

Sixth Edition

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

A European Perspective

Michael R. Solomon Gary J. Bamossy
Søren Askegaard Margaret K. Hogg



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CASE STUDIES

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1	'Help me, I can't pay!' Credit card targeting, young consumers and protectionist policy Sandra Awanis, Lancaster University Management School, UK	Consumer financial decisions and literacy; dark side of marketing (various cultural contexts e.g. US; UK, Brunei and Indonesia)
2	Volunteers as co-creators of cultural events: the case of the Midnight Sun Film Festival in Sodankylä, Lapland Anu Valtonen and Minni Haanpää, University of Lapland, Finland	Co-creation; cultural events (Lapland)
Part B		
3	Virtual consumption: are consumers truly enjoying their Second Life? Eman Gadalla, Lancaster University Management School and Kathy Keeling, Manchester Business School, UK	Consumption experiences in the virtual world of <i>Second Life</i>
4	Contemporary fatherhood and the use of technology: exploring the transition to first-time fatherhood Ben Kerrane, Lancaster University Management School, UK and Shona Bettany, Westminster University, UK	Changing gender roles/norms, fatherhood, transitions and identity within family; high-technology products, self (UK)
5	What is mothering really all about? And how does consumption fit into the picture? Susanna Molander, Stockholm University School of Business, Sweden	Mothering practices; feeding the family; family dinnertimes (Stockholm)
6	Greek women's desired and undesired selves, identity conflicts and consumption Katerina Karanika, Exeter University, UK	Greek consumers' different selves; identity conflicts; symbolic self-completion; extended self (Thessaloniki and Athens)
Part C		
7	When a rapper buys a champagne house: Jay-Z and Ace of Spades Joonas Rokka, Emlyon Business School, France, and Nacima Ourahmoune, Kedge Business School, France	Brand management issues; managing brand imagery in world of social media; co-construction of brand imagery (France)

(continued)

Case study number	Case study title/author(s)	Topic(s)/context
8	Changing attitudes towards alcohol consumption: emotional and information appeals Effi Raftopoulou, Salford University, UK	Emotions in advertising; social marketing (UK)
9	Ethical luxury: some consumption dilemmas of ethics and sustainability Sheila Malone, Lancaster University, UK	Ethics, sustainability and luxury marketing; consumer decision-making (UK)
10	Dodge's last stand? Or, who buys cars these days? Gry Høngsmark Knudsen, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark	Social media; brand community; gender issues/representation - US and <i>online world</i>
Part D		
11	Influencer marketing: monetising online audiences through customer reviews Ben Koeck and David Marshall, University of Edinburgh Business School, UK	Blogging, influencer marketing; digital word of mouth - <i>online world</i>
12	'Miss u loads': online consumer memorialisation practices Darach Turley, Dublin City University, Ireland, and Stephanie O'Donohoe, University of Edinburgh, UK	Death and dying; self concept; storytelling in the online virtual world - <i>online world</i>
13	What is generational marketing? And how does consumption contribute to strengthen links between generations? Elodie Gentina, Skema Business School, Lille, France	Cross-cultural study of sharing practices across generations between mothers and daughters (France and Japan)
14	Fertility in Europe - what's next? Ingeborg Astrid Kleppe, Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen, Norway	Consumer choice, individual, household and family consumer decision making (EU)
Part E		
15	Keep the faith: mediating Catholicism and consumption Leighanne Higgins, Lancaster University Management School, UK	Religion and consumption (Scotland)
16	Acculturating to diversity: the changed meaning of consumer acculturation in globalisation Julie Emontspool, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark	Consumer acculturation in global cities (Brussels context)
17	Majority consumers' resistance to ethnic marketing: lessons learned from Austria's MPreis customers, Marius K. Luedicke, Cass Business School, City University, London, UK	Acculturation; ethnicity; immigration; ethical challenges for marketers (Austria)

PREFACE

We wrote this book because we're fascinated by the everyday activities of people. The field of consumer behaviour is, to us, the study of how the world is in large part influenced by the action of marketers. We're fortunate enough to be teachers and researchers (and occasionally consultants) whose work allows us to study consumers. Given that we're also consumers, we can find both professional and personal interest in learning more about how this process works. We hope that, as consumers and future managers, you find this study to be fascinating as well. Whether you're a student, manager or professor, we're sure you can relate to the trials and tribulations associated with last-minute shopping, preparing for a big night out, agonising over a purchase decision, fantasising about a week skiing in the Swiss Alps, celebrating a holiday on the Cote d'Azur or commemorating a landmark event, such as graduating from university, getting a driver's licence or (dreaming about) winning the lottery.

Buying, having and being

Our understanding of this field goes beyond looking at the act of *buying* only, but extends to both *having* and *being* as well. Consumer behaviour is about much more than just buying things; it also embraces the study about how having (or not having) things affects our lives, and how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and about each other – our state of being. In addition to understanding why people buy things, we also try to appreciate how products, services and consumption activities contribute to the broader social world we experience. Whether shopping, cooking, cleaning, playing football or hockey, lying on the beach, emailing or texting friends, or even looking at ourselves in the mirror, our lives are touched by the marketing system.

The field of consumer behaviour is young, dynamic and in flux. It is constantly being cross-fertilized by perspectives from many different disciplines. We have tried to express the field's staggering diversity in this text. Consumer researchers represent virtually every social science discipline, plus a few represent the physical sciences and the arts for good measure. From this melting pot has come a healthy debate among research perspectives, viewpoints regarding appropriate research methods, and even deeply held beliefs about what are and what are not appropriate issues for consumer researchers to study in the first place.

A European perspective on consumers and marketing strategy

The main objective for this new, sixth edition has been to significantly increase its relevance for European students and scholars, while retaining the accessibility, contemporary approach and the level of excellence in the discussions of consumer behaviour theory and applications established over the last 12 editions of Michael Solomon's *Consumer Behaviour*. Based on the twelfth American edition, we have tried to satisfy the need for a comprehensive consumer behaviour textbook with a significant European content. Hence, we have added illustrative examples and cases that are analysed and discussed in a European consumer context, as well as numerous European scholarly references, including essays on the future of the field written by leading European consumer behaviour scholars. The text also includes a number of advertisements of European origin so that the reader can visualize various elements in the marketing applications of consumer behaviour theory.

These changes, which focus on European consumers and research, have been made throughout the book. However, the most substantial changes relevant to the field of consumer research have been the economic recession and budgetary crisis that have followed the financial crisis, and the proliferation of new social media interactivity. These two developments are featured in a number of examples throughout the book. The new edition also offers many examples of the new opportunities and challenges in this marketplace, as well as discussing the implications and challenges of carrying out business strategies and developing tactics.

The internationalisation of market structures makes it increasingly necessary for business people to acquire a clear perspective and understanding of cultural differences and similarities among consumers from various countries. One of the challenges of writing this book has been to develop materials which illustrate *local* as well as *pan-European* and *global* aspects of consumer behaviour. In this spirit, we have kept a number of American and other non-European examples to illustrate various similarities and differences on the global consumer scene. The book also emphasises the importance of understanding consumers in formulating marketing strategy. Many (if not most) of the fundamental concepts of marketing are based on the practitioner's ability to understand people. To illustrate the potential of consumer research to inform marketing strategy, the text contains numerous examples of specific applications of consumer behaviour concepts by marketing practitioners.

Digital consumer behaviour

As more of us go online every day, there's no doubt the world is changing – and consumer behaviour is constantly evolving in response to the Web and social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). The sixth edition seeks to highlight the new world of the digital consumer. Today, consumers and producers come together electronically in ways we have never known before. Rapid transmission of information alters the speed at which new trends develop and the direction in which they travel, especially because the virtual world lets consumers participate in the creation and dissemination of new products.

One of the most exciting aspects of the new digital world is that consumers can interact directly with other people who live just down the street or half way across the world. As a result, we are having to radically redefine the meaning of community. It's no longer enough to acknowledge that consumers like to talk to each other about products. Now we share opinions and get the up-to-date information about new films, music, cars, clothes, in electronic communities that might include a young parent from Aalborg or Aachen, a senior citizen from Stockholm or Les Moutiers, or a teenager from Amsterdam or Istanbul. And many of us meet up in computer-mediated environments (CMEs) such as Facebook or Twitter. We have started to thread material and examples about these new emerging consumer playgrounds throughout the text.

We have just begun to explore the ramifications for consumer behaviour when a Web surfer can project her own picture onto a website to get a virtual makeover or a corporate purchasing agent can solicit bids for a new piece of equipment from vendors around the world in minutes. These new ways of interacting in the marketplace create bountiful opportunities for marketing managers and consumers alike.

However, is the digital world always a rosy place? Unfortunately, just as in the 'real world', the answer is no, as recent experiences in the UK with Twitter (e.g. trolling) indicate. In addition to insulting consumers, the potential to exploit them – whether by invading their privacy, preying on the curiosity of children, or simply providing false product information – is always there. So inevitably the digital world comes with its own warnings. That said, it is difficult to imagine going back to a world without the Web, and it is changing the field of consumer behaviour all the time – so watch this space.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael R. Solomon, PhD, joined the Haub School of Business at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia as Professor of Marketing in 2006, where he also serves as Director of the Center for Consumer Research. From 1995 to 2006, he was the Human Sciences Professor of Consumer Behavior at Auburn University. Prior to joining Auburn he was Chairman of the Department of Marketing in the School of Business at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.



Professor Solomon's primary research interests include consumer behaviour and lifestyle issues, branding strategy, the symbolic aspects of products, the psychology of fashion, decoration and image, services marketing, and the development of visually oriented online research methodologies. He currently sits on the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, the *European Business Review* and the *Journal of Retailing*, and he recently completed a six-year term on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Marketing Science.

In addition to this book, he is also the co-author of the widely used textbook *Marketing: Real People, Real Decisions*. Professor Solomon frequently appears on television and radio shows such as *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, Channel One, The Wall Street Journal Radio Network, and National Public Radio to comment on consumer behaviour and marketing issues.

Gary J. Bamossy, PhD, is Clinical Professor of Marketing at the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, in Washington DC, and the Coca Cola Chair Visiting Professor of Marketing at the Olayan School of Business, American University of Beirut. From 1985 to 1999 he was on the Faculty of Business and Economics at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, as *Hoogleraar*, *Marktkunde* (Professor of Marketing), and Director of Business Research for the VU's participation at the Tinbergen Research Institute. Prior to his appointment at Georgetown, he was Director of the Global Business Program and a member of the marketing faculty at the University of Utah (1999–2005).



Professor Bamossy's primary research interests are on the global diffusion of material culture, sustainable consumption, and trademark infringement. He has published numerous articles on these and related topics in academic journals and as chapters in research books. He has given invited lectures on materialism and sustainable consumption issues at universities, companies and government agencies in North America, Europe and Asia, and his work has been funded by the Dutch Science Foundation (KNAW), the Marketing Science Institute, the Davidson Institute (University of Michigan) and the Anglo-Dutch Scholar Forum. Together with Professor W.F. van Raaij, Dr Bamossy co-chaired the first European conference for the Association for Consumer Research, in Amsterdam. For the past several years, Dr Bamossy has served as an Invited Member by The Bank of Sweden, to nominate a candidate for the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

Professor Bamossy is a frequent contributor to the mass media. His research has been quoted or written about in the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *The VPRO*, *The Associated Press*, National Public Radio, CBS Television, *Fox News* and CBS Radio.

Søren Askegaard is Professor of Consumption Studies at the University of Southern Denmark. He entered the atmosphere the same year as Yuri Gagarin left it. Søren has a post-graduate Diploma in Communication Studies from the Sorbonne University, Paris and PhD in Business Studies from Odense University, 1993.

Professor Askegaard's research interests generally are in the field of consumer culture theory and commercial symbolism. He is generally interested in debunking what is known as 'common sense', and he likes to act as a 'Martian' in his own society (as well as other societies), in order to catch a glimpse of all the funny, little – and not so little – things we do (and consume!), while thinking that it is 'perfectly normal'.

Professor Askegaard has given invited lectures at universities in Europe, North America, Asia and Latin America. He has served on a dozen programme committees for scientific conferences and is, among other things, co-organiser of the 2012 Consumer Culture Theory conference at Oxford University. He has been a visiting professor at universities in France, Sweden, Turkey and the USA.

Søren Askegaard served as associate editor for *The Journal of Consumer Research* 2008–14 and is currently member of its editorial review board. He also serves on the editorial boards for four other journals. His research has been published in numerous international journals and anthologies. For his research accomplishment he has received three research awards, including the Danish Marketing Association's Research Award. In 2008, he received the Danish Academy for Business Research Award for making his and his colleagues' research beneficial to the business community in Denmark. He also serves as the honorary consul of France in Odense, Denmark.

His research has been widely quoted by the mass media in Denmark, where he is a frequent commentator on consumer and market issues. His research has also been featured in the Swedish media and on BBC 4.



Margaret K. Hogg holds the Chair of Consumer Behaviour and Marketing in the Department of Marketing at Lancaster University Management School (LUMS). She read for an MA (Hons) in Politics and Modern History at Edinburgh University; postgraduate studies in History at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam; an MA in Business Analysis at Lancaster University; and a PhD in Consumer Behaviour and Retailing at Manchester Business School. She worked for six years in marketing with 'K Shoes' in Kendal and she spent eight years at Manchester School of Management (MSM), UMIST before moving to LUMS in May 2004.

Professor Hogg's main areas of research interests are around the issues of identity, self and consumption within consumer behaviour. Her work has appeared in refereed journals including the *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Policy*, *Marketing Management Journal*, *Advances in Consumer Research* and *Consumption, Markets and Culture*. She edited six volumes of papers on Consumer Behaviour in the Sage Major Works series (2005 and 2006) and has co-authored numerous book chapters. Professor Hogg regularly presents papers at international conferences including US, European and Asia-Pacific meetings of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR), and Consumer Culture Theory. She has given numerous seminar papers as an invited speaker (e.g. in Australia, New Zealand and Europe). She is a regular reviewer for the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; she is an Associate Editor (Buyer Behaviour) for *Journal of Business Research*; and she reviews regularly for the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management* and *Marketing Theory*. She has been on the conference programme committees for US and European meetings of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR).

Professor Hogg held an award under the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR/Programme Blanc) for two studies as part of Professor Dominique Roux's (Paris XII) project on New Approaches to Consumer Resistance (NACRE). She has taught extensively on consumer behaviour at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and supervised and examined a wide range of PhD students.



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Margaret Hogg would like to say a very sincere 'thank you' to her family, Daniel, Robert, Julietta, Zoe, Elijah and Becca, and to her late husband, Richard, for their generous, unstinting and loving support since she started this project.

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Figures

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Part A

CONSUMERS IN THE MARKETPLACE

This introductory part comprises three chapters. The first chapter previews much of what this book is about and gives an overview of the field of consumer behaviour. It examines how the field of marketing is influenced by the actions of consumers, and also how we as consumers are influenced by marketers. It also surveys consumer behaviour as a discipline of enquiry, and describes some of the different approaches that researchers use in order better to understand what makes consumers behave as they do. The second chapter takes a look at contemporary consumer culture and, more particularly, its globalisation tendencies. It digs deeper into how marketing and culture are intertwined in contemporary societies and raises the important issue of the meaning of consumer goods for consumers. The third chapter offers a broad overview of the consumer in the marketplace, through its investigation of the modern ritual of the shopping process. It also looks at various contemporary retail environments and the roles they play in consumers' social lives.



1 AN INTRODUCTION TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter you will understand why:

- We use products to help us define our identities in different settings.
- Consumer behaviour is a process.
- Marketers need to understand the wants and needs of different consumer segments.
- Our motivations to consume are complex and varied.
- Our beliefs and actions as consumers strongly connect to other issues in our lives.
- Technology and culture create a new 'always on' consumer.
- Many different types of specialists study consumer behaviour.
- There are differing perspectives regarding how and what we should understand about consumer behaviour.

LIANE is working at her computer. It is early autumn and the beginning of a new term at her Higher Professional Nursing school in Amsterdam. Time for getting new books and study materials. As a full time student in her final year of a full time practical internship and exams, she is not surprised to find that several of the required books are still unavailable at the campus bookshop.

She goes online to check if she can get her books from one of the internet bookshops. She uses her favorite portal (<http://www.athenaeum.nl/studieboeken>), which she thinks might be able to deliver the books faster than their international competitors. Athenaeum doesn't have all of the books in stock that she needs, and she really feels that she should get all them from the same store. On an impulse, Liane visits a website that sells used books and provides search facilities for a number of online booksellers. She searches for a couple of the titles she is looking for, but the search function on this site does not seem to be working properly. For a moment, she considers putting some of her used books up for sale on this site, then decides not to let herself be distracted, and moves on to the UK version of Amazon.com. She has heard from friends that prices are a little steeper here (relative to the other internet

bookshops), but she knows this site well by now. Besides, the books she wants are in stock and can be delivered in about a week, maybe less. Considering that the chances of the books she needs appearing in the campus bookshop on time seem pretty slim, Liane decides to go ahead and buy them online.

While filling out the Amazon order form, she thinks about what else she needs to get done. She and her friend are looking for an interesting topic for a course project and she wants to look at ideas for a relevant European project, so she clicks on CESSDA's website (<http://www.cessda.net>) for some inspiration. Also, she wants to visit a few of her favourite sites for news, music and travel. 'A little information update before meeting my friends this afternoon for coffee', she thinks to herself. She clicks back to the Amazon tab in her browser, hits 'OK' on her textbook order confirmation and is glad to have that out of the way. She navigates her way back to <http://www.cessda.net> and starts her search. All the while that she's getting the textbooks ordered, she is also thinking to herself that she should take a look at her personal performance data, which is logged on her activity tracker, Polar Loop. She has just finished a great work out and run at the gym the day before . . . now might be a good time to post the results of that impressive effort on her Facebook page! Suddenly Liane remembers that there were a couple of study plans to print out from the university website - and a few emails to answer. She checks her e-mail account and is a little surprised to see that she has received so much mail today - seems like everybody just realized that summer is over and wants to get started on new projects. It makes her feel joyful, even invigorated . . .

DIANA STORM

CONSUMPTION IN EUROPE? THE EUROPEAN CONSUMER?

This is a book about **consumer behaviour**, written from a European perspective. But what does that mean exactly? Obviously, to write about a 'European' consumer or a 'European's consumer behaviour' is problematic. For that matter, one might even ask 'What and where is Europe'? For it is a concept as well as a continent, and the borders of both oscillate wildly. The most common present-day usage of the term 'Europe' seems to be shorthand for (and synonymous with) the European Union. The external borders of this supranational project are well-defined, and in some cases well-defended. But they remain movable, having consistently shifted outward over the last half century. From a core of six founding members in the continent's west, this 'Europe' has expanded to comprise 28 states, as far east as Cyprus. Where to draw Europe's Eastern border, and does it really have one?¹

Some of the general theory about the psychological or sociological influences on consumer behaviour may be common to all Western cultures. On the one hand, some theories may be culturally specific. Certain groups of consumers do show similar kinds of behaviour across national borders, and research on consumers in Europe suggests that we even use our understanding of the consumption environment to make sense of the foreign cultures we are visiting.² On the other hand, the ways in which people live their consumption life vary greatly from one European country to another, and sometimes even within different regions of the same country. As a student of consumer behaviour, you might want to ask yourself: 'In which consumption situations do I seem to have a great deal in common with fellow students from other European countries? And in what ways do I seem to more closely resemble my compatriots? In what ways do subcultures in my country exert a strong influence on my consumption patterns, and how international are these subcultures?' To add to the complexity of all this, the EU continues to expand, adding new members. *Eurostat* officially reports on and offers rich data for 28 countries (EU28) and estimates the European population at roughly 507 million consumers.³ These 'new' European consumers come from vastly different economic and political

circumstances, and each has its own unique historical and cultural development. Much more on these consumers' aspirations and consumption behaviours will be reviewed in chapters in Parts D and E of this text, which forms a portrait of European consumers.

This book is about consumer behaviour theory in general, and we will illustrate our points with examples from various European markets as well as from the United States and other countries. Each chapter features 'Multicultural dimensions' boxes which spotlight international aspects of consumer behaviour. From both a global and a pan-European perspective, these issues will be explored in depth (see Chapters 2, 13, 14 and 15).

Consumer behaviour: people in the marketplace

You can probably relate to at least some general aspects of Liane's behaviour. This book is about people like Liane. It concerns the products and services they buy and use, and the ways these fit into their lives. This introductory chapter briefly describes some important aspects of the field of consumer behaviour, including the topics studied, who studies them, and some of the ways these issues are approached by consumer researchers.

But first, let's return to Liane: the sketch which started the chapter allows us to highlight some aspects of consumer behaviour that will be covered in the rest of the book.

- As a consumer, Liane can be described and compared to other individuals in a number of ways. For some purposes, marketers might find it useful to categorise Liane in terms of her age, gender, income or occupation. These are some examples of descriptive characteristics of a population, or *demographics*. In other cases, marketers would rather know something about Liane's interests in fashion, sports, fitness, music, or the way she spends her leisure time. This sort of information often comes under the category of *psychographics*, which refers to aspects of a person's lifestyle and personality. Knowledge of consumer characteristics plays an extremely important role in many marketing applications, such as defining the market for a product or deciding on the appropriate techniques to employ when targeting a certain group of consumers.
- Liane's purchase (and boycotting) decisions are heavily influenced by the opinions and behaviours of her friends. A lot of product information, as well as recommendations to use or avoid particular brands, is picked up in conversations among real people, rather than by way of television commercials, magazines or advertising messages. The bonds among Liane's group of friends are in part cemented by the products they all use, or specifically avoid. The growth of the Web has created thousands of online **consumption communities** where members share opinions and recommendations about anything from healthy foods to iPhone apps. Liane forms bonds with fellow group members because they use the same products. There is also pressure on each group member to buy things that will meet with the group's approval, and often a price to pay in the form of group rejection or embarrassment when one does not conform to others' conceptions of what is good or bad, 'in' or 'out'.⁴
- As a member of a large society, people share certain cultural values or strongly held beliefs about the way the world should function. Other values are shared by members of *subcultures*, or smaller groups within the culture, such as ethnic groups, teens, people from certain parts of the country, even hipsters who listen to Arcade Fire, wear Band of Outsiders clothing, and eat vegan tacos. The people who matter to Liane – her *reference group* – value the idea that women should be innovative, style-conscious, independent and up front (at least a little). While many marketers focus on either very young targets or the thirty-somethings, some are recognising that another segment which is attracting marketers' interest is the rapidly growing segment of older (50+) people.
- When browsing through the websites, Liane was exposed to many competing 'brands'. Many offerings did not grab her attention at all; others were noticed but rejected because they did not fit the 'image' with which she identified or to which she aspired. The use of *market segmentation strategies* means targeting a brand only to specific groups of consumers rather

than to everybody – even if that means that other consumers will not be interested or may choose to avoid that brand.

- Brands often have clearly defined *images* or ‘personalities’ created by product advertising, packaging, branding and other marketing strategies that focus on positioning a product a certain way or by certain groups of consumers adopting the product. One’s leisure activities in particular are very much lifestyle statements: they say a lot about what a person is interested in, as well as something about the type of person they would like to be. People often choose a product offering, a service or a place, or subscribe to a particular idea, because they like its image, or because they feel its ‘personality’ somehow corresponds to their own. Moreover, a consumer may believe that by buying and using the product, its desirable qualities will somehow magically ‘rub off’.
- When a product succeeds in satisfying a consumer’s specific needs or desires, as <http://www.amazon.co.uk> did for Liane, it may be rewarded with many years of *brand* or *store loyalty*, a bond between product or outlet and consumer that may be very difficult for competitors to break. Often a change in one’s life situation or self-concept is required to weaken this bond and thus create opportunities for competitors.
- Consumers’ evaluations of products are affected by their appearance, taste, texture or smell. We may be influenced by the shape and colour of a package, as well as by more subtle factors, such as the symbolism used in a brand name, in an advertisement, or even in the choice of a cover model for a magazine. These judgements are affected by – and often reflect – how a society feels that people should define themselves at that point in time. Liane’s choice of a new hairstyle, for example, says something about the type of image women like her want to project. If asked, Liane might not be able to say exactly why she considered some websites and rejected others. Many product meanings are hidden below the surface of the packaging, the design and advertising, and this book will discuss some of the methods used by marketers and social scientists to discover or apply these meanings.
- Amazon.co.uk has a combined American and international image that appeals to Liane. A product’s image is often influenced by its *country of origin*, which helps to determine its ‘brand personality’. In addition, our opinions and desires are increasingly shaped by input from around the world, thanks to rapid advancements in communications and transportation systems (witness the internet!). In today’s global culture, consumers often prize products and services that ‘transport’ them to different locations and allow them to experience the diversity of other cultures. While the global/European recession has had an impact on many consumer behaviours,⁵ young/single European consumers seem to be making use of the internet for another form of ‘shopping’, with online data websites reporting revenues of over half a billion euros! In the UK, the Office for National Statistics has added online dating as a category in its basket for measuring goods and services as a cost of living. As the financial analyst for online dating puts it: ‘People don’t cut back on hooking up, but meeting people online is cheaper – you get to sift through potential suitors’.⁶

The field of consumer behaviour covers a lot of ground: it is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Consumers take many forms, ranging from a six-year-old child pleading with her mother for wine gums to an executive in a large corporation deciding on an extremely expensive computer system. The items that are consumed can include anything from tinned beans to a massage, democracy, reggae music, and even other people (the images of rock stars, for example). Needs and desires to be satisfied range from hunger and thirst to love, status or even spiritual fulfilment. There is a growing interest in consumer behaviour, not only in the field of marketing but from the social sciences in general. This follows a growing awareness of the increasing importance of consumption in our daily lives, in our organisation of daily activities, in our identity formation, in politics and economic development, and in the flows of global culture, where consumer culture seems to spread,

albeit in new forms, from North America and Europe to other parts of the world. This spread of consumer culture via marketing is not always well received by social critics and consumers, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.⁷ Indeed, consumption can be regarded as playing such an important role in our social, psychological, economic, political and cultural lives that today it has become the ‘vanguard of history’.⁸

Consumers are actors on the marketplace stage

The perspective of **role theory**, which this book emphasises, takes the view that much of consumer behaviour resembles actions in a play,⁹ where each consumer has lines, props and costumes that are necessary to a good performance. Since people act out many different roles, they may modify their consumption decisions according to the particular ‘play’ they are in at the time. The criteria that they use to evaluate products and services in one of their roles may be quite different from those used in another role.

Another way of thinking about consumer roles is to consider the various ‘plays’ that the consumer may engage in. One classical role here is the consumer as a ‘chooser’ – somebody who, as we have seen with Liane, can choose between different alternatives and explores various criteria for making this choice. But the consumer can have many things at stake other than just ‘making the right choice’. We are all involved in a communication system through our consumption activities, whereby we communicate our roles and statuses. We are also sometimes searching to construct our identity, our ‘real selves’, through various consumption activities. Or the main purpose of our consumption might be an exploration of a few of the many possibilities the market has to offer us, maybe in search of a ‘real kick of pleasure’. On the more serious side, we might feel victimised by fraudulent or harmful offerings, and we may decide to take action against such risks from the marketplace by becoming active in consumer movements. Or we may react against the authority of the producers by co-opting their products, and turning them into something else, as when military boots all of a sudden became ‘normal’ footwear for pacifist women. We may decide to take action as ‘political consumers’ and boycott products from companies or countries whose behaviour does not meet our ethical or environmental standards. Hence, as consumers we can be choosers, communicators, identity-seekers, pleasure-seekers, victims, rebels and activists – sometimes simultaneously.¹⁰

Consumer behaviour is a process

In its early stages of development, the field was often referred to as *buyer behaviour*, reflecting an emphasis on the interaction between consumers and producers at the time of purchase. Marketers now recognise, however, that consumer behaviour is an ongoing *process*, not merely what happens at the moment a consumer hands over money or a credit card and in turn receives some good or service.

The **exchange**, in which two or more organisations or people give and receive something of value, is an integral part of marketing.¹¹ While exchange remains an important part of consumer behaviour, the expanded view emphasises the entire consumption process, which includes the issues that influence the consumer before, during and after a purchase. Figure 1.1 illustrates some of the issues that are addressed during each stage of the consumption process.

Consumer behaviour involves many different actors

A consumer is generally thought of as a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase and then disposes of the product during the three stages of the consumption process. In many cases, however, different people may be involved in the process. The *purchaser* and *user* of a product may not be the same person, as when a parent chooses clothes for a teenager (and makes selections that can result in ‘fashion suicide’ from the teenager’s point of view).

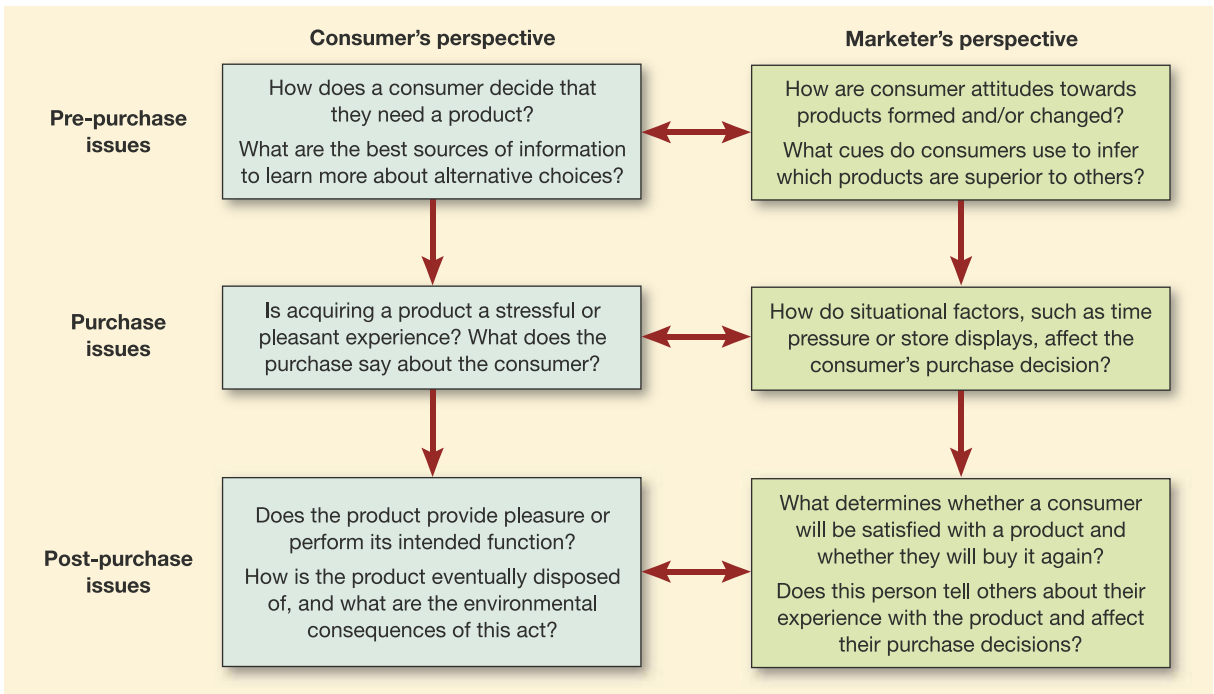


Figure 1.1 Some issues that arise during stages in the consumption process

In other cases, another person may act as an *influencer*, providing recommendations for (or against) certain products without actually buying or using them. For example, a friend, rather than a parent, accompanying a teenager on a shopping trip may pick out the clothes that they decide to purchase.

Finally, consumers may be organisations or groups in which one person may make the decisions involved in purchasing products that will be used by many, as when a purchasing agent orders the company's office supplies. In other organisational situations, purchase decisions may be made by a large group of people – for example, company accountants, designers, engineers, sales personnel and others – all of whom will have a say in the various stages of the consumption process. One important organisation is the family, where different family members play pivotal roles in decision-making regarding products and services used by all (see Chapter 11).

MARKETING OPPORTUNITY



Successful companies understand that needs are a moving target. No organisation – no matter how renowned for its marketing prowess – can afford to rest on its laurels. *Everyone* needs to keep innovating to stay ahead of changing customers and the marketplace. BMW is a great example. No one (not even rivals like Audi or Mercedes-Benz) would argue that the German car manufacturer knows how to make a good car (though they may not agree with the company's claim to be 'the ultimate driving machine'). Still, BMW's engineers and designers know they have to understand

how drivers' needs will change in the future – even those loyal owners who love the cars they own today. The company is highly sensitive to such key trends as:

- a desire for environmentally friendly products
- increasingly congested roadways and the movement by some cities such as London to impose fees on vehicles in central areas
- new business models that encourage consumers to rent products only while they need them rather than buying them outright.





BMW's response: The company committed more than \$1 billion to develop electric BMWi models such as its new i3 commuter car and i8 sports car. These futuristic-looking vehicles are largely made from lightweight carbon fibre to maximise the distance they can go between battery charges, and 25 per cent of the interior plastic

comes from recycled or renewable raw materials. In addition, BMW started a car-sharing service (now in several European cities as well as San Francisco) it calls DriveNow: Drivers use a computer chip in their licences to hire a car and leave it wherever they are when they no longer need it. That's forward thinking.¹²

CONSUMERS' IMPACT ON MARKETING STRATEGY

Why should managers, advertisers, and other marketing professionals bother to learn about consumer behaviour? Very simply, *understanding consumer behaviour is good business*. The basic marketing concept states that firms exist to satisfy needs. Marketers can only satisfy these needs to the extent that they understand the people or organisations who will use the products and services they are trying to sell. *Voilà!* That's why we study consumer behaviour.

Consumer response is the ultimate test of whether a marketing strategy will succeed. Thus, a marketer should incorporate knowledge about consumers into every facet of a successful marketing plan. Data about consumers help organisations to define the market and identify threats to and opportunities for a brand. And, in the wild and wacky world of marketing, nothing is for ever: this knowledge also helps to ensure that the product continues to appeal to its core market.

Market segmentation: to whom are we marketing?

Whether within or across national boundaries, effective **market segmentation** delineates segments whose members are similar to one another in one or more characteristics and different from members of other segments. Depending on its goals and resources, a company may choose to focus on just one segment or several, or it may ignore differences among segments by pursuing a mass market strategy. In the internet-based market, Amazon.com tries to reach multiple segments at the same time. Alternatively, Meetic (the large European dating and chat site) offers a very similar product to all its customers – online dating services – but localises its offerings for dozens of European countries by offering country sites in the local language . . . a key consideration for many when it comes to dating and chatting!¹³

In many cases, it makes a lot of sense to target a number of market segments. The likelihood is that no one will fit any given segment description exactly, and the issue is whether or not consumers differ from our profile in ways that will affect the chances of their adopting the products we are offering.

Many segmentation variables form the basis for slicing up a larger market, and a great deal of this book is devoted to exploring the ways marketers describe and characterise different segments. The segmentation variables listed in Table 1.1 are grouped into four categories, which also indicate where in the book these categories are considered in more depth.

While consumers can be described in many ways, the segmentation process is valid only when the following criteria are met:

- Consumers within the segment are similar to one another in terms of product needs, and these needs are different from consumers in other segments.
- Important differences among segments can be identified.
- The segment is large enough to be profitable.

Table 1.1 Variables for market segmentation

Category	Variables	Location of discussion
Demographics	Age	Chapter 11
	Gender	Chapter 5
	Social class, occupation, income	Chapter 12
	Ethnic group, religion	Chapters 13, 15
	Stage in life	Chapter 11
	Purchaser vs user	Chapter 10
Geographic	Region	Chapters 13, 15
	Country differences	Chapters 2, 15
Psychographic	Self-concept, personality	Chapter 5
	Lifestyle	Chapters 6, 13, 14, 15
Behavioural	Brand loyalty, extent of usage	Chapter 8
	Usage situation	Chapter 9
	Benefits desired	Chapter 6

- Consumers in the segment can be reached by an appropriate marketing mix.
- The consumers in the segment will respond in the desired way to the marketing mix designed for them.

Demographics are statistics that measure observable aspects of a population, such as birth rate, age distribution or income. The national statistical agencies of European countries and pan-European agencies such as Eurostat¹⁴ are major sources of demographic data on families, but many private firms gather additional data on specific population groups. The changes and trends revealed in demographic studies are of great interest to marketers, because the data can be used to locate and predict the size of markets for many products, ranging from mortgages to baby food and health care for senior consumers.

In this book we will explore many of the important demographic variables that make consumers the same as, or different from, others. We'll also consider other important characteristics that are not so easy to measure, such as **psychographics** – differences in consumers' personalities and tastes which can't be measured objectively. For now, let's summarise a few of the most important demographic dimensions, each of which will be developed in more detail in later chapters. However, a word of caution is needed here. The last couple of decades have witnessed the growth of new consumer segments that are less dependent on demographics and more likely to borrow behavioural patterns and fashions across what were formerly more significant borders or barriers. It is now not so uncommon to see men and women, or grandmothers and granddaughters, having similar tastes. Hence, useful as demographic variables might be, marketers should beware of using them as the sole predictors of consumer tastes.

Age

Consumers in different age groups have very different needs and wants, and a better understanding of the ageing process of European consumers will continue to be of great importance to marketers as well as public policy decision-makers. By the year 2020, the world will have 13 'super-aged' societies (where 20 per cent or more of the population is 65 years or older) . . . and most of those countries will be in Europe (Netherlands, France, Sweden, Portugal, Slovenia and Croatia).¹⁵ While people who belong to the same age group differ in many other ways, they do tend to share a set of values and common cultural experiences that they carry throughout life.¹⁶ *Marie Claire*, the French magazine with over 2 million 'likes' on