

Consumer behavior 41358



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Consumer Behavior Essay

Introduction

The study of consumer behavior has proven to be of added value to marketing executives and middle managers who design marketing strategies. Managers understand and utilize consumer attitude, which includes emotions, self-monitoring and cognition, when attempting to gain a competitive advantage through developing various marketing strategies. This paper will review appropriate theories of consumer attitudes and develop various advertising, merchandising and selling strategies based on these propositions. To counter consumer defense mechanisms, this paper will also discuss competitive war battlefield tactics.

Marketing managers match various marketing strategies with the attitudes of typical consumers. However, most of the time, the facts of a product are perilously similar to the facts of its competition. That is when cognition yields to attitude, or how a consumer will feel about a product. One would think attitude gives way to cognition as the price of the product increases. That is not necessarily so.

Face-to-face research with automotive shoppers showed selections are made based on emotion. (Edell & Burke, 1987) For example, a young male consumer with \$35, 000 who has an interest in buying a high-performance car may not be inclined to read literature on every model in that class or take notes on comparable autos. Rather, studies show many consumers are more apt to walk into a showroom, spot a model, peer at the instrument panel, sit behind the wheel, get out and say to the salesperson, “ I like the

red HPZX car”. In essence, the automobile feels good; therefore it must be the best purchase. Under these circumstances, the consumer exhibits a high propensity of self-monitoring. This phenomenon occurs despite the fact that information – processing (cognition) improves consumers’ abilities to evaluate product quality. (Fast, Frisbee, Vosburgh, 1989)

Self-monitoring propensity refers to how an individual presents him/herself in relation to those around them. Consumers with a high propensity for self-monitoring typically control and change their self-image to meet the demands of changing trends. Conversely, low self-monitoring consumers are less concerned with trends, and focus more on inner, non-material values in their social settings. The marketing manager designing advertising strategies that will appeal to either consumer types would employ image-based strategies to appeal to high propensity self-monitoring consumers. Quality-oriented advertising would be used to attract low-propensity self-monitoring consumers. (Jones 1994)

Cognition, the need to engage in effortful thinking or processing information, is also measured in terms of “ high” and “ low” need consumers. Low cognitive consumers are more apt to be influenced by advertisements that contain celebrities, fashion, and every-changing trends. Typically, these advertisements are very short “ spots”. Consumers who enjoy being engaged in thinking would find longer advertisements with quality claim attributes highly motivational, and thereby inclined to purchase the products advertised. (Cacioppo, Haugtvedt, Petty 1992)

Delivering quality to customers in a competitive marketplace dictates the need to continually enhance the experience and satisfaction of consumers. However, evidence indicates that satisfying customers is not enough to retain them. Even satisfied customers defect at a high rate in many industries. Xerox found that its “totally satisfied” customers were six times more likely to re-purchase Xerox products during the following eighteen months than its “merely satisfied” customers were. “Totally satisfied” ranks two scale points higher than “merely satisfied”, despite the fact that it earns six times more loyalty. The scales commonly used by researchers to measure consumer satisfaction do not translate linearly into outcomes (such as loyalty) in terms of purchases. This also suggests that businesses must strive for 100 percent, or total, customer satisfaction and be happy to achieve the level of loyalty desired. (Jones & Sasser 1995)

Current studies attribute a higher degree of emotionality to the opposite end of the satisfaction continuum – dissatisfaction – than was true in the past. For example, Bell and Zemke suggest that customers who have experienced service failures fall into two categories: annoyed and victimized. They define “annoyance” as minor irritation associated with a promise not fully realized. The feeling of “victimization” is characterized by a major feeling of “ire, frustration, and/or pain”. In effect, the feeling of being victimized is a deeper emotion than feeling irritated and might lead to outrage, rather than dissatisfaction. In the language of recovery, it may be more difficult to recover from feelings of victimization than to recover from irritation or annoyance – unless the latter occurs repeatedly. (Bell & Zemke 1987)

These insights suggest that focusing on customer delight and outrage – emotions more intense than satisfaction or dissatisfaction – and how these emotions comprise consumer attitude may lead to a better understanding of the dynamics of consumer emotions and their effect on customer behavior and loyalty. Such behaviors include actively choosing to purchase exclusively from one business and offering word-of-mouth support or unsolicited advocacy of a service business.

Generally, most customers range from being moderately dissatisfied to moderately satisfied. It can be inferred that such a state of moderation means customers are essentially ambivalent in their loyalty to a particular business. These customers would likely “defect” in the presence of a modest motivator – for example, getting a better price, finding a more convenient store location, or trying a new or different merchant.

An outraged or delighted customer feels far less ambivalent. An outraged customer will almost certainly defect, and is likely to become what Jones and Sasser call a “terrorist”. That is, negative experiences motivate them to tell others. Therefore, it is in the best interest of marketing managers to view the consumer as either a “terrorist” or an “apostle”.

Consider a customer who, after reserving a car, arrives in town with his or her family to start a vacation and discovers that the rental agency has no car available. This outraged customer will likely become a terrorist telling an emotionally charged story that is exaggerated with each retelling! In contrast, a delighted customer is likely to become a loyal “apostle” for the firm’s good service deeds. Having experienced the firm’s superior service, an

apostle has faith in the firm and will spread the good word through unsolicited advocacy. (Christopher et al 1991) The challenge for managers of service businesses is to reduce the number of terrorists and create apostles, which requires mastering the factors that promote customer delight and avert customer outrage.

Human Resources Management

Understanding consumer behavior requires some duality on the part of every business. By employing effective internal mechanisms, organizations can develop and reinforce respect for a consumer's desire for security, esteem, and fairness. Fulfilling these consumer needs can be achieved through human resources (HR) management practices such as employee selection, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems. First, companies must explicitly identify employee behaviors associated with the three consumer needs as a framework for HR practices:

- Hiring – Give job applicants a realistic job preview; outline how the employee is expected to act in a customer contact position. Identify desirable attributes for the job in order to design interviews or behavior simulations and exercises for effective screening of applicants. For example, AT&T hires its telephone contact employees using a simulation based on a careful analysis of job competencies required to deliver AT&T's services.
- Designing training programs – List the critical behaviors that new employees must display and, more importantly, teach them about the firm's service-quality norms by emphasizing the need-gratification behaviors.

- Developing and implementing performance-management systems – List need-gratification behaviors and assess the degree to which employees actually display them in order to reinforce their training indoctrination. Performance management is service-quality management that provides an opportunity to recognize and reward employees who accomplish specific difficult, but attainable, service goals. (Locke, & Latham 1990)

At a large U. S. day care and preschool provider, regional managers and corporate staff worked in groups using a critical-incident technique to specify which staff behaviors were ineffective and which were particularly effective in conveying respect for the customer. (Flanagan 1954) In other words, they categorized behaviors as likely to be associated with customer outrage or delight. For example, relative to the need for esteem, an ineffective event would be confronting parents in front of their child about an overdue tuition payment. An effective event would be telephoning parents at home unexpectedly to compliment their child's work at school that day. Their goal became using these needs-based identifiers in training and possibly performance appraisal. The added benefit of the exercise was to provide a framework for systematically examining the role of consumer attitudes, delight, and outrage in the service encounter.

Hiring, training, and performance management can be accomplished in ways that support a service-quality philosophy. This cognitive, or informative – processing, approach to treating employees as though they were consumers and focusing on gratifying their needs is a simple rule for organizations implementing effective HR practices. Creating a climate in which employees

feel capable of attaining their own goals and desires through self-monitoring can translate into a milieu conducive to gratifying consumer needs.

Consumer Attitudes

The study of attitudes, or emotions, has emerged as an important but neglected topic of interest in consumer behavior. (Holbrook & Rajeev, 1987) Work in this area has increased, but knowledge of emotional facets of the consumption experience remains limited. One of the problems encountered in this area is the fact that the theorists disagree on the specific definition of emotion, along with mood and feelings. The term “affect” may be used to encompass all emotions, moods, feelings and motivators, and so serves our domain as well. (Gardner, 1985; Izard, 1977; Plutchik, 1980)

According to Plutchik (1980) and others, there is a consensus that consumer attitudes, or emotions (even those which do not reflect strong psychological stress) reveal a probing, comprehensive, base-line picture of an individual's subconscious and semiconscious motives. A consumer's attitude communicates and provides information about the probability of behavior and helps organizations prepare for appropriate action. Plutchik (1980) defines emotions as “total body reactions” to basic problems of survival, which have been genetically etched in us over thousands of years of evolutionary development. He further states they are ultra-conservative adaptations, or innate reactions, which promulgate survival along with amino acids (DNA genes). An understanding of human emotions, their defense mechanisms, and the psychological processes which manage emotional

intensity, can reveal to others what our behavior is likely to be and how our emotions can be used to induce change in our behavior.

Typology of Emotions

According to many theorists, our beliefs and personalities have evolved over time as a means of acquiring a more predictable, understandable perception of behavior regulated by emotional process (Plutchik, 1980). Therefore, our beliefs, personalities, and emotional systems are directly related. As they relate to consumer behavior, beliefs, personalities and emotional systems comprise consumer attitudes. Consumers provide cues to their underlying emotions from observable personalities, traits and opinions. These cues assist marketing managers in designing marketing strategies.

The development of emotion typologies dates back to 1650, when Descartes declared that there were six primary passions: love, hate, desire, joy, sadness, and admiration. Much of the more recent work has used the approach of classifying facial responses that accompany emotions. (Izard, 1977) Some typology development efforts have used data reduction techniques such as factor or cluster analysis, while others have used logical, deductive approaches. (Holbrook et al, 1984; 1987)

Given the diversity of objectives, methods, and stimulus domains, it is not surprising that the typologies developed in previous research do not completely agree, although there is some overlap in the categories identified. Categories identified in one study do not always appear in others or, when they do, these categories often appear combined with other factors. The categories identified are not always mutually exclusive, especially in

studies using oblique rather than orthogonal methods of factor rotation. As a consequence, empirical studies often combine categories that in other studies or typologies are considered distinct. (Holbrook & Rajeev 1987)

The Plutchik (1980) typology is utilized to demonstrate its usefulness in marketing strategies. Plutchik found eight different types of emotions and analyzed the types of situations, beliefs, feelings and behaviors that are generally associated with them. Plutchik attaches an implied set of relations among the properties. For example, an individual faced with a threat infers danger, feels fear, and wants to run away, to achieve the goal of emotional protection. When applied to designing marketing strategies, managers can use information on general consumer attitudes (retrieved through polls, surveys, studies, etc.) to determine the best course of action to design a strategy.

Advertising and selling strategies have been developed based on Plutchik's emotion typology that could conceivably be implemented by marketing managers. For example, suppose that a sales representative believes that a prospect is responding with an emotional response of fear during a sales presentation. The customer may appear to feel threatened by the sales representative, or he may indirectly express a sense of danger with the product or towards the company. The fear may be do to the prospective consumers' knowledge that the salesperson sells to his leading competitor, or perhaps because the customer is worried about buying something he really does not need. The consumer will likely respond to his emotion of fear by seeking protection. An emotional-protection selling strategy should attempt to reduce the level of fear in the customer and induce a feeling of

safety and security. The strategy might be implemented as follows: Initially, the salesperson should build the customer's confidence in him by encouraging the customer to offer a moderate amount of self-disclosure (or by getting him to express his personal feelings about some topic which is non-sensitive and neutral to sales decisions (e. g., local sports team opinions, mutual friend, or the national economy). When trust has been established, the salesperson should get the consumer to extend this self-disclosure to his attitude about the product. These feelings should give clues about product desires and the best sales methods. If a mass-media advertising campaign is conducted with the objective of reducing fear and helping to achieve a sense of protection, risk-reduction themes should be considered. These themes should stress how the product reduces risk in a consumer's life and creates security.

Asking for help in the sales presentation or promotional campaign may attract individuals who project feelings of sadness and isolation and are attempting to achieve reintegration. Furthermore, individuals expressing affiliation needs may be sold by initially attempting to get them to share information on unrelated, affiliate-type topics with which the salesperson agrees. Topics can include any items of mutual interest such as sports, friends, the community, etc. After building a bond of acceptance, the sales person should gradually introduce factors which progressively more closely relate to the product, until the prospective buyer feels a sense of trust in the sales person and the product and is ready to purchase it.

Upon inspection of Plutchik's typology, some of the emotions appear to be functionally related. Conte (Plutchik, 1980) found, in a study, that different

emotions could be organized around a circle. The emotions that Plutchik found were expended into 40 corresponding personality traits. A nearly perfect correspondence between the primary emotion dimensions and the clusters of personality traits was discovered. Using the same circular model, marketers could develop promotional strategies as applied to different consumers.

Selling and promotional strategy assumptions depend on determining the appropriate decision mix along the following strategy continuum:

1. Whether to intensively probe or attempt a quick sale
2. Whether to forcefully lead the prospect or ask for help
3. Whether to stress inner directed (personal) themes or other directed (social) themes
4. Whether to develop interest about the product or get the consumer to make a trial offer
5. Whether to flatter the consumer or keep the presentation objective and factual

These strategies exhibit different selling and advertising communication positions along these continuums, which are suggested for the various emotional states. For example, marketing communications should attempt to flatter consumers who appear extremely dependent and depressed, while very objective, straightforward communication should be used for consumers on the opposite side of the spectrum (those who appear self-confident).

The circular model of diagnosing different emotional responses may answer some of the questions about how to develop effective marketing strategies. However, it has been found that emotional defense mechanisms have evolved in people to such a degree that they frequently mask the underlying emotion (Kellerman, 1980). To allow for these in the development of strategies, an understanding of their nature is necessary. The next section describes these mechanisms and will offer suggestions for dealing with them.

Emotional Defense Mechanism

Kellerman (1980) states that individuals attach defense mechanisms to their emotions in order to prevent undue stress and maintain a predictable understanding of their environment. Defense mechanisms are the interplay between emotions and cognition. They are used to intervene emotions are too overt or revealing or when social acceptance is required. Defense mechanisms not only surface during crisis, but they occur naturally with the mild emotions that everyone experiences daily.

An understanding of emotional defense mechanisms is of profound importance when developing marketing strategies, as well as when interpreting any interpersonal communication. Most defenses are used to block expression of feeling (Plutchik, 1980). Therefore, defense mechanisms cloud our expression of the most sensitive of desires we have for products. By determining which defense mechanisms are being used, the product benefits and communication messages which have the greatest motivational impact may also be revealed.

Kellerman (1980) proposed that humans attach the defense mechanisms listed in Figure 5 to different emotions. In the context of this paper, these defense mechanisms are used to explain the different types of reactions a consumer may have to price changes and/or product shortages. They could be used to explain other types of customer reactions as well. Price changes and product shortages are used as examples, since they have been common during the last decade. (Zeitlin & Westwood, 1986) By understanding the emotional defense mechanisms that customers attach to these experiences, positive strategies can be developed to minimize potential patronage losses.

While understanding consumer emotions and defense mechanisms can be of help to marketers, the management of these emotions and defenses can also be applied to corporate strategy. Thus, another technique helpful to marketing managers is understanding the therapy of emotions, which can be used to increase the effectiveness of designing marketing strategies.

Management of Emotions

Psychological therapists often have patients who on the surface want to change, but who also have deeply implanted emotional defenses, which make change rather difficult. Most psychoanalysts are not able to segment their markets to attract customers who are easy to change. In other words, since psychoanalysts have to change the most difficult of attitudes, the approaches they use may be extremely effective on easier attitude changes that may be attempted in promotional and sales campaigns.

Chance (1980) found psychological counseling to be most effective when the counselor influences a patient through the following three phases:

<https://assignbuster.com/consumer-behavior-41358/>

1. Initially, the counselor should be seen as an empathetic, warm, parental figure, who encourages the patient to disclose feelings and troubles and who simultaneously responds with positive feedback.
2. After trust is established, the counselor should attempt to get the client to carry out a course of action by insisting that the demands are very limited in scope and that occasional failures will not change the patient client friendly relationship. Selective, positive reinforcement is used, with the purpose of being viewed as a quasi-dependable source of self-esteem enhancement.
3. Before contact with the patient ends, the counselor must translate other-directed approval into self-directed approval. In other words, in earlier phases, motivation was developed primarily through the counselor's empathy and positive reinforcement. However, the patient must now be convinced that he is taking an action because he personally desires it.

These phases are more easily stated than applied. As with selling a product, the process requires great interpersonal skills. However, for people with good interpersonal skills, the phases suggest a communication strategy for selling and promoting products. Initial salesperson-consumer contact requires sincerity support on behalf of the salesperson. If selling a car, for example, the sales associate should request small tasks of the consumer, such as sitting in the car, working the various knobs and dials on the dashboard, and looking at the engine and trunk space. The salesperson should insist that such requests are merely non-binding experiments to determine the feasibility of the car. When some interest is shown, the salesperson should stress how this interest is really a confirmation of the

consumer's wisdom and insight. The customer should then be encouraged to test drive the car, with the hope that the salesperson can translate the "other-directed" action of testing the car into "self-directed" motivation and action to purchase.

Conclusion

Consumer attitude, self-monitoring and cognition add considerable depth to understanding consumer behavior when designing marketing strategies. Although consumer cognition is the dominant stream of consumer-behavior research today, consumer attitudes may at times be the "symptoms" behaviors which reflect a lack of self-monitoring as the cause of failed marketing strategies. Sales people, as a "defense mechanism", have often diagnosed an apparent lack of emotion on the part of a consumer for deeply desired products.

Much more research on emotions should be conducted in marketing. However, marketing managers should not wait before applying theories of attitudes, self-monitoring and cognition when designing marketing strategies, as current research reveals insight into strategic and effective advertisement design. This suggests that advertising campaigns should sequentially develop awareness, interest, desire, and action when creating advertising strategies.

References and Bibliography

Bell, C. R. & Zemke, R. E. (1987). "Service Breakdown: The Road to Recovery," *Management Review*, October, pp. 32-35

Buck, Ross (1984). *The communication of emotion*, New York: The Gineford Press.

Cacioppo, John T., Haugtvedt, Curtis P., Petty, Richard E. (1992) Need for Cognition and Advertising: Understanding the Role of Personality Variables in Consumer Behavior, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 1 pp. 239 – 260.

Chance, M. R. (1989). An Ethnological Assessment of Emotion, in *Emotion: Theory, Research, and Experience*, Vol. I, Robert Plutchik and Henry Kellerman (eds), New York: Academic Press.

Christopher, M. A. Payne & Ballantyne, D. (1991). *RM: Bringing Quality, Customer Service and Marketing Together* (Oxford, England: Butterworth-Heinemann).

Edell, Julie A. & Burke, Marian C. (1987) The power of feelings in understanding advertising effects, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, pp. 421-433.

Fast, Janet, Frisbee, William R., Vosburgh, Richard E. (1989) The Effects of Consumer Education on Consumer Search, *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, Vol. 23, pp. 65.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954) “ The Critical Incident Technique,” *Psychological Bulletin*, volume 51, July, pp. 327-358.

Gardner, Meryl Paula (1985) Mood states and consumer behavior: A critical review, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 12, pp. 281-300.

Harrell, Gilbert D. (1986). *Consumer Behavior*, Chicago: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.

Holbrook, Morris B. and Batra, Rajeev (1987) Assessing the role of emotions as mediators of consumer responses to advertising, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, p 404-420.

Holbrook, Morris B., Chestnut, Robert W., Oliva, Terrence A., and Greenleaf, A. (1984) Play as a consumption experience: The roles of emotions, *Performance and Personality in the enjoyment of games*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 11, p 728-739.

Izard, C. E. (1977), *Human Emotions*, New York: Plenum Personality, Vol 11, p 273 -294.

James, W. (1884). What is an emotion? *Mind* 9, p 188-205 (reprinted in M. Arnord (ed), (1968), *The Nature of Emotion*, B. Himore: Penguin).

Jones, Melinda (1994) Linking Dispositions and Social Behavior: Self-Monitoring and Advertising Preferences, *Teaching of Psychology*, Vol. 21, pp. 160 – 161.

Jones, T. O. & Sasser, Jr. W. E. (1995) Why Satisfied Customers Defect *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 73, November-December, pp. 88-99.

Kellerman, Henry (1980). A structural model of emotion and personality: psychoanalytic and sociobiological implications, in *Emotion: Theory, Research, and Experience*, Robert Plutchik and Henry Kellerman (eds.), New York: Academic Press.

Locke, E. A. & Latham, G. R. (1990). A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall).

Mills, Trudy & Kleinman, Sheryl (1988) Emotions, reflexivity and action: An interactionist analysis, *Social Forces*, Vol 66: 4, p 1009-1027.

Mizerski, Richard W. & White, J. D. (1986) Understanding and using emotions in advertising, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol 3: 4, pp. 57-69.

Plutchik, Robert (1980) A general psycho-evolutionary theory of emotion, in *Emotion: Theory, Research, and Emotion*, Robert Plutchik, and Henry Kellerman (Eds.), New York: Academic Press.

Russell, J. A. & Mehravian, A. (1977) Evidence for a three-factor theory of emotion, *Journal of Research on Personality*, Vol 11, pp. 273-294.

Russell, J. A. & Pratt G. (1980) A description of the affective quality attributed to environments, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 38, pp. 311-322.

Storm, Christine & Storm, T. (1987) A taxonomic study of the vocabulary of emotions, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 53, pp. 805-816.

Sutton, Robert I. and Rafaeli, A. (1988), untangling the relationship between displayed emotions and organizational sales: The Case of Convenience Stores. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol 31: 3, pp. 461-487.

Tesser, A. and Collins, James E. (1988), Emotion in social reflection and comparison situations: Intuitive, systematic, and exploratory approaches. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 55: 5, pp. 695-709.

<https://assignbuster.com/consumer-behavior-41358/>

Zeitlin, David M., Westwood, Richard A. (1986), Measuring emotional response. *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol 13, pp. 34-44.