
UNIT 2 COMMUNICATION-KEY BEHAVIOURAL CONCEPTS

Objectives

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- describe the consumer behaviour variables that are relevant to development of marketing communications.
- discuss the way in which these variables affect behaviour.
- relate these variables to the marketing communications processes.
- utilize these variables to design effective marketing communications.

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Consumer Needs and Motivation
- 2.3 Consumer Personality and Psychographics
- 2.4 Consumer Perception
- 2.5 Consumer Learning and Concepts Relevant to Advertising
- 2.6 Consumer Attitudes and Advertising
- 2.7 Group Behaviour and Consumers
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Self Assessment Questions
- 2.10 Further Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

"He loves the feel of the city... The skyscrapers... The crowds... The pretty faces... And the heady feeling of being successful... Above all the freedom of being himself." The ad for pantaloons from Mens Wear is not putting its focus a dry statistic or a flat two dimensional profile of a target customer. It is bringing into your contemplation a living thinking almost life blood individual and seems to know what it is talking about. The ad speaks directly to people it chooses to address - a focus and selectivity brought into marketing communications by clearly understanding who my customer is? What are his needs, aspirations and motivations in life, his main interests? What characterizes him in terms of value, interest and preferences-who does he meet for advice? Information? In short what makes him tick?

Since marketing and advertising accomplish the task of delivery of desired satisfaction to the consumer, in order to succeed, there is a need to first fully define the consumer, his buying behaviour and the influences on this behaviour. Consumer Behaviour thus becomes the directional force in Advertising. In this unit an effort is made to expose you to the behavioural inputs of significance to those designing and delivering advertising communication.

2.2 CONSUMER NEEDS AND MOTIVATION

Identification of consumer needs and the design of the organisation's offer in response to those needs is the rational sequence of the marketing process as suggested by the marketing concept. Identification of consumer needs and understanding of their motivations is therefore imperative for advertisers. Motivation has been described as the driving force within individuals that impels them to action. It is unfulfilled needs that act as motivators to any actions. Needs, which could be



primary or secondary have been classified variously in terms of Maslow's need hierarchy, the need two etc. Motivation has a dynamic nature because existing needs are never fully satisfied, new needs emerge as old needs attain satiation and selection of goals is strongly effected by success/failure in prior goal attainment. Advertising as a function makes extensive use of the concepts of consumer needs and motivation in basically two ways. The first and more common usage is the positioning application where the marketing communications are designed in response to whether the product is to be positioned as a satisfies of social needs is to be designed as fulfilling rational or emotional motives. The second and relatively less frequent use of these concepts is made by advertisers is in trying to understand the nature of advertising itself as a product, a satisfies for the consumer's need for product and brand information and then designing marketing communications accordingly, in response to the need definition in each given case.

The underlying concepts that therefore need to be understood are the hierarchy of needs, motives and goal selection by consumers, and relationship between needs and motives.

Activity 1

Look at 5 shirting advertisements on the television. Identify the needs that the advertiser is trying to target in each case. Do you think that the motivation created by the advertisers are the most suitable ones in each case? If not what are the suggestions you would like to offer.

S. No.	Need Identified	Suggestions
Ad. 1		
Ad. 2		
Ad. 3		
Ad. 4		
Ad. 5		

2.3 CONSUMER PERSONALITY AND PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Personality, the sum total of the inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to his environment is also defined as the psychological blue print of an individual.

Personality as a variable is used to explain individual differences rather than individual similarities. Advertisers are often faced with questions that ask

- a) What is the type of person expected to adopt the new line of cosmetics for men?
- b) What are the traits associated with readers of specialty magazines as opposed to those of general magazines?
- c) Are buyers of Marini and Ambassador likely to be different kind of people?

Study of consumer personality is essential because it reflects individual differences and because it is stable and enduring, furnishes the advertiser with a rich understanding of what subconscious motivations may underlie seemingly simple buying decisions (Freud's theory of Personality). This analysis may enable the design of a brand personality to obtain a degree of fit with target customer's personality, even imbue a brand with personality traits like aggressiveness or venturesomeness.

Similarly, concepts of self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image etc. may be used by advertisers while developing brand personalities.

Psychographics, a study of lifestyles of consumers on the other hand tries to analyse consumer not in terms of objective and measurable demographic data but as individuals pursuing definitive lifestyles as depicted by their activities, interest, opinions and values in addition to the demographic information. Psychographic analysis therefore does not merely enable the advertiser to identify who is to be addressed but also what to say, how to say and where to say it. Psychographic segmentation enables the advertiser to segment the whole population into 8-10 lifestyle types who can be rigorously defined as people and be understood. Tools of AIO studies and VALS typologies picturise consumers in far more complete and qualitative terms.

Activity 2

Carry out a survey of 10 motorcycle owners and scooter owners to find out their personal preferences about their likes and dislikes, their product choices, social relationships, hobbies, the way they spend time and money. Compare the aggregate profiles of the 2 sets of people. Do you find that the difference in personal preferences is significant?

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2.4 CONSUMER PERCEPTION

Perception may be described as how we see the world around us. Two individuals seeing the same ad may interpret them differently depending upon their perception of what is depicted. Perception is defined as process by which individuals select, organize and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. A stimulus is any unit of input to the senses. Concepts like absolute threshold and sensory adaptation are of special significance to advertisers. Absolute threshold is the lowest level at which an individual can experience a sensation. For example, the distance at which a commuter can notice a billboard is that individual's absolute threshold. As absolute threshold measures under conditions of constant stimulation, billboards would need to be of spectacular size or interest in order to be noticed if the driver is driving on a busy highway plastered with series of billboards. This is also termed as sensory adaptation. Another concept of interest is differential threshold or J.N.D. (Just Noticeable Difference) which is the minimal difference that can be detected between two stimuli. This concept is seen in use in gradual, over the time changes in ad formats or spokesperson model, package changes logo or typography changes or emphasis shifts in advertising messages. Some other perceptual constructs which are relevant here are:

Selective Exposure : Consumers tend to actively seek out messages that are pleasant, or relevant to present needs, are sympathetic. Painful or threatening messages are ignored or screened out. Reassurative advertising that pats the consumers on the back for the wisdom of their buying decision is also retained and valued. Examples of avoidance behaviour are cancer ads and heavy smokers and social advertising regarding electricity and water wastage etc.

Selective Attention : Consumers vary in terms of the attention they give to stimuli which meet their needs and interests as compared to those irrelevant to their needs. They also vary in terms of kinds of information in which they are interested as well as in the form of message and type of medium they prefer.

Perceptual defence and Perpetual blocking : Consumer subconsciously screen out



stimuli which is important for them not to see even though exposure has taken place.

Furthermore consumers tend to distort information that is not consistent with their values, beliefs and needs. Some of the distorting influences are physical appearances, stereotypes, first impression, Halo effects or even irrelevant cues. For example people tend to associate qualities with physical appearances (e.g., an image of an efficient housewife in terms of physical appearance which in most peoples minds may be quite at variance with the actual modern housewives today, which again may vary from society to society on physical appearance of an efficient business executive or a research scientist). Selection of models for print and TV commercial therefore becomes a key element in the persuability of the ad.

Perceptual blocking refers to the consumer tendency to protect themselves from the consistent bombarding of advertising stimuli by simply shutting off, i.e. tuning out the stimuli from conscious awareness. Research shows the problem to be very undespread. Advertisers today face the challenge to be able to understand the input to such behaviour, so that their reach and effective reach do not develop into different statistics.

Activity 3

Talk to 5 consumers in respect of their most recent consumer durable purchases and find out the degree and extent of ad recall they display for the consumer durable in question. Compare this with the recall levels of 5 people who are not interested in buying that particular consumer durable. Do you notice a difference between the recall and retention of the 2 groups. Can you explain why this happened?

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2.5 CONSUMER LEARNING AND CONCEPTS RELEVANT TO ADVERTISING

For the marketing perspective, we could define learning as the process by which individuals acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience they apply to future related behaviour. Advertising makes widespread cues to need recognition or purchase motivation, which may, if supported by buyer intention, lead to purchase. Some of the important learning theory concepts of relevance to advertisers are:

Repetition ; Repetition increases the likelihood of retention of information received by reinforcing learning and showing the process of 'decay' or forgetting. Evidence also suggested that 'overlearning' or repetition beyond what is necessary to aid retention. Advertising scheduling makes use of the repetition concept in order to work out the necessary reinforcement needed for adequate retention. It has also been demonstrated that extremely high numbers of exposures however would result in inattention or boredom, producing what is called 'advertising wearout'. Advertisers recognising this, user variations of advertising messages to offset wearout yet maintain frequency levels necessary for retention in case of frequently purchase products. Examples like those of Maggie Hot and Sweet tomato chilli sauce and Pepsi illustrate this.

Stimulus generalisation According to the classical conditioning theory, learning depends



not only on repetition but also on the ability of consumer to generalise. Once brand franchise has been built for a certain product and recognisable and favourable brand images exist, advertisers use similar background music, logo words or phraseology, sometimes even the models to help consumers retain favourable association of a new brand with an existing one from the same family. This is specially true of brand name extension in the early stages of new brand launch.

Stimulus discrimination: It is a concept opposite to stimulus generalisation and results in the selection of a specific stimulus from among similar stimuli. In the competitive world of today, when every brand fights a battle of identity in the consumer's mind, stimulus discrimination is a concept very extensively used as it is the foundation of creating and communicating differentiation.

Brand leaders wanting to establish or retain brand franchise would want the consumers so to discriminate while imitators would seek stimulus generalisation. Once stimulus discrimination has set in, however, it is difficult to oust a leader as has been proved by the Maggie name associated with the product noodles. So strong is the brand identification that in most consumers mind especially children it has almost earned the status of a generic name. In fact the longer the period of learning i.e., of associating a brand with a product the more likely is the consumer to discriminate.

Learning concepts from Cognitive theory - Four concepts here are specially relevant for application in marketing communications. These are:

Rehearsal Defined as the silent, mental repetition of material or information, rehearsal determines how much information would be available for delivery from the short term memory to the long term memory store, for use in future decisions. Advertising by monitoring certain frequency levels and therefore more or less frequent exposures, aids rehearsal. However short term memory is limited in capacity, marketers must understand that the information given is simple or unique enough to be absorbed without much loss. Research suggests that only 2 to 3 bits of information can be conveyed in a 15 second commercial if the object is later recall.

Encoding : Encoding is the process by which consumers select and assign a word or visual image to represent an object. Advertisers aid encoding by using brand symbols (Nestle nest, Woolmark, Onida devil). Learning a picture takes less time, than learning verbal information, but both together have been found to be important in forming overall mental image.

Consumers constantly recode information already encoded to include large amount of information. This ability to regroup relevant information together is called chunking. It is important for advertisers to understand the groupings or chunks that can be handled by consumers as recall is hampered if the chunks offered in an ad do not match those in the consumer's frame of reference.

Activity 4

Notice the Marketing Communications of 2 leading brands of soaps or shampoos or tea or coffee. How has, in terms of packaging, branding, ad appeal stimulus discrimination been applied?

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2.6 CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND ADVERTISING

An attitude is a learned predisposition towards an object reflects whether we are favorably or unfavorably disposed towards the object. As attitudes are in the nature of being acquired predisposition, advertising which contributes to the learning inputs



becomes a factor in attitude formation and attitude change. By using rational as well as emotional appeals advertisers try to contribute to the cognitive affective and the conative components of attitudes. In terms of attitude change, advertisers using the inputs of Fishbein's models of component of attitudes seek to change attitudes by either trying to alter brand beliefs or alter relative evaluation of conflicting brand attitudes.

2.7 GROUP BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMERS

Apart from individual determinants of behaviour, consumers in their buying decisions are heavily influenced by group influences like reference groups, family, cultures and subcultures.

By studying factors that influence the persuasibility and vulnerability of consumer types to reference group, and influences advertisers make skillful uses in marketing communications by presenting the celebrity, experience and common man appeals in advertising.

Similarly dynamics of family decision making, influence of children, assignment of decision making roles, role and importance of children become inputs in developing messages for family consumption products. These inputs are specially relevant to all product and service categories which are for family consumption rather than for individual consumption and where the family is expected to be an important reference group. You would have noticed such appeals being utilised for articles ranging from toothpastes and cooking oils to family holidays and credit cards and a vast range of consumer durables.

2.8 SUMMARY

Knowledge of what makes the consumer behave as he does, is vital for successful development of all marketing effort, advertising included. Advertisers, by understanding the underlying needs, motivation attitudes and perceptions of consumers, get in a position to defining and delivering their own task effectively and meaningfully. Study of buyer behaviour thus provides a useful foundation on which persuasive responsive communication linkages with present and prospective consumers can be built.

2.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that different people buy same product/brand for different motives. Identify the buying motives for cellular phones and computers.
2. How personality factors/variables of a consumer affect the purchase decisions. Discuss in relation to the tourism product.

2.10 FURTHER READINGS

1. H. Assael, *Consumer Behaviour and Marketing Action*, South Western College Publications, 1998.
2. G. Forall, *Consumer Psychology for Marketing*, Business Press, 1998.