PART 2 DISCUSSES THE CONSUMER AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Chapters 4 through 8 provide the reader with a comprehensive picture of consumer psychology. These chapters explain the basic psychological concepts that account for individual behavior and demonstrate how these concepts influence the individual's consumption-related behavior. Chapter 9 shows how communication links consumers as individuals to the world and people around them.

chapter**four**

Consumer Motivation

Human needs—consumer needs—are the basis of all modern marketing. Needs are the essence of the marketing concept. The key to a company's survival, profitability, and growth in a highly competitive marketplace is its ability to identify and satisfy unfulfilled consumer needs better and sooner than the competition.

Marketers do not create needs, though in some instances they may make consumers more keenly aware of unfelt needs. Successful marketers define their markets in terms of the needs they presume to satisfy, not in terms of the products they sell. This is a market-oriented, rather than a production-oriented, approach to marketing. A marketing orientation focuses on the needs of the buyer; a production orientation focuses on the needs of the seller. The marketing concept implies that the manufacturer will make only what it knows people will buy; a production orientation implies that the manufacturer will try to sell whatever it decides to make.

The philosophy and marketing strategy of Charles Revson, the builder of the Revlon cosmetics empire, depict an insightful understanding of consumer needs. Charles Revson started by manufacturing nail polish, but he defined nail polish as a fashion accessory and not merely a nail covering. His strategy was designed to induce women to use different shades of nail polish to match different



outfits, moods, and occasions. This approach vastly broadened the market for the product, because it persuaded women to buy and use many different colors of nail polish in the same season rather than wait to finish one bottle before buying another one. And Revson ensured that women would buy more and more bottles of nail polish by introducing new nail color fashions every season. Emulating GM's strategy of planned obsolescence (i.e., introducing new automobile models every year), Revlon would introduce new nail colors every fall and spring and, through heavy and effective advertising, would persuade women that buying the new colors would satisfy their needs to appear fashionable and attractive.[1]

TABLE 4.1 Companies Can Define Themselves as Product-Oriented versus Need-Oriented

	PRODUCT-ORIENTED	NEED-ORIENTED
Pfizer	We make pharmaceuticals.	"We dedicate ourselves to humanity's quest for longer, healthier, happier lives through innovation in pharmaceutical, consumer, and animal health products." (**www.pfizer.com**)
Logitech	We make cameras and PC tracking devices.	"Logitech designs, manufactures and markets personal peripherals that enable people to effectively work, play, and communicate in the digital world. The company's products combine essential core technologies, continuing innovation, award-winning industrial design and excellent price performance." (**www.logitech.com**)
Ritz-Carlton	We rent rooms and provide facilities for meetings and events.	The company's credo stresses the genuine care and comfort of the guests, the finest personal service and facilities, a warm yet refined ambience, and an experience that fulfills even the unexpressed needs and wishes of the guests. (**www.ritzcarlton.com**)

Similar to GM's segmentation strategy, Revson developed separate cosmetic lines targeting different consumer segments, such as the popularly priced *Revlon* (which Revson equated with the positioning of the Pontiac), *Natural Wonder* (targeting the youth market), and *Marcella Borghese* (positioned as the high-class line with international "flavor"). Most importantly, Revson understood that he was not selling women the physical product (e.g., nail lacquer to cover their nails) but the fantasy that the nail polish would attract attention and bestow class and glamour on the user. Thus, Revson did not sell deep red polish; he sold *Fire and Ice*. He did not sell dark red polish; he sold *Berry Bon Bon*. Charles Revson summed up his philosophy by saying "In the factory, we make cosmetics; in the store, we sell hope." And selling hope, rather than the physical product known as cosmetics, allowed Revson to charge much more for his products. Rather than compete with other manufacturers on the basis of price, Revson competed on the basis of perceived quality and greater satisfaction of women's needs for fantasy and attention.[2]

Savvy companies define their missions in terms of the consumer needs they satisfy rather than the products they produce and sell. Because consumers' basic needs do not change but the products that satisfy them do, a corporate focus on developing products that will satisfy consumers' needs ensures that the company stays in the forefront of the search for new and effective solutions. By doing so, such companies are likely to survive and grow despite strong competition or adverse economic conditions. On the other hand, companies that define themselves in terms of the products they make may suffer or even go out of business when their products are replaced by competitive offerings that better satisfy the same need. Table 4.1 includes examples of companies that define themselves as need-oriented rather than product-oriented.

This chapter discusses basic needs that operate in most people to motivate behavior. It explores the influence that such needs have on consumption behavior. Later chapters in Part 2 explain why and how these basic human needs, or motives, are expressed in so many diverse ways.

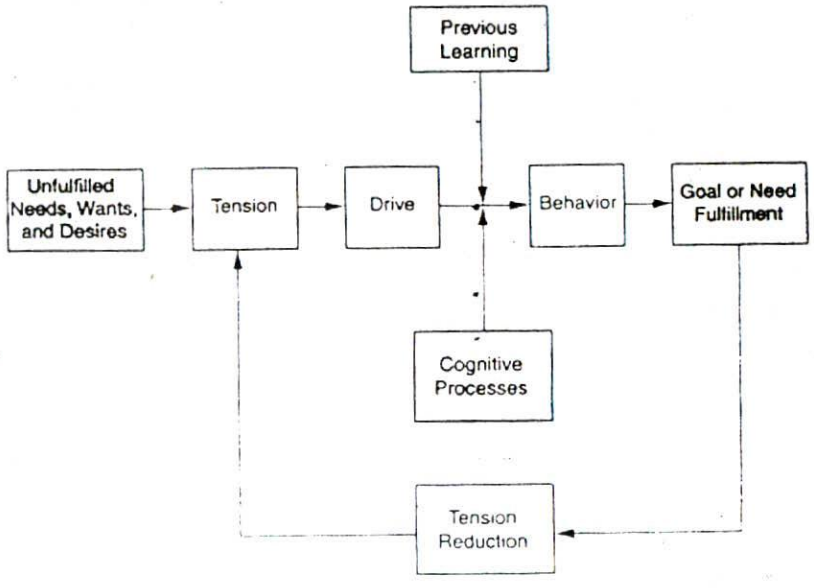
motivation as a psychological force

Motivation is the *driving force within individuals that impels them to action.* This driving force is produced by a state of tension, which exists as the result of an unfulfilled need. Individuals strive both consciously and subconsciously to reduce this tension through behavior that they anticipate will fulfill their needs and thus relieve them of the stress they feel. The specific goals they select and the patterns of action they undertake to achieve their goals are the results of individual thinking and learning. Figure 4.1 presents a model of the motivational process. It portrays motivation as a state of need-induced tension that "drives" the individual to engage in behavior that he or she believes will satisfy the need and thus reduce the tension. Whether gratification is actually achieved depends on the course of action pursued. The specific goals that consumers wish to achieve and the courses of action they take to attain these goals are selected on the basis of their thinking processes (cognition) and previous learning (e.g., experience). Therefore, marketers must view motivation as the force that induces consumption and, through consumption experiences, the process of consumer learning (discussed in Chapter 7).

Needs

Every individual has needs: some are innate, others are acquired. **Innate needs** are physiological (i.e., *biogenic*); they include the needs for food, water, air, clothing, shelter, and sex. Because they are needed to sustain biological life, the biogenic needs are considered **primary needs** or motives.

Acquired needs are needs that we learn in response to our culture or environment. These may include needs for self-esteem, prestige, affection, power, and learning. Because acquired needs are generally psychological (i.e., *psychogenic*), they are considered **secondary needs** or motives. They result from the individual's subjective psychological state and from relationships with others. For example, all individuals need shelter from the elements; thus, finding a place to live fulfills an important primary need for a newly transferred executive. However, the kind of home she rents or buys may be the result of secondary needs. She may seek a place in which she and her husband can entertain large



Model of the Motivation Process

Source: From Jeffrey F. Dugree et al., "Observations: Translating Values into Product Wants," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36, 6 (November 1996). Reprinted by permission of the *Journal of the American Marketing Association*.

FIGURE 4.1

groups of people (and fulfill social needs); she may want to live in an exclusive community to impress her friends and family (and fulfill ego needs). The place where an individual ultimately chooses to live thus may serve to fulfill both primary and secondary needs.

Goals

Goals are the sought-after results of motivated behavior. As Figure 4.1 indicated, all behavior is goal oriented. Our discussion of motivation in this chapter is in part concerned with **generic goals**, that is, the general classes or categories of goals that consumers see as a means to fulfill their needs. If a student tells his parents that he wants to become a medical doctor, he has stated a generic goal. If he says he wants to get an M.D. degree from UCLA, he has expressed a **product-specific goal**. Marketers are particularly concerned with product-specific goals, that is, the specifically branded products and services that consumers select for goal fulfillment.

Individuals set goals on the basis of their personal values, and they select means (or behaviors) that they believe will help them achieve their desired goals. Figures 4.2 A, B, and C depict a framework of the goal structure behind losing weight and maintaining weight loss and the results of a study based on this model. Figure 4.2A depicts an overall framework for pursuing consumption-related goals. Figure 4.2B depicts the interrelationship among the needs driving the goal of losing weight (e.g., increased self-confidence, looking and feeling better, and living longer) and the behaviors required to achieve the goal (i.e., exercising and/or dieting). Figure 4.2C depicts the complex nature of goal setting based on subjects' responses to questions regarding their reasons for selecting weight loss as a goal, providing justification for each reason, and explaining each justification.[3] The three diagrams together depict the complexity of goal setting and the difficulties in understanding this process through a set theoretical model. Figure 4.3 depicts an ad that portrays subscribing to a health magazine as a means to achieve several physical appearance-related goals.

The selection of goals

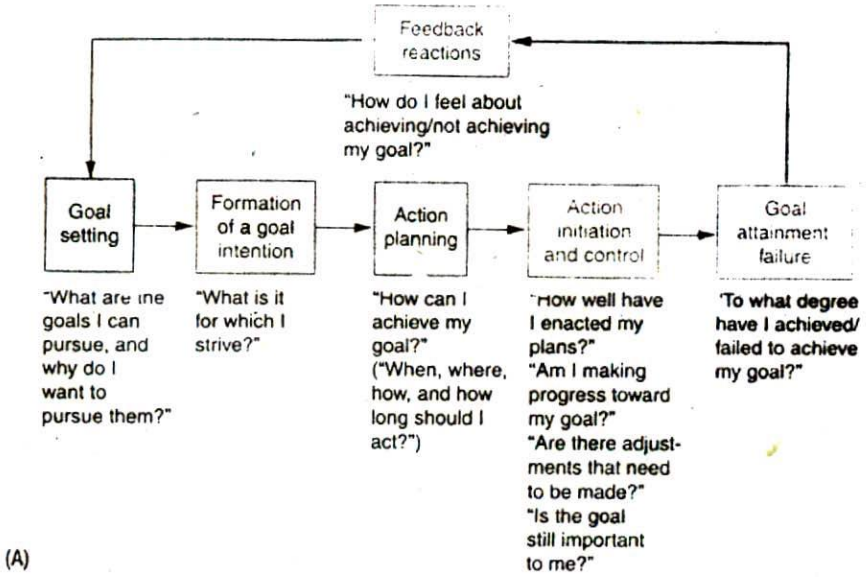
For any given need, there are many different and appropriate goals. The goals selected by individuals depend on their personal experiences, physical capacity, prevailing cultural norms and values, and the goal's accessibility in the physical and social environment. For example, a young woman may wish to get a deep, even tan and may envision spending time in the sun as a way to achieve her goal. However, if her dermatologist advises her to avoid direct exposure to the sun, she may settle for a self-tanning cosmetic product instead. The goal object has to be both socially acceptable and physically accessible. If cosmetic companies did not offer effective alternatives to tanning in the sun, our young woman would have to either ignore the advice of her dermatologist or select a substitute goal, such as untanned (but undamaged) youthful-looking skin.

An individual's personal characteristics and own perception of self also influence the specific goals selected. Research on personal goal orientation distinguished two types of people: (1) persons with *promotion focus* are interested in their growth and development, have more hopes and aspirations and favor the presence of positive outcomes; (2) persons with a *prevention focus* are interested in safety and security, are more concerned with duties and obligations and favor the absence of negative outcomes. One study found that, in forming consumption-related goals, consumers with a prevention focus favored the status quo and inaction over action.[4] Another study distinguished between two types of goals: (1) **ideals**, which represent hopes, wishes, and aspirations; and (2) **oughts**, which represent duties, obligations, and responsibilities. The study showed that people concerned with *ideals* relied more on feelings and affects in evaluating advertisements, while people more concerned with *oughts* relied more heavily on the substantive and factual contents of ads.[5] In yet another study, some consumers were led to believe that they obtained a discount in the purchase price of a PC because of their good negotiating skills and were encouraged to feel proud, while others were led to believe that they received the discount because the computer was on sale and were not encouraged to feel proud. In addition, the goals

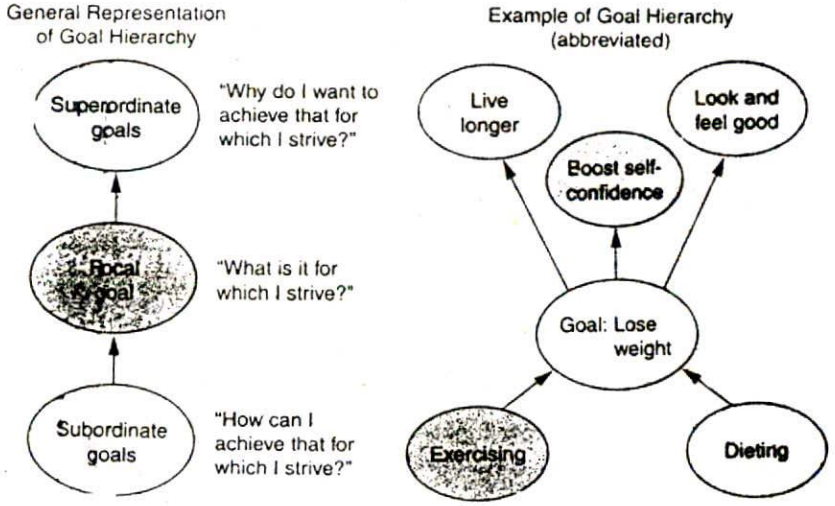
FIGURE 4.7

The Needs and Goals Behind Losing or Maintaining Body Weight

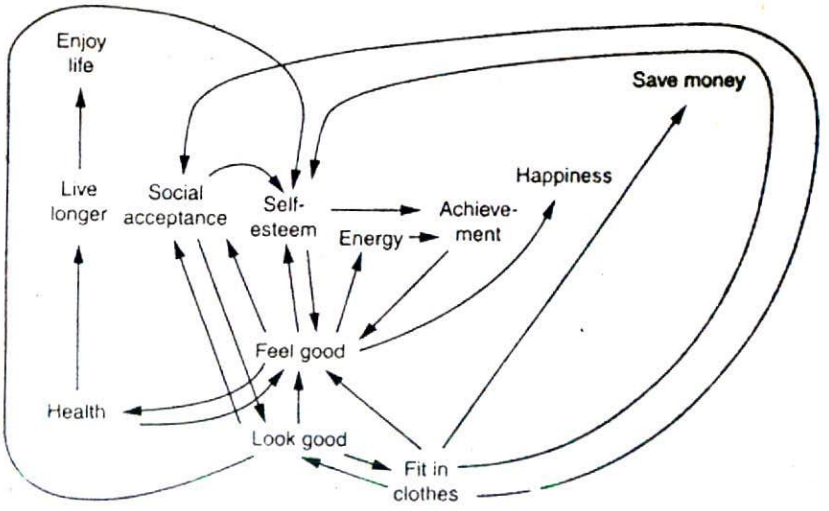
Source. From "Goal Setting and Goal Pursuit in the Regulation of Body Weight," by Richard Bagozzi and Elizabeth Edwards originally published in *Psychology and Health, 13,* 1998. Reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd., www.tandf.co.uk/journals.



(A)



(B)



(C)

FIGURE 4.3

Source: Courtesy of Weider Publications, Inc.



Achieving Goals by Subscribing to a Magazine

that the consumers were encouraged to believe they had obtained were stated as either gains (i.e., promotion goals) or the avoidance of losses (i.e., prevention goals). The study showed that people who felt proud of their negotiating skills and also believed that they avoided losses were less likely to repurchase the product than persons who felt proud and also believed that they had achieved gains. For the people who did not feel proud, the type of goals they believed they had accomplished had no impact on intentions to repurchase the product.[6]

Goals are also related to negative forms of consumption behavior. One study found that personal goals that focus on extrinsic benefits (such as financial success, social status, and being attractive to others) are associated with higher degrees of

Source: Courtesy of Illuminating Experiences. Agency is BrandStreet Advertising LLC. Copy by Ed Shankman, art by Dave Frank, and design by Joe Gwgliuzza.



FIGURE 4.4 Different Appeals for Same Goal Object

compulsive buying than goals that stress intrinsic benefits (such as self-acceptance, affiliation, and connection with community).[7] These studies illustrate the complexity of the ways consumers conceptualize goals and the impact of set or achieved goals on consumption behavior.

Figure 4.4 shows appeals to three different target audiences for the same goal object—lighting. Figure 4.5 presents a series of advertisements for American Airlines illustrating that individuals have different reasons and seek to accomplish different goals when flying the airline. The statement that the airline knows what these goals are conveys the company's focus on its customers' needs.

Interdependence of needs and goals

Needs and goals are interdependent; neither exists without the other. However, people are often not as aware of their needs as they are of their goals. For example, a teenager may not consciously be aware of his social needs but may join a number of chat groups online to meet new friends. A person may not consciously be aware of a power need but may choose to run for public office when an elective position becomes available. A college student may not consciously recognize her need for achievement but may strive to attain a straight A grade point average.

Individuals are usually somewhat more aware of their *physiological* needs than they are of their *psychological* needs. Most people know when they are hungry, thirsty, or cold, and they take appropriate steps to satisfy these needs. The same people may not consciously be aware of their needs for acceptance, self-esteem, or status. They may, however, subconsciously engage in behavior that satisfies their psychological (acquired) needs.

Positive and negative motivation

Motivation can be **positive** or **negative** in direction. We may feel a driving force *toward* some object or condition or a driving force *away* from some object or condition. For example, a person may be impelled toward a restaurant to fulfill a hunger need, and away from motorcycle transportation to fulfill a safety need.

Some psychologists refer to positive drives as needs, wants, or desires and to negative drives as fears or aversions. However, although positive and negative motivational

FIGURE 4.5 *Source:* © American Airlines, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved. (www.aa.com)



Different Appeals for Same Goal Object American Airlines

forces seem to differ dramatically in terms of physical (and sometimes emotional) activity, they are basically similar in that both serve to initiate and sustain human behavior. For this reason, researchers often refer to both kinds of drives or motives as *needs*, *wants*, and *desires*. Some theorists distinguish *wants* from *needs* by defining wants as product-specific needs. Others differentiate between desires, on the one hand and needs and wants on the other. Thus, there is no uniformly accepted distinction among the terms needs, wants, and desires.

Needs, wants, or desires may lead to goals that can be positive or negative. A positive goal is one toward which behavior is directed; thus, it is often referred to as an **approach object**. A negative goal is one from which behavior is directed away and is referred to as an **avoidance object**. Because both approach and avoidance goals are the results of motivated behavior, most researchers refer to both simply as *goals*. Consider this example: A middle-aged woman with a positive goal of fitness may join a health club to work out regularly. Her husband, who views getting fat as a negative goal, joins a health club to guide his exercise. In the former case, the wife's actions are designed to achieve the *positive* goal of health and fitness; in the latter case, her husband's actions are designed to avoid a ***negative*** goal—a flabby physique. Figure 4.6 shows two ads for Neutrogena sun lotion—one stressing *positive motivation* and the other *negative motivation*.

Rational versus emotional motives

Some consumer behaviorists distinguish between so-called **rational motives** and **emotional motives**. They use the term ***rationality*** in the traditional economic sense, which assumes that consumers behave rationally by carefully considering all alternatives and choosing those that give them the greatest utility. In a marketing context, the term *rationality* implies that consumers select goals based on totally objective criteria, such as size, weight, price, or miles per gallon. Emotional motives imply the selection of goals according to personal or subjective criteria (e.g., pride, fear, affection, or status).

The assumption underlying this distinction is that subjective or emotional criteria do not maximize utility or satisfaction. However, it is reasonable to assume that consumers always attempt to select alternatives that, in their view, serve to best satisfy

FIGURE 4.6



Source: © Neutrogena Corporation.

Positive versus Negative Motivation

their needs. Obviously, the assessment of satisfaction is a very personal process, based on the individual's own need structure, as well as on past behavioral and social (or learned) experiences. What may appear irrational to an outside observer may be perfectly rational in the context of the consumer's own psychological field. For example, a person who pursues extensive facial cosmetic surgery in order to appear younger uses significant economic resources (e.g., hefty surgical fees, time lost in recovery, inconvenience, and the risk that something may go wrong) to achieve her goal. To that person, undergoing the surgery, and expending the considerable financial and physical costs required, are perfectly rational decisions to achieve her goal. However, to many other persons within the same culture who are less concerned with aging, and to persons from other cultures that are not so preoccupied with personal appearance, these decisions appear completely irrational.

the dynamics of motivation

Motivation is a highly dynamic construct that is constantly changing in reaction to life experiences. Needs and goals change and grow in response to an individual's physical condition, environment, interactions with others, and experiences. As individuals attain their goals, they develop new ones. If they do not attain their goals, they continue to strive for old goals or they develop substitute goals. Some of the reasons why need-driven human activity never ceases include the following: (1) Many needs are never fully satisfied; they continually impel actions designed to attain or maintain satisfaction. (2) As needs become satisfied, new and higher-order needs emerge that cause tension and induce activity. (3) People who achieve their goals set new and higher goals for themselves.

Needs are never fully satisfied

Most human needs are never fully or permanently satisfied. For example, at fairly regular intervals throughout each day individuals experience hunger needs that must be

satisfied. Most people regularly seek companionship and approval from others to satisfy their social needs. Even more complex psychological needs are rarely fully satisfied. For example, a person may partially satisfy a need for power by working as administrative assistant to a local politician, but this vicarious taste of power may not sufficiently satisfy her need; thus, she may strive to work for a state legislator or even to run for political office herself. In this instance, temporary goal achievement does not adequately satisfy the need for power, and the individual strives ever harder to more fully satisfy that need.

New needs emerge as old needs are satisfied

Some motivational theorists believe that a hierarchy of needs exists and that new, higher-order needs emerge as lower-order needs are fulfilled.[8] For example, a man whose basic physiological needs (e.g., food, housing, etc.) are fairly well satisfied may turn his efforts to achieving acceptance among his neighbors by joining their political clubs and supporting their candidates. Once he is confident that he has achieved acceptance, he then may seek recognition by giving lavish parties or building a larger house.

Marketers must be attuned to changing needs. For example, the Mercedes-Benz ad shown in Figure 4.7 portrays three different car models corresponding to an individual's needs as he or she matures.

Success and failure influence goals

A number of researchers have explored the nature of the goals that individuals set for themselves. Broadly speaking, they have concluded that individuals who successfully achieve their goals usually set new and higher goals for themselves; that is, they raise their **levels of aspiration**. This may be due to the fact that their success in reaching lower goals makes them more confident of their ability to reach higher goals. Conversely, those who do not reach their goals sometimes lower their levels of aspiration.[9] Thus, goal selection is often a function of success and failure. For example, a college senior who is not accepted into medical school may try instead to become a dentist or a podiatrist.

The nature and persistence of an individual's behavior are often influenced by expectations of success or failure in reaching certain goals. Those expectations, in turn, are often based on past experience. A person who takes good snapshots with an inexpensive camera may be motivated to buy a more sophisticated camera in the belief that it will enable him to take even better photographs, and eventually he may upgrade his camera by several hundred dollars. On the other hand, a person who has not been able to take good photographs is just as likely to keep the same camera or even to lose all interest in photography.

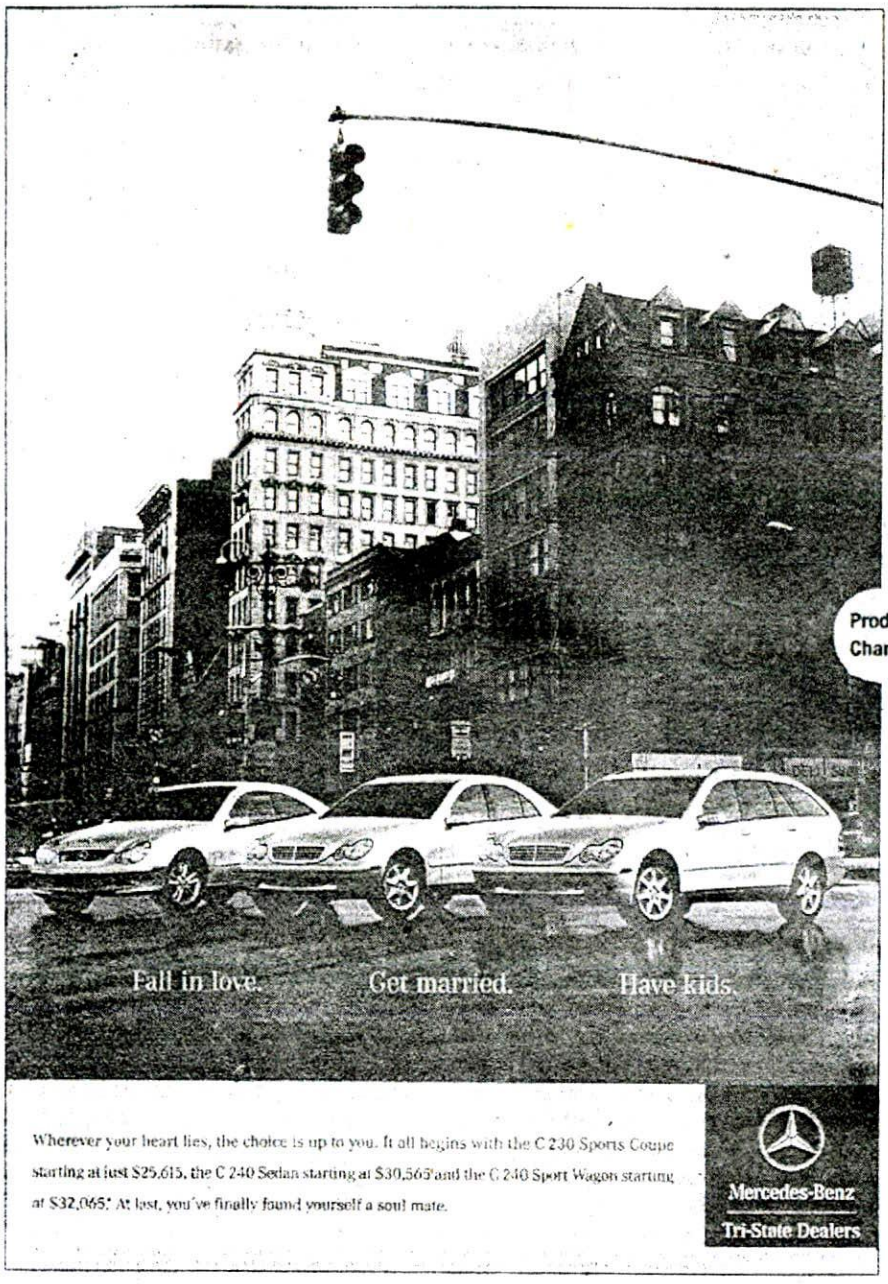
These effects of success and failure on goal selection have strategy implications for marketers. Goals should be reasonably attainable. Advertisements should not promise more than the product will deliver. Products and services are often evaluated by the size and direction of the gap between consumer expectations and objective performance. Thus, even a good product will not be repurchased if it fails to live up to unrealistic expectations created by ads that "overpromise." Similarly, a consumer is likely to regard a mediocre product with greater satisfaction than it warrants if its performance exceeds her expectations.

Substitute goals

When an individual cannot attain a specific goal or type of goal that he or she anticipates will satisfy certain needs, behavior may be directed to a **substitute goal**. Although the substitute goal may not be as satisfactory as the primary goal, it may be sufficient to dispel uncomfortable tension. Continued deprivation of a primary goal may result in the substitute goal assuming primary-goal status. For example, a woman who has

FIGURE 4.7

Source: Courtesy of Mercedes-Benz. Image © Jake Chessum



Product Alternatives for Changing Consumer Needs

stopped drinking whole milk because she is dieting may actually begin to prefer skim milk. A man who cannot afford a BMW may convince himself that a new sporty Chrysler Sebring has an image he clearly prefers.

Frustration

Failure to achieve a goal often results in feelings of frustration. At one time or another, everyone has experienced the frustration that comes from the inability to attain a goal.

The barrier that prevents attainment of a goal may be personal to the individual (e.g., limited physical or financial resources) or an obstacle in the physical or social environment (e.g., a storm that causes the postponement of a long-awaited vacation). Regardless of the cause, individuals react differently to frustrating situations. Some people manage to cope by finding their way around the obstacle or, if that fails, by selecting a substitute goal. Others are less adaptive and may regard their inability to achieve a goal as a personal failure. Such people are likely to adopt a defense mechanism to protect their egos from feelings of inadequacy. The creation of a new type of children's board game represents a creative response to the concept of frustration. Unlike most board games, where a child who has lost may be frustrated and subject to the ridicule of other children, the new game is centered on skill-building activities and provides every child with a chance to shine. While the game is built on a "nobody loses" concept, the designers have carefully built in an element of competition because a complete lack of competition may make a game seem boring.[10]

Defense mechanisms

People who cannot cope with frustration often mentally redefine their frustrating situations in order to protect their self-images and self-esteem. For example, a young woman may yearn for a European vacation she cannot afford. The coping individual may select a less expensive vacation trip to Disneyland or to a national park. The person who cannot cope may react with anger toward her boss for not paying her enough money to afford the vacation she prefers, or she may persuade herself that Europe is unseasonably warm this year. These last two possibilities are examples, respectively, of *aggression* and *rationalization*, **defense mechanisms** that people sometimes adopt to protect their egos from feelings of failure when they do not attain their goals. Other defense mechanisms include *regression*, *withdrawal*, *projection*, *daydreaming*, *identification*, and *repression*. These defense mechanisms are described in Table 4.2. This listing of defense mechanisms is far from exhaustive, because individuals tend to develop their own ways of redefining frustrating situations to protect their self-esteem from the anxieties that result from experiencing failure. Marketers often consider this fact in their selection of advertising appeals and construct advertisements that portray a person resolving a particular frustration through the use of the advertised product.

Multiplicity of needs and variation of goals

A consumer's behavior often fulfills more than one need. In fact, it is likely that specific goals are selected because they fulfill several needs. We buy clothing for protection and for a certain degree of modesty; in addition, our clothing fulfills a wide range of personal and social needs, such as acceptance or ego needs.

One cannot accurately infer motives from behavior. People with different needs may seek fulfillment through selection of the same goal; people with the same needs may seek fulfillment through different goals. Consider the following examples. Five people who are active in a neighborhood association may each belong for a different reason. The first may be genuinely concerned with protecting the interests of the neighborhood's residents; the second may be concerned about the possibility of increased crime in the area; the third may seek social contacts from organizational meetings; the fourth may enjoy the power of directing a large group; and the fifth may enjoy the status provided by membership in an attention-getting organization.

Similarly, five people may be driven by the same need (e.g., an ego need) to seek fulfillment in different ways. The first may seek advancement and recognition through a professional career; the second may become active in a political organization; the third may run in regional marathons; the fourth may take professional dance lessons; and the fifth may seek attention by monopolizing classroom discussions.

Realizing that many people have a need to make new friends as well as have a place to live, new apartment buildings in New York City now include such facilities as private parks, entertainment rooms, card rooms, exercise rooms, billiard rooms adjacent

TABLE 4.2 Defense Mechanisms

DEFENSE MECHANISM	DESCRIPTION AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Aggression	In response to frustration, individuals may resort to aggressive behavior in attempting to protect their self-esteem. The tennis pro who slams his tennis racket to the ground when disappointed with his game or the baseball player who physically intimidates an empire for his call are examples of such conduct. So are consumer boycotts of companies or stores.
Rationalization	People sometimes resolve frustration by inventing plausible reasons for being unable to attain their goals (e.g., not having enough time to practice) or deciding that the goal is not really worth pursuing (e.g., how important is it to achieve a high bowling score?).
Regression	An individual may react to a frustrating situation with childish or immature behavior. A shopper attending a bargain sale, for example, may fight over merchandise and even rip a garment that another shopper will not relinquish rather than allow the other person to have it.
Withdrawal	Frustration may be resolved by simply withdrawing from the situation. For instance, a person who has difficulty achieving officer status in an organization may decide he can use his time more constructively in other activities and simply quit that organization.
Projection	An individual may redefine a frustrating situation by projecting blame for his or her own failures and inabilities on other objects or persons. Thus, the golfer who misses a stroke may blame his golf clubs or his caddy.
Daydreaming	Daydreaming, or fantasizing, enables the individual to attain imaginary gratification of unfulfilled needs. A person who is shy and lonely, for example, may daydream about a romantic love affair.
Identification	People resolve feelings of frustration by subconsciously identifying with other persons or situations that they consider relevant. For example, slice-of-life commercials often portray a stereotypical situation in which an individual experiences a frustration and then overcomes the problem by using the advertised product. If the viewer can identify with the frustrating situation, he or she may very likely adopt the proposed solution and buy the product advertised.
Repression	Another way that individuals avoid the tension arising from frustration is by repressing the unsatisfied need. Thus, individuals may "force" the need out of their conscious awareness. Sometimes repressed needs manifest themselves indirectly. The wife who is unable to bear children may teach school or work in a library; her husband may do volunteer work in a boys' club. The manifestation of repressed needs in a socially acceptable form is called *sublimation*, another type of defense mechanism.

to laundry rooms, and other types of common areas that convey a sense of community and facilitate meetings with neighbors.[11]

Arousal of motives

Most of an individual's specific needs are dormant much of the time. The arousal of any particular set of needs at a specific moment in time may be caused by internal stimuli found in the individual's physiological condition, by emotional or cognitive processes, or by stimuli in the outside environment.

Physiological arousal

Bodily needs at any one specific moment in time are based on the individual's physiological condition at that moment. A drop in blood sugar level or stomach contractions will trigger awareness of a hunger need. Secretion of sex hormones will awaken the sex need. A decrease in body temperature will induce shivering, which makes the individual aware of the need for warmth. Most of these physiological cues are involuntary; however, they arouse related needs that cause uncomfortable tensions until they are satisfied. For example, a person who is cold may turn up the heat in his bedroom and also make a mental note to buy a warm cardigan sweater to wear around the house. Figure 4.8 demonstrates arousal of a physiological need.

Emotional arousal

Sometimes daydreaming results in the arousal or stimulation of latent needs. People who are bored or who are frustrated in trying to achieve their goals often engage in daydreaming (autistic thinking), in which they imagine themselves in all sorts of desirable situations. These thoughts tend to arouse dormant needs, which may produce uncomfortable tensions that drive them into goal-oriented behavior. A young woman who daydreams of a torrid romance may spend her free time in Internet single chat rooms; a young man who dreams of being a famous novelist may enroll in a writing workshop.

Cognitive arousal

Sometimes random thoughts can lead to a cognitive awareness of needs. An advertisement that provides reminders of home might trigger instant yearning to speak with one's parents. This is the basis for many long-distance telephone company campaigns that stress the low cost of international long-distance rates.

Environmental (or situational) arousal

The set of needs an individual experiences at a particular time are often activated by specific cues in the environment. Without these cues, the needs might remain dormant. For example, the 6 o'clock news, the sight or smell of bakery goods, fast-food commercials on television, the end of the school day—all of these may arouse the "need" for food. In such cases, modification of the environment may be necessary to reduce the arousal of hunger.

A most potent form of situational cue is the goal object itself. A woman may experience an overwhelming desire to visit Australia when she is drawn to the scene depicted in Figure 4.9; a man may suddenly experience a "need" for a new car when passing a dealer's display window. Sometimes an advertisement or other environmental cue produces a psychological imbalance in the viewer's mind. For example, a young college student who constantly uses his cell phone may see a new, slick-looking cell phone model with more features displayed in a store window. The exposure may make him unhappy with his old cell phone and cause him to experience tension that will be reduced only when he buys himself the new cell phone model.

FIGURE 4.8



Source: © The Procter & Gamble Company. Used by permission.

Another satisfied body part, brought to you by ThermaCare

When people live in a complex and highly varied environment, they experience many opportunities for need arousal. Conversely, when their environment is poor or deprived, fewer needs are activated. This explains why television has had such a mixed effect on the lives of people in underdeveloped countries. It exposes them to various lifestyles and expensive products that they would not otherwise see, and it awakens wants and desires that they have little opportunity or even hope of satisfying. Thus, while television enriches many lives, it also serves to frustrate people with little money or education or hope, and may result in the adoption of such aggressive defense mechanisms as robbery, boycotts, or even revolts.

FIGURE 4.9

Source: © Tourism Australia. Used with permission. All rights reserved. (www.australia.com)



Environmental Arousal •

There are two opposing philosophies concerned with the arousal of human motives. The **behaviorist school** considers motivation to be a mechanical process; behavior is seen as the response to a stimulus, and elements of conscious thought are ignored. An extreme example of the *stimulus–response* theory of motivation is the impulse buyer who reacts largely to external stimuli in the buying situation. According to this theory, the consumer's cognitive control is limited; he or she does not act but reacts to stimuli in the marketplace (e.g., an ice cream truck on the corner). The **cognitive school** believes that all behavior is directed at goal achievement.

Needs and past experiences are reasoned, categorized, and transformed into attitudes and beliefs that act as predispositions focused on helping the individual satisfy needs, and they determine the actions that he or she takes to achieve this satisfaction.

types and systems of needs

For many years, psychologists and others interested in human behavior have attempted to develop exhaustive lists of human needs. Most lists of human needs tend to be diverse in content as well as in length. Although there is little disagreement about specific physiological needs, there is considerable disagreement about specific psychological (i.e., psychogenic) needs.

In 1938, the psychologist Henry Murray prepared a detailed list of 28 psychogenic needs. This research was probably the first systematic approach to the understanding of nonbiological human needs. Murray believed that everyone has the same basic set of needs but that individuals differ in their priority ranking of these needs. Murray's basic needs include many motives that are assumed to play an important role in consumer behavior, such as acquisition, achievement, recognition, and exhibition (see Table 4.3).

Hierarchy of needs

Dr. Abraham Maslow, a clinical psychologist, formulated a widely accepted theory of human motivation based on the notion of a universal hierarchy of human needs.[12] Maslow's theory identifies five basic levels of human needs, which rank in order of importance from lower-level (biogenic) needs to higher-level (psychogenic) needs. The theory postulates that individuals seek to satisfy lower-level needs before higher-level needs emerge. The lowest level of chronically unsatisfied need that an individual experiences serves to motivate his or her behavior. When that need is "fairly well" satisfied, a new (and higher) need emerges that the individual is motivated to fulfill. When this need is satisfied, a new (and still higher) need emerges, and so on. Of course, if a lower-level need experiences some renewed deprivation (e.g., thirst), it may temporarily become dominant again.

Figure 4.10 presents a diagram of **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**. For clarity, each level is depicted as mutually exclusive. According to the theory, however, there is some overlap between each level, as no need is ever completely satisfied. For this reason, although all levels of need below the level that is currently dominant continue to motivate behavior to some extent, the prime motivator—the major driving force within the individual—is the lowest level of need that remains largely unsatisfied.

Physiological needs

In the hierarchy-of-needs theory, physiological needs are the first and most basic level of human needs. These needs, which are required to sustain biological life, include food, water, air, shelter, clothing, sex—all the biogenic needs, in fact, that were listed as primary needs earlier.

According to Maslow, physiological needs are dominant when they are chronically unsatisfied: "For the man who is extremely and dangerously hungry, no other interest exists but food. He dreams food, he remembers food, he thinks about food, he emotes only about food, he perceives only food, and he wants only food."[13] For many people in this country, the biogenic needs tend to be satisfied, and higher-level needs are dominant. Unfortunately, however, the lives of the many homeless people in major cities and in physically devastated areas are focused almost entirely on satisfying their biogenic needs, such as the needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

TABLE 4.3 Murray's List of Psychogenic Needs

NEEDS ASSOCIATED WITH INANIMATE OBJECTS

Acquisition
Conservancy
Order
Retention
Construction

NEEDS THAT REFLECT AMBITION, POWER, ACCOMPLISHMENT, AND PRESTIGE

Superiority
Achievement
Recognition
Exhibition
Inviolacy (inviolate attitude)
Infavoidance (to avoid shame, failure, humiliation, ridicule)
Defendance (defensive attitude)
Counteraction (counteractive attitude)

NEEDS CONCERNED WITH HUMAN POWER

Dominance
Deferrence
Similance (suggestible attitude)
Autonomy
Contrariance (to act differently from others)

SADOMASOCHISTIC NEEDS

Aggression
Abasement

NEEDS CONCERNED WITH AFFECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE

Affiliation
Rejection
Nurturance (to nourish, aid, or protect the helpless)
Succorance (to seek aid, protection, or sympathy)
Play

NEEDS CONCERNED WITH SOCIAL INTERCOURSE (THE NEEDS TO ASK AND TELL)

Cognizance (inquiring attitude)
Exposition (expositive attitude)

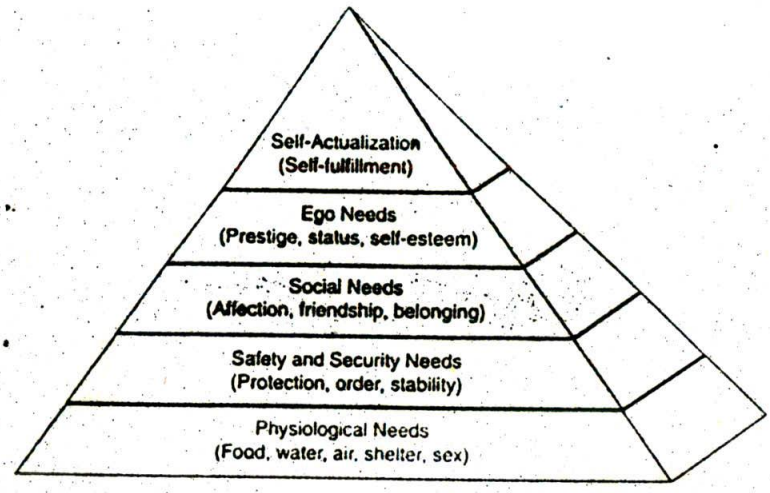
Source: Adapted from Henry A. Murray, "Types of Human Needs," in David C. McClelland, *Studies in Motivation* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), 63–66. Reprinted by permission of Irvington Publishers, Inc.

Safety needs

After the first level of need is satisfied, safety and security needs become the driving force behind an individual's behavior. These needs are concerned not only with physical safety but also include order, stability, routine, familiarity, and control over one's life and environment. Health and the availability of health care are important safety concerns. Savings accounts, insurance policies, education,

FIGURE 4.10

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



and vocational training are all means by which individuals satisfy the need for security.

Social needs

The third level of Maslow's hierarchy includes such needs as love, affection, belonging, and acceptance. People seek warm and satisfying human relationships with other people and are motivated by love for their families. Because of the importance of social motives in our society, advertisers of many product categories emphasize this appeal in their advertisements.

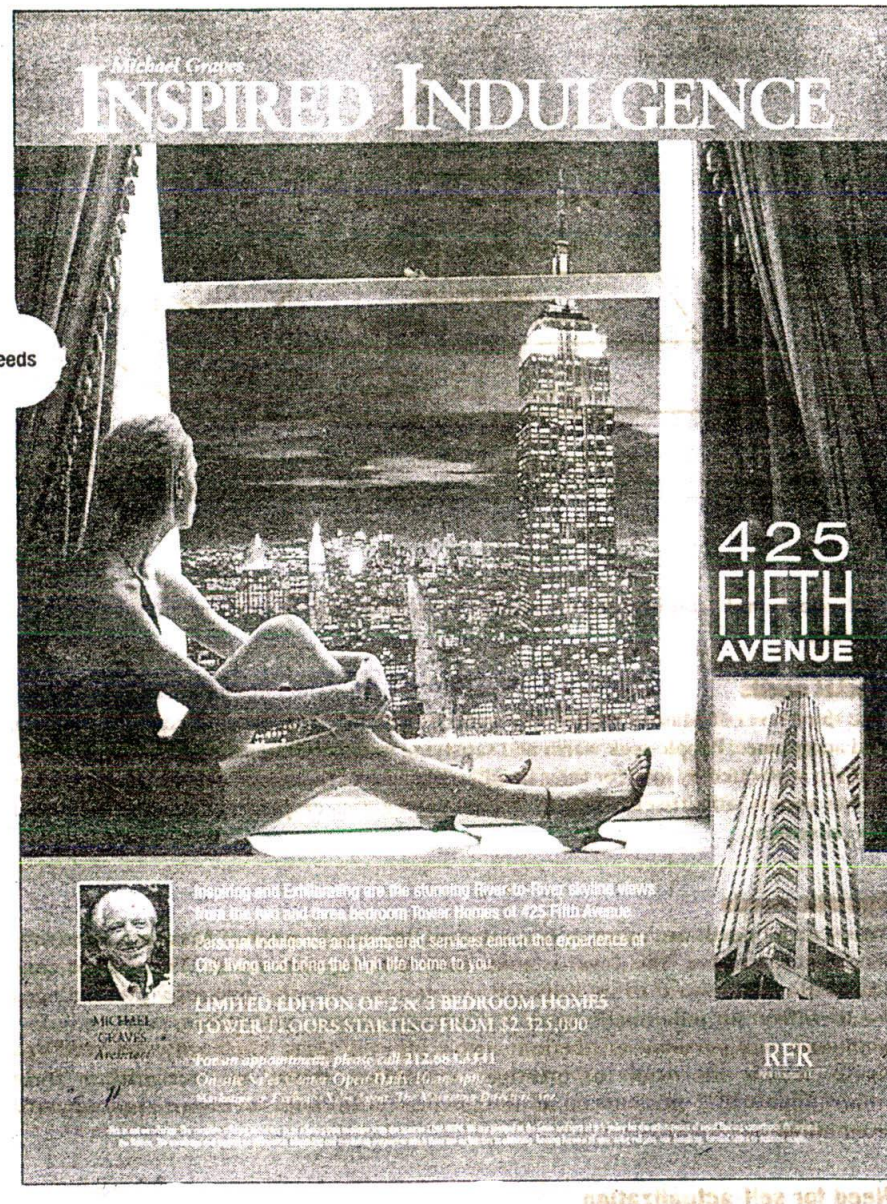
Egoistic needs

When social needs are more or less satisfied, the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy becomes operative. This level is concerned with egoistic needs. These needs can take either an inward or an outward orientation, or both. Inwardly directed ego needs reflect an individual's need for self-acceptance, self-esteem, success, independence, and personal satisfaction with a job well done. Outwardly directed ego needs include the needs for prestige, reputation, status, and recognition from others. Figure 4.11 presents an ad designed to fulfill both an inward and outward orientation.

Need for self-actualization

According to Maslow, most people do not satisfy their ego needs sufficiently to ever move to the fifth level—the need for self-actualization (self-fulfillment). This need refers to an individual's desire to fulfill his or her potential—to become everything he or she is capable of becoming. In Maslow's words, "What a man can be, he must be."[14] This need is expressed in different ways by different people. A young man may desire to be an Olympic star and work single-mindedly for years to become the best in his sport. An artist may need to express herself on canvas; a research scientist may strive to find a new drug that eradicates cancer. Maslow noted that the self-actualization need is not necessarily a creative urge but that it is likely to take that form in people with some capacity for creativity. Some of our largest corporations encourage their highly paid employees to look beyond their paychecks to find gratification and self-fulfillment in the workplace—to view their jobs

FIGURE 4.11



Source: © The Marketing Directors Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Appeal to Egoistic Needs

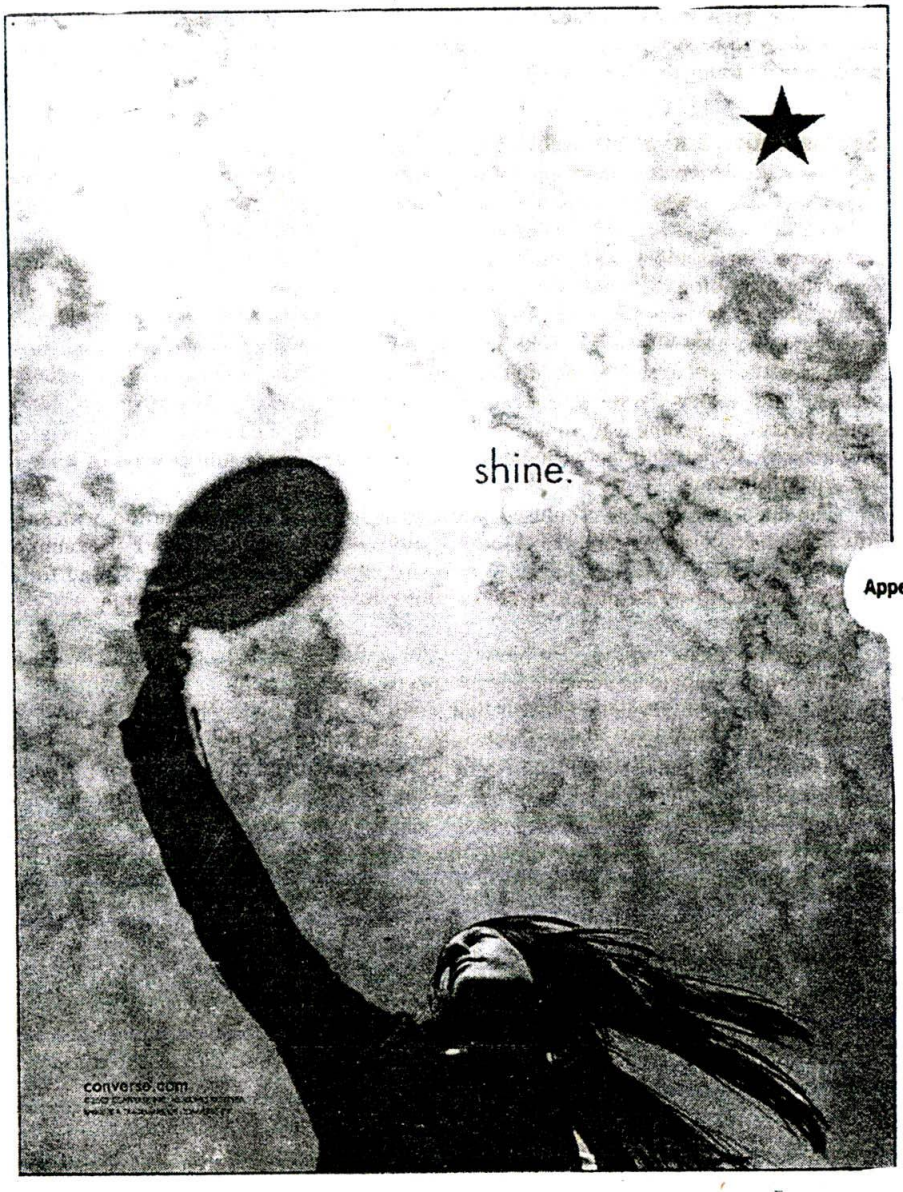
as the way to become "all they can be." Figure 4.12 shows an ad for athletic shoes based on a self-actualization appeal (note that the shoes themselves are not featured in the ad).

An evaluation of the need hierarchy and marketing applications

Maslow's hierarchy-of-needs theory postulates a five-level hierarchy of prepotent human needs. Higher-order needs become the driving force behind human behavior as

FIGURE 4.12

Source: Courtesy of Converse.



Appeal to Self-Actualization

lower-level needs are satisfied. The theory says, in effect, that dissatisfaction, not satisfaction, motivates behavior.

The need hierarchy has received wide acceptance in many social disciplines because it appears to reflect the assumed or inferred motivations of many people in our society. The five levels of need are sufficiently generic to encompass most lists of individual needs. The major problem with the theory is that it cannot be tested empirically; there is no way to measure precisely how satisfied one level of need must be before the next higher need becomes operative. The need hierarchy also appears to be very closely bound to our contemporary American culture (i.e., it appears to be both culture- and time-bound).

Despite these limitations, the hierarchy offers a highly useful framework for marketers trying to develop appropriate advertising appeals for their products. It is adaptable in two ways: First, it enables marketers to focus their advertising appeals on a need level that is likely to be shared by a large segment of the target audience; second, it facilitates product positioning or repositioning.

Segmentation and promotional applications

Maslow's need hierarchy is readily adaptable to market segmentation and the development of advertising appeals because there are consumer goods designed to satisfy each of the need levels and because most needs are shared by large segments of consumers. For example, individuals buy health foods, medicines, and low-fat products to satisfy physiological needs. They buy insurance, preventive medical services, and home security systems to satisfy safety and security needs. Almost all personal care and grooming products (e.g., cosmetics, mouthwash, shaving cream), as well as most clothes, are bought to satisfy social needs. High-tech products such as elaborate sound systems and luxury products (e.g., furs, big cars, or expensive furniture) are often bought to fulfill ego and esteem needs. Postgraduate college education, hobby-related products, exotic and physically challenging adventure trips are sold as ways of achieving self-fulfillment.

The need hierarchy is often used as the basis for market segmentation, with specific advertising appeals directed to one or more need-segment levels. For example, the BMW ad presented in Figure 4.13 stresses power, an egoistic need. An ad for a very expensive sports car may use a self-actualization appeal such as "you deserve the very best."

Advertisers may use the need hierarchy for **positioning** products—that is, deciding how the product should be perceived by prospective consumers. The key to positioning is to find a niche—an unsatisfied need—that is not occupied by a competing product or brand. The need hierarchy is a very versatile tool for developing positioning strategies because different appeals for the same product can be based on different needs included in this framework. For example, many ads for soft drinks stress social appeal by showing a group of young people enjoying themselves and the advertised product; others stress refreshment (a physiological need); still others may focus on low caloric content (thus indirectly appealing to the ego need).

A trio of needs

Some psychologists believe in the existence of a trio of basic needs: the needs for power, for affiliation, and for achievement. These needs can each be subsumed within Maslow's need hierarchy; considered individually, however, each has a unique relevance to consumer motivation.

Power

The power need relates to an individual's desire to control his or her environment. It includes the need to control other persons and various objects. This need appears to be closely related to the ego need, in that many individuals experience increased self-esteem when they exercise power over objects or people.

Affiliation

Affiliation is a well-known and well-researched social motive that has far-reaching influence on consumer behavior. The affiliation need suggests that behavior is strongly influenced by the desire for friendship, for acceptance, for belonging. People with high affiliation needs tend to be socially dependent on others. They often select goods they feel will meet with the approval of friends. Teenagers who hang out at

FIGURE 4.13

Source: Courtesy of BMW.



Appeal to the Power Need

malls or techies who congregate at computer shows often do so more for the satisfaction of being with others than for making a purchase. An appeal to the affiliation needs of young adults is shown in Figure 4.14. The affiliation need is very similar to Maslow's social need.

Achievement

A considerable number of research studies have focused on the achievement need.[15] Individuals with a strong need for achievement often regard personal accomplishment as an end in itself. The achievement need is closely related to both the egoistic need and the self-actualization need. People with a high need for achievement tend to be more self-confident, enjoy taking calculated risks, actively research their environments, and value feedback. Monetary rewards provide an important type of

FIGURE 4.14

Source: Photograph by James Mollison. Courtesy of United Colors of Benetton.



Appeal to the Affiliation Need

feedback as to how they are doing. People with high achievement needs prefer situations in which they can take personal responsibility for finding solutions. High achievement is a useful promotional strategy for many products and services targeted to educated and affluent consumers. Figure 4.15 demonstrates an appeal to the achievement need.

In summary, individuals with specific psychological needs tend to be receptive to advertising appeals directed at those needs. They also tend to be receptive to certain kinds of products. Thus, a knowledge of motivational theory provides marketers with key bases for segmenting markets and developing promotional strategies.

FIGURE 4.15



Source: Courtesy of General Motors Corporation.

Appeal to the Achievement Need

the measurement of motives

How are motives identified? How are they measured? How do researchers know which motives are responsible for certain kinds of behavior? These are difficult questions to answer because motives are hypothetical constructs—that is, they cannot be seen or touched, handled, smelled, or otherwise tangibly observed. For this reason, no single measurement method can be considered a reliable index. Instead, researchers usually rely

on a combination of various research techniques to try to establish the presence and/or the strength of various motives. By using a combination of assessments based on behavioral data (observation), subjective data (self-reports), and qualitative data (projective tests, collage research, etc.), many consumer researchers feel confident that they are achieving more valid insights into consumer motivations than they would by using any one technique alone.

Constructing a scale that measures a specific need, while meeting the criteria of reliability and validity, can be complex. For example, a recent research project employed six different studies to develop and validate a seemingly simple five-item scale to measure status consumption (defined as the tendency to purchase goods and services for the prestige that owning them bestows). Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement (i.e., using a Likert scale) on the following five items:[16]

1. I would buy a product just because it has status.
2. I am interested in new products with status.
3. I would pay more for a product if it had status.
4. The status of the product is irrelevant to me.
5. A product is more valuable to me if it has some snob appeal.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the findings of qualitative research methods are highly dependent on the analyst; they focus not only on the data themselves but also on what the analyst thinks they imply. Though some marketers are concerned that qualitative research does not produce hard numbers that objectively "prove" the point under investigation, others are convinced that qualitative studies are more revealing than quantitative studies. However, there is a clear need for improved methodological procedures for measuring human motives.

Motivational research

The term **motivational research**, which should logically include all types of research into human motives, has become a "term of art" used to refer to qualitative research designed to uncover the consumer's subconscious or hidden motivations. Based on the premise that consumers are not always aware of the reasons for their actions, motivational research attempts to discover underlying feelings, attitudes, and emotions concerning product, service, or brand use.

The development of motivational research

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality (discussed in Chapter 5) provided the foundation for the development of motivational research. This theory was built on the premise that unconscious needs or drives—especially biological and sexual drives—are at the heart of human motivation and personality. Freud constructed his theory from patients' recollections of early childhood experiences, analysis of their dreams, and the specific nature of their mental and physical adjustment problems.

Dr. Ernest Dichter, formerly a psychoanalyst in Vienna, adapted Freud's psychoanalytical techniques to the study of consumer buying habits. Up to this time, marketing research had focused on what consumers did (i.e., quantitative, descriptive studies). Dichter used qualitative research methods to find out *why* they did it. Marketers were quickly fascinated by the glib, entertaining, and usually surprising explanations offered for consumer behavior, especially since many of these explanations were grounded in sex. For example, marketers were told that cigarettes and Lifesaver candies were bought because of their sexual symbolism, that men regarded convertible cars as surrogate mistresses, and that women baked cakes to fulfill their reproductive yearnings. Before long, almost every major advertising agency in the country had a psychologist on staff to conduct motivational research studies. Four product profiles developed by Dichter and their applications to contemporary products are presented in Table 4.4.

By the early 1960s, however, marketers realized that motivational research had a number of drawbacks. Because of the intensive nature of qualitative research, samples

TABLE 4.4 Dichter's Research: Selected Product Personality Profiles and Current Applications

BAKING

Dichter described *baking* as an expression of femininity and motherhood, evoking nostalgic memories of delicious odors pervading the house when the mother was baking. He said that when baking a cake, a woman is subconsciously and symbolically going through the act of giving birth, and the most fertile moment occurs when the baked product is pulled from the oven. Dichter also maintained that when a woman bakes a cake for a man, she is offering him a symbol of fertility.[a] The Betty Crocker image was based on this profile.

AUTOMOBILES

According to Dichter, the car allows consumers to convert their subconscious urges to destroy and their fear of death—two key forces in the human psyche—into reality. For example, the expression "step on it" stems from the desire to feel power, and the phrase "I just missed that car by inches" reflects the desire to play with danger. Based on this view, Dichter advised Esso (now Exxon) to tap into consumers' aggressive motives for driving cars in promoting the superiority of its gasoline product. The slogan "Put a tiger in your tank" was developed as a result of his advice.[b]

Dichter also maintained that cars have personalities, and that people become attached to their cars and view them as companions rather than objects. This notion stands behind his views that a man views a convertible as a mistress and a sedan as his wife.

DOLLS

Dolls play an important part in the socialization of children and are universally accepted as an essential toy for girls. Parents choose dolls that have the kind of characteristics they want their children to have, and the doll is an object for both the parents and the children to enjoy. When Mattel introduced *Barbie* in 1959, the company hired Dichter as a consultant. His research indicated that while girls liked the doll, their mothers detested the doll's perfect bodily proportions and Teutonic appearance. Dichter advised Mattel to market the doll as a teenage fashion model, reflecting the mother's desire for a daughter's proper and fashionable appearance. The advertising themes used subtly told mothers that it is better for their daughters to appear attractive to men rather than nondescript.[c]

ICE CREAM

Dichter described ice cream as an effortless food that does not have to be chewed and that melts in your mouth, a sign of abundance, an almost orgiastic kind of food that people eat as if they want it to run down their chins. Accordingly, he recommended that ice cream packaging should be round, with illustrations that run around the box panel, suggesting unlimited quantity.

Sources: [a]Ernest Dichter, *Handbook of Consumer Motivations* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964); Jack Hitt, "Does the Smell of Coffee Brewing Remind You of Your Mother?" *New York Times Magazine*, May 7, 2000, 6, 71. [b]Phil Patton, "Car Shrinks," *Fortune*, March 18, 2002, 6. [c]Barbara Lippert, "B-Ball Barbie," *Adweek*, November 9, 1998, 39.

necessarily were small; thus, there was concern about generalizing findings to the total market. Also, marketers soon realized that the analysis of projective tests and depth interviews was highly subjective. The same data given to three different analysts could produce three different reports, each offering its own explanation of the consumer behavior examined. Critics noted that many of the projective tests that were used had originally been developed for clinical purposes rather than for studies of marketing or consumer behavior. (One of the basic criteria for test development is that the test be developed and validated for the specific purpose and on the specific audience profile from which information is desired.)

Other consumer theorists noted additional inconsistencies in applying Freudian theory to the study of consumer behavior. First, psychoanalytic theory was structured specifically for use with disturbed people, whereas consumer behaviorists were interested in explaining the behavior of "typical" consumers. Second, Freudian theory was developed in an entirely different social context (nineteenth-century Vienna), whereas motivational research was introduced in the 1950s in postwar America. Finally, too many motivational researchers imputed highly exotic (usually sexual) reasons to rather prosaic consumer purchases. Marketers began to question their recommendations (e.g., Is it better to sell a man a pair of suspenders as a means of holding up his

pants or as a "reaction to castration anxiety"? Is it easier to persuade a woman to buy a garden hose to water her lawn or as a symbol of "genital competition with males"?).

Qualitative research techniques used in motivational research

There are a number of qualitative research techniques that are used to delve into the consumer's unconscious or hidden motivations, such as *metaphor analysis, storytelling, word association, sentence completion, thematic apperception tests, drawing pictures*, and *photo sorts.*

Metaphor Analysis This method, including the tool termed *ZMET*, was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. When DuPont used metaphor analysis to study women's emotions regarding pantyhose, women revealed that they evoked feelings of sensuality and being sexy and attractive to men. The implication of these findings is that pantyhose ads must appeal less to women's executive personas and more to their sensual feelings.[17]

Storytelling This method consists of having customers tell real-life stories regarding their use of the product under study. By using this method to study parents' perceptions of diapers, Kimberly-Clark discovered that parents viewed diapers as clothing related to a particular stage in the child's development. Thus, if their children wore diapers too long, parents became distressed and embarrassed because they viewed it as their failure to toilet train their children. Using these data, the company introduced its highly successful Huggies Pull-Ups training pants—a product that established a new category in the U.S. diaper industry.[18] One application of the storytelling method requires subjects to tell a story about *someone else.* For example, persons who are afraid to fly may feel embarrassed to elaborate on the reasons for that fear when asked directly. However, if asked to describe the reasons why an individual would be afraid to fly, subjects are likely to ascribe their own fears to another person. In doing so, they "project" their own apprehensions and anxieties regarding flying onto this third person.

Word Association and Sentence Completion In the word association method, respondents are presented with words, one at a time, and asked to say the first word that comes to mind. This method is highly useful in determining consumers' associations with existing brand names and those under development. In sentence completion, respondents are asked to complete a sentence upon hearing the opening phrase (e.g., "People who drive convertibles . . .").

Thematic Apperception Test Developed by Henry A. Murray, this test consists of showing pictures to individual respondents and asking them to tell a story about each picture. For example, research conducted for Clearasil employed an image of a female looking into a mirror under the caption "Here is a teenager looking into the mirror and seeing pimples." The researchers discovered that teenagers view their lives as fast-paced and socially active and that the discovery of a pimple abruptly disturbs the swiftness of their lives. The resulting advertising depicted a teenage male walking briskly down the street and spotting a pimple on his face in a store window. All motion around him stops. He applies Clearasil, the pimple disappears, and life resumes its pace.[19]

Drawing Pictures and Photo Sorts Visual images are often used to study consumers' perceptions of various brands and to develop new advertising strategies. For example, when respondents were asked to draw pictures of the typical Pillsbury cake-mix user, their drawings depicted old-fashioned, chubby females wearing frilly aprons. When asked to draw pictures of the Duncan Hines cake-mix user, their drawings showed slim, "with it" women wearing heels and miniskirts. These findings provided important input to Pillsbury concerning the need to reposition its product.[20]

In a study using photo sorts conducted by the advertising agency for Playtex (a manufacturer of bras), respondents received stacks of photos depicting different types of women and asked to select pictures portraying their own self-images. Although many of the respondents were overweight, full-breasted, and old-fashioned in appearance, they selected photos showing physically fit, well-dressed, and independent women. The advertising agency advised Playtex to stop stressing the comfort of its bras in its ads and designed a new campaign showing sexy, thin, and big-bosomed women under the slogan "The fit that makes the fashion."[21]

Evaluation of motivational research

Despite its criticisms, motivational research is still regarded as an important tool by marketers who want to gain deeper insights into the *whys* of consumer behavior than conventional marketing research techniques can yield. Since motivational research often reveals unsuspected consumer motivations concerning product or brand usage, its principal use today is in the development of new ideas for promotional campaigns, ideas that can penetrate the consumer's conscious awareness by appealing to unrecognized needs.

Motivational research also provides marketers with a basic orientation for new product categories and enables them to explore consumer reactions to ideas and advertising copy at an early stage to avoid costly errors. Furthermore, as with all qualitative research techniques, motivational research findings provide consumer researchers with basic insights that enable them to design structured, quantitative marketing research studies to be conducted on larger, more representative samples of consumers.

ethics and consumer motivation

While some critics accuse marketers of "creating" needs and of manipulating consumers into buying goods they do not need, most people agree that marketers cannot create needs, however, they can awaken latent needs and encourage consumers to engage in unwholesome behaviors. For example, the pleasurable and social aspects of smoking, drinking, and gambling are often promoted as enticing and socially acceptable, while the addictive and health aspects are downplayed. Marketers sometimes target vulnerable consumers such as children, teenagers, and the elderly, who may not have the knowledge or experience to evaluate the products or services being promoted. These marketing practices may be legal, but many groups consider them unethical, and are pushing for new regulations and legislation to restrict their use. Many national advertisers voluntarily restrict these questionable marketing practices in order to maintain and enhance their images with their target publics.

Although marketers may not be able to sell consumers things they do not truly need, advertising often motivates consumers to buy and consume *larger amounts* of certain products. For example, in 2004, the food industry spent $10 billion on marketing to children, significantly contributing to the number of obese or overweight children, a population that has doubled in the past 20 years (no pun intended). As a result, some law makers have called for legislation regulating food advertising to children.[22] In response to these criticisms, Kraft Foods stopped TV advertising of certain products to children, and increased their advertising of sugar-free drinks and smaller packages of cookies.[23] McDonald's, a company frequently accused of selling junk foods with too much fat and poor nutritional quality, has eliminated some of its "super-sized" offerings and begun selling more salads. They even offer apples as a desert alternative to calorie-laden pies.[24]

Children are not the only vulnerable population. Teenagers and college students are often provided with too much easy credit, which puts them into financial

difficulties for years. For example, as a result of very aggressive marketing of credit cards to college students, college loan debt has been rising, and the average graduate leaves college with over $18,000 in credit card debt, often coupled with a low credit rating, which can bring about a financial crisis for years to come.[25] One study showed that, on average, students received their first credit card at age 18 (some did so when they were as young as 15), more than 10 percent owned more than five cards, and most of these young people did not keep credit card receipts, did not check their monthly statements against their purchases, were unaware of the interest rates they were charged, and about 10 percent paid only the minimum required payment every month.[26] Recognizing that the marketing of credit cards to college students has become far too aggressive and against society's best interests, many states have passed, or are in the process of passing, strict rules limiting the marketing of banks and credit card companies on college campuses.[27]

Some insurance companies have been accused of using retired military officers to aggressively market life insurance, high-cost loans, and other financial products to young recruits and junior officers on American military bases. Because of legislative pressures and very negative publicity, several military insurance providers have begun offering full cash refunds to military personnel.

Direct-to-consumer pharmaceutical advertising, permitted since 1997, has increased the consumption of numerous categories of medications. Consumers confirm that they obtain most of the information about these medications from TV commercials rather than from their physicians.[28] Recognizing that direct-to-consumer advertising has become too aggressive, the pharmaceuticals industry has developed voluntary restrictions regarding this marketing method. The Senate majority leader has called for a two-year moratorium on advertising new drugs to consumers; one major pharmaceutical company has volunteered not to advertise new drugs to consumers during their first year on the market.[29]

We live in a complex, technologically advanced and competitive society where some offerings that are available, such as alcohol, tobacco and gambling, hurt consumers and ruin lives. Some researchers are studying the personal and situational attributes that contribute to dysfunctional consumption behavior.[30] Others have suggested that too many consumption choices make consumers confused, unsatisfied, less happy, psychologically drained, and more likely to experience negative emotions.[31] Some consumers confess to feeling "paralyzed" by the vast array of choices in retail aisles, and tend to defensively cling to their old brands, or to buy nothing at all.

The examples cited above clearly indicate that aggressive advertising can increase the level of demand for some products, sometimes in a manner that is detrimental to the well-being of the consumers targeted and to society. Societal forces are effective in curtailing seemingly unethical behavior by marketers. Marketers do respond (or are forced by legislation to respond) when their advertising efforts are viewed as socially undesirable.

SUMMARY

Motivation is the driving force within individuals that impels them to action. This driving force is produced by a state of uncomfortable tension, which exists as the result of an unsatisfied need. All individuals have needs, wants, and desires. The individual's subconscious drive to reduce need-induced tensions results in behavior that he or she anticipates will satisfy needs and thus bring about a more comfortable internal state.

All behavior is goal oriented. Goals are the sought-after results of motivated behavior. The form or direction that behavior takes—the goal that is selected—is a result of thinking processes (cognition) and previous learning (e.g., experience). There are two types of goals: generic goals and product-specific goals. A generic goal is a general category of goal that may fulfill a certain need; a product-specific goal is a specifically branded or labeled product that the

individual sees as a way to fulfill a need. Product-specific needs are sometimes referred to as wants.

Innate needs—those an individual is born with—are physiological (biogenic) in nature; they include all the factors required to sustain physical life (e.g., food, water, clothing, shelter, sex, and physical safety). Acquired needs—those an individual develops after birth—are primarily psychological (psychogenic); they include love, acceptance, esteem, and self-fulfillment. For any given need, there are many different and appropriate goals. The specific goal selected depends on the individual's experiences, physical capacity, prevailing cultural norms and values, and the goal's accessibility in the physical and social environment.

Needs and goals are interdependent and change in response to the individual's physical condition, environment, interaction with other people, and experiences. As needs become satisfied, new, higher-order needs emerge that must be fulfilled.

Failure to achieve a goal often results in feelings of frustration. Individuals react to frustration in two ways: "fight" or "flight." They may cope by finding a way around the obstacle that prohibits goal attainment or by adopting a substitute goal (fight); or they may adopt a defense mechanism that enables them to protect their self-esteem (flight). Defense mechanisms include aggression, regression, rationalization, withdrawal, projection, daydreaming, identification, and repression.

Motives cannot easily be inferred from consumer behavior. People with different needs may seek fulfillment through selection of the same goals; people with the same needs may seek fulfillment through different goals. Although some psychologists have suggested that individuals have different need priorities, others believe that most human beings experience the same basic needs, to which they assign a similar priority ranking. Maslow's hierarchy-of-needs theory proposes five levels of human needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, egoistic needs, and self-actualization needs. Other needs widely integrated into consumer advertising include the needs for power, affiliation, and achievement.

There are three commonly used methods for identifying and "measuring" human motives: observation and inference, subjective reports, and qualitative research (including projective techniques). None of these methods is completely reliable by itself. Therefore, researchers often use a combination of two or three techniques in tandem to assess the presence or strength of consumer motives. Motivational research is qualitative research designed to delve below the consumer's level of conscious awareness. Despite some shortcomings, motivational research has proved to be of great value to marketers concerned with developing new ideas and new copy appeals.

The ethical issues regarding motivation and consumption behavior are focused on the promotion by some marketers of undesirable behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking, gambling, compulsive buying), and the targeting of vulnerable populations. However, when undesirable consequences affect large numbers of consumers, societal forces put pressure on the marketers responsible and persuade them (or require them) to curtail or eliminate these unethical marketing practices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the ethical issues related to the statement "marketers don't create needs; needs preexist marketers." Can marketing efforts *change* consumers' needs? Why or why not?
2. Consumers have both innate and acquired needs. Give examples of each kind of need and show how the same purchase can serve to fulfill either or both kinds of needs.
3. Specify both innate and acquired needs that would be useful bases for developing promotional strategies for
   a. global positioning systems
   b. sunglasses with built-in earphones and an MP3 player
   c. recruiting high school seniors to join the armed forces
   d. a new super-compact and powerful digital camera
4. Why are consumers' needs and goals constantly changing? What factors influence the formation of new goals?
5. How can marketers use consumers' failures at achieving goals in developing promotional appeals for specific products and services? Give examples.
6. For each of the situations listed in question 3, select one level from Maslow's hierarchy of human needs that can be used to segment the market and position the product (or the organization). Explain your choices. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Maslow's need hierarchy for segmentation and positioning applications?
7. a. How do researchers identify and measure human motives? Give examples.
   b. Does motivational research differ from qualitative research? Discuss.
   c. What are the strengths and weaknesses of motivational research?

EXERCISES

1. Find two advertisements that depict two different defense mechanisms and discuss their effectiveness.
2. Find three advertisements that appeal to the needs for power, affiliation, and achievement and discuss their effectiveness.
3. Most human needs are dormant much of the time. What factors cause their arousal? Find two examples of ads that are designed to arouse latent consumer needs and discuss their effectiveness.
4. Find an ad or a recent article related to one of the ethical issues explored in this chapter and discuss it.

KEY TERMS

- **acquired needs**
- **approach object**
- **avoidance object**
- **defense mechanisms**
- **emotional motives**
- **generic goals**
- **innate needs**
- **levels of aspiration**
- **maslow's hierarchy of needs**
- **motivation**
- **motivational research**
- **motivational research techniques**
- **positioning**
- **positive versus negative motivation**
- **primary needs**
- **product-specific goals**
- **rational motives**
- **secondary needs**
- **substitute goal**

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chapterfive

Personality and Consumer Behavior

Marketers have long tried to appeal to consumers in terms of their personality characteristics. They have intuitively felt that what consumers purchase, and when and how they consume, are likely to be influenced by personality factors. For this reason, marketing and advertising people have frequently depicted (or incorporated) specific personality traits or characteristics in their marketing and advertising messages. Some recent examples are an appeal to *individuality* for the Harley-Davidson motorcycle (headline: "We're all created equal. But after that, it's up to you"—**www.harley-davidson.com**), an appeal to *status and/or innovativeness* for Audi (headline: "Never Follow"—**www.audiusa.com**), an appeal to *nonconformity* in introducing the new Saab 97X SUV (headline: "For those who consider conformity a serious road hazard"—**www.saabusa.com**), and an appeal by Aflac to investors' *sense of self-assurance* (headline: "Invest wisely. Relax happily"—**www.aflac.com**).

This chapter is designed to provide the reader with an understanding of how *personality* and *self-concept* are related to various aspects of consumer behavior. It examines what personality is, reviews several major personality theories, and describes how



these theories have stimulated marketing interest in the study of consumer personality. The chapter considers the important topics of *brand personality,* how the related concepts of *self* and *self-image* influence consumer attitudes and behavior, and concludes with an exploration of *virtual personality* or *self.*

what is personality?

The study of **personality** has been approached by theorists in a variety of ways. Some have emphasized the dual influence of heredity and early childhood experiences on personality development; others have stressed broader social and environmental influences and the fact that personalities develop continuously over time. Some theorists prefer to view personality as a unified whole; others focus on specific traits. The wide variation in viewpoints makes it difficult to arrive at a single definition. However, we propose that personality can be defined as *those inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to his or her environment.*

The emphasis in this definition is on *inner characteristics*—those specific qualities, attributes, traits, factors, and mannerisms that distinguish one individual from other individuals. As discussed later in the chapter, the deeply ingrained characteristics that we call personality are likely to influence the individual's product choices: They affect the way consumers respond to marketers' promotional efforts, and when, where, and how they consume particular products or services. Therefore, the identification of specific personality characteristics associated with consumer behavior has proven to be highly useful in the development of a firm's market segmentation strategies.

The nature of personality

In the study of personality, three distinct properties are of central importance: (1) *personality reflects individual differences*; (2) *personality is consistent and enduring*; and (3) *personality can change.*

Personality reflects individual differences

Because the inner characteristics that constitute an individual's personality are a unique combination of factors, no two individuals are exactly alike. Nevertheless, many individuals may be similar in terms of a single personality characteristic but not in terms of others. For instance, some people can be described as "high" in *venturesomeness* (e.g., willing to accept the risk of doing something new or different, such as skydiving or mountain climbing), whereas others can be described as "low" in *venturesomeness* (e.g., afraid to buy a recently introduced product). Personality is a useful concept because it enables us to categorize consumers into different groups on the basis of one or even several traits. If each person were different in terms of all personality traits, it would be impossible to group consumers into segments, and there would be little reason for marketers to develop products and promotional campaigns targeted to particular segments.

Personality is consistent and enduring

An individual's personality tends to be both consistent and enduring. Indeed, the sibling who comments that his brother "has always wanted to be different from the day he was born" is supporting the contention that personality has both consistency and endurance. Both qualities are essential if marketers are to explain or predict consumer behavior in terms of personality.

Although marketers cannot change consumers' personalities to conform to their products, if they know which personality characteristics influence specific consumer responses, they can attempt to appeal to the relevant traits inherent in their target group of consumers.

Even though consumers' personalities may be consistent, their consumption behavior often varies considerably because of the various psychological, sociocultural, environmental, and situational factors that affect behavior. For instance, although an individual's personality may be relatively stable, specific needs or motives, attitudes, reactions to group pressures, and even responses to newly available brands may cause a change in the person's behavior. Personality is only one of a combination of factors that influence how a consumer behaves.

Personality can change

Under certain circumstances personalities change. For instance, an individual's personality may be altered by major life events, such as marriage, the birth of a child, the death of a parent, or a change of job and/or profession. An individual's personality changes not only in response to abrupt events but also as part of a gradual maturing process—"She's growing up, she is much calmer," says an uncle after not seeing his niece for five years.

There is also evidence that personality stereotypes may change over time. More specifically, although it is felt that men's personality has generally remained relatively constant over the past 50 years, women's personality has seemed to become increasingly more masculine and should continue to do so over the next 50 years. This prediction indicates a *convergence* in the personality characteristics of men and women.[1] The reason for this shift is that women have been moving more and more into occupations that have traditionally been dominated by men and, therefore, have increasingly been associated with masculine personality attributes.

theories of personality

This section briefly reviews three major theories of personality: (1) **Freudian theory**, (2) **neo-Freudian theory**, and (3) **trait theory**. These theories have been chosen for discussion from among many theories of personality because each has played a prominent role in the study of the relationship between consumer behavior and personality.

Freudian theory

Sigmund Freud's **psychoanalytic theory of personality** is a cornerstone of modern psychology. This theory was built on the premise that *unconscious needs* or *drives*, especially sexual and other biological drives, are at the heart of human motivation and personality. Freud constructed his theory on the basis of patients' recollections of early childhood experiences, analysis of their dreams, and the specific nature of their mental and physical adjustment problems.

Id, superego, and ego

Based on his analyses, Freud proposed that the human personality consists of three interacting systems: the *id*, the *superego*, and the *ego*. The id was conceptualized as a "warehouse" of primitive and impulsive drives—basic physiological needs such as thirst, hunger, and sex—for which the individual seeks immediate satisfaction without concern for the specific means of satisfaction. The ad for Godiva Chocolatier (see Figure 5.1) captures some of the mystery and the excitement associated with the "forces" of primitive drives.

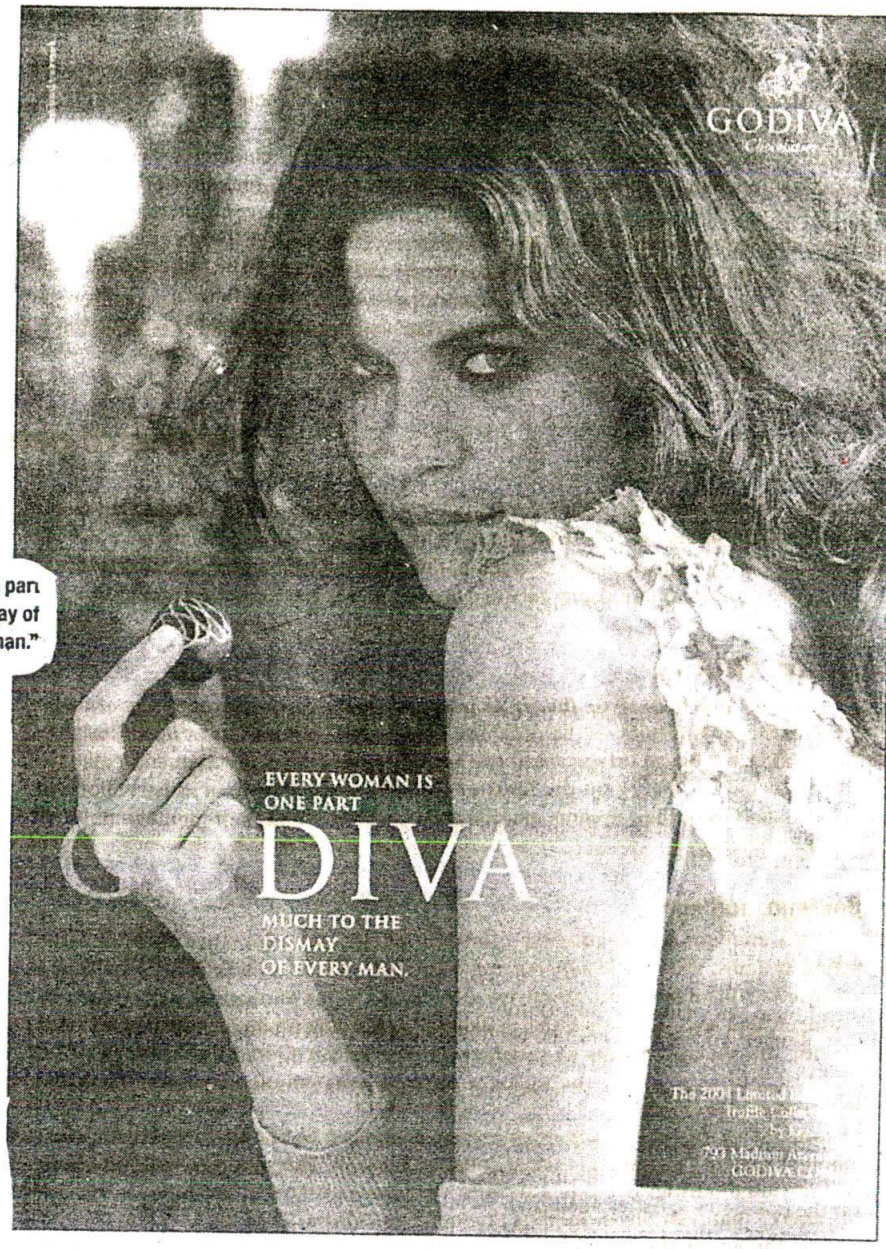
In contrast to the id, the *superego* is conceptualized as the individual's internal expression of society's moral and ethical codes of conduct. The superego's role is to see that the individual satisfies needs in a socially acceptable fashion. Thus, the superego is a kind of "brake" that restrains or inhibits the impulsive forces of the id.

Finally, the *ego* is the individual's conscious control. It functions as an internal monitor that attempts to balance the impulsive demands of the id and the sociocultural constraints of the superego. Figure 5.2 represents the interrelationships among the three interacting systems. In addition to specifying a structure for personality, Freud emphasized that an individual's personality is formed as he or she passes through a number of distinct stages of infant and childhood development. These are the *oral*, *anal*, *phallic*, *latent*, and *genital* stages. Freud labeled four of these stages of development to conform to the area of the body on which he believed the child's sexual instincts are focused at the time.

According to Freudian theory, an adult's personality is determined by how well he or she deals with the crises that are experienced while passing through each of these

FIGURE 5.1

Source: © Godiva Chocolatier, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Photography by CLANG.



"Every woman is one part Godiva, much to the dismay of every man."

stages (particularly the first three). For instance, if a child's oral needs are not adequately satisfied at the first stage of development, the person may become fixated at this stage and as an adult display a personality that includes such traits as dependence and excessive oral activity (e.g., gum chewing and smoking). When an individual is fixated at the anal stage, the adult personality may display other traits, such as an excessive need for neatness.

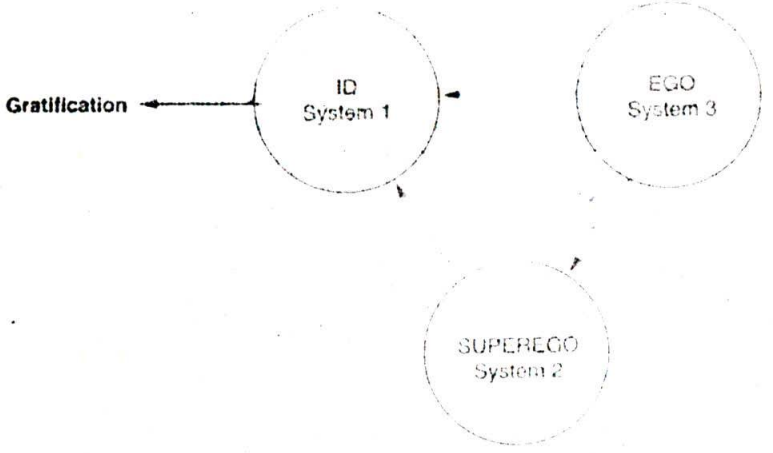


FIGURE 5.2
A Representation of the Interrelationships Among the Id, Ego, and Superego

Freudian theory and "product personality"

Researchers who apply Freud's psychoanalytic theory to the study of consumer personality believe that human drives are largely *unconscious* and that consumers are primarily unaware of their true reasons for buying what they buy. These researchers tend to see consumer purchases and/or consumption situations as a reflection and an extension of the consumer's own personality. In other words, they consider the consumer's appearance and possessions—grooming, clothing, jewelry, and so forth—as reflections of the individual's personality. Table 5.1 presents the results of a study of 19,000 consumers that examines the link between snack food perceptions and selected personality traits.[2] The findings of the research, for example, reveal that potato chips are associated with being ambitious, successful, and a high achiever and impatient with less than the best, whereas

TABLE 5.1 Snack Foods and Personality Traits

SNACK FOODS	PERSONALITY TRAITS
Potato chips	Ambitious, successful, high achiever, impatient with less than the best.
Tortilla chips	Perfectionist, high expectations, punctual, conservative, responsible.
Pretzels	Lively, easily bored with same old routine, flirtatious, intuitive, may overcommit to projects.
Snack crackers	Rational, logical, contemplative, shy, prefers time alone.
Cheese curls	Conscientious, principled, proper, fair, may appear rigid but has great integrity, plans ahead, loves order.
Nuts	Easygoing, empathetic, understanding, calm, even-tempered.
Popcorn	Takes charge, pitches in often, modest, self-confident but not a show-off.
Meat snacks	Gregarious, generous, trustworthy, tends to be overly trusting.

Source: From *What Flavor is Your Personality? Discover Who You Are by Looking at What You Eat*, by Alan Hirsch, MD (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2001).

popcorn seems to be related to a personality that takes charge, pitches in often, is modest and self-confident but not a show-off. (The related topics of *brand personality*, and the self and *self-images* are considered later in the chapter.)

Neo-Freudian personality theory

Several of Freud's colleagues disagreed with his contention that personality is primarily instinctual and sexual in nature. Instead, these neo-Freudians believed that *social relationships* are fundamental to the formation and development of personality. For instance, Alfred Adler viewed human beings as seeking to attain various rational goals, which he called *style of life*. He also placed much emphasis on the individual's efforts to overcome *feelings of inferiority* (i.e., by striving for superiority).

Harry Stack Sullivan, another neo-Freudian, stressed that people continuously attempt to establish significant and rewarding relationships with others. He was particularly concerned with the individual's efforts to reduce tensions, such as anxiety.

Like Sullivan, Karen Horney was also interested in *anxiety*. She focused on the impact of child–parent relationships and the individual's desire to conquer feelings of anxiety. Horney proposed that individuals be classified into three personality groups: *compliant, aggressive*, and *detached*.[3]

1. Compliant individuals are those who move toward others (they desire to be loved, wanted, and appreciated).
2. Aggressive individuals are those who move against others (they desire to excel and win admiration).
3. Detached individuals are those who move away from others (they desire independence, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and individualism or freedom from obligations).

A personality test based on Horney's theory (the CAD) has been developed and tested within the context of consumer behavior.[4] The initial CAD research uncovered a number of tentative relationships between college students' scores and their product and brand usage patterns. For example, highly *compliant* students were found to prefer name-brand products such as Bayer aspirin (**www.bayer.com**); students classified as *aggressive* showed a preference for Old Spice deodorant (**www.oldspice.com**) over other brands (seemingly because of its masculine appeal); and highly *detached* students proved to be heavy tea drinkers (possibly reflecting their desire not to conform). More recent research has found that children who scored high in self-reliance—who preferred to do things independently of others (i.e., *detached* personalities)—were *less* likely to be brand loyal and were *more* likely to try different brands.[5]

Many marketers use some of these neo-Freudian theories intuitively. For example, marketers who position their products or services as providing an opportunity to belong or to be appreciated by others in a group or social setting would seem to be guided by Horney's characterization of the *detached* individual. Figure 5.3 shows an ad for the Suzuki Reno that captures a positive image of the detached (or individualistic or nonconformist) person. Its headline declares: "180° from those other squares." This clever ad is referring to competitors' vehicles that are "square" and their "square" owners.

Trait theory

Trait theory constitutes a major departure from the *qualitative* measures that typify the Freudian and neo-Freudian movements (e.g., personal observation, self-reported experiences, dream analysis, projective techniques).

The orientation of trait theory is primarily quantitative or empirical; it focuses on the measurement of personality in terms of specific psychological characteristics, called traits. A *trait* is defined as "any distinguishing, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another."[6] Trait theorists are concerned with the construction of personality tests (or inventories) that enable them to pinpoint individual differences in terms of specific traits.

Selected *single-trait personality* tests (which measure just one trait, such as self-confidence) are often developed specifically for use in consumer behavior studies.

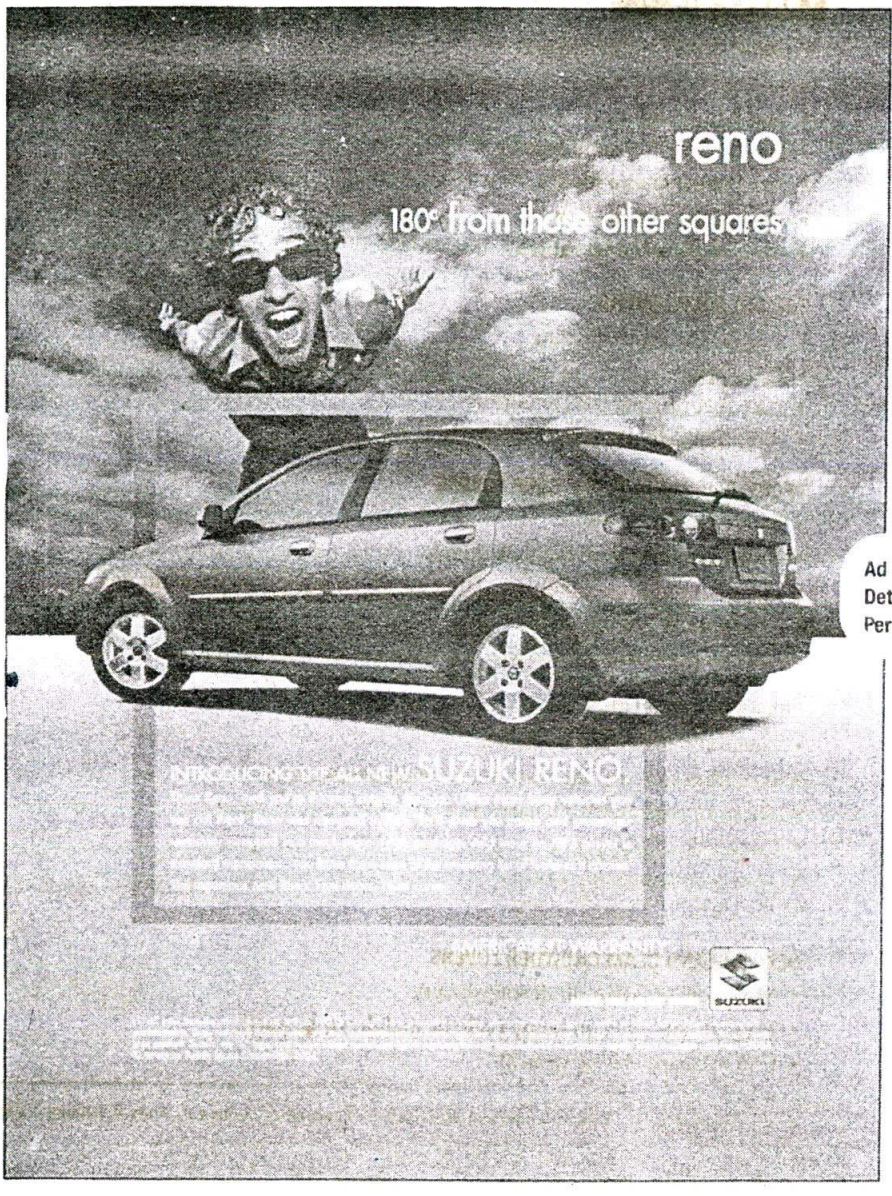


FIGURE 5.3

Source: © American Suzuki Motors Corporation 2005. Reprinted with permission.

Ad Applying Horney's Detached or Nonconformist Personality

These tailor-made personality tests measure such traits as **consumer innovativeness** (how receptive a person is to new experiences), **consumer materialism** (the degree of the consumer's attachment to "worldly possessions"), and **consumer ethnocentrism** (the consumer's likelihood to accept or reject foreign-made products).

Trait researchers have found that it is generally more realistic to expect personality to be linked to how consumers *make their choices* and to the purchase or consumption of *a broad product category* rather than a specific brand. For example, there is more likely to be a relationship between a personality trait and whether or not an individual owns an SUV than between a personality trait and the brand of SUV purchased. It is of interest to note that a study of over 1,000 U.S. adults found very different traits among soup-lovers having preferences for different types of soups (e.g., chicken noodle versus

TABLE 5.2 Soup and Soup-Lovers' Traits

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP LOVERS
- Watch a lot of TV
- Are family oriented
- Have a great sense of humor
- Are outgoing and loyal
- Like daytime talk shows
- Most likely to go to church

TOMATO SOUP LOVERS
- Passionate about reading
- Love pets
- Like meeting people for coffee
- Aren't usually the life of the party

VEGETABLE/MINESTRONE SOUP LOVERS
- Enjoy the outdoors
- Usually game for trying new things
- Spend more money than any other group dining in fancy restaurants
- Likely to be physically fit
- Gardening is often a favorite hobby

CHILI-BEEF SOUP LOVERS
- Generally preferred by males
- Its enthusiasts are the most social of all soup-lovers
- They are the life of the party
- They love telling jokes
- They watch sporting events
- They watch sitcoms on TV

NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER LOVERS
- Most conservative of all soup-lovers
- Pride themselves on being realistic and down-to-earth
- Can occasionally be cynical

Source: Gwen Carden, "Your Favorite Soup Reveals Your Personality," *Sioux City Journal*, January 2, 2001, p. 5.

New England clam chowder).[7] Table 5.2 presents the traits associated with six different types of soups.

The next section shows how measures of personality traits are used to expand our understanding of consumer behavior.

personality and understanding consumer diversity

Marketers are interested in understanding how personality influences consumption behavior because such knowledge enables them to better understand consumers and to segment and target those consumers who are likely to respond positively to their product

or service communications. Several specific personality traits that provide insights about consumer behavior are examined next.

Consumer innovativeness and related personality traits

Marketing practitioners try to learn all they can about **consumer innovators**—those who are *open* to new ideas and to be among the first to try new products, services, or practices—for the market response of such innovators is often a critical indication of the eventual success or failure of a new product or service.

Personality traits that have been useful in differentiating between consumer innovators and noninnovators include *consumer innovativeness, dogmatism, social character, need for uniqueness, optimum stimulation level, sensation seeking,* and *variety-novelty seeking.* (Chapter 15 examines nonpersonality characteristics that distinguish between consumer innovators and noninnovators.)

Consumer Innovativeness

Consumer researchers have endeavored to develop measurement instruments to gauge the level of consumer innovativeness, because such measures of personality traits provide important insights into the nature and boundaries of a consumer's willingness to innovate.[8] Over the years, the trait of consumer innovativeness has been linked to the need for stimulation, novelty seeking, and the need for uniqueness—three other traits that will be discussed later in this chapter.[9] Table 5.3 presents two alternative scales for measuring consumer innovativeness, the first scale measuring general innovativeness and the second measuring domain specific (i.e., product-specific) innovativeness.

Available consumer research indicates a positive relationship between innovative use of the Internet and buying online.[10] Other research exploring the association between personality traits and innovative Internet behavior has reported that Internet shoppers tend to see themselves as being able to control their own future, using the Internet to seek out information, enjoying change, and ***not*** being afraid of uncertainty.[11]

Dogmatism

Consumer responses to distinctively unfamiliar products or product features (i.e., level of dogmatism—a personality-linked behavior) is of keen interest to many marketers,

TABLE 5.3 Two Consumer Innovativeness Measurement Scales

A "GENERAL" CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS SCALE

1. I would rather stick to a brand I usually buy than try something I am not very sure of.
2. When I go to a restaurant, I feel it is safer to order dishes I am familiar with.
3. If I like a brand, I rarely switch from it just to try something different.
4. I enjoy taking chances in buying unfamiliar brands just to get some variety in my purchase.
5. When I see a new brand on the shelf, I'm not afraid of giving it a try.

A DOMAIN SPECIFIC CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS SCALE

1. Compared to my friends, I own few rock albums.
2. In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know the titles of the latest rock albums.
3. In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to buy a new rock album when it appears.
4. If I heard that a new rock album was available in the store, I would be interested enough to buy it.
5. I will buy a new rock album, even if I haven't heard it yet.
6. I know the names of new rock acts before other people do.

Source: Gilles Roehrich, "Consumer Innovativeness: Concepts and Measurements," *Journal of Business Research*, 57 (June 2004): 674.

especially marketers of technologically rich products. **Dogmatism** is a personality trait that measures the degree of rigidity (versus openness) that individuals display toward the unfamiliar and toward information that is contrary to their own established beliefs.[12] A person who is *highly dogmatic* approaches the unfamiliar defensively and with considerable discomfort and uncertainty. At the other end of the spectrum, a person who is *low dogmatic* will readily consider unfamiliar or opposing beliefs.

Consumers who are low in dogmatism (*open-minded*) are more likely to prefer innovative products to established or traditional alternatives. In contrast, highly dogmatic (*closed-minded*) consumers are more likely to choose established, rather than innovative, product alternatives.

Highly dogmatic consumers tend to be more receptive to ads for new products or services that contain an appeal from an authoritative figure. To this end, marketers have used celebrities and experts in their new-product advertising to make it easier for potentially reluctant consumers (noninnovators) to accept the innovation. In contrast, low-dogmatic consumers (who are frequently high in innovativeness) seem to be more receptive to messages that stress factual differences, product benefits, and other forms of product-usage information.

Social character

The personality trait known as *social character* has its origins in sociological research, which focuses on the identification and classification of individuals into distinct sociocultural types. As used in consumer psychology, social character is a personality trait that ranges on a continuum from **inner-directedness** to **other-directedness**. Inner-directed consumers tend to rely on their own inner values or standards in evaluating new products and are likely to be consumer innovators. Conversely, other-directed consumers tend to look to others for guidance as to what is appropriate or inappropriate; thus, they are *less* likely to be consumer innovators.

Inner- and other-directed consumers are attracted to different types of promotional messages. Inner-directed people seem to prefer ads that stress product features and personal benefits (enabling them to use their own values and standards in evaluating products), whereas other-directed people prefer ads that feature an approving social environment or social acceptance (this in keeping with their tendency to look to others or to act as part of a group). Thus, other-directed individuals may be more responsive to appeals that are based on social or group affiliations, rather than the informational content of an ad.

Need for uniqueness

We all know people who seek to be unique. For these people, conformity to others' expectations or standards, either in appearance or in their possessions, is something to be avoided. Moreover, we would expect that it is easier to express or act uniquely if one does not have to pay a price in the form of others' criticism. Supporting this perspective, a recent study of consumers' need for uniqueness (NFU) explored the circumstances under which high NFU individuals do (and do not) make unconventional (i.e., unique) choices. The research revealed that when consumers are asked to explain their choices, but are not concerned about being criticized by others, they are more receptive to making unique choices.[13] Seeing the importance of NFU, other consumer researchers have developed an inventory to measure the trait within the context of consumer behavior. Table 5.4 presents a sample of items drawn from the inventory.

Optimum stimulation level

Some people seem to prefer a simple, uncluttered, and calm existence, whereas others prefer an environment crammed with novel, complex, and unusual experiences. Consumer research has examined how such variations in individual needs for stimulation may be related to consumer behavior. Research has found that high **optimum stimulation levels** (OSLs) are linked with greater willingness to take risks, to try new products, to be innovative, to seek purchase-related information, and to accept new retail facilities than low OSLs. One recent study investigated college students' willingness to select *mass customization* of fashion items (e.g., a pair of jeans that are especially measured, cut, and sewn so they offer

TABLE 5.4 Sample Items from a Consumers' Need for Uniqueness Scale[a]

I collect unusual products as a way of telling people I'm different.

When dressing, I have sometimes dared to be different in ways that others are likely to disapprove.

When products or brands I like become extremely popular, I lose interest in them.

As far as I'm concerned, when it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, customs and rules are made to be broken.

I have sometimes purchased unusual products or brands as a way to create a more distinctive personal image.

I sometimes look for one-of-a-kind products or brands so that I create a style that is all my own.

I avoid products or brands that have already been accepted and purchased by the average consumer.

[a]This inventory is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Source: Kelly Tepper Tian, William O. Bearden, and Gary L. Hunter, "Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (June 2001): 50–66. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

a better fit or appearance), found that OSL predicted two factors—students' openness to *experimentation with appearance* (e.g., "I try on some of the newest clothes each season to see how I look in the styles") and *enhancement of individuality* (e.g., "I try to buy clothes that are very unusual").[14]

OSL scores also seem to reflect a person's desired level of lifestyle stimulation.[15] For instance, consumers whose actual lifestyles are equivalent to their OSL scores appear to be *quite satisfied,* whereas those whose lifestyles are understimulated (i.e., their OSL scores are greater than the lifestyle they are currently living) are likely to be *bored.* Those whose lifestyles are overstimulated (i.e., their OSLs are lower than current reality) are likely to seek *rest* or *relief.* This suggests that the relationship between consumers' lifestyles and their OSLs is likely to influence their choices of products or services and how they manage and spend their time. For instance, a person who feels bored (an understimulated consumer) is likely to be attracted to a vacation that offers a great deal of activity and excitement. In contrast, a person who feels overwhelmed (an overstimulated consumer) is likely to seek a quiet, isolated, relaxing, and rejuvenating vacation.

Sensation seeking

Closely related to the OSL concept is **sensation seeking** (SS), which has been defined as "a trait characterized by the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experience, and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experience." Research evidence shows that teenage males with higher SS scores are more likely than other teenagers to prefer listening to heavy metal music and to engage in reckless or even dangerous behavior.[16]

Variety-novelty seeking

Still another personality-driven trait quite similar to and related to OSL is **variety** or **novelty seeking**. There appear to be many different types of consumer variety seeking: *exploratory purchase behavior* (e.g., switching brands to experience new, different, and possibly better alternatives), *vicarious exploration* (e.g., securing information about a new or different alternative and then contemplating or even daydreaming about the option), and *use innovativeness* (using an already adopted product in a new or novel way).[17] The use innovativeness trait is particularly relevant to technological products (such as home electronics products), in which some models offer an abundance of features and functions, whereas others contain just a few essential features or functions. For example, a consumer with a high variety-seeking

score might purchase a digital video recorder with more features than a consumer with a lower variety-seeking score. Consumers with high variety-seeking scores are also more likely to be attracted to brands that claim to have novel features or multiple uses or applications. Still further, there appears to be a relationship between variety seeking and time of day, with greater variety-seeking behavior occurring when the consumer is experiencing arousal lows (as opposed to arousal peaks). And during the time of day when arousal seeking is relatively minimal, leader brands fare better, while follower brands do better during periods of the day when variety seeking is heightened.[18]

Marketers, up to a point, benefit by offering additional options to consumers seeking more product variety because consumers with a high need for variety tend to search for marketers that provide a diverse product line (offering much choice).[19] However, a point may be reached where a marketer might offer too many products with too many features. In such a case, the consumer may be turned off and avoid a product line with too much variety. Ultimately, in searching for the "just right," marketers must walk the fine line between offering consumers too little and too much choice. Additionally, research has shown that variety seekers often use price promotions as a low-cost way to try different brands over time—high-variety seekers tend to pay lower prices for the same item than do low-variety seekers.[20]

The stream of research examined here indicates that the consumer innovator differs from the nonmnnovator in terms of personality orientation. A knowledge of such personality differences should help marketers select target segments for new products and then to design distinctive promotional strategies for specific segments.

Cognitive personality factors

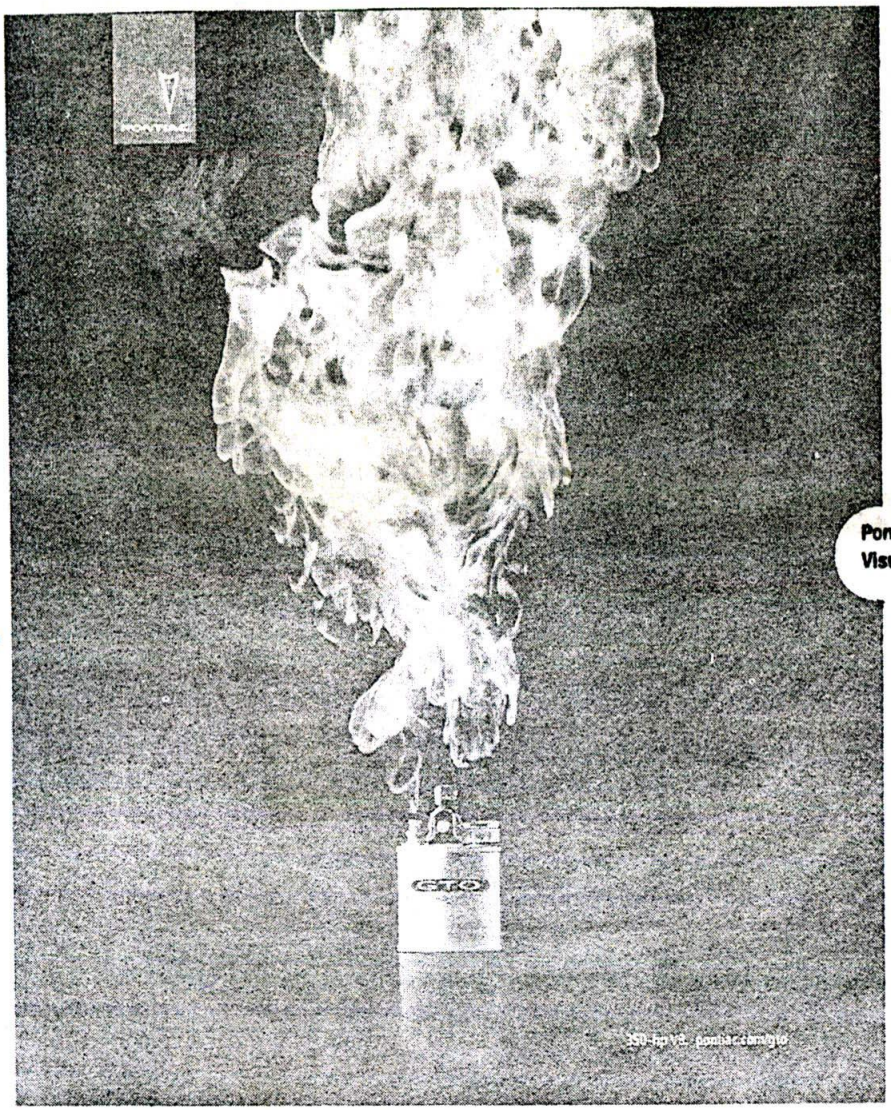
Consumer researchers have been increasingly interested in how **cognitive personality** factors influence various aspects of consumer behavior. In particular, two cognitive personality traits—**need for cognition** and **visualizers versus verbalizers**—have been useful in understanding selected aspects of consumer behavior.

Need for cognition

A promising cognitive personality characteristic is need for cognition (NC). It measures a person's craving for or enjoyment of *thinking*. Available research indicates that consumers who are *high* in NC are more likely to be responsive to the part of an ad that is rich in product-related information or description; consumers who are relatively *low* in NC are more likely to be attracted to the background or peripheral aspects of an ad, such as an attractive model or well-known celebrity.[21] In this realm, research among adolescents compared the effectiveness of a cartoon message and a written message. As expected, for those low in NC, the cartoon message was more effective in changing attitudes and subjective norms, whereas the written message was more effective for those high in NC.[22] In still another study, it was found that message framing (e.g., positively emphasizing a brand's advantages) has more impact on individuals low in NC than it has on individuals high in NC.[23] Furthermore, research suggests that consumers who are high in NC are likely to spend more time processing print advertisements, which results in superior brand and ad claim recall.[24]

Need for cognition also seems to play a role in an individual's use of the Internet. More precisely, NC has been positively related to using the Internet to seek product information, current events and news, and learning and education—all activities that incorporate a cognitive element.[25] A recent study examined both need for cognition and sensation seeking (discussed earlier in this chapter) with regard to Web site complexity. The research discovered that the subjects preferred Web sites with a medium level of complexity (rather than high or low complexity). Still further, those with a high need for cognition tended to evaluate Web sites with low visual complexity and high verbal complexity more favorably. In contrast, those who were high sensation seekers tended to prefer complex visual designs, whereas those who were low sensation seekers preferred simple visual designs.[26] Such research insights provide advertisers with

FIGURE 5.4



Source: Courtesy of General Motors Corporation.

Pontiac Targeting the Visualizer

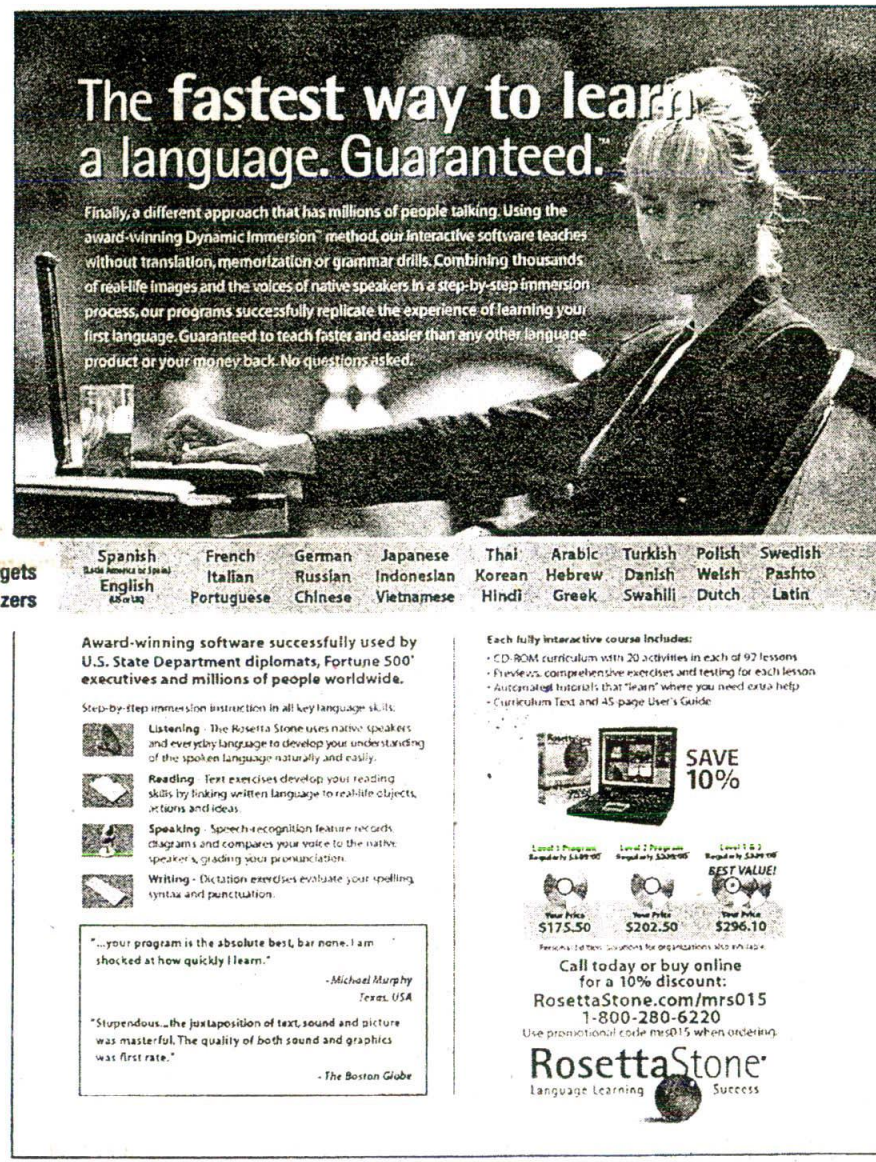
valuable guidelines for creating advertising messages (including supporting art) that appeal to a particular target audience grouping's *need for cognition*.

Visualizers versus verbalizers

It is fairly well established that some people seem to be more open to and prefer the written word as a way of securing information, whereas others are more likely to respond to and prefer visual images or messages as sources of information. Consistent with such individual differences, cognitive personality research classifies consumers into two groups: *visualizers* (consumers who prefer visual information and products that stress the visual, such as membership in a videotape club) or ***verbalizers*** (consumers who prefer written or verbal information and products, such as membership in book clubs or audiotape clubs). Some marketers stress strong visual dimensions in order to attract visualizers (see Figure 5.4); others raise a question and provide the answer, or feature a detailed description or point-by-point explanation to attract verbalizers (see Figure 5.5).

FIGURE 5.5

Source: © Rosetta Stone. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



Rosetta Stone® Targets Verbalizers

From consumer materialism to compulsive consumption

Consumer researchers have become increasingly interested in exploring various consumption and possession traits. These traits range from *consumer materialism* to *fixated consumption behavior* to *consumer compulsive behavior.*

Consumer materialism

Materialism (the extent to which a person is considered materialistic) is a topic frequently discussed in newspapers, in magazines, and on TV (e.g., "Americans are very materialistic") and in everyday conversations between friends ("He's so materialistic!"). Materialism, as a personality-like trait, distinguishes between individuals who regard possessions as essential to their identities and their lives and those for whom possessions

TABLE 5.5 Sample Items from a Materialism Scale

SUCCESS

- I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
- I like to own things that impress people.
- I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success. (R)

CENTRALITY

- I usually buy only the things I need. (R)
- I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned. (R)
- I like a lot of luxury in my life.

HAPPINESS

- I have all the things I really need to enjoy life. (R)
- My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.
- It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Note: Measured on a 5 point "agreement" scale. Items with a (R) are scored inversely.

Source: Marsha L. Richins, "The Material Values Scale: Measurement Properties and Development of a Short Form," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (June 2004): 217–218.

are secondary.[27] Researchers have found some general support for the following characteristics of materialistic people: (1) They especially value acquiring and showing off possessions; (2) they are particularly self-centered and selfish; (3) they seek lifestyles full of possessions (e.g., they desire to have lots of "things," rather than a simple, uncluttered lifestyle); and (4) their many possessions do not give them greater personal satisfaction (i.e., their possessions do not lead to greater happiness).[28] Table 5.5 presents sample items from a materialism scale.

Materialism has often been linked to advertising, and researchers have suggested that in the United States there has been an increasing emphasis on materialism in the print media. It is important to remember, though, that the extent of consumer materialism can vary from country to country (e.g., consumer materialism is less developed in Mexico than in the United States) and, therefore, marketers must be careful when trying to export a successful U.S. marketing mix to another country.[29]

Fixated consumption behavior

Somewhere between materialism and compulsion, with respect to buying or possessing objects, is the notion of being *fixated* with regard to consuming or possessing. Like materialism, *fixated consumption behavior* is in the realm of normal and socially acceptable behavior. Fixated consumers do not keep their objects or purchases of interest a secret; rather, they frequently display them, and their involvement is openly shared with others who have a similar interest. In the world of serious collectors (Barbie dolls, Carnival glass, rare antique teddy bears, or almost anything else that has drawn collectors), there are countless millions of *fixated consumers* pursuing their interests and trying to add to their collections.

Fixated consumers typically possess the following characteristics: (1) a deep (possibly passionate) interest in a particular object or product category, (2) a willingness to go to considerable lengths to secure additional examples of the object or product category of interest, and (3) the dedication of a considerable amount of discretionary time and money to searching out the object or product.[30] This profile of the fixated consumer describes many collectors or hobbyists (e.g., collectors of coins, stamps, antiques, vintage wristwatches, or fountain pens). Research exploring the dynamics of the fixated consumer (in this case, coin collectors) revealed that, for fixated consumers, there is not only

TABLE 5.6 Sample Items from Scales to Measure Compulsive Buying

VALENCE, D'ASTOUS, AND FORTIER COMPULSIVE BUYING SCALE

1. When I have money, I cannot help but spend part or the whole of it.
2. I am often impulsive in my buying behavior.
3. As soon as I enter a shopping center, I have an irresistible urge to go into a shop to buy something.
4. I am one of those people who often responds to direct-mail offers (e.g., books or compact discs).
5. I have often bought a product that I did not need, while knowing I had very little money left.

FABER AND O'GUINN COMPULSIVE BUYING SCALE

1. If I have any money left at the end of the pay period, I just have to spend it.
2. I felt others would be horrified if they knew my spending habits.
3. I have bought things even though I couldn't afford them.
4. I wrote a check when I knew I didn't have enough money in the bank to cover it.
5. I bought something in order to make myself feel better.

Source: Gilles Valence, Alain d'Astous, and Louis Fortier, "Compulsive Buying: Concept and Measurement," *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 11 (1988): 419–433; Ronald J. Faber and Thomas C. O'Guinn, "A Clinical Screener for Compulsive Buying," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19 (December 1992): 459–469; and Leslie Cole and Dan Sherrell, "Comparing Scales to Measure Compulsive Buying: An Exploration of Their Dimensionality," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, 22, ed. Frank R. Kardes and Mita Sujan (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1995), 419–427.

an enduring involvement in the object category itself but also a considerable amount of involvement in the process of acquiring the object (sometimes referred to as the "hunt").

Compulsive consumption behavior

Unlike materialism and fixated consumption, **compulsive consumption** is in the realm of abnormal behavior—an example of the dark side of consumption. Consumers who are compulsive have an *addiction*: in some respects they are out of control, and their actions may have damaging consequences to them and to those around them. Examples of compulsive consumption problems are uncontrollable shopping, gambling, drug addiction, alcoholism, and various food and eating disorders.[31] For instance, there are many women and a small number of men who are *chocoholics*—they have an intense craving (also termed an addiction) for chocolate.[32] From a marketing and consumer behavior perspective, *compulsive buying* can also be included in any list of compulsive activities. To control or possibly eliminate such compulsive problems generally requires some type of therapy or clinical treatment.

There have been some research efforts to develop a screener inventory to pinpoint compulsive buying behavior. Table 5.6 presents sample questions from several of these scales. Evidence suggests that some consumers use self-gifting, impulse buying, and compulsive buying as a way to influence or manage their moods; that is, the act of purchasing may convert a negative mood to a more positive one ("I'm depressed, I'll go out shopping and I'll feel better").[33]

Consumer ethnocentrism: responses to foreign-made products

In an effort to distinguish between consumer segments that are likely to be receptive to foreign-made products and those that are not, researchers have developed and tested the *consumer ethnocentrism* scale, called CETSCALE (see Table 5.7).[34] The CETSCALE has

TABLE 5.7 The Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale—CETSCALE

1. American people should always buy American-made products instead of imports.
2. Only those products that are unavailable in the United States should be imported.
3. Buy American-made products. Keep America working.
4. American products, first, last, and foremost.
5. Purchasing foreign-made products is un-American.
6. It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Americans out of jobs.
7. A real American should always buy American-made products.
8. We should purchase products manufactured in America instead of letting other countries get rich off us.
9. It is always best to purchase American products.
10. There should be very little trading or purchasing of goods from other countries unless out of necessity.
11. Americans should not buy foreign products, because this hurts American business and causes unemployment.
12. Curbs should be put on all imports.
13. It may cost me in the long run but I prefer to support American products.
14. Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets.
15. Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into the United States.
16. We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country.
17. American consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Americans out of work.

Notes: Response format is a 7-point Likert-type scale (strongly agree = 7, strongly disagree = 1). Range of scores is from 17 to 119. Calculated from confirmatory factor analysis of data from 4-area study.

Source: Terence A. Shimp and Subhash Sharma, "Consumer Ethnocentrism: Construction and Validation of the CETSCALE," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24 (August 1987): 282. Reprinted by permission.

been successful in identifying consumers with a predisposition to accept (or reject) foreign-made products. Consumers who are highly ethnocentric are likely to feel that it is inappropriate or wrong to purchase foreign-made products because of the resulting economic impact on the domestic economy, whereas nonethnocentric consumers tend to evaluate foreign-made products—ostensibly more objectively—for their extrinsic characteristics (e.g., "how good are they?"). A portion of the consumers who would score low on an ethnocentric scale are actually likely to be quite receptive to products made in foreign countries.

Ethnocentrism has been found to vary by country and product. Mexican consumers, for example, are more ethnocentric than their French and American counterparts; and Malaysian consumers, while preferring to purchase slacks, shirts, undergarments, and belts that are locally manufactured, want to buy imported sunglasses and watches.[35] Other evidence suggests that some older American consumers, in remembrance of World War II, still refuse to purchase German- and/or Japanese-made products, whereas some German and Japanese consumers may feel similarly about American-made products.[36]

Marketers successfully target ethnocentric consumers in any national market by stressing a nationalistic theme in their promotional appeals (e.g., "Made in America" or "Made in France") because this segment is predisposed to buy products made in their native land. Honda, the Japanese automaker, in an indirect appeal to ethnocentric Americans, had advertised that its Accord wagon is "Exported from America" to other markets (reinforcing that some of its automobiles are made in the United States).

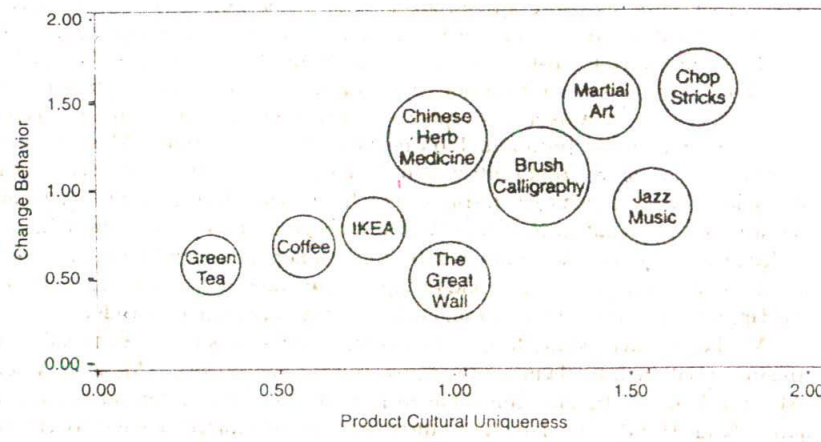
TABLE 5.8 Strategies for Managing Country-of-Origin Effects

	COUNTRY IMAGE	
MARKETING MIX	**POSITIVE**	**NEGATIVE**
Product	Emphasize "Made In"	Emphasize Brand Name
Price	Premium Price	Low Price to Attract Value Conscious
Place (Channel of Distribution)	Exclusive Locations	Establish Supply Chain Partners
Promotion	Country Image	Brand Image
	Nation Sponsored	Manufacturer Sponsored

Source: Osman Mohamad, Zafar U. Ahmed, Earl D. Honeycutt, Jr., and Taizoon Hyder Tyebkhan, "Does 'Made In. . . ' Matter to Consumers? A Malaysian Study of Country of Origin Effect," *Multinational Business Review* (Fall 2000): 73. Reprinted with permission.

However, a study examining the preferences of U.K. consumers across eight product categories found that domestic country bias (i.e., a preference for products manufactured in a consumer's country of residence) varied among product categories. This means that a domestic manufacturer cannot expect that local consumers will automatically prefer their offerings over imported ones.[37] Still further, one research study found that low-knowledge consumers' product attitude (i.e., the consumer has little knowledge about the product) is more strongly influenced by country-of-origin perceptions than high-knowledge consumers' product attitude.[38] Table 5.8 presents a marketing mix strategy that can be used to manage country-of-origin effects. Specifically, if marketers determine that the potential customers in a particular country possess a *positive* image of products made in the country in which their products originate, the marketers may be able to create a marketing mix strategy that follows options in the *Positive* column. In contrast, if marketers assess that the potential customers in a particular country possess a *negative* image of products made in the country in which their products originate, the marketers might be wise to elect a marketing mix strategy that follows options in the *Negative* column of Table 5.8.

In this era of multinational marketing, it may be unclear to many consumers as to whether a particular product is domestic or imported. Consider Toyota, for example. Some of the models it sells in the United States are manufactured in Japan, some are manufactured in the United States, and some are manufactured in both nations (and end up being sold in the United States). One study conducted among business school students in New York City has examined eight different products, from green tea to jazz music, to determine if they differ in terms of "degree of globilization." As presented in Figure 5.6,



Object Degree of Globalization

Source: Jufei Kao, "Is It a Foreign Product? A Scale to Classify Products in an Era of Globalization," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 31 (2004): 680.

FIGURE 5.6

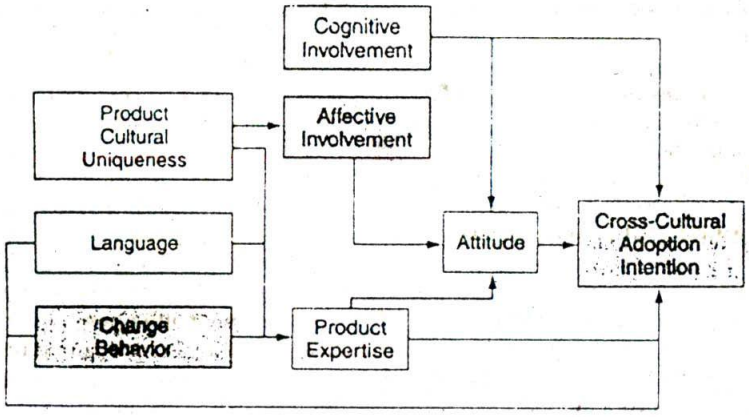


FIGURE 5.7

Causal Relationship Among Foreign Product Competence, Product Expertise, Involvement, Attitude, and Cross-Cultural Adoption Intention

Source: Jufei Kao, "Is It a Foreign Product? A Scale to Classify Products in an Era of Globalization," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 31 (2004): 681.

products in the lower-left corner have a higher degree of globalization, meaning that consumers view them to be low in product cultural uniqueness (i.e., they are viewed as nonforeign), while those in the upper right-hand corner are thought of as being "foreign."[39] Still further, Figure 5.7 illustrates the factors, including product cultural uniqueness, that lead to cross-cultural product adoption intention.

brand personality

Early in this chapter, as part of our discussion of Freudian theory, we introduced the notion of *product personality*. Consumers also subscribe to the notion of *brand personality*; that is, they attribute various descriptive personality-like traits or characteristics to different brands in a wide variety of product categories. For instance, with some help from frequent advertising, consumers tend to see Perdue (chickens) as representing freshness (**www.perdue.com**), Nike as the athlete in all of us (**www.nike.com**), and BMW as performance driven (**www.bmw.com**).[40] In a similar fashion, the brand personality for Levi's 501 jeans (**www.levi.com**) is "dependable and rugged," "real and authentic," and "American and Western." Such personality-like images of brands reflect consumers' visions of the inner core of many strong brands of consumer products. As these examples reveal, a brand's personality can either be functional ("dependable and rugged") or symbolic ("the athlete in all of us").[41] There is common sense and research evidence to conclude that any brand personality, as long as it is *strong* and *favorable*, will strengthen a brand.[42] However, it is not clear, for example, how many consumers would be willing to pay a premium for a brand-name diamond.

Marketers have even provided an instant personality or heritage for a new product by employing a symbolic or fictional historical branding strategy. For example, when Brown Forman (**www.brown-forman.com**) entered the microbrewed beer market, it used the brand name "1886" for its new beer, which is the year that one of its other products, Jack Daniel's bourbon, was first distilled.[43] In another vein, marketers are increasingly interested in learning how the experience of consumers visiting their product's Web site impacts on their brand's personality. An exploration of this issue reveals that compared to nonvisitors, visitors to a brand's Web site tend to perceive the brand to be a younger and more modern product, as well as more sincere and trustworthy.[44]

Brand personification

Some marketers find it useful to create a **brand personification**, which tries to recast consumers' perception of the attributes of a product or service into a human-like character. For instance, in focus group research, well-known brands of dishwashing liquid have been

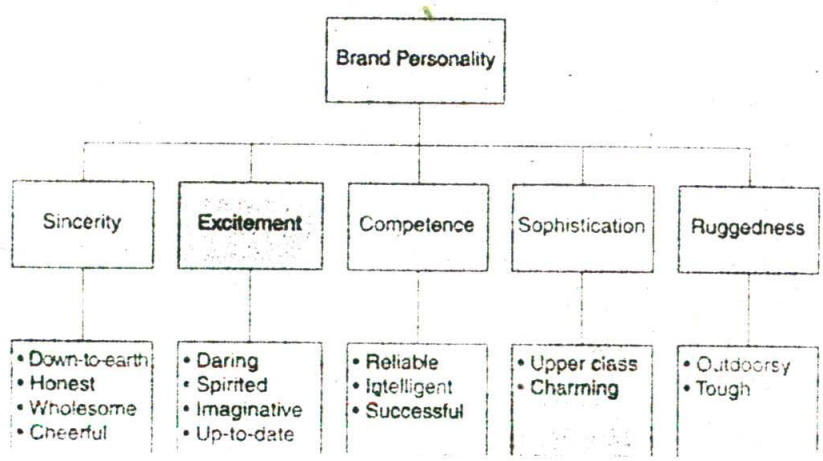
likened to "demanding task masters" or "high-energy people." Many consumers express their inner feelings about products or brands in terms of their association with known personalities. Identifying consumers' current brand–personality links and creating personality links for new products are important marketing tasks.

The M&M "people" are a current "fun" example of brand personification (**www.m-ms.com**). It is based on the line of questioning that could ask the following: "If an M&M (or a chocolate-coated peanut variety) was a person, what kind of person would it be?" Additional questioning would be likely to explore how the color of the coating impacts consumers' perceived personality for the "M&M people."

To personify and humanize its model consumer, Celestial Seasonings, Inc. (**www.celestialseasonings.com**), the leading specialty tea maker in the United States, refers in its advertising to "Tracy Jones." And just who is Tracy Jones? According to Celestial Seasonings, she is "female, upscale, well educated, and highly involved in life in every way."[45] In a similar fashion, Mr. Coffee (**www.mrcoffee.com**), a popular brand of automatic-drip coffee makers, unexpectedly found in its focus group research that consumers were referring to Mr. Coffee as if the product were a person (e.g., "he makes good coffee" and "he's got a lot of different models and prices").[46] After careful consideration, the marketers decided to explore the possibility of creating a *brand personification*. Initial consumer research indicated that Mr. Coffee was seen as being "dependable," "friendly," "efficient," "intelligent," and "smart."

Figure 5.8 presents a *brand personality framework* that reflects extensive consumer research designed to pinpoint the structure and nature of a brand's personality. The framework suggests that there are five defining *dimensions* of a brand's personality ("sincerity," "excitement," "competence," "sophistication," and "ruggedness"), and 15 *facets* of personality that flow from the five dimensions (i.e., "down-to-earth," "daring," "reliable," "upper class," and "outdoors").[47] If we carefully review these brand personality dimensions and facets, it appears that this framework tends to accommodate the brand personalities pursued by many consumer products.

It is important to point out that the consumer sometimes develops a relationship with a brand that is similar in certain respects to the relationships they have with others (e.g., friends, family, neighbors). Some consumers, for example, become "brand zealots," and develop a relationship that goes beyond a functional need. An example of this would be VW Beetle owners who give their cars names and who can be seen talking to their vehicles and affectionately stroking them. Another would be the advertising executive who had the Apple Macintosh logo tattooed on this chest (near his heart), or the Harley-Davidson motorcycle owner with a Harley tattoo. While in an "exchange relationship"



A Brand Personality Framework

Source: Jennifer L. Aaker, "Dimension of Brand Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 35 (August 1997): 352. Reprinted by permission of the American Marketing Association.

FIGURE 5.8

the consumer gets something back in return, brand zealots develop a "communal relationship" with the product and demonstrate a passion that is typically associated only with close friends and family.[48]

Product personality and gender

A product personality, or persona, frequently endows the product or brand with a gender. For instance, Celestial Seasonings' Tracy Jones was given a feminine persona, whereas Mr. Coffee was given a masculine personality. The assigning of gender as part of a product's personality description is fully consistent with the marketplace reality that products and services, in general, are viewed by consumers as having gender. A study that asked Chinese consumers to categorize various products in terms of gender, found that they perceived coffee and toothpaste to be masculine products, whereas bath soap and shampoo were seen as feminine products.[49]

Armed with knowledge of the perceived gender of a product or a specific brand, marketers are in a better position to select visuals and text copy for various marketing messages.

Product personality and geography

Marketers learned long ago that certain products, in the minds of consumers, possess a strong geographical association (e.g., San Francisco sourdough bread). Consequently, by employing geography in the product's name, the product's manufacturer creates a geographic personality for the product. Such a geographic personality can lead to geographic equity for the brand, meaning that in the consumer's memory, the knowledge of the brand reflects a strong geographic association.

Interestingly, geographic brand names can be either familiar or unfamiliar (or fictitious). For example, take "Philadelphia cream cheese." In fact, it is manufactured in Illinois, even though it uses the name of one of the largest cities in the United States. Still further, although we all know that Arizona is a state, Arizona ice tea is brewed and bottled in the state of New York. Fictitious geographic product names include Hidden Valley salad dressings and Bear Creek soups.[50]

But more important than whether the name is real or fictitious is whether the location and its image add to the product's brand equity.[51] Although Texas' Best Barbecue Sauce may be made in New Jersey, many Americans associate barbecue with Texas. Similarly, the Old El Paso brand of salsa capitalizes on the Mexican influence in the Southwest. The product may be made in Minneapolis, but a brand of salsa named Twin Cities Salsa (e.g., Minneapolis/St. Paul) just doesn't have the same cachet. Table 5.9 provides a list of familiar and not-so-familiar geographic brand names.

Personality and color

Consumers not only ascribe personality traits to products and services, but they also tend to associate personality factors with specific colors. For instance, Coca-Cola (**www.coca cola.com**) is associated with red, which connotes excitement. Blue bottles are often used to sell wine because the color blue appeals particularly to female consumers, and they buy the majority of wine.[52] Yellow is associated with novelty, and black frequently connotes sophistication.[53] For this reason, brands wishing to create a sophisticated persona (such as Pasta LaBella) or an upscale or premium image (e.g., Miller Beers' Miller Reserve) use labeling or packaging that is primarily black. A combination of black and white communicates that a product is carefully engineered, high tech, and sophisticated in design. The IBM Thinkpad has consistently used an all-black case with a red button to house its very successful line of laptops. Nike has used black, white, and a touch of red for selected models of its sport shoes. This color combination seems to imply advanced-performance sports shoes. Recently, M&M/Mars (**www.mmmars.com**) has exploited the folklore that its green M&Ms are

TABLE 5.9 Examples of Geographic Brand Names

GEOGRAPHIC ORIENTATION	BRAND NAME	PRODUCT	LOCALE
Familiar/Actual	*K.C. Masterpiece*	BBQ Sauce	Oakland, CA
	London Pub	Vinegar	Bloomfield, NJ
	Old El Paso	Salsa	Minneapolis, MN
	Old Milwaukee	Beer	Detroit, MI
	Philadelphia	Cream Cheese	Glenview, IL
	San Francisco Intl	Buns/Rolls	Totowa, NJ
	Arizona Iced Tea	Iced Tea	Lake Success, NY
Unfamiliar/Fictitious	*Bear Creek*	Soup	Harbor City, UT
	Green Forest	Paper Towels	Mexico
	Hidden Valley	Salad Dressing	Oakland, CA
	Italian Village	Ravioli	Secaucus, NJ
	Pepperwood Grove	Wine	Oakville, CA
	Sorrel Ridge	Jam	Port Reading, NJ

Source: K. Damon Aiken, Eric C. Koch, and Robert Mandrigal, "What's in a Name? Explorations in Geographic Equity and Geographic Personality," *American Marketing Association* (Winter 2000): 302.

aphrodisiacs by creating a green female M&M character that it has featured in some of its ads.[54] And although we all know that ketchup is red, Heinz (**www.heinz.com**) developed its green ketchup after doing research with more than 1,000 kids, who helped decide on the product's green color and its packaging (e.g., the bottle is designed to fit smaller hands).[55] A recent print and outdoor advertising campaign for LifeSavers, based on consumer flavor and color research, characterizes *cherry* as "Ms. Popularity," *lime* as "The Outsider," and *sour apple and cherry* (targeted to teens) as "The Troublemaker."[56]

Many fast-food restaurants use combinations of bright colors, like red, yellow, and blue, for their roadside signs and interior designs. These colors have come to be associated with fast service and inexpensive food. In contrast, fine dining restaurants tend to use sophisticated colors like gray, white, shades of tan, or other soft, pale, or muted colors to reflect the feeling of fine, leisurely service. Consumer research sponsored by a marketer of popularly priced casual wear found that dark colors, such as gray, dark blue, and black, were preferred to pastel colors in wintry northeastern and midwestern markets. However, when the multimarket study reached sunny Phoenix, Arizona, a reversal occurred—the darker colors fell into disfavor, and rose, pinks, yellows, and turquoise became the preferred colors. Further research revealed that many people seek to contrast the somber backdrop of the desert with multicolor pastel clothing and home furnishings. Table 5.10 presents a list of various colors, their personality-like meanings, and associated marketing insights.

As part of its *2005 Color Survey*, BuzzBack Market Research asked consumers to look over a palette of 44 color shades and to indicate which one best reflects their nature. The six color shades cited with the greatest frequency were Palace Blue (11 percent), Fiery Red (9 percent), Sunshine (7 percent), Little Boy Blue (6 percent), Sailor Blue (5 percent), and Black Limo (4 percent). Interestingly, while the top selection for males was Palace Blue (17 percent), two top vote gettings among women were Fiery Red and Sunshine (9% each).[57] Table 5.11 presents the associations made by consumers with their "personal shade."

TABLE 5.10 The Personality-like Associations of Selected Colors

COLOR	PERSONALITY LINK	MARKETING INSIGHTS
Blue	Commands respect, authority	• America's favored color • IBM holds the title to blue • Associated with club soda • Men seek products packaged in blue • Houses painted blue are avoided • Low-calorie, skim milk • Coffee in a blue can perceived as "mild"
Yellow	Caution, novelty, temporary, warmth	• Eyes register it fastest • Coffee in yellow can taste "weak" • Stops traffic • Sells a house
Green	Secure, natural, relaxed or easygoing, living things	• Good work environment • Associated with vegetables and chewing gum • Canada Dry ginger ale sales increased when it changed sugar-free package from red to green and white
Red	Human, exciting, hot, passionate, strong	• Makes food "smell" better • Coffee in a red can perceived as "rich" • Women have a preference for bluish red • Men have a preference for yellowish red • Coca-Cola "owns" red
Orange	Powerful, affordable, informal	• Draws attention quickly
Brown	Informal and relaxed, masculine, nature	• Coffee in a dark-brown can was "too strong" • Men seek products packaged in brown
White	Goodness, purity, chastity, cleanliness, delicacy, refinement, formality	• Suggests reduced calories • Pure and wholesome food • Clean, bath products, feminine
Black	Sophistication, power, authority, mystery	• Powerful clothing • High-tech electronics
Silver, Gold, Platinum	Regal, wealthy, stately	• Suggests premium price

Source: From Bernice Kanner, "Color Schemes," *New York* magazine, April 3, 1989, 22–23. Reprinted by permission.

self and self-image

Consumers have a variety of enduring images of themselves. These self-images, or perceptions of self, are very closely associated with personality in that individuals tend to buy products and services and patronize retailers whose images or personalities relate in some meaningful way to their own self-images. In essence, consumers seek to depict themselves in their brand choices—they tend to approach products with images that could enhance their self-concept and avoid those products that do not.[58] In this final section, we examine the issue of *one* or *multiple* selves, explore the makeup of the

TABLE 5.11 Consumers' Associations with the Personal Shade

PALACE BLUE IS...	
"calming/peaceful"	27%
FIERY RED IS...	
"fiery/hot" & "energetic"	24%
SUNSHINE IS...	
"happy/cheerful"	58%
"bright"	30%
"optimistic"	25%
"sunny"	19%
LITTLE BOY BLUE IS...	
"calming/peaceful"	28%
a "favorite color"	21%
"easy going/laid back"	16%
"happy/cheerful"	16%
SAILOR BLUE IS...	
a "favorite color"	19%
"strong/powerful"	18%
"calming/peaceful"	17%
BLACK LIMO IS...	
"dark"	19%
"matches everything/basic"	19%
"mysterious"	14%
"fits my mood"	14%
a "favorite color"	13%
"strong/powerful"	12%

Source: Brandweek, April 4, 2005, 24.

self-image, the notion of **extended self**, and the possibilities or options of *altering the self-image.*

One or multiple selves

Historically, individuals have been thought to have a single self-image and to be interested, as consumers, in products and services that satisfy that single self. However, it is more accurate to think of consumers as having **multiple selves**.[59] This thinking reflects the understanding that a single consumer is likely to act quite differently with different people and in different situations. For instance, a person is likely to behave in different ways with parents, at school, at work, at a museum opening, or with friends at a nightclub. The healthy or normal person is likely to display a somewhat different personality in each of these different situations or social **roles**. In fact, acting exactly the same in all situations or roles and not adapting to the situation at hand may be considered a sign of an abnormal or unhealthy person.

In terms of consumer behavior, the idea that an individual embodies a number of different "selves" (i.e., has multiple self-images) suggests that marketers should target their products and services to consumers *within the context of a particular "self,"* and in certain cases, a choice of different products for different *selves.* (The notion of a consumer having multiple selves or playing multiple roles supports the application of usage situation as a segmentation base discussed in Chapter 3.)

The makeup of the self-image

Consistent with the idea of multiple self-images, each individual has an image of himself or herself as a certain kind of person, with certain traits, skills, habits, possessions, relationships, and ways of behaving. As with other types of images and personality, the individual's self-image is unique, the outgrowth of that person's background and experience. Individuals develop their self-images through interactions with other people—initially their parents, and then other individuals or groups with whom they relate over the years.

Products and brands have symbolic value for individuals, who evaluate them on the basis of their consistency (congruence) with their personal pictures or images of themselves. Some products seem to match one or more of an individual's self-images; others seem totally alien. It is generally believed that consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self-images by selecting products and brands with "images" or "personalities" that they believe are congruent with their own self-images and avoiding products that are not.[60] This seems to be especially true for women; research reveals that more women than men (77 percent versus 64 percent) feel that the brands they select reflect their personalities.[61]

Given this relationship between brand preference and consumers' self-images, it is natural that consumers use brands to help them in their task of defining themselves. Research indicates that consumers who have strong links to particular brands—a positive self-brand connection—see such brands *as representing an aspect of themselves.* For marketers, such *connections* are certainly an important step in the formation of consumer loyalty and a positive relationship with consumers.[62] Consider the two charts presented in Figure 5.9, which show purchase intent to be strongest when there is a good fit between brand image and self-image.[63]

A variety of different self-images have been recognized in the consumer behavior literature for a long time. In particular, many researchers have depicted some or all of the following kinds of self-image: (1) **actual self-image** (how consumers in fact see themselves), (2) **ideal self-image** (how consumers would like to see themselves), (3) **social self-image** (how consumers feel others see them), and (4) **ideal social self-image** (how consumers would like others to see them).

It also seems useful to think in terms of two other types of self-images—**expected self** and the **"ought-to" self.** The *expected self-image* (how consumers expect to see themselves at some specified future time) is somewhere between the *actual* and *ideal* self-images. It is a future-oriented combination of what is (the actual self-image) and what consumers would like to be (the ideal self-image). As another interesting type of self-image—the *"ought-to" self*—consists of traits or characteristics that an individual believes it is his or her duty or obligation to possess.[64] Examples of this form of self-image might be the striving to achieve a deeper religious understanding or the seeking of a fair and just solution to a challenging ethical problem. Because the expected self and the ought-to self provide consumers with a realistic opportunity to change the self, they are both likely to be more valuable to marketers than the actual or ideal self-image as a guide for designing and promoting products.

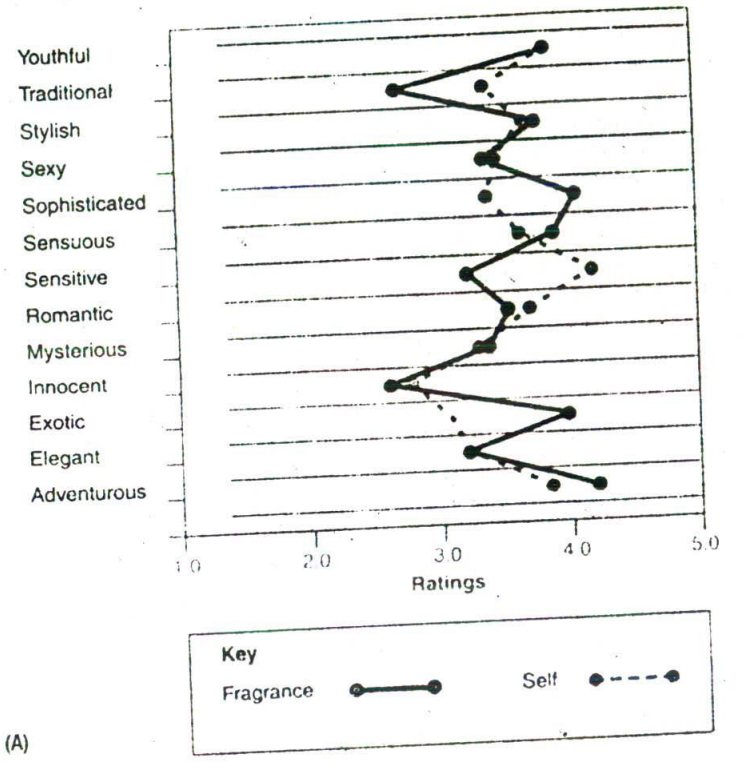
In different contexts (i.e., in different situations and/or with respect to different products), consumers might select a different self-image to guide their attitudes or behavior. For instance, with some everyday household products, consumers might be guided by their actual self-image, whereas for some socially enhancing or socially conspicuous products, they might be guided by their social self-image. When it comes to an important and a strong personal goal or wish, like losing weight and feeling better about oneself and one's appearance, an individual might be guided by either their ideal self-images or ideal social self-images.

The concept of self-image has strategic implications for marketers. For example, marketers can segment their markets on the basis of relevant consumer self-images and then position their products or services as symbols of such self-images. Such a strategy is fully consistent with the marketing concept in that the marketer first assesses the needs of a consumer segment (with respect to both the product category and to an appropriate symbol of self-image) and then proceeds to develop and market a product or service that meets both criteria. The importance of marketing cannot be overstated, as brand equity

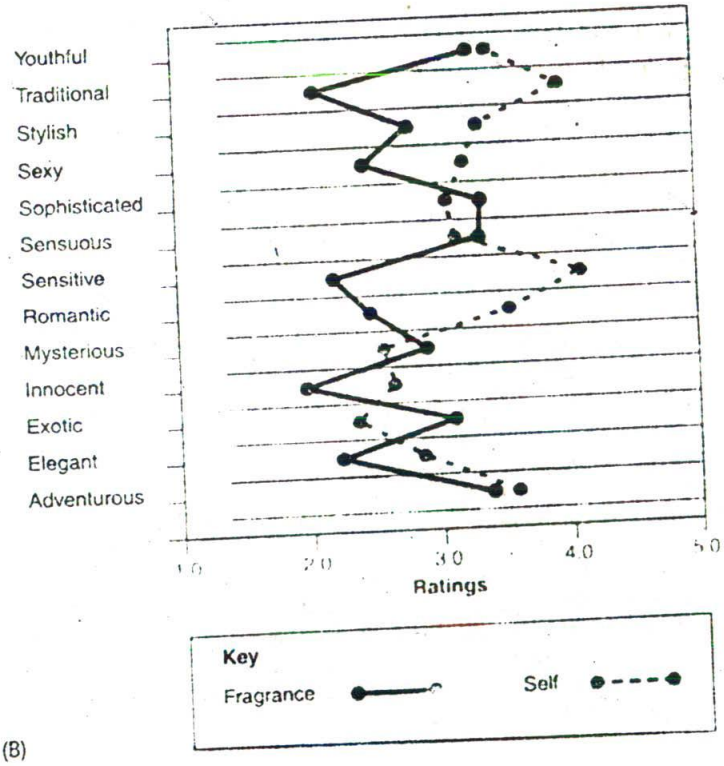
FIGURE 5.9

Self-Image, Brand Image, and Purchase Intent. (a) Fragrance Commerical: Self-Image and Brand-Image Convergence Among Respondents with Strong Purchase Intent. (b) Fragrance Commercial: Self-Image and Brand-Image Convergence Among Respondents with Weak Purchase Intent.

Source: Abhilasha Mehta, "Using Self-Concept to Assess Advertising Effectiveness," *Journal of Advertising Research* (February 1999): 87.



(A)



(B)

theory (which focuses on the value inherent in a brand name) postulates that the power of a brand resides in the consumer's mind from both lived (purchase and usage) and mediated (advertising and promotion) experiences.[65]

The extended self

The interrelationship between consumers' self-images and their possessions (i.e., objects they call their own) is an exciting topic. Specifically, consumers' possessions can be seen to confirm or extend their self-images. For instance, acquiring a desired or sought-after pair of "vintage" Levi jeans might serve to expand or enrich a Brazilian teenager's image of self. The teenager might now see herself as being more desirable, more fashionable, and more successful because she has a pair of the sought-after "vintage jeans." In a similar manner, if the gold chain that a college student (let's call him Ted) received as a gift from his grandmother was stolen, Ted is likely to feel diminished in some way. Indeed, the loss of a prized possession may lead Ted to "grieve" and to experience a variety of emotions, such as frustration, loss of control, the feeling of being violated, even the loss of magical protection. Table 5.12 presents sample items from a measurement instrument designed to reflect how particular possessions (e.g., a gold chain) might become part of one's extended self.

The previous examples suggest that much human emotion can be connected to valued possessions. In such cases, possessions are considered extensions of the self. It has been proposed that possessions can extend the self in a number of ways: (1) *actually*, by allowing the person to do things that otherwise would be very difficult or impossible to accomplish (e.g., problem solving by using a computer); (2) *symbolically*, by making the person feel better or "bigger" (receiving an employee award for excellence); (3) by *conferring status or rank* (e.g., among collectors of rare works of art because of the ownership of a particular masterpiece); (4) by *bestowing feelings of immortality* by leaving valued possessions to young family members (this also has the potential of extending the recipients' selves); and (5) by *endowing with magical powers* (e.g., a pair of cuff links inherited from one's grandfather might be perceived as magic amulets bestowing good luck when they are worn).[66]

Altering the self

Sometimes consumers wish to change themselves to become a different or improved self. Clothing, grooming aids or cosmetics, and all kinds of accessories (such as sunglasses, jewelry, tattoos, or even colored contact lenses) offer consumers the opportunity

TABLE 5.12 Sample Items from an Extended Self-Survey[a]

My _____ holds a special place in my life.
My _____ is central to my identity.
I feel emotionally attached to my _____.
My _____ helps me narrow the gap between what I am and try to be.
If my _____ was stolen from me, I would feel as if part of me is missing.
I would be a different person without my _____.
I take good care of my _____.
I trust my _____.

[a]A 6-point agree–disagree scale was used.

Source: Kimberly J. Dodson, "Peak Experiences and Mountain Biking: Incorporating the Bike in the Extended Self," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 1996. Reprinted by permission.

TABLE 5.13 Sample Items from a Vanity Scale

PHYSICAL-CONCERN ITEMS

1. The way I look is extremely important to me.
2. I am very concerned with my appearance.
3. It is important that I always look good.

PHYSICAL-VIEW ITEMS

1. People notice how attractive I am.
2. People are envious of my good looks.
3. My body is sexually appealing.

ACHIEVEMENT-CONCERN ITEMS

1. Professional achievements are an obsession with me.
2. Achieving greater success than my peers is important to me.
3. I want my achievements to be recognized by others.

ACHIEVEMENT-VIEW ITEMS

1. My achievements are highly regarded by others.
2. I am a good example of professional success.
3. Others wish they were as successful as me.

Source: Richard G. Netemeyer, Scot Burton, and Donald R. Lichtenstein, "Trait Aspects of Vanity: Measurement and Relevance to Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (March 1995): 624. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press as publisher.

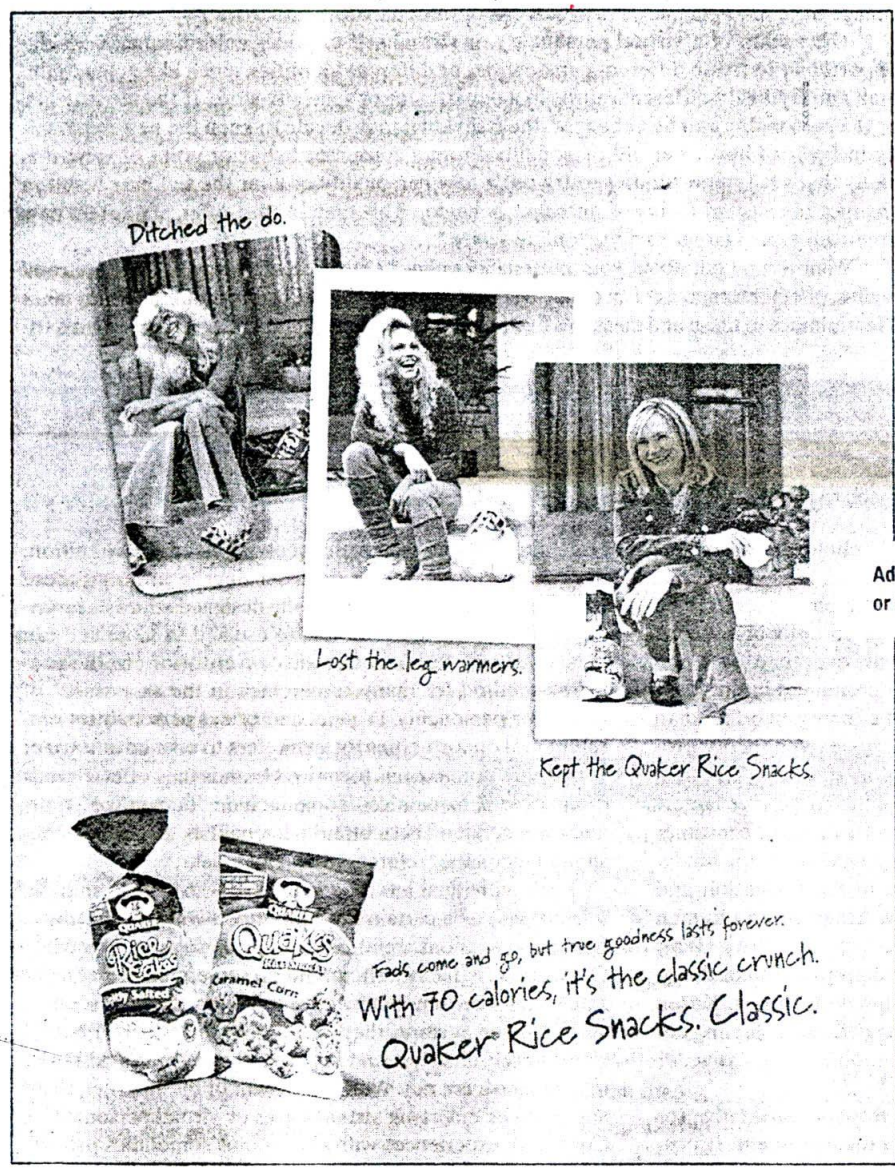
to modify their appearances (to create a "makeover") and thereby to alter their "selves." In using *self-altering products*, consumers are frequently attempting to express their individualism or uniqueness by creating a new self, maintaining the existing self (or preventing the loss of self), and extending the self (modifying or changing the self). Sometimes consumers use self-altering products or services to conform to or take on the appearance of a particular type of person (such as a military person, a physician, a business executive, or a college professor).

Closely related to both self-image and altering the self is the idea of *personal vanity*. As a descriptor of people, vanity is often associated with acting self-important, self-interested, or admiring one's own appearance or achievements. Using a "vanity scale" (Table 5.13), researchers have investigated both *physical vanity* (an excessive concern for and/or a positive—or inflated—view of one's physical appearance) and *achievement vanity* (an excessive concern for and/or a positive or inflated view of one's personal achievements). They have found both these ideas are related to materialism, use of cosmetics, concern with clothing, and country club membership.[67]

There is also research evidence to suggest that self-monitoring may serve as a moderating variable when it comes to how well a person is guided by situational cues regarding social appropriateness. Low self-monitors are individuals who are typically guided by their inner feelings, whereas high self-monitors claim that they act differently in different situations and with different people.[68] Consequently, high self-monitors might be more prone to employ a self-altering product in order to enhance their ideal social self-image.

Altering one's self, particularly one's appearance or body parts, can be accomplished by cosmetics, hair restyling or coloring, getting a tattoo, switching from eyeglasses to contact lenses (or the reverse), undergoing cosmetic surgery, or a "makeover" (see Figure 5.10).

FIGURE 5.10



Source: © The Quaker Oats Company. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Ad Appealing to the "New You" or the Altered Self

virtual personality or self

With the widespread interest in using the Internet as a form of entertainment and as a social vehicle to meet new people with similar interests, there has been a tremendous growth in the use of online chat rooms. People who visit chat rooms are able to carry on real-time conversations about themselves and topics of mutual interest with people from all over the globe. Because at the present time most chats are actually text conversations rather than live video broadcasts, the participants usually never get to see each other. This creates an opportunity for chat room participants to try out new identities or to change their identities while online. For instance, one can change from male to female (known as "gender

swapping"); from old to young; from married to single; from white-collar professional to blue-collar worker; or from grossly overweight to svelte. In terms of personality, one can change from mild-mannered to aggressive, or from introvert to extrovert.

The notion of a **virtual personality** or **virtual self** provides an individual with the opportunity to try on different personalities or different identities, much like going to the mall and trying on different outfits in a department or specialty store. If the identity fits, or the personality can be enhanced, the individual may decide to keep the new personality in favor of his or her old personality. From a consumer behavior point of view, it is likely that such opportunities to try out a new personality or alter the self may result in changes in selected forms of purchase behavior. This may in turn offer marketers new opportunities to target various "online selves."

Want to find out about your personality online? One Web site, **www.outofservice.com/bigfive**, offers Internet users an online test called "The Big Five Personality Test," which takes a few minutes to finish and measures five fundamental dimensions of personality. Give it a try.

SUMMARY

Personality can be described as the psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to his or her environment. Although personality tends to be consistent and enduring, it may change abruptly in response to major life events, as well as gradually over time.

Three theories of personality are prominent in the study of consumer behavior: psychoanalytic theory, neo-Freudian theory, and trait theory. Freud's psychoanalytic theory provides the foundation for the study of motivational research, which operates on the premise that human drives are largely unconscious in nature and serve to motivate many consumer actions. Neo-Freudian theory tends to emphasize the fundamental role of social relationships in the formation and development of personality. Alfred Adler viewed human beings as seeking to overcome feelings of inferiority. Harry Stack Sullivan believed that people attempt to establish significant and rewarding relationships with others. Karen Horney saw individuals as trying to overcome feelings of anxiety and categorized them as compliant, aggressive, or detached.

Trait theory is a major departure from the qualitative (or subjective) approach to personality measurement. It postulates that individuals possess innate psychological traits (e.g., innovativeness, novelty seeking, need for cognition, materialism) to a greater or lesser degree, and that these traits can be measured by specially designed scales or inventories. Because they are simple to use and to score and can be self-administered, personality inventories are the preferred method for many researchers in the assessment of consumer personality. Product and brand personalities represent real opportunities for marketers to take advantage of consumers' connections to various brands they offer. Brands often have personalities—some include "humanlike" traits and even gender. These brand personalities help shape consumer responses, preferences, and loyalties.

Each individual has a perceived self-image (or multiple self-images) as a certain kind of person with certain traits, habits, possessions, relationships, and ways of behaving. Consumers frequently attempt to preserve, enhance, alter, or extend their self-images by purchasing products or services and shopping at stores they perceive as consistent with their relevant self-image(s) and by avoiding products and stores they perceive are not. With the growth of the Internet, there appear to be emerging virtual selves or virtual personalities. Consumer experiences with chat rooms sometimes provide an opportunity to explore new or alternative identities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you explain the fact that, although no two individuals have identical personalities, personality is sometimes used in consumer research to identify distinct and sizable market segments?
2. Contrast the major characteristics of the following personality theories: (a) Freudian theory, (b) neo-Freudian theory, and (c) trait theory. In your answer, illustrate how each theory is applied to the understanding of consumer behavior.
3. Describe personality trait theory. Give five examples of how personality traits can be used in consumer research.

4. How can a marketer of cameras use research findings that indicate a target market consists primarily of inner-directed or other-directed consumers? Of consumers who are high (or low) on innovativeness?
5. Describe the type of promotional message that would be most suitable for each of the following personality market segments and give an example of each: (a) highly dogmatic consumers, (b) inner-directed consumers, (c) consumers with high optimum stimulation levels, (d) consumers with a high need for recognition, and (e) consumers who are visualizers versus consumers who are verbalizers.
6. Is there likely to be a difference in personality traits between individuals who readily purchase foreign-made products and those who prefer American-made products? How can marketers use the consumer ethnocentrism scale to segment consumers?
7. A marketer of health foods is attempting to segment a certain market on the basis of consumer self-image. Describe the four types of consumer self-image and discuss which one(s) would be most effective for the stated purpose.

EXERCISES

1. How do your clothing preferences differ from those of your friends? What personality traits might explain why your preferences are different from those of other people?
2. Find three print advertisements based on Freudian personality theory. Discuss how Freudian concepts are used in these ads. Do any of the ads personify a brand? If so, how?
3. Administer the nine items from the materialism scale (listed in Table 5.5) to two of your friends. In your view, are their consumption behaviors consistent with their scores on the scale? Why or why not?

KEY TERMS

- **actual self-image**
- **brand personification**
- **cognitive personality**
- **compulsive consumption**
- **consumer ethnocentrism**
- **consumer innovativeness**
- **consumer innovators**
- **consumer materialism**
- **dogmatism**
- **expected self**
- **extended self**
- **Freudian theory**
- **ideal self-image**
- **ideal social self-image**
- **inner-directedness**
- **multiple selves**
- **need for cognition**
- **neo-Freudian theory**
- **optimum stimulation levels**
- **other-directedness**
- **"ought-to" self**
- **personality**
- **psychoanalytic theory of personality**
- **roles**
- **sensation seeking**
- **social self-image**
- **trait theory**
- **variety- or novelty-seeking**
- **virtual personality or self**
- **visualizers versus verbalizers**

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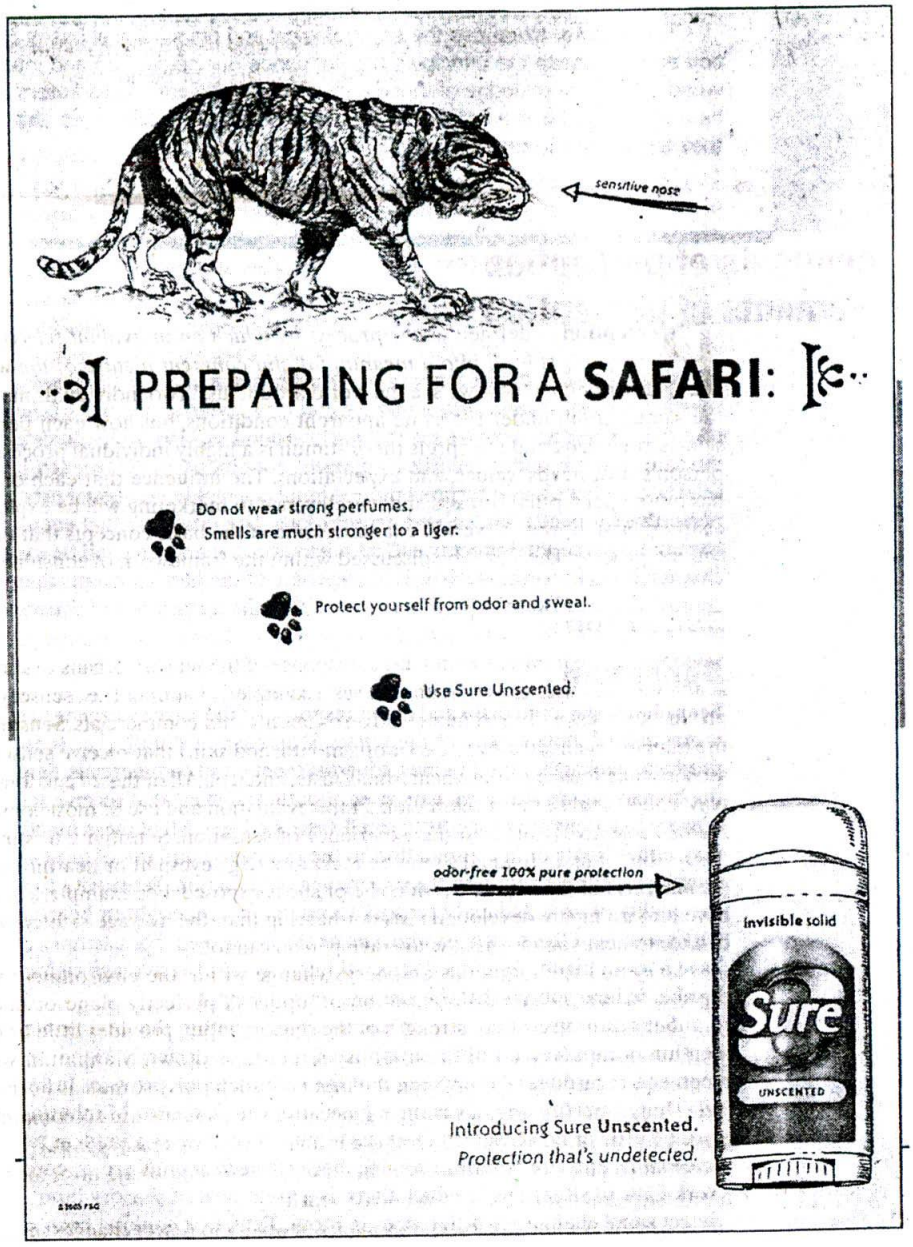
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chapter**six**

Consumer Perception

In 1967, Gablinger's beer was introduced as a "low-calorie" beer. It was promoted as a diet beer with the proposition that heavy beer drinkers (who buy most of the beer sold) would gain less weight drinking this product than they would drinking regular beer. The product failed. Five years later, Miller Lite was introduced as "less filling" under the slogan "everything you want in a beer . . . and less." The product was a great success and paved the way for many other brands of light beer.[1] Miller Lite succeeded because the company's promotion suggested beer drinkers could drink more beer than they already did without feeling full. Gablinger's failed because it told beer drinkers that they would gain less weight while drinking beer (though heavy beer drinkers are usually not concerned with their weight). In reality, in terms of physical product attributes, Gablinger's and Miller Lite were practically identical. It's how the two offerings were perceived by the target audience—how they were "positioned"—that made the difference. Whereas Gablinger's offered consumers a product *attribute* (i.e., less calories), Miller Lite offered them a product *benefit*—a less filling beer that allowed them to drink more beer.

Individuals act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the basis of objective reality. For each individual, *reality* is a totally personal phenomenon, based on that person's needs,



wants, values, and personal experiences. Thus, to the marketer, consumers' perceptions are much more important than their knowledge of objective reality. For if one thinks about it, it's not what actually is so, but what consumers *think* is so, that affects their actions, their buying habits, their leisure habits, and so forth. And, because individuals make decisions and take actions based on what they perceive to be reality, it is important that marketers understand the whole notion of perception and its related concepts to more readily determine what factors influence consumers to buy. Before the introduction of low-calorie beer, consumers had no preconceived view of the product. Because Miller understood the behavior of beer drinkers, it

provided the company with a way to interpret the new offering in a manner congruent with their needs, which Gablinger's failed to do earlier for the same product.

This chapter examines the psychological and physiological bases of human perception and discusses the principles that influence our perception and interpretation of the world we see. Knowledge of these principles enables astute marketers to develop advertisements that have a better-than-average chance of being seen and remembered by their target consumers.

elements of perception

Perception is defined as *the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world.* It can be described as "how we see the world around us." Two individuals may be exposed to the same stimuli under the same apparent conditions, but how each person recognizes, selects, organizes, and interprets these stimuli is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, and expectations. The influence that each of these variables has on the perceptual process and its relevance to marketing will be explored later in the chapter. First, however, we will examine some of the basic concepts that underlie the perceptual process. These will be discussed within the framework of consumer behavior.

Sensation

Sensation is the immediate and direct response of the sensory organs to stimuli. A **stimulus** is any unit of input to any of the senses. Examples of stimuli (i.e., sensory input) include products, packages, brand names, advertisements, and commercials. **Sensory receptors** are the human organs (the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin) that receive sensory inputs. Their sensory functions are to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. All of these functions are called into play, either singly or in combination, in the evaluation and use of most consumer products. Human sensitivity refers to the experience of sensation. Sensitivity to stimuli varies with the quality of an individual's sensory receptors (e.g., eyesight or hearing) and the amount (or *intensity*) of the stimuli to which he or she is exposed. For example, a blind person may have a more highly developed sense of hearing than the average sighted person and may be able to hear sounds that the average person cannot.

Sensation itself depends on energy change within the environment where the perception occurs (i.e., on differentiation of input). A perfectly bland or unchanging environment, regardless of the strength of the sensory input, provides little or no sensation at all. Thus, a person who lives on a busy street in midtown Manhattan would probably receive little or no sensation from the inputs of such noisy stimuli as horns honking, tires screeching, and fire engines clanging, because such sounds are so commonplace in New York City. In situations in which there is a great deal of sensory input, the senses do not detect small changes or differences in input. Thus, one honking horn more or less would never be noticed on a street with heavy traffic.

As sensory input *decreases*, however, our ability to detect changes in input or intensity *increases*, to the point that we attain maximum sensitivity under conditions of minimal stimulation. This accounts for the statement, "It was so quiet I could hear a pin drop." The ability of the human organism to accommodate itself to varying levels of sensitivity as external conditions vary not only provides more sensitivity when it is needed but also serves to protect us from damaging, disruptive, or irrelevant bombardment when the input level is high.

One researcher pointed out that 83 percent of all communications today appeal to sight; also that smell, not sound, is the second most important sensory input. This study also reported that consumers preferred shoes and belts presented in a scented room rather than a non-scented room, and were also willing to pay higher prices for these products.[2] The importance of smell in communication was strongly supported by two

Americans who developed a scientific explanation as to how people associate memories with smells (and won the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physiology for this work) and other studies demonstrating the impact of fragrance on product and store choices.[3]

The absolute threshold

The lowest level at which an individual can experience a sensation is called the **absolute threshold**. The point at which a person can detect a difference between "something" and "nothing" is that person's absolute threshold for that stimulus. To illustrate, the distance at which a driver can note a specific billboard on a highway is that individual's absolute threshold. Two people riding together may first spot the billboard at different times (i.e., at different distances); thus, they appear to have different absolute thresholds. Under conditions of constant stimulation, such as driving through a "corridor" of billboards, the absolute threshold increases (i.e., the senses tend to become increasingly dulled). After an hour of driving through billboards, it is doubtful that any one billboard will make an impression. Hence, we often speak of "getting used to" a hot bath, a cold shower, or the bright sun. As our exposure to the stimulus increases, we notice it less. In the field of perception, the term *adaptation* refers specifically to "getting used to" certain sensations; that is, becoming accommodated to a certain level of stimulation.

Sensory adaptation is a problem that concerns many national advertisers, which is why they try to change their advertising campaigns regularly. They are concerned that consumers will get so used to their current print ads and TV commercials that they will no longer "see" them; that is, the ads will no longer provide sufficient sensory input to be noted.

In an effort to cut through the advertising clutter and ensure that consumers note their ads, some marketers try to *increase* sensory input. For example, Apple Computer once bought all the advertising space in an issue of *Newsweek* magazine to ensure that readers would note its ads. From time to time, various advertisers have taken all of the bus cards on certain bus routes to advertise their products, ensuring that wherever a rider sits, he or she will be exposed to the ad. Other advertisers try to attract attention by *decreasing* sensory input. For example, some print ads include a lot of empty space in order to accentuate the brand name or product illustration, and some TV ads use silence, the absence of audio sound, to generate attention.

Some marketers seek unusual or technological media in which to place their advertisements in an effort to gain attention. Examples of such media include disks placed in bathroom sinks that play commercials when activated by running water, ads embedded in the floors of supermarkets, and small monitors that display weather and news, as well as advertising, placed in elevators. Researchers have reported that the use of an ambient scent in a retail environment enhances the shopping experience for many consumers and makes the time they spend examining merchandise, waiting in line, and waiting for help seem shorter than it actually is.[4] Some marketers have invested in the development of specially engineered scents to enhance their products and entice consumers to buy. Marketers try to form stronger bonds between young, design-oriented consumers and brands, using the store image itself to give "dimension" to their brands, and present them as "cool." For example, in one store selling sports footwear, the shoes are integrated into a huge sound system in the shape of a wall; in another store selling advertised high-definition TVs, the screens show works of art inside the store.[5]

The differential threshold

The minimal difference that can be detected between two similar stimuli is called the **differential threshold**, or the **just noticeable difference** (the **j.n.d.**). A nineteenth-century German scientist named Ernst Weber discovered that the j.n.d. between two stimuli was not an absolute amount, but an amount relative to the intensity of the first stimulus. **Weber's law**, as it has come to be known, states that the stronger the initial stimulus, the greater the additional intensity needed for the second stimulus to be perceived as different. For example, if the price of a half gallon container of premium, freshly squeezed orange juice is $5.50, most consumers will probably not notice an increase of 25 cents

(i.e., the increment would fall below the j.n.d.), and it may take an increase of 50 cents or more before a differential in price would be noticed. However, a 50-cent increase in the price of gasoline would be noticed very quickly by consumers because it is a significant percentage of the initial (base) cost of the gasoline.

According to Weber's law, an additional level of stimulus equivalent to the j.n.d. must be added for the majority of people to perceive a difference between the resulting stimulus and the initial stimulus. Let us say that Goddard's, a 130-year-old manufacturer of fine polishes, wants to improve its silver polish sufficiently to claim that it retards tarnish longer than the leading competitive brand. In a series of experiments, the company determines that the j.n.d. for its present polish (which now gives a shine that lasts about 20 days) is 5 days, or one-fourth longer. That means that the shine given by the improved silver polish must last at least 25 days (or one-fourth) longer if the new polish is to be perceived by the majority of users as, in fact, improved. By finding this j.n.d. of 5 days, the company has isolated the minimum amount of time necessary to make its claim of "lasts longer" believable to the majority of consumers. If it had decided to make the polish effective for 23 days (just 3 extra days of product life), its claim of "lasts longer" would not be perceived as true by most consumers and, from the marketer's point of view, would be "wasted." On the other hand, if the company had decided to make the silver polish effective for 40 days, it would have sacrificed a good deal of repeat purchase frequency. Making the product improvement just equal to the j.n.d. thus becomes the most efficient decision that management can make.

An interesting application of the j.n.d. is the development of new food products. With the public alarm regarding the rapidly rising obesity rates, food marketers are looking for substances that can mimic the creamy and palate-coating food of fatty products such as pudding, cheese, and chocolate.[6] The challenge is to create fat substitutes with taste that is below, or at least not significantly above, consumers' j.n.d. for the original, fatty foods.

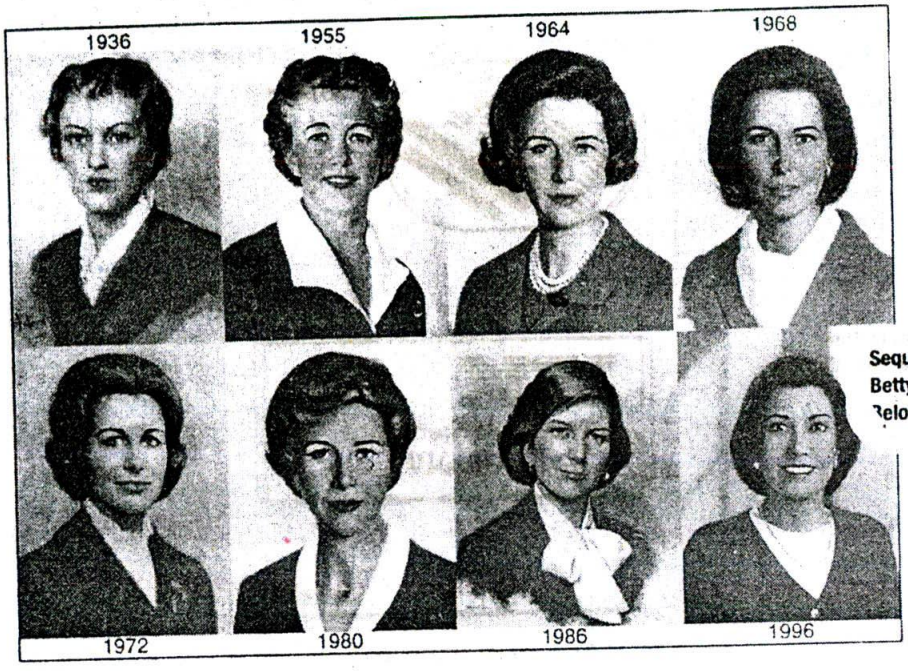
Marketing applications of the j.n.d.

Weber's law has important applications in marketing. Manufacturers and marketers endeavor to determine the relevant j.n.d. for their products for two very different reasons: (1) so that negative changes (e.g., reductions in product size or quality, or increases in product price) are not readily discernible to the public (i.e., remain below the j.n.d.), and (2) so that product improvements (e.g., improved or updated packaging, larger size, or lower price) are very apparent to consumers without being wastefully extravagant (i.e., they are at or just above the j.n.d.). For example, some years ago, in an apparent misunderstanding of the j.n.d., a silver polish manufacturer introduced an extension of its silver polish brand that prolonged the shine of the silver by months but raised its product price by merely pennies. By doing so, the company decreased its sales revenue because the new version cannibalized the sales of the old product and, at the same time, was purchased much less frequently than the old version. One marketing expert advised the company to double the price of the new product rather than make it just slightly more expensive than the old one.[7] However, for a nondurable consumer good, a product that has been improved dramatically but is doubled in price is inconsistent with the concept of the j.n.d. A better strategy would have been to introduce several successive versions of the polish; each version with a shine that lasts longer than the previous version (and at or slightly above the j.n.d.) and offered at a higher price (but a price that is lower than the j.n.d.).

When it comes to product improvements, marketers very much want to meet or exceed the consumer's differential threshold; that is, they want consumers to readily perceive any improvements made in the original product. Marketers use the j.n.d. to determine the amount of improvement they should make in their products. Less than the j.n.d. is wasted effort because the improvement will not be perceived; more than the j.n.d. is wasteful because it reduces the level of repeat sales. On the other hand, when it comes to price increases, less than the j.n.d. is desirable because consumers are unlikely to notice it.

Since many routinely purchased consumer goods are relatively inexpensive, companies are reluctant to raise prices when their profit margins on these items are declining.

FIGURE 6.1



Source: Courtesy of General Mills, Inc.

Sequential Changes in the Betty Crocker Symbol Fall Below the j.n.d.

Instead, many marketers decrease the product *quantity* included in the packages, while leaving the prices unchanged—thus, in effect, increasing the per unit price. The manufacturer of Huggies reduced the number of diapers in a package from 240 to 228 (and continued pricing it at $31.99); PepsiCo reduced the weight of one snack food bag from 14.5 ounces to 13.5 ounces (and maintained the price at $3.29), and Poland Spring reduced its water-cooler-sized bottle from 6 to 5 gallons (and maintained the old price at $9.25).[8] The packages for these products remained virtually unchanged. Presumably, the decreases in the number of items or weight of these products reflect j.n.d.-focused research; the reductions in quantity were below most consumers' j.n.d. for these products.

Marketers often want to update their existing package designs without losing the ready recognition of consumers who have been exposed to years of cumulative advertising impact. In such cases, they usually make a number of small changes, each carefully designed to fall below the j.n.d., so that consumers will perceive minimal difference between succeeding versions. For example, Betty Crocker, the General Mills symbol, has been updated seven times from 1936 to 1996 (see Figure 6.1).

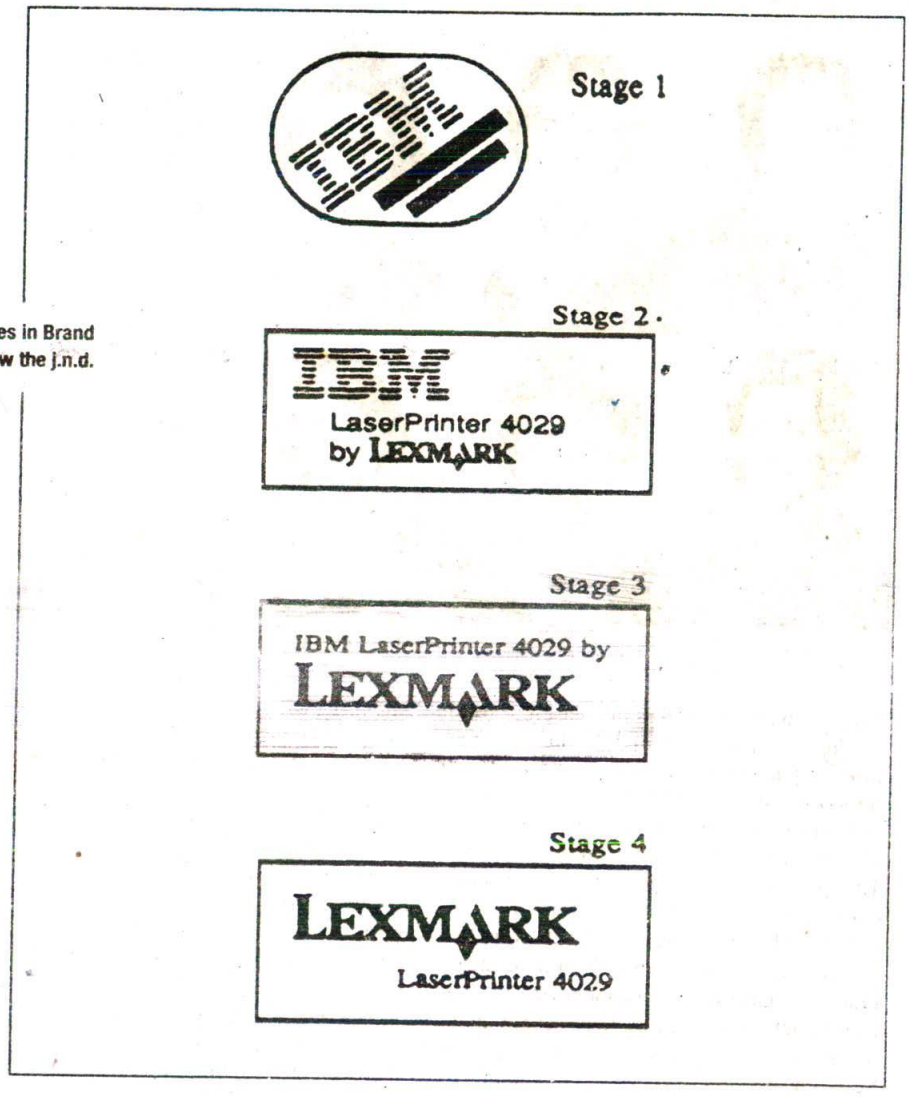
When Lexmark International Inc. bought the office supplies and equipment line from IBM in March 1991, it agreed to relinquish the IBM name by 1996. Recognizing the need to build a brand image for Lexmark while moving away from the well-known IBM name, Lexmark officials conducted a four-stage campaign for phasing in the Lexmark name on products. As Figure 6.2 indicates, Stage 1 carried only the IBM name, Stage 2 featured the IBM name and downplayed Lexmark, Stage 3 featured the Lexmark name and downplayed IBM, and Stage 4 features only the Lexmark name. Figure 6.3 shows a Lexmark ad with the transition complete.

Subliminal perception

In Chapter 4 we spoke of people being *motivated* below their level of conscious awareness. People are also *stimulated* below their level of conscious awareness; that is, they can perceive stimuli without being consciously aware that they are doing so. Stimuli that are too weak or too brief to be consciously seen or heard may nevertheless be strong enough to be perceived by one or more receptor cells. This process is called **subliminal perception**

FIGURE 6.2

Source: © Lexmark International, Inc. Used with permission.



Gradual Changes in Brand Name Below the j.n.d.

because the stimulus is beneath the thresnold, or "limen," of conscious awareness, though obviously not beneath the absolute threshold of the receptors involved. (Perception of stimuli that are above the level of conscious awareness technically is called *supraliminal perception*, though it is usually referred to simply as perception.)

The effectiveness of so-called subliminal advertising was reportedly first tested at a drive-in movie in New Jersey in 1957, where the words "Eat popcorn" and "Drink Coca-Cola" were flashed on the screen during the movie. Exposure times were so short that viewers were unaware of seeing a message. It was reported that during the six-week test period, popcorn sales increased 58 percent and Coca-Cola sales increased 18 percent, but these findings were later reported to be false. Years later, a scientific study found that although the simple subliminal stimulus COKE served to arouse thirst in subjects, the subliminal command DRINK COKE did not have a greater effect, nor did it have any behavioral consequences.[9]

Since the 1950s, there have been sporadic reports of marketers using subliminal messages in their efforts to influence consumption behavior. For example, Disney was

FIGURE 6.3



Source: © Lexmark International, Inc. Used with permission.

Transition Complete: Lexmark Stands Alone

accused of using subliminal messages in the movies *Aladdin* (where the hero allegedly whispers "good teenagers, take off your clothes" in a subaudible voice), *The Little Mermaid* (where a minister officiating at a wedding ceremony allegedly displays an erection), and *The Lion King* (where the letters "S-E-X" are allegedly formed in a cloud of dust).[10] At times, it has been difficult to separate truth from fiction regarding such alleged manipulations. When some of the subliminal methods were tested methodically using scientific research procedures, the research results did not support the notion that subliminal messages can persuade consumers to act in a given manner.

Evaluating the effectiveness of subliminal persuasion

Despite the many studies undertaken by academicians and researchers since the 1950s, there is no evidence that subliminal advertising persuades people to buy goods or services. A review of the literature indicates that subliminal perception research has been based on two theoretical approaches. According to the first theory, constant repetition of

very weak (i.e., subthreshold) stimuli has an incremental effect that enables such stimuli to build response strength over many presentations. This would be the operative theory when weak stimuli are flashed repeatedly on a movie screen or played on a soundtrack or audiocassette. The second approach is based on the theory that subliminal sexual stimuli arouse unconscious sexual motivations. This is the theory behind the use of sexual embeds in print advertising. But no studies have yet indicated that either of these theoretical approaches has been effectively used by advertisers to increase sales. However, there is some indication that subliminal advertising may provide new opportunities for modifying antisocial behavior through public awareness campaigns that call for individuals to make generalized responses to suggestions that enhance their personal performance or improve their attitudes.[11] There is also some (though not definitive) evidence that subliminal methods can indirectly influence attitudes and feelings toward brands.[12]

In summary, although there is some evidence that subliminal stimuli may influence affective reactions, there is no evidence that subliminal stimulation can influence consumption behavior. There continues to be a big gap between perception and persuasion. A recent review of the evidence on subliminal persuasion indicates that the only way for subliminal techniques to have a significant persuasive effect would be through long-term repeated exposure under a limited set of circumstances, which would not be economically feasible or practical within an advertising context.[13]

As to sexual embeds, most researchers are of the opinion that "what you see is what you get"; that is, a vivid imagination can see whatever it wants to see in just about any situation. And that pretty much sums up the whole notion of perception: Individuals see what they want to see (e.g., what they are motivated to see) and what they expect to see. Several studies concerned with public beliefs about subliminal advertising found that a large percentage of Americans know what subliminal advertising is, they believe it is used by advertisers, and that it is effective in persuading consumers to buy.[14] To correct any misperceptions among the public that subliminal advertising does, in fact, exist, the advertising community occasionally sponsors ads like the one depicted in Figure 6.4, which ridicule the notion that subliminal techniques are effective or that they are used in advertising applications. The ethical issues related to subliminal advertising are discussed later in this chapter.

dynamics of perception

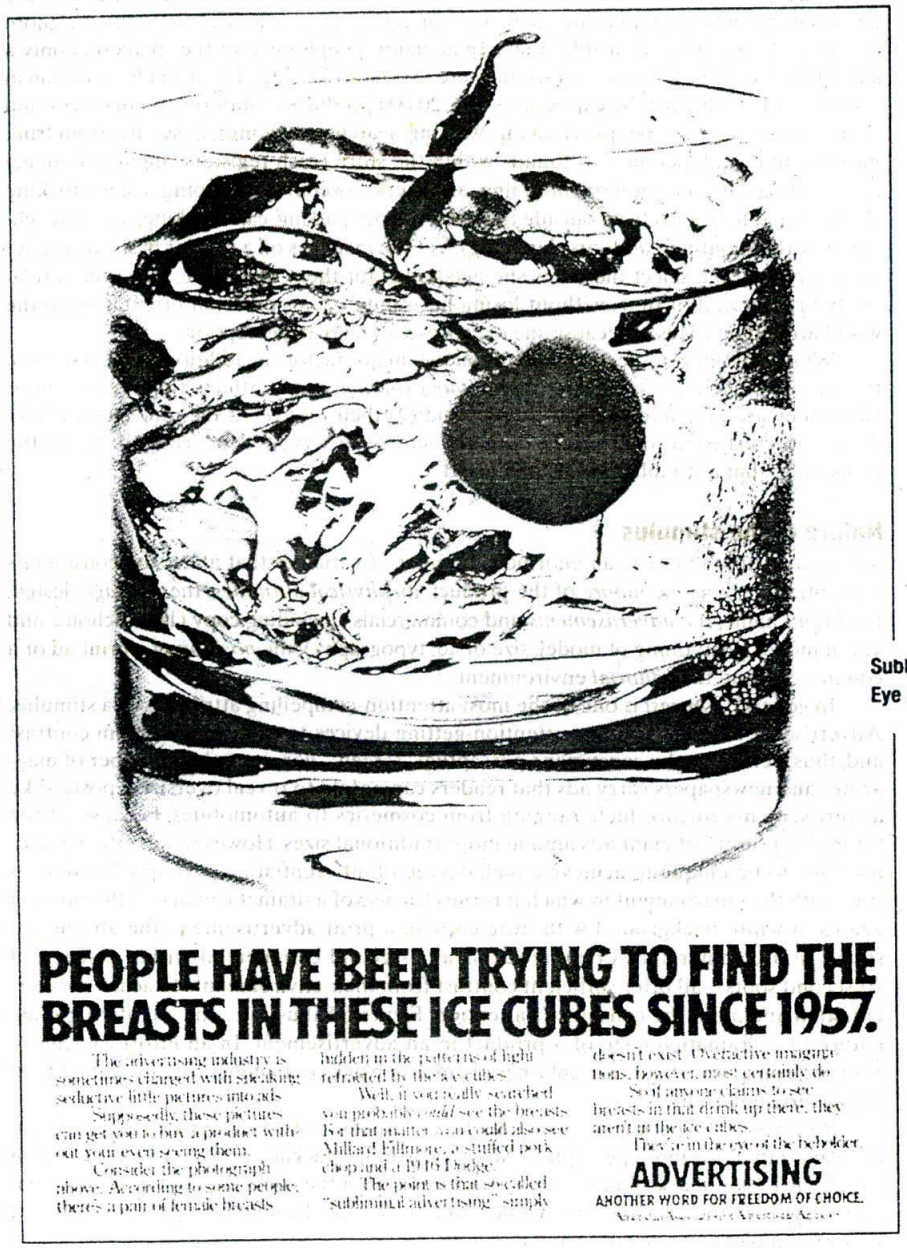
The preceding section explained how the individual receives sensations from stimuli in the outside environment and how the human organism adapts to the level and intensity of sensory input. We now come to one of the major principles of perception: Raw sensory input by itself does not produce or explain the coherent picture of the world that most adults possess. Indeed, the study of perception is largely the study of what we subconsciously add to or subtract from raw sensory inputs to produce our own private picture of the world.

Human beings are constantly bombarded with stimuli during every minute and every hour of every day. The sensory world is made up of an almost infinite number of discrete sensations that are constantly and subtly changing. According to the principles of sensation, intensive stimulation "bounces off" most individuals, who subconsciously block (i.e., adapt to) a heavy bombardment of stimuli. Otherwise, the billions of different stimuli to which we are constantly exposed might serve to confuse us and keep us perpetually disoriented in a constantly changing environment. However, neither of these consequences tends to occur, because perception is not a function of sensory input alone. Rather, perception is the result of two different kinds of inputs that interact to form the personal pictures—the perceptions—that each individual experiences.

One type of input is *physical stimuli* from the outside environment; the other type of input is provided by individuals themselves in the form of certain predispositions (expectations, motives, and learning) based on *previous experience*. The combination of these two very different kinds of inputs produces for each of us a very private, very personal picture of the world. Because each person is a unique individual, with unique

FIGURE 6.4

Source: Courtesy of American Association of Advertising Agencies.



Subliminal Embeds Are in the Eye of the Beholder

experiences, needs, wants, desires, and expectations, it follows that each individual's perceptions are also unique. This explains why no two people see the world in precisely the same way.

Individuals are very selective as to which stimuli they "recognize"; they subconsciously organize the stimuli they do recognize according to widely held psychological principles, and they interpret such stimuli (they give meaning to them) subjectively in accordance with their personal needs, expectations, and experiences. The following sections examine each of these three aspects of perception: the **selection**, **organization**, and **interpretation of stimuli**.

Perceptual selection

Consumers subconsciously exercise a great deal of selectivity as to which aspects of the environment (which stimuli) they perceive. An individual may look at some things, ignore others, and turn away from still others. In actuality, people receive (i.e., perceive) only a small fraction of the stimuli to which they are exposed. Consider, for example, a woman in a supermarket. She may be exposed to over 20,000 products of different colors, sizes, and shapes; to perhaps 100 people (looking, walking, searching, talking); to smells (from fruit, meat, disinfectant, people); to sounds within the store (cash registers ringing, shopping carts rolling, air conditioners humming, and clerks sweeping, mopping aisles, stocking shelves); and to sounds from outside the store (planes passing, cars honking, tires screeching, children shouting, car doors slamming). Yet she manages on a regular basis to visit her local supermarket, select the items she needs, pay for them, and leave, all within a relatively brief period of time, without losing her sanity or her personal orientation to the world around her. This is because she exercises *selectivity* in perception.

Which stimuli get selected depends on two major factors in addition to the nature of the stimulus itself: (1) consumers' *previous experience* as it affects their *expectations* (what they are prepared, or "set," to see) and (2) their *motives* at the time (their needs, desires, interests, and so on). Each of these factors can serve to increase or decrease the probability that a stimulus will be perceived.

Nature of the stimulus

Marketing stimuli include an enormous number of variables that affect the consumer's perception, such as the *nature* of the product, its *physical attributes*, the *package* design, the *brand* name, the *advertisements* and commercials (including copy claims, choice and sex of model, positioning of model, size of ad, typography), the *position* of a print ad or a commercial, and the *editorial* environment.

In general, *contrast* is one of the most attention-compelling attributes of a stimulus. Advertisers often use extreme attention-getting devices to achieve maximum contrast and, thus, penetrate the consumer's perceptual "screen." For example, a number of magazines and newspapers carry ads that readers can unfold to reveal oversized, poster-like advertisements for products ranging from cosmetics to automobiles, because of the "stopping power" of giant ads among more traditional sizes. However, advertising does not have to be unique to achieve a high degree of differentiation; it simply has to contrast with the environment in which it is run. The use of a dramatic image of the product against a white background with little copy in a print advertisement, the absence of sound in a commercial's opening scene, a 60-second commercial within a string of 20-second spots—all offer sufficient contrast from their environments to achieve differentiation and merit the consumer's attention. Figure 6.5 illustrates the attention-getting nature of a dramatic image of a product in an advertisement. In an effort to achieve contrast, some advertisers use splashes of color in black-and-white print ads to highlight the advertised product.

With respect to packaging, astute marketers usually try to differentiate their packages to ensure rapid consumer perception. Since the average package on the supermarket shelf has about 1/10th of a second to make an impression on the consumer, it is important that every aspect of the package—the name, shape, color, label, and copy—provide sufficient sensory stimulation to be noted and remembered.

Expectations

People usually see what they expect to see, and what they expect to see is usually based on familiarity, previous experience, or preconditioned set (**expectations**). In a marketing context, people tend to perceive products and product attributes according to their own expectations. A student who has been told by his friends that a particular professor is interesting and dynamic will probably perceive the professor in that manner when the class begins; a teenager who attends a horror movie that has been billed as terrifying will probably find it so. On the other hand, stimuli that conflict sharply with expectations often receive more attention than those that conform to expectations.



FIGURE 6.5

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Dramatic Image of a Product Compels Attention

For years, some advertisers have used blatant sexuality in advertisements for products to which sex is not relevant, in the belief that such advertisements would attract a high degree of attention. However, ads with irrelevant sexuality often defeat the marketer's objectives because readers tend to remember the sexual aspects of the ad (e.g., the innuendo or the model), not the product or brand advertised. Nevertheless, some advertisers continue to use erotic appeals in promoting a wide variety of products, from office furniture to jeans. (The use of sex in advertising is discussed in Chapter 9.)

Motives

People tend to perceive the things they need or want; the stronger the need, the greater the tendency to ignore unrelated stimuli in the environment. A student who is looking for a new cell phone provider is more likely to notice and read carefully ads for deals and special offers regarding such services than his roommate, who may be satisfied with his present cellular service. In general, there is a heightened awareness of stimuli that are relevant to one's needs and interests and a decreased awareness of stimuli that are irrelevant to those needs. An individual's perceptual process simply attunes itself more closely to those elements in the environment that are important to him or her. Someone who is overweight is more likely to notice ads for diet foods; a sexually repressed person may perceive sexual symbolism where none exists.

Marketing managers recognize the efficiency of targeting their products to the perceived needs of consumers. For example, a marketer can determine through marketing research what different segments of consumers consider to be the ideal attributes of the product category or what they perceive their needs to be in relation to the product category. The marketer can then segment the market on the basis of those needs and vary the product advertising so that consumers in each segment will perceive the product as meeting their own special needs, wants, or interests.

Selective perception

As the preceding discussion illustrates, the consumer's "selection" of stimuli from the environment is based on the interaction of expectations and motives with the stimulus itself. These factors give rise to four important concepts concerning perception.

Selective Exposure Consumers actively seek out messages that they find pleasant or with which they are sympathetic, and they actively avoid painful or threatening ones. They also selectively expose themselves to advertisements that reassure them of the wisdom of their purchase decisions.

Selective Attention Consumers exercise a great deal of selectivity in terms of the attention they give to commercial stimuli. They have a heightened awareness of stimuli that meet their needs or interests and minimal awareness of stimuli irrelevant to their needs. Thus, consumers are likely to note ads for products that would satisfy their needs and disregard those in which they have no interest. People also vary in terms of the kinds of information in which they are interested and the form of message and type of medium they prefer. Some people are more interested in price, some in appearance, and some in social acceptability. Some people like complex, sophisticated messages; others like simple graphics.

Perceptual Defense Consumers subconsciously screen out stimuli that they find psychologically threatening, even though exposure has already taken place. Thus, threatening or otherwise damaging stimuli are less likely to be consciously perceived than are neutral stimuli at the same level of exposure. Furthermore, individuals sometimes unconsciously distort information that is not consistent with their needs, values, and beliefs. One way to combat *perceptual defense* is to vary and increase the amount of sensory input. For example, since research showed that most Canadian smokers no longer pay attention to the written warning labels on cigarette packs, Canada now requires tobacco firms to feature graphic health warnings on cigarette packs; one such warning shows a damaged brain and warns about strokes; another shows a limp cigarette and states that tobacco can cause impotence.[15]

Perceptual Blocking Consumers protect themselves from being bombarded with stimuli by simply "tuning out"—blocking such stimuli from conscious awareness. They do so out of self-protection because of the visually overwhelming nature of the world in which we live. The popularity of such devices as *TiVo* and *ReplayTV*, which enable viewers to skip over TV commercials with great ease, is, in part, a result of *perceptual blocking*.

Perceptual organization

People do not experience the numerous stimuli they select from the environment as separate and discrete sensations; rather, they tend to organize them into groups and perceive them as unified wholes. Thus, the perceived characteristics of even the simplest stimulus are viewed as a function of the whole to which the stimulus appears to belong. This method of perceptual organization simplifies life considerably for the individual.

The specific principles underlying perceptual organization are often referred to by the name given the school of psychology that first developed it: **Gestalt psychology**. (*Gestalt*, in German, means pattern or configuration.) Three of the most basic principles of perceptual organization are *figure and ground*, *grouping*, and *closure*.

Figure and ground

As was noted earlier, stimuli that contrast with their environment are more likely to be noticed. A sound must be louder or softer, a color brighter or paler. The simplest visual illustration consists of a figure on a ground (i.e., background). The figure is perceived more clearly because, in contrast to its ground, it appears to be well defined, solid, and in the forefront. The ground is usually perceived as indefinite, hazy, and continuous. The common line that separates the figure and the ground is generally attributed to the figure rather than to the ground, which helps give the figure greater definition. Consider the stimulus of music. People can either "bathe" in music or listen to music. In the first case, music is simply background to other activities; in the second, it is figure. Figure is more clearly perceived because it appears to be dominant; in contrast, ground appears to be subordinate and, therefore, less important. Figure 6.6 presents an ad that stresses *figure* (the product) over *ground* (the hazy, continuous background).

People have a tendency to organize their perceptions into **figure-and-ground** relationships. How a figure–ground pattern is perceived can be influenced by prior pleasant or painful associations with one or the other element in isolation. For example, a short time following the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 by airplanes hijacked by terrorists, a professor in New Jersey came across an ad for Lufthansa (Germany's national airline) that featured a flying jet, photographed from the ground up, between two glass high-rise buildings. Rather than focusing on the brand and the jet (i.e., the "figure"), all the viewer could think about was the two tall glass towers in the background (i.e., the "ground"), and the possibility of the jet crashing into them. When the professor presented the ad to his students, many expressed the same thoughts. Clearly, this figure–ground reversal was the outcome of the painful events that occurred in September 2001.

Advertisers have to plan their advertisements carefully to make sure that the stimulus they want noted is seen as figure and not as ground. The musical background must not overwhelm the jingle; the background of an advertisement must not detract from the product. Print advertisers often silhouette their products against a nondistinct background to make sure that the features they want noted are clearly perceived. We are all familiar with figure–ground reversals, such as the picture of the woman in Figure 6.7. How old would you say she is? Look again very carefully. Depending on how you perceived figure and how you perceived ground, she can be either in her early twenties or her late seventies.

Marketers sometimes run advertisements that confuse the consumer because there is no clear indication of which is figure and which is ground. Of course, in some cases, the blurring of figure and ground is deliberate. The well-known Absolut Vodka campaign, started over 25 years ago, often runs print ads in which the figure (the shape of the Absolut bottle) is poorly delineated against its ground, challenging readers to search for the bottle; the resulting audience "participation" produces more intense ad scrutiny.

Grouping

Individuals tend to group stimuli so that they form a unified picture or impression. The perception of stimuli as groups or chunks of information, rather than as discrete bits of

FIGURE 6.6



Source: © The Gillette Company. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Product as Figure with a Hazy (back) Ground.

information, facilitates their memory and recall. **Grouping** can be used advantageously by marketers to imply certain desired meanings in connection with their products. For example, an advertisement for tea may show a young man and woman sipping tea in a beautifully appointed room before a blazing hearth. The overall mood implied by the grouping of stimuli leads the consumer to associate the drinking of tea with romance, fine living, and winter warmth.

Most of us can remember and repeat our Social Security numbers because we automatically group them into three "*chunks*," rather than try to remember nine separate numbers. Similarly, we recall and repeat our phone number in three segments—the area code, first three digits, and the last four digits. Also, for decades, Americans had five-digit

FIGURE 6.7



Source: American Journal of Psychology by Boring, E. G. Copyright 1930 by Univ. of Illinois Press. Reproduced with permission of Univ. of Illinois Press.

Figure-and-Ground Reversal

zip codes grouped as a single chunk; as four digits are being added to our zip codes, the U.S. Postal Service faces a challenge in getting Americans to recall the extra digits and add a chunk to their recollection of zip codes.

Closure

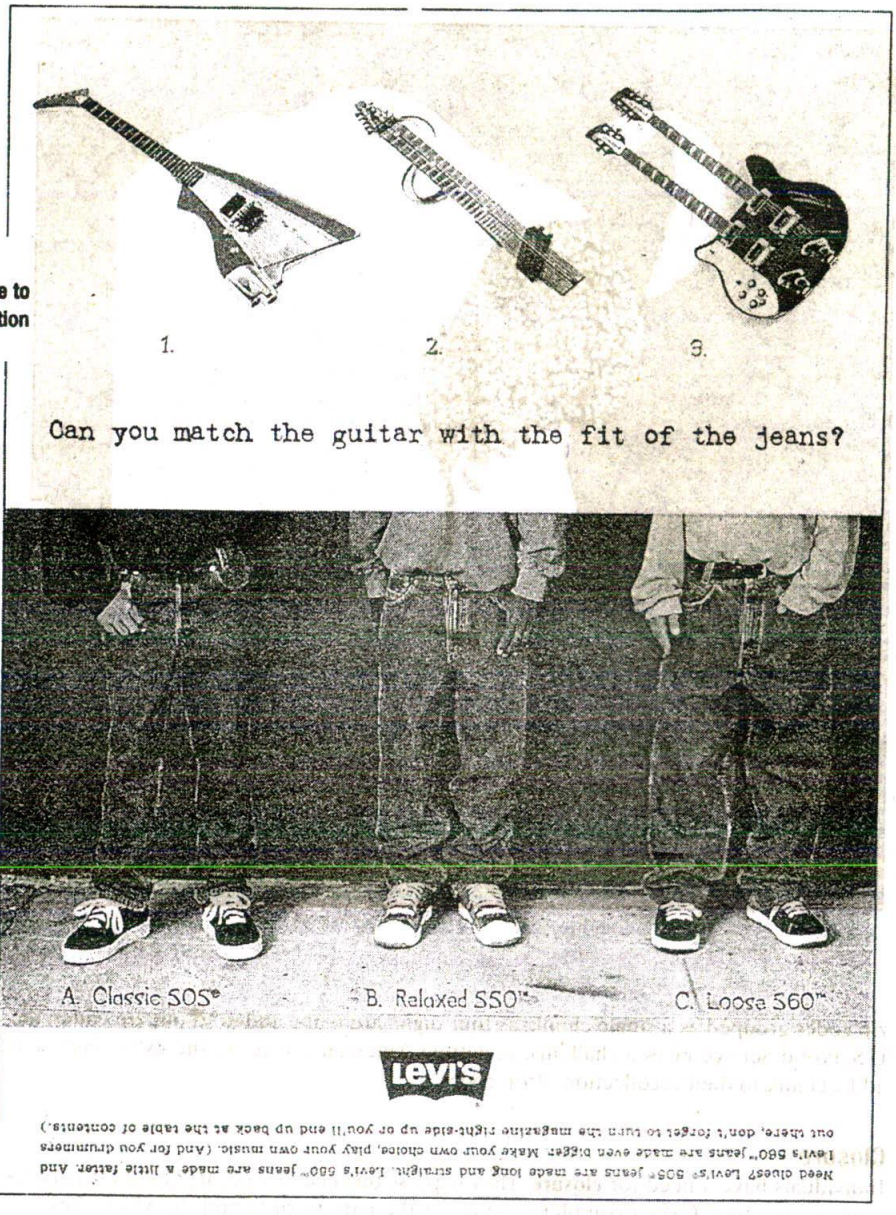
Individuals have a need for **closure**. They express this need by organizing their perceptions so that they form a complete picture. If the pattern of stimuli to which they are exposed is incomplete, they tend to perceive it, nevertheless, as complete; that is, they consciously or subconsciously fill in the missing pieces. Thus, a circle with a section of its periphery missing is invariably perceived as a circle, not an arc.

Incomplete messages or tasks are better remembered than completed ones. One explanation for this phenomenon is that a person who hears the beginning of a message or who begins a task develops a need to complete it. If he or she is prevented from doing so, a state of tension is created that manifests itself in improved memory for the incomplete task. For example, hearing the beginning of a message leads to the need to hear the rest of it—like waiting for the second shoe to drop.

The need for closure has interesting implications for marketers. Promotional messages in which viewers are required to "fill in" information beg for completion by consumers, and the very act of completion serves to involve them more deeply in the

FIGURE 6.8

Source: Courtesy of Levi Strauss & Co.



Using the Need for Closure to Increase Attention

message (see Figure 6.8). In a related vein, advertisers have discovered that they can achieve excellent results by using the soundtrack of a frequently viewed television commercial on radio. Consumers who are familiar with the TV commercial perceive the audio track alone as incomplete; in their need for completion, they mentally play back the visual content from memory.

In summary, it is clear that perceptions are not equivalent to the raw sensory input of discrete stimuli, nor to the sum total of discrete stimuli. Rather, people tend to add to or subtract from stimuli to which they are exposed on the basis of their expectations and motives, using generalized principles of organization based on Gestalt theory.

Perceptual interpretation

The preceding discussion has emphasized that perception is a personal phenomenon. People exercise selectivity as to which stimuli they perceive, and they organize these stimuli on the basis of certain psychological principles. The interpretation of stimuli is also uniquely individual, because it is based on what individuals expect to see in light of their previous experiences on the number of plausible explanations they can envision, and on their motives and interests at the time of perception.

Stimuli are often highly ambiguous. Some stimuli are weak because of such factors as poor visibility, brief exposure, high noise level, or constant fluctuation. Even stimuli that are strong tend to fluctuate dramatically because of such factors as different angles of viewing, varying distances, and changing levels of illumination. Consumers usually attribute the sensory input they receive to factors they consider most likely to have caused the specific pattern of stimuli. Past experiences and social interactions help to form certain expectations that provide categories (or alternative explanations) that individuals use in interpreting stimuli.

When stimuli are highly ambiguous, an individual will usually interpret them in such a way that they serve to fulfill personal needs, wishes, interests, and so on. It is this principle that provides the rationale for the projective tests discussed in Chapter 4. Such tests provide ambiguous stimuli (such as incomplete sentences, unclear pictures, untitled cartoons, or ink blots) to respondents who are asked to interpret them. How a person describes a vague illustration, or what meaning the individual ascribes to an ink blot, is a reflection not of the stimulus itself, but of the subject's own needs, wants, and desires. Through the interpretation of ambiguous stimuli, respondents reveal a great deal about themselves.

How close a person's interpretations are to reality, then, depends on the clarity of the stimulus, the past experiences of the perceiver, and his or her motives and interests at the time of perception.

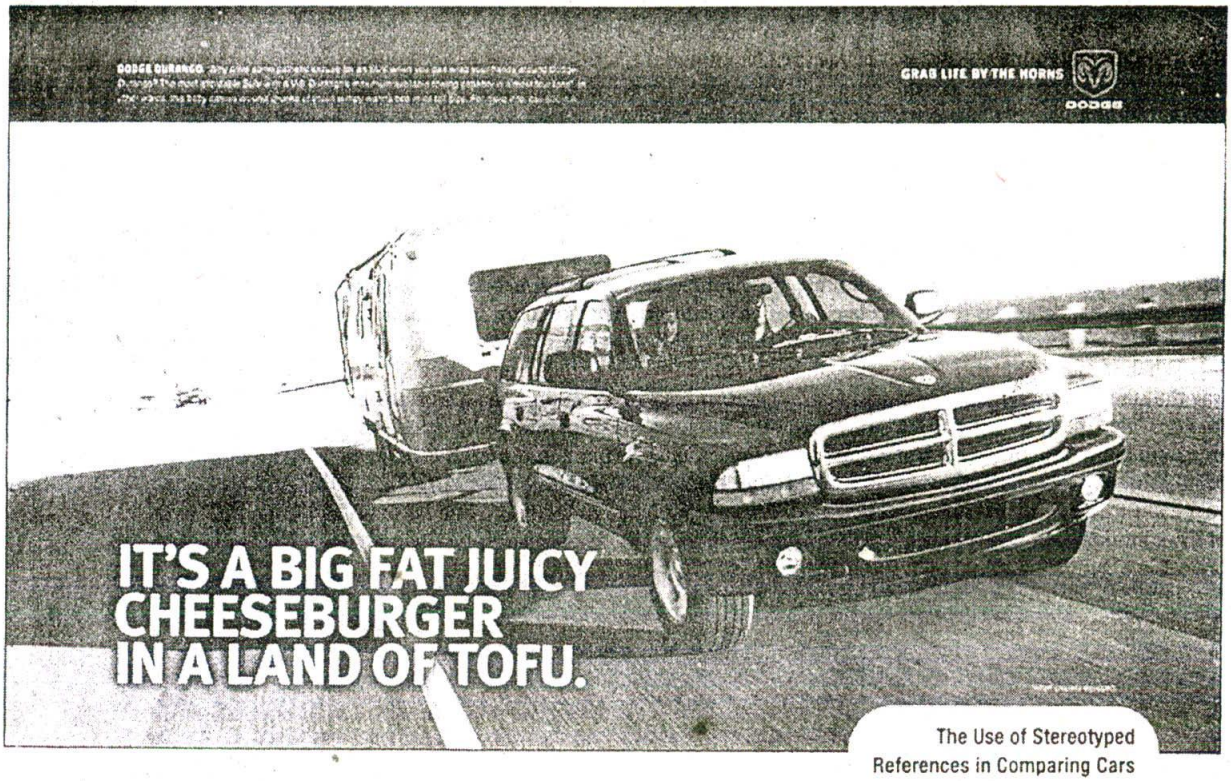
Perceptual distortion

Individuals are subject to a number of influences that tend to distort their perceptions, such as physical appearances, stereotypes, first impressions, jumping to conclusions, and the halo effect.

Physical Appearances People tend to attribute the qualities they associate with certain people to others who may resemble them, whether or not they consciously recognize the similarity. For this reason, the selection of models for print advertisements and for television commercials can be a key element in their ultimate persuasiveness. Studies have found that attractive models are more persuasive and have a more positive influence on consumer attitudes and behavior than average-looking models; attractive men are perceived as more successful businessmen than average-looking men. Some research suggests that models influence consumers' perceptions of physical attractiveness, and through comparisons, their own self-perceptions.[16] Recent research indicates that using a highly attractive model may not necessarily increase message effectiveness. One study revealed that highly attractive models are perceived as having more expertise regarding enhancement products (e.g., jewelry, lipstick, perfume) but not problem-solving products (e.g., products that correct beauty flaws such as acne or dandruff).[17] Therefore, advertisers must ensure that there is a rational match between the product advertised and the physical attributes of the model used to promote it.

Stereotypes Individuals tend to carry pictures in their minds of the meanings of various kinds of stimuli. These stereotypes serve as expectations of what specific situations, people, or events will be like, and they are important determinants of how such stimuli are subsequently perceived. Several years ago, an ad for Benetton featuring two men—one black and one white—handcuffed together, which was part of the "united colors of Benetton" campaign promoting racial harmony, produced a public outcry because people perceived it as depicting a white man arresting a black man. Clearly, this perception was the result of stereotypes, since

FIGURE 6.9 Source: © DaimlerChrysler Corporation. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



The Use of Stereotyped References in Comparing Cars

there was nothing in the ad to indicate that the white person was arresting the black person rather than the other way around. The ad featured in Figure 6.9 contrasts the powerful and rugged Dodge Durango, termed "a big fat juicy cheeseburger" with other, less rugged and "weaker" cars referred to in the ad as the "land of tofu." One Asian student interpreted the ad as contrasting typically American cars with foreign cars manufactured in Southeast Asia, where tofu originated. Clearly, the student was interpreting the ad in terms of stereotypes. One study discovered the stereotypes regarding a product's country-of-origin influenced consumers' purchases, and also that such stereotypes had more impact on an impulse purchase than on a deliberate and planned purchase.[18] The ad for Akteo watches shown in Figure 6.10 is based on the notion that a man's watch reflects his individuality.

First Impressions First impressions tend to be lasting; yet, in forming such impressions, the perceiver does not yet know which stimuli are relevant, important, or predictive of later behavior. A shampoo commercial effectively used the line, "You'll never have a second chance to make a first impression." Since first impressions are often lasting, introducing a new product before it has been perfected may prove fatal to its ultimate success; subsequent information about its advantages, even if true, will often be negated by the memory of its early performance.

Jumping to Conclusions Many people tend to jump to conclusions before examining all the relevant evidence. For example, the consumer may hear just the beginning of a commercial message and draw conclusions regarding the product or service being advertised.

FIGURE 6.10

Source: Courtesy of Universal Watch Company.



Ad Depicting Stereotypes

For this reason, many copywriters are careful to give their most persuasive arguments first. A recent study showed that consumers who ate foods with elaborate names such as "succulent Italian seafood filet" rated those foods as more tasty and appealing than those who ate the same foods with such regular names as "seafood filet."[19] Many consumers do not read the volume information on food labels. One study found that consumers purchase packages that they believe contain greater volume, whether or not this is actually so, and that they perceive elongated packaging to contain more volume than round packaging.[20] Clearly, these findings have important implications for package design, advertising, and pricing, and also represent some ethical dilemmas that are discussed later on in this chapter.

Halo Effect Historically, the halo effect has been used to describe situations in which the evaluation of a single object or person on a multitude of dimensions is based on the

evaluation of just one or a few dimensions (e.g., a man is trustworthy, fine, and noble because he looks you in the eye when he speaks). Consumer behaviorists broaden the notion of the halo effect to include the evaluation of multiple objects (e.g., a product line) on the basis of the evaluation of just one dimension (a brand name or a spokesperson). Using this broader definition, marketers take advantage of the halo effect when they extend a brand name associated with one line of products to another. The lucrative field of *licensing* is based on the halo effect. Manufacturers and retailers hope to acquire instant recognition and status for their products by associating them with a well-known name. (Chapter 7 discusses licensing in greater detail.) A recent study discovered that brands are judged more positively than warranted when evaluated alone than when evaluated within a group of other brands.[21] These findings have implications for the placement of brands in stores and the position of a given brand's advertisements in relation to competing ads within a magazine or a commercial break.

Tampering with the perceived halo effect of a product or brand can have disastrous consequences. For example, in an attempt to enhance the image of JW Marriott, the Marriott hotel chain's upscale brand, Marriott took over the Righa Royal Hotel, an upscale hotel in New York City, and renamed it the JW Marriott New York. When the new name signs went up, the company discovered that scores of regular, upscale customers who always stayed at the Righa when visiting New York City canceled their reservations because they did not want to tell colleagues to contact them at the Marriott. The company restored the Righa Hotel name, with the JW Marriott name included in smaller print.[22]

Despite the many subjective influences on perceptual interpretation, individuals usually resolve stimulus ambiguity somewhat "realistically" on the basis of their previous experiences. Only in situations of unusual or changing stimulus conditions do expectations lead to wrong interpretations.

consumer imagery

Consumers have a number of enduring perceptions, or images, that are particularly relevant to the study of consumer behavior. Products and brands have symbolic value for individuals, who evaluate them on the basis of their consistency (congruence) with their personal pictures of themselves. Chapter 5 discussed consumer self-images and how consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self-images by buying products and using services that they believe are congruent with their self-images and by avoiding those that are not. The following section examines consumers' perceived images of products, brands, services, prices, product quality, retail stores, and manufacturers.

Product positioning

The essence of successful marketing is the image that a product has in the mind of the consumer—that is, its **positioning**. Positioning is more important to the ultimate success of a product than are its actual characteristics, although products that are poorly made will not succeed in the long run on the basis of image alone. The core of effective positioning is a unique position that the product occupies in the mind of the consumer. Most new products fail because they are perceived as "me too" offerings that do not offer potential consumers any advantages or unique benefits over competitive products.

Marketers of different brands in the same category can effectively differentiate their offerings only if they stress the *benefits* that their brands provide rather than their products' physical features. The benefits featured in a product's positioning must reflect attributes that are important to and congruent with the perceptions of the targeted consumer segment. For example, the two energy bars Nutrigrain and Balance are probably quite similar in terms of their nutritional composition and their physical characteristics;

however, each one of the two brands is clearly positioned to offer a distinct benefit. Nutrigrain is positioned as an alternative to unhealthy snack foods in the morning, and Balance is positioned as an energy pickup for the late afternoon.

Positioning strategy is the essence of the marketing mix; it complements the company's definition of the competition, its segmentation strategy, and its selection of target markets. For example, in its positioning as a breakfast food, Nutrigrain competes with other breakfast foods. Through research, the manufacturer has determined the characteristics of people who are concerned about their health and appearance (and yet, eat unhealthy breakfast foods) and the media they read, listen to and watch. The marketers of Balance have determined the characteristics of those who need a pick-me-up in the late afternoon and their media habits, and developed a marketing plan that reflects all these elements.

Positioning conveys the concept, or meaning, of the product or service in terms of how it fulfills a consumer need. A good positioning strategy should have a two-pronged meaning: one that is congruent with the consumer's needs while, at the same time, featuring the brand against its competition. For example, the classic 7-Up slogan "The Un-Cola" was designed to appeal to consumers' desire for an alternative to the most popular soft drink (by using the prefix *un*), while also elevating the product by placing it in the same league with its giant competitor (by using the word *cola*). Also, as demonstrated by 7-Up's change in positioning strategy to "Caffeine—never had it, never will" to depict its core benefit, the same product (or service) can be positioned differently to different market segments or can be repositioned to the same audience, without being physically changed. Procter and Gamble has positioned its SURE deodorant as an essential travel necessity to take on safari—a positioning strategy designed to reach a strong, masculine, adventurous target audience (see Figure 6.11).

The result of successful positioning strategy is a distinctive brand image on which consumers rely in making product choices. A positive brand image also leads to consumer loyalty, positive beliefs about brand value, and a willingness to search for the brand. A positive brand image also promotes consumer interest in future brand promotions and *inoculates* consumers against competitors' marketing activities. An advertiser's positioning strategy affects consumer beliefs about its brand's attributes and the prices consumers are willing to pay.

In today's highly competitive marketplace, a distinctive product image is most important, but also very difficult to create and maintain. As products become more complex and the marketplace more crowded, consumers rely more on the product's image and claimed benefits than on its actual attributes in making purchase decisions. The major positioning strategies are discussed in the following five sections.

Umbrella positioning

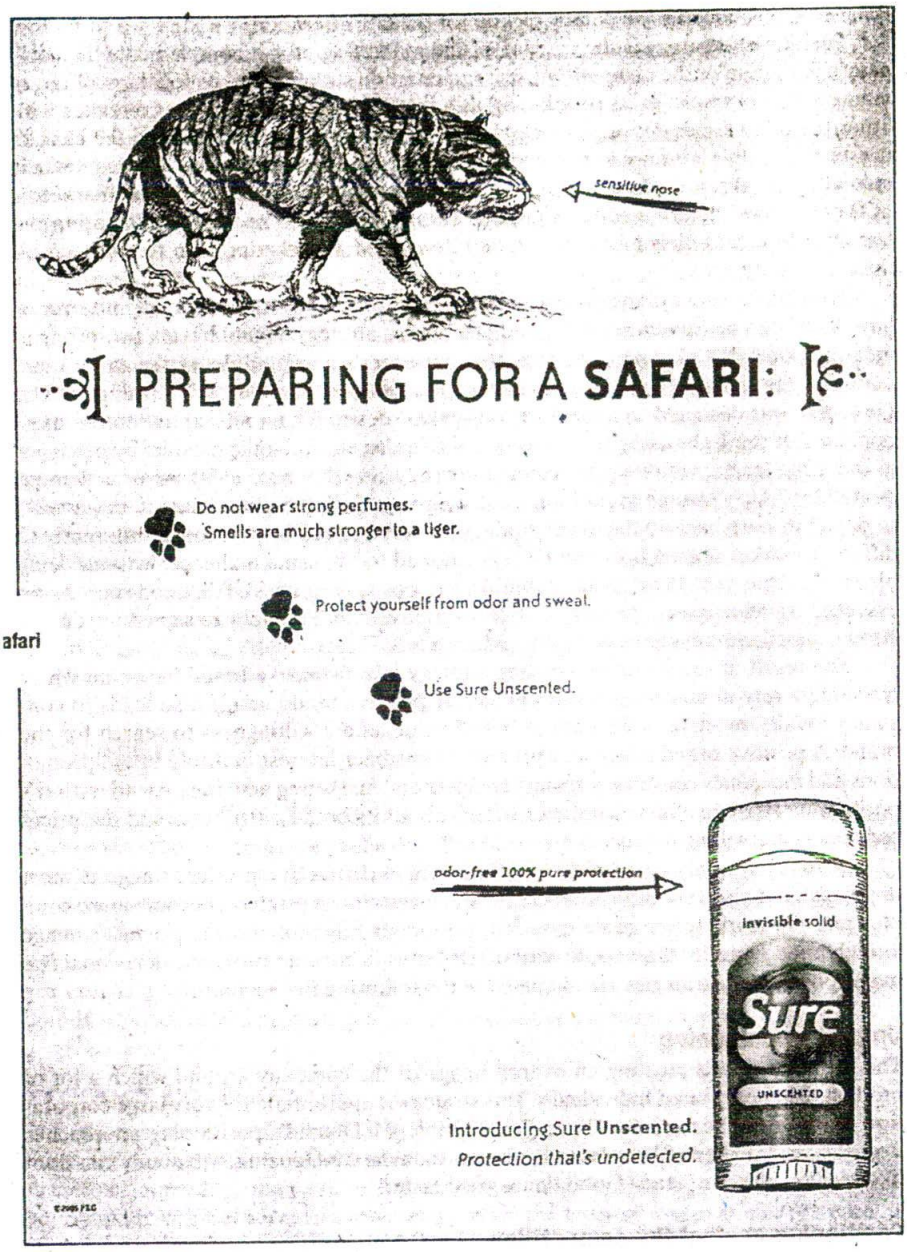
This strategy entails creating an overall image of the company around which a lot of products can be featured individually. This strategy is appropriate for very large corporations with diversified product lines. For example, McDonald's positioning approaches over the years include "You deserve a break today at McDonald's," "Nobody can do it like McDonald's can," and "Good times, great taste."

Positioning against the competition

A classic example of positioning against the competition is Wendy's "Where's the beef?" which was used to differentiate the smaller fast-food chain from much larger competitors. Visa's past slogan "We make American Express green with envy" is another good example of this strategy. A Sunkist ad featured a lemon, in the form of a salt shaker, with the caption "Salternative." The Hertz car rental company has run TV ads depicting other car rental companies as lacking in features that Hertz outlets generally possess, such as proximity to passenger terminals at airports (e.g., "Hertz? Not exactly."). Figure 6.12 reminds beer drinkers that Miller Light was the original "less filling" beer and also positions it against Bud Light.

FIGURE 6.11

Source: © Procter & Gamble Company. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



Preparing for a Safari

Positioning based on a specific benefit

FedEx created its highly reliable service image with the slogan "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight." Maxwell House Coffee is "good to the last drop." Bounty is "the quicker picker upper." These are examples of slogans that smartly and precisely depict key benefits of the brands they promote and have effectively positioned these brands in the minds of consumers. There are also many examples of products that failed because they were positioned to deliver a benefit that consumers either did not want or did not believe. For example, Gillette's "For Oily Hair Only" shampoo failed because most consumers do not acknowledge that they have oily hair. Effective

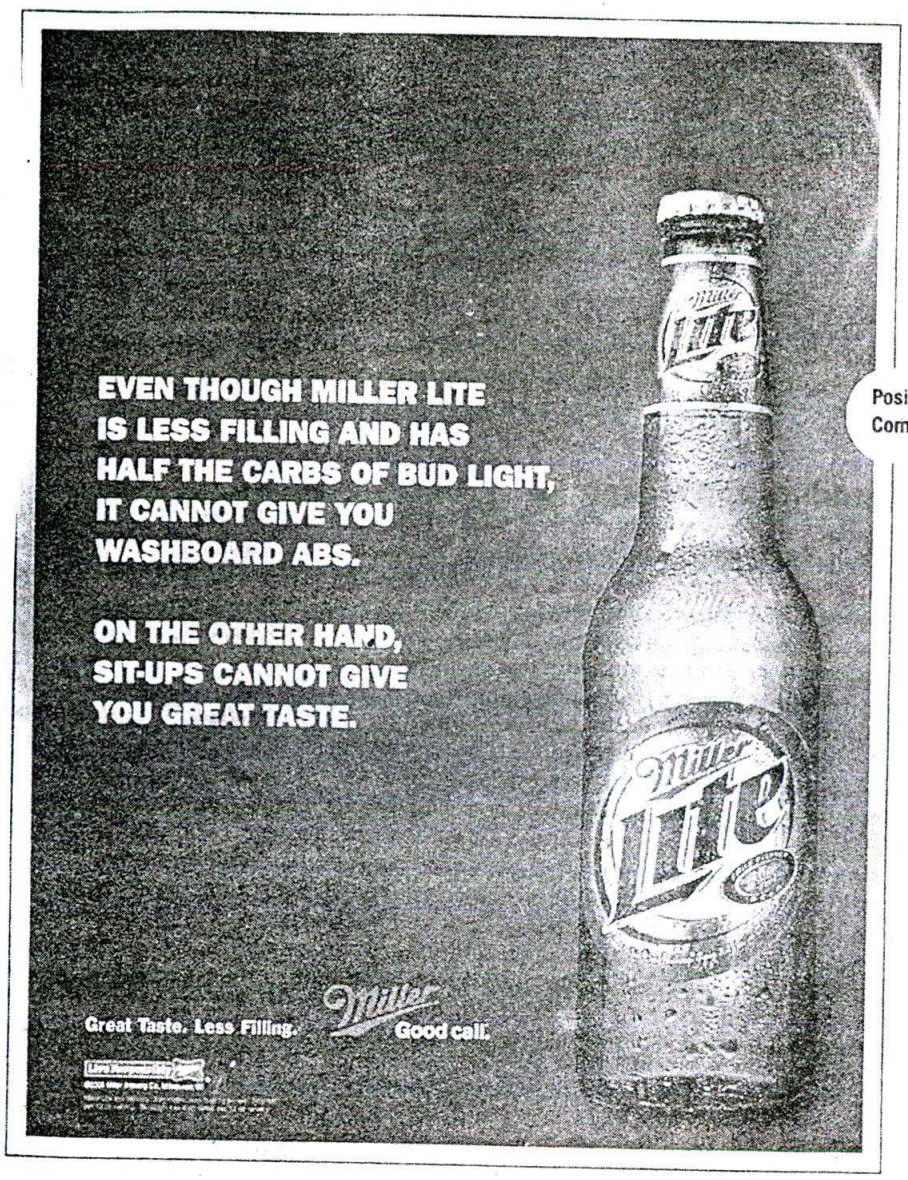


FIGURE 6.12

Source: © Miller Brewing Company. Used with permission. All rights reserved

Positioning Against the Competition

depictions of a core benefit often include memorable imagery (e.g., the old lady featured in Wendy's "Where's the beef?" ad).

Finding an "unowned" position

In highly competitive markets, finding a niche not targeted by other companies is challenging but not impossible. For example, Long Island's *Newsday*, in a reference to two competitive daily newspapers published in New York City (*The Daily News* and the *New York Times*), is positioned as "On top of the news and ahead of the times." A clever approach to finding (or even creating) an "unowned" position was Palmolive's claim to ". . . soften your hands as you do the dishes"; today, even though

many people no longer wash dishes by hand, Palmolive positions its dishwashing liquid as "tough on grease, soft on hands."

Filling several positions

Because unfilled gaps or "unowned" perceptual positions present opportunities for competitors, sophisticated marketers create several distinct offerings, often in the form of different brands, to fill several identified niches. For example, Visine's line of eye care offerings include versions for redness relief, eye lubrication, advanced redness relief and lubrication, lubrication and rewetting, and "tears" packaged in a single drop dispenser.[23] Crest Toothpaste's line includes offerings for whitening, tartar protection, multicare, cavity protection, sensitive teeth protection, and refreshing mouth and breath with baking soda. Many of these versions are offered as pastes, gels, liquid gels or striped pastes, in many flavors. There is also a separate line of toothpastes and gels for kids.[24] It would be difficult for a manufacturer to penetrate either the eye care or the toothpaste market with a product that offers a benefit that is not already provided by Visine or Crest, in their respective markets.

Product repositioning

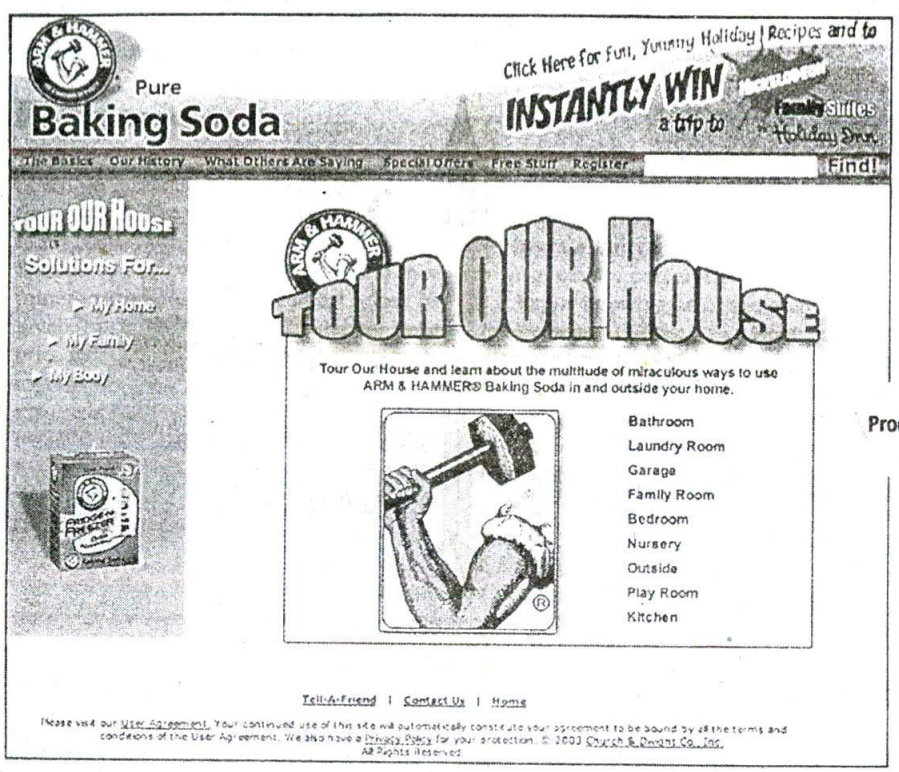
Regardless of how well positioned a product appears to be, the marketer may be forced to reposition it in response to market events, such as a competitor cutting into the brand's market share or too many competitors stressing the same attribute. For example, rather than trying to meet the lower prices of high-quality private-label competition, some premium brand marketers have repositioned their brands to justify their higher prices, playing up brand attributes that had previously been ignored.

Another reason to reposition a product or service is to satisfy changing consumer preferences. For example, for years, GM tried to convince consumers that Oldsmobile is not an "old folks'" car by trying to reposition the car as "not your father's Oldsmobile." However, this effort failed because the "old folks'" image of the brand was very strongly set in the minds of car buyers, and GM discontinued this brand. Following consumers' frantic efforts to cut down on consuming carbohydrates, some brands of orange juice, vegetable juice, and beer were repositioned as products that provide "less carbs." One of the most successful product repositionings is the promotion of Arm & Hammer as America's standard for cleanliness and purity by showing it used as a product for the home, the family, and personal care. The brand's Web site lists about one dozen personal care uses, including using the product as a facial scrub, deodorant, bath soak, and mouth refreshent. The site also lists scores of possible uses of the product in every possible room of a typical house and its outside areas (see Figure 6.13).

Perceptual mapping

The technique of **perceptual mapping** helps marketers to determine just how their products or services appear to consumers in relation to competitive brands on one or more relevant characteristics. It enables them to see gaps in the positioning of all brands in the product or service class and to identify areas in which consumer needs are not being adequately met. For example, if a magazine publisher wants to introduce a new magazine to Generation Y, he may use perceptual mapping to uncover a niche of consumers with a special set of interests that are not being adequately or equally addressed by other magazines targeted to the same demographic segment. This insight allows him to position the new magazine as specifically focused on these interests. Or, a publisher may discover through perceptual mapping that consumers perceive its magazine (let's call it *Splash*) to be very similar in editorial content and format to its closest competitors, *Bash* and *Crash*. By changing the focus of its editorial features to appeal to a new market niche, the publisher can reposition the

FIGURE 6.13



Source: © Church & Dwight Co., Inc., use of Arm & Hammer—"Tour our house" website is with the express written permission of Church & Dwight Co., Inc., Princeton New Jersey.

Product Repositioning

magazine (e.g., from *Splash* to *Fashion Splash*). Figure 6.14 presents this example in a perceptual map.

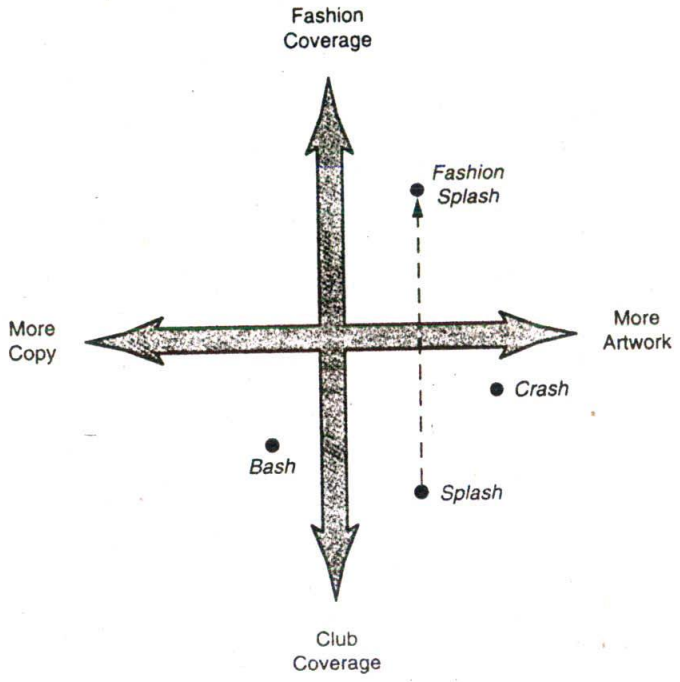
Positioning of services

Compared with manufacturing firms, service marketers face several unique problems in positioning and promoting their offerings. Because services are intangible, image becomes a key factor in differentiating a service from its competition. Thus, the marketing objective is to enable the consumer to link a specific image with a specific brand name. Many service marketers have developed strategies to provide customers with visual images and tangible reminders of their service offerings. These include delivery vehicles painted in distinct colors, restaurant matchbooks, packaged hotel soaps and shampoos, and a variety of other specialty items. Many service companies feature real service employees in their ads (as tangible cues) and some use people-focused themes to differentiate themselves. For example, the Ritz-Carlton promotes its "guest experience" with the corporate motto "We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen."

Many service companies market several versions of their service to different market segments by using a differentiated positioning strategy. However, they must be careful to avoid perceptual confusion among their customers. For example, Marriott's Hotels and Resorts brand claims to provide customers with "superior service and genuine care"; the Renaissance Hotels and Resorts brand provides "distinctive décor, imaginative experiences and delights its customers' senses"; the Courtyard brand provides "essential services and amenities to business travelers"; the Residence Inn is

FIGURE 6.14

Perceptual Map of Competitors Facilitates Magazine Repositioning



designed for extended stays; and the Fairfield Inn provides rooms and suites at "prices that will make customers smile."[25] Although distinct brand names are important to all products or services, they are particularly crucial in marketing services due to the abstract and intangible nature of many services. For example, names such as Federal Express (later abbreviated to FedEx) and Humana (a provider of health services) are excellent names because they are distinctive, memorable, and relevant to the services they feature. On the other hand, Allegis—a short-lived brand name aimed at creating a business travel concept by combining United Airlines, Hertz, and Hilton and Westin Hotels under one umbrella—failed because it told consumers nothing about the type of services it offered.[26]

The design of the service environment is an important aspect of service positioning strategy and sharply influences consumer impressions and consumer and employee behavior. The physical environment is particularly important in creating a favorable impression for such services as banks, retail stores, and professional offices, because there are so few objective criteria by which consumers can judge the quality of the services they receive. The service environment conveys the image of the service provider with whom the service is so closely linked. Thus, the Polo Ralph Lauren store in its renovated 1895 mansion on New York's Upper East Side is the embodiment of the image Lauren wants to create for his clothes: traditionalism and Old World values. All the trappings of what one imagines to be the high-class and well-heeled ways of the very, very rich are here, from the baronial, hand-carved staircase lined with "family" portraits to the plush sitting rooms with working fireplaces. The Polo store image artfully extends the image of the clothing it sells and projects an Old World quality of living and shopping that its upscale target market finds appealing.

One study of service environments identified five environmental variables most important to bank customers: (1) privacy (both visually and verbally, with enclosed offices, transaction privacy, etc.); (2) efficiency/convenience (e.g., transaction areas that

are easy to find, directional signs); (3) ambient background conditions (temperature, lighting, noise, music); (4) social conditions (the physical appearance of other people in the bank environment, such as bank customers and bank personnel); and (5) aesthetics (e.g., color, style, use of materials, and artwork).[27]

Perceived price

How a consumer perceives a price—as high, as low, as fair—has a strong influence on both purchase intentions and purchase satisfaction. Consider the perception of price fairness, for example. There is some evidence that customers do pay attention to the prices paid by other customers (such as senior citizens, frequent flyers, affinity club members), and that the differential pricing strategies used by some marketers are perceived as unfair by customers not eligible for the special prices. No one is happy knowing he or she paid twice as much for an airline ticket or a theater ticket as the person in the next seat. Perceptions of price unfairness affect consumers' perceptions of product value and, ultimately, their willingness to patronize a store or a service. One study, focused on the special challenges of service industries in pricing intangible products, proposed three types of pricing strategies based on the customer's perception of the value provided by the purchase: *satisfaction-based* pricing, *relationship* pricing, and *efficiency* pricing (see Table 6.1).

Reference prices

Products advertised as "on sale" tend to create enhanced customer perceptions of savings and value. Different formats used in sales advertisements have differing impacts, based on consumer **reference prices**. A reference price is *any price that a consumer uses as a basis for comparison in judging another price.* Reference prices can be external or internal. An advertiser generally uses a higher *external reference price* ("sold elsewhere at . . .") in an ad offering a lower sales price, to persuade the consumer that the product advertised is a really good buy. *Internal reference prices* are those prices (or price ranges) retrieved by the consumer from memory. Internal reference prices play a major role in consumers' evaluations and perceptions of value of an advertised (external) price deal, as well as in the believability of any advertised reference price. However, consumers' internal reference prices change. For example, as the prices of flat-screen TVs declined

TABLE 6.1 Three Pricing Strategies Focused on Perceived Value

PRICING STRATEGY	PROVIDES VALUE BY . . .	IMPLEMENTED AS . . .
Satisfaction-based pricing	Recognizing and reducing customers' perceptions of uncertainty, which the intangible nature of services magnifies.	Service guarantees. Benefit-driven pricing. Flat-rate pricing.
Relationship pricing	Encouraging long-term relationships with the company that customers view as beneficial.	Long-term contracts. Price bundling.
Efficiency pricing	Sharing with customers the cost savings that the company has achieved by understanding, managing, and reducing the costs of providing the service.	Cost-leader pricing.

Source: Leonard L. Berry and Yadav S. Manjit, "Capture and Communicate Value in the Pricing of Services," *Sloan Management Review*, Summer 1996, 41–51.

sharply due to competition and manufacturers' abilities to produce them more cheaply, consumers' reference prices for this product have declined as well, and many no longer perceive flat-screen TVs as a luxury product that only few can afford. One study showed that consumers' price reference points include past prices, competitors' prices, and the cost of goods sold. The study also showed that these reference points do not adequately reflect the effects of inflation on costs, and that customers attribute price differentials to profit and fail to consider vendor costs.[28]

Some researchers proposed that two types of utility are associated with consumer purchases. **Acquisition utility** represents the consumer's perceived economic gain or loss associated with a purchase and is a function of product utility and purchase price. **Transaction utility** concerns the perceived pleasure or displeasure associated with the financial aspect of the purchase and is determined by the difference between the internal reference price and the purchase price.[29] For example, if a consumer wants to purchase a television set for which her internal reference price is approximately $500, and she buys a set that is sale-priced at $500, she receives no transaction utility. However, if either her internal reference price is increased or the sales price of the set is decreased, she will receive positive transaction utility, which increases the total utility she experiences with the purchase.

Consumers' perceptions of the credibility and fairness of stated prices is an important factor in overall satisfaction. Although many marketers assume that the traditional phrases "regular price" versus "sale price" have the same meaning for all consumers, this is unlikely given the evidence that perceptions of marketing stimuli vary widely among consumers.[30]

Several studies showed that consumers believe that the selling prices of a product or service are considerably higher than their perceived fair prices.[31] Several studies have investigated the effects on consumer price perceptions of three types of advertised reference prices: plausible low, plausible high, and implausible high. *Plausible low* prices are well within the range of acceptable market prices; *plausible high* are near the outer limits of the range but not beyond the realm of believability, and *implausible high* are well above the consumer's perceived range of acceptable market prices. As long as an advertised reference price is within a given consumer's acceptable price range, it is considered plausible and is assimilated. (See *assimilation-contrast theory* in Chapter 8.) If the advertised reference point is outside the range of acceptable prices (i.e., implausible), it will be *contrasted* and thus will not be perceived as a valid reference point. This will adversely affect both consumer evaluations and the advertiser's image of credibility.[32]

Another study showed that when consumers encounter prices that are significantly different from their expectations, they engage in *dissonance reduction*. That is, they seek additional information to justify the high price or they trivialize their own expectations by, for example, saying that their expectations were unrealistic because it has been a while since they last were in the market to buy the product in question.[33] Table 6.2 depicts the possible changes in the perceptions of consumers who encounter unexpected prices. (The theory of **cognitive dissonance** is fully explored in Chapter 8.)

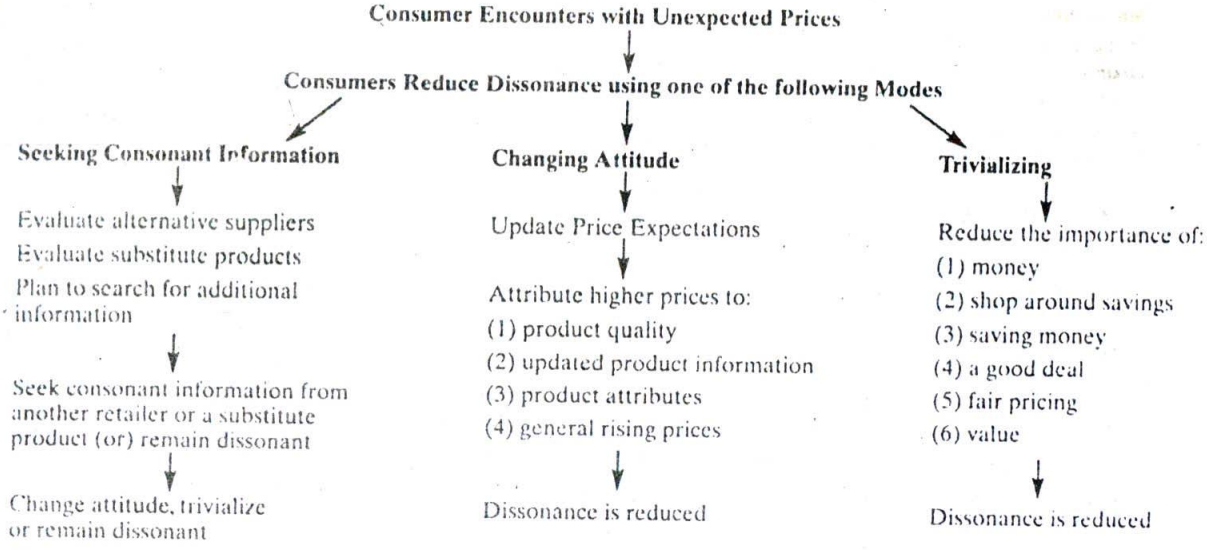
Perceived quality

Consumers often judge the quality of a product or service on the basis of a variety of informational cues that they associate with the product. Some of these cues are **intrinsic** to the product or service; others are **extrinsic**. Either singly or together, such cues provide the basis for perceptions of product and service quality.

Perceived quality of products

Cues that are *intrinsic* concern physical characteristics of the product itself, such as size, color, flavor, or aroma. In some cases, consumers use physical characteristics (e.g., the flavor of ice cream or cake) to judge product quality. Consumers like to believe that they base their evaluations of product quality on intrinsic cues, because that enables them to justify their product decisions (either positive or negative) as being "rational" or "objective" product choices. More often than not, however, they use extrinsic characteristics to judge quality. For example, though many consumers claim they buy a brand because of its superior taste, they are often unable to identify that brand in blind taste tests. One

TABLE 6.2



Source: Joan Lindsey Mulliken, "Beyond Reference Price: Understanding Consumers' Encounters with Unexpected Prices," *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 12, no. 3, 141.

study discovered that the color of a powdered fruit drink product is a more important determinant than its label and actual taste in determining the consumer's ability to identify the flavor correctly. The study's subjects perceived the purple or grape-colored versions of the powdered product "tart" in flavor and the orange-colored version as "flavorful, sweet, and refreshing."[34] *Consumer Reports* found that consumers often cannot differentiate among various cola beverages and that they base their preferences on such *extrinsic cues* as packaging, pricing, advertising, and even peer pressure.[35] A study reported that both consumers who rated a popcorn's taste as unfavorable and those who rated the same taste as favorable consumed more of the product when the container size was increased.[36] In the absence of actual experience with a product, consumers often evaluate quality on the basis of cues that are external to the product itself, such as price, brand image, manufacturer's image, retail store image, or even the country of origin.

Many consumers use *country-of-origin* stereotypes to evaluate products (e.g., "German engineering is excellent" or "Japanese cars are reliable"). Many consumers believe that a "Made in the U.S.A." label means a product is "superior" or "very good." Yet for food products, a foreign image is often more enticing. For example, Haagen-Dazs, an American-made ice cream, has been incredibly successful with its made-up (and meaningless) Scandinavian-sounding name. The success of Smirnoff vodka, made in Connecticut, can be related to its so-called Russian derivation. Sorbet has become a very popular and chic dessert, now that it is no longer called sherbet. A recent study pointed out that consumers' perceptions of value, risk, trust, attitude towards the brand, satisfaction, familiarity, attachment, and involvement moderate the impact of country-of-origin on perceived quality.[37] Several researchers developed a scale that measures perceptions of brand luxury—a construct that is often related to perceived quality (see Figure 6.15).

Perceived quality of services

It is more difficult for consumers to evaluate the quality of services than the quality of products. This is true because of certain distinctive characteristics of services: They are intangible, they are variable, they are perishable, and they are simultaneously produced and consumed. To overcome the fact that consumers are unable to compare competing

FIGURE 6.15

Measuring Perceptions of Brand Luxury

Source: Franck Vigneron and Lester W. Johnson, "Measuring Perceptions of Brand Luxury," *Journal of Brand Management*, London, 11, no. 6 (July 2004): 484.

Non-personally-oriented perceptions			
Conspicuousness	Conspicuous	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Noticeable
	Popular	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Elitist*
	Affordable	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Extremely expensive*
	For wealthy	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	For well-off
Uniqueness	Fairly exclusive	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Very exclusive*
	Precious	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Valuable
	Rare	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Uncommon
	Unique	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Unusual
Quality	Crafted	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Manufactured
	Upmarket	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Luxurious*
	Best quality	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Good quality
	Sophisticated	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Original
	Superior	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Better
Personally-oriented perceptions			
Hedonism	Exquisite	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Tasteful
	Attractive	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Glamorous*
	Stunning	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Memorable
Extended self	Leading	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Influential
	Very powerful	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Fairly powerful
	Rewarding	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Pleasing
	Successful	_ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _ : _	Well regarded

* Indicates item is reverse-scored

services side-by-side as they do with competing products, consumers rely on surrogate cues (i.e., extrinsic cues) to evaluate service quality. In evaluating a doctor's services, for example, they note the quality of the office and examining room furnishings, the number (and source) of framed degrees on the wall, the pleasantness of the receptionist, and the professionalism of the nurse; all contribute to the consumer's overall evaluation of the quality of a doctor's services.

Because the actual quality of services can vary from day to day, from service employee to service employee, and from customer to customer (e.g., in food, in waitperson service, in haircuts, even in classes taught by the same professor), marketers try to standardize their services in order to provide consistency of quality. The downside of service standardization is the loss of customized services, which many consumers value.

Unlike products, which are first produced, then sold, and then consumed, most services are first sold and then produced and consumed simultaneously. Whereas a defective product is likely to be detected by factory quality control inspectors before it ever reaches the consumer, an inferior service is consumed as it is being produced; thus, there is little opportunity to correct it. For example, a defective haircut is difficult to correct, just as the negative impression caused by an abrupt or careless waiter is difficult to correct.

During peak demand hours, the interactive quality of services often declines, because both the customer and the service provider are hurried and under stress. Without special effort by the service provider to ensure consistency of services during peak hours, service image is likely to decline. Some marketers try to change demand patterns in order to distribute the service more equally over time. Long-distance telephone services, for instance, traditionally have offered a discount on telephone calls placed during off-peak hours (e.g., after 11:00 P.M. or on weekends); some restaurants offer a significantly less expensive "early bird" dinner for consumers who come in before 7:00 P.M. Service providers often try to reduce the perceived waiting time and the likely consequent negative service

evaluation by filling the consumer's time. For example, diners may be invited to study the menu while waiting for a table; visitors who wait their turn at an attraction at Disney World are almost always distracted by video presentations or live entertainment.

The most widely accepted framework for researching service quality stems from the premise that a consumer's evaluation of service quality is a function of the magnitude and direction of the gap between the customer's *expectations of service* and the customer's *assessment (perception) of the service actually delivered.*[38] For example, a brand-new graduate student enrolled in an introductory marketing course at a highly reputable university has certain expectations about the intellectual abilities of her classmates, the richness of classroom discussions, and the professor's knowledge and communication skills. At the end of the term, her assessment of the course's quality is based on the differences between her expectations at the start of the term and her perceptions of the course at the end of the semester. If the course falls below her expectations, she will view it as a service of poor quality. If her expectations are exceeded, she will view the course as a high-quality educational experience. Of course, the expectations of a given service vary widely among different consumers of the same service. These expectations stem from word-of-mouth consumers have heard about the service, their past experiences, the promises made about the service in its ads and by its salespersons, the purchase alternatives available, and other situational factors.[39] Based on these factors, the sum total of a consumer's expectations of a service *before* receiving it is termed *predicted service*, services evaluated by the customer at the *end* of the service that significantly exceed the predicted service are perceived as offerings of high quality and generate more customer satisfaction, increased probability of repeat patronage, and favorable word-of-mouth.[40]

The SERVQUAL scale was designed to measure the gap between customers' expectations of services and their perceptions of the actual service delivered, based on the following five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility.[41] These dimensions are divided into two groups: the *outcome* dimension (which focuses on the reliable delivery of the core service) and the *process* dimension, which focuses on how the core service is delivered (i.e., the employees' responsiveness, assurance, and empathy in handling customers) and the service's tangible aspects.[42] The process dimension offers the service provider a significant opportunity to exceed customer expectations. For example, although Federal Express provides the same core service as other couriers (the *outcome* dimension), it provides a superior *process* dimension through its advanced tracking system, which can provide customers with instant information about the status of their packages at any time between pickup and delivery; it also provides call centers with knowledgeable, well-trained, and polite employees who can readily answer customers' questions and handle problems. Thus, FedEx uses the process dimension as a method to exceed customers' expectations and has acquired the image of a company that has an important, customer-focused competitive advantage among the many companies providing the same core service. Figure 6.16 shows an ad centered on customer expectations; it also makes the service experience more tangible by depicting the warm interaction between the customer and service employee in a pleasant "homelike" service environment. Table 6.3 depicts the application of the five SERVQUAL dimensions in a study of tourists' perceptions of tour operators.

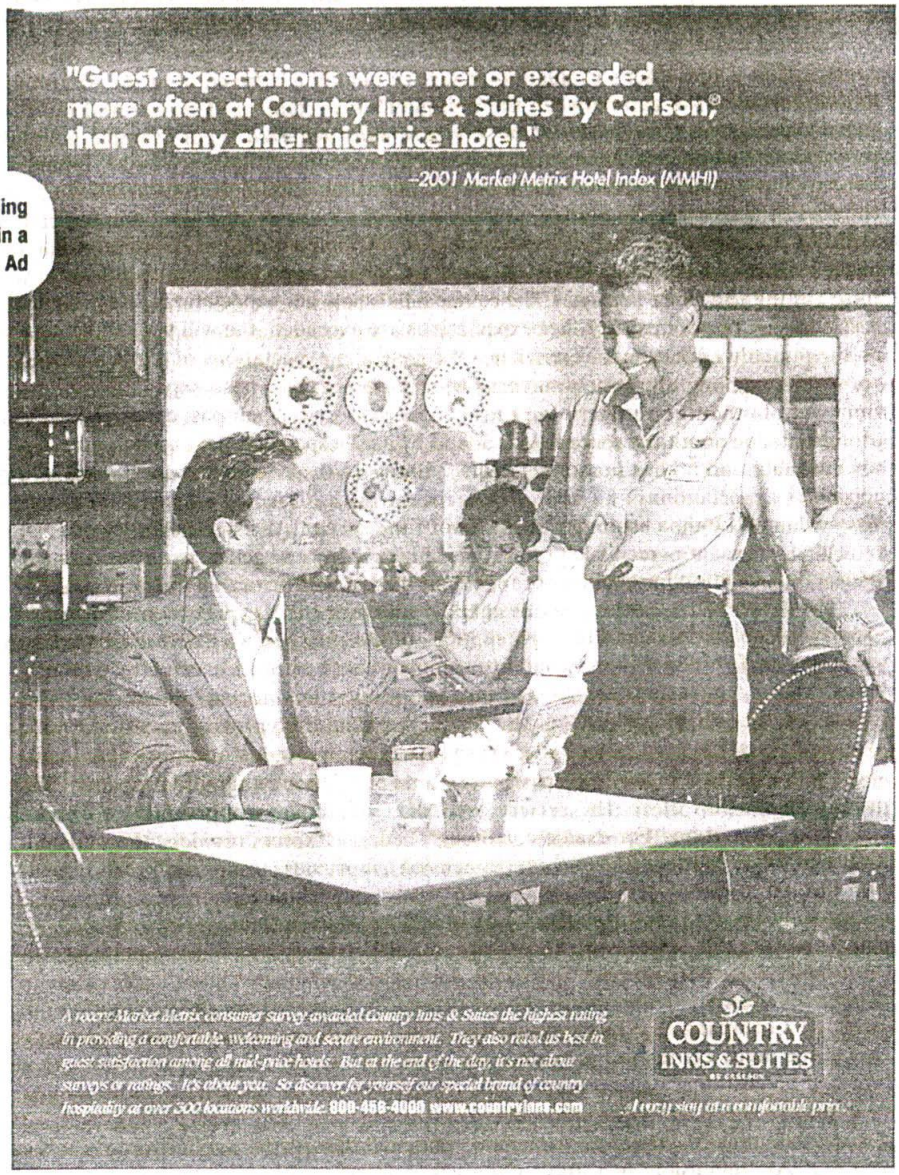
Perceptions of high service quality and high customer satisfaction lead to higher levels of purchase intentions and repeat buying. Service quality is a determinant of whether the consumer ultimately remains with the company or defects to a competitor. When service quality evaluations are high, customers' behavioral intentions tend to be favorable to the company, and they are likely to remain customers. When service evaluations are low, customer relationships are more likely to weaken, resulting in defection to a competitor. Another issue in the perception of service quality is time. A longitudinal research study using the SERVQUAL scale discovered that consumers' perceptions of service quality declined over time, that favorable perceptions of the service's tangible features declined the least, and that changes in perceptions impacted the intentions to purchase the service again.[43]

Today many services are delivered over the phone or the Internet, without direct visual contact between the customer and the service employee. Under these conditions,

FIGURE 6.16

Source: Courtesy of Country Inns & Suites.

Tangible Cues Fulfilling Customer Expectations in a Service Ad



it is more difficult to research the factors that determine the customer's perception of service quality. Because more and more companies, including the manufacturers of many tangible products, use service-focused selling points to promote and differentiate their offerings, such consumer studies are crucial. Call centers are a key point for customer access to the company and also an important source of customer information. One study analyzed voice-to-voice encounters among customers and call-center employees, and developed a scale that measures customers' perceptions of such service experiences and their future intentions regarding the company represented by the call center contacted (see Table 6.4).

TABLE 6.3 Tour Operators Evaluated Under the Five SERVQUAL Dimensions

(1) ASSURANCE DIMENSION:
- being served by the appropriate personnel;
- reinforcement of tourists' confidence;
- experienced and competent tour and hotel escorts; and
- fluent and understandable communication with tourists.

(2) RESPONSIVENESS DIMENSION:
- sincere interest in problem solving;
- provision of adequate information about the service delivered;
- prompt response to tourists' requests;
- provision of information on local entertainment;
- willingness to help tourists; and
- advice on how to use free time.

(3) RELIABILITY DIMENSION:
- easy contact on arrival at airport;
- easy location of and contact with tour and hotel escorts;
- services delivered on time;
- right first time;
- keeping promises;
- insisting on error-free service;
- meeting the tour schedule; and
- no sudden increase in tour cost.

(4) EMPATHY DIMENSION:
- pleasant, friendly personnel;
- understanding of specific needs; and
- cultivation of friendly relationship.

(5) TANGIBLES DIMENSION:
- modern and technologically relevant vehicles;
- appealing accommodation facilities;
- availability of information documents and notes;
- physical appearance of tour and hotel escorts (tidiness etc.); and
- high-quality meals.

Source: Eda Atilgn, Serkan Akinaci, and Safak Aksoy, "Mapping Service Quality in the Tourism Industry," *Managing Service Quality*, 13, no. 5 (2003), 416

Price/quality relationship

Perceived product value has been described as a trade-off between the product's perceived benefits (or quality) and the perceived sacrifice—both monetary and non-monetary—necessary to acquire it. A number of research studies have found that consumers rely on price as an indicator of product quality, that consumers attribute different qualities to identical products that carry different price tags, and that such consumer characteristics as age and income affect the perception of value.[44] One study suggested that consumers using a **price/quality relationship** are actually relying on a well-known (and, hence, more

TABLE 6.4 A Scale Measuring Customers' Perceptions of Call-Center Employees

ATTENTIVENESS

1. The agent did not make an attentive impression.*
2. The agent used short, affirmative words and sounds to indicate that (s)he was really listening.

PERCEPTIVENESS

1. The agent asked for more details and extra information during the conversation.
2. The agent continually attempted to understand what I was saying.
3. The agent paraphrased what had been said adequately.

RESPONSIVENESS

1. The agent offered relevant information to the questions I asked.
2. The agent used full sentences in his or her answers instead of just saying yes or no.
3. The agent did not recognize what information I needed.*

TRUST

1. I believe that this company takes customer calls seriously.
2. I feel that this company does not respond to customer problems with understanding.*
3. This company is ready and willing to offer support to customers.
4. I can count on this company to be sincere.

SATISFACTION

1. I am satisfied with the level of service the agent provided.
2. I am satisfied with the way I was spoken to by the agent.
3. I am satisfied with the information I got from the agent.
4. The telephone call with this agent was a satisfying experience.

CALL INTENTION

1. I will very likely contact this company again.
2. Next time I have any questions I will not hesitate to call again.
3. I would not be willing to discuss problems I have with this company over the phone.*

*Negatively phrased item.

Source. Ko de Ruyter and Martin G. M. Wetzels, *Journal of Service Research*, "The Impact of Perceived Listening Behavior in Voice-to-Voice Service Encounters," February 2000, pp. 276–284, copyright © 2000 by Sage Publications Ltd. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications.

expensive) brand name as an indicator of quality without actually relying directly on price per se.[45] A later study found out that consumers use price and brand to evaluate the prestige of the product but do not generally use these cues when they evaluate the product's performance.[46] Because price is so often considered an indicator of quality, some product advertisements deliberately emphasize a high price to underscore the marketers' claims of quality. Marketers understand that, at times, products with lower prices may be interpreted as reduced quality. At the same time, when consumers evaluate more concrete attributes of a product, such as performance and durability, they rely less on the price and brand name as indicators of quality than when they evaluate the product's prestige and symbolic value.[47] For these reasons, marketers must understand all the attributes that customers use

to evaluate a given product and include all applicable information in order to counter any perceptions of negative quality associated with a lower price.

In most consumption situations, in addition to price, consumers also use such cues as the brand and the store in which the product is bought to evaluate its quality. Consumers use price as a surrogate indicator of quality if they have little information to go on, or if they have little confidence in their own ability to make the product or service choice on other grounds. When the consumer is familiar with a brand name or has experience with a product (or service) or the store where it is purchased, price declines as a determining factor in product evaluation and purchase.

Retail store image

Retail stores have images of their own that serve to influence the perceived quality of products they carry and the decisions of consumers as to where to shop. These images stem from their design and physical environment, their pricing strategies, and product assortments. A study that examined the effects of specific store environmental factors on quality inferences found that consumer perceptions were more heavily influenced by ambient factors (such as the number, type, and behavior of other customers within the store and the sales personnel) than by store design features.[48] Another study discovered that consumers' preferences of apparel stores were determined by the availability of the desired clothing in stock, the outside store appearance, shopping hours, and advertising.[49]

A study of retail store image based on comparative *pricing strategies* found that consumers tend to perceive stores that offer a small discount on a large number of items (i.e., *frequency of price advantage*) as having lower prices overall than competing stores that offer larger discounts on a smaller number of products (i.e., *magnitude of price advantage*). Thus, frequent advertising that presents large numbers of price specials reinforces consumer beliefs about the competitiveness of a store's prices.[50] This finding has important implications for retailers' *positioning strategies*. In times of heavy competition, when it is tempting to hold frequent large sales covering many items, such strategies may result in an unwanted change in store image. For example, Lord & Taylor's in New York City, formerly positioned as an upscale, high-class department store, advertises sales so frequently and fills its aisles with sales racks proclaiming bargain prices, so that its upscale image has been tarnished, and its customer mix has changed. Marketers must also consider how price reductions of *specific* products impact consumers' perceptions. One study pointed out that some poorly chosen price promotions bring about discrepancies between the actual prices in the store and consumers' perceptions of the retailer's *overall store price image*.[51]

The *width of product assortment* also affects retail store image. Grocery retailers, for example, are often reluctant to reduce the number of products they carry out of concern that perceptions of a smaller assortment will reduce the likelihood that consumers will shop in their stores.[52] On the other hand, Whole Foods Markets—a relatively small supermarket chain—has carved itself a profitable niche by carrying a much smaller but highly selective range of products in comparison to conventional supermarkets. Whole Foods stores carry organic (perceived as healthier) products, many of which are bought from mom-and-pop producers; all food products carried are screened for artificial ingredients; and the chain is phasing out all products with hydrogenated fats. The chain has been much more profitable than conventional supermarkets in spite of its limited product assortment.[53] Clearly, the unique benefit that a store provides is more important than the number of items it carries in forming a favorable store image in consumers' minds.

The type of product the consumer wishes to buy influences his or her selection of a retail outlet; conversely, the consumer's evaluation of a product often is influenced by the knowledge of where it was bought. A consumer wishing to buy an elegant dress for a special occasion may go to a store with an elegant, high-fashion image, such as Saks Fifth Avenue. Regardless of what she actually pays for the dress she selects (regular price or marked-down price), she will probably perceive its quality to be high. However, she may perceive the quality of the identical dress to be much lower if she buys it in an off-price store with a low-price image.

Most studies of the effects of extrinsic cues on perceived product quality have focused on just one variable—either price *or* store image. However, when a second extrinsic cue is available (such as price *and* store image), perceived quality is sometimes a function of the interaction of both cues on the consumer. For example, when brand and retailer images become associated, the less favorable image becomes enhanced at the expense of the more favorable image. Thus, when a low-priced store carries a brand with a high-priced image, the image of the store will improve, whereas the image of the brand will be adversely affected. For that reason, marketers of prestigious designer goods often attempt to control the outlets where their products are sold. Also, when upscale stores sell leftover expensive items to discount stores, they remove the designer labels from these goods as part of the agreements they have with the manufacturers of these products.

Fads can have some unforeseen consequences on consumers' store choices. Recently, 99-cent and one-dollar stores, originally the terrain of lower-income consumers, became fashionable among affluent consumers, who bought there such items as beach balls with the logo "99-cents Only" imprinted on them (in giant letters), wines for under $5, and faux-bamboo picture frames. A study of one chain of dollar-stores found that 32 percent of the cars in the chains' parking lots were less than two years old and in excellent condition; in Los Angeles, Mercedes-Benzes, BMWs, and Rolls-Royces were routinely seen in the parking areas of low-status outlets.[54]

Manufacturers' image

Consumer imagery extends beyond perceived price and store image to the producers themselves. Manufacturers who enjoy a favorable image generally find that their new products are accepted more readily than those of manufacturers who have a less favorable or even a "neutral" image. Researchers have found that consumers generally have favorable perceptions of pioneer brands (the first in a product category), even after follower brands become available. They also found a positive correlation between *pioneer brand image* and an individual's *ideal self-image*, which suggests that positive perceptions toward pioneer brands lead to positive purchase intentions.[55] Studies show that consumers choose brands perceived as similar to their own *actual, ideal, social, ideal-social*, and *situational-ideal-social* images. Thus, if a consumer believes that using the brand is fun, she will buy it and use it when she is having fun with her friends and, to her, the brand will be worth what it costs, so long as she perceives it as fun.[56] These findings have important implications regarding the possible perils of repositioning brands.

Some major marketers introduce new products under the guise of supposedly smaller, pioneering (and presumably more forward-thinking) companies. The goal of this so-called *stealth* (or faux) *parentage* is to persuade consumers that the new brands are produced by independent, nonconformist free spirits, rather than by giant corporate entities. Companies sometimes use stealth parentage when they enter a product category totally unrelated to the one with which their corporate name has become synonymous. For example, when Disney Studios—a company with a wholesome, family-focused image—produces films that include violence and sex, it does so under the name Touchstone Pictures.

Today companies are using advertising, exhibits, and sponsorship of community events to enhance their images. Although some marketers argue that product and service advertising do more to boost the corporate image than *institutional* (image) advertising does, others see both types of advertising—product and institutional—as integral and complementary components of a total corporate communications program. When the reputation of Wal-Mart was tarnished by allegations of unfair labor practices, sexual discrimination and the publication of data indicating that the company caused most of America's trade imbalance with China, the company published ads stating that "Wal-Mart Is Working for Everyone." In addition, the company's executives appeared on TV talk shows and met with community groups and government officials to dispel the negative associations. In a further effort to improve its image, Wal-Mart sponsored a new TV reality show, *The Scholar*, on which high school seniors from across the country competed for college scholarships financed by Wal-Mart.[57]

perceived risk

Consumers must constantly make decisions regarding what products or services to buy and where to buy them. Because the outcomes (or consequences) of such decisions are often uncertain, the consumer perceives some degree of "risk" in making a purchase decision. **Perceived risk** is defined as *the uncertainty that consumers face when they cannot foresee the consequences of their purchase decisions.* This definition highlights two relevant dimensions of perceived risk: uncertainty and consequences.

The degree of risk that consumers perceive and their own tolerance for risk taking are factors that influence their purchase strategies. It should be stressed that consumers are influenced by risks that they perceive, whether or not such risks actually exist. Risk that is not perceived—no matter how real or how dangerous—will not influence consumer behavior. The major types of risks that consumers perceive when making product decisions include *functional risk, physical risk, financial risk, social risk, psychological risk*, and *time risk* (see Table 6.5).

Perception of risk varies

Consumer perception of risk varies, depending on the person, the product, the situation, and the culture. The amount of risk perceived depends on the specific consumer. Some consumers tend to perceive high degrees of risk in various consumption situations; others tend to perceive little risk. For example, adolescents who engage in high-risk consumption activities, such as smoking or drug use, obviously have lower perceived risk than those who do not engage in high-risk activities. *High-risk perceivers* are often described as **narrow categorizers** because they limit their choices (e.g., product choices) to a few safe alternatives. They would rather exclude some perfectly good alternatives than chance a poor selection. *Low-risk perceivers* have been described as **broad categorizers** because they tend to make their choices from a much wider range of alternatives. They would rather risk a poor selection than limit the number of alternatives from which they can choose.

An individual's perception of risk varies with product categories. For example, consumers are likely to perceive a higher degree of risk (e.g., functional risk, financial risk, time risk) in the purchase of a plasma television set than in the purchase of an automobile; this type of risk is termed *product-category* perceived risk. Researchers have also identified *product*-specific perceived risk. One study found that consumers perceive service decisions to be riskier than product decisions, particularly in terms of social risk, physical risk, and psychological risk.

TABLE 6.5 Types of Perceived Risk

Functional risk is the risk that the product will not perform as expected. ("Can the new PDA operate a full week without needing to be recharged?")

Physical risk is the risk to self and others that the product may pose. ("Is a cellular phone really safe, or does it emit harmful radiation?")

Financial risk is the risk that the product will not be worth its cost. ("Will a new and cheaper model of a Plasma TV monitor become available six months from now?")

Social risk is the risk that a poor product choice may result in social embarrassment. ("Will my classmates laugh at my purple mohawk haircut?")

Psychological risk is the risk that a poor product choice will bruise the consumer's ego. ("Will I be embarrassed when I invite friends to listen to music on my five-year-old stereo?")

Time risk is the risk that the time spent in product search may be wasted if the product does not perform as expected. ("Will I have to go through the shopping effort all over again?")

The degree of risk perceived by a consumer is also affected by the shopping situation (e.g., a traditional bricks-and-mortar retail store, online, catalog, direct-mail solicitations, or door-to-door sales). The sharp increase in mail-order catalog sales in recent years suggests that on the basis of positive experiences and word-of-mouth, consumers now tend to perceive less risk in mail-order shopping than they once did, despite their inability to physically inspect the merchandise before ordering. The findings regarding the impact of perceived risk in shopping online are mixed. While some studies showed that the frequency of shopping online reduced consumers' perceived risk regarding such purchases, other studies showed no correlation between the two factors. Researchers also discovered that consumers' levels of involvement, brand familiarity, and the perceived benefits of shopping online impacted the perceived risk of electronic buying.[58]

How consumers handle risk

Consumers characteristically develop their own strategies for reducing perceived risk. These risk-reduction strategies enable them to act with increased confidence when making product decisions, even though the consequences of such decisions remain somewhat uncertain. Some of the more common risk-reduction strategies are discussed in the following sections.

Consumers seek information

Consumers seek information about the product and product category through word-of-mouth communication (from friends and family and from other people whose opinions they value), from salespeople, and from the general media. They spend more time thinking about their choice and search for more information about the product alternatives when they associate a high degree of risk with the purchase. This strategy is straightforward and logical because the more information the consumer has about the product and the product category, the more predictable the probable consequences and thus, the lower the perceived risk.

Consumers are brand loyal

Consumers avoid risk by remaining loyal to a brand with which they have been satisfied instead of purchasing new or untried brands. High-risk perceivers, for example, are more likely to be loyal to their old brands and less likely to purchase newly introduced products.

Consumers select by brand image

When consumers have had no experience with a product, they tend to "trust" a favored or well-known brand name. Consumers often think well-known brands are better and are worth buying for the implied assurance of quality, dependability, performance, and service. Marketers' promotional efforts supplement the perceived quality of their products by helping to build and sustain a favorable brand image.

Consumers rely on store image

If consumers have no other information about a product, they often trust the judgment of the merchandise buyers of a reputable store and depend on them to have made careful decisions in selecting products for sale. Store image also imparts the implication of product testing and the assurance of service, return privileges, and adjustment in case of dissatisfaction.

Consumers buy the most expensive model

When in doubt, consumers often feel that the most expensive model is probably the best in terms of quality; that is, they equate price with quality. (The price/quality relationship was discussed earlier in this chapter.)

Consumers seek reassurance

Consumers who are uncertain about the wisdom of a product choice seek reassurance through money-back guarantees, government and private laboratory test results, warranties,

and prepurchase trial. For example, it is unlikely that anyone would buy a new model car without a test drive. Products that do not easily lend themselves to free or limited trial, such as a refrigerator, present a selling challenge to marketers.

The concept of perceived risk has major implications for the introduction of new products. Because high-risk perceivers are less likely than low-risk perceivers to purchase new or innovative products, it is important for marketers to provide such consumers with persuasive risk-reduction strategies, such as a well-known brand name (sometimes achieved through licensing), distribution through reputable retail outlets, informative advertising, publicity stories in the media, impartial test results, free samples, and money-back guarantees. Also, most stores that carry a number of different brands and models of the same product, as well as manufacturers of such diverse model lines, now offer online consumers quick and easy ways to generate side-by-side comparisons with detailed charts of the features of all the available models.

ethics and consumer perception

The ethical issues related to consumer perception focus on how marketers use the knowledge of perception to manipulate consumers. One technique marketers use is to blur the distinctions between *figure* and *ground*. For example, to combat fast-forwarding by consumers who wish to avoid TV commercials, marketers are increasingly turning to **product placements**, where the line between television shows and ads is virtually nonexistent. In ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, Sears' Kenmore appliances and Craftsman tools are the "stars" of the show. Research indicates that many viewers were more likely to shop at Sears after seeing the show. Bags of Doritos and six-packs of Mountain Dew were given to the winners of personal challenge contests on *Survivor*, and the judges of "American Idol" always have a Coca-Cola within easy reach. A new product developed by Burger King went on sale the day after it was featured on *The Apprentice*, and another show of this series focused on developing an ad for Dove Cool Moisture Body Wash. Predictions have indicated that marketers are likely to increase expenditures substantially on such *branded entertainment*. In addition, online editions of newspapers often embed advertisements within the content of news. A newly formed consumer advocacy group, Commercial Alert, is lobbying for legislation that will require advertisers to disclose upfront those ads that are designed as product placements.[59]

Marketers also blend promotion and program content by positioning a TV commercial so close to the storyline of a program that viewers are unaware they are watching an advertisement until they are well into it. Because this was an important factor in advertising to children, the Federal Trade Commission has strictly limited the use of this technique. TV stars or cartoon characters are now prohibited from promoting products during the children's shows in which they appear. Other potential misuses of figure-and-ground are print ads (called *advertorials*) that closely resemble editorial matter, making it increasingly difficult for readers to tell them apart. Thirty-minute commercials (called *infomercials*) appear to the average viewer as documentaries, and thus command more attentive viewing than obvious commercials would receive.

As discussed earlier, marketers use their knowledge of the *just noticeable difference* to ensure that reductions in product quantity or quality and increases in prices go unnoticed by consumers. Marketers can also increase the quantity of the product consumed by the way it is physically packaged or presented. For example, studies showed that: (1) both children and adults consume more juice when the product is presented in short, wide glasses than in tall slender glasses; (2) candies placed in clear jars were eaten much quicker than those presented in opaque jars; (3) sandwiches in transparent wrap generated more consumption than those in opaque wraps; and (4) the visibility and aroma of tempting foods generated greater consumption.[60] Another study demonstrated that the organization of the merchandise, the size of the package, the symmetry of the display and its perceived variety served to impact consumption quantities. The consumer implications of these findings are listed in Table 6.6.[61]

TABLE 6.6 Implications for How Assortment Structure Influences Consumption Quantities

	ORGANIZATION INFLUENCES CONSUMPTION	SIZE INFLUENCES CONSUMPTION	SYMMETRY INFLUENCES CONSUMPTION	PERCEIVED VARIETY PARTIALLY MEDIATES CONSUMPTION	CONSUMPTION RULES INFLUENCE CONSUMPTION
Consumer implications	Organization is relevant for mixed assortments in bowls (or "grab bags"), buffets, potlucks, or dinner table settings. It may also be relevant in retail contexts. Consumers may be able to control consumption by organizing less-structured offerings.	Assortment size or duplication is commonly found in the form of multiple product tastings, multiple offerings of party snacks, duplicate buffet lines, family dinners with multiple dishes, and perhaps even in retail displays. Duplicated offerings can stimulate consumption.	The symmetry of an assortment is an issue wherever multiple units (and perhaps sizes) of options are involved, such as at holiday dinners, toys in play areas, and collectables and collecting. Minimal variation in the size of serving bowls may overstimulate consumption.	People are often surprised at how much they consume, showing that they may have been influenced at a basic or perceptual level.	Large inventory levels in one's home pantry could increase the quantity of food one believes is appropriate for a meal. Health-care professionals and dieticians can stimulate consumption among nutritionally deficient individuals by offering smaller helpings of more items.

Source: Barbara E. Kahn and Brian Wansink, "The Influence of Assortment Structure on Perceived Variety and Consumption Quantities," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30 (March 2004), 530. Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Marketers can also manipulate consumers' perception and behavior by using the physical setting where consumption occurs. It is widely known that supermarkets routinely move products around to encourage consumers to wander around the store, and keep the stores relatively cold because colder temperatures make people hungrier and so they increase their food purchases. (Some nutritionists advise consumers to go food shopping directly after a filling meal.) At DisneyWorld, guests leaving rides, and presumably still under the spell of the thrill and enjoyment experienced, must exit through a corridor of stores featuring merchandise congruent with the themes of the rides.

Marketers can also manipulate consumers' interpretations of marketing stimuli through the context in which they are featured. For example, in QVC's "Extreme Shopping," during which rare and expensive products are offered, consumers perceived $200 art prints as reasonably priced when the prints were shown immediately after much more expensive items.[62] Inadvertently, marketers can also impact the content of news to which consumers are exposed. For example, many marketers carefully screen the context in which their messages are shown, because they recognize that advertisements are perceived more positively when placed within more positive programs. Thus, they may choose not to place ads in news broadcasts or programs that cover serious issues, such as wars and world hunger, where some of the content is bound to be unpleasant.

In 1973, a book entitled *Subliminal Seduction* charged that advertisers were using subliminal embeds in their print ads to persuade consumers to buy their advertised brands. It was alleged, for example, that liquor advertisers were trying to increase the subconscious appeal of their products by embedding sexually suggestive symbols in ice cubes floating in a pictured drink.[63] Subsequently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) studied the subject and concluded that subliminal messages, whether

effective or not, are intended to deceive consumers and, therefore, contradict the public interest. However, because of the absence of any evidence that subliminal persuasion really works, no state or federal laws have been enacted to restrict the use of subliminal advertising.

Conveying socially undesirable stereotypes in products and advertisements is another ethical dilemma marketers may face. Some years ago, the makers of an American icon—G.I. Joe—introduced a substantially more muscular version of the doll and were subsequently accused of sanctioning the use of muscle-building drugs by teenagers. Similarly, the makers of Barbie—a doll that has gradually become thinner and bustier—were accused of conveying an unrealistic body image to young girls.[64] A recent example of perceived sterotypes in TV ads are ads that portray husbands and fathers as objects of ridicule and scorn (images that the creators of the messages believed to be a clever reversal of traditional sex roles).

SUMMARY

Perception is the process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Perception has strategy implications for marketers because consumers make decisions based on what they perceive rather than on the basis of objective reality.

The lowest level at which an individual can perceive a specific stimulus is that person's absolute threshold. The minimal difference that can be perceived between two stimuli is called the differential threshold or just noticeable difference (j.n.d.). Most stimuli are perceived by consumers above the level of their conscious awareness; however, weak stimuli can be perceived below the level of conscious awareness (i.e., subliminally). Research refutes the notion that subliminal stimuli influence consumer buying decisions.

Consumers' selections of stimuli from the environment are based on the interaction of their expectations and motives with the stimulus itself. The principles of selective perception include the following concepts: selective exposure, selective attention, perceptual defense, and perceptual blocking. People usually perceive things they need or want, and block the perception of unnecessary, unfavorable, or painful stimuli.

Consumers organize their perceptions into unified wholes according to the principles of Gestalt psychology: figure and ground, grouping, and closure. The interpretation of stimuli is highly subjective and is based on what the consumer expects to see in light of previous experience, on motives and interests at the time of perception, and on the clarity of the stimulus itself. Influences that tend to distort objective interpretation include physical appearances, stereotypes, halo effects, irrelevant cues, first impressions, and the tendency to jump to conclusions.

Just as individuals have perceived images of themselves, they also have perceived images of products and brands. The perceived image of a product or service (how it is positioned) is probably more important to its ultimate success than are its actual physical characteristics. Products and services that are perceived distinctly and favorably have a much better chance of being purchased than products or services with unclear or unfavorable images.

Compared with manufacturing firms, service marketers face several unique problems in positioning and promoting their offerings because services are intangible, inherently variable, perishable, and are simultaneously produced and consumed. Regardless of how well positioned a product or service appears to be, the marketer may be forced to reposition it in response to market events, such as new competitor strategies or changing consumer preferences.

Consumers often judge the quality of a product or service on the basis of a variety of informational cues; some are intrinsic to the product (such as color, size, flavor, and aroma), while others are extrinsic (e.g., price, store image, brand image, and service environment). In the absence of direct experience or other information, consumers often rely on price as an indicator of quality. How a consumer perceives a price—as high, low, or fair—has a strong influence on purchase intentions and satisfaction. Consumers rely on both internal and external reference prices when assessing the fairness of a price.

Consumer imagery also includes perceived images of retail stores that influence the perceived quality of products they carry, as well as decisions as to where to shop. Manufacturers who enjoy a favorable image generally find that their new products are accepted more readily than those of manufacturers with less favorable or even neutral images.

Consumers often perceive risk in making product selections because of uncertainty as to the consequences of their product decisions. The most frequent types of risk that consumers perceive are functional risk, physical risk, financial risk, social risk, psychological risk, and time risk. Consumer strategies for reducing perceived risk include increased information search, brand loyalty, buying a well-known brand, buying from a reputable retailer, buying the most

expensive brand, and seeking reassurance in the form of money-back guarantees, warranties, and prepurchase trial. The concept of perceived risk has important implications for marketers, who can facilitate the acceptance of new products by incorporating risk-reduction strategies in their new-product promotional campaigns.

The perception-related ethical issues include blurring the distinction between advertising and the informational or entertainment content of print or electronic media (i.e., figure-and-ground confusion), the large increase in product placements and branded advertising to combat the avoidance by consumers of TV commercials, using the physical environment and stimulus factors to increase consumption, and portraying socially undesirable stereotypes in advertising.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does sensory adaptation affect advertising effectiveness? How can marketers overcome sensory adaptation?
2. Discuss the differences between the absolute threshold and the differential threshold. Which one is more important to marketers? Explain your answer.
3. For each of these products—chocolate bars and bottles of expensive perfume—describe how marketers can apply their knowledge of the differential threshold to packaging, pricing, and promotional claims during periods of (a) rising ingredient and materials costs and (b) increasing competition.
4. Does subliminal advertising work? Support your view.
5. How do advertisers use contrast to make sure that their ads are noticed? Would the lack of contrast between the ad and the medium in which it appears help or hinder the effectiveness of the ad? What are the ethical considerations in employing such strategies?
6. What are the implications of figure–ground relationships for print ads and for online ads? How can the figure–ground construct help or interfere with the communication of advertising messages?
7. Why are marketers sometimes "forced" to reposition their products or services? Illustrate your answers with examples.
8. Why is it more difficult for consumers to evaluate the quality of services than the quality of products?
9. Discuss the roles of extrinsic cues and intrinsic cues in the perceived quality of:
   a. wines.
   b. restaurants.
   c. plasma TV monitors.
   d. graduate education.

EXERCISES

1. Find three print advertisements that use some of the stimulus factors discussed in this chapter to gain attention. For each example, evaluate the effectiveness of the stimulus factors used.
2. Define selective perception, and relate one or two elements of this concept to your own attention patterns in viewing print advertisements and TV commercials.
3. Find an ad or example in print format (e.g., an article) illustrating two of the positioning approaches discussed in this chapter. Evaluate the effectiveness of each ad or example selected.
4. Select a company that produces several versions of the same product under the same brand name (do not use one of the examples discussed in this chapter). Visit the firm's Web site and prepare a list of the product items and the benefits that each item offers to consumers. Are all these benefits believable and will they persuade consumers to buy the different versions of the product? Explain your answers.
5. Construct a two-dimensional perceptual map of your college using the two attributes that were most influential in your selection. Then mark the position of your school on the diagram relative to that of another school you considered. Discuss the implications of this perceptual map for the student recruitment function of the university that you did not choose.
6. Apply two of the concepts used to explain consumers' evaluations of service quality to your evaluation of this course up to this point in the semester.
7. Find a recent article discussing one of the ethical issues discussed in this chapter and present it in class.

KEY TERMS

- **absolute threshold**
- **branded advertising**
- **broad versus narrow categorizers**
- **closure**
- **cognitive dissonance**
- **consumer imagery**
- **differential threshold**
- **expectations**
- **figure and ground**
- **Gestalt psychology**
- **grouping**
- **intrinsic versus extrinsic cues**
- **just noticeable difference (j.n.d.)**
- **perceived price**
- **perceived quality**
- **perceived risk**
- **perception**
- **perceptual blocking**
- **perceptual distortion**
- **perceptual interpretation**
- **perceptual organization**
- **perceptual mapping**
- **positioning**
- **price/quality relationship**
- **product placements**
- **product or service positioning and repositioning**
- **reference prices**
- **selective perception**
- **sensation**
- **sensory adaptation**
- **sensory receptors**
- **stereotypes**
- **subliminal perception**
- **Weber's law**

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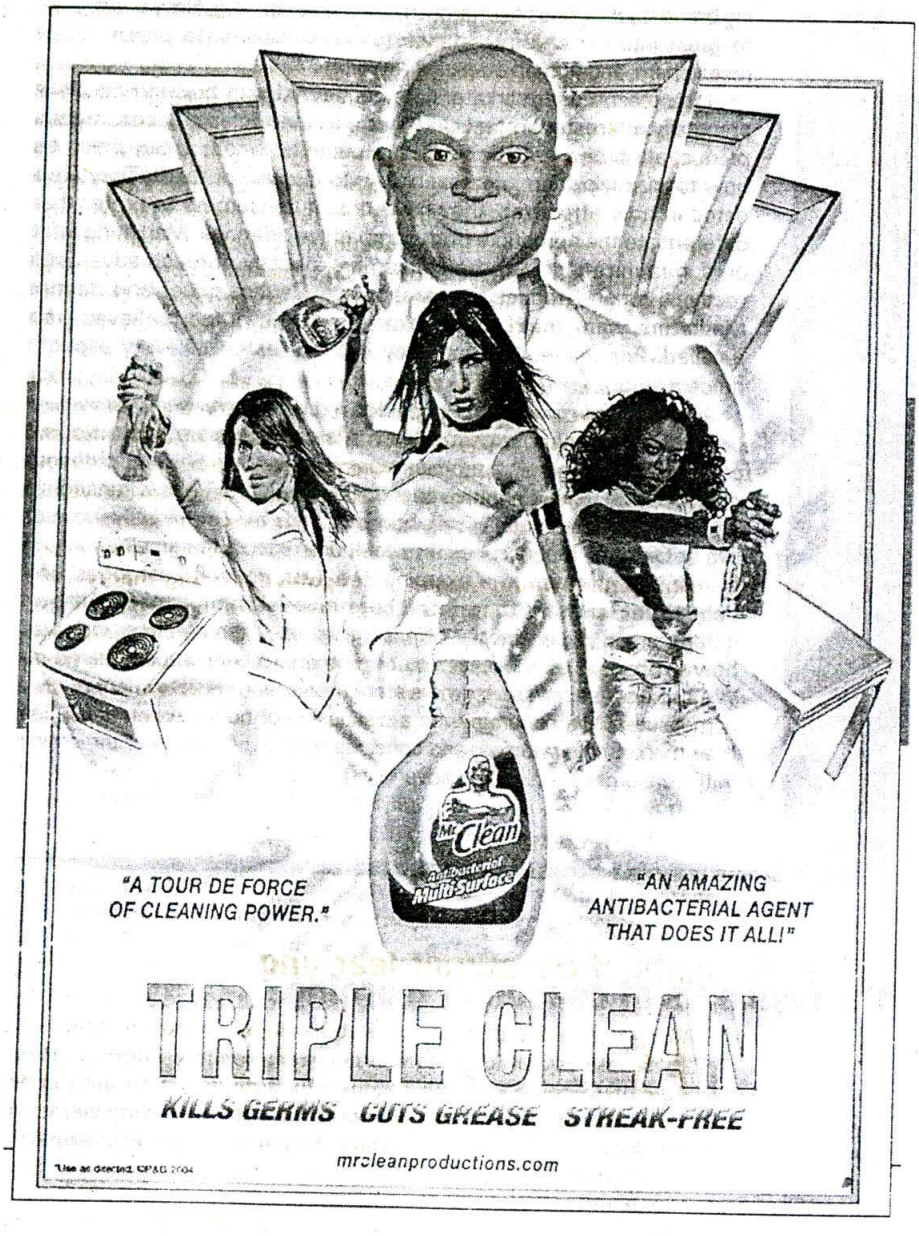
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chapterseven

Consumer Learning

When Procter & Gamble introduced Crest some fifty years ago as the first toothpaste with fluoride, the product was endorsed by the American Dental Association as the best alternative for preventing teeth decay. Today, under the Crest brand name, P&G markets about one hundred versions of toothpaste, manual and electric toothbrushes, Whitestrips for whitening teeth, and flossing and mouth rinsing products. P&G also combined two of its oldest brands, Cascade dishwashing powder and Dawn liquid dish soap, to create Cascade 2-in-1 Action Packs for the dishwasher. These gelatin packs contain the ingredients of both products, are easier to use, and clean grease better than each of the original products. In 1912, the Oreo cookie was introduced and, for decades, only few and minor variations on the original were offered. But, since 2001, many variations of the cookie's size, filling, and biscuit flavor have been introduced, such as Uh Oh Oreo, Double Delight Peanut Butter & Chocolate Oreo, and Delight Mint 'N Creme Oreo.[1]

All these new products represent *extensions* of highly successful *brands* and follow the principles of *consumer learning*. When Cascade, Dawn, and Oreo were first introduced, they became successful because they worked and effectively fulfilled consumers' needs. Through years of exposure to repeated advertising and



reminder advertising, most consumers remember these products and their advertised benefits while shopping. Each time they use them, they are repeatedly rewarded by the superior performances of Crest, Cascade and Dawn or Oreo's rich and fun-to-take-apart-and-eat quality. When new products carrying the well-known brand names were advertised, consumers immediately *associated* them with the well-established brand names and were eager to try them. When the new products worked well, consumers once again were *rewarded*, they continued to purchase them and became *loyal* to them.

Repeating advertising messages about brands and their benefits, rewarding people for purchase behavior by selling products that provide superior benefits, getting consumers to

make associations among different offerings under the same brand name, and developing brand loyalty are all elements of consumer learning. How individuals learn is a matter of great interest and importance to academicians, to psychologists, to consumer researchers, and to marketers.

The reason that marketers are concerned with how individuals learn is that they are vitally interested in teaching them, in their roles as consumers, about products, product attributes, and their potential benefits; where to buy them, how to use them, how to maintain them, and even how to dispose of them. They are also vitally interested in how effectively they have taught consumers to prefer their brands and to differentiate their products from competitive offerings. Marketing strategies are based on communicating with the consumer—directly, through advertisements, and indirectly, through product appearance, packaging, price, and distribution channels. Marketers want their communications to be noted, believed, remembered, and recalled. For these reasons, they are interested in every aspect of the learning process.

However, despite the fact that learning is all-pervasive in our lives, there is no single, universal theory of how people learn. Instead, there are two major schools of thought concerning the learning process: One consists of *behavioral theories,* the other of *cognitive theories.* Cognitive theorists view learning as a function of purely mental processes, whereas behavioral theorists focus almost exclusively on observable behaviors (responses) that occur as the result of exposure to stimuli.

In this chapter, we examine the two general categories of learning theory: **behavioral learning theory** and **cognitive learning theory**. Although these theories differ markedly in a number of essentials, each theory offers insights to marketers on how to shape their messages to consumers to bring about desired purchase behavior. We also discuss how consumers store, retain, and retrieve information, and how learning is measured. We continue with a discussion of how marketers use learning theories in their marketing strategies, and conclude with a discussion of the ethical issues involved with consumer learning and advertising.

the elements of consumer learning

Because not all learning theorists agree on how learning takes place, it is difficult to come up with a generally accepted definition of learning. From a marketing perspective, however, consumer learning can be thought of as *the process by which individuals acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience that they apply to future related behavior.* Several points in this definition are worth noting.

First, consumer learning is a *process;* that is, it continually evolves and changes as a result of newly acquired *knowledge* (which may be gained from reading, from discussions, from observation, from thinking) or from actual *experience.* Both newly acquired knowledge and personal experience serve as *feedback* to the individual and provide the basis for *future behavior* in similar situations.

The role of *experience* in learning does not mean that all learning is deliberately sought. Though much learning is *intentional* (i.e., it is acquired as the result of a careful search for information), a great deal of learning is also *incidental,* acquired by accident or without much effort. For example, some ads may induce learning (e.g., of new products under familiar brand names such as the ones discussed earlier), even though the consumer's attention is elsewhere (on a magazine article rather than the advertisement on the facing page). Other ads are sought out and carefully read by consumers contemplating a major purchase decision.

The term **learning** encompasses the total range of learning, from simple, almost reflexive responses, to the learning of abstract concepts and complex problem solving. Most learning theorists recognize the existence of different types of learning and explain the differences through the use of distinctive models of learning.

Despite their different viewpoints, learning theorists in general agree that in order for learning to occur, certain basic elements must be present. The elements included in most learning theories are *motivation, cues, response,* and *reinforcement.* These concepts are discussed first because they tend to recur in the theories discussed later in this chapter.

Motivation

The concept of **motivation** is important to learning theory. Remember, motivation is based on needs and goals. Motivation acts as a spur to learning. For example, men and women who want to take up bicycle riding for fitness and recreation are motivated to learn all they can about bike riding and also to practice often. They may seek information concerning the prices, quality, and characteristics of bicycles and "learn" which bicycles are the best for the kind of riding that they do. They will also read any articles in their local newspapers about bicycle trails and may seek online information about "active vacations" that involve biking or hiking. Conversely, individuals who are not interested in bike riding are likely to ignore all information related to the activity. The goal object (bicycle riding in order to relax and stay fit) simply has no relevance for them. The degree of relevance, or *involvement,* determines the consumer's level of motivation to search for knowledge or information about a product or service. (*Involvement theory,* as it has come to be known, is discussed later in the chapter.) Uncovering consumer motives is one of the prime tasks of marketers, who then try to teach motivated consumer segments why and how their products will fulfill the consumers' needs.

Cues

If motives serve to stimulate learning, **cues** are the stimuli that give direction to these motives. An advertisement for an exotic trip that includes bike riding may serve as a cue for bike riders, who may suddenly "recognize" that they "need" a vacation. The ad is the cue, or *stimulus,* that suggests a specific way to satisfy a salient motive. In the marketplace, price, styling, packaging, advertising, and store displays all serve as cues to help consumers fulfill their needs in product-specific ways.

Cues serve to direct consumer drives when they are consistent with consumer expectations. Marketers must be careful to provide cues that do not upset those expectations. For example, consumers expect designer clothes to be expensive and to be sold in upscale retail stores. Thus, a high-fashion designer should sell his or her clothes only through exclusive stores and advertise only in upscale fashion magazines. Each aspect of the marketing mix must reinforce the others if cues are to serve as the stimuli that guide consumer actions in the direction desired by the marketer.

Response

How individuals react to a drive or cue—how they behave—constitute their **response.** Learning can occur even when responses are not overt. The automobile manufacturer that provides consistent cues to a consumer may not always succeed in stimulating a purchase. However, if the manufacturer succeeds in forming a favorable image of a particular automobile model in the consumer's mind, it is likely that the consumer will consider that make or model when he or she is ready to buy.

A response is not tied to a need in a one-to-one fashion. Indeed, as was discussed in Chapter 4, a need or motive may evoke a whole variety of responses. For example, there are many ways to respond to the need for physical exercise besides riding bicycles. Cues provide some direction, but there are many cues competing for the consumer's attention. Which response the consumer makes depends heavily on previous learning; that, in turn, depends on how related responses have been reinforced

FIGURE 7.1

Source: Courtesy of Neutrogena Corporation



Product Usage Leads to Reinforcement

Reinforcement

Reinforcement increases the likelihood that a specific response will occur in the future as the result of particular cues or stimuli. For example, Figure 7.1 presents a three-step process for facial skin care based on three products (i.e., cues). This ad is instructional and designed to generate consumer learning. If a college student finds that the cleansing routine based on the three products featured in this ad relieves his acne problem, he is likely to continue buying and using these products. Through positive reinforcement, learning has taken place, since the facial cleansing system lived up to expectations. On the other hand, if the products had not provided relief from the problem when first used, the student would have no reason to associate the brand with acne relief in the future. Because of the absence of reinforcement, it is unlikely that he would buy that brand again.

With these basic principles established, we can now discuss some well-known theories or models of how learning occurs.

behavioral learning theories

Behavioral learning theories are sometimes referred to as **stimulus-response theories** because they are based on the premise that observable responses to specific external stimuli signal that learning has taken place. When a person acts (responds) in a predictable way to a known stimulus, he or she is said to have "learned." Behavioral theories are not so much concerned with the *process* of learning as they are with the *inputs* and *outcomes* of learning; that is, in the stimuli that consumers select from the environment and the observable behaviors that result. Two behavioral theories with great relevance to marketing are **classical conditioning** and **instrumental** (or **operant) conditioning.**

Classical conditioning

Early classical conditioning theorists regarded all organisms (both animal and human) as relatively passive entities that could be taught certain behaviors through repetition (i.e., *conditioning*). In everyday speech, the word *conditioning* has come to mean a kind of "knee-jerk" (or automatic) response to a situation built up through repeated exposure. If you get a headache every time you think of visiting your Aunt Gertrude, your reaction may be conditioned from years of boring visits with her.

Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist, was the first to describe conditioning and to propose it as a general model of how learning occurs. According to Pavlovian theory, conditioned learning results when a stimulus that is paired with another stimulus that elicits a known response serves to produce the same response when used alone.

Pavlov demonstrated what he meant by **conditioned learning** in his studies with dogs. The dogs were hungry and highly motivated to eat. In his experiments, Pavlov sounded a bell and then immediately applied a meat paste to the dogs' tongues, which caused them to salivate. Learning (conditioning) occurred when, after a sufficient number of repetitions of the bell sound followed almost immediately by the food, the bell sound alone caused the dogs to salivate. The dogs associated the bell sound (the *conditioned* stimulus) with the meat paste (the *unconditioned* stimulus) and, after a number of pairings, gave the same unconditioned response (salivation) to the bell alone as they did to the meat paste. The unconditioned response to the meat paste became the conditioned response to the bell. Figure 7.2A models this relationship. An analogous situation would be one in which the smells of dinner cooking would cause your mouth to water. If you usually listen to the 6 o'clock news while waiting for dinner to be served, you would tend to associate the 6 o'clock news with dinner, so that eventually the sounds of the 6 o'clock news alone might cause your mouth to water, even if dinner was not being prepared and even if you were not hungry. Figure 7.2B diagrams this basic relationship.

In a consumer behavior context, an **unconditioned stimulus** might consist of a well-known brand symbol (such as the Neutrogena name) that implies dermatologists' endorsement and pure (chemically free) products (i.e., containing few potentially irritating ingredients, such as perfume scents commonly added to personal cleansing products). This previously acquired consumer perception of Neutrogena is the *unconditioned response.* **Conditioned stimuli** might consist of new products bearing the well-known symbol (such as the items depicted in Figure 7.1), and the *conditioned response* would be trying these products because of the belief that they embody the same attributes with which the Neutrogena name is associated.

Cognitive associative learning

Contemporary behavioral scientists view classical conditioning as the learning of associations among events that allows the organism to anticipate and "represent" its environment. According to this view, the relationship (or contiguity) between the conditioned stimulus and the unconditioned stimulus (the bell and the meat paste) influenced the dogs' expectations, which in turn influenced their behavior (salivation). Classical conditioning, then, rather than being a reflexive action, is seen as **cognitive associative learning**—not the acquisition of new reflexes, but the acquisition of new knowledge about the world.[2]

FIGURE 7.2A

Pavlovian Model of Classical Conditioning

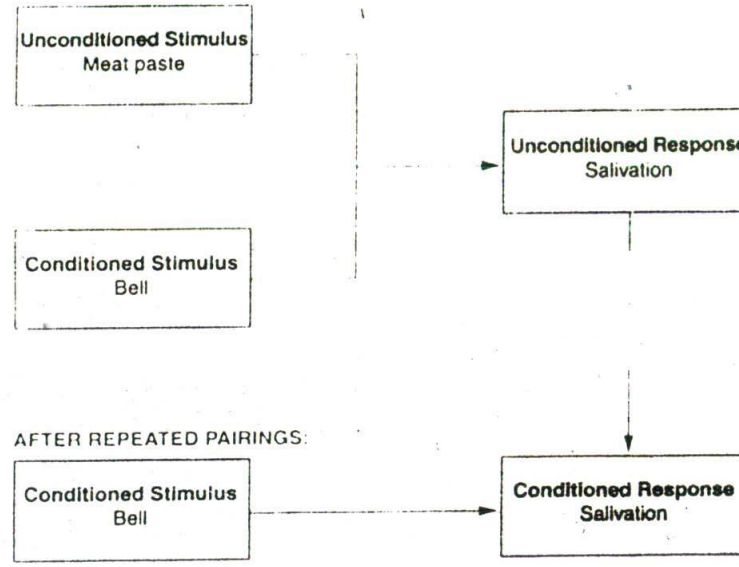
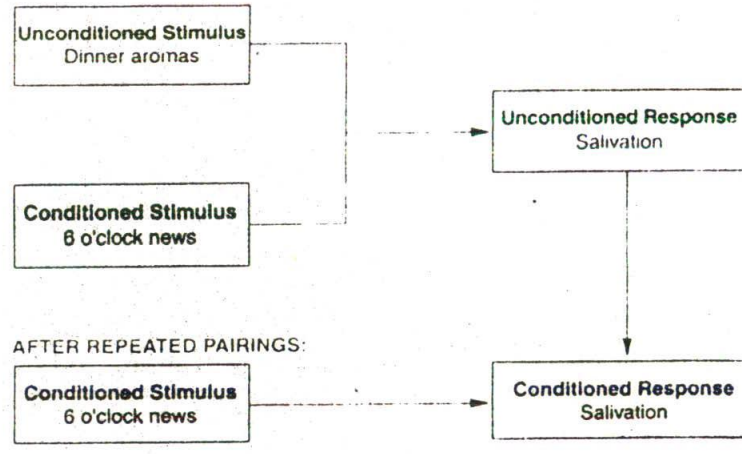


FIGURE 7.2B

Analogous Model of Classical Conditioning



According to some researchers, optimal conditioning—that is, the creation of a strong association between the conditioned stimulus (CS) and the unconditioned stimulus (US)—requires (1) forward conditioning (i.e., the CS should precede the US); (2) repeated pairings of the CS and the US; (3) a CS and US that logically belong together; (4) a CS that is novel and unfamiliar; and (5) a US that is biologically or symbolically salient. This model is known as **neo-Pavlovian conditioning**.

Under neo-Pavlovian theory, the consumer can be viewed as an information seeker who uses logical and perceptual relations among events, along with his or her own preconceptions, to form a sophisticated representation of the world. Conditioning is the learning that results from exposure to relationships among events in the environment; such exposure creates expectations as to the structure of the environment.

Strategic applications of classical conditioning

Three basic concepts derive from classical conditioning: *repetition, stimulus generalization,* and *stimulus discrimination.* Each of these concepts is important to the strategic applications of consumer behavior.

Repetition **Repetition** increases the strength of the association between a conditioned stimulus and an unconditioned stimulus and slows the process of forgetting. However, research suggests that there is a limit to the amount of repetition that will aid retention. Although some overlearning (i.e., repetition beyond what is necessary for learning) aids retention, at some point an individual can become satiated with numerous exposures, and both attention and retention will decline. This effect, known as **advertising wearout**, can be moderated by varying the advertising message. Some marketers avoid wearout by using *cosmetic variations* in their ads (using different backgrounds, different print types, different advertising spokespersons) while repeating the same advertising theme. For example, the classic, decades-old Absolut Vodka campaign has used the same theme with highly creative and varied backgrounds, relating the product to holidays, trends, and cultural symbols in the United States and across the world (e.g., see Figure 7.3). One study showed that brand familiarity impacted the effectiveness of repeating ads. The effectiveness of repeated ads for an unfamiliar brand declined over time, but when the same advertising was used for a well-known and familiar brand, repetition wearout was postponed.[3]

Substantive variations are changes in advertising content across different versions of an advertisement. For example, the two ads in Figure 7.4 stress two different attributes of the same product. Varied ads provide marketers with several strategic advantages. Consumers exposed to substantively varied ads process more information about product attributes and have more positive thoughts about the product than those exposed to cosmetic variations. Attitudes formed as a result of exposure to substantively varied ads are more resistant to change in the face of competitive attack.

Although the principle of repetition is well established among advertisers, not everyone agrees on how much repetition is enough. Some marketing scholars believe that just three exposures to an advertisement are needed: one to make consumers aware of the product, a second to show consumers the relevance of the product, and a third to remind them of its benefits. This is known as the *three-hit theory.* Others think it may take 11 to 12 repetitions to increase the likelihood that consumers will actually receive the three exposures basic to the so-called three-hit theory.

The effectiveness of repetition is somewhat dependent upon the amount of competitive advertising to which the consumer is exposed. The higher the level of competitive ads, the greater the likelihood that *interference* will occur, causing consumers to forget previous learning that resulted from repetition.

Stimulus Generalization According to classical conditioning theorists, learning depends not only on repetition but also on the ability of individuals to generalize. Pavlov found, for example, that a dog could learn to salivate not only to the sound of a bell but also to the somewhat similar sound of jangling keys. If we were not capable of **stimulus generalization**—that is, of making the same response to slightly different stimuli—not much learning would take place.

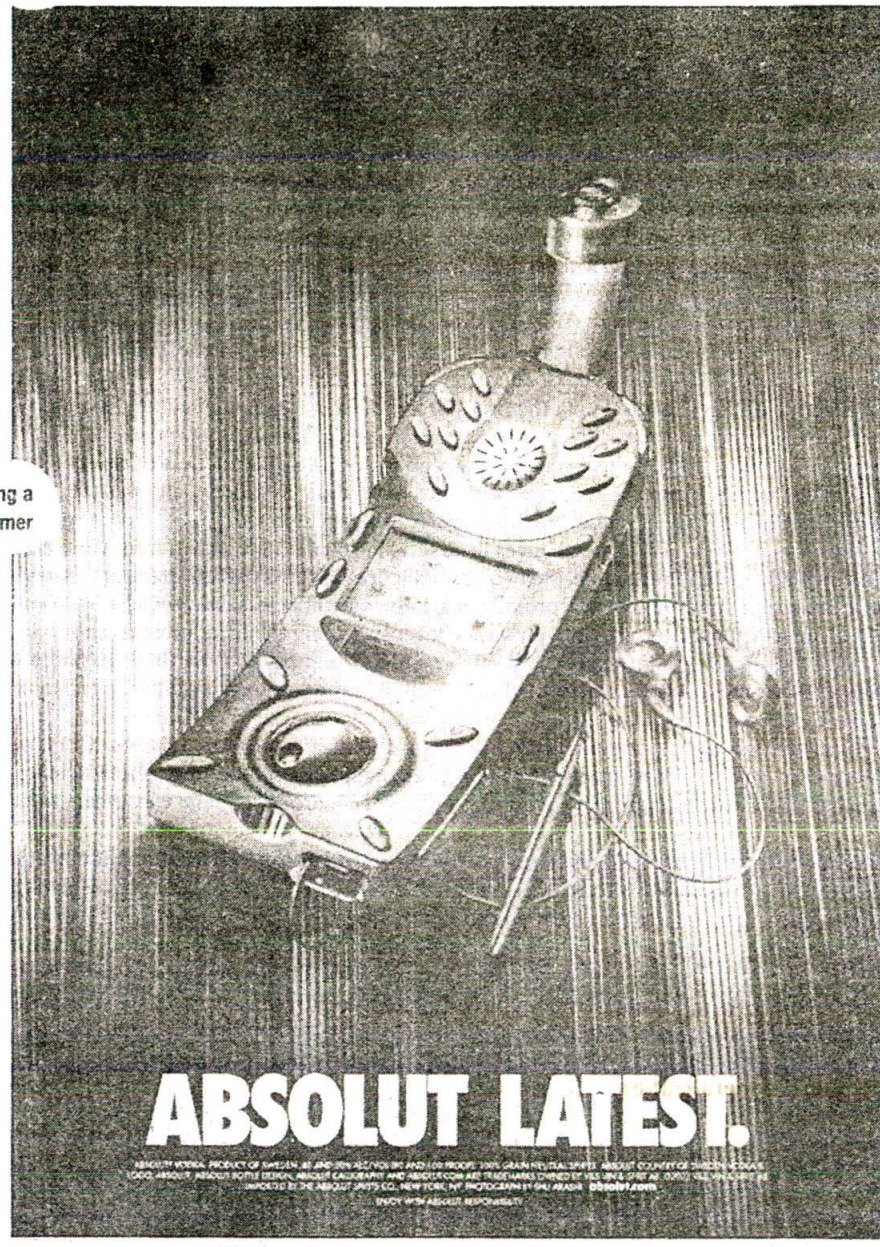
Stimulus generalization explains why some imitative "me-too" products succeed in the marketplace: Consumers confuse them with the original product they have seen advertised. It also explains why manufacturers of private-label brands try to make their packaging closely resemble the national brand leaders. They are hoping that consumers will confuse their packages with the leading brand and buy their product rather than the leading brand. Similarly packaged competitive products result in millions of lost sales for well-positioned and extensively advertised brands.

Product Line, Form, and Category Extensions The principle of stimulus generalization is applied by marketers to *product line, form,* and *category extensions.* In **product line**

FIGURE 7.3

Source: Under permission by V&S Vin & Sprit AB (PUBL). Absolut Country of Sweden Vodka & Logo, Absolut, Absolut Bottle Design and Absolut Calligraphy are the trademarks owned by V&S Vin & Sprit AB (PUBL). © 2005 V&S Vin & Sprit AB. Photographer Shu Akashi.

Absolut Targeting a Techno-Savvy Consumer



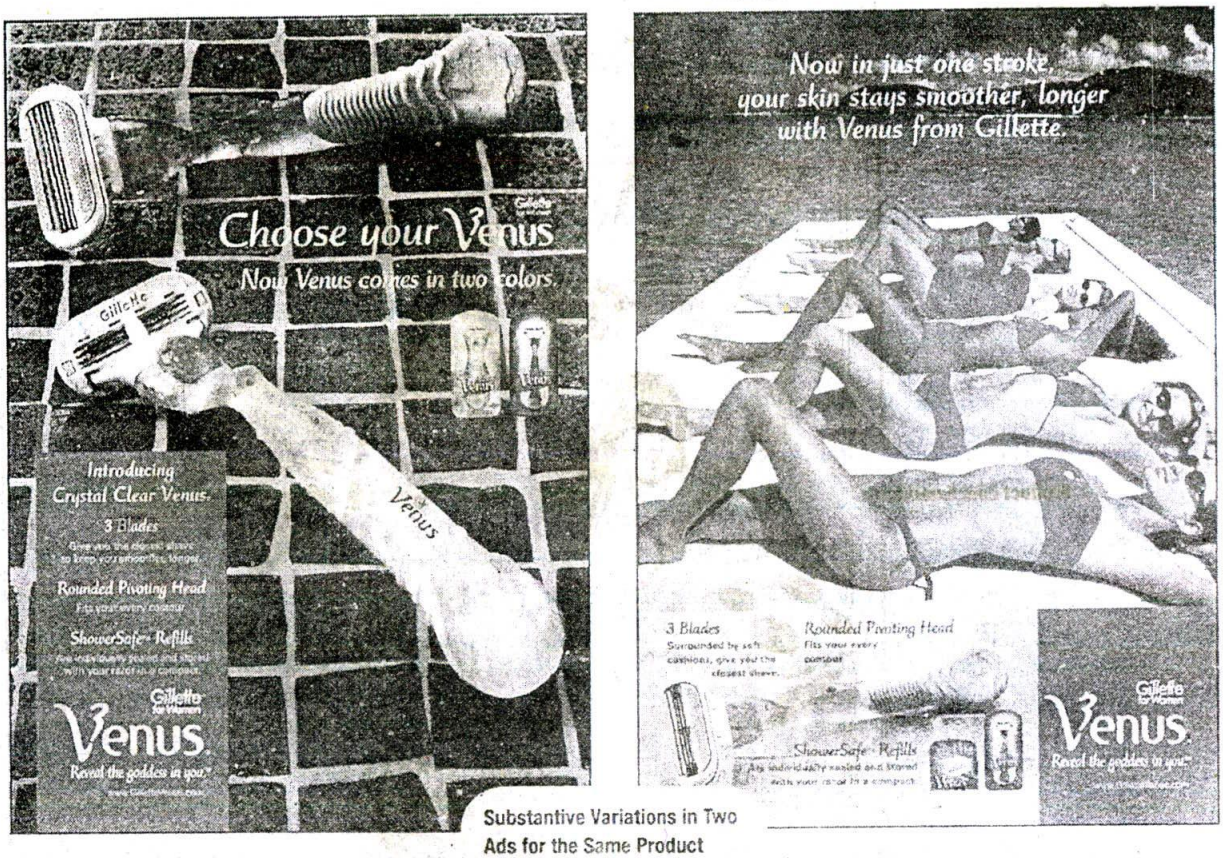
extensions, the marketer adds related products to an already established brand, knowing that the new products are more likely to be adopted when they are associated with a known and trusted brand name (see Figure 7.5).

Marketers also offer **product form extensions**, such as Crest Toothpaste to Crest Whitestrips, Listerine mouthwash to ListerinePaks (see Figure 7.6), and Ivory bath soap to Ivory liquid soap to Ivory shower gel. Marketers also offer **product category extensions** that generally target new market segments (see Figure 7.7).

The success of product extensions depends on a number of factors. If the image of the parent brand is one of quality and the new item is logically linked to the brand, consumers

Source: Courtesy of Gillette.

FIGURE 7.4



Substantive Variations in Two Ads for the Same Product

are more likely to bring positive associations to the new offerings introduced as product line, form, or category extensions. For example, Tylenol, a highly trusted brand, initially introduced line extensions by making its products available in a number of different forms (tablets, capsules, gelcaps), strengths (regular, extra strength, and children's), and package sizes. It then extended its brand name to a wide range of related remedies for colds, flu, sinus congestion, and allergies, further segmenting the line for adults, children, and infants. The number of different products affiliated with a brand strengthens the brand name, as long as the company maintains a quality image across all brand extensions. Failure to do so, in the long run, is likely to negatively affect consumer confidence and evaluations of all the brand's offerings. One study showed that brands that include diverse products are likely to offer more successful brand extensions than brands that include similar products. The study also confirmed that the likely associations between the benefits offered by the brand and its new extension are the key to consumers' reactions to the brand extension.[4]

Family Branding **Family branding**—the practice of marketing a whole line of company products under the same brand name—is another strategy that capitalizes on the consumer's ability to generalize favorable brand associations from one product to others. Campbell's, originally a marketer of soups, continues to add new food products to its product line under the Campbell's brand name (such as canned soups, frozen meals, soup to be eaten on-the-go, and tomato juice), thus achieving ready acceptance for the

FIGURE 7.5

Source: © Procter & Gamble Company. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Product Line Extention

new products from satisfied consumers of other Campbell's food products. The Ralph Lauren designer label on men's and women's clothing helps to achieve ready acceptance for these products in the upscale sportswear market. Clearly, managing a family brand is more complex than managing a brand that includes only closely related items. One study demonstrated that consumers are likely to expect variability in the performances of the products under the family brand if the company does not address this issue in the information provided with new products introduced; the study singles out the importance of consistent positioning even as the number of offerings under a given name increases.[5]



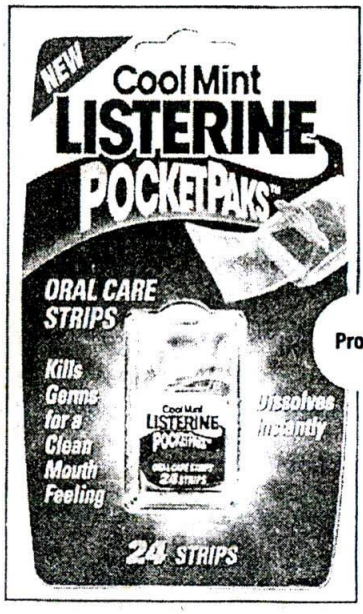


FIGURE 7.6

Source: © The Procter & Gamble Company. Used by Permission. Courtesy of Pfizer Consumer Healthcare, Pfizer Inc.

Product Form Extensions

On the other hand, Procter & Gamble (P&G) was built on the strength of its many individual brands in the same product category. For example, the company offers multiple brands of laundry products, of antiperspirants, and of hair care products, including shampoo. Although offering many brands of the same product is expensive, the combined weight of its brands has always provided Procter & Gamble (the **umbrella brand**) with great power in negotiating with advertising media and securing desirable shelf space for its products in the United States and around the world. It also enables the company to effectively combat any competitors who may try to introduce products in markets dominated by P&G.

Donald Trump, the real estate tycoon, made his own surname into a brand name, *Trump*, a name attached to multiple buildings, hotels, and casinos to give consumers feelings of confidence in their quality. He extended this brand into television with his highly successful reality show *The Apprentice*, which has itself developed brand extensions. Real estate developers offer Mr. Trump a percentage in their new developments in return for the use of his name. However, he has to be vigilant that the Trump name is not attached to inferior buildings or hotels or TV shows because the brand would lose its carefully built up quality image.

Retail private branding often achieves the same effect as family branding. For example, Wal-Mart used to advertise that its stores carried only "brands you trust." Now, the name Wal-Mart itself has become a "brand" that consumers have confidence in, and the name confers brand value on Wal-Mart's store brands.

Licensing **Licensing**—allowing a well-known brand name to be affixed to products of another manufacturer—is a marketing strategy that operates on the principle of *stimulus generalization*. The names of designers, manufacturers, celebrities, corporations, and even cartoon characters are attached for a fee (i.e., "rented") to a variety of products, enabling the licensees to achieve instant recognition and implied quality for the licensed products. Some successful licensors include Liz Claiborne, Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, and Christian Dior, whose names appear on an exceptionally wide variety of products, from sheets to shoes and luggage to perfume. Figure 7.8 shows an ad for eyeglasses bearing the name of the well-known shoe manufacturer Kenneth Cole.

FIGURE 7.7

Source: Courtesy of Neutrogena Corporation.

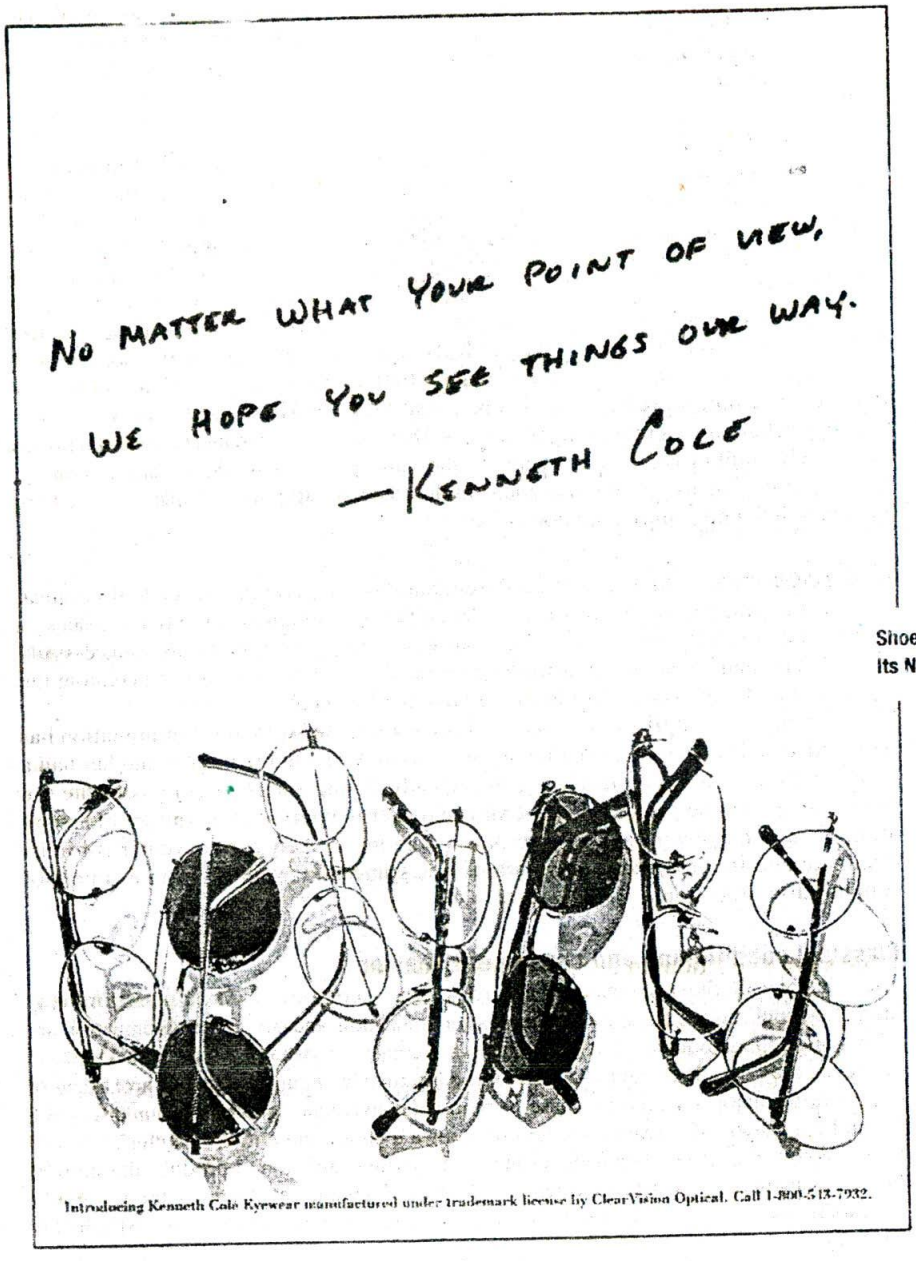


Product Category Extensions

Corporations also license their names and trademarks, usually for some form of brand extension, where the name of the corporation is licensed to the maker of a related product and thereby enters a new product category (e.g., Godiva chocolates licensed its name for Godiva liqueur). Corporations also license their names for purely promotional licensing, in which popular company logos (such as "Always Coca-Cola") are stamped on clothing, toys, coffee mugs, and the like. The Vatican Library licenses its name for a variety of products from luggage to bed linens, and the Mormon Church has expanded its licensing activities to apparel and home decorating items.

FIGURE 7.8

Source: Courtesy of Kenneth Cole Productions, Inc.



Shoe Manufacturer Licenses Its Name

The increase in licensing has made *counterfeiting* a booming business, as counterfeiters add well-known licensor names to a variety of products without benefit of contract or quality control. Aside from the loss of sales revenue because of counterfeiting, the authentic brands also suffer the consequences associated with zero quality control over counterfeit products that bear their names. It is also increasingly difficult to identify fakes of such expensive and upscale goods as Christian Dior bags, Gucci shoes, and Chanel No. 5 perfume. Many firms are now legally pursuing retailers that sell counterfeit branded goods; many also are employing specialized technology to make their products more counterfeit-proof.[6]

Stimulus Discrimination **Stimulus discrimination** is the opposite of stimulus generalization and results in the selection of a specific stimulus from among similar stimuli. The consumer's ability to discriminate among similar stimuli is the basis of positioning strategy (discussed in Chapter 6), which seeks to establish a unique image for a brand in the consumer's mind.

Positioning In our over-communicated society, the key to stimulus discrimination is effective **positioning**, a major competitive advantage. The image—or position—that a product or service holds in the mind of the consumer is critical to its success. When a marketer targets consumers with a strong communications program that stresses the unique ways in which its product will satisfy the consumer's needs, it wants the consumer to differentiate its product from among competitive products on the shelf. Unlike the imitator who hopes consumers will *generalize* their perceptions and attribute special characteristics of the market leader's products to its own products, market leaders want the consumer to *discriminate* among similar stimuli. Major marketers are constantly vigilant concerning store brand look-alikes, and they quickly file suit against retailers that they believe are cannibalizing their sales. They want their products to be recognized as uniquely fulfilling consumers' needs. Studies have shown that the favorable attitudes resulting from effective positioning and stimulus discrimination are usually retained long enough to influence future purchase behavior.[7]

Product Differentiation Most product differentiation strategies are designed to distinguish a product or brand from that of competitors on the basis of an attribute that is relevant, meaningful, and valuable to consumers. However, many marketers also successfully differentiate their brands on an attribute that may actually be irrelevant to creating the implied benefit, such as a noncontributing ingredient or a color.

It often is quite difficult to unseat a brand leader once stimulus discrimination has occurred. One explanation is that the leader is usually first in the market and has had a longer period to "teach" consumers (through advertising and selling) to associate the brand name with the product. In general, the longer the period of learning—of associating a brand name with a specific product—the more likely the consumer is to discriminate and the less likely to generalize the stimulus. Figure 7.9 is an example of stimulus discrimination.

Classical conditioning and consumer behavior

The principles of classical conditioning provide the theoretical underpinnings for many marketing applications. Repetition, stimulus generalization, and stimulus discrimination are all major applied concepts that help to explain consumer behavior in the marketplace. However, they do not explain all behavioral consumer learning. Although a great deal of consumer behavior (e.g., the purchase of branded convenience goods) is shaped to some extent by repeated advertising messages stressing a unique competitive advantage, a significant amount of purchase behavior results from careful evaluation of product alternatives. Our assessments of products are often based on the degree of satisfaction—the rewards—we experience as a result of making specific purchases; in other words, from instrumental conditioning.

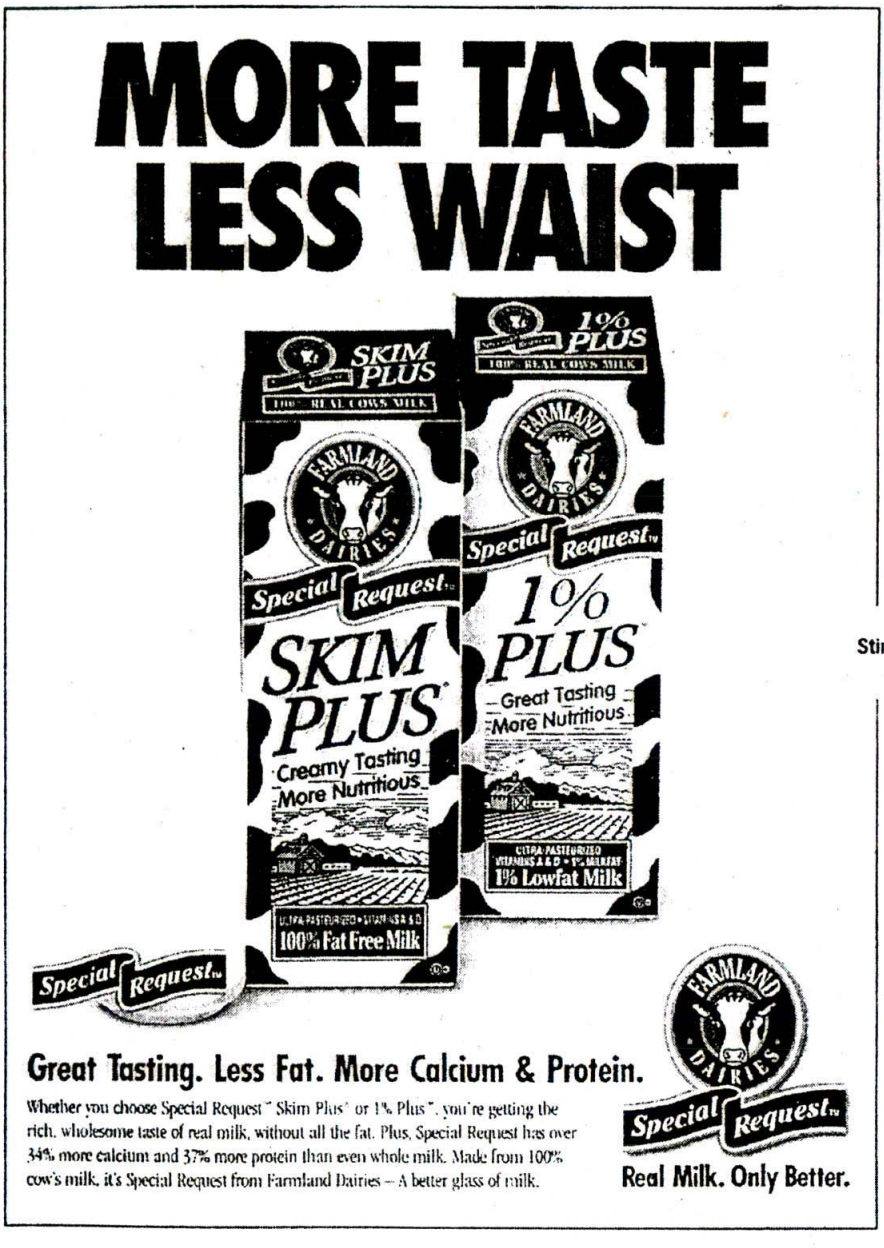
Instrumental conditioning

Like classical conditioning, **instrumental conditioning** requires a link between a stimulus and a response. However, in instrumental conditioning, the stimulus that results in the most satisfactory response is the one that is learned.

Instrumental learning theorists believe that learning occurs through a trial-and-error process, with habits formed as a result of rewards received for certain responses or behaviors. This model of learning applies to many situations in which consumers learn about products, services, and retail stores. For example, consumers learn which stores carry the type of clothing they prefer at prices they can afford to pay by shopping in a number of

FIGURE 7.9

Source: © Farmland Dairies LLC. Used with permission.



Stimulus Discrimination

stores. Once they find a store that carries clothing that meets their needs, they are likely to patronize that store to the exclusion of others. Every time they purchase a shirt or a sweater there that they really like, their store loyalty is rewarded (*reinforced*), and their patronage of that store is more likely to be repeated. Whereas classical conditioning is useful in explaining how consumers learn very simple kinds of behaviors, instrumental conditioning is more helpful in explaining complex, goal-directed activities.

The name most closely associated with instrumental (*operant*) conditioning is that of the American psychologist B. F. Skinner. According to Skinner, most individual learning occurs in a controlled environment in which individuals are "rewarded" for choosing an appropriate behavior. In consumer behavior terms, instrumental conditioning suggests

that consumers learn by means of a trial-and-error process in which some purchase behaviors result in more favorable outcomes (i.e., rewards) than other purchase behaviors. A favorable experience is "instrumental" in teaching the individual to repeat a specific behavior.

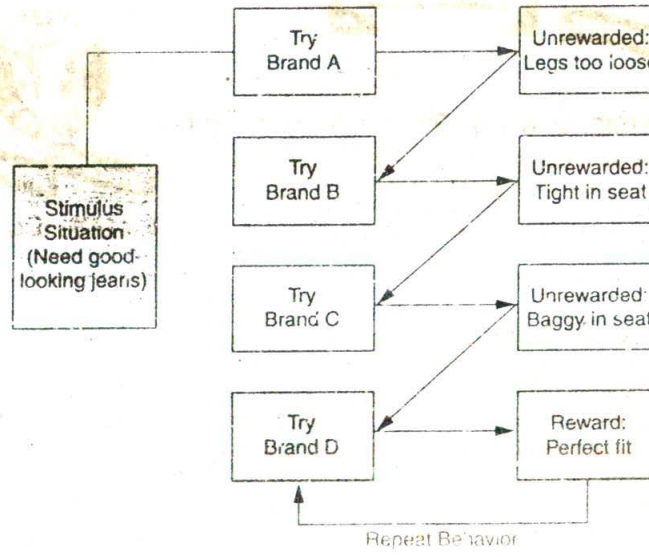
Like Pavlov, Skinner developed his model of learning by working with animals. Small animals, such as rats and pigeons, were placed in his "Skinner box"; if they made appropriate movements (e.g., if they depressed levers or pecked keys), they received food (a positive reinforcement). Skinner and his many adherents have done amazing things with this simple learning model, including teaching pigeons to play Ping-Pong and even to dance. In a marketing context, the consumer who tries several brands and styles of jeans before finding a style that fits her figure (positive reinforcement) has engaged in instrumental learning. Presumably, the brand that fits best is the one she will continue to buy. This model of instrumental conditioning is presented in Figure 7.10.

Reinforcement of behavior

Skinner distinguished two types of reinforcement (or reward) that influence the likelihood that a response will be repeated. The first type, **positive reinforcement**, consists of events that strengthen the likelihood of a specific response. Using a shampoo that leaves your hair feeling silky and clean is likely to result in a repeat purchase of the shampoo. **Negative reinforcement** is an unpleasant or negative outcome that also serves to encourage a specific behavior. An advertisement that shows a model with wrinkled skin is designed to encourage consumers to buy and use the advertised skin cream.

Fear appeals in ad messages are examples of negative reinforcement. Many life insurance advertisements rely on negative reinforcement to encourage the purchase of life insurance. The ads warn husbands of the dire consequences to their wives and children in the event of their sudden death. Marketers of headache remedies use negative reinforcement when they illustrate the unpleasant symptoms of an unrelieved headache, as do marketers of mouthwash when they show the loneliness suffered by someone with bad breath. In each of these cases, the consumer is encouraged to avoid the negative consequences by buying the advertised product.

Either positive or negative reinforcement can be used to elicit a desired response. However, negative reinforcement should not be confused with punishment, which is



A Model of Instrumental Conditioning

FIGURE 7.10

designed to *discourage* behavior. For example, parking tickets are not negative reinforcement; they are a form of "punishment" designed to discourage drivers from parking illegally.

Extinction and Forgetting When a learned response is no longer reinforced, it diminishes to the point of *extinction*, that is, to the point at which the link between the stimulus and the expected reward is eliminated. If a consumer is no longer satisfied with the service a retail store provides, the link between the stimulus (the store) and the response (expected satisfaction) is no longer reinforced, and there is little likelihood that the consumer will return. When behavior is no longer reinforced, it is "unlearned." There is a difference, however, between extinction and *forgetting*. A couple who have not visited a once-favorite restaurant for a very long time may simply forget how much they used to enjoy eating there and not think to return. Thus, their behavior is unlearned because of lack of use rather than lack of reinforcement. Forgetting is often related to the passage of time; this is known as the process of *decay*. Marketers can overcome forgetting through repetition, and can combat extinction through the deliberate enhancement of consumer satisfaction. Sometimes, marketers may cause extinction deliberately and "undo" a previously learned association. For example, a large car service in New York City known for many years as Tel Aviv Car Service is now advertising itself as the "Dial 7s" car service in reference to its phone number (consisting of seven consecutive sevens) and, quite possibly, to undo its association in the consumer's mind with Israeli ownership.

Strategic applications of instrumental conditioning

Marketers effectively utilize the concepts of consumer instrumental learning when they provide positive reinforcement by assuring customer satisfaction with the product, the service, and the total buying experience.

Customer Satisfaction (Reinforcement) The objective of all marketing efforts should be to maximize customer satisfaction. Marketers must be certain to provide the best possible product for the money and to avoid raising consumer expectations for product (or service) performance beyond what the product can deliver. Aside from the experience of using the product itself, consumers can receive reinforcement from other elements in the purchase situation, such as the environment in which the transaction or service takes place, the attention and service provided by employees, and the amenities provided. For example, an upscale beauty salon, in addition to a beautiful environment, may offer coffee and soft drinks to waiting clients and provide free local telephone service at each hairdressing station. Even if the styling outcome is not so great, the client may feel so pampered with the atmosphere and service that she looks forward to her next visit. On the other hand, even with the other positive reinforcements in place, if the salon's employees are so busy talking with each other while the service is being rendered that the client feels ignored, she is not likely to return.

Recent data from the American Customer Satisfaction Index—the benchmark source regarding customer satisfaction with businesses—illustrate that many companies wrongly assume that lower prices and more diverse product lines make customers more satisfied. Instead, it appears that companies that create personal connections with customers, and also offer diverse product lines and competitive prices, are the ones providing the best reinforcement, resulting in satisfaction and repeat patronage.[8] Some hotels offer reinforcements in the form of small amenities, such as chocolates on the pillow or bottled water on the dresser; others send platters of fruit or even bottles of wine to returning guests to show their appreciation for continued patronage. Most frequent shopper programs are based on enhancing positive reinforcement and encouraging continued patronage. The more a consumer uses the service, the greater the rewards. Kellogg's provides a frequent user program by including coupons on the top of its cereal boxes that can be accumulated and exchanged for various premiums, such as a coffee mug or denim shirt emblazoned with the company's logo.

Relationship marketing—developing a close personalized relationship with customers—is another form of nonproduct reinforcement. Knowing that she will be advised of a forthcoming sale or that selected merchandise will be set aside for her next visit cements the loyalty that a consumer may have for a retail store. The ability to telephone his "personal" banker to transfer funds between accounts or to make other banking transactions without coming into the bank reinforces the satisfaction a consumer may have with his bank. Service companies are particularly vulnerable to interruptions in customer reinforcement because of service failures that cannot be controlled in advance. As a result, astute service providers have implemented *service recovery* measures that provide extra rewards to customers who have experienced service failures. Studies indicate that customers who emotionally bonded with the service provider were less forgiving than other customers because they felt truly "betrayed," and that the effectiveness of service recovery measures had the strongest impact on loyal customers.[9]

Reinforcement Schedules Marketers have found that product quality must be consistently high and provide satisfaction to the customer with each use for desired consumer behavior to continue. However, they have also discovered that some nonproduct rewards do not have to be offered each time the transaction takes place; even an occasional reward provides reinforcement and encourages consumer patronage. For example, airlines may occasionally upgrade a passenger at the gate, or a clothing discounter may from time to time announce a one-hour sale over the store sound system. The promise of possibly receiving a reward provides positive reinforcement and encourages consumer patronage.

Marketers have identified three types of reinforcement schedules: *total* (or continuous) reinforcement, *systematic* (fixed ratio) reinforcement, and *random* (variable ratio) reinforcement. An example of a total (or continuous) reinforcement schedule is the free after-dinner drink or fruit plate always served to patrons at certain restaurants. Needless to say, the basic product or service rendered is expected to provide total satisfaction (reinforcement) each time it is used.

A *fixed ratio* reinforcement schedule provides reinforcement every "*n*th" time the product or service is purchased (say, every third time). For example, a retailer may send a credit voucher to account holders every three months based on a percentage of the previous quarter's purchases. A *variable ratio* reinforcement schedule rewards consumers on a random basis or on an average frequency basis (such as every third or tenth transaction). Gambling casinos operate on the basis of variable ratios. People pour money into slot machines (which are programmed to pay off on a variable ratio), hoping for the big win. Variable ratios tend to engender high rates of desired behavior and are somewhat resistant to extinction—perhaps because, for many consumers, hope springs eternal. Other examples of variable ratio schedules include lotteries, sweepstakes, door prizes, and contests that require certain consumer behaviors for eligibility.

Shaping Reinforcement performed *before* the desired consumer behavior actually takes place is called **shaping**. Shaping increases the probabilities that certain desired consumer behavior will occur. For example, retailers recognize that they must first attract customers to their stores before they can expect them to do the bulk of their shopping there. Many retailers provide some form of preliminary reinforcement (shaping) to encourage consumers to visit only their store. For example, some retailers offer loss leaders—popular products at severely discounted prices—to the first hundred or so customers to arrive, since those customers are likely to stay to do much of their shopping. By reinforcing the behavior that's needed to enable the desired consumer behavior to take place, marketers increase the probability that the desired behavior will occur. Car dealers recognize that in order to sell new model cars, they must first encourage people to visit their showrooms and to test-drive their cars. Hopefully, the test-drive will result in a sale. Using shaping principles, many car dealers encourage showroom visits by providing small gifts (such as key chains and DVDs), larger gifts (e.g., a $10 check) to test-drive the car, and a rebate check upon placement of an order. They use a multi-step shaping process to achieve desired consumer learning.

Massed versus distributed learning

As illustrated previously, *timing* has an important influence on consumer learning. Should a learning schedule be spread out over a period of time (*distributed learning,*) or should it be "bunched up" all at once (*massed learning*)? The question is an important one for advertisers planning a media schedule, because massed advertising produces more initial learning, whereas a distributed schedule usually results in learning that persists longer. When advertisers want an immediate impact (e.g., to introduce a new product or to counter a competitor's blitz campaign), they generally use a massed schedule to hasten consumer learning. However, when the goal is long-term repeat buying on a regular basis, a distributed schedule is preferable. A distributed schedule, with ads repeated on a regular basis, usually results in more long-term learning and is relatively immune to extinction.

Modeling or observational learning

Learning theorists have noted that a considerable amount of learning takes place in the absence of direct reinforcement, either positive or negative, through a process psychologists call **modeling** or **observational learning** (also called *vicarious learning*). Consumers often observe how others behave in response to certain situations (stimuli) and the ensuing results (reinforcement) that occur, and they imitate (model) the positively reinforced behavior when faced with similar situations. Modeling is *the process through which individuals learn behavior by observing the behavior of others and the consequences of such behavior.* Their role models are usually people they admire because of such traits as appearance, accomplishment, skill, and even social class.

Advertisers recognize the importance of observational learning in their selection of models—whether celebrities or unknowns. If a teenager sees an ad that depicts social success as the outcome of using a certain brand of shampoo, she will want to buy it. If her brother sees a commercial that shows a muscular young athlete eating Wheaties—"the breakfast of champions"—he will want to eat it, too. Indeed, vicarious (or observational) learning is the basis of much of today's advertising. Consumer models with whom the target audience can identify are shown achieving positive outcomes to common problem situations through the use of the advertised product. Children learn much of their social behavior and consumer behavior by observing their older siblings or their parents. They imitate the behavior of those they see rewarded, expecting to be rewarded similarly if they adopt the same behavior.

Sometimes ads depict negative consequences for certain types of behavior. This is particularly true of public policy ads, which may show the negative consequences of smoking, of driving too fast, or of taking drugs. By observing the actions of others and the resulting consequences, consumers learn vicariously to recognize appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

cognitive learning theory

Not all learning takes place as the result of repeated trials. A considerable amount of learning takes place as the result of consumer thinking and problem solving. Sudden learning is also a reality. When confronted with a problem, we sometimes see the solution instantly. More often, however, we are likely to search for information on which to base a decision, and we carefully evaluate what we learn in order to make the best decision possible for our purposes.

Learning based on mental activity is called **cognitive learning**. Cognitive learning theory holds that the kind of learning most characteristic of human beings is *problem solving,* which enables individuals to gain some control over their environment. Unlike behavioral learning theory, cognitive theory holds that learning involves complex *mental processing of information.* Instead of stressing the importance of repetition or the association of a reward with a specific response, cognitive theorists emphasize the role of motivation and mental processes in producing a desired response.

Information processing

Just as a computer processes information received as input, so too does the human mind process the information it receives as input. **Information processing** is related to both the consumer's cognitive ability and the complexity of the information to be processed. Consumers process product information by attributes, brands, comparisons between brands, or a combination of these factors. Although the attributes included in the brand's message and the number of available alternatives influence the intensity or degree of information processing, consumers with higher cognitive ability apparently acquire more product information and are more capable of integrating information on several product attributes than consumers with lesser ability.

Individuals also differ in terms of **imagery**—that is, in their ability to form mental images—and these differences influence their ability to recall information. Individual differences in imagery processing can be measured with tests of *imagery vividness* (the ability to evoke clear images), *processing style* (preference for and frequency of visual versus verbal processing), and *daydream (fantasy) content* and *frequency.*[10]

The more experience a consumer has with a product category, the greater his or her ability to make use of product information. Greater familiarity with the product category also increases cognitive ability and learning during a new purchase decision, particularly with regard to technical information. Some consumers learn by analogy; that is, they transfer knowledge about products they are familiar with to new or unfamiliar products in order to enhance their understanding. One study found that when people exerted more cognitive effort in processing information about a product, they experienced a process-induced negative effect toward that alternative and were more likely to choose a product that required less effort to evaluate. However, the negative effect did not influence product choice for a clearly superior product.[11]

How consumers store, retain, and retrieve information

Of central importance to the processing of information is the human memory. A basic research concern of most cognitive scientists is discovering how information gets stored in memory, how it is retained, and how it is retrieved.

Because information processing occurs in stages, it is generally believed that there are separate and sequential "storehouses" in memory where information is kept temporarily before further processing: a *sensory store,* a *short-term store,* and a *long-term store.*

Sensory Store All data come to us through our senses; however, the senses do not transmit whole images as a camera does. Instead, each sense receives a fragmented piece of information (such as the smell, color, shape, and feel of a flower) and transmits it to the brain in parallel, where the perceptions of a single instant are synchronized and perceived as a single image, in a single moment of time. The image of a sensory input lasts for just a second or two in the mind's **sensory store**. If it is not processed, it is lost immediately. As noted in Chapter 6, we are constantly bombarded with stimuli from the environment and subconsciously block out a great deal of information that we do not "need" or cannot use. For marketers, this means that although it is relatively easy to get information into the consumer's sensory store, it is difficult to make a lasting impression. Furthermore, the brain automatically and subconsciously "tags" all perceptions with a value, either positive or negative; this evaluation, added to the initial perception in the first microsecond of cognition, tends to remain unless further information is processed. This would explain why first impressions tend to last and why it is hazardous for a marketer to introduce a product prematurely into the marketplace.

Short-term Store The **short-term store** (known as "working memory") is the stage of real memory in which information is processed and held for just a brief period. Anyone who has ever looked up a number in a telephone book, only to forget it just before dialing, knows how briefly information lasts in short-term storage. If information in the short-term store undergoes the process known as *rehearsal* (i.e. the silent, mental repetition of

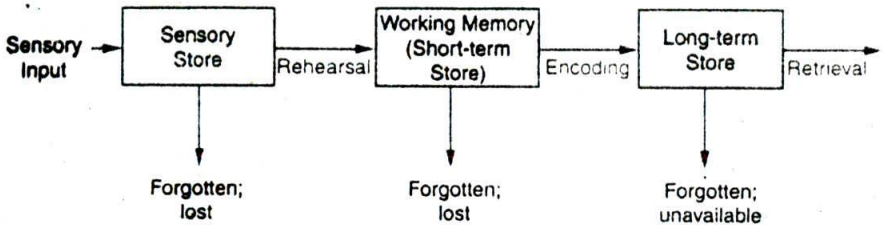


FIGURE 7.11
Information Processing and Memory Stores

information), it is then transferred to the long-term store. The transfer process takes from 2 to 10 seconds. If information is not rehearsed and transferred, it is lost in about 30 seconds or less. The amount of information that can be held in short-term storage is limited to about four or five items.

Long-term Store In contrast to the short-term store, where information lasts only a few seconds, the **long-term store** retains information for relatively extended periods of time. Although it is possible to forget something within a few minutes after the information has reached long-term storage, it is more common for data in long-term storage to last for days, weeks, or even years. Almost all of us, for example, can remember the name of our first-grade teacher. Figure 7.11 depicts the transfer of information received by the sensory store, through the short-term store, to long-term storage.

Rehearsal and Encoding The amount of information available for delivery from short-term storage to long-term storage depends on the amount of **rehearsal** it is given. Failure to rehearse an input, either by repeating it or by relating it to other data, can result in fading and eventual loss of the information. Information can also be lost because of competition for attention. For example, if the short-term store receives a great number of inputs simultaneously from the sensory store, its capacity may be reduced to only two or three pieces of information.

The purpose of rehearsal is to hold information in short-term storage long enough for encoding to take place. **Encoding** is the process by which we select a word or visual image to represent a perceived object. Marketers, for example, help consumers encode brands by using brand symbols. Kellogg's uses Tony the Tiger on its Frosted Flakes; the Green Giant Company has its Jolly Green Giant. Dell Computer turns the *e* in its logo on its side for quick name recognition; Microsoft uses a stylized window, presumably on the world.

"Learning" a picture takes less time than learning verbal information, but both types of information are important in forming an overall mental image. A print ad with both an illustration and body copy is more likely to be encoded and stored than an illustration without verbal information. A study that compared the effects of visual and verbal advertising found that, when advertising copy and illustrations focus on different product attributes, the illustrations disproportionately influence consumer inferences.[12] Another study found that high-imagery copy had greater recall than low-imagery copy, whether or not it was accompanied by an illustration; for low-imagery copy, however, illustrations were an important factor in audience recall.[13]

Researchers have found that the encoding of a commercial is related to the context of the TV program during (or adjacent to) which it is shown. Some parts of a program may require viewers to commit a larger portion of their cognitive resources to processing (e.g., when a dramatic event takes place versus a casual conversation). When viewers commit more cognitive resources to the program itself, they encode and store less of the information conveyed by a commercial. This suggests that commercials requiring relatively little cognitive processing may be more effective within or adjacent to a dramatic program setting than commercials requiring more elaborate

processing.[14] Viewers who are very involved with a television show respond more positively to commercials adjacent to that show and have more positive purchase intentions. Men and women exhibit different encoding patterns. For example, although women are more likely than men to recall TV commercials depicting a social relationship theme, there is no difference in recall among men and women for commercials that focus on the product itself.[15]

When consumers are presented with too much information (called **information overload**), they may encounter difficulty in encoding and storing it all. Often, it is difficult for consumers to remember product information from ads for new brands in heavily advertised categories. Consumers can become cognitively overloaded when they are given a lot of information in a limited time. The result of this overload is confusion, resulting in poor purchase decisions.

Retention Information does not just sit in long-term storage waiting to be retrieved. Instead, information is constantly organized and reorganized as new links between chunks of information are forged. In fact, many information-processing theorists view the long-term store as a network consisting of nodes (i.e., concepts), with links between and among them. As individuals gain more knowledge about a subject, they expand their network of relationships and sometimes their search for additional information. This process is known as *activation*, which involves relating new data to old to make the material more meaningful. Consumer memory for the name of a product may also be activated by relating it to the spokesperson used in its advertising. For many people, Michael Jordan means Nike sneakers. The total package of associations brought to mind when a cue is activated is called a *schema*.

Product information stored in memory tends to be brand based, and consumers interpret new information in a manner consistent with the way in which it is already organized. Consumers are confronted with thousands of new products each year, and their information search is often dependent upon how similar or dissimilar (discrepant) these products are to product categories already stored in memory. Therefore, consumers are more likely to recall the information they receive on new products bearing a familiar brand name, and their memory is less affected by exposure to competitive ads.

One study demonstrated that *brand imprinting*—messages that merely establish the brand's identity—conducted before the presentation of the brand's benefits facilitates consumer learning and retention of information about the brand.[16] Studies also showed that a brand's *sound symbolism* (a theory suggesting that the *sounds* of words convey meanings) and the brand's *linguistic characteristics* (e.g., unusual spelling) impacted the encoding and retention of the brand name.[17]

Consumers recode what they have already encoded to include larger amounts of information (called **chunking**). Marketers should research the kinds and numbers of groupings (chunks) of information that consumers can handle. When the chunks offered in an advertisement do not match those in the consumer's frame of reference, information recall may be hampered. The extent of prior knowledge is also an important consideration. Knowledgeable consumers can take in more complex chunks of information than those who are less knowledgeable about the product category. Thus, the amount and type of technological information contained in a computer ad can be much more detailed in a magazine such as *PC Magazine* or *Wired* than in a general-interest magazine such as *Time*.

Information is stored in long-term memory in two ways: *episodically* (by the order in which it is acquired) and *semantically* (according to significant concepts). We may remember having gone to a movie last Saturday because of our ability to store data episodically, and we may remember the plot, the stars, and the director because of our ability to store data semantically. Learning theorists believe that memories stored semantically are organized into frameworks by which we integrate new data with previous experience. For information about a new brand or model of printer to enter our memory, for example, we would have to relate it to our previous experience with printers in terms of such qualities as speed, print quality, resolution, and memory.

Retrieval **Retrieval** is the *process by which we recover information from long-term storage.* For example, when we are unable to remember something with which we are very familiar, we are experiencing a failure of the retrieval system. Marketers maintain that consumers tend to remember the product's benefits rather than its attributes, suggesting that advertising messages are most effective when they link the product's attributes with the benefits that consumers seek from the product; this view is consistent with the previous discussion of product positioning strategies (Chapter 6). Consumers are likely to spend time interpreting and elaborating on information they find relevant to their needs and to activate such relevant knowledge from long-term memory.

Incongruent (or unexpected) message elements pierce consumers' perceptual screens and improve the memorability of an ad when these elements are relevant to the advertising message. For example, an ad for a brand of stain-resistant, easy-to-clean carpet shows an elegantly dressed couple in a beautiful dining room setting where the man inadvertently knocks the food, the flowers, and the china crashing to the floor. The elegance of the actors and the upscale setting make the accident totally incongruous and unexpected, whereas the message remains highly relevant: The mess can be cleaned up easily without leaving a stain on the carpet.

Incongruent elements that are not relevant to an ad also pierce the consumer's perceptual screen but provide no memorability for the product. An ad showing a nude woman sitting on a piece of office furniture would very likely attract readers' attention, but would provide no memorability for the product or the advertiser because of the irrelevance of the nudity to the advertising message. One study discovered that false cues in post-experience advertising influence recollection. Also, when the false verbal cues and picture appeared together they were more likely to be integrated into memory than false verbal cues without pictures.[18]

Interference The greater the number of competitive ads in a product category, the lower the recall of brand claims in a specific ad. These **interference effects** are caused by confusion with competing ads, and make information retrieval difficult. Ads can also act as retrieval cues for a competitive brand. An example of such consumer confusion occurred when consumers attributed the long-running and attention-getting television campaign featuring the Eveready Energizer Bunny to the leader in the field, Duracell. Advertisements for competing brands or for other products made by the same manufacturer can lower the consumer's ability to remember advertised brand information. Such effects occur in response to even a small amount of advertising for similar products.

The level of interference experienced can depend on the consumer's previous experiences, prior knowledge of brand attribute information, and the amount of brand information available at the time of choice. There are actually two kinds of interference: *New learning* can interfere with the retrieval of previously stored material, and *old learning* can interfere with the recall of recently learned material. With both kinds of interference, the problem is the similarity of old and new information. Advertising that creates a distinctive brand image can assist in the retention and retrieval of message contents.

Limited and extensive information processing

For a long time, consumer researchers believed that all consumers passed through a complex series of mental and behavioral stages in arriving at a purchase decision. These stages ranged from awareness (exposure to information) to evaluation (preference, attitude formation), to behavior (purchase), to final evaluation (adoption or rejection). This same series of stages is often presented as the *consumer adoption process* (discussed in Chapter 15).

A number of models have been developed over the years to express the same notion of sequential processing of information by consumers (see Table 7.1). Initially, marketing scholars believed that extensive and complex processing of information by consumers was applicable to all purchase decisions. However, on the basis of their own subjective experiences as consumers, some theorists began to realize that there were

TABLE 7.1 Models of Cognitive Learning

	PROMOTIONAL MODEL	TRICOMPONENT MODEL	DECISION-MAKING MODEL	INNOVATION ADOPTION MODEL	INNOVATION DECISION PROCESS
Sequential Stages of Processing	Attention	Cognitive	Awareness Knowledge	Awareness	Knowledge
	Interest Desire	Affective	Evaluation	Interest Evaluation	Persuasion
	Action	Conative	Purchase Postpurchase Evaluation	Trial Adoption	Decision Confirmation

some purchase situations that simply did not call for extensive information processing and evaluation; that sometimes consumers simply went from awareness of a need to a routine purchase, without a great deal of information search and mental evaluation. Such purchases were considered of minimal personal relevance, as opposed to highly relevant, search-oriented purchases. Purchases of minimal personal importance were called *low-involvement purchases,* and complex, search-oriented purchases were considered *high-involvement purchases.* The following section describes the development of **involvement theory** and discusses its applications to marketing strategy.

Involvement theory

Involvement theory developed from a stream of research called **hemispheral lateralization**, or split-brain theory. The basic premise of *split-brain theory* is that the right and left hemispheres of the brain "specialize" in the kinds of information they process. The left hemisphere is primarily responsible for cognitive activities such as reading, speaking, and attributional information processing. Individuals who are exposed to verbal information cognitively analyze the information through left-brain processing and form mental images. Unlike the left hemisphere, the right hemisphere of the brain is concerned with nonverbal, timeless, pictorial, and holistic information. Put another way, the left side of the brain is rational, active, and realistic; the right side is emotional, metaphoric, impulsive, and intuitive.[19] Figure 7.12 shows an ad literally depicting split-brain theory.

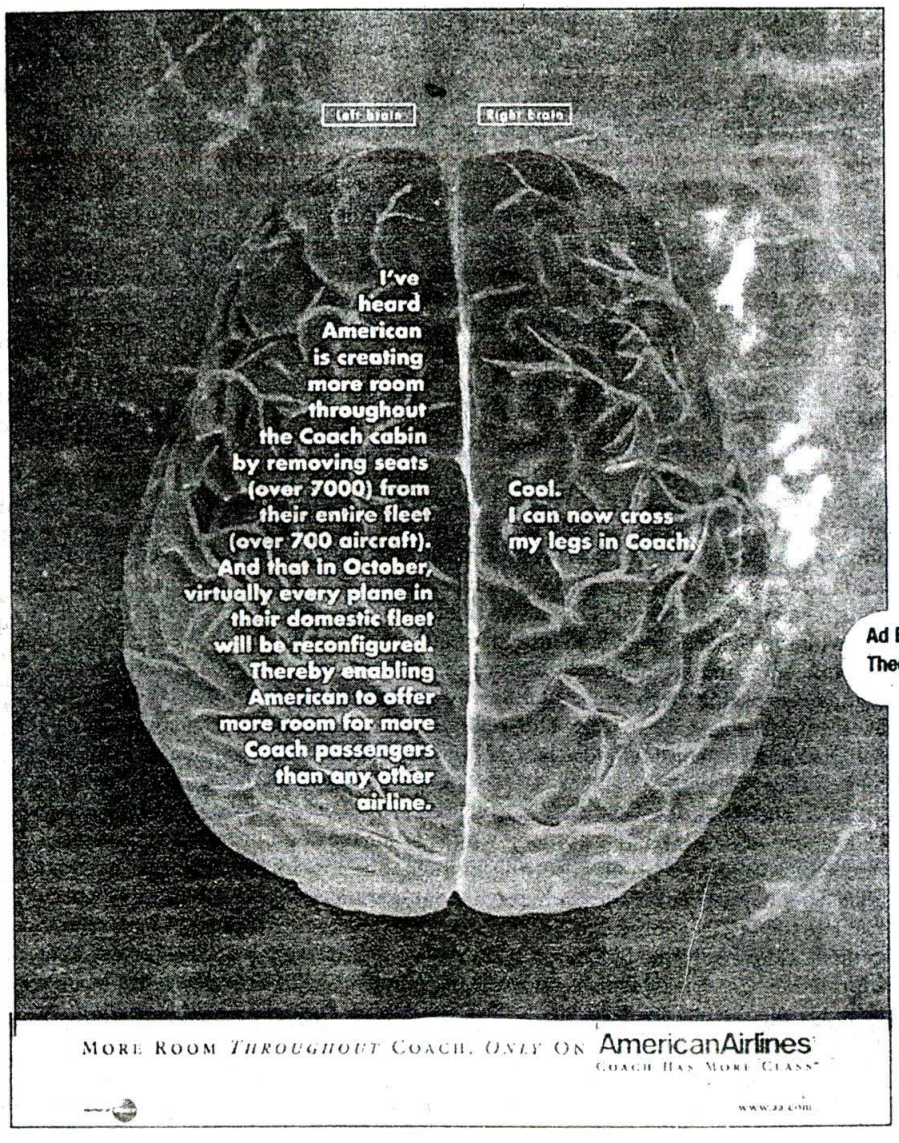
Involvement theory and media strategy

Building on the notion of hemispheral lateralization, a pioneer consumer researcher theorized that individuals *passively* process and store right-brain (nonverbal, pictorial) information—that is, without active involvement.[20] Because TV is primarily a pictorial medium, TV viewing was considered a right-brain activity (passive and holistic processing of images viewed on the screen), and TV itself was therefore considered a low-involvement medium. This research concluded that **passive learning** occurs through repeated exposures to a TV commercial (i.e., low-involvement information processing) and produces changes in consumer behavior (e.g., product purchases) *prior* to changes in the consumer's attitude toward the product. This view contradicts the models presented in Table 7.1, all of which maintain that cognitive evaluation and favorable attitude toward a product take place before the actual purchase behavior.

To extend this line of reasoning, cognitive (verbal) information is processed by the left side of the brain; thus, print media (e.g., newspapers and magazines) and interactive media (the Internet) are considered high-involvement media. According to this theory, print advertising is processed in the complex sequence of cognitive stages

FIGURE 7.12

Source: Courtesy of American Airlines. Image © Abrams Lacagnina/Getty Images/The Image Bank.



Ad Based on Split-Brain Theory

depicted in classic models of information processing (i.e., high-involvement information processing).

The right-brain theory of passive processing of information is consistent with classical conditioning. Through repetition, the product is paired with a visual image (e.g., a distinctive package) to produce the desired response: purchase of the advertised brand. According to this theory, in situations of passive learning (generated by low-involvement media), repetition is the key factor in producing purchase behavior. In marketing terms, the theory suggests that television commercials are most effective when they are of short duration and repeated frequently, thus ensuring brand familiarity without provoking detailed evaluation of the message content.

The right-brain processing theory stresses the importance of the *visual component* of advertising, including the creative use of symbols. Under this theory, highly visual TV commercials, packaging, and in-store displays generate familiarity with the brand and

induce purchase behavior. Pictorial cues are more effective at generating recall and familiarity with the product, whereas verbal cues (which trigger left-brain processing) generate cognitive activity that encourages consumers to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the product.

There are limitations to the application of split-brain theory to media strategy. Although the right and left hemispheres of the brain process different types of cues, they do not operate independently of each other but work together to process information. Some individuals are *integrated processors* (they readily engage both hemispheres during information processing). Integrated processors have better overall recall of both the verbal and the visual portions of print ads than individuals who exhibit right or left hemispheral processing.

Involvement theory and consumer relevance

From the conceptualization of high- and low-involvement media, involvement theory next focused on the consumer's involvement with products and purchases. It was briefly hypothesized that there are high- and low-involvement consumers; then, that there are high- and low-involvement purchases. These two approaches led to the notion that a consumer's level of involvement depends on the degree of personal relevance that the product holds for that consumer. Under this definition, high-involvement purchases are those that are very important to the consumer (e.g., in terms of perceived risk) and thus provoke extensive problem solving (information processing). An automobile and a dandruff shampoo both may represent high-involvement purchases under this scenario—the automobile because of high perceived financial risk, the shampoo because of high perceived social risk. Low-involvement purchases are purchases that are not very important to the consumer, hold little relevance, and have little perceived risk, and, thus, provoke very limited information processing. Highly involved consumers find fewer brands acceptable (they are called **narrow categorizers**); uninvolved consumers are likely to be receptive to a greater number of advertising messages regarding the purchase and will consider more brands (they are **broad categorizers**).

Central and peripheral routes to persuasion

The theory of **central** and **peripheral routes to persuasion** illustrates the concepts of extensive and limited problem solving for high- and low-involvement purchase situations. The major premise of this theory is that consumers are more likely to carefully evaluate the merits and weaknesses of a product when the purchase is of high relevance to them. Conversely, the likelihood is great that consumers will engage in very limited information search and evaluation when the purchase holds little relevance or importance for them. Thus, for high-involvement purchases, the *central route to persuasion*—which requires considered thought and cognitive processing—is likely to be the most effective marketing strategy. For low-involvement purchases, the *peripheral route to persuasion* is likely to be more effective. In this instance, because the consumer is less motivated to exert cognitive effort, learning is more likely to occur through repetition, the passive processing of visual cues, and holistic perception.

Various researchers have addressed the relationship between the theory of central and peripheral routes to persuasion and consumer information processing. Numerous studies have found that high involvement with a product produces more extensive processing of information, including extensive information search on the Internet.[21] It is apparent that highly involved consumers use more attributes to evaluate brands, whereas less involved consumers apply very simple decision rules. In marketing to highly involved consumers, the quality of the argument presented in the persuasive message, rather than merely the imagery of the promotional message, has the greater impact on the consumption decision.

Many studies investigated the relationship between the level of information processing and the product and promotional elements of the marketing mix. For example, one study found that comparative ads (see Chapter 9) are more likely to be processed centrally (purposeful processing of message arguments), whereas noncomparative ads are commonly processed peripherally (with little message elaboration and a response derived from

other executional elements in the ad).[22] Another study found that the use of metaphors and figures of speech that deviate from the expected in print ads places added processing demands on the readers and increases the ad's persuasiveness and memorability. The metaphors examined in this study were such slogans as "It forced other car makers into the copier business" (Mercury Sable) and "In the Caribbean, there's no such thing as a party of one" (Malibu Caribbean Rum).[23] Another study demonstrated that the correlation between a consumer's product involvement and objective product knowledge is higher for utilitarian products than in products designed to bring about pleasure (termed *hedonic products*); in the case of hedonic products, the correlation between subjective knowledge and product involvement is higher than for utilitarian products.[24] Assuming that *subjective knowledge* is the result of interpreting the imagery presented in the ad while *objective knowledge* is the outcome of the factual information that the ad provides, marketers should consider the degree of the product's utilitarianism in selecting either the central or peripheral route in promoting that product.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model The **elaboration likelihood model (ELM)** suggests that a person's level of involvement during message processing is a critical factor in determining which route to persuasion is likely to be effective. For example, as the message becomes more personally relevant (i.e., as involvement increases), people are more willing to expend the cognitive effort required to process the message arguments. Thus, when involvement is high, consumers follow the central route and base their attitudes or choices on the message arguments. When involvement is low, they follow the peripheral route and rely more heavily on other message elements (such as spokespersons or background music) to form attitudes or make product choices.

Measures of involvement

Given that involvement theory evolved from the notion of high- and low-involvement media, to high- and low-involvement consumers, to high- and low-involvement products and purchases, to appropriate methods of persuasion in situations of high and low product relevance, it is not surprising to find there is great variation in the conceptualization and measurement of involvement itself. Researchers have defined and conceptualized involvement in a variety of ways, including ego involvement, commitment, communications involvement, purchase importance, extent of information search, persons, products, situations, and purchase decisions.[25] Some studies have tried to differentiate between *brand* involvement and *product* involvement.[26]

The lack of a clear definition about the essential components of involvement poses some measurement problems. Researchers who regard involvement as a cognitive state are concerned with the measurement of ego involvement, risk perception, and purchase importance. Researchers who focus on the behavioral aspects of involvement measure such factors as the search for and evaluation of product information. Others argue that involvement should be measured by the degree of importance the product has to the buyer.

Because of the many different dimensions and conceptualizations of involvement, it makes the most sense to develop self-administered measures that assess the consumer's cognitions or behaviors regarding a particular product or product category, and where involvement is measured on a continuum rather than as a dichotomy consisting of two mutually exclusive categories of "high" and "low" involvement. Table 7.2 presents a semantic differential scale designed to measure involvement. Table 7.3 shows a personal involvement inventory developed to measure a consumer's "enduring involvement" with a product.

Marketing applications of involvement

Involvement theory has a number of strategic applications for the marketer. For example, the left-brain (cognitive processing)/right-brain (passive processing) paradigm seems to have strong implications for the content, length, and presentation of both print, television, and interactive advertisements. There is evidence that people process information extensively when the purchase is of high personal relevance and engage in

TABLE 7.2 Measuring Involvement on a Semantic Differential Scale

To Me, [Insert Product or Product Category] Is:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Important	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Unimportant
2. Interesting	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Boring
3. Relevant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Irrelevant
4. Exciting	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Unexciting
5. Meaningful	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Meaningless
6. Appealing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Unappealing
7. Fascinating	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ordinary
8. Priceless	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Worthless
9. Involving	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Uninvolving
10. Necessary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Unnecessary

Source: Adapted from Judith Lynne Zaichowsky, "The Personal Involvement Inventory: Reduction, Revision, and Application to Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 23, 4 (December 1994): 59–70. Reprinted by permission.

limited information processing when the purchase is of low personal relevance. Uninvolved consumers appear to be susceptible to different kinds of persuasion than highly involved consumers. Therefore, for high-involvement purchases, marketers should use arguments stressing the strong, solid, high-quality attributes of their products, thus using the central (or highly cognitive) route. For low-involvement purchases, marketers should use the peripheral route to persuasion, focusing on the method of presentation rather than on the content of the message (e.g., through the use of celebrity spokespersons or highly visual and symbolic advertisements).

Marketers can take steps to increase customer involvement with their ads. For example, advertisers can use sensory appeals, unusual stimuli, and celebrity endorsers to generate more attention for their messages. Since highly involved consumers are more likely to engage in long-term relationships with products and brands, marketers should simultaneously increase customer involvement levels and create bonds with their

TABLE 7.3 Product Involvement Inventory Measuring Consumers' Enduring Involvement with Products

1. I would be interested in reading about this product.
2. I would read a *Consumer Reports* article about this product.
3. I have compared product characteristics among brands.
4. I usually pay attention to ads for this product.
5. I usually talk about this product with other people.
6. I usually seek advice from other people prior to purchasing this product.
7. I usually take many factors into account before purchasing this product.
8. I usually spend a lot of time choosing what kind to buy.

Source: Edward F. McQuarrie and J. Michael Munson, "A Revised Product Involvement Inventory: Improved Usability and Validity," *Diversity in Consumer Behavior: Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 19 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1992), pp. 108–115. Reprinted by permission.

customers.[27] Of course, the best strategy for increasing the personal relevance of products to consumers is the same as the core of modern marketing itself: Provide benefits that are important and relevant to customers, improve the product and add benefits as competition intensifies, and focus on forging *bonds* and *relationships* with customers rather than just engaging in *transactions*.

measures of consumer learning

For many marketers, the dual goals of consumer learning are increased market share and brand-loyal consumers. These goals are interdependent: Brand-loyal customers provide the basis for a stable and growing market share, and brands with larger market shares have proportionately larger groups of loyal buyers. Marketers focus their promotional budgets on trying to teach consumers that their brands are best and that their products will best solve the consumers' problems and satisfy their needs. Thus, it is important for the marketer to measure how effectively consumers have "learned" its message. The following sections will examine various measures of consumer learning: *recognition* and *recall measures*, *cognitive measures*, and the *attitudinal and behavioral measures of brand loyalty*.

Recognition and recall measures

Recognition and **recall tests** are conducted to determine whether consumers remember seeing an ad, the extent to which they have read it or seen it and can recall its content, their resulting attitudes toward the product and the brand, and their purchase intentions. Recognition tests are based on *aided recall*, whereas recall tests use *unaided recall*. In recognition tests, the consumer is shown an ad and asked whether he or she remembers seeing it and can remember any of its salient points. In recall tests, the consumer is asked whether he or she has read a specific magazine or watched a specific television show, and if so, can recall any ads or commercials seen, the product advertised, the brand, and any salient points about the product.

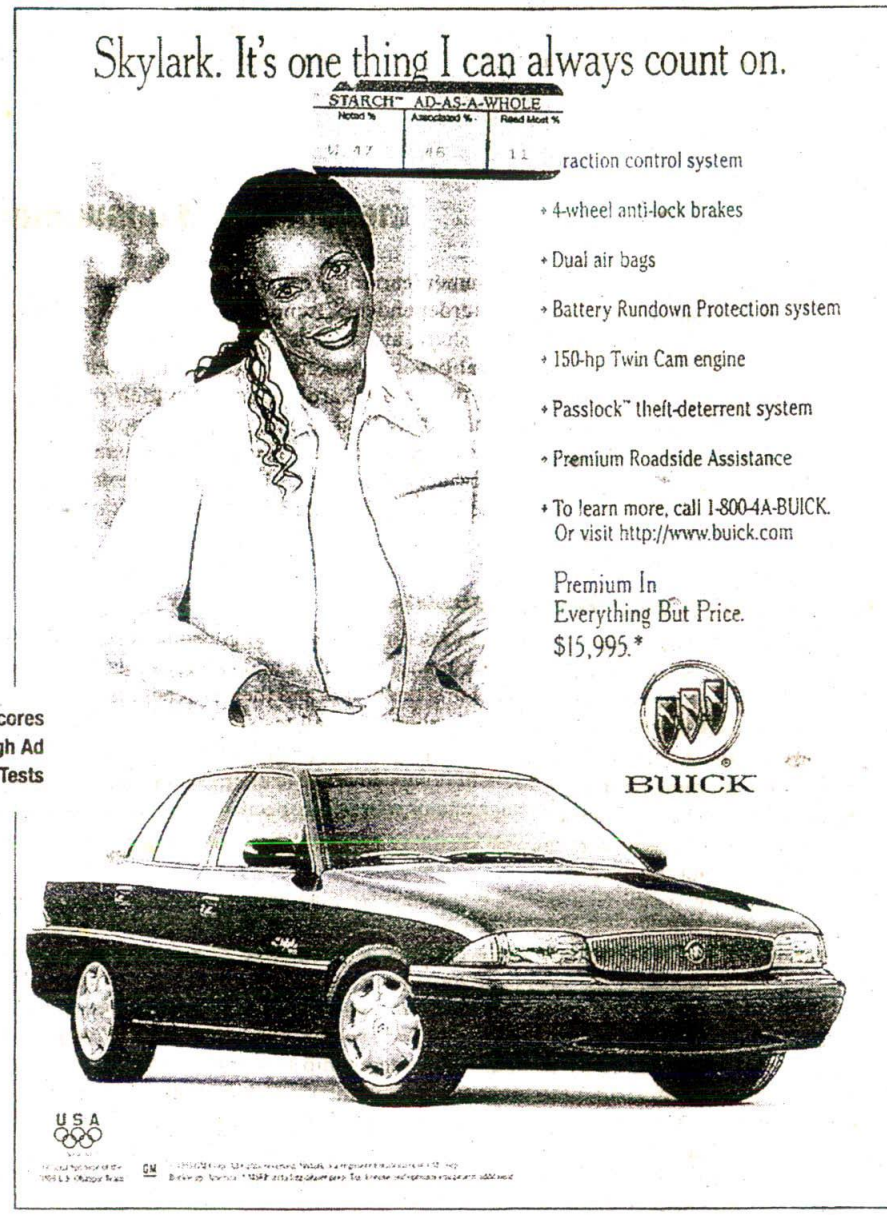
A number of syndicated research services conduct recognition and recall tests, such as the Starch Readership Service, which evaluates the effectiveness of magazine advertisements. After qualifying as having read a given issue of a magazine, respondents are presented with the magazine and asked to point out which ads they *noted*, which they *associated with the advertiser*, and which they *read most*. They are also asked which parts of the ads they *noted* and *read most*. An advertiser can gauge the effectiveness of a given ad by comparing its readership recognition scores to similar-sized ads, to competitive ads, and to the company's own prior ads. Figure 7.13 shows an example of a "Starched" ad. A recent study using Starch readership scores demonstrated that consumers received more information from advertisements for *shopping products* (e.g., high-priced clothing and accessories) than from ads for *convenience goods* (e.g., low-priced items purchased routinely) and, surprisingly, from ads for *search products* (e.g., very expensive, durable items purchased infrequently following an extensive information search). These findings show that marketers may be underinforming consumers when advertising search products.[28]

Cognitive responses to advertising

Another measure of consumer learning is the degree to which consumers accurately comprehend the intended advertising message. **Comprehension** is a function of the message characteristics, the consumer's opportunity and ability to process the information, and the consumer's motivation (or level of involvement). To ensure a high level of comprehension, many marketers conduct **copy testing** either *before* the advertising is actually run (called **pretesting**) or *after* it appears (**posttesting**). Pretests are used to determine which, if any, elements of an advertising message should be revised before major media expenses are

FIGURE 7.13

Source: Courtesy of Buick.



Starch Readership Scores Measure Learning Through Ad Recognition Tests

incurred. Posttests are used to evaluate the effectiveness of an ad that has already run and to identify which elements, if any, should be changed to improve the impact and memorability of future ads.

Attitudinal and behavioral measures of brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is the ultimate desired outcome of consumer learning. However, there is no single definition of this concept. The varied definitions of brand loyalty reflect the models presented earlier in Table 7.1. They are summarized in Table 7.4, together with their shortcomings and weaknesses in the context of potential competitive responses.

TABLE 7.4 Definitions of Brand Loyalty and Their Shortcomings

STAGE	IDENTIFYING MARKER	VULNERABILITIES
Cognitive	Loyalty to information such as price, features, and so forth.	Actual or imagined better competitive features or price through communications (e.g., advertising) and vicarious or personal experience. Deterioration in brand features or price. Variety seeking and voluntary trial.
Affective	Loyalty to a liking: "I buy it because I like it."	Cognitively induced dissatisfaction. Enhanced liking for competitive brands, perhaps conveyed through imagery and association. Variety seeking and voluntary trial. Deteriorating performance.
Conative	Loyalty to an intention: "I'm committed to buying it."	Persuasive counterargumentative competitive messages. Induced trial (e.g., coupons, sampling, point-of-purchase promotions). Deteriorating performance.
Action	Loyalty to action, coupled with the overcoming of obstacles.	Induced unavailability (e.g., stocklifts—purchasing the entire inventory of a competitor's product from a merchant). Increased obstacles generally. Deteriorating performance.

Source: Reprinted with permission from 1999 Special Issue of Journal of Marketing, published by the American Marketing Association, Richard L. Oliver, 1999, vol. 63, 33–34.

Marketers agree that brand loyalty consists of both attitudes and actual behaviors toward a brand and that both must be measured. **Attitudinal measures** are concerned with consumers' overall feelings about the product and the brand (i.e., evaluation), and their purchase intentions. **Behavioral measures** are based on observable responses to promotional stimuli—repeat purchase behavior rather than attitude toward the product or brand. A recent study pointed out that marketers must distinguish between two attitudinal measures of brand loyalty (see Table 7.5); the study demonstrated that the degree of commitment toward buying the brand and the propensity to be brand loyal are two *separate* dimensions but did not conclusively determine which construct is more useful for explaining buying behavior.[29]

Behavioral scientists who favor the theory of instrumental conditioning believe that brand loyalty results from an initial product trial that is reinforced through satisfaction, leading to repeat purchase. *Cognitive* researchers, on the other hand, emphasize the role of mental processes in building brand loyalty. They believe that consumers engage in extensive problem-solving behavior involving brand and attribute comparisons, leading to a strong brand preference and repeat purchase behavior. Therefore, brand loyalty is the synergy among such attitudinal components as perceived product superiority, customer satisfaction and the purchase behavior itself.

Recently, brain imaging technologies, commonly used in medicine, were used to study brand loyalty and yielded some fascinating results. Brain scans of some Japanese women taken while they were answering questions about everyday events showed similar patterns, but these patterns became distinctive when women who were brand loyal to a given store responded to the statement "this is the perfect store for me."

The brain scans of consumers who were split as to whether they prefer Coke or Pepsi and were given blind taste tests indicated that two different brain regions were at play. When the subjects tasted either of the soft drinks, their brain's reward system was activated. But when these persons were told which brand they were drinking, their brains' memory region (where information regarding brand loyalty is stored) was activated and overrode the preferences the participants indicated after tasting the soft drink, but before knowing which brand they had tasted.[30]

Behavioral definitions (such as frequency of purchase or proportion of total purchases) lack precision, because they do not distinguish between the "real" brand-loyal

TABLE 7.5 Two Distinct Attitudinal Measures of Brand Loyalty

MEASURE DESCRIPTION

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ACT OF PURCHASING THE BRAND

Using a scale from 1 to 5, please tell me how committed you are to purchasing your preferred brand of directory advertising.

x_1	Uncommitted	1	2	3	4	5	Committed

Purchasing advertising with my preferred brand of directory in the next issue would be:

x_2	Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Good
x_3	Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	Pleasant
x_4	Unfavorable	1	2	3	4	5	Favorable
x_5	Negative	1	2	3	4	5	Positive
x_6	Undesirable	1	2	3	4	5	Desirable
x_7	Unwise	1	2	3	4	5	Wise
x_8	Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely

x_9 I would recommend my main brand to other people.

	Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	Likely

PROPENSITY TO BE LOYAL

x_1 I would rather stick with a brand I usually buy than try something I am not very sure of.

x_2 If I like a brand, I rarely switch from it just to try something different.

x_3 I rarely introduce new brands and products to my colleagues.

x_4 I rarely take chances by buying unfamiliar brands even if it means sacrificing variety.

x_5 I buy the same brands even if they are only average.

x_6 I would rather wait for others to try a new brand than try it myself.

x_7 I would rather stick to well-known brands when purchasing directory advertising.

Behavioral loyalty includes the dimensions of preference and allegiance. It was operationalized as the amount of money spent on the preferred brand (preference) over time (allegiance).

Source: Rebekah Bennett and Sharyn Rundle-Thiele, "A Comparison of Attitudinal Loyalty Measurement Approaches," *Journal of Brand Management* (January 2002): 193–209. Reprinted by permission.

buyer who is intentionally faithful and the spurious brand-loyal buyer who repeats a brand purchase out of mere habit or because it is the only one available at the store. Often consumers buy from a mix of brands within their acceptable range (i.e., their **evoked set**, see Chapter 16). The greater the number of acceptable brands in a specific product category, the less likely the consumer is to be brand loyal to one specific brand. Conversely, products having few competitors, as well as those purchased with great frequency, are likely to have greater brand loyalty. Thus, a more favorable attitude toward a brand, service, or store, compared to potential alternatives, together with repeat patronage, are seen as the requisite components of customer loyalty. A recent study related the attitudinal and purchase aspects of brand loyalty to market share and the relative prices of brands. The study showed that brand trust and brand affect, combined, determine purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Purchase loyalty leads to a higher market share, and attitudinal loyalty often enables the marketer to charge a higher price for the brand relative to competition.[31]

An integrated conceptual framework views consumer loyalty as the function of three groups of influences: (1) consumer drivers (i.e., personal degree of risk aversion

or variety seeking); (2) brand drivers (i.e., the brand's reputation and availability of substitute brands); and (3) social drivers (i.e., social group influences and peers' recommendations). These influences produce four types of loyalty: (1) *no loyalty*—no purchase at all and no cognitive attachment to the brand; (2) *covetous loyalty*—no purchase but strong attachment and predisposition towards the brand that was developed from the person's social environment; (3) *inertia loyalty*—purchasing the brand because of habit and convenience but without any emotional attachment to the brand; and (4) *premium loyalty*—high attachment to the brand and high repeat purchase.[32] This framework also reflects a correlation among consumer involvement and the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of brand loyalty. Due to social perceptions regarding the importance of a car, and the symbolism of a particular car brand (e.g., Mercedes) as representing prestige and achievement, consumers may become involved with and attached to the brand without purchasing it (covetous loyalty), but may purchase the brand when they have the money to do so. Low involvement leads to exposure and brand awareness and then to brand habit (inertia loyalty). Consumers operating in this condition perceive little differentiation among brands and buy the brand repeatedly due to familiarity and convenience. On the other hand, premium loyalty represents truly brand-loyal consumers who have a strong commitment to the brand, are less likely to switch to other brands in spite of the persuasive promotional efforts of competitors, and may even go out of their way to obtain the strongly preferred brand.

Loyalty programs are generally designed with the intention of forming and maintaining brand loyalty. One study showed that brand managers believe that all reward programs impact incremental purchases and that low and moderate reward programs are the most cost-effective. The study proposed three types of brand-loyalty reward programs (see Table 7.6).[33] This research illustrates the options of tailoring loyalty programs to the purchase patterns of different market segments and the importance of doing so.

Unlike tangible products, where switching to another brand is relatively easy, it is often difficult to switch to another "brand" of service. For example, it is costly and time consuming to transfer one's business to a new attorney or accountant or even to get used

TABLE 7.6 Three Brand-Loyalty Reward Programs

REWARD PROGRAM	MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER	DISCOUNT COUPONS	PRODUCT LINE MERCHANDISE
Low	A quarterly one-page newsletter with information concerning new and existing products in the product line.	Coupons included in the newsletter for a $0.25 discount off any product in the product line.	Receive product line merchandise (e.g., coffee mugs or T-shirts) with 20 proofs of purchase and a $5.00 postage and handling fee.
Moderate	A quarterly full-color booklet with recipes and information concerning new and existing products in the product line.	Coupons included in the booklet for a $0.50 discount off any product in the product line.	Receive product line merchandise (e.g., coffee mugs or T-shirts) with 20 proofs of purchase.
High	A monthly full-color booklet with recipes, games and puzzles, and information concerning new and existing products in the product line.	Coupons included in the booklet for a $1.00 discount off any product in the product line.	Receive product line merchandise (e.g., coffee mugs or T-shirts) with 10 proofs of purchase.

Source: Brian Wansink, "Developing a Cost-Effective Brand Loyalty Program," *Journal of Advertising Research* 43 (3) (September 2003): 305.

to a new hair stylist. One study showed that the reasons that cause customers to switch service providers play a role in their loyalty behaviors toward subsequent providers. Thus, service marketers should research past customer behavior and use these data to increase the loyalty of new customers.[34]

Brand equity

The term **brand equity** refers to the value inherent in a well-known brand name. This value stems from the consumer's perception of the brand's superiority, the social esteem that using it provides, and the customer's trust and identification with the brand. For many companies, their most valuable assets are their brand names. Well-known brand names are referred to as **megabrands**. Among the best-known brands are Coca-Cola, Campbell's Soup, Hallmark Cards, and United Parcel Service. Their names have become "cultural icons" and enjoy powerful advantages over the competition.

Because of the escalation of new-product costs and the high rate of new-product failures, many companies prefer to leverage their brand equity through brand extensions rather than risk launching a new brand. Brand equity facilitates the acceptance of new products and the allocation of preferred shelf space, and enhances perceived value, perceived quality, and premium pricing options. Brand equity is most important for low-involvement purchases, such as inexpensive consumer goods that are bought routinely and with little processing of cognitive information. A study found that very strong brand cues, such as the ones conveyed by brands with high equity, may actually "block" the learning of quality-related cues for specific product attributes.[35] Thus, competitors of a strong brand will find it difficult to "teach" brand-loyal customers about the benefits of their brands.

Because a brand that has been promoted heavily in the past retains a cumulative level of name recognition, companies buy, sell, and rent (i.e., license) their brand names, knowing that it is easier for a new company to buy, rather than to create, a brand name that has enduring strength. Brand equity enables companies to charge a price premium—an additional amount over and above the price of an identical store brand. A relatively new strategy among some marketers is **co-branding** (also called double branding). The basis of co-branding, in which two brand names are featured on a single product, is to use another product's brand equity to enhance the primary brand's equity. For example, Cranberry Newtons is a product of Nabisco and Ocean Spray, bearing both brand names. Some experts believe that using a second brand's equity may imply that the host brand can no longer stand on its own. Others question whether a co-branded product causes consumer confusion as to who actually makes the product, and whether the host brand can survive if the second brand endorsement is taken away.

Brand equity reflects brand loyalty, which, as presented here, is a *learned* construct and one of the most important applications of learning theory to consumption behavior. Brand loyalty and brand equity lead to increased market share and greater profits. To marketers, the major function of learning theory is to teach consumers that their product is best, to encourage repeat purchase, and, ultimately, to develop loyalty to the brand name and brand equity for the company.

ethics and consumer learning

Previously, we discussed the ethics involved in using such factors as motivation and perception to arouse consumer needs and influence their cognitions of marketing offerings, with the assumptions that such influences will lead to purchase behavior. This section discusses the ethics of using the *elements of learning* to lead consumers to engage in *undesirable* behaviors. For example, behavioral, cognitive, and observational learning can sometimes lead to undesirable behavior after a person observes a

particular behavior in an advertisement or commercial, and develops a cognition based on the ad, which subsequently leads to undesirable behavior. In trying to illustrate that some ads may bring about undesirable, although unintended, behavior, a New Jersey professor showed his students a magazine ad featuring a fit, smiling young man on a sidewalk in New York City with yellow cabs, pedestrians, and buildings in the background. The bright red headline read "Just once a day!" All other copy elements of the ad were concealed in order to disguise the actual product advertised. When the professor asked his students to guess what kind of product the ad was promoting, the consensus of the guesses was that the ad was for some kind of a pill, probably a vitamin. In fact, the ad was for a medication that is used as part of an HIV therapy by persons who are HIV positive. Since visual images are very persuasive, is it possible that the fit young man and the bright red caption "Just once a day!" conveys to young adults that being HIV positive is an easily "manageable" condition, and that one can engage in unsafe sex? And, if a study indicates that such a perception is indeed created by the ad, what should the marketer do? Clearly, featuring an individual who looks *unhealthy* in an ad for a pharmaceutical designed to control a serious medical condition will not be effective. The caption is an accurate representation of how often this drug should be taken (in combination, of course, with other drugs). This example demonstrates how difficult it is to develop advertisements that are free of any cues that may unintentionally cause *some* persons to draw the wrong conclusions and engage in undesirable behavior.

Since children are more likely than adults to imitate behavior they see (observational learning) on TV with little or no evaluative judgment, there are many ethical concerns regarding advertising to children. Advertising to children is subject to self-regulation according to guidelines developed by the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. Among others, the guidelines state that product presentations or claims must not mislead children about the product's performance or benefits, exploit the child's imagination or create unrealistic expectations, that products be shown in safe situations and the ads must refrain from encouraging behavior that is inappropriate for children. Following the direction of stimulus–response theory that children may easily form associations between stimuli and outcomes, the guidelines also include directions for avoiding ads that (1) encourage children to pressure their parents to buy the products advertised, and (2) compel children to feel that ownership of a given product will make them more accepted by peers. In relation to loyalty-building measures such as kid's clubs, premiums, and sweepstakes, the guidelines recognize that children may not always understand the true purpose of such measures and so they direct marketers to take steps not to exploit children with such programs.[36]

CARU's new releases illustrate many possible misuses in advertising to children and also the effectiveness of self-regulation. For example, in response to CARU's routine monitoring of children's advertising and CARU's subsequent request, a marketer of cotton candy machines agreed to modify a TV commercial that featured children operating an electrical candy machine without parental supervision and while dancing or talking on the phone.

After viewing a commercial showing Oreo cookies going into a toaster and popping out as KoolStuf pastries, a four-year-old child inserted Oreos into a toaster and, when they did not pop out, tried to retrieve them with a pair of scissors. The child's mother complained to CARU, which brought it to the attention of Oreo's marketer, who subsequently agreed to modify the commercial. Procter & Gamble agreed to modify a TV spot for Pringles that CARU believed encouraged excessive consumption of the snack food.[37]

Currently, a major concern regarding the impact of marketing on children's behavior is whether food marketers "teach" children to eat more than they should and thus cause the surging obesity and health problems among young consumers. Some consumer advocacy groups have called for the regulation of food marketing targeted to children; the food marketers and CARU believe that CARU's current guidelines already address

this issue.[38] Clearly, there are merits to the argument that, ultimately, any consumption behavior, including excessive eating, is the responsibility of adult individuals and not the marketer who produced the food. As a society, we have not always accepted this position; for example, smokers are allowed to sue tobacco companies. However, it must always be remembered that children are a vulnerable population. Fearing that "McDonald's-made-me-fat" lawsuits will gain momentum, the food companies are now pursuing legislation that will not allow obese persons to sue them for personal damages.[39]

The principle of stimulus generalization can also be used to confuse consumers and alter intended consumption behavior. In most drugstores, less expensive brands of personal care products such as shampoo, dental floss, skin care lotions, and soap come in packages that are extremely similar to instantly recognized and more expensive premium brands of these products, and are deliberately placed right next to them on the shelf. Consumers can easily be confused by such displays and also by brand names or logos similar to those of premium offerings. Therefore, the marketers of premium brands often secure legal protection (in the form of patents or trademarks) for their brand names, packages and visual identities.

SUMMARY

Consumer learning is the process by which individuals acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience they apply to future related behavior. Although some learning is intentional, much learning is incidental. Basic elements that contribute to an understanding of learning are motivation, cues, response, and reinforcement.

There are two schools of thought as to how individuals learn—behavioral theories and cognitive theories. Both contribute to an understanding of consumer behavior. Behavioral theorists view learning as observable responses to stimuli, whereas cognitive theorists believe that learning is a function of mental processing.

Three major *behavioral learning theories* are classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, and observational (vicarious) learning. The principles of classical conditioning that provide theoretical underpinnings for many marketing applications include repetition, stimulus generalization, and stimulus discrimination. Neo-Pavlovian theories view traditional classical conditioning as cognitive associative learning rather than as reflexive action.

Instrumental learning theorists believe that learning occurs through a trial-and-error process in which positive outcomes (i.e., rewards) result in repeat behavior. Both positive and negative reinforcement can be used to encourage the desired behavior. Reinforcement schedules can be total (consistent) or partial (fixed ratio or random). The timing of repetitions influences how long the learned material is retained. Massed repetitions produce more initial learning than distributed repetitions; however, learning usually persists longer with distributed (i.e., spread out) reinforcement schedules.

Cognitive learning theory holds that the kind of learning most characteristic of humans is problem solving. Cognitive theorists are concerned with how information is processed by the human mind: how it is stored, retained, and retrieved. A simple model of the structure and operation of memory suggests the existence of three separate storage units: the sensory store, short-term store (or working memory), and long-term store. The processes of memory include rehearsal, encoding, storage, and retrieval.

Involvement theory proposes that people engage in limited information processing in situations of low importance or relevance to them and in extensive information processing in situations of high relevance. Hemispheral lateralization (i.e., split-brain) theory gave rise to the theory that television is a low-involvement medium that results in passive learning and that print and interactive media encourage more cognitive information processing.

Measures of consumer learning include recall and recognition tests, cognitive responses to advertising, and attitudinal and behavioral measures of brand loyalty. A basic issue among researchers is whether to define brand loyalty in terms of the consumer's behavior or the consumer's attitude toward the brand. Brand equity refers to the inherent value a brand name has in the marketplace.

Brand loyalty consists of both attitudes and actual behaviors toward a brand and both must be measured. For marketers, the major reasons for understanding how consumers learn are to teach them that their brand is best and to develop brand loyalty.

The ethical issues regarding consumer learning are centered on potential misuses of behavioral, cognitive, and observational learning. Most importantly, these issues involve targeting children and young adults and, albeit unintentionally, "teaching" them to engage in socially undesirable behaviors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can the principles of (a) classical conditioning theory and (b) instrumental conditioning theory be applied to the development of marketing strategies?
2. Describe in learning terms the conditions under which family branding is a good policy and those under which it is not.
3. Neutrogena, the cosmetics company, offers a line of shaving products for men. How can the company use stimulus generalization to market these products? Is instrumental conditioning applicable to this marketing situation? If so, how?
4. Which theory of learning (classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, observational learning, or cognitive learning) best explains the following consumption behaviors: (a) buying a six-pack of Gatorade, (b) preferring to purchase jeans at a Diesel Store, (c) buying a digital camera for the first time, (d) buying a new car, and (e) switching from one cellular phone service to another? Explain your choices.
5. a. Define the following memory structures: sensory store, short-term store (working memory), and long-term store. Discuss how each of these concepts can be used in the development of an advertising strategy.
   b. How does information overload affect the consumer's ability to comprehend an ad and store it in his or her memory?
6. Discuss the differences between low- and high-involvement media. How would you apply the knowledge of hemispheral lateralization to the design of TV commercials and print advertisements?
7. Why are both attitudinal and behavioral measures important in measuring brand loyalty?
8. What is the relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity? What role do concepts play in the development of marketing strategies?
9. How can marketers use measures of recognition and recall to study the extent of consumer learning?

EXERCISES

1. Imagine you are the instructor in this course and that you are trying to increase student participation in class discussions. How would you use reinforcement to achieve your objective?
2. Visit a supermarket. Can you identify any packages where you think the marketer's knowledge of stimulus generalization or stimulus discrimination was incorporated into the package design? Note these examples and present them in class.
3. Visit the news section at **www.caru.org**. Select three of the press releases featured there (other than the ones discussed in this chapter) and illustrate how they depict the ethics of applying learning theory in advertising to children.

KEY TERMS

- **advertising wearout**
- **behavioral learning theory**
- **behavioral response**
- **brand equity**
- **brand loyalty**
- **broad categorizers versus narrow categorizers**
- **central and peripheral routes to persuasion**
- **chunking**
- **classical conditioning**
- **co-branding**
- **cognitive associative learning**
- **cognitive learning theory**
- **comprehension**
- **conditioned learning**
- **conditioned versus unconditioned stimuli**
- **copy testing**
- **cues**
- **elaboration likelihood model (ELM)**
- **encoding**
- **evoked set**
- **family branding**
- **hemispheral lateralization**
- **imagery**
- **information overload**
- **information processing**
- **instrumental learning**
- **interference effects**
- **involvement theory**
- **learning**
- **licensing**
- **massed versus distributed learning**

- megabrands
- modeling, observational, and vicarious learning
- motivation
- negative reinforcement
- neo-Pavlovian conditioning
- operant learning
- passive learning
- positioning
- positive reinforcement
- pretesting and posttesting
- product category, product form and product line extensions
- recognition and recall tests
- rehearsal
- reinforcement
- repetition
- retrieval
- sensory, short-term, and long-term stores
- shaping
- stimulus discrimination
- stimulus generalization
- stimulus-response theories

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chapter eight

Consumer Attitude Formation and Change

As consumers, each of us has a vast number of attitudes toward products, services, advertisements, direct mail, the Internet, and retail stores. Whenever we are asked whether we like or dislike a product (e.g., a Samsung HDTV set), a service (e.g., satellite TV from Direct TV), a particular retailer (e.g., Wal-Mart), a specific direct marketer (e.g., **www.Buy.com**), or an advertising theme (e.g., "Chrysler—inspiration comes standard"), we are being asked to express our **attitudes**.

Within the context of consumer behavior, an appreciation of prevailing attitudes has considerable strategic merit. For instance, there has been very rapid growth in the sales of natural ingredient bath, body, and cosmetic products throughout the world. This trend seems linked to the currently popular attitude that things "natural" are good and things "synthetic" are bad. Yet, in reality, the positive attitude favoring things natural is not based on any systematic evidence that natural cosmetic products are any safer or better for consumers.

To get at the heart of what is driving consumers' behavior, *attitude research* has been used to study a wide range of strategic marketing questions. For example, attitude research is frequently undertaken to determine whether consumers will accept a proposed new-product idea, to gauge why a firm's target audience has



not reacted more favorably to its new promotional theme, or to learn how target customers are likely to react to a proposed change in the firm's packaging design. To illustrate, major athletic shoe marketers such as Nike (**www.nike.com**) or Reebok (**www.reebok.com**) frequently conduct research among target consumers of the different types of athletic footwear products that they market. They seek attitudes of target consumers with respect to size, fit, comfort, and fashion elements of their footwear, as well as test reactions to potential new designs or functional features. They also regularly gauge reactions to their latest advertising and other marketing messages designed to form and change consumer attitudes. All these marketing activities are related to the important task of impacting consumers' attitudes.

In this chapter we will discuss the reasons why attitude research has had such a pervasive impact on consumer behavior. We also will discuss the properties that have made attitudes so attractive to consumer researchers, as well as some of the common frustrations encountered in attitude research. Particular attention will be paid to the central topics of attitude formation, attitude change, and related strategic marketing issues.

what are attitudes?

Consumer researchers assess attitudes by asking questions or making inferences from behavior. For example, if a researcher determines from questioning a consumer that she consistently buys Secret deodorant (**www.secret-deodorant.com**) and even recommends the product to friends, the researcher is likely to infer that the consumer possesses a positive attitude toward this brand of deodorant. This example illustrates that attitudes are not directly observable but must be inferred from what people say or what they do.

Moreover, the illustration suggests that a whole universe of consumer behaviors—consistency of purchases, recommendations to others, top rankings, beliefs, evaluations, and intentions are related to attitudes. What, then, are attitudes? In a consumer behavior context, an *attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object.* Each part of this definition describes an important property of an attitude and is critical to understanding the role of attitudes in consumer behavior.

The attitude "object"

The word *object* in our consumer-oriented definition of attitude should be interpreted broadly to include specific consumption- or marketing-related concepts, such as product, product category, brand, service, possessions, product use, causes or issues, people, advertisement, Internet site, price, medium, or retailer. There is general agreement that an attitude "can be conceptualized as a summary evaluation of an object."[1]

In conducting attitude research, we tend to be *object specific.* For example, if we were interested in learning consumers' attitudes toward three major brands of popularly priced watches, our "object" might include Seiko, Fossil, and Casio; if we were examining consumer attitudes toward major brands of computer printers, our "object" might include HP, Dell, Brother, Canon, OKI, Lexmark, and Epson.

Attitudes are a learned predisposition

There is general agreement that attitudes are *learned.* This means that attitudes relevant to purchase behavior are formed as a result of direct experience with the product, word-of-mouth information acquired from others, or exposure to mass-media advertising, the Internet, and various forms of direct marketing (e.g., a retailer's catalog). It is important to remember that although attitudes may result from behavior, they are not synonymous with behavior. Instead, they reflect either a favorable or an unfavorable evaluation of the attitude object. As *learned predispositions,* attitudes have a motivational quality; that is, they might propel a consumer *toward* a particular behavior or repel the consumer *away* from a particular behavior.

Attitudes have consistency

Another characteristic of attitudes is that they are relatively consistent with the behavior they reflect. However, despite their *consistency,* attitudes are not necessarily permanent; they do change. (Attitude change is explored later in this chapter.)

It is important to illustrate what we mean by consistency. Normally, we expect consumers' behavior to correspond with their attitudes. For example, if a Canadian consumer reported preferring German over Japanese automobiles, we would expect that the individual would be more likely to buy a German brand when his current vehicle needed to be replaced. In other words, when consumers are free to act as they wish, we anticipate that their actions will be consistent with their attitudes. However, circumstances often preclude consistency between attitudes and behavior. For example, in the case of our Canadian consumer, the matter of affordability may intervene, and the consumer would find a particular Japanese car to be a more cost-effective choice than a German car. Therefore, we must consider possible *situational* influences on consumer attitudes and behavior.

Attitudes occur within a situation

It is not immediately evident from our definition that attitudes occur within and are affected by the *situation*.[2] By "situation," we mean events or circumstances that, at a particular point in time, influence the relationship between an attitude and behavior. A specific situation can cause consumers to behave in ways seemingly inconsistent with their attitudes. For instance, let us assume that Brad purchases a different brand of toothpaste each time he runs low. Although his brand-switching behavior may seem to reflect a negative attitude or dissatisfaction with the brands he tries, it actually may be influenced by a specific situation, for example, his wish to economize. Thus, he will buy whatever is the least expensive brand, and it is not a matter of a negative attitude.[3]

The opposite can also be true. If Sheryl stays at a Holiday Inn each time she goes out of town for business, we may erroneously infer that she has a particularly favorable attitude toward Holiday Inn. On the contrary, Sheryl may find Holiday Inn to be "just okay." However, because she owns her own business and travels at her own expense, she may feel that Holiday Inn is "good enough," given that she may be paying less than she would be paying if she stayed at a Marriott, Sheraton, or Hilton hotel.

Indeed, consumers can have a variety of attitudes toward a particular object, each corresponding to a particular situation or application. For instance, Saul may feel its alright to have a station wagon to drive the kids to their afterschool and weekend activities; or even to take his college-age daughter back and forth each year, with all her stuff, to State College, some two hundred and fifty miles away. However, when it comes to his growing interest in off-road driving, Saul feels strongly that only a high-quality sports utility vehicle (SUV) would provide the appropriate features to enable him to safely pursue his growing interest. So recently when it came time to replace the family's old station wagon, he opted for a new SUV, one that provided the "right" feature set to ensure his off-road interests.

It is important to understand how consumer attitudes vary from situation to situation. For instance, it is useful to know whether consumer preferences for various brands of SUVs (e.g., Honda Pilot, Jeep Liberty, and Ford Explorer) might depend on the anticipated driving task or most common driving situation (i.e., storage capacity, car pooling, and off-road driving). In Saul's case, his attitude and decision-making process lead him to select a Jeep 4x4. He feels it provides a win-win situation—in that the Jeep 4x4 would satisfy his need to car pool and transport his daughter to college, as well as his interest in off-road driving (Figure 8.1).

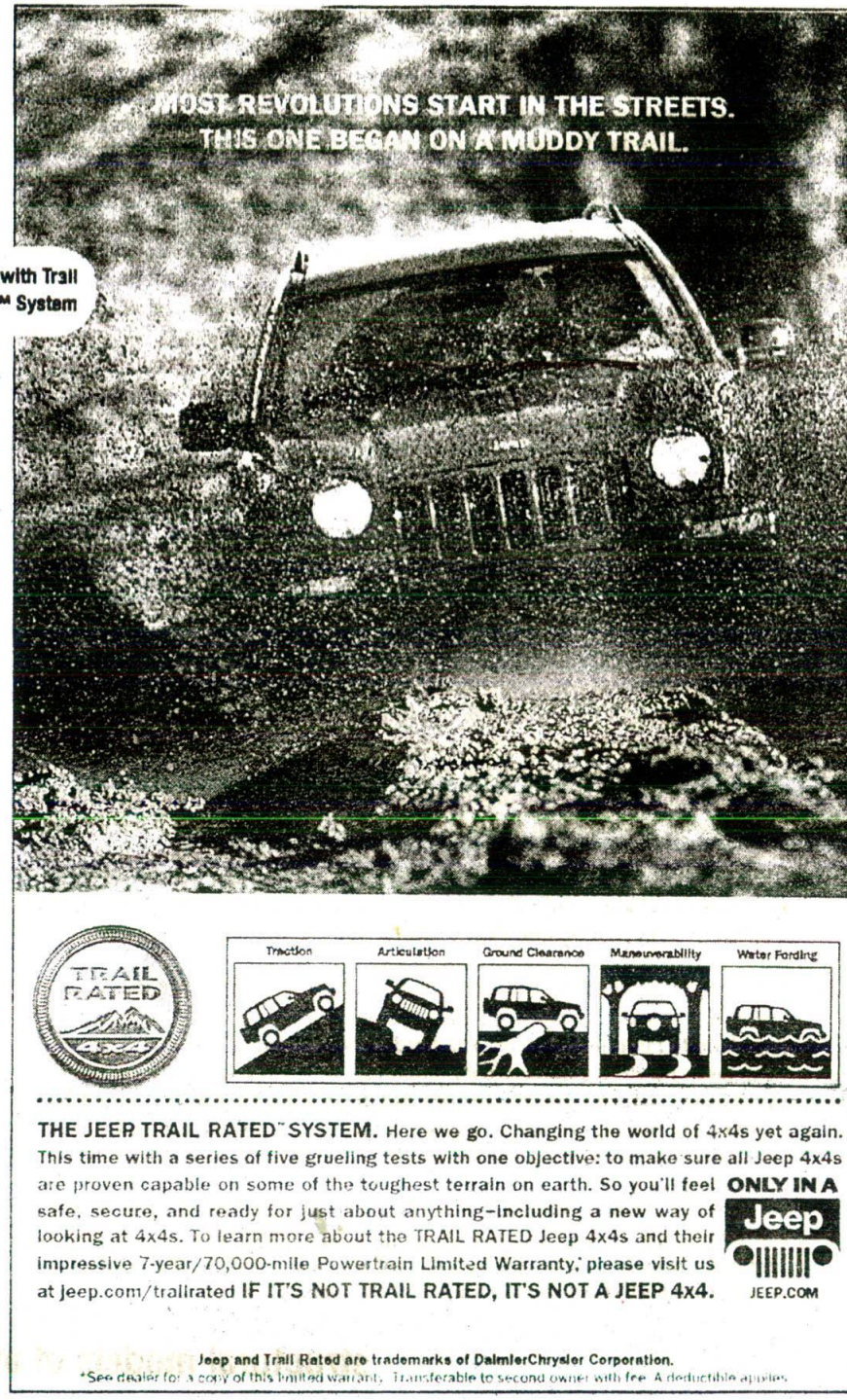
Clearly, when measuring attitudes, it is important to consider the situation in which the behavior takes place, or we can misinterpret the relationship between attitude and behavior. Table 8.1 presents additional examples of specific situations that might influence consumer attitudes toward specific brands of products or services.

structural models of attitudes

Motivated by a desire to understand the relationship between attitudes and behavior, psychologists have sought to construct models that capture the underlying dimensions of an attitude.[4] To this end, the focus has been on specifying the

FIGURE 8.1

Source: © DaimlerChrysler Corporation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Jeep's 4x4 SUV with Trail Rated™ System

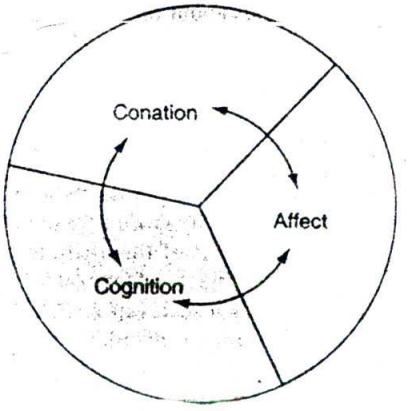
TABLE 8.1 Examples of How Situations Might Influence Attitudes

PRODUCT/SERVICE	SITUATION	ATTITUDE
Claritan	Runny nose due to allergies	"I've got to stop my nose from running because I've got a date in two hours."
Hyundai Automobile	Buying a new car	"With my son starting college in the fall, I don't want to spend a lot of money on a car."
Northwestern Mutual	Life insurance	"Now that I've just become a father, I want to make sure that my family is provided for."
The New York Times	Need a job	"I graduated college last month, spent three weeks in Europe, and now it's time to find a job."
American Airlines	Family wedding	"My cousin is getting married and I want to be there."
Starbucks	Need to stay awake	"I have to pull an 'all-nighter' to finish this paper that has to be submitted by 9:00 A.M."
Softsoap Pump Soap	Messy bathroom counter	"I'm tired of cleaning soap off of the bathroom counter."

composition of an attitude to better explain or predict behavior. The following section examines several important attitude models: the *tricomponent attitude model,* the *multiattribute attitude models,* the *trying-to-consume model,* and the *attitude-toward-the-ad models.* Each of these models provides a somewhat different perspective on the number of component parts of an attitude and how those parts are arranged or interrelated.

Tricomponent attitude model

According to the **tricomponent attitude model**, attitudes consist of three major components: a *cognitive* component, an *affective* component, and a *conative* component (see Figure 8.2).[5]



A Simple Representation of the Tricomponent Attitude Model

FIGURE 8.2

FIGURE 8.3 A Consumer's Belief System for Two Methods of Broadband Internet Access

Product	BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS							
Brand	Cable Internet Access				DSL Internet Access			
Attributes	Speed	Availability	Reliability	Other Features	Speed	Availability	Reliability	Other Features
Beliefs	Faster than DSL	Offered now by my cable company	As reliable as my cable TV	No choice of provider and slows down when lots of subscribers are online	Slower than a cable modem but faster than dial-up service	Offered now by my local telephone company	Can be spotty	Bandwidth varies less than with a cable connection but can be more difficult to install and troubleshoot
Evaluations	(++++)	(+++)	(+++)	(−)	(++)	(+++)	(−)	(+)

Source: Adapted from Todd Spangler, "Crossing the Broadband Divide," *PC Magazine*, February 12, 2001, 92–103.

The cognitive component

The first part of the tricomponent attitude model consists of a person's *cognitions*, that is, the knowledge and perceptions that are acquired by a combination of direct experience with the *attitude object* and related information from various sources. This knowledge and resulting perceptions commonly take the form of *beliefs;* that is, the consumer believes that the attitude object possesses various attributes and that specific behavior will lead to specific outcomes.

Although it captures only a part of Steve's belief system about two types of broadband Internet connections (e.g., cable and DSL), Figure 8.3 illustrates the composition of a consumer's belief system about these two alternatives. Steve's belief system for both types of connections consists of the same basic four attributes: speed, availability, reliability, and "other" features. However, Steve has somewhat different beliefs about the two broadband alternatives with respect to these attributes. For instance, he knows from friends that the local cable company's broadband connection is much faster than DSL, but he does not like the fact that he will also have to begin subscribing to cable TV if he does not want to pay an extra $20 a month for the broadband Internet connection. Steve is thinking of asking a few of his friends about the differences between cable and DSL broadband Internet service and will also go online to a number of Web sites that discuss this topic (e.g., **www.cnet.com**).

The affective component

A consumer's *emotions* or *feelings* about a particular product or brand constitute the *affective component* of an attitude.[6] These emotions and feelings are frequently treated by consumer researchers as primarily *evaluative* in nature; that is, they capture an individual's direct or global assessment of the attitude object (i.e., the extent to which the individual rates the attitude object as "favorable" or "unfavorable," "good" or "bad"). To illustrate, Table 8.2 shows a series of evaluative (affective) scale items that might be used to assess consumers' attitudes toward Old Spice aftershave (**www.oldspice.com**).

Affect-laden experiences also manifest themselves as *emotionally charged states* (e.g., happiness, sadness, shame, disgust, anger, distress, guilt, or surprise). Research indicates that such emotional states may enhance or amplify positive or negative

TABLE 8.2 Selected Evaluative Scale Used to Gauge Consumers's Attitudes Toward Old Spice Aftershave

Compared to other aftershaves, Old Spice aftershave is:

Refreshing	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	Not refreshing
Positive	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	Negative
Pleasant	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	Unpleasant
Appealing to others	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	Unappealing to others

experiences and that later recollections of such experiences may impact what comes to mind and how the individual acts.[7] For instance, a person visiting a shopping center is likely to be influenced by his or her emotional state at the time. If the shopper is feeling particularly joyous at the moment, a positive response to the shopping center may be amplified. The emotionally enhanced response to the shopping center may lead the shopper to recall with great pleasure the time spent at the shopping center. It also may influence the individual shopper to persuade friends and acquaintances to visit the same shopping center and to make the personal decision to revisit the center.

In addition to using direct or global evaluative measures of an attitude object, consumer researchers can also use a battery of affective response scales (e.g., that measure feelings and emotions) to construct a picture of consumers' overall feelings about a product, service, or ad. Table 8.3 gives an example of a five-point scale that measures affective responses.

The conative component

Conation, the final component of the tricomponent attitude model, is concerned with the *likelihood* or *tendency* that an individual will undertake a specific action or behave in a

TABLE 8.3 Measuring Consumers' Feelings and Emotions with Regard to Using Old Spice Aftershave

For the past 30 days you have had a chance to try Old Spice Aftershave. We would appreciate it if you would identify how your face felt after using the product during this 30-day trial period. For each of the words below, we would appreciate it if you would mark an "X" in the box corresponding to how your face felt after using Old Spice Aftershave during the past 30 days.

	VERY				NOT AT ALL
Relaxed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Attractive looking	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Tight	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Smooth	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Supple	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Clean	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Refreshed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Younger	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Revived	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Renewed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

TABLE 8.4 Two Examples of Intention-to-Buy Scales

Which of the following statements best describes the chance that you will buy Old Spice Aftershave the next time you purchase an aftershave product?

_____ I definitely will buy it.
_____ I probably will buy it.
_____ I am uncertain whether I will buy it.
_____ I probably will not buy it.
_____ I definitely will not buy it.

How likely are you to buy Old Spice Aftershave during the next three months?

_____ Very likely
_____ Likely
_____ Unlikely
_____ Very unlikely

particular way with regard to the attitude object. According to some interpretations, the conative component may include the actual behavior itself.

In marketing and consumer research, the conative component is frequently treated as an expression of the consumer's *intention to buy.* Buyer intention scales are used to assess the likelihood of a consumer purchasing a product or behaving in a certain way. Table 8.4 provides several examples of common **intention-to-buy scales.** Interestingly, consumers who are asked to respond to an intention-to-buy question appear to be more likely to actually make a brand purchase for positively evaluated brands (e.g., "I will buy it"), as contrasted to consumers who are not asked to respond to an intention question.[8] This suggests that a positive brand commitment in the form of a positive answer to an attitude intention question impacts in a positive way on the actual brand purchase.

Multiattribute attitude models

Multiattribute attitude models portray consumers' attitudes with regard to an attitude object (e.g., a product, a service, a direct-mail catalog, or a cause or an issue) as a function of consumers' perception and assessment of the key attributes or beliefs held with regard to the particular attitude object. Although there are many variations of this type of attitude model, we have selected the following three models to briefly consider here: the *attitude-toward-object model,* the *attitude-toward-behavior model,* and the *theory-of-reasoned-action model.*

The attitude-toward-object model

The **attitude-toward-object model** is especially suitable for measuring attitudes toward a *product* (or *service*) category or specific *brands.*[9] According to this model, the consumer's attitude toward a product or specific brands of a product is a function of the presence (or absence) and evaluation of certain product-specific beliefs and/or attributes. In other words, consumers generally have favorable attitudes toward those brands that they believe have an adequate level of attributes that they evaluate as positive, and they have unfavorable attitudes toward those brands they feel do not have an adequate level of desired attributes or have too many negative or undesired attributes. As an illustration, we return to the broadband Internet connection example (see Figure 8.3). Each alternative has a different "mix" of features (a "feature set"). The defining features might include speed, reliability, cost, availability of 24/7 technical assistance, maximum file size that can be e-mailed, and so on. For instance, one of the two types of connections might be found to excel on core features, whereas the other may be really good on a few of the core

TABLE 8.5 A Scale Used to Measure Attitude Toward Brands for 8- to 12-Year-Olds

	DEFINITELY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	DEFINITELY AGREE
Kellogg's—I like it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kellogg's—It is fun.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kellogg's—It is great.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kellogg's—It is useful.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kellogg's—I like it very much.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kellogg's—It is practical/handy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kellogg's—It is useless.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Source: Claude Pecheux and Christian Derbaix, "Children and Attitude Toward the Brand. A New Measurement Scale," *Journal of Advertising Research* (July/August 1999): 19–27.

features but offer more additional features. It is also possible that neither the cable nor the DSL carriers may be more than "second rate." However, what consumers will purchase is likely to be a function "how much they know," "what they feel are important features for them," and in the current example, their "awareness as to which type of broadband service possesses (or lacks) the valued attributes."

Conducting consumer attitude research with children, especially gauging their attitudes toward products and brands, is an ongoing challenge. What is needed are new and effective measurement approaches that allow children to express their attitudes toward brands. To this end, researchers have labored to develop an especially simple and short attitude measurement instrument for questioning children between 8 and 12 years of age. In the case of the example presented in Table 8.5, the questionnaire is set up to assess children's attitudes toward the Kellogg's brand.[10]

The attitude-toward-behavior model

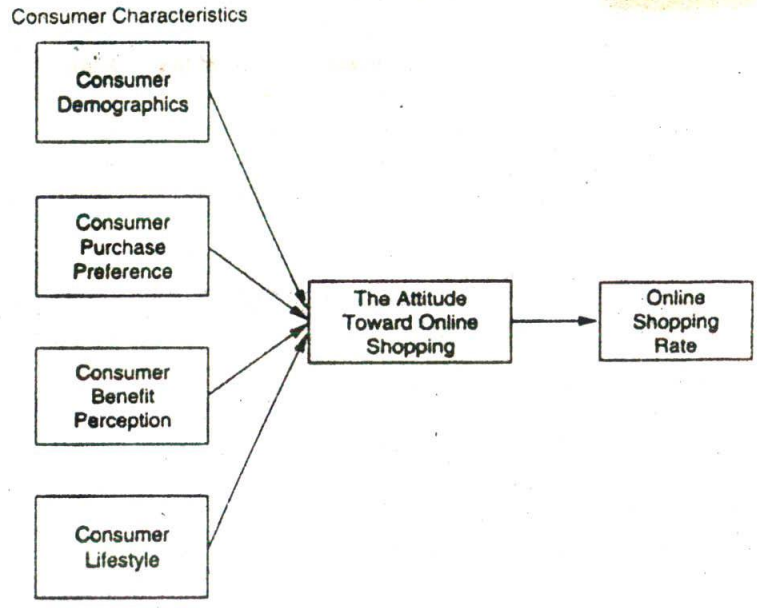
The **attitude-toward-behavior model** is designed to capture the individual's *attitude toward behaving* or *acting* with respect to an object rather than the attitude toward the object itself.[11] The appeal of the attitude-toward-behavior model is that it seems to correspond somewhat more closely to actual behavior than does the attitude-toward-object model. For instance, knowing Sam's attitude about the act of purchasing a Rolex wristwatch (i.e., his attitude toward the *behavior*) reveals more about the potential act of purchasing than does simply knowing his attitude toward expensive watches or specifically Rolex watches (i.e., the attitude toward the *object*). This seems logical, for a consumer might have a positive attitude toward an expensive Rolex wristwatch but a negative attitude as to his prospects for purchasing such an expensive wristwatch.

A recent study conducted in Taiwan examined the relationship between consumer characteristics and attitude toward the behavior of online shopping. The researcher found that attitudes toward online shopping are significantly different based on various consumer behavior factors. For example, the research identified the following nine benefits of online shopping: (1) effectiveness and modern, (2) purchase convenience, (3) information abundance, (4) multiform and safety, (5) service quality, (6) delivery speed, (7) homepage design, (8) selection freedom, and (9) company name familiarity. These nine attributes were selected because they tend to reflect consumers' attitude toward online shopping.[12] The researcher goes on to explore a model (see Figure 8.4) that suggests that *consumer characteristics* (on the left-side of the model) impact *attitudes toward online shopping* (in the middle of the model—the nine attitudinal attributes listed above) and the *rating of the online shopping experience* (on the right-side of the model).

FIGURE 8.4

Consumer Characteristics, Attitude, and Online Shopping

Source: Shwu-Ing Wu, "The Relationship Between Consumer Characteristics and Attitude Toward Online Shopping," *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* 21, no. 7 (2003): 40.



Theory-of-reasoned-action model

The **theory-of-reasoned-action model** represents a comprehensive integration of attitude components into a structure that is designed to lead to both better explanation and better predictions of behavior. Like the basic tricomponent attitude model, the theory-of-reasoned-action model incorporates a *cognitive* component, an *affective* component, and a *conative* component; however, these are arranged in a pattern different from that of the tricomponent model (see Figure 8.5).

In accordance with this expanded model, to understand *intention* we also need to measure the *subjective norms* that influence an individual's intention to act. A subjective norm can be measured directly by assessing a consumer's feelings as to what relevant others (family, friends, roommates, coworkers) would think of the action being contemplated; that is, would they look favorably or unfavorably on the anticipated action? For example, if an undergraduate student was considering cutting her hair shorter and dying it red and stopped to ask herself what her parents or boyfriend would think of such behavior (i.e., approve or disapprove), such a reflection would constitute her subjective norm.

Consumer researchers can get behind the *subjective norm* to the underlying factors that are likely to produce it. They accomplish this by assessing the *normative beliefs* that the individual attributes to relevant others, as well as the individual's *motivation to comply* with each of the relevant others. For instance, consider the undergraduate student contemplating cutting her hair shorter and dying it red. To understand her subjective norm about the desired purchase, we would have to identify her relevant others (parents and boyfriend); her beliefs about how each would respond to her short red hair (e.g., "Mom would consider the shorter hair as too 'boyish,' but my boyfriend would love it"); and, finally, her motivation to comply with her parents and/or her boyfriend.[13] A recent study also indicates that incorporating the consumer's emotional experience into the multiattribute model has the potential of enhancing the predictability of motives and preferences.[14]

Theory of trying-to-consume model

There has been an effort underway to extend attitude models so that they might better accommodate consumers' goals as expressed by their "trying" to consume.[15] The **theory of trying to consume** is designed to account for the many cases in which the action or

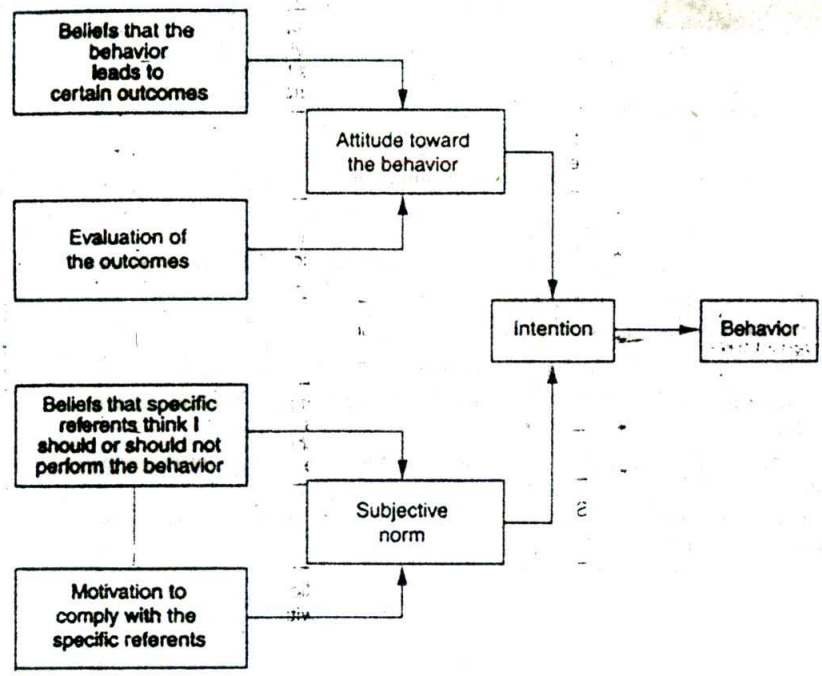


FIGURE 8.5

A Simplified Version of the Theory of Reasoned Action

Source: Adapted from Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), 84. © 1980. Adapted by permission of Prentice Hall, Inc.

outcome is not certain but instead reflects the consumer's attempts to consume (i.e., purchase). In trying to consume, there are often *personal impediments* (a consumer is trying to find just the right shoes to go with a newly purchased dress for under $100 or trying to lose weight but loves chocolate bars) and/or *environmental impediments* (only the first 50 in line will be able to purchase this $200 MP3 player for the special Saturday 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. price of $99) that might prevent the desired action or outcome from occurring. Again, the key point is that in these cases of trying, the outcome (e.g., purchase, possession, use, or action) is not and cannot be assumed to be certain. Table 8.6 lists a few examples of possible personal and environmental impediments that might negatively impact the outcome for a consumer trying to consume. Researchers have recently extended this inquiry by examining those situations in which consumers do *not* try to consume—that is, *fail to try to consume.* In this case, consumers appear to (1) fail to see or are ignorant of their options and (2) make a conscious effort not to consume; that is, they might seek to self-sacrifice or defer gratification to some future time.[16]

Attitude-toward-the-ad models

In an effort to understand the impact of advertising or some other promotional vehicle (e.g., a catalog) on consumer attitudes toward particular products or brands, considerable attention has been paid to developing what has been referred to as **attitude-toward-the-ad models.**

Figure 8.6 presents a schematic of some of the basic relationships described by an attitude-toward-the-ad model. As the model depicts, the consumer forms various feelings (affects) and judgments (cognitions) as the result of exposure to an ad. These feelings and judgments in turn affect the consumer's *attitude toward the ad* and *beliefs about the brand* secured from exposure to the ad. Finally, the consumer's attitude toward the ad and beliefs about the brand influence his or her *attitude toward the brand.*[17]

Research among Asian Indian U.S. immigrants have explored attitudes toward 12 advertisements and purchase intention of six different products that the ads feature.

TABLE 8.6 Selected Examples of Potential Impediments That Might Impact on Trying

Potential Personal Impediments

"I wonder whether my hair will be long enough by the time of my wedding so that I can have the hairdo I want."

"I want to try to lose 2 inches off my waist by my birthday."

"I'm going to try to get us tickets for the Rolling Stones concert for our anniversary."

"I'm going to attempt to give up smoking by my birthday."

"I am going to increase how often I run two miles from three to five times a week."

"Tonight I'm not going to have dessert at the restaurant."

Potential Environmental Impediments

"The first 1,000 people at the baseball game will receive a team cap."

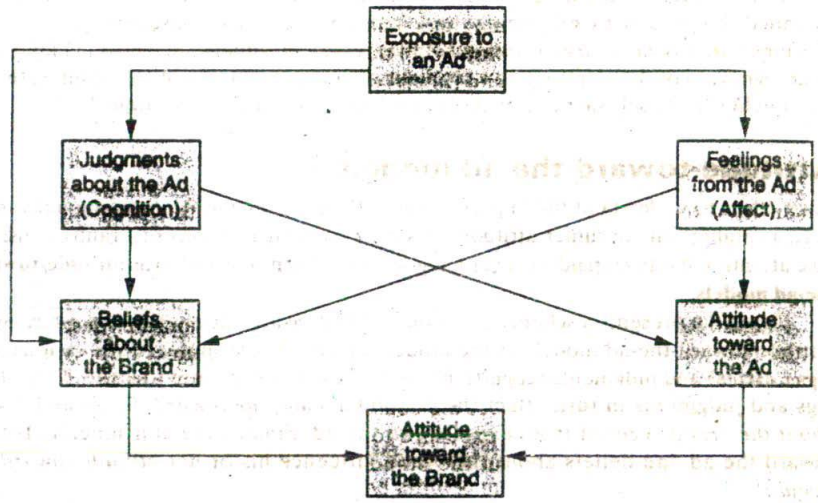
"Sorry, the car you ordered didn't come in from Japan on the ship that docked yesterday."

"There are only two cases of Chardonnay in our stockroom. You better come in sometime today."

"I am sorry. We cannot serve you. We are closing the restaurant because of an electrical problem."

The study found a positive relationship between attitude toward the advertisement and purchase intention for each of the advertised products; that is, if consumers "like" the ad, they are more likely to purchase the product.[18]

Finally, consumer socialization has also shown itself to be an important determinant of a consumer's attitudes toward advertising. One study, for example, found that parental communication, peer communication, social utility of advertising, amount of television watched, gender, and race were all associated with attitude toward advertising. African Americans and women were found to have more positive attitudes toward advertising.[19]



A Conception of the Relationship Among Elements in an Attitude-Toward-the-Ad Model

Source: Inspired by and based on Julie A. Edell and Marian Chapman Burke, "The Power of Feelings in Understanding Advertising Effects," *Journal of Consumer Research* 14 (December 1987): 431. Reprinted by permission of University of Chicago Press as publisher.

FIGURE 8.6

attitude formation

How do people, especially young people, form their initial *general* attitudes toward "things"? Consider their attitudes toward clothing they wear, for example, underwear, casual wear, and business attire. On a more specific level, how do they form attitudes toward Fruit of the Loom or Calvin Klein underwear, or Levi's or Gap casual wear, or Anne Klein or Emporium Armani business clothing? Also, what about where such clothing is purchased? Would they buy their underwear, casual wear, and business clothing at Wal-Mart, Sears, JC Penney, or Macy's? How do family members and friends, admired celebrities, mass-media advertisements, even cultural memberships, influence the formation of their attitudes concerning consuming or not consuming each of these types of apparel items? Why do some attitudes seem to persist indefinitely while others change fairly often? The answers to such questions are of vital importance to marketers, for without knowing how attitudes are formed, they are unable to understand or to influence consumer attitudes or behavior.

Our examination of attitude formation is divided into three areas: *how attitudes are learned,* the *sources of influence* on attitude formation, and the impact of *personality* on attitude formation.

How attitudes are learned

When we speak of the formation of an attitude, we refer to the shift from having no attitude toward a given object (e.g., an MP3 player) to having *some* attitude toward it (e.g., having an MP3 player is great when you want to listen to music while on a treadmill at the gym). The shift from no attitude to an attitude (i.e., the *attitude formation*) is a result of learning (see Chapter 7 for detailed exploration of consumer behavior and learning theories).

Consumers often purchase new products that are associated with a favorably viewed brand name. Their favorable attitude toward the brand name is frequently the result of repeated satisfaction with other products produced by the same company. In terms of *classical conditioning,* an established brand name is an *unconditioned* stimulus that through past positive reinforcement resulted in a favorable brand attitude. A new product, yet to be linked to the established brand, would be the *conditioned* stimulus. To illustrate, by giving its Secret Platinum and Olay conditioners the benefit of two well-known and respected family names (i.e., Secret and Olay), P&G is expecting on a transfer of the favorable attitude already associated with these two brand names to the new product (see Figure 8.7). They are counting on stimulus generalization from the two brand names to the new product. Research suggests that the "fit" between a parent brand (e.g., in this case both Secret and Olay) and a brand extension (e.g., in this case Secret Platinum and Olay conditioners) is a function of two factors: (1) the similarity between the preexisting product categories already associated with the parent brands (i.e., mostly products related to skin care) and the new extension and (2) the fit or match between the images of the parent brands and the new extension.[20]

Sometimes attitudes *follow* the purchase and consumption of a product. For example, a consumer may purchase a brand-name product *without* having a prior attitude toward it because it is the only product of its kind available (e.g., the last bottle of aspirin in a gas station mini-mart). Consumers also make trial purchases of new brands from product categories in which they have little personal involvement (see Chapter 7). If they find the purchased brand to be satisfactory, then they are likely to develop a favorable attitude toward it.

In situations in which consumers seek to solve a problem or satisfy a need, they are likely to form attitudes (either positive or negative) about products on the basis of information exposure and their own cognition (knowledge and beliefs). In general, the more information consumers have about a product or service, the more likely they are to form attitudes about it, either positive or negative. However, regardless of available information, consumers are not always ready or willing to process product-related

FIGURE 8.7

Source: © Procter & Gamble Company. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



Attitudes Are Formed Through Association with Favorable Brand Names

information. Furthermore, consumers often use only a limited amount of the information available to them. Specifically, only two or three important beliefs about a product are likely to dominate in the formation of attitudes and that less important beliefs provide little additional input.[21] This suggests that marketers should fight off the impulse to include *all* the features of their products and services in their ads; rather, they should focus on the few key points that are at the heart of what distinguishes their product from the competition.

Sources of influence on attitude formation

The formation of consumer attitudes is strongly influenced by *personal experience,* the *influence* of family and friends, *direct marketing, mass media,* and the *Internet.*

A primary means by which attitudes toward goods and services are formed is through the consumer's direct experience in trying and evaluating them.[22] Recognizing the importance of direct experience, marketers frequently attempt to stimulate trial of new products by offering cents-off coupons or even free samples. Figure 8.8 illustrates this strategy; the ad for Wrigley's Cool Green Apple Free Gum includes a trial coupon for a pack of gum (which would make one of the two packs free). In such cases, the marketer's objective is to get consumers to try and evaluate the product. If a product proves to be to their liking, then it is likely that consumers will form a positive attitude and be more likely to repurchase the product. In addition, from the information on the coupon the marketer is able to create a database of interested consumers.

As we come in contact with others, especially family, close friends, and admired individuals (e.g., a respected teacher), we form attitudes that influence our lives.[23] The family is an extremely important source of influence on the formation of attitudes, for it is the family that provides us with many of our basic values and a wide range of less central beliefs. For instance, young children who are rewarded for good behavior with sweet foods and candy often retain a taste for (and positive attitude toward) sweets as adults.

Marketers are increasingly using highly focused direct-marketing programs to target small consumer niches with products and services that fit their interests and lifestyles. (Niche marketing is sometimes called *micromarketing.*) Marketers very carefully target customers on the basis of their demographic, psychographic, or geodemographic profiles with highly personalized product offerings (e.g., watches for left-handed people) and messages that show they understand their special needs and desires. Direct-marketing efforts have an excellent chance of favorably influencing target consumers' attitudes, because the products and services offered and the promotional messages conveyed are very carefully designed to address the individual segment's needs and concerns and, thus, are able to achieve a higher "hit rate" than mass marketing.

In countries where people have easy access to newspapers and a variety of general and special-interest magazines and television channels, consumers are constantly exposed to new ideas, products, opinions, and advertisements. These mass-media communications provide an important source of information that influences the formation of consumer attitudes. Other research indicates that for consumers who lack direct experience with a product, exposure to an emotionally appealing advertising message is more likely to create an attitude toward the product than for consumers who have beforehand secured direct experience with the product category.[24] The net implications of these findings appear to be that emotional appeals are most effective with consumers who lack product experience.

Still another issue with regard to evaluating the impact of advertising messages on attitude formation is the level of realism that is provided. Research has shown that attitudes that develop through *direct experience* (e.g., product usage) tend to be more confidently held, more enduring, and more resistant to attack than those developed via *indirect experience* (e.g., reading a print ad). And just as television provided the advertiser with more realism than is possible in a radio or print ad, the Internet has an even greater ability to provide telepresence, which is the simulated perception of direct experience. The Internet also has the ability to provide the "flow experience," which is a cognitive state occurring when the individual is so involved in an activity that nothing else matters. Research on telepresence suggests that "perceptions of telepresence grew stronger as levels of interactivity and levels of vividness (i.e., the way an environment presents information to the senses) of web sites increased."[25]

FIGURE 8.8

Source: © Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



Wrigley's Extra Cool Green Apple

Personality factors

Personality also plays a critical role in attitude formation. For example, individuals with a *high need for cognition* (i.e., those who crave information and enjoy thinking) are likely to form positive attitudes in response to ads or direct mail that are rich in product-related information. On the other hand, consumers who are relatively *low in need for cognition* are more likely to form positive attitudes in response to ads that feature an attractive model or well-known celebrity. In a similar fashion, attitudes toward new products and new consumption situations are strongly influenced by specific personality characteristics of consumers.

strategies of attitude change

It is important to recognize that much of what has been said about *attitude formation* is also basically true of attitude change. That is, attitude changes are *learned;* they are influenced by *personal experience* and other *sources of information,* and *personality* affects both the receptivity and the speed with which attitudes are likely to be altered.

Altering consumer attitudes is a key strategy consideration for most marketers. For marketers who are fortunate enough to be market leaders and to enjoy a significant amount of customer goodwill and loyalty, the overriding goal is to fortify the existing positive attitudes of customers so that they will not succumb to competitors' special offers and other inducements designed to win them over. For instance, in many product categories (e.g., crayons, in which Crayola has been the leader, or baking soda, in which Arm & Hammer has dominated), most competitors take aim at the market leaders when developing their marketing strategies. Their objective is to change the attitudes of the market leaders' customers and win them over. Among the *attitude-change strategies* that are available to them are (1) changing the consumer's basic motivational function, (2) associating the product with an admired group or event, (3) resolving two conflicting attitudes, (4) altering components of the multiattribute model, and (5) changing consumer beliefs about competitors' brands.

Changing the basic motivational function

An effective strategy for changing consumer attitudes toward a product or brand is to make particular needs prominent. One method for changing motivation is known as the **functional approach.**[26] According to this approach, attitudes can be classified in terms of four functions: the **utilitarian function**, the **ego-defensive function**, the **value-expressive function**, and the **knowledge function**.

The utilitarian function

We hold certain brand attitudes partly because of a brand's utility. When a product has been useful or helped us in the past, our attitude toward it tends to be favorable. One way of changing attitudes in favor of a product is by showing people that it can serve a utilitarian purpose that they may not have considered. For example, the ad for Lysol (Figure 8.9) points out that this product kills harmful germs.

The ego-defensive function

Most people want to protect their self-images from inner feelings of doubt—they want to replace their uncertainty with a sense of security and personal confidence.[27] Ads for cosmetics and fashion clothing, by acknowledging this need, increase both their relevance to the consumer and the likelihood of a favorable attitude change by offering reassurance to the consumer's self-concept. For example, the ad in Figure 8.10 for Dressbarn, a retailer of fashion clothing, stresses in its headline: "When I believe in myself, everything becomes possible." Another example would be the ongoing advertising campaign for the Zippo lighter, designed to counter the trend toward disposable lighters. In an effort to equate the long-lasting relationship a consumer can have with his Zippo lighter with other things in life, the campaign uses headlines such as "True love is not disposable" (the ad shows a Zippo with an engraved love poem).[28]

The value-expressive function

Attitudes are an expression or reflection of the consumer's general values, lifestyle, and outlook. If a consumer segment generally holds a positive attitude toward owning the latest designer jeans, then their attitudes toward new brands of designer jeans are likely to reflect that orientation. Similarly, if a segment of consumers has a positive

FIGURE 8.9



Source: © Reckitt Benckiser Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Lysol Sanitizing Wipes

attitude toward being "high tech," then their attitudes toward thin wall-mountable HDTV sets are likely to reflect this viewpoint. Thus, by knowing target consumers' attitudes, marketers can better anticipate their values, lifestyle, or outlook and can reflect these characteristics in their advertising and direct-marketing efforts. The advertisement for Timberland in Figure 8.11 addresses target consumers' attitudes and outlooks.

The knowledge function

Individuals generally have a strong need to know and understand the people and things they encounter. The consumer's "need to know," a cognitive need, is important

Source: © dressbarn. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

FIGURE 8.10



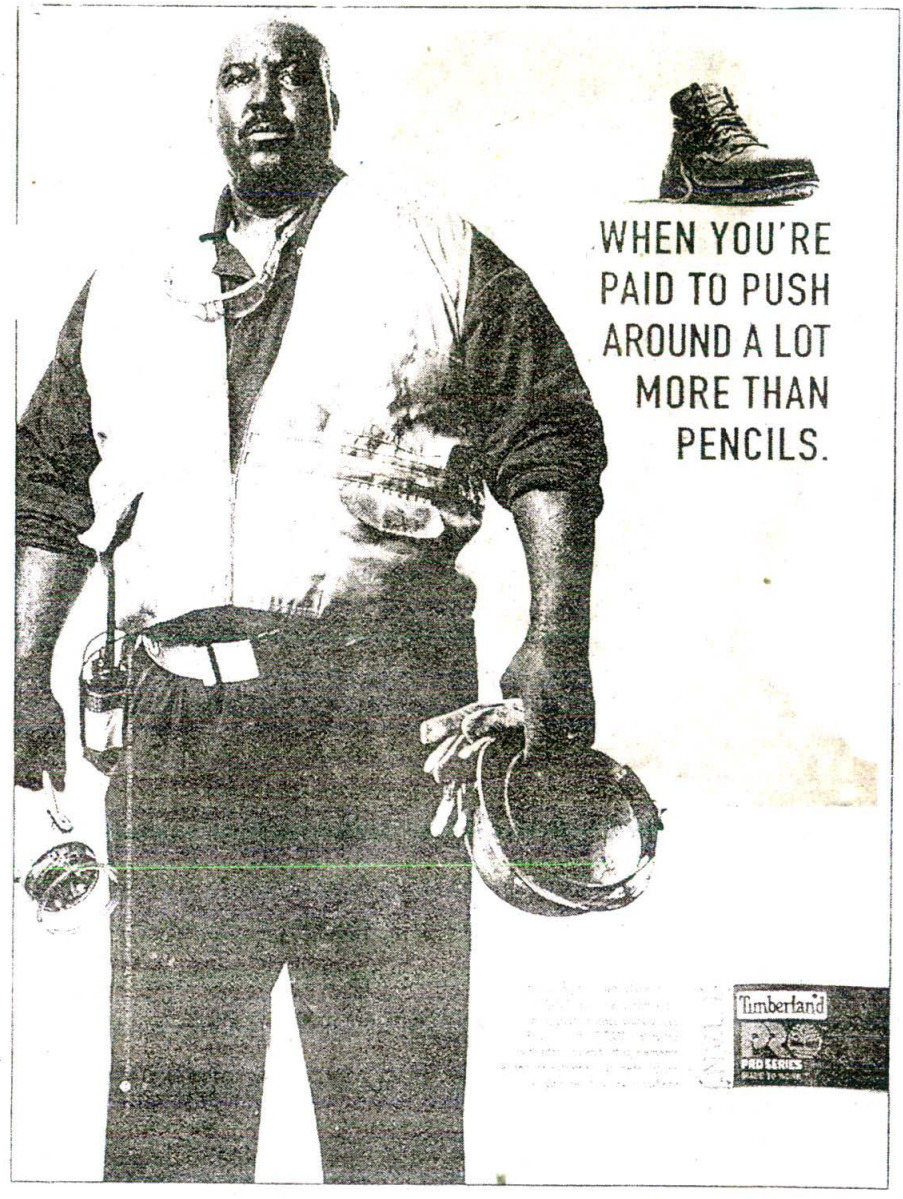
Dressbarn Uses Ego-Defensive Appeal

to marketers concerned with product positioning. Indeed, many product and brand positionings are attempts to satisfy the *need to know* and to improve the consumer's attitudes toward the brand by emphasizing its advantages over competitive brands. For instance, a message for a new OTC allergy medication might point out how it is superior to other OTC allergy medications in alleviating the symptoms of allergies. The message might even use a bar graph to contrast its allergy symptom relief abilities to other leading allergy medications. Figure 8.12 is an ad for General Mills' Milk'n Cereal bars that focus on the product information panel for the two products. In addition, the ad goes on to state that they are "50% larger, twice the calcium, and three times the iron of Kellogg's bars." An important characteristic of the advertising is its appeal and usefulness to consumers' *need to know.*

Combining several functions

Because different consumers may like or dislike the same product or service for different reasons, a functional framework for examining attitudes can be very useful. For instance, three consumers may all have positive attitudes toward Suave hair care products. However, one may be responding solely to the fact that the products work well (the utilitarian function); the second may have the inner confidence to agree with the point "When you know beautiful hair doesn't have to cost a fortune" (an ego-defensive function). The third consumer's favorable attitudes might reflect the realization that Suave has for many years stressed value (equal or better products for less)—the *knowledge function.*

FIGURE 8.11



Source: © 2005 The Timberland Company. All rights reserved.

Associating the product with a special group, event, or cause

Attitudes are related, at least in part, to certain groups, social events, or causes. It is possible to alter attitudes toward companies and their products, services, and brands by pointing out their relationships to particular social groups, events, or causes. Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory, for example, may be the number-one tourist attraction in the State of Vermont but, more importantly, the company is well recognized for giving approximately 7.5 percent of its pretax profits to a variety of causes (see **www.benjerry.com**), for establishing employee-led community action teams that work on local public service projects, and for distributing small grants to community groups within the State of Vermont.

FIGURE 8.12



Source: Honey Nut Cheerios® bar is a registered trademark of General Mills and is used with permission.

General Mills Uses a Knowledge Appeal in Helping Target Consumers Formulate an Attitude

Companies regularly include mention in their advertising of the civic and public acts that they sponsor to let the public know about the good that they are trying to do. For instance, Folgers® coffee sponsors a program "Wakin' up the Music," which supports a music appreciation program for youngsters in grades K–3, created by the GRAMMY® Foundation. Similarly, Crest sponsors a program that promotes good oral care to children through the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Figure 8.13 presents an ad highlighting the benefits of McDonalds' ongoing charity—Ronald McDonald Houses.

Recent research into brand-cause alliances have investigated the relationship between the "cause" and the "sponsor." For instance, one study found that while both the

FIGURE 8.13

Source: © McDonald's Corporation. "Used with permission from McDonald's Corporation."

McDonald's Demonstrates Its Ongoing Commitment to Ronald McDonald Houses



brand and the cause benefit from such alliances, a *low familiar cause* benefitted more from its association with a positive brand than did a *highly familiar cause*.[29] The results of another study further suggests that if corporate sponsors fail to explicitly indicate their motives for a company-cause or a product-cause association, it is likely that consumers will form their own motives for the association between the company, product or service, and the cause.[30] This finding seems to indicate that it is likely to be a good idea for a sponsor to reveal to target consumers the reasoning behind their sponsorship, so that consumers know the sponsor's motives rather than form their own potentially inaccurate or negative motives.

Resolving two conflicting attitudes

Attitude-change strategies can sometimes resolve actual or potential conflict between two attitudes. Specifically, if consumers can be made to see that their negative attitude toward a product, a specific brand, or its attributes is really not in conflict with another attitude, they may be induced to change their evaluation of the brand (i.e., moving from negative to positive).

For example, Stanley is a serious amateur photographer who has been thinking of moving from 35 mm photography into the realm of medium-format photography in order to take advantage of the larger negative size. However, with the growth of digital photography, Stanley is unsure of whether his move to the medium format will be worthwhile. Stanley loves the idea of having a bigger negative to work with in his darkroom (attitude 1), but he may feel that purchasing a medium-format camera is an unwise investment because these cameras may be supplanted in the near future by digital photography (attitude 2). However, if Stanley learns that Mamiya offers a medium-format camera that offers both a film capability and a digital capability, and even has recently introduced an entirely digital medium-format camera, he might change his mind and thereby resolve his conflicting attitudes. Finally, Figure 8.14 is an ad for Seventh Generation's line of natural dishwashing and laundry detergents. The company points out that their products are as affective as synthetic chemical cleaning agents and are safer because they are all natural. For a person who cares about both the affectiveness and environmental safety of the cleaning products they use, Seventh Generation is attempting to resolve what might otherwise be conflicting attitudes.

Altering components of the multiattribute model

Earlier in this chapter we discussed a number of multiattribute attitude models. These models have implications for attitude-change strategies; specifically, they provide us with additional insights as to how to bring about attitude change: (1) changing the relative evaluation of attributes, (2) changing brand beliefs, (3) adding an attribute, and (4) changing the overall brand rating.

Changing the relative evaluation of attributes

The overall market for many product categories is often set out so that different consumer segments are offered different brands with different features or benefits. For instance, within a product category such as dishwashing liquids, there are brands such as Dawn that stress potency and brands such as Dove that stress gentleness. These two brands of dishwashing liquids have historically appealed to different segments of the overall dishwashing liquid market. Similarly, when it comes to coffee, the market can be divided into regular coffee and decaffeinated coffee, or when it comes to headache remedies, there is the division between aspirin (e.g., Bayer) and acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol).

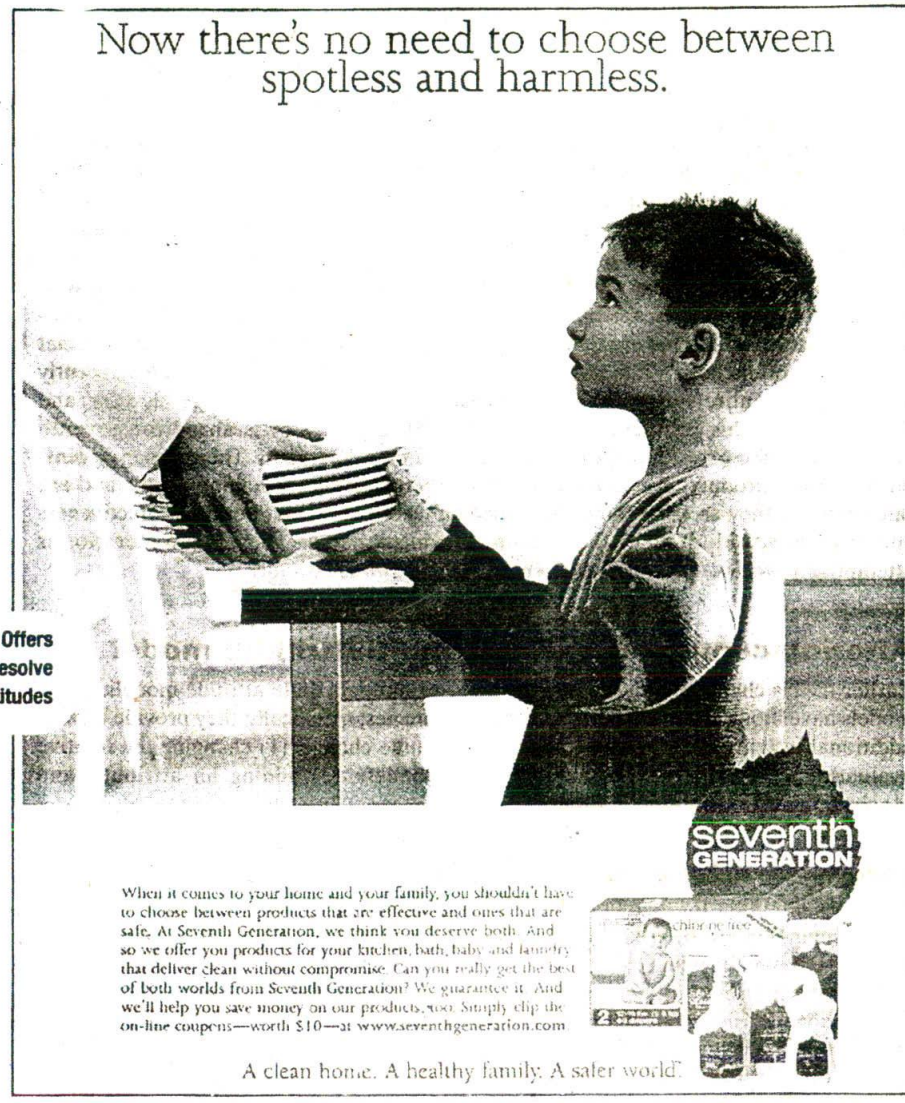
In general, when a product category is naturally divided according to distinct product features or benefits that appeal to a particular segment of consumers, marketers usually have an opportunity to persuade consumers to "cross over," that is, to persuade consumers who prefer one version of the product (e.g., standard bifocal eyeglass lenses) to shift their favorable attitudes toward another version of the product (e.g., progressive bifocal lenses).

Changing brand beliefs

A second cognitive-oriented strategy for changing attitudes concentrates on changing beliefs or perceptions about the brand itself. This is by far the most common form of advertising appeal. Advertisers constantly are reminding us that their product has "more" or is "better" or "best" in terms of some important product attribute. As a variation on this theme of "more," ads for Palmolive dishwashing liquid are designed to *extend* consumers' brand attitudes with regard to the product's gentleness by suggesting

FIGURE 8.14

Source: © Seventh Generation, Inc.



Seventh Generation Offers Information That Helps Resolve Two Conflicting Attitudes

that it be used for hand washing of fine clothing items. Figure 8.15 presents an ad for Bush's Baked Beans that makes the point that "We couldn't make our secret family recipe any better, so we made it easier" (by placing it in a microwavable cup). In a similar fashion, Paul Mitchell hair care products have challenged the notion that hair damaged by chemicals, the environment, or heat cannot be helped. Paul Mitchell claims that the use of their Super Strong™ hair care products can strengthen damaged hair over 50 percent.

Within the context of brand beliefs, there are forces working to stop or slow down attitude change. For instance, consumers frequently resist evidence that challenges a strongly held attitude or belief and tend to interpret any ambiguous information in ways that reinforce their preexisting attitudes.[31] Therefore, information suggesting a change in attitude needs to be compelling and repeated enough to overcome the natural resistance to letting go of established attitudes.

FIGURE 8.15



Source: © Bush Brothers & Company.

Changing Attitudes by Altering Beliefs About a Brand •

Adding an attribute

Another cognitive strategy consists of *adding an attribute.* This can be accomplished either by adding an attribute that previously has been ignored or one that represents an improvement or technological innovation.

The first route, adding a previously ignored attribute, is illustrated by the point that yogurt has more potassium than a banana (a fruit associated with a high quantity of potassium). For consumers interested in increasing their intake of potassium, the comparison of yogurt and bananas has the power of enhancing their attitudes toward yogurt.

The second route of adding an attribute that reflects an actual product change or technological innovation is easier to accomplish than stressing a previously ignored attribute. To illustrate, Kenmore has introduced a refrigerator with PūR, an advanced and unique

FIGURE 8.16

Source: © Sears Brands, LLC. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



Kenmore is Changing (or Enhancing) an Attitude by Adding an Attribute

water filtration system (Figure 8.16). This is a powerful and attractive feature for a refrigerator, a feature that reflects Kenmore's continued efforts to create innovative products.

Sometimes eliminating a characteristic or feature has the same enhancing outcome as adding a characteristic or attribute. For instance, a number of skin care or deodorant manufacturers offer versions of their products that are unscented (i.e., *deleting an ingredient*). Indeed, Dove also markets an unscented version of its original Dove product.

Changing the overall brand rating

Still another cognitive-oriented strategy consists of attempting to alter consumers' *overall assessment of the brand* directly, without attempting to improve or change their

evaluation of any single brand attribute. Such a strategy frequently relies on some form of global statement that "this is the largest-selling brand" or "the one all others try to imitate," or a similar claim that sets the brand apart from all its competitors. For instance, an advertisement announcing that the Chrysler 300C is "the most awarded new car ever" is the type of information that can increase consumers' positive attitudes, and also stimulate positive word-of-mouth, and even the purchase of a Chrysler 300C.

Changing beliefs about competitors' brands

Another approach to attitude-change strategy involves changing consumer beliefs about the *attributes of competitive* brands or product categories. For instance, a Motrin advertisement makes a dramatic assertion of product superiority over Advil and Aleve by claiming that "no other works faster or stronger on muscle pain." Similarly, Clorox Clean-Up that claims that Mr. Clean cannot remove certain types of tough stains that Clorox Clean-Up can. The main message is to proffer the insight that Clorex Clean-Up is a superior product to Mr. Clean's product (a principal competitor). While potentially very effective, such comparative advertising can boomerang by giving visibility to a competing brand and their claims. (Chapter 9 discusses comparative advertising in greater depth.)

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM)

Compared to the various specific strategies of attitude change that we have reviewed, the **elaboration likelihood model (ELM)** proposes the more global view that consumer attitudes are changed by two distinctly different "routes to persuasion": a central route or a peripheral route (see also Chapter 7).[32] The *central route* is particularly relevant to attitude change when a consumer's motivation or ability to assess the attitude object is *high;* that is, attitude change occurs because the consumer actively seeks out information relevant to the attitude object itself. When consumers are willing to exert the effort to comprehend, learn, or evaluate the available information about the attitude object, learning and attitude change occur via the central route.

In contrast, when a consumer's motivation or assessment skills are low (e.g., low involvement), learning and attitude change tend to occur via the *peripheral route* without the consumer focusing on information relevant to the attitude object itself. In such cases, attitude change often is an outcome of secondary inducements (e.g., cents-off coupons, free samples, beautiful background scenery, great packaging, or the encouragement of a celebrity endorsement). Research indicates that even in low-involvement conditions (e.g., such as exposure to most advertising), in which both central and secondary inducements are initially equal in their ability to evoke similar attitudes, it is the central inducement that has the greatest "staying power"—that is, over time it is more persistent. Additionally, for subjects low in product knowledge, advertisements with terminology result in the consumer having a better attitude toward the brand and the ad.[33]

An offshoot of the elaboration likehood model is the *dual mediation model* (DMM). The DMM model adds a link between attitude towards the ad and brand cognitions.[34] It acknowledges the possibility that the central route to persuasion could be influenced by a peripheral cue (i.e., attitude towards the ad). Thus, this model demonstrated the interrelationship between the central and peripheral processes.

behavior can precede or follow attitude formation

Our discussion of attitude formation and attitude change has stressed the traditional "rational" view that consumers develop their attitudes before taking action (e.g., "Know what you are doing before you do it"). There are alternatives to this "attitude precedes behavior" perspective, alternatives that, on careful analysis, are likely to be

just as logical and rational. For example, *cognitive dissonance theory* and *attribution theory* each provide a different explanation as to why behavior might precede attitude formation.

Cognitive dissonance theory

According to **cognitive dissonance theory**, discomfort or dissonance occurs when a consumer holds conflicting thoughts about a belief or an attitude object. For instance, when consumers have made a commitment—made a down payment or placed an order for a product, particularly an expensive one such as an automobile or a personal computer—they often begin to feel cognitive dissonance *when they think of the unique, positive qualities of the brands not selected ("left behind")*. When cognitive dissonance occurs after a purchase, it is called *postpurchase dissonance*. Because purchase decisions often require some amount of compromise, postpurchase dissonance is quite normal. Nevertheless, it is likely to leave consumers with an uneasy feeling about their prior beliefs or actions—a feeling that they would seek to resolve by changing their attitudes to conform with their behavior.[35]

Thus, in the case of postpurchase dissonance, attitude change is frequently an *outcome* of an action or behavior. The conflicting thoughts and dissonant information following a purchase are prime factors that induce consumers to change their attitudes so that they will be consonant with their actual purchase behavior.

What makes postpurchase dissonance relevant to marketing strategists is the premise that *dissonance* propels consumers to reduce the unpleasant feelings created by the rival thoughts. A variety of tactics are open to consumers to reduce postpurchase dissonance. The consumer can rationalize the decision as being wise, seek out advertisements that support the choice (while avoiding dissonance-creating competitive ads), try to "sell" friends on the positive features of the brand (i.e., *"the consumer as a sales agent"*), or look to known satisfied owners for reassurance. For example, consider the response of a young man who just purchased an engagement ring for his girlfriend to the following ad headline he spots in a magazine: "How can you make two months' salary last forever?" This thought is likely to catch his attention. It says to him that although an engagement ring costs a great deal of money, it lasts forever because the future bride will cherish it for the rest of her life. Such an ad exposure is bound to help him reduce any lingering dissonance that he might have about how much he just spent on the ring.

While it has traditionally been viewed that with respect to a particular purchase, cognitive dissonance was something that a consumer either had or did not have, a recent study found that there can exist different types and levels of dissonance. The research studied consumer durable purchases, and found three distinct segments of consumers: a high dissonance segment, a low dissonance segment, and a "concerned about needing the purchase" segment.[36]

In addition to such consumer-initiated tactics for reducing postpurchase uncertainty, marketers can help consumers relieve their dissonance by including messages in their advertising specifically aimed at reinforcing consumers' decisions by complimenting their wisdom, offering stronger guarantees or warranties, increasing the number and effectiveness of its services, or providing detailed brochures on how to use its products correctly. However, with respect to product and service advertisements, there is evidence that as many as 75 percent of Americans feel that advertisers, on purpose, stretch the truth about their products in their advertising.[37]

Attribution theory

As a group of loosely interrelated social psychological principles, **attribution theory** attempts to explain how people assign causality (e.g., blame or credit) to events on the basis of either their own behavior or the behavior of others.[38] In other words, a person might say, "I contributed to UNICEF because it really helps people in need," or "She

tried to persuade me to buy that unknown brand of DVD player because she'd make a bigger commission." In attribution theory, the underlying question is why: "Why did I do this?" "Why did she try to get me to switch brands?" This process of making inferences about one's own or another's behavior is a major component of attitude formation and change.

Attribution theory is certainly part of our everyday life, as companies continue to have their names on football stadiums and sponsor all types of charitable events. Research results indicate that the better the "match" between a sponsor and an event, the more positive the outcome is likely to be. Still further, there is evidence to suggest that consumers are willing to reward high-effort firms (i.e., they will pay more and/or evaluate the product higher) if they feel that the company has made an extra effort to make a better product or provide better consumer services.[39]

Self-perception theory

Of the various perspectives on attribution theory that have been proposed, **self-perception theory**—individuals' inferences or judgments as to the causes of their own behavior—is a good beginning point for a discussion of attribution.

In terms of consumer behavior, self-perception theory suggests that attitudes develop as consumers *look at and make judgments about their own behavior.* Simply stated, if a young Wall Street banker observes that he routinely purchases *The Wall Street Journal* on his way to the office, he is apt to conclude that he likes *The Wall Street Journal* (i.e., he has a positive attitude toward this newspaper).[40] Drawing inferences from one's own behavior is not always as simple or as clear-cut as the newspaper example might suggest. To appreciate the complexity of self-perception theory, it is useful to distinguish between **internal and external attributions**. Let us assume that Dana has just finished using a popular computer photoediting software (e.g., Adobe's Photoshop) for the first time and that her digital photographs were well received when they were shown to the members of the photography club that she belongs to. After receiving the compliments, she says to herself, "I'm really a natural at editing my digital photos," this statement would be an example of an *internal attribution.* It is an internal attribution because she is giving herself credit for the outcome (e.g., her ability, her skill, or her effort). That is, she is saying, "These photos are good because of me." On the other hand, if Dana concluded that the successful digital photoediting was due to factors beyond her control (e.g., a user-friendly photoediting program, the assistance of another club member, or just "luck"), this would be an example of an *external attribution.* In such a case, she might be saying, "My great photos are beginner's luck."

This distinction between internal and external attributions can be of strategic marketing importance. For instance, it would generally be in the best interests of the firm that produces the photoediting software if users, especially inexperienced users, *internalized* their successful use of the software package. If they internalized such a positive experience, it is more likely that they will repeat the behavior and become a satisfied regular user. Alternatively, however, if they were to *externalize* their success, it would be preferable that they attribute it to the particular software rather than to an incidental environmental factor such as "beginner's luck" or another's "foolproof" instructions. Additionally, recent studies suggest that when advertisers accurately target their message to consumers, with the proper cognitive generalizations about the self ("self-schema"), the consumer perceives the argument quality of the ad as being higher, and therefore has a more favorable attitude towards the message.[41]

According to the principle of **defensive attribution**, consumers are likely to accept credit personally for success (internal attribution) and to credit failure to others or to outside events (external attribution). For this reason, it is crucial that marketers offer uniformly high-quality products that allow consumers to perceive themselves as the reason for the success; that is, "I'm competent." Moreover, a company's advertising should

serve to reassure consumers, particularly inexperienced ones, that its products will not let them down but will make them heroes instead.

Foot-in-the-door Technique Self-perception theorists have explored situations in which consumer compliance with a minor request affects subsequent compliance with a more substantial request. This strategy, which is commonly referred to as the **foot-in-the-door technique**, is based on the premise that individuals look at their prior behavior (e.g., compliance with a minor request) and conclude that they are the kind of person who says "yes" to such requests (i.e., an internal attribution). Such self-attribution serves to increase the likelihood that they will agree to a similar more substantial request. Someone who donates twenty-five dollars to the American Heart Association might be persuaded to donate a much larger amount when properly approached. The initial donation is, in effect, the *foot in the door.*

Research into the foot-in-the-door technique has concentrated on understanding how specific incentives (e.g., cents-off coupons of varying amounts) ultimately influence consumer attitudes and subsequent purchase behavior. It appears that different-size incentives create different degrees of internal attribution, which, in turn, lead to different amounts of attitude change. For instance, individuals who try a brand without any inducements or individuals who buy a brand repeatedly are more likely to infer increasingly positive attitudes toward the brand from their respective behaviors (e.g., "I buy this brand because I like it"). In contrast, individuals who try a free sample are less committed to changing their attitudes toward the brand ("I tried this brand because it was free").

Thus, contrary to what might be expected, it is not the biggest incentive that is most likely to lead to positive attitude change. If an incentive is too big, marketers run the risk that consumers might externalize the cause of their behavior to the incentive and be *less* likely to change their attitudes and *less* likely to make future purchases of the brand. Instead, what seems most effective is a *moderate* incentive, one that is just big enough to stimulate initial purchase of the brand but still small enough to encourage consumers to internalize their positive usage experience and allow a positive attitude change to occur.[42]

In contrast with the foot-in-the-door technique is the **door-in-the-face technique**, in which a large, costly first request that is probably refused is followed by a second, more realistic, less costly request. Under certain situations, this technique may prove more effective than the foot-in-the-door technique.[43]

Attributions toward others

In addition to understanding self-perception theory, it is important to understand **attributions toward others** because of the variety of potential applications to consumer behavior and marketing. As already suggested, every time a person asks "why?" about a statement or action of another or "others"—a family member, a friend, a salesperson, a direct marketer, a shipping company—attribution theory is relevant. To illustrate, in evaluating the words or deeds of others, say, a salesperson, a consumer tries to determine if the salesperson's motives are in the consumer's best interests. If the salesperson's motives are viewed as favorable to the consumer, the consumer is likely to respond favorably. Otherwise, the consumer is likely to reject the salesperson's words and go elsewhere to make a purchase. In another case, a consumer orders a new digital camera from a major direct marketer such as **Buy.com** or **Newegg.com**. Because the consumer wants it immediately, she agrees to pay an extra $8 to $15 for next-day delivery by FedEx or UPS. If on the next day the package with the digital camera fails to show up as expected, the consumer has two possible "others" to which she might attribute the failure—that is, the direct marketer (failing to get the product out on time) or the delivery service (failing to get the package to the consumer on time). In addition, she might blame them both (a dual failure); or if the weather was really bad, she might conclude that it was the bad weather (an attribution that neither of them was at fault).[44]

Attributions toward things

Consumer researchers also are interested in consumers' **attributions toward things** because products (or services) can readily be thought of as "things." It is in the area of judging product performance that consumers are most likely to form product attributions. Specifically, they want to find out why a product meets or fails to meet their expectations. In this regard, they could attribute the product's successful performance (or failure) to the product itself, to themselves, to other people or situations, or to some combination of these factors.[45] To recap an earlier example, when Dana edited a set of challenging digital photos, she could attribute her success to the Photoshop software (product attribution), to her own skill (self or internal attribution), or to a fellow photo club member who helped her (external attribution).

How we test our attributions

After making initial attributions about a product's performance or a person's words or actions, we often attempt to determine whether the inference we made is correct. According to a leading attribution theorist, individuals acquire conviction about particular observations by acting like "naive scientists," that is, by collecting additional information in an attempt to confirm (or disconfirm) prior inferences. In collecting such information, consumers often use the following criteria:[46]

1. Distinctiveness—The consumer attributes an action to a particular product or person if the action occurs when the product (or person) is present and does not occur in its absence.
2. Consistency over time—Whenever the person or product is present, the consumer's inference or reaction must be the same, or nearly so.
3. Consistency over modality—The inference or reaction must be the same, even when the situation in which it occurs varies.
4. Consensus—The action is perceived in the same way by other consumers.

To illustrate how the process of testing our attributions work, Figure 8.17 provides three scenarios that depict (for three of the four "attributions testing criteria"), how people might use information to determine why a corporation has given a grant for an after-school program to benefit public school children, and whether the giving is either internally or externally driven or caused.

Consensus	Distinctiveness	Consistency	Resulting attribution
High *Many groups support the after-school program*	**High** *The corporation supports only the school*	**High** *The corporation supports the school regularly*	→ **External influence** *Support of the school is related to the quality of the school*
Low *Only the corporation supports the after-school program*	**Low** *The corporation supports several schools and other programs*	**High** *The corporation supports the school regularly*	→ **Internal disposition** *Support of the school is related to the benevolence of the corporation*
Either High or Low	**Either High or Low**	**Low** *The corporation gave a grant to the school only once*	→ **External influence** *Support of the school is related to an undefined aspect of the particular situation that occurred at the time of the grant*

Testing Attributions of a Corporate Grant to Support an After-School Program

Source: Andrea M. Sjovall and Andrew C. Talk, "From Actions to Impressions: Cognitive Attribution Theory and the Formation of Corporate Reputation," *Corporate Reputation Review* 7 (Fall 2004): 277.

FIGURE 8.17

The following example illustrates how each of these criteria might be used to make inferences about product performance and people's actions.

If Mike, a city bus driver who loves do-it-yourself projects, observes that the edges on wooden tables that he builds seem to be smoother when using his new DeWalt router (**www.dewalt.com**), he is likely to credit the new DeWalt power tool with the improved appearance of his tables (i.e., distinctiveness). Furthermore, if Mike finds that his new DeWalt router produces the same high-quality results each time he uses it, he will tend to be more confident about his initial observation (i.e., the inference has consistency over time). Similarly, he will also be more confident if he finds that his satisfaction with the DeWalt power tool extends across a wide range of other related tasks, from making dovetail joints for drawers to cutting patterns in wood (i.e., consistency over modality). Finally, Mike will have still more confidence in his inferences to the extent that his friends who own DeWalt routers also have similar experiences (i.e., consensus).

Much like Mike, we go about gathering additional information from our experiences with people and things, and we use this information to test our initial inferences.

SUMMARY

An attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object (e.g., a product category, a brand, a service, an advertisement, a Web site, or a retail establishment). Each property of this definition is critical to understanding why and how attitudes are relevant in consumer behavior and marketing.

Of considerable importance in understanding the role of attitudes in consumer behavior is an appreciation of the structure and composition of an attitude. Four broad categories of attitude models have received attention: tricomponent attitude model, multiattribute attitude model, trying-to-consume attitude model, and attitude-toward-the-ad model.

The tricomponent model of attitudes consists of three parts: a cognitive component, an affective component, and a conative component. The cognitive component captures a consumer's knowledge and perceptions (i.e., beliefs) about products and services. The affective component focuses on a consumer's emotions or feelings with respect to a particular product or service. Evaluative in nature, the affective component determines an individual's overall assessment of the attitude object in terms of some kind of favorableness rating. The conative component is concerned with the likelihood that a consumer will act in a specific fashion with respect to the attitude object. In marketing and consumer behavior, the conative component is frequently treated as an expression of the consumer's intention to buy.

Multiattribute attitude models (i.e., attitude-toward-object, attitude-toward-behavior, and the theory-of-reasoned-action models) have received much attention from consumer researchers. As a group, these models examine consumer beliefs about specific product attributes (e.g., product or brand features or benefits). Recently, there has been an effort to better accommodate consumers' goals as expressed by their "trying to consume" (i.e., a goal the consumer is trying or planning to accomplish). The theory of trying is designed to account for the many cases in which the action or outcome is not certain. The attitude-toward-the-ad models examine the influence of advertisements on the consumer's attitudes toward the brand.

How consumer attitudes are formed and how they are changed are two closely related issues of considerable concern to marketing practitioners. When it comes to attitude formation, it is useful to remember that attitudes are learned and that different learning theories provide unique insights as to how attitudes initially may be formed. Attitude formation is facilitated by direct personal experience and influenced by the ideas and experiences of friends and family members and exposure to mass media. In addition, it is likely that an individual's personality plays a role in attitude formation.

These same factors also have an impact on attitude change; that is, attitude changes are learned, and they are influenced by personal experiences and the information gained from various personal and impersonal sources. The consumer's own personality affects both the acceptance and the speed with which attitudes are likely to be altered.

Strategies of attitude change can be classified into six distinct categories: (1) changing the basic motivational function, (2) associating the attitude object with a specific group or event, (3) relating the attitude object to conflicting attitudes, (4) altering components of the multiattribute model, (5) changing beliefs about competitors' brands, and (6) the elaboration likelihood model. Each of these strategies provides the marketer with alternative ways of changing consumers' existing attitudes.

Most discussions of attitude formation and attitude change stress the traditional view that consumers develop attitudes before they act. However, this may not

always, or even usually, be true. Both cognitive dissonance theory and attribution theory provide alternative explanations of attitude formation and change that suggest that behavior might precede attitudes. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that the conflicting thoughts, or dissonant information, following a purchase decision might propel consumers to change their attitudes to make them consonant with their actions. Attribution theory focuses on how people assign causality to events and how they form or alter attitudes as an outcome of assessing their own behavior or the behavior of other people or things.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain how situational factors are likely to influence the degree of consistency between attitudes and behavior.
2. Because attitudes are learned predispositions to respond, why don't marketers and consumer researchers just measure purchase behavior and forget attitudes?
3. Explain a person's attitude toward visiting Disney World in terms of the tricomponent attitude model.
4. How can the marketer of a "nicotine patch" (a device that assists individuals to quit smoking) use the *theory of trying* to segment its market? Using this theory, identify two segments that the marketer should target and propose product positioning approaches to be directed at each of the two segments.
5. Explain how the product manager of a breakfast cereal might change consumer attitudes toward the company's brand by (a) changing beliefs about the brand, (b) changing beliefs about competing brands, (c) changing the relative evaluation of attributes, and (d) adding an attribute.
6. The Department of Transportation of a large city is planning an advertising campaign that encourages people to switch from private cars to mass transit. Give examples of how the department can use the following strategies to change commuters' attitudes: (a) changing the basic motivational function, (b) changing beliefs about public transportation, (c) using self-perception theory, and (d) using cognitive dissonance.
7. The Saturn Corporation is faced with the problem that many consumers perceive compact and midsize American cars to be of poorer quality than comparable Japanese cars. Assuming that Saturn produces cars that are of equal or better quality than Japanese cars, how can the company persuade consumers of this fact?
8. Should the marketer of a popular computer graphics program prefer consumers to make internal or external attributions? Explain your answer.
9. A college student has just purchased a new personal computer. What factors might cause the student to experience postpurchase dissonance? How might the student try to overcome it? How can the retailer who sold the computer help reduce the student's dissonance? How can the computer's manufacturer help?

EXERCISES

1. Find two print ads, one illustrating the use of the affective component and the other illustrating the cognitive component. Discuss each ad in the context of the tricomponent model. In your view, why has each marketer taken the approach it did in each of these ads?
2. What sources influenced your attitude about this course before classes started? Has your initial attitude changed since the course started? If so, how?
3. Describe a situation in which you acquired an attitude toward a new product through exposure to an advertisement for that product. Describe a situation in which you formed an attitude toward a product or brand on the basis of personal influence.
4. Find advertisements that illustrate each of the four motivational functions of attitudes. Distinguish between ads that are designed to reinforce an existing attitude and those aimed at changing an attitude.
5. Think back to the time when you were selecting a college. Did you experience dissonance immediately after you made a decision? Why or why not? If you did experience dissonance, how did you resolve it?

KEY TERMS

- attitudes
- attitude-toward-behavior model
- attitude-toward-object model
- attitude-toward-the-ad models
- attributions toward others
- attributions toward things
- attribution theory
- cognitive dissonance theory
- defensive attribution
- door-in-the-face technique
- ego-defensive function
- elaboration likelihood model (ELM)
- foot-in-the-door technique
- functional approach
- intention-to-buy scales
- internal and external attributions
- knowledge function
- multiattribute attitude models
- self-perception theory
- theory of reasoned action
- theory of trying to consume
- tricomponent attitude model
- utilitarian function
- value-expressive function

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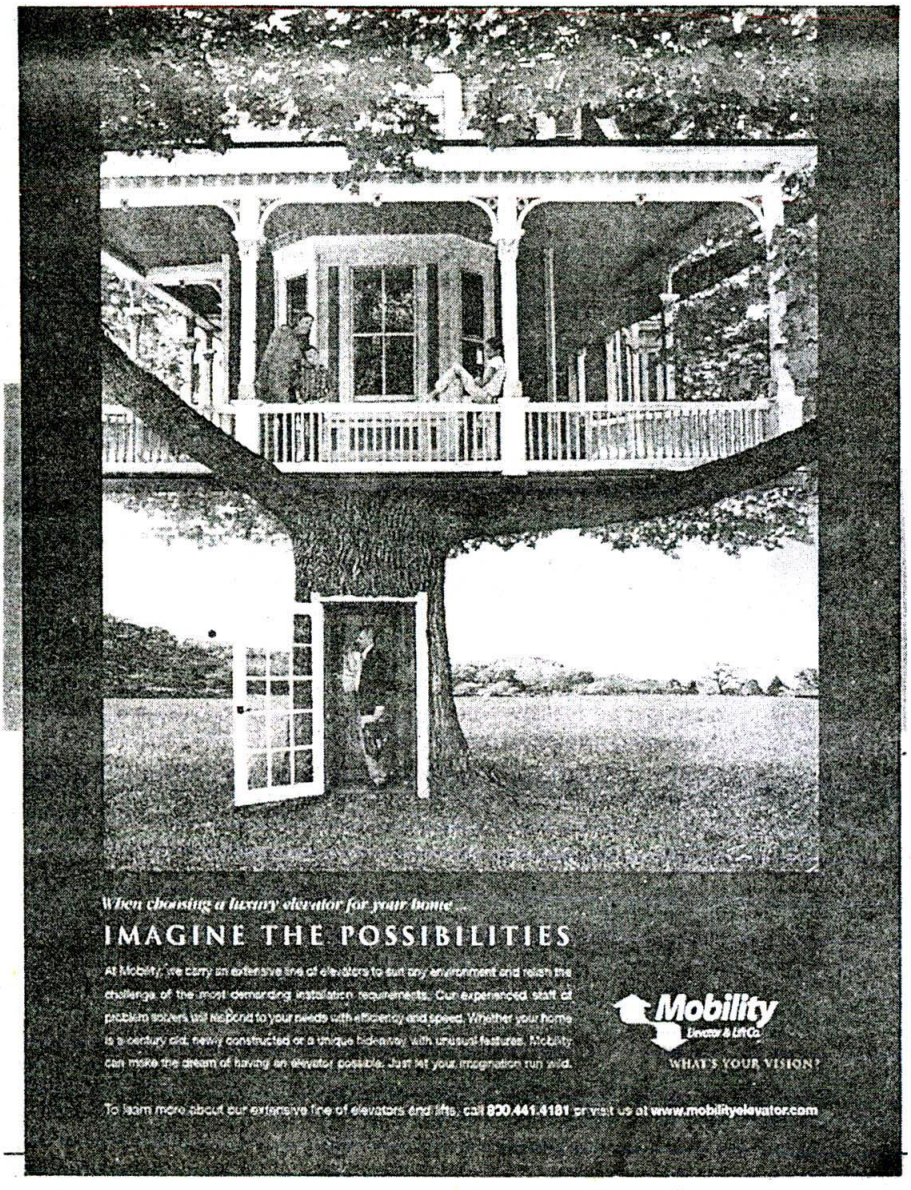
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chapter**nine**

Communication and Consumer Behavior

When you watch TV today, like so many other Americans, you probably have cable or satellite service with access to hundreds of channels. You may also have the ability to order movies and other programs on-demand or have a digital video recorder (DVR) provided by your cable service or that you purchased from TiVo or ReplayTV. If you have a DVR, you can "time shift" by recording programs and watching them at your convenience and skip through commercials easily. The programs and commercials broadcast to you on the network, local, and cable channels are the same as those transmitted to your next-door neighbor. Your household may even be one of the few thousand families declared as "representative" of the nation by the Nielsen Media Research company and the programs that you and other members of your family watch and the precise durations of these viewings, including all "channel surfing" activities, are transmitted to Nielsen via your telephone or broadband connection at least once a day. In turn, Nielsen uses the information it receives from its "Nielsen Families" to estimate the number of viewers of all TV programs each day and conclude, for example, that *American Idol* was the most-watched program one week, a position perhaps occupied by *CSI* during another week. Nielsen's ratings also determine the prices that broadcasters charge advertisers for 30-second spots.



For example, on the basis of Nielsen's estimates, a 30-second spot on the 2005 Super Bowl program cost 2.4 million dollars.[1]

Let's fast-forward into the future, say, five years from now (perhaps even less). Then, if you do not own a dog, you will not see ads for Puppy Chow, and if you are an apartment dweller, you will not have to watch commercials for lawn mowers or snow blowers. And if you would like to go on a virtual test-drive while receiving an ad for a Mercedes, you will be able to do so by pressing a button on your remote control.[2]

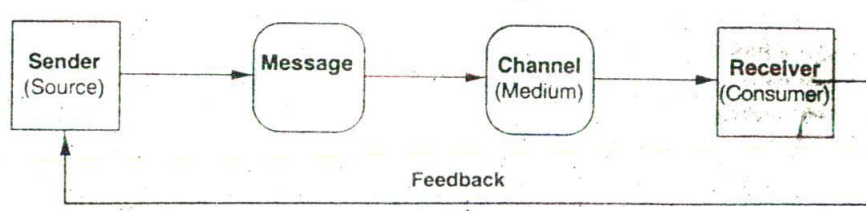
Your viewing habits will still be closely monitored, but in more sophisticated ways. Your cable provider may give you an upgrade or other incentive if you agree to be part of a group

whose viewing habits are used for research purposes (i.e., for determining ratings and advertising rates). Or, Nielsen or another company may pay you to carry a Portable People Meter (PPM)—a small device that you will clip to your belt, wear all day, and plug into a cradle at night that will transmit the data the device had collected. That data will include not only what you had seen on TV that day but also all the ads you were exposed to on the radio, in stores, in the newspapers or magazines that you had read, and the Web sites you visited. If you drove your car that day and your PPM was equipped with a GPS, it will also record the ads posted on every billboard that you passed.[3]

Clearly, communications are undergoing a vast change. Communications are the link between the individual and society. This chapter is the bridge between the characteristics of individuals (covered in Chapters 3 through 8) and the small groups and larger society in which they operate. Communication is the tool that marketers use to persuade consumers to act in a desired way (e.g., to vote, to make a purchase, to make a donation, to patronize a retail store). Today, the media and communications models that have been used for decades are undergoing fundamental changes. Advertisers are unhappy with the current broadcast media because there are many more channels, thus they are reaching smaller and more fragmented audiences and getting less "eyeballs" for the money they spend for TV ads. Consumers can avoid commercials with increasing ease, and advertising messages reach many people who are not interested in the products advertised. Advertisers complain that the Nielsen ratings do not accurately reflect the ethnic composition of the United States population and do not monitor TV viewing via DVRs and other means. Cable operators realize that they have the means to monitor media viewing more accurately but are deeply aware of the privacy concerns of their subscribers. The TV networks, who have lost vast audiences to cable channels, realize that continuing to provide free programming underwritten by advertising revenues generated from reaching massive audiences of prime-time shows—a model in place since the early 1950s—may no longer be feasible. The networks, cable companies, and advertisers agree that the new communications model consists of smaller groups of consumers who are already interested in the products advertised, and to whom they must provide more interactive and enticing ways of viewing their promotional messages.[4] In short, driven by technology, mass communication is going through the greatest changes since the development of spoken and written language.

components of communication

Although there are many ways to define communication, most marketers agree that **communication** is *the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver via a medium (or channel) of transmission.* In addition to these four basic components—sender, receiver, medium, and message—the fifth essential component of communication is *feedback,* which alerts the sender as to whether the intended message was, in fact, received. Figure 9.1 depicts this basic communications model.

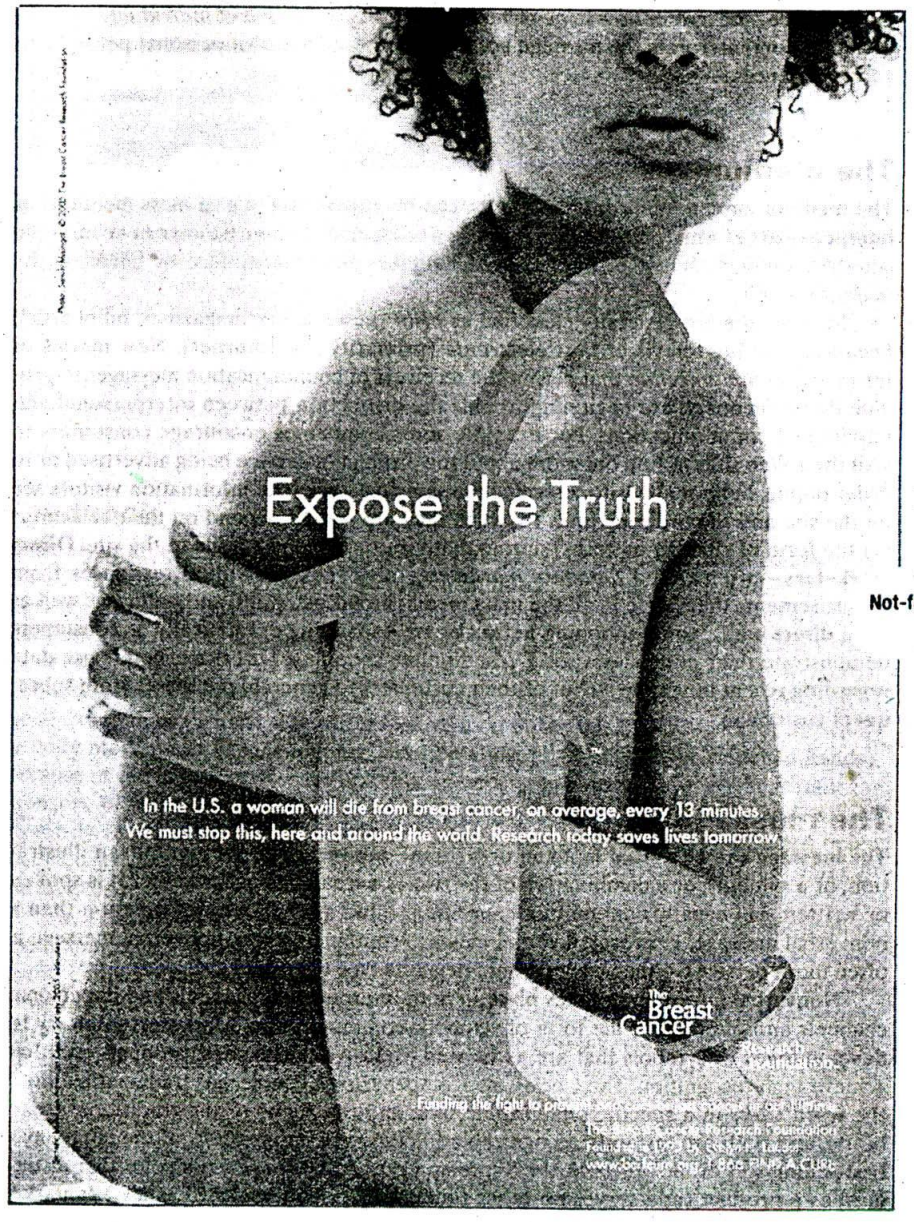


Basic Communication Model

FIGURE 9.1

The sender

The sender, as the initiator of the communication, can be a formal or an informal source. A **formal communications source** is likely to represent either a for-profit (commercial) or a not-for-profit organization (see Figure 9.2); an **informal source** can be a parent or friend who gives product information or advice. Consumers often rely on informal communications sources in making purchase decisions because, unlike formal sources, the sender is perceived as having nothing to gain from the receiver's subsequent actions. For that reason, marketers must always encourage and even initiate positive **word-of-mouth communications** about their products and services.



Not-for-Profit Advertising

Source: © The Breast Cancer Research Foundation. Used with permission. All rights reserved. (www.bcrfcure.org).

FIGURE 9.2

The receiver

The **receiver** of formal marketing communications is likely to be a targeted prospect or a customer (e.g., a member of the marketer's target audience). *Intermediary* and *unintended* audiences are also likely to receive marketers' communications. Examples of intermediary audiences are wholesalers, distributors, and retailers, who receive trade advertising from marketers designed to persuade them to order and stock merchandise, and relevant professionals (such as architects or physicians), who are sent *professional advertising* in the hopes that they will specify or prescribe the marketer's products. Unintended audiences include everyone who is exposed to the message who is not specifically targeted by the sender. Unintended receivers of marketing communications often include publics that are important to the marketer, such as shareholders, creditors, suppliers, employees, bankers, and the local community. It is important to remember that the audience—no matter how large or how diverse—is composed of *individual receivers*, each of whom interprets the message according to his or her own personal perceptions and experiences.

The medium

The **medium**, or communications channel, can be **impersonal** (e.g., a mass medium) or **interpersonal** (a formal conversation between a salesperson and a customer, or an informal conversation between two or more people that takes place face-to-face, by telephone, by mail, or online).

Mass media are generally classified as *print* (newspapers, magazines, billboards), *broadcast* (radio, television), or *electronic* (primarily the Internet). New modes of *interactive communication* that permit the receivers of communication messages to provide direct feedback are beginning to blur the distinction between interpersonal and impersonal communications. For example, most companies encourage consumers to visit their Web sites to find out more about the product or service being advertised or to order online, but not all visitors receive the same message. The information visitors see on the site and the ordering links to which they are routed depend on their selections (in the form of clicking patterns) during that visit or even past visits to the site. **Direct marketers**—often called *database marketers*—also seek individual responses from advertisements they place in all the mass media: broadcast, print, and online, as well as from **direct mail**. Home shopping networks are expanding dramatically as consumers demonstrate their enthusiasm for TV and online shopping. Direct marketers use data regarding recent buying behavior of their customers to generate purchases from subsequent customers.

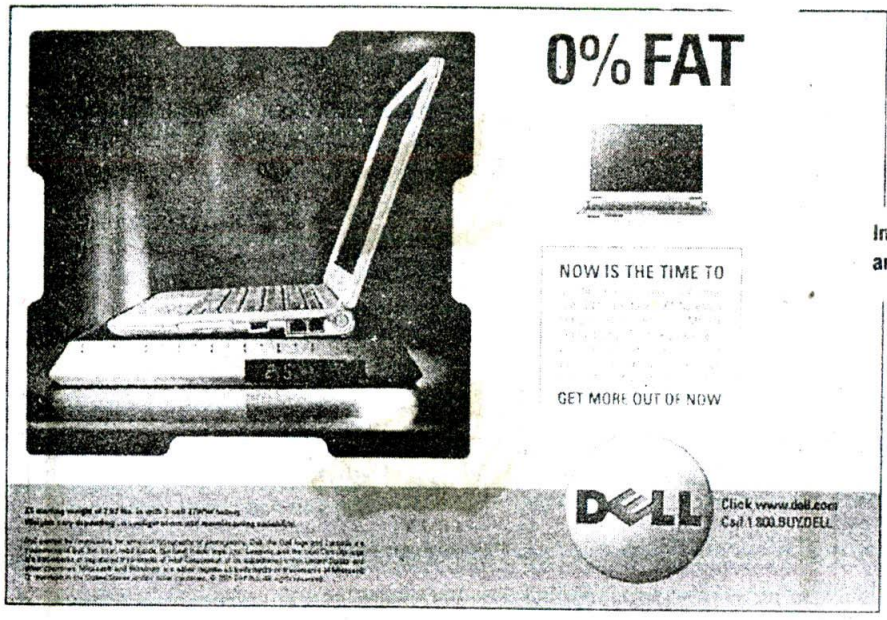
The message

The **message** can be **verbal** (spoken or written), **nonverbal** (a photograph, an illustration, or a symbol), or a combination of the two. A verbal message, whether it is spoken or written, can usually contain more specific product (or service) information than a nonverbal message. However, a verbal message combined with a nonverbal message is often more persuasive than either would be alone (see Figure 9.3).

Nonverbal information takes place in both interpersonal channels and impersonal channels and often takes the form of symbolic communication. Marketers often try to develop logos or symbols that are associated exclusively with their products and that achieve high recognition. The Coca-Cola Company, for example, has trademarked both the word *Coke* in a specific typographic style and the shape of the traditional Coke bottle, and both are instantly recognizable to consumers as symbols of the company's best-selling soft drink.[5] In 1994, the Supreme Court ruled that even a color that distinguishes a product (and serves no other function) can be registered as a trademark.[6]

FIGURE 9.3

Source: © Dell.



Incongruity Between Verbal and Visual Elements

Figure 9.4 depicts an ad portraying nonverbal, symbolic communications (in the form of hand gestures) in three different cultures.

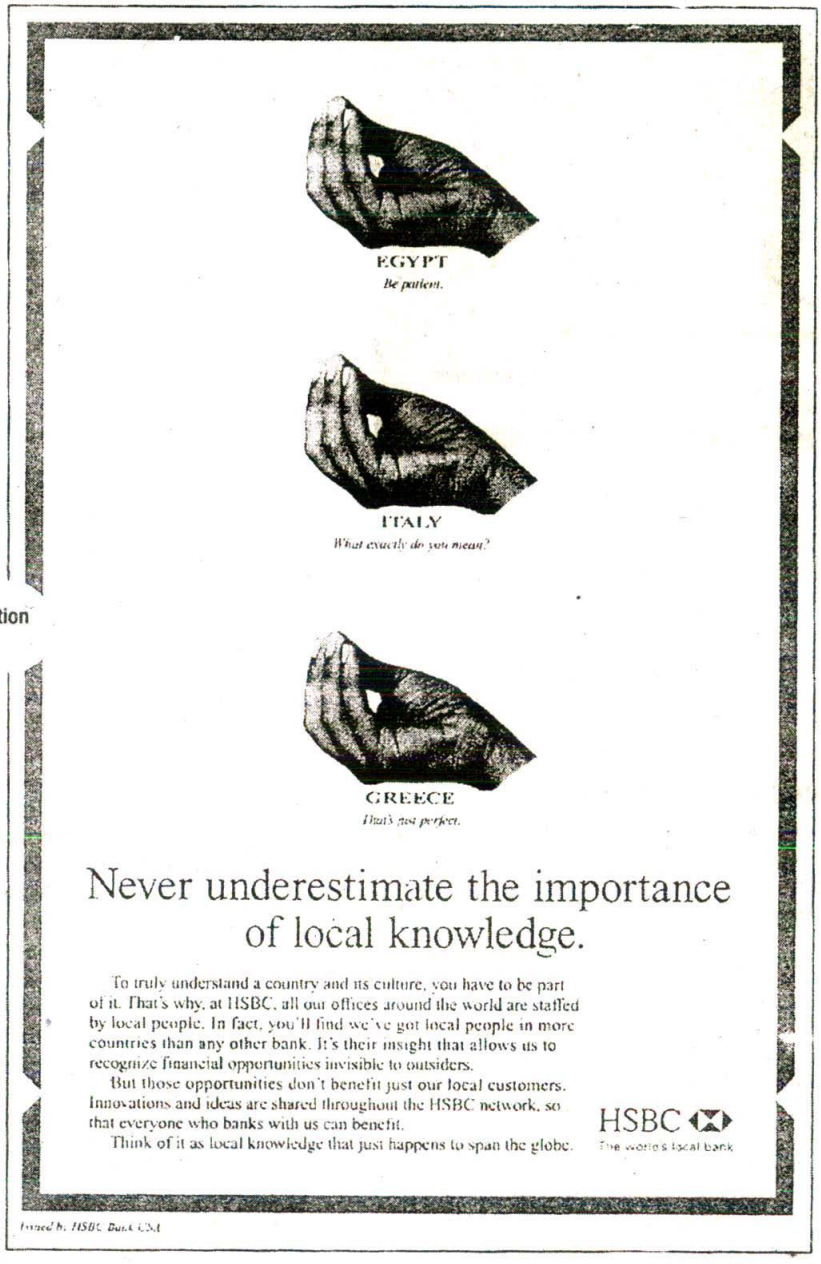
Feedback

Feedback is an essential component of both interpersonal and impersonal communications. Prompt feedback permits the sender to reinforce, to change, or to modify the message to ensure that it is understood in the intended way. Generally, it is easier to obtain feedback (both verbal and nonverbal) from interpersonal communications than impersonal communications. For example, a good salesperson usually is alert to nonverbal feedback provided by the prospective consumer. Such feedback may take the form of facial expressions (a smile, a frown, a look of total boredom, an expression of disbelief) or body movements (finger tapping, head nodding, head shaking, or clenched hands). Because of the high cost of space and time in impersonal media, it is very important for sponsors of impersonal communications to devise methods to obtain feedback as promptly as possible, so that they may revise a message if its meaning is not being received as intended. (An expanded discussion of *feedback* can be found later in the chapter.)

An excellent example of marketing based on shoppers' feedback, in the form of "body language," is the selling method employed at the rapidly growing Diesel jeans chain. Unlike other clothing stores, Diesel stores are not user-friendly because the company believes that a disoriented customer is the best prospect. Diesel stores feature loud techno music and large TV screens playing videos unrelated to the merchandise sold. There are no signs directing customers to different departments, no obvious salespeople, and jeans items have strange names accompanied by confusing charts intended to explain the clothing options. In the midst of this chaos, young and hip-looking salespeople, who are trained to spot "wayward-looking," overwhelmed, and confused shoppers, "rescue" them by becoming their "shopping friends" and, of course, sell them as many pairs of jeans as possible.[7]

FIGURE 9.4

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Nonverbal Communication

the communications process

In general, a company's marketing communications are designed to make the consumer aware of the product or service, induce purchase or commitment, create a positive attitude toward the product, give the product a symbolic meaning, or show how it can solve the consumer's problem better than a competitive product (or service).

The message initiator (source)

The sponsor (initiator) of the message first must decide to whom the message should be sent and what meaning it should convey. Then the sponsor must *encode* the message in such a way that its meaning is interpreted by the targeted audience in precisely the intended way.

The sources of *impersonal communications* usually are organizations (either for-profit or not-for-profit) that develop and transmit appropriate messages through special departments (e.g., marketing or public relations) or spokespersons. The targets, or receivers, of such messages usually are a specific audience or several audiences that the organization is trying to inform, influence, or persuade. For example, AOL wants to attract both online users and advertisers; a museum may wish to target both donors and visitors; and a mail-order company may want to persuade consumers to call a toll-free number for a copy of its catalog.

Marketers have a large arsenal from which to draw in encoding their messages: They can use words, pictures, symbols, spokespersons, and special channels. They can buy space or time in carefully selected media to advertise or broadcast their message, or they can try to have their message appear in space or time usually reserved for editorial messages. (The latter, called **publicity**, usually is the result of public relations efforts and tends to be more believable because its commercial origins and intent are not readily apparent.)

Credibility

The *credibility of the source* affects the *decoding* of the message. The sponsor of the communications—and his or her perceived honesty and objectivity—have an enormous influence on how the communication is accepted by the receiver(s). When the source is well respected and highly thought of by the intended audience, the message is much more likely to be believed. Conversely, a message from a source considered unreliable or untrustworthy is likely to be received with skepticism and may be rejected.

Credibility is built on a number of factors, of which the most important are the perceived intentions of the source. Receivers ask themselves, "Just what does he (or she) stand to gain if I do what is suggested?" If the receiver perceives any type of personal gain for the message sponsor as a result of the proposed action or advice, the message itself becomes suspect: "He wants me to buy that product just to earn a commission."

Credibility of Informal Sources One of the major reasons that informal sources such as friends, neighbors, and relatives have a strong influence on a receiver's behavior is simply that they are perceived as having nothing to gain from their purchase recommendation. That is why word-of-mouth communication is so effective. Interestingly enough, informal communications sources, called **opinion leaders**, often do profit psychologically, if not tangibly, by providing product information to others. A person may obtain a great deal of ego satisfaction by providing solicited as well as unsolicited information and advice to friends. This ego gratification may actually improve the quality of the information provided, because the opinion leader often deliberately seeks out the latest detailed information in order to enhance his or her position as "expert" in a particular product category. The fact that the opinion leader does not receive material gain from the recommended action increases the likelihood that the advice will be seriously considered.

Clever marketers initiate **word-of-mouth** (WOM) campaigns. Many firms enlist typical consumers to serve as their **buzz agents**, who agree to bring products they are promoting to gatherings of family and friends, read books they are promoting on mass transit with the title clearly visible, suggest to store owners who do not carry a given product that they should do so, and talk other consumers into trying certain products during shopping trips. Generally, these "agents" do not receive direct payment from the companies they represent, although they often receive free samples. They are motivated by having been identified by the marketers as opinion leaders, and they get an ego boost by appearing so knowledgeable to their peers and having access to new products before others do.[8]

Although marketers had long-ago recognized the perils of *negative* word-of-mouth that can result in unfounded rumors about products (see Chapter 15) today they are more acutely concerned about this issue than ever before. Digital technologies now enable disgruntled consumers to reach millions of people easily through chat rooms and their own Web sites and describe their often-exaggerated negative experiences with products and services. Persistent critics of marketers who initiate bad publicity online are called **determined detractors**. Many companies have been subject to such online attacks; perhaps the best-known example is the individual who ate nothing but McDonald's food for thirty days and produced an extremely critical documentary about this company entitled *Super Size Me*.[9]

Some of the factors that motivate consumers to engage in word-of-mouth are: consumer involvement with the product or message, self-involvement, alleviating postpurchase uncertainty and dissonance (by convincing others to make a similar purchase), seeking information, and concern for others A recent study identified the following factors as the primary motives behind **WOM**: venting negative feelings, concern for others, extraversion and positive self-enhancement, social benefits, economic incentives, helping the company, and advice seeking.[10]

Credibility of Formal Sources Not-for-profit sources generally have more credibility than for-profit (commercial) sources. Formal sources that are perceived to be "neutral"—such as *Consumer Reports* or newspaper articles—have greater credibility than commercial sources because of the perception that they are more objective in their product assessments. That is why publicity is so valuable to a manufacturer: Citations of a product in an editorial context, rather than in a paid advertisement, give the reader much more confidence in the message. A recent study found that the publicity surrounding the Super Bowl increased viewers' attention to and recall of the advertisements shown during the game.[11]

Because consumers recognize that the intentions of commercial sources (e.g., manufacturers, service companies, financial institutions, retailers) are clearly profit oriented, they judge commercial **source credibility** on such factors as past performance, reputation, the kind and quality of service they are known to render, the quality and image of other products they manufacture, the image and attractiveness of the spokesperson used, the type of retail outlets through which they sell, and their position in the community (e.g., evidence of their commitment to such issues as social responsibility or equal employment). Many Starbucks ads stress social responsibility.

Firms with well-established reputations generally have an easier time selling their products than do firms with lesser reputations. The ability of a quality image to invoke credibility is one of the reasons for the growth of family brands Manufacturers with favorable brand images prefer to give their new products the existing brand name in order to obtain ready acceptance from consumers. Furthermore, a quality image permits a company to experiment more freely in many more areas of marketing than would otherwise be considered prudent, such as freestanding retail outlets, new price levels, and innovative promotional techniques Recognizing that a manufacturer with a good reputation generally has high credibility among consumers, many companies spend a sizable part of their advertising budget on **institutional advertising**, which is designed to promote a favorable company image rather than to promote specific products.

In a crowded marketplace, many companies try to distinguish themselves and increase their credibility by being "good corporate citizens." These firms often engage in **cause-related marketing**, where they contribute a portion of the revenues they receive from selling certain products to such causes as helping people inflicted with incurable diseases or hurt by inclement weather. For example, fashion designers such as Armani and Ralph Lauren have donated selected portions of their sales to AIDS research and other charities. To acknowledge National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, many beauty and cosmetics companies earmark a portion of the selling price of their "pink-ribbon" products to breast cancer charities.

Following the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, several designers sold tsunami-relief T-shirts; many others encouraged consumers to make donations to a fund that was set up to help the storm's victims and even included links to this fund in their Web sites. Other kinds of corporate-sponsored special events include marching bands, fireworks displays, parades, laser shows, and traveling art exhibits. The nature and quality of these sponsorships constitute a subtle message to the consumer: "We're a great (kind, good-natured, socially responsible) company; we deserve your business."

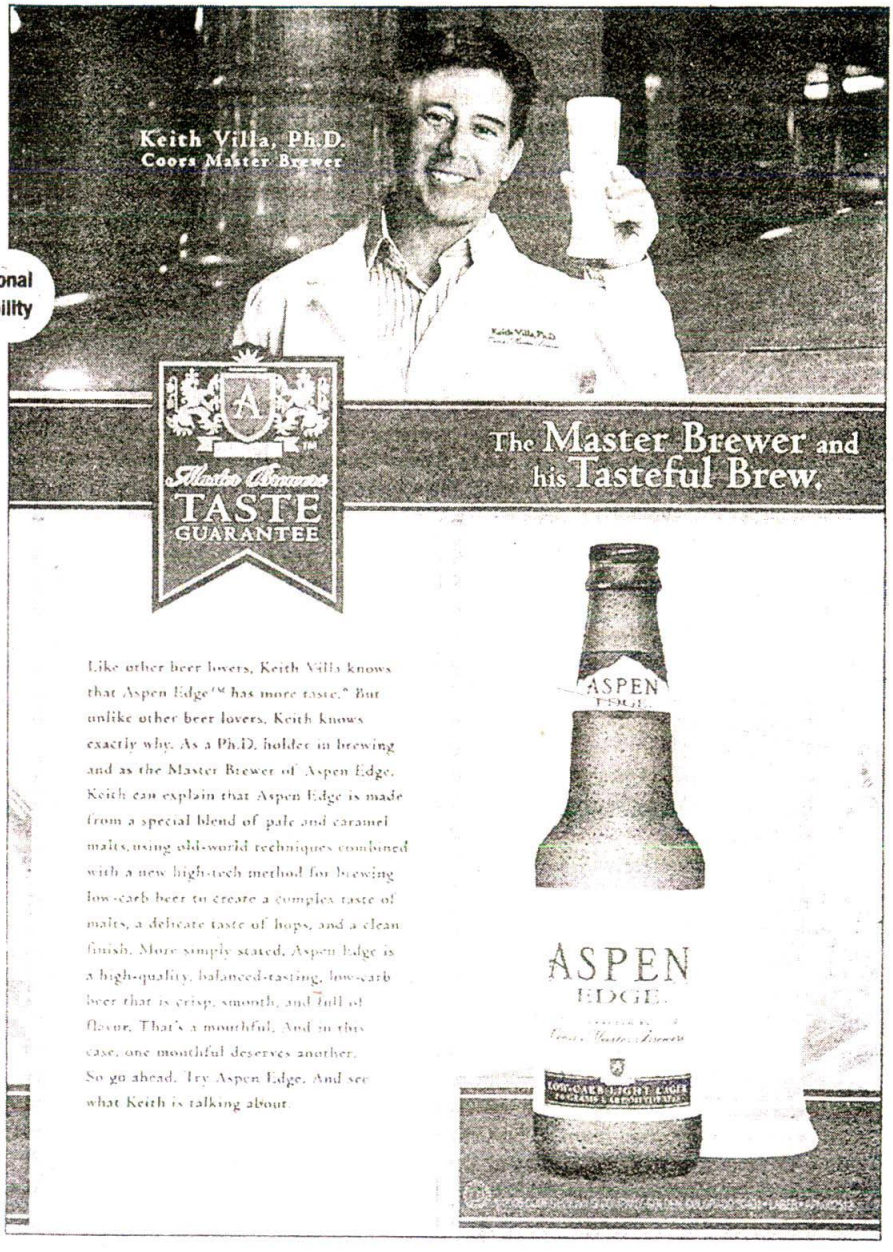
Credibility of Spokespersons and Endorsers Consumers sometimes regard the spokesperson who gives the product message as the source (or initiator) of the message. Thus, the "pitchman" (whether male or female) who appears in person or in a commercial or advertisement has a major influence on message credibility.

Many studies have investigated the relationship between the effectiveness of the message and the spokesperson or endorser employed. Here are some of the key findings of this body of research:

- The effectiveness of the spokesperson is related to the message itself. For example, when message comprehension is low, receivers rely on the spokesperson's credibility in forming attitudes toward the product, but when comprehension (and, thus, systematic information processing) is high, the expertise of the spokesperson has far less impact on a receiver's attitudes.[12]
- The synergy between the endorser and the type of product or service advertised is an important factor. Figure 9.5 gives the educational credentials of an employee endorsing his company's product. One study found that, for attractiveness-related products (such as cosmetics), a physically attractive celebrity spokesperson significantly enhanced message credibility and attitude toward the ad; for attractiveness-unrelated products (e.g., a camera), an attractive endorser had little or no effect. This suggests a "match-up" hypothesis for celebrity advertising.[13] Another study found that a celebrity endorser was more effective in terms of source credibility and consumer attitudes toward the ad for a hedonistic and "experiential" service (e.g., a restaurant) than for a utilitarian service (e.g., a bank).[14] When a celebrity endorser has damaged his or her credentials through engaging in scandalous behavior, the marketer immediately disassociates itself from the endorser in question.
- Endorsers who have demographic characteristics (e.g., age, social class, and ethnicity) that are similar to those of the target audience are viewed as more credible and persuasive than those that do not. Also, consumers with strong ethnic identification are more likely to be persuaded by endorsers with similar ethnicity than individuals with weaker ethnic identification.[15]
- The endorser's credibility is not a substitute for corporate credibility. One study discovered that although the endorser's credibility strongly impacted the audience's *attitudes toward the ad,* the perceived corporate credibility had a strong impact on *attitudes toward the advertised brand.*[16] This study supports the development of multiple measures to evaluate the credibility and persuasiveness of advertising messages, such as attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and consumer purchase intentions.
- Marketers who use celebrities to give testimonials or endorse products must be sure that the specific wording of the endorsement lies within the recognized competence of the spokesperson. A tennis star can believably endorse a brand of analgesic with comments about how it relieves sore muscle pain; however, a recitation of medical evidence supporting the brand's superiority over other brands is beyond his or her expected knowledge and expertise, and thus may reduce (rather than enhance) message credibility. Somewhat surprisingly, one study of advertising agencies found that none of the agencies surveyed had a written strategy regarding the selection of celebrity endorsers. The study's authors recommended a long list of factors to be considered in selecting celebrity endorsers, such as a careful match with the target audience, product and brand, the celebrity's overall image, prior endorsements, trustworthiness, familiarity, expertise, profession, physical attractiveness, and whether the celebrity is a brand user.[17]

FIGURE 9.5

Source: © Coors Brewing Company, Golden, Colorado.



In interpersonal communications, consumers are more likely to be persuaded by salespersons who engender confidence and who give the impression of honesty and integrity. Consumer confidence in a salesperson is created in diverse ways, whether warranted or not. A salesperson who "looks you in the eye" often is perceived as more honest than one who evades direct eye contact. For many products, a sales representative who dresses well and drives an expensive, late-model car may have more credibility than one without such outward signs of success (and inferred representation of a best-selling product). For some products, however, a salesperson may achieve more credibility by dressing in the role of an expert. For example, a man selling home improvements may

achieve more credibility by looking like someone who just climbed off a roof or out of a basement than by looking like a banker.

Message Credibility The reputation of the retailer who sells the product has a major influence on message credibility. Products sold by well-known quality stores seem to carry the added endorsement (and implicit guarantee) of the store itself (e.g., "If Macy's carries it, it must be good."). The aura of credibility generated by reputable retail advertising reinforces the manufacturer's message as well. That is why so many national ads (i.e., manufacturer-initiated ads) carry the line, "Sold at better stores everywhere."

The reputation of the medium that carries the advertisement also enhances the credibility of the message. For example, the image of a prestige magazine like *Fortune* confers added status on the products advertised within. The reputation of the medium for honesty and objectivity also affects the believability of the advertising. Consumers often think that a medium they respect would not accept advertising for products it did not "know" were good. Because specialization in an area implies knowledge and expertise, consumers tend to regard advertising they see in special-interest magazines with more credibility than those they note in general-interest magazines. However, following such revelations that a highly visible media commentator was paid by the government to promote a particular view regarding education, that a reporter in a presidential news conference was actually "planted" there in order to ask friendly questions, and that a national magazine published questionable accusations that American soldiers desecrated a Koran, a majority of Americans have begun to question seriously the credibility of the media.[18]

Consumers today have more media options than ever before in new forms of media (such as the Web) and traditional media in new forms (such as online editions of well-established newspapers), but there is no single answer as to which medium has the most credibility. One study discovered that individuals interested in politics are shifting from television to the Web for political information.[19] Another study reported that the public generally considers opinion polls reported in traditional news media as more credible than online polls;[20] still another study reported that cable television newscasts are viewed as the most credible, and that differences in the perceived credibility of various media were related to the consumer's age.[21] As the number and types of media continue to evolve and grow, print, broadcast, and digital media executives should survey their audiences periodically on such factors as perceived fairness, balance, and accuracy in order to maximize their credibility with audiences and their attractiveness to advertisers.

The consumer's previous experience with the product or the retailer has a major impact on the credibility of the message. Fulfilled product expectations tend to increase the credibility accorded future messages by the same advertiser; unfulfilled product claims or disappointing product experiences tend to reduce the credibility of future messages. Thus, the key basis for message credibility is the ability of the product, service, or brand to deliver consistent quality, value, and satisfaction to consumers.

Effects of Time on Source Credibility: The Sleeper Effect The persuasive effects of high-credibility sources do not endure over time. Although a high-credibility source is initially more influential than a low-credibility source, research suggests that both positive and negative credibility effects tend to disappear after six weeks or so. This phenomenon has been termed the **sleeper effect**.[22] Consumers simply forget the source of the message faster than they forget the message itself. The sleeper effect is caused by *dissociation* (i.e., the consumer disassociates the message from its source) over time, leaving just the message content. The theory of ***differential decay*** suggests that the memory of a negative cue (e.g., a low-credibility source) simply decays faster than the message itself, leaving behind the primary message content.[23] However, reintroduction of the same or similar message by the source serves to jog the audience's memory, and the original effect remanifests itself; that is, the high-credibility source remains more persuasive than the low-credibility source. The implication for marketers who use high-credibility spokespersons is that they must repeat the same series of ads or commercials regularly in order to maintain a high level of persuasiveness. Somewhat surprisingly, the sleeper

effect supports the use of negative attack advertising in political campaigns. The results of a study applying the sleeper effect to political advertising showed that the effectiveness of the attack ad increases considerably over a period of weeks, while the audience's initial negative perception of the political assailant as having low credibility fades and has only a temporary negative impact on the ad.[24] However, this logic must not be extended to advertising and marketers must not assume that consumers who become aware of a brand through a loud and intrusive ad campaign will continue to remember the brand favorably and forget the negative experience of watching the ads that made them aware of the brand.[25]

The target audience (receivers)

Receivers decode the messages they receive on the basis of their personal experiences and personal characteristics. If Joe Brown, a college freshman attempting to purchase a textbook online, receives shoddy service and delayed delivery from an online retailer claiming to sell textbooks at discounted prices, he will be reluctant to use this outlet again. Instead, he will probably use a reputable online book seller (such as **Amazon.com**), from whom many of his classmates reported prompt and reliable service, even though the book costs slightly more there than at the other discount seller. The selection of the online retailer is based on Joe's and his classmates' experiences.

A number of factors affect the *decoding* and *comprehension* of persuasive messages, including the receiver's personal characteristics, involvement with the product or product category, the congruency of the message with the medium, and the receiver's mood.

Personal characteristics and comprehension

The amount of meaning accurately derived from the message is a function of the message characteristics, the receiver's opportunity and ability to process the message, and the receiver's motivation. In fact, all of an individual's personal characteristics (described in earlier chapters) influence the accuracy with which the individual decodes a message. A person's demographics (such as age, gender, marital status), sociocultural memberships (social class, race, religion), and lifestyle are key determinants in how a message is interpreted. A bachelor may interpret a friendly comment from his unmarried neighbor as a "come-on"; a student may interpret a professor's easygoing manner as an indication of "relaxed" grading rigor. Personality, attitudes, and prior learning all affect how a message is decoded. Perception, based as it is on expectations, motivation, and past experience, certainly influences message interpretation. Clearly, not everyone reads and understands the marketing communications they receive in the same way that the sender intended.

For example, one study, focused on gender-based differences in responding to charity ads, reported that women found altruistic appeals that stressed helping others more persuasive, whereas men tended to choose self-oriented themes that stressed helping oneself.[26] Another study discovered that persons who view themselves as more individualistic and unique and who tend to enjoy effortful thinking (i.e., they are high in the personality trait termed *need for cognition*) were more likely to be persuaded by comparative advertising than persons who possess lower levels of these personality traits.[27] Other researchers discovered that persons with a high need for cognition are more persuaded by messages that consist of high-quality arguments followed by implicit, rather than explicit, conclusions.[28] Another study found that the level of confidence that people have in their evaluations of an ad influence the type of ad they prefer; persons who were highly confident in their judgments were more persuaded by strong ads, rather than comparable weak ads, for a given product.[29]

Involvement and congruency

A person's level of involvement (see Chapter 7) plays a key role in how much attention is paid to the message and how carefully it is decoded. People who have little interest (i.e., a low level of involvement) in golf, for example, may not pay much attention to an ad for a specially designed putter; people who are very interested (highly involved) in

golf may read every word of a highly technical advertisement describing the new golf club. Thus, a target audience's level of involvement is an important consideration in the design and content of persuasive communications. One study discovered a relationship between level of involvement and the style and context of an ad. Subjects with low involvement with the product preferred messages placed within a congruent context (e.g., a humorous ad within a humorous TV series) while persons highly involved with the product preferred messages that contrasted the style of ad and the context within which it was placed (e.g., a humorous ad within a rational context such as a TV documentary).[30] Another study showed that the congruency between the nature of the television program and the advertisement affected the level of viewer recall. Cognitively involving commercials shown in a cognitively involving program context had higher recall than low-involvement commercials placed within an affective program context.[31]

Mood

Mood, or affect, plays a significant role in how a message is decoded. A consumer's mood (e.g., cheerfulness or unhappiness) affects the way in which an advertisement is perceived, recalled, and acted upon. Marketers of many image-centered products such as perfume, fashion, and liquor have found that appeals focused on emotions and feelings associated with these products are more effective than rational appeals depicting the product's benefits. However, some advertisers have used emotional appeals effectively for technologically complex products. For example, Apple Computer encourages consumers to "Think Different"; Intel uses the "Intel Inside" theme to differentiate its product. After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, many marketers adapted the mood of their advertising to reflect the newly somber, patriotic spirit of the country.

Many studies have investigated the impact of mood on message comprehension and effectiveness. In one study, the subjects' moods were manipulated by showing humorous ads (generating a positive mood) to some subjects and informational ads (generating a neutral mood) to other subjects. The study found that a positive mood enhanced the learning of brand names and the product categories to which they belong.[32] The consumer's mood is influenced by the *content* of the ad and by the *context* in which the advertising message appears (such as the accompanying TV program or adjacent newspaper story); these in turn affect the consumer's evaluation and recall of the message. One study showed that consumers with low familiarity with a service category prefer ads based on story appeals rather than lists of attributes and that such appeals work better when the receivers are in a happy mood while decoding the message.[33]

Barriers to communication

Various "barriers" to communication may affect the accuracy with which consumers interpret messages. These include selective perception and psychological noise.

Selective Exposure to Messages Consumers selectively perceive advertising messages. They read carefully ads for products they are interested in and tend to ignore advertisements that have no special interest or relevance to them. Furthermore, technology provides consumers with increasingly sophisticated means to control their exposure to media. TV remote controls offer viewers the ability to "wander" among program offerings with ease (often referred to as *grazing*), to *zap* commercials by muting the audio, and to *channel surf*—switch channels to check out other program offerings during commercial breaks. Some marketers try to overcome channel surfing during commercials by *roadblocking* (i.e., playing the same commercial simultaneously on competing channels).

The VCR enables viewers to fast-forward (*zip*) through commercials of prerecorded programs. The majority of consumers zip indiscriminately through videotapes to avoid all commercials, without first evaluating the commercials they *zap*. More recently, digital video recorders and services such as *TiVo* and *ReplayTV* allow consumers not only to watch programs whenever they want, but also to skip commercials easily. In response, worried broadcasters have increased their *product placements* and expenditures on *branded entertainment* (see Chapter 6) and have sought other means to make it more

difficult for consumers to avoid exposure to TV commercials. The growth of satellite radio allows consumers to avoid hearing radio ads. Caller ID, phone answering machines, the government's "do not call" list, and other devices allow consumers to screen out telemarketing and other unsolicited contacts from marketers.

Psychological Noise Just as telephone static can impair reception of a message, so too can **psychological noise** (e.g., competing advertising messages or distracting thoughts). A viewer faced with the clutter of nine successive commercial messages during a program break may actually receive and retain almost nothing of what he has seen. Similarly, an executive planning a department meeting while driving to work may be too engrossed in her thoughts to "hear" a radio commercial. On a more familiar level, a student daydreaming about a Saturday night date may simply not "hear" a direct question by the professor. The student is just as much a victim of noise—albeit psychological noise—as another student who literally cannot hear a question because of construction noise from the building next door. There are various strategies that marketers use to overcome psychological noise:

- Repeated exposure to an advertising message (through *repetition* or *redundancy* of the advertising appeal) helps surmount psychological noise and facilitates message reception. Thus, repeating an ad several times is a must. (The effects of repetition on learning were discussed in Chapter 7.) The principle of redundancy also is seen in advertisements that use both illustrations and copy to emphasize the same points. To achieve more advertising redundancy, many marketers now place their messages in such places as video games, movie theaters, elevators, floors in supermarkets, and even public restrooms.
- Copywriters often use *contrast* to break through the psychological noise and advertising clutter. Contrast (discussed in Chapter 6) entails using features within the message itself to attract additional attention. Such strategies include featuring an unexpected outcome, increasing the amount of sensory input (such as color, scent, or sound), and using tested message appeals that tend to attract more attention.
- Broadcasters and marketers also use *teasers* to overcome noise. For example, trivia quizzes shown at the beginning of a commercial break are designed to engage viewers in sticking with the channel in order to find out at the end of the break whether their own answers were right.
- Thanks to new technologies, marketers can now place customized ads on such devices as cell phones and addressable cable TV boxes; they can get consumers to register for promotional messages and giveaways more easily, and engage consumers with the product before the sales pitch.[34]
- The Web provides marketers with more options, and many advertisers have shifted considerable sums from TV to Internet advertising. Online, marketers can place ads that consumers' PCs will automatically retrieve from the Internet, in such formats as *floater ads* that sometimes replace the more commonly used *pop-ups*, and in Web sites that use programming from TV.[35] In fact, some large marketers like Pepsi, Unilever, and GE have implemented campaigns that run only online and that generally are more innovative and significantly cheaper than TV advertisements.[36]

Of course, the most effective way to ensure that a promotional message stands out and is received and decoded appropriately by the target audience is through effective *positioning* and a *unique selling proposition*. Advertisements for products that are perceived to provide better value than competitive products are more likely to be received in their intended ways than other promotional messages within the advertising clutter.

Feedback—the receiver's response

Since marketing communications are usually designed to persuade a target audience to act in a desired way (e.g., to purchase a specific brand or product, to vote for a presidential candidate, to pay income taxes early), the ultimate test of marketing communications

is the receiver's response. For this reason, it is essential for the sender to obtain **feedback** as promptly and as accurately as possible. Only through feedback can the sender determine whether and how well the message has been received.

As noted earlier, an important advantage of interpersonal communications is the ability to obtain immediate feedback through verbal as well as nonverbal cues. Experienced speakers are very attentive to feedback and constantly modify their messages based on what they see and hear from the audience. Immediate feedback is the factor that makes personal selling so effective. It enables the salesperson to tailor the sales pitch to the expressed needs and observed reactions of each prospect. Similarly, it enables a political candidate to stress specific aspects of his or her platform selectively in response to questions posed by prospective voters in face-to-face meetings. Immediate feedback in the form of inattention serves to alert the college professor to jolt a dozing class awake; thus, the professor may make a deliberately provocative statement such as: "This material will probably appear in your final exam."

Obtaining feedback is as important in *impersonal* (mass) communications as it is in *interpersonal* communications. Indeed, because of the high costs of advertising space and time in mass media, many marketers consider impersonal communications feedback to be even more essential. The organization that initiates the message must develop some method for determining *a priori* whether its mass communications are received by the intended audience, understood in the intended way, and effective in achieving the intended objectives.

Unlike interpersonal communications feedback, mass communications feedback is rarely direct; instead, it is usually inferred. Senders infer how persuasive their messages are from the resulting action (or inaction) of the targeted audience. Receivers buy (or do not buy) the advertised product; they renew (or do not renew) their magazine subscriptions; they vote (or do not vote) for the political candidate. Another type of feedback that companies seek from mass audiences is the degree of customer satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with a product purchase. They try to discover and correct as swiftly as possible any problems with the product in order to retain their brand's image of reliability. Many companies have established 24-hour hot lines to encourage comments and questions from their consumers and they also solicit consumer feedback through online contact. Figure 9.6 shows a comprehensive model of the options and relationships among the basic communications elements discussed above.

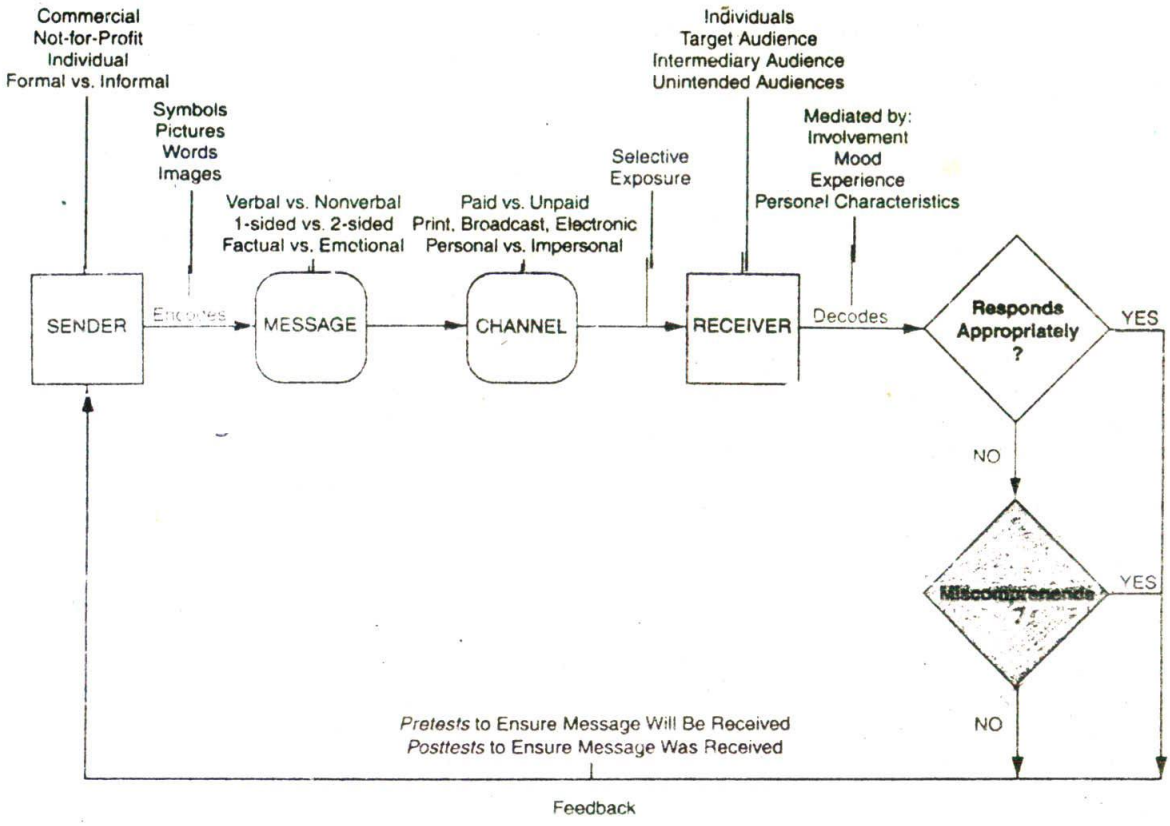
Advertising effectiveness research

In evaluating the impact of their advertising, marketers must measure the *persuasion effects* (i.e., was the message received, understood, and interpreted correctly?) and the *sales effects* (i.e., did the ad increase sales?) of their advertising messages. Advertisers gauge the *persuasion effects* of their messages by conducting audience research to find out which media are read, which television programs are viewed, and which advertisements were remembered by their target audience(s). Should feedback indicate that the audience does not note or miscomprehends an ad, an alert sponsor modifies or revises the message so that the intended communication does, in fact, take place.

Unlike interpersonal communications between, say, a retail salesperson and a customer, in which the feedback (e.g., the customer's purchase or nonpurchase) is immediate, impersonal communications feedback is much less timely. Therefore, the *sales effects* of mass communications are difficult to assess (although retailers usually can assess the effectiveness of their morning newspaper ads by midday on the basis of sales activity for the advertised product). A widely used method of measuring the sales effects of food and other packaged goods advertising is based on the Universal Product Code (UPC), which is tied to computerized cash registers. Supermarket scanner data can be combined with data from other sources (e.g., media and promotional information) to measure the correlation between advertisements, special promotions, and sales.

Generally, persuasion effects are measured through *exposure*, *attention*, *interpretation*, and *recall*. Selected measures of these factors are described below.

FIGURE 9.6 **Comprehensive Communication Model**



Media and Message Exposure Measures Some of these measures assess *how many* consumers received the message and others focus on *who* received it. Data collected via both types of measures are offered for sale by syndicated services. For example, comScore Media Metrix measures the sizes of Internet audiences, their demographic characteristics and also segments these groups according to their purchasing power. Mediamark Research Inc. (MRI) provides, for a given magazine, data on its *circulation* as well as a descriptive *audience profile* (a breakdown of its readers by gender, median age, and household income). The weekly Nielsen Ratings rank TV programs by the size of their audiences. A "top ranking" means that the program was watched by more people than any other program at that time during the week. In order to measure who watched a given program, some of the households in the Nielsen sample are also equipped with *People Meters*—small boxes that are placed on or near each TV set in the household. The boxes have buttons and lights that are assigned to each household member. When a viewer begins watching TV, he or she pushes the assigned button, which changes the indicator light from red to green. When viewers finish watching, they push their button again (and the indicator changes back to red). To measure the audiences of local TV, Nielsen uses *diaries* in which viewers record the programs watched each day and who in the household watched each program.[37] As discussed earlier, some companies are developing *Portable People Meters* that will measure a person's total exposure to all communications and advertising and transmit this data daily to advertisers and broadcasters.

Message Attention and Interpretation Measures Physiological measures track bodily responses to stimuli. For example, Perception Research Services uses *eye tracking*—a method where a camera tracks the movement of the eye across store shelves and gauges to which labels or brands respondents paid more attention. The Capita Research Group uses *brain wave analysis* that tracks the degree of attention paid to the components of viewed advertisements through monitoring electrical impulses produced by the viewer's brain.[38] In *theater tests,* TV programs or commercials are shown in a theater setting and viewers use dials (located in their armrests) to indicate their levels of interest or disinterest during the showing of the program or advertisement. *Web site usability tests* allow researchers to "peek over the shoulders" of visitors to record how quickly they find specific information, which components of the site draw more attention, and which parts lead to more clicks. The *Starch Readership Survey* (discussed in Chapter 7) is a measure of attention as well as recall.

Sophisticated physiological techniques can be used to measure the degrees of consumer arousal and involvement but do not assess the reasons behind their levels of engagement with the messages tested. Generally, researchers use *attitudinal measures,* placed within *copy pretests* or *posttests* to assess whether respondents like the message, understand it correctly, and regard it as effective and persuasive. Researchers are also interested in measuring the emotions and feelings provoked by ads. One study tested the use of *Facial Electromyography* (Facial EMG)—a method that tracks the electrical activity and subtle movements of facial muscles—to gauge the emotions generated by different types of TV commercials. This research concluded that facial EMG is more effective in measuring emotional responses than self-reported cognitive responses because it goes beyond the biases and limitations of the commonly used (but much cheaper and easier to administer) *self-report technique*.[39]

Message Recall Measures In addition to the *recall and recognition* measures discussed in Chapter 7, researchers use *day-after recall tests* in which viewers of TV shows or listeners to radio broadcasts are interviewed a day after watching or listening to a given program. Participants are asked to describe which commercials they recall. The recall of a commercial and its central theme is evidence of its attention-getting and persuasive power.

designing persuasive communications

In order to create persuasive communications, the sponsor (who may be an individual, a for-profit company, or a not-for-profit organization) must first establish the objectives of the communication, then select the appropriate audiences for the message and the appropriate media through which to reach them, and then design (encode) the message in a manner that is appropriate to each medium and to each audience. As noted earlier, the communications strategy should also include an *a priori* feedback mechanism that alerts the sponsor to any need for modifications or adjustments to the media or the message.

Communications strategy

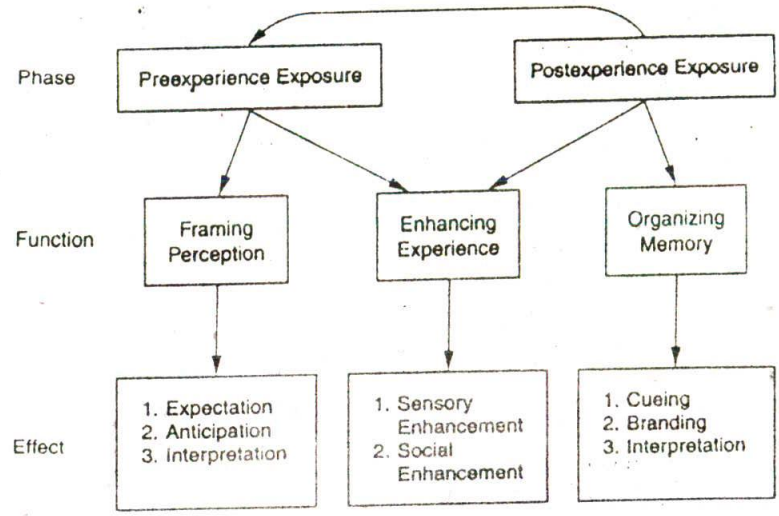
In developing its communications strategy, the sponsor must establish the primary communications objectives. These might consist of creating awareness of a service, promoting sales of a product, encouraging (or discouraging) certain practices, attracting retail patronage, reducing postpurchase dissonance, creating goodwill or a favorable image, or any combination of these and other communications objectives.

There are numerous models claiming to depict how persuasive communications work. The *cognitive models* depict a process in which exposure to a message leads to interest and desire for the product and, ultimately, to buying behavior. For many decades, this general model had been widely adopted by advertisers. A more recent and sophisticated model of advertising is shown in Figure 9.7. The authors of this paradigm maintain

FIGURE 9.7

The Three Phases and Flow of the Perception/Experience/Memory Model of Advertising

Source: Bruce F. Hall, "A New Model for Measuring Advertising Effectiveness," *Journal of Advertising Research* (March/April 2002): 23–31.



that it reflects the interrelationship among the key factors of persuasion—*perception, experience,* and *memory*—in a manner more consistent with how the human mind really works than the older cognitive models, and that advertising messages based on this model are more likely to generate consumption behavior.[40] The existence of these and many other models that claim to explain how persuasion works reflects the complexity of human information processing and the resulting challenges faced by advertisers trying to influence consumption behavior.

Target audience

An essential component of a communications strategy is selecting the appropriate audience. It is important to remember that an audience is made up of individuals—in many cases, great numbers of individuals. Because each individual has his or her own traits, characteristics, interests, needs, experience, and knowledge, it is essential for the sender to segment the audience into groups that are homogeneous in terms of some relevant characteristic. Segmentation enables the sender to create specific messages for each target group and to run them in specific media that are seen, heard, or read by the relevant target group. It is unlikely that a marketer could develop a single message that would appeal simultaneously to its total audience. Efforts to use "universal" appeals phrased in simple language that everyone can understand invariably result in unsuccessful advertisements to which few people relate.

Companies that have many diverse audiences sometimes find it useful to develop a communications strategy that consists of an overall (or umbrella) communications message to all their audiences, from which they spin off a series of related messages targeted directly to the specific interests of individual segments. In addition, to maintain positive communications with all of their publics, most large organizations have public relations departments or employ public relations consultants to broadcast favorable information about the company and to suppress unfavorable information.

Media strategy

Media strategy is an essential component of a communications plan. It calls for the placement of ads in the specific media read, viewed, or heard by each targeted audience. To accomplish this, advertisers develop, through research, a **consumer profile** of their target

customers that includes the specific media they read or watch. Media organizations regularly research their own audiences in order to develop descriptive **audience profiles**. A cost-effective media choice is one that closely matches the advertiser's consumer profile to a medium's audience profile.

Before selecting specific media vehicles, advertisers must select general media categories that will enhance the message they want to convey. Which media categories the marketer selects depends on the product or service to be advertised, the market segments to be reached, and the marketer's advertising objectives. Rather than select one media category to the exclusion of others, many advertisers use a multimedia campaign strategy, with one primary media category carrying the major burden of the campaign and other categories providing supplemental support.

The Web is the newest advertising medium, and using it to communicate effectively with customers still represents a challenge to marketers. A recent study identified three groups of factors that marketers should consider when building a Web site: (1) providing information search tools such as easy site navigation, complete product information, and ability to customize the content; (2) incorporating designs that enhance the enjoyment of the site's users (such as attractive visuals and colors); and (3) providing tools that support the transaction such as security, ease of entering the information, stating the rules of the transaction clearly, providing the company information, and quick response time.[41] Table 9.1 compares the potential persuasive impact of major advertising media along the dimensions of *targeting precision* (i.e., the ability to reach exclusively the intended audience), constructing a *persuasive message*, degree of *psychological noise*, *feedback*, and relative *cost*.

Message strategies

The message is the thought, idea, attitude, image, or other information that the sender wishes to convey to the intended audience. In trying to encode the message in a form that will enable the audience to understand its precise meaning, the sender must know exactly what he or she is trying to say and why (what the objectives are and what the message is intended to accomplish). The sender must also know the target audience's personal characteristics in terms of education, interests, needs, and experience. The sender must then design a message strategy through words and/or pictures that will be perceived and accurately interpreted (decoded) by the targeted audience. One study developed a list of message elements designed to appeal to three personality types, defined as the *righteous buyer* (who looks to recommendations from independent sources such as *Consumer Reports*), the *social buyer* (who relies on the recommendations of friends, on celebrity endorsements, and testimonials), and the *pragmatic buyer* (who looks for the best value for the money, though not necessarily the least expensive).[42]

Involvement theory

Involvement theory (see Chapter 7) suggests that individuals are more likely to devote active cognitive effort to evaluating the pros and cons of a product in a high-involvement purchase situation and more likely to focus on peripheral message cues in low-involvement situations. The *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) proposes that, for high-involvement products, marketers should follow the **central route to persuasion**; that is, they should present advertisements with strong, well-documented, issue-relevant arguments that encourage cognitive processing. When involvement is low, marketers should follow the **peripheral route to persuasion** by emphasizing non-content visual or symbolic material (e.g., background scenery, music, or celebrity spokespersons) that provide the consumer with pleasant, indirect associations with the product and provoke favorable inferences about its merits. A recent study discovered that the level of involvement and the focus of the ad determined its persuasive effectiveness. Highly involved consumers were more influenced by ads stressing the *outcome* of using the product and less involved consumers were more influenced by ads portraying the *process* of using it.[43]

TABLE 9.1 Persuasive Capabilities and Limitations of Major Advertising Media

	TARGETING PRECISION	MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION	DEGREE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NOISE	OBTAINING FEEDBACK	RELATIVE COST
Newspapers	Access to large audiences. Not very selective in reaching consumers with specific demographics. Effective for reaching local consumers.	Flexible. Messages can be designed and published quickly. Limited production quality and short message life.	High clutter. Many messages competing for attention.	Sales volume. Redemptions of special promotions and level of store traffic provide immediate feedback.	Determined by size of ad and the medium's circulation. Affordable for local businesses. Permits joint (cooperative) advertising by national manufacturers and local sellers.
Magazines	High geographic and demographic selectivity. *Selective binding*[a] allows more precise targeting of subscribers with the desired demographics.	High quality of production. High credibility of ads in special-interest magazines. Long message life and pass-along readership. Long lead time required.	High clutter. Some magazines may not guarantee ad placement in a particular position within the magazine.	Delayed and indirect feedback, such as the Starch scores that measure recall and attention.	Determined by cost of page and circulation. Top magazines charge very high rates.
Television	Reaches very large audiences. Many programs lack audience selectivity.	Appeals to several senses. Enables messages that draw attention and generate emotion. Short-duration messages must be repeated. Long lead time.	High clutter. Viewers can avoid message exposures by channel surfing or using advanced technologies such as TiVo.	Day-after recall tests measure how many consumers were exposed to the message and, to a lesser degree, their characteristics.	Very high costs based on how many consumers watch a given program.
Radio	High geographic and demographic audience selectivity.	Audio messages only. Short exposure. Relatively short lead time.	High clutter. Listeners can easily switch among stations during commercials.	Delayed feedback, such as day-after recall tests.	Based on size of the audience reached. Local radio may be relatively inexpensive.
Internet	Potential for great audience selectivity. Audience may be demographically skewed. Enables tracking customers and building databases. Privacy issues make targeting more difficult.	Increasingly more advanced messages can be designed and shown relatively quickly. Marketers recognize that their home pages are advertisements and must be designed as persuasive tools.	Very high degree of clutter. Visitors can easily escape promotional messages. Banner ads and home pages can reinforce and expand promotional messages featured in other media.	Interactive medium with potential for gathering immediate feedback. Click rates on ads do not measure their impact accurately (since exposure to the brands featured occurs even without a click).	Great variation in establishing advertising rates since there is no standard measure of the impact of online advertising.

(Continued)

TABLE 9.1 Continued

	TARGETING PRECISION	MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION	DEGREE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NOISE	OBTAINING FEEDBACK	RELATIVE COST
Direct Mail[b]	High audience selectivity. Enables personalization. Perceived by many as "junk mail" and discarded.	Enables novel, visually appealing, and dramatic messages (including the addition of sensory inputs).	No competing messages within the mailing.	Easy to measure feedback through limited pretests and cost-per-inquiry and cost-per-order. Delayed feedback.	Relatively high cost per person per mailing due to "junk mail" image.
Direct Marketing[c]	Marketers can build and constantly refine an electronic database of qualified buyers based on inquiries and direct orders. Permits the development of highly selective customer segments. Privacy concerns makes this practice difficult.	A function of the medium used to solicit the direct response from the customer.	Can be relatively free of clutter, even in media where there is generally a lot of noise. For example, infomercials provide advertisers with a "clutter-free" environment.	Generates measurable responses and enables marketers to measure the profitability of their efforts directly.	Determined through such variables as cost-per-inquiry, cost-per-sale, and revenue-per-advertisement.

Notes: [a]Selective binding is a technique that enables publishers to narrowly segment their subscription bases. When readers subscribe, they are asked to provide demographic information, which the publisher enters into a database. Through a sophisticated computerized system, the publisher is able to select specific subscribers, based on reader demographic profiles, to receive special sections that are bound into a limited number of magazines.
[b]Direct mail includes catalogs, letters, brochures, promotional offers, and any materials mailed directly to customers at their homes or offices.
[c]Direct marketing is not a medium but an interactive marketing technique that uses various media (such as mail, print, broadcast, telephone, and cyberspace) for the purpose of soliciting a direct response from a consumer. Electronic shopping (through home-shopping TV channels or interactive cable) is also considered direct marketing.

Message structure and presentation

Some of the decisions that marketers must make in designing the message include the use of *resonance, positive* or *negative message framing, one-sided* or *two-sided messages, comparative advertising,* and the *order* of presentation.

Resonance

Advertising resonance is defined as wordplay, often used to create a double meaning used in combination with a relevant picture. Examples of advertising resonance include the phrase "absolut masterpiece" appearing next to a bottle of Absolut Vodka, and Pepsi's slogan "hit the beach topless" next to a Pepsi bottle cap lying in the sand. By using resonance in ads marketers can improve the chances that their ads will be noticed by consumers and create favorable and lasting impressions. A recent study tested the effectiveness of metaphors and puns, such as a car seat with a package of motion sickness remedy serving as the seat belt's buckle. The study concluded that using rhetorical figures and symbols in ads increased the recall and memory of these messages; these findings are consistent with data from Starch Readership Surveys (see Chapter 7) showing that consumers are more likely to read ads that employ resonance than those that do not.[44]

Message framing

Should a marketer stress the benefits to be gained by using a specific product (**positive message framing**) or the benefits to be lost by not using the product (**negative message framing**)? Research suggests that the appropriate message framing decision depends on

the consumer's attitudes and characteristics as well as the product itself. For example, one study found that persons with a low need for cognition were more likely to be persuaded by negatively framed messages.[45] Another study found that an individual's self-image impacts the type of framing that he or she finds more persuasive. Individuals with an independent self-image (i.e., who view themselves as defined by unique characteristics) were more persuaded by messages stressing an approach goal (positive framing), and those with an interdependent self-view (i.e., who view themselves as defined by others) found messages that stress avoidance goals more convincing (negative framing).[46]

A study of a credit card company's customers who had not used their cards in the preceding three months found that negative message framing (i.e., what the consumer might lose by not using the credit card) had a much stronger effect on subsequent usage behavior than positive message framing.[47] A study of advertised products that enabled the early detection of disease indicated that positively framed anecdotal messages were less persuasive than negatively framed anecdotal messages.[48] A recent study discovered that negative message framing was more effective than positive framing when respondents had less opportunity to process the information in the ad, but less effective when respondents had more opportunity to process the ad's content.[49]

One-sided versus two-sided messages

Should marketers tell their audiences only the good points about their products, or should they also tell them the bad (or the commonplace)? Should they pretend that their products are the only ones of their kind, or should they acknowledge competing products? These are very real strategy questions that marketers face every day, and the answers depend on the nature of the audience and the nature of the competition.

If the audience is friendly (e.g., if it uses the advertiser's products), if it initially favors the communicator's position, or if it is not likely to hear an opposing argument, then a *one-sided (supportive) message* that stresses only favorable information is most effective. However, if the audience is critical or unfriendly (e.g., if it uses competitive products), if it is well educated, or if it is likely to hear opposing claims, then a *two-sided (refutational) message* is likely to be more effective. Two-sided advertising messages tend to be more credible than one-sided advertising messages because they acknowledge that the advertised brand has shortcomings. Two-sided messages can also be very effective when consumers are likely to see competitors' negative counterclaims or when consumer attitudes toward the brand are already negative.

Some marketers stress only positive factors about their products and pretend that competition does not exist. However, when competition does exist and when it is likely to be vocal, such advertisers tend to lose credibility with the consumer. The credibility of an advertised claim can often be enhanced by actually disclaiming superiority of some product features in relation to a competing brand or by not claiming that the product is a universal cure. For example, an ad for Rogaine noted that, at the conclusion of a 12-month clinical test, almost half the men using the product experienced modest to dense hair regrowth, about a third experienced minimal hair regrowth, and about one-sixth had no regrowth whatever (see Figure 9.8). The admission that the product did not always work enhanced the credibility of the ad. In political marketing, a candidate will sometimes argue in generalities that a particular course of action is the correct one but give no details with which the audience can analyze, discuss, or rebut the argument (a one-sided argument). Using a two-sided argument, the candidate may say something favorable about the reasonableness of an opponent's position before attacking it, thus gaining credibility by appearing objective, open-minded, and fair in examining the issues.

Comparative advertising

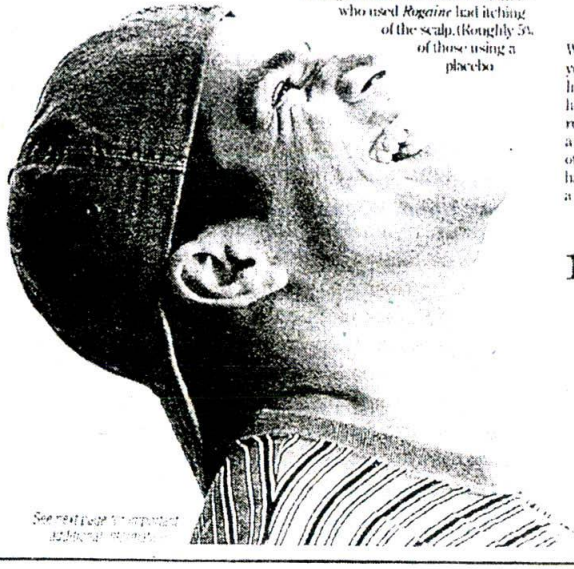
Comparative advertising is a widely used marketing strategy in which a marketer claims product superiority for its brand over one or more explicitly named or implicitly identified competitors, either on an overall basis or on selected product attributes. Comparative advertising is useful for product positioning, for target market selection, and for brand-positioning strategies.

FIGURE 9.8

Source: Courtesy of Pfizer Consumer Healthcare, Pfizer Inc.

John's losing his hair. His mission: get it back.

ASAP!
But how?
Weaving? No.
Transplant?
Not for him.
A hairpiece?
Never, never.
What John really wants is his *own* hair back.
And now he's learned, **for male pattern baldness, only *Rogaine*® has been proven to regrow hair.**



Normal hair grows and rests in cycles. The exact mechanism by which *Rogaine*® Topical Solution (minoxidil topical solution 2%) stimulates hair growth is unknown. But many scientists believe that *Rogaine* works, in part, by taking advantage of the existing hair's growth cycle. Prolong the growth cycle so that more hairs grow longer and thicker at the same time, and you may see improved scalp coverage.

Will *Rogaine* work for you?

Dermatologists conducted 12-month clinical tests. After 4 months, 26% of patients using *Rogaine* reported moderate to dense hair regrowth, compared with 11% of those using a placebo (a similar solution without minoxidil — the active ingredient in *Rogaine*). After 1 year of use, almost half of the men who continued using *Rogaine* in the study rated their regrowth as moderate (40%) to dense (8%). Thirty-six percent reported minimal regrowth. The rest (16%) had no regrowth.

Side effects were minimal: 7% of those who used *Rogaine* had itching of the scalp. (Roughly 5% of those using a placebo reported the same minor irritations.) *Rogaine* should only be applied to a normal, healthy scalp (not sunburned or irritated).

Make a commitment to see results.

Studies indicate that *at least 4 months of twice-daily treatment with Rogaine are usually necessary before there is evidence of regrowth.* So why not make it part of your normal routine when you wake up and go to bed, like brushing your teeth.

As you'd expect, if you're younger, have been losing your hair for a shorter period of time, and have less initial hair loss, you're more likely to have a better response.

Rogaine is a treatment, not a cure. So further progress is only possible by using it continuously. If you stop using it, you will probably shed the newly regrown hair within a few months.

Get your free Information Kit, plus a $10 incentive to see a doctor.

Why wait? Find out whether *Rogaine* is for you. Call 1-800-965-1199 for a free Information Kit about the product and how to use it. And because *Rogaine* requires a prescription, we'll include a list of nearby dermatologists or other doctors experienced in treating hair loss, plus a $10 incentive to visit a doctor soon.

Call

1-800-965-1199

for your free Information Kit on *Rogaine* and a $10 incentive to see a doctor.

Rogaine® TOPICAL SOLUTION minoxidil 2%

Two-Sided Appeal

Some critics of the technique maintain that comparative ads often assist recall of the competitor's brand at the expense of the advertised brand. However, the wide use of comparative advertising and research into its strategic effects do not support this view. Studies have found that comparative ads are capable of exerting more positive effects on brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and actual purchase than noncomparative advertisements.[50] Studies of comparative advertising found that comparative ads elicited higher levels of cognitive processing, had better recall, and were perceived as more relevant than noncomparative ads.[51] A study that tested the degree of negativity in comparative messages (by using positive, negative, and mildly negative comparative messages) for several

products reported that negative elements in an ad contributed to its effectiveness as long as they were believable or were offset by some elements that made the ad appear neutral.[52] These studies and many others support the view that, if used properly and in the right context, comparative marketing is a highly effective positioning strategy.

There has been considerable concern expressed regarding the ability of comparative advertising to mislead consumers, including several legal actions against companies by the Federal Trade Commission. A recent study advocates the development of specific measures designed to gauge a comparative ad's ability to mislead consumers.

Overall, comparative advertising has been used more in the United States than in other countries. However, one study of American and Thai consumers discovered that the persuasive ability of comparative ads was related to the two personality traits—*self-construal* (the degree to which people view themselves as autonomous and independent) and *need for cognition*—in the same way in both countries.[53] Another study compared American and Korean consumers and demonstrated that cultural values were more important in influencing reactions to comparative ads than reactions to noncomparative ads, and also that *need for cognition* impacted the persuasiveness of comparative ads for both groups.[54]

Order effects

Is it best to present your commercial first or last? Should you give the bad news first or last? Communications researchers have found that the **order** in which a message is presented affects audience receptivity. For this reason, politicians and other professional communicators often jockey for position when they address an audience sequentially; they are aware that the first and last speeches are more likely to be retained in the audience's memory than those in between. On TV, the position of a commercial in a commercial pod can be critical. The commercials shown first are recalled the best, whereas those in the middle are recalled the least.

When just two competing messages are presented, one after the other, the evidence as to which position is more effective is somewhat conflicting. Some researchers have found that the material presented first produces a greater effect (*primacy effect*), whereas others have found that the material presented last is more effective (*recency effect.*) Magazine publishers recognize the impact of **order effects** by charging more for ads on the front, back, and inside covers of magazines than for the inside magazine pages because of their greater visibility and recall.

Order is also important in listing product benefits within an ad. If audience interest is low, the most important point should be made first to attract attention. However, if interest is high, it is not necessary to pique curiosity, so product benefits can be arranged in ascending order, with the most important point mentioned last. When both favorable information and unfavorable information are to be presented (as in an annual stockholders' report), placing the favorable material first often produces greater tolerance for the unfavorable news. It also produces greater acceptance and better understanding of the total message. A recent study found that revealing the brand name at the onset of a message enhances brand recall and message persuasiveness.[55]

Repetition

Repetition is an important factor in learning. Thus, it is not surprising that repetition, or frequency of the ad, affects persuasion, ad recall, brand-name recall, and brand preferences. Multiple message exposures give consumers more opportunity to internalize product attributes, to develop more or stronger cue associations, to develop more positive attitudes, and an increased willingness to resist competitive counterpersuasion efforts. In low-involvement situations, individuals are more likely to regard message claims that are repeated frequently as more truthful than those repeated with less frequency. Different ads depicting different applications of the same promotional theme enhance the memorability of the brand advertised.

Advertising appeals

Sometimes objective, *factual appeals* are more effective in persuading a target audience;

be reached and their degree of involvement in the product category. In general, however, logical, reason-why appeals are more effective in persuading educated audiences, and emotional appeals are more effective in persuading less-educated consumers. The following section examines the effectiveness of several frequently used emotional appeals.

Fear Fear is an effective appeal often used in marketing communications. Some researchers have found a negative relationship between the intensity of fear appeals and their ability to persuade, so that strong fear appeals tend to be less effective than mild fear appeals. A number of explanations have been offered for this phenomenon. Strong fear appeals concerning a highly relevant topic (such as cigarette smoking) cause the individual to experience cognitive dissonance, which is resolved either by rejecting the practice or by rejecting the unwelcome information. Because giving up a comfortable habit is difficult, consumers more readily reject the threat. This they do by a variety of techniques, including denial of its validity ("There still is no real proof that smoking causes cancer"), the belief that they are immune to personal disaster ("It can't happen to me"), and a diffusing process that robs the claim of its true significance ("I play it safe by smoking only filter cigarettes"). Therefore, marketers should use reasonable but not extreme fear appeals and also recognize that fear appeals are not always appropriate. For example, a study of warning information labels affixed to full-fat, reduced-fat, and nonfat products concluded that, for products with credible and familiar risks, information labels were more effective than warning labels because they do not arouse *psychological reactance*.[56] (See Chapter 4.) Another study of adolescent responses to fear communications found that adolescents are more persuaded to avoid drug use by messages that depict negative social consequences of drug use rather than physical threats to their bodies.[57] A five-month study of high school students discovered that short-term cosmetic fear appeals (such as yellow teeth or bad breath) used in ads to stop or reduce smoking were more persuasive for males, while long-term health fear appeals (such as getting cancer later in life) were more persuasive for females.[58]

There is no single explanation of the relationship between fear appeals and persuasiveness. One theory proposes that individuals cognitively appraise the available information regarding the severity of the threat, then they appraise the likelihood that the threat will occur; they evaluate whether coping behavior can eliminate the threat's danger, and if so, whether they have the ability to perform the coping behavior. This theory is called the *Ordered Protection Motivation* (OPM) model. The study also found that the personality variable "sensation seeking" affected the processing of fear appeals. A high sensation seeker is more likely to use drugs and also to react negatively to fear-focused antidrug messages, feeling that he or she is immortal.[59]

Marketers must also consider that the mention of possibly detrimental side effects of using a product while proclaiming its benefits may result in negative attitudes toward the product itself. For that reason, when the benefits of a new pharmaceutical are discussed by actors in a TV ad, the negative side effects—which the company is required to mention—are usually rapidly intoned by a voice-over while the actors cheerfully repeat the drug's benefits.

Humor Many marketers use humorous appeals in the belief that humor will increase the acceptance and persuasiveness of their advertising communications. By some estimates, up to 24 percent of TV ads in the United States use humor, but there are some risks associated with using this appeal. For example, the effects of humorous ads vary by the audience's demographics, level of involvement (humor is more effective for promoting low-involvement products), and attitudes (humor is more effective when the audience already has positive attitudes toward the brand).[60] Table 9.2 summarizes some research findings on the impact of humor on advertising.

Marketers believe that younger, better-educated, upscale, and professional people tend to be receptive audiences for humorous messages (see Figure 9.9). A study of how humor actually works within ads discovered that surprise is almost always needed to generate humor and that the effectiveness of humorous ads is also influenced by such

TABLE 9.2 Impact of Humor on Advertising

- *Humor attracts attention.*
- *Humor does not harm comprehension.* (In some cases it may even aid comprehension.)
- *Humor is not more effective at increasing persuasion.*
- *Humor does not enhance source credibility.*
- *Humor enhances liking.*
- *Humor that is relevant to the product is superior to humor that is unrelated to the product.*
- *Audience demographic factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age) affect the response to humorous advertising appeals.*
- *The nature of the product affects the appropriateness of a humorous treatment.*
- *Humor is more effective with existing products than with new products.*
- *Humor is more appropriate for low-involvement products and feeling-oriented products than for high-involvement products.*

Source: Marc G. Weinberger and Charles S. Gulas, "The Impact of Humor in Advertising: A Review," *Journal of Advertising* 21, 4 (December 1992): 35–59. Reprinted by permission.

message elements as warmth and playfulness.[61] A recent study developed a measure of a personality trait named *need for humor* (NFH) that is focused on a person's tendency to enjoy, engage, or seek out amusement and suggested that these cognitive factors can better explain how consumers respond to humorous advertisements.[62]

Abrasive Advertising How effective can unpleasant or annoying ads be? Studies of the *sleeper effect,* discussed earlier, suggest that the memory of an unpleasant commercial that antagonizes listeners or viewers may dissipate over time, leaving only the brand name in the minds of consumers.

All of us have at one time or another been repelled by so-called *agony commercials,* which depict in diagrammatic detail the internal and intestinal effects of heartburn, indigestion, clogged sinus cavities, hammer-induced headaches, and the like. Nevertheless, pharmaceutical companies often run such commercials with great success because they appeal to a certain segment of the population that suffers from ailments that are not visible and thus elicit little sympathy from family and friends. Their complaints are legitimized by commercials with which they immediately identify. With the sponsor's credibility established ("They really understand the misery I'm going through"), the message itself tends to be highly persuasive in getting consumers to buy the advertised product.

Sex in Advertising In our highly permissive society, sensual advertising seems to permeate the print media and the airwaves. Advertisers are increasingly trying to provoke attention with suggestive illustrations, crude language, and nudity in their efforts to appear "hip" and contemporary. In today's advertising, there is a lot of explicit and daring sexual imagery, extending far beyond the traditional product categories of fashion and fragrance into such categories as shampoo, beer, cars, and home construction.

There is little doubt that sexual themes have attention-getting value, but studies show that they rarely encourage actual consumption behavior. A widely quoted study that examined the effects of sexual advertising appeals on cognitive processing and communications effectiveness found that sexual appeals interfere with message comprehension, particularly when there is substantial information to be processed. It also found that more product-related thinking occurs in response to nonsexual appeals and that visual sexual elements in an ad are more likely to be processed than its verbal content, drawing

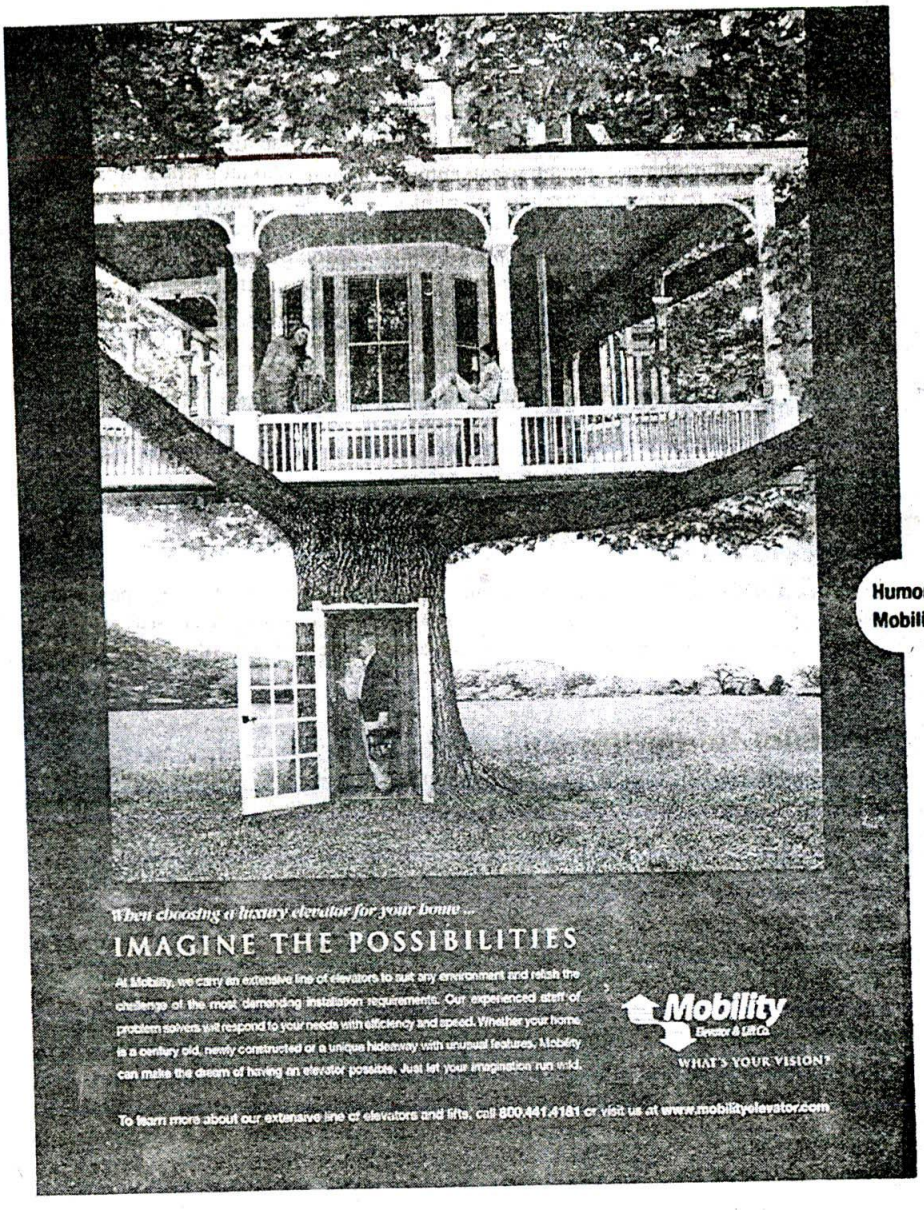


FIGURE 9.9

Source: Client: Mobility Elevator and Lift Co. – West Caldwell, NJ Agency: BrandStreet Advertising – Montclair, NJ Creative Director: David Frank, Co-Creative Director: Joe Gugliuzza, Copywriter: James A. Cotter, Photography/Photo Illustration: John Halpern. Used with permission.

Humorous Appeal: Upward Mobility

cognitive processing away from product or message evaluation.[63] Some researchers have concluded that nudity may negatively impact the product message.[64] These and other findings support the theory that sexual advertising appeals often detract from the processing of message content.

The type of interest that sexual advertising evokes often stops exactly where it starts—with sex. If a sexually suggestive or explicit illustration is not relevant to the product advertised, it has little effect on consumers' buying intentions. This highlights the potential risk of sexually-oriented advertising: The advertiser may be giving up persuasiveness to achieve "stopping power." When using sex to promote a product, the advertiser must be sure that the product, the ad, the target audience, and the use of sexual themes and elements all work together. When sex is relevant to the product, it can be an

extremely potent copy theme. For example, the advertisers of fragrances for either men or women often use highly romantic or suggestive visuals in their ads, implying that the use of the fragrance will result in a meaningful or sultry romance.

Audience Participation Earlier we spoke about the importance of feedback in the communications process. The provision of feedback changes the communications process from one-way to two-way communication. This is important to senders because it enables them to determine whether and how well communication has taken place. But feedback also is important to receivers because it enables them to participate, to be involved, to experience in some way the message itself. Participation by the receiver reinforces the message. An experienced communicator asks questions and opinions of an audience to draw them into the discussion. Many professors use the participative approach in classrooms rather than the more sterile lecture format because they recognize that student participation tends to facilitate internalization of the information covered.

Although participation is easily accomplished in interpersonal and online communications, it takes a great deal of ingenuity to achieve in impersonal communications.

marketing communication and ethics

The keys to effective marketing communications are developing the right persuasive message and delivering it to the right audience. The corresponding ethical issues focus on (1) identifying and locating specific audiences and (2) the contents of the promotional messages they are sent.

Precision targeting

The consumer's loss of privacy is an increasingly problematic ethical issue as marketers manage to identify and reach out to increasingly smaller audiences through innovative media. As evident from discussions throughout this chapter, it is apparent that the old *broadcasting* model—where large audiences are reached with the same electronic or print messages—is rapidly becoming obsolete. Advertisers are increasingly adopting *narrowcasting*—a technique that allows them to send very directed messages to very small audiences on an ongoing basis. **Narrowcasting** is made possible through the efforts of sophisticated data providers who compile individual profiles from census data, tax records, credit card companies, banks, direct-mail responses, surveys and product warranty cards completed by consumers, and from internal sales records provided by companies. Sophisticated analysis of such data enables the compilation of extremely specialized lists of consumers. For example, a marketer can purchase a list of left-handed people with a specified income who own pets and are of Hispanic origin. Based on these characteristics, the marketer can develop and deliver a highly targeted and persuasive message designed specifically for this very narrow group.

Narrowcasting was used extensively in the swing state of Ohio during the 2004 presidential elections, where campaign workers received daily lists of voters with very specific characteristics and the issues that these individuals were likely to be concerned about. The campaign workers were also equipped with Palm Pilots where short audiovisual, precisely targeted messages, developed on the basis of specific voters' characteristics, were stored and shown to these voters by the campaign workers who visited them.[65] Narrowcasting is made possible because people who buy products (generally with credit cards), fill out census surveys, and file taxes have inadvertently yielded their privacy rights regarding their demographics and consumption habits.

Another ethical issue of targeted communications is reaching and possibly manipulating consumers who are, according to some, less capable of making sound consumption decisions. Public complaints have been made regarding the targeting of

ads to students in classrooms through such media as Whittle Communication's Channel One (a closed-circuit TV offered free to public schools), and through the provision of materials and programs that marketers provide to students as "educational" tools when, in fact, they include a lot of persuasive advertising.

Marketers can learn not only *who* you are (e.g., your personal characteristics) and *what* specific purchases you make, but now they can also learn *where* you are at any given moment because your cell phone, mobile e-mail device, or the GPS integrated into your car or sports-watch serve as sort of "electronic bracelets" that monitor your movements. In one futuristic movie thriller set in 2054, the hero passes a billboard featuring the American Express card, which, upon scanning his eye retina, becomes a hologram (presumably only visible to him) portraying his picture and personal data and urging him to use the card. He then enters a Gap store where he is met by voices greeting him by name, asking how he liked his previous purchases, and suggesting items that he may like based on his past purchases. Although such scanning and recognition devices are not yet widespread, if you travel abroad and have a cell phone with a roaming service, upon landing at your destination your phone is likely to include a message welcoming you to that destination and offering you additional services designed for travelers. Clearly, in the not-too-distant future, when you drive a car equipped with a GPS with the radio on, the commercial that you will hear may alert you to, say, a McDonald's two exits down next to the highway; that ad will not be the same as the one heard by another driver in a different location and listening to the same radio station. In fact, some companies use cabs equipped with GPS and advertising billboards on their roofs to create ever-changing advertising messages; the changing ad displays correspond to the businesses the cabs pass as they travel.[66] Once again, more sophisticated media to reach consumers results in loss of consumers' privacy.

The contents of promotional messages

The ethical issues related to the content of marketing communications include the accuracy of the information provided, the impact of values portrayed in ads, and the potential misuse of promotional messages' persuasive abilities. Regarding accuracy, a toothpaste ad stating that "brand A is the best" is considered an acceptable form of advertising "puffery" because consumers generally understand that there is no credible way to determine what "best" means. A toothpaste ad stating that the brand was "endorsed by the American Dental Association" is an objective statement because it includes information that is easy to verify. However, is an ad stating that the brand "provides more cavity protection than any other toothpaste" permissible advertising puffery, or is it false or misleading? The answer depends on how most reasonable consumers are likely to interpret the ad. Do they believe that there is a scientific way to measure the degree of cavity protection and that the maker of the brand has conducted a scientific study of all brands of toothpaste on the market and whether the study proved the ad's claim? It is clear that determining how most reasonable consumers are likely to interpret the ad is a complex undertaking, and therefore there is no definitive answer to the question "At what point does puffery become deceptive?"

Truth-in-advertising laws protect consumers from false advertisements. Over time, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has developed guidelines as to what constitutes **deceptive advertising** and they hold marketers responsible for determining their ads' potential to mislead consumers. While the FTC is responsible for stopping false or misleading ads, it is apparent that such ads continue to exist. For example, the FTC's Web site has featured a "Red Flag" button alerting consumers that "misleading weight loss advertising is everywhere" and also warning them to beware of weight loss claims that are too good to be true, such as claims that the product causes "substantial weight loss no matter how much the consumer eats" or promising "a weight loss of two pounds or more a week for a month or more without dieting or exercise."[67] The FTC encourages and investigates complaints by consumers and companies regarding false or misleading ads, but its public advice for consumers regarding weight loss products illustrates that it

cannot locate and stop all misleading ads. The FTC can also require companies that have misled consumers through their advertising to run **corrective advertising**. For example, years ago Listerine's maker was forced to correct the claim that the product prevents colds.

In addition to the FTC, the National Advertising Review Council (NARC) is the self-regulatory group that monitors complaints from companies and consumers regarding truth in advertising and often determines what ads can or cannot state. For example, NARC determined that Colgate-Palmolive provided supportive evidence to the claim that its Oxy-Plus product "blasts away grease faster" than P&G's Ultra Dawn, but decided that there was no evidence supporting GlaxoSmithKline's claim that Super PoliGrip provides the "strongest hold ever," a claim that the company subsequently withdrew. NARC also supported a challenge of promotions for cancer treatment claiming that "Chemotherapy doesn't work for everyone."[68] In some cases, powerful companies can persuade media to stop running ads they deem deceptive. For example, Anheuser-Busch persuaded ABC, CBS, and NBC to stop running Miller Beer ads depicting consumers comparing beers and saying that the Miller beers have more flavor, on the grounds that these comparisons were flawed.[69]

The potential manipulative impact of promotional messages on children was explored earlier (see Chapter 7). There is a consensus that even if children understand the purpose of promotional messages, marketers must take special care in advertising to children because of the amount of time children spend viewing TV and spend online. As discussed in Chapter 7, CARU has developed specific guidelines regarding truth and accuracy in advertisements directed at the young, and the organization regularly monitors such communications.[70] Studies also show that parents significantly influence children's understanding and processing of advertisements.[71] Generally, advertising to children in the United States is less regulated than in European countries.

Since advertising is part of our culture, the cumulative persuasive impact of promotional messages on societal values must be considered. By itself, one tasteless ad has little impact on our values. However, cumulatively, such ads may persuade consumers to act unwisely or develop undesirable attitudes. For example, repeated exposure to ads depicting perfectly tanned persons is likely to result in excessive sun bathing or tanning via ultraviolet light, despite the fact that it has been documented that such practices significantly increase the chances of developing cancer. Interestingly, not all ads that promote a practice that may negatively impact one's health are treated the same way. For example, although it is known that tanning causes cancer, we have accepted ads portraying perfectly tanned models without criticism. On the other hand, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has alerted marketers of HIV medications to the fact that some of their ads, which often show healthy-looking persons involved in rigorous physical activity, may be conveying the notion that since the drugs can restore one's health, they implicitly encourage unsafe sex.[72]

Following considerable research, it is now generally accepted that repeated exposure to very thin "ideal" figures in promotional messages leads to negative self-perceptions (particularly in women) and is partially responsible for the increase in eating-related disorders. Marketers now recognize that ads focused on beauty and attractiveness, especially if they stress the importance of these attributes over other personal characteristics, are likely to be scrutinized by the media, consumers, advocacy groups, or religious organizations. Subsequently, numerous advertisements now portray more realistic-looking models and some beauty-products ads integrate the notion that although the "outside" is important, the person's self-worth or "true beauty" comes from "within."

Although many ads portray values or behaviors that many consumers find distasteful or wrong, the importance of public scrutiny must not be underestimated. For example, the broadcast of the 2004 Super Bowl included many ads portraying crude humor and gags that were later criticized by many (and also amplified by the coincidental "wardrobe malfunction" of a female entertainer during the half-time show). As a result, advertisers during the 2005 Super Bowl broadcast took special care

to develop ads that were more mainstream and traditional, not an easy task since Super Bowl ads—expected to be creative and unique—are the most analyzed group of ads in American broadcasting.[73]

SUMMARY

This chapter has described how the consumer receives and is influenced by marketing communications. There are five basic components of communication: the sender, the receiver, the medium, the message, and feedback (the receiver's response). In the communications process, the sender encodes the message using words, pictures, symbols, or spokespersons and sends it through a selected channel (or medium). The receiver decodes (interprets) the message based on his or her personal characteristics and experience, and responds (or does not respond) based on such factors as selective exposure, selective perception, comprehension, and psychological noise.

There are two types of communications: interpersonal and impersonal (or mass) communications. Interpersonal communications occur on a personal level between two or more people and may be verbal or nonverbal, formal or informal. In mass communications, there is no direct contact between source and receiver. Interpersonal communications take place in person, by telephone, by mail, on the Web or e-mail; mass communications occur through such impersonal media as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Feedback is an essential component of all types of communications because it provides the sender with some notion as to whether and how well the message has been received.

The credibility of the source, a vital element in message persuasiveness, often is based on the source's perceived intentions. Informal sources and neutral or editorial sources are considered to be highly objective and, thus, highly credible. The credibility of a commercial source is more problematic and usually is based on a composite evaluation of its reputation, expertise, and knowledge and that of the medium in which it advertises, the retail channel, and company spokespersons.

Media selection depends on the product, the audience, and the advertising objectives of the campaign. Each medium has advantages and shortcomings that must be weighed in the selection of media for an advertising campaign. Following the emergence of new technologies, many advertisers are now developing more customized communications that can reach consumers via media with narrowcasting, rather than broadcasting, capabilities.

The manner in which a message is presented influences its impact. For example, one-sided messages are more effective in some situations and with some audiences; two-sided messages are more effective with others. High-involvement products (those with great relevance to a consumer segment) are best advertised through the central route to persuasion, which encourages active cognitive effort. Low-involvement products are best promoted through peripheral cues, such as background scenery, music, or celebrity spokespersons.

Marketers can either use objective, factual appeals or emotional appeals. The emotional appeals most frequently used in advertising include fear, humor, and sexual appeals. Audience participation is a very effective communications strategy because it encourages internalization of the advertising message.

The ethical issues related to marketing communications include invasion of consumer privacy, the potential manipulation of consumers who are less capable of making wise decisions due to age or other demographic factors, the distinction between advertising puffery and deception, misleading advertising, and the cumulative persuasive impact of messages that portray socially undesirable behavior or values.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the differences between feedback from interpersonal communications and feedback from impersonal communications. How can the marketer obtain and use each kind of feedback?
2. List and discuss the effects of psychological noise on the communications process. What strategies can a marketer use to overcome psychological noise?
3. List and discuss factors that affect the credibility of formal communications sources of product information. What factors influence the perceived credibility of an informal communications source?
4. What are the implications of the sleeper effect for the selection of spokespersons and the scheduling of advertising messages?
5. Should marketers use more body copy than artwork in print ads? Explain your answer.
6. For what kinds of audiences would you consider using comparative advertising? Why?

EXERCISES

1. Bring two print advertisements to class: one illustrating a one-sided message and the other a two-sided message. Which of the measures discussed in the chapter would you use to evaluate the effectiveness of each ad? Explain your answers.
2. Find one example of each of the following two advertising appeals: fear and sex. One example must be a print ad and the other a TV commercial. Analyze the placement of each ad in the medium where it appeared according to the media selection criteria presented in Table 9.1.
3. Watch one hour of TV on a single channel during prime time and also tape the broadcast. Immediately after watching the broadcast, list all the commercials you can recall seeing. For each commercial, identify (a) the message framing approach used, and (b) whether the message was one-sided or two-sided. Compare your list with the actual taped broadcast. Explain any discrepancies between your recollections and the actual broadcast on the basis of concepts discussed in this chapter.
4. For three of the commercials you watched in the preceding exercise, identify whether the marketer used the central or peripheral route to persuasion. Explain your answer and speculate on why each marketer chose the approach it used to advertise the product or service.
5. Find an example of a promotional message delivered by narrowcasting and discuss it along the ethical issues discussed in this chapter.
6. Find an example of an advertisement that, in your view, depicts a socially undesirable practice and explain why.

KEY TERMS

- **advertising resonance**
- **audience versus consumer profiles**
- **broadcasting versus narrowcasting**
- **buzz-agents**
- **cause-related marketing**
- **central versus peripheral routes to persuasion**
- **communication**
- **comparative advertising**
- **corrective advertising**
- **deceptive advertising**
- **direct marketing versus direct mail**
- **Federal Trade Commission**
- **feedback**
- **formal versus informal communications sources**
- **institutional advertising**
- **interpersonal versus impersonal communications**
- **one-sided versus two-sided messages**
- **opinion leaders**
- **order effects**
- **positive versus negative framing strategies**
- **psychological noise**
- **publicity**
- **repetition**
- **resonance**
- **sleeper effect**
- **source credibility**
- **target audience**
- **truth-in-advertising laws**
- **verbal versus nonverbal messages**
- **word-of-mouth communications**

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