

# Learning theories amongst young adults

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Introduction The concept of 'learning' has been embedded In each and every one of us from the daddy were born. Since, the beginning of man, learning has been incorporated Into our very nature whether we are conscious of It or not; from learning how to control fire to noticing how that fire provides us with warmth and security to ward of wild animals. Learning as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something'.

Over the years, psychologists have come up with different theories on how we learn. Marketers have taken these theories and applied them to gain a better understanding of how consumers learn and behave, in order to develop better marketing strategies to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers. This is commonly known today as consumer behavior. The rapid increases of millennial consumers over the years have Intrigued marketers to further understand and analyses this new breed of consumers. Hence, to understand their behaviors Is to understand how they learn and process Information.

There are many ways to learn and along with that, many different learning theories. In this research, I will be focusing on three mall learning theories related to young adult learning and what are the implications of these theories to marketing. Learning Theories of Young Adults & How Marketers Apply Them To analyses how young adults learn, we have to first understand the term 'young adult'. In actuality, there is no definition to the term; however it is widely used these days to describe an individual who lies within the transition period between the adolescence to adulthood period.

The term is also typically used to better categorize his segment of individuals in researches, studies and even marketing. According to Erikson's Stages of Development, the young adult stage ranges between the ages of 18-35 years (Erikson, 1968). Due to the advancements of this ever-changing society, learning today is not the same as it was 20-30 years ago. The exposure to technology from an early age has altered the way these 'digital natives' think and process information compared to previous generations before them (Presents, 2001). Thus, the focus is towards understanding how young adults learn. Knowledge is perception - Socrates.

Learning is no longer just a passive assimilation of knowledge (Pigged, 1968), which is passed down from teacher to student. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn". The conventional student-teacher or 'teach me' methods of learning can no longer be applied to the young adults of this generation. Instead, the use of a more active learning method such as cognitive learning is more relevant today. Cognitive learning is a theory that defines learning as a behavioral change based on the acquisition of information about the environment' (Mossy, 2009).

There are three main branches of cognitive learning; the iconic rote learning, vicarious learning and reasoning or analogy learning. Iconic rote learning The first area of cognitive learning we will be looking at is iconic rote learning. Iconic rote learning is defined as learning the association between two or more concepts in absence of conditioning (Neal, Sequester, Hawkins, 2002). The essence of this concept is repetition, where the intended concept is repeated over and over again to engage the attention of the intended target.

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On the surface, this concept might seem similar to that of the classical conditioning method which also involves repetition. However, this concept differs from classical conditioning because of the absence of a stimulus-response mechanism, a direct reinforcement or reward involved. The aim of iconic learning is just to boost the attention and promote awareness of a concept to associate its key attributes. Young adults today are faced with a "continuous partial attention" syndrome, where there is an overload of information from the use of technology (Coleman, 2013).

It is difficult to teach a young adult today in a classroom, specially with the use of smartphones, laptops and gadgets, while simultaneously trying to receive information from the speaker or teacher. Moreover, young adults have the tendency to be distracted by the thought of needing to check their text messages or notifications from social-media circles. This attachment to technology is the reason why the transfer of an intended information or concept, has to be extensively repeated to obtain the constant attention or awareness of the intended person, in order for learning to occur.

Herbert Simon, a Nobel-winning economist wrote "Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention". Therefore, marketers who understand this theory, apply it to their marketing strategies to attract the attention of young adult consumers. Advertisers use mediums such as television commercials, Youth ads, and print media to create a link between the brand and its key benefits to consumers through iconic rote learning. For example, the extensive repetition and occurrences of a Caturact advertisement, associates the brand to premium coffee.

Once consumers have made the connection between Cataracts and premium coffee, consumers will cognitive processing. The presence of these commercials can even be made on digital platforms such as tablets and smoothness through downloaded APS (applications). Hence, with the right amount of exposure and occurrence, marketers will be able to capitalize on the 'distraction' of technology to learning and use it to their advantage when marketing young adults through infiltrating popular internet mediums such as Backbone and Youth. Vicarious learning Vicarious learning, also known as observational learning (sometimes called modeling or imitation) is simple learning by observing others and copying their behavior Fletcher and Gorton, 2007). Often used in conjunction with Bandanna's social learning theory, made famous by the 'Boob doll' experiment; considers that children learn complex social behaviors by copying the behaviors of adults. Later on, Bandeau acknowledged that learners also play an active role in the learning process by only choosing models which are consistent with their own personal beliefs and values which produce desired outcomes (Bandeau, 1989).

Androgyny, also known as the study of how adults learn, was made popular by Malcolm Knowles who believed that adults are self-directed, goal-orientated and bring life experiences and knowledge to their learning experience (Knowles, 1989). Hence, it is clear that Bandanna's theory not only applies to only children but to young adults as well because they only model those who align with their own prior beliefs and knowledge, to reach a desired goal or outcome. Thus, marketers who understand these learning

theories apply them to their marketing strategies to reach young adult consumers.

For instance, popular Swedish retailers H&M use David Beckman (a famous footballer and celebrity) as their brand ambassador and spokesperson for their clothing line. Young adults who identify and look to Beckman as their role model will tend to imitate him; including what he wears in this case. Analytical or reasoning learning Analytical or reasoning learning can be defined as " an inference process that allows consumers to use an existing knowledge base to understand a new situation or object" (Hawkins and Motherboards, 2010).

In analytical learning, critical reasoning based on existing understanding and knowledge is used together with new information or concepts in the learning process. This is common in young adults as they incorporate life experiences and pre-existent knowledge to their learning experience, as mentioned earlier based on the androgyny study (Knowles, 1989). Simply put, this theory of learning helps young adults use a pre-existing knowledge of something that they familiar with, to learn something that which they are not familiar with.

Typically, high-involvement products involve more reasoning thinking because consumers are motivated to learn about products that they are interested Marketers who understand this theory use it to reach young adult consumers. An example of this is the purchase of high-involvement products such as smoothness. Users in Malaysia were between the ages of 25 to 34

(Enterprise News, 2011), hence falling within the young adult category (Erikson, 1968).

The consumer behaviorism model suggests that a typical consumer goes through four stages before purchasing a product; recognition, searching for information, evaluation of alternatives and finally, the purchase decision (Kettle and Keller, 2012). Therefore, in the purchase of a smartened, young adults in Malaysia use analytical or reasoning learning to acquire as much information about the smartened when comparing between brands and prices.

Hence, marketers in the smartened industry, should market their smoothness based on emphasizing on the unique specifications and restorability of price in order to gain a comparative advantage over competitor brands. If the product attributes align with a previous knowledge or experience, then the young adult will be motivated to learn more about the smartened and eventually decide to purchase it. Conclusion Young adults have become the main target market of marketers. Hence, it is critical to understand how they think, behave and learn.

In this assignment I highlighted who young adult are and analyses the different cognitive approaches to learning when it comes to young adults which include; iconic rote, vicarious and analytical learning. These learning theories have a direct impact on the decision-making process of young adult consumers in purchasing items. I have also given real life examples which illustrated and describe the appropriate marketing strategies to not only

reach but significantly affect and influence the way young adults purchase products.