

# Consumer behaviour and marketing essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



## 1. 0 Introduction

“ Consumer behaviour is the study of processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” (Solomon, 2002). Why? How? When? What? Where individuals and groups buy? People talk rationally but they buy emotionally. People buy a car not because of the great gas mileage or the price. They buy it because it makes them feel good. People “ feel” on the basis of the words used and the pictures painted by those words. Literally, a rose by any other name probably wouldn’t sell.

## 1. 1 Consumer behaviour and Marketing

Why should managers, advertisers and other marketing professionals bother to learn about consumer behaviour? Because firms exist to satisfy consumers’ needs. The study of consumers helps firms and organizations improve their marketing strategies. Consumer response is the ultimate test of whether a marketing strategy will succeed. Thus, knowledge about customers should be incorporated into every facet of a successful marketing plan. In order to understand why customers react the way they do, the following behavioural sciences have to be examined.

## 2. 0 Perception

“ Perception is the process by which we recognize what is represented by the information provided by our sense organs.” (Carlson, Buskist, Mastin, 2000)

Our perception is an approximation of reality. We see things-cars, streets, people, books, trees, televisions. Our brain attempts to make sense out of

<https://assignbuster.com/consumer-behaviour-and-marketing-essay-sample/>

the stimuli to which we are exposed. This works well for example, when we “see” a friend three hundred feet away at his or her correct height; however our perception is sometimes “off”-for example, certain shapes of ice cream containers look like they contain more than rectangular ones with the same volume.

## 2. 1 Environmental Influences

Stimuli are many things, emulating the senses, the mind and the environment. Stimuli from the environment would be, smelling coffee out of a coffee shop; the smell makes you want to go in for a coffee. Moreover, marketers rely heavily on visual elements in advertising, store design and packaging. We find information from our environment using all of our senses: sight, smell, sound, touch and taste.

## 2. 2 Internal Influences

We also use internal senses to aid our perception. We use pressure, pain and temperature, which are known as the Organic senses, we use our muscle tension, limb position etc, which are the kinaesthetic senses, and we use our vestibular senses, which is our balance and head position.

Other internal ways that we perceive: -

We are selective to what we pay attention to, and what information we retain. We are more likely to pay attention to or retain information that we are interested in. We also avoid information that contradicts our beliefs. If we

believe that smoking is not so bad, when shown an advert about the dangers of smoking, we are not likely to pay any attention or retain the information.

## 2. 3 External Influences

There are many external factors which affect our perceptions and they are as follows:

Habituation: - This is what we are used to, for example, I am used to hearing music from the next door, so I do not really notice it, whereas if there was a different noise I would notice it. Position: - If a product is in a different place to usual in a shop, we'll notice it. Novelty: - We notice something new. Repetition: - If we see the same advert repeatedly, we will eventually remember it. Some more are intensity, contrast and movement.

## 2. 4 Absolute thresholds and Weber's Law

If there is a slight change in the external environment we are likely to notice. We have an absolute threshold, which is the point at which we notice a change. If I am in a room and the lights are very slowly getting dimmer, I probably would not notice immediately; whereas, if I was in a room and the lights suddenly went off, I would notice immediately.

" In the nineteenth century, a psychophysicist named Ernst Weber found that the amount of change that is necessary to be noticed is systematically related to the intensity of the original stimulus. The stronger the particular stimulus, the greater a change must be for it to be noticed" (Solomon, 2002).

In marketing terms, this would mean that the higher the price of a good, the greater the change in price required for consumers to take notice.

## 2. 5 Expectation

Our expectations are influenced by our past experiences, and our experiences of the product, e. g. certain brands and our mind set. Our expectations are also influenced by the way something is presented to us. For example, if a ring is presented to us in an expensive looking box, we will expect it to be more expensive than if it was simply wrapped in tissue paper.

## 2. 6 Brand perception

Brands are perceived in different ways. Usually, a company wants a brand to be perceived a certain way.

Renault is launching their new Clio to be perceived as sporty. In the adverts they show young people looking good, driving their Clio, which is making them happy. They want the Clio to be seen as a sporty car for young people.

## 2. 7 Involuntary perception

### Physiological

Perception can be involuntary. Some of the things we perceive are because of physiological factors such as: Hunger, thirst, cold, fear, sex, instinct, emotions or curiosity.

### Gestalt

“ Our brains tend to relate incoming sensations to others already in memory based on the fundamental organizational principles. These principles are based on Gestalt psychology, a school of thought that maintains that people derive meanings from the totality of set of stimuli, rather than from any individual stimulus” (Solomon, 2002). In short, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

### Subliminal

“ Subliminal perception means perception of a stimulus below the conscious level” (Assael, 1998). Subliminal messages supposedly can be sent on both visual and aural channels. An example of that is when the possible effects of messages hidden on sound recordings, fascinate many consumers.

## 3. 0 Learning: behavioural and cognitive learning theories

### 3. 1 Learning

“ Learning is any permanent change in behaviour as the result of experience or practice” (Wright, 2003). As consumers gain experience in purchasing and consuming products, they learn not only what brands they like and do not like, but also the features they like most in particular brands. They then adjust their future behaviour based on past experience. Psychologists who study learning have advanced several theories explaining the learning process. These learning theories are classified in behavioural and cognitive.

#### 3. 1. 1 Behavioural Learning Theories

Behavioural learning theories assume that learning takes place as the result of responses to external events. Behaviourist psychologists have developed two types of learning theories: classical conditioning and operant conditioning.

### 3. 1. 2 Classical Conditioning

Theories of classical conditioning are reflected in Pavlov's famous experiment. He showed a hungry dog some food, so it salivated. He repeated this several times. He then showed the hungry dog some food, but before it salivated, Pavlov rang a bell, in order to associate it with the unconditioned stimulus (food). After a number of trials, the dog learned the connection between the bell and food; and when it heard the bell even in the absence of food, it salivated.

This theory is used in advertising, for example, people associate the name Nike with sports, as they make sportswear, and most of their adverts depict sporting activities.

" And classical conditioning works with advertising. For example, many beer ads prominently feature attractive young women wearing bikinis. The young women (Unconditioned Stimulus) naturally elicit a favourable, mildly aroused feeling (Unconditioned Response) in most men. The beer is simply associated with this effect. The same thing applies with the jingles and music that accompany many advertisements."

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/sbb/comm221/chapters/Pavlov.htm>

<https://assignbuster.com/consumer-behaviour-and-marketing-essay-sample/>

## Table 1: classical conditioning

Adopted from Henry Assael (1998)

### 3. 1. 3 Operant Conditioning

Instrumental, or operant conditioning, also requires the development of a link between a stimulus and a response. However, the individuals determine the response that provides the greatest satisfaction. Operant conditioning involves a different series of events, and this is what we usually think of as learning. The general pattern is:

Behaviour...; consequences...; behaviour is more or less likely to be repeated

This learning process is most closely associated with the psychologist B. F. Skinner, who demonstrated the effects of operant conditioning by teaching pigeons and other animals to dance and perform other activities by systematically rewarding them for desired behaviours. In instrumental learning, the response is performed because it is instrumental to gaining a reward or punishment (Solomon, 2002). There are three major forms of instrumental conditioning:

\* Positive reinforcement - Suppose that you visit a new restaurant and taste (behaviour) a delicious (consequence) meal, and you are more likely having that meal in the future (behavioural change).

\* Negative reinforcement - A toy market company might run an advertisement showing a kid sitting disappointed because he/she did not



have its toy. The message to be conveyed is that the kid could have avoided this negative outcome if only had had that particular toy.

\* Punishment - occurs when a response is following unpleasant event. For example, receiving a painful bite sticking your finger into a parrot's cage. You will not repeat this action in the future.

## Table 2: operant conditioning

Adopted from Henry Assael (1998)

### 3. 1. 4 Schedules Of Reinforcements

An important factor in operant conditioning is the set of rules by which appropriate reinforcements are given for behaviour. In order a company to achieve its aims, the most effective reinforcement schedule has to be used. Several different schedules are possible:

- \* Fixed interval: The consumer is given a free dish on every Monday when he/she eats in a particular restaurant.
- \* Fixed ratio: Reinforcement occurs only after a fixed number of responses. Every tenth time a frequent shopper card is presented, a product is provided.
- \* Variable ratio: Every time an action is performed, there is a certain percentage change that a reward will be given. " They learn that if they keep throwing money into the machine, they will eventually win something (if they don't go broke first)" (Solomon 2002).

### 3. 1. 5 Cognitive Learning Theory

In contrast to behavioural theories of learning, cognitive learning theory approaches stress the importance of internal mental processes. In other words, cognitive theory emphasizes the thought process involved in consumer learning, whereas classical and operant conditioning emphasizes the results based on the stimulus associations.

### Vicarious Learning

A type of cognitive learning that has important marketing applications is vicarious or observational learning. The consumer does not always need to go through the learning process himself or herself- sometimes it is possible to learn from observing the consequences of others. For example, viewers may empathize with characters in advertisements that experience (usually positive) results from using a product. In this way, the consumer sees the positive consequences of imitating the behaviour of others. The other side of the coin is seeing the negative consequences of another's actions and avoiding them. For example, the social embarrassment of not using a deodorant stimulates negative vicarious learning.

## 4. 0 Memory and forgetting

### 4. 1 Memory

" All learning implies memory" (Wright, 2003). Memory involves a process of acquiring information and storing it over time so that it will be available when needed.

There are three kinds of memory:

\* Impression: First and last impressions are very important. These are often what a person remembers about another person or a product.

\* Short Term Memory: Stores information for a limited period of time and its capacity is limited; it holds the information we are currently processing.

When we see an advertisement on TV for a mail order product we might like to buy, we only keep the phone number in memory until we have dialed it.

\* Long Term Memory is the system that allows us to retain information for a long period of time. In order for information to enter into long-term memory from short-term memory, we must usually “rehears” it several times.

Marketers assist in the process by devising catchy slogans or jingles that consumers repeat on their own.

Once information has successfully stored into long-term memory, we use deliberate strategies to encode the information.

#### 4. 2 Forgetting

Forgetting occurs when the stimulus is no longer repeated or perceived. If a product is not used or if its advertising discontinued, consumers may forget that product. Forgetting by consumers is a big headache for marketers.

##### “ Interference Theory”

According to this, forgetting is more influenced by what we do before or after learning than by the passage of time. Retroactive interference occurs when later learning interferes with the recall of earlier learning. Proactive interference occurs when earlier learning interferes with later learning.

Marketers can combat forgetting by repetition, by simply maintaining the level of advertising expenditures relative to competition. However, showing the same advertisement again and again may merely irritate the consumer. The most important method of avoiding forgetting is to deliver benefits to a defined target segment.