



WHO'S DRIVING YOU HOME TONIGHT?

NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE



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Section 3 • Choosing and Using Products

In Section 3 we look at how consumers think about products, the steps they use to choose one, and what happens after we buy something. Chapter 8 focuses on how we form feelings and thoughts about products and how marketers influence us. In Chapter 9 we look at the steps we use to identify the best solution to a consumption problem. Chapter 10 highlights how factors at the time of purchase influence our choices and then what happens after we buy.

MCDONOUGH, RITANY

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CHAPTERS AHEAD

Chapter 8 • Attitudes and Persuasive Communications

Chapter 9 • Decision Making

Chapter 10 • Buying, Using, and Disposing



Chapter 8 • Attitudes and Persuasive Communications

Chapter Objectives

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- 8-1** It is important for consumer researchers to understand the nature and power of attitudes.
- 8-2** Attitudes are more complex than they first appear.
- 8-3** We form attitudes in several ways.
- 8-4** A need to maintain consistency among all of our attitudinal components often motivates us to alter one or more of them.
- 8-5** Attitude models identify specific components and combine them to predict a consumer's overall attitude toward a product or brand.
- 8-6** The communications model identifies several important components for marketers when they try to change consumers' attitudes toward products and services.
- 8-7** The consumer who processes a message is not the passive receiver of information marketers once believed him or her to be.
- 8-8** Several factors influence the effectiveness of a message source.
- 8-9** The way a marketer structures his or her message determines how persuasive it will be.
- 8-10** Many modern marketers are reality engineers.
- 8-11** Audience characteristics help to determine whether the nature of the source or the message itself will be relatively more effective.



Source: Blend Images/Corbis

Saundra is hanging out at the mall, idly texting some friends about some stuff she saw in a few stores. When she checks her Facebook page, she sees several of them are chatting about their college application plans. She groans to herself; it's starting already! She's just starting her senior year of high school, and already everybody's thinking about what happens next year. Saundra realizes it's time to bite the bullet and really start to look into this; her Mom will certainly be happy. But it's all so confusing. She's been getting bombarded with enticing ads and brochures from so many different schools. They're hard to escape; some arrive by snail mail and others keep hitting her with emails and texts. A few have invited her to take virtual campus tours on their Web sites, and one even wants her to enter a virtual world version of the campus as an avatar to walk around and "talk" to current students. It's amazing

to see how different their pitches are, too. Sure, some universities tout their academic excellence, but others play up their international programs, job placement programs, and even amenities (rock climbing walls!). Of course, she's familiar with some of the schools that are starting to court her, and she already has a pretty good idea in her mind of what they're about. But others feel like a blank

slate; so far at least, she has absolutely no idea about what it would be like to be a student at these schools. As Sandra starts to post some Facebook queries about where people are looking, she realizes it's going to be an intense year.

OBJECTIVE 8-1

It is important for consumer researchers to understand the nature and power of attitudes.

The Power of Attitudes

People use the term *attitude* in many contexts. A friend might ask you, “What is your attitude toward abortion?” A parent might scold, “Young man, I don’t like your attitude.” Some bars even euphemistically refer to happy hour as “an attitude adjustment period.” For our purposes, though, an **attitude** is a lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects, advertisements, or issues.¹ We call anything toward which one has an attitude an **attitude object (A_o)**. As Sandra will learn (and no doubt you did too) during her college search process, we assimilate information from a variety of sources and often put a lot of effort into forming an attitude toward many things, including a complex attitude object like a university.

An attitude is lasting because it tends to endure over time. It is general because it applies to more than a momentary event, such as hearing a loud noise, though you might, over time, develop a negative attitude toward all loud noises. Consumers have attitudes toward a wide range of attitude objects, from product-specific behaviors (e.g., you use Crest toothpaste rather than Colgate) to more general, consumption-related behaviors (e.g., how often you should brush your teeth). Attitudes help to determine whom you choose to date, what music you listen to, whether you will recycle aluminum cans, or whether you choose to become a consumer researcher for a living. In this chapter we’ll consider the contents of an attitude, how we form attitudes, and how we measure them. We will also review some of the surprisingly complex relationships between attitudes and behavior and then take a closer look at how marketers can change these attitudes.

Psychologist Daniel Katz developed the **functional theory of attitudes** to explain how attitudes facilitate social behavior.² According to this pragmatic approach, attitudes exist *because* they serve some function for the person. Consumers who expect that they will need to deal with similar situations at a future time will be more likely to start to form an attitude in anticipation.³ Two people can each have an attitude toward some object for different reasons. As a result, it’s helpful for a marketer to know *why* an attitude is held before he or she tries to change it. These are different attitude functions:

- **Utilitarian function**—The **utilitarian function** relates to the basic principles of reward and punishment we learned about in Chapter 4. We develop some attitudes toward products simply because they provide pleasure or pain. If a person likes the taste of a cheeseburger, that person will develop a positive attitude toward cheeseburgers. Ads that stress straightforward product benefits (e.g., you should drink Diet Coke “just for the taste of it”) appeal to the utilitarian function.
- **Value-expressive function**—Attitudes that perform a **value-expressive function** relate to the consumer’s self-concept (Chapter 6) or central values (Chapter 7). A person forms a product attitude in this case because of what the product says about him or her as a person. Value-expressive attitudes also are highly relevant to the psychographic analyses we discussed in Chapter 7, which consider how consumers cultivate a cluster of activities, interests, and opinions to express a particular social identity.
- **Ego-defensive function**—Attitudes we form to protect ourselves either from external threats or internal feelings perform an **ego-defensive function**. An early marketing study showed that housewives resisted the use of instant coffee because it threatened their conception of themselves as capable homemakers (this doesn’t seem to be a big issue for most anymore!).⁴ Products that promise to help a man project a “macho” image (e.g., Marlboro cigarettes) appeal to his insecurities about his masculinity. Another

example is deodorant ads that stress the dire, embarrassing consequences when you're caught with underarm odor in public.

- **Knowledge function**—We form some attitudes because we need order, structure, or meaning. A **knowledge function** applies when a person is in an ambiguous situation (“it’s OK to wear casual pants to work, but only on Friday”) or when he or she confronts a new product (e.g., “Bayer wants you to know about pain relievers”).

OBJECTIVE 8-2

Attitudes are more complex than they first appear.

The ABC Model of Attitudes

When Subaru of America began work on a new marketing strategy, the automaker discovered that even though most auto buyers had heard of the brand, few had strong emotional connections to it. However, current Subaru owners expressed strong passion and even love for the brand. To ramp up this emotional connection for non-owners as well, the new campaign targets people who are in three different stages of buying a car—what Subaru calls the *heart*, the *head*, and the *wallet*. The *heart* stage focuses on the love that owners show for their cars; commercials share personal stories of their attachment. The *head* stage ads, in contrast, present the rational side of specific models as they emphasize how the cars benefit their owners in terms of reliability, economy, and so on. Then, the *wallet* ads deal with the financial details of actually buying a Subaru; these include special offers from local dealers.⁵

Like the Subaru campaign, an attitude has three components: affect, behavior, and cognition. As we saw in Chapter 5, **affect** describes how a consumer *feels* about an attitude object. **Behavior** refers to the *actions* he or she takes toward the object or in some cases at least his or her intentions to take action about it (but, as we will discuss at a later point, an intention does not always result in an actual behavior). **Cognition** is what he or she *believes* to be true about the attitude object. You can remember these three components of an attitude as the **ABC model of attitudes**.

The ABC model emphasizes the interrelationships among knowing, feeling, and doing. We can't determine consumers' attitudes toward a product if we just identify their cognitions (beliefs) about it. For example, a researcher may find that shoppers “know” a particular camcorder has a power zoom lens, auto focus, and a flying erase head, but simply knowing this doesn't indicate whether they feel these attributes are good, bad, or irrelevant, or whether they would actually buy the camcorder.

Hierarchies of Effects

Which comes first: knowing, feeling, or doing? It turns out that each element may lead things off, depending on the situation. Attitude researchers developed the concept of a **hierarchy of effects** to explain the relative impact of the three components. Each hierarchy specifies that a fixed sequence of steps occur *en route* to an attitude. Figure 8.1 summarizes these three different hierarchies.

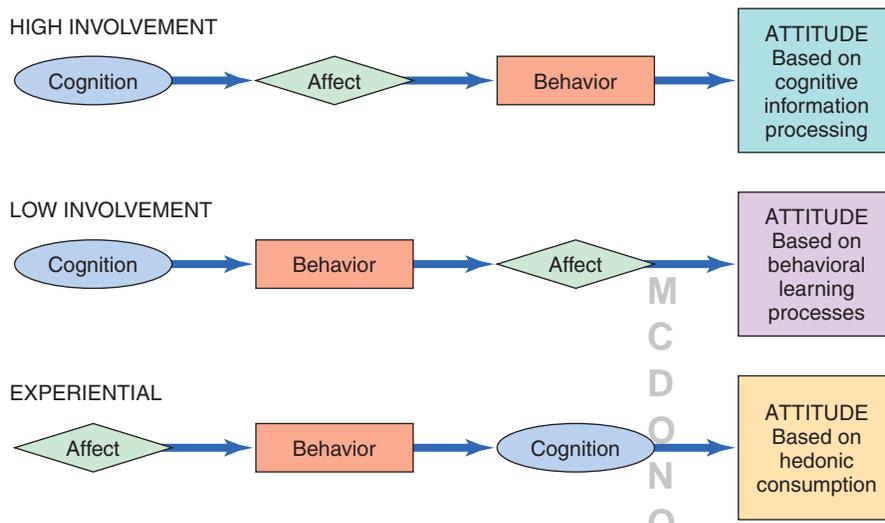
The High-Involvement Hierarchy: Think → Feel → Do

The **high-involvement hierarchy** assumes that a person approaches a product decision as a problem-solving process. First, he or she forms beliefs about a product as she accumulates knowledge (*beliefs*) regarding relevant attributes. Next, he or she evaluates these beliefs and forms a feeling about the product (*affect*).⁶ Then he or she engages in a relevant behavior, such as when he or she buys a product that offers the attributes he or she feels good about. This hierarchy assumes that a consumer is highly involved when he or she makes a purchase decision (see Chapter 5).⁷ He or she is motivated to seek out a lot of information, carefully weigh alternatives, and come to a thoughtful decision.

The Low-Involvement Hierarchy: Think → Do → Feel

The **low-involvement hierarchy of effects** assumes that the consumer initially doesn't have a strong preference for one brand over another; instead, he or she acts on the basis of

Figure 8.1 THREE HIERARCHIES OF EFFECTS



limited knowledge and forms an evaluation only *after* he or she has bought the product.⁸ The attitude is likely to come about through behavioral learning, as good or bad experiences reinforce his or her initial choice.

The possibility that consumers simply don't care enough about many decisions to carefully assemble a set of product beliefs and then evaluate them is important. This implies that all of our well-intentioned efforts to influence beliefs and carefully communicate information about product attributes may fall on deaf ears. Consumers aren't necessarily going to pay attention anyway; they are more likely to respond to simple stimulus–response connections when they make purchase decisions. For example, a consumer who chooses among paper towels might remember that “Bounty is the quicker picker-upper” rather than systematically comparing all the brands on the shelf. Get a life!

The notion of consumers' low involvement is a bitter pill for some marketers to swallow. Who wants to admit that what they market is not important to the people who buy it? A brand manager for, say, a brand of bubble gum or cat food may find it hard to believe that consumers don't put that much thought into purchasing the product because he or she spends many waking (and perhaps sleeping) hours thinking about it.

For marketers, the ironic silver lining to this low-involvement cloud is that under these conditions, consumers are not motivated to process a lot of complex, brand-related information. Instead, they will be swayed by principles of behavioral learning, such as the simple responses that conditioned brand names or point-of-purchase displays elicit (as we discussed in Chapter 4).

The Experiential Hierarchy: Feel → Do → Think

According to the **experiential hierarchy of effects**, we act on the basis of our emotional reactions. The experiential perspective highlights the idea that intangible product attributes, such as package design, advertising, brand names, and the nature of the setting in which the experience occurs, can help shape our attitudes toward a brand. We may base these reactions on *hedonic* motivations, such as whether using the product is exciting like the Nintendo Wii or aesthetically pleasing like the Apple iPhone.

Even the emotions the communicator expresses have an impact. A smile is infectious; in a process we term *emotional contagion*, messages that happy people deliver enhance our attitude toward the product.⁹ Numerous studies demonstrate that the mood a person is in when he or she sees or hears a marketing message influences how he or she will process the ad, the likelihood that he or she will remember the information he

This ad for New York's famous Smith & Wollensky restaurant emphasizes that marketers and others associated with a product or service are often more involved with it than are their customers.

Source: Courtesy of Smith & Wollensky Steak House.

**Steak is our life.
All we ask is that you
make it your lunch.**

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Smith & Wollensky.
The quintessential New York City steakhouse.
49th St. & 3rd Ave. (212)753-1530.



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Winner of The *Wine Spectator's* 1987 Grand Award.

Product design and other aesthetic attributes helps to influence attitudes when consumers choose on the basis of their emotional reactions.

Source: Rob Cousins/Alamy.



or she sees, and how he or she will feel about the advertised item and related products in the future.

Researchers continue to debate whether cognition and affect are independent or linked when we form attitudes based on hedonic consumption. The **cognitive-affective model** proposes that an emotional reaction is just the last step in a series of cognitive processes that follows sensory recognition of a stimulus and retrieval of information from memory that helps to categorize it. In contrast the **independence hypothesis** argues that affect and cognition are separate systems so that it's not always necessary to have a cognition to elicit an emotional response. This perspective focuses more on the impact of aesthetic experiences as opposed to the consumption of products that provide primarily functional benefits.¹⁰

OBJECTIVE 8-3

We form attitudes in several ways.

How Do We Form Attitudes?

We all have lots of attitudes, and we don't usually question how we got them. Certainly, you're not born with the heartfelt conviction that, say, Pepsi is better than Coke, or that emo music liberates the soul. From where do these attitudes come?

We form an attitude in several different ways, depending on the particular hierarchy of effects that operates. As we saw in Chapter 4, we simply may form an attitude toward a brand as a result of classical conditioning: A marketer repeatedly pairs an attitude object such as the Pepsi name with a catchy jingle ("You're in the Pepsi Generation"). Or we can form an attitude because of instrumental conditioning: The marketer reinforces us when we consume the attitude object (e.g., you take a swig of Pepsi and it quenches your thirst). Finally, this learning can result from a complex cognitive process. For example, teenagers may model the behavior of friends and media endorsers, such as Beyoncé, who drink Pepsi because they believe that this will allow them to fit in with the desirable lifestyle that Pepsi commercials portray.

All Attitudes Are Not Created Equal

It's important to distinguish among types of attitudes because not all form in the same way.¹¹ One consumer may be highly brand-loyal; she has an enduring, deeply held positive attitude toward an attitude object, and it would be difficult to weaken this involvement. However, another woman may be a more fickle consumer: She may have a mildly positive attitude toward a product but be quite willing to abandon it when something better comes along. In this section, we'll consider the differences between strongly and weakly held attitudes and briefly review some of the major theoretical perspectives researchers use to explain how attitudes form and relate to our other attitudes.

Consumers vary in their *commitment* to an attitude; the degree of commitment relates to their level of involvement with the attitude object (see Chapter 5).¹² Let's look at three (increasing) levels of commitment:

- 1 Compliance**—At the lowest level of involvement, **compliance**, we form an attitude because it helps us to gain rewards or avoid punishment. This attitude is superficial; it is likely to change when others no longer monitor our behavior or when another option becomes available. You may drink Pepsi because the cafeteria sells it, and it is too much trouble to go elsewhere for a Coca-Cola.
- 2 Identification**—**Identification** occurs when we form an attitude to conform to another person's or group's expectations. Advertising that depicts the dire social consequences when we choose some products over others relies on the tendency of consumers to imitate the behavior of desirable models (more on this in Chapter 11).
- 3 Internalization**—At a high level of involvement we call **internalization**, deep-seated attitudes become part of our value system. These attitudes are difficult to change because they are so important to us. The infamous Coke debacle of the 1980s (still a

standard in marketing textbooks today) illustrates what can happen when a marketer messes with strongly held attitudes. In this case, Coca-Cola decided to change its flavor formula to meet the needs of younger consumers who often preferred a sweeter taste (more characteristic of Pepsi). The company conducted rigorous blind *taste tests* that showed people who didn't know what brands they were drinking preferred the flavor of the new formula. Much to its surprise, when New Coke hit the shelves, the company faced a consumer revolt as die-hard Coke fans protested. This allegiance to Coke was obviously more than a minor taste preference for these people; the brand was intertwined with their social identities and took on intense patriotic and nostalgic properties.

OBJECTIVE 8-4

A need to maintain consistency among all of our attitudinal components often motivates us to alter one or more of them.

The Consistency Principle

Have you ever heard someone say, “Pepsi is my favorite soft drink. It tastes terrible,” or “I love my boyfriend. He’s the biggest idiot I’ve ever met”? Probably not (at least until the couple gets married!), because these beliefs or evaluations don’t go together. According to the **principle of cognitive consistency**, we value harmony among our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and a need to maintain uniformity among these elements motivates us. This desire means that, if necessary, we change our thoughts, feelings, or behaviors to make them consistent with other experiences. That boyfriend may slip up and act like a moron occasionally, but his girlfriend (eventually) will find a way to forgive him—or dump him. The consistency principle is an important reminder that we don’t form our attitudes in a vacuum: A big factor is how well they fit with other, related attitudes we already hold.

We’ve already reviewed this phenomenon in Chapter 5, when we learned about the *theory of cognitive dissonance*. We saw there that when a person is confronted with inconsistencies among attitudes or behaviors, he or she will take some action to resolve this “dissonance”; perhaps he will change his or her attitude or modify his or her behavior to restore consistency. The theory has important ramifications for consumer behavior. We often confront situations in which there is some conflict between our attitudes toward a product or service and what we actually do or buy.¹³

According to the theory, our motivation to reduce the negative feelings of dissonance makes us find a way for our beliefs and feelings to fit together. The theory focuses on situations in which two cognitive elements clash. A *cognitive element* is something a person believes about himself or herself, a behavior he or she performs, or an observation about his or her surroundings. For example, the two cognitive elements “I know smoking cigarettes causes cancer” and “I smoke cigarettes” are *dissonant* with one another. This psychological inconsistency creates a feeling of discomfort that the smoker tries to reduce. The magnitude of dissonance depends on both the importance and number of dissonant elements.¹⁴ In other words, we’re more likely to observe dissonance in high-involvement situations where there is more pressure to reduce inconsistencies.

We reduce dissonance when we eliminate, add, or change elements. A person can stop smoking (*eliminating*), or remember Great-Aunt Sophie who smoked until the day she died at age 95 (*adding*). Alternatively, he or she might question the research that links cancer and smoking (*changing*), perhaps by believing industry-sponsored studies that try to refute this connection.

Dissonance theory can help to explain why evaluations of a product tend to increase *after* we buy the product. The cognitive element, “I made a stupid decision,” is dissonant with the element, “I am not a stupid person,” so we tend to find even more reasons to like something after it becomes ours. A classic study at a horse race demonstrated this *postpurchase dissonance*. Bettors evaluated their chosen horse more highly and were more confident of its success *after* they placed a bet than before. Because the bettor financially commits to the choice, he or she reduces dissonance by elevating the attractiveness of the chosen alternative relative to the nonchosen ones.¹⁵ One implication of this phenomenon is that consumers actively seek support for their decisions so they can justify them; therefore, marketers should supply their customers with additional reinforcement after they purchase to bolster these decisions.



As it gets increasingly difficult for cigarette smokers to indulge their habit in public places like offices, they have to work harder to reduce cognitive dissonance in order to justify the effort to continue this practice.

Source: Scott Griessel/Fotolia.

Self-Perception Theory

Do we always change our attitudes to be in line with our behavior because we're motivated to reduce cognitive dissonance? **Self-perception theory** provides an alternative explanation of dissonance effects.¹⁶ It assumes that we observe our own behavior to determine just what our attitudes are, much as we assume that we know what another person's attitude is when we watch what he does. The theory states that we maintain consistency as we infer that we must have a positive attitude toward an object if we have bought or consumed it (assuming that we freely made this choice). Thus, you might say to yourself, "I guess I must be into Facebook pretty big time. I seem to spend half my life on it."

Self-perception theory helps to explain the effectiveness of a strategy salespeople call the **foot-in-the-door technique**: They know that consumers are more likely to comply with a big request if they agree to a smaller one first.¹⁷ The name for this technique comes from the old practice of door-to-door selling; salespeople learn to plant their foot in a door so the prospect doesn't slam it on them. A good salesperson knows that he or she is more likely to get an order if he or she can persuade the customer to open the door and talk. By agreeing to do so, the customer signals that he or she is willing to listen to the salesperson's pitch. Placing an order is consistent with the self-perception that "I'm the kind of person who is willing to buy something from a salesperson who knocks on my door."¹⁸ Recent research also points to the possibility that when salespeople ask consumers to make a series of choices, these decisions are cognitively demanding and deplete the resources the person has available to monitor his or her behavior. As a result, the target will opt for easier decisions down the road; in some cases, it may be easier just to comply with the request than to search for reasons why you shouldn't.¹⁹

Social Judgment Theory

Social judgment theory also assumes that people assimilate new information about attitude objects in light of what they already know or feel.²⁰ The initial attitude acts as a frame of reference, and we categorize new information in terms of this existing standard. Just as our decision that a box is heavy depends in part on the weight of other boxes we lift, we develop a subjective standard when we judge attitude objects.

One important aspect of the theory is that people differ in terms of the information they will find acceptable or unacceptable. They form **latitudes of acceptance and rejection** around an attitude standard. They will consider and evaluate ideas falling within the latitude favorably, but they are more likely to reject out of hand those that fall outside of this zone. People tend to perceive messages within their latitude of acceptance as more consistent with their position than those messages actually are. We call this exaggeration an *assimilation effect*.

However, we tend to see messages that fall in our latitude of rejection as even more unacceptable than they actually are; this results in an exaggeration we call a *contrast effect*.²¹ As a person becomes more involved with an attitude object, his or her latitude of acceptance gets smaller. In other words, consumers accept fewer ideas farther from their own position and they tend to oppose even mildly divergent positions. Discriminating buyers have smaller latitude of acceptance (e.g., "choosy mothers choose Jif peanut butter"). However, relatively uninvolved consumers consider a wider range of alternatives. They are less likely to be brand loyal and are more likely to switch brands.

Balance Theory

Have you ever heard the expression, "Any friend of Joe's is a friend of mine?" How about "My enemy's enemy is my friend?" **Balance theory** considers how people perceive relations among different attitude objects, and how they alter their attitudes so that these remain consistent (or "balanced").²² One study even found that when a person observes two other individuals who are eating similar food, they assume they must be friends!²³

A balance theory perspective involves relations (always from the perceiver's subjective point of view) among three elements, so we call the resulting attitude structures *triads*. Each triad contains (1) a person and his or her perceptions of (2) an attitude object and (3) some other person or object. The theory specifies that we want relations among elements in a triad to be harmonious. If they are unbalanced, this creates tension that we are motivated to reduce by changing our perceptions to restore balance.

We link elements together in one of two ways: They can have either a *unit relation*, where we think that a person is somehow connected to an attitude object (something like a belief), or they can have a *sentiment relation*, where a person expresses liking or disliking for an attitude object. You might perceive that a dating couple has a positive sentiment



A woman who dislikes men in earrings has to resolve a state of imbalance if she wants to date a guy who wears one.

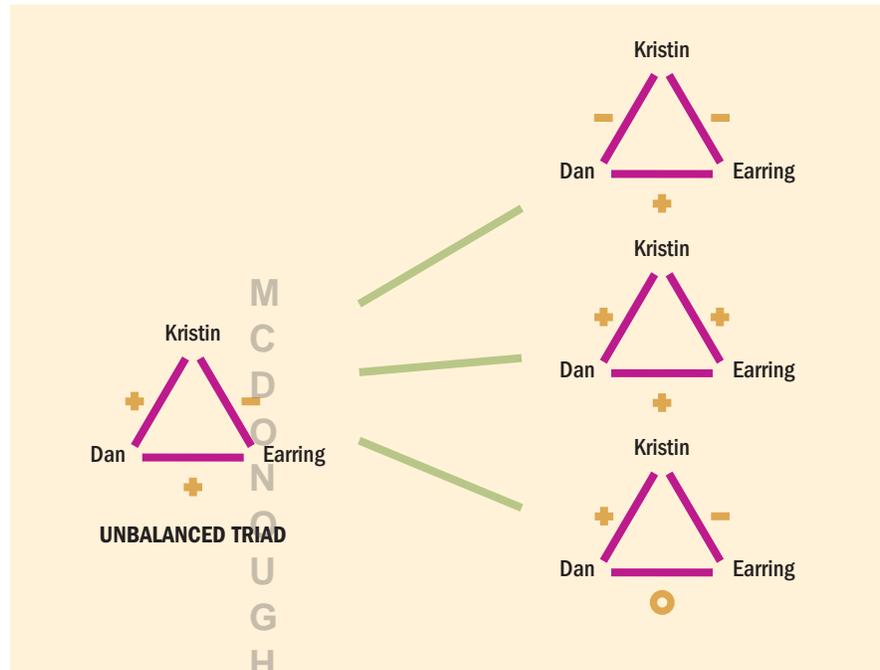
Source: youngnova/123RF.

relation. On getting married, they will have a positive unit relation. If they get divorced, they sever the unit relation.

To see how balance theory might work, consider the following scenario:

- Kristin would like to date Dan, who is in her consumer behavior class. In balance theory terms, Kristin has a positive sentiment relation with Dan.
- One day, Dan shows up in class wearing an earring. Dan has a positive unit relation with the earring.
- Men who wear earrings are a turnoff to Kristin. She has a negative sentiment relation with men's earrings.

Figure 8.2 BALANCE THEORY



Marketing Opportunity



Consumers often like to publicize their connections with successful people or organizations (no matter how shaky the connection)

to enhance their own standing. Researchers call this tactic **basking in reflected glory**. A series of studies at Arizona State University (ASU) showed how students' desires to identify with a winning image—in this case, ASU's football team—influenced their consumption behaviors. After the team played a game each weekend, observers recorded the incidence of school-related items, such as ASU T-shirts and caps that students walking around campus wore. The researchers correlated the frequency of these behaviors to the team's performance. If the team won on Saturday, students were more likely to show off their school affiliation (basking in reflected glory) the following Monday than if the team lost. And the bigger the point spread, the more likely they were to observe students who wore clothes with the ASU logo.²⁴

According to balance theory, Kristin faces an unbalanced triad. As Figure 8.2 shows, she will experience pressure to restore balance by altering some aspect of the triad. How can she do this? She could decide that she does not like Dan after all. Or her liking for Dan could prompt her to decide that earrings on men are really pretty cool. She might even try to negate the unit relation between Dan and the earring by deciding that he must wear it as part of a fraternity initiation (this reduces the free-choice element). Finally, she could choose to “leave the field” by accepting a date with Dan's roommate Doug who doesn't wear an earring (but who has an awesome tattoo). Note that although the theory does not specify which of these routes Kristin will choose, it does predict that she will change one or more of her perceptions to achieve balance. Although this example is an oversimplified representation of most attitude processes, it helps to explain a number of consumer behavior phenomena.

Balance theory reminds us that when we have balanced perceptions, our attitudes also are likely to be stable. However, when we experience inconsistencies, we also are more likely to change our attitudes. Balance theory helps explain why consumers like to be linked to positively valued objects. When you form a unit relation with a popular product (e.g., you wear a popular designer's clothing, drive a hot car, or follow a popular singer), this may improve the chances that other people will include you as a positive sentiment relation in their triads.

At the college level, many schools in addition to ASU reap huge revenues when they license their school's name and logo. Universities with strong athletic programs, such as Michigan State, Miami, and Auburn, clean up when they sell millions of dollars worth of merchandise (everything from T-shirts to toilet seats). Yale was a relative latecomer to this game, but the director of licensing explained the decision to profit from the use of the school's name and the likeness of bulldog mascot Handsome Dan: “We recognize that our name means a lot—even to people who didn't go here. Plus, this way we can crack down on the Naked Coed Lacrosse shirts out there with Yale on them.”²⁵



When a school's team wins a game, students (and fans) are more likely to wear merchandise that link them to the institution as they "bask in reflected glory."

Source: Rose-Marie Murray/Alamy.

CB AS I SEE IT

Jennifer Escalas, *Vanderbilt University*



Do you have a favorite celebrity? One whom you follow on Twitter or Instagram? If that celebrity uses a particular brand, would you buy it? Kim Kardashian receives ten thousand dollars to tweet about a product. Abercrombie and Fitch paid *Jersey Shore* stars *not* to wear their products on the reality television show. Companies like Adly.com offer thousands of celebrities endorsement deals on social media; they utilize stars like Katy Perry, Justin Bieber, and Taylor Swift, who combined have nearly 200 million Twitter followers.

My research with Jim Bettman explores how celebrity endorsement works, focusing on the symbolic meanings associated with celebrities, and how that meaning can be linked to brands. We believe that people engage in consumption (at least in part) to create themselves and communicate aspects about themselves to others. For example, consumers may communicate who they are by the car they drive. You probably think that someone who drives a Prius is different from a person who drives a Mercedes. Why is that? It's because there are different symbolic meanings associated with the two brands. Prius is a hybrid, so the driver is likely concerned about the environment. Mercedes are expensive, so the driver is likely to be wealthy.

Marketers spend a lot of time (and money!) developing unique images for their brands. Celebrity endorsement is one way for marketers to connect symbolic meanings to the image of their brand. Celebrities often personify various characteristics that may be useful to consumers when they construct and communicate their self-concepts, such as being stylish, rugged, smart, sexy, successful, or even rebellious.

Consumers do not look to all celebrities for meaning indiscriminately. They are more likely to accept meanings from brands associated with a celebrity who represents either who they are or

who they would like to be, and to reject meanings associated with a celebrity who represents either who they are not or who they would not like to become. Furthermore, for a celebrity endorsement to work well, there should be a match between the celebrity image and the brand image. It doesn't make sense for former President George W. Bush to endorse Urban Outfitters.

Our studies show that when self-concept construction is especially important, celebrity endorsements have a stronger effect. We look at settings where consumers' identities are compromised by such factors as low self-esteem, loneliness, or stress, which create a liminal state where self-identity needs to be reconstructed. We find that consumers with low self-esteem respond favorably to advertisements that feature aspirational celebrities that the consumer wishes to be more like. We believe these consumers use the celebrity's image, which is associated with the brand, to build their own self-esteem. We also find that lonely consumers and consumers experiencing high levels of stress respond more favorably to brands advertised with a celebrity endorser who they like. Thus, we find that celebrity endorsement can serve a therapeutic function for consumers with compromised identities by providing useful symbolic meanings for self-identity construction.

This “balancing act” is at the heart of **celebrity endorsements**, in which marketers hope that the star’s popularity will transfer to the product or when a nonprofit organization recruits a celebrity to discourage harmful behaviors.²⁶ We will consider this strategy at length later in this chapter. For now, it pays to remember that creating a unit relation between a product and a star can backfire if the public’s opinion of the celebrity endorser shifts from positive to negative. For example, Pepsi pulled an ad that featured Madonna after she released a controversial music video involving religion and sex; it also happened when celebrity bad girl Paris Hilton got busted. The strategy can also cause trouble if people question the star–product unit relation: This occurred when the late singer Michael Jackson, who also did promotions for Pepsi, subsequently confessed that he didn’t even drink soda.

OBJECTIVE 8-5

Attitude models identify specific components and combine them to predict a consumer’s overall attitude toward a product or brand.

Attitude Models

When market researchers want to assess consumers’ attitudes toward beer brands, they might simply go to a bar and ask a bunch of guys, “How do you feel about Budweiser?” However, as we saw previously, attitudes can be a lot more complex than that. One problem is that many attributes or qualities may link to a product or service; depending on the individual, some of these will be more or less important (“Less filling!” “Tastes great!”). Another problem is that when a person decides to take action toward an attitude object, other factors influence his or her behavior, such as whether he or she feels that his family or friends would approve. **Attitude models** specify the different elements that might work together to influence people’s evaluations of attitude objects.

Multiattribute Attitude Models

A simple response does not always tell us everything we need to know, either about *why* the consumer feels a certain way toward a product or about what marketers can do to change her attitude. Our beliefs (accurate or not) about a product often are key to how we evaluate it. Warner-Lambert discovered this when it conducted research for its Fresh Burst Listerine mouthwash. A research firm paid families so it could set up cameras in their bathrooms and watch their daily routines (maybe they should have just checked out YouTube). Participants who bought both Fresh Burst and rival Scope said they used mouthwash to make their breath smell good. But Scope users swished around the liquid and then spit it out, whereas Listerine users kept the product in their mouths for a long time (one respondent held the stuff in until he got in the car and finally spit it out in a sewer a block away!). These findings told Listerine that the brand still hadn’t shaken its medicine-like image.²⁷

Because attitudes are so complex, marketing researchers may use **multiattribute attitude models** to understand them. This type of model assumes that consumers’ attitude toward an attitude object (A_o) depends on the beliefs they have about several of its attributes. When we use a multiattribute model, we assume that we can identify these specific beliefs and combine them to derive a measure of the consumer’s overall attitude. We’ll describe how these models work with the example of a consumer who evaluates a complex attitude object that should be familiar to you: a college.

Basic multiattribute models contain three specific elements:²⁸

- *Attributes* are characteristics of the A_o . A researcher tries to identify the attributes that most consumers use when they evaluate the A_o . For example, one of a college’s attributes is its scholarly reputation.
- *Beliefs* are cognitions about the specific A_o (usually relative to others like it). A belief measure assesses the extent to which the consumer perceives that a brand possesses a particular attribute. For example, a student might believe that the University of North Carolina is strong academically (or maybe this is consistency theory at work because your humble author went to graduate school there!).

- *Importance weights* reflect the relative priority of an attribute to the consumer. Although people might consider an A_o on a number of attributes, some attributes are likely to be more important than others (i.e., consumers will give them greater weight). Furthermore, these weights are likely to differ across consumers. In the case of colleges and universities, for example, one student might stress research opportunities, whereas another might assign greater weight to athletic programs.

The most influential multiattribute model is called the **Fishbein Model**, named after its primary developer.²⁹ The model measures three components of attitude:

- *Salient beliefs* people have about an A_o (i.e., those beliefs about the object a person considers during evaluation).
- *Object-attribute linkages*, or the probability that a particular object has an important attribute.
- *Evaluation* of each of the important attributes.

When we combine these three elements, we compute a consumer's overall attitude toward an object (we'll see later how researchers modify this equation to increase its accuracy). The basic formula is:

$$A_{jk} = \sum \beta_{ijk} I_{ik}$$

where

i = attribute

j = brand

k = consumer

I = the importance weight given attribute i by consumer k

β = consumer k 's belief regarding the extent to which brand j possesses attribute i

A = a particular consumer's (k 's) attitude score for brand j

We obtain the overall attitude score (A) when we multiply consumers' rating of each attribute for all the brands they considered by the importance rating for that attribute.

To see how this basic multiattribute model works, let's suppose we want to predict which college our friend Saundra from the beginning of the chapter is likely to attend. After months of waiting anxiously, Saundra gets accepted to four schools. Because she must now decide among these, we would first like to know which attributes Saundra will consider when she forms an attitude toward each school. We can then ask Saundra to assign a rating regarding how well each school performs on each attribute and also determine the relative importance of the attributes to her.

By summing scores on each attribute (after we weight each by its relative importance), we compute an overall attitude score for each school. Table 8.1 shows these hypothetical ratings. Based on this analysis, it seems that Saundra has the most favorable attitude toward Smith. She is clearly someone who would like to attend a college for women with a solid academic reputation rather than a school that offers a strong athletic program or a party atmosphere.

Marketing Applications of the Multiattribute Model

Suppose you were the director of marketing for Northland College, another school Saundra considered. How might you use the data from this analysis to improve your image?

Capitalize on Relative Advantage. If prospective students view one brand as superior on a particular attribute, a marketer needs to convince consumers like Saundra that this particular attribute is important. For example, although Saundra rates Northland's social atmosphere highly, she does not believe this attribute is a valued aspect for a college. As Northland's marketing director, you might emphasize the importance of an active social

TABLE 8.1 The Basic Multiattribute Model: Sandra's College Decision

Attribute (i)	Importance (I)	Beliefs (B)			
		Smith	Princeton	Rutgers	Northland
Academic reputation	6	8	9	6	3
All women	7	9	3	3	3
Cost	4	2	2	6	9
Proximity to home	3	2	2	6	9
Athletics	1	1	2	5	1
Party atmosphere	2	1	3	7	9
Library facilities	5	7	9	7	2
Attitude score		163	142	153	131

life, varied experiences, or even the development of future business contacts that a student forges when he or she makes strong college friendships.

Strengthen Perceived Product/Attribute Linkages. A marketer may discover that consumers do not equate his brand with a certain attribute. Advertising campaigns often address this problem when they stress a specific quality to consumers (e.g., “new and improved”). Sandra apparently does not think much of Northland’s academic quality, athletic programs, or library facilities. You might develop an informational campaign to improve these perceptions (e.g., “little-known facts about Northland”).

Add a New Attribute. Product marketers frequently try to distinguish themselves from their competitors when they add a product feature. Northland College might try to emphasize some unique aspect, such as a hands-on internship program for business majors that takes advantage of ties to the local community.

Influence Competitors’ Ratings. Finally, you can decrease your competitors’ higher ratings with a *comparative advertising* strategy. In this case, you might publish an ad that lists the tuition rates of a number of area schools with which Northland compares favorably and emphasize the value for the money its students get.

Do Attitudes Predict Behavior?

Consumer researchers have used multiattribute models for many years, but a major problem plagues them: In many cases, a person’s attitude doesn’t predict behavior. In a classic demonstration of “do as I say, not as I do,” many studies report a low correlation between a person’s reported attitude toward something and actual behavior toward it. Some researchers are so discouraged that they question whether attitudes are of any use at all when we try to understand behavior. Hence the popular expression, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

In response, researchers tinkered with the Fishbein Model to improve its predictive ability. They call the newer version the **theory of reasoned action**.³² This model contains several important additions to the original, and although the model is still not perfect, it does a better job of prediction.³³ Let’s look at some of the modifications to this model.

Intentions Versus Behavior

Attitudes possess both direction and strength. A person may like or dislike an attitude object with varying degrees of confidence or conviction. It is helpful to distinguish between

Marketing Pitfall



The (in)consistency between attitudes and behavior links to a major public health problem: **medication adherence**. This term

describes the extent to which people fill and actually take prescribed medicines. Although some patients unfortunately don’t adhere to prescriptions because they can’t afford them, many simply forget to swallow their pills. This breakdown between attitudes and behavior threatens many people’s health and it also adds huge costs to the healthcare system. An industry study estimates it costs U.S. taxpayers \$290 billion annually.³⁰ The CVS chain found that even for chronic diseases, one-third of their customers stopped taking their prescribed medicine after a month, and half stopped after a year. CVS aggressively reminds people to fill their prescriptions with texts, e-mails, and phone calls.³¹ Still, even these methods are only part of the solution: People still need to actually take the pills once they get them home.



Marketers focus on how a product's attributes are “new and improved” when they want to strengthen the linkage to a quality they think consumers desire.

Source: Balint Radu/Fotolia.

attitudes we hold firmly and those that are more superficial, especially because a person who holds an attitude with greater conviction is more likely to act on it. One study on environmental issues and marketing activities found, for example, that people who express greater conviction in their feelings regarding environmentally responsible behaviors such as recycling show greater consistency between attitudes and behavioral intentions.³⁴

Social pressure also can help motivate consumers to engage in socially responsible behaviors. One study assessed this possibility when it compared the effectiveness of different ways a hotel might encourage guests to reuse their towels. When researchers used a social appeal (“the majority of guests reuse their towels”), this worked better than a functional appeal (“help save the environment”). They also found that compliance was boosted when they phrased the requests in terms of directly relevant others (“the majority of guests in this room reuse their towels”) compared to more general group appeals (“the majority of men and women reuse their towels”).³⁵ As this example illustrates, the theory acknowledges the power of other people to influence what we do. Much as we may hate to admit it, what we think others would *like* us to do may override our own preferences. Thus, **normative influence** can result in a contradiction between what we say we will do and what we actually do when the moment of truth arrives.

Let’s take a closer look at Saundra’s college choice. You saw in Table 8.1 that she was eager to attend a predominantly female school. However, if she felt that this choice would be unpopular (perhaps her friends would think she was too nerdy), she might ignore or downgrade this preference when she made her decision. Researchers added a new element, the **subjective norm (SN)**, to account for the effects of what we believe other people think we should do. They use two factors to measure SN: (1) the intensity of a *normative belief (NB)* that others believe we should take or not take some action and (2) the *motivation to comply (MC)* with that belief (i.e., the degree to which the consumer takes others’ anticipated reactions into account when she evaluates a purchase).

“I WON’T WEAR A **HELMET**
(PHAN DINH - MENTAL AGE 2YRS)
IT MAKES ME LOOK STUPID”

M
C
D
O
N
O
U
G
H

EVERY YEAR OVER 12,000 PEOPLE DIE ON OUR ROADS AND 30,000 ARE SERIOUSLY INJURED. THAT MEANS THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES LEFT PICKING UP THE PIECES. FAMILIES TORTURED BY THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, CRIPPLED BY REDUCED INCOME OR THE SUDDEN NEED TO CARE FOR A RELATIVE WITH PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE. THE SAD TRUTH IS THAT MOST OF THESE CASES COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED BY SIMPLY WEARING A HELMET. WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THERE ARE NO EXCUSES.

WEAR A **HELMET**. THERE ARE NO EXCUSES.

This Vietnamese ad employs social pressure (the subjective norm) to address people's attitudes toward wearing helmets.

Source: Asia Injury Prevention Foundation.

The newer model also measures **attitude toward the act of buying (A_{act})**, rather than only the attitude toward the product itself. In other words, it focuses on the perceived consequences of a purchase. Knowing how someone feels about buying or using an object turns out to be more valid than merely knowing the consumer's evaluation of the object itself.³⁶

To understand this distinction, consider a marketing researcher who wants to measure college students' attitudes toward safe sex and wearing condoms. Although many college students interviewed would probably report a positive attitude toward condom use, can the researcher conclude from the responses that these respondents will actually buy and use them? The researcher might get more accurate results if the same students were asked how likely they are to *buy* condoms. A person might have a positive A_o toward condoms, but A_{act} (attitude toward the act of obtaining the attitude object) might be negative because of the embarrassment or the hassle involved.

Obstacles to Predicting Behavior in the Theory of Reasoned Action

Despite improvements to the Fishbein Model, problems arise when researchers misapply it. As our discussion about measuring personality traits in Chapter 7 showed, sometimes researchers use a model in ways it was not intended or where certain assumptions about human behavior may not be warranted.³⁷ Here are some other obstacles to prediction researchers encounter:

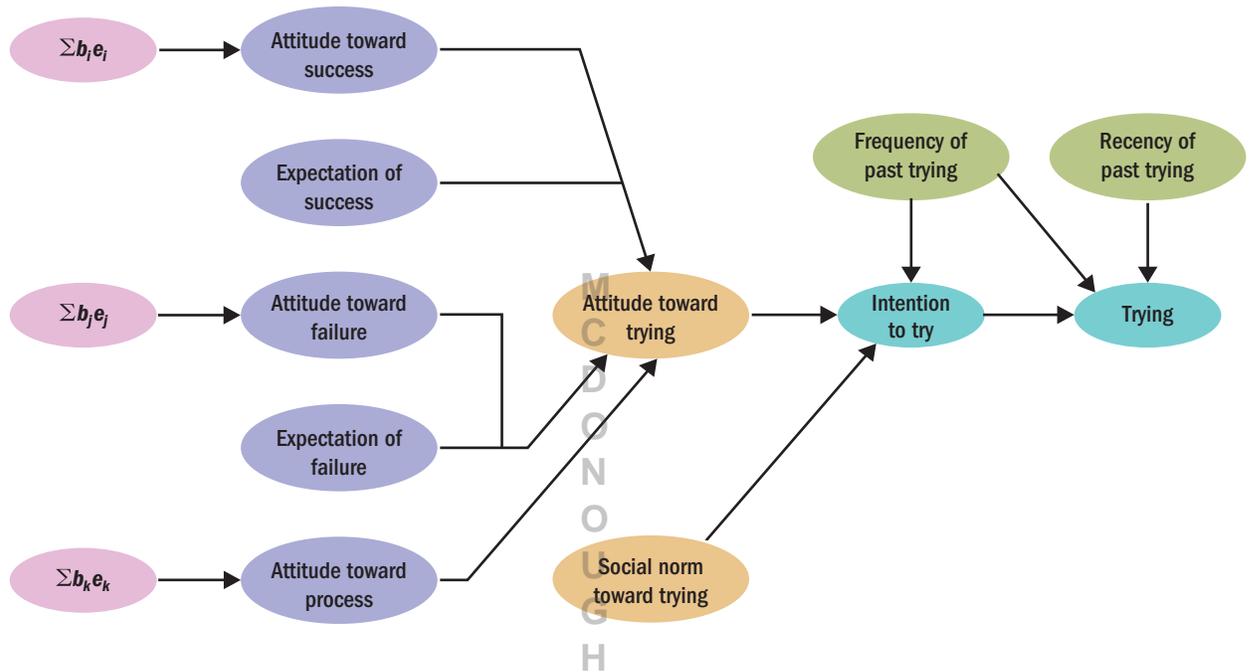
- The model tries to predict actual behavior (e.g., taking a diet pill), not the *outcomes* of behavior that some studies assess (e.g., losing weight).
- Some outcomes are beyond our control, such as when the purchase requires the cooperation of other people. For instance, a woman might *want* to get a mortgage, but this intention will be worthless if she cannot find a banker to give her one.

- The basic assumption that behavior is intentional may be invalid in a variety of cases, including impulsive acts, sudden changes in situation, novelty seeking, or even simple repeat buying. One study found that such unexpected events as having guests, changes in the weather, or reading articles about the healthfulness of certain foods significantly affected actual behaviors.³⁸
- Measures of attitude often do not really correspond to the behavior they are supposed to predict, either in terms of the A_o or when the act will occur. One common problem is a difference in the level of abstraction researchers employ. For example, knowing a person's attitude toward sports cars may not predict whether he or she will purchase a BMW Z3. It is important to match the level of specificity between the attitude and the behavioral intention.
- A similar problem relates to the *time frame* of the attitude measure. In general, the longer the time between the attitude measurement and the behavior it is supposed to assess, the weaker the relationship will be. For example, predictability improves greatly if we ask a consumer the likelihood that he or she will buy a house in the next week as opposed to within the next 5 years.
- We form stronger and more predictive attitudes through direct, personal experience with an A_o than those we form indirectly through advertising.³⁹ According to the **attitude accessibility perspective**, behavior is a function of the person's immediate perceptions of the A_o , in the context of the situation in which he or she encounters it. An attitude will guide the evaluation of the object but *only* if a person's memory activates it when he or she encounters the object. These findings underscore the importance of strategies that induce trials (e.g., by widespread product sampling to encourage the consumer to try the product at home, taste tests in grocery stores, test drives at car dealers, etc.) as well as those that maximize exposure to marketing communications.

In addition, most researchers apply the theory of reasoned action in Western settings. Certain assumptions inherent in the model may not necessarily apply to consumers from other cultures. Several cultural roadblocks diminish the universality of the theory of reasoned action:⁴⁰

- The model predicts the performance of a voluntary act. Across cultures, however, many activities, ranging from taking exams and entering military service to receiving an inoculation or even choosing a marriage partner, are not necessarily voluntary.
- The relative impact of subjective norms may vary across cultures. For example, Asian cultures tend to value conformity and "face saving," so it is possible that subjective norms involving the anticipated reactions of others to the choice will have an even greater impact on behavior for many Asian consumers. Indeed, a study conducted during an election in Singapore successfully predicted how people would vote as it assessed their voting intentions beforehand. These intentions were in turn influenced by such factors as voters' attitudes toward the candidate, attitudes toward the political party, and subjective norms, which in Singapore includes an emphasis on harmonious and close ties among members of the society.
- The model measures behavioral intentions and thus presupposes that consumers are actively thinking ahead and planning future behaviors. The intention concept assumes that consumers have a linear time sense; they think in terms of past, present, and future. As we'll discuss in Chapter 10, not all cultures subscribe to this perspective on time.
- A consumer who forms an intention implicitly claims that he or she is in control of his or her actions. Some cultures (e.g., Muslim peoples) tend to be fatalistic and do not necessarily believe in the concept of free will. Indeed, one study that compared students from the United States, Jordan, and Thailand found evidence for cultural differences in assumptions about fatalism and control over the future.

Figure 8.3 THEORY OF TRYING



Trying to Consume

Other theorists propose different perspectives on the attitude–behavior connection. For example, the **multiple pathway anchoring and adjustment (MPAA) model** emphasizes multiple pathways to attitude formation, including outside-in (object-centered) and inside-out (person-centered) pathways.⁴¹

Another perspective tries to address some of these problems because it focuses instead on consumers’ goals and what they believe they have to do to attain them. The **theory of trying** states that we should replace the criterion of behavior in the reasoned action model with *trying* to reach a goal. As Figure 8.3 shows, this perspective recognizes that additional factors might intervene between intent and performance—both personal and environmental barriers might prevent the individual from attaining the goal. For example, a person who intends to lose weight may have to deal with numerous issues: He may not believe he is capable of slimming down, he may have a roommate who loves to cook and who leaves tempting goodies lying around the apartment, his friends may be jealous of his attempts to diet and encourage him to pig out, or he may be genetically predisposed to obesity and cutting down on calories simply will not produce the desired results.⁴²

Persuasion: How Do Marketers Change Attitudes?

BUY NOW! Advertisers constantly bombard us with messages imploring us to change our attitudes—and of course buy their products. These persuasion attempts can range from logical arguments to graphic pictures, from peers who try to intimidate us to celebrities who try to charm us. Now we’ll review some of the factors that help gauge the effectiveness of marketing communications. Our focus will be on some basic aspects of communication that specifically help to determine how and if consumers will form new attitudes or modify existing ones.

Persuasion involves an active attempt to change attitudes. This is of course job number 1 for many marketing communications. Later we’ll learn more about how marketers try to accomplish this, but for now we’ll set the stage by listing some basic psychological principles that influence people to change their minds or comply with a request:⁴³

Scarcity makes products more desirable.

Source: carmenbobo/Fotolia.



- **Reciprocity**—We are more likely to give if first we receive. That’s why including money in a mail survey questionnaire (in some cases, as little as a nickel or dime) increases the response rate compared to surveys that come without financial incentives in the envelope.
- **Scarcity**—Like people, items are more attractive when they aren’t available. In one study, researchers asked people to rate the quality of chocolate chip cookies. Participants who only got one cookie liked them better than did those who evaluated more of the same kind of cookie. That helps explain why we tend to value “limited-edition” items.
- **Authority**—We believe an authoritative source much more readily than one that is less authoritative. That explains why the U.S. public’s opinion on an issue can shift by as much as 2 percent when the *New York Times* (but not the *National Enquirer*) runs an article about it.
- **Consistency**—As we saw previously in this chapter, people try not to contradict themselves in terms of what they say and do about an issue. In one study, students at an Israeli university who solicited donations to help disabled people doubled the amount they normally collected in a neighborhood if they first asked the residents to sign a petition supporting this cause 2 weeks before they actually asked for the donations.
- **Liking**—We agree with those we like or admire. A study found that good-looking fund-raisers raised almost twice as much as other volunteers who were not as attractive.
- **Consensus**—We consider what others do before we decide what to do. People are more likely to donate to a charity if they first see a list of the names of their neighbors who have already done so.

Decisions, Decisions: Tactical Communications Options

Suppose Audi wants to create an advertising campaign for a new ragtop it targets to young drivers. As it plans this campaign, the automaker must develop a message that will arouse desire for the car. To craft persuasive messages that might persuade someone to buy this car instead of the many others available, we must answer several questions:

- Who will drive the car in the ad? A NASCAR driver? A career woman? A reality show star? The source of a message helps determine whether consumers will accept it.
- How should we construct the message? Should it emphasize the negative consequences of being left out when others drive cool cars and you still tool around in your old clunker? Should it directly compare the car with others already on the market, or maybe present a fantasy in which a tough-minded female executive meets a dashing stranger while she cruises down the highway in her Audi?

- What media should we use? Should the ad run in a magazine? Should we air it on TV? Sell the product door-to-door? Post the material on a Web site or create a Facebook group? Convince bloggers to write about it? Reward shoppers who check in on Foursquare at an Audi dealership? If we do produce a print ad, should we run it in the pages of *Vogue*? *Good Housekeeping*? *Car and Driver*? Sometimes *where* you say something is as important as *what* you say. Ideally, we should match the attributes of the medium with those of what we sell. For example, advertising in magazines with high prestige is more effective when we want to communicate messages about overall product image and quality, whereas specialized expert magazines do a better job when we want to convey factual information.⁴⁴
- What characteristics of the target market might lead its members to accept the ad? If targeted users are frustrated in their daily lives, they might be more receptive to a fantasy appeal. If they're status-oriented, maybe a commercial should show bystanders who swoon with admiration as the car cruises by.

OBJECTIVE 8-6

The communications model identifies several important components for marketers when they try to change consumers' attitudes toward products and services.

The Elements of Communication

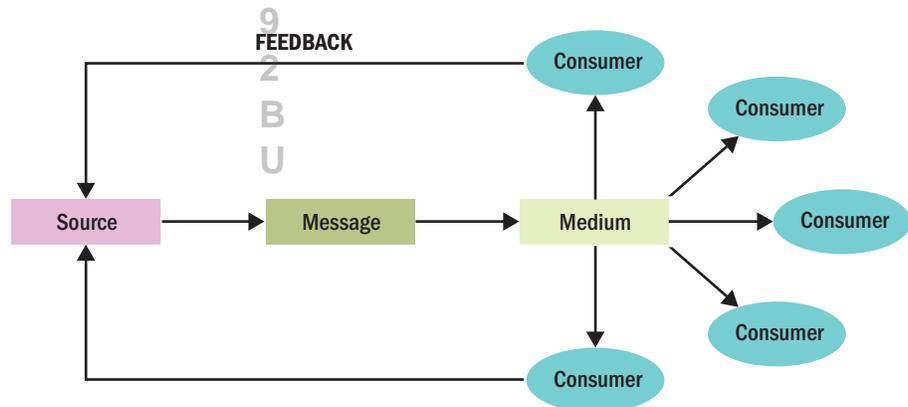
Marketers traditionally rely on the **communications model** in Figure 8.4. This model specifies the elements they need to control to communicate with their customers. One of these is a *source*, where the communication originates. Another is the *message* itself. There are many ways to say something, and the structure of the message has a significant effect on how we perceive it. We must transmit the message via a *medium*, which could be TV, radio, magazines, billboards, personal contact, or even a matchbook cover. One or more *receivers* interpret the message in light of their own experiences. Finally, the source receives *feedback* so that the marketer can use receivers' reactions to modify aspects of the message as necessary.

An Updated View: Interactive Communications

The traditional communications model is not entirely wrong, but it also doesn't tell the whole story—especially in today's dynamic world of interactivity, where consumers have many more choices available to them and greater control over which messages they *choose* to process.⁴⁵

In fact, the popular strategy we call **permission marketing** acknowledges that a marketer will be more successful when he or she communicates with consumers who have already agreed to listen to him or her; consumers who “opt out” of listening to the message probably weren't good prospects in the first place.⁴⁶ In contrast, those who say they want to learn more are likely to be receptive to marketing communications they have chosen to see or hear. As the permission marketing concept reminds us, we don't have to simply sit

Figure 8.4 THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS MODEL





When consumers opt-in to receive information from an organization they are more likely to pay attention to it when a message arrives.

Source: LiliWhite/Fotolia.

there and take it. We have a voice in deciding what messages we choose to see and when, and we exercise that option more and more.

Social scientists developed the traditional model to understand mass communications in which a source transmits information to many receivers at one time—typically via a *broadcast* medium such as television. This perspective essentially views advertising as the process of transferring information to the buyer before a sale. It regards a message as *perishable*—the marketer repeats the same message to a large audience and then the message “vanishes” when a new campaign takes its place. As we’ll see, that model doesn’t work as well now that we can *narrowcast*, or finely tune our messages to suit small groups of receivers (sometimes even one person at a time).

OBJECTIVE 8-7

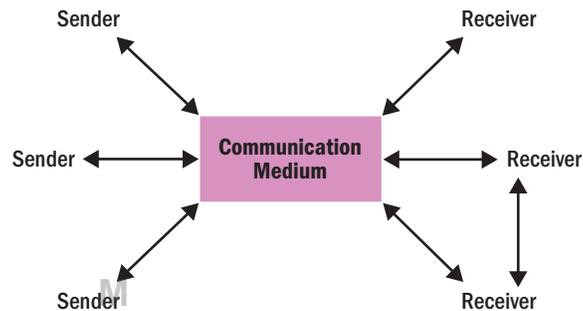
The consumer who processes a message is not the passive receiver of information marketers once believed him or her to be.

How long has it been since you posted to your Facebook page? Exciting technological and social developments make us rethink the picture of passive consumers as people increasingly play more proactive roles in communications. In other words, we are to a greater extent *partners*—rather than couch potatoes—in the communications process. Our input helps to shape the messages we and others like us receive; furthermore, we may seek out these messages rather than sit home and wait to see them on TV or in the paper. For example, the popular social media platform *Pinterest* allows users to create digital scrapbooks, but in the

process it serves as a voyage of discovery as people pull images from many sources (often other users’ Boards). This kind of new medium allows consumers to “dream out loud” and also guide one another toward many new styles and brands.⁴⁷ Figure 8.5 illustrates this updated approach to interactive communications.

One of the early instigators of this communications revolution was the humble handheld remote control device. As VCRs (remember them?) began to be commonplace in homes, suddenly consumers had more input into what they wanted to watch—and when. No longer did the TV networks decide when we could watch our favorite shows, and we didn’t have to miss the new episode of *Hawaii Five-O* because it was on at the same time as the Bears game.

Since that time, of course, our ability to control our media environment has mushroomed. Just ask some of the millions of us who use digital video recorders (DVRs) such as TiVo to watch TV shows whenever we wish—and who blithely skip over the commercials.⁴⁸ Many others have access to video-on-demand or pay-per-view TV. Home-shopping networks encourage us to call in and discuss our passion for cubic zirconium jewelry live

Figure 8.5 AN UPDATED COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

on the air. Caller ID devices and answering machines allow us to decide if we will accept a phone call during dinner and to know if a telemarketer lurks on the other end before we pick up the phone. A bit of Web surfing allows us to identify kindred spirits around the globe, to request information about products, and even to provide suggestions to product designers and market researchers.

OBJECTIVE 8-8

Several factors influence the effectiveness of a message source.

The Source

Regardless of whether we receive a message by “snail mail” (net-heads’ slang for the postal service), email, or SMS text, common sense tells us that if different people say or write the same words, the message can still affect us differently. Researchers have discussed the power of *source effects* for more than 60 years. When we attribute the same message to different sources and measure the degree of attitude change that occurs after listeners hear it, we can isolate which characteristics of a communicator cause attitude change.⁴⁹

Under most conditions, the source of a message can have a big impact on the likelihood that receivers will accept it. Marketers can choose a spokesperson because she is an expert, attractive, famous, or even a “typical” consumer who is both likable and trustworthy. *Credibility* and *attractiveness* are two particularly important source characteristics (i.e., how much we either believe or like the communicator).⁵⁰

How do marketing specialists decide whether to stress credibility or attractiveness when they select a message source? There should be a match between the needs of the recipient and the potential rewards the source offers. When this match occurs, the recipient is more motivated to process the message. An attractive source, for example, is more effective for receivers who tend to be sensitive about social acceptance and others’ opinions, whereas a credible, expert source is more powerful when she speaks to internally oriented people.⁵¹ However, even a credible source’s trustworthiness evaporates if she endorses too many products.⁵²

The choice may also depend on the type of product. A positive source can reduce risk and increase message acceptance overall, but particular types of sources are more effective to reduce different kinds of risk. Experts excel when we want to change attitudes toward utilitarian products that have high performance risk, such as vacuums, because they are complex and may not work as we expect. Celebrities work better when they focus on products such as jewelry and furniture that have high social risk, where the users are more concerned about the impression others have of them. Finally, “typical” consumers, who are appealing sources because of their similarity to the recipient, tend to be most effective when they provide real-life endorsements for everyday products that are low risk, such as cookies.⁵³

Source Credibility

Source credibility refers to a communicator’s expertise, objectivity, or trustworthiness. This dimension relates to consumers’ beliefs that this person is competent and that he or she will provide the necessary information we need when we evaluate competing products.

A credible source is particularly persuasive when the consumer has yet to learn much about a product or form an opinion of it.⁵⁴ Indeed, a study demonstrated that simply letting consumers know a firm is profitable leads them to put more stock in what the company says in its advertising.⁵⁵ On the other hand, some subtle cues can diminish credibility: Consider for example those super fast **disclaimers** you often hear at the end of a commercial message that supply additional information the advertiser is required to provide (“possible side effects may include nausea, diarrhea, or death”). Although people tend to assume that people who speak faster are more intelligent, they may trust them less. When consumers don’t already have a positive attitude toward a product, a fast-paced disclaimer leads them to think the advertiser has ulterior motives and they trust the company less.⁵⁶

Sincerity is particularly important when a company tries to publicize its *corporate social responsibility (CSR)* activities that benefit the community. As we saw in Chapter 2, a company’s image can skyrocket when consumers believe it’s genuinely doing good things. But this effort can backfire if people question the organization’s motivations (e.g., if they think the firm spends more to talk about its good deeds than to actually do them).⁵⁷ Not too surprisingly, people who see deceptive advertising experience a feeling of distrust that carries over to other messages from that source and even to other sources because they are more likely to assume that advertising in general is not credible—a true case of poisoning the well for other marketers!⁵⁸

One widely used technique to generate credibility is to pay an expert or a celebrity to tout a product, but this kind of endorsement doesn’t come cheap. However, typically the investment is worth it simply because market analysts use the announcement of an endorsement contract to evaluate a firm’s potential profitability, which affects its expected return. On average, then, the impact of endorsements on stock returns appears to be so positive that it offsets the cost of hiring the spokesperson.⁵⁹ Indeed, a study on the use of celebrities in marketing reported that ads containing a celebrity endorser produced 9.4 percent higher consumer readership than ads without a celebrity endorser. In its analysis of almost 80,000 print ads, Starch Advertising Research concluded, “in terms of helping with the first task in ... getting consumers to read your ad, these data show that a celebrity endorsement moves the readership needle.”⁶⁰

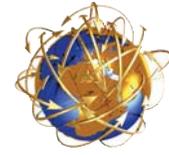
The drawing power of famous people may even be “wired in”: One study found that compared to “ordinary” faces, our brains pay more attention to famous faces and more efficiently process information about these images.⁶¹ Celebrities increase awareness of a firm’s advertising and enhance both company image and brand attitudes.⁶² A celebrity endorsement strategy can be an effective way to differentiate among similar products. This is especially important when consumers do not perceive many actual differences among competitors, as often occurs when brands are in the mature stage of the product life cycle.

Although in general more positive sources tend to increase attitude change, there are exceptions to this rule. Sometimes we can think a source is obnoxious, yet it is still effective. A case in point is the irritating redhead in Wendy’s commercials who says “Now That’s Better.” In some instances the differences in attitude change between positive sources and less-positive sources become erased over time. After a while, people appear to “forget” about the negative source and change their attitudes anyway. We call this process the **sleeper effect**.⁶³

The source effects issue has gained even more attention recently as a result of a hot trend in marketing known as **native advertising**. This term refers to digital messages designed to blend into the editorial content of the publications in which they appear. The idea is to capture the attention of people who might resist ad messages that pop up in the middle of an article or program. These messages may look a lot like a regular article, but they often link to a sponsor’s content. For example, native ads on *Vanity Fair* magazine’s Web site resemble editorial contributions complete with a byline, but the author is listed as “Vanity Fair Agenda.” An advertising executive commented, native ads “should not come across as anything that doesn’t belong. That is what we mean by native; it belongs.”⁶⁴

A message’s credibility increases if receivers think the source’s qualifications are relevant to the product he or she endorses. This linkage can overcome other objections people may have to the endorser or the product. Ronald Biggs, whose claim to fame was

The Tangled Web



In recent years we’ve witnessed a new attempt to manipulate attitudes that some call **sock puppeting**. This term describes a company executive or other biased source that poses as someone else as he or she touts the organization in social media. For example, it came to light that the CEO of Whole Foods had posted derogatory comments about rival Wild Oats without revealing his true identity. More recently, a nonprofit research organization called GiveWell that rates the effectiveness of charities had to discipline two of its founders who pretended to be other people on blogs and then referred people to the group’s Web site.⁶⁵

Similar problems may dilute the credibility of *Wikipedia*, the open-source online encyclopedia that is beloved by many students. Anyone can edit entries, so their reliability is not assured. Although other alert contributors may eventually correct false or self-serving entries, there is still room for organizations to color content in a way that serves their goals. For example, a visitor edited the *Wikipedia* entry for the SeaWorld theme parks to change all mentions of “orcas” to “killer whales”; he or she also deleted a paragraph that criticized SeaWorld’s “lack of respect toward its orcas.” It turns out the changes originated at a computer located in Anheuser-Busch—the company that happens to own SeaWorld. An employee of PepsiCo deleted several paragraphs of the Pepsi entry that focused on its detrimental health effects, and a person at Walmart altered an entry about how the retailer pays its employees.

Another form of sock puppeting is so-called **paid influencer programs** that attempt to start online conversations about brands when they encourage bloggers to write about them. These “sponsored conversations” can be effective, but again marketers need to be careful about the potential to distort source recommendations. Kmart awarded a shopping spree to a group of bloggers who agreed to post about their experiences. Panasonic flew bloggers to the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where they posted about the show and Panasonic products unveiled there. Mercedes gave a blogger use of an SUV for a week in exchange for posts about it.

Marketing messages that consumers perceive as **buzz** (those that are authentic and consumer generated) tend to be more effective than those they categorize as **hype** (those that are inauthentic, biased, and company generated). However, the digital environment makes it easier for a hype message to masquerade as buzz if the source does not disclose that it is in fact sponsored. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) toughened its stance on this problem in 2013, when the regulatory agency issued guidelines for organizations that advertise in digital media. For example, the FTC says, “Required disclosures must be clear and conspicuous. In evaluating whether a disclosure is likely to be clear and conspicuous, advertisers should consider its placement in the ad and its proximity to the relevant claim. The closer the disclosure is to the claim to which it relates, the better.”⁶⁶ The agency is trying to address abuses like the situation in which a PR firm for a video game developer had its own employees pose as consumers and post positive game reviews at the iTunes store.⁶⁷

his role in the *Great Train Robbery* in the United Kingdom, successfully served as a spokesman in Brazil for a company that makes door locks—a topic about which he is presumably knowledgeable!⁶⁸

It’s important to note that what is credible to one consumer segment may be a turnoff to another. Indeed, rebellious or even deviant celebrities may be attractive to some simply for that reason. Tommy Hilfiger cultivated a rebellious, street-smart image when he used rappers Snoop Doggy Dogg—aka Snoop Dog, aka Snoop Lion, aka Snoopzilla—to help launch his clothing line and Coolio, a former crack addict and thief and Diddy (aka Puffy) as a runway model.⁶⁹ Parents may not be thrilled by these message sources—but isn’t that the point? Charlie Sheen, please report to the studio

A consumer’s beliefs about a product’s attributes will weaken if he or she perceives that the source is biased.⁷⁰ **Knowledge bias** implies that a source’s knowledge about a topic is not accurate. **Reporting bias** occurs when a source has the required knowledge but we question his or her willingness to convey it accurately—as when a racket manufacturer pays a star tennis player to use its products exclusively. The source’s credentials might be appropriate, but the fact that consumers see the expert as a “hired gun” compromises believability.

Source Attractiveness: “What Is Beautiful Is Good”

A British dairy company enlisted Johnny Rotten, the lead singer of the Sex Pistols, to appear in a commercial (or *advert*, as they say in the United Kingdom) to promote its butter. Sales went up substantially when the punk legend plugged the product (rotten butter?).⁷¹

Source attractiveness refers to the social *value* recipients attribute to a communicator. This value relates to the person’s physical appearance, personality, social status, or similarity to the receiver (we like to listen to people who are like us). Our desire to know what our peers think helps to explain why both Facebook and Google now allow **shared endorsements**; users who follow or rate a product or service may find that their endorsements show up on the advertiser’s page.⁷²

Some sources like Johnny Rotten appeal to us because they are cool, brainy, or just plain famous. However, many simply are nice to look at. Almost everywhere we turn, beautiful people try to persuade us to buy or do something. As Chapter 6 showed us, our society places a high premium on physical attractiveness. We assume that good-looking people are smarter, hipper, and happier than the rest of us. This is an example of a **halo effect**, which occurs when we assume that persons who rank high on one dimension excel on others as well. We can explain this effect in terms of the consistency principle we discussed previously in this chapter; we are more comfortable when all of our judgments about a person correspond.

As a result, physically attractive people often get a boost in life because people assume they excel on other dimensions as well. Occasionally this halo effect can backfire if observers infer that someone has exploited their attractiveness (e.g. women who get labeled as “gold diggers”). One study found that good-looking children are less likely to get assistance from adults (at least for fairly mild problems) because people assume they are more competent and thus better able to help themselves. One implication of this work is that ironically charitable organizations may want to consider using less attractive kids as models to solicit donations!⁷³ Note: Psychologists also refer to the opposite, *forked-tail effect* that describes our assumptions that an unattractive person also isn’t good at other things. There are a lot of angels and devils out there.

Star Power: Celebrities as Communications Sources

Celebrities hawk everything from grills (George Foreman) to perfumes (Jennifer Lopez). As our discussion about the consistency principle illustrates, these messages are more effective when there’s a logical connection between the star and the product. When Bob Dylan pitches Victoria’s Secret lingerie (yes, he really did), marketers may need to reread their consumer behavior textbook.⁷⁴ Then again, teen idol Justin Bieber puts his name on almost everything ... including nail polish!⁷⁵



Celebrities, major and minor, frequently serve as communications sources in advertisements, promotions and infomercials.

Source: Blend Images/Corbis.

Star power works because celebrities embody *cultural meanings*—they symbolize important categories like status and social class: A “working-class hero” (Mike of *Mike & Molly*), gender (the effeminate Cam on *Modern Family*), age (the youthful President Grant on *Scandal*), and even personality types (the nerdy Sheldon on *The Big Bang Theory*, cool Adam Levine on *The Voice*). Ideally, the advertiser decides what meanings the product should convey (that is, how it should position the item in the marketplace) and then chooses a celebrity who embodies a similar meaning. The product’s meaning thus moves from the manufacturer to the consumer, using the star as a vehicle.⁷⁶

Nonhuman Endorsers

A celebrity endorsement strategy has its drawbacks. As we previously noted, stars’ motives may be suspect if they plug products that don’t fit their images or if consumers begin to believe the celebrities never met a product they didn’t like (for a fee). They may be involved in a scandal or deviate from a brand’s desired image—for example, the Milk Processor Education Program suspended “Got Milk?” ads featuring Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen after Mary-Kate entered a treatment facility for an undisclosed health issue.

For these reasons, some marketers seek alternative sources, including cartoon characters and mascots. As the marketing director for a company that manufactures costumed

Marketing Pitfall



Celebrities (and their managers) don’t necessarily jump at the chance to endorse just any product.

After all, they have a brand image to protect as well. For years one popular strategy has been to film commercials overseas and stipulate that they are not to air at home. The practice is so widespread in Japan that one Web site even coined a term to describe it: *Japander* (a combination of Japanese and pandering): “a western star who uses his or her fame to make large sums of money in a short time by advertising products in Japan that they would probably never use ... (see *sinecure [sic], prostitute*) ... to make an ass of oneself in Japanese media.” Check out japander.com to see actors such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Clooney, and Jennifer Aniston in commercials they’d prefer their U.S. fans didn’t see.⁷⁷

Spokescharacters boost the effectiveness of advertising claims.

Source: Pat Canova/Alamy.



characters for sports teams and businesses points out, “You don’t have to worry about your mascot checking into rehab.”⁷⁸ Researchers report that **spokescharacters**, such as the Pillsbury Doughboy, Chester Cheetah, and the GEICO Gecko, do, in fact, boost viewers’ recall of claims that ads make and also yield higher brand attitudes.⁷⁹ Some of the most popular spokescharacters in recent years include Old Spice’s The Man Your Man Could Smell Like (played by former NFL athlete Isaiah Mustafa), Snoopy (who appears in commercials for MetLife), the talking M&Ms, Flo for Progressive insurance, and Allstate’s Mayhem Man.⁸⁰

As we saw in Chapter 7, an *avatar* is one increasingly popular alternative to a flesh-and-blood endorser. *Avatar* is a Hindu term for a deity that appears in superhuman or animal form. In the computing world, it means a character you can move around inside a visual, graphical world. Consumers who inhabit virtual worlds such as *Second Life*, *Habbo Hotel*, and *The Sims* design their avatars to reflect their own unique personalities, desires, and fantasies.

The advantages of using virtual avatars compared to flesh-and-blood models include the ability to change the avatar in real time to suit the needs of the target audience. From an advertising perspective, they are likely to be more cost effective than hiring a real person. From personal-selling and customer-service perspectives, they handle multiple customers at one time, they are not geographically limited, and they are operational 24/7; therefore, they free up company employees and sales personnel to perform other activities.⁸¹

OBJECTIVE 8-9

The way a marketer structures his or her message determines how persuasive it will be.

The Message

Subtle aspects of the way a source delivers a message can influence our interpretation of what he or she says. For example, if a source refers to the brand as “you,” “we,” or more abstractly “the brand” this changes how people feel about the product. A more intimate reference can bolster feelings about brands with whom the consumer has a positive relationship, but it can also be off-putting if it’s inconsistent with how the person feels about the product.⁸²

Even the layout in a print ad sends a message about how the consumer should relate to the advertised item. A brand that wants customers to see it as a “friend” by depicting a model using it is more effective when the product image appears horizontally and near the model. On the other hand, if a brand wants customers to see it as a “leader” the advertiser will have better luck if it physically places the brand above the user and farther away “(it’s lonely at the top).”⁸³

A major study of more than 1,000 commercials identified factors that determine whether a commercial message will be persuasive. The single most important feature: Does the communication stress a unique attribute or benefit of the product?⁸⁴ Table 8.2 lists some other good and bad elements of commercial messages.

Consumers may find commercials confusing, but what’s even worse is when we find them annoying. In a landmark study of irritating advertising, researchers examined more than 500 prime-time network commercials that had registered negative reactions by consumers. The most irritating commercials were for feminine hygiene products, hemorrhoid medication or laxatives, and women’s underwear. The researchers identify these as prime offenders:

- The commercial shows a sensitive product (e.g., hemorrhoid medicine) and emphasizes its usage.
- The situation is contrived or overdramatized.
- A person is put down in terms of appearance, knowledge, or sophistication.

TABLE 8.2 Characteristics of Good and Bad Messages

Positive effects	Negative effects
Showing convenience of use	Extensive information on components, ingredients, or nutrition
Showing new product or improved features	Outdoor setting (message gets lost)
Casting background (i.e., people are incidental to message)	Large number of on-screen characters
Indirect comparison to other products	Graphic displays
Demonstration of the product in use	
Demonstration of tangible results (e.g., bouncy hair)	
An actor playing the role of an ordinary person	
No principal character (i.e., more time is devoted to the product)	

Source: Adapted from David W. Stewart and David H. Furse, “The Effects of Television Advertising Execution on Recall, Comprehension, and Persuasion,” *Psychology & Marketing* 2 (Fall 1985): 135–60. Copyright © 1985 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

- An important relationship, such as a marriage, is threatened.
- There is a graphic demonstration of physical discomfort.
- The commercial created uncomfortable tension because of an argument or an antagonistic character.
- It portrays an unattractive or unsympathetic character.
- It includes a sexually suggestive scene.
- The commercial suffers from poor casting or execution.

Characteristics of the message itself help determine its impact on attitudes. These variables include *how* we say the message as well as *what* we say. Depending on the marketer's objectives and the nature of the product, different kinds of messages produce different results. A marketer faces some crucial issues when she creates a message:

- Should the message be conveyed in words or pictures?
- How often should the message be repeated?
- Should the message draw a conclusion, or should this be left up to the listener?
- Should the message present both sides of an argument?
- Should the message explicitly compare the product to competitors?
- Should the message include a blatant sexual appeal?
- Should the message arouse negative emotions such as fear?
- How concrete or vivid should the arguments and imagery be?
- Should the message be funny?

Should We Use Pictures or Words?

The saying "One picture is worth a thousand words" captures the idea that visuals are effective, especially when the communicator wants to influence receivers' emotional responses. For this reason, advertisers often rely on vivid illustrations or photography.⁸⁵

However, a picture is not always as effective when it communicates factual information. Ads that contain the same information elicit different reactions when the marketer presents them in visual versus verbal form. The verbal version affects ratings on the utilitarian aspects of a product, whereas the visual version affects aesthetic evaluations. Verbal elements are more effective when an accompanying picture reinforces them, especially if they *frame* the illustration (the message in the picture strongly relates to the copy).⁸⁶

Because it requires more effort to process, a verbal message is most appropriate for high-involvement situations, such as print contexts where the reader really pays attention to the advertising. Verbal material decays more rapidly in memory, so these messages require more frequent exposures to obtain the desired effect. Visual images, in contrast, allow the receiver to *chunk* information at the time of encoding (see Chapter 4). Chunking results in a stronger memory trace that aids retrieval over time.⁸⁷

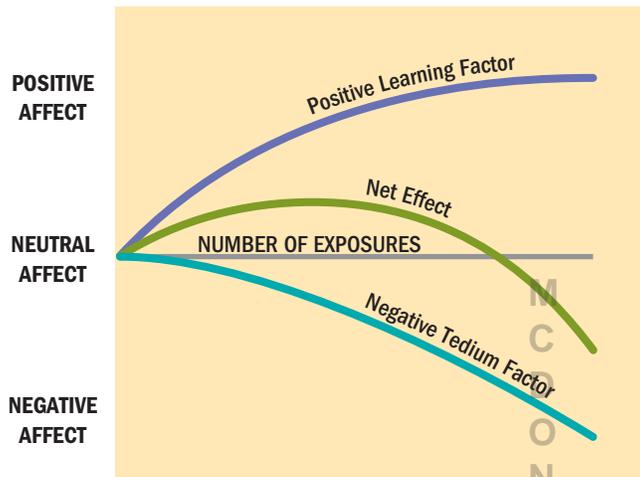
The concrete discussion of a product attribute in ad copy also influences the importance of that attribute because it draws more attention. For example, in a study where participants read two versions of ad copy for a watch, the version that claimed "According to industry sources, three out of every four watch breakdowns are due to water getting into the case," was more effective than the version that simply said, "According to industry sources, many watch breakdowns are due to water getting into the case."⁸⁸

Should We Repeat the Message?

Repetition can be a double-edged sword for marketers. As we noted in Chapter 4, we usually need multiple exposures to a stimulus before learning occurs. Contrary to the saying "familiarity breeds contempt," people tend to like things that are more familiar to them, even if they were not that keen on them initially.⁸⁹ Psychologists call this the **mere exposure phenomenon**.

Advertisers find positive effects for repetition even in mature product categories: Repeating product information boosts consumers' awareness of the brand, even though the marketer says nothing new.⁹⁰ However, as we saw in Chapter 6, too much repetition creates *habituation*, whereby the consumer no longer pays attention to the stimulus

Figure 8.6 TWO-FACTOR THEORY OF MESSAGE REPETITION



because of fatigue or boredom. Excessive exposure can cause advertising wear-out, which can result in negative reactions to an ad after we see it too much.⁹¹ Research evidence indicates that “three’s the charm” when it comes to exposing an audience to a product claim. Additional messages tend to trigger skepticism and actually reverse any positive impact.⁹²

The **two-factor theory** explains the fine line between familiarity and boredom; it proposes that two separate psychological processes operate when we repeatedly show an ad to a viewer. The positive side of repetition is that it increases familiarity and thus reduces uncertainty about the product. The negative side is that over time boredom increases with each exposure. At some point the amount of boredom exceeds the amount of uncertainty the message reduces, and this results in wear-out. Figure 8.6 depicts this pattern. Its effect is especially pronounced when each exposure is of a fairly long duration (such as a 30-second commercial).⁹³

The two-factor perspective implies that advertisers can overcome this problem if they limit the amount of exposure per repetition (e.g., use 15-second spots instead of longer commercials). They can also maintain familiarity but alleviate boredom if they slightly vary the content of ads over time—although each spot differs, the campaign still revolves around a common theme. Recipients who see varied ads about the product absorb more information about product attributes and experience more positive thoughts about the brand than do those who see the same information repeatedly. This additional information also allows the person to resist attempts to change his or her attitude in the face of a counterattack by a competing brand.⁹⁴

How Do We Structure the Argument?

Many marketing messages are like debates or trials: A source presents an argument and tries to convince the receiver to shift his or her opinion. As you’ve no doubt guessed, the *way* we present the argument may be as important as *what* we say. It’s often a good idea to relate the product to a person’s identity to ramp up involvement as we discussed in Chapter 5. On the other hand, there’s the temptation to push too hard. A recent study shows how that can happen: Respondents were asked to focus on their attitudes toward environmental issues to activate that aspect of their identities. Then they were divided into three groups, each of which was shown a separate slogan for Charlie’s Soap, a real biodegradable cleanser. One message just said the soap was “a good choice for consumers.” A second version related to the issue by calling the soap “a good choice for green consumers.” The third message pushed the envelope farther: “the only choice for green consumers!” Although many real managers predicted that the last choice would be most effective, in fact the second one was most effective because the last choice just pushed too hard.⁹⁶

Net Profit



The Pandora music site attracts about 70 million listeners, who tune in to playlists Pandora creates based on their initial preferences for certain artists. The site uses a music intelligence algorithm to dissect the characteristics of favorite songs and serve up others that are similar. Pandora’s engineers constantly tweak the playlists as they experiment with variations of the experience. For example, do listeners want to hear mostly familiar songs, or do they want to discover new music? One of the biggest issues they wrestle with: How frequently should Pandora repeat the same song or artist in a playlist? The site constantly tries new variations to arrive at the optimal number of repetitions, but it turns out a lot depends on other factors such as the time of day and where listeners are when they tune in. For example, Pandora’s data show that users welcome new music instead of the same old same old, but when they’re at work not so much. The company continues to tweak its algorithm as it tries to answer the elusive question, “Can you have too much of a good thing?”⁹⁵

CB AS I SEE IT

Pierre Chandon INSEAD, France



I am interested in food marketing, how it makes people fat, and how consumer research can help find solutions that improve health without killing the pleasure of eating or the food industry.

The obesity epidemic is largely driven by ever-increasing food portion sizes. Yet, our efforts to fight obesity have focused on trying to influence *what* people eat instead of *how much* they eat. Traditional public policy solutions (warnings, labels,

taxes, bans) are resisted by the food industry, which has focused on food reformulation instead. Unfortunately, these efforts have all had limited success because they are perceived as a threat to our freedom to eat the food that we know and like.

My research shows that regulators and food companies can unite to fight obesity by making people happier to spend more for less food, a triple win for public health, business, and eating enjoyment. Here is how:

- **Improve perception of food portion and package sizes.** Visual biases make us strongly underestimate today's supersized portions and resist downsizing. Drawing on our knowledge of these biases, we can increase acceptance of portion downsizing, by bringing original small sizes back to lunchroom menus (to reframe perceptions of and preferences for a "normal" size), or by using "stealth" downsizing that elongates, instead of shortening, packages in supermarkets.
- **Focus on the sensory pleasure of eating, rather than on food quantity, or even health.** We show that

highlighting sensory pleasure (which peaks with the first mouthful) leads school kids and fast-food patrons to choose, prefer, and pay more for smaller portions. This can be done easily in schools through sensory imagery training and in restaurants with more vivid menu descriptions.

Food and eating are fascinating research areas because they touch upon cognitive as well as social psychology, but also economics, sociology, and even the branch of philosophy related to taste (aesthetics). Because we all eat, it is rare to find someone who is not interested in the factors that, unbeknownst to us, influence what, when, and how much we eat. For example, in another study, I showed that people eat more, and less healthy, after their favorite football team was defeated, especially if it was a narrow defeat against a rival of the same strength, and eat less and more healthy after a victory. We also show that this happens because fans see the defeat of their team as their own failure (we say "we lost," not "they lost"), which makes it harder to self-regulate.⁹⁷

Most messages merely present one or more positive attributes about the product or reasons to buy it. These are *supportive arguments*. An alternative is to use a *two-sided message*, in which the message presents both positive and negative information. Research indicates that two-sided ads can be quite effective, yet marketers rarely use them.⁹⁸

Why would a marketer want to devote advertising space to publicize a product's negative attributes? Under the right circumstances, **refutational arguments** that first raise a negative issue and then dismiss it can be quite effective. This approach increases source credibility because it reduces *reporting bias*; this means that the receiver assumes the source has carefully considered both sides of the argument. Also, people who are skeptical about the product may be more receptive to a balanced argument instead of a "white-wash."⁹⁹ For example, after General Motors declared bankruptcy, an ad declared: "Let's be completely honest: No company wants to go through this."¹⁰⁰ Research evidence indicates that when experts have strong arguments on their side, they are actually more effective if they express some uncertainty rather than stating unequivocally that they are correct.¹⁰¹

This doesn't mean the marketer should go overboard and confess to major problems with the product (though hopefully there aren't any major ones to admit to). The typical refutational strategy discusses relatively minor attributes that may present a problem or fall short when the customer compares a product to competitors. Positive, important

attributes then refute these drawbacks. For example, Avis got a lot of mileage when it claimed to be only the “No. 2” car rental company, whereas an ad for Volkswagen woefully described one of its cars as a “lemon” because there was a scratch on the glove compartment chrome strip.¹⁰² A two-sided strategy appears to be the most effective when the audience is well educated (and presumably more impressed by a balanced argument).¹⁰³ It is also best to use when receivers are not already loyal to the product—“preaching to the choir” about possible drawbacks may raise doubts unnecessarily.

One important structural question: Should the argument draw conclusions, or should the marketer merely present the facts and let the consumer arrive at his or her own decision? On the one hand, consumers who make their own inferences instead of having ideas spoon-fed to them will form stronger, more accessible attitudes. On the other hand, leaving the conclusion ambiguous increases the chance that the consumer will not form the desired attitude.

The response to this issue depends on the consumer’s motivation to process the ad and the complexity of the arguments. If the message is personally relevant, people will pay attention to it and spontaneously form inferences. However, if the arguments are hard to follow or consumers lack the motivation to follow them, it’s safer for the ad to draw conclusions.¹⁰⁴

Should We Compare Our Product to Our Competitors?

In 1971 the FTC issued guidelines that encouraged advertisers to name competing brands in their ads. The government did this to improve the information available to consumers in ads, and indeed recent evidence indicates that, at least under some conditions, this type of presentation does result in more informed decision making.¹⁰⁵ However, advertisers need to tread lightly, especially when they risk ruffling the feathers of other companies. Fox rejected a commercial that Sodastream submitted for the 2015 Super Bowl because the actress Scarlett Johansson sensually sips her homemade soda and says, “Sorry, Coke and Pepsi.”¹⁰⁶

Comparative advertising refers to a message that compares two or more recognizable brands and weighs them in terms of one or more specific attributes.¹⁰⁷ An Arby’s campaign to promote its chicken sandwiches used this approach: One commercial, set in a fictitious McDonald’s boardroom, featured a young man who tries to convince McDonald’s executives to serve a healthier type of chicken as he proclaims, “I propose that McDonald’s stops putting phosphates, salt and water into its chicken. Consider replacing your chicken that is only about 70 percent chicken, with 100 percent all-natural chicken.” The room erupts in laughter. At the end of the spot, a voice-over chimes in: “Unlike McDonald’s, all of Arby’s chicken sandwiches are made with 100 percent all-natural chicken...”¹⁰⁸

This strategy can cut both ways, especially if the sponsor depicts the competition in a nasty or negative way. Although some comparative ads result in desired attitude changes, they may also be lower in believability and stir up **source derogation** (i.e., the consumer may doubt the credibility of a biased presentation).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, in some cultures (such as Asia), comparative advertising is rare because people find such a confrontational approach offensive.

New Message Formats: The Social Media Revolution

The novel “ice-bucket challenge” that swept the Internet in fall 2014 was a novel way to harness social media for a good cause; the movement that asked people to take a selfie of themselves dousing their heads in a bucket of ice water went viral and raised more than \$115 million for A.L.S. research. Researchers explain this success by pointing to several elements of the message including: the 24-hour deadline to either take the cold shower or pay the money (a specific goal as opposed to a more abstract one); the public nature of the challenge that allowed participants to share their selfies online; and the slight amount of self-sacrifice that was involved. Yes, people tend to donate more money when they have to suffer a bit for the cause; researchers label this the **martyrdom effect**. As one put it, “We’re supposed to prefer pleasure to pain but, when it comes to charity, you don’t hear about massage-a-thons or dessert-a-thons.”¹¹⁰

The “ice-bucket challenge” that swept the Internet was a novel way to harness social media for a good cause.

Source: Jurgen Falchle/Fotolia



5

An array of new ways to transmit information in both text and picture form offers marketers exciting alternatives to traditional advertising on TV, billboards, magazines, and so on.¹¹¹ **M-commerce** (mobile commerce), where marketers promote their goods and services via wireless devices, including cell phones, PDAs, and iPods, is red-hot. European and Asian consumers already rely on their cell phones to connect them to the world in ways we are only starting to see in the United States. In Asia, tiny cell phone screens have become electronic wallets that buy Cokes from vending machines and devices that dole out McDonald’s coupons on the phone screen. Among the Chinese, cell phones have become such important status symbols that relatives at funeral rites burn paper cell phone effigies so the dead will have their mobiles in the afterlife.

If you’re on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn (and the odds are good that you are), you’re one of the billions of people who use **social media** applications globally. This term refers to the set of technologies that enable users to create content and share it with thousands or even millions of others. We’ll dive into social media in more detail in Chapter 14. In addition to “the obvious suspects” (i.e. popular social media platforms including Facebook,

Pinterest, Foursquare, Tumblr, and so on), there are many other alternatives for marketers that want to harness these new technologies to communicate with customers. Some of these may even use multiple platforms, unfold over a period of time, and integrate social media with real world experiences. A **transmedia storytelling** strategy typically includes communications media that range from Web sites, blogs, and email to recorded phone calls and even graffiti messages scrawled in public spaces.

OBJECTIVE 8-10 Reality Engineering

Many modern marketers are reality engineers.

The Pennsylvania city of Altoona temporarily renamed itself “POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold” to promote a popular movie that parodies product-placement advertising; the movie’s producers sold the title to the maker of POM Wonderful pomegranate juice for \$1 million.¹¹⁴ **Reality engineering** occurs when marketers appropriate elements of popular culture and use them as promotional vehicles.¹¹⁵ It’s hard to know what’s real anymore; specialists even create “used jeans” when they apply chemical washes, sandpaper, and other techniques to make a new pair of jeans look like they’re ready for retirement. The industry has a term for this practice that sums up the contradiction: *new vintage!*¹¹⁶

The grassroots efforts we often witness today to capture our attention epitomize **guerrilla marketing**: Promotional strategies that use unconventional means and venues to encourage word of mouth about products. This has nothing to do with monkey business; the term implies that the marketer “ambushes” the unsuspecting recipient because the message pops up in a place where he or she wasn’t expecting to see an advertisement. These campaigns often recruit legions of real consumers who agree to engage in some kind of street theater or perhaps place messages in unconventional locations like public restrooms or on city sidewalks to get in the face of media-saturated consumers.

Reality engineers have many tools at their disposal; they plant products in movies, pump scents into offices and stores, attach video monitors in the backs of taxicabs, buy ad space on police patrol cars, or film faked “documentaries” such as *The Blair Witch Project*.¹¹⁷ This process is accelerating: Historical analyses of Broadway plays, best-selling novels, and the lyrics of hit songs, for example, clearly show large increases in the use of real brand names over time.¹¹⁸

Here are some examples of reality engineering:

- Mattel announced that it was putting a “for sale” sign on the Barbie Malibu Dreamhouse, where the doll character supposedly has lived in comfort since the introduction of Malibu Barbie in 1971. The campaign mixed actual and imaginary elements. A section of the real estate Web site Trulia carried the for-sale listing that described the property as “the dreamiest of dream houses.”¹¹⁹
- The Quill.com division of the office supply retail chain Staples carries a line of products from the Dunder Mifflin Paper Company of Scranton, PA. As any fan knows, that is the fictional setting of the TV show *The Office*, which recently went off the air after nine seasons.¹²⁰
- The Coachella music festival made headlines with a “virtual performance” (via hologram) of the deceased performer Tupac Shakur. YouTube reported more than 15 million views of the spectacle within 48 hours, and Tupac’s greatest hits album made the *Billboard 200* for the first time in 12 years. Plans are underway to debut holograms of other dead stars including Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson.¹²¹
- A New York couple funded their \$80,000 wedding by selling corporate plugs; they inserted coupons in their programs and tossed 25 bouquets from 1-800-FLOWERS.

Product Placement

When the new James Bond movie, *Spectre*, came out in 2015 the heroes and villains chased one another in flashy cars including an Aston Martin, Range Rover, and Jaguar C-X75.¹²² A music video for the Jennifer Lopez song “Live It Up” (featuring Pitbull) hyped

Net Profit



The band Nine Inch Nails was one of the first marketers to use a transmedia storytelling technique. To promote the *Year Zero* album, game players searched for clues to reveal images from “the future.” The first clue appeared on the back of a shirt promoting Nine Inch Nails’ European tour. On the back of the shirt several letters were highlighted that spelled out “I am trying to believe.” The words led fans to the Web site *iamtryingtobelieve*, which describes a drug named “Parepin” that, in the *Year Zero* story, is being added to the water supply to cloud people’s minds.¹¹² Other clues linked back to the band, such as a USB flash drive left in a bathroom stall at a concert, which in turn led fans to other Web sites that let them download printable stickers, stencils, and posters. Eventually, some players obtained special mobile phones that rang later with instructions to find a bus that took them to—drumroll—a special live performance by the band.¹¹³

Swarovski, Nokia, Ice Watches, and Beluga vodka. Apple took top honors in 2014 movie product placements; its products appeared in about one-fourth of all number-one box-office hits during the year that ran the gamut from *Birdman* to *Sex Tape*. Target stores played a role in episodes of the CW's *Jane the Virgin* TV show and a Toyota car was written into the plot of an episode of ABC's *Modern Family*.¹²³

That's quite a change; In the not-so-distant past, TV networks demanded that producers "geek" (alter) brand names before they appeared in a show, as when *Melrose Place* changed a Nokia cell phone to a "Nokio."¹²⁴ Today, real products pop up everywhere. Well-established brands lend an aura of realism to the action, while upstarts benefit tremendously from the exposure. In the movie version of *Sex and the City*, Carrie's assistant admits that she "borrows" her pricey handbags from a rental Web site called Bag Borrow or Steal. The company's head of marketing commented about the mention, "It's like the *Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval. It gives us instant credibility and recognition."¹²⁵

Bag Borrow or Steal got a free plug (oops, they got another one here!). In many cases, however, these "plugs" are no accident. **Product placement** is the insertion of real products in fictional movies, TV shows, books, and plays. Many types of products play starring (or at least supporting) roles in our culture; the most visible brands range from Coca-Cola and Nike apparel to the Chicago Bears football team and the Pussycat Dolls band.¹²⁶

Product placement is by no means a casual process: Marketers pay about \$25 billion per year to plug their brands in TV and movies. Several firms specialize in arranging these appearances; if they're lucky, they manage to do it on the cheap when they get a client's product noticed by prop masters who work on the shows. For example, in a cafeteria scene during an episode of *Grey's Anatomy*, it was no coincidence that the character Izzie Stevens happened to drink a bottle of Izze Sparkling Pomegranate fruit beverage. The placement company that represents PepsiCo paid nothing to insert the prop in that case, but it probably didn't get off so easily when the new brand also showed up in HBO's *Entourage* and CBS's *The Big Bang Theory* and *The New Adventures of Old Christine*.¹²⁷

Today, most major releases brim with real products, even though a majority of consumers believe the line between advertising and programming is becoming too fuzzy and distracting (though as we might expect, concerns about this blurring of boundaries are more pronounced among older people than younger).¹²⁸ A study reported that consumers respond well to placements when the show's plot makes the product's benefit clear. Similarly, audiences had a favorable impression when a retailer provided furniture, clothes, appliances, and other staples for the struggling families who get help on ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.¹²⁹

Some researchers claim that product placement aids consumer decision making because the familiarity of these props creates a sense of cultural belonging while they generate feelings of emotional security. Another study found that placements consistent with a show's plot do enhance brand attitudes, but incongruent placements that aren't consistent with the plot affect brand attitudes *negatively* because they seem out of place.¹³⁰

Advergaming

If you roar down the streets in the *Need for Speed Underground 2* video racing game, you'll pass a Best Buy store as well as billboards that hawk Old Spice and Burger King.¹³¹ *America's Army*, produced by the U.S. government as a recruitment tool, is one of the most successful advergaming. Twenty-eight percent of those who visit the *America's Army* Web page click through to the recruitment page.

About three-quarters of U.S. consumers now play video games, yet to many marketers the idea of integrating their brands with the stories that games tell is still a well-kept secret. Others, including Axe, Mini Cooper, and Burger King, have figured this out: They create game narratives that immerse players in the action. Orbitz offers playable banner-games that result in the highest click-through rate of any kind of advertising the online travel site does. However, these linkages sometimes draw criticism if they seem to encourage violent behavior. Recently, as the game maker Electronic Arts (EA) took steps to launch its *Medal of Honor Warfighter* game, the company put up a Web site that included links to the catalogs of the manufacturers of the real kinds of guns, knives, and combat-style gear

the game includes, such as a powerful sniper's rifle and accessories for assault weapons. After gamers protested, EA disabled the links.¹³²

Even so, the future is bright for **advergaming**, where online games merge with interactive advertisements that let companies target specific types of consumers. These placements can be short exposures such as a billboard that appears around a racetrack, or they can take the form of branded entertainment and integrate the brand directly into the action. The mushrooming popularity of user-generated videos on YouTube and other sites creates a growing market to link ads to these sources as well. This strategy is growing so rapidly that there's even a new (trademarked) term for it. **Plinking™** is the act of embedding a product or service link in a video.

Why is this new medium so hot?¹³³

- Compared to a 30-second TV spot, advertisers can get viewers' attention for a much longer time. Players spend an average of 5 to 7 minutes on an advergaming site.
- Physiological measures confirm that players are highly focused and stimulated when they play a game.
- Marketers can tailor the nature of the game and the products in it to the profiles of different users. They can direct strategy games to upscale, educated users, while they gear action games to younger users.
- The format gives advertisers great flexibility because game makers now ship PC video games with blank spaces in them to insert virtual ads. This allows advertisers to change messages on the fly and pay only for the number of game players that actually see them. Sony Corporation now allows clients to directly insert online ads into PlayStation 3 videogames; the in-game ads change over time through a user's Internet connection.
- There's great potential to track usage and conduct marketing research. For example, an inaudible audio signal coded into Activision's *Tony Hawk's Underground 2* skating game on PCs alerts a Nielsen monitoring system each time the test game players view Jeep product placements within the game.

Types of Message Appeals

A persuasive message can tug at the heartstrings or scare you, make you laugh, make you cry, or leave you yearning to learn more. In this section, we'll review the major alternatives available to communicators.

Emotional Versus Rational Appeals

Colgate-Palmolive's Total brand was the first toothpaste to claim that it fights gingivitis, a benefit that let Colgate inch ahead of Procter & Gamble's Crest for the first time in decades. Colgate initially made a scientific pitch for its new entry because it emphasized Total's germ-fighting abilities. In newer ads, however, former model Brooke Shields cavorted with two children (not hers) as soft music played in the background. She stated, "Having a healthy smile is important to me. Not just as an actress but as a mom."¹³⁴

So, which is better: to appeal to the head or to the heart? The answer often depends on the nature of the product and the type of relationship consumers have with it. It's hard to gauge the precise effects of rational versus emotional appeals. Although recall of ad content tends to be better for "thinking" ads than for "feeling" ads, conventional measures of advertising effectiveness (e.g., day-after recall) may not be adequate to assess cumulative effects of emotional ads. These open-ended measures assess cognitive responses, and they may penalize feeling ads because the reactions are not as easy to articulate.¹³⁵

Sex Appeals

A risqué ad campaign for Kraft's Zesty Italian salad dressing attracted the attention of a conservative activist group called One Million Moms. Members took to the Web to protest a print ad featuring a hunky male model having a naked picnic. The group stated, "Last

week's issue of *People* magazine had the most disgusting ad on the inside front cover that we have ever seen Kraft produce. A full 2-page ad features a naked man lying on a picnic blanket with only a small portion of the blanket barely covering his genitals. It is easy to see what the ad is really selling." Kraft responded, "Our Kraft dressing's 'Let's Get Zesty' campaign is a playful and flirtatious way to reach our consumers. People have overwhelmingly said they're enjoying the campaign and having fun with it."¹³⁶ Apparently not everyone.

Echoing the widely held belief that "sex sells," many marketing communications for products from perfumes to autos feature heavy doses of erotic suggestions that range from subtle hints to blatant displays of skin. Of course, the prevalence of **sex appeals** varies from country to country. Even U.S. firms run ads elsewhere that would not go over at home. For example, a "cheeky" ad campaign designed to boost the appeal of U.S.-made Lee jeans among Europeans features a series of bare buttocks. The messages are based on the concept that if bottoms could choose jeans, they would opt for Lee: "Bottoms feel better in Lee Jeans."¹³⁷

Perhaps not surprisingly, female nudity in print ads generates negative feelings and tension among female consumers, whereas men's reactions are more positive—although women with more liberal attitudes toward sex are more likely to be receptive.¹³⁸ In a case of turnabout being fair play, another study found that males dislike nude males in ads, whereas females responded well to undressed males—but not totally nude ones like the guy in the Kraft ad.¹³⁹ Women also respond more positively to sexual themes when they occur in the context of a committed relationship rather than just gratuitous lust.¹⁴⁰

So, does sex work? Although erotic content does appear to draw attention to an ad, its use may actually be counterproductive. In one survey, an overwhelming 61 percent of the respondents said that sexual imagery in a product's ad makes them *less* likely to buy it.¹⁴¹ Ironically, a provocative picture can be *too* effective; it can attract so much attention as to hinder processing and recall of the ad's contents. Sexual appeals appear to be ineffective when marketers use them merely as a "trick" to grab attention. They do, however, appear to work when the product is *itself* related to sex (e.g., lingerie or Viagra).¹⁴²

A research firm explored how men and women look at sexually themed ads and what effect, if any, what they choose to look at might have on the ads' effectiveness. One part of the study used special software to follow the visual behavior of respondents as they looked at print ads. The ad sample consisted of two U.S. print ads, one sexual and one nonsexual, from each of five product categories. When the participants looked at a sexual ad, men tended to ignore the text as they focused instead on the woman in it, whereas the women participants tended first to explore the ad's text elements. Men said they liked the sexual ads more, they liked the products advertised in them more, and they would be more likely to buy those products. In contrast, women scored the sexual ads lower than the nonsexual ones on all three of those criteria.¹⁴³

Humor Appeals

A TV commercial for Metamucil showed a National Park Service ranger who pours a glass of the laxative down Old Faithful and announces that the product keeps the famous geyser "regular." Yellowstone National Park started getting letters from offended viewers. Park officials also had their own concerns: They didn't want people to think that the geyser needed "help" or that it's OK to throw things down into it!¹⁴⁴

Do **humor appeals** work? Overall, funny advertisements do get attention. One study found that recognition scores for *humorous* liquor ads were better than average. However, the verdict is mixed as to whether humor affects recall or product attitudes in a significant way.¹⁴⁵ One reason silly ads may shift opinions is that they provide a source of *distraction*. A funny ad inhibits **counterarguing** (in which a consumer thinks of reasons why he or she doesn't agree with the message); this increases the likelihood of message acceptance because the consumer doesn't come up with arguments against the product.¹⁴⁶

Fear Appeals

Volkswagen's advertising campaign to promote the safety of its Jetta model really got people's attention. The spots depict graphic car crashes from the perspective of the passengers

Marketing Pitfall



A series of funny ads created by a German agency didn't make everyone laugh. Grey Germany did three condom ads for a

pharmacy chain. They implied that if more people used condoms the world would have been spared such figures as Mao Tse-Tung, Adolf Hitler, and Osama bin Laden. Each execution depicted a swimming sperm with a likeness of one of the despised characters. Critics complained that the ads were racist, offensive, and inappropriate; the campaign apparently didn't exactly enhance the retailer's image.¹⁴⁷

who chatter away as they drive down the street. Without warning, other vehicles come out of nowhere and brutally smash into their cars. In one spot, viewers see a passenger's head striking an airbag. The spots end with shots of stunned passengers, the damaged Jetta, and the slogan: "Safe happens." The ads look so realistic that consumers called the company to ask if any of the actors were hurt.¹⁴⁸

Fear appeals emphasize the negative consequences that can occur unless the consumer changes a behavior or an attitude. These types of messages are fairly common in advertising, although they are more common in social marketing contexts in which organizations encourage people to convert to healthier lifestyles by quitting smoking, using contraception, or relying on a designated driver. Several countries including the United States are looking at tough new guidelines for cigarette advertising and packaging. These options include requiring a range of horrific images to appear directly on the cigarette packaging (and in cigarette ads) to show people who have suffered from the ravages of cigarettes, such as a man with cigarette smoke coming out of a tracheotomy hole in his throat and a cadaver on an autopsy table. In 2013 a U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that these images, along with the phone number 1-800-QUIT-NOW, are "unabashed attempts to evoke emotion" and "browbeat consumers" to stop buying the companies' products. However, the FDA still plans to continue the fight.¹⁴⁹

This tactic, if and when it's implemented, may well scare away would-be smokers, but do fear appeals work more generally? Most research on this topic indicates that these negative messages are most effective when the advertiser uses only a moderate threat and when the ad presents a solution to the problem. Otherwise, consumers will tune out the ad because they can do nothing to solve or avoid the threat.¹⁵⁰

When a weak threat is ineffective, there may be insufficient elaboration of the harmful consequences of the behavior. When a strong threat doesn't work, there may be too much elaboration that interferes with the processing of the recommended change in behavior; the receiver is too busy thinking of reasons the message doesn't apply to him or her to pay attention to the offered solution.¹⁵¹ A study that manipulated subjects' degree of anxiety about AIDS, for example, found that they evaluated condom ads most positively when the ads used a moderate threat. Copy that promoted use of the condom because "Sex is a risky business" (moderate threat) resulted in more attitude change than either a weaker threat that emphasized the product's sensitivity or a strong threat that discussed the certainty of death from AIDS.¹⁵²

Similarly, scare tactics have not generally been an effective way to convince teenagers to curb their use of alcohol or drugs. Teens simply tune out the message or deny its relevance to them.¹⁵³ However, a study of adolescent responses to social versus physical threat appeals in drug prevention messages found that social threat (such as being ostracized by one's peers) is a more effective strategy.¹⁵⁴

The Message as Art Form: Metaphors Be with You

Just like novelists, poets, and artists, marketers are storytellers. Their communications take the form of stories because they describe intangible product benefits. The storyteller, therefore, must express these in some concrete form so that consumers will get the message.

Advertising creatives rely (consciously or not) on well-known literary devices to communicate these meanings. For example, characters such as Mr. Goodwrench, the Jolly Green Giant, and Charlie the Tuna may personify a product or service. Many ads take the form of an **allegory**, which is a story about an abstract trait or concept that advertisers tell in the context of a person, animal, vegetable, or object.

A **metaphor** places two dissimilar objects into a close relationship such that "A is B," whereas a **simile** compares two objects, "A is like B." A and B, however dissimilar, share some quality that the metaphor highlights. Metaphors allow the marketer to apply meaningful images to everyday events. In the stock market, "white knights" battle "hostile raiders" with the help of "poison pills"; Tony the Tiger equates cereal with strength and "you're in good hands with Allstate" insurance.¹⁵⁵

Resonance is another type of literary device advertisers frequently use. It is a form of presentation that combines a play on words with a relevant picture. Whereas

A fear appeal from South Africa.
 Source: Courtesy of brandhouse



metaphor substitutes one meaning for another by connecting two things that are in some way similar, resonance employs an element that has a double meaning—such as a *pun*, in which two words sound similar but have different meanings. For example, an ad for a diet strawberry shortcake dessert might bear the copy “berried treasure” so that the brand conveys qualities we associate with buried treasure such as valuable and hidden. An ad for ASICS athletic shoes proclaimed, “We believe women should be running the country” as it depicted a woman jogging, whereas a Bounce fabric softener ad asked “Is there something creeping up behind you?” as it showed a woman’s dress bunched up on her back as a result of static. Because the text departs from expectations, it creates a state of tension or uncertainty on the part of the viewer until he or she figures out the word-play. Once the consumer “gets it,” he or she may prefer the ad to a more straightforward message.¹⁵⁶

Just as a novelist or artist can tell a story in words or pictures, we can choose several ways to address our consumer audiences. Advertisers structure commercials like other art forms; as we’ve seen, they borrow conventions from literature and art to communicate.¹⁵⁷ One important distinction is between a *drama* and a *lecture*.¹⁵⁸ A lecture is like a speech: The source speaks directly to the audience to inform them about a product or to persuade them to buy it. Because a lecture clearly implies an attempt at persuasion, the audience will regard it as such. Assuming it motivates listeners, they weigh the merits of the message along with the source’s credibility. Cognitive responses occur (e.g., “How much did Coke pay him to say that?”). Consumers accept the appeal if it overcomes objections and is consistent with their beliefs.

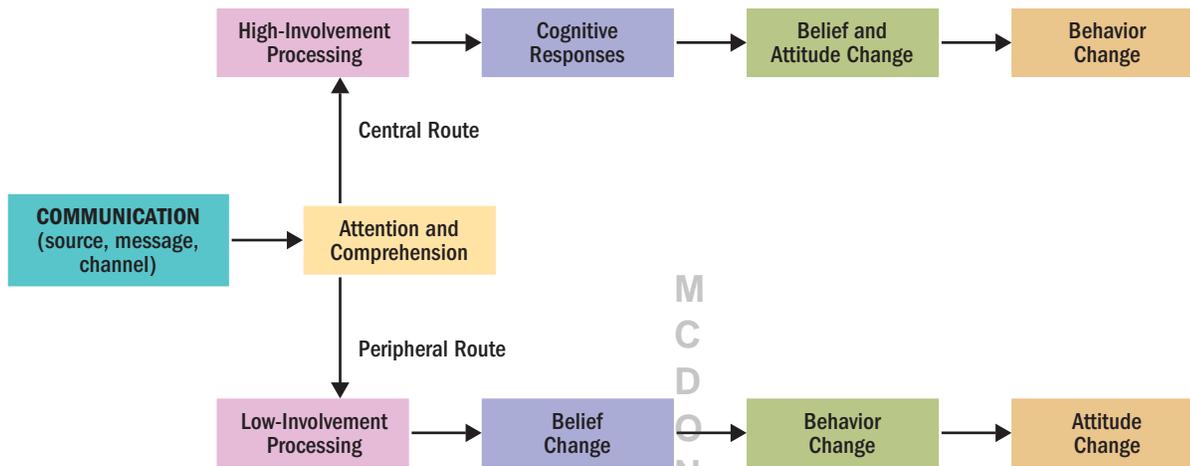
OBJECTIVE 8-11

Audience characteristics help to determine whether the nature of the source or the message itself will be relatively more effective.

**The Source Versus the Message:
 Do We Sell the Steak or the Sizzle?**

We’ve discussed two major components of the communications model: the source and the message. At the end of the day, which component persuades consumers to change their attitudes? Should we worry more about *what* we say or *how* we say it and *who* says it?

Surprise! The answer is it depends. As we saw in Chapter 5, consumers’ level of involvement determines which cognitive

Figure 8.7 THE ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL (ELM) OF PERSUASION

processes will activate when they receive a message. This in turn influences which aspects of a communication they process. Like travelers who come to a fork in the road, they choose one path or the other. The direction they take determines which aspects of the marketing communication will work and which will fall on deaf ears.

The **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)** assumes that, under conditions of high involvement, we take the *central route* to persuasion. Under conditions of low involvement, we take a *peripheral route* instead. Figure 8.7 diagrams this model.¹⁵⁹

The Central Route to Persuasion

According to the ELM, when we find the information in a persuasive message relevant or interesting, we pay careful attention to it. In this event, we focus on the arguments the marketer presents and generate *cognitive responses* to this content. An expectant mother who hears a radio message that warns about drinking while pregnant might say to herself, “She’s right. I really should stop drinking alcohol now that I’m pregnant.” Or she might offer counterarguments, such as, “That’s a bunch of baloney. My mother had a cocktail every night when she was pregnant with me, and I turned out fine.” If people generate counterarguments in response to a message, it’s less likely that they will yield to the message, whereas if they generate further supporting arguments, it’s more likely they’ll comply.¹⁶⁰

The central route to persuasion involves the standard hierarchy of effects we discussed earlier in this chapter. Recall this assumes that we carefully form and evaluate beliefs; the strong attitudes that result in turn guide our behavior. The implication is that message factors, such as the quality of arguments an ad presents, will determine attitude change. Prior knowledge about a topic results in more thoughts about the message and also increases the number of counterarguments.¹⁶¹

The Peripheral Route to Persuasion

In contrast, we take the peripheral route when we’re not really motivated to think about the marketer’s arguments. Instead, we’re likely to use other cues to decide how to react to the message. These cues include the product’s package, the attractiveness of the source, or the context in which the message appears. We call sources of information extraneous to the actual message *peripheral cues* because they surround the actual message.

The peripheral route to persuasion highlights the **paradox of low involvement**: When we *don’t* care as much about a product, the way it’s presented (e.g., who endorses it or the visuals that go with it) increases in importance. The implication here is that we may buy low-involvement products chiefly because the marketer designs a “sexy” package, chooses a popular spokesperson, or creates a stimulating shopping environment. In

other words, especially when a consumer engages in emotional or behavioral decision making, these environmental cues become more important than when he or she performs cognitive decision making; as a result, he or she looks more carefully at the product’s performance or other objective attributes.

To recap, the basic idea of the ELM is that highly involved consumers look for the “steak” (e.g., strong, rational arguments). Those who are less involved go for the “sizzle” (e.g., the colors and images in packaging or famous people’s endorsements). It is important to remember, however, that the *same* communications variable can be both a central and a peripheral cue, depending on its relation to the attitude object. The physical attractiveness of a model might serve as a peripheral cue in a car commercial, but her beauty might be a central cue for a product such as shampoo where a major product benefit is to enhance attractiveness.¹⁶²

MyMarketingLab

To complete the problems with the , go to EOC Discussion Questions in the MyLab as well as additional Marketing Metrics questions only available in MyMarketingLab.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Now that you have finished reading this chapter, you should understand why:

1. It is important for consumer researchers to understand the nature and power of attitudes.

An *attitude* is a predisposition to evaluate an object or product positively or negatively. We form attitudes toward products and services, and these attitudes often determine whether we will purchase or not.

2. Attitudes are more complex than they first appear.

Three components make up an attitude: beliefs, affect, and behavioral intentions.

3. We form attitudes in several ways.

Attitude researchers traditionally assumed that we learn attitudes in a fixed sequence: First we form beliefs (*cognitions*) about an attitude object, then we evaluate that object (*affect*), and then we take some action (*behavior*). Depending on the consumer’s level of involvement and the circumstances, though, his attitudes can result from other hierarchies of effects as well. A key to attitude formation is the function the attitude holds for the consumer (e.g., is it utilitarian or ego defensive?).

4. A need to maintain consistency among all of our attitudinal components often motivates us to alter one or more of them.

One organizing principle of attitude formation is the importance of consistency among attitudinal components—that

is, we alter some parts of an attitude to be in line with others. Such theoretical approaches to attitudes as cognitive dissonance theory, self-perception theory, and balance theory stress the vital role of our need for consistency.

5. Attitude models identify specific components and combine them to predict a consumer’s overall attitude toward a product or brand.

Multiattribute attitude models underscore the complexity of attitudes: They specify that we identify and combine a set of beliefs and evaluations to predict an overall attitude. Researchers integrate factors such as subjective norms and the specificity of attitude scales into attitude measures to improve predictability.

6. The communications model identifies several important components for marketers when they try to change consumers’ attitudes toward products and services.

Persuasion refers to an attempt to change consumers’ attitudes. The communications model specifies the elements marketers need to transmit meaning. These include a source, a message, a medium, a receiver, and feedback.

7. The consumer who processes a message is not the passive receiver of information marketers once believed him or her to be.

The traditional view of communications regards the perceiver as a passive element in the process. New developments in interactive communications highlight the need to

C O U G H B R I T T A N Y 5 9 9 2 B U

consider the active roles a consumer plays when he or she obtains product information and builds a relationship with a company. Advocates of permission marketing argue that it's more effective to send messages to consumers who have already indicated an interest in learning about a product than trying to hit people "cold" with these solicitations.

8. Several factors influence the effectiveness of a message source.

Two important characteristics that determine the effectiveness of a source are its attractiveness and credibility. Although celebrities often serve this purpose, their credibility is not always as strong as marketers hope. Marketing messages that consumers perceive as buzz (those that are authentic and consumer generated) tend to be more effective than those they categorize as hype (those that are inauthentic, biased, and company generated).

9. The way a marketer structures his or her message determines how persuasive it will be.

Some elements of a message that help to determine its effectiveness include the following: conveyance of the message in words or pictures; employment of an emotional or

a rational appeal; frequency of repetition; conclusion drawing; presentation of both sides of the argument; and inclusion of fear, humor, or sexual references. Advertising messages often incorporate elements from art or literature, such as dramas, lectures, metaphors, allegories, and resonance.

10. Many modern marketers are reality engineers.

Reality engineering occurs when marketers appropriate elements of popular culture to use in their promotional strategies. These elements include sensory and spatial aspects of everyday existence, whether in the form of products that appear in movies, scents pumped into offices and stores, billboards, theme parks, or video monitors attached to shopping carts.

11. Audience characteristics help to determine whether the nature of the source or the message itself will be relatively more effective.

The relative influence of the source versus the message depends on the receiver's level of involvement with the communication. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) specifies that source effects are more likely to sway a less-involved consumer, whereas a more-involved consumer will be more likely to attend to and process components of the actual message.

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REVIEW

- 8-1 How can an attitude play an ego-defensive function?
- ★ 8-2 Describe the ABC model of attitudes.
- 8-3 List the three hierarchies of attitudes, and describe the major differences among them.
- 8-4 How do levels of commitment to an attitude influence the likelihood that it will become part of the way we think about a product in the long term?
- 8-5 We sometimes enhance our attitude toward a product after we buy it. How does the theory of cognitive dissonance explain this change?
- 8-6 What is the foot-in-the-door technique? How does self-perception theory relate to this effect?
- 8-7 What are latitudes of acceptance and rejection? How does a consumer's level of involvement with a product affect his latitude of acceptance?
- 8-8 According to balance theory, how can we tell if a triad is balanced or unbalanced? How can consumers restore balance to an unbalanced triad?
- 8-9 Describe a multiattribute attitude model and list its key components.
- ★ 8-10 "Do as I say, not as I do." How does this statement relate to attitude models?
- 8-11 What is a subjective norm, and how does it influence our attitudes?
- 8-12 What are three obstacles to predicting behavior even if we know a person's attitudes?
- 8-13 Describe the Theory of Reasoned Action. Why might it not be equally valuable when we apply it to non-Western cultures?

- ★ 8-14 List three psychological principles related to persuasion.
- ★ 8-15 Describe the elements of the traditional communications model, and tell how the updated model differs.
- 8-16 What is source credibility, and what are two factors that influence our decision as to whether a source is credible?
- 8-17 What is the difference between buzz and hype?
- 8-18 What is a halo effect, and why does it happen?
- 8-19 What is an avatar, and why might an advertiser choose to use one instead of hiring a celebrity endorser?
- 8-20 Marketers must decide whether to incorporate rational or emotional appeals in a communications strategy. Describe conditions that are more favorable to one or the other.
- 8-21 When should a marketer present a message visually versus verbally?
- 8-22 How does the Two-Factor Theory explain the effects of message repetition on attitude change?
 - (a) When is it best to present a two-sided message versus a one-sided message?
- 8-23 Do humorous ads work? If so, under what conditions?
 - (a) Should marketers ever try to arouse fear to persuade consumers?
- 8-24 Why do marketers use metaphors to craft persuasive messages? Give two examples of this technique.
- 8-25 What is the difference between a lecture and a drama?
- 8-26 Describe the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and summarize how it relates to the relative importance of *what* is said versus *how* it's said.

M C D N O U G H E R I T A N Y 5 9 9 2 B U

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR CHALLENGE

■ DISCUSS

- 8-27 The Federal Trade Commission recently sponsored a conference on "Blurred Lines: Advertising or Content?" that reflects the agency's concerns about the resemblance between native ads and "real" articles.¹⁶³ The chapter discusses the problem of *sock puppeting* where executives masquerade as everyday consumers and post negative reviews about their competitors. Numerous cases have come to light of hotels, restaurants, and other businesses that pay customers to write positive evaluations on review sites. *Wikipedia* can be edited by anyone. Do we care about source credibility anymore? What does the future look like for source effects in an age when anyone can post content, and pretend it came from a credible source?
- 8-28 Many universities use commercial companies to run campus Web sites and email services. These agreements provide Web services to colleges at little or no cost. But these actions arouse controversy because major companies pay to place advertising on the sites. That gives marketers the opportunity to influence the attitudes of thousands of

students who are involuntarily exposed to product messages. University administrators argue that they could not provide the services by themselves; students expect to be able to fill out financial aid forms and register for classes online. Colleges that do not offer such services may lose their ability to attract students. How do you feel about this situation? Should companies be able to buy access to your eyeballs from the school you pay to attend if it means you get access to enhanced online services in return?

8-29 As more of us rely on our smartphones, advertisers are following us onto this platform. The first iAds now appear on iPhones and iPods, and the early evidence is that they work well. In one study (funded by Apple), people who were exposed to an iAd for Campbell's were more than twice as likely to recall it than those who had seen a TV ad. Recipients were also four times more likely to say they would buy the advertised product.¹⁶⁴ As a consumer, is this good news or bad news? How do you feel about getting ads on your smartphone? How do you

think the marketplace will react to this new advertising medium as it becomes more commonplace?

- 8-30** An antismoking ad sponsored by the New York City Department of Health crossed the line for many viewers. The spot showed a young boy who cries hysterically as a crowd of adults walk by him. The voiceover says, “This is how your child feels after losing you for a minute. Just imagine if they lost you for life.” The ad aroused a lot of controversy because it wasn’t clear if the child was merely acting or if the spot’s producers provoked his tears for the camera. Is this genre of “scared straight” advertising an effective way to convince people to curb unhealthy behaviors like smoking?
- 8-31** Google updated its terms of service to allow shared endorsements though it’s likely most users don’t read these terms too carefully. Not everyone is thrilled about finding out his or her comments appear in an ad without giving explicit permission. Users who claimed the company had not adequately notified them about how it was using endorsements sued Facebook.¹⁶⁵ What should be the platform’s obligation to ask permission? Are we as consumers responsible for whatever it does so long as we agree to the site’s terms of service (and read the fine print)?
- 8-32** The Coca-Cola Company pulled a U.K. Internet promotion campaign after parents accused it of targeting children by using references to a notorious pornographic movie. As part of its efforts to reach young social media users for its Dr. Pepper brand, the company took over consenting users’ Facebook status boxes. Then, the company would post mildly embarrassing questions such as “Lost my special blankie. How will I go sleepies?” and “What’s wrong with peeing in the shower?” But, when a parent discovered that her 14-year-old daughter’s profile had been updated with a message that directly referred to a hardcore porn film, the plan backfired and Coke had to pull the promotion.¹⁶⁶ What does it take to get the attention of jaded young people, who get exposed to all kinds of messages in cyberspace? What guidelines (if any) should marketers follow when they try to talk to young people on social media platforms?
- 8-33** *Aflog* is a fake blog a company posts to build buzz around its brand. Is this ethical?
- 8-34** The *sleeper effect* implies that perhaps we shouldn’t worry too much about how positively people evaluate a source. Similarly, there’s a saying in public relations that “any publicity is good publicity.” Do you agree?
- 8-35** Discuss some conditions that would cause you to advise a marketer to use a comparative advertising strategy.
- 8-36** The American Medical Association encountered a firestorm of controversy when it agreed to sponsor a line of healthcare products that Sunbeam manufactured (a decision it later reversed). Should trade or professional organizations, journalists, professors, and others endorse specific products at the expense of other offerings?
- 8-37** Many, many companies rely on celebrity endorsers as communications sources to persuade. Especially when

they target younger people, these spokespeople often are “cool” musicians, athletes, or movie stars. In your opinion, who would be the most effective celebrity endorser today, and why? Who would be the least effective? Why?

- 8-38** Swiss Legend, a watch brand, gets famous people to wear its colorful timepieces. One way it does this is to give away its products at awards shows. Publicists call this common practice “gifting the talent”: Companies provide stars with “goody bags” full of complimentary products.¹⁶⁷ What do you think about the practice of “gifting the talent” to accumulate endorsements? Is this a sound strategy? Is it ethical for celebrities to accept these gifts?
- 8-39** Watchdog groups have long decried product placements because they blur the line between content and advertising without adequately informing viewers. The networks themselves appear to be divided on how far they want to open the gate. According to one study, the effectiveness of product placement varies by product category and type of placement. Consumers indicate that product placements have the most influence on their grocery, electronics, and apparel purchases. The most common platform for a placement is to get a brand shown on a T-shirt or other piece of an actor’s wardrobe.¹⁶⁸ What do you think about this practice? Under what conditions is product placement likely to influence you and your friends? When (if ever) is it counterproductive?
- 8-40** One of the most controversial intersections between marketing and society occurs when companies provide “educational materials” to schools.¹⁶⁹ Many firms, including Nike, Hershey, Crayola, Nintendo, and Foot Locker, provide free book covers swathed in ads. Standard art supplies, blocks, trucks, and dolls get supplemented with Milton Bradley and Care Bears worksheets, Purell hand-cleaning activities, and Pizza Hut reading programs. Clearasil provides sample packets of its acne medication along with brochures to educate high school students about proper skin care; the handouts also direct students to the Clearasil Web site where they can register for music downloads and iPods. Other companies contract with schools to run focus groups with their students during the school day to get reactions to new product ideas. Some schools encourage kids to practice their math as they count Tootsie Rolls, and the kids use reading software that bears the logos of Kmart, Coke, Pepsi, and Cap’n Crunch cereal. Many educators argue that these materials are a godsend for resource-poor schools that otherwise could not provide computers and other goodies to their students. However, a California law bans the use of textbooks with brand names and company logos. This legislation was prompted by complaints from parents about a middle-school math book that uses names such as Barbie, Oreos, Nike, and Sony PlayStation in word problems. What’s your position on these practices? Should corporations be allowed to promote their products in schools in exchange for donations of educational materials, computers, and so on?

■ APPLY

- 8-41** Think of a behavior someone does that is inconsistent with his or her attitudes (e.g., attitudes toward cholesterol, drug use, or even buying things to make him or her stand out or attain status). Ask the person to elaborate on why he or she does the behavior, and try to identify the way the person resolves dissonant elements.
- 8-42** Devise an attitude survey for a set of competing automobiles. Identify areas of competitive advantage or disadvantage for each model you include.
- 8-43** Construct a multiattribute model for a set of local restaurants. Based on your findings, suggest how restaurant managers could improve their establishment's image via the strategies described in this chapter.
- 8-44** Locate foreign ads at sites like japander.com in which celebrities endorse products that they don't pitch on their home turf. Ask friends or classmates to rate the attractiveness of each celebrity, then show them these ads and ask them to rate the celebrities again. Does the star's "brand image" change after it's paired with cheesy ads? Based on these results, what advice would you give to a manager who has to choose among endorsement offers for a famous client?
- 8-45** Why would a marketer consider saying negative things about her product? When is this strategy feasible? Can you find examples of it?
- 8-46** Collect ads that rely on sex appeal to sell products. How often do they communicate benefits of the actual product?
- 8-47** Observe the process of counterargumentation by asking a friend to talk out loud while he or she watches a commercial. Ask him or her to respond to each point in the ad or to write down reactions to the claims the message makes. How much skepticism regarding the claims can you detect?
- 8-48** The chapter discusses the important problem of medication adherence. How can healthcare marketers strengthen the link between intentions and behavior to boost the rate at which people actually take their prescribed medications? Devise a communications strategy to increase the adherence rate.
- 8-49** Make a log of all the commercials a network television channel shows during a 2-hour period. Assign each to a product category and decide whether each is a drama or an argument. Describe the types of messages the ads use (e.g., two-sided arguments), and keep track of the types of spokespersons who appear (e.g., TV actors, famous people, animated characters). What can you conclude about the dominant forms of persuasive tactics that marketers currently employ?
- 8-50** Collect examples of ads that rely on the use of metaphors or resonance. Do you feel these ads are effective? If you were marketing the products, would you feel more comfortable with ads that use a more straightforward, "hard-sell" approach? Why or why not?
- 8-51** Create a list of current celebrities whom you feel typify cultural categories (e.g., clown, mother figure, etc.). What specific brands do you feel each could effectively endorse?
- 8-52** Conduct an "avatar hunt" on e-commerce Web sites, online video game sites, and online communities such as *The Sims* that let people select what they want to look like in cyberspace. What seem to be the dominant figures people choose? Are they realistic or fantasy characters? Male or female? What types of avatars do you believe would be most effective for each of these different kinds of Web sites, and why?

Case Study

SHAMPOO BUYING: A "BAD HAIR" DAY?

When was the last time you purchased shampoo or other hair care products? How long did it take you to choose? How did you decide?

The hair care aisle of a typical drugstore has more than 200 choices for shampoo. The packages promote a myriad of benefits including repair, protection, hydration, control, and nourishment. How does a consumer make the match between his or her needs and the brand benefits? It's not easy to choose, and therefore not a surprise that many shoppers spend about 20 minutes in this aisle when they select a shampoo brand.

The confusion builds when you consider that it is not just shampoo that we buy. There are gels, mousses, hairsprays, shine enhancers, and conditioners. A recent Mintel survey shows that three-quarters of consumers use conditioner in addition to shampoo, and these numbers are even higher for women.

5 One way that consumers try to simplify the purchase process is by referring to compelling advertising, so ad agencies work hard to create effective messages that can reinforce current brand loyalty or persuade consumers to try a new brand. Hair care product advertising relies heavily on television, print, the Internet, and outdoor advertising, most commonly in the form of billboards. In addition, many ad campaigns feature appealing celebrity endorsers such as Katie Holmes, Nicole Scherzinger, and Sofia Vergara.

And it's not only women in the United States who scratch their heads over these choices. To the women of Singapore and the Philippines, the choice of hair conditioner poses the same challenges. To connect with women in these countries, Unilever tried a nontraditional campaign to show the benefit of Cream Silk Hair Fall Defense, a conditioner brand the company sells in those countries. Cream Silk's core benefit is the "strength" it gives hair. With the help of advertising agency JWT, Unilever

was able to break through the advertising clutter and deliver its message in an entirely new format.

JWT began by contacting Paul Goh, the leading violin bow-maker in Singapore. For this promotion, Mr. Goh was asked to switch out the horsehair violin bows he traditionally used and exchange them with human hair on four of his violin bows. This hair had been washed and conditioned with Cream Silk. To demonstrate the strength of the hair, a string quartet used the bows as it played during a 4-hour concert in a busy shopping mall in Manila. Good news for Unilever: The entire concert concluded without even one broken hair on the violin bows! You can view the video yourself on YouTube; just search “The Human Hair Quartet.” The viral video has excellent production quality and includes the advertising message:

When it comes to showing strong hair, all commercials show it the same way. So we changed the game, by turning the demonstration of STRONG HAIR, into a live performance

According to the advertising agency JWT, “The event struck the right chord with Cream Silk’s target market. The crowd swelled to 600 at its height, more than 450 Cream Silk samples were given away and the vast majority of consumers we surveyed walked away with a positive perception of the brand. What do you think? If you were looking for stronger hair, would this advertising convince you? How is this approach superior or inferior to others that conditioner brands typically use?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CS 8-1 Describe Cream Silk’s promotion within the context of the multiattribute model: Which attribute(s) were central to the promotion and how does the model explain what the company was trying to accomplish with the “Human Hair Quartet?” What limitations might this model have for predicting consumer’s attitudes and purchase behavior towards Cream Silk? (Hint: Take a look at the Theory of Reasoned Action.)

CS 8-2 In contrast to the Cream Silk promotion, Old Spice used its characteristically quirky approach to persuade men to try its hair care products. The integrated campaign, “That’s the Power of Hair,” incorporated a popular Huey Lewis tune, an interactive Web site, and funny ads featuring animated hair. Discuss the type of message appeal and the Elaboration Likelihood Model route each campaign used.

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MyMarketingLab

Go to the Assignments section of your MyLab to complete these writing exercises.

- 8-53** A government agency wants to encourage people who have been drinking to use designated drivers. What advice could you give the organization about constructing persuasive communications? Discuss some factors that might be important, including the structure of the communications, where they should appear, and who should deliver them. Should it use fear appeals? If so, how?
- 8-54** Contrast the hierarchies of effects the chapter outlines. How should marketers take these different situations into account when they choose their marketing mix?

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Although respondents who report a greater degree of interest in a product category indeed are more likely to be opinion leaders, we must view the results of surveys that discover self-designated opinion leaders with some skepticism. Some people have a tendency to inflate their own importance and influence, whereas others who really are influential might not admit to this quality or be conscious of it if they are.⁷¹ The fact that we transmit advice about products does not mean other people *take* that advice.

Sociometry: The Kevin Bacon Phenomenon

The play *Six Degrees of Separation* is based on the premise that everyone on the planet indirectly knows everyone else—or at least knows people who in turn know them. Indeed, social scientists estimate that the average person has 1,500 acquaintances and that five to six intermediaries can connect any two people in the United States.⁷² A popular game called **Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon** challenges players to link the actor Kevin Bacon with other actors in much the same way.⁷³

Sociometric methods trace communication patterns among members of a group. These techniques allow researchers to systematically map out the interactions among group members. Like the Vaseline campaign in Alaska we described previously, this means we interview consumers and find out who they ask for product information. In many cases, one or a few people emerge as the “nodes” in a map—and *voilà*, we’ve found our opinion leaders. This method is the most precise, but it is difficult and expensive to implement because it involves close study of interaction patterns in small groups. For this reason, it’s best to apply a sociometric technique in a closed, self-contained social setting, such as in hospitals, in prisons, and on military bases, where members are largely isolated from other social networks.

Sociometric techniques don’t just look at who talks (or texts) to whom; they also consider the type of relationships among members of a social network. **Tie strength** refers to the nature of the bond between people. It can range from *strong primary* (e.g., one’s spouse) to *weak secondary* (e.g., an acquaintance whom one rarely sees). Although strong ties are important, weak ties are as well because they perform a *bridging function*. This type of connection allows a consumer access between subgroups. For example, you might have a regular group of friends that is a primary reference group (strong ties). If you have an interest in tennis, one of these friends might introduce you to a group of people in her dorm who play on the tennis team. As a result, you gain access to their valuable expertise through this bridging function. This referral process demonstrates the **strength of weak ties**.

We use sociometric analyses to better understand *referral behavior* and to locate strengths and weaknesses in terms of how one’s reputation flows through a community.⁷⁴ To understand how a network guides what we buy, consider a study researchers conducted among women who lived together in a sorority house. They found evidence that subgroups, or *cliques*, within the sorority were likely to share preferences for various products. In some cases, the sisters even shared their choices of “private” (i.e., socially inconspicuous) products (probably because of shared bathrooms in the sorority house).⁷⁵

OBJECTIVE 11-4

Social media changes the way we learn about and select products.

The Social Media Revolution

The odds are good that you’ve already accessed social media today. If you checked into your Facebook page (of course not during class!), fired off a tweet, read a restaurant review on Yelp, or maybe even killed off some nasty orcs on *World of Warcraft*, you’re part of the social media revolution that is changing how consumers interact with the marketplace and with one another. Many of us love to share details about our lives that our parents probably would never discuss in public. Somehow events don’t seem “official” until we post them: A change in relationship status on Facebook, a photo of a luscious restaurant appetizer on Instagram, a funky necklace pinned onto a Pinterest Board.

Sometimes people define social media in terms of hardware (like Samsung smartphones) or software (like Snapchat), but really it’s first and foremost about **online community**: The



AVAILABLE WITH ALL-WHEEL DRIVE
VENZA. KEEP ON ROLLING.

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TOYOTA
TRUCKS & SUVs

collective participation of members who together build and maintain a site.⁷⁶ Indeed, many of us become so enmeshed in our social networks that we feel the need to check them constantly to be sure we stay on top of what our (online) friends are up to 24/7 (oops, better stop reading this chapter and scan your Facebook, Twitter, or Foursquare posts!). Do you know anyone like that? Some refer to this compulsion as **fear of missing out (FOMO)**. Certainly there are advantages to always feeling connected, but perhaps the downside is a vague feeling of regret or inadequacy that lurks in the background in case we chose not to be somewhere—or even worse, that we weren't invited in the first place!⁷⁷

Whether we feel left out or not, it seems clear that our passion for social media exerts a big impact on our emotions and experiences during the course of a typical day. Indeed, one study even found that people on Twitter tend to follow others who share their mood: People who are happy tend to retweet or reply to others who are happy, whereas those who are sad or lonely tend to do the same with others who also post negative sentiments.⁷⁸

Today, it seems that “everyone” is on Facebook—including parents.

Source: Courtesy of Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., Inc.

Online Social Networks and Brand Communities

Let's take a closer look at the underlying fabric of social media. Each online platform, such as Facebook, Pinterest, or Twitter, consists of a **social network** a set of socially relevant nodes connected by one or more relations.⁷⁹ **Nodes** are members of the network (e.g., the more than 1 billion Facebook users) who are connected to one another. Ties stem from affiliations, such as kinship, friendship and affective bonds, shared experiences, and common hobbies and interests. When we think of community, we tend to think of people, but in principle, members of a network can be organizations, articles, countries, departments in a company, or any other definable unit. A good example is your university alumni association. The association is a community of networked individuals and organizations. Social networks are sometimes called **social graphs** though this term may also refer to a diagram of the interconnections of units in a network.

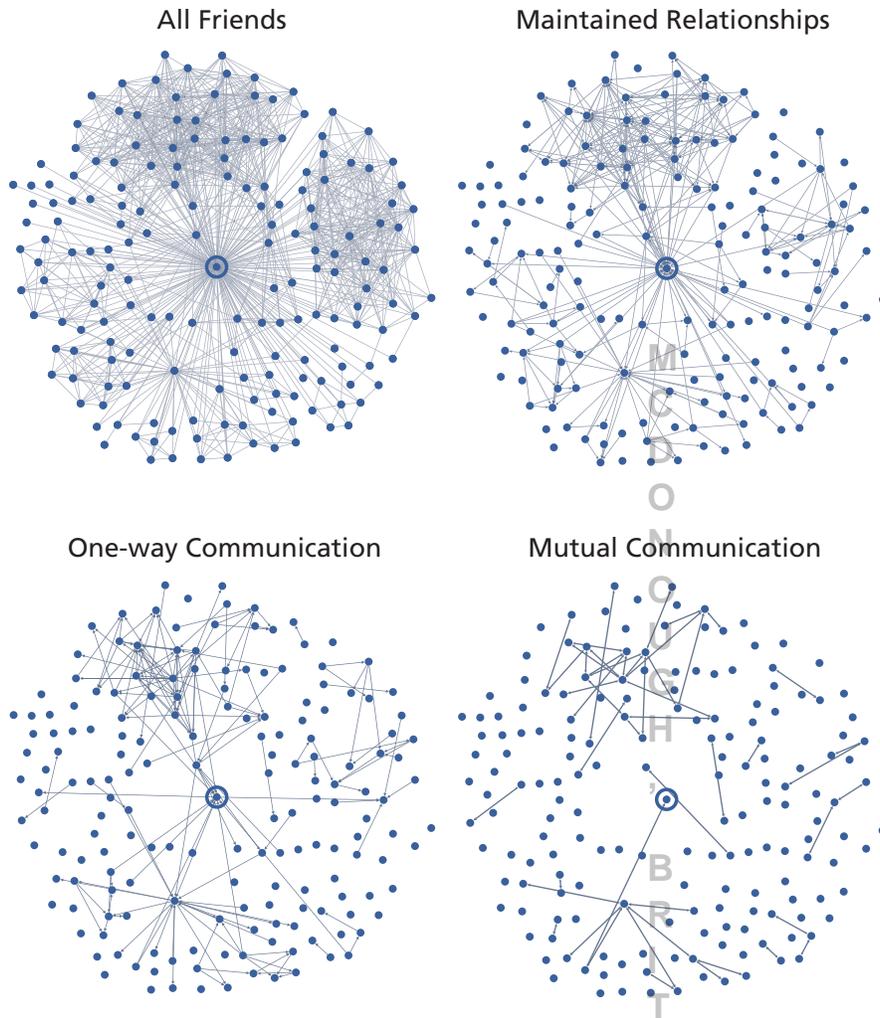
Flows occur between nodes. Flows are exchanges of resources, information, or influence among members of the network. On Facebook you share news, updates about your life, opinions on your favorite books and movies, photos, videos, and notes. As you share content, you create flows from among those in your network. In social media, these flows of communication go in many directions at any point in time and often on multiple platforms—a condition we term **media multiplexity**. Flows are not simply two-way or three-way; they may go through an entire community, a list or group within a network, or several individuals independently. For marketers, flows are especially important because they are the actionable components of any social network system in terms of the sharing of information, delivery of promotional materials, and sources of social influence.

Successful online communities possess several important characteristics:

- **Standards of behavior:** Rules that specify what members can and can't do on the site. Some of these rules are spelled out explicitly (e.g., if you buy an item on eBay, you agree that you have entered into a legal contract to pay for it), but many of them are unspoken. A simple example is discouragement of the practice of **flaming** when a POST CONTAINS ALL CAPITAL LETTERS TO EXPRESS ANGER.
- **Member contributions:** A healthy proportion of users need to contribute content. If not, the site will fail to offer fresh material and ultimately traffic will slow. Participation can be a challenge, though. Remember the *80/20 rule* we discussed way back in Chapter 1? It applies to online consumption as well. The fact is that most members of an online community are **lurkers**. That's kind of a creepy term, but it just means they absorb content that others post rather than contributing their own. Researchers estimate that only 1 percent of a typical community's users regularly participate, and another nine percent do so only intermittently. The remaining 90 percent just observe what's on the site. Although they don't contribute content, they do offer value to advertisers that simply want to reach large numbers of people.

But what happens when we want to engage consumers more actively? How can a site convert lurkers into active users? The easier it is to participate, the more likely it is that the community can generate activity among a larger proportion of visitors. In part, this means ensuring that there are several ways to participate that vary in ease of use. Facebook is an example of an online community that has figured out how to offer several forms of participation. Members can post status updates (easy), make comments, upload pictures, share notes and links, play social games, answer quizzes, decorate their profiles, upload videos, and create events (a bit harder), among other forms of participation.

- **Degree of connectedness:** Powerful groups are cohesive; this means the members identify strongly with them and are highly motivated to stay connected. Online groups may be even more cohesive than physical groups, even though many of the members will never meet one another in person. For example, compared to the "six degrees of separation" norm we discussed, researchers estimate that Facebook's members on average have only four degrees of separation from each other. Although some users have designated only one friend and others have thousands, the median is about 100 friends. The researchers found that most pairs of Facebook users could be connected



A graphical representation of one person's network neighborhood on Facebook.

Source: Courtesy of Dr. Cameron Marlow, Stanford University.

through four intermediate users, and this number shrank to three within a single country.⁸⁰ Because many of us devote so much time and energy to our online group relationships, connectedness also reflects our real world relationships (it's common for people to learn that their partner has broken up with them only after they see a change in "relationship status" on Facebook!). One study that analyzed 1.3 million Facebook users and about 8.6 billion links among them reported that couples who are in a relationship are more likely to stay together if they share a lot of mutual Facebook friends, and they're more likely to break up within a few months if this indicator dips sharply because it implies their social lives aren't overlapping much.⁸¹

- **Network effects** The quality of the site improves as the number of users increases. For example, Amazon's ability to recommend books to you based on what other people with similar interests buy gets better as it tracks more and more people who enter search queries.

Social Games

A **social game** is a multiplayer, competitive, goal-oriented activity with defined rules of engagement and online connectivity among a community of players. Successful mobile games such as *Candy Crush* and *Angry Birds* boast millions of avid followers.⁸² These applications usually incorporate one or more elements of game design, such as **leaderboards** that indicate how each player is doing relative to others in the game and **badges** that show the community the challenges the player has mastered so far.

Social games are built on several layers, including platform, mode, milieu, and genre.⁸³ Let's briefly review the basic dimensions of social games:

- A **game platform** refers to the hardware systems on which the game is played. Platforms include *game consoles* (consoles are interactive, electronic devices used to display video games, such as Sony's PlayStation 3, Microsoft's Xbox 360, and Nintendo's Wii), computers (including both online games and those that require software installation on the player's computer hard drive), and portable devices that may include smartphones or devices specifically for game play such as the Sony PSP or Nintendo DS.⁸⁴
- **Mode** refers to the way players experience the game world. It includes aspects such as whether a player's activities are highly structured, whether the game is single-player or multiplayer, whether the game is played in close physical proximity to other players (or by virtual proximity), and whether the game is real-time or turn-based.
- **Milieu** describes the visual nature of the game, such as science fiction, fantasy, horror, and retro.
- The **genre** of a game refers to the method of play. Popular genres include simulation, action, and role-playing. *Simulation games* depict real-world situations as accurately as possible. There are several subgenres, including racing simulators, flight simulators, and "Sim" games that enable players to simulate the development of an environment. Among social games, simulations include the highly popular *FarmVille*, *Pet Resort*, and *FishVille*. Action games consist of two major subgenres: *first-person shooters (FPS)*, where you "see" the game as your avatar sees it, and *third-person games*. In *role-playing games (RPGs)*, the players play a character role with the goal of completing some mission. Perhaps the best-known RPG started its life as a tabletop game: *Dungeons and Dragons*. Players adopt the identity of a character in the game story and go about completing tasks and collecting points and items as they strive to accomplish the intended goal.

Net Profit



MMORPGs—massive multiplayer online role-playing games—truly encompass the social aspects of gaming.

World of Warcraft is one of the largest MMORPGs with millions of players from around the world; other popular ones include *Haven* and *The Sims*.⁸⁵ The money people spend in virtual worlds like these grows rapidly. Indeed, **digital virtual consumption (DVC)** may well be the next frontier of marketing. Today in the United States alone, consumers spend well more than \$2 billion per year (yes, billion) to buy **virtual goods** for their online characters.⁸⁶ Thousands of in-world residents design, create, and purchase clothing, furniture, houses, vehicles, and other products their avatars need, and many do it in style as they acquire the kind of "bling" they can only dream about in real life. Some forward-thinking marketers understand that these platforms are the next stage they can use to introduce their products into people's lives, whether real or virtual. Today, for example, people who play *The Sims* can import actual pieces of furniture from IKEA into their virtual homes.

Source: Bloomberg/Getty Images.

Digital Word-of-Mouth

Viral marketing occurs when an organization motivates visitors to forward online content to their friends; the message quickly spreads much like a cold virus moves among residents of a dorm. It usually takes off when the online content is entertaining or just plain weird. This strategy stirred up a huge amount of interest in "lap giraffes," for example.



Thousands of people started to look for these cuddly pets after an online message circulated about them. One hitch: There is no such thing as a lap giraffe. The scam was part of a marketing campaign for the cable provider DirecTV. More than half a million people put their names on a waiting list to receive one of the tiny animals. Presumably they're still waiting to get their new pets delivered.⁸⁷

There's no doubt many of us love to share the news with others; news about new styles, new music, and especially new stuff that we've bought. Of course we do this in the form of online reviews in forums like Yelp or TripAdvisor. However the urge to share even creates new genres of communication such as **haul videos** that feature a proud *fashionista* describing clothing items she just bought, and **unboxing videos** that illustrate in painstaking detail exactly how to remove electronics products from their boxes and assemble them for use (if you don't believe it, Google these terms!).



Twitter has emerged as a powerful social network, as this Australian ad reminds us. Source: Courtesy of STIHL Pty Ltd.

The viral marketing explosion highlights the power of the **Megaphone Effect**. Web 2.0 makes a huge audience available to everyday consumers. Some fashion bloggers build an impressive following as they share their views about what's hot and what's not. For example, more than 30,000 people read this post:

Found the perfect gray socks while shopping at Uniqlo in Tokyo with my mom/favorite shopping partner (she's always down to stop randomly to eat and shares my love for finding wearable things in unlikely places). Vaguely sheer and just the right length. This sounds extremely trivial, and sort of is, but I've been looking for something like them forever now.⁸⁸

Researchers report that written communication about brands is more likely to include mentions of interesting or unusual brands, and the motivation to post about these items is driven to a greater extent by the desire for self-enhancement. When people share their opinions about products with their social networks, they may do so to satisfy one of several goals: To manage the impression they make on others, to regulate emotions by expressing affective reactions, to share and acquire information, to bond with others, and to persuade others to change their opinions.⁸⁹

Unlike a spontaneous conversation in the physical world, when consumers write about products they have more time to think strategically about what they're saying—and

CB AS I SEE IT

Jonah Berger, *The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania*



Why do some things go viral? And why do some products and brands get more WOM than others?

It's clear that WOM is both frequent and important. People share all sorts of opinions, news, and information with their friends and colleagues. There are more than 500 million tweets and greater than 100 billion emails sent every day. In fact, you probably received an email, text, or social media update from someone while you were reading this sentence.

Further, interpersonal communication has a big impact on consumer behavior. Think about the last book you read or movie you watched. Chances are you heard about it from someone else. Indeed, WOM generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising.

As a result, companies and organizations are making WOM a big part of their marketing strategy. They're trying to create viral videos and starting accounts on every new social media property they can find.

But in all this hype around the newest technology, people have forgotten about something much more important: the psychology. Why does some content go viral while other stuff collects only a couple views? Why do some products get lots of WOM, whereas others are barely discussed? And how by understanding this science, can people get their product, ideas, and behaviors to become popular?

It turns out that six key factors drive much of what people talk about and share. In *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, I put them in an acronym called S.T.E.P.P.S. That stands for Social

Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value, and Stories. Each of these is a psychological principle that drives people to share all sorts of news, stories, and information.

Take Emotion. We analyzed 3 months of *New York Times* articles, almost 7,000 piece of content, to look at what made the most emailed list. Examining everything from world news and politics to sports and style we looked at which articles were highly shared and why. In general, we found that articles that evoked more emotion were more likely to be shared. The more people care, the more they share.

Further, more positive content was more likely to make the most emailed list. Sharing positive things puts others in a better mood, and reflects better on the sender. Most people want to be seen as Positive Pollys rather than Negative Nellys.

Even beyond valence though, the specific type of emotion articles evoked also mattered. Articles that evoked more high arousal emotions, like anger, anxiety, and inspiration were 21 to 34 percent more likely to go viral. Emotions that activate us can drive us to pass things on.

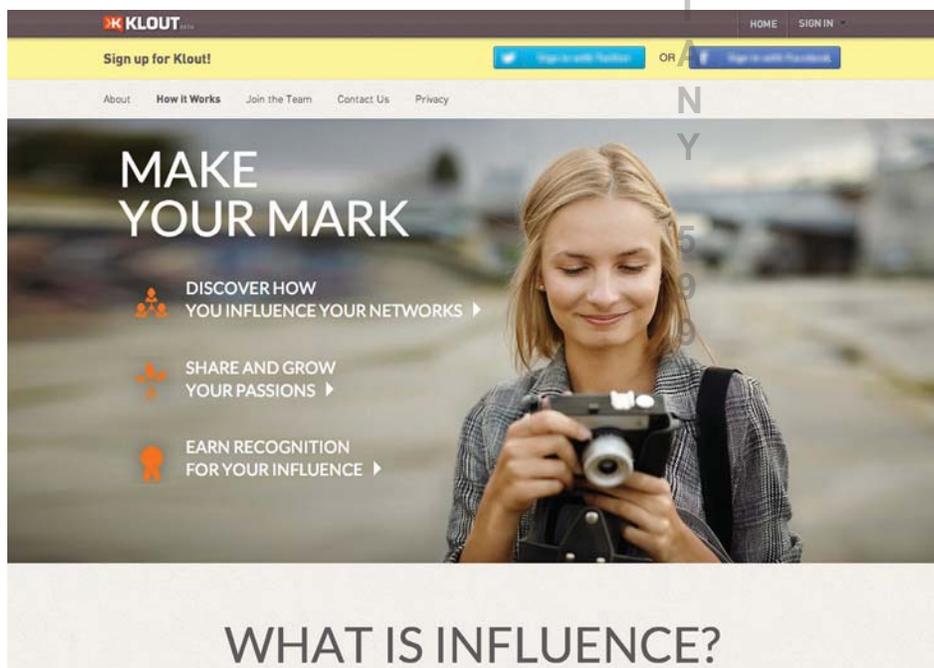
about how these judgments reflect on them.⁹⁰ Indeed, much of what we post is actually about ourselves; one study reported that 80 percent of tweets people send focus on themselves rather than other topics.⁹¹

A study that analyzed *Twitter* data illustrates the care people take to portray themselves in a positive light, but to avoid acting like they're bragging when they tweet about products they've bought or experienced. When the researchers looked at posts regarding two luxury brands—Louis Vuitton and Mercedes—they found that people commonly mention these items “in passing” as they comment on what they're doing or feeling at the moment, or even try to downplay the brand's positive characteristics to avoid looking too snobbish.⁹²

Other researchers identified a somewhat similar phenomenon they call the **Dispreferred Marker Effect**. Online posts that are really negative may make the writer look harsh and judgmental, so people sometimes soften them by couching them in *dispreferred markers*, including phrases such as, “I'll be honest,” “God bless it,” or “I don't want to be mean, but ...” Sure enough, readers of these kinds of posts evaluated the writer more positively than they did posters who just laid out the bad news, warts and all.⁹³

Digital Opinion Leaders

Quick, what's your Klout Score? Klout claims to precisely measure just how influential each of us is in cyberspace. The site assesses more than 12 billion pieces of data every day to compute a score from 0 to 100 for anyone who is online. Several indicators go into this number, including the ratio of comments or retweets a person generates compared to the amount of content he or she posts as well as the relative influence of the people who share this content. Not surprisingly celebrities including Justin Bieber and Zooey Deschanel boast high Klout scores, but plenty of influential people in other walks of life do too. Now Klout for Business allows brands to identify consumers with high scores so they can try to enlist them in spreading digital WOM about their brands. The matchmaking service Tawkify uses Klout scores as well, to pair people up for dates. One of the company's executives observed, “We've found that Klout scores are an authentic measurement of sophistication,



Klout scores measure how influential people are in online social networks.

Source: Courtesy of Klout, Inc.

wit, cultural savvy and appeal—a much truer and more trustworthy measurement than the typical online dating site bull-hockey-factors of height, weight and income.”⁹⁴

Previously we saw that opinion leaders are people who are more influential than most when they recommend purchases to others. In online groups, opinion leaders sometimes are called **power users**. They have a strong communications network that gives them the ability to affect purchase decisions for a number of other consumers, directly and indirectly.⁹⁵

Much like their offline counterparts, power users are active participants at work and in their communities. Their social networks are large and well developed. Others trust them and find them to be credible sources of information about one or more specific topics. They tend to have a natural sense of intellectual curiosity, which may lead them to new sources of information. And they post an awful lot of brand-related content: Forrester Research has dubbed these brand-specific mentions **influence impressions**. In advertising lingo, an *impression* refers to a view or an exposure to an advertising message. Forrester estimates that, each year, U.S. consumers generate 256 billion influence impressions as people talk about their lives with each other, telling stories and experiences that invariably include brands.⁹⁶ These influence impressions are primarily delivered by—you guessed it—power users: Only 6.2 percent of social media users are responsible for about 80 percent of these brand mentions. Forrester calls these influencers **mass connectors**.

MyMarketingLab

To complete the problems with the , go to EOC Discussion Questions in the MyLab as well as additional Marketing Metrics questions only available in MyMarketingLab.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. Other people and groups, especially those that possess social power, influence our decisions.

We belong to or admire many different groups, and a desire for them to accept us often drives our purchase decisions. Individuals or groups whose opinions or behavior are particularly important to consumers are reference groups. Both formal and informal groups influence the individual’s purchase decisions, although such factors as the conspicuousness of the product and the relevance of the reference group for a particular purchase determine how influential the reference group is.

Individuals have influence in a group to the extent that they possess social power. Types of social power include information power, referent power, legitimate power, expert power, reward power, and coercive power.

Brand communities unite consumers who share a common passion for a product. Brandfests, which companies organize to encourage this kind of community, can build brand loyalty and reinforce group membership.

We conform to the desires of others for two basic reasons: (1) People who model their behavior after others because they take others’ behavior as evidence of the correct way to act are conforming because of informational social influence; and (2) those who conform to satisfy the expectations of others or to be accepted by the group are affected by

normative social influence. Group members often do things they would not do as individuals because their identities become merged with the group; they become deindividuated.

2. Word-of-mouth communication is the most important driver of product choice.

Much of what we know about products we learn through word-of-mouth (WOM) communication rather than formal advertising. We tend to exchange product-related information in casual conversations. Although WOM often is helpful to make consumers aware of products, it can also hurt companies when damaging product rumors or negative WOM occur.

3. Opinion leaders’ recommendations are more influential than others when we decide what to buy.

Opinion leaders who are knowledgeable about a product and whose opinions are highly regarded tend to influence others’ choices. Specific opinion leaders are somewhat hard to identify, but marketers who know their general characteristics can try to target them in their media and promotional strategies. Other influencers include market mavens, who have a general interest in marketplace activities; and surrogate consumers, who are compensated for their advice about purchases.