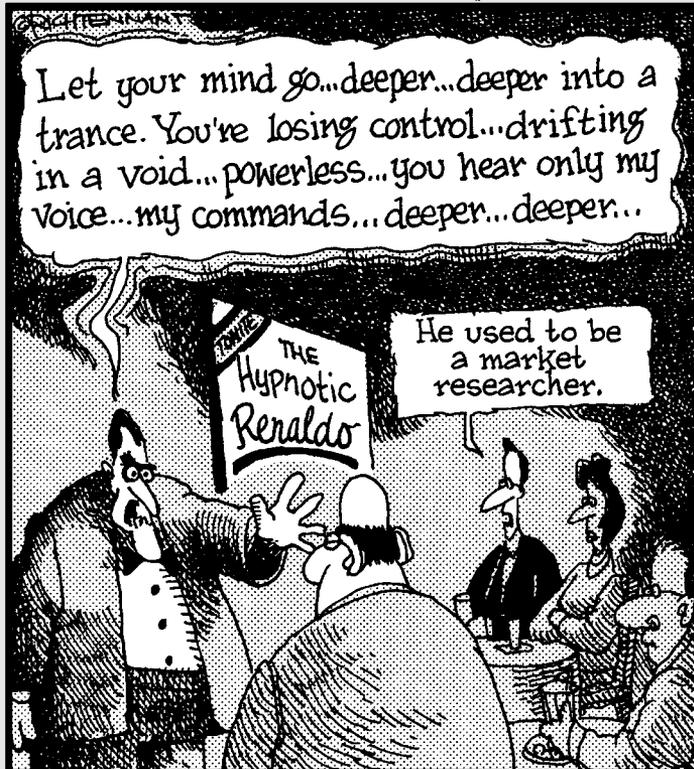


# Part II

# Delving Into the Psychology of the Individual Consumer

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



## *In this part . . .*

**I**n this part, I explain why it's important to understand the psychology of your consumers and show how to gain an in-depth grasp of the internal workings that make consumers think and act the way they do. For instance, I look at the motivation of consumers and how it relates to the consumers' desires to achieve certain outcomes. I discuss the emotions that consumers go through and how they work with motivation to move toward a purchase.

I also evaluate the perception process and the interpretations of consumers. I help you find out how you're perceived by your consumer, how you can make use of those perceptions, and how to reshape them if necessary. As if that weren't enough, I also explain how to use consumer attitudes to predict and change intentions.

Consumers are affected internally not only by emotion but also by their self-concepts. Self-concept often translates into a person's lifestyle, or the way that he lives his life, which he creates by spending (or not spending) money. So I delve into this topic as well.

You'll walk away from this part of the book with a solid feel for how the internal psychology of individuals impacts them as consumers. Having a better understanding helps you communicate with consumers and move them toward a purchase.

## Chapter 4

# Recognizing Need and Desire: Motivation and Emotion

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Uncovering the motivations behind consumer action
  - ▶ Tapping into your customers' emotions
  - ▶ Using marketing to appeal to consumers' emotions and motivations
- 

**W**hen you understand how specific situations influence certain motives and emotions in your consumers, you enter the sales situation with the upper hand. Motivation and emotion are energizing forces within the consumer that invoke certain behaviors and can make those behaviors purposeful and directed. Understanding the desire components of consumer behavior can help you in product positioning, sales, and advertising.

When you understand motivation and emotions, it's easier to speak directly to consumers in a way that moves them to action. This chapter draws you into the depths of consumer psychology, helping you understand why consumers make purchases in the first place as well as what prompts them to do so. Throughout the chapter, I also help you to identify with your customers on an emotional level and appeal to the emotions that spark motivation and spawn action. The following chapters show you how to get your customers to act by purchasing your product or service; this chapter helps you awaken their needs or desires.

## *What Moves Consumers to Action: Factors of Motivation*

*Motivation* is the persistent need that stirs up and energizes long-term goals within a consumer, and it plays a serious role in consumer behavior. In order to understand the motivation of your consumers, you must understand what it is that motivates them in general. That task can seem complex, so my goal in this section is to simplify it for you.

## Exploring the major motivators

Motivation can be hunger, sex, curiosity, security, power, and so on, and it begins with the presence of a stimulus that triggers the recognition of a need. Motivators for consumption include status, social acceptance, security, or individuality. These and other motivations are subconscious and can be triggered or reinforced by your marketing message.



When thinking about what motivates your customer, consider the five main motivators that consumers experience and react to:

- ✔ **Basic needs:** Basic needs are easy motivators to understand because they're the things that everybody needs to survive; examples are food, shelter, and water. Consumers don't want to pay extra for basic needs. If your customer is motivated by a basic need, price will be a major factor in the purchase.
- ✔ **Convenience:** As a motivator, convenience is all about saving time, effort, and money. For example, someone looking for a housekeeper may be motivated by convenience, because the act of hiring a housekeeper indicates that the person is interested in saving time and easing day-to-day life. Paying for convenience is common in today's society. Convenience provides people with the opportunity to spend less time on the things they dislike doing and to spend time, money, and effort on the things they enjoy.
- ✔ **Security/safety:** This powerful motivator is about peace of mind; it's triggered by fear of the unknown and the uncontrollable things in life. Everyone's looking to feel safe and secure. This motivator is what drives consumers to purchase insurance, fire sprinklers, smoke detectors, or security alarms.
- ✔ **Self-image/ego:** Although no one likes to admit it, everyone has an ego. People love to look good, feel good, and be envied by others. This motivator is strongly driven by emotions, and purchase decisions triggered by this motivator aren't logical decisions — they're based on emotion. The self-image motivator always brings with it a feeling; it makes the consumer look good, which in return makes him or her feel good. For example, you may purchase a car that you know will gain the attention of other drivers, or you may purchase a house in a specific neighborhood because it shows that you're doing well for yourself. This motivator can be very strong.
- ✔ **Fun:** Ahhhh . . . fun! What more is there to say? The multimillion dollar entertainment industry should be proof enough that fun can be a strong motivator. Fun is about leisure, relaxation, and enjoyment. This motivator pushes someone to buy the pool table, the big-screen television, and that Jacuzzi for the deck out back. These purchases contain no real practical purpose, but they're a source of guaranteed fun and enjoyment.



Motivation affects both the level of importance the product has to the consumer as well as how much interest the consumer has in the product. Having this understanding enables you to focus more on the desired emotional state that the consumer is trying to achieve.

In addition to the various types of motivators, motivation can be either positive or negative. Here are examples of each type:

- ✓ **Positive motivation:** This type of motivation leads to the purchase of a sports car. The consumer is motivated by the ride and the way it makes him look and feel.
- ✓ **Negative motivation:** This type of motivation leads to the purchase of life insurance. The consumer is motivated to purchase because he's worried and uncertain about how a family member would handle the expense of a funeral and burial if he were to pass away. The consumer purchases this insurance to help handle his affairs after his death. This isn't a pleasant motivation; it's actually rather unpleasant, which is why it's considered a negative motivation.

Motivation consists of drives, urges, wishes, or desires that initiate an uncomfortable tension within the consumer that remains until that need is satisfied. The motivation drives them continually through the consumer buying process, so your goal as a marketer is to identify and awaken your customers' underlying motivation; after you do that, you can implement other facets of marketing strategy to promote your product or service.

## *An example of marketing-driven motivation in action*

Consider the following example from Hair-For-Hunks, which clarifies the effect your marketing messages can have on consumers.

Hair-For-Hunks is a fictitious hair replacement manufacturer that boasts the highest sales in its industry. Entering the marketplace with a bang, the company's newest product, Coverage, is a hair product that targets men in their mid- to late-40s who are experiencing hair loss. In marketing its product, Hair-For-Hunks accepts the significance of consumer motivation and uses popular motivation theories of a respected psychologist when creating its marketing campaigns. The company used a combination of both unconscious and functional marketing tactics to motivate men to buy Coverage.

Hair-For-Hunks acknowledges that men in the target segment want to be viewed as athletic and attractive; they struggle with the fact that they're losing their hair at such an early age. In light of this information, the company decides not to use a traditional male model in advertisements, instead opting to make the potential customer the model and capture his response to

the product. Hair-For-Hunks puts the potential consumer in the starring role as the attention getter, not some 20-something model with a full head of hair. This advertising allows men who are potential consumers of Coverage to experience what using the product may be like from a purely egotistical point of view. While starring in the advertisement, these men experience glances from attractive women in their 20s to mid-30s and even enjoyed smiles and envious looks from other men.

Hair-For-Hunks is able to create the illusion that the unconscious desire of its target segment — a full head of hair and attention from others — is fulfilled by using the new Coverage product. The company realizes that its customer base has an unspoken fear of becoming old and bald, and Coverage promises to conquer that fear and rid them of the uncomfortable tension. Pledging to turn back the clock and create the illusion of youth and a full head of hair attracts the attention of other consumers. Hair-For-Hunks has developed a marketing concept that motivates its customers to not only purchase the Coverage product but also to become loyal customers.

In essence, the consumers who purchase Coverage aren't really purchasing the hair product but rather the concept of youth and masculinity produced by the product marketing campaign. By not using a traditional model, the potential consumer becomes the model and therefore the *face* of the product.



Motivation isn't the only factor at work in this example, though. As you see in this chapter, human needs motivate consumers to buy, and as a marketer, you can bring out specific emotions to sell your products and services.

## *Energizing Motivation: The Role of Emotion*

Emotions influence every decision your consumers make. They shape memories and influence perceptions, dreams, thoughts, and judgments. Emotion drives motivation and triggers the motivation to do something in response to a feeling. Emotions include the gain of power, loss of power, anticipated gain, and anticipated loss. Emotions aren't easy to define, and they don't operate alone.



Think of emotions as first impressions: They're important because they influence a response and behavior. In truth, a consumer's emotions may determine whether any action follows at all.

Emotions move consumers to purchase, revisit a place of business, and decide whether the price for a product or service is worth it. The bottom line is that specific emotions trigger a consumer to purchase. And emotional experiences with products and services can often lead to building consumer

loyalty. So emotions are important in understanding why consumers buy what they do. Engaging your customer in your advertising and marketing and gaining a favorable emotional response is the beginning of the motivational process.

## *Understanding how emotions affect purchasing behavior*

Consumers purchase products and services to experience certain emotional states or to achieve emotional goals in a process called *emotional arousal*. Emotions can create a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction, but they also can give the consumer the perception that their purchase will help them avoid a feeling of displeasure or pain. Emotions are the commonality behind decision making.

No matter what the purchase is, consumers must somehow associate a positive emotional connection between your product and themselves. Positive emotions can include the fulfillment of a desire, the support of values, or the feelings of safety and protection. Can you identify which role your product fits into?

Similar to motivations, consumers can have both positive and negative emotions that affect their purchasing decisions. They also have both nonexpressed (insecurity and depression) and expressed emotions (excitement, joy, and happiness). It's important to understand the difference between expressed and nonexpressed emotions because if a consumer is purchasing but isn't expressing any emotions toward the product, you may be required to ask more questions in order to understand the end state she's trying to achieve.



Consumers can struggle with conflicts in the decision-making process, because oftentimes they're trying to rationalize their emotions. You often see this as *double talk* from consumers. They'll express one thing and a few minutes later express something contradictory to their initial statement. This double talk is caused by a conflict when choosing between a product that's rational and a product that's pleasurable.

For example, say that a successful businesswoman walks into a car dealership. She explains that she wants a car that gets attention and goes fast. She selects the car that she wants. It's a flashy sports car that seats two. The longer she sits in the dealership, the more she tries to rationalize the purchase. She's feeling unsure; even though her purchase is pleasurable, she wonders whether it's rational. The double talk begins. How does the salesperson handle this? In order to complete the sale, it's his job to remind her of what she asked for when she came in and the reasoning she gave him for the car she was looking for.

In the following list, I show you the emotional cycle associated with consumption, and to illustrate my points, I use examples that go back to the earlier Hair-for-Hunks scenario:

- 1. Dissatisfaction:** The consumer feels a need that isn't satisfied.  
For example, Joey, a 36-year-old, is unhappy that he has experienced hair loss at such an early age.
- 2. Discomfort and tension:** The need causes the consumer to feel tension that makes him uncomfortable.  
Joey wants to be viewed as athletic and attractive, but he doesn't feel that way because of his hair loss.
- 3. Drive to satisfy the uncomfortable tension:** The consumer is driven to satisfy the tension making him feel uncomfortable.  
Joey begins looking for a solution for his hair loss in hopes that he may be viewed as athletic and attractive.
- 4. Satisfaction and reduction of tension:** The consumer satisfies his need by making a purchase.  
Joey discovers Hair-For-Hunks and purchases the company's Coverage product.
- 5. Reduction of tension:** With the need satisfied, the consumer's tension dissipates and he once again feels comfortable.  
Joey uses the Coverage product and once again feels confident that he's reflecting a younger, athletic, and more attractive appearance.

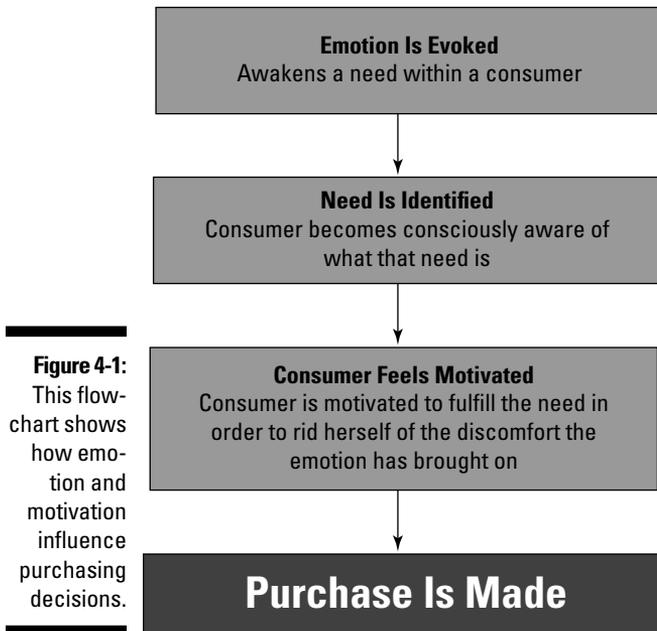
## *Linking marketing efforts to consumers' emotions*

As a marketer, you can use knowledge of motivation and emotions to move beyond basic advertising into the realm of the unconscious and conscious desires, fears, and needs in order to successfully market your products and services to consumers. It's simply not enough to promote your products as just filling a functional need; you must touch customers on a deeper level. Doing so helps the consumer feel that she's somehow linked to your product and that it produces the favorable image of her and who she wants to be. This reaction evokes consumer identification with your product and motivates her to buy — and keep buying — your product.



You can use marketing activities as a way to stimulate emotions and satisfy motivation. If you accept that emotions influence consumers' desires, motivations, and behaviors, it makes sense to consider the role of emotions in your marketing and advertising. After all, the purpose of most advertising and marketing is to persuade, motivate, and sell. Creating the appropriate emotions

in advertising increases the chances that the advertising will have a positive effect on persuading consumers to purchase your product. By creating marketing materials and advertisements that trigger or reinforce the emotions your consumers are feeling, you see an increased number of consumers interested in buying your product. Figure 4-1 shows a flowchart of the emotional and motivational factors leading up to a purchase.



As I mention earlier in this chapter, emotion jump-starts a consumer's motivation to purchase, but how can you use that information in your own marketing strategy? You can use emotion in two ways:

- ✔ **You can use emotional arousal as a benefit of your product.** For example, does your product enhance a consumer's life by giving her more energy, more joy, or overall happiness? If so, use that as a benefit in your product positioning, sales presentations, and advertising.
- ✔ **You can also use the reduction of an emotion as a benefit.** For example, does your product relieve stress, save time, or reduce anxiety? If so, you can use that relief as a benefit.

The idea is to look at the emotional benefits that your product carries for consumers so that when marketing you can use those benefits to trigger the motivation for them to buy your product.

Consider the Hair-for-Hunks example from earlier in the chapter. In this example, the men that Hair-For-Hunks was targeting felt unattractive and less youthful looking than they once did when they had full heads of hair. In order to awaken consumers' motivations, the marketers in this example appealed to the negative emotions that the men were feeling. Then the company bundled its emotional benefits in its marketing message in order to entice the men to purchase the Coverage product.

A real-life example of how consumer motivation and emotions can produce action is the bottled water industry. This industry has become extremely profitable over the past ten years, but when bottled water was first produced, consumers laughed at the concept. Why would they want to buy water in a bottle when they could drink it from the kitchen tap? That's when the marketing message changed: People weren't buying bottled water for convenience but rather for their health. By drinking bottled water, they felt they were protecting themselves from the impurities of tap water. A wariness of drinking tap water developed during this time. Impurities? What would they do to people? Could they be harmful? Now people are sold on the idea of bottled water.

Here's the breakdown of this bottled water example in terms of motivations and emotions:

- ✓ The motivators were personal safety and security of one's health.
- ✓ The emotion of fear moved consumers into action. They began to drink bottled water that they had to pay for in order to avoid drinking tap water.

The marketing message changed consumer behavior by touching consumers and making the issue personal. In return, consumers wanted to feel safe, so they opened their wallets and spent (and continue to spend) money on bottled water.

## *Evoking Emotion and Spurring Motivation through Marketing*

When consumers are motivated by an emotion, they're looking to either satisfy an emotion or get rid of it, so you have to figure out how to influence their response. To spur the emotions that trigger consumers' motivations to purchase your product, make sure they see the emotional benefits of the purchase. You can then use that information in your marketing strategy and speak directly to the emotions of your consumers.

## *Identifying your customers' underlying motivations*

The best way to use emotion in your marketing strategy is to start out by looking at the major motivators that consumers experience and then determine which motivators your products address. Do you add convenience to their lives? Do you provide them with a basic need? Do you provide them with fun? What about providing them with peace of mind or security? Keep in mind that it's possible to fit into more than one of the motivator categories.

After you identify what motivators your products address, you can use this information as you draft your marketing messages and advertisements. Your objective is to use the motivators that you've identified to speak directly to consumers. The emotional benefits that you offer to your consumers should be in your marketing and advertising message, and they also must be used to enhance the positioning of your product. (Refer to Chapter 16 for more information on positioning.)



It's important to take time to evaluate your consumers and determine what motivates them to buy from you. How do you know what they're motivated by? Evaluate the problem that your product solves. If you sell security systems, for example, your product offers security. By taking the time to identify the motivators that your consumers experience and by speaking directly to them and providing a way to get rid of any uncomfortable tension, your consumers will quickly see that you offer them a satisfying solution that puts them back into the comfortable zone they desire.

## *Motivating action by tapping into emotions*

Think back to the last election — national or local. It's quite clear that political marketers have mastered the art of tapping into emotions to sway voters. Believe it or not, you can apply the same principles to tap into the emotions of your customers to sway their purchase decisions. I show you how in the following sections.

### *Identifying which emotions to stimulate*

The key to tapping into the emotions of your consumers is to help them feel what your product or service offers. What emotion does it serve — happiness, fear, humor, warmth, or maybe even the resolution of anger? Get in touch with the emotions that consumers feel when they come looking for your product.

If your company sells security systems, for example, you know that your consumers are fearful that someone may try to break into their homes. They're looking for a product that offers peace of mind and security. Fear is

the emotion that triggers the motivation to purchase the security system, so that's the one you want to address.



Fear can move a consumer to purchase for the feeling of security and peace of mind, but if you abuse this emotion, you risk running yourself out of business. You can use fear as a selling point, but you have to be careful to do so ethically. If your product or service can rid consumers of a fear, move forward. Educate them of the consequences if they don't purchase your product. For example, if they don't purchase your security system, you can tell them that they run the risk of having their homes broken into and of not feeling safe because they're unprotected. Otherwise, don't try to fake it; consumers will see through your ploy and head for your competitor.

### *Stimulating the intended emotion with marketing tactics*

In order to be successful, your marketing tactics must stimulate an emotional need for your product or service. How do you do this? Use the following three methods for tapping into the emotions of your consumer:

- ✔ **Get personal.** Share personal stories of customers or people in your company. No fictional brochure or advertisement can create real-life excitement; you can only gain real consumer excitement and stimulate emotional buying by sharing personal stories. By getting personal, you create credibility for your product or service and give customers something to relate to. Refer to Chapter 5 to find out more on influencing a consumer's perception.
- ✔ **Bust out those benefits.** Customers want to know what their purchases will do for them. Stop being wordy in your marketing message and give it to them straight. Point directly to the benefits of the product or service; features are meaningless to your consumer unless they're benefits. If you're having trouble identifying your benefits, fill in the blanks: "What that means to you is \_\_\_\_\_?" See Chapter 16 for more information about educating consumers about your product.
- ✔ **Prove it.** In order to create emotions of excitement and trust, you must prove the benefits of your product. You can do so by using testimonials, providing demonstrations, or offering free trials and samples. At this point, you're no longer actively selling your product or service because your customers are already willing to buy! Refer to Chapter 3 to find more about applying consumer behavior to your marketing strategy.

Suppose a family purchases a new home and has the desire to make sure that it's protected and safe in that new home. The family has had an emotion of fear since moving into the new area, so it's motivated to purchase a security system for protection. A company that sells security systems knows that the motivators behind their consumers are peace of mind and safety. These motivators enable the company to create marketing messages and advertisements specially geared to this family.

As the family began to shop around for information regarding the different alarm systems available, many of the advertisements and marketing messages contained technical jargon that the family didn't understand. However, when browsing the newspaper ads one morning, the family came across the security company I just mentioned. The advertisement spoke to the family and the fear that was motivating it to purchase. The family related to the company and felt understood, so one of the members made the call. The security company was able to provide the family with a solution to satisfy its need and provide peace of mind.

The company that used the high-tech words and technical jargon didn't touch the family personally and didn't relate to what was motivating it to purchase, so that company lost out on a sale and the pleasure of bringing peace of mind to a new customer.

## *Recognizing and reconciling internal conflicts*



When a consumer decides to make a purchase decision, she may have more than one source of motivation and be faced with a conflict. Consumers often find themselves in situations where different motives, both positive and negative, conflict with one another, and they must deal with the internal conflict. This section discusses each of the three types of motivation conflicts and tells you how you can recognize and help to reconcile them in your customers.

### *When the customer equally desires two options*

In the *approach-approach conflict*, the consumer is struggling with two desirable alternatives. This conflict generates the least amount of anxiety of the three types of customer conflicts. Although the consumer must make a decision, each option is equally desirable and has attractive options.

For example, say a man is at an auto dealership and has decided that he likes two cars, but he only has enough money to buy one of them. Ultimately, the man will walk away from the dealership happy, but his initial need to choose creates an internal conflict and some anxiety about making the choice. Obviously, a consumer caught in an approach-approach conflict eventually will choose the most desirable option.



You can help your customers deal with the approach-approach conflict by informing them of the benefits and features of each product option and how they compare to each other. If a competitor offers the alternative option to your product or service, it's important to offer a thorough comparison of purchasing from you versus purchasing from your competitor. Emphasize product features and benefits. If your item is identical to your competitor's, focus on the strengths of your company; if the item is different, focus on the item you offer and how it compares to your competitor's alternative.

The consumer's path to the final decision involves thinking and rethinking the benefits of each option. As the consumer analyzes each option, the desire for one over the others becomes stronger. The closer the consumer gets to that one option, the stronger the drive becomes for that particular option. In other words, the benefits of that specific product become more desirable, leaving the other option less desirable.

Here's an example to illustrate what I mean: Suppose a man walks into an auto dealership looking to purchase a minivan for his family. Two used minivans are available. One has all the options, but the price tag is higher. The other is less expensive, but lacks many of the options that the first van does. The man debates with his family because either vehicle would work. After debating with one another and visiting with the salesperson, the man and his family decided that the more expensive option is the better choice. The less expensive minivan no longer captures their interest.

Even though the approach-avoidance conflict generates a minimal level of anxiety, the outcome is always positive. This is the easiest conflict to recognize and resolve. After all, the consumer gets to choose between two good options. It's just a matter of which one they think and feel is best for them.

### ***When the customer feels a positive and negative response simultaneously***

In the *approach-avoidance conflict*, the consumer is both attracted and repelled at the same time because the desired product may carry with it negative consequences. For instance, the consumer may experience guilt when buying a high-status or pleasurable product or service.

As an example, suppose that in order to purchase a sports car, a consumer must pay a large down payment in order to keep her monthly payments manageable. She feels some resistance to purchasing the car unless the stress of the purchase is lessened.

How can you resolve this conflict through marketing and advertising? Focus on the pleasure of the purchase, namely the features of the selected car and the importance of those features to the consumer. If that doesn't work, offer a model with fewer options (and therefore a lower price), or get creative in financing the purchase.



Your objective when faced with an approach-avoidance conflict is to draw attention to the pleasure of the product and take the attention away from the stress that's halting the purchase by offering options that alleviate or lighten the consequences that are holding back the consumer.

***When the customer faces two undesirable options***

In the *avoidance-avoidance conflict*, the consumer is faced with two undesirable alternatives. Neither choice is pleasing, but he must select one. The options in this scenario don't matter; what's important is the fact that the consumer wasn't looking to purchase a product. Instead he finds himself in the situation that it's *necessary* to purchase, not pleasurable.

For example, say a consumer needs to repair a 20-year-old refrigerator or buy a new one. Both choices are undesirable because both involve spending a large sum of money. Consumers facing this type of conflict generally do an in-depth search for information and seek out ways to possibly avoid at least one option. How can you assist in resolving this conflict? Point out how purchasing your product or service may save the customer money, or offer up payment option plans that can ease the burden of spending a large amount of money at one time.



The quicker you can ease the conflict, the easier it is to move the customer past the conflict and into the purchase. Your objective when your customer is in an avoidance-avoidance conflict is to turn a negative alternative into a positive one.



## Chapter 5

# Supplying Information and Influencing Perception

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding the value of perception and how it works
  - ▶ Knowing how consumers form perceptions
  - ▶ Influencing consumers' perceptions so they do what you want
- 

**C**onsumers are faced with a wide variety of stimuli every day. They analyze and interpret each stimulus with their built-in screening systems. These systems help consumers select and recognize what information is relevant to them and ignore what isn't. Ultimately, this recognition leads to their purchasing decisions.

In this chapter, I explain what perception is and how a person's perception forms. I also explain how perception influences purchasing behavior and how you can influence consumers' perceptions of your products or services with your marketing efforts.

## *In the Eye of the Beholder: A Primer on Perception and Consumers*

Ever wonder why people buy certain products? It's all about perception. *Perception* is how consumers understand the world around them based on information received through their senses. In response to the stimuli, consumers subconsciously evaluate their needs, values, and expectations, and then they use that evaluation to select, organize, and interpret the stimuli. This process of receiving and interpreting information is an internal one.

For example, suppose you're throwing a dinner party and have two unlabeled bottles of wine available to your guests. One bottle carries a price tag of \$75 per bottle. The other you picked up at \$12 per bottle. Your guests love the \$12 bottle of wine and can't rave enough about it. All evening you're collecting compliments for your wine selection. At the next gathering that you hold, you offer the same selection of wine to the same guests from the previous party, but just for experiment's sake you left the labels and price tags on the wine. You notice through your experiment that the guests are drawn to and more impressed by the \$75 bottle of wine. Because it tastes better? Nope. It's because subconsciously your guests perceive the \$75 bottle of wine as a higher quality wine that *should* taste better than the \$12 bottle. That's how the subconscious mind works with consumers.



Consumers make decisions based on what they perceive instead of on the basis of objective reality, so accounting for consumers' perceptions of your business and product or service is a crucial part of devising your marketing strategy. Even though you can't force a perception on a consumer, you can work hard to understand it. You can determine the factors that influence it and find out how that perception is processed. By knowing the general perceptions that your consumers may carry, you can tailor your marketing and advertising messages specifically to them.

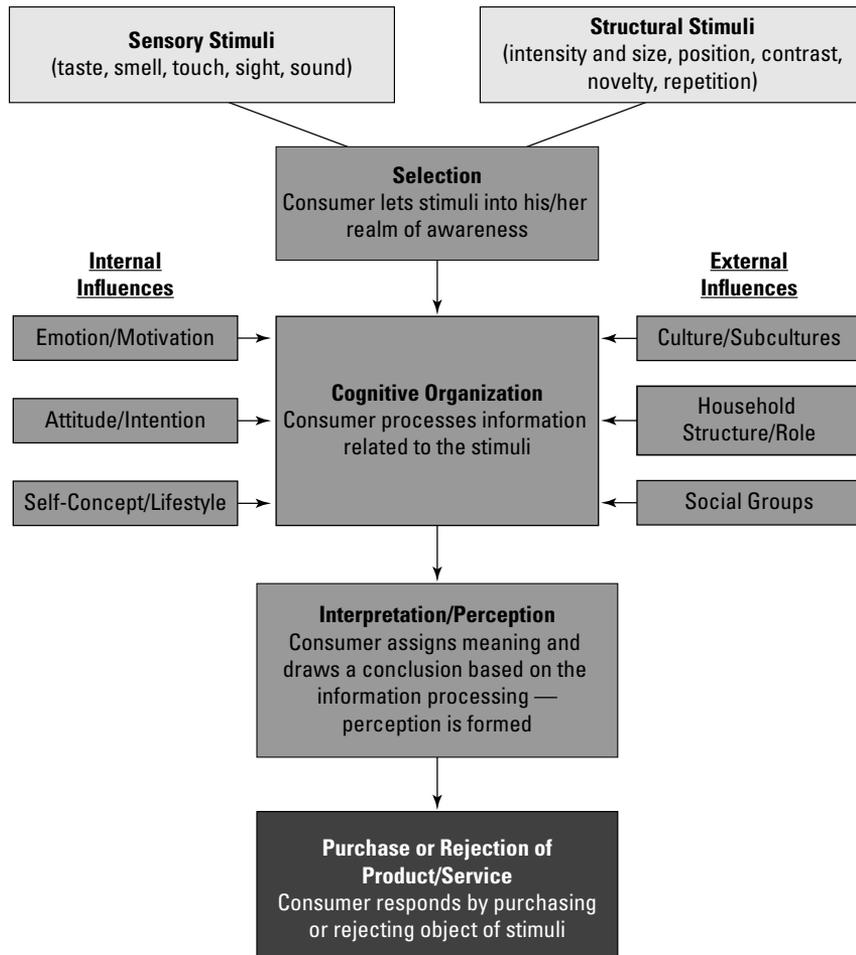
## Understanding How Perception Forms

By understanding how consumers construct their perceptions, you can better influence consumers to do what you want: buy your product or service.

Perception takes place in three stages:

- ✔ **Stage 1 — Selection:** The selection stage of perception takes place when a person encounters a particular stimulus.
- ✔ **Stage 2 — Cognitive organization:** In this stage, the consumer organizes his thoughts about the stimulus. This is when the consumer shapes his response to the stimulus.
- ✔ **Stage 3 — Interpretation:** This is the stage in which the consumer solidifies his perception and then executes a response. This response can be expressed physically or verbally.

Figure 5-1 shows a flowchart of the process and the influences that affect consumers. The following sections expand on these three stages.



**Figure 5-1:**  
This flowchart shows the formation of perception and how it translates to action.

## *Selection: Letting in stimuli*

Two categories of stimuli affect a person's perception: *sensory characteristics*, which involve the senses, and *structural characteristics*, which are external elements.



It's important to realize that consumers don't select the stimuli that affect them. Stimuli response is automatic, because it provides them with an internal trigger. It acts as the red light or green light and then guides them in their response. For example, when I smell vanilla, the scent triggers my subconscious and reminds me of the candles my mother used to light at dinnertime when I was a child. I have the green light to anything that smells like vanilla, because I like the memory it recalls for me.

### *Sensory stimuli*

Sensory characteristics affect a consumer's senses. As a marketer, you can use your knowledge of the characteristics to stimulate the consumer's perception. Sensory characteristics include vision, taste, smell, sound, and feel. Here's a rundown of these stimuli:

- ✓ **Vision:** Vision is the most dominant of the senses, so you're probably more familiar with using it in marketing than with using any of the other senses. Vision is known to stimulate physiological changes. You can affect the perception of consumers by using color, shape, and size. For example:
  - **Warm colors, such as red and orange, increase blood pressure and heart rate.** Orange is also often used in fast-food restaurants to stimulate diners' appetites.
  - **Cool colors, such as blue and green, decrease blood pressure and heart rate.** Blues and greens are often used in hospitals for their calming effect and to reduce patient anxiety.
  - **Unique size and/or shape:** The size and shape of your packaging has the ability to attract new consumers to your products. For example, consider the last time you walked into a retail store and saw a uniquely shaped shampoo bottle. You more than likely were intrigued and picked up the bottle to have a second look.
- ✓ **Taste:** Culture plays a powerful role in perception, especially when determining taste. Taste affects the success of food and beverages. For example, European food tastes very different from Korean food. The two types carry different flavors, different appearances, and different textures. The difficulty of taste as a stimulus is that everyone likes something different, so what may taste good to one consumer may not taste good to another.



If you depend on taste to sell consumers on your product, your best course of action to ensure success is to conduct taste tests with them. You won't be able to please everyone, but try to provide items that appeal to the mass of your target market.

- ✓ **Smell:** Smell is the most direct of the senses for consumers. No other sense evokes memory more than smell. It's proven that smelling scents remembered from childhood can result in moods like those experienced in the person's younger years. Marketers have begun to understand this, so some are using smells to build mood effects into products. Marketers also know that using certain pleasant scents in a store increases the time consumers spend browsing. An example of the impact that smell carries is to think of the cinnamon roll shops located in malls or airports. The aroma of fresh-baked cinnamon rolls draws consumers in to purchase.



While some smells work to your benefit, others that are too overpowering can repel consumers. Consider the consumers who avoid the fragrance section of department stores because of the overpowering odor.

- ✔ **Sound:** Sound, in the form of music and speech, can capture consumers' attention quickly. Research has shown a positive connection between the use of popular songs in ads and consumers' ability to recall those ads. It's also proven that consumers react to what they hear in stores. Pleasant music results in increased store sales, and unpleasant noise results in lower store sales.

In order to use sound to enhance consumers' perceptions, consider your target market and what sounds appeal to them. If your business is a book store, classical music may encourage concentration. On the other hand, if your business is a clothing store for teenagers, you'll likely want to focus on popular music that appeals to them.

- ✔ **Feel:** When a consumer can touch and feel a product, she obtains vital information that can have a positive or negative effect. Consider a pillow, for example. As the consumer touches and feels the pillow, its softness may remind her of the way her grandmother's pillows used to feel. This creates a pleasant perception and moves the consumer to purchase the pillow. However, the reverse also can happen. I may touch the pillow and be reminded of the itchy sweater my mother use to make me wear. This creates a negative perception that results in me not wanting to purchase the pillow.



You don't have control over negative perceptions for any of the previous stimuli. You just can't please everyone. What you can do, however, is ask the consumers what they don't like about the product you have shown them, and then point them in the direction of different products that will hopefully produce a positive perception. In other words, try to find out why the product triggers a red light for them. That way you can move them on to something that will trigger a green light.

### ***Structural (external) stimuli***

Structural characteristics that affect a consumer's perceptions are external, not internal. They deal less with the consumer's senses, and yet they rely on visual elements to gain the consumer's attention. (A lot of what follows relates to advertising; if you'd like more info on using advertising effectively, flip to Chapter 3.) Here are the structural stimuli that you might use:

- ✔ **Intensity and size:** These characteristics often are the first things to attract the consumer's attention. *Intensity* refers to the number of times consumers see your product or advertisement. You can gain consumers' attention by creating an advertisement that's brighter and larger in size than average advertisements. An example would be a full-page newspaper ad.

If you have a retail location and want to use intensity and size to your benefit in that location, consider the number of places you put your product and the sizes of the displays that house your products. If you place one display at the entrance of your store and then another one where a customer might check out, you have not only increased the



number of times your product is seen, but you've created the perception that the product is important enough for you to put it in more than one place.

- ✓ **Position:** Whether a consumer sees an advertisement or product depends largely on where it's positioned. This includes where an ad is placed on a newspaper page or where a product sits on the shelf.
- ✓ **Contrast:** When you employ contrast, you set off one thing against another. Consider grabbing a consumer's attention by placing a black-and-white advertisement in a colorful publication or creating a commercial that plays softly during a television rock show.

Placing an element where consumers don't expect to see it attracts attention. You don't always have to be the most colorful or the loudest; sometimes the contrast alone attracts more attention than the norm.

In a retail setting, consider the colors you use in the displays that house your products. Also use lighting to really enhance and draw attention to your product. The objective is to make it stand out from among the other products available.

- ✓ **Novelty:** Most people love novelty, whether the uniqueness is a new look, sound, taste, smell, or feel. Your child may choose a particular candy because of the novelty packaging; he's not especially concerned with what's inside. Consumers don't necessarily buy items because they're the least expensive either — most of the time they aren't. They buy the items because they're different and stand out.
- ✓ **Repetition:** Repetition works. Advertisements often are repeated to help consumers recall a product and create a strong interest in that product. You hope that the desire created by the ad translates into a sale. Repetition works extremely well with *low-involvement purchases*, which are purchases that are less involved and carry a lower expenditure and less personal risk. Examples of these products are shampoo, toothpaste, or laundry detergent.

Because consumers use these products every day and they typically don't cost much, consumers are more willing to take a risk in trying them out. When they see an advertisement that interests them or that sticks in their minds due to the repetition, they will often take mental note so that when they're standing in the aisle to purchase the product, they recall your advertisement and choose to try it.



Knowing which stimulus is right for you depends on your target market. Market research and testing of the different structural stimuli for your specific product allows you to see which one works for your product. You also can watch competitors to see what they're doing and then glean ideas from the information.

## ***Cognitive organization: Processing information***

When it comes to developing a perception, the consumer must process the stimuli to interpret it and conclude the steps of perception development. The processing phase is extremely subjective and is based on the following things:

- ✓ What the consumer expects to see in light of her previous experience
- ✓ The number of explanations she can envision
- ✓ The motives and interests at the time of perception
- ✓ The clarity of the stimulus itself

In this stage, consumers compare the stimuli to their own beliefs, attitudes, and involvement. This is a mental process that's affected by things such as race, color, religion, gender, or other past cultural experiences. In response to stimuli, consumers usually perceive things they need or want, and block unnecessary, unfavorable, or painful stimuli.

Consumer response to stimuli isn't a proactive thought-out process. A stimulus triggers the beliefs and attitudes that are stored in the memory of the consumer. For instance, consider the fact that I like the smell of vanilla. I don't sit down to process why — I just know that I do. I like it because it reminds me of dinner with my family when I was a child; vanilla was the scent of the candle my mother lit during our meals. Now, obviously, if I take time to analyze why I like the scent of vanilla I would remember, but the truth is that subconsciously I already remember.

The same is true for stimuli that trigger painful memories. For instance, when I walk down the grocery store aisle, the thought of peanut butter makes me sick. I know it's because I choked on a peanut when I was younger, but I don't stand there and ponder why I don't like peanut butter. I just automatically know that I don't.

The response to stimuli for each consumer is built in. If it isn't, the opportunity to create a positive experience to the stimuli is available, but the internal trigger won't already be present.

How do you as a marketer handle a stimulus that creates either a positive or negative response? You do it by observing consumers and asking questions. Why do they like or dislike that smell? What is it that attracted them to that specific product? Was it the feeling it gave them when they touched it? Why was that consumer turned off by the spice in that entrée?



The truth is that there are some responses you can't change no matter how you modify your marketing. But what you can do is get to know your consumers, ask questions, and help them find what it is they need. Then find what product will give them the green light to purchase.

## *Interpretation: Giving meaning to the stimuli*

*Comprehension* is the process in which consumers understand what a message is saying. Factors in comprehension of advertising and marketing messages include product development, existing expertise in the product area, expectations consumers already have of what they will learn, and individual differences across consumers.

The consumer's interpretation gives meaning to the stimulation that the consumer has received. This meaning is based on internal and external factors. Interpretation then leads to action. After the consumer has received the stimuli and organized it, he interprets the information by using the following:

- ✓ **Physical appearances:** Consumers draw conclusions based on physical appearances. For example, when consumers see people they know, those who resemble them, or those whom they'd like to imitate, they recall the positive attributes of these people and make a positive interpretation.  
  
This is why attractive models are more persuasive for luxury products (think jewelry, expensive cars, high-end clothing). Consumers see these beautiful people and think that they'll be beautiful too if they own that ring, SUV, or tux. But when marketers want to promote common products (cleaning supplies, computers, cellphones, and so on), they turn to the everyday man or woman — people “just like me” in the consumer's mind.
- ✓ **Stereotypes:** Our own ideas, thoughts, and preconceived notions of how people should be influence how stimuli are perceived. Take for example the face you put with your customer service claim. Is it friendly? Is the person smiling? Does he look eager to help?
- ✓ **First impressions:** A consumer's first impression determines which stimuli is relevant, important, or worthy of acting on. Your customer's first impression is gauged on your eagerness to help him, the clarity in your offering, and whether you took the time to listen to his needs.
- ✓ **Early information:** People usually don't listen to all the information that's available before making a conclusion. So make sure you put the persuasive arguments first in your advertising and marketing message.

- ✓ **Halo effect:** Consumers perceive and evaluate multiple objects based on just one factor. An example of this is a brand name or a company's spokesperson of choice. Say a company that makes a popular athletic shoe breaks into the antiperspirant/deodorant market. If the consumers' perception of the shoe is positive, they're likely to have a positive perception of the antiperspirant as well.

## *Cultivating and Shaping Consumer Perception*

A common mistake that businesses make is in assuming that perception is built on the features and benefits of their product or service. The truth is that perception is built on the *value* that the consumer believes the product or service carries.



You must create value for your consumers to shape and cultivate their perceptions. You create value by focusing on what your consumers believe is essential. Consumer perception depends on

- ✓ The stimuli to which consumers are exposed
- ✓ How that stimuli is presented to the consumer
- ✓ The quality of products and services that you offer
- ✓ Customer service and the support that you provide
- ✓ The deliverability of what you promise

Essentially, all consumers want a compelling return on their investment with you. That doesn't just mean money; it means time too.

## *Identifying what's important to your customers*

Consumers' perceptions of value are based on their individual sets of criteria. However, consumers typically see value in some common ways, which I explain in the following sections.

### *Recognizing common factors in value assessment*

Quality, service and support, and delivery contribute to the consumer's perception of value. Every point of contact with your customers is a potential

moment of truth regarding your company's value. If your customers experience a moment that isn't positive, their perception of your value won't be positive either.



When you constitute a good value with customers, I guarantee they'll tell everyone they know. This is how potential customers begin to form a perception about your product or service, which of course means more business. When considering how to shape and cultivate perception, realize that nothing is a stronger influence than the endorsement of a satisfied customer.

Here's how you can ensure that consumers place great value on your service or product:

- ✔ **Quality of the product or service:** Quality is the first and most important component of value, and it encompasses quality in service and quality in product. Consumers see value when they see quality. As a business, do you work to improve your products consistently? Consumers judge quality by the improvement a company makes to its offerings.

Quality boils down to the moment that your customer experiences a positive or a negative impression when interacting with a given product or service. You create value by providing quality.

- ✔ **Service and support:** The service and support that you provide must be top-notch in every way that you communicate with your customer. In other words, you need to uphold promises, take the time to listen to your customer, and stand behind your product. Service and support come from everyone that's employed by your company, from the production line to the receptionist that answers the phone. Every element within your business that supports the promise to service what you sell impacts the value that consumers perceive.

It's important to ensure that your customers receive exactly what your company has committed to deliver. If they don't, their perception of your value will fall. Service and support includes everything from meeting customer expectations to accurately filling orders. It's the extension of your commitment to your consumer beyond the quality of your product.



Every person and every department within your company must understand the importance and contribute to the value that your customer buys — including service and support. Look for opportunities to delight your consumers, not only at the point of sale, but at the point in which a problem occurs. If you ignore service and support, you could risk losing the customer forever.

Your customers will make it clear when they enjoy doing business with you. Not only will they tell you that they're pleased, but they'll tell everyone they know. People with professional and likeable personalities should have direct customer contact; they're the front line to creating the perception of value.



- ✓ **Delivery:** When it comes to satisfying consumers or exceeding their expectation as it relates to delivery, it depends entirely on the right time, right price, right destination, right condition, right quantity, right product, and right packaging.

I like to call delivery the last mile of cultivating and shaping the perception that your consumers hold. Use this last mile to not only improve, but also to differentiate yourself from your competitors.

### *Accounting for individuality*

Consumers see what they expect to see, and what they expect to see usually depends on their general beliefs and stereotypes. Because different groups of people have different beliefs and stereotypes, they tend to perceive stimuli in the marketing environment differently.

When crafting your marketing strategy, remember the following facts:

- ✓ **Perception is unique to each consumer; no two people view the world exactly the same.** As a result, you must look at each consumer as an individual and realize that not all consumer response will be the same.
- ✓ **Perception is not necessarily as the world is in reality, but more often it is as we think of the world.** Perception is the way a consumer “takes in” your message. As a result, individual consumers often behave differently to the same stimulus presented under the same conditions. Evaluate your marketing message, but realize that it may not always have the same effect on everyone. Just because a consumer doesn’t respond well to your product doesn’t mean that your message doesn’t work. Instead, it could just mean that the consumer wasn’t the right one for you.

As a marketer or business owner, you must be aware of this so you can tailor your marketing stimuli, such as ads, packaging, and pricing, for each segment you’re trying to attract.

You can target a positive perception within a specific group. With most purchasing decisions, consumers usually can come up with one reason why they shouldn’t purchase a product or service. This is the misperception you need to control.



You must identify the single most important decision-making factor that is critical in bringing about the desired behavior from your consumers. This factor will vary from business to business. Why do consumers pick you? Are they most interested in the quality of your products, the service and support that you provide, or the delivery method you use? When you isolate that factor, you can focus on sales, product development, and creating a positive influence on the consumers’ perceptions of your product or service.

## *Gaining attention with the use of stimuli*

As a business owner, how do you ensure that the stimuli you're placing in front of consumers aren't ignored, but rather recognized, interpreted, and stored in their memories? Know how to recognize the three *concepts of perception*, or processes that consumers go through. And depending on the process at hand, use specific stimuli to gain consumers' attention so they can complete the purchase. The concepts of perception include the following:

- ✔ **Selective exposure:** Consumers are more likely to notice stimuli that relate to their immediate needs. Consumers in this phase seek out messages that are pleasant, that they can empathize with, and that reassure them of good purchases.
- ✔ **Selective distortion:** After the consumer has decided to purchase a product, he tends to only seek out information that reinforces that decision. At times this information can distort what's true.
- ✔ **Selective retention:** Consumers remember more accurately messages that are favorable to their self-image than messages that are unfavorable. In other words, consumers tend to remember the good and forget the bad.



By understanding these concepts of perception, you have a better chance of ensuring that your marketing message isn't ignored by your potential consumers. When you understand which types of perception are associated with each stimulus, you can focus on a particular stimulus or combinations of stimuli that evoke the most favorable perception in your potential consumers. You can use the process that the consumer uses to direct your marketing message to them and trigger the stimuli that they need to get the green light for the purchase.

For example, if you're finding that the majority of your consumers are in a selective retention process of perception, you want to draft your marketing message in a way that's favorable to their self-image. Think of the cosmetic dentist down the street. He knows that his patients are mostly interested in teeth whitening, because it enhances their self-image, increases their confidence, and makes them feel beautiful. He creates a marketing message that caters to potential patients and places the message in a magazine that's distributed to 38- to 45-year-old successful women. Why? He knows they're looking for ways to enhance their self-image, they know that beauty is important to success, and his marketing message will reinforce their values and their decision to have their teeth whitened. They'll then perceive him to be the dentist they contact for this service, because he understands them.

## Avoiding sensory overload

The *sensory threshold* of a consumer represents their sensitivity level to specific stimuli and how many stimuli they can take before they must respond. Consumers are exposed to different types of stimuli every day. The truth is, however, that consumers can't process large quantities of stimuli at one time. They have been equipped with the natural ability to limit their sensory processing; because of this limitation, some stimuli never enter the conscious awareness of consumers. So, because consumers have multiple encounters with stimuli on a daily basis, an individual stimulus must be adequately intense in order for a consumer to perceive it.



Understanding sensory thresholds enables you to analyze the stimuli that you're using and determine how they affect customers and the purchase of your product. In other words, you have to find out whether you're reaching consumers at the correct sensory threshold.

### Identifying the sensory thresholds

Consumers have different levels of sensory threshold, but they generally fit into one of the following categories:

- ✓ **Absolute threshold:** This is the lowest level at which you can experience a sensation. The point at which a consumer can detect a difference between something and nothing is that person's absolute threshold for that stimulus. As exposure to the stimulus increases, you notice it less.  
  
For example, the point at which a driver can see a billboard is her absolute threshold. After an hour of passing billboards on the highway, the person develops an internal blindness to the billboards, and it's doubtful that any of them will make an impression.
- ✓ **Differential threshold:** The minimal difference that can be detected between two stimuli is the differential threshold. A professional wine taster demonstrates differential threshold. The wine taster frequently perceives a difference between two bottles of wine, yet an amateur may find the wine identical.
- ✓ **Subliminal threshold:** This threshold is only recognized subconsciously by the consumer because of the shortness in duration and differences in messages. Suppose, for example, a teenager is watching a music video during which the word "fast" appears on the television for 5 seconds and then disappears; then 20 seconds later an image of a specific energy drink appears. Even though the teenager doesn't consciously remember the message, in the subliminal threshold she has stored the word "fast" along with the image of the energy drink. The idea is that when she enters a store, she will associate "fast" with the energy drink and purchase the drink when she needs a pick-me-up.



Research suggests that subliminal perception has a limited effect on consumers, although evidence does show that the stimuli presented at the subliminal threshold can reach your sensory register. However, some believe that if the message is exposed to the consumer above the subliminal threshold, it should have the same impact. This makes the use of subliminal stimuli unnecessary.

This threshold has generated a lot of controversy in the marketing industry. Some claim subliminal advertising is an act of marketers brainwashing consumers, but marketers deny it. Consumers believe they're being marketed to without their permission, which has raised concern regarding marketing ethics.

### *Using thresholds in your favor*

The key is to understand the different sensory thresholds in order to use them in your favor. When it comes to consumers' absolute threshold, you must create advertisements above this threshold. For example, say you're advertising in an area that houses multiple advertisements or billboards. Because of these advertisements, your consumers are experiencing sensory overload and are unable to process the advertising messages. You may want to choose to advertise in another venue that isn't so saturated. This way you can more easily gain the attention of consumers.

You often use the differential threshold when you don't want your consumers to sense a change, as when you need to raise your product's price. In order to use the threshold in this way, you must focus on the benefits of the product to outweigh the differences. If a consumer is presented with both the positive and the negative, he can outweigh the negative perception with the positive. For example, suppose you raised the price but your lotion is the best on the market. In that case, you might advertise as being rated the #1 lotion without focusing on the price increase.

At other times, though, you want your consumers to recognize the differential threshold, perhaps when you increase the size of your product. For example, consider the shampoo bottle that reads "25 percent more," but yet remains the same price. In this situation, you want consumers to notice the difference, so you focus on both benefits, 25 percent more but for the same price.

The subliminal threshold is broken when a person is exposed to two different messages, which are only shown for a short time. The messages are so short in time that the consumer isn't consciously aware of them. Here's an example of when you might use the subliminal threshold: You may advertise a 30-second spot that talks about the new sandwich that you have just introduced, and then shortly thereafter you play a 30-second spot about being hungry. The consumer subconsciously stores both of these messages and perceives that he's hungry and should purchase the new sandwich.

## Chapter 6

# Uncovering Attitudes: General and Lasting Evaluations

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining consumer attitude
  - ▶ Considering how consumer attitudes are formed
  - ▶ Walking through strategies that help change consumer attitudes
- 

**A**ttitudes can tell you a lot about your consumers as long as you're paying attention. The consumer's *attitude* is a general evaluation of something — it encompasses the consumer's knowledge of that something, her liking or disliking of it, and the strength of her feelings regarding it.

*Intent* can be looked at as the result of the attitude. It's the state of mind at the time the consumer carries out an action. You must work to change attitude in order to produce change in the intention. Intention is usually one or two steps away from the actual purchase.

All the strategies used to change consumer attitudes take the traditional view that attitude precedes consumer behavior. So, in the marketing world, we use the relationship between attitude and behavior in order to create the change of intention if needed.

In this chapter, I give you an overview on attitude. I show you how attitudes are formed and how you can gauge the attitude and work to change it if necessary.

## *Nailing Down the Basics of Consumer Attitude*

The attitude of a consumer refers to what that consumer feels or believes about a product or service. An attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to an object. In

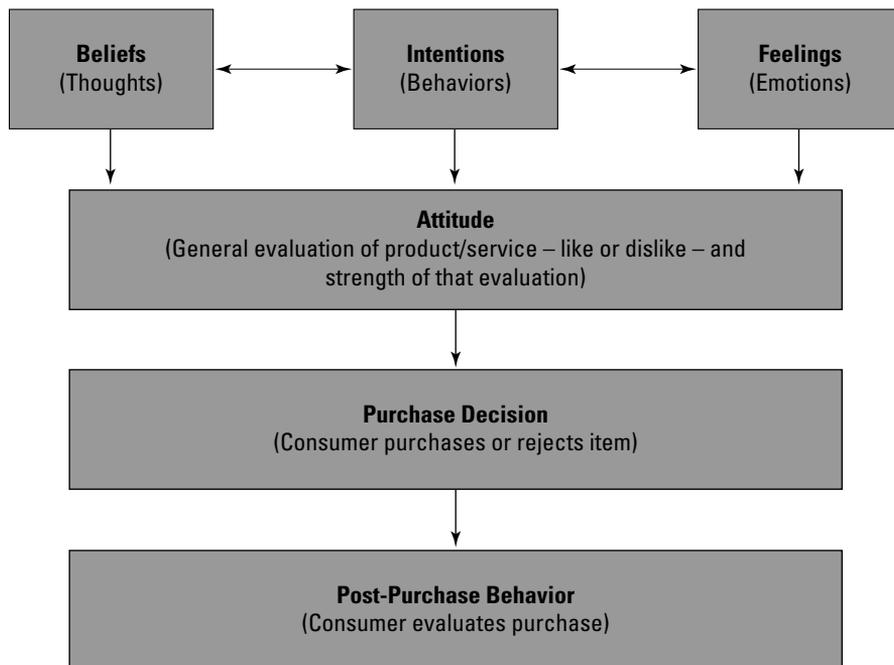
the realm of marketing, attitudes are the enduring feelings, evaluation, and tendency consumers have toward your product, service, or company.

## *Dissecting an attitude: The sum of its parts*

An attitude can be defined as a relatively lasting cluster of feelings, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies that are directed toward a specific product, person, idea, object, or group. The three components of attitude come from this definition.



By understanding the components of the attitude, you can gain a better understanding of the consumer. The three components of attitude are *beliefs* (what a consumer thinks about a product), *feelings* (how a consumer feels about a product), and *intentions* (how a consumer is likely to act as a result of those beliefs and feelings). The following sections discuss these components in detail, and Figure 6-1 shows how they influence attitude formation and the purchase decision.



**Figure 6-1:** This flowchart shows the factors that influence attitude formation and how the attitude affects the purchase decision and then some.

### ***Beliefs***

This component is the cognitive component of consumer attitudes. It's related to the general know-how of a person. To really grasp this component, you need to understand the difference between a belief and a feeling and how they both construct the attitude of the consumer. A belief is an opinion; an attitude is a point of view. So, in other words, belief represents the opinion or the way someone "thinks," which helps that person form the point of view that's reflected in his attitude toward a product.

Clear as mud, right? Well, here's an example to help you along: Consider a person who says that smoking is bad for your health. This statement is the belief component of his attitude; it's what he "thinks" about smoking. This belief works to create his attitude (or point of view), which states that he "doesn't like" smoking and doesn't think people should smoke.

### ***Feelings***

The feeling component is the emotive component of consumer attitudes, and it's derived from emotions a consumer feels toward a product or service. This component of attitude is developed by past emotional association with a product and by emotional effect of belief.

Consumer purchases are influenced by feeling. How does your product make the consumer feel? How does she feel about the marketing messages you send out? The feeling component is comprised not only of the consumer's knowledge of the product, but also of her internal emotional evaluation of the product — how she "feels" about the product.

The feeling component is the one that helps consumers reach purchase decisions by evaluating the functions of their attitudes. When consumers evaluate their feelings toward a product or service, they tend to evaluate the adjustment, ego, value, or knowledge function that it provides. (I discuss these functions later in the chapter.)

### ***Intentions***

This component is the behavior (intentions) component of consumer attitudes. As with the feeling component, the intentions component is sometimes a logical consequence representing action. However, it can sometimes reflect other circumstances as well. For example, even though a consumer may not like a department store and believes that it isn't good for the community, he may go there with a friend and end up purchasing a product.

In other words, intention is the component that creates the readiness to respond and the intent to either purchase or not purchase the product or service. The intentions component is a much stronger indicator of behavior than either beliefs or feelings, because it represents action.

## *Seeing how attitude affects purchase decisions*

Market research and behavioral science studies have shown that consumers' attitudes toward a product influence their overall evaluation of whether to purchase that product. It also influences whether they relate positively or negatively toward that product.



Attitudes can help you gauge your acceptance into the marketplace. They tell you how well you're meeting the needs of your consumer and show you how the consumer perceives your logo, endorsers, products, or marketing messages. As predictors of behavior, attitudes create the intentions of consumers.



Consumers screen information that conflicts with their attitudes. In their minds they change information to make it consistent with their beliefs and attitudes. They also selectively remember bits of information that reinforce their attitudes (and forget the rest). This is why working to change negative attitudes about your products is important; otherwise you'll never reach the buying intention that you're striving for.

Because attitudes are difficult to define, measure, and observe, you may need to do some research to fully understand the attitudes of your consumers. (Refer to Chapter 12 for more information on conducting market research.)

The interaction between beliefs and feelings and underlying values can make it difficult to understand the role of attitudes and how they affect consumers. Because they're internal, it's often not easy to gain a visual perspective of how the consumer is being affected by beliefs and feelings.

Attitudes have a level of consistency, but they can and do change. Changing them, however, isn't always easy. Find out more in the later section "Marketing to Create Positive Attitudes and Influence Negative Ones."

## *Understanding How Consumers Form Attitudes*

Consumer attitudes develop over time from childhood. Consumers are continually subjected to new knowledge, input, experiences, and influences. The formation of an attitude is helped along by direct personal experience and is influenced by the ideas, personality, and experiences of friends, family members, and the media.

Attitudes can change in response to the following:

- ✔ The introduction of new or improved products by you or your competition
- ✔ The addition of new consumer experiences
- ✔ The marketing efforts of your competition
- ✔ The performance of the product after purchase

All these things can affect a consumer's current attitude and her likelihood of attitude change. Attitudes that are relative to purchase behavior are often formed as a result of

- ✔ Direct experience with the product
- ✔ Word-of-mouth marketing
- ✔ Exposure to media advertising, the Internet, and direct marketing efforts

In the following sections, I discuss two important components that cause consumers to have the attitudes that they have. Attitudes are created by a consumer's own internal power of reasoning, which I refer to in this section as *internal assessment*, but they're also affected by outside pressures, which I refer to as *external influences*. When you can comprehend the cause of attitude, you can gain a better understanding of the attitudes consumers possess and why those attitudes may exist. Understanding also enhances your chances of changing negative attitudes.

## A preview of attitude models

Five categories of attitude models have received attention in the study of consumer attitudes:

- ✔ The *tricomponent attitude model*, which focuses on the cognitive (belief), affective (feeling), and conative (behavior) components of attitude
- ✔ The *multiattribute attitude models*, which include the attitude-toward-object model and the attitude-toward-behavior model
- ✔ The *trying-to-consume attitude model*, which focuses on what consumers are trying to achieve by purchasing a product or service
- ✔ The *attitude-toward-ad model*, which focuses on how consumers respond to advertisements

- ✔ The *theory of reasoned action*, which looks at both internal and external influencing factors that affect purchasing behavior

You can use these models to gain a better understanding of the role that attitudes play in consumer behavior. The models deal with the structure and composition of a developing attitude. Throughout this chapter, I cover the concepts you need to know; you can use the preceding list as a starting point if you're interested in doing more research on these commonly used models.

## *Perceiving a customer's internal assessment*

Because attitudes are difficult to measure, it's useful to understand and measure the influence of product-purchase attitudes in terms that relate to the way a product functions in supporting the attitude that it causes. After becoming familiar with these functions, their roles, and how they affect consumers, you can use them to further understand the attitudes of your consumers. The four primary functions are adjustment, value, ego, and knowledge; I expand on each one in the following sections.

### *Adjustment function*

The *adjustment function* gives a product the ability to help a consumer achieve a desired goal or avoid an undesired goal. An example of the adjustment function would be a consumer who finds a fantastic pizza shop; he repeatedly orders pizza from this restaurant in order to avoid the risk or dissatisfaction of another pizza shop.

How can this function work in your favor as a business owner? If you were the owner of another pizza shop, you could offer a money-back guarantee if the consumer wasn't satisfied.

### *Value function*

The *value function* gives a product consistency with the consumer's central values or self-image. After all, value, which is an expressive function of attitude, serves as a means of making a concrete expression about certain consumer values. An example of this function would include a consumer who only chooses to purchase American-made automobiles. This decision would be an expression of her value not to purchase foreign-made vehicles. In this case, the consumer feels that she's portraying her values in the vehicle that she drives.



The value function is the most difficult one to deal with because it relates to personal values, and values tend to be something that most consumers hold onto as being important to who they are.

### *Ego function*

The *ego function* gives a product the capability to defend the consumer's self-image against internal or external threats. For example, consider the purchase of designer-label clothing over nondesigner-label clothing. Some consumers believe that their clothing is an extension and an expression of their self. The clothing conveys the consumer's self-image.



Attitudes that are caused by the ego function often are used as a protection mechanism for consumers. The ego function is a function of internal assessment that you must be careful of, because it's working to protect consumers from feeling inferior. If you work to change the consumer's attitude, he may do the opposite of what you want, which is reinforce his defenses. Instead, when

you come across the ego function, your course of action must focus on what rewards the consumer. You want to avoid a potential backfire that pushes the consumer to cling to the attitude rather than change it.

As an example, consider designer clothes again. If you're a company that sells knockoffs, you may find it difficult to counteract the consumer who feels that he's less inferior because of the designer labels he wears. You must find a way to reward the consumer, perhaps explaining that you can't tell the difference between the two lines of clothing. Or you might remind the consumer that because of the decreased price he can purchase more items of clothing, which gives him a broader wardrobe without depleting his budget. Whatever you do, you must not criticize the consumer for his previous purchases of designer labels. Doing so will only make him cling to the previous attitude that he must have designer labels in order to not feel inferior.

### *Knowledge function*

The *knowledge function* gives a product the ability to provide meaning to the consumer's beliefs and experiences. In other words, it recognizes that people are driven by the need to gain information to organize and understand their environments. It fulfills the need for order, meaning, and structure.

An example of the knowledge function would be the consumer gaining information about a new medical procedure through advertisements. Marketers often use the knowledge function by applying "need-to-know" strategies in their advertisements and marketing materials.



You can use the cognitive needs of a consumer to approach this function when trying to change an attitude. Provide the consumer with as much knowledge and advice as possible. In this function, the consumer's desire is to learn. She wants to feel like an expert and like she's making an educated decision.

## *Accounting for external influences*

External influences are the inputs from the outside world that consumers use to bring cause to their attitudes. These influences can be friends, family members, or peers. Because consumers are interested in what others have to say, they listen and use the information they receive as a cause for the attitudes they have. External influences have the ability to affect attitudes in both negative and positive ways. Following are the three general categories of influence on attitudes:

- ✓ **Ideas:** Ideas can be influenced by friends, family members, peers, and the media. For example, a consumer may gain the idea from some external influence that in order to give off the impression of success, he must wear only tailor-made suits. This influences him to purchase only tailor-made suits and causes a particular attitude that tailor-made suits denote success.

- ✔ **Personality traits:** A consumer's personality traits represent how he responds to things around him. It isn't uncommon for consumers to also be influenced by the personality traits of those closest to them. For example, suppose that a consumer has surrounded himself with people who stay on top of technology. They always purchase the newest gadget, and so because of the consumer's association with this group, he also purchases the newest gadgets when they're introduced.
- ✔ **Experiences:** The experiences of others affect consumers in their attitudes toward products. For example, if your mother visits a new restaurant and tells you that the food was horrible, the chances of you visiting that restaurant are slim. However, if she purchases a product and can't say enough good things about it, the chances of you purchasing that product are much higher.

You could almost look at external influences as being equivalent to peer pressure. Consumers don't always agree with those around them, but they do often listen to them to gain their point of view. In fact, after a span of time, they begin to understand or even accept those attitudes as correct, especially in specific situations.



However, do remember that the effect of attitudes on the behavior of consumers depends on the situation in which the behavior occurs. A specific situation may cause consumers to behave in ways that aren't consistent with their own attitudes. Consider the situation in which the behavior takes place; otherwise you may misinterpret the relationship between attitude and behavior. (I discuss the consistency of attitudes in more detail in the later section "Understanding the roots of attitude inconsistencies.")

Also keep in mind that the influences of family and friends have major impacts on a consumer's values, beliefs, and attitudes. For this reason, most people carry over many of their attitudes from childhood into their adult lives. As you can imagine, these long-time attitudes can be difficult to directly influence; however, if the attitude is positive, you may be in luck. This source can be a great word-of-mouth referral for you. But, if the attitude is negative, it can have a detrimental effect on potential or current customers.

## *Understanding the roots of attitude inconsistencies*

Consumers often behave inconsistently when it comes to the components of attitude. They are human, after all. Inconsistency happens for several reasons:

- ✔ **The lack of ability:** A consumer may want a new vehicle, but she may not be able to afford it. She lacks the ability to purchase the vehicle.

- ✔ **Competing demands for resources:** A consumer may want a new vehicle *and* a new house. She can only afford one, so she has to make a decision about which item to purchase.
- ✔ **Social influence:** A consumer may enjoy gambling, but because she's with friends who don't agree with gambling, she chooses not to gamble. This type of influence can come from family, friends, co-workers, and any other social acquaintances.
- ✔ **Attitude measurement problems:** Consumers sometimes have difficulty measuring their own attitudes. In many situations, consumers don't consciously set out to specify how positively or negatively they feel about a certain product.

For example, consider a hybrid car. A consumer doesn't always give reliable answers when a market researcher asks her how she feels about hybrid cars, how important her beliefs are about the car, and what her overall evaluation is of the hybrid car. Consumers may not answer honestly because they're confused by the question or fear that the research may not agree with their point of view. Inaccurate answers often cause erroneous measurements, because the consumer may go on to act on her true attitudes.

## *Marketing to Create Positive Attitudes and Influence Negative Ones*

It's important to realize that you have the ability to shape and direct the attitudes of prospective consumers. You also can reshape consumers' attitudes. Obviously it's easier to work to create a positive attitude or to confirm existing positive attitudes than it is to change an attitude. After an attitude has been formed, it's difficult (but not impossible) to change. It simply takes a considerable amount of effort to change what a consumer believes to be true.



You can position your product or service by using messages that focus on certain beliefs and feelings of consumers. What belief do you want the consumer to have about your product? How do you want to make the consumer feel? These two things must drive the intent.

For example, a grocery store by the name of Food-4-Cheap, which is locally owned and interested in positioning itself by using a belief message that triggers both a belief and feeling and drives intent, may run an advertisement that says, "Food-4-Cheap. Always Open. Always Less." The grocery store in this example triggers all three components of attitude. The store gave consumers the belief that its products are cheap and its hours make shopping convenient. These two triggered the intent of the consumer to go to that grocery store.

In the following sections, I show you how you can influence consumers' beliefs and feelings about your offering with your marketing mix.

## *Inducing positive attitudes*

Creating a positive attitude in prospective consumers can be done by using your marketing efforts. You can use the following approaches to do so:

- ✓ **Create a positive emotional connection.** Focus your marketing message so that you gain the consumer's attention. After you have the consumer's attention, you want your message to create a positive emotional connection between him and your product.
- ✓ **Create curiosity.** Using your marketing message, arouse the curiosity of potential consumers. This curiosity will motivate them to contact you. When they do, you can help construct their positive attitude by giving them top-notch customer service.
- ✓ **Consider a two-sided message.** Consumers tend to have a natural level of skepticism when it comes to marketing messages, so using a two-sided message often leads to them feeling as if you have more credibility. For example, consider the marketing of prescription drugs. They're required by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to present both the positive effects of the drug as well as the side effects and dangers of using it.
- ✓ **Take advantage of comparative marketing.** Don't be afraid to compare your products to those of your competitors. Doing so creates credibility from the consumers' point of view and can lead to a positive attitude toward your products. Just keep in mind that you must be able to back your comparison claims.
- ✓ **Use credible sources.** You have to focus not only on the message of your marketing, but also on where you advertise and put your message. Consumers pay attention to the source of the message; in fact, the source is often used in the development of their perceptions of a product.

## *Reshaping negative attitudes*

Attitude changes are learned. They're influenced by personal experiences and information gained from various personal and impersonal sources. Consumers also are affected by their own personalities. Personality affects both the consumers' acceptance and the speed at which their attitudes can be changed.

If a consumer has a negative attitude toward a product, your challenge is to identify the key issues that are affecting the consumer's attitude toward that product. Then you can adjust your marketing to make your consumer's attitude a more positive one. You can only ask people what their attitudes are or infer them, because it's impossible to directly observe them.



Even though attitudes can be changed, keep in mind that the task isn't easy. In general, weak attitudes are easier to change than those that are strongly held. Consumers tend to develop strong attitudes when it comes to areas that they consider to be of great personal importance. Strong attitudes can be either negative or positive, however. In areas of limited importance, consumers tend to be ambivalent or neutral, so their attitudes are weaker and more vulnerable to change. It's also easier to change attitudes that deal with low-involvement purchases (versus high-involvement purchases).

In this section, I help you recognize areas where negative attitudes are likely to be strong or weak, and I offer strategies to help you turn those frowns upside down, so to speak.

### *Assessing the strength of the attitude*

When a consumer is highly involved in her purchase, she's committed to the brand or the product. In this scenario, it's often easier to change her beliefs about the product than it is to change her attitude. For example, consider a consumer who's in the process of purchasing a car. She knows that a particular brand of a car shows people that she's successful and has achieved a level of financial status. It would be difficult to persuade her that the specific brand she's looking at doesn't reflect that type of message. However, you could change her belief that perhaps the brand of vehicle you're selling makes that same statement. You would do this by providing her with advertising reports or statistics of sales that reflect the wealthy image.

When it comes to low-involvement purchases, such as toothpaste, deodorant, or laundry soap, it's easier to change a consumer's attitude. Why? Because in low-involvement purchases, consumers are less likely to be committed to the brand. They're less self-identified with these products and services than they are when it comes to high-involvement purchases. They're also more likely to accept messages that don't conform to their beliefs.

### *Selecting your strategies*

When you're faced with stagnant or slipping market share or active competitors, you need to develop strategies that attempt to change or intensify your consumers' attitudes. Attitude change strategies can focus on one of the attitude components — beliefs, feelings, intentions — or a combination of all three. (Refer to the earlier section "Dissecting an attitude: The sum of its parts" for more on these components.)



The struggle that consumers face with the belief and feeling components of attitude is that they're learned and sometimes consumers are unaware of where they were learned from. Similarly, you as a marketer may not know where consumers' attitudes are generated. Their attitudes may have nothing at all to do with your product or service, so be sure to consider the following:

- ✔ **A consumer may hold beliefs or feelings that aren't accurate.** Here's an example of a consumer's inaccurate belief: "If I let a doctor X-ray me, I will get cancer from the radiation." In a case like this, you want to provide the individual with more information and show him how you can protect him from the radiation.
- ✔ **A consumer can have multiple feelings and beliefs.** In fact, some may even conflict with other beliefs and feelings. For example, a consumer might say, "I believe that going to the gym is important, but it takes away from my family time after work and that makes me feel guilty." In this case, you want to relate to the consumer's conflicting attitude. After summarizing the conflict, advise him that if he does go to the gym, he will lead a healthier lifestyle and live longer and in turn will actually be able to spend more time with his family.
- ✔ **A consumer may have both positive and negative beliefs and feelings about a single product or service.** Here's an example: "I like red wine, but it stains my teeth." When facing this scenario, both beliefs are true, so you want to focus on the attributes of your product. This way you get him to focus more on the positive rather than the negative.



When you face these struggles, you can only work to change consumers' attitudes. You can choose from any of the following six strategies:

- ✔ **Change the basic motivational function.** This strategy takes into account that attitudes serve four functions: adjustment, value, ego, and knowledge (see the earlier section "Perceiving a customer's internal assessment" for more on these functions). By changing the basic motivational function of your product, the attitude toward your product can be changed. For example, you can offer free trials, money-back guarantees, and coupon promotions. Market in a way that drives consumers to try your product. The end result — with any luck — is that they develop a positive attitude toward it.
- ✔ **Associate your product with a special group, event, or cause.** Attitudes can be altered by indicating your product's relationship to a particular group, event, or cause. Concern for the environment is a cause that has been used frequently. For example, an environmentally conscious consumer may change his mind about a company when he finds out that it's going green.
- ✔ **Relate to conflicting attitudes.** Consumers like harmony and shy away from conflict. If you can show that their attitudes toward your product are in conflict with other attitudes, they may be persuaded to change one of the attitudes. (Just hope they change the one that pertains to you!)
- ✔ **Alter components in product attributes.** You can use this strategy to change the evaluation of the features your product offers. You can do so by upgrading or downgrading significant features, changing consumer beliefs by introducing new information, adding features, or changing the overall product rating.

- ✔ **Change beliefs about competing brands.** You can directly compare your product to competing brands in an attempt to change consumer beliefs about both products.
- ✔ **Provide information at the right times.** Consumer attitudes can be changed by either central or peripheral routes to persuasion. In other words, you need to give the consumer more information when he's most receptive to that information. Sounds complicated doesn't it? Here's what I mean: In the central route, attitude changes occur because the consumer seeks and evaluates additional information about your product. Motivation levels are high and the consumer is willing to invest the time and effort to gather and evaluate the information.



## Chapter 7

# Defining the Role of Identity: Self-Concepts and Lifestyle

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Exploring the impact of identity on consumers
  - ▶ Understanding and marketing to consumer self-concepts
  - ▶ Evaluating lifestyle characteristics that affect consumer behavior
- 

**T**he self-concepts and lifestyles of consumers set up their identities. These two components show not only how consumers see themselves, but also how they portray themselves to others. They also affect consumer behavior and consumption patterns. When consumers identify a product as relating to their self-concepts and lifestyle, they often form an emotional identification with that product. This makes them feel as if the product was created just for them.

In this chapter, I explain the many different self-concepts and lifestyles and show how you can use your understanding of them to help consumers feel as if your product was created just for them.

## *Understanding the Dynamic Effect of Identity (Self-Concepts + Lifestyles)*

*Self-concept* is a consumer's perception of himself. It's a collaboration of subjective thoughts and perceptions that he holds. In other words, it isn't an objective evaluation. A self-concept is composed of multidimensional characteristics, and it includes not only physical attributes, but psychological ones as well. Some attributes that are included are: personality attributes; knowledge of skills, abilities, and talents; and occupation. A consumer's perception is also intertwined with the various roles that he takes on, including family roles, personal roles, and professional roles.



Self-concept refers to how consumers see and feel about themselves; it's the image of themselves that they have shaped and created. How does self-concept affect consumer behavior? Well, in order to reflect the image they have of themselves, consumers buy and use products that support that image.

At times, lifestyle is reflective of self-concepts. *Lifestyle* refers to the way a consumer lives. It represents the external characteristics that pertain to how a consumer lives: the activities he engages in, his habits and possessions, and the interests he expresses. In other words, lifestyle represents what he sees as value in his life. This value is reflected in the way that he spends his time and money. Lifestyle is the result of a consumer's motivations, education, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and opinions, demographic factors, and personality. At the same time, lifestyle also represents a consumer's income level, marital status, culture, social class, and buying power. These different roles all combine to reflect the consumer's lifestyle.

## *Studying how identity affects purchasing behavior*

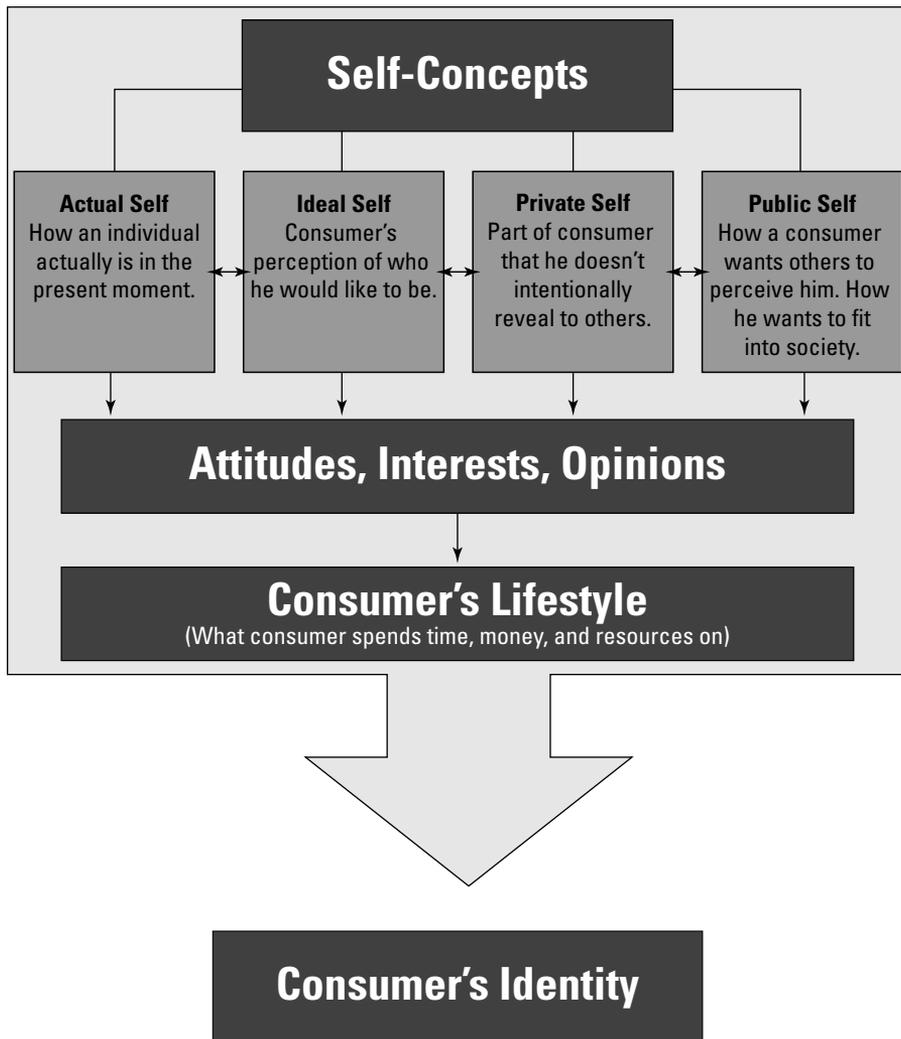
Self-concept is an important determinant of consumer behavior, because it describes how consumers see themselves and how they think other people see them. Consumers define their sense of self at least partially from the products and services they consume. They attempt to support their self-concepts by using those products that communicate particular personal characteristics to themselves and those around them. For example, self-concept is the basis for why a consumer wears certain fashions, purchases particular products, and drives specific cars.



Products and brands are an important part of how an individual defines herself. In other words, products and brands help a consumer stay in line with the self-concept she has developed. The subjective meaning of a product ties in closely with one's self-concept or image. A consumer will buy products that she feels reflect her established image.

Like self-concept, lifestyle determines what products consumers buy, how they use them, and how they feel about them. Consumers purchase products and services to support their lifestyles.

In essence, a person's self-concepts influence her attitudes, interests, and opinions, which in turn influence her lifestyle; together these factors determine her *identity*. Figure 7-1 shows you how the concepts relate to one another.



**Figure 7-1:**  
Inevitably,  
self-  
concepts  
determine a  
consumer's  
identity.



A person's self-concept can change over a period of time. This change most often happens during an identity crisis or traumatic experience. During this time an individual will often go through a reassessment and develop a new self-concept. When a person's self-concept changes, her lifestyle may also change as a result of both internal and external factors. That's because a consumer's lifestyle is reflective of her self-concepts; the corresponding consumption patterns change as well.

## *Seeing how identity factors into successful marketing plans*

Advertising and marketing can influence consumers to buy products that symbolically represent the self-concept they're attempting to achieve. When your advertisements and marketing messages are passed on to consumers by using reinforcement of their self-concepts, consumers are more inclined to purchase your products. On the other hand, if consumers feel that your advertisement doesn't fit with their self-concepts, they're less likely to accept the advertisement and purchase your product.



If you know the specifics of your consumers' lifestyles, you can profile their patterns of acting and interacting with the world around them. And even better is the fact that you can develop marketing strategies targeted to common market segments based on similarities in lifestyle. You can then use this information to not only get the right message about your product in the right places for your intended consumers, but you also can develop your products to meet the lifestyle interests of your target markets.

For example, suppose I'm a home builder who's looking to develop a new housing addition in a specific zip code. I decide to do a lifestyle assessment of people located in that zip code. The lifestyle assessment shows me that the median income is \$450,000 annually and that most of the homeowners in the area are married and have two kids. The average home purchase price is \$800,000. Because of this assessment, I now know that if I build my housing development in this area, the houses can range from \$750,000 to \$950,000 and should sell with no problem. After I've selected my area and finalized the plan, I can then begin marketing to this zip code.

## *Identifying Consumer Self-Concepts and Then Marketing to Them*

In the past, people believed that humans only had one self, but it has been proven that we actually have multiple selves. No, I don't mean you're schizophrenic. I simply mean that individuals act differently with different people in different situations. Here are the four basic dimensions of self-concept:

- ✓ **Actual self:** The *actual self* reflects how an individual actually is at the present moment. A consumer's actual self-concept can include social status, age, gender, occupation, and so on. For example, I'm a marketing consultant. This is a real perception of me, and it's what I portray to others.

- ✔ **Ideal self:** The *ideal self* is a consumer's perception of who he would like to be (but isn't). As consumers, many people are in constant pursuit of bettering themselves, whether it's through education, income, health, or occupation. Because they aspire to have the ideal life, they often purchase products that make them feel closer to that ideal self-concept.
- ✔ **Private self:** The *private self* is one that isn't intentionally revealed to others. The private self represents who a person is or would like to be to himself (versus who he wants to be to others). Private self-concept can represent how you believe that you act, such as friendly, creative, loving, or adventurous.
- ✔ **Public self:** The *public self* is revealed to others. The public (or social) self-concept is how a consumer wants to be seen by others — how he wants to fit into society. For example, consumers may want to feel attractive, intelligent, and successful.



Self-concepts work in two ways: They're both dynamic and organized. Because self-concepts are dynamic, they provide consumers with direction in their lives. They view their actual self and take direction to achieve their ideal self. Self-concepts are also organized, and because of this, they provide consumers with a feeling of stability. This stability makes the consumer want to protect and support his concepts in order to maintain a feeling of stability, which comes from the consistency that is provided by self-concepts. Consumers maintain stability by purchasing products that are in line with their self-concepts.

## *Tracing the formation of self-concepts*

Research shows that humans aren't born with self-concepts. Instead, they begin to emerge in the early months of a person's life. They're shaped and reshaped through repeated experiences. Specifically, self-concepts are a product of interacting with others. Through these interactions, people develop perceptions of themselves, which become their self-concepts.

The following are the three distinctive ways that self-concepts are developed in individuals:

- ✔ **Received messages:** Self-concepts are a reflection of a person's interaction with others. As the person takes in messages (both positive and negative) that are received throughout his life, he begins to construct the image he has of himself. These messages are not just verbal; they can be nonverbal as well. Here's a verbal example: If an individual's mother tells him every day that he will be successful, that message becomes a part of his self-concept (as his ideal self). He will work every day to better himself and reach toward that success.

- ✔ **Social comparisons:** When a person evaluates himself and compares that evaluation to someone else, he forms a self-concept (his actual self). An important factor to take into consideration when it comes to social comparison is who the individual is comparing himself to. For example, a 37-year-old man would likely compare himself regularly to other 37-year-old men.
- ✔ **Culture:** The culture an individual was raised in contributes to self-concepts as well. (Refer to Chapter 8 to read more about how culture affects consumers.) For example, an individual who was raised in a very loving home would have a private self-concept that causes him to act loving to everyone he meets.

An individual arrives at a self-concept by taking all three of these things into account. It's important to realize that because self-concepts are a part of a person's identity, they're fairly stable and difficult to change, especially as the individual gets older. Often the only way for a self-concept to be changed is through a new life experience or drastic life change.



Because self-concept isn't instinctive (but rather a product of interaction with others), it has limitless potential for development and achievement. In other words, consumers are always in the development phase of their self-concepts. And you can help them achieve those concepts by providing products that work to support and protect the self-concepts that are important to them.

## *Understanding how self-concepts affect the individual*

By understanding self-concepts and how they affect consumers, you can use the knowledge to position your products in a way that's attractive to consumers, thereby causing them the desire to purchase. The following list provides you with information on how self-concepts affect consumer behavior:

- ✔ **Individuals perceive themselves differently than others because of previous experiences and present perceptions.** You must understand how your consumers see themselves, which is often based on the messages they have received throughout life. Do they perceive themselves as successful? If so, position your product in a way that makes them feel successful.
- ✔ **Individuals perceive different aspects of themselves at different times with varying degrees of clarity.** Understand the perception of your consumers. Are they focused on their families or careers? For example, if your consumers are focused on family, it probably isn't a good idea to try and sell them a sports car that only has two seats.
- ✔ **Any experience that an individual perceives as inconsistent with her self-concept can be perceived as a threat.** Consumers purchase products

that support their self-concepts, so if your consumer feels that your product is in conflict with her self-concept she may not purchase it in fear that it will threaten her feeling of stability.

- ✔ **Consumers tend to resist change to their self-concepts.** When you understand the purpose of self-concepts to consumers (to provide stability and consistency), it's easier to support those concepts rather than to try and change them. So make sure your product supports your consumer's self-concept.
- ✔ **The more central a particular belief is regarding an individual's self-concept, the more resistant she will be to changing that belief.** Drastic life changes or experiences are usually the only times that consumers change their self-concepts. This is particularly true in older consumers. If you have a consumer who believes that buying your product is frivolous and a waste of money, you'll find it nearly impossible to sell her that product — unless, of course, you can find a way to relate it to another self-concept that the consumer holds.

For example, if I'm an elderly woman and you're trying to sell me a security system, I may see it as frivolous and a waste of money — until you explain to me how it will keep me safe and protect me from intruders. The consumer's belief that it is a waste of money is in line with her actual self, but safety is in line with her ideal self, which is being safe and secure in her own home.

- ✔ **Perceived success and failure impact self-concept.** Failure in a highly regarded area lowers evaluations in all other areas. Success in a prized area raises evaluations. Understand where your consumer is. Is she in a place of feeling success or failure? For example, if you ask her about her job and she tells you she was just laid off, it probably isn't the time to show her your most expensive item. However, if she tells you she just opened up her third business, you can probably bring up that big-ticket item and close the deal.
- ✔ **The world and the things in it aren't simply perceived; they're perceived in relation to an individual's self-concept.** You must realize that consumers see things differently. The unfortunate thing is that self-concepts aren't visible to the eye. So you have to ask questions and really listen to your consumers in order to understand their perceptions of your product.
- ✔ **The development of self-concept is an ongoing and continuous process.** The self-concepts of consumers are always developing and consumers are always working to achieve them. So the positioning question that you must ask yourself to reach out to consumers is "How does my product help consumers achieve their self-concepts?"
- ✔ **Individuals strive to behave in ways that are in line with their self-concepts.** It's difficult for consumers to step outside of their self-concepts, because they're sort of like comfort zones. So if your product pushes them outside of their self-concepts, you'll find it difficult to get their attention. You must put your product in line with consumers' self-concepts.

- ✔ **Self-concept usually takes precedence over the physical body.** In other words, individuals often sacrifice physical comfort and safety to achieve emotional satisfaction. When consumers are outside of their self-concepts, they experience discomfort, and so this is why they work hard to stay inside of them. If a consumer has the ideal self-concept that she wants to be in a beauty pageant and win, she'll go out of her way to achieve that goal — even if it means getting to the gym by 4 a.m. As a marketer, show the benefit of what you offer and how you'll help that consumer reach her ideal self.
- ✔ **Self-concept continuously guards itself against self-esteem loss.** Self-concepts work to protect consumers. They evaluate the self-concept support that they gain from a product in order to make a decision on purchasing that product. If it's in conflict with their self-concepts, including self-esteem, it's easy for the consumer to walk away. So be sure you know how your product supports the self-concepts of your consumer.



Self-concept affects more than just the here-and-now, one-time purchase. It also affects the following:

- ✔ **Memory:** When your marketing message or advertisement relates to a consumer's self-concept, she has a greater level of recall than she does with advertisements that don't relate to the self-concept she strives to achieve. This is because of the dynamic component of self-concepts. A consumer is always developing and trying to achieve her ideal self-concept, and memory often serves as a reminder of how to do that.
- ✔ **Attitude and intention:** A consumer's self-concept affects product preference through the attitudes she forms when she sees your advertisement. Advertisements or marketing messages that are congruent with the consumer's self-concept can create a positive attitude toward your product. Similarly, when your advertisement is in line with the consumer's self-concept, her desire (intention) to purchase the product is strengthened. (Refer to Chapter 6 for more on attitudes and intentions.)

## *Directing your marketing strategy to engage consumer self-concepts*

You can use your understanding of the four different dimensions of self-concept — actual self, ideal self, private self, and public self — to target your products to consumers. (I explain these dimensions earlier in the chapter.) Here's how you can effectively target consumers with each of the different selves:

- ✔ **Reinforce the actual self:** Many products on the market attempt to reinforce one's actual self-concept (who a consumer is at the present time).

So marketers target consumer segments based on that concept. Where do consumers live at the moment? What are their lifestyles like right now? How does your product work in those lifestyles? The idea is to find out where your consumers are right now, and then you can present your product in a way that supports the actual self-concept.

For example, consider how minivans are marketed. They're marketed as a product that's intended to be driven by busy parents who constantly transport their children from place to place. Those who market minivans know that parents see themselves as busy people who care about the safety of their children. Parents relate to this self-concept, so they have a desire to purchase a minivan.

- ✔ **Convince consumers to make their ideal selves a reality:** Consumers use their ideal self to compare the value of their actual self. They want their actual self to have similar characteristics to their ideal self. If these two concepts aren't similar enough, they'll attempt to achieve their ideal self by purchasing products that reinforce that self. So determine how your products help them get there. How do your products help support the ideal self of the consumer?

Take for example a person who desires to be wealthy. He may not make enough money to be considered wealthy or upper class, but he aspires to be. This consumer may purchase certain things that make him feel like he belongs to the upper class. By purchasing an item that's known to be affordable to the upper class, this consumer may feel closer to achieving his ideal self. He may lean toward buying a home in a specific neighborhood or a specific type of car.

- ✔ **Evoke the behavior of the private self:** You can use a consumer's awareness of his private self to market your product. You can evoke private self-concepts by using images in your marketing that portray internal self-concepts, such as happiness, joy, or health consciousness.

A health food, for instance, may represent an image of living well and eating healthily. This image taps into the private self-concept of someone who feels that he's health conscious. Consumers who see themselves as health conscious will buy products that reinforce their desire to be healthy.

- ✔ **Encourage leadership of the public self:** Physical attractiveness can be a public self-concept. In fact, it has become extremely important to many individuals in today's society. Advertisements and the media enforce this importance by glamorizing popular role models, such as news anchors and celebrities. Consumers feel that physical attractiveness is a sign of social power, self-esteem, and wealth. So both males and females who value good looks feel they should emulate this attractiveness. Because consumers want to purchase products that make them feel attractive, they focus on specific clothing brands, fine jewelry, and sometimes even cosmetic surgery. As a marketer you want your marketing message to use images that are attractive and that portray the idea that by using your product or service the consumer is attractive as well.

Public self can also represent the desire to feel neighborly, friendly, successful, tasteful, and so on. So, for example, a consumer may buy a finer wine to serve at a dinner party in order to create the perception of having good taste.



It's important to really evaluate your consumers and their lifestyles, because lifestyle is the reflection of self-concepts, and while self-concepts aren't visible to the eye, you can gain a better understanding of them by viewing the lifestyles of your consumers. Do they enjoy fine wines and restaurants? What are their cars like? And how big are their houses? When you have found the lifestyle that your consumer represents, you'll have a greater understanding of what marketing messages you should use to market your product.



You can effectively target your marketing message by including slogans, celebrities, and product images that give consumers the idea that if they purchase something, it can help them create or maintain a certain dimension of self.

## Reflecting on and Targeting Consumer Lifestyles

Lifestyle is reflective of the self-concepts that consumers hold. It's what consumers put their time, money, and other resources into. It represents their values as well as their interests. So you can gain a wealth of information about your consumers by taking a deeper look into their lifestyles.

Lifestyle is technically measured by a technique known as *psychographics*, which involves measuring consumer responses to activities, interest, and opinions. This measurement process is known as an *AIO*. After gathering the responses, you combine them with demographic information and other factors. Next you analyze them to find distinctive lifestyle characteristics, and then put them into groups according to these characteristics. Finally, you segment the groups so the products can be positioned and the marketing campaigns can be created.

It's difficult to perform an AIO without consumer data, so in this section, I spend some time explaining the different key lifestyle characteristics and help you increase your knowledge of how you can specifically use that information to market to consumers with those characteristics.

Lifestyle characteristics and understanding how people live provides you with more usable information than personality assessments do. You can use these characteristics to develop and create marketing strategies that are positioned in a way that appeals to your consumers. That way your message relates to your consumer's lifestyle. You also can use lifestyle characteristics to help select the right venues to display your advertising and marketing messages.

## *Recognizing lifestyle-determining factors*

Consumers are affected by many factors pertaining to their lifestyles. These factors include income, marital status, culture, social class, and buying power, among others. All these factors determine the way of life for a consumer. Some factors may be more important than others to some consumers, so you want to target those first. Targeting correctly really comes down to market research and what your consumers are looking for from you. (Refer to Chapter 12 for more information on market research.)

### *Income*

A person's disposable income is extremely important when it comes to consumer patterns and consumption behavior. A consumer may aspire to buy certain goods and services, but her income may become a restriction. On the other hand, a consumer may have an unlimited amount of income, and so she may be able to buy whatever she wants. So, as you can see, income often determines what consumers purchase and when.



A consumer's lifestyle can change if income increases or decreases. Market studies show that as a consumer's spendable income increases, she's more apt to spend money on her wants rather than her needs. She feels a sense of spending freedom. Consider, for example, lottery winners. Is a winner's first purchase a loaf of bread? Typically not. It's a new home, a luxury car, or an extravagant vacation. Specifically, when income increases, the following behaviors takes place:

- ✔ The percentage of money spent on basic necessities, such as food and clothing, increases. The reason for this is that consumers are now no longer worried about running out of money. Instead, they feel free to spend more.
- ✔ The percentage spent on housing remains constant, but utilities like gas and electricity decrease, because they're now spending more money traveling and vacationing in the tropical islands and less time at home.
- ✔ The percentage spent on other items — such as recreation, education, self-help, and luxury items — increases.

Change of income for consumers often creates either freedom in spending or restraint in spending, depending on whether the income increases or decreases. What typically happens is that in the initial phase of an income increase, consumers spend money rapidly, because their income boundary feels lifted by more discretionary income. If a consumer's income decreases, she will begin to look for ways to save money. In both of these scenarios, the consumer's lifestyle is affected by the amount of income.

### *Marital status*

As you can imagine, consumer spending patterns change in direct proportion with marital status. For instance, when a couple marries, they have more disposable income to spend. When a couple divorces, however, each party has less disposable income. The same is true for consumers who find themselves widowed. In each of these scenarios, incomes change and consumption patterns are also affected.

Here's an example: If you're single, you're more likely to purchase frozen dinners or eat out more often, because it's difficult to cook for one. By doing so you save money as well. If you're married, your grocery bill will likely increase, and your family will dine at home more often, because spending time at home is important and eating out is too expensive for a family.



The bottom line is that if your product is of benefit to singles, married couples, and divorcees or widows/widowers, you have to create three types of messages. You want to cater your message specifically to each of those groups and their lifestyles so you don't turn off one group.

### *Culture*

A *culture* is a segment of society that shares the same beliefs, learned values, and attitudes. It isn't uncommon for a culture to share similar history, religion, language, thoughts, knowledge, and morals as well. All these factors affect consumer lifestyle and consumer beliefs. (Refer to Chapter 8 for more information on how culture affects consumers.)

Culture is part of the external impact that influences the consumer. It represents the pressure that's put on him by others within his culture. Here are some of the ways that culture affects consumers and purchasing:

- ✔ It affects prepurchase and purchase activities as well as consumption patterns.
- ✔ It affects consumers' buying habits by impacting how they perceive a specific product.
- ✔ It can determine which purchases consumers view as frivolous.
- ✔ It affects the way consumers search for information.
- ✔ It determines the importance placed on specific features of a product and product alternatives.
- ✔ It impacts the amount negotiated during the purchasing process.
- ✔ It impacts consumption — how consumers use and consume products.
- ✔ It can influence how individuals dispose of products. They may resell them after use, give them away to others, or recycle them.

Culture influences the following lifestyle characteristics as well:

- ✔ **Communication and language:** The way consumers communicate and the language they use often affect their lifestyle by who they associate with, what neighborhoods they live in, and at times what social classes they participate in. Keep in mind that this doesn't just include verbal communication. Nonverbal communication, such as hand gestures and facial expressions, also affect lifestyle. As a marketer, you must respect the way your consumers communicate and the language they use — not only for clarity, but so you don't offend.
- ✔ **Dress and appearance:** In many cultures, consumers dress differently. In some cultures, consumers wear more clothes and in others they wear less. This affects consumers' behavior because it dictates what clothing they wear as well as what they deem appropriate or offensive.
- ✔ **Food and eating habits:** Cultures often determine how, what, and when consumers eat. Eating habits affect consumers because they influence the food that they buy as well as what restaurants they go to.
- ✔ **Time and time consciousness:** Culture affects time because in some cultures time is more flexible. The lifestyles of some consumers may be more lax when it comes to timing and appointments; others will be more prompt. You want to be sure that you understand this so you don't offend (or become offended) when dealing with certain consumers.
- ✔ **Relationships:** Different cultures look at relationships with different importance levels. Some hold them with great respect and others see relationships as less formal. When working with consumers, you want to have an understanding of the relationships in their lifestyles so you can appeal to their needs.
- ✔ **Values and norms:** This is the most common factor of lifestyle when it comes to culture. Cultures carry different values and norms, so if you're serving a specific culture, you need to be familiar with these values and norms in order to avoid being offensive.
- ✔ **Beliefs and attitudes:** Cultures carry different beliefs and attitudes toward lifestyle. Some think it's okay to have an abundance of money, while others find it a blessing to live in poverty. So, obviously, these types of beliefs affect consumers' lifestyles and buying habits.
- ✔ **Mental process and learning:** Each consumer learns and processes things differently, so this often has an effect on lifestyle. For example, it may determine where consumers send their children to school or what language they speak.
- ✔ **Work habits and practices:** Work habits and practices are affected by culture and they also affect lifestyle. A consumer may work 15 hours a day because it's what he was taught from his culture. Or a consumer may only work three hours a day and then take a nap. It's important to understand how this differs from culture to culture in order to understand the

lifestyle of the consumer you're trying to reach out to. Here's another issue to consider: Is it okay to call your consumers on Sunday to discuss business? Some consumers would see that practice as disrespectful and therefore wouldn't do business with you.



As a marketer or business owner, it's your responsibility to know the culture of your target market. If you aren't familiar with the culture that you're marketing to, you may make a huge marketing blunder that could be to the detriment of your business. In fact, if an advertisement is offensive or puts off a consumer and his culture, you'll have a tough time gaining traction within the market of that culture. After all, certain acts in different cultures are considered disrespectful, and after you've disrespected them they may no longer do business with you. Even worse, they could share with everyone your disrespectful act, which would influence whether other people in that culture do business with you.

For example, in the French culture, people don't smile when meeting strangers. In fact, they don't trust folks who smile at them before establishing a connection or relationship. So, if a company runs an advertisement in France where two strangers meet and smile, the consumers probably wouldn't be receptive to that advertisement.

### ***Social class***

All societies possess a hierarchical structure that stratifies residents into classes of people called *social classes*. Groups and individuals are classified into this hierarchy on the basis of esteem and prestige. The groups differ in status, wealth, education, possession, values, occupation, lifestyles, friendships, and manners of speaking. Consumers of the same social class tend to share the same values, beliefs, and behaviors that unite them. A person's social class is relatively permanent. Members of social classes tend to socialize with each other rather than with members of other classes.

Here are the six social class divisions within the United States:

- ✓ **Upper upper class**, which represents those who have old money (money that has been passed up through the family). Consumer purchases in this class often focus more on economic status and behavioral standards in order to uphold their social status.
- ✓ **Lower upper class**, which represents the new rich. Consumer purchases in this class often focus more on upholding economic status, educational credentials, and behavioral standards in order to reach their desired social status.
- ✓ **Upper middle class**, which represents professionals or business owners. Consumer purchases in this class often focus more on educational credentials, increasing economic status, and behavioral standards in order to reach their desired social status.
- ✓ **Lower middle class**, which represents lower-paid white-collar workers and higher-paid blue-collar workers. Consumer purchases in this class

are geared more toward behavioral standards; economic status is less important to them.

- ✔ **Upper lower class**, which represents the blue-collar worker. Consumer purchases in this class are geared more toward behavioral standards, but economic status isn't important to them.
- ✔ **Lower lower class**, which represents the underemployed or unemployed. Consumer purchases are geared more toward behavioral standards; economic status and educational credentials aren't important to them.

The interesting thing about social classes is that both actual and perceptual factors distinguish the groups. Social class is the only lifestyle factor that deals with both the actual and the perceptual. In perceptual terms, individuals perceive that the many classes have different amounts of prestige, power, and privilege.

Social class tends to be a predictor of resources owned. Consumers often buy products and services to demonstrate their membership within a specific social class. Consumers also have been known to purchase goods and services to help advance their social standing within a specific class, because a membership in a higher social class leads to greater influence within the workplace, organization, and society as a whole.



It's common for social class to be erroneously confused with income. But the fact is that social class captures those lifestyle differences that income ignores. For example, different social classes

- ✔ **Value education differently.** Consumers who value education will spend more on higher education, self-improvement, and workshops. Those who value it less will conversely spend less.
- ✔ **Have different attitudes toward family life, raising children, the role of the women, and so on.** Consumer attitudes regarding family life affect consumers because they have a great effect on consumption patterns. If a consumer believes that the role of women is to stay home, this situation often creates less discretionary income for the family. If she works outside of the home, however, the family will be more apt to purchase convenience products, such as day care, dinners out, housekeepers, and so on.
- ✔ **Exhibit different lifestyles.** The importance that consumers put on their public lifestyle affects their consumption patterns. If perception of others doesn't matter, they'll pay less than those who find the exhibition of their lifestyle a definition of their social class.
- ✔ **Have different activities outside the home.** A consumer who participates in multiple activities outside of the home will spend more on convenience items in order to accommodate that lifestyle of activities. On the other hand, the consumer who stays at home will have fewer outside expenditures.

### *Buying power*

*Buying power* is often referred to as a consumer's purchasing power — the consumer's ability to use the cash she has to purchase products to meet her current wants and needs. Buying power, which is based on the consumer's income level and credit, allows her to change her lifestyle characteristics.

Buying power gives the consumer the power of choice, meaning that when consumers have unlimited buying power, there are no limits to what they can purchase to meet their needs. However, if a consumer has limited buying power, her purchasing decisions may not be as uninhibited.

Manufacturers often analyze the buying power of specific market segments, which allows them to design products and services that are a good match with the average amount of disposable income that a consumer within a specific income bracket is expected to use. As a marketer, it's important to understand the buying power of your consumers, because if you have something to sell, you must have people who have money to buy.



It isn't uncommon for consumer groups that share some of the same lifestyle factors to gather and create buying power by purchasing in quantities. How can you use this to your benefit? Consider tapping into groups that have the buying power to purchase in quantities. You can often find this by evaluating lifestyle. An example would be a group of attorneys who purchase legal journals at a discounted price because they purchase them in a quantity. This isn't to say that you can't target individual consumers who have a large capacity of buying power; they're just typically a little harder to reach than groups. Keep in mind that this also can be true for services that are purchased. Consider, for example, the corporation that offers a discounted rate at a local gym to its employees. The gym offers the discount because it's reaching consumers in masses rather than individually.

In order to determine buying power for consumers within your market, you must gather the spending data of targeted consumers, which can be obtained from third-party market research companies. (Refer to Chapter 12 for more information.) You can take this information to target specific consumer groups with your offer. (Chapter 10 discusses group influences of consumers.)

## *Working lifestyle factors into your marketing mix*

When it comes to focusing your marketing on lifestyle factors, you must first understand what lifestyle factors are common within your target market. Are the majority of your consumers married? Are they professionals? Do they

belong to specific social classes or cultures? You gain this information from market research, and then use the information to segment your market and identify the lifestyle commonalities. Use these commonalities to draft a marketing message that appeals to your target market. (Visit Chapter 13 for more information on identifying your target market.) In the following sections, I show you how to successfully market with each of the lifestyle factors in mind.

### ***Income***

Products that are considered to be luxury items are more income sensitive than products that consumers consider necessities. So if your product is considered more of a luxury, you want to go after consumers who have more disposable income or buying power — or at least be able to show consumers who have a limited amount of disposable income why your product is important to them and why they should purchase it.



If your product is a luxury item, you need to keep a close eye on income and saving trends to avoid a decrease in sales due to a weak economy or recession. Research has shown that during slow economic times consumers tend to hold on tighter to their pocket books, especially when it means buying items of luxury. If your product is a necessity, however, you need to focus on the value of your product compared to your competitor's. You need to prove why consumers should spend their hard-earned money to purchase your product rather than your competitor's.

### ***Marital status***

In order to market your product or service to individuals based on marital status, ask yourself how your product or service enhances the lifestyle of that group, whether single, married, or divorced. Then craft your message directly to those consumers so it attracts and appeals to them.

For example, travel agents, homebuilders, and health clubs have recently recognized the purchasing power of single individuals, so they have begun to market to this important segment of the population.

### ***Culture***

When marketing to consumers in specific cultures, it's important to adhere to their values and beliefs. When you do so, you have a better chance of causing those consumers to be receptive to your marketing. If you fail to adhere to their values, you take the risk of offending them to the point that they never purchase your product. (Check out Chapter 8 for more information on the influence of culture on marketing.)

### *Social class*

You can use social class distinctions to separate marketing programs and strategies in terms of product and service development as well as in terms of advertising and communication. To be positioned in the best possible way, manufacturers and retailers need to familiarize themselves with the class membership of their target markets and the members' needs, wants, purchasing motives, and requirements in terms of product features and benefits.



As a marketer or business owner, you can use social class to increase product influences by:

- ✓ **Creating different products, services, and product/service lines intended for different social classes:** For example, try offering your top-of-the-line product to those in the upper class (who can afford it and view it as a product that sets them apart in social status), but then also take the time to create products that are specific to young professionals in the middle class. Even though they can't afford the top-of-the-line products, they'll still have an option of purchasing a product from you. For example, consider the BMW 1 series that was created for the middle class individual who couldn't afford to purchase the BMW 7 series.
- ✓ **Marketing the types of products you offer to the social class whose members typically buy them:** For instance, upper class is a good market for real estate, prestigious cars, designer clothes, foreign wines, expensive hobbies, posh restaurants, and so on.
- ✓ **Selling items of status, or *conspicuous items*, which are products that social classes are likely to talk about and compare among themselves:** Fashion, jewelry, or flashy automobiles are all visible items that create status for consumers. They're items that others will talk about. These items often make consumers feel important and be perceived as being in a higher social class than their peers (which is often the reason behind purchasing these products).
- ✓ **Aiming your promotional messages to appeal to a specific social class:** For example, the promotional messages directed to the upper class consumers have to stress status, style, taste, and sophistication. These messages must also show these high-end consumers what they can do with the product to express themselves.

Different products and stores are perceived by consumers to be appropriate to certain social classes. For instance, working classes tend to evaluate products in more utilitarian terms and more affluent consumers tend to evaluate products based on appearance and body image. So when you evaluate social classes, you can evaluate the opportunities to create products and marketing strategies that enable you to go *upmarket*, by appealing to high-income consumers, or *down-market*, by appealing to low-income consumers.

***Buying power***

You want to be sure that the market you're targeting has the buying power to purchase your product. If it doesn't, you could very well be wasting your marketing dollars. When evaluating buying power within your target market, consider providing several quality levels of the same types of products that match the buying power and the demand in a given sector of the market.

For example, if you're marketing \$1.5 million houses to consumers who can only afford \$950,000 houses, you're missing the market. If you want to create diversity in your product, consider creating products in the price range that's within your target market's buying power.

