

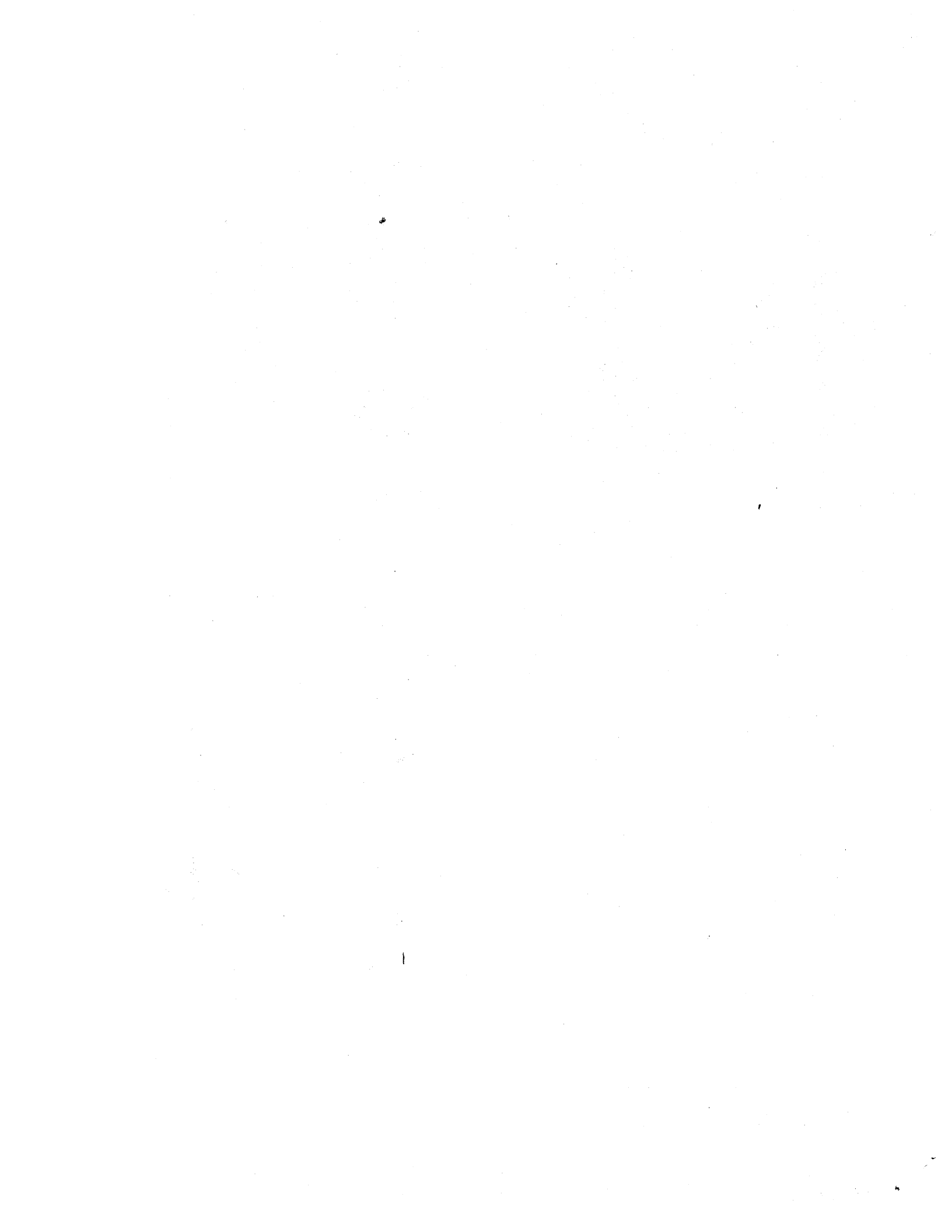
CHAPTER 4

Consumer Buyer Behavior

Previous chapters have emphasized the importance of using buyer behavior information in planning marketing strategy. This approach appears logical since the fundamental purpose of business activity is the satisfaction of the wants of consumer and industrial buyers. In recognition of this point, progressive firms have adopted "the marketing concept," which implies the consumer orientation of the entire business firm. As a means of achieving such an orientation, it was shown that the process of planning marketing strategy requires understanding of and adaptation to the environment in which the product is to be sold. It was demonstrated that the demand variable is the most basic environmental factor influencing the character of effective marketing strategy.

In considering the problem of buyer behavior, it will be helpful to discuss the factors that influence the purchase of consumer goods separately from those resulting in the purchase of industrial goods. Consumer goods are those destined for use by ultimate consumers or households, and these goods are in such form that they can be used without commercial processing. Industrial goods are products destined to be sold primarily for use in producing other goods or rendering services, as contrasted with goods destined to be sold primarily to the ultimate consumer.¹ Since executives responsible for purchasing industrial goods are professionals who make their decisions in the context of a complex organization, the factors that influence their buying actions tend to differ considerably from those that influence the buying behavior of the ultimate consumer. Accordingly, we shall deal with consumer buyer behavior first and then turn to a consideration of the behavior of the industrial buyer in Chapter 5.

¹ Reprinted by permission from *Marketing Definitions*, compiled by the Committee on Definitions, American Marketing Association, Ralph S. Alexander, Chairman (published by American Marketing Association, 1960), pp. 11, 14.



PURCHASE OF CONSUMER GOODS

In beginning our analysis, it is helpful to examine the concept "product" more closely. "A product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a need. It includes physical objects, services, persons, organizations, and ideas. Other names for a product would be the *offer*, *value package* or *benefit bundle*."²

We can understand the concept better by specifically recognizing its different levels. In essence, there are four levels of the concept: "core product, product offering, augmented product, and potential product. The *core product* refers to the basic want-satisfying capability of a product. The *product offering* includes the core product as well as the brand image, styling, packaging, organizational reputation, etc. The *augmented product* refers to the product offering plus the marketing program of that offering (i.e., promotion, price, delivery and installation, warranties, etc.) The *potential product* refers to possible new or extended uses to which the augmented product could be put."³

The buyer typically focuses on the "total product." From this perspective, a product is a bundle of attributes that the buyer expects to deliver want satisfaction.⁴ In developing marketing strategy, accordingly, it is useful to classify goods on the basis of the amount of shopping effort that consumers are willing to undertake in purchasing them and the perceived risk involved in making the purchases. This results in the following four classes:

1. *Specialty products* are those bundles of attributes which the buyer perceives as involving high risk with respect to performance and/or interpersonal influence and as worthy of significant shopping effort. The buyer expects the benefits derived to be significant and also perceives that the risk of choosing products which do not provide these expected benefits is great. Thus, the buyer will expend considerable money, time, thought, and/or physical activity to acquire these products. And the buyer will attempt to reduce the risk associated with purchase via such means as reliance upon well-known brands and the advice of relevant others. Examples of specialty products include luxury automobiles such as the Cadillac or the Mercedes Benz and the services of a heart surgeon or a tax expert.

² Philip Kotler, *Principles of Marketing* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980) p. 368.

³ Ben M. Enis and Kenneth J. Roering, "Product Classification Taxonomies: Synthesis and Consumer Implications," in *Conceptual and Theoretical Developments in Marketing*, AMA Special Educator's Conference, Phoenix, Arizona, February 1980, pp. 5-6. This paper provides a review of the work on product classification schemes together with a synthesis designed to extend the usefulness of such efforts.

⁴ Adapted from Ibid., pp. 12-15, 21-22.

2. *Shopping products* are those attribute bundles which the buyer perceives as not likely to involve high performance or interpersonal risks but as worth considerable shopping effort. Examples include such goods as pickup trucks, computers, homes, or apartments; services such as life insurance, travel tours, or college curricula; and even such illegal services as gambling or such illegal goods as narcotics.

3. *Convenience products* are those attribute bundles which are perceived to be low risk and are expected to be worth little effort. They are relatively standardized products. Examples include such unsought goods as umbrellas, such services as a taxi, a shoeshine, or unskilled labor; and such staples as salt or paper clips.

4. *Preference products* are those attribute bundles which the buyer perceives to involve possible high risk but for which he or she expects to exert only limited shopping effort. That is, the buyer sees distinct benefits to be derived from different core product offerings but does not value these benefits highly enough to expend significant effort to attain them. Examples of preference products include beer, laundry detergents, lubricating oils and greases, hand tools, television programs, and airline service.

In applying the above classifications, it is desirable to remember that not all customers view the same "product" in the same way. The buyer thinks in terms of the "total product"—the bundle of attributes that he or she expects to deliver want satisfaction. Thus, a wristwatch may provide a different bundle of attributes to different segments of buyers. A Timex, for example, is at best a preference product; a Philippe Patek, on the other hand, is a specialty item. The marketer's task, therefore, is to determine how the majority of prospective buyers view the product.

Then, too, the perceptions and expectations of the buyer vary with the stage in the buying process. A buyer encountering a purchasing situation for the first time may perceive it as quite risky—for example, the initial decision as to choice of beer, cigarettes, or television shows. He or she might cope with that risk by engaging in extensive problem solving—trading off effort for risk. Subsequent buying decisions with regard to the same product, however, may be based upon habitual repurchase of the same brand.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AS A DECISION PROCESS

As a means of organizing our discussion, it will be helpful to conceive of consumer buyer behavior as essentially a decision-making process, although it will be recognized that experience leads the consumer to make many purchases by habit, thus conserving time and energy. We shall then discuss some of the key concepts that help the

marketer to understand buyer behavior and that are useful in guiding research designed to assist executives in deciding how best to influence purchase through product changes, price changes, and promotional effort. Finally, we shall consider the use of comprehensive models of consumer buyer behavior as a potential aid to executive decision making in the development of marketing plans.

In analyzing consumer buying behavior, we can distinguish two broad types of approaches: (1) problem-solving behavior involved in the initial purchase of unfamiliar products; and (2) habitual brand choice, which is characteristic of repeat purchases of well-known low-priced products. While it is recognized that a considerable portion of buying is done on the basis of habit, we shall give initial emphasis to the problem-solving (or decision-making) type of behavior involved in the buying of unfamiliar products. The factors influencing choice in such situations are more complex and merit careful analysis. Behavior involved in the first purchase of such a product, moreover, provides helpful background in understanding the formation of habits that predominate as consumers gain experience with the product and the item appears regularly on the housewife's shopping list.

In the purchase of an unfamiliar product, accordingly, we can distinguish the following stages in the decision-making process: (1) recognition of a problem (felt need); (2) the search for alternative solutions to the problem; (3) evaluation of alternatives (brands); (4) the purchase decision; and (5) postpurchase feelings and evaluation. With this decision-making process in mind, let us consider certain key concepts that will help us to understand the behavior of the prospective buyer.

Relation between the Individual and His Environment

The problem with which we are concerned is why some consumers buy a particular brand, why others do not, and how nonusers can be led to switch to it. It will help us to understand such behavior if we start with the following simplified equation:

$$B = f(P, E)$$

That is, any given type of behavior (such as the purchase of an unfamiliar product) is a function of the interplay between the consumer's personal makeup, P (personality), and his perception of the environmental situation, E . Thus, any given brand is one possible choice that the consumer might make among other brands in the same category, and even among other kinds of products. Allowing for external situational influences, which might have a bearing on buying behavior, we can understand the consumer's decision if we can assess the hold that the brand has on its current consumers as well as the appeal that it might offer to its most likely prospects. We can do this by relating the consumer's perception of the brand to his "needs."

In our analysis, therefore, we shall deal first with the individual consumer and his "needs" and "attitudes." We shall then consider the influence of the consumer's perception of the environment upon his buying behavior.

THE INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER

Basic Needs or Motives

The starting point in the purchase decision-making process is the recognition of a need (or a buying motive). Motives are "all those inner striving conditions variously described as wishes, desires, needs, drives, and the like. . . . Formally, then, a motive is an inner state that energizes, activates, or moves (hence 'motivation'), and that directs or channels behavior toward goals. . . . Hunger, the quest for power or status, the desire to land on the moon or to own a new car—all these are motives according to this definition." A goal in turn, may be thought of as "the object, condition, or activity toward which the motive is directed, in short, that which will satisfy or reduce the striving."⁵

Motivational theory received its greatest impetus from Freud. Nearly all theorists who have worked with clinical data have accepted part of the Freudian scheme but have rejected other portions. "One of the more recent theories is that developed by Maslow, who has integrated most of the leading approaches to motivation into an overall scheme designed to conform to the known facts—clinical and observational, as well as experimental. He refers to his synthesis as a "holistic-dynamic theory." It is especially interesting to marketing people, since it is based primarily upon a study of normal people rather than the abnormal subjects who have been the concern of most other theorists.

Maslow classifies motivational life in terms of fundamental needs or goals, rather than in terms of any listing of drives in the ordinary sense of instigation (the "pulls" rather than the "pushes"). He lists the following five levels of needs, arranged in order of their basic importance to the individual:

1. The physiological needs—for example, to satisfy hunger and thirst.
2. The safety needs—for example, security, order, and stability.

⁵ Reprinted by permission from Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, *Human Behavior* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), pp. 239-40.

⁶ See D. C. McClelland, *Personality* (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), pp. 388-410, for a brief summary of Freud's motivational system, an evaluation of his conceptual scheme, as well as contributions of other scholars to motivational theory.

⁷ Adaptation of "The Basic Needs," pp. 89-101 in *Motivation and Personality* by A. H. Maslow. Copyright 1954 by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

3. The belongingness and love needs—such as affection and identification.
4. The esteem needs—such as prestige, success, and self-respect.
5. The need for self-actualization—for example, to do what one is best fitted for.

Also identified are two classes of cognitive needs, which are not definitely located in the need hierarchy but which are believed to exist, perhaps as a function of intelligence and of gratification, fairly high up the scale of lower-order needs:

6. The desire to know and understand (an essential precondition to the satisfaction of basic needs).
7. The aesthetic needs—for example, the craving for beauty.

Maslow believes that the five basic needs develop in such a way that the most important—that is, the physiological needs—must be satisfied before the safety needs, which are next in importance, can fully emerge in a person's development; and so on up the ladder from the lower needs (most important) to the higher needs (least important) in the hierarchy.

For example, he explains that the physiological needs are the most prepotent of all needs:⁸

What this means specifically is that in the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be the physiological needs rather than any others. A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else.

It is quite true that man lives by bread alone—when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled? At once other and (higher) needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still higher) needs emerge, and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency.

Maslow explains that the need hierarchy is not as rigid as may be implied by the above explanation. While most people feel the needs in about the order indicated, there may be exceptions in individual cases. Also, it would be a mistake to conclude that each need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges. Instead, all the basic needs of most normal members of our society are partially satisfied and partially unsatisfied at the same time. A more realistic description of the hierarchy would be in terms of decreasing percentages of satisfaction as we go up the hierarchy of prepotency. To illus-

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 83.

trate, it is as if the average citizen were satisfied perhaps 85 percent in physiological needs, 70 percent in safety needs, 50 percent in love needs, 40 percent in self-esteem needs, and 10 percent in self-actualization needs.

According to Maslow, these basic needs are neither necessarily conscious nor unconscious. In the average person, however, they are more often unconscious than conscious. Moreover, these needs must be understood not to be exclusive or single determiners of certain kinds of behavior. For example, one may make love not only for sexual release but also to convince oneself of one's masculinity or femininity, to make a conquest, to feel powerful, or to win more basic affection.

One of the problems encountered in the use of the above list of motives is that we can all think of other needs that do not fit neatly into the seven classifications listed. Another difficulty is fitting the purchase of each product neatly into a single motive category. Then, too, different motives can lead to identical buying behavior and, conversely, entirely different buying decisions can be traced back to identical motivations.⁹

It is evident that the marketing executive cannot infer motivation directly from behavior and that behavior cannot be predicted in a simple way from motivation. Realization of these complexities has led to the use of research as an aid to gaining an understanding of this important influence upon buying behavior. The task of finding out why people buy, however, is not an easy one. Often people will not, or cannot, explain their actions. Let us examine this problem briefly and indicate some of the approaches which may be taken to deal with it.

Motivation research. In discussing the basic needs that motivate human behavior in all phases of living, Maslow made the point that these motives are more often unconscious than conscious. While this may not be equally true when we restrict our analysis to buying behavior, the problem of getting behind the superficial reasons people give in response to direct questions about their buying motives has long been recognized. Smith clarified the problem by discussing three levels of awareness in the range from consciousness to unconsciousness.¹⁰ The first level deals with conscious and public material that consumers are willing to discuss with an interviewer.

The second level includes rarely discussed material—that is, motives only slightly outside awareness (preconscious level). An example would be moving to a better neighborhood as a means of social climb-

⁹ For an excellent discussion of these points, see James H. Myers and William H. Reynolds, *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Management* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), pp. 89–91.

¹⁰ From G. H. Smith, *Motivation Research in Advertising and Marketing*, an Advertising Research Foundation Publication (Copyright 1954 by McGraw-Hill Book Co.), pp. 19–21. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

ing. In an interview, instead of giving this response people might tend to rationalize the move by explaining that a home in a high-toned neighborhood represents a better investment.

The third level deals with material that is unanalyzed by the individual and not discussed with other people (unconscious level). An example would be bargain hunting as the need to outsmart others and to express aggression toward a substitute for the bad, refusing mother.

It was to gain access to material in the preconscious and unconscious levels of awareness that marketers turned to the research methods of the behavioral scientists. The methods most commonly used are the informal, qualitative interview and projective techniques.

The informal, qualitative interview (depth interview) is described as casual, conversational, and free-flowing. The respondent is encouraged to talk at length in the subject area of interest and to express whatever thoughts or feelings come to mind.¹¹ Generally, there is no list of questions that must be asked in a prescribed way. The emphasis is on letting the respondent lead the way in order to find out what is important to him and why and to allow opportunity for unanticipated responses to be made. Interviews may run for one or two hours.

Projective techniques have two principal characteristics: (1) Their specific purpose is not apparent. (2) The projective device is ambiguous—that is, it contains no specific meaning; it can be interpreted in different ways. The object is to find out what meanings the respondent will read into it. The underlying assumption is that in responding promptly, the consumer will reveal something of himself—his thoughts, feelings, values, and needs. The main principle which is assumed to be at work is that of *projection*, or the unconscious imputation to others of the characteristics of oneself. Free association may also come into play, so that the resulting chain of thoughts is related in meaning and revealing about the respondent.

The kinds of projective techniques commonly used in motivation research are word association, incomplete sentences, narrative projection, cartoons, requests for description of others, and picture responses (adaptations of the Thematic Apperception Test).¹²

Fennell has advocated another approach to the study of why people buy that appears to have promise. She suggests that the term *motivation* be used to refer to the conditions under which brand purchase is activated and to the general direction of the behavior acti-

¹¹ Adapted by permission from Joseph W. Newman, *Motivation, Research and Marketing Management* (Boston: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, 1957), p. 406.

¹² For a discussion of projective techniques, including examples, see *ibid.*, pp. 424-40. Also, for a helpful discussion of problems involved in the use of projective techniques together with methodological improvements to correct these limitations, see D. H. Robertson and R. W. Joseph, "Projective Techniques in Research," *Journal of Advertising Research*, October 1974, p. 27 ff.

vated. The research approach involves permitting consumers to classify themselves in terms of perceived activating conditions—that is, in terms of the product-use situation as perceived by the consumer. Five motivating situations are identified, each consisting of an activating condition and behavior mode, as shown below:

Situation Perception	Behavior Activated
1. Aversive elements	Escape
2. Anticipated aversive elements	Prevention
3. Normal depletion	Maintenance
4. Product-related aversive elements	Conflict resolution
5. Positive elements	Diversion and enjoyment

Each motivating situation specifies a general direction for consumer purchase behavior. Brand choice within the motivating situation is determined by the cognitive and affective components of brand attitude.¹³

One of the criticisms of motivation studies employing behavioral science techniques relates to the size and composition of the sample of consumers interviewed in such research. Clearly, this is an important matter which must be handled on a sound, scientific basis. During the exploratory stage of research, when hypotheses are being sought, much benefit may be derived from a relatively small number of interviews using the informal qualitative approach or carefully designed projective techniques. If the findings are labeled "hypotheses" and are treated as such, the requirements of sound research are met.

In the second stage of the research project, however, these hypotheses should be subjected to careful testing by appropriate procedures. Well-designed, direct questions or carefully prepared projective techniques, or both, may be used at this stage. At this point, however, the sample should be representative of the consumers who make up the market for the brand and should be large enough to yield a satisfactory degree of accuracy. This is essential so that the findings may be projected to that consumer population with which the seller is concerned.

Where the nature of the product and the nature of the marketing mix permit, it is good practice to incorporate the findings of a motivation research study in an actual selling or advertising campaign and conduct a test to determine the relative effectiveness of the new appeal as compared with that previously used. Validation tests of this sort, if properly conducted under favorable circumstances, may provide a much-needed measure of the value of motivational studies.

¹³ Adapted by permission from Geraldine Fennell, "Motivation Research Revisited," *Journal of Advertising Research*, June 1975, pp. 26-27. © Copyright 1975 by the Advertising Research Foundation.

While it is true that the consumer's motives tend to activate behavior which eventually results in a purchase, the previous discussion indicates that behavior cannot be predicted in a simple way from motivations. Other intervening factors internal to the individual also come into play, factors that tend to influence the consumer's perception of the various goal objects (products, brands) that may be utilized to satisfy his desires. These intervening variables include the consumer's attitudes, self-image, and traits (habits). Let us turn to a consideration of the consumer's values or attitudes.

As mentioned earlier, the purchase decision process of the consumer begins with the identification of a need to be satisfied. After the desire has been aroused, the next step is to evaluate different products or services as ways of satisfying this need. The decision to buy a particular product or service is then followed by the choice of the brand or the selection of the supplier of the service. Consumer attitudes play an important part both (1) in the process of evaluation of alternative products or services as means of satisfying the desire and (2) in the choice of the brand to be purchased or the supplier to be patronized. Thus, attitudes directly affect purchase decisions.

"Attitude is the predisposition of the individual to evaluate some symbol or object or aspect of his world in a favorable or unfavorable manner. Opinion is the verbal expression of an attitude, but attitudes can also be expressed in nonverbal behavior." Attitudes have two important dimensions: (1) an "affective, or feeling, core of liking or disliking"; (2) "cognitive, or belief, elements that describe the object of the attitude, its characteristics, and its relations to other objects." Included in the latter would be evaluative beliefs which attribute to the object good or bad, desirable or undesirable, qualities. "All attitudes thus include beliefs, but not all beliefs are attitudes."¹⁴

Attitudes also have a third dimension that is important for marketing—an implied readiness for some kind of action toward the object of the attitudes. For example, if a consumer has a favorable attitude toward Coca-Cola, there is an implication that this individual is more likely to buy this brand than alternative competing brands. This action tendency suggests a relationship with the motivational factors discussed previously and is an important consideration in understanding the buying process.

How are attitudes formed? To a very considerable extent they are learned in the process of interaction with other people. Factors that tend to develop and change attitudes may include the following: (1) In

¹⁴ Adapted by permission from D. Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Summer 1950, pp. 163-204. For a broader concept of "attitudes," see McClelland, *Personality*, chap. 8.

the satisfaction of basic desires, the individual will develop favorable attitudes toward people and objects that satisfy his or her needs and unfavorable attitudes toward those that block the attainment of those needs. (2) Attitudes are based in part upon the kind and amount of information that the individual receives and upon the nature of the sources of this information. (3) Many attitudes held by individuals come either directly or indirectly from the groups of which they are members—for example, family, work, and social. (4) Personality factors (such as intelligence, appearance, activity levels, withdrawal tendencies, and dominance) have some effect upon attitudes. (5) Actual experience with the object—favorable or unfavorable—will have a profound effect upon attitudes toward it.¹⁵

Evidence on the relationship between consumer attitudes and their buying decisions comes from the work of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. The center has been making surveys of consumer finances since 1946. The information is secured through annual personal interviews with the head of each spending unit in a national sample of dwelling units selected by area probability sampling to represent the population of the United States. Through these surveys, data are gathered on consumer attitudes; income; ownership, purchases, and purchase plans of automobiles, durable goods, and houses; assets; debts; and personal characteristics. Our special interest is the center's studies dealing with the measurement of consumer attitudes and their relationship to spending.

Two measures of attitudes toward spending are used by the center. The primary measure is an index of consumer attitudes based upon answers to six attitudinal questions: (1) whether the family is better or worse off than a year earlier; (2) its personal financial expectations for the coming year; (3) its one-year expectations regarding business conditions; (4) its longer-range economic outlook; (5) its appraisal of buying conditions for household goods and clothing; and (6) price expectations. The six components of the index have equal weight.

A second measure of attitudes toward spending is an index of buying intentions. Data have been collected on expressed intentions to buy houses, cars, and durable household goods; to make home improvements or repairs; and to make major nondurable goods expenditures. Only plans that respondents rated as having at least a fair chance of fulfillment were considered.

To what extent do consumer attitudes influence spending? According to Katona:

Changes in consumer attitudes are advance indications of changes in consumer spending on durable goods and make a net contribution to the

¹⁵ Adapted from D. Kreeh, R. S. Crutchfield, and E. L. Ballachey, *Individual and Society* (Copyright 1962 by McGraw-Hill Book Co.), chap. 6. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

prediction of such spending after the influence of income has been taken into account.¹⁶

The work of the Survey Research Center deals with the relation of consumer attitudes to primary demand—that is, to the purchase of alternative types of products such as automobiles, durable goods, and houses. Let us now consider the relationship between attitudes and the purchases of individual brands.

Significant evidence is reported by Alvin A. Achenbaum in discussing an attitude measurement system developed by the marketing research department of Grey Advertising, Inc., in which 24 studies were conducted over a period of eight years. This system was designed to measure attitude as a predispositional response—one that is indicative of future behavior. According to Achenbaum:¹⁷

... we start with the point of view that attitudes reflect needs or motivation and are predictive of behavior. There is a growing abundance of marketing data which suggest that this is a tenable point of view.

In our own work, we have found in every study we have done—and there has been not a single exception—that there is a very direct relationship between attitudes and usage behavior. The more favorable the attitude, the higher the incidence of usage; the less favorable the attitude, the lower the incidence of usage (see Figure 4-1, Current Users column). In an effort to inject dynamism into the analysis, we also looked at the relationship with regard to former triers and never triers of the product. As we would expect, the more unfavorable people are toward a product, the more likely they are to stop using it. The interesting thing is that if you

FIGURE 4-1
Relationship between Attitudes and Usage for a Dental Product

Attitudes toward Dental Product	Current Users		Former Users		Never Users		Line Total
	Users	Users	Users	Users	Users	Users	
Excellent	78	8	14	100			100
Very good	56	15	29	100			100
Good	29	26	45	100			100
Fair	14	35	51	100			100
Not so good	8	53	39	100			100
Poor	8	76	16	100			100

Source: Reprinted by permission from Alvin A. Achenbaum, "Knowledge Is a Thing Called Measurement," *The Attitude Researcher*, ed. Sara Lee Adler and Irving Crespi, eds., published by American Marketing Association, 1966, pp. 113-14.

¹⁶ From George Katona, *The Powerful Consumer* (Copyright 1960 by McGraw-Hill Book Co.), pp. 52-53. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

¹⁷ Reprinted by permission from Alvin A. Achenbaum, "Knowledge Is a Thing Called Measurement," in *Attitude Research*, ed. Sara Lee Adler and Irving Crespi, eds., published by American Marketing Association, 1966, pp. 112-14.

look at people who have never tried the product, their attitudes tend to fall in a normally shaped curve (see Figure 4-1, Never Users column).

While the above evidence shows that there is a direct relationship between attitudes and usage behavior, Figure 4-1 indicates that a portion of the respondents with favorable attitudes toward the dental product (brand) were "never users": excellent, 14 percent; very good, 29 percent; good, 45 percent. Why haven't these people purchased the brand? There are a number of possibilities: (1) Considerable time may elapse between the formation of a favorable attitude toward a brand and the date when an actual purchase decision is made. Thus, advertising and word-of-mouth comment may lead a consumer to form a favorable attitude toward the Toyota compact automobile in September, but the consumer may then own a year-old Volkswagen that he does not wish to trade in until it is three years old. (2) Lack of money may lead the consumer to purchase a less expensive brand, which is his second choice, rather than the more expensive brand, which he really prefers. (For example, he may buy a Panasonic color television set at a lower price than he would have to pay for the RCA model that he really prefers.) (3) The preferred brand (e.g., Maxim freeze-dried coffee) may be out of stock when the housewife goes to make a purchase, and she may therefore accept a substitute that does not rate as high on her preference scale, rather than seek the desired brand in another store. (4) Attitudes may be more favorable to a competing brand than to the one "never tried." For example, a portion of the 45 percent who rated the brand "good" may rate a competing brand "excellent," and some of these may buy the competing brand when a purchase decision is finally made. (5) Other inhibiting forces such as social influences and time pressure may also prevent the purchase of the preferred brand. In recognition of the fact that a number of forces other than consumer attitudes influence the purchase decision, Howard has suggested the measurement of intention (to buy) as an intervening construct in explaining buyer behavior.¹⁸

Additional insights are provided by Pavasars and Wells in discussing the question "Can measures of brand attitudes be used to predict buying behavior?" They explain that the answer depends mainly upon three things: (1) If the classical definition of "attitude" is used in attitude measurement, the likelihood of a successful prediction is smaller than it would be if attitude were defined and measured using the "constant sum probability to purchase" approach. (2) If the prediction is attempted on an individual level, the likelihood of success is much smaller than it would be if the prediction were attempted on an

¹⁸ The relationship between the constructs of attitude, intention, and purchase is discussed later in this chapter. See also John A. Howard and Jagdish N. Sheth, *The Theory of Buyer Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), pp. 132-33.

aggregate basis. (3) If intervening events in the "real world" are not successfully isolated, the likelihood of predicting sales is small.

Attitudes (that is, intentions expressed probabilistically) can predict behavior but only if they are used correctly.¹⁹

Attitude change. The previous discussion has indicated that consumer attitudes have an important influence on the purchase decision. If this is the case, the question then arises as to how the firm can lead prospective buyers to adopt more favorable attitudes toward the type of product it manufactures (for example, air conditioners) as well as to its own brand, as opposed to competing brands (for example, Frigidaire versus General Electric).²⁰

There are two basic approaches to this problem. One is to undertake research by which to determine current desires and attitudes of prospective buyers with regard to the product and the brand. Once this information is known, the firm may redesign its product so that it more adequately conforms to these buyers' desires and preferences. The firm may also modify its promotional approach in the light of this information.

A second method is to attempt to change the consumer's desires and attitudes with regard to the product and the brand. This is a more difficult task than the first, but it is necessary where the product represents an innovation, as was true with television when it was first introduced commercially after World War II. Such would also be the case where a product used primarily by women, such as hair coloring, is first marketed for use by men.

If the marketer wishes to change attitudes toward his brand, his approach should be chosen only after consideration of the factors that influence the formation of attitudes: biological needs, information, group affiliations, personality, and experience. Analysis indicates that certain of these attitude-forming factors cannot be changed by the marketer. Certainly this is true of basic needs, personality characteristics, and group affiliations. Under certain circumstances, the experience of consumers with the brand may be changed. For example, people who have never used it may be given free samples for trial—provided that the item is a consumable product of low unit price subject to repeat purchase (for example, toothpaste). If the product is superior, and its want-satisfying qualities may be evaluated through usage, experience with a free sample may indeed modify consumer attitudes toward the brand. Distribution of free samples, however, is not suitable for all types of products.

¹⁹ Adapted from John Pavasars and William D. Wells, "Measures of Brand Attitudes Can Be Used to Predict Buying Behavior," *Marketing News*, April 11, 1975, p. 6. Published by the American Marketing Association.

²⁰ Based upon Myers and Reynolds, *Consumer Behavior*, pp. 165-66.

Of the various attitude-forming factors, therefore, the possibility of changing the information that the consumer has about the brand is often the most effective approach. The effective use of communication through personal selling, promotion, and publicity is therefore worthy of careful study.²¹ While space does not permit a discussion of this topic here, we shall deal with the subject of building an effective promotional mix by which to influence consumer desires and attitudes in Chapter 10. Crane summarizes a discussion of this topic, however, as follows:²²

Attitudes are not easy to change. First, because there seems to be a tendency to restore balance when it is upset and, second, because there is a tendency to avoid an upset by avoiding exposures to messages inconsistent with the existing attitude structure. Accidental exposure does occur, however. A communicator who knows existing attitude structures and the ways in which people react to their upset, can choose the method and point of attack most likely to produce, in the end, the new attitude structure most favorable to his objectives.

Attitude measurements. A wide variety of methods are available for the measurement of attitudes. Here we shall limit our discussion to identifying certain of the more important approaches. Those interested in more background should consult the references listed in footnote 23.

Projective techniques and qualitative interviews, discussed earlier, are useful in the determination of attitudes as well as motives. In addition, attitude scaling can be used to determine the position of an individual with respect to a topic, event, retail store, or brand. It can also be used to chart the entire population, or some subgroup, to determine distribution of spread of opinion about some topic. For example, what percentage of teenage boys are hi-fi enthusiasts?

The following are some of the more useful attitude scaling techniques:

1. Continuum of feeling (for example, from "extremely important" in steps to "of no importance", from "extremely good" to "extremely bad", from "extremely sure" to "not sure at all").

²¹ For an interesting discussion of five broad strategy alternatives that advertisers may use to change attitudinal structures, see Harper W. Boyd, Jr., Michael L. Ray, and Edward C. Strong, "An Attitudinal Framework for Advertising Strategy," *Journal of Marketing*, April 1972, pp. 27-33.

²² Reprinted by permission from E. Crane, *Marketing Communications* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 66. See this source for a discussion of ways to change attitudes through communication.

²³ This discussion is based on Myers and Reynolds, *Consumer Behavior*, pp. 150-57. Used by permission. See also J. P. Guilford, *Psychometric Methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1954); and C. E. Osgood, G. J. Suci, and P. N. Tannenbaum, *The Measurement of Meaning* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

2. Paired comparisons—items, colors, products, brands may be presented in pairs to consumers for comparison.

3. Rank order—the investigator may present all items to be compared (for example, alternative advertisements) at once and ask respondents to rank them in the order of their preference.

4. Statement selection or sorting—attitudes may be measured by having individuals respond to verbal expressions about a given topic (for example, "Almost every advertisement is honest"). When a large number of such statements have been developed for a given topic (for example, government regulation of advertising), attitudes may be measured through several alternative approaches: (a) Thurstone scaling—statements are sorted into piles ranging from "most favorable" to "most unfavorable"; each statement is then assigned a point value; consumers are then asked to select the statements with which they agree; attitude scores for each individual are then calculated. (b) Likert scaling—a scale indicating strength of agreement ("agree very strongly," "agree fairly strongly," etc.) is presented; each respondent rates each statement according to how strongly he or she agrees or disagrees; the score for each respondent is determined from both the direction and the strength of the respondent's feelings toward the various statements.

5. Osgood Semantic Differential—pairs of words or statements of opposite meaning that might describe a product are presented to respondents (for example, ball-point pens might be rated as slow-fast, loose-tight, faddish-conservative, simple-complex); the respondent rates each of several products on each dimension by placing a check at the place on a line that indicates his or her feelings; the average of the checks is plotted as a profile for each product.

According to Myers and Reynolds, attitude scaling techniques constitute a very powerful means of acquiring insights into the minds of consumers, and they are widely used in marketing studies today.

Learning

After a need has been recognized, alternative products and brands have been evaluated, and a purchase has been made, the consumer arrives at one of the most significant aspects of the entire sequence. It is with the use of the brand that some degree of satisfaction of the initial need will be experienced. If the consumption of the brand leads to gratification of the initiating needs, then "reinforcement" will occur. If the same need is aroused at some later date, the consumer will tend to repeat the purchase of the same product and brand. We have described here the process of "learning," which is defined as any change in behavior which results from experience or practice in similar situations (as opposed to changes due to physiological variations

such as growth, deterioration, hunger, fatigue, effects of alcohol, or sleep).²⁴

We are especially interested in the influence of the learning process upon attitudes toward alternative types of products and brands, that is, upon brand preference. If brand A is purchased and yields a high degree of gratification upon usage, then when the same need arises at a later time, the consumer will have an increased tendency to purchase brand A once again. Each succeeding time that brand A is purchased and gives satisfaction, additional reinforcement occurs, thus further increasing the probability that brand A will be selected when the same need arises again. The increasing likelihood that the purchase of brand A will be repeated is *learning*. Reinforcement is necessary for learning to take place.

Note that the increase in the probability that brand A will be purchased is related to the number of times that the brand has been purchased, has gratified the need, and, hence, has provided reinforcement. Accordingly, the opportunity for experience, or learning, to influence brand preference tends to be greater for products that are purchased frequently than for those purchased only occasionally or those purchased once in a lifetime.

It is also important to note that reinforcement depends upon the degree to which the felt need of the consumer is gratified. This underscores the importance of product development and product improvement activities in planning the marketing mix. If the firm decides to produce a product capable of satisfying an important consumer need, and individualizes its brand in ways important to the user, then gratification of desire and reinforcement should follow purchase of the brand.

It is clear from the above discussion that learning theory helps us understand consumer buying behavior. Indeed, theories of stimulus-response learning are an important element in the Howard model of consumer behavior, which is discussed later. Still another approach views learning as a probabilistic process, under the assumption that the best predictor of future buying behavior is the sequence, rhythm, and frequency of past purchasing behavior. As an example, Kuehn has developed a mathematical model describing brand-shifting behavior as a probabilistic process and incorporating the effects of past purchases and elapsed time between purchases. This model was tested through empirical research using sequential purchase data from 600 Chicago families over a three-year period. Although space does not permit a discussion of this approach here, it is worthy of careful study.²⁵

²⁴ Bertelson and Steiner, *Human Behavior*, p. 135.

²⁵ See Alfred A. Kuehn, "Consumer Brand Choice as a Learning Process," *Journal of Advertising Research*, December 1962, pp. 10-17.

PSYCHOGRAPHIC PROFILES

The preceding discussion focuses on the individual consumer. Yet the advertising copywriter, the product designer, and the media analyst need to understand the psychological characteristics of the collection of individuals who are believed to be prospective buyers of the firm's product. Research that provides psychographic profiles based upon lifestyle dimensions has proved to be very useful to those involved in making real-world marketing decisions.²⁶

INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT UPON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

In our discussion of buying behavior up to this point, we have focused attention upon the individual consumer. Drawing upon psychology and social psychology, we have traced the influence of motives, attitudes, and learning upon buying decisions. But the individual consumer lives in an environment that exerts important cultural and social influences upon his or her behavior. Indeed, both motives and attitudes of the consumer are patterned by the culture and the social institutions in which he or she lives. Accordingly, to assist in explaining certain uniformities in motives and attitudes of consumers which influence their buying behavior, we shall now draw on the fields of anthropology and sociology for a number of helpful concepts relating to cultural and social influences. We shall consider first the concept of *culture*.

Cultural Influences

According to Kroeber, "the mass of learned and transmitted motor reactions, habits, techniques, ideas, and values—and the behavior they induce—is what constitutes *culture*." It is all those things about man that are more than just biological or organic and that are also more than merely psychological.²⁷ It is the man-made part of the environment, the total way of life of a people, the social legacy that the individual acquires from his group.²⁸

The culture into which consumers are born, accordingly, provides a good many ready-made solutions to problems growing out of the geographic, biologic, and social environment in which they live. These ready-made solutions are provided in the form of cultural patterns relating to the ideology, role definitions, and socialization procedures

²⁶ For an excellent discussion of such research and its various uses, see William D. Wells, "Psychographics: A Critical Review," *Journal of Marketing Research*, May 1975, p. 196 ff.

²⁷ A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1948), p. 8.

²⁸ Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man* (New York: Prentice Books, 1957), p. 20.

of the society in which they live. These cultural patterns are transmitted to individuals through such social institutions as the family, school, church, and social class, by means of language, parents' attitudes and behavior, reading, and public school instruction. As a result, the cultural patterns that consumers learn influence their ideas and values, the roles they play, the way in which they carry those roles out, and the manner in which their needs and desires are handled.

Culture provides patterns that guide individuals in the satisfaction of their biological needs. Thus, the child learns the diet pattern of his culture, modesty and hygiene of elimination, proper conduct in sexual affairs, patterns of propriety in dress. The requirement for food, for example, is met in every society. But the specific foods that an individual regards as acceptable are determined by his culture. The Chinese, for instance, dislike milk and milk products, while dairy products make up an important part of the American diet.

Culture not only patterns the way in which people satisfy their needs but also creates desires that exert a strong influence upon their buying behavior. The learned desires of certain consumers for cigarettes or alcohol, for example, may be just as compelling as their requirements for food. So, too, the desires for a late-model automobile or television set, which are learned from the American culture, may occupy a position high in the list of products wanted by a newly married couple—perhaps even ahead of the need they may feel for a home of their own.

It is helpful to recognize also that within a complex, heterogeneous culture, such as that found in the United States, subcultures exist that are especially relevant to the understanding of buyer behavior.²⁹ These subcultures may be defined in terms of such factors as region, rural or urban residence, ethnic background, and religion. Those identified with a subculture tend to think and act alike in certain respects, and this has important implications for their "lifestyle."³⁰ Recognition of this point has led to experimentation with market segmentation as a means of developing effective marketing strategy adapted to market targets that are believed to have special promise.

Influence of Social Class

In addition to being molded by culture, the attitudes and needs of the consumer are patterned by the *social class* to which he or she

²⁹ For a discussion of subcultural groupings and their significance for marketing strategy, see Thomas S. Robertson, *Consumer Behavior* (Glencview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1970), pp. 102-15.

³⁰ Life style reflects the overall manner in which people live and spend time and money. It may be measured by (1) the products a person consumes, and (2) the person's activities, interests, and opinions. See Jerry Wind, "Life Style Analysis: A New Approach," in Fred G. Alvare, ed., *Combined Proceedings 1971 Spring and Fall Conferences*, American Marketing Association, 1972, pp. 302-5.

belongs. Even though American political ideology is based on the concept that "all men are created equal," studies of many communities in all the regions of the United States clearly demonstrate the presence of a well-defined class structure.

Pioneering research dealing with the existence of social class in America and how it may be measured was done by Warner and his associates. Warner conceived of social class as "two or more orders of people who are believed to be, and are accordingly ranked by the members of the community, in socially superior and inferior positions."³¹ Associated with this definition are the ideas that the individual must participate in the social interaction of the class and must be accepted as a peer by its members. After considerable investigation, Warner and his associates came to the conclusion that a family's position in the social structure of a community is determined by the following criteria: occupation, amount of income, source of income, house type, neighborhood, and education. Under Warner's approach, individuals are classified as to social class by other people who know them.

Using this research design, Warner identifies six social classes as follows:³²

Upper-upper (1.4 percent): Members of "old families," the aristocracy of birth and inherited wealth, born into their positions of prestige, with enough wealth to maintain a large house in the best neighborhood.

Lower-upper (1.6 percent): Similar to the upper-upper in costly homes in the best neighborhood and in design for living, but lacking in distinguished ancestry. While their incomes average somewhat larger than families in the upper-upper class, their wealth is newer and it is not inherited.

Upper-middle (10.2 percent): Respectable, achieving, solid citizens of high moral principles and personal integrity; moderately successful business and professional men and their families. Their incomes average somewhat less than the lower-upper class, and these incomes are derived predominantly from salary rather than from invested wealth. Some education and polish is necessary, but lineage is unimportant.

Lower-middle (28.1 percent): Clerks, white-collar workers, small businessmen, schoolteachers, foremen in industry, people who live in small homes on side streets; frequently homeowners.

Upper-lower (32.6): "Poor but honest" workers, usually in semiskilled occupations, who participate less in the educational and other advantages of our society, and who spend a large percentage of their income on food and shelter. This class and the lower-middle class are closely related in tastes, problems, and beliefs. Together, these two classes are regarded as "the common man."

³¹ Reprinted by permission from W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt, *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 81-91.

³² Adapted from W. Lloyd Warner, Marjorie Meeker, and Kenneth Dalis, *Social Class in America* (Torchbook edition), pp. 11-15, 31, 35, 174, 181. Copyright 1919 by Science Research Associates, Inc., Chicago. Copyright © 1960 by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. By permission of Harper & Row.

Lower-lower (25.2 percent): Semiskilled and unskilled workers; families who live in the worst homes in poor neighborhoods, people who are often on relief, who have low incomes, and who are lacking in ambition or opportunity to improve their lot.

Our interest, of course, is in the value of social-class stratification to the marketing executive. Because Warner's research had been done in smaller communities, there was concern that the same social-class system might not exist in more complex metropolitan centers. If some such system did exist, would the Warner research approach uncover it? Then, too, many marketers did not see the relevance of social class to consumer buying behavior, since previous research in this area had been concerned with broad differences in patterns of living, moral codes, and mental illness, as well as other behavioral science goals.

With this in mind, the *Chicago Tribune* undertook several extensive studies during the mid-1950s exploring social class in a metropolitan city and the relevance of this factor to the individual family's buying behavior. The studies were carried out under the direction of Pierre Martineau, research director of the *Chicago Tribune*, and W. Lloyd Warner. In this study, interviewing was done in metropolitan Chicago and involved 3,880 households. The data used to calculate the "Index of Status Characteristics" were: (1) occupation (weighted by 5), sources of income (weighted by 4), and housing type (weighted by 3). Martineau reported the following conclusions:³³

1. There is a social-class system operative in metropolitan markets, which can be isolated and described.
2. It is important to realize that there are far-reaching psychological differences between the various classes.

3. Consumption patterns operate as prestige symbols to define class membership, which is a more significant determinant of economic behavior than mere income. Income has always been the marketer's handiest index to family consumption standards. But it is a far-from-accurate index. . . . Social-class position and mobility-stability dimensions will reflect in much greater depth each individual's style of life.

Interesting background on the importance of social class, as opposed to income, as an influence on consumer behavior is provided by Coleman.³⁴ He notes that three families, all earning around \$8,000 a

³³ Reprinted by permission from Pierre Martineau, "Social Classes and Spending Behavior," *Journal of Marketing*, October 1956, p. 130, published by the American Marketing Association. The relationship between spending patterns and social class is given additional support in a book by Richard P. Coleman scheduled for publication in 1976 entitled, *Social Standing in America*, according to a feature article in the *Detroit Free Press*, December 31, 1975, p. 1, under the headline, "Class Counts in U.S., Sociologists Find."

³⁴ Adapted by permission from Richard P. Coleman, "The Significance of Social Stratification in Selling," in Martin L. Bell, ed., *Proceedings of the 45th National Conference of the American Marketing Association*, December 28-30, 1960 (published by the American Marketing Association, 1961), pp. 171-84.

year, but each from a different social class, exhibit radical differences in their ways of spending money. An upper-middle-class family in this income bracket (for example, a young lawyer and his wife) is apt to spend a relatively large share of its resources on housing in a prestige neighborhood, on rather expensive pieces of furniture, on clothing from quality stores, and on cultural amusements or club memberships.

Meanwhile, the lower-middle-class family (headed by an insurance salesman or a fairly successful grocery store owner) probably has a better house, but in not so fancy a neighborhood. The family is apt to have as full a wardrobe, though not so expensive, and probably more furniture, though none by name designers. These people almost certainly have a much bigger savings account in the bank.

Finally, the working-class family (with a cross-country truck driver or a highly paid welder as its chief wage earner) is apt to have less house and less neighborhood than the lower-middle or upper-middle family of the same income. But this family will have a bigger, later model car, plus more expensive appliances in its kitchen and a bigger TV set in its living room. This family will spend less on clothing and furniture, but more on food if the number of children is greater. The man of the house also probably spends much more on sports, attending baseball games, going hunting and bowling, and perhaps owning a boat of some description.

Social-class research provides a parsimonious explanation of certain aspects of human behavior. Marketing planners, however, have found it helpful to supplement such studies with lifestyle research as a means of adding useful information about behavior influencing consuming patterns. Lifestyle studies, for example, provide detailed explanations of activities, interests, needs, and values associated with social-class membership. Accordingly, such information may prove helpful in making decisions concerning product planning, promotional strategy, and pricing policy.³⁵

Social Group

Another way in which the environment exerts an influence upon the individual consumer is through the social groups to which he or she belongs. A social group is "a number of persons who communicate with one another often over a span of time, and who are few enough so that each person is able to communicate with all the others, not at second-hand, through other people, but face-to-face."³⁶ Groups which

³⁵ For a comprehensive review and evaluation of quantitative research on consumers' lifestyles, see William D. Wells and Stephen C. Cosmas, *Life Styles*, Project on Synthesis of Knowledge of Consumer Behavior, RANN Program, National Science Foundation, University of Illinois Survey Research Laboratory, April 1973.

³⁶ G. C. Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1950), pp. 1, 123. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

have an important influence upon the housewife, for example, include her family, circle of friends, neighbors, and clubs. These are known as *primary groups*, and they are characterized by intimate, face-to-face association over a long period of time. Sociologists have found that such groups tend to develop norms as to what the members of the group should do, ought to do, are expected to do, under given circumstances. These norms are in the nature of shared attitudes and opinions, and as such, they influence the behavior of group members. Recognition of this tendency has led behavioral scientists to use the concept of the *primary group* in studies of consumer buying motivation and behavior.

Influence of primary group. The concept of primary group is recognized as an important intervening variable in a study by Katz and Lazarsfeld dealing with personal influence in the purchase of household goods such as breakfast cereals, coffee, and soap flakes or chips.³⁷ They asked women who had recently changed types of household products or brands of food what had made them change.

Among the various possible influences that might lead to a change in product or brand, the impact of informal personal advice was found to be greater than the impact of mass media advertisements. And, for products of all kinds, friends and neighbors were named influential most often, with adult female relatives ranking next. The influence of primary groups on buying behavior is thus clearly demonstrated.

It is noteworthy that the human group influences the individual in two ways. (1) It is through the primary groups that the culture is transmitted and the personality of the individual is shaped. As a result, continuing influence is exercised over the individual's behavior throughout his or her life. (2) Personal interactions with members of primary groups influence individuals in their day-to-day decisions. And after the decisions are made, the approval or disapproval of primary group members tends to reinforce certain kinds of behavior and to discourage other kinds.

Reference groups. "Reference groups" are those groups that individuals use as a point of reference in determining their own judgments, beliefs, and behavior.³⁸ Note that the individual may not be a member of a group that serves as a frame of reference for his or her judgments, beliefs, and behavior. It may be a group to which he or she aspires; by adopting its dress, habits, and attitudes, he or she may hope to be invited into membership.

Our interest is in the influence which reference groups may have upon buying behavior. (1) Reference group influence is particularly potent in an informational vacuum. Where the individual has little or

³⁷ E. Katz and P. F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (New York: Free Press, 1955), pp. 178, 246.

³⁸ Reprinted from Tamotsu Shibutani, "Reference Groups as Perspectives," *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1965, pp. 562, 563, and 565, by permission of The University of Chicago Press. Copyright 1965 by The University of Chicago.

no knowledge about the attributes of a product, reference group influence is at its strongest. (2) The conspicuousness of the product is perhaps the most general attribute bearing on its susceptibility to reference group influence.³⁸

The susceptibility of various products and brands to reference group influence is summarized in Figure 4-2. Note the following examples.

FIGURE 4-2
Reference Group Influence (relatively weak [-], relatively strong [+])

		Product	
		Weak [-]	Strong +
[-] Brand or Type [+]			
Clothing			
Furniture			
Magazines			
Refrigerators (type)			Cars* Cigarettes* Beer (premium versus regular)* Drugs*
Toilet soap			
Canned peaches			Air conditioners* Instant coffee* TV (black and white)
Laundry soap			
Refrigerators (brand)			
Radios			
		Product	[+]
		[-] Brand or Type [+]	

Products and brands of consumer goods may be classified by the extent to which reference groups influence their purchase. The classification of all products marked with an asterisk (*) is based on actual experimental evidence. Other products in this table are classified speculatively on the basis of generalizations derived from the sum of previous studies. Source: Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University. Reprinted by permission.

1. Reference group influence may operate with respect to both product and brand (product +, brand +), as in the upper right cell of Figure 4-2. With respect to cars, both the product and the brand are socially conspicuous. Whether or not a person buys a car, and also what brand he or she buys, is likely to be influenced by what others do.
2. Reference group influence may operate with respect to product but not brand (product +, brand -), as in the case of instant coffee. Whether it is served in a household depends upon whether the housewife, in view of her own reference groups and the image she has of their attitudes toward this product, considers it appropriate to serve it. The brand itself is not conspicuous or socially important and is largely a matter for individual choice.
3. Where a type of product is owned by virtually all people, reference groups may influence the selection of the brand, but not the

³⁸ Adapted by permission from Francis S. Bourne, "Group Influence in Marketing," in Benais Likert and Samuel P. Hayes, Jr., eds., *Some Applications of Behavior Research* (UNESCO, 1957), chap. 6.

product (product -, brand +). In this cell are classified clothing, furniture, magazines, refrigerators (type), and toilet soap.

4. Purchasing behavior for "product -, brand -" items is governed by product attributes rather than by the nature of the presumed users. Examples are laundry soap, canned peaches, refrigerators (brand), and radios. In this group, neither the product nor the brand tends to be socially conspicuous. Reference groups, accordingly, exert very little influence over purchasing behavior.

Buying decisions within the family. We have already noted the influence of primary groups upon consumer behavior. The family, of course, is an especially important primary group. Accordingly, let us examine the framework in which buying decisions are made within the family and some of the factors that influence brand choice in this setting. According to Coulson, there are three sources of influence on brand and product choices: the purchaser, the user, and the author.⁴⁰

In this context, it is clear that the purchasing agent (generally the housewife) has the strategic role in the brand decision, since she acts as the "gatekeeper" controlling the channel through which products flow from the stores to consumption within the family. Coulson developed some tentative propositions about how the household "purchasing agent" accommodates the user and the authority in making her brand decisions. These propositions were based on the results of previous research and also upon a pilot study among 100 housewives in Chicago. The study covered ten product classes that have a high percentage of their sales in food stores. These were: beer, cake mixes, candy bars, canned peas, canned spaghetti, chewing gum, cigarettes, cold cereals, deodorants, and margarine. A selection of Coulson's propositions follow:

1. Other members of the family exert considerable influence on the housewife in making brand decisions.
2. In the role of purchasing agent, the housewife knows the family's brand preferences better for some product classes than for others.
3. In the role of purchasing agent, the housewife takes more account of the family's brand preferences for some product classes than for others.
4. On products with the brand name clearly visible in use, she is more receptive to her husband's brand preferences than to

⁴⁰ Adapted by permission from John S. Coulson, "Buying Decisions within the Family and the Consumer-Brand Relationship," from Joseph W. Newman, ed., *On Knowing the Consumer* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966), pp. 59-66. For an interesting study of the prevalence of conflict in household decision making and the tactics employed by spouses to resolve their conflict, see Jagdish N. Sheth and Stephen Cosmas, "Tactics of Conflict Resolution in Family Buying Behavior," *Facility Working Paper*, no. 271, College of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, September 16, 1975.

those of her children. (If she thinks a brand is not good for a child, she may veto the child's request.)

- b. The housewife is most receptive to the brand preferences of her family for products in which the brand is clearly visible, and least receptive for products in which there is a substantial change in the product before use. (If the family cannot identify the brand during consumption, the housewife is free to select the brand she desires.)

This study calls our attention to the different roles played in the buying process, distinguishing among users, influencers, and buyers. Let us now turn to the concept of the "family life cycle" and examine the ways in which life-cycle position influences consumer behavior.

The family life cycle. The family life cycle describes the orderly progression of stages through which households tend to pass in the United States today.⁴¹ The concept of the family life cycle, which had its origins in sociology, has been studied intensively by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. The center classifies the life cycle into the following stages: (1) the bachelor stage: young, single people; (2) newly married couples: young, no children; (3) the full nest I and II: young married couples with dependent children, (a) youngest child under six, (b) youngest child six or over; (4) the full nest III: older married couples with dependent children; (5) the empty nest: older married couples with no children living with them, (a) head in labor force, (b) head retired; (6) the solitary survivors: older single people, (a) in labor force, (b) retired.

Our interest is in the influence of position in the life cycle upon buying behavior. As a means of illustrating the influence of the life cycle on buying, let us compare three widely separated stages:

Full nest I, youngest child under six: house purchasing at peak; buy washers, dryers, TV, baby food, chest rubs and cough medicine, vitamins, dolls, wagons, sleds, skates.

Full nest III, older married couples with dependent children: high average purchase of durables; buy new more tasteful furniture, auto travel, nonnecessary appliances, boats, dental services, magazines.

Empty nest II, older married couples, no children at home, retired: buy medical care, products which aid health, sleep, and digestion.

It is clear from these examples that the products purchased by households are influenced significantly by the life-cycle stage achieved.⁴²

⁴¹ Reprinted by permission from William D. Wells and George Gubar, "The Cycle Concept in Marketing Research," *Journal of Marketing Research*, November 1966, pp. 355-63, published by the American Marketing Association.

⁴² For a description of a model used successfully to forecast the entry of families into stage 2 of the family life cycle, see Mark R. Bomball, Walter J. Primeaux, and Donald E. Pursell, "Forecasting Stage 2 of the Family Life Cycle," *Journal of Business*, January 1975, p. 65 ff.

MULTIATTRIBUTE MODELS FOR PREDICTING ATTITUDES

What influences the formation of the consumer's attitudes toward different brands that might satisfy a felt desire (his or her evoked set)? During recent years considerable research has focused on the characteristics or qualities that consumers attribute to alternative brands evoked in the process of evaluation. This research draws upon *attribution theory*, which deals with the question of how people infer, from limited available evidence, unobservable attributes about the objects in their environment—that is, how people go beyond directly observable "data" to infer further elements and thus complete a partial representation of some focal object.⁴³

From the marketing viewpoint we are interested in understanding the attributes that prospective buyers assign to alternative brands in the hope that this may suggest what underlies the brand images they develop and the brand preferences that they form. Such knowledge may assist us in diagnosing ways in which brands may be improved and may help us in developing new brand concepts. Also, research on the attributes assigned to different brands by prospective buyers may make it possible to predict the formation of buyers' attitudes toward these brands (brand image, brand preference) and, hopefully, lead to prediction of actual purchases.

These possibilities have led to the development of multiattribute models for predicting attitudes and to the testing of these models in empirical research. The following concepts emerge from an examination of various models.

1. Consumers perceive a product as a bundle (combination) of attributes that might satisfy a felt desire. The characteristics imputed to a product brand by the consumer are influenced by a number of factors including the appearance of the brand; its price; the retail stores selling it; the types of people seen using it (social class); and information received from advertising, personal selling, and other sales promotional methods. Prospective buyers evaluate the brand in terms of the attributes they impute to the generic product class—that is, whether the brand is high or low in an attribute (or feature) common to the class.

2. Examples of products and the attributes that may be associated with them are shown below:

- a. Mouthwash—effectiveness, color, price, taste/Flavor, kills germs.
b. Cigarettes—flavor, tar and nicotine content, taste, strength, ease of draw.

⁴³ R. E. Burnkrant, "Attribution Theory in Marketing Research: Problems and Prospects," in M. J. Schlinger, ed., *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 2, 1975, p. 465. Copyright 1975, Association for Consumer Research. For additional background, see Robert B. Settle, "Attribution Theory and Consumer Behavior," in H. H. Kassarjian and I. S. Robertson, eds., *Perspectives in Consumer Behavior*, rev. ed. (Glencview, Ill.: Scott Foresman and Co., 1973), pp. 64-74.

- c. Toothpaste—decay prevention, taste/Flavor, freshens mouth, whitens teeth, price.
- d. Automobiles—safety, gas mileage, styling, comfort, repair record, acceleration, quality of workmanship, price.

Individual brands of the above products tend to be evaluated according to how well they rate on the attributes that consumers normally attribute to the class. Of course, in undertaking research designed to understand the attitudes of consumers to each brand, it is important to develop the list of product attributes through appropriate communication with those who constitute the potential market for the product.

3. In developing a multiattribute model, it is important not only to determine what attributes consumers impute to different brands in a product class but also to approximate the way in which they combine the product attributes to arrive at overall preference judgments of each brand. A widely used model developed by Cohen, Fishbein, and Ahlota illustrates one attempt to accomplish this task.⁴⁴ This model is labeled the "adequacy-importance model." According to this formulation, an individual's attitude toward an object (A_o) is a function of the importance of the attribute dimension i for the person, his evaluation of the object with respect to the attribute dimension i , and the number of attribute dimensions considered. Thus:

$$A = \sum_{i=1}^n P_i D_i$$

In applying this model, respondents are asked to evaluate how satisfactory a brand is with respect to an attribute dimension (e.g., decay prevention for a toothpaste)—that is, its adequacy. They are also asked to indicate how important each attribute is by assigning a weight to each one.

Experience in applying such a model has indicated the desirability of defining exactly what is meant by "importance." This has led researchers to make a distinction between *importance*, *determinance*, and *salience* as applied to product attributes.⁴⁵ Let us examine these distinctions.⁴

2. According to Myers and Alpert, when a feature or attribute is "important" to people, it presumably has some consequence or significance in their choices among brands or their overall evaluations or rankings of products. "Importance" has been measured by asking con-

⁴⁴ For additional background, see M. B. Mazis, O. T. Ohtola, and E. E. Klippel, "A Comparison of Four Multi-Attribute Models in the Prediction of Consumer Attitudes," *Journal of Consumer Research*, June 1975, pp. 38-51.

⁴⁵ J. H. Myers and M. I. Alpert, "Semantic Confusion in Attitude Research: Salience vs. Importance vs. Determinance," in W. D. Perreault, Jr., ed., *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 4, pp. 106-9. Copyright 1977, Association for Consumer Research.

sumers to answer this question, "How important are each of these features in choosing . . . [e.g., an electronic calculator]?"

b. "Determinance" differs from importance, however. Attitudes toward features which are most closely related to preference or to actual purchase decisions are said to be determinant: the remaining features or attitudes—no matter how favorable—are not determinant. Accordingly, determinance includes but goes beyond "importance." A feature or product attribute can be of extreme importance (e.g., the safety of automobiles) yet have no real effect on choice among competing brands if all are perceived as equal for this feature.

c. In attitude research "salience" is measured by noting the order in which attributes of a product are verbalized when consumers are asked, "Name the things that come to mind when you think about buying . . . [e.g., Crest toothpaste]." The question that arises is whether the most important features of a brand are elicited first, the next most important next, and so on. Research on this point suggests that there are differences between order of elicitation (salience) and importance. Why? Some attributes may be "top-of-the-mind" because they are heavily advertised but may not be important in brand choice. Other attributes may be overlooked by the consumer in responding to a questionnaire, but would be recognized as important if they were mentioned by a salesclerk.

Considerable research has been undertaken to test various forms of the multiattribute model in recent years.⁴⁶ In a majority of cases, the test of alternative forms of the model has been a measure of the correlation between the model's attitude score and stated preference rankings of individual brands. It has generally been accepted that the model (in all its forms) produces reasonable scale values for each of the brands. The differences observed in the various model forms have been in its level of predictability of the stated brand preference rankings.

In spite of the potential shortcomings of the multiattribute attitude model it has still been shown to provide reasonable scale values for brands in a product class—reasonable in the sense that the model produces values which are significantly monotonically correlated with stated preference rankings.⁴⁷

It should be noted, however, that these stated brand preference ratings do not totally capture the rank ordering of brand choice (actual brand purchase). That is, the inference should be drawn that attitudes and preferences are not equivalent to choice behavior, even when most intervening variables are experimentally excluded from the choice process.

⁴⁶ David J. Reibstein, "Can the Multi-Attribute Model Be Utilized to Predict Probabilities of Brand Choice?" in *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 4, pp. 111-16. Copyright 1977 Association for Consumer Research.

⁴⁷ See comments on the meaning of "monotonic correlation" at the end of the chapter, p. 165.

Instead of attempting to predict individual consumer choice behavior in separate choice occasions, as is generally attempted with multivariate models, some researchers contend that individual brand preferences should be represented in a stochastic manner (i.e., in terms of probabilities of the choice of individual brands). Such an approach has been suggested by David Reibstein in reporting an experiment in which a multivariate model was combined with a choice axiom, thereby securing a prediction of probabilities of brand choice on an individual basis.

INTENTIONS

In attempts to improve the prediction of buying behavior a considerable amount of research has been done recently on the influence of *attitude* and *social influences* in explaining the formation of *intention*, which is seen as the step immediately preceding actual purchase. One of the most popular theories in consumer research relating to the prediction and explanation of consumer *intention* is the "extended Fishbein model." According to Lutz, "This popularity is at least in part due to the fact that the theory is a promising one for consumer researchers interested primarily in the explanation of consumer behavior and, at the same time, provides a framework for devising behavior change strategies, a feature of interest to managers and policy makers."⁴⁸

Since the Fishbein model appears to have considerable potential for application in marketing decision making, a brief explanation follows. According to Fishbein,

The model states that a person's intention to perform any behavior is a function of (1) his attitude toward performing that behavior (A_B) and (2) his subjective norm concerning that behavior (SN). The model also suggests that these two variables may take on different weights in determining different intentions. That is, some intentions may be entirely under attitudinal control, other intentions may be entirely under normative control, and still other intentions may be influenced by both attitudinal and normative considerations. The relative weights of these two components as determinants of an intention are expected to vary as a function of the type of intentions being considered and individual difference variables. Further, the model suggests that, like any other attitude, the attitude toward the behavior can be viewed as a function of the person's salient beliefs (in this case about performing the behavior) and the evaluative aspects of those beliefs. . . . Similarly, the subjective norm is viewed as a function of normative beliefs and the person's motivation to comply with relevant referents.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Richard J. Lutz, "Conceptual and Operational Issues in the Extended Fishbein Model," in Beverlee B. Anderson, ed., *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 3, p. 469. Copyright 1976, Association for Consumer Research.

⁴⁹ Martin Fishbein, "Extending the Extended Model: Some Comments," *ibid.*, pp. 491-97.

Essentially, the Fishbein extended model rests on three equations:⁵⁰

$$B \sim I = (A_B)w_1 + (SN)w_2 \quad (1)$$

$$A_B = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i e_i \quad (2)$$

$$SN = \sum_{j=1}^m b_j m_j \quad (3)$$

where

B is the behavior under study

I is the individual's intention to perform the behavior

A_B is his attitude toward performing the behavior

SN is the subjective norm with respect to the behavior

w_1 and w_2 are empirically derived weights

b_i is the belief that performing the behavior leads to some consequence i

e_i is the individual's evaluation of consequence i

n is the number of salient beliefs

b_j is the normative belief regarding referent j 's expectations as to whether the individual should or should not perform the behavior

m_j is the individual's motivation to comply with referent j

m is the number of salient referents

Determinants of intention. In equation 1 above, intention is shown as the antecedent of the behavior under study (B). A causal flow of influence is postulated wherein the individual's intention to perform the behavior (I) is the result of his or her attitude toward performing the behavior (A_B) and the subjective norm with respect to this behavior (SN). In marketing terms, let us consider the purchase of an automobile. If our goal is to predict the purchase of a Volkswagen Rabbit, then we focus on the consumer's intention to buy a VW Rabbit. This intention, accordingly, is the resultant of his or her attitude toward buying a VW Rabbit (A_B) plus consideration of whether people in his or her reference group would approve of such a choice (SN).

Subjective norm. The subjective norm may be measured by the use of the following scale:

Most people who are important to me think

I should _____ I should not
perform behavior X (purchase a VW Rabbit)

The essential idea here is to get a measure of the general social pressure on the individual to perform the behavior (or not to perform it).

⁵⁰ Martin A. Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., © 1975), pp. 301-2. Reprinted with permission.

Attitudinal component. An individual's attitude toward engaging in a behavior (buying a VW Rabbit) will be favorable if this behavior leads to desirable outcomes or blocks undesirable outcomes. Thus in the A_g construct (attitude-toward-the-behavior) the "attributes" associated with the behavior are a set of outcomes, or valued states, which the individual wishes to either attain or avoid. In the example of the VW Rabbit, one such outcome, or attribute, would be to achieve economical operation of the automobile; another might be to stretch the short supply of gasoline under conditions of high price per gallon.

Relation between intention and behavior. According to Fishbein, there are three major factors that influence the size of the relationship between intention and behavior: (1) the specificity of the intentional measure; (2) the time between the measure of intention and the behavioral observation; and (3) the degree to which carrying out the intention is completely under the individual's control.⁵¹

Testing the extended Fishbein model. Ryan and Bonfield summarized the empirical testing of the Fishbein model as follows:

1. A detailed review of empirical tests of the model in social psychological literature suggests that the model is an accurate predictor of a wide range of behavioral intentions and behavior.

2. A number of studies conducted in the United States have been reported in which a form or adaptation of the extended model has been tested in a marketing context using cross-sectional regression analysis as the principal analytic tool. These tests covered a wide range of products such as toothpaste, fruit drinks, automobiles, detergents, and prescription drugs. The evidence from these studies indicates that the model has value in predicting and explaining variance in intentions and purchase behavior. The average correlation between intention (BI) and purchasing behavior (B) was .44. The average multiple correlation of attitude and social influence on intention (BI) was .60.

3. The predictive power obtained in marketing studies has been generally lower than that obtained in the social psychology studies. A possible explanation may be found in the different types of behaviors and attitudes explained. The social psychology studies were concerned with potentially central attitudes, such as attitudes involving racial or religious beliefs. The marketing studies dealt with purchase activities which may have involved noncentral attitudes. Consequently, the marketing behavior may have had smaller associations with attitudes and social influence because of its lack of centrality to the individual. For example, research has shown that the deterministic influence was stronger when consumers perceived the product as

⁵¹ M. J. Ryan and E. H. Bonfield, "The Fishbein Extended Model and Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, September 1975, pp. 118-36.

important (it was stronger for automobiles, for example, than for toothpaste).

4. The components measured in the Fishbein model tend to have greater power to predict variations in intentions when respondents are drawn from high-education and low-brand-loyalty groups than when they are chosen from low-education and high-brand-loyalty groups.

Concluding comments. Fishbein's extended model for the prediction of intentions has stimulated a good deal of interest among marketing researchers. Empirical tests indicate that the model has considerable promise. A number of researchers have proposed refinements in the theoretical constructs used in the model, however, as well as the methods followed in measuring them. This active interest and the experimentation that it stimulates may well result in even better predictions of intention in the future.⁵²

MODELS OF CONSUMER BUYER BEHAVIOR

We now have the conceptual background to enable us to understand the more complex theoretical models of buyer behavior that have developed during the past 18 years. These models fit together in a logical structure a large number of variables known to operate in purchase behavior. Emphasis is on the explanation of the relationships among these variables. Theoretical constructs are defined in such a way as to facilitate measurement through research. A basis is thus provided for formal expression of these models in mathematical terms.

While several comprehensive models of buyer behavior have been developed, we shall limit ourselves to the discussion of the Howard-Sheth model since it has received wide attention in marketing circles and has been subjected to several large-scale validation tests. Those interested in learning about other notable comprehensive models should consult the references cited below.⁵³

The Howard-Sheth Model

The Howard-Sheth model is a general theory of buying behavior designed to apply to most people buying most products.⁵⁴ The theory

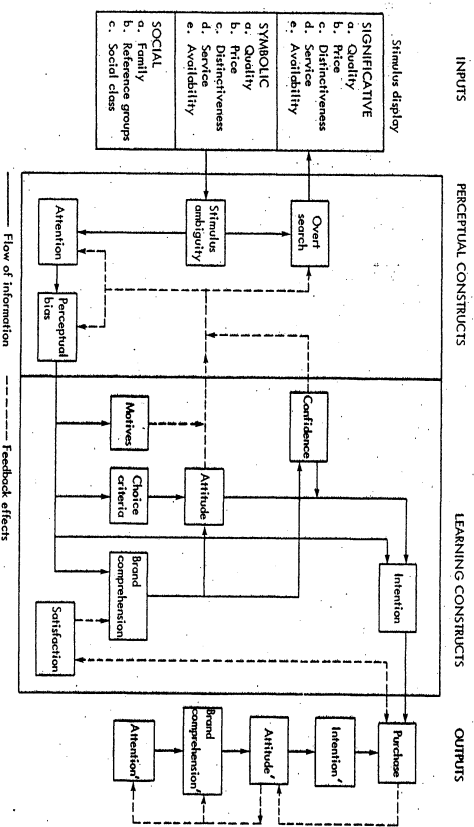
⁵² For example, see the five papers presented in the workshop entitled "Extending the Fishbein Extended Model," in Anderson ed., *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 3, pp. 469-97. See also the papers from the session "New Research Directions in Attitude Models," in J. C. Olson, ed., *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 7, pp. 339-58. Copyright 1980, Association for Consumer Research. See also Paul R. Warshaw, "A New Model for Predicting Behavioral Intentions: An Alternative to Fishbein," *Journal of Marketing Research*, May 1980, pp. 153-72.

⁵³ See Francesco M. Nicotria, *Consumer Decision Processes* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), chap. 6; James F. Engel, Roger D. Blackwell, and David T. Kollat, *Consumer Behavior*, 3d ed. (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1978), chap. 3.

⁵⁴ From John A. Howard and Jagdish N. Sheth, "A Theory of Buyer Behavior," in Harold H. Kassarjian and Thomas S. Robertson, eds., *Perspectives in Consumer Behavior*. Copyright © 1968 by Scott, Foresman and Company. Used by permission.

may be used to understand industrial buying as well as consumer purchasing. It attempts to explain the brand choice behavior of the buyer over time. It postulates that buying behavior is caused by a stimulus in either the buyer or the buyer's environment. This stimulus is the input to the system. The outputs are a variety of responses that the buyer is likely to manifest, the most important of which is the purchase of the brand. Accordingly, buying is explained in the context of stimulus-response theory upon which a more elaborate structure has been built. The model integrates ideas from learning theory, cognitive theory, and the theory of exploratory behavior, among others. (See Figure 4—3 for a diagram of this model.)

FIGURE 4—3
A Simplified Description of the Theory of Buyer Behavior



Source: Reproduced by permission from John A. Howard and Jagdish N. Sheth, *The Theory of Buyer Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), p. 36.

Stimulus input variables.⁵⁵ Let us examine this model more closely, beginning with the inputs shown at the upper left-hand corner of the diagram. Assume that the buyer becomes aware of a need which he expects to satisfy by the purchase of a brand from a generic product class. Three types of inputs may furnish stimuli designed to influence his choice of an individual brand from among five alternatives that are available. Through their marketing activities, the five

⁵⁵ The description of the Howard-Sheth model that follows is summarized by permission from John A. Howard and Jagdish N. Sheth, *The Theory of Buyer Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), chaps. 2 and 3.

competitors attempt to communicate information (stimulus display) to the buyer in the hope that it may influence his choice. Examining an automobile in the dealer's showroom, for example, would communicate "significant" stimuli to the prospective buyer. Likewise, when the prospect reads views, or hears advertisements for different brands of cars he is receiving "symbolic" stimuli.

A third input is social stimuli, that is, the information that the buyer's social environment provides concerning the positive and negative aspects of the alternative brands under consideration. Word-of-mouth communication is the most obvious example.

Internal variables (hypothesized constructs). We now turn to the central rectangular box which identifies the various internal-state variables and processes that explain how the buyer responds to the three types of stimuli that come from the environment. These constructs are divided into two classes: (1) those having to do with perception and (2) those having to do with learning.

When a need has been aroused, a buyer who is familiar with a product class will call to mind several alternative brands (or goal objects) capable of satisfying that need. These brands constitute the *evoked set*, and they may represent only a few brands out of the many that are available on the market. *Brand comprehension* is a learning construct that refers to knowledge about the existence and characteristics of the brands in the purchaser's evoked set.

Choice criteria are the buyer's mental rules for matching alternative brands with motives and ranking them in terms of their want-satisfying capacity. In the choice process, *attitude* (brand preference) and *confidence* (ability to estimate the reward from buying the brand) lead to *intention* to buy. *Intention*, in turn, may lead to *purchase*. The resulting *satisfaction*, or its absence, will feed back influence to future buying decisions.

Output variables. While the act of purchase is the culmination of the processing of the input stimuli explained above, there are other types of buyer responses that are important to executives in evaluating past marketing strategy and in planning future programs. As Figure 4—3 shows, there are five output variables: (1) attention,⁵⁶ (2) brand comprehension,⁵⁷ (3) attitude,⁵⁸ (4) intention,⁵⁹ and (5) purchase. These variables are operationally well defined and may be used in research designed to measure the results of marketing effort.⁶⁰

Decision-making process. While the Howard-Sheth model is complex, an important feature of the theory is that the buyer tends to simplify the buying process as a result of the learning that comes from past experience and information processing. Past experience includes

⁵⁶ For a stripped-down version of the model and its application, see John A. Howard and Jagdish N. Sheth, *Application of Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1977), fig. 11—1 and chaps. 2, 3, and 5.

generalization from similar buying situations and repeat buying of the same product class. Information comes from the buyer's commercial and social environments. The changes in the decision-making process over time are especially significant.

Howard and Sheth classify the buying decision process as (1) extensive problem solving (EPS), (2) limited problem solving (LPS), and (3) routinized response behavior (RRB), depending upon the amount of information needed to make a decision. In *extensive problem solving*, attitude toward the brands is low, because the buyer is unfamiliar with the product class with which he is first being confronted. Brand ambiguity is high, with the result that the buyer actively seeks information. The time interval from the initiation of the decision process until its completion is greater than with LPS or RPB. *Deliberation*, or reasoning, will be high, since the buyer lacks a well-defined product class concept. He is also apt to consider many brands as part of the evoked set; his brand comprehension will be extensive, but shallow, on any one particular brand; and stimuli coming from the commercial environment are less likely to trigger any immediate purchase reaction.⁵⁷

When attitude toward brands is moderate, the buyer's decision process can be called *limited problem solving*. Here the buyer is familiar with the product class but unfamiliar with the brand (brand ambiguity still exists). He is likely to seek information, but not to the extent that he seeks it in EPS. His fact gathering is to aid in comparing and discriminating among different brands. His deliberation is much less, since choice criteria are tentatively well defined. Brand comprehension will consist of a small number of brands, each having about the same degree of preference.

In *routinized response behavior*, the buyer will have a high level of attitude toward brands in his evoked set. Furthermore, he has now accumulated sufficient experience and information to have no brand ambiguity. He will in fact discriminate among brands enough to show a strong preference toward one or two brands in his evoked set. He is unlikely to actively seek any information. Whatever information he passively or accidentally receives will be subject to selective perceptual processes, so that only congruent information is allowed. Very often the congruent information will act as "triggering cues" to motivate him to manifest purchase behavior. (Much impulse buying may be explained in this way.) The buyer's evoked set will consist of a few brands toward which he is highly predisposed. However, he will have greater preference toward one brand in his evoked set and lesser preference toward others.

⁵⁷When a family moves to a new city, this triggers a number of purchase decisions, the most important of which may be buying a new residence. For a discussion of information seeking under these circumstances, see Donald J. Hempel and William J. McEwen, "The Impact of Mobility and Social Integration on Information Seeking," paper presented at the 1975 National Conference of the Association for Consumer Research, 7 pp.

Situational variables and buyer behavior. In recent years it has become evident that recognition of situational variables can substantially increase the ability to explain and understand buyer behavior. A consumer situation may be viewed as comprising "all those factors particular to a time and place of observation which do not follow from a knowledge of personal (intra-individual) and stimulus (choice alternative) attributes and which have a demonstrable and systematic effect on current behavior."

The following five groups of situational characteristics illustrate this concept: (1) physical surroundings (location, sounds, aroma, weather, among others); (2) social surroundings (other persons present); (3) temporal perspective (time of day, season of the year, time since last purchase, last meal, last payday, among others); (4) task definition (an intent or requirement to select, shop for, or obtain information about a purchase); and (5) antecedent states (momentary moods such as anxiety, pleasantness, hostility; momentary conditions such as cash on hand, fatigue, and illness).

A number of empirical tests of situational influence in consumer behavior have been conducted in the past seven years using inventories of situational scenarios and choice alternatives. These inventories ask subjects to rate the likelihood that they would choose each of several alternative products or services under each of several sets of situational conditions. These studies have covered beverages, leisure activities, meat products, motion pictures, snack products, and fast foods. The results suggest the importance of including situational variables in undertaking research on buyer behavior.⁵⁸

Concluding comments. The Howard-Sheth model appears to be a powerful tool for explaining consumer behavior, especially for frequently purchased items, where past experience is likely to influence future attitudes. While it works better when used to guide research on the marketing of established products, rather than new ones, it has been useful in planning, executing, and analyzing test markets for new brands. There is also hope that further developmental work with the model may improve its usefulness in these applications. The results of validation tests of the model have been encouraging, but Howard and his associates indicate that further testing is needed before some of the more advanced applications envisioned for the model become feasible.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Adapted by permission from Russell W. Belk, "Situational Variables and Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 2, no. 3, December 1975, pp. 157-64. See also J. A. Russell and A. Mehrabian, "Environmental Variables in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, June 1976, pp. 62-63; and Russell W. Belk, "A Reply to Russell and Mehrabian," vol. 3, no. 3, December 1976, pp. 175-77.

⁵⁹For a report on the comprehensive research project designed to test the validity of the Howard-Sheth theory of buyer behavior and to facilitate its continuing development, see John U. Farley, John A. Howard, and L. Winston Rindg, *Consumer Behavior: Theory and Application*, Marketing Science Institute Series (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1974).

CONCLUSION

Information on buyer behavior has been shown as an important input for use in planning marketing strategy. Initially, we have limited our analysis to the purchase of consumer goods, but we will deal with industrial goods in the next chapter. Consumer buying behavior is treated as a decision-making process involving: (1) recognition of a problem (a felt need); (2) the search for alternative solutions to the problem; (3) evaluation of alternatives (brands); (4) the purchase decision; and (5) postpurchase feelings and evaluation.

In seeking to understand those aspects of the individual consumer's psychological makeup that are relevant to the buying decision, we discussed the concepts of motives, attitudes, and learning. Research methods used to identify the motives that activate the buying process and to measure the attitudes that consumers have with respect to alternative brands have been briefly described and illustrated.

We have shown how motives and attitudes are patterned by the culture in which the individual consumer lives, the social class to which he or she belongs, as well as by family and reference groups. The position of the household in the family life cycle was shown to have significant influence upon the types of products and services that are purchased at any given time.

In addition to these influences, we should note that the consumer is also affected by certain factors in the external situation, such as the proximity of stores to his or her home, the time of day he or she shops, the availability of parking space near different stores, the brands carried in the stores, the exposure of goods through display, and so on. Knowledge of the interplay of the buyer's motives and attitudes with the cultural and social influences in his or her environment, as well as with these situational influences, is important in understanding why, how, where, and when people buy.

Research on multivariate models has added to our understanding of the influences that determine brand preference. Emerging from this research is the "extended Fishbein model" for use in the explanation and prediction of consumer intention, which is the step immediately preceding purchase. This model has considerable potential for application in marketing decision making.

Finally, the Howard-Sheth theoretical model has been presented to tie together, in a unified structure, the many variables that affect the purchase of a brand. Empirical tests indicate that this model appears to have substantial validity, but it still requires additional development and further validation studies before its full potential can be realized.

Executives and researchers need a theory of buyer behavior to guide them in the development of effective marketing programs. Their interest in a workable theory comes about because such a theory tells

them at which points marketing effort may alter the buyer's environment and thus influence his or her purchasing behavior. Thus, management can change the quality level and characteristics of the product, its price, and its availability in the retail outlets where consumers would expect to find it. Equally important, the character of the messages communicated through the sales and promotional programs, as well as the amount of such effort, can also change the symbolic information content of the prospect's environment and may thus influence the buying decision.

With such a theoretical model of buyer behavior in mind, the executive and the market research expert can work together in deciding (1) what information to gather in order to provide data needed for planning marketing strategy for the year ahead and (2) what output measurements to secure as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the program. Weaknesses identified through such audits can then serve as an input in planning improved strategy for the following year. In short, an ongoing program of research, which feeds essential information to those responsible for the planning of marketing strategy, has the potential of making possible significant improvements in the effectiveness of the marketing effort. A research program of this kind would constitute part of a modern marketing information system such as that described in Chapter 3.

QUESTIONS

1. What needs might the following products or services satisfy? (Use Maslow's list in responding.)
 - a. Simba—a soft drink by Coca-Cola.
 - b. *Book of Knowledge* encyclopedia.
 - c. Sidewinder General tire (patented puncture sealing).
 - d. State Farm Life Insurance.
 - e. Panasonic complete stereo system (phonograph and twin speakers).
 - f. Dale Carnegie course.
2. To what extent do consumers' attitudes influence purchase decisions:
 - a. Of alternative types of products (for example, color television sets, outboard motorboats)?
 - b. Of alternative brands (for example, Maxwell House, Chase & Sanborn, or Hills Bros. coffee)?
3. a. What approaches may be taken in attempting to change consumers' attitudes toward a manufacturer's brand?
 b. What factors should be considered in deciding which of the approaches identified in (a) should be used in a specific instance?

Apply these factors to the following situations:

(1) At one time, Kroehler furniture was purchased primarily by the "common man"—the upper-lower-class and lower-middle-class

- families. After having consumer research done by a consultant, the firm wished to modify the brand image so that its line would also appeal to the upper-middle and upper classes.
- (2) Clairol had long sold hair coloring to women successfully. In a recent year, the firm introduced Great Day hair coloring for men. Clearly the firm faced a problem in overcoming long-standing attitudes of men believed to be unfavorable to such a product.
4. What is the definition of learning?
 - a. How does this concept help us to understand consumer buying behavior?
 - b. How does this concept help us to understand consumer buying behavior?
 5. What criteria were used by Warner and Martineau to determine the Index of Status Characteristics in Chicago?
 - a. What conclusions did Martineau reach concerning the value of social-class stratification to the marketing executive?
 - b. Would segmentation of markets along social-class lines be equally significant for the marketing of automobiles, gasoline, beer, coffee, and dietary foods?
 - c. Explain briefly the concept of reference groups.
 6. How susceptible are the following products and brands to reference group influence? (Use the following classification system: product +, brand +; product -, brand +; product +, brand -; product -, brand -)
 - (1) Automobiles.
 - (2) Beer (premium versus regular).
 - (3) Air conditioners.
 - (4) Radios.
 - (5) Color television sets.
 7. For which of the products listed below does the housewife tend to take into account the preference of other members of the family in making purchases?
 - a. Kellogg's Sugar Pops (preferred by four-year-old son).
 - b. My Sin perfume (wanted by 13-year-old daughter).
 - c. Marlboro cigarettes (preferred by husband; wife likes Kents).
 - d. Rival dog food (preferred by Fido).
 - e. Idahoan instant potatoes (liked by wife; husband likes Maine potatoes boiled and then mashed by hand).
 8. Research suggests that the position of a family in the life cycle is likely to have an influence on its purchasing behavior. Which of the products in column 1 would the families listed in column 2 be most likely to purchase?

Products	Life-Cycle Stages
Sleeping pills	Bachelor
Boats	Newly married
Ski equipment	Full nest I
Round-the-world tour	Full nest II
Piano	Full nest III
Automatic washer and dryer	Empty nest I
Bicycle	Empty nest II

9. At what point in the Howard-Sheth model (Figure 4-3) may executives apply stimuli through the marketing plan used? In what ways might such stimuli influence the consumer's buying behavior?
10. Why should the marketing plan be adapted to the amount of experience that the consumer has had with the brand? In answering, relate your response to (a) users of Kent cigarettes and (b) prospective buyers of the Polaroid color camera.

Technical Note

Technical note concerning "monotonic correlation." (See Reibstein's comments on testing of multivariate models for predicting attitudes, p. 153.) In mathematics a "monotonic" association is described as follows:

As the values of an independent variable get larger, the values of the dependent variable also get larger (they never get smaller). Conversely, as the values of the independent variable get larger, the values of the dependent variable get smaller (they never get larger). There is a straight-line relationship between the independent and dependent variables, not a relationship where the values of the dependent variable first increase and then decrease as the values of the independent variable get larger.

Accordingly, Reibstein's findings might be restated as follows:

In tests involving several brands in a product class (e.g., automobiles) higher attitude scores generated by the multivariate model are associated with higher brand preference rankings by consumers. Lower attitude scores are associated with lower brand preference rankings. That is, as attitude scores increase brand preference rankings increase in a straight-line relationship.