CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

A European Perspective

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Chapter 5
Motivation, lifestyles and values

Chapter objectives

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

5.1 It is important for marketers to recognise that products can satisfy a range of consumer needs.

5.2 Consumers experience different kinds of motivational conflicts that can impact their purchase decisions.

5.3 The way we evaluate and choose a product depends on our degree of involvement with the product, the marketing message and/or the purchase situation.

5.4 A lifestyle defines a pattern of consumption that reflects a person's choices of how to spend his or her time and money, and these choices are essential to defining consumer identity.

5.5 It can often be more useful to identify *patterns* of consumption than knowing about *individual* purchases when organisations craft a lifestyle marketing strategy.

5.6 Psychographics go beyond simple demographics to help marketers understand and reach different consumer segments.

5.7 Underlying values often drive consumer motivations. Products thus take on meaning because a person thinks they will help him or her to achieve some goal that is linked to a value, such as individuality or freedom. A set of core values characterises each culture, to which most of its members adhere.

ANDREW and his German girlfriend, Alexandra, have just found a table for lunch at a restaurant in Kolonaki (Athens) that Andrew found recommended on TripAdvisor.[1] It had been Andrew's turn to choose where to eat as Alexandra had suggested the Cretan restaurant where they had had dinner the previous night. Andrew studies the menu hard. He is reflecting on what a man will do for love. Alexandra is keen that they both eat healthily. She's not yet managed to persuade him to follow her conversion to vegetarianism. However, she's slowly but surely persuading him to give up burgers and pizzas for healthier, preferably organic, fare. At least while they are on holiday he can hide from tofu and the other vegan delights that confront him as the menu choices at their favourite local café when he visits her in St. Andrews.

Alexandra is still prepared to eat dairy products, so she is not a vegan. She argues that eating this way not only cuts out unwanted fat, but is also good for the environment. Just Andrew's luck to fall head-over-heels for a green, organic-food-eating environmentalist who is into issues of sustainability. As Andrew gamely tries to decide between the stuffed artichokes with red pepper vinaigrette and the grilled, marinated croquettes, he wonders if he might be able to choose the *soutzoukakia smyrneika* (meatballs cooked with cumin, cinnamon and garlic in a tomato sauce) – after all, they are on holiday and in Greece!

Margaret K. Hogg

Introduction

As a lacto-ovo-vegetarian (rather than a lacto-vegetarian or a vegan),[2] Alexandra is certainly not alone in believing that eating organic foods are good for the body, the soul and the planet.[3] The forces that drive people to buy and use products are generally straightforward, as when a person chooses what to have for lunch. As hard-core vegans demonstrate, however, even the consumption of basic food products may also be related to wide-ranging beliefs regarding what is appropriate or desirable. Among the more general population there are strong beliefs about genetically modified foods, which have proved difficult to alter via information campaigns.[4] There has been a lively debate in Europe about genetically modified foods compared with the US, although genetic modification for medical purposes has not met with such widespread hostility in Europe. Consumers see 'functional foods as placed midway on the combined "naturalness–healthiness continuum" from organically processed to genetically modified'[5] but tend to remain unconvinced that genetically modified foods can offer any significant health benefits.[6]

Concerns about adult, and more especially childhood, obesity, for instance, mean that diet has become a burning issue for many European governments.[7] It is obvious our menu choices have deep-seated consequences. In some cases, our emotional responses create a deep commitment to the product. Sometimes people are not even fully aware of the forces that drive them towards some products and away from others. Often a person's *values* – their priorities and beliefs about the world – influence these choices, as in Alexandra's case. Choices are not always straightforward. Often there are trade-offs to be made (as in Andrew's case).

Marketing opportunity

Vegans, vegetarians and now. . . reducetarians

'According to the Vegan Society,[8] there were three-and-a-half times as many vegans in 2016 [in the UK] as 10 years earlier. The NHS states that more than 1.2 million people in the UK are vegetarian. ***And a YouGov survey found that 25% of people in Britain have cut back how much meat they eat*** [emphases

added]. . . Brian Kateman, the co-founder of the Reducetarian movement,[9] a group committed simply to eating less meat. . . is a self-described pragmatist. He grew up eating steaks and buffalo wings, but as a student decided to go vegetarian. . . . "I'm a utilitarian", he says. "I'm more interested in outcomes than processes. The reason people eat less meat isn't for some badge, some public status, it's because it has a meaningful impact on the world. . . It's about moderation for everyday omnivores". According to the reducetarians, to eat less meat is an accomplishment; but to eat meat occasionally isn't a failure.'[10]

The motivation process: why ask why?

5.1

It is important for marketers to recognise that products can satisfy a range of consumer needs.

To understand motivation is to understand *why* consumers do what they do. Why do some people choose to bungee jump off a bridge (which is close to being an important rite of passage for young Europeans on their gap year visiting New Zealand), while others choose to do gardening for their relaxation,[11] while still others spend their leisure time on social media? Whether to quell the pangs of hunger, as in the case of Andrew and Alexandra, to kill boredom, or to attain some deep spiritual experience, we do everything for a reason – even if we can't always articulate what that reason is. Marketing students are taught that the goal of marketing is to satisfy consumers' needs. However, this insight is of little value unless we can discover *what* those needs are and *why* they exist.

Motivation refers to the processes that cause people to behave as they do. From a *psychological perspective,* motivation occurs when a **need** is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy. Once a need has been activated, a state of tension exists that drives the consumer to attempt to reduce or eliminate the need. This need may be *utilitarian* (a desire to achieve some functional or practical benefit, as when Alexandra eats green vegetables for nutritional reasons), or it may be *hedonic* (an experiential need, involving emotional responses or fantasies, as when Andrew thinks longingly about Greek cuisine). The distinction between the two is, however, a matter of degree. The desired end-state is the consumer's **goal**. Marketers try to create products and services that will provide the desired benefits and permit the consumer to reduce this tension.

Does a person even need to be aware of their motivation in order to achieve a goal? The evidence suggests that motives can lurk beneath the surface, and cues in the environment can activate a goal even when we don't know it. The effects of **incidental brand exposure** are now being explored; here are some initial thoughts:

- People who were exposed to a sign in a room of the brand name 'Apple' enhanced their motivation to be different and unique compared to others who saw a sign with the IBM brand name.[12]
- College students who used a 'cute' ice cream scoop to help themselves to ice cream took a larger amount than those who used a plain scoop; the idea was that the whimsical object drove them to be more self-indulgent, even though they weren't aware of this effect.[13]

Whether the need is utilitarian or hedonic, a discrepancy exists between the consumer's present state and some ideal state. This gulf creates a state of tension. The magnitude of this tension determines the urgency the consumer feels to reduce the tension. This degree of arousal is called a 'drive'. A basic need can be satisfied in any number of ways, and the specific path a person chooses is influenced both by their unique set of experiences and by

the values instilled by cultural, religious, ethnic or national background. In Alexandra's case, her German upbringing meant that lunch was her mother's home-cooked food, and this would normally have been her main meal of the day. Supper was usually a cold spread of breads, cheeses and cold meats, with soup in the winter or salad in the summer (a meal known as *abendbrot* in German). However, patterns of family eating are changing now in Germany.[14]

These personal and cultural factors combine to create a **want**, which is one manifestation of a need. For example, hunger is a basic need that must be satisfied by all; the lack of food creates a tension state that can be reduced by the intake of such products as paella, bouillabaisse, pasta, cheeses, smoked herring, chocolate biscuits or bean sprouts. The specific route to drive reduction is culturally and individually determined. Once the goal is attained, tension is reduced and the motivation recedes (for the time being). Motivation can be described in terms of its *strength,* or the pull it exerts on the consumer, and its *direction,* or the particular way the consumer attempts to reduce motivational tension.

Motivational strength

The degree to which a person is willing to expend energy to reach one goal as opposed to another reflects their underlying motivation to attain that goal. Many theories have been advanced to explain why people behave the way they do. Most share the basic idea that people have some finite amount of energy that must be directed towards certain goals. A conceptual distinction has been made between goal setting and goal striving.[15] Bagozzi and Dhokalia's modelling of goals has been extended by examining consumers' willingness to *persistently* strive to achieve goals. In a study of assisted reproductive technologies, researchers identified the important interplay between culture and cognition in affecting consumers' persistence in achieving goals – in this case, the highly emotional goal of parenthood.[16]

Biological *vs* learned needs

Early work on motivation ascribed behaviour to *instinct,* the innate patterns of behaviour that are universal in a species. This view is now largely discredited. The existence of an instinct is difficult to prove or disprove. The instinct is inferred from the behaviour it is supposed to explain (this type of circular explanation is called a *tautology*).[17] It is like saying that a consumer buys products that are status symbols because they are motivated to attain status, which is hardly a satisfactory explanation.

Drive theory

Drive theory focuses on biological needs that produce unpleasant states of arousal (e.g. your stomach grumbles during the first lecture of the day – you missed breakfast). We are motivated to reduce the tension caused by this arousal. Tension reduction has been proposed as a basic mechanism governing human behaviour.

In a marketing context, tension refers to the unpleasant state that exists if a person's consumption needs are not fulfilled. A person may be grumpy or unable to concentrate very well if they haven't eaten. Someone may be dejected or angry if they cannot afford that new car they want. This state activates goal-oriented behaviour, which attempts to reduce or eliminate this unpleasant state and return to a balanced one, called **homeostasis**. Some researchers believe that this need to reduce arousal is a basic mechanism that governs

This gym advertises no contract required (so no long-term expensive commitment to obtain membership) and also the ease of online registration to appeal to potential customers keen to pursue healthy activities.

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much of our behaviour. Indeed, there is research evidence for the effectiveness of so-called **retail therapy**; apparently the act of shopping restores a sense of personal control over one's environment and as a result can alleviate feelings of sadness.[18]

Those behaviours that are successful in reducing the drive by satisfying the underlying need are strengthened and tend to be repeated. (This *reinforcement* aspect of the learning process will be discussed in Chapter 6.) Your motivation to leave your lecture early to buy a snack would be greater if you hadn't eaten in the previous 24 hours than if you had eaten breakfast only two hours earlier. If you did sneak out and experienced indigestion after, say, wolfing down a packet of crisps, you would be less likely to repeat this behaviour the next time you wanted a snack. One's degree of motivation, then, depends on the distance between one's present state and the goal.

Drive theory, however, runs into difficulties when it tries to explain some facets of human behaviour that run counter to its predictions. People often do things that *increase* a drive state rather than decrease it. For example, people may delay gratification. If you know you are going out for a five-course dinner, you might decide to forgo a snack earlier in the day even though you are hungry at that time. And the most rewarding thing may often be the tension of the drive state itself, rather than its satisfaction.

Expectancy theory

Most explanations of motivation currently focus on cognitive rather than biological factors in order to understand what drives behaviour. **Expectancy theory** suggests that behaviour is largely pulled by expectations of achieving desirable outcomes – *positive incentives* – rather than being pushed from within. We choose one product over another because we expect this choice to have more positive consequences for us. Thus, the term **drive** is used here more loosely to refer to both physical and cognitive, i.e. learned, processes.

Motivational direction

Motives have direction as well as strength. They are goal oriented in that they drive us to satisfy a specific need. Most goals can be reached by a number of routes, and the objective of a company is to convince consumers that the alternative it offers provides the best chance to attain that goal. For example, a consumer who decides that they need a pair of jeans to help them reach their goal of being accepted by others can choose among Levi's, Wranglers, Diesel, Calvin Klein, Pepe, Gap, Hugo Boss, Stone Island and many other alternatives, each of which promises to deliver certain functional as well as symbolic benefits.

Needs *vs* wants

The specific way a need is satisfied depends on the individual's unique history, learning experiences and their cultural environment. A need reflects a basic goal, such as keeping yourself nourished or protected from the elements. The particular form of consumption used to satisfy a need is termed a want. A want is a specific manifestation of a need and represents the pathway for achieving the objective, which in turn depends a lot upon our unique personalities, cultural upbringing and our observations about how others we know satisfy the same need. Therefore, personal and cultural factors come into play at this point. For example, two classmates may feel their stomachs rumbling during a lunchtime lecture. If neither person has eaten since the night before, the strength of their respective needs (hunger) would be about the same. However, the way each person goes about satisfying this need might be quite different. The first person may be a vegetarian like Alexandra, who fantasises about large bowls of salad, whereas the second person like Andrew might be equally aroused by the prospect of a large plateful of Greek meatballs in tomato sauce. However, in some cases we don't even know we have a 'want' until we can no longer have it.

We can be motivated to satisfy either utilitarian or hedonic needs. When we focus on a *utilitarian need,* we emphasise the objective, tangible attributes of products, such as miles per gallon in a car, the amount of fat, calories and protein in a cheeseburger or the durability of a pair of blue jeans. *Hedonic needs* are subjective and experiential; here we might look to a product to meet our needs for excitement, self-confidence or fantasy – perhaps to escape the mundane or routine aspects of life.[19] Many items satisfy our hedonic needs. Luxury brands, in particular, thrive when they offer the promise of pleasure to the user. Of course, consumers can be motivated to purchase a product because it provides *both* types of benefits. For example, a mink coat might be bought because it feels soft against the skin, because it keeps one warm through the long cold winters of northern Europe and because it has a luxurious image. But, again, the distinction tends to hide more than it reveals, because functionality can bring great pleasure to people and is an important value in the modern world.[20] Indeed, recent research on novel consumption experiences indicates that even when we choose to do unusual things (like eating bacon ice cream or staying in a freezing ice hotel), we may do so because we have what the authors term a **productivity orientation**. This refers to a continual striving to use time constructively: trying new things is a way to check them off our checklist of experiences we want to achieve before moving on to others.[21]

Motivational conflicts

5.2

Consumers experience different kinds of motivational conflicts that can impact their purchase decisions.

A goal has *valence,* which means that it can be positive or negative. A positively valued goal is one towards which consumers direct their behaviour; they are motivated to *approach* the