

Consumer behaviour and reference group essay sample

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



There are various different influences on whether we buy a product or not and this is called consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour “ is about people, or more accurately, the systematic study of their behaviour patterns in a marketing context” (Keith Williams 1983). Reference groups are a major part of the influential jigsaw. A reference group is “ A person or group of people that significantly influences an individual’s behaviour” (Bearden and Etzel 1982). There are lots of different types of reference groups and each individual can belong to more than one. An example of one is an aspirational reference group. Aspirational reference groups are indirect to you and are a group you do not belong to but wish you did. An example of how marketers could use this can be seen with the company Nike. They are a highly popular sports brand and use famous sports stars like Cristiano Ronaldo to advertise their produce both in adverts and in real life. The objective for the marketers is to make people think that if their favourite sport stars, such as Ronaldo, wear Nike produce then the consumer will want to as well so they could be seen in the same mould as them, thus looking to aspire to be in the same group. Another example of a group can be the opposite of aspirational which is dissociative.

This is a group that people do not want to belong to. An example of a dissociative company can be seen with the Burberry brand and Pete Doherty. Pete used to wear Burberry clothing but had a reputation as a party animal and not a role model and as such gave Burberry a bad reputation which cost them the prestige they once had. Also Burberry became the central wear for the ‘ chav’ culture amongst Britain in the early twenty first century, meaning many people tried to avoid being associated with the brand by not wearing

it, thus creating a dissociative group. We have reference groups for a few reasons. For instance, most people would rather be a part of something than be on their own. This can be seen in Sherif's experiment in 1936. The experiment showed that to gain association and acceptance by other people we are liable to modify our behaviour in order to become like them.

A major part of reference groups is motivation and understanding what drives them on is key to marketers. An understanding of human drives may enable marketers to offer products which provide satisfaction. To understand motivation, marketers can use certain practices such as in depth interviews and focus groups but also theories such as Maslow's hierarchy and Vroom's expectancy theory. Maslow's hierarchy shows all the different scales of needs from the consumer, marketers can design clever promotions to appeal to all the different levels. The lower down the scale, such as psychological needs, come under utilitarian motivation where as further up the hierarchy, such as self-actualisation, comes under hedonic motivation. These are important from marketers because they lead to different consumer behaviour patterns. As shown in Babin and Harris (2009 p86) utilitarian motivations lead to choosing the most convenient place to have lunch where as hedonic motivations lead to going out to a trendy, new restaurant for dinner. An example of how different companies use Maslow's hierarchy can be seen with Coca-Cola as they use happy groups of people which appeals to the social needs where as Innocent Smoothies appeal to physiological needs where health is a bigger appeal.

Using Vroom's motivation theory the costumer chooses one product over another because they expect the choice to have more positive consequences. Reference groups are important to marketers because members of the group will communicate about products using word of mouth. Word of mouth is a powerful weapon for marketers as most people desire to tell others about purchases for various reasons such as to feel involved, maybe they are concerned for others or just for self enhancement. Groups can influence attitudes, behaviours and opinions of others and can force peer pressure on group members to keep up with the trends. Word of mouse is likely to be a growth area in marketing communication in the twenty first century with examples such as Facebook likes and review websites like Snowglo. My first advertisement that I have chosen is a FIFA 13 television commercial.

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=J4fMcYKWZqI)

The advert appeals to various different reference groups. Firstly, the advert features Lionel Messi, whom most people consider to be the best footballer in the World, which adds a star value to it. This means it has aspirational qualities as consumers see Messi playing the game and want to be like him so will go out and buy the product to be considered in the same bracket. The advert has the message of 'Join the Club' which is used by marketers to make you believe that you are part of a bigger community and making it out that you will fit in with your friends if you play this game, so they are using Sherif's experiment on the consumer. Another reference group which the

advert is aimed at are young males. The advert features a lot of them in a bid to try and convince the consumer that this is what all people their age are doing and they should join in. This could also be seen by parents when buying a present and when they see the advert they would see all these young teenage males featuring in the advert and have the thought that this is what all the people their age do and would be a present well received. The second advert I have chosen is a Compare the Market television advert. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8Kh-YyckPc>) This advert uses witty and clever techniques to entice the consumer into purchasing their service.

The use of a meerkat which is seen by many as a cute and adorable animal is smart as people will warm to it more and having a funny advert will make people concentrate while watching rather than switch channel. The use of cuddly toys is used by marketers as a way of repetitive buying, which is clever as consumers will want to renew their service to receive a new cuddly toy. The cuddly toy also brings in the children reference group as they will see the advert and possibly pester their parents to get them one and the benefits for the marketers are that once the consumer joins they will keep wanting to making their children happy by renewing and thus receiving the next cuddly toy reward. Children are a primary reference group and “children influence as much as \$700 billion per year in consumer spending” (Smith 2011). The influence children make to consumer buying is massive and the marketers who came up with the idea for cuddly toys have used them well. “One study found that 36% of parents with children between the

ages of 6 and 11 reported that kids significantly influence their purchases.” (Babin and Harris, 2013).

Basically, this advert can appeal to lots of different reference groups but parents with young children have been especially targeted. The last advert I have chosen is an Emporio Armani magazine advert from 2008.

(<http://bittenandbound.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/david-beckham-emporio-armani-underwear-ad.jpg>)

This advert is narrowed down to a few reference groups. By using a well-known footballer the marketers are aiming towards the aspirational football fans who want to be just like David Beckham. Also targeted are young males and females. Males because the marketers can use Vroom’s motivational theory on them by stating, you can look just like David Beckham if you put in the hard work and get some Emporio Armani underwear. Young females are also targeted as they may want their boyfriends to look like David Beckham, who is arguably one of the most well-known and popular people on the planet and as such a lot of young females would want their own David Beckham and buying Emporio Armani can help them to achieve that. By using David Beckham they are using a man who is in the peak of personal fitness and the advert would not have been so appealing to these reference groups if they had used a forty year old man. Using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, this advert appeals to both ends of the scale. At the bottom and psychological end this magazine advert is appealing to the sexual nature of the consumer where as it is also appealing the self-esteem section as by

wearing the same underwear as David Beckham a young male will have a sense of prestige and generally feel better about himself.

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