
6



The psychological basis of marketing

Allan J. Kimmel

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Introduction

Whether one considers marketing as a managerial process or as a formalized field of inquiry, it is clear that it is interdisciplinary in nature, spanning a variety of academic fields, including the behavioural and social sciences, communications and economics. These disciplinary links serve to enrich the marketing enterprise, providing it with empirically-grounded theories and concepts that lie at the heart of the pluralistic perspective typically employed by marketers to ply their trade. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the psychological foundations of marketing – a daunting task in light of the breadth of contributions of psychology to the marketing discipline, but one that nonetheless is essential to carry out in order to gain a fuller understanding of what marketing is and how the marketing process functions. Psychology’s contributions to marketing are perhaps most evident in the study of consumer behaviour, which serves as the focus of Chapter 12; however, a broader perspective reveals psychology’s relevance to each of marketing’s various activities, including product design, promotion, pricing, and the like.

Psychology as a discipline

Psychology encompasses the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. Like marketing, the discipline of psychology has strong connections to other fields of inquiry, including philosophy, biology, evolution, and the social sciences. It also

Table 6.1 Psychological Constructs and Some Associated Marketing Areas

Construct	Marketing areas
Learning	Brand recall, loyalty
Motivation	Consumer needs, choice conflicts
Perception	Product packaging, advertising content
Decision making	Brand selection, consumer involvement, post-purchase evaluation
Attitudes	Customer satisfaction, trust, ad influence
Personality	Consumer segmentation, materialism, addictions

similarly is comprised of numerous sub-fields, such as: experimental psychology (e.g. the rules governing how people perceive, learn and remember); cognitive psychology (e.g. the mental mechanisms that underlie how people make judgements and decisions); personality psychology (e.g. the measurement, origins and influence of personality differences); social psychology (e.g. how individuals' attitudes, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours affect and are affected by other people and the social environment); industrial-organizational psychology (e.g. the factors that influence job motivation and satisfaction); clinical, counselling and community psychology (e.g. how behaviour and mental processes become disordered, and how they can be treated or prevented); and developmental psychology (e.g. changes in thinking, social skills and personality that occur throughout the lifespan). This is but a small sampling of psychology's sub-fields and their corresponding topical areas and issues; in fact, the American Psychological Association formally recognizes 54 specific divisions of the discipline. These areas are dominated by a core set of psychological constructs (see Table 6.1); that is, explanatory concepts that conceptualize intangible elements of the domain studied within a particular science.

Psychological constructs are essential to fields like psychology because they help explain how and why people think and behave the way they do within their physical and social contexts. For example, learning is a construct that helps explain observable changes in behaviour that come about from experience, as when a consumer develops a loyalty to a particular brand that has proven to have high quality across previous usage situations. The utility of psychological constructs is not limited to the discipline of psychology; as will become evident in this chapter, they are essential to understanding the marketing process. Nonetheless, for a construct to be of any value, it first must meet certain criteria: it must be precisely and unambiguously defined, including specification of its domain and clarification as to its distinctiveness relative to similar other constructs, and it must be capable of being measured (Churchill, 1979). Marketers have adopted many of the measurement and observation techniques developed and honed over the years by psychologists, including a wide range of self-report measurement tools (such as opinion surveys, attitude scales, personality scales), projective techniques (such as the interpretation of ambiguous illustrations), and interview approaches (such as in-depth interviews and personal journals or diaries). Consider, for example, the need for cognition, which falls within the domain of the psychological construct of personality. This trait, which reflects the chronic tendency to engage in purposive thinking and to enjoy problem-solving, is measured by a series of statements (e.g. 'I really enjoy a task that involves coming up

with solutions to problems') that comprise the need for cognition scale (Cacioppo and Petty, 1982). When employed in advertising research, the scale revealed interesting differences between high and low need for cognition consumers. Compared with low scorers, high need for cognition consumers processed advertising information more thoroughly, had superior recall for brands and brand claims, and relied more heavily on print sources than television for news information. Consistent with elaboration likelihood theory (see 'Persuasion' below), high need for cognition consumers are apt to base their attitudes on message arguments and brand features, whereas lows use peripheral cues, such as music and emotional elements to guide their attitudes (Haugtvedt et al., 1992). The insight provided by such measurement approaches can prove invaluable to advertisers in the design of message content and the selection of channels of message delivery.

The application of knowledge derived from systematic research in psychology and other disciplines is crucial to the ongoing evolution of the hybrid field of marketing. For example, psychologist George Katona pioneered the use of survey methodologies in order to assess consumer expectations and attitudes. His work resulted in effective predictors of purchasing behaviour which ultimately were incorporated into the index of consumer sentiment, a leading economic indicator (Friestad, 2001). The applied tradition in psychology also in part can be traced back to the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin who, in his often quoted comment that 'there is nothing as practical as a good theory', implied that once we have obtained scientific understanding of some aspect of behaviour, it should be possible to put that knowledge to practical use. During the Second World War, in a series of experiments, Lewin set out to determine the most effective persuasive techniques for convincing women to contribute to the war effort by changing their families' dietary habits. The goal was to influence the women to change their meat consumption patterns to less desirable, but cheaper and still nutritious meats, to buy more milk in order to protect the health of family members, and to safeguard the well-being of their babies by feeding them cod-liver oil and orange juice. Lewin compared the effectiveness of two kinds of persuasive appeals by randomly assigning housewives to an experimental condition involving either a lecture or group discussion on the recommended changes. The results of the research revealed that actively discussing ways to achieve good nutrition resulted in greater changes towards healthier eating habits than passively listening to lectures. Lewin explained the findings by suggesting that group processes had come into play to reinforce the desired normative behaviour for those individuals who had participated in the discussions. To some extent, contemporary support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers, can be seen as part of the legacy of Lewin's wartime research (Brehm and Kassin, 1993).

A survey of the psychological foundations of marketing

It has been suggested that one way of defining marketing is to consider it as psychology applied to business. Although an overly simplistic definition given the evolving complexity and breadth of the marketing discipline, the definition fits

perfectly with the key objective of this chapter, which is to describe the various ways that the discipline of marketing is psychological in nature. To satisfy that objective, the remainder of this chapter surveys five essential topical areas that exemplify the ways that psychology provides insight into customer behaviour and can be incorporated within formulations for marketing actions and marketing management decision making. In turn, the following areas are covered: (1) motivation; (2) perception; (3) decision making; (4) attitudes; and (5) persuasion.

Motivation

A good starting point for surveying the psychological underpinnings of marketing is by considering some basic notions related to motivation. Indeed, the essence of marketing, as clarified by the well-known marketing concept, is firmly rooted within the context of motivational needs. The marketing concept presumes that the various aspirations and objectives of marketing practitioners are oriented to beneficial outcomes for all of the stakeholders involved in a marketing exchange. Primarily, marketing is held to play a useful role in helping consumers satisfy their needs and thereby enables the smooth operation of the exchange relationship between consumers and organizations. This is done through the development of needed products and services that are priced so as to give good value to buyers, while providing profit to the product producer, service provider, and other intermediaries. Thus, marketers are beholden to identify the physiological and psychological needs that motivate consumers and the means through which those needs can be satisfied through the development and provision of appropriate marketplace offerings.

Derived from the Latin term *movere* ('to move'), motivation is a psychological construct that encompasses a range of processes that energize, direct and sustain goal-directed behaviour. It is widely understood that consumer behaviour typically is stimulated by an internal deficiency that results in an imbalance or disequilibrium attributed to a discrepancy between the present condition and some ideal state. The resulting state of tension tied to the unfilled need gives rise to a drive – an internal psychological force that impels a person to engage in an action designed to satisfy the need. Such behaviour is goal-directed, that is, it is not randomly selected, but chosen on the basis of learning (e.g. the outcomes of previous experiences) and cognitive processes (e.g. expectations of future outcomes). Motivated behaviour is directed towards certain end states or outcomes (typically referred to as 'goal objects' or 'incentives') that the individual anticipates will satisfy extant needs, reduce the inner state of tension, and thereby restore the system to a state of balance.

Consumers play an active role in selecting their goals, and products and services represent means by which they can satisfy their various needs. Goal objects that attract the behaviour of consumers (so-called 'positively-valent' objects) reflect consumer wants or desires and, in that sense, represent external manifestations of consumer needs. By contrast, undesired goal objects (so-called 'negatively-valent' objects) repel behaviour, as would be the case when a consumer avoids a brand of soap that is

thought to cause drying of the skin. A person's needs are strongly interrelated, and, as a result, needs can operate simultaneously on behaviour. An expensive fur coat can satisfy certain practical or utilitarian needs (e.g. to be warm during the winter) as well as more emotional or experiential needs (e.g. the excitement associated with wearing the coat in public) and status needs (e.g. the personal satisfaction that comes from being envied by others). Divergent forces can place consumers in a state of motivation conflict, as when the attracting forces of the expensive fur coat are opposed by the need to maintain one's budget or the desire to protect the rights of endangered animals. In such cases, marketers can assist consumers in overcoming such 'approach-avoidance' conflicts by designing appeals that emphasize the desirable aspects of the product and downplay the negative (e.g. by offering a suitable financing arrangement for the purchase). Many marketing messages are designed specifically to make consumers aware of the needs that can be satisfied through the purchase or use of certain products or services. Thus, an Ericsson advertisement heralded the GH388 cellphone as the one 'made to match the needs of the international traveller' and a Barney's of New York advertisement claimed that the shopper 'will have no difficulty finding anything you need' at the retail clothing store.

It is important to note that both physiological needs (e.g. hunger, thirst, pain avoidance, security, maintenance of body temperature) and psychogenic needs (e.g. achievement, affiliation, status, approval, power) motivate consumer behaviour. For example, conspicuous consumption, a concept that can be traced back to the work of economist Thorstein Veblen (1899) to explain 'the waste of money and/or resources by people to display a higher status than others' is clearly linked to the psychological ego-related needs for status, approval and self-confidence, although it may be influenced in part by extrinsic factors, such as social norms and cultural values. The lavish expenditure of money that is primarily guided by a desire to display one's wealth and success can be seen in the purchase of luxury brand products (e.g. a 20,000 euro Patek Philippe watch). This motive can operate at an unconscious level, such that consumers may not be consciously aware of the actual forces that have guided their purchasing behaviour. Projective research techniques are often utilized by marketing researchers to gain insight into the unconscious motives that explain the root causes of unconsciously-motivated behaviour (Kassarjian, 1974; Rook, 2006).

Certain needs may become more or less compelling for the consumer as circumstances change. A consumer predilection towards conspicuous consumption is likely to be offset when the satisfaction of certain basic needs is threatened. This was evidenced during the global financial crisis which began in 2008, a period during which consumers grew increasingly responsive to marketers' sales promotions, such as money-off offers. During the fourth quarter of 2008, coupon distribution in the US rose 7.5 per cent and redemptions rose 15 per cent relative to the preceding year, and online searches reflected consumers' concerns about their economic well-being. Searches of value-related words such as 'coupons' rose 161 per cent to 19.9 million compared with 2007 and 'discount' rose 26 per cent to 7.9 million (Howard, 2009). This shift from higher- to lower-order needs is consistent with early conceptualizations of human motivation, such as Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene theory. The fact that the economic recession also reportedly spawned a significant increase in the volume of candy consumed

(Haughney, 2009) suggests that transformational needs, as expressed by a desire for sensory gratification, may also influence consumers at the same time they strive to overcome problems or satisfy basic needs (Rossiter et al., 1991).

A good example of how psychological principles of motivation conceptually clarify the effectiveness of promotional marketing messages is illustrated by Rogers' (1983) protection motivation theory, which illuminates the circumstances by which fear appeals have persuasive effects on audiences. In this view, the effectiveness of messages that demonstrate the negative aspects or physical dangers associated with a particular behaviour (e.g. smoking cigarettes, drug abuse, spousal abuse) or improper product usage (e.g. drinking and driving) is less a matter of the degree of fear the messages induce, but rather the extent to which they motivate people to protect themselves from the negative consequences and take steps to deal with the danger. Accordingly, a fear appeal must contain four components if it is to succeed in changing attitudes or behaviour; it must: (1) clearly specify how unpleasant the consequences will be if the recommended actions are not followed; (2) communicate the likelihood or probability of those negative consequences; (3) indicate how the negative consequences can be avoided if the recommendations are followed; and (4) explain that the targeted individuals are capable of performing the recommended action. According to their ordered protection motivation model, Arthur and Quester (2004) propose that the first two components, severity of threat and probability of occurrence, comprise a threat appraisal dimension (i.e. they arouse fear), whereas the last two components, response-efficacy and self-efficacy, comprise a coping appraisal dimension (i.e. they compel a person to behaviour). Evidence suggests that both dimensions must be considered when creating fear appeals (e.g. Eppright et al., 1994).

Other recent marketing applications of motivational concepts can be seen in research on consumer self-control (Vohs and Faber, 2007), response to marketing scams (Langenderfer and Shimp, 2001), dietary behaviours (Bock et al., 1998), and product usage and abandonment (Wansink et al., 2000).

Perception

Perception refers to a set of psychological processes that enable individuals to experience and make sense of their surrounding environment through the active cognitive processes of selection, organization and interpretation. Unprocessed sensory information received via the sensory systems that enable vision, hearing, taste and touch is rendered meaningful on the basis of innate human abilities, prior learning and past experiences. For example, seeing a red can on the table might be perceived as a Coca-Cola soft drink, without any apparent indication of the brand name. Marketers must be attentive to perceptual principles because it is the consumer's subjective experience or personal construction of objective reality that determines his or her reactions to marketing phenomena. Many difficult lessons have been learned when marketing decisions have been made without a concern for consumer perception, including new product launches, promotional campaigns, and pricing considerations. For example, Starbucks was forced to pull from stores its 'Collapse

into Cool' promotional posters for the popular coffee chain's new Tazo citrus drinks when consumers complained that the poster's imagery (flying insects surrounding two tall iced beverages) was too reminiscent of the September 11 attacks on New York's Twin Towers. Although the ad had nothing to do with the event, the combination of the term 'collapse' and the unfortunate choice of illustration was perceived by some consumers as insensitive on the part of the company and a malicious attempt to capitalize on the misfortunes of others (Roeper, 2002).

The perceptual process can be understood as comprised of a chain of events that begins with sensorial input (i.e. the immediate response of our sensory receptors to basic stimuli like light, sound and texture) and ends with the conscious recognition (i.e. a meaningful perception) of an external event (e.g. 'Aha, there's a Coke on the table'). In other words, perception is not a single, discrete experience, but rather the conscious determination of a sequence of non-conscious processes. This point helps us understand why certain stimuli may not be noticed by individuals even after exposure to the stimulus has occurred (e.g. 'I didn't even see the can on the table because I was concentrating on the song that was playing in the background'). As the initial stage of the perceptual process, exposure tends to be influenced by stimulus factors (colour, size, position, novelty, contrast) and personal factors (past experience, expectations, motives, needs, mood). Thus, some stimuli are more likely to capture our attention (e.g. those that are unexpected, unique, or in direct contrast from their surroundings) than are others (non-changing, repetitive, and similar to background stimuli), because the former are more utile in overcoming the tendency for *sensory adaptation*, the process whereby responsiveness to an unchanging stimulus decreases over time. Perceptual vigilance describes the tendency for people to have a heightened sensitivity to stimuli that are capable of satisfying their motives (e.g. 'I noticed that Coke right away because I was so thirsty'), whereas perceptual defence pertains to the tendency for people to screen out stimuli that are too threatening, even though exposure may have occurred (e.g. 'I probably didn't see the soft drink because I'm trying to stick to my diet').

The relevance of these perceptual notions to marketing should be apparent. Marketers and advertisers clearly want consumers to perceive their offerings and messages (i.e. to select them), but must counter consumers' tendency to screen out marketing-related stimuli, whether it be an advertisement in a magazine, a package on a store shelf, an email that announces a promotion, and so on. The problem of capturing consumer attention has increased in recent decades as the number of offerings and marketing communications to promote those offerings have steadily proliferated. Indeed, the excessive bombardment of promotional messages has led to *advertising clutter*, the 'proliferation of advertising that produces excessive competition for viewer attention, to the point that individual messages lose impact and viewers abandon the ads (via fast-forwarding, changing channels, quitting viewing, etc.)' (Lowrey et al., 2005: 121). Beyond the most obvious case of television advertising, the problem of clutter also characterizes consumers' rising aversion to other marketing formats, including outdoor signage, email spamming, internet pop-up messages, and SMS messaging. Clutter is likely to impede message recall, especially when one considers that a majority of consumers engage in multi-tasking, such as using their PC or mobile phone while watching television (Greenspan, 2004).

The ability for any one promotional message to break through marketing clutter in order to capture attention, arouse interest, and have its intended effects has become exceedingly difficult. Marketing research must be carried out to determine the appropriate strategies for capturing attention and enhancing recall; for example, by developing messages that are at odds with commonly-held beliefs, including a lot of white space or vivid colours in print ads, incorporating humour or allusions to sexuality in the message content, presenting incomplete stimuli that stimulate audience involvement in the message, and so on. In retail settings, where the number of stock-keeping units (SKUs) continues to rise – the average number of products carried by a typical supermarket has more than tripled since 1980, from 15,000 to 50,000 (Nestle, 2002) – effective product packaging and display are required in order to be noticed and selected by shoppers. As a result, many consumer goods companies now view product packages not only as containers for shipping and storing products, but as three-dimensional ads for grabbing shopper attention (Story, 2007). This is seen in Pepsi's striking bottle designs for its Mountain Dew soft drink, Evian's luxurious glass container for a line of bottled water, rounded Kleenex packages bearing artistic imagery, and NXT's men's products bearing light-emitting diodes that light up the product every 15 seconds to illuminate air bubbles suspended in the clear gel.

Beyond considerations related to stimulus exposure and attention, psychological principles of perception also explain how stimuli are organized and interpreted. The ground-breaking work on perceptual organization was carried out by a group of German psychologists during the early twentieth century who suggested that people tend to organize their perceptions according to certain innate tendencies, such as closure (the tendency to derive meaning from incomplete stimuli by forming a complete perception), figure/ground (the tendency to designate part of the perceptual field as a figure and the rest as background), and grouping (the tendency to group stimuli automatically according to proximity, similarity, or continuity so they form a unified and meaningful impression) (Sternberg, 2008). These principles help explain how the overall unity of perception or 'Gestalt' (i.e. organized form or total configuration) is greater than or fundamentally different from the sum of its individual sensations. Applications of Gestalt principles are apparent in a variety of marketing activities, such as the development of promotional messages (e.g. advertisements that are purposely left incomplete or interrupted before their expected finish in order to involve the perceiver more actively in the message itself and enhance recall), the presentation of goods in the retail setting (e.g. private label brands packaged to look like market leaders and shelved next to them in order to appear to have comparable quality), and pricing (e.g. partitioning the base price and the surcharge so that consumers perceive the total price as cheaper than if the all-inclusive price had been given).

Another basic notion of perception that underlies marketing practice has to do with the fact that there are limits in human sensory reception. The point at which individuals are incapable of detecting weak stimulation is referred to as the absolute threshold, whereas the differential threshold demarcates the point below which people are incapable of noticing changes in a stimulus or differences between similar stimuli (the so-called 'just noticeable difference' or JND). Research has shown that

the JND for two stimuli is not equal to an absolute amount, but an amount that is relative to the intensity of the initial stimulus, a proportionate relationship that is described by Weber's law. Briefly, Weber's law suggests that the greater the initial intensity of a stimulus, the more the stimulus must be changed in order to be detected by the perceiver. This relationship is utilized by marketers in determination of changes that are not intended to exceed the JND and be noticed (e.g. decreases in product size or reductions in product quality attributed to the rising costs of ingredients) or changes that are intended to exceed the JND while keeping costs to a necessary minimum (e.g. product improvements, price reductions).

Other recent applications of perception in marketing are apparent in ongoing research on eating behaviour. In addition to identifying the motivational forces that spark a rise in obesity levels, marketing researchers are actively engaged in studies intended to illuminate how diet is influenced by perceptual factors. Research has shown that low-fat labels increase snack-food consumption for normal-weight and overweight consumers who are apt to misperceive 'low-fat' foods as lower in calories and to overestimate appropriate serving size (Wansink and Chandon, 2006). Consumers also tend to underestimate the caloric content of main dishes, leading them to choose higher calorie side dishes, drinks or desserts (Chandon and Wansink, 2007).

For a discussion of the critical role of perceptions in the marketing of brands, see Batey (2008).

Decision making

A fundamental focus of psychological research and theory is that of human decision making; specifically, the cognitive processes by which people make judgements. These processes provide significant insight into our understanding of human consumption, which can be conceptualized as a sequence of decision-making stages, ranging from the decision to consume (whether to spend or save, timing of the consumption, amount of goods to consume), product category spending (the category of goods or services to consume), brand selection (choice of benefits, role of reputation and status, loyalty and preference, brand image and positioning), buying behaviour (how and where to shop and pay, whether to comparison shop, frequency of shopping and product acquisition), and product usage and disposition (nature of product usage, how to dispose of products, environmental concerns).

Decision making typically begins with problem recognition; that is, the individual perceives a discrepancy between a current state of his or her condition and a desired state. As suggested by motivation theory, the imbalance arouses tension that in turn provokes behaviour. This initial decision-making stage may be attributed to changes in one's actual condition (e.g. depletion of stock, dissatisfaction with current products, changes in one's finances) or ideal state (e.g. new need or want circumstances, recent purchases that create a need for other product add-ons, new product opportunities). In most cases, the imbalance between these states will be perceived as a problem that must be eliminated (such as the depletion of breakfast cereal that requires replenishment), although in other cases, a perceived

opportunity will stimulate action (as when an increase in one's finances motivates one to spend).

Problem recognition is likely to be followed by information search, such that one considers the various alternatives available for solving or eliminating the problem. Information search may be comprised of two steps, an internal search, which involves scanning one's memory for previous experiences that recall the current situation, and an external search, which involves the search for relevant information from a variety of alternative sources, including social relations (e.g. friends, family members), public sources (e.g. news channels, independent product-rating organizations, online forums), and marketing-dominated sources (e.g. advertising, company websites, salespersons). The degree to which such searches are carried out by the individual will depend upon that person's involvement in the problem or the focal concern of the problem. Psychologists conceptualize *involvement* as a construct related to self-relevance; specifically, the term has been defined as 'a motivational state induced by an association between an activated attitude and some aspect of the self-concept' (Johnson and Eagly, 1989: 283). Depending upon the psychological theory, this definition has varying interpretations, suggesting three types of involvement (Verplanken and Svenson, 1997). *Ego-relevant involvement*, derived from social judgement theory (e.g. Sherif and Hovland, 1961), refers to the psychological state resulting from the activation of enduring attitudes (i.e. evaluative reactions to some stimulus or situation; see 'Attitudes' below) that define a person. According to this perspective, attitudes are comprised of so-called 'latitudes of acceptance' (a range of positions one finds acceptable), 'latitudes of rejection' (a range of positions one finds unacceptable) and 'non-commitment' (positions towards which one is indifferent). Because high ego involvement attitudes are less easily influenced, high ego involvement tends to enhance latitudes of rejection (i.e. the range of positions one finds unacceptable), thereby inhibiting persuasion (Johnson and Eagly, 1989).

Impression-relevant involvement, a concept which stems from dissonance theory, refers to self-presentation motives that are activated in situations in which someone expresses an attitude. This type of involvement pertains to the concern one has with defending a position, and thus increases when an individual believes that the expression of an attitude will have an impact on the impression others form of him or her (Leippe and Elkin, 1987; Zimbardo, 1960). Finally, *outcome-relevant involvement*, which stems from dual-process persuasion theory (Chaiken, 1987; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), has to do with the degree to which situations or issues are linked to the attainment of desirable outcomes. This type of involvement is assumed to be associated with message-relevant thinking, such that high involvement in a message is likely to result in careful scrutiny of the merits of the arguments that comprise a persuasive message. By contrast, argument strength is less likely to influence the attitudes of persons with low involvement in the message (see 'Persuasion' below).

Aspects of each of these psychological conceptualizations of involvement are reflected in marketing applications of the involvement construct and its role in the information search and evaluation of alternative stages of consumer decision making (Andrews et al., 1990). From a marketing perspective, *consumer involvement* has been defined as the motivation to process product-related information

(Solomon, 2008). Implicit in this definition is the understanding that involvement relates to the importance or relevance of a product/service or its purchase and the perceived risks involved in the purchase, elements that maintain the self-relevance notion rooted in the psychological conceptualizations.

During the information search stage of the decision-making process, consumers are likely to be motivated to engage in an extensive external search to the extent that a purchase is high in relevance and perceived risks (i.e. perceived negative consequences, which may be functional, financial, social or personal in nature). Products that evoke high-involvement processes tend to elicit high levels of perceived risk, given that they are infrequently purchased, higher in cost, complex, personally relevant and publicly visible to others (e.g. a new car, home, computer, expensive suit). The high involvement decision-making process involves extensive problem solving; that is, considerable time and effort are devoted to an external search for information and the subsequent evaluation of alternatives. The abundant information, gathered from a wide array of external sources, is likely to be applied to an evaluation of alternatives through a compensatory approach, which implies that an offer or brand will be selected through a determination of the preponderance of desired product attributes (i.e. characteristics or features that come to mind when considering a product category), weighted according to personal preference (the so-called 'weighted-additive rule'). Because the decision is based on a careful, rational scrutiny and comparison of all the facts, an alternative may be selected even though it has certain weaknesses or drawbacks, so long as they are compensated by important, personally-relevant strengths. For example, after careful evaluation, a new car buyer may opt for the Toyota Camry, despite its high cost (a key drawback), because its higher ratings on specific features (e.g. performance, safety, comfort) result in an overall evaluation that surpasses that of the considered alternatives. Further, preferences are likely to be shaped during the analysis of alternatives, such that a favourable attitude towards one alternative will precede its selection (i.e. preference precedes trial).

By contrast, products that evoke low-involvement processes are associated with low levels of perceived risks – they are frequently purchased, inexpensive, and low in personal relevance (e.g. household cleaning products, soft drinks, candy). Such purchase situations are unlikely to motivate the consumer to devote much time or effort to the information search; rather, the problem-solving approach utilized is often limited to a minimal external search or internal search of stored memories pertaining to the various alternatives. For example, when choosing from among the soft drink beverages in a supermarket, a consumer may select Pepsi Max as a result of a point of purchase display that stimulates recall of the slogan, 'Max your Life', which had been stored in memory during exposure to ads associated with the launch of the brand. Because the consumer lacks the motivation to engage in extensive information search for such a low involvement product, a distinct preference is unlikely to be developed until after the choice is made and the product is consumed.

Consumers are apt to apply non-compensatory decision-making rules or other heuristics when evaluating low-involvement alternatives; in essence, these are approaches that provide shortcuts for a relatively effortless and speedy decision. One example of a non-compensatory strategy, 'satisficing', involves the selection of the first adequate option, without the consumer exploring or giving consideration

to the entire set of options. A similar strategy is to apply the lexicographic rule, which consists of selecting an alternative among those to be considered that receives the highest evaluation on the most important or salient attribute; in the case that a choice is not clear, the remaining brands are compared on the second most important attribute, and so on until one alternative remains. With such approaches, alternatives that excel on other features will not be selected; that is, a trade-off of the benefits of some attributes against the deficits of others will not occur. Satisficing and the lexicographic rule represent examples of *heuristics*, which are simple rules of thumb, educated guesses, or intuitive judgements that simplify the decision-making process, leading to outcomes that often lead to satisfactory, albeit sub-optimal, outcomes. In the marketing context, consumers may approach complex choices by simply concluding that the most expensive brand has the highest quality, or simply select a brand which offers the most extra features because it is thought that one will probably wish to have those features later. The nature of heuristics and their potential pitfalls (see Table 6.2) have been experimentally studied and elaborated on by cognitive psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (Kahneman and Tversky, 2000; Kahneman et al., 1982).

Although beyond the scope of the present chapter, it should be noted that psychologists have identified a number of additional factors that are likely to influence decision making, including personality (e.g. some consumers are more likely

Table 6.2 Examples of Heuristic Biases and Marketing Examples

Bias	Description	Marketing example
Affect heuristic	Hastily judging objects or people by an immediate feeling of 'goodness' or 'badness'	Overly trusting a friendly seller; exaggerating the performance quality of a product due to its external appeal (e.g. a freshly painted used car)
Availability heuristic	Salient memories override normative reasoning	A consumer rejects all Sony products because of an early bad experience with one cheap Sony product
Confirmation bias	The tendency to seek out opinions and facts that support one's own beliefs and hypotheses	Tendency to take into account product reviews that laud an item you want to purchase, while ignoring negative reviews
False consensus effect	Inclination to assume that one's beliefs are more widely held than they actually are	Assuming that others will be satisfied with the same brands and service providers that you prefer
Gambler's fallacy	Pervasive false beliefs about the nature of random sequences	Lottery players who play the same numbers every time, assuming the number is 'due' to win

Table 6.2 (Cont'd)

Bias	Description	Marketing example
Planning fallacy	People consistently underestimate the amount of time and effort it will take for them to accomplish a given task	A consumer waits until the last minute to shop for presents; people underestimating the time and effort required to assemble a newly purchased item
Representativeness heuristic	The tendency to blindly classify objects based on surface similarity; 'like goes with like'	Assuming that the quality of a cheaper brand is equal to that of a brand leader due to similar packaging

Source: Adapted from Anissimov, 2004. Reprinted with kind permission.

to seek variety than others, or are more receptive to new and innovative options), lifestyles and values (e.g. consumption decisions are influenced by one's personal priorities and characteristic way of living), learning (e.g. consumers are likely to be influenced by previous decisions and experiences), social influences (e.g. word-of-mouth recommendations from friends can have a significant influence on a person's choices), and situational forces (e.g. store atmospherics can enhance the shopping experience and influence choices). Finally, psychological insight into the decision-making process has been applied by marketers in the design of advertising and other types of promotions (see Mehta, 1994; Rossiter et al., 1991).

Attitudes

The topic of attitudes has been the focus of an enormous amount of research attention in psychology, although interest in the construct dates back to the turn of the twentieth century (Kraus, 1995; Rajecki, 1990). One reason for the intense scrutiny of attitudes has to do with their pervasiveness in everyday life. Any time people make evaluations of something in their social world, or react positively or negatively to the things they encounter, in essence, they are revealing their attitudes. Thus, whenever marketers or consumer researchers ask consumers what they think or how they feel about something in the marketplace – a product, brand, price, service, store, advertisement, and so on – their effort is oriented towards the assessment of attitudes. A common assumption is that attitudes influence how people react in a behavioural sense, that is, that attitudes precede and influence behaviour. Although once the subject of contentious debate, the causal link between attitudes and behaviour in certain specified circumstances (assuming appropriate measurement approaches are utilized) is indisputable (Kraus, 1995). These points help us understand why the attitudes of the various stakeholders in the marketing process are so compelling to marketers, and why the measurement

of attitudes is considered so important to researchers. If accurate measures of consumer attitudes can be obtained, then it should be possible to predict behaviour with a certain degree of accuracy.

A common view of the attitude construct is that it represents a person's tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to the object of the attitude, which may be a concrete entity (such as a product), something more abstract (such as quality of service), other persons, or ideas. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1998: 269), *attitude* is defined as 'a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating an entity with a certain degree of favor or disfavor.' One view of the attitude construct conceptualizes it as a relatively enduring organization of three interrelated psychological dimensions: (1) cognitive, which is comprised of beliefs about the attitude object; (2) affective, which consists of feelings towards the object; and (3) conative, which refers to intentions leading to behaving in a certain way towards the object. This so-called tricomponent theory emphasizes the ABC of attitudes (affect, behaviour, and cognition) (Rajecki, 1990).

It has long been held that attitudes are capable of serving four useful functions for the individual, including: (1) utilitarian (i.e. attitudes guide behaviour in order to maximize rewards and minimize punishments administered by others; (2) ego-defensive (i.e. attitudes serve as a defence mechanism that can protect the individual from personally threatening realities); (3) knowledge (i.e. attitudes provide order and structure to one's social world); and (4) value-expressive (i.e. attitudes assist the individual in expressing his or her values to others) (Katz, 1960; McGuire, 1969). Each of these functions can readily be applied to understand various aspects of consumer behaviour, including brand preferences, customer loyalty, and reactions to promotional efforts (Solomon, 2008). For example, a straightforward example of the utilitarian function is evident in situations in which consumers develop positive attitudes towards products that bring pleasure and negative attitudes towards products that make them feel bad. Advertisements are often designed to express the utilitarian benefits that can be accrued from the consumption of a product or brand (e.g. Diet Coke, 'Just for the taste of it').

The power of attitudes in the marketing sphere is especially apparent in the context of customer loyalty to a brand. Brand loyalty is conceptualized as a pattern of repeat product purchasing, accompanied by an underlying positive attitude towards the brand. This suggests that there are two key components that comprise loyalty, one of which is behavioural (the purchasing support that comes from buying a particular brand repeatedly) and the other of which is attitudinal (brand commitment attributed to a strong positive attitude or liking for the brand). In what Knox and Walker (2001) deem the 'brand loyalty matrix', considering both of these components together as either high or low suggests different kinds of brand consumers (see Figure 6.1). When both commitment and purchasing support are low for a brand, consumers fall into the 'switchers' category; that is, they show no loyalty towards any one brand but rather switch from brand to brand, assuming they are all essentially alike and the one selected should be that which offers the most savings. 'Habituals' are high on purchasing support, but low on commitment. Such consumers regularly purchase the same brand repeatedly, not out of any true loyalty towards the brand, but more out of habit (or so-called *inertia*, i.e. they lack the motivation to put forth

		Brand Commitment	
		High	Low
Brand Support	High	<p>LOYALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – active decision making, based on product features and quality – high perceived risk in changing – small portfolios 	<p>HABITUALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – passive decision making, based on simplification – will readily change if first brand is unavailable – small portfolios
	Low	<p>VARIETY SEEKERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – multi-brand buying – active search based on quality – large portfolios – seek variety for own sake or alternative use occasions 	<p>SWITCHERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sensitive to price and promotion – large and varied portfolios – low perceived risk in changing

Figure 6.1 Brand loyalty matrix and characteristics of loyalty types (Knox and Walker, 2001)

Source: Knox, S. and Walker, D. (2001) 'Managing and measuring brand loyalty', *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 9: 111–28. Reprinted by permission of the publisher (Taylor & Francis Groups, <http://www.informaworld.com>).

the effort to evaluate and compare specific brands). 'Variety seekers' tend to have a strong brand preference (i.e. high commitment), but like to play the field and thus show low purchasing support. Such consumers are apt to try out alternative brands, even though they have a preferred brand that they ultimately will return to, because they like to experiment, especially for different use situations (e.g. buying an imported brand to share with guests during a party).

'Loyals' are those consumers who score high on both purchasing support and commitment. These are persons who are truly committed to a brand, take pride in using it, recommend it to others, and view the brand as important to their self-concept. The commitment to the brand is likely to be reflective of an underlying attitude that serves the utilitarian function (i.e. the consumer has a strong liking for the brand because it is viewed as highest in quality and therefore is rewarding) as well as the value-expressive function (i.e. true brand loyals define themselves, in part, through their commitment to the brand and can project this sense of self to others through an association with the brand). Personality psychologists suggest that the *self-concept*, defined as one's perceptions of or feelings about oneself, can be extended or modified by the possessions that one owns and uses. In essence, consumers can create themselves and allow themselves to be created by the products, services and experiences they consume, and this is especially likely to be the case for brand loyals, some of whom have such admiration for a brand that they will tattoo themselves with the brand logo. Thus, some persons may define their rebellious and free-spirited self-concept by owning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle,

others exhibit their conscientious and caring nature by purchasing Body Shop products, and others demonstrate their environmental sensitivities by driving a Toyota Prius (Maynard, 2007).

Consistent with the increasing difficulties in reaching consumers through traditional media channels and the growing trend towards consumer-to-consumer influence via social networking, blogging, brand communities, and other forms of social connectedness, marketing strategists have begun to seek out new approaches for engaging customers and converting their loyalty into advocacy. Brand advocates are consumers who appreciate a product or brand so much that they are willing to serve as ambassadors for the offering, enthusiastically recommending it to others. One approach is simply to offer consumers a monetary incentive for each brand referral that leads to a purchase (Ryu and Feick, 2007), a strategy that was utilized by Procter & Gamble during the successful launch of Whitestrips, a leading brand of teeth whitening strips. Another approach is the icecard process, which enables brand adorers (i.e. current buyers especially satisfied with the brand and who have a strong connection and loyalty to it) to order free sets of branded contact cards ('icecards') featuring brand artwork on one side and their own personal details on the other. Hugely popular among young brand loyals, research has revealed that a majority of cards (78 per cent) are distributed to friends and acquaintances, and in 65 per cent of the cases, distribution triggers a brand conversation (Rusticus, 2006). Such approaches can be seen as a form of push marketing in which companies encourage customers with favourable attitudes towards certain offerings to spread the word to others; that is, in each case, the goal is to convert attitudes into behaviours above and beyond a purchase.

Efforts to convert brand loyals into advocates inevitably leads us back to a consideration of the extent to which behaviours can be accurately predicted from measurements of attitudes. In efforts to assess the causal link between attitudes and behaviour, consumer researchers have utilized the self-report research approach pioneered by such psychologists as Louis Thurstone (1928) and Rensis Likert (1932). Measures are obtained by having people describe their own behaviour or state of mind through the use of direct interviews, questionnaires, diaries, and the like. Researchers have found that attitudes are good predictors of behaviour when the following conditions are met: (a) there is a correspondence between the attitude and behavioural measures (i.e. specific attitudes predict specific behaviours); (b) a correspondence exists between attitudinal and behavioural objects, such that the attitude target (i.e. the object of the attitude) matches the behavioural target (i.e. the object towards which behaviour is directed) and the attitude action (i.e. what one would like to do with the object) matches the behavioural action (i.e. the activity that comprises the behaviour); (c) measures of attitudes and behaviours are obtained from the same people; and (d) other factors that influence the attitude-behaviour relationship are considered (e.g. situational variables, other competing attitudes, attitude strength and attitude accessibility) (see Fazio, 1986; Kraus, 1995).

Several of these insights into the attitude-behaviour relationship were taken into account in the development of the behavioural intentions model by social psychologists Fishbein and Ajzen (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Consistent with their theory of reasoned action (now revised as the theory of planned behaviour), they contend that behaviour can most accurately be predicted from a consideration of an individual's *intention* to perform or not perform the

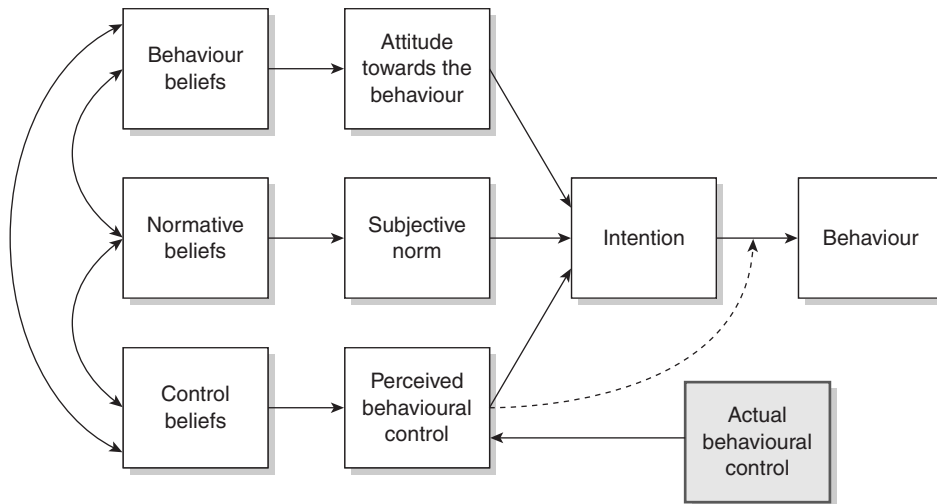


Figure 6.2 Behavioural intentions model based on theory of planned behaviour/reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991)

Source: Reprinted from Ajzen, I. (1991) 'The theory of planned behavior', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50: 179–211. Copyright 1991, with permission from Elsevier.

behaviour, where intention is defined as the subjective estimate of the probability that one will behave in a certain way towards an attitude object. According to Ajzen's revised model (see Figure 6.2), intention is shaped by one's attitude towards the behaviour (i.e. beliefs about the anticipated consequences of the behaviour under consideration and one's evaluations of those consequences) and by subjective norms (i.e. the extent to which one's behaviour is influenced by beliefs about what others prefer and one's motivation to comply with their wishes). The relative importance of these two sets of intention-influencing factors will determine the nature of a person's intention, assuming the person holds a sufficient degree of perceived control over performing the behaviour, and intention should serve as an efficient guide as to how likely a person is to perform or not perform the behaviour.

As an example applied to the marketing context, consider the case of a young student who has been saving to purchase her first car. If we wanted to predict the likelihood of her purchasing a sports car that aroused her interest at a local dealership, we might first try to gauge her attitude towards purchasing it. Through appropriate questioning – Fishbein and Ajzen utilized written questionnaires with closed-ended rating scales for this purpose – we might learn that, for the most part, she believes the purchase will have positive consequences (e.g. the car will impress others, she will feel good about herself by driving such a cool car, parking will be easier with a small car, the car will require few repairs), albeit with a couple of potential negative outcomes as well (e.g. she may have to borrow a small sum of money from her parents to make the purchase, car parts may be difficult to locate). Overall, however, the preponderance of positive outcomes is likely to result in a strong positive attitude toward purchasing the sports car. In terms of subjective norms, the story might be

quite different. When considering the student's perceptions about the beliefs of important others, we may learn that, overall, the people she cares about do not think the purchase is a good idea (e.g. her parents think the sports car is too extravagant and unsafe, her boyfriend thinks the car is too expensive and he would be a bit jealous). On the other hand, she believes the dealer thinks the sports car was 'made for her' and that she would be unwise to forego such a great deal. Because the seller's reactions are less important to the student than those of her parents and boyfriend, it is likely that a strong negative subjective norm will be working against her intention to purchase the sports car. Finally, our prediction must take into account the students' beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede her purchase (e.g. a friend knows the dealer and may be able to encourage him to offer an attractive financing arrangement). If the balance of these three sets of forces (attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived control) results in a relatively high intention to buy the car, it is likely that we will be correct in predicting that she will buy it, assuming the measures are obtained within a reasonably close temporal proximity to when the behaviour is likely to occur.

The behavioural intentions model is an example of a psychological framework that has been borrowed and applied by researchers and practitioners in a variety of other disciplines, and marketing is no exception. The model has successfully predicted purchases for a wide variety of product and service categories (e.g. toothpastes, automobiles, laundry detergents, clothing, medical therapies, weight control drugs) and other consumption activities (e.g. dieting, exercising, use of money-saving coupons, donating blood) (see Ajzen, 2008; Sheppard et al., 1988).

Persuasion

Another reason that researchers and practitioners have devoted such formidable attention to the attitude construct has to do with the interest in attitude change, commonly referred to as 'persuasion'. Attitude change is related to the assumption that attitudes and behaviour are causally linked; in short, if attitudes influence behaviour, then it should be possible to have an impact on behaviour by first changing the attitudes that give rise to the behaviour. The ability to change or somehow influence consumer preferences, their likes and dislikes, and their loyalties to companies or brands is of fundamental interest to marketers. For example, if a competitor's brand is preferred over that offered by another company, resulting in higher market share for the former, then the latter company could attempt to modify how customers feel about the respective brands in order to have an impact on their buying behaviour. The means by which such attitude change can be accomplished have been the focus of an enormous amount of research over the years by social psychologists and communication researchers (Gilbert et al., 1998; Hovland et al., 1953). One of the pioneers in persuasion research, social psychologist Carl I. Hovland, borrowed as the guiding focus for this research the didactic statement attributed to communication theorist Harold Laswell, 'who says what to whom with what effect'. Each element of the statement has served as the focus of research programmes since the Second World War, the results of which have been utilized by marketers in the design of

marketing messages (e.g. one-sided vs. two-sided messages; order of arguments), determination of message source (e.g. celebrity endorsements; salesperson characteristics), audience variables (e.g. utilized in segmentation and targeting considerations), development of social marketing programmes (e.g. safe driving campaigns), among a broad array of other applications.

In one widely applied approach for understanding and implementing persuasive interventions, social psychologists Petty and Cacioppo (1986) incorporated notions related to involvement theory in the development of their elaboration likelihood model (ELM). In their view, there are two possible paths or 'routes' to persuasion, a central route and a peripheral route. The route taken depends on one's motivation and ability to process information presented in the message; that is, to think about and carefully scrutinize arguments in the persuasive communication. When the central route is followed, the receiver is thought to be very active and involved, as in situations where persuasive messages deal with issues that are important and personally relevant. In contrast, the peripheral path is likely to be taken when messages deal with issues that are uninvolved or unimportant for the recipient.

In order to better distinguish between the two explanations for how attitude change can be effected, imagine the case in which you are actively shopping for a new car. Because a new car purchase is something very important to you – that is, it is high in risk, an expensive purchase, and a choice that entails complex consideration – your head will be spinning with questions as you contemplate the arguments being presented to you by a salesperson who is attempting to convince you to purchase a car that you had expressed interest in. Are you better off with an earlier offer? Will you be able to keep up with the payments? Is this really the right car for you? In other words, when confronted with a personally significant message, we do more than simply listen for the sake of acquiring information, we think about the message, its arguments and their implications. This process is what Petty and Cacioppo refer to as 'high elaboration', which consists of evaluating the strength or rationality of a persuasive message, considering whether the message contents agree or disagree with one's current belief system, and weighing the personal implications of the message points and arguments.

Now imagine that you are not interested at all in buying a car. However, while in the cinema awaiting the start of a movie, a 30-second advertisement for a new Chevrolet car model is shown that captures your attention. It begins by showing the popular singer Bruce Springsteen and his band performing the song 'Born in the USA'. The music continues as the Chevrolet appears, transporting an attractive young couple through the idyllic landscape of the American West. Copy text describing various features of the car are eventually superimposed on this scene, and the advertisement ends with the car eventually disappearing over the horizon. Chances are, because of your lack of involvement in a car purchase and your lack of interest in cars in general, you paid little attention to the message arguments (i.e. the car's features), and no doubt would be unable to recall them even immediately after the ad was aired. Because your motivation was low to process the brief message, message elaboration did not occur; rather, your attention was placed on so-called 'peripheral (or persuasion) cues', – features of the communication that were incidental to message content, such as characteristics of the message source (Bruce

Springsteen) and the style or form of the message (the music and compelling images, the attractive couple inside the car).

Attitude change might be accomplished in both of the scenarios described above, but in different ways. At the car dealership, the quality and strength of the message arguments presented by the salesperson would determine the ability of his or her communication to influence your attitudes towards the car being considered. This is because when people are motivated to consider a message carefully, their reaction to it depends on its content. If the arguments are strong and they stimulate favourable evaluation, the message will be persuasive. In the second case, you may leave the cinema with a more favourable attitude towards the Chevrolet depicted in the ad, but for reasons unrelated to message arguments. When you think of the car, it might remind you of Bruce Springsteen, or the song, or of images of the American West, and those thoughts may enhance your feelings about the product.

The ELM model helps to clarify some of the research findings accrued through experimental research on persuasion. For example, it has been found that strong arguments result in more post-communication attitude change than weak arguments, but mostly for research participants who are highly involved in the communication. On the other hand, a message delivered by an expert source (e.g. an endorsement of a new medication by a noted doctor) results in more post-communication attitude change, but mostly for research participants who are not very involved in the message. In the first case, message strength had an impact on highly involved persons who followed the central route to persuasion, whereas in the second case, a characteristic of the source (degree of expertise) had an impact on low-involved persons who followed a peripheral course to persuasion (White and Harkins, 1994).

The implications of the ELM model for marketing strategy are relatively straightforward: strategy should be based on the level of cognitive processing the target audience is expected to engage in and the route they are likely to follow to attitude change. If the processing level is low, due to low motivation and involvement, the peripheral route should dominate, and emphasis will need to be placed on the way messages are executed and on the emotions of the target audience. If the central route is anticipated, then the content of the messages should be dominant – messages will need to be informative and the executional aspects need only be adequate (to maintain attention) (see Mehta, 1994; Petty and Wegener, 1998).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the psychological basis of marketing through a focus on five topical areas of the behavioural sciences. Other areas that were only briefly alluded to here due to space constraints, but which have significant implications for marketers, include learning, personality, social behaviour, and developmental psychology (see Chapter 12). Because the marketing enterprise is comprised of exchange activities that involve people, it is not an exaggeration to

suggest that psychological principles and concepts permeate every marketing action in one sense or another. As the examples presented in this chapter attest, much can be gained when marketing activities are planned and implemented with an eye towards psychology's role in the process.

The future holds great promise for further applications of psychology in marketing as our understanding of human behaviour and mental processes continues to evolve. For example, new technologies are making it possible to track what happens in buyers' brains as they consider difficult choices. In one recent study (Hedgcock and Rao, 2009), volunteers' brains were scanned as they pondered a choice between sets of equally appealing options. When the choice set also included a third, less attractive option, the choice between the preferred options became easier and relatively more pleasurable, as indicated by decreased activity in an area of the brain associated with negative emotions. By contrast, the brain scans for persons choosing between only two equally preferred options revealed irritation attributed to the difficulty of the choice process. Apparently, the participants were using heuristics when evaluating three-item choice sets rather than a more complex evaluation process.

It is important to add that although this chapter concerns the impact of psychology on marketing, the discipline of psychology in turn has drawn from the marketing process. For example, marketing tactics are utilized by psychologists to seek coveted research funds for scientific and therapeutic programmes, as well as for influencing public policy and obtaining government support for public interventions (e.g. in efforts to control obesity and other eating disorders and programmes to control domestic abuse and other forms of violence). Mutual sharing and exchange between the disciplines is likely to continue through the twenty-first century, resulting in further benefits for both marketing and psychology.

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