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Consumer Behavior

Buying, Having, and Being

Thirteenth Edition

Michael R. Solomon

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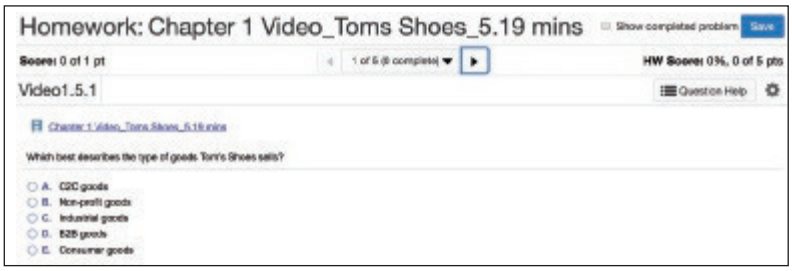

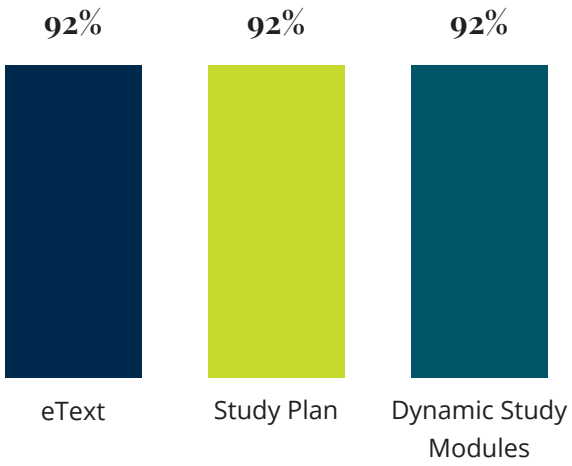

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success of her book in 2016, Maire Kondo started KonMari Media Inc. which provides training programs on organizing, tidying up, and decluttering. The certification allows aspiring organizing devotees to learn and master *KonMari* methods. Getting selected for these certifications is not easy. Applicants must provide a statement demonstrating that they have read books and should also provide pictures of how they have applied the tidying up methods in their lives.

For now, the simple question "*Does it Spark Joy?*" and the *KonMari* method are going strong. It will be interesting to see if Marie Kondo's next season is approved on Netflix. Till then, many people have begun the mission of *Kondoing* their homes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CS 5-1 What role do you think Netflix and social media played in popularizing Marie Kondo? Do you think the popularity of the show '*Tidying up with Marie Kondo*' is based on Marie Kondo only, or would any other personality achieve similar results?

CS 5-2 What you think motivated Marie to tidy up as a child and as a grown up in the light of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and other theories?

CS 5-3 How does Kondo's proposition of keeping only the things that "*spark joy*" relate to the concepts of material accumulation and minimalism?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

5-19 The basic lesson of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is that we must first satisfy basic needs before we progress up the ladder (a starving man is not interested in status symbols, friendship, or self-fulfillment). This implies that consumers value different product attributes depending on what is currently available to them. In today's economic environment, the hierarchy helps to explain why many consumers take a closer look at the price and reliability of a product rather than whether it will impress their friends. How do you believe the recession changed the way consumers evaluate products? Do you agree that the priorities many now place on "value-priced" brands is the "new normal," or will our attitudes change now that the economy has improved?

5-20 Our emotional reactions to marketing cues are so powerful that some high-tech companies study mood in small doses (in 1/30 of a second increments) as they analyze people's facial reactions when they see ads or new products. They measure happiness as they look for differences between, for example, a *true smile* (which includes a relaxation of the upper eyelid) and a *social smile* (which occurs only around the mouth). Whirlpool used this technique to test consumers' emotional reactions to a yet-to-be-launched generation of its Duet washers and dryers. The company's goal: To design an appliance that will actually make people happy. Researchers discovered that even though test subjects said they weren't thrilled with some out-of-the-box design options, such as unusual color combinations, their facial expressions said otherwise.[91] Does the ability to study our emotional reactions at such a specific level give marketers an unfair advantage?

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6 The Self: Mind, Gender, and Body

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- **6-1** The self-concept strongly influences consumer behavior.
- **6-2** Gender identity is an important component of a consumer's self-concept.
- **6-3** The way we think about our bodies (and the way our culture tells us we should think) is a key component of self-esteem.



Source: gpointstudio/Shutterstock.

Lisa is trying to concentrate on the report her client expects by five o'clock. She has worked hard to maintain this important account for the firm, but today she is distracted thinking about her date with Eric last night. Although things seemed to go okay, she couldn't shake the feeling that Eric regards her more as a friend than as a potential romantic partner. As she leafs through *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* during her lunch hour, Lisa is struck by all the articles that offer tips on how to become more attractive by dieting, exercising, and wearing sexy clothes. She begins to feel depressed as she looks at the svelte models in the many advertisements for perfumes, apparel, and makeup. Each woman is more glamorous and beautiful than the last. Surely they've had "adjustments"; women simply don't look that way in real life. Then again, it's unlikely that Eric could ever be mistaken for Zac Efron on the street. Still, in her down mood, Lisa actually thinks that maybe she should look into cosmetic surgery. Even though she's never considered herself unattractive, maybe if she got a new nose or removed that mole on her cheek she'd feel better about herself. Who knows, she might look so good she'll get up the nerve to submit a photo to that website Tinder that everyone's talking about. But on second thought, is Eric even worth it?

OBJECTIVE 6-1
The Self-Concept Strongly Influences Consumer Behavior.

The Self

Are you what you buy? Lisa isn't the only person who feels that her physical appearance and possessions affect her "value" as a person. We choose many products, from cars to cologne, because we want to highlight or hide some

aspect of the self. In this chapter, we'll focus on how consumers' feelings about themselves shape their consumption practices, particularly as they strive to fulfill their society's expectations about how a male or female should look and act.

Does the Self Exist?

Most of us can't boast of coming close to Katy Perry's 108 million followers on Twitter, but many of us do have hundreds of followers, in addition to legions of Facebook friends.[1] The explosion of these and other social networking services enables everyone to focus on himself or herself and share mundane or scintillating details about life with anyone who's interested (*why* they are interested is another story!).

An emphasis on the unique nature of the self is much greater in Western societies.[2] Many Eastern cultures stress the importance of a **collective self**, where a person derives his or her identity in large measure from a social group. Both Eastern and Western cultures believe that the self divides into an inner, private self and an outer, public self. Where cultures differ is in terms of which part they see as the "real you"; the West tends to subscribe to an independent understanding of the self, which emphasizes the inherent separateness of each individual.

Non-Western cultures, in contrast, tend to focus on an interdependent self where we define our identities largely by our relationships with others.[3] For example, a Confucian perspective stresses the importance of "face": others' perceptions of the self and maintaining one's desired status in their eyes. One dimension of face is *mien-tzu*, the reputation one achieves through success and ostentation. Some Asian cultures developed explicit rules about the specific garments and even colors that certain social classes and occupations were allowed to display. These traditions live on today in Japanese style manuals that set out detailed instructions for dressing and how to address people of differing status.[4] That orientation is a bit at odds with such Western conventions as "casual Friday," which encourages employees to express their unique selves through dress (at least short of muscle shirts and flip-flops).

Self-Concept

The **self-concept** summarizes the beliefs a person holds about his or her own attributes and how he or she evaluates the self on these qualities. Although your overall self-concept may be positive, there certainly are parts of it you evaluate more positively than others. For example, Lisa feels better about her professional identity than she does about her feminine identity.

The self-concept is a complex structure. We describe attributes of self-concept along such dimensions as *content* (e.g., facial attractiveness versus mental aptitude), *positivity* (i.e., self-esteem), *intensity and stability* over time, and *accuracy* (i.e., the degree to which one's self-assessment corresponds to reality).[5] As we'll see later in this chapter, consumers' self-assessments can be quite distorted, especially with regard to their physical appearance. In addition, our own estimates of how much we change over time vary as well: A study that included both young and old people asked more than 19,000 respondents about their preferences in the past (foods, vacations, hobbies, and bands) and also to predict how their tastes will change in the future. Regardless of age, people acknowledged that their prior choices had changed quite a bit over time, but they still tended to predict that they would not change as they got older.[6]