



Part 2

Understanding how marketing communications works

Chapters 5–8

This part of the book is concerned with the contextual aspects of marketing communications.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore fundamental issues concerning information processing and buyer behaviour, important elements if marketing communication messages are to be effective.

Chapter 7 explores the nature and characteristics of relationships and then reviews the impact marketing communications can have on relationship marketing and its development. This provides a platform for the way in which the rest of the book is developed.

The final chapter in Part 2 develops ideas about how marketing communications might work and traces some important models and concepts that again are reflected in later parts of this text.

For readers with access to the companion web site that accompanies this book, there is a supplementary chapter available in PDF format. This examines the influence and potential impact on marketing communications, of an organisation's different stakeholders and the interrelationships that organisations form with them.

Video Insight Part 2

Part 2 of the book is concerned with issues relating to how marketing communications might work. Broadly, marketing communications work partly by understanding audiences, their perceptions and attitudes and then using marketing communications to change, develop or build on these elements.

The video material of the City of Birmingham focuses on how the marketing team measure people's perceptions of the city and how they have tried to make their communications interactive, encouraging people to share their feelings about the city, with the city. This involves extensive use of their web site.

HSBC provide an insight into another important dynamic of marketing communications, the development of customer and supplier relationships. This part of the Video Insight allows you to hear about the way in which this bank considers the importance of customer relationships and how they use marketing communications to develop them.

Part 2 of the book also addresses issues concerning the way customers buy products and services and how marketing communications needs to be used in a complementary way, if it is to function effectively. In the video we see how Land Rover has changed their products as a result of changes in the marketplace. We then hear about how they account for the way their customers make buying decisions and how they use marketing communications in the knowledge of how their customers use their brand.

Go to www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill to watch the Video Insight, and then answer the following questions:

1. How have the City of Birmingham used marketing communications to change peoples' perceptions of the city? Why do you think they have had to do this?
2. If you were responsible for HSBC's marketing how would you use marketing communications to build customer trust?
3. How might advertising be used to influence a potential customer's decision making process?





Chapter 5

Understanding how customers process information

Understanding the way in which customers perceive their world, the way they learn, develop attitudes and respond to marketing communication stimuli is fundamental if effective communications are to be developed.

Aims and learning objectives

The aim of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the main elements of buyer information processing, in order that readers develop an appreciation of the way marketing communications can be built on an understanding of buyer behaviour.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:

1. introduce cognitive theory as an important element in the development of planned communications;
2. examine personality as a main factor in the determination of successful communications;
3. explore perception in the context of marketing communications;
4. understand the main differences between conditioning and cognitive learning processes;
5. appraise the role of attitudes and the different ways in which attitudes are thought to be developed;
6. appreciate the importance of understanding an individual's intention to act in a particular way and its part in the decision process;
7. understand how marketing communications can be used to influence these elements of buyer behaviour and in particular change attitudes;
8. provide a brief overview of the other environmental influences that affect the manner in which individuals process information.

For an applied interpretation see Janine Dermody's MiniCase entitled *The lost generation? The challenge of communicating with politically cynical British youth* at the end of this chapter.

Introduction

This chapter explores the elements that influence the information processing behaviour of two different types of buyer: consumers and organisational buyers. It will then establish how the identification of different behaviour patterns can influence marketing communications.

Marketing is about many things, but one of its central themes is the management of behaviour. This behaviour may be seen in the context of an exchange, in which case actions prior to, during and after a purchase will be important. In a relationship context, it is the series of behaviours manifest at the beginning, in the middle and during the decline and termination of a relationship that will be pertinent. Whichever perspective is adopted, it makes sense to underpin marketing activities with an understanding of buyer behaviour, in order that marketing strategies and communication plans in particular be more effective. It is not the intention to provide a deep or comprehensive analysis

It makes sense to underpin marketing activities with an understanding of buyer behaviour.

of buyer behaviour, since there are many specialist texts that readers can refer to (for example, Solomon *et al.*, 2007 or Evans *et al.*, 2006). However, this book considers the context in which buyers process information, the way they behave, their decision-making processes and the ways in which such knowledge can be utilised for effective marketing communications.

There are a number of theoretical approaches that have been developed to assist our understanding of human behaviour, but the majority have their roots in one of three psychological orientations. These three (Freud's psychoanalytical theory, reinforcement theory and cognitive theory) can be seen to have influenced thinking about buyer behaviour over the last 50 years (see Table 5.1). This book explores cognitive theory in the context of marketing communications and also acknowledges the influence of emotional and hedonic consumption perspectives.

Table 5.1 Summary of three main psychological orientations

Theoretical approach	Explanation
Psychoanalytical theory	First developed by Freud, this approach is based on the way an individual develops over time within the context of a family and their interactions with mother and father and later with their siblings. Freud was the first to think in this way and to consider the unconscious as an important influence on behaviour. These are now referred to as psychodynamic theories and they hold that human behaviour is primarily the function of reactions to internal (thus mostly unconscious) stimuli: instincts, urges, thoughts.
Reinforcement theory	People behave in the knowledge of what will happen as a result of their behaviour. Therefore, behaviour is dependent upon the expected outcomes or consequences: Rules of Consequences. The three Rules describe the logical outcomes that typically occur after consequences: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consequences that lead to Rewards increase a behaviour. 2. Consequences that lead to Punishments decrease a behaviour. 3. Consequences that lead to neither Rewards nor Punishments extinguish a behaviour.
Cognitive theory	Assumes individuals use and process information derived from external and internal sources, to solve problems and make considered decisions. See text below. Social cognitive theory considers the interaction of an individual's environment, behaviour and various personal factors such as cognitive, affective and biological events.

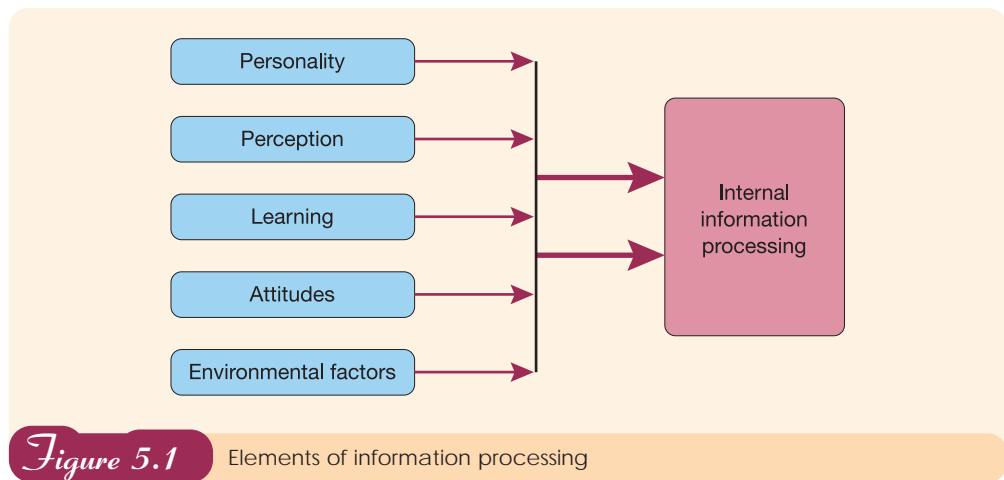
Cognitive theory

Mainstream psychology has moved from a behaviourist to a cognitive orientation. Similarly, the emphasis in understanding and interpreting consumer behaviour has progressed from a reinforcement to a cognitive approach.

Cognitive theory is based on an information-processing, problem-solving and reasoning approach to human behaviour.

Cognitive theory is based on an information-processing, problem-solving and reasoning approach to human behaviour. Individuals use information that has been generated by external sources (e.g. advertisements) and internal sources (e.g. memory). This information is given thought, processed, transferred into meanings or patterns and then combined to form judgements about behaviour (based on Rumelhart in Belk, 1975).

The cognitive orientation considers consumers to be adaptive problem solvers, people who use various processes to reason, form concepts and acquire knowledge. There are several determinants that are important to the understanding of the cognitive orientation because they contribute to the way in which individuals process information. These are personality, perception, learning, attitudes, certain environmental influences and issues pertinent to an individual's purchase situation (Figure 5.1). Each of these will now be considered.



ViewPoint 5.1

Thinking adrenaline with Red Bull

As consumers become more aware and interested in healthy eating and drinking so food and drink manufacturers have tried to adapt their products and communications to meet the needs of this new market.

The world of sports and energy drinks is relatively complex as there are clear yet different attributes associated with brands in these two markets. Energy drinks are designed to provide a boost to a person's system and they contain caffeine and sugar to provide the stimulation. Red Bull and Lucozade Energy are the two market leaders.

Sports drinks on the other hand are designed to replenish nutrients, water and sugar lost through exercise. In this market Lucozade and Powerade lead the market and it is this part of the market that has benefited most from the interest in healthier lifestyles.

Marketing communications in this market need to communicate the benefits of use and this requires some cognitive thought on behalf of consumers. Bainbridge (2007) reports that Red Bull spends 30 per cent

of its turnover on promotional activity. Much of this is spent associating the brand with sports activities and the accompanying adrenaline rush. This is supported by using testimonials from key sports personalities across a range of activities from football and cricket through to golf, water and snow sports.

Source: Bainbridge (2007) www.redbull.co.uk.

Question

How might a competitor to Red Bull in the energy drinks market communicate their brand's attributes if not allowed to use sports activities?

Task

Visit www.redbull.co.uk and make a list of the range of sports that they associate themselves with.

Personality

Personality is, essentially, concerned with the inner properties of each individual, those characteristics that differentiate each of us. Consideration is given to two main approaches: the Freudian and Trait theories of personality.

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Psychoanalytic theory

Freud believed that the needs that motivate human behaviour, are driven by two primary instincts: life and death. The life instincts are considered to be predominantly sexual in nature, whereas the death instincts are believed to be manifested through self-destructive and/or aggressive behaviour.

The personality of the individual is assumed to have developed in an attempt to gratify these needs, and consists of the id, superego and ego; this approach is termed psychoanalytic theory. The id is the repository for all basic drives and motivations. Its function is to seek pleasure through the discharge of tension. The superego acts to restrain the id, to inhibit the impulses of the pleasure-seeking component, partly by acting within the rules of society. These two are obviously in conflict, which the ego attempts to mediate by channelling the drives of the id into behaviour acceptable to the superego.

The application of psychoanalytic theory to buyer behaviour suggests that many of the motives for purchase are driven by deeply rooted sexual drives and/or death instincts. These can only be determined by probing the subconscious, as demonstrated by the work undertaken by motivation researchers, the first of whom were Dichter and Vicary. Motivation research attempts to discover the underlying motivations for consumer behaviour. A variety of techniques have been developed, including in-depth interviews, projective techniques, association tests and focus groups.

Psychoanalytic theory has been criticised as too vague, unresponsive to the environment and too reliant on the early development of the individual. Furthermore, because the samples used are very often small and because of the emphasis on the unconscious, verification and substantiation of the results of experiments are often difficult – some say impossible.

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However, the psychoanalytic approach has been used as the basis for many advertising messages, aimed at deeply rooted feelings, hopes, aspirations and fears. For example, many life assurance companies use fear in their advertising messages to motivate people to invest in life

and pension policies. Advertisements for cars often depict symbols: those of life and death (e.g. Audi), safety (e.g. Volvo) and virility (e.g. Ferrari or Porsche).

We also know that buyers can be motivated by symbolic as well as functional motives in their purchases. Thus the use of sexual appeals and symbols in advertisements is often undertaken with this information in mind. In addition, many commentators agree that motivation research is the forerunner of the psychographics research often used for market segmentation.

Trait theory

In contrast with the largely qualitative approach of the Freudian school is the empirical perspective. Under this approach, personality is measured and quantified. What is being measured are the traits or 'distinguishing, relatively enduring ways in which one individual differs from another' (Guildford, 1959). Personality tests invariably seek to measure individual differences in respect of specific traits. The end result is a label that is applied to the particular traits observed in the individuals being tested. These labels, for example, consider aspects such as the degree of assertiveness, responsiveness to change or the level of sociability an individual might exhibit.

Of specific interest to marketing communicators is the relationship between broad personality traits and general styles of behaviour.

Of specific interest to marketing communicators is the relationship between broad personality traits and general styles of behaviour. Consumer psychologists, working on behalf of advertising agencies in particular, have spent a great deal of time trying to identify specific traits and then develop consumer profiles, which enable a distinct market segment to be determined. One of the early attempts was the 4Cs programme, developed by Young and Rubicam in the late 1980s.

Four distinct types of consumer were identified: aspirers, succeeders, mainstreamers and reformers, each of whom have particular psychographic characteristics.

Mainstreamers are motivated by a basic need for security and belonging. To satisfy that drive, they tend to buy established products and manufacturers' brands, as they perceive purchase risk to be lower. Aspirers seek status and self-esteem and this is directed through identification with materialism. Aspirers are able to express themselves through the possession of goods, which act as symbols of achievement, such as the latest hi-fi or designer clothes. Succeeders are people who are successful but who need to control the events in their lives. Typically they read the *Financial Times* or the *Daily Telegraph* and consume products that have proven quality. Reformers are the antithesis of the aspirers, in that they seek self-fulfilment rather than status. Own brands and natural products are sought by them, as it is the quality of life that is their underlying motivation (QED, 1989).

The use of personality within marketing communications is both well established and important, as demonstrated through the use of celebrities for the purposes of brand endorsement.

ViewPoint 5.2

Disguising personality with silhouettes

Some brands are deliberately stripped of personality as this enables them to appeal to a wider audience and avoid being labelled or stereotyped. For example, BMW's long running advertising campaign is based on the functional excellence of their cars. BMW's advertising is characterised by the lack of people in their advertising. For many years the driver was never seen and there are no passengers or children, so viewers cannot categorise certain types of drivers as typically BMW.

DeBeers have used the strapline, 'a diamond is forever' because they feel it has universal appeal. One of their more successful campaigns, 'Shadows' presented couples in silhouette form progressing through various stages in their lives. The ad was designed to reach and appeal to a wide range of people, signifying that a diamond was for everyone.

In much the same way Apple used a silhouette of a person wearing/using an iPod. Although the visual suggested male, female and age-group characteristics, the silhouette focused attention on the product, not the type of person who should use it.



Exhibit 5.1

DeBeers – Shadows
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives.



Exhibit 5.2

iPod Silhouette
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives.

In all of these cases the absence of clearly defined users or the use of a silhouette devoid of personality, invited viewers to superimpose themselves and their own personalities into the car, relationship and music environment respectively. By not presenting a particular type of person and their distinguishing personality traits, these brands have been able to reach and appeal to diverse audiences.

Sources: Adapted from Cobau (2000); Anon. (2004).

Question

To what extent do you think potential purchasers might find it difficult to associate with these brands, when there is nobody to identify with?

Task

Get copies of these three ads. Apart from the silhouette, is there anything else that they have in common?

By combining the qualitative approach of the motivational researchers with the quantitative approach of the trait theorists, psychographic variables can be determined. Over the last 20 years this has developed into a popular segmentation technique, called psychographics.

Perception

Perception is concerned with how individuals see and make sense of their environment.

Perception is concerned with how individuals see and make sense of their environment. It is about the selection, organisation and interpretation of stimuli by individuals so that they can understand the world.

Each day, individuals are exposed, to a tremendous number of stimuli. De Chernatony (1993) suggests that each consumer is exposed to over 550 advertisements per day while Lasn (1999) estimated that this should be 3,000 advertisements per day (cited by Dahl *et al.*, 2003). In addition, there are thousands of other non-commercial stimuli that each individual encounters. To cope with this bombardment, our sensory organs select those stimuli to which attention is given. These selected stimuli are organised in order to make them comprehensible and are then given meaning. In other words, there is an interpretation of the stimuli that is influenced by attitudes, values, motives and past experiences as well as the character of the stimuli themselves. Stimuli, therefore, are selected, organised and interpreted.

Perceptual selection

The vast number of messages mentioned earlier need to be filtered, as individuals cannot process them all. The stimuli that are selected result from the interaction of the nature of the stimulus with the expectations and the motives of the individual. Attention is an important factor in determining the outcome of this interaction: 'Attention occurs when the stimulus activates one or more sensory receptor nerves and the resulting sensations go to the brain for processing' (Hawkins *et al.*, 1989).

The nature of the stimuli, or external factors such as the intensity and size, position, contrast, novelty, repetition and movement, are factors that have been developed and refined by marketing communicators to attract attention. Animation is used to attract attention when the

Sexual attraction can be a powerful means of capturing the attention of audiences.

product class is perceived as bland and uninteresting, such as margarine or teabags. Unexpected camera angles and the use of music can be strong methods of gaining the attention of the target audience, as used successfully in the Bacardi Breezer and Renault commercials. Sexual attraction can be a powerful means of capturing the attention of audiences and



Exhibit 5.3

Diet Coke

The hugely successful Diet Coke television ads depict office workers timing their work break to coincide with the presence of certain attractive males. Images courtesy of The Advertising Archives.

when associated with a brand's values can be a very effective method of getting attention (for example, the Diet Coke advertisement, Exhibit 5.3).

The expectations, needs and motives of an individual, or internal factors, are equally important. Individuals see what they expect to see, and their expectations are normally based on past experience and preconditioning. From a communications perspective the presentation of stimuli that conflict with an individual's expectations will invariably receive more attention. The attention-getting power of erotic and sexually driven advertising messages, is understood and exploited. For example, jeans manufacturers such as Levi 501s, Wranglers and Diesel, often use this type of stimulus to promote their brands. However, advertising research based on recall testing often reveals that the attention-getting stimulus (e.g. the male or female) generates high recall scores, but the product or brand is very often forgotten. Looked at in terms of Schramm's model of communication (Chapter 2), the process of encoding was inaccurate, hence the inappropriate decoding.

Of particular interest is the tendency of individuals to select certain information from the environment. This process is referred to as selective attention. Through attention, individuals avoid contact with information that is felt to be disagreeable in that it opposes strongly held beliefs and attitudes.

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Individuals see what they want or need to see. If they are considering the purchase of a new car, there will be heightened awareness of car advertisements and a correspondingly lower level of awareness of unrelated stimuli. Selective attention allows individuals to expose themselves to messages that are comforting and rewarding. For example, reassurance is often required for people who have bought new cars or expensive technical equipment and who have spent a great deal of time debating and considering the purchase and its associated risk. Communications congratulating the new owner on their wise decision often accompany post-purchase literature such as warranties and service contracts. If potentially harmful messages do get through this filter system, perceptual defence mechanisms help to screen them out after exposure.

Perceptual organisation

For perception to be effective and meaningful, the vast array of selected stimuli needs to be organised. The four main ways in which sensory stimuli can be organised are figure-ground, grouping, closure and contour.

Figure-ground

Each individual's perception of an environment tends to consist of articles on a general background, against which certain objects are illuminated and stand proud. Williams (1981) gives the examples of trees standing out against the sky and words on a page. This has obvious implications for advertisers and the design and form of communications, especially advertisements, to draw attention to important parts of the message, most noticeably the price, logo or company/brand name.

Grouping

Grouping can be used to encourage associations between a product and specific attributes.

Objects that are close to one another tend to be grouped together and a pattern develops. Grouping can be used to encourage associations between a product and specific attributes. For example, food products that are positioned for a health market are often displayed with pictures that represent fitness and exercise, the association being that consumption of the food will lead to a lifestyle that incorporates fitness and exercise, as these are important to the target market.

Closure

When information is incomplete individuals make sense of the data by filling in the gaps. This is often used to involve consumers in the message and so enhance selective attention. Advertisements for American Express charge cards or GM credit cards ('if invited to apply'), for example, suggest that ownership denotes membership, which represents exclusiveness and privilege.

Television advertisements that are run for 60 seconds when first launched are often cut to 30 or even 15 seconds later in the burst. The purpose is two-fold: to cut costs and to remind the target audience. This process of reminding is undertaken with the assistance of the audience, who recognise the commercial and mentally close the message even though the advertiser only presents the first part.

Contour

Contours give objects shape and are normally formed when there is a marked change in colour or brightness. This is an important element in package design and, as the battle for shelf space in retail outlets becomes more intense, so package design has become an increasingly important aspect of attracting attention. The Coca-Cola bottle and the packaging of the Toblerone bar are two classic examples of packaging that convey the brand.

These methods are used by individuals in an attempt to organise stimuli and simplify their meanings. They combine in an attempt to determine a pattern to the stimuli, so that they are perceived as part of a whole or larger unit. This is referred to as gestalt psychology.

Perceptual interpretation

Interpretation is the process by which individuals give meaning to the stimuli.

Interpretation is the process by which individuals give meaning to the stimuli once they have been organised. As Cohen and Basu (1987) state, by using existing categories, meanings can be given to stimuli. These categories are determined from the individual's past experiences and they shape what the individual expects to see. These expectations, when combined with the strength and clarity of the stimulus and the motives at the time perception occurs, mould the pattern of the perceived stimuli.

The degree to which each individual's ascribed meaning, resulting from the interpretation process, is realistic, is dependent upon the levels of distortion that may be present. Distortion may occur because of stereotyping: the predetermined set of images which we use to guide our

expectations of events, people and situations. Another distortion factor is the halo effect that occurs when a stimulus with many attributes or dimensions is evaluated on just a single attribute or dimension. Brand extensions and family branding strategies are based on the understanding that if previous experiences with a different offering are satisfactory, then risk is reduced and an individual is more likely to buy a new offering from the same 'family'.

Marketing and perception

Individuals, therefore, select and interpret particular stimuli in the context of the expectations arising from the way they classify the overall situation. The way in which individuals perceive, organise and interpret stimuli is a reflection of their past experiences and the classifications used to understand the different situations each individual frames every day. Individuals seek to frame or provide a context within which their role becomes clearer. Shoppers expect to find products in particular situations, such as rows, shelves or display bins of similar goods. They also develop meanings and associations with some grocery products because of the utility and trust/emotional satisfaction certain pack types evoke. The likelihood that a sale will be made is improved, if the context in which a purchase transaction is undertaken does not contradict a shopper's expectations.

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Marketing communications should attempt to present products (objects) in a frame or 'mental presence' (Moran, 1990) that is recognised by a buyer, such as a consumption or purchase situation. A product has a much greater chance of entering an evoked set if the situation in which it is presented is one that is expected and relevant. However, a new pack design can provide differentiation and provoke people into reassessing their expectations of what constitutes appropriate packaging in a product category.

Javalgi *et al.* (1992) point out that perception is important to product evaluation and product selection. Consumers try to evaluate a product's attributes using the physical cues of taste, smell, size and shape. Sometimes no difference can be distinguished, so the consumer has to make a judgement on factors other than the physical characteristics of the product. This is the basis of branding activity, where a personality is developed for the product which enables it to be perceived differently from its competitors. The individual may also set up a separate category or evoked set in order to make sense of new stimuli or satisfactory experiences. Consumer perception of salon- and shop-based haircare products shows important differences and indicates the different roles that marketing communication needs to play (see Figure 5.2). Within each of these sectors many brands are developed that are targeted at different segments based upon demographic, benefit and psychographic factors.

Goodrich (1978) discusses the importance of perception, which can be seen in terms of the choices tourists make when deciding which destination to visit. The decision is influenced by levels of general familiarity, levels of specific knowledge and perception. It follows that the more favourable the perception of a particular destination, the more likely it is to be selected from its competitors.

Finally, individuals carry a set of enduring perceptions or images. These relate to themselves, to products and to organisations. For example, many consumers perceive the financial services industry negatively. This is simply because of the inherent complexity associated with the product offerings and the rumble of negative publicity caused by the debate over account-charges and the Northern Rock issue (Nottage, 2007). The concept of positioning the product in the mind of the consumer is fundamental to marketing strategy and is a topic that will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 11. The image an individual has of an organisation is becoming

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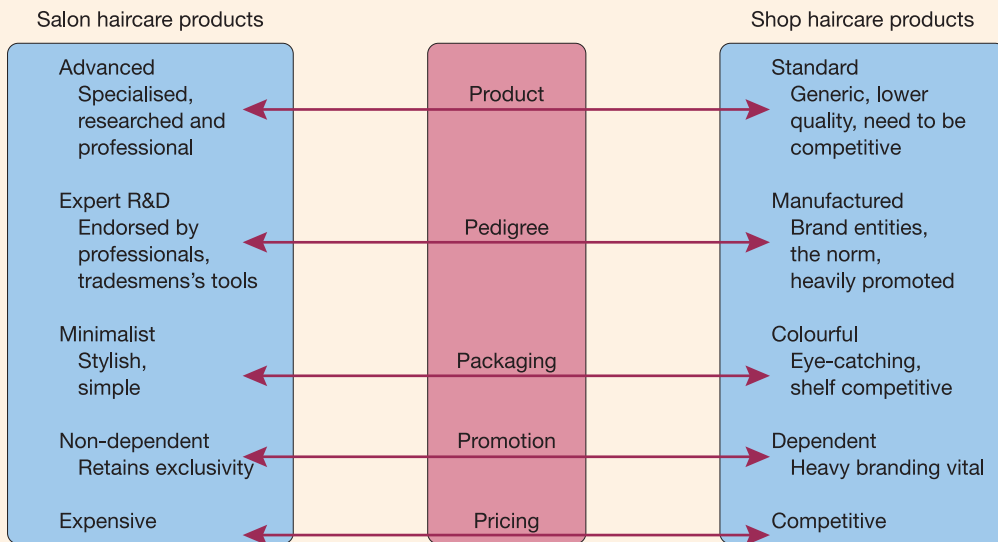


Figure 5.2 Comparison of salon and shop haircare products

recognised as increasingly important, judging by the proportion of communication budgets being given over to public relations activities and corporate advertising in particular.

Organisations develop multiple images to meet the positioning requirements of their end-user markets and stakeholders. They need to monitor and adjust their identities constantly in respect of the perceptions and expectations held by the other organisations in their various networks. For example, the level of channel coordination and control can be a function of the different perceptions of channel members. These concern the perception of the channel depth, processes of control and the roles each member is expected to fulfil. Furthermore, the perception of an organisation's product quality and its associated image (reputation) is becoming increasingly important. Both end-user buyers and channel members are attempting to ensure that the intrinsic and extrinsic cues associated with their products are appropriate signals of product quality (Moran, 1990).

ViewPoint 5.3 Frozen images

Sales of frozen food had been falling, by as much as 12 per cent in 2005, as consumers' preference moved to the chiller cabinet. Research by Mintel in 2004, cited by Jones (2007), found that people perceived dog food as a more desirable product than a frozen ready meal. Consumers perceived frozen food to be of poor quality, that there was little variety, it scored low on taste, it was seen to be not as good for you as fresh food and that frozen ready meals and both fruit and vegetables are a compromise purchase. Overall this was a challenging situation for frozen food manufacturers including the market leader Bird's Eye.

Bird's Eye's approach was to first introduce the 'Store Cupboard'. This represented a place for food that is free of preservatives, artificial flavours, colours and other additives. Their second was to launch an advertising campaign where the goal was to convey the truth about various aspects of chilled and frozen food. One truth was to convey the message that Bird's Eye fish was frozen as soon as it was caught, unlike some wet fish sales where the fish can be up to 10 days old. Another truth is that Bird's Eye only use wild Alaskan

salmon unlike competitors who use farmed salmon, which is fed synthetically-produced astaxanthin in order to ensure the preferred pink colour.

The campaign helped to arrest and reverse the fall in sales while the growth for products featured in the advertising was exceptional. Bird's Eye had changed the way frozen food was perceived, they had provided consumers with facts and relevant information, an opportunity to see a different point of view and in doing so presented the brand as truthful and trustworthy.

Source: Jones (2007).

Question

If you were a competitor of Bird's Eye what would be your reaction to this campaign?

Task

Visit the Bird's Eye site and determine how important freshness appears to be in their frozen foods pages.



Exhibit 5.4

This ad by Birds Eye was part of a campaign to change the way frozen food was perceived by consumers
Courtesy of Birds Eye Ltd.

Learning

There are two mainstream approaches to learning: behavioural and cognitive.

Table 5.2 Types of learning

Type of learning	Explanation	
Behavioural	Classical	Individuals learn to make associations or connections between a stimulus and their responses. Through repetition of the response (the behaviour) to the stimulus, learning occurs.
	Operant	Learning occurs as a result of an individual operating or interacting with the environment. The response of the individual is instrumental in getting a positive reinforcement (reward) or negative reinforcement (punishment). Behaviour that is rewarded or reinforced will be continued, whereas behaviour that is not rewarded will cease.
Cognitive		Assumes that individuals attempt to actively influence their immediate environments rather than be subject to it. They try to resolve problems by processing information from past experiences (memory) in order to make reasoned decisions based on judgements.

Behavioural learning

There are three factors important to behavioural learning: association, reinforcement and motivation.

The behaviourist approach to learning views the process as a function of an individual's acquisition of responses. There are three factors important to behavioural learning: association, reinforcement and motivation. However, it is the basic concept of the stimulus–response orientation that will be looked at in more detail.

It is accepted that for learning to occur all that is needed is a 'time–space proximity' between a stimulus and a response. Learning takes place through the establishment of a connection between a stimulus and a response. Marketing communications are thought to work by the simple process of people observing messages and being stimulated/motivated to respond by requesting more information or purchasing the advertised product in search of a reward. Behaviour is learned through the conditioning experience of a stimulus and response. There are two forms of conditioning: classical and operant.

Classical conditioning

Classical conditioning assumes that learning is an associative process that occurs with an existing relationship between a stimulus and a response. By far the best-known example of this type of learning are the experiments undertaken by the Russian psychologist Pavlov. He noticed that dogs began to salivate at the sight of food. He stated that this was not taught, but was a reflex reaction. This relationship exists prior to any experimentation or learning. The food represents an unconditioned stimulus and the response (salivation) from the dogs is an unconditioned response.

Pavlov then paired the ringing of a bell with the presentation of food. Shortly the dogs began to salivate at the ringing of the bell. The bell became the conditioned stimulus and the salivation became the conditioned response (which was the same as the unconditioned response).

From an understanding of this work it can be determined that two factors are important for learning to occur:

- To build the association between the unconditioned and conditioned stimulus, there must be a relatively short period of time.
- The conditioning process requires that there be a relatively high frequency/repetition of the association. The more often the unconditioned and conditioned stimuli occur together, the stronger will be the association.

Classical conditioning can be observed operating in each individual's everyday life. An individual who purchases a new product because of a sales promotion may continue to buy the product even when the promotion has terminated. An association has been established between the sales promotion activity (unconditioned stimulus) and the product (conditioned stimulus). If product quality and satisfaction levels allow, long-run behaviour may develop despite the absence of the promotion. In other words, promotion need not act as a key purchase factor in the long run.

Advertisers attempt to associate their products/services with certain perceptions, images and emotions that are known to evoke positive reactions from consumers. Image advertising seeks to develop the associations that individuals have when they think of a brand or an organisation, and hence its reputation. Messages of this type show the object with an unconditioned stimulus that is known to evoke pleasant and favourable feelings. The product becomes a conditioned stimulus eliciting the same favourable response. The advertisements for Bounty Bars use images of desert islands to evoke feelings of enjoyment and pleasure and associations with coconuts.

Advertisers attempt to associate their products/services with certain perceptions, images and emotions that are known to evoke positive reactions.

ViewPoint 5.4

Conditioned stimuli

Gary Lineker became closely associated as the face of Walker's crisps. Alan Hansen is developing the role of spokesperson for Morrisons, and Jamie Oliver and Penelope Cruz are becoming brand ambassadors for Sainsbury's and L'Oréal Paris respectively.

For several years Citroën UK and Citroën France both used Claudia Schiffer in their car advertising. In Britain the international model is only associated with a single product, the Xara in two separate executions. However, research indicates that across all segments she became the face of Citroën and an association has developed between the two.

The car becomes the conditioned stimulus and the celebrity model acts as an unconditioned stimulus. See the model, think of the Xara or perhaps think of Citroën.

Question

If frequency of pairing between the conditioned and the unconditioned stimulus is necessary for learning to occur, why do many brands keep changing their ambassadors?

Task

Find another brand where this type of relationship has developed.

Operant conditioning

In this form of conditioning, sometimes known as instrumental conditioning, learning occurs as a result of an individual operating or acting on some part of the environment. The response of the individual is instrumental in getting a positive reinforcement (reward) or negative reinforcement (punishment). Behaviour that is rewarded or reinforced will be continued, whereas behaviour that is not rewarded will cease.

B. F. Skinner was a pioneer researcher in the field of operant conditioning. His work, with rats who learned to press levers in order to receive food and who later only pressed the lever

when a light was on (discriminative stimulus), highlights the essential feature of this form of conditioning: that reinforcement follows a specific response.

Many organisations use reinforcement in their communications by stressing the benefits or rewards that a consumer can anticipate receiving as a result of using a product or brand. For example, Tesco offer 'Reward Points' and Nectar offer a reward of money savings which 'makes the difference'. Reinforcement theories emphasise the role of external factors and exclude the individual's ability to process information internally. Learning takes place either through direct reinforcement of a particular response or through an associative conditioning process.

Operant conditioning is a mechanistic process that is not realistic, as it serves only to simplify an extremely complex process.

However, operant conditioning is a mechanistic process that is not realistic, as it serves only to simplify an extremely complex process.

Cognitive learning

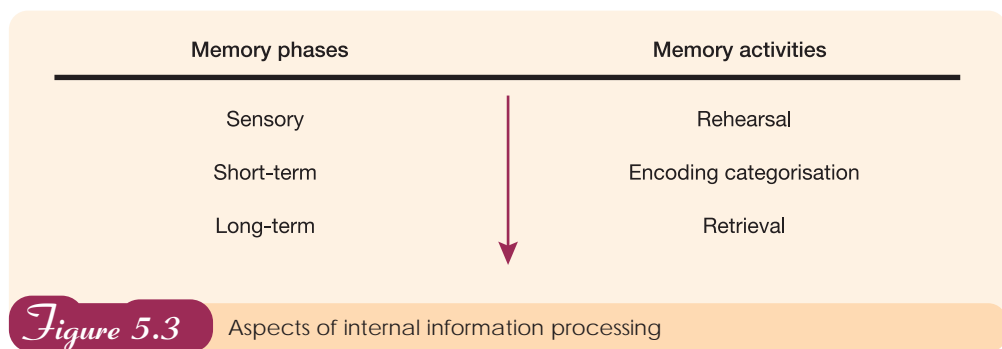
This approach to our understanding of learning assumes that individuals attempt to control their immediate environments. They are seen as active participants in that they try to resolve problems by processing information that is pertinent to each situation. Central to this process is memory. Just as money can be invested in short-, medium- and long-term investment accounts, so information is memorised for different periods of time. These memories are sensory, short-term and long-term (see Figure 5.3).

Sensory storage refers to the period in which information is sensed for a split second, and if an impression has been made the information will be transferred to short-term memory where it is rehearsed before transfer to long-term memory. *Short-term* memory lasts no longer than approximately eight seconds and a maximum of four or five items can be stored in short-term memory at any one time. Readers will probably have experienced being introduced to someone at a social event only to forget the name of the guest when they next meet them at the same event. This occurs because the name was not entered into *long-term* memory. Information can be stored for extended periods in long-term memory. This information is not lying dormant, however, it is constantly being reorganised and recategorised as new information is received.

There are four basic functions by which memory operates.

There are four basic functions by which memory operates. These are, first, *rehearsal*, where information is repeated or related to an established category. This is necessary so that the second function, *encoding*, can take place. This involves the selection of an image to represent the perceived object. Once in long-term memory it is *categorised and stored*, the third function. *Retrieval* is the final function, a process by which information is recovered from storage.

Cognitive learning is about processing information in order that problems can be resolved. These information-handling processes can range from the simple to the complex. There are three main processes: iconic, modelling and reasoning.



Iconic rote learning involves understanding the association between two or more concepts when there is an absence of a stimulus. Learning occurs at a weak level through repetition of simple messages. Beliefs are formed about the attributes of an offering without any real understanding of the source of the information. Advertisers of certain products (low value, frequently purchased) will try to remind their target audiences repeatedly of the brand name in an attempt to help consumers learn. Through such repetition, an association with the main benefits of the product may be built, if only via the constant reminders by the spokesperson.

Learning through the *modelling* approach involves the observation and imitation of others and the associated outcomes of their behaviour. In essence, a great deal of children's early learning is developed in this way. Likewise, marketing communicators use the promise of rewards to persuade audiences to act in a particular way. By using positive images of probable rewards, buyers are encouraged to believe that they can receive the same outcome if they use the particular product. For example, clothing advertisements often depict the model receiving admiring glances from passers-by. The same admiration is the reward 'promised' to those who wear the same clothing. A similar approach was used by Kellogg's to promote their Special K breakfast cereal. The commercial depicted a (slim) mother and child playing on a beach. The message was that it is important to look after yourself and to raise your family through healthy eating, an outdoor life and exercise.

Reasoning is perhaps the most complex form of cognitive learning. Through this process, individuals need to restructure and reorganise information held in long-term memory and combine it with fresh inputs in order to generate new outputs. Financial services providers have to convey complex information, strictly bounded by the Financial Services legislation and the Financial Services Authority. So, brands such as Nationwide and Hiscox convey key points about simplicity and specialist services respectively, to differentiate their brands. This enables current and potential customers to process detailed information about these brands and to make judgements or reason that these brands reach acceptable (threshold) standards.

Reasoning is perhaps the most complex form of cognitive learning.

Of all the approaches to understanding how we learn, cognitive learning is the most flexible interpretation. The rational, more restricted approach of behavioural learning, where the focus is external to the individual, is without doubt a major contribution to knowledge. However, it fails to accommodate the complex internal thought processes that individuals utilise when presented with various stimuli.

It is useful to appreciate the way in which people are believed to learn and forget as there are several issues which are useful to media planners in particular.

Interference theory

Burke and Srull (1988) suggest that learning and brand recall can be interfered with. This may be caused either by new material affecting previously stored information or by old information being retrieved and interfered with by incoming messages. The first case, where the last message has the strongest recall, is similar to the recency effect discussed in the context of message design (Chapter 17).

In a competitive environment, where there are many messages being transmitted, each one negating previous messages, the most appropriate strategy for an advertiser would be to separate the advertisements from those of its competitors. This reasoning supports much of the positioning work undertaken by brand managers.

Decay

The rate at which individuals forget material assumes a pattern, as shown in Figure 5.4. Many researchers have found that information decays at a negatively decelerating rate. As much as 60 per cent of the initial yield of information from an advertisement has normally decayed within six

Information decays at a negatively decelerating rate.

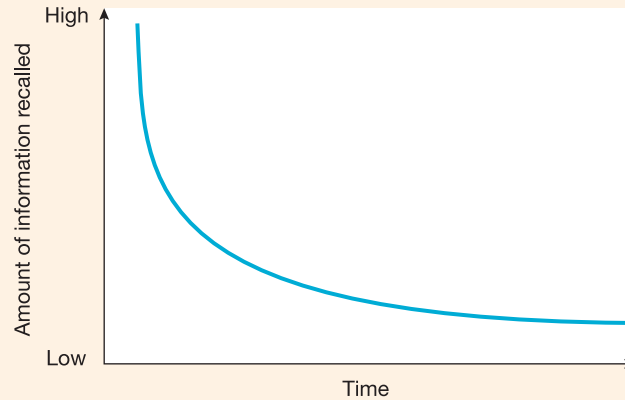


Figure 5.4 A standard decay curve

weeks. This decay, or wear-out, can be likened to the half-life of radioactive material. It is always working, although it cannot be seen, and the impact of the advertising reduces through time. Like McGuire's (1978) retention stage in his hierarchy of effects model (see Chapter 16), the storage of information for future use is important, but with time, how powerful will the information be and what triggers are required to promote recall?

Advertising wear-out is thought to occur because of two factors.

Advertising wear-out is thought to occur because of two factors. First, individuals use selective perception and mentally switch off after a critical number of exposures. Second, the monotony and irritation caused by continued exposure lead to counter-argument to both the message and the advertisement (Petty and Cacioppo, 1979).

Advertisements for alcoholic drinks such as Carlsberg and Artois attempt to prevent wear-out by using variations on a central theme to provide consistency yet engage audiences through interest and entertainment.

Cognitive response

Learning can be visualised as following either of the curves set out in Figure 5.5. The amount learnt 'wears out' after a certain repetition level has been reached. Grass and Wallace (1969) suggest that this process of wear-out commences once a satiation point has been reached. A number of researchers (Zielske, 1959; Strong, 1977) have found that recall is improved when messages are transmitted on a regular weekly basis, rather than daily, monthly or in a concentrated or dispersed format.

An individual's ability to develop and retain awareness or knowledge of a product will, therefore, be partly dependent not only on the quality of the message but also on the number and quality of exposures to a planned message. To assist the media planner there are a number of concepts that need to be appreciated and used within the decisions about what, where and when a message should be transmitted. There are a number of other concepts that are of use to media planners: these are reach and coverage, frequency, gross rating points, effective frequency, efficiency and media source effects.

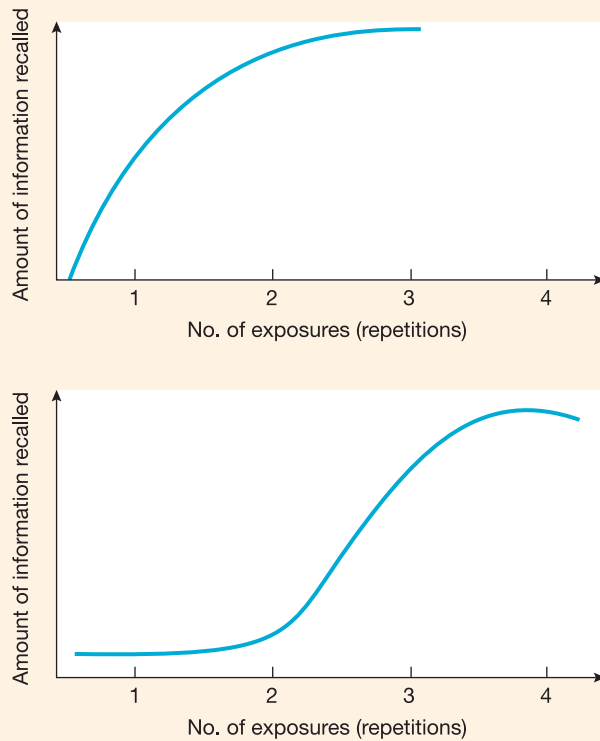


Figure 5.5

Learning curves

ViewPoint 5.5

Cognitive or emotional cats?

The differences between the cognitive and emotional approaches can be clearly seen in the battle to feed British cats. The two main competitors, Whiskas (owned by Mars) and Felix (owned by Purina) have used communications which appeal directly to the cognitive and emotional needs of cat owners.

For a long time in the 1980s Whiskas was market leader with a 53 per cent market share. To help establish this position the brand used a well-tried advertising formula. This consisted of a middle-class housewife who was shown with a perfect cat. This scene was followed by one in which a scientist, in a white coat, explained the nutritional ingredients and value of feeding the 'animal' Whiskas. The rationality of this approach could not be challenged.

At this time Felix, with just 5 per cent market share, was a struggling brand. However, research commissioned to accompany a relaunch found that cat owners could not recognise the perfect cat proclaimed by Whiskas. Their cats were scruffy, naughty, cheeky and very demanding and they were loved because of their fun loving spirit and mischievous personalities.

Felix was developed to reflect this perception, to remind owners of their cats and the ads made no reference at all to meat, nutrition or well-being. Communications were designed to engage audiences (cat owners) on an emotional level and appeal to the relationship they have with their pets (not animals). Felix's market share rose sharply and the brand became the second largest brand in the category and forced Whiskas to drop their rational approach and use more emotional communications.

Source: Challis *et al.* (2006).

Question

Do you believe the use of an emotional approach would have been successful in the 1980s. In other words, is the use (and success) of these of these approaches culturally determined?

Task

Choose two dog food brands and determine the level of emotion and rationality in their respective communications.

Attitudes

Attitudes are learned through past experiences and serve as a link between thoughts and behaviour.

The perceptual and learning processes may lead to the formation of attitudes. These are predispositions, shaped through experience, to respond in an anticipated way to an object or situation. Attitudes are learned through past experiences and serve as a link between thoughts and behaviour. These experiences may relate to the product itself, to the messages transmitted by the different members of the channel network (normally mass media communications) and to the information supplied by opinion leaders, formers and followers.

Attitudes tend to be consistent within each individual: they are clustered and very often interrelated. This categorisation leads to the formation of stereotypes, which is extremely useful for the design of messages as stereotyping allows for the transmission of a lot of information in a short time period (30 seconds) without impeding learning or the focal part of the message.

Attitude components

Attitudes are hypothetical constructs, and classical psychological theory considers attitudes to consist of three components:

1. Cognitive component (*learn*)

This component refers to the level of knowledge and beliefs held by individuals about a product and/or the beliefs about specific attributes of the offering. This represents the learning aspect of attitude formation.

2. Affective component (*feel*)

By referring to the feelings held about a product – good, bad, pleasant or unpleasant – an evaluation is made of the object. This is the component that is concerned with feelings, sentiments, moods and emotions about an object.

3. Conative component (*do*)

This is the action component of the attitude construct and refers to the individual's disposition or intention to behave in a certain way. Some researchers go so far as to suggest that this component refers to observable behaviour.

This three-component approach (Figure 5.6) to attitudes is based upon attitudes towards an object, person or organisation. The sequence of attitude formation is generally considered to be learn, feel and do. However, this approach to attitude formation is limited in that the components are seen to be of equal strength. A single-component model has been developed where the attitude only consists of the individual's overall feeling towards an object. In other words, the affective component is the only significant component.

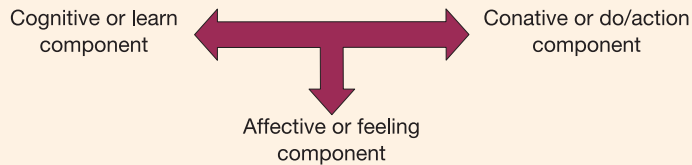


Figure 5.6

The three-component attitude model

Intentions

Of the many advances in this area, those made by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) have made a significant contribution. They reasoned that the best way of predicting behaviour was to measure an individual's intention to purchase (the conative component). Underlying intentions are the individual's attitude towards the act of behaviour and the subjective norm. In other words, the context within which a proposed purchase is to occur is seen as important to the attitude that is developed towards the object.

The subjective norm is the relevant feelings others are believed to hold about the proposed purchase, or intention to purchase. Underpinning the subjective norm are the beliefs held about the people who are perceived to 'judge' the actions an individual might take. Would they approve or disapprove, or look favourably or unfavourably upon the intended action?

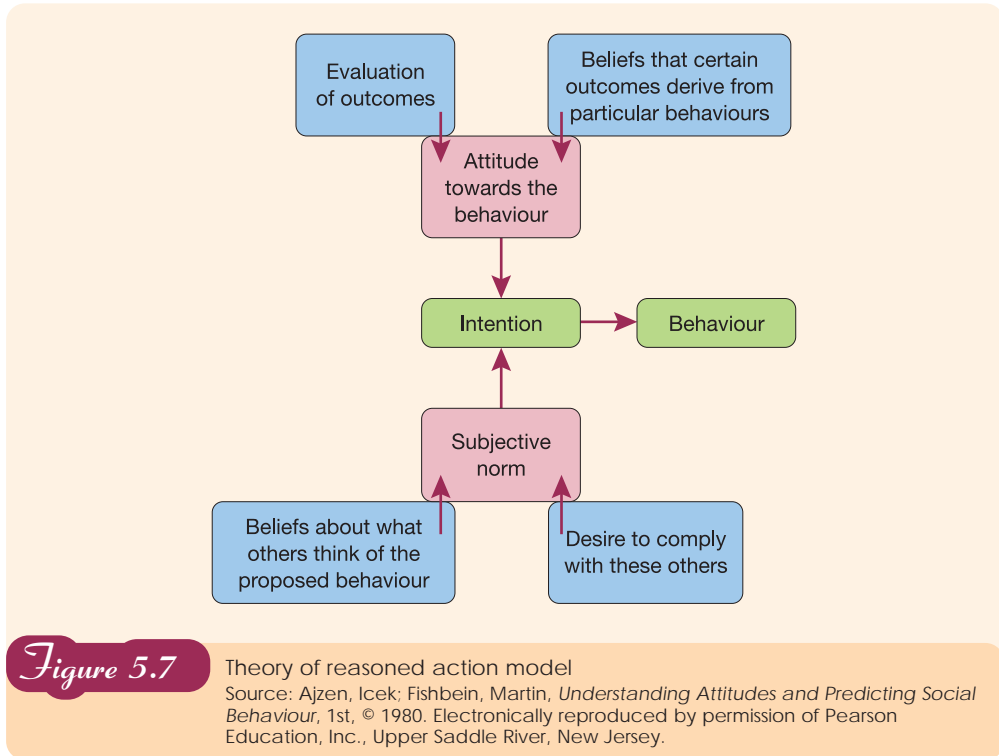
Underpinning the attitude towards the intention to act in a particular way are the strengths of the beliefs that a particular action will lead to an outcome. Ajzen and Fishbein argue that it is the individual's attitude to the act of purchasing, not the object of the purchase, that is important. For example, a manager may have a positive attitude towards a particular type of expensive office furniture, but a negative attitude towards the act of securing agreement for him to purchase it.

Underpinning the attitude towards the intention to act in a particular way are the strengths of the beliefs that a particular action will lead to an outcome.

The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Figure 5.7) shows that intentions are composed of interrelated components: subjective norms, which in turn are composed of beliefs and motivations about relevant others, towards a particular intention, and attitudes, which in turn are made up of beliefs about the probable outcomes that a behaviour will lead to.

This approach recognises the interrelationship of the three components of attitudes and that it is not attitude but the intention to act or behave that precedes observable behaviour that should be the focus of attention. It should be understood that attitudes do not precede behaviour and cannot be used to predict behaviour, despite the attempts of a number of researchers. Attitudes are important, but they are not the sole determinant of behaviour, and intentions may be a better indicator of behaviour.

Attitudes impact on consumer decision-making, and the objective of marketing communications is often to create a positive attitude towards a product and/or to reinforce or change existing attitudes. An individual may perceive and develop a belief that British Airways has a friendly and informal in-flight service and that the service provided by Lufthansa is cold and formal. However, both airlines are perceived to hold a number of different attributes, and each individual needs to evaluate these attributes in order that an attitude can be developed. It is necessary, therefore, to measure the strength of the beliefs held about the key attributes of different products. There are two main processes whereby beliefs can be processed and measured: compensatory and non-compensatory models.



Compensatory models

Through this approach, attributes that are perceived to be weak can be offset by attributes that are perceived to be strong. As a result, positive attitudes are determined in the sense that the evaluation of all the attributes is satisfactory. For example, Table 5.3 sets out a possible evaluation of three package holidays. Despite the weakness on hotel cleanliness, the strength of the other attributes in package 2 scores this one the highest, so the strongest attitude is formed towards this product. Some individuals make decisions about products on the basis that their attributes must not contain any weaknesses. Therefore package 2 would not be considered, as it fails to reach a minimum level of expected satisfaction on cleanliness, thus, despite its strengths, it is relegated from the decision alternatives.

Table 5.3 Compensatory and non-compensatory models

Attribute	Weighting	Package 1		Package 2		Package 3	
		Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score
Price	5	5	25	6	30	5	25
Hotel cleanliness	3	3	9	2	6	4	12
Travel times	2	7	14	9	18	4	8
Attitude rating			48		54		45
Possible decisions							
Compensatory model		Not considered		<i>Winner</i>		Not considered	
Non-compensatory model		<i>Winner</i>		Not considered		Considered	

An understanding of attitude components and the way in which particular attributes can be measured not only enables organisations to determine the attitudes held towards them and their competitors but also empowers them to change the attitudes held by different stakeholders, if it is thought necessary.

Using marketing communications to influence attitudes

Marketing communications can be used to influence the attitudes held by a target audience. When developing campaigns, consideration needs to be given to the current and desired attitudes of the target audience. The focus of a campaign can be on whether the audience requires information (learning), an emotional disposition (feeling) or whether the audience need to be encouraged to behave in a particular way (doing).

Marketing communications can be used to influence the attitudes held by a target audience.

In today's competitive environment in which product lifecycles are shortening, innovation is increasingly critical and organisations require marketing staff to be accountable for their investments, there is greater urgency to encourage potential customers to test, use or behave towards a product in particular ways. Marketing communications can induce behavioural change by getting people to buy a brand and this might require the use of direct marketing, sales promotions and personal selling. When the emphasis of a campaign is on driving behaviour and action, direct-response advertising can be effective. It is said that 40 per cent of television ads have a telephone number or web site address.

In some circumstances change might be in the form of motivating customers to visit a web site, to fill in an application form, call for a brochure, download a document or just encourage them to visit a shop and sample the brand free of money and any other risks. This 'doing' component of the attitude construct is commonly referred to as a 'call-to-action'.

Changing attitudes

Marketing communications is important to either maintain or change attitudes held by stakeholders. Attitudes can be changed in other ways, for example through changes to product and service elements, pricing and channel decisions. However, marketing communications have a pivotal role in conveying each of these aspects to the target audience. Branding (Chapter 11) is a means by which attitudes can be established and maintained in a consistent way and it is through the use of the tools of the communications mix that brand equity can be sustained. The final point that needs to be made is that there is a common thread between attributes, attitudes and positioning (Chapters 10 and 11). Attributes provide a means through which brands can be differentiated from competitors' products (DRIP Chapter 1). Marketing communications are used to convey information about these attributes. People form attitudes as a result of their interpretation of the associated marketing communications, and from that they position brands in their minds.

Attributes provide a means through which brands can be differentiated from competitors' products.

Environmental influences on the attitudes people hold towards particular products and services are partly a reflection of the way they interpret the marketing communications surrounding them, partly as a result of their direct experience of using them and partly as a result of the informal messages received from family, friends and other highly credible sources of information. These all contribute to the way people position products and services and the way they understand them relative to competing products.

Managing attitudes (towards an offering) is therefore very important but before marketing communications can be used it may be necessary to change the product offering (its attributes) to ensure credibility and to enable promises to be delivered.

1. Change the physical product or service element

At a fundamental level, attitudes might be so ingrained that it is necessary to change the product or service. This may involve a radical redesign or the introduction of a significant new attribute. Only once these changes have been made should marketing communications be used to communicate the new or revised object. When the fruit juice drink 'Sunny Delight' was sold by Procter & Gamble the first thing the new owners did was to change the drink itself. It raised the level of fruit juice and added vitamins and reduced the number of colourants, additives and preservatives. Only then was the drink relaunched, proclaiming the nature of the reconstituted drink.

Attitudes might be so ingrained that it is necessary to change the product or service.

2. Change misunderstanding

In some circumstances people might misunderstand the benefits of a particularly important attribute and marketing communications are required to correct the beliefs held. This can be achieved through product demonstration of functionally based communications. Packaging and even the name of the product may need to be revised.

3. Build credibility

Attitudes towards a brand might be superficial and lack sufficient conviction to prompt conative behaviour. This can be corrected through the use of an informative strategy, designed to build credibility. Product demonstration and hands-on experience (e.g. through sampling) are effective strategies. Skoda support a rally team to convey durability, speed and performance.

4. Change performance beliefs

Beliefs held about the object and the performance qualities of the object can be adjusted through appropriate marketing communications. For example, by providing accurate information it is possible to change the perceptions held about the attributes, and so it is possible to change the attitudes about the object. See ViewPoint 5.3 about how Bird's Eye changed the way people perceived frozen food.

5. Change attribute priorities

By changing the relative importance of the different attributes and ratings it is possible to change attitudes. Therefore, a strategy to emphasise a different attribute can change the attitude not only to a brand but to a product category. By stressing the importance of travel times, it might raise the importance of this attribute in the minds of potential holiday-makers and so give package 2 an advantage over its rivals, using the non-compensatory decision rule. Dyson changed attitudes to carpet cleaning equipment by stressing the efficiency of their new cyclone technology rather than the ease of use, aesthetic design or generic name (Hoover) associations used previously.

A strategy to emphasise a different attribute can change the attitude not only to a brand but to a product category.

6. Introduce a new attribute

Opportunities might exist to introduce a radically different and new (or previously unused) attribute. This provides a means for clear differentiation until competitors imitate and catch up. The solution for package 3 may be to introduce a fourth attribute, one in which the suppliers of package 3 know they have an advantage over the competition. This may be that they have a no-surcharge guarantee and packages 1 and 2 do not. By making prominent the new no-surcharge guarantee in the promotional messages transmitted by package 3, the introduction of a new significant attribute may lead to greater success.

7. Change perception of competitor products

By changing the way competitor products are perceived it is possible to differentiate your own brand. For example, by changing the perception of packages 1 and 2 or changing the association of their packages with the others, package 3 might gain an advantage. This

could be achieved by using messages that set the package apart from its rivals, suggesting, for example, that not all package holidays are the same. This is a theme that was used by Thomson Holidays, when their copy read, 'We go there, we don't stay there'.

8. *Change or introduce new brand associations*

By using celebrities or spokespersons with whom the target audience can identify, it might be possible for package 3 to change the way the product is perceived on an emotional basis rather than relying on attributes and a more rational argument.

9. *Use corporate branding*

By altering the significance of the parent brand relative to the product brand, it is possible to alter beliefs about brands and their overall value. In some situations there is little to differentiate competitive brands and little credible scope to develop attribute-based attitudes. By using the stature of the parent company it is possible to develop a level of credibility and brand values that other brands cannot copy, although they can imitate by using their parent brand. Procter & Gamble have introduced their name to the packs of many of their brands.

10. *Change the number of attributes used*

Many brands still rely on a single attribute as a means of providing a point of differentiation. This was popularly referred to as a unique selling proposition (USP) at a time when attribute- and information-based communications reflected a *feature-dominated* understanding of branding. Today, two or even three attributes are often combined with strong emotional associations in order to provide a point of differentiation and a set of *benefit-oriented* brand values.

Many brands still rely on a single attribute as a means of providing a point of differentiation.

In order to make sense of these different approaches, and to understand how marketing communications can be used to bring about attitudinal change, it is helpful to consider the three attitude components considered earlier in this chapter; the cognitive, affective and conative components.

Cognitive component

When an audience lacks information, misunderstands a brand's attributes or whose perception of a brand is inappropriate, the essential task of marketing communications is to give the audience the right, or up-to-date, information. This enables perception, learning and attitude development based on clear truths. This is a rational, informational approach, one that appeals to a person's ability to rationalise and process information in a logical manner. It is therefore important that the level and quality of the information provided is appropriate to the intellectual capabilities of the target audience. Other tasks include showing the target audience how a brand differs from those of competitors, establishing what the added value is and suggesting who the target audience is by depicting them in the message.

Both advertising and public relations are key tools and television, print and the Internet are key media used to deliver information and influence the way people perceive a brand. Rather than provide information about a central or popular attribute or aspect of an offering, it is possible to direct the attention of an audience to different aspects of the object and so shape their beliefs about the brand in different ways to competitors. So, some crisp and snack food manufacturers used to communicate the importance of taste. Now in an age of chronic social obesity, many of these manufacturers have changed the salt and fat content and now appeal to audiences on the basis of nutrition and health. They have changed the focus of attention from one attribute to another.

Although emotion can be used to provide information, the overriding approach is informational.

Affective component

Having established that a product might be useful it is important that the audience develop positive attitudes towards a brand based on an emotional attachment or set of values.

Marketing communications is used to convey a set of emotional values.

Marketing communications is used to convey a set of emotional values that will appeal to and hopefully engage the target audience.

When attitudes to a brand or product category are discovered to be either neutral or negative it is common for brands to use an emotional rather than rational or information-based approach. This can be achieved by using messages that are unusual in style, colour and tone and because they stand out and get noticed they can change the way people feel and their desire to be associated with that object, brand or product category. There is great use of visual images and the appeal is often to an individual's senses, feelings and emotional disposition. The goal is help people feel, 'I (we) like, I (we) desire (aspire to), I (we) want or I (we) belong to' whatever is being communicated. Establishing and maintaining positive feelings towards a brand can be achieved through reinforcement and to do this it is necessary to repeat the message.

Creating positive attitudes used to be the sole preserve of advertising but today a range of tools and media can be used. For example, product placement within films and music videos, helps to show how a brand fits in with a desirable set of values and lifestyles. The use of suitable music, characters that reflect the values of either the current target audience or an aspirational group, a tone of voice, colours and images all help to create a particular emotional disposition and understanding about what the brand represents or stands for.

Perhaps above all else the use of celebrity endorsers to create desire through association is one of the main ways attitudes are developed, based on an emotional disposition. This approach focuses on changing attitudes to the communication (attitudes to the ad) rather than the offering. Fashion brands are often presented using a celebrity model and little or no text. The impact is visual, inviting the reader to make positive attitudes and associations with the brand and the endorser. See the successful ads for Marks & Spencer and TopShop.

Marmite use an emotional approach based on challenging audiences to decide whether they love or hate the unique taste. The government have used a variety of approaches to change people's attitude to drink/driving, smoking, vaccinations, tax, pensions and the use of rear seat belts to name but a few of their activities. They will often use an information approach, but in some cases use an affective approach based on dramatising the consequences of a particular behaviour to encourage the audience to change their attitudes and behaviour. The overriding strategy is therefore emotional.



Exhibit 5.5

The Government's *THINK!* Seat belts campaign used to change behaviour towards using belts in the rear seats of cars
Department for Transport/Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO.

Conative component

In some product categories people are said to be inert because they are comfortable with a current brand, have little reason to buy into a category, do not buy any brand or are just reluctant to change their brand. In this situation attitude change should be based on provoking behaviour. As explained later in this book, the growth and development of direct marketing and web-based communications is based on the desire to encourage people to do something rather than undertake passive attitude change that does not necessarily result in a sale. So, a conative approach stimulates people to try, test, trial, visit (a showroom or web site) a brand, usually free and often without overt commitment.

A conative approach stimulates people to try, test, trial, visit.

Sales promotion, personal selling and direct marketing are the key tools used to drive behavioural change. For example, sales promotions are geared to driving behaviour by getting people to try a brand, direct marketing seeks to encourage a response and hence engage in interaction and salespeople will try to close a customer to get a sale. Advertising can be used to raise awareness and direct people to a store or web site.

In addition to these approaches, experiential marketing has become very popular as it is believed that direct experience of touching, feeling or using a product helps establish positive values and develop commitment. So, many car manufacturers offer opportunities to test drive a car not only for a few hours but several days. They have test circuits where drivers can spend time driving several different cars in the range across different terrain.

The overriding strategy in this context is to provoke customers into action.

ViewPoint 5.6

branching out as NatWest change attitudes

The banking system is a classic example of market inertia. Customers see little reason to move or change their banks unless provoked by gross inefficiency or their accounts are mishandled. At the same time many banks have closed a large proportion of their UK branch network and moved their call centres off shore to reduce costs, they have moved away from a human approach to customer service to one based on mechanics. There has since been a 'consumer backlash against foreign call centres [that] has led some companies to return operations to the UK' (Winterman, 2007).

When the Royal Bank of Scotland bought NatWest in 2000 it reversed the strategy of closing branches and using overseas call centres. A policy of refurbishing all the branches has since been implemented, new branches opened and all call centre operations are now UK-based.

As a result, NatWest have used this initiative as the backbone of their communication strategy. By positioning themselves against an attribute that had been discarded by competitors, NatWest have been able to establish a clear point of differentiation. By focusing their marketing and communications on their branch network in order to provide customers the opportunity for personal contact by just walking into a local branch, they have been able to add considerable value to the brand and given inert customers a reason to change to NatWest.

Sources: Winterman (2007); www.natwest.com/.

Question

As all banks provide a service, how feasible is it for them to use service as a basis for differentiation?

Task

Find two other banks and determine the attributes they use for differentiation.

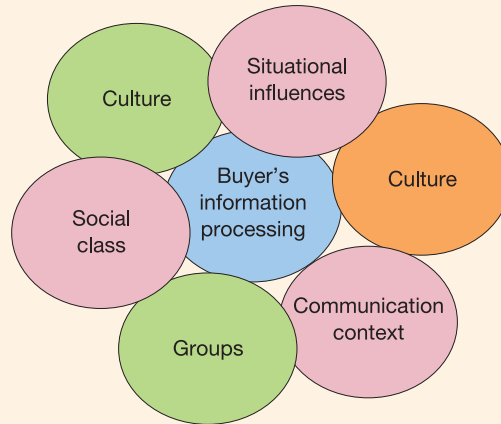


Figure 5.8

Environmental influences on buyer information processing

Environmental influences on buyer information processing

Neither organisations nor consumers exist in a vacuum. They exist in an ‘open’ system and therefore act upon and are affected by various environmental factors (Figure 5.8). There are a number of externally generated influences that impact upon buyer information processing and decision-making. The main factors are considered in the final section of this chapter.

Culture

Culture encompasses the norms, beliefs, artefacts and customs that are learned from society and that constitute its values.

Culture has been referred to as the unique characteristics that identify the acceptable patterns of behaviour and social relations within a particular society. Culture encompasses the norms, beliefs, artefacts and customs that are learned from society and that constitute its values. It is these values that influence consumer behaviour and are of increasing importance to the international advertiser. Indeed,

a more detailed consideration of the role of culture on marketing communications can be found in Chapter 28.

Culture is learned and acquired, it is not instinctive. Culture defines acceptable behaviour within a society and so sets the rules for all members who belong to the culture. For marketing communications, culture should be seen as a communication system in its own right. Through verbal and non-verbal actions a society is able to maintain stability, to bind all members with a sense of identity and to provide them with a means of continuity.

Sub-cultures

There are a number of sub-cultures within any given culture. These include age, geography, race, religion and ethnic groupings and they can all influence the way marketing communications are perceived, interpreted and understood.

Social class

Virtually all societies are stratified by class, based upon power, wealth and prestige. Society values individuals and groups on criteria such as education, occupation and level of income. This information is distilled into a social class system, such as upper, middle and lower class, which for a long time has been a main characteristic of UK society.

Marketers have developed a socioeconomic categorisation that is used as a primary means of segmenting markets. Creative designers have always used symbols to reflect the values, lifestyles, norms and family roles associated with each perceived stratum. Among the many benefits this brings is the ability to transfer a lot of information relatively quickly and so communicate effectively. The process also allows for the continuity of the core values of society.

However, this traditional approach to segmentation is becoming increasingly difficult to utilise as consumers' purchasing habits become more complex and their lifestyles become less rigid and more open. Advertisers recognise the speed at which consumers can move between purchasing styles, even in the space of a single shopping trip. This is because the requirements of each purchase can be so different that tailor-made segmentation by product is necessary. For example, Dulux recognises that its market for paints consists of 'sloshers' and 'craftsmen'. Paint can be bought for the attic, where it will be 'sloshed', or for the lounge, where it will be applied by the same person like a 'craftsman'.

Groups

Groups are one of the primary factors influencing learning and socialisation. An individual may simultaneously be a member of several groups, each having a different degree of effect. These groups can be categorised as follows:

Groups are one of the primary factors influencing learning and socialisation.

1. Ascribed groups: one automatically belongs, e.g. family.
2. Primary/secondary groups: where interaction is on a one-to-one basis, e.g. family and friends.
3. Formal/informal groups: where the presence or absence of structure and hierarchy defines the group activity.
4. Aspirational/membership groups: groups to which the individual wishes to belong or does belong.

All these act as reference groups for the individual and influence the individual's behaviour.

Situational influences

The design, encoding and media channels used to transmit communication messages must take into account that buyers are influenced by factors that are unique to each buying situation and are not related specifically to the product or the individual. The situational context impacts on the information-processing capabilities of the buyer. For example, the amount of light in the store or the level of store traffic can influence the amount of time given to decision-making. While this factor will normally have been accounted for in the formulation of the marketing strategy, it must be revisited if the communications are to be effective.

When considering the impact that situational influences might have on information processing, the type of situation needs to be considered. A situational determinant is a factor that is unique to each buying act. These situational influences are connected neither to the purchase object nor to the buyer, and are independent of them. Hansen (1972) identified three types of situation: usage, purchase and communications.

Usage situation

It is important to understand when and where an offering is to be consumed, whether its consumption is a largely a private act, oriented to the individual (such as chocolate bars) or part

Communications need to encapsulate the situation in which consumption occurs.

of a social activity (such as beer). For example, some manufacturers of breakfast cereals have been repositioning (Chapter 11) their brands in an attempt to encourage use at other times of the day. Communications need to reflect this strategy and encapsulate the situation in which consumption occurs.

ViewPoint 5.7

Breakfast culture in New York

As food and drink manufacturers have had to adapt their product offerings and change key attributes, in the light of growing concerns about obesity, so the juice market has benefitted and grown. However, most brands need to fight hard to provide a point of differentiation, as juice is natural and the category is perceived more as a commodity.

For many years Tropicana performed well but with the arrival of own label brands that copied Tropicana's gable top carton and undercut its premium price so market share fell in a rising market.

Research identified three key interrelated points. One was an upmarket audience who preferred fresh, premium quality foods. The second was that Tropicana was the number one grocery brand in New York, bigger than Coca-Cola. The third point was that this audience perceived New York as strongly aspirational.

As New York has a strong breakfast culture incorporating waffles, muffins, pancakes, eggs and coffees, all available from restaurants, hotels and diners, a campaign was devised to incorporate Tropicana as a key ingredient in a typical New York breakfast. The television ad used Dean Martin's 'How do you like your eggs in the morning'.

Sales rose immediately the ads were aired and volume grew by 25 per cent in 2005 and sales value grew three times the rate of the previous year. By cross-referencing an audience to a known and desired cultural set Tropicana arrested a decline in sales and reinvigorated the brand.

Sources: Hui (2005); Huzzey *et al.* (2006).

Question

Associating a food/drink with an occasion (in this case breakfast) is not new. To what extent might such an association restrict the development of a brand?

Task

Identify two other brands that are strongly associated with a major city.

Purchase situation

The act of purchase and the associated environment can influence the behaviour of the target individual. Is shopping a monthly, biannual, weekly or last-minute activity? Mothers shopping with children are more likely to be influenced by product preferences of their children than when shopping without them. This may be due not only to the amount of time available to complete the physical act of shopping but also to the time to process the information. Engel *et al.* (1990) cite information load, format and form as important criteria. Too much information (information overload) can reduce the accuracy of an individual's decision-making, whereas the order in which information is presented both on packages and in terms of store layout can seriously retard the amount of time taken to process information, and this can also influence the motivation of the shopper.

The way in which information is presented will affect the decision style.

The way in which information is presented will affect the decision style. For example, the ease of comparing brands, perhaps on an individual attribute basis (e.g. diabetics determining the amount of sugar or carbohydrate in competing brands), will influence both perception and purchase

behaviour. The development of online buyer comparison sites means that a number of attributes can be compared at the same time.

What is the environment of the shop like? Are there opportunities to influence the target with in-store promotions and advertising messages? Different individuals prefer different supermarkets and price is not the sole criterion. Store loyalty is a function of a number of issues, among them convenience, layout, product range, car-parking facilities and whether packers are available. Associated with this is the concept of corporate image. Each of the supermarket chains has a particular range of images held by its consumers. Consumer perception of store efficiency and value for money and the totality of corporate communications need to reflect, deflect or reinforce particular images. This element is pursued in greater depth in Chapter 15.

Communications situation

The settings in which marketing communications are received will affect the degree to which the message is understood and acted upon. For example, salespersons cold-calling on organisations (arriving at an organisation and requesting a sales interview without a prior appointment) are not usually received in a positive way. Furthermore, having gained an appointment through a prior arrangement does not mean that the information provided during the visit will be received as intended. The buyer may have been advised of some bad news prior to the meeting and their thoughts are not focused on the object of the sales meeting or presentation. Television commercials may be zipped or zapped, clutter may prevent key points of the message getting home or general noise in the form of conversation may also affect the effectiveness of the message. One of the central issues concerning the situation in which communications are received is the need to gain the attention of the receiver.

The settings in which marketing communications are received will affect the degree to which the message is understood and acted upon.

Having determined that there are particular types of situations where the consumption process occurs, Belk (1975) proposes that there are five main situation variables that should be considered. These are the physical aspects, the social surroundings, the time, the task and the antecedent states.

Physical aspects refer to the store design and layout, the location, the lighting, music, smells and sounds associated with the situation. The *social surroundings* refer to all those involved in the purchase, usage or communications. For example, a child was described in one type of situation as accompanying a mother on the shopping activity, and children have a degree of influence on such an event.

Time was considered in the context of the time available to complete the activity, but it could also be considered in the context of time of day, year or season, or time elapsed since the last purchase. The *task* itself is pertinent. Is the purchase for a third party as a present, or is it for personal consumption? Finally, *antecedent states* are the influences each individual experiences, but state is transitional. For example, states of high elation, despondency, bitterness or pleasure are experienced by all individuals, but they are not enduring characteristics.

The particular impact of various environmental influences can affect the behaviour of buyers during purchase activity, during usage and when information is being processed. Understanding the impact of the physical, time and social influences, together with the nature of the task and antecedent states, provides the marketing communications planner with fresh inputs to the exercise of positioning the product appropriately.

Summary

1. Introduce cognitive theory as an important element in the development of planned communications.

Cognitive theory is based upon an information-processing, problem-solving and reasoning approach to human behaviour. Individuals use information that has been generated by external sources (e.g. advertisements) and internal sources (e.g. memory). This information is given thought, processed, transferred into meanings or patterns and then combined to form judgements about behaviour.

The cognitive orientation considers consumers to be adaptive problem solvers, people who use various processes to reason, form concepts and acquire knowledge.

2. Examine personality as a main factor in the determination of successful communications.

Personality is, essentially, concerned with the inner properties of each individual, those characteristics that differentiate each of us. There are two main approaches: the Freudian and Trait theories of personality.

Freudian theory is based on the beliefs that human behaviour is driven by two primary instincts: life and death. The personality of the individual is assumed to have developed in an attempt to gratify these needs, and consists of the id, superego and ego; this approach is termed psychoanalytic theory.

Trait theory is a quantitative approach where the distinguishing and relatively enduring ways in which one individual differs from another is measured and quantified. Personality tests invariably seek to measure individual differences in respect of specific traits such as the degree of assertiveness, responsiveness to change or the level of sociability an individual might exhibit.

3. Explore perception in the context of marketing communications.

Perception is concerned with how individuals see and make sense of their environment. The way in which individuals perceive, organise and interpret stimuli is a reflection of their past experiences and the classifications used to understand the different situations each individual frames every day.

Marketing communications are used to position brands using a variety of stimuli so that consumers understand and recognise them.

4. Understand the main differences between conditioning and cognitive learning processes.

The Behaviourist approach to learning considers the process to be a function of an individual's acquisition of responses. There are three factors important to learning: association, reinforcement and motivation. Behaviour is learned through the conditioning experience of a stimulus and response.

Cognitive learning considers learning to be a function of an individual's attempt to control their immediate environment. They are seen as active participants in that they try to resolve problems by processing information that is pertinent to each situation. Central to this process is memory. Cognitive learning is about processing information in order that problems can be resolved. These information-handling processes can range from the simple to the complex. There are three main processes: iconic, modelling and reasoning.

5. Appraise the role of attitudes and the different ways in which attitudes are thought to be developed.

Attitudes are predispositions, shaped through experience, to respond in an anticipated way to an object or situation. Attitudes are learned through past experiences and serve as a link

between thoughts and behaviour. Attitudes tend to be consistent within each individual: they are clustered and very often interrelated. Attitudes consist of three interrelated elements; the cognitive, affective and conative, otherwise referred to as learn, feel, do.

6. Appreciate the importance of understanding an individual's intention to act in a particular way and its part in the decision process.

Underlying intentions are the individual's attitude towards the act of behaviour and the subjective norm. In other words, the context within which a proposed purchase is to occur is seen as important to the attitude that is developed towards the object.

The theory of reasoned action shows that intentions are composed of interrelated components: subjective norms, which in turn are composed of beliefs and motivations about relevant others, towards a particular intention, and attitudes, which in turn are made up of beliefs about the probable outcomes that a behaviour will lead to.

7. Understand how marketing communications can be used to influence these elements of buyer behaviour and in particular change attitudes.

Marketing communications can be used to influence the attitudes held by a target market. When developing campaigns consideration needs to be given to the current and desired attitudes to be held by the target audience. The focus of a campaign can be on whether the audience requires information (learning), an emotional disposition (feeling) or whether the audience needs to be encouraged to behave in a particular way (doing).

8. Provide a brief overview of the other environmental influences that affect the manner in which individuals process information.

There are a number of externally generated influences that impact upon buyer information processing and decision-making. These concern culture and sub-cultures, groups, situational influences, the usage situation and the purchase and communications situations.

The particular impact of these environmental influences can affect the behaviour of buyers during purchase activity, during usage and when information is being processed. Understanding the impact of the physical, time and social influences, together with the nature of the task and antecedent states, provides marketing communications opportunities to position products and services appropriately.

Review questions

1. Write a short description of cognitive theory. How does it differ from behaviourism?
2. What are the main elements of information processing?
3. How does Trait theory differ from Freudian theories of personality?
4. Describe a purchase repertoire (or evoked set) and suggest how marketing communications might assist perceptual selection.
5. To what extent are perception and positioning interlinked?
6. Choose three print advertisements where the user is promised a reward.
7. Attitudes are believed to comprise three elements. Name them.
8. Write a brief explanation of the theory of reasoned action.
9. How might the environment influence marketing communications?
10. Identify the different types of situational influences on the purchase process.

MiniCase

The lost generation? The challenge of communicating with politically cynical British youth

Dr Janine Dermody, University of Gloucestershire

In this case study you are invited to explore what may be described as part of a global paradox, which illustrates the complexities involved in understanding an audience's attitudes and behaviour and the challenges of trying to communicate with them.

The political landscape in Britain

Within this paradox democracy is triumphant throughout the world with new waves of democracy occurring in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia; but in contrast fewer people are willing to turn out and vote in many Western democracies, most notably in Britain and the United States. Consequently there are increasing concerns about changes in society that are undermining the effectiveness of democratic institutions such as government and causing the public to turn away from them. These changes include a growing public cynicism about politics and a widespread disaffection with political institutions, a decline in the institutions that underpin civic society and democracy such as political parties, and the long-term decline in electoral turnout in the majority of democratic countries.

This political disengagement is highly evident within British society, where public attitudes in the first decade of the twenty-first century appear to revolve around fear and distrust, with cynicism and suspicion abounding on the integrity of politicians and their styles of governance. As a nation, Britain is becoming more distrustful of its politicians and government and electoral participation appears to be in 'meltdown'. In the 2001 British election turnout reached an all-time low, with 59.4 per cent of the British public voting (Mori figures). In the 2005 election, when turnout might have been expected to be higher because of public anger over the Iraq war, turnout only increased to 61 per cent. Of particular concern though are the attitudes of young people towards electoral politics – most visible through the high proportion of them failing to vote in elections.

Young people in Britain have been lambasted by journalists for their continuing failure to vote, for example Polly Toynbee has described them as 'airheads' and 'know-nothings' and Nigella Lawson has argued they 'should be treated with contempt'. Politicians, keen to catch their votes have tried a number of initiatives including *'Rock the Vote'* (1997) – a cross-party

alliance that aimed to encourage young people to register to vote, and more recently Labour's personal text messages to the mobile phones of young people to remind them to vote. The filmic qualities of Labour's 2001 advertising campaign were also perceived by young people as specifically designed for them (even though they were not).

So what are young peoples' attitudes and behaviour towards electoral politics?

Youth electoral attitudes and behaviour

We will start by examining their electoral behaviour. In the 1997 British general election, 43 per cent of 18–24 year olds did not vote, in 2001 this increased to 61 per cent abstention, and in 2005 63 per cent abstained (Mori figures). Research indicates this abstention is not confined to national elections; it also includes local and European elections where youth turnout at each election point is progressively deteriorating. An evaluation of the evidence on youth electoral attitudes and behaviour signifies some alarming trends, and signals very strongly that young people are very isolated compared with other electoral segments in Britain:

- Turnout at elections is lower for 18–24 year olds than older voters, and the drop in turnout indicates an increasing predisposition among this younger age group not to vote in elections.
- Young people are less interested in national political issues than older adults; and they know less about the election process.
- Young people perceive politicians and governments as dishonest and inefficient – contributing to their belief that voting is a 'worthless' act or creating anger resulting in the withholding of their vote.
- Young people feel alienated from British society, and are therefore not voting.
- Globalisation is undermining the credibility and authority of national governments – destabilising faith in a nation's elected officials and reinforcing youth electoral apathy.
- Electoral civic-mindedness is less strong in young people than it is in older adults, contributing to non-voting behaviour, or more self-centred voting behaviour.

These trends reflect negative attitudinal positions – revolving around trust, cynicism and personal political efficacy.

Trust involves a positive evaluation of the performance of governments, parties and leaders, combined with optimism and confidence in their intentions to do ‘good’. Cynicism involves a negative evaluation – the expectation that these bodies will not act in the public’s best interests, and may intentionally harm them. The negative evaluations of young people signals that their appraisals are not positive, and that they are not hopeful or certain of the ‘good’ intentions of these bodies. Indeed, recent research confirms that young people are highly cynical of politicians and leaders; with significant proportions of them agreeing that ‘politicians lie to the media and the public’, ‘candidates for office are only interested in people’s votes not their opinions’ and ‘politicians lose touch with the people once elected’. These negative evaluations, can, however, be counterbalanced by a strong sense of personal political efficacy. Personal political efficacy is the feeling that the political action of individuals can influence the behaviour and policies of government, parties and politicians – it is a feeling of empowerment. The strength of personal political efficacy is derived from individuals’ political competence, essentially their level of political interest and knowledge, executed through their political experiences. Thus, a strong sense of personal political efficacy evolves from successful experiences that cultivate confidence and expertise, for example successfully petitioning for a Marine Conservation Bill, while unsuccessful experiences, for example the failure of the anti-war and anti-tuition fees protests, can reduce individuals strength of political efficacy, increase their cynicism and decrease their trust. In order to help you understand the consequences of these attitudes, you need to be aware of the

nature of our consumer culture, which has generated individuals who believe they are empowered, self-knowingly unique and enterprising. As a result increasing numbers of young people who choose to vote will act as consumers who seek choices that offer high personal efficacy for them. This means they will vote *if* they think that their vote will make a positive difference to their lives and those of their friends and family, and possibly, more widely to elements of British and global society that they care about – and as ‘empowered voter-consumers’, they will vote even if they are highly cynical.

Figure 5.9 portrays *some* of the relationships between trust, cynicism and personal efficacy and electoral engagement and political alienation. For example, low trust, high distrust, high cynicism and low personal efficacy feed young peoples’ feelings of alienation from electoral politics, thereby contributing to non-voting behaviour. Essentially such politically alienated individuals have no political hope, faith or confidence; they are politically sceptical, highly cynical and ever wary and watchful of government, politicians and parties. It is therefore not surprising that so many young people feel very politically estranged and are therefore not voting. Yet as you can see from this model, high personal efficacy is important because it can overcome highly cynical attitudes to facilitate voting behaviour.

So should politicians just give up on this generation and focus their attention on active voters? Are they completely lost? While there is some merit in this suggestion, from a marketing perspective that focuses on gaining ‘winnable’ customers, this is not an option for regenerating civic society. While marketers would not normally advocate trying to win ‘angry customers’, this is exactly what politicians need to do if they are to restore young peoples’ confidence in them.

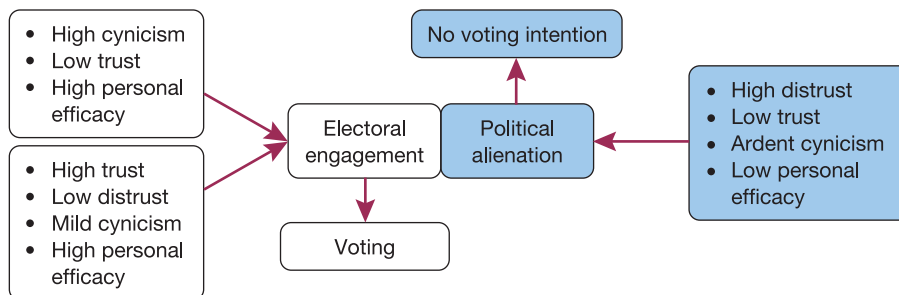


Figure 5.9 Dimensions of electoral engagement and alienation

Yet how can this be achieved?

Well, while this generation are angry, their cynicism will not always prevent them from voting if their personal political efficacy is high. Personal political efficacy is therefore very important in any efforts to reconnect with this disengaged age group. The marketing communications challenge therefore becomes one of designing campaigns to build the personal political efficacy of young people in order to increase their trust in parties and leaders and consequently reduce their feelings of political alienation. The difficulty of this task, however, should not be underestimated!

MiniCase questions:

1. For the majority of you, you will just have read an account of people in the same age group as yourself (18–24 year olds).
 - a) How closely does the account above reflect yourself and your attitudes towards politicians and voting? If you are different, why are you different? Could it be your personality? The way you perceive the world? The way you learn?
 - b) In order to represent this group more fully, create a pictorial representation of them – using visuals and text from magazines, newspapers, web sites, photographs, print ads, etc. You may create a multiple image that includes both genders, ethnicity, etc., or individual pictures of different segments. Support your pictures with accompanying explanations.
2. What forms of personal political efficacy do you think should be encouraged? How would your suggestions increase young peoples' trust in government, the prime minister, parties and politicians? How could the building of personal political efficacy influence cynicism? Can you envisage any problems if personal political efficacy is increased among this age group (18–24)? Are there examples where the personal efficacy of this age group has been developed in other contexts and/or countries? Elaborate on your findings in drawing your conclusions.
3. Role play: You work within a premiere marcoms agency and have just won the account for (please choose one):
 - a) The Labour Party
 - b) The Conservative Party
 - c) The Electoral Commission.

In teams, develop a marcoms campaign for 18–21-year-olds eligible to vote for the first time that you believe will increase their personal political efficacy and, in so doing, overcome the obstacles created by their cynicism and low trust, resulting in a very positive disposition towards voting in a forthcoming British general election. Your campaign should include objectives, segmentation, positioning and communications and media strategies as well as creative work. Your ideas must be realistic and you must work to the budget given to you by your tutor. It is critical that you justify your campaign.

You may include your pictorial representations from question (1b) and the conclusions you have drawn from question (2).

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