

It might sound strange, but some of the best business folks who I have met know very little about marketing and advertising. They simply have a knack for making the products that people need. Some of them are actually pretty un-savvy as consumers themselves, yet somehow get by on instinct and intellect. The one exception, however, is consumer behaviour. On some level everyone needs to understand if he want to be able to make and sell the products that consumers want. You really do not need to know how to launch a marketing campaign, how to create an image, how to spread word-of-mouth information about your product, or how to spin doctor. You can hire people to do all of those things for you. But if you do not know how people make basic buying and selling decisions in their lives, you simply won't ever understand what will sell.

Such fundamentals as brand loyalty, brand identity, and niche marketing are firmly grounded in consumer behaviour. You can learn a lot of it just by taking some sociology classes, or even by watching your own family shopping. My first introduction to consumer behaviour was not through any organized business program, but through going to the grocery store with my mom while growing up. It was interesting to see what brands she bought. There were a lot of companies that she trusted just because she had always used, but occasionally things would change. My mom was very easily swayed by things claiming to have increased health benefits. A new product which was supposedly super fortified would always sway her away from an old, trusted brand - even one she had been with forever.

Like most consumers, my mom assumed that she was motivated purely by rational concerns. In her case, she wanted to give her family the healthiest food possible on her budget. Like most people, however, once companies profiled her consumer behaviour, they could sell their products to her. There are certain keywords that triggered consumer buying decisions, certain qualities she was looking for in the food, and even certain fonts, graphics, and colors that she associated with good, wholesome food. The consumer behavior researchers had more of an understanding of what people like my mom liked than I could possibly have guessed at the time. Still, even at such a young age, I already understood the basics of consumer market research.