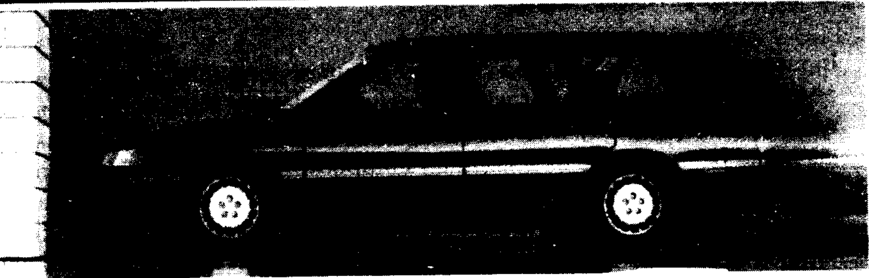


Volvo Has Built A Reputation For Surviving Accidents. Subaru Has Built A Reputation For Avoiding Them.

The Volvo 240 has done a fine job of surviving accidents. And we, at Subaru, have always admired that.

So we gave the new Subaru Legacy unibody construction like the Volvo 240.

But at Subaru, we think there's something even better than surviving accidents. And that's not getting into them in the first place.

So unlike the 240, the Subaru Legacy offers an optional anti-lock braking system (ABS). A feature that pumps your brakes automatically for maximum maneuverability and gives you much greater steering control during heavy braking.

Unlike the 240, the Subaru Legacy is available with full-time four wheel drive. A more civilized form of four wheel drive giving you greater traction on smooth high speed highways as well as on washboard dirt roads.

And unlike most cars in the world, the Subaru Legacy comes with both four wheel disc brakes and independent suspension.

At Subaru, we know that even cars not involved in accidents can eventually come apart. So every Subaru is put together to stay together through conditions which drive other cars into the ground. Of course, we can't guarantee how long every one of our cars will last. But we do know 93% of all Subaru cars registered in America since 1979 are still on the road.*

And the new Subaru Legacy may even surpass that record for durability. A Subaru Legacy has broken the FIA World Speed/Endurance record by running 19 days at an average speed of 138.8 mph for more than 62,000 miles.**

So you see, it wasn't just accidents the Subaru Legacy was designed to avoid. But junk yards as well.

*R.L. Polk & Co. Statistics, July 1, 1988. **Validated by the Federation Internationale De L'Automobile.

Subaru Legacy™

We Built Our Reputation By Building A Better Car.

Figure 6–9. Positioning by competitor: Subaru cars.

Courtesy of Subaru of America, Inc.

The first four steps or exercises provide a useful background. The final steps address the evaluation and measurement follow-up. Each step will be discussed in turn.

Identifying the Competitors

A first step is to identify the competition. This step is not as simple as it might seem. Pepsi might define its competitors as follows:

1. **Other cola drinks.**
2. **Nondiet soft drinks.**
3. **All soft drinks.**
4. **Nonalcoholic beverages.**
5. **All beverages except water.**

In most cases, there will be a primary group of competitors and one or more secondary competitors, and it will be useful to identify both categories. Thus, Coke will compete primarily with other colas, but other nondiet soft drinks and diet colas could be important as secondary competitors. As another example, the flower-delivery service Teleflora will compete primarily with other flower-delivery services such as FTD, but also secondarily with other gifts such as boxed chocolates. *Time* magazine may compete more with the TV news shows and channels than with *Newsweek*. Such secondary competition is of special concern to brands that are market leaders in their categories, for they are the ones that need to be most considered with issues of category (*primary*) demand.

A knowledge of various ways to identify such groupings will be of conceptual as well as practical value. One approach is to determine from buyers of a product which other products they considered. For example, a sample of cola drinkers might be asked what other beverages they might have consumed instead. Or, the respondent could be asked what brand would have been purchased had that particular cola brand been out of stock. The resulting analysis will identify the primary and secondary groups of competitive products. Instead of customers, retailers or buyers knowledgeable about customers could provide the information.

Another approach is the development of associations of products with use situations.[26] A respondent might be asked to keep a diary or to recall the use contexts for Pepsi. One might be with an afternoon snack. The respondent could then be asked to name all the beverages that would be appropriate to drink with an afternoon snack. For each beverage so identified, the respondent could be asked to identify appropriate use contexts so that the list of use contexts was more complete. This process would continue for perhaps twenty or thirty respondents until a large list of use contexts and beverages resulted. Another group of respondents would then be asked to make a judgment, perhaps on a seven-point scale, as to how appropriate each beverage would be for each use situation. Then, groups of beverages could be clustered based on their similarity of appropriate use situations. Thus, if Pepsi was regarded as appropriate with snacks, it would compete primarily with other beverages regarded as appropriate for snack occasions. If it

was not regarded as appropriate for use with meals, it would be less competitive with beverages deemed more appropriate for meals.

These two approaches suggest a conceptual basis for identifying competitors even when marketing research is not employed. The concept of alternatives from which customers choose and the concept of appropriateness to a use context can be used to understand the competitive environment. A management team or a group of experts, such as retailers or buyers who have an understanding of the customer, could employ one or both of these conceptual bases to identify competitive groupings.

Determining How the Competitors Are Perceived and Evaluated

To determine how competitor products are perceived, it is necessary to choose an appropriate set of product attributes for the comparison. The term *attributes* includes not only product characteristics and customer benefits but also product associations such as product uses or product users. Thus for beer, a relevant attribute could be the association of a brand with outdoor picnics as opposed to a nice restaurant. Another could be the association with athletes.

In any product category there are usually a host of attribute possibilities. Further, some can be difficult to specify. Consider the taste attribute of beer. Taste testers in a *Consumer Reports* study considered the taste attribute but also the related attributes of smell, strength, and fullness. However, the strength of a beer is probably related to both its taste and its aroma characteristics, and perhaps also to its alcoholic content. Likewise, the notion of fullness is highly interrelated with the other attributes. Fullness can refer to the degree to which the drinker is left with a "full feeling" after consuming beer, to the visual color and texture of the product, and to a wide variety of other possible attributes.

The task is to identify potentially relevant attributes, to remove redundancies from the list, and then to select those that are most useful and relevant in describing brand images.

One approach to the generation of an attribute list is the Kelly repertory grid. The respondent is first given a deck of cards containing brand names from which all unfamiliar brands are culled. Three cards are then selected randomly from those remaining. The respondent is asked to identify the two brands that are most similar and to describe why those two brands are similar to each other and different from the third. The respondent is then asked to rate the remaining brands on the basis of the attributes thus identified. This procedure is repeated several times for each respondent. As a variant, respondents could be asked to select a preference between two brands and then asked why one brand was selected over the other.

Such a technique will often generate a rather long list of attributes, sometimes as many as several hundred and usually well over forty. The next step is to remove the redundancy from the list. In most cases there will be a set of words or phrases that will essentially mean the same thing. Such redundancies can be identified using logic and judgment.

Another approach is to remove redundancy through a statistical technique

called factor analysis.[27] Respondents are asked to rate each of the objects with respect to each attribute. For example, they might be asked to rate Budweiser on a seven-point scale as to the degree it is full bodied. Correlations between attributes are then calculated, and factor analysis essentially groups the attributes on the basis of those correlations.

After a list of nonredundant attributes is obtained, the next task is to select those that are the most meaningful and important to the customer's image of the competitive objects. The selected attributes should be those that are important and relevant to the customer in making distinctions between brands and in making purchasing decisions. One study found that the relevant attribute list for toothpaste was considered to include prevention of decay, taste, whitening capability, color, and attractiveness of the product and its packaging, and price.[28] Chapter 8 will discuss several approaches for selecting the most useful and meaningful attributes.

Determining the Competitors' Positions

Another useful exercise is to determine how competitors (including our own entry) are positioned. The primary focus of interest is how they are positioned with respect to the relevant attributes. What is the customer's image of the various competitors? We are also interested in how they are positioned with respect to each other. Which competitors are perceived as similar and which as different? Such judgments can be made subjectively. However, it is also possible to use research to help answer such questions empirically. Such research is termed multidimensional scaling because its goal is to scale objects on several dimensions (or attributes). Multidimensional scaling can be based upon either attribute data or nonattribute data. Approaches based on attribute data will be considered first.

Attribute-Based Multidimensional Scaling

The most direct way to determine images is simply to ask a sample of the target segment to scale the various objects on the attribute dimensions. One approach is to use a seven-point agree-or-disagree scale. For example, the respondent could be asked to express his or her agreement or disagreement with statements regarding the Ford Escort: With respect to its class I would consider the Ford Escort to be

Sporty.
Roomy.
Economical.
Good handling.

Alternatively, perceptions of a brand's users or use contexts could be used to determine the brand image: I would expect the typical Escort owner to be

Older.
Wealthy.
Independent.
Intelligent.

The Escort is most appropriate for

Short neighborhood trips.
Commuting.
Cross-country trips.

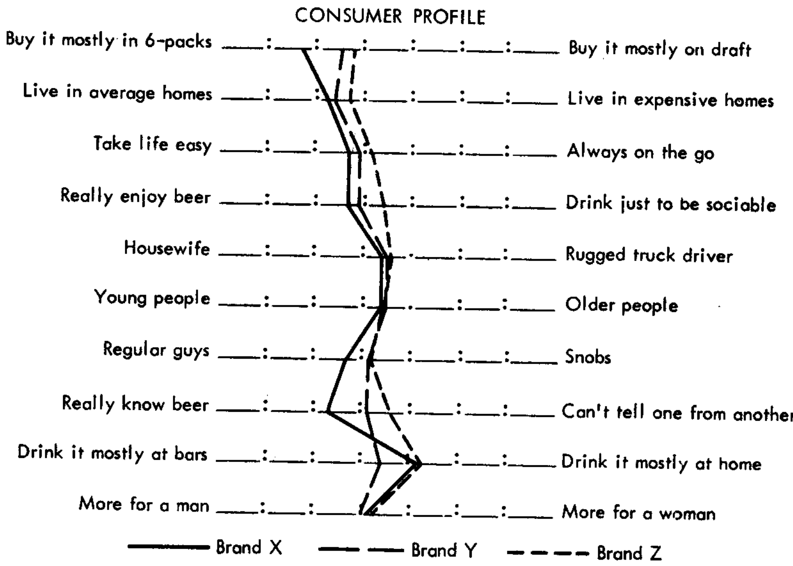
Another approach, the *semantic differential*, was used by W. A. Mindak to obtain the image of three beer brands.[29] The resulting profiles are shown in Figure 6–10. Notice that the image is not only obtained with respect to nine product attributes but also with respect to ten customer characteristics. Several observations emerge. Brand X is especially strong on the refreshing dimensions. Brand Z is weak across the board. The consumer profiles are really similar, which, in this case, was regarded as good news for the makers of brand X, who deliberately tried to appeal to a broad segment.

Non-Attribute-Based Multidimensional Scaling

Attribute-based approaches have several conceptual disadvantages. A complete, valid, and relevant attribute list is not easy to generate. Furthermore, an object may be perceived or evaluated as a total whole that is not really decomposable in terms of attributes. These disadvantages lead us to the use of nonattribute data, such as similarity data.

Similarity measures simply reflect the perceived similarity of two objects in the eyes of the respondents. For example, each respondent may be asked to rate the degree of similarity of each pair of objects. Thus, the respondent does not have an attribute list that implicitly suggests criteria to be included or excluded. The result, when averaged over all respondents, is a similarity rating for each object pair. A *multidimensional scaling program,* then, attempts to locate objects in a two- or three- (or more if necessary) dimensional space. Such a space is again termed a perceptual map. The program attempts to construct the perceptual map such that the two objects with the highest similarity are separated by the shortest distance, the object pair with the second highest similarity is separated by the second shortest distance, and so on. Of course, the programs will rarely be able to accomplish this goal, but many different perceptual maps are tried to get as close as possible.

In a study of car images several years ago,[30] between-object similarities were obtained for six cars and an "ideal car." The resulting perceptual map is shown in Figure 6–11. The disadvantage of the similarity-based approach is that the interpretation of the dimensions does not have the attributes as a guide. Thus, in Figure 6–11 one horizontal axis might be determined "prestige" and the other horizontal axis "size," but there are no attributes on which to base these judgments. Attribute data can be collected separately and correlated with the dimensions found in Figure 6–11, but it would be a distinctly separate analysis. The underlying perceptual map, of course, would still be based upon the similarity data. In addition to the use of similarity data, methods have recently been developed that can extract positioning maps from purchase data of members of longitudinal purchase panels, based on the patterns of brand switching for individual households, as well as in



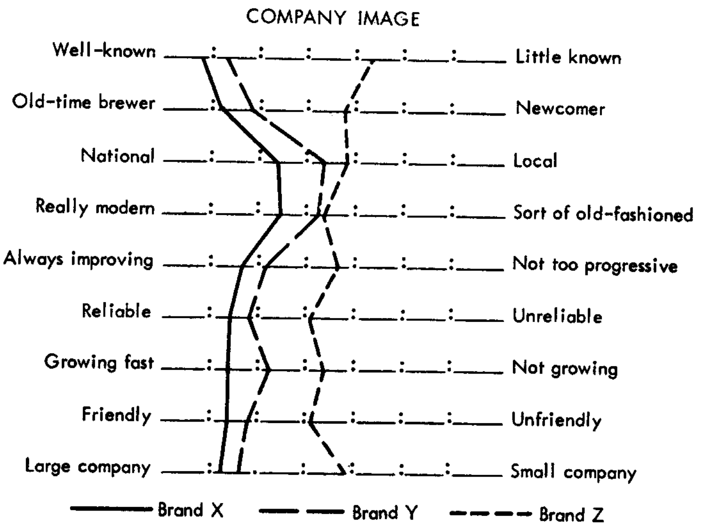
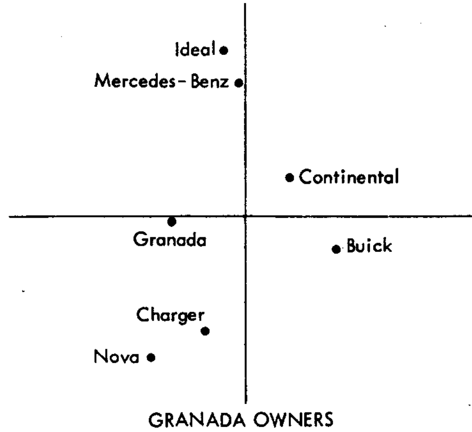


Figure 6–10. Images and consumer profile for three brands.

Source: W. A. Mindak, "Fitting the Semantic Differential to the Marketing Problem," Journal of Marketing, *25, April 1961, pp. 31-32. Published by American Marketing Association.*



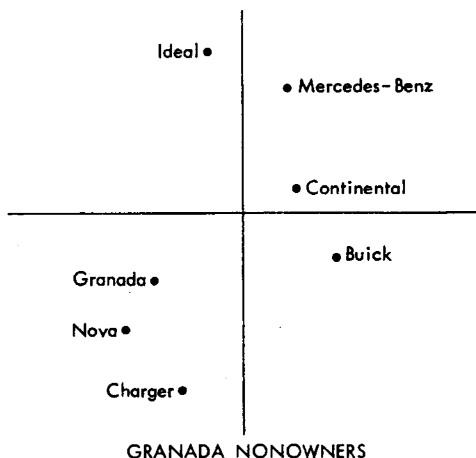


Figure 6–11. Similarity-based perceptual map.

Source: Robert E. Wilkes, "Product Positioning by Multidimensional Scaling," Journal of Advertising Research, *17, August 1977, p. 16.*

other ways. These are not discussed here, and the interested reader is referred to marketing research texts and journals for more information.[31]

Analyzing the Customers

The ultimate positioning decision specifies where in the perceptual map the brand should be positioned. Making that decision obviously requires knowing which areas in the map will be attractive to the customers. In most cases, customers will differ markedly as to the area in the perceptual map they prefer even if their per-

ceptions of brands are similar. Thus, the task is usually to identify segments or clusters of customers based on their preferred locations in the perceptual maps. The decision will then involve selecting the segment or segments as well as the target position.

One approach to segmentation involves identifying which attributes or customer benefits are most important and then identifying groups of customers who value similar attributes or benefits. In Chapter 8, methods to identify important attributes or benefits will be discussed. Another approach uses the concept of an "ideal object." An ideal object, also discussed in Chapter 8, is an object the customer would prefer over all others, including objects that can be conceptualized but do not actually exist.[32] It is a combination of all the customer's preferred attribute levels. Customers who have similar ideal objects will form relevant segments.

It is often important to consider customers' preference for attributes in the context for the use context.[33] Preferences may be very sensitive to use context. In one study, focus groups (structured discussions involving eight to ten people) and judgment were used to identify nine relevant use contexts for coffee:[34]

1. To start the day.
2. Between meals.
3. Between meals with others.
4. With lunch.
5. With supper.
6. Dinner with guests.
7. In the evening.
8. To keep awake in the evening.
9. On weekends.

In this study, there were differences across use occasion (Hill's Brothers had a 7 percent share of breakfast use but only a 1.5 percent share of the remainder of the day). The major differences were found between A.M. coffee drinkers and P.M.. coffee drinkers.

MAKING THE POSITIONING DECISION . . . .

The four steps or exercises just discussed should be conducted prior to making the actual positioning decision, as the results will nearly always contribute to the decision. The exercises can be done subjectively by the involved managers if necessary. Although marketing research will be more definitive, if research is not feasible or justifiable, the process should still be pursued. However, even with that background, it is still not possible to generate a cookbook solution to the positioning question. However, some guidelines or checkpoints can be offered.

1. *An economic analysis should guide the decision.* As was noted in Chapter 4, the success of any objective basically depends on two factors: the potential market size times the penetration probability. Unless both of these factors are favorable, success will be unlikely.

The market segment size, right now or very soon, should be worthwhile. If new buyers are to be attracted to the product class, a reasonable assessment should be made of the potential size and share of that growth area. Demographic trends are obviously very useful in making such forecasts: the recent growth in single-person households, for example, has led to special campaigns from cruise lines, food companies, and so on, aimed at the singles market.[35] Additionally, various other kinds of data sources (such as syndicated survey reports by Yankelovich, Roper, etc.)[36] are used by marketers to keep track of lifestyle and attitudinal trends among consumers so that they can find fast-growth areas. For instance, such services alerted marketers to the trend among consumers to seek flavorful foods and beverages in the early 1990s, leading Seagrams to bring out flavored alcoholic drinks, Heinz to launch salsa-flavored ketchup, and so on. However, some surveys (such as annual lifestyle and behavior data collected by ad agency DDB Needham) have shown that alleged shifts in consumer values and attitudes do not always translate into equivalent changes in buying patterns, so caution must always be applied in interpreting data about such trends.[37]

If categories are not growing, and share gains are sought from other brands within the category, those brands should have a large enough market share to justify the effort. Research must show that there exists a good reason why users of these targeted brands might switch. The "penetration probability" must indicate that there is indeed a competitive weakness to attack, or a competitive advantage to exploit, that will lead to the intended share gain.

2. *Positioning usually implies a segmentation commitment.* Positioning usually means that an overt decision is being made to ignore parts of the market and to concentrate only on certain segments. Such an approach requires commitment and discipline, because it is not easy to turn your back on potential buyers. Yet the effect of generating a distinct, meaningful position is to focus on the target segments and not be constrained by the reaction of other segments.

There is always the possibility of deciding to engage in a strategy of *undifferentiation*—that of attempting to reach all segments. In that case, it might be reasonable to consider deliberately generating a *diffuse image*, or an image that will mean different things to different people. Such an approach is risky and difficult to implement and usually would only be used by a large brand with a very strong market position. The implementation could involve projecting a range of advantages while avoiding being identified with any one. Alternatively, there could be a conscious effort to avoid being explicit about any particular feature. Pictures of bottles of Coca-Cola superimposed with the words "It's the real thing," or Budweiser's claim that "Bud is the king of beers," or "Somebody still cares about quality" illustrate these strategies.

It is possible to "oversegment" the market, and aim at too specialized a market. Some recent research shows that communicating several differentiating features for a brand in one ad (rather than few, spread over several ads), can lead to the perception of the brand being so different from the others in the category that it is seen as a *specialty* or *subtype*, as being almost a different product than the *standard* or *reference* product.[38]

3. *If the advertising is working, stick with it.* An advertiser will often get tired of

a positioning strategy and the advertising used to implement it and will consider making a change. However, the personality or image of a brand, like that of a person, evolves over many years, and the value of consistency through time cannot be overestimated. Some of the very successful, big-budget campaigns have run for ten, twenty, or even thirty years. Larry Light, while the executive vice president of BBDO, a major New York advertising agency, said that the "biggest mistake marketers make is to change the personality of their advertising year after year. They end up with a schizophrenic personality at worst, or no personality at best."[39] Burger King, for example, which has had many different advertising campaigns in the last ten years, has been accused of weakening its positioning in the marketplace by this too-rapid change.[40] See Figure 6–12.

4. *Don't try to be something you are not.* It is tempting but naive, and usually fatal, to decide on a positioning strategy that exploits a market need or opportunity but assumes that your product is something it is not. Before positioning a product, it is important to determine the position of the various competitors. One approach is to scale the competitors on the various identified attributes. The fourth step involves customer analysis. What segmentation variables seem most relevant? What about benefit segmentation?

Consider Hamburger Helper, introduced in 1970 as an add-to-meat product that would generate a good-tasting, economical, skillet dinner. It did well during the early 1970s, when meat prices were high, but in later years, homemakers switched back to more exotic, expensive foods. Reacting to the resulting drop in sales, a decision was made to make Hamburger Helper more exotic by positioning it as a base for casseroles. However, the product—at least in the consumers' minds—could not deliver. The consumers continued to view it as an economical, reliable convenience food; furthermore, they felt that they did not need help in making casseroles.

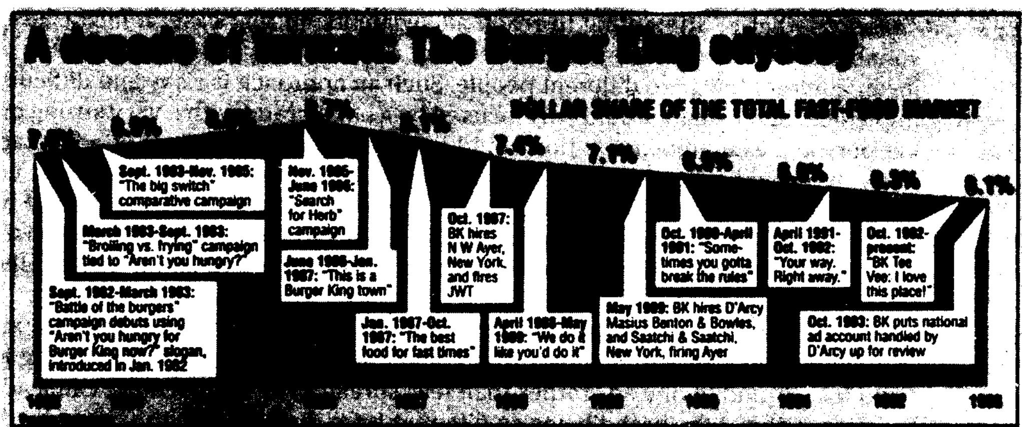


Figure 6–12. Changes in Burger King campaigns over the years.

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5. *Consider symbols.* A symbol or set of symbols can have strong associations that should be considered when making positioning decisions. Symbols like the Marlboro Man or the Jolly Green Giant can help implement a campaign, of course. but there can be existing symbols already developed by the brand or organization that can be used. Their availability can affect the positioning decision. For example, Wells Fargo bank has used the Wells Fargo stagecoach with all its associations for many years. The role of symbols in creating a brand personality is discussed further in Chapter 10.

A positioning objective, like any advertising objective, should be operational, in that it should be measurable. To evaluate the advertising and to generate diagnostic information about future advertising strategies, it is necessary to monitor the position over time. A variety of techniques can be employed to make this measurement; typically, test ads are shown to one group of consumers, but not to another, and differences in their positioning maps are then compared. Techniques have also been developed which can relate changes in brand purchasing histories, obtained from households that are members of longitudinal panels, to the advertising and other marketing mix elements aimed at those household panel members.[41] These methods allow managers to test different ad executions to see which ones are most likely to succeed in repositioning brands in desired directions on positioning maps, and, subsequently, to track changes in brand positioning over time.

SUMMARY

A key advertising objective is identifying the target market segments. A concentration strategy involves the selection of a single segment, whereas a differentiation strategy will have several segments, perhaps each having a separate advertising goal. Among the ways to identify segments that might be worthwhile and attractive is by describing them by age, income, geographic location, ethnicity, product usage, or brand loyalty. Segments can also be created by grouping customer in segments that want the same product benefits or share the same lifestyle or culture.

There are a variety of positioning strategies available to the advertiser. An object can be positioned as follows:

1. By product characteristics or customer benefit (Crest is a cavity fighter).
2. By price and quality (Sears is a "value" store).
3. By use or application (Gatorade is for flu attacks).
4. By product user (Miller is for the blue-collar, heavy beer drinker).
5. By product class (7-Up is a soft drink like the colas, not a mixer).
6. By cultural symbol (the Marlboro cowboy).
7. By competitor (Avis positions itself with Hertz).

Four steps should precede the selection of a positioning strategy. In the first, an effort should be made to identify the competitors. In the second step, the attributes used to perceive and evaluate competitors are determined. The third step involves the determination of the position of the various competitors. The fourth

step involves customer analysis. What segmentation variables seem most relevant? What about benefit segmentation?

The positioning decision should involve an economic analysis of the potential target segments and the probability of affecting their behavior with advertising. Other factors include realizing that positioning involves a segmentation commitment, sticking to a strategy that is working, being sure that the product matches the positioning strategy, and consideration of available symbols that may contribute to image formation. Finally, marketers should consider the evaluation stage, when the position is monitored.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some argue that usage is the most useful segmentation variable. Others believe that the benefit provided by the product or service is the most useful. Still others will refute both statements. What is your position? Why?
2. Distinguish between controlled coverage and customer self-selection. Which approach would likely be most effective for the manufacturer of an expensive sports car?
3. Develop segmentation strategies for the following:
   a. Wristwatch company.
   b. Manufacturer of electronic calculators.
   c. College.
   d. Police department.
   e. Pleasure-boat company.
   f. Large retail hardware store.
   g. Church.
   h. Hair spray.
4. Select six television and ten print advertisements. How are the products positioned?
5. Can you expand the list of seven positioning strategies mentioned in the text?
6. Obtain two examples of each of the positioning strategies discussed in the chapter.
7. Consider the following beer brands: Lowenbrau, Miller Lite, Miller Genuine Draft, Coors, Coors Light, Bud, Bud Light, Michelob Dry, Schlitz Malt, Heineken, and Beck's.
   a. In each case, write down what you think is the image the general public holds of that brand. Confine your answers to a few statements or phrases.
   b. Generate an attribute list for beer, using the Kelly repertory grid approach. Revise your answer to part (a).
   c. Identify the competitors of the listed brands of beer by asking consumers or potential consumers of that object what they would select if that object were not available.
   d. Determine the use situations relevant to beer, and for three use situations list other products that might be appropriate.
8. Consider all possible pairs of the following brands of soft drinks: 7-Up, Pepsi, Diet 7-Up, Diet Pepsi, Coke, Orange Crush, Diet Coke, and your ideal brand.

a. Rank the brand pairs in terms of their similarity. Was the task a reasonable one? Are you comfortable with all your rankings?
b. Pick several sets of three brands, identify the two most similar brands in the set, and explain why you regard them as the most similar. Using the Kelly repertory grid technique, generate a list of attributes relevant to this product class. Scale each of the attributes in terns of how important they are to you in your choice of a soft drink.
c. How would you say each of these brands is "positioned"?

9. What would be the characteristics of an ideal brand of toothpaste for you? How might the concept of an ideal brand be related to benefit segmentation? What brand did you buy last? Why? How would your ideal brand differ from this brand?

10. Suppose Anheuser-Busch is interested in entering the soft drink market. They have developed a new drink called Chelsea, which is a carbonated apple-juice drink that contains 0.5 percent alcohol. It is packaged in a glass bottle partially wrapped in foil, like some of the labels used on premium beers. What are the positioning alternatives open to Chelsea? How would you go about selecting the optimal one?

NOTES

1. "Marketing's New Look," *Business Week*, January 26, 1987, pp. 64–69; "Stalking the New Consumer," *Business Week*, August 28, 1989, pp. 54–62.
2. See Alfred A. Kuehn and Ralph L. Day, "Strategy of Product Quality," *Harvard Business Review*, 40 (November/December 1962), 100–110.
3. Most of the demographic figures mentioned here come from different issues of *American Demographics*, which the interested advertising planner is urged to follow.
4. Nancy Stephens, "Cognitive Age: A Useful Concept for Advertising?" *Journal of Advertising*, 20, no. 4 (December 1991), 37–48.
5. *Advertising Age*, August 9, 1993, p. 8;
6. *Advertising Age*, August 30, 1993, p. 12.
7. For discussions of these needs see Laura A. Peracchio, "Young Children's Processing of a Televised Narrative: Is a Picture Really Worth a Thousand Words," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (September 1993), pp. 281–293, and Catherine Cole and Siva K. Balasubramaniam, "Age Differences in Consumers' Search for Information: Public Policy Implications," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (June 1993), 157–169.
8. Joan Meyers-Levy and Brian Sternthal, "Gender Differences in the Use of Message Cues and Judgments," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28 (February 1991), 84–96.
9. *Working Woman*, June 1993, pp. 23–25.
10. For some statistics, see *The Wall Street Journal*, October 13, 1993, p. A1.
11. "Frito-Lay Packs $90m Ad Punch," *Advertising Age*, December 18, 1989, p. 18.
12. Joel S. Dubow, "Occasion-based vs. User-based Benefit Segmentation," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32, no 1 (March–April 1992), 11–18.
13. A. S. C. Ehrenberg, "Repetitive Advertising and the Consumer," *Journal of Advertising Research* (April 1974).
14. *The Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 1993, p. A7.
15. Russell I. Haley, "Benefit Segmentation: a Decision-Oriented Research Tool," *Journal of Marketing*, 32 (July 1968), 30–35.
16. "Research Finds Fickle Consumers," *Advertising Age*, June 26, 1989, p. 31.
17. Russell I. Haley and Philip J. Weingarden, "Running Reliable Attitude Segmentation Studies," *Journal of Advertising Research* (December 1986/January 1987), 51–55.

18. Arnold Mitchell, *The Nine American Lifestyles* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), and *Advertising Age*, February 13, 1989, p. 24. For a review of earlier research on psychographics, see William D. Wells, "Psychographics: A Critical Review," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 12 (May 1975), 196–213.
19. *Advertising Age*, February 15, 1993, p. 6.
20. These concepts are developed in the context of a normative mathematical model in Ronald E. Frank, William F. Massy, and Yoram Wind, *Market Segmentation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), especially in Chapter 8.
21. *The Wall Street Journal*, February 1, 1991, p. B1.
22. *Advertising Age*, September 20, 1993, p. 52.
23. *Business Week*, January 27, 1992, p. 84.
24. James H. Myers and Allan D. Shocker, "Toward a Taxonomy of Product Attributes." Working paper (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, June 1978), p. 3.
25. "Miller's Fast Growth Upsets the Beer Industry," *Business Week*, November 8, 1976.
26. George S. Day, Allan D. Shocker, and Rajendra K. Srivastava, "Customer-Oriented Approaches to Identifying Product Markets," *Journal of Marketing*, 43 (Fall 1979), 8–19.
27. David A. Aaker and George S. Day, *Marketing Research* (New York: Wiley, 1989).
28. Russell J. Haley, "Benefit Segmentation: A Decision Oriented Research Tool," *Journal of Marketing* (July 1968), 30–35.
29. W. A. Mindak, "Fitting the Semantic Differential to the Marketing Problem," *Journal of Marketing*, 25 (April 1961), 28–33.
30. Robert E. Wilkes, "Product Positioning by Multidimensional Scaling," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 17 (August 1977), 15–18.
31. See, for example, Steven M. Shugan, "Estimating Brand Positioning Maps Using Supermarket Scanning Data," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24, no. 1 (1987), 1–18, and Hotaka Katahira, "Perceptual Mapping Using Ordered Logit Analysis," *Marketing Science*, 9, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 1–17.
32. In Figure 4–7, an ideal point is shown as a point on the map. However, if an attribute-based multidimensional scaling was involved and a scale such as "inexpensive to buy-expensive to buy" were employed, the respondent would prefer to be as far to the right as possible. In that case, the "ideal point" would actually appear in the perceptual map as an ideal direction or vector instead of as a point.
33. Rajendra K. Srivastava, Robert P. Leone, and Allan D. Schocker, "Market Structure Analysis: Hierarchical Clustering of Products Based on Substitution in Use," *Journal of Marketing*, 45 (Summer 1981), pp. 38–48.
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AR III

ESSAGE STRATEGY

7 ATTENTION AND COMPREHENSION

I advise you to include the brand name in your headline. If you don't, 80 percent of the readers (who don't read your body copy) will never know what product you are advertising. If you are advertising a kind of product only bought by a small group of people, put a word in your headline that will flag them down, such as asthma, bedwetters, women over 35.
(David Ogilvy)

The advertiser must provide vivid incentives if he is to gain the favorable attention of a person whose senses have been dulled by fatigue or relaxation.
(Darrell Lucas and Steuart Britt, *Advertising Psychology and Research*)

Researchers have attempted to measure the number of advertisements that each consumer is potentially exposed to every day, and these estimates range from at least several hundred to a couple of thousands.[1] Between 1967 and 1981, the average number of network TV commercials per day rose from 1,856 to 4,079, and by 1989 this number had risen further to 6,180. The rates of increase in non-network TV commercials was even greater. These increases occurred both because more TV minutes per hour were devoted to commercials, and because more—and shorter—TV commercials ran in each commercial minute. While sixty-second TV commercials constituted 77 percent of all network commercials in 1965, they made up only 2 percent of the total in 1989, by which time thirty-second ads formed 57 percent of the total and fifteen-second spots formed 38 percent of the total.[2]

With this increasing amount of clutter, and with more households zapping ads through their TV remote controls, it is becoming increasingly difficult for ads to gain the attention of consumers. And, because channel-switching and ad-avoidance means consumers are viewing fewer seconds of ever-smaller commercials with ever-reducing attention, even ads that do get watched communicate less

of the intended information. Studies have found that ads are fully or partly miscomprehended between 20 to 30 percent of the time.[3]

Clearly, regardless of whether an ad is aiming at boosting recall, changing brand attitudes, or inducing purchase action, there are two important prerequisites for *any* effect to occur. First, an individual must be exposed to it and pay some attention to it. As the hierarchies of effect (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) pointed out, gaining a consumer's attention is usually the first step in creating effective advertising. Getting such attention is rarely enough by itself, but an ad that fails to get attention is unlikely to achieve anything else. One might say that getting (and holding) a consumer's attention is a necessary but not sufficient condition in creating effective advertising. In the second step, a consumer who does pay attention to an ad must interpret and comprehend it in the way the advertiser intended it to be interpreted. The communication must not be misinterpreted or miscomprehended; if this does happen, the ad is unlikely to lead to the kind of attitude change that the advertiser seeks.

Each of these steps of attention and comprehension represents, in some sense, a perceptual barrier through which many advertisements fail to pass. Some advertisements are not successful at stimulating sense organs in the recipient to a minimal threshold level of interest or awareness. Other advertisements have their meaning distorted by the recipient in such a way that the effect of the advertisement is quite different from what the advertiser intended.

Perception has been defined as "the process by which an individual maintains contact with his environment"[4] and elsewhere as "the process whereby an individual receives stimuli through the various senses and interprets them."[5] *Stimuli* here can refer to sets of advertisements (such as a campaign), to a single advertisement, or to a portion of an advertisement. The process, as conceptualized in Figure 7–1, includes two stages—attention and interpretation (or comprehension). Both play a role in helping an individual cope with the infinite quantity of accessi-

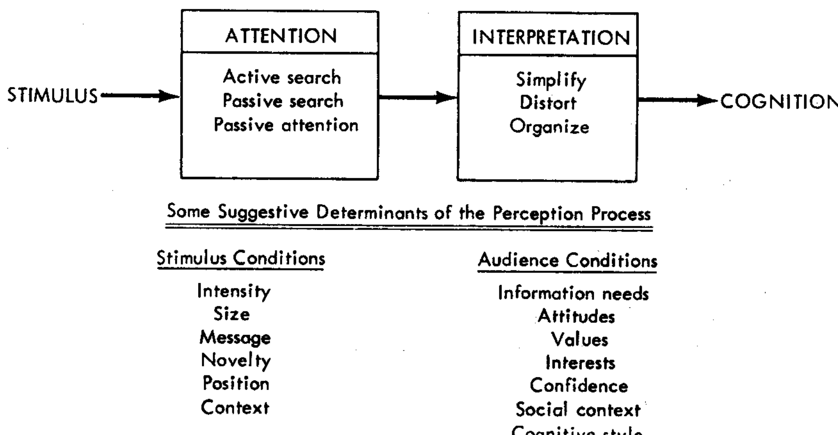


Figure 7–1. The perception process.

ble stimuli, a quantity that would otherwise be impossible to process. The first stage is the attention filter. The second stage in perception is the interpretation process. An individual organizes the stimulus content into his or her own models of reality, models that may be very different from those of other individuals or of the sender. In doing so, the person often simplifies, distorts, organizes, and even "creates" stimuli.[6]

Given this background on the perceptual process, it is clearly helpful to develop some understanding of these psychological processes, so that ads can be designed to maximize their attention-getting ability and their ability to correctly communicate the targeted copy-points. In the balance of the chapter we will consider, in turn, attention and comprehension.

ATTENTION

Attention can be viewed as an information filter—a screening mechanism that controls the quantity and nature of information any individual receives. Getting a consumer's attention is not easy. An individual, overtly or accidentally, avoids exposure to stimuli. The advertising environment is truly "cluttered"; most major magazines, for example, have almost one-half of their pages carrying advertisements, the other half carrying editorial matter.

Amid all this advertising "noise," it is not easy to create an ad that stands out enough to get noticed, processed, and remembered. The effectiveness of ads is reduced not only by the higher levels of clutter in general, but even more significantly by the proximity of ads for competing brands from the same product category. A recent study by Robert Kent found that 20 to 30 percent of the TV ads per hour per network were for the same product category.[7] As one might expect, research by Raymond Burke and Thomas Srull does show that consumer memory for a particular brand's ad does get hurt—less brand information is remembered—if the consumer sees that ad in the midst of competitive advertising, and especially if the consumer is not processing the ad with a view to possible purchase.[8]

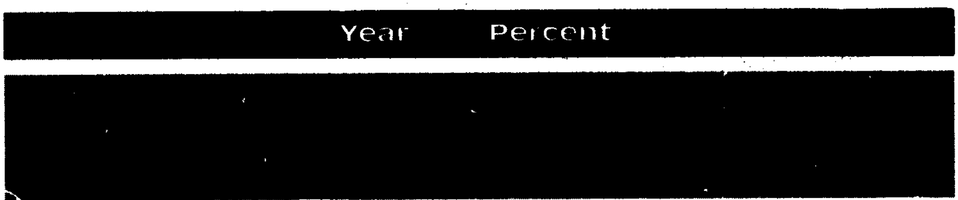
The situation is made worse in the broadcast media, especially television. Viewers have always had the freedom to do other things while a program is being shown, including leaving the room mentally or physically, but the use of remote control devices has made channel-switching endemic. Television advertisers today have to cope with the phenomena of *zapping* (switching across programs using a remote control device) and *zipping* (fast-forwarding through ads when viewing prerecorded programs on a videocassette recorder).

Combating Clutter, Zapping and Zipping

Clutter

As discussed above, a major problem facing advertisers today is the difficulty of gaining attention in the face of the increase in advertising clutter. Research by Peter Webb and Michael Ray has clearly shown that higher levels of clutter hurt the performance of individual ads—the more the clutter, the lower are average levels of ad recall, for instance.[9] For an average commercial, another study showed the

following drop in the correct brand recall of the last commercial seen between 1965 and 1981:


Year	Percent

A recent study by Tom Brown and Michael Rothschild showed, however, that while increased clutter may decrease ad effectiveness as gauged by unaided recall measures, the effects are reduced if the attention-getting power of the ad is measured instead by unaided recall or by recognition. Further, even for unaided recall, they found that increasing clutter further from today's already high levels did not appear to hurt ad effectiveness very much, and they speculate that the effects of clutter on such recall may be near its maximum.[10]

How can you fight clutter? Research shows that the effects of increased clutter do not affect all ads equally. Webb found that ads placed either at the beginning or the end of a commercial break ("pod") were less affected than were ads in the middle of such breaks. This suggests that advertisers ought to negotiate the first or last position in a pod. High-involvement ads were also less affected than lower-involvement ads, suggesting that ads that evoke greater inherent involvement (or succeed in creating enough "borrowed interest") might suffer less from clutter.[11] In the print medium, several advertisers have tried to fight clutter by using devices as varied as three-dimensional pop-ups to musical microchips in their magazine ads. These ads can cost millions of dollars apiece, but they do succeed in getting nearly 100 percent readership.[12] Whether this translates into attitudinal or sales effects, of course, is another matter altogether.

Zapping

Only a few years ago, the major concern of television advertisers was to inhibit viewers from leaving the room during the commercials. Now there is a much more serious problem—commercials can get zapped without leaving the room.[13] A viewer can turn off the sound or change channels with a remote control tuner (zapping) or run fast-forward on a prerecorded program (zipping). Households with remote controls for their TV sets zap ads 60 percent more than do those without remotes—and such remotes are now in more than 50 percent of all U.S. TV homes, and there are more of them every day.[14]

Using scanner data, Fred Zufryden, James Pedrick and Avu Sankaralingam found that, in addition to the presence of remotes, zapping also to be higher among households with cable TV, and with multiple people at home, households with children under eighteen living at home, households with college-educated adults, and households where VCRs are used. Interestingly, they reported TV channel switching to occur more during TV programs than during ads, and they found the strange result that TV ads appeared to affect sales more strongly if they were

zapped than if they were not! They suggest that perhaps consumers are forced to pay more attention to ads they are zapping—ads not being zapped might just be completely ignored![15]

Meanwhile, according to proprietary studies by the scanner data company Information Resources, Inc. (IRI), zapping tends to be higher for the first ad in a commercial break, and higher among more media-savvy younger consumers, especially those who have higher incomes and male. Other surveys also point out that younger adults zap ads more often than older adults, and men more than women. Zappers are less likely to plan their TV viewing and more likely to flip TV channels till they find something they like (sometimes called "channel grazing").[16]

The obvious approach to combating zapping (and zipping and clutter) is to create commercials that are so interesting that viewers will prefer to watch them rather than zap or zip them.[17] Research shows that zapping tends to occur most strongly during the first five seconds of a commercial, so that it is crucial to sustain the consumer's interest during these first few seconds. In sustaining the viewer's interest, advertisers can make use of all the principles that we will discuss further below—offer information that is useful, create ads that are complex and interesting, create ads that "fit" with prior expectations and attitudes, and so on.

In making such ads, the "interesting" and "novel" elements appear to be more important than the "useful information" aspects, at least for casual, low-involvement viewers. Indeed, a recent study by T. J. Olney, Morris Holbrook, and Rajeev Batra found that viewers' tendency to zip and zap commercials was reduced to the extent they found the commercials pleasurable—but increased for ads that were simply useful and utilitarian.[18] A study by the McCann-Erickson agency also found that zapping was reduced for ads that were more entertaining.[19] Having said that, it must also be pointed out that getting and gaining attention is not everything: the executional elements that are used for these purposes must not detract and distract from the real, eventual purpose of the ad, such as changing attitudes.

Ideally, ads should be so interesting that viewers would look for or wait for commercials to come on! Perhaps the most spectacular commercial of recent times was a spot for the Apple Macintosh computer. Called "1984," it aired only once during the Super Bowl. A young woman is shown throwing a sledgehammer through a giant TV screen featuring Big Brother. The tag line was: "Apple computer will introduce Macintosh and you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984." The ad was enormously successful at generating interest in the computer. Apple's "Lemmings" commercial, aired at the 1985 Super Bowl, however, was less successful.[20]

Zipping

A study found that consumers playing back prerecorded programs on their videocassette recorders tend to zip through ads over 60 percent of the time.[21] Another study looking at consumers zipping through videotaped programs and ads also found that while most consumers zipping through ads whipped through all ads indisciminately, trying to avoid all of them, zipping rates were lowest for the first commercial in the first pod and highest for the commercials in the last pod.[22] So while it appears far more difficult to fight zipping than zapping, early pod place-

ment might offer some hope. Other advertisers combat zipping by developing commercials that use visual elements (such as brand logos or package shots) that will be visible even if the viewer is fast-forwarding through the ad. Patricia Stout and Benedicta Burda found that such a "brand dominance" strategy does appear to inhibit the reducing effects of zipping on attitude toward the ad, brand beliefs, and purchase intentions.[23]

Creating Ads That Attract Attention

The attention filter operates at various levels of effort and consciousness. At one extreme is the process of *active search* wherein a receiver actually seeks information. He or she might solicit opinions of friends or search through magazines not normally read. Another level could be termed *passive search.* A receiver searches for information only from sources to which he or she is exposed during the normal course of events. The final level might be called *passive attention.* Here a receiver has little immediate need for the information and makes no conscious effort to obtain it, but some information may nevertheless enter the system.

At all three levels, it is appropriate to discuss why a person obtains information so that ads can be designed to maximize attention. There are, of course, as many reasons as there are situations and individuals. However, it is instructive to examine four general motives for attending to informative stimuli. A first motive is to obtain information that will have a high level of utility for a person. In an advertising context, an individual will obtain product information that will help make better purchase decisions. Second, people may be motivated to expose themselves to information that supports their opinions—supportive exposure—and to avoid "discrepant" information. Third, there is a desire to be exposed to information that stimulates. Finally, people are motivated to find stimuli that are interesting to them. These motives will be examined in turn.

Information of Practical Value

It might seem more than slightly redundant to mention that advertising does, in fact, inform and that people do use such information in making decisions. Although advertising practitioners and behavioral scientists search for subtle and often-disguised explanations for why some advertisements register and others do not, it is too easy to overlook the obvious and principal role of advertising as a mechanism for informing. Indeed, psychologists cite studies that demonstrate that people do expose themselves to information that has practical value to them. By now, the reader should not require such evidence. Clearly, there is a practical need for product information and effective advertisements tend to fulfill this need.

The Shell Company advertisement shown in Figure 7–2 is an example of an advertisement that offers to the reader some practical information, the availability of one of its "answer series" booklets. A measure of the success of the campaign was the fact that 600 million of these booklets were distributed during the first three years of the campaign. Clearly, the offered information was regarded as useful. Incidentally, the Shell campaign was effective in affecting the Shell image as a company that provides useful information for consumers.[24]

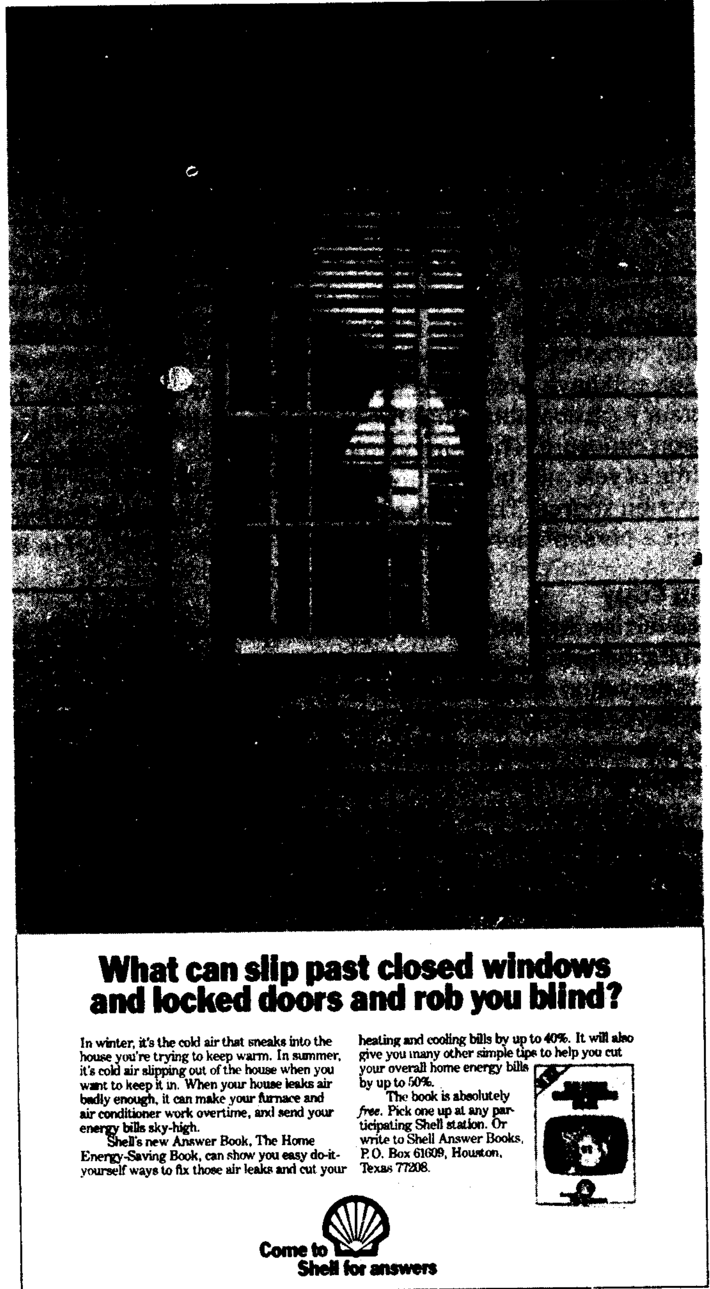


Figure 7-2. An advertisement offering practical information.
Courtesy of Shell Oil Company.

Many advertising copywriters have noted that in their experience many of the advertisements that do well in attracting attention (as evidenced, for example, by coupon returns) have headlines that promise free, useful information. A very successful headline format, for instance, is "How to . . . ," used in the context of the problem that the consumer is trying to solve with the purchase of this particular product. A consumer in the market for a refrigerator, for example, will very likely notice and read an advertisement that offers, in the headline, information on "How to select the best refrigerator for your needs."[25]

Robert Burnkrant applies a general theory of motivation that the behavioral tendency to process information is based upon three factors.[26] The first is the need for information about some topic. Obviously, audience members will have more information need for some products than others. For example, products that are costly, complex, or somewhat unknown because they are new or for some other reason will have associated with them an information need. The second is the expectancy (probability) that processing a particular ad will lead to relevant information exposure. The third would be a measure of the value of that particular as a source of relevant information: the goodness or badness of the message as an information source. This structure provides an approach to determine the extent to which a person might be motivated to process information from a particular ad.

Long Copy

An advertisement with short copy can be informative. A new brand or model in an established product class with strikingly different features may require no copy at all. However, in many situations a truly informative advertisement requires rather long copy (see our discussion of direct marketing copy in Chapter 3). The use of long copy and, consequently, the development of advertising with high informative content is inhibited by a widely accepted "rule" of the advertising business. This rule stipulates that copy must be short and punchy to be read. The concept is that readers will turn away from formidable lengthy copy.

Although such a rule may indeed apply for some products in some situations, it is by no means universally true. If a reader has a real use for the information and the information is well packaged, she or he can be induced to read long copy. Furthermore, it is often a small sacrifice to lose readership among those who do not need the information and thus are not motivated to read it. David Ogilvy makes the case for long copy, illustrating his point by his own print advertising.

> *How long should your copy be? It depends on the product. If you are advertising chewing gum, there isn't much to tell, so make your copy short. If, on the other hand, you are advertising a product which has a great many different qualities to recommend it, write long copy: the more you tell, the more you sell.*
>
> *There is a universal belief in lay circles that people won't read long copy. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Claude Hopkins (a great copywriter in the first part of the century) once wrote five pages of solid text for Schlitz beer. In a few months, Schlitz moved up from fifth place to first. I once wrote a page of solid text for Good Luck Margarine, with most gratifying results.*

Research shows that readership falls off rapidly up to 50 words of copy, but drops very little between 50 and 500 words. In my first Rolls-Royce advertisement I used 719 words—piling up one fascinating fact on another. In the last paragraph I wrote, "People who feel diffident about driving a Rolls-Royce can buy a Bentley." Judging from the number of motorists who picked up the word "diffident" and bandied it about, I concluded that the advertisement was thoroughly read. In the next one I used 1,400 words.

In my first advertisement for Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap, I used 961 words. Fourteen thousand readers clipped the coupon from this advertisement and scores of them later established factories in Puerto Rico. . . . We have even been able to get people to read long copy about gasoline. One of our Shell advertisements contained 617 words, and 22 percent of male readers read more than half of them.[27]

Infomercials

One way in which advertisers are trying to communicate large amounts of information to consumers in the television medium is the use of *infomercials*. These are long programs, usually thirty minutes in length, that go into depth about the features of the product. Many advertisers including Apple computers, Kodak (for its photo-CD product), etc. have begun to use infomercials, which previously were associated with less reputable direct response campaigns for shoddy merchandise appearing on late night television programs. Because of the increasing respectability and use of infomercials in the mid-1990s, some very established marketing clients have begun to use them, and large agency networks such as Interpublic have acquired or started infomercial-producing divisions

Active Search

There are situations in which buyers will not obtain adequate information for decision making from sources to which they are normally exposed. In such cases, they may actively seek out information from advertising in special interest magazines, by soliciting opinions from others, or by reading technical reports.

Active search generates exposures that are extremely important because of the salience of the information to the receiver. Such exposures will be more likely to affect product knowledge and attitude structure than those not associated with effort. Furthermore, the receiver is apt to be close to a purchase and the chances of forgetting the message are therefore lower. Active search is more likely to occur when risk and uncertainty are high—with major purchases, products involving relatively high involvement, and products that are new. The need for information will be highest for new products and lowest for brands with which a buyer is very familiar. As buyers develop brand loyalty, for example, their need for product information will be reduced. Evans found that automobile buyers who repurchased the same make are less likely to shop than are those who switched from one make to another.[28] The active search for information is likely to be highest among those consumers who already have some knowledge and expertise about the product category—prior knowledge facilitates comprehension of additional information.

Those with lesser knowledge may seek less "hard" information, process it less analytically, and rely more on friends and salespeople for advice.[29]

Future Reference

A purchase need not necessarily be imminent for a person to collect product information. It is reasonable to acquire such information for future use, using processes we have described as passive search or passive attention. It costs time and effort to engage in active search, but such costs can be avoided or reduced if an individual keeps informed about a product class. For example, young men or women may keep informed about personal computers, to prepare themselves for the time when they make a purchase. Of course, there will likely be other motivations as well. John Howard and Jagdish Sheth mention the need "to be a well-informed buyer in fulfilling a social role, in maintaining a social position. One is valued according to how much one knows with regard to the availability and value of products."[30]

Information That Supports: The Consistency Theories

A natural and intuitively appealing hypothesis is that people have a psychological preference for supportive information. It follows that they therefore tend to avoid nonsupportive or discrepant information. This latter tendency is illustrated by a line attributed to comedian Dick Gregory: "I have been reading so much about cigarettes and cancer that I quit reading." The term selective exposure has been applied to these twin drives.

Selective exposure can be explained by the *consistency theories,* such as dissonance theory, which suggest that people have a cognitive drive to develop consistent cognitions and behaviors about objects. *Dissonance theory* predicts that cognitive dissonance, the existence of conflicting cognitive elements, is discomforting and that people will try to reduce it. One mechanism for reducing dissonance is selective exposure—to obtain supportive information and to avoid discrepant information.

Efforts to confirm the selective exposure hypothesis in psychology have not been definitive. In part, this has been due to the difficulty of disentangling selective exposure from the other motives to process information, particularly information utility and interest factors. However, the evidence in contexts more relevant to advertising is much more positive.

D. Ehrlich and other psychologists showed recent car buyers eight envelopes allegedly containing advertisements for different makes of cars. Over 80 percent of the respondents chose the advertisements for their own cars—advertisements that would presumably be supportive.[31] J. F. Engel interviewed two matched samples, one of which had purchased a new Chevrolet (a later replication used Volkswagens) a short time before (from one day to two weeks). New car owners seemed to have greater recall and interest in Chevrolet advertising.[32] Judson Mills found that, after controlling for differences in product desirability, a positive interest for advertisements of chosen products existed although there was no negative interest in advertisements for rejected products.[33] Using sophisticated statistical

techniques on awareness data from a study of repeated magazine ads, Rajeev Batra and Wilried Vanhonacker also found evidence that ad awareness was higher for those who already seemed to have higher brand attitudes.[34]

Involuntary Exposure

Selective exposure should tend to increase when an individual's position is threatened by involuntary exposure to nonsupportive information. Consider a person who has a stable attitude and is loyal to one or several automobile models. Suppose that he or she is told of a rumored government report suggesting that one of the models he or she prefers has a characteristic that makes it tend to develop transmission difficulties. The person might then be sensitive to information that would support his or her position—that the model is actually quite reliable. An advertiser might therefore stand ready to respond immediately to any negative information his or her customers are likely to receive. Such a campaign would capitalize on selectivity and could be very effective. Its target would be existing customers, even loyal buyers, instead of those not now buying the brand. Oldsmobile ran such an ad in 1992, when rumors were floating that General Motors might shut down that division, to reassure existing buyers that it would indeed stay in business.

Combating Selective Exposure

How does an advertiser combat selective exposure—be it overt or de facto? He or she can use rewards, contests, or premiums to get people to read the material. Users of direct-mail advertisements have had great success with using contests to break through the selective-exposure barrier. An alternative is to not even try to reach certain segments directly, but to try to do it indirectly by a two-step flow of information, that is, reach opinion leaders and then rely on word of mouth to reach others (see Chapter 11).

Information That Stimulates: The Complexity Theories

There is a set of theories termed *complexity theories* that consistently makes inconsistent predictions than the consistency theories. The most dramatic position among the complexity theorists is Salvatore Maddi's variety theory. Its essence is that novelty, unexpectedness, change, and complexity are pursued because they are inherently satisfying. The definition of novelty and unexpectedness must stress the difference between existing cognitive content and current or future perceptions, and, hence, the experience of variety is very likely to also be the experience of inconsistency.[35]

Maddi's theory rests on the very reasonable assumption that people get bored and are motivated to reduce that boredom by seeking stimuli that are novel, unusual, and different. People are curious about the world around them, and this curiosity will influence exposure patterns. In particular, they may be motivated to seek out information that does not support their positions. A similar position is advocated by Berlyne,[36] who suggests that stimuli attract attention because of their

physical properties (such as brightness, color and size) and their *collative* properties (such as complexity, novelty, motion, etc.).

The complexity theories have empirical support of their own.[37] Studies of exploratory behavior have found that when a new element is introduced into the environment, individuals will attempt to learn about it. In that respect, the use of the journalistic sense for what is news and how it can be dramatized can be useful to copywriters. David Ogilvy suggested as much when he advised copywriters to inject news into their headlines. He wrote that "the two most powerful words you can use in a headline are free and new. You can seldom use free but you can always use new—if you try hard enough."[38] Other studies have indicated that variety in the form of small degrees of novelty and unexpectedness is pleasurable, whereas completely predictable events become boring. Another empirical conclusion is that variety is not only pursued and enjoyed, but is actually necessary to normal living.

It is useful to search for generalizations relating descriptors of the ad, such as size and shape, to attention. If, as Daniel Berlyne argues, stimuli attract attention because of their physical and collative properties, what ad characteristics will attract attention?

Ad Characteristics

Many characteristics contribute to the ability of an advertisement to attract attention.

The size and intensity of an ad will often influence attention. Advertisement readership will increase with advertisement size, although not linearly. Research using Starch measures of advertising readership (discussed in Chapter 14) has found that readership scores of full-page ads using four colors are about 85 percent higher than are scores of half-page ads using four colors.[39]

A "loud" ad stimulus will be more likely to be perceived than one of less intensity. Color presentations will usually attract more attention than will those in black and white: Starch concludes that the use of four colors generates about 50 percent more readership than black and white for one-page and two-page ads. Position can also influence attention. The left side of the page and the upper half get slightly more readership because of people's reading habits. Starch has concluded that ads on the back of a magazine will attract about 65 percent more readers than those toward the middle. Ads on the inside front and back covers will attract about 30 percent more readers.

Research has also highlighted the attention-getting properties of "vivid" information—information that is concrete rather than abstract, imagery provoking, emotionally interesting, containing a great deal of detail and specificity about objects, actions, outcomes, and situational context. It has been suggested that advertising phrased in concrete, detailed, and specific terms will attract more attention (and be more influential in shaping product quality judgments) than will copy phrased in abstract and general terms.[40] It is important, however, for the message itself to be vivid, not simply the presentation of it, and for the consumer to process the information in terms of its imagery: vivid but irrelevant information may get

initial attention but may not get processed and have no impact on subsequent attitudes.[41]

Several studies have also investigated the impact of an ad's collative properties on the amount of attention given to them. Morris Holbrook and Donald Lehmann found that ads rated as surprising, incongruous, or funny were more likely to have been read,[42] and Bruce Morrison and Marvin Dainoff found that the visual complexity of magazine ads was positively related to the time that readers spent looking at these ads.[43]

Forestalling Ad Wearout via Pool-Outs

It certainly seems obvious that advertising should avoid being predictable, especially in situations wherein selectivity can easily operate to screen out advertisements. One special case of this problem is when an advertiser chooses to repeat an ad with high frequency at the same target market, over the course of some time period. Since consumers have already seen that same ad execution, they will stop paying attention to it. This is called the problem of ad "wear-out," and to reduce its impact it is a good idea to repeat not that same identical ad execution, but slight variations of it, through using what are called "pool-outs."

Research by H. Rao Unnava and Robert Burnkrant has shown that while variations or pool-outs get more attention than the same execution repeated again, the pool-outs get an extra bonus if they are sufficiently distinct from each other: such variations can then lead to the creation of multiple associations in the viewer's mind about the brand, facilitating the retrieval of the brand name in memory, leading to higher subsequent brand name recall.[44] Additionally, David Schumann, Richard Petty, and D. Scott Clemons have shown that the nature of the variation employed needs to be different in high versus low involvement situations. Since high involvement consumers process an ad message in terms of its central arguments (see Chapter 5), repeated ads aimed at them need to vary not just cosmetic elements (such as illustration, font, endorser, etc.), but the core arguments being used. In contrast, ads aimed at less involved consumers should vary just these cosmetic elements, because that is how such consumers process the ad and that is therefore what they are likely to get bored with.[45]

Adaptation-Level Theory, Distinctiveness, and Incongruency

H. Helson has developed an *adaptation-level theory* that is relevant to this discussion.[46] He suggests that it is not only the focal stimuli that determine perception, but also the contextual stimuli (background) and residual stimuli (past experience). The individual learns to associate a stimulus set with a reference point, or adaptation level. Attention is then created when an object deviates markedly from that level. For example, if a person has a hand in hot water for a period of time, the hand will adapt to that temperature and other water will be perceived relative to it. Thus, a dish of warm water could be perceived as cold, relative to an individual's adaptation level.

Helson studied the adaptation-level construct in various contexts, among them light intensity, colors, and lifting tasks. He found empirically that a weighted

average of the logarithm of the various stimuli involved provided a reliable predictor for the adaptation level. The inclusion of the logarithm suggests that a very intense stimulus may not dominate the adaptation level to the exclusion of the others. "Weber's Law," named after a nineteenth-century researcher, also suggests that the degree to which a stimulus will be regarded as different will depend not on the absolute stimulus change but on the percentage of change from some point of reference.

These concepts suggest that ads that are sufficiently different from an audience's adaptation level and expectations will attract attention, pointing out the importance of *distinctiveness*. It is extremely important for ads to stand out from what the consumer considers to be "expected" for "typical" ads of that product category. For example, while a humorous ad may usually attract attention if it is surrounded by more conventional copy approaches, if many humorous ads are used by competing brands in that category, the ability of any one of them to attract attention would be reduced. On the other hand, if past experience has suggested to consumers that most comparable advertising avoided humor in its copy, then one using humor may attract attention even if it is not otherwise unusual. Various studies, including one by J. Craig Andrews, Syed Akhter, Srini Durvasula, and Darrel Muehling, have found that ads that are distinctive beat nondistinctive ads on various measures of effectiveness, including attitudes and intentions, in low-involvement conditions (the effects did not appear for high-involvement ads, presumably because consumers would pay attention to the ads regardless of their executional distinctiveness).[47] An example of a campaign that was sufficiently different to be distinctive would be the Nike campaign for its football shoes, starring Dennis Hopper as a crazy football fanatic collecting and even sniffing shoes of his football heroes—indeed, many people found it to be distinctive enough to be disturbing and offensive.[48]

Within an advertisement, the illustration or copy may similarly stand out from the balance of the advertisement if it is sufficiently unusual or unexpected. This suggests that ads that have some elements (headlines, visuals, etc.) that somehow are *incongruent* with each other might be especially effective in attracting attention and stimulating elaborative processing. Susan Heckler and Terry Childers point out that ad elements can be incongruent either because they are unexpected (having a low probability of naturally appearing together, because they don't both fit into the theme of the ad), or because they appear to be irrelevant to the point the ad is trying to make. Their study suggests that the best ads (in terms of recall and elaboration of information) use ad elements that are unexpected but still relevant, in that they do contribute to the theme or message of the ad. Simply using irrelevant elements in ad doesn't appear to pay off.[49]

Based on the theories of psychologist George Mandler, it has also been suggested that it is better to use ad elements (such as headlines and visuals) that are moderately inconsistent with each other, rather than very consistent with each other (so that ad is almost processed automatically, without much thought) or extremely inconsistent (so that the inconsistency cannot be resolved by the reader, leading to frustration).[50] Edward McQuarrie and David Mick suggest that consumers perceive moderate inconsistencies in ads as clever and enjoy deciphering

their meaning, leading to enhanced ad liking.[51] An example of the use of moderate inconsistency in advertising was the NYNEX campaign for its yellow pages advertising, which was designed to show the variety of small establishments that advertised there. Each ad used a pun on the directory listing of some kind of establishment or service, and there was an inconsistency between the opening visuals (for example, U.S. marine riflemen doing a drill march in the manner of a rock band) and the actual category of service establishments then revealed (e.g., rock drills).

A Reconciliation

How does one reconcile consistency and complexity theories, two intuitively plausible but conflicting positions? One approach is to assume that tendencies toward consistency and variety both exist. The one that will dominate will depend on the personality and the situation involved.[52] Assume that there is a level of activation at which an individual is comfortable and effective. When the activation level is lower than desired, the individual will pursue variety to increase it. When it is high, she or he will be motivated to reduce stimulation and seek harmony such as is predicted by consistency theories. Obviously, there will be differences across people in terms of the optimal activation level. The situation will also determine behavior. If a high level of activation is required for optimal task performance, variety seeking will emerge. Thus, if a person is embarking on a major purchase, he or she may require a variety of information; if it is a routine purchase, such a drive will not tend to emerge.

Information That Interests

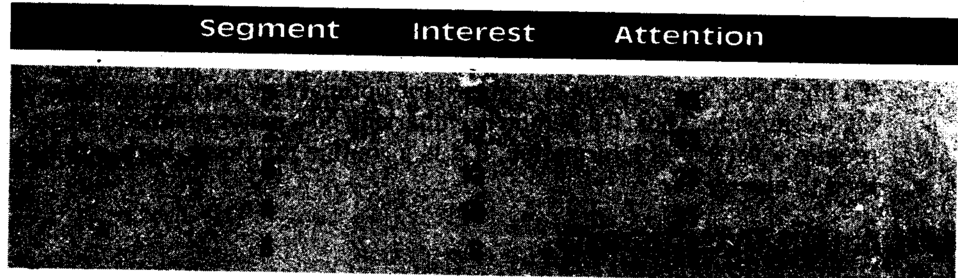
People tend to notice information that is interesting to them. In turn, they are interested in subjects with which they are involved. They are essentially interested in themselves and in various extensions of themselves. Elihu Katz summarizes and interprets some relevant empirical findings:

> *Apart from the quest for support and for utility, mere interest would seem to be an important factor in selectivity. The desire to see one's self-reflection is part of this. So is the desire to keep watch over things in which one has invested one's ego. Thus moviegoers identify with screen stars of similar age and sex: one reads in the newspaper about an event in which one personally participated; one reads advertisements for the product one purchased; political partisans immerse themselves in political communications regardless of its source; smokers choose to read material supporting the smoking-lung cancer relationship no less than material disclaiming the relationship, and much more avidly than nonsmokers; after one has been introduced to a celebrity, one notices (or "follows") his name in print even more frequently.*[53]

The relationship of interest to attention can be seen by noting the difference in advertisement readership across product classes. A study in the early 1950s of nearly 8,000 one-page advertisements in *Post* and *Life* was conducted by Starch, a service that regularly reports advertising readership. It revealed that automobile

advertisement readership by men, according to one of their measures, was five times as high as that for women's clothes and about twice as high as for toilet goods, insurance, and building materials. For women, the highest categories were motion pictures and women's clothing, which had twice the readership of advertisements for travel and men's clothing and four times that for liquor and machinery.[54]

Russell Haley offers several case studies to support his opinion that people are more apt to look at and remember things in which they are interested than things in which they are not.[55] He further hypothesized that people are interested in information concerning benefits that they feel are important in a product. He thus applies benefit segmentation to the task of penetrating the attention barrier. In one on-air television test, the interest in the benefit offered in the commercial was measured for each of five segments, as was the attention level achieved by the commercial. The results showed a nice relationship between interest and attention:



Segment	Interest	Attention
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

In another study reported by Haley, the target segment was preoccupied with their children's welfare. A child-oriented test advertisement received an attention level over five times that of each of the five other advertisements.

A most effective approach for gaining attention would be to run an advertisement about the person or persons to whom it is directed, mentioning him by name and discussing his activities. Max Hart (of Hart, Schaffner & Marx) reportedly scoffed at his advertising manager, George L. Dyer, when the latter offered to bet him $10 that he could compose a newspaper page of solid type that Hart would read word for word. Dyer said, "I don't have to write a line of it to prove my point. I'll only tell you the headline: THIS PAGE IS ALL ABOUT MAX HART."[56]

Such an approach is usually impossible (except in direct marketing mail pieces, where the letter and envelope can often be "personalized" by laser printing the recipient's name), but advertisements can be developed with which people can readily identify. For instance, an insurance company ran a series of advertisements in which agents were presented in a most personal way. Their hobbies and lifestyles were discussed in a manner that made it easy for readers to identify with them. Such advertisements, of course, were sure to have an enormous impact on the company's agents, who could easily picture themselves in them. A firm's own employees or its retailers are often an important audience, even if not the primary one.

Another approach is to present a communication involving topical issues—those in which the audience is likely to be heavily involved. Thus, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many companies began tying their advertising appeals to various aspects of the highly topical issues of ecology and recycling. As long as the copy is handled properly, the resulting association will very likely be positive. "News value" can also be created by the advertiser, as was done by Taster's Choice Instant Coffee, which ran an ad campaign much like a soap opera miniserial, with TV viewers following each episode of the amorous goings-on between two apartment neighbors who met when she ran out of Taster's Choice for a dinner party and wanted to borrow some from him. Yet another approach is to address the lack of interest head-on and challenge it. When CIGNA insurance ran ads announcing its change in logo in 1993, the ad said "Was. (showed old logo), Is. (new logo), Who Cares? (copy giving reason for the change)." Obviously, a creative agency could come up with hundreds of other ways to create interest.

FROM ATTENTION TO RECALL

As we said in Chapter 5, the recall of an ad's content is a necessary but not sufficient condition for persuasion. Recall is typically a more important ad objective in low involvement situations, because consumers may not go through a great degree of thinking about which brand to buy. In high-involvement situations, consumers typically use more brand-attribute information in deciding which brand is better for them, so persuasion becomes very important—but recall of the brand, and the attributes of the brand, is obviously still necessary, because the actual brand choice will likely occur at some point in time after the ad was seen. In both kinds of situations, therefore, an ad has not only to attract attention, but also to communicate the brand name and the brand benefits in a memorable way.

How can an ad create higher levels of brand name and copy point recall? Obviously, several complementary methods are possible. One is higher levels of advertising repetition, enabling a high level of competitive *share of voice*. This can be made possible by higher ad budgets (see Chapter 16) or by focusing on frequency rather than reach in one's media plan, perhaps by using smaller ad units (fifteen-second TV spots instead of thirty-second spots) or by utilizing cheaper media (such as radio or outdoor). These issues are discussed in Chapter 17.

Another obvious method is to utilize more distinctive creative material in the ad. Ads that are novel and distinctive not only get noticed more, they also get remembered more. In addition, ads can use higher levels of repetition (of the brand name and of the key selling message) *within* each ad. High-recall TV and radio ads, for instance, often repeat each of these three times or more within each commercial. Ads can also use memorable slogans or jingles that help get the consumer repeat the brand name and/or key selling idea to themselves long after they see the ad. These and other ideas are discussed more fully in the chapters on creative tactics (Chapters 12 and 13).

Finally, since the actual brand choice will be made most likely in an in-store environment far away from and much later than the actual advertising exposure, it is very helpful to try to use in-store cues that will help the consumer to remember

the brand name and the brand's benefits at the moment when in-store choices are made. As we discussed more fully in Chapter 3, the advertiser can thus reproduce some key ad element on the packaging of the brand itself, on in-store point-of-purchase material, or in other forms of in-store advertising media, such as shopping cart advertising. These and other devices help the consumer recognize the brand and its message in the store, so they don't have to be recalled entirely from memory. They thus make the key advertising theme more retrievable and accessible in the consumer's mind at the time of choice, thus increasing the likelihood that the advertised brand will be chosen.

ATTENTION VERSUS COMPREHENSION . . . .

The approaches discussed to make an ad more attention-getting could be said to "borrow interest" for the "real" material in the ad, from the various executional devices discussed, to increase attention for the entire ad. In doing so, an advertiser should be concerned not to attract attention in a manner that diverts interest from the important points of the message. In particular, it is not useful to attract an individual with a highly interesting subject if the brand and its message get lost in the process. For example, sexually attractive models tend to generate high interest among some audience segments, but they can also divert a reader from the message. A study by Jessica Severn, George Belch and Michael Belch found that sexually explicit ad stimuli can lead to the generation of thoughts that deal much more with the ad execution than with the message about the brand, so that while ad and brand name recall might go up, copy point recall tends to go down.[57]

These trade-offs arise not only with the use of sex in advertising, but with many other executional devices as well, including the use of humor, of endorsers, and so on. Thus, it appears that a portion of the advertisement can dominate a reader's perception to the detriment of the communication impact if that portion that dominates is not related to the advertisement objective. The deleterious effects of such distracting executional elements were also highlighted in a recent study of the copy test scores of 750 television commercials by ASI Market Research, Inc.[58] This analysis showed, first, that certain camera and sound techniques that detract from clarity of communication—such as camera techniques that interfere with clear framing, logical flow, and smoothness of motion, or sound effects and music that make it difficult for the words of the copy to be clearly heard—decrease attention to the ad. Second, the extent to which the viewer links the ad to the brand name, in memory, is dependent on how early and how often the brand name is mentioned. It seems clear that when an ad is being scripted, priority must be given to communicating the brand name and the key copy points, and attention-getting executional elements must not be allowed to interfere with the consumer's ability to pay attention to, understand, and remember these vital brand-related elements.

In sum, it cannot be emphasized enough that the task of the advertiser is not merely to create ads that evoke attention, vital enough as that is, but also to ensure that adequate *copy point communication* occurs. The comprehension of an ad's positioning, through its copy points, has a real and measurable impact on advertising

response: most researchers today agree that good comprehension is vital for persuasion to occur. David Stewart and David Furse have demonstrated that the understanding of a brand's differentiating qualities is the most important factor in an ad's persuasion scores (referenced in Chapter 5's discussion of recall versus persuasion). Indeed, research has shown that if consumers fail to comprehend the arguments in an ad about why the brand is better, they will turn instead to the "peripheral" aspects of the ad (such as the expertise of the endorser) in forming their attitudes toward the brand. On the other hand, if comprehension does occur, this allows attitudes to be formed in a more "systematic" or "central" manner, and factors such as the source's expertise become less important. We therefore turn now to discussing some factors that help determine how successfully an ad conveys its desired copy points.

INTERPRETATION AND COMPREHENSION . . . . . .

We turn now to our second perceptual step, the interpretation and comprehension of stimuli. Here, there are two kinds of comprehension one could be concerned about. The first is objective comprehension: did the reader of the ad interpret it and comprehend it just the way the advertiser intended? This is what is being measured in copy test scales of copy point communication: how many consumers took away from the ad the message we wanted to give them. A second approach to comprehension is to ask how much subjective comprehension occurred. Did the ad reader think only about the explicit ad content, or did they they go beyond that and make some inferences about message content that weren't explicitly part of the ad? Did they go "deeper" and embellish the ad content in some way, using their own general knowledge about the way the world works? Did they go even "deeper," and somehow relate the ad's content to their own lives and own experiences and fantasies? David Mick has argued that the deeper the level of such subjective comprehension, the more effective the ad will be in credibility, in being liked, in persuasion, and in recall.[59]

The tenets of Gestalt psychology, which we will discuss below, are useful in understanding the psychological processes in both kinds of comprehension, because they tell us how and why someone could interpret the ad in ways possibly different from those intended.[60] The German word *gestalt* is roughly translated into configuration, or whole, or pattern. The Gestalt view is that it is necessary to consider the organized whole, the system of elementary events, since the whole has a meaning distinct from its individual parts. Gestalt psychologists enunciated two principles. The first is the concept of the organized whole, or gestalt. Stimuli are perceived not as a set of elements, but as a whole. When a person looks at a landscape, she or he does not see many blades of grass, several trees, white clouds, and a stream, but, rather, a field or total configuration. This total has a meaning of its own that is not necessarily deducible from its individual components. The second concept is that an individual has cognitive drive toward an orderly cognitive configuration or psychological field. An individual desires to make the psychological field as good as possible. A good field or gestalt is simple, familiar, regular, meaningful, consistent, and complete. The modern consistency theories, such as

dissonance theory, so useful in attitude research, are outgrowths of this second tenet, which was developed in the study of the perceptual process.

In the following section, the first and basic principle of Gestalt psychology will be discussed and illustrated in an advertising context. The emergence of the organized whole from a limited set of stimuli is demonstrated by a set of classic experiments. The importance of interrelationships among stimuli is brought out. An implication of the Gestalt view is that a brand must be considered as an organized whole and not simply as the sum of independent attributes. Another is that the context is important. After these implications are considered, we turn to the concept of a cognitive drive toward a "good" Gestalt and to some determinants of perceptual organization.

The Organized Whole

S. E. Asch conducted a classic set of experiments, reported in 1946, that demonstrated how individuals form organized wholes and the importance of interactions among component parts.[61] A group was read a list of personal characteristics and asked to write a brief impression of the person described by the list. The list contained seven attributes: intelligent, skillful, industrious, warm, determined, practical, and cautious. A second group, with the same instructions, was read the same list except that the word "warm" was replaced by the word "cold." The difference in the two groups' perceptions was striking. The warm person was perceived to be happier, better natured, more sociable, more altruistic, more humorous, and more imaginative. Further experiments indicated that when polite versus blunt was used instead of warm versus cold, the differences became relatively minor. And, Asch determined that the first few terms established a context in which later terms were evaluated. Perception was affected by the order in which the terms were presented.

Asch generated several conclusions from these experiments. Even when the stimuli are incomplete, people seem to strive to form a complete impression of a person or object. Thus, advertising copy does not necessarily have to tell the whole story; an individual will naturally fill in the gaps. The studies indicated that stimuli are seen in interaction. The intelligence of a warm person is perceived differently from that of a cold person. Because of such interaction effects, the total impact of an advertising campaign needs to be considered. An appeal or an advertisement that may prove effective by itself may not be effective in the context of the whole campaign. Furthermore, the studies suggested that some attributes (warm-cold) are more central to the conceptual process than others (polite-blunt). Finally, the experiments indicated that the first few traits formed a set or context within which others are interpreted. Thus, an advertiser should be very concerned with first impressions. Generating trial with a big giveaway program may project a sleezy image from which a brand may never recover.

Principles of Perceptual Organization

An important tenet of Gestalt psychology is that there is a cognitive drive to obtain a good Gestalt or configuration, one that is simple, familiar, regular, meaningful,

consistent, and complete. The human mind is not above making minor or even major distortions of the stimuli to accomplish this purpose. The following principles are related to this cognitive drive.

Closure

If we see a symbol that would be a square except that a small segment of one side is missing, our minds will fill in this gap and a square will be perceived. This process is called closure. In the Asch experiment, in which rather strong perceptions in individuals were obtained from a short list of attributes, closure was occurring. A detailed picture of an individual emerged from a sketchy list of cues.

An advertiser can use the closure process to make a campaign more efficient. A 60-second commercial can, for example, be run several times so that the content has been learned by a worthwhile percentage of the target audience. To combat forgetting, a shorter spot—maybe only 5 or 10 seconds long-could be used. Or, a radio campaign could be used to supplement a television campaign. Research by Julie Edell and Kevin Keller has shown that a viewer of the short TV spot, or a listener of the radio spot, will tend to visualize the omitted material.[62] Thus, the material contained in the sixty-second commercial will have been transmitted in a much shorter time. Furthermore, the risk of boring the viewer with repeated showings is reduced.

Another use of the closure concept is leaving a well-known jingle uncompleted. Those exposed will have a strong cognitive drive to effect closure by mentally completing the jingle. For example, Salem cigarettes mounted a campaign in which they presented "You can take Salem out of the country but you can't . . ." The audience then had to provide the familiar ending "take the country out of Salem." The Hathaway shirt advertisements showing the man in a dress shirt and eye patch ran without any mention of Hathaway. Again, the audience was expected via the closure process to insert the manufacturer's name. The ad for J&B scotch whisky shown in Figure 7–3 invites the reader to use closure to fill in the brand's initials. Activating the closure process in this manner can get the reader involved, even to the extent of stimulating effort on his or her part. Such involvement often enhances learning. Research by Frank Kardes and others has shown that forcing consumers to make their own inferences from an ad (rather than having the ad itself draw that conclusion explicitly) leads to consumer attitudes that are more accessible from memory and more stable over time because such inferences require cognitive effort.[63] Such inference-based accessible attitudes should then be more likely to have an impact on behavior.

Closely related to closure is the process of interpreting an ambiguous stimulus. Again, the interesting part of the process is the participant's involvement. The hope is that ambiguity will stimulate sufficient interest to sustain the cognitive activity necessary to "figure it out." There are several ways in which an advertisement can be made "ambiguous." Consider, for example, an advertisement made up of three principal elements—a picture, some written material, and the brand name. Ambiguity can be introduced into any of these components (and may be a way to highlight or emphasize a component) or into the relationship among components. The picture, for example, could be made ambiguous by leaving out parts of it or us-

ingle ells,
ingle ells.

The holidays aren't the same without

Figure 7-3. Seeking closure: J&B Scotch whisky.
Copyright by The Paddington Corporation. Reprinted by permission.

ing some form of abstract art. The written material could contain innuendo or indirect meanings. For example, "Does she or doesn't she?" and "I'm Sylvia—fly me to Miami" contain other associations besides those of hair coloring and air travel. Even the brand or company name could be made relatively or completely "ambiguous," as in the Hathaway shirt example. The object of ambiguity can be to tease an individual's curiosity, to draw attention to the advertisement, to initiate consideration and thinking, or to motivate an individual to learn. There are, of course, dangers in making an advertisement itself or any component thereof too ambiguous, just as moderate incongruity is better than extreme incongruity.

Assimilation-Contrast

Another principle of perceptual psychology is called *assimilation-contrast*. Cognitively, an individual will seek to maximize or minimize the differences among stimuli. Assimilation and contrast operate in cases in which stimuli are neither very similar nor very different. In these cases, an individual will tend to perceive them as being "more" similar than they really are (*assimilation*) or to exaggerate the differences (*contrast*) cognitively. Both tendencies are related to the cognitive drive to simplify stimuli. The perception process is made easier if one sees only similarities or dissimilarities, eliminating the "in-betweens."

An advertiser can take advantage of the assimilation principle in many ways. It provides a rationale for family or umbrella brands like Kellogg's, Betty Crocker, or Westinghouse. The hope is that buyers will tend to generalize their past experiences with the brand to a new product (a cereal, a cake mix, or a dishwasher) that carries the brand or company name. This tendency to assimilate a new product into a family brand will be enhanced by the use of advertising styles that have come to be associated with the family brand. Many advertisers (such as Microsoft, Compaq, Apple) thus strive for a common "look and feel" for all their ads.

The assimilation principle can also be used to advantage by the use of analogies, such as a luxury car trying to link itself with some other symbol of luxury (such as a Faberge egg). Joan Meyers-Levy and Brian Sternthal point out that assimilation can be expected to occur either if a consumer only uses low effort in processing the ad and focuses on the similarity between the two items being linked together, or when the two advertised objects display high overlap. If the consumer processes the ad much more deeply, however, and if the two items display low overlap, the differences between the two objects are more likely to be focused on, and a contrast effect is more likely to emerge.[64]

Assimilation can also work to an advertiser's disadvantage. Thus, a new product variation may be perceived as the same as the old one unless efforts are made to guard against this reaction. Also, advertisements for similar products, like menthol cigarettes, that tend to use similar appeals run the danger of being assimilated. As a result, a smaller brand may not get much mileage out of its advertising since the audience may not distinguish it from its more widely known competitor. In such situations, it is sometimes necessary to use dramatic means as UPS Overnight Delivery Service does in Figure 7–4, trying to distinguish itself from its more widely known rival, Federal Express. Another example of assimilation working to an advertiser's disadvantage would be the Eveready battery ads using a pink

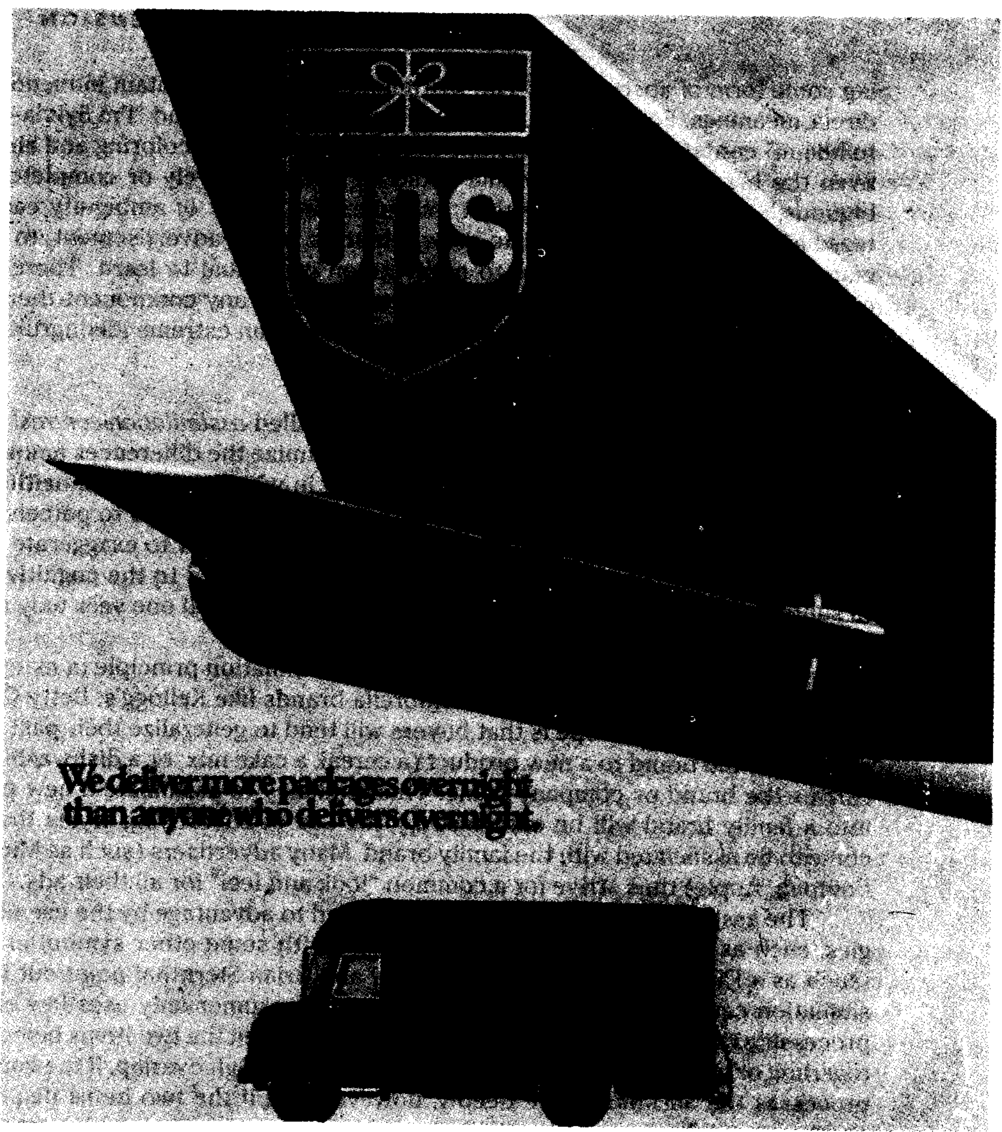


Figure 7–4. Fighting assimilation: UPS Overnight Delivery.
Courtesy of United Parcel Service of America, Inc.

bunny, which won praise for their humor but were often misidentified by consumers as being ads for other battery brands.

Miscomprehension of Advertising

If consumers can "naturally" misinterpret communications through the drive for closure and through such assimilation-contrast processes, then it could be argued that some of the advertising accused of being deliberately deceptive (see Chapter 18) is not intended to be so, but gets misinterpreted "naturally." To see what proportion of televised and written communications were miscomprehended, the Educational Foundation of the American Association of Advertising Agencies conducted two studies a few years ago. The first study covered television communications, and was conducted in 1979. Sixty thirty-second televised communications—including ads, public service communications, and editorial content—were tested for miscomprehension among nearly 2,700 consumers.[65] The study found that somewhere between 28 to 30 percent of the communications (ads or other content) were miscomprehended, as measured by a particular series of true-false questions. While this percentage should not be accepted uncritically, since it comes from one study using one particular research method, it does show the wide extent to which consumers can read unintended meanings into communications.

The second study was conducted a few years later and covered print (magazine) ads and editorial content.[66] Some 1,350 consumers were asked questions about fifty-four full-page magazine ads and another fifty-four editorial pages. This time, roughly 20 percent of the material was miscomprehended, with another 15 percent being not understood (the consumers said they "didn't know" when asked about 15 percent of the information). In both studies, miscomprehension was higher among older, less educated consumers. Taken together, these studies clearly point to the importance of creating ads that not only get attention, but also communicate clearly and unambiguously the key copy points that are intended to be gotten across. An example of miscomprehension hurting a brand is the case of the new soft-drink Crystal Pepsi. Unlike Pepsi, this drink had a lighter taste, but this fact was not made clear in the launch advertising, which used a playful line "You've never seen a taste like this." This line apparently wasn't comprehended by consumers to mean the taste was very different from Pepsi, so many people expected it to taste just like Pepsi (because of the similarity in names) and were disappointed when it didn't. The company therefore eventually dropped "Pepsi" from the name, and ran new ads that were much more direct about the "new citrus cola" taste of Crystal.[67]

SUMMARY

A successful advertising message must, first of all, be able to attract attention. The ad that fails to get attention is unlikely to achieve anything else. It must also be interpreted in the way that the advertiser intended. Perception is the process of attending to and interpreting stimuli. The first stage is the attention filter, and the second is the interpretation process. Each exists as a potential perceptual barrier

through which an advertisement must pass if it is to influence the viewer, listener, or reader. Getting attention is not easy, particuiarly in television where viewers can do other things while a program is showing. Zipping (fast-forwarding through ads when viewing prerecorded programs on a videocassette recorder) and zapping (switching across programs using a remote control device) has made the problem of getting and holding viewer attention particularly difficult. Zipping and zapping can be reduced by creating commercials that are very interesting or entertaining. The perception process includes both attention and interpretation and is influenced by stimulus characteristics such as copy size, intensity, and message, and by audience variables such as needs, attitudes, values, and interests.

To understand the attention filter, it is instructive to determine why people attend to advertisements. One motivation is to secure information that has practical value to them in making decisions. In some circumstances people will engage in active search for information. A second motivation is selective exposure, obtaining information that supports attitudes or purchase decisions and avoiding nonsupportive information. A third motivation is to obtain variety and combat boredom. Adaptation-level theory postulates that individuals learn to associate a stimulus with a reference point or adaptation level. Attention is created when an object differs significantly from what it is supposed to be like. Weber's law addresses the question of how different a stimulus has to be from the adaptation level to be perceived as different. Finally, people are attracted to advertisements that are interesting.

Two concepts from Gestalt psychology help us to understand the interpretation process. The first is that stimuli are perceived as a whole. What is important in an advertisement interpretation is the total impression that it leaves. The second is that an individual has a cognitive drive toward an orderly cognitive configuration. Closure is an example of the cognitive drive toward a familiar, regular, and meaningful configuration. If a subject realizes that something is missing from a picture, his or her mind will add it. Assimilation-contrast, another example of this cognitive drive, is used by the audience member to remove ambiguity from a stimulus. A host of audience conditions can influence interpretation, among them needs, values, brand preferences, social situation, cognitive styles, and cognitive needs. Studies of miscomprehension in advertising have shown that from 20 percent to 30 percent of ads and other content are misinterpreted. It is vital that ads are created not only to gain attention, but also to communicate key copy points clearly and unambiguously and minimize miscomprehension.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. For each of the following products, indicate under what circumstances, if any, an audience member would engage in active search, passive search, or passive attention.
   a. Automobiles.
   b. Toothpaste.
   c. Sugar.
   d. Cement mixers.

e. Business forms.
f. Greeting cards.
g. Computers.

2. Under what conditions are people likely to read long copy?
3. Consider five advertisements you have read recently. Why did you read them? What was your motivation? Does your motivation fit into one of the four categories listed in the chapter? Should other categories be added?
4. In one study, it was found that recent car purchasers tended to read advertisements for the brand they bought. How do you explain this finding? Are there explanations in addition to those of consistency theory?
5. Pick out a print and a television advertisement that you feel is informative and one of each that you feel is not informative and explain your choices. Do you feel that television advertising in general is informative?
6. What are the factors that determine when a person will seek consistency and when a person will seek complexity? Suppose that you are advertising toothpaste and have identified one segment in one category and another segment in the other. How do you decide upon which segment to focus? How would the advertising campaigns for the two segments differ?
7. How should a copy team go about balancing the need to attract attention and gain advertisement readership with the need to generate a certain kind of impact? Be specific. What procedures should be followed? Can these procedures be embedded in a formal decision model?
8. What is adaptation-level theory in the advertising context? How could one measure the environment of the advertisement quantitatively?
9. How have advertisers attempted to minimize zipping and zapping? Which, in your opinion, is the more serious of the two problems? Estimate the economic impact of zapping for a brand of coffee with an annual advertising budget of $52 million.
10. Recall advertisements that use the concept of closure. Were they, in your opinion, more effective because of it? Why? What is the difference between closure and contrast?
11. Give an example of an advertisement that will motivate assimilation for some and that will activate a contrast mechanism for others.
12. What is meant by the *collative* property of an ad? What effect might it have on attention and interpretation?

NOTES

1. Steuart H. Britt, Stephen C. Adams, and Allan S. Miller, "How Many Advertising Exposures per Day?" *Journal of Advertising Research*, 12 (December 1972), 3–9.
2. Cathy J. Cobb-Walgren, "The Changing Commercial Climate," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising* (1990) 343–368.
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8 UNDERSTANDING BENEFIT-BASED ATTITUDES

Said a tiger to a lion as they drank beside a pool,
"Tell me, why do you roar like a fool?"
"That's not foolish," replied the lion with a twinkle in
his eyes. "They call me king of all the beasts
because I advertise."
A rabbit heard them talking and ran home like a
streak. He thought he would try the lion's plan, but
his roar was a squeak. A fox came to investigate—
and had his lunch in the woods.
The moral: When you advertise, be sure you've got
the goods!
(Fable)

Once the target market for an advertising campaign has been [illegible] and communication and positioning objectives set, the advertising manager needs to make decisions about the content of the advertising [illegible] or what we call *message strategy*. For example, what should be the [illegible] thrust of message of the TV commercials or magazine ads [illegible] the ad campaign for the brand in question?

Here—based in part upon the kinds of research reviewed in Chapter 5—the manager must decide if the message needs to focus on communicating product benefits (and, if so, exactly what benefits), developing or reinforcing a brand image or personality (and, if so, what specific personality), evoking and associating specific feelings and emotions with the brand, or making the brand appear fashionable by creating social and group influences. These topics are covered in the remaining chapters that constitute Part III of this book. Creating buying action is another possible objective, and the tools for doing that (such as direct marketing, cooperative advertising, or sales promotions) were discussed earlier in Chapter 3.

This chapter focuses on the question of which benefits need to be communicated in order to change consumer attitudes toward the brand. Until we provide a better definition later in this chapter, a product benefit can be thought of as a positive payoff to the consumer from a certain product attribute, and we will use the terms *attribute* and *benefit* interchangeably. In general, advertisers want to accent the positive and focus advertising on those attributes that are perceived as ad-

vantages of the product (either in an absolute "good-for-you" sense, or relative to competitor products). Sometimes it is advantageous to focus part of the advertising message on negative attributes of your product. *Refutational advertising* (Volkswagen is a "lemon") employs this technique. The point is that to analyze the question of which *benefits* to communicate, we really need to know which *attributes* are considered in making the brand-choice decision and which of them are most important in the targeted product-market situation.

And, in order to know whether a particular positioning strategy will really work, we need to know whether the product *attributes* and images are linked to overall attitudes in the consumer's mind. Do his or her perceptions, feelings, and beliefs about the attributes of a brand really influence the decision process? All these are questions about attitude and market structure.

The chapter therefore begins with a brief overview of the attitude construct and various approaches to measuring attitude. This is followed by a section on how to identify the important attributes and benefits in a given product-market situation. Then some well-known models of attitude are presented, and some of the things to look out for in using the models are noted. The use of the attitude construct for segmentation and market planning rounds out the chapter.

ATTITUDE LEVELS AND COMPONENTS . . . .

Attitude is a central concept in the entire field of social psychology, and theories and methods associated with its explanation and measurement have largely evolved from the work of social psychologists and psychometricians. Gordon W. Allport, for example, has stated that "Attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in American social psychology. No other term appears more frequently in experimental and theoretical literature."[1]

The most widely held view of the structure of an attitude is that it is made up of three closely interrelated components: *cognitive* (awareness, comprehension, knowledge), *affective* (evaluation, liking, preference), and *conative* (action tendencies such as intentions, trial, or purchase). Attention is usually focused on the middle (affective) component, assessing the degree of positive or negative feelings for an object. The underlying assumption is that this overall liking component is based on the cognitive component (beliefs and knowledge about the brand) and then leads to the intention to try (or lack of it).[2] In other words, we buy something because we like it, and we like it because we cognitively evaluate its benefits to us as good.

There have recently been arguments that people often develop overall attitudinal liking for objects without first cognitively evaluating them as good, with such overall attitudes being based purely on emotions and feelings rather than some rational, cognitive belief- or benefit-based evaluation.[3] This might be especially true in situations in which consumers lack the interest or knowledge (motivation and ability) to really think about the merits of competing brands: the kind of "low-elaboration likelihood" situation we discussed in Chapter 5. We will discuss such feeling-based attitudes in Chapter 9, when we focus on creating feelings through advertising.

For the moment, let us suppose that we are in the kind of high-involvement situation where consumers actually base their overall attitudes toward competing brands on the basis of an evaluation (either thorough, or more casual) of the benefits offered by these different brands. In such situations, we must know how to measure overall attitude and to understand the basis on which it is formed, in order to develop an advertising campaign that strives to increase the favorability of attitudes toward our brand.

Attitude can be measured directly by asking a respondent to indicate whether he or she likes or dislikes a brand or by attempting a direct assessment of the degree of like or dislike on a positive-negative scale. While this is useful, it does not give us "diagnostics": it does not tell us *why* a brand is liked or disliked. To get this information, we can rely on the attitude models that assume that this overall liking is based on a cognitive evaluation of underlying attributes or benefits of the brand, and get consumer ratings of the brand on those underlying aspects. For example, a consumer could be asked to judge a brand on the basis of several attributes or characteristics according to whether it was positive or negative on each, and the mean of her or his scores taken as the attitude measure. Such measures are called *multiattribute evaluations of the brand* because they are based on the evaluation of underlying attributes that is assumed to underlie the directly measured overall attitude.

Direct Measures of Overall Attitude

The simplest way to measure overall attitude toward an object (brand, store, product class, or whatever) is to ask a respondent whether he or she likes or dislikes it. There are no explicit attribute criteria given on which the evaluation is made. Respondents are simply asked to answer "yes" or "no," and the responses are used to determine the brand attitude.

If interest centers on attempting to capture the degree of attitude, the question can be put in the form of a scale. For example, a respondent could be asked to express how much she or he liked a brand on a scale ranging from "very much" (1) to "very little" (7). Other terms could be used, such as "excellent-poor" or "good-bad." George S. Day,[4] a Wharton professor, for example, suggested the seven-point scale shown in Figure 8–1 as being particularly appropriate for durable products. He points out how segments of the scale might be used to identify whether the object is preferred and whether or not it is likely to be considered if a purchase situation developed.

An important question is whether attitudes are related to brand choice and market behavior. Obviously, of course, the attitudes have to be measured in the way that is most specifically relevant to the behavior being predicted.[5] Even if measured correctly, positive attitudes toward a brand will not always result in purchase behavior. A person can have a positive attitude for a brand and yet not be willing or able to buy it. Many teenagers have strong positive attitudes for a Porsche, but few are likely to be purchasers. Furthermore, situational events at the time of purchase and/or "impulsive" behavior can throw off short-run sales predictions made on the basis of attitude measures taken some time previous to the

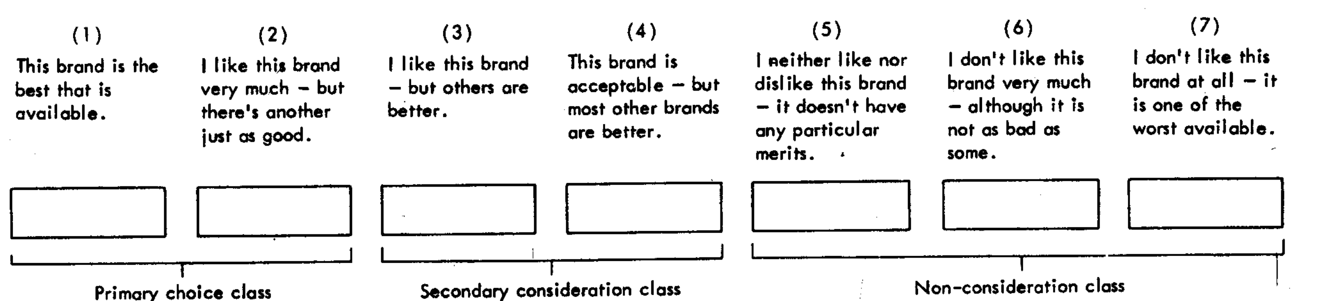


Figure 8–1. A relative rate scale for brand attitudes.

Source: George S. Day, Buyer Attitudes and Brand Choice Behavior *(New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 160.*

purchase occasion. As a third example, a consumer may end up buying a brand even if he or she does not have a favorable attitude, if the consumer feels that other people such as experts or a peer group like it, recommend it, or will be impressed by it. (These kinds of group norm effects are discussed in Chapter 11.)

However, if these types of cases are basically exceptions and are not dominant in the market or segment of interest, a strong relationship between attitude and purchase behavior should emerge. Alvin Achenbaum[6] has demonstrated that attitude and usage levels are associated in several consumer product categories. Figure 8–2 shows the attitude-usage relationship for a brand of cigarettes, deodorant, gasoline, laxative, and a dental product. For each of the four brands, the percentage using the brand is strongly related to the attitude toward it.[7]

According to some recent research, the relationship between attitudes and purchase behaviors gets stronger as the consumer gets more "direct" information about the brand (such as that obtained through actual trial): the consumer then feels more certain and confident about the attitude, and is more likely to use it in making purchase decisions.[8] Information about a brand obtained through advertising is relatively less "direct." Repeated advertising exposure, however, can increase how much information the consumer has about the brand, which can

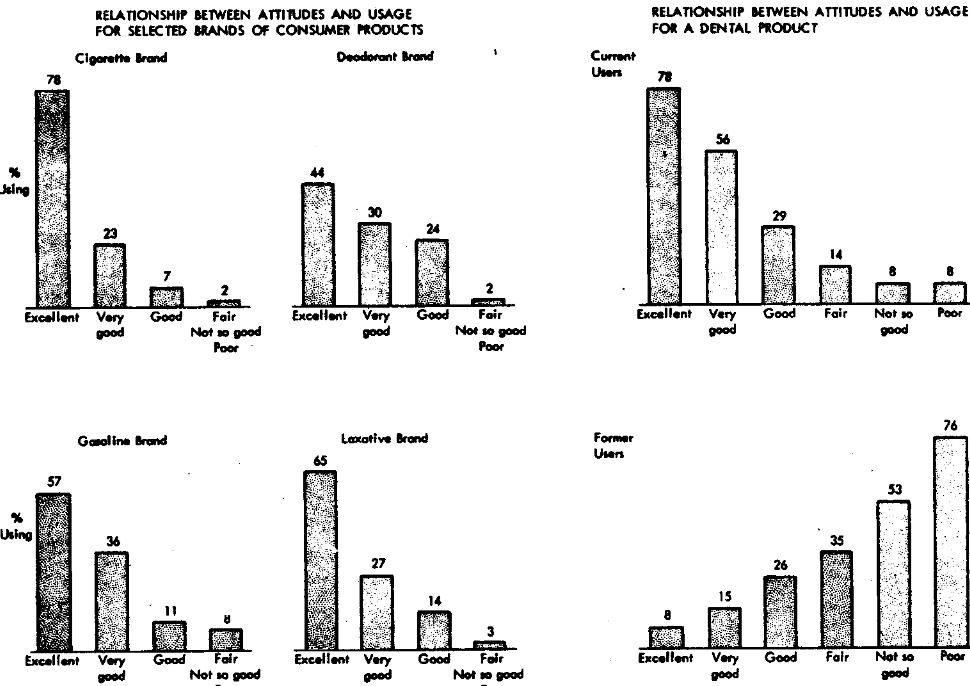


Figure 8–2. Attitude-usage relationships in several product categories.

Source: Reprinted from Alvin A. Achenbaum, "Knowledge Is a Thing Called Measurement," in Lee Adler and Irving Crespi, eds., Attitude Research at Sea *(1966), p. 113, published by American Marketing Association.*

increase the confidence with which attitudes are held and thus increase their impact on behavior.[9]

Overall Attitude As an Objective

Overall attitudes are used for objective setting, strategic decision making, and evaluating performance in advertising. A range of attitudes can be identified for a brand that has been on the market for a short period. Figure 8–3 suggests that seven attitude segments might be identified for the brand, ranging from segment 1, holding strong negative attitudes, through segment 4, holding neither positive nor negative attitudes, to segment 7, holding strong positive attitudes. The tails of the distribution represent attitude extremes. The majority fall in the middle segments, holding slight tendencies in either direction or no *predisposition* one way or another with respect to the brand. These segments represent alternative targets for an advertising campaign.

Segment 7 might represent a small group of relatively heavy users who have become satisfied with the brand and are strongly loyal to it. Attitude in this case could be a measure of brand loyalty. We would expect this group to express strong positive feelings to back up their behavior and purchasing patterns.

Segment 4, on the other hand, could hold no attitude for our brand for at least two reasons. First, it represents people who do not yet know that our brand exists. They have not learned of it from our advertising, from friends, or by any chance use experience. Such people have not yet entered the *awareness* stage (this is the situation for new brands). Second, some people in this segment could be aware of the brand but be so uninvolved in purchasing with respect to the product class that no meaningful direction of predisposition exists. They could purchase it on one occasion but just as easily choose another brand on another occasion. Another representation of such consumers is to say that they see no meaningful differences in the brand choices available: their choice process is essentially random with respect to this product class, although it may not be with respect to others.

Segment 1 represents a small group of buyers who probably confine their

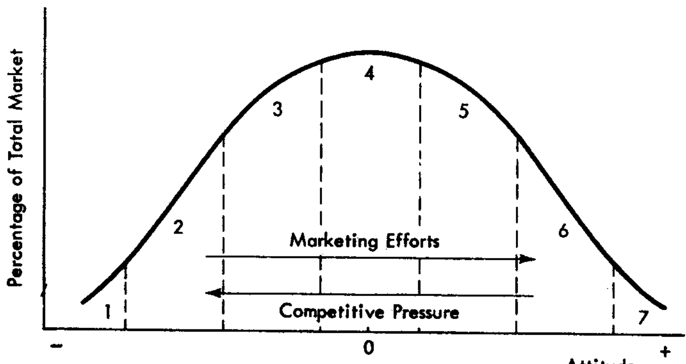


Figure 8–3. Attitude segments for a hypothetical brand.

purchases to other competitive brands in the class, and reject ours. In other words, our brand is not in their *consideration class* or *evoked set* of alternatives from which they make a choice, even though they are aware of it. Their negative attitudes could be based on a host of reasons, many of which are sustained by our competitors.

In any of these situations, an argument can be made for continuing to engage in advertising to sustain or change attitudes for two fundamental reasons. First, attitudes decay over time, and go below the threshold needed for active consideration. Just as a good friend can be forgotten when not around, so a good brand can be forgotten unless effort is expended to keep its name before the public. The rate of decay and the number of insertions necessary to sustain the threshold level are questions to be examined later, in Chapter 17. The second reason is that in most market situations competitors are constantly attempting to create favorable attitudes for their brands at the expense of our own. As shown by the opposing arrow in Figure 8–3, there is a constant force operating in the opposite direction to our marketing efforts, a force that attempts to pull our customers away.

Importance of the Attributes That Underlie Overall Attitudes

Although an advertiser can glean much useful information from knowing the market's attitude for his or her brand, it is equally or more important to know what lies behind those attitudes. Basically, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the brand and what are the important criteria or attributes on which decision making is based? Particularly significant is the identification of the one or the few attributes used by consumers to choose between brands that are relatively similar or, as some would say, "functionally equivalent."

In most cases, copy development will focus on one or a few attributes. Competition for the consumer's attention is usually so intense that it is only possible to get one or a few ideas across, and it thus becomes crucial to identify the attribute (or the few attributes) that are most important in consumer decision making. Should a toothpaste manufacturer, for example, focus on decay prevention, bright teeth, fresh breath, or perhaps the taste of the product? Would a university be better off stressing the international reputation of its faculty, the physical environment in which it resides, or some exceptional aspect of its teaching or research programs?

Many of the questions reviewed in the last chapter concerning which positioning strategy to adopt can be reduced to "which attribute(s) is most important in a given purchasing or choice situation?" More precisely, these questions are ones of identifying the attributes that are most important in attitude formation and change and ultimately in the purchase-choice decision itself. Every product, service, or choice situation has associated with it a set of attributes on which the choices are made. In the case of choosing between Coke and Pepsi, for example, taste is likely to be very important.

Attributes can be examined at different levels. James Myers and Allan Shocker[10] have made a distinction between physical characteristics, pseudophysical characteristics, and benefits, all of which can be used in positioning and at-

tribute selection. Physical characteristics are the most objective and can be measured on some physical scale such as temperature, color intensity, sweetness, thickness, distance, dollars, acidity, saltiness, strength of fragrance, weight, and so on. Pseudophysical characteristics, in contrast, reflect physical properties which are not easily measured. Examples are spiciness, smokey taste, tartness, type of fragrance (smells like a . . .), greasiness, creaminess, and shininess. Benefits refer to advantages that promote the well-being of the consumer or user. Psychological benefits can usually be classified at the benefits or pseudophysical level.

MEANS-ENDS AND LADDERING ANALYSIS. . . . . .

Another useful way of distinguishing between the different levels of attributes is through the *means-end chain model.*[11] This model focuses on the connection between product attributes, consumer consequences, and personal values, through a process called "laddering":

product attributes → consumer consequences → personal values

In this model, values represent the desired end states. They can have an external orientation ("feeling important" or "feeling accepted"), or they can relate to how one views oneself ("self-esteem," "happiness," "security," "neatness," "accomplishment"). Product attributes and consumer consequences represent the means that can be used to achieve the desired ends. Product attributes include measurable physical characteristics such as "miles per gallon" or "cooking speed" and subjective characteristics such as "tastes good," "strong flavor," or "stylish." Consumer consequences are any result occurring to the consumer. Consequences can be functional ("saves money" or "don't have to wash your hair every day") or can affect self-perceptions ("having more friends," "having fun," or "being more attractive").

The means-end chain model suggests that it is the associational network involving attributes, consequences, and values that really represent needs to be understood in developing message content. Effective advertising should thus address all levels and not just be concerned with the product attributes. The major positive consumer consequences should be communicated verbally or visually, and the value level should provide the driving force behind the advertising.

One approach to eliciting a means-end chain can be illustrated using an airline example.[12] The process begins with a repertory grid exercise in which consumers are asked to state how two airlines out of a set of three are similar and how they differ. Suppose the attribute "has wide-bodied aircraft" emerges from this exercise. Consumers are then asked why an attribute such as "wide bodies" is preferred. One response might be "physical comfort." The consumer is then asked why "physical comfort" is desired. The answer could be to "get more done." Another "why" question yields a value, "feel better about self." Similarly, the "ground service" attribute leads to "save time," "reduce tension," "in control," and "feeling secure."

A campaign based on the ground service attribute would then address the consequences ("save time," "reduce tension," and "in control") and value ("feeling secure") dimensions. A mother needing personal service might be presented traveling with children. The theme is being "in control," being able to cope with the situation. The result is a feeling of security. The creative group will, of course, have knowledge of the total means-end structures as they develop the campaign. An example of a means-ends chain for the airline category is presented in Figure 8–4. An ad that illustrates the means-ends distinction is that for Sharp's nonalcoholic beer

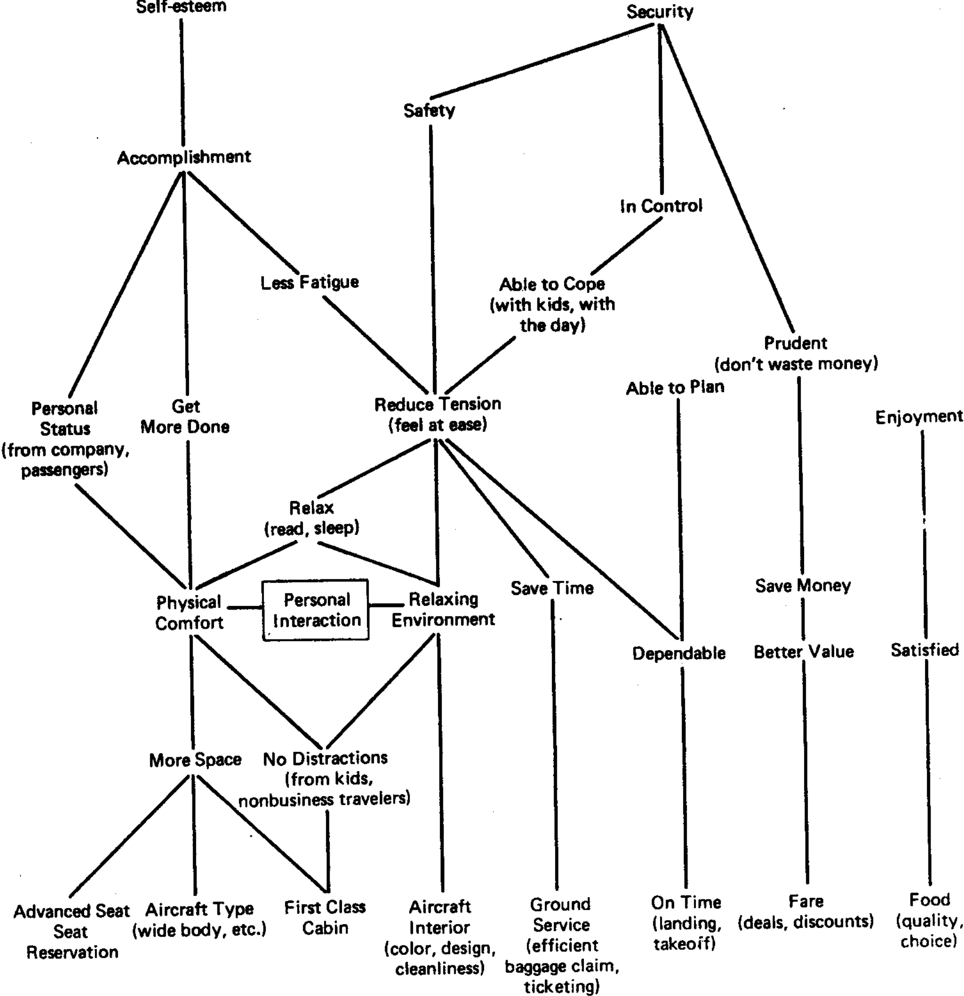


Figure 8–4. Means-ends chain for airline industry.

Source: Thomas S. Reynolds and Jonathan Gutman, "Advertising Is Image Management," Journal of Advertising Research, *15, February/March 1984, p. 34. © 1984 by the Advertising Research Foundation.*

in Figure 8–5: here the "means" is nonalcoholic beer, but the "end" is "keeping your edge" for the next bowling game.

IDENTIFYING IMPORTANT ATTRIBUTES OR BENEFITS

A great many methods, approaches, and techniques have been developed to identify and determine the relative importance of the set of attributes on which brands are perceived and evaluated. In some cases, the relevant set of attributes will be known from past experience with the product category or past research with similar brands. In others, the first task will be to conduct research designed to reveal the attribute set itself. Once this set has been found, other procedures for developing specific measures or importance weights on each attribute can be used.

Suppose an advertiser faces a situation in which very little is known about how buyers choose among alternatives. How can the relevant attribute set be identified? Procedures such as focus groups, in-depth consumer interviews, or the Kelly repertory grid[13] can be used. Jacob Jacoby and others[14] developed an extension of the repertory grid that uses an information display board. Analysis procedures have been developed that allow the ordering of the attributes identified in this way on the basis of their importance.[15]

Once the set of attributes has been identified, the problem of identifying which of them are more or less important can be addressed. In particular, the advertiser needs a specific measure of the importance of each attribute in the set. Various forms of attribute rating and ranking instruments can be used to obtain judgments about the attributes themselves. And, methods called *conjoint analysis*, which give respondents levels of each attribute to consider, are employed. Examples of these various approaches are presented in the next sections.

Rating, Ranking, and Conjoint Analysis

Attributes or benefits, rather than brands or objects, can be the focus of research, and procedures similar to those used for measuring overall attitude given earlier applied to measure their importance. The most straightforward ranking approach is simply to ask consumers to rank a list of attributes in order of importance. This is much like voting data in political elections, and the attributes that receive the most "votes" are considered to be the most important.

The most straightforward rating method, which has the advantage of ease of understanding and administration, is to present the attributes as a list with a very important–very unimportant scale alongside each. The consumer simply checks the appropriate scale position in each case according to how important the particular attribute is in the purchase decision. A modification of this procedure is to use a Likert scale. In this case, statements such as "It would be very important for me to know whether the next tire I purchased was steel-belted or nylon-belted" are developed. The respondents are asked to record the degree to which they agree or disagree with each such statement.

The direct rating and ranking methods, particularly those which ask in a

Figure 8–5. An advertisement showing the brand as a means to an end.
Courtesy of Miller Brewing Company.

straightforward way the degree of importance of each attribute, are comparatively inexpensive and easy to administer. The argument is that if some attributes are included that are unimportant, this will simply show up in the final data analysis. A problem, of course, is that consumers are prone to want "everything" and tend to reflect these desires by rating everything as important. Most products are, in effect, trade-offs of desirable attributes, and the direct methods tend not to uncover these trade-offs. What the advertiser really wants to know is the degree to which consumers are willing to trade off one desirable feature in favor of another.

Another problem with the direct methods is that they do not specify what really is meant by "more" or "less" of an attribute. The respondent is presented with the attribute only, and not levels of the attribute. Much interest has thus been generated in methods designed to recover importance weights from data generated by presenting respondents with combinations of attribute levels. As a group, these procedures are known as *conjoint analysis*, or *conjoint measurement*. The goal of conjoint analysis is to derive importance weights of the attributes and attribute levels; this is similar to that of the ranking-rating methods, but the procedures differ in how the data are collected and analyzed. In all versions of the technique, the consumer is asked to make trade-offs between various attributes, all of which may be seen as desirable.

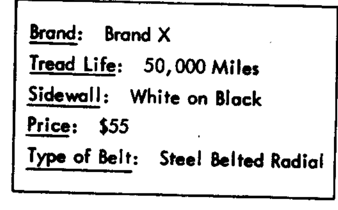
Figure 8–6 gives an example of a stimulus card used in conjoint analysis for a study of automobile tires in which five attributes—brand, tread life, sidewall, price, and type of belting—were involved. Various computer analysis routines can be used to derive importance weights from the data collected. Figure 8–7 shows

I. Trade-Off Approach

	TREAD LIFE		
BRAND	30,000 Miles	40,000 Miles	50,000 Miles
Goodyear	8	4	1*
Goodrich	12	9	5
Michelin	11	7	3
Brand X	10	6	2

1* Denotes best-liked combination

II. Full-Profile Approach



Least Liked								Most Liked
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Scale Board

Figure 8–6. Examples of stimulus cards used in trade-off and full-profile approaches of conjoint analysis.

Source: Patrick J. Robinson, "Applications of Conjoint Analysis to Pricing Problems," in David B. Montgomery and Dick R. Wittink, eds., Market Measurement and Analysis *(Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute, 1980), p. 185.*

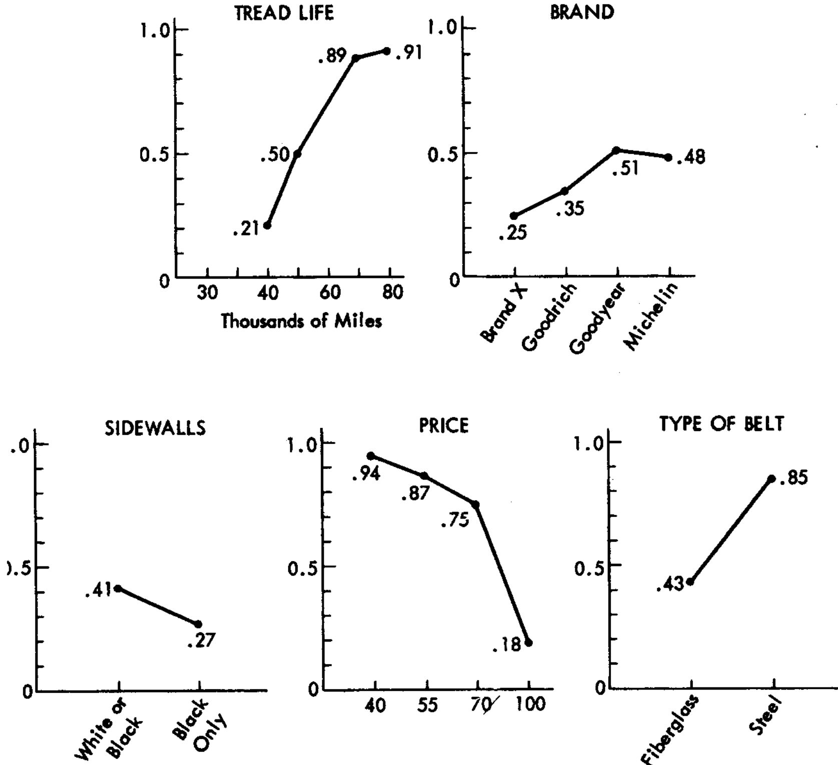


Figure 8-7. Importance of attribute levels in a study of automobile tires.

Source: Patrick J. Robinson, "Application of Conjoint Analysis," in David B. Montgomery and Dick R. Wittink, eds., Market Measurement and Analysis *(Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute, 1980), p. 186.*

that in this study, for example, respondents valued long tread wear (80,000 miles) and low price ($40) very highly in comparison with whether sidewalls were a particular color or even the tire brand. Also, as can be seen, whether the tire is steel-belted or fiberglass appears to make a significant difference. Respondents value steel-belted much more than fiberglass.

The overall importance of each attribute can also be derived from such data. Figure 8-8 shows the results in this study. As can be seen, price and tread life are the most important attributes in the set of five attributes tested, whereas type of belt, brand, and sidewalls follow in that order.

A significant advantage of conjoint measurement is that new combinations of attributes, and, hence, judgments about the relative attractiveness of new "products" can be derived from the data. By knowing how important each level of an attribute is, the researcher can combine various levels and derive the overall value of the new combination. Some recent developments in the area of conjoint analysis are presented in an appendix to this chapter.

Ranking, rating, and conjoint analysis procedures are most useful for deriving

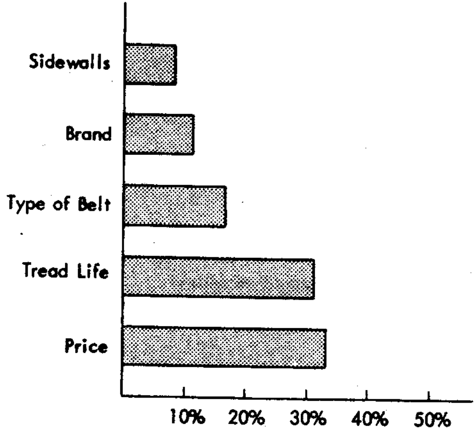


Figure 8–8. Overall attribute importance in the automobile tires study.
Source: Patrick J. Robinson, "Applications of Conjoint Analysis," in David B. Montgomery and Dick R. Wittink, eds., Market Measurement and Analysis *(Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute, 1980), p. 186.*

importance weights for a set of attributes as well as for providing the advertiser with many additional insights into feasible brand and product combinations. Whether such attributes do in fact determine attitudes and ultimate brand purchases is the subject of the next section.

Leverage and Determinant Attributes

Do the attributes identified by consumers as being important really make a difference when it comes to overall brand attitudes, preferences, and choices?

An attribute that has high *leverage* is one that has a high degree of influence on overall attitude. Its influence may derive from its importance to individuals in their attitude structure, the attribute weight. However, its influence may not be totally reflected by the importance weight. It is not unlikely that one attribute affects another in a cognitive structure. Thus, a communication that affects perception or belief along one attribute might have a significant indirect effect on other attributes and thus on the attitude structure. For example, an attribute like styling may have high leverage not only because the consumer values it highly (and by itself) with respect to a product class, but also because it may affect evaluations on other attributes like performance and convenience. Thus, a change in brand perception on the styling dimension may affect perception with respect to performance and convenience, and, therefore, have a stronger influence on attitude than might at first be suspected. If styling is, for some reason, the foundation for performance and convenience, a change in either of the latter may not have a similar effect on styling.[16]

One approach to measuring leverage might be to measure the strength of the cognitive link between one attribute and others. An attribute that is independent

and not "connected" to other attributes might be considered to have no influence beyond that represented by its importance weights. Another attribute that seemed closely intertwined with other attributes (tends to have strong cognitive association) might have more leverage than is reflected by its importance weights.

Another more direct approach to measuring leverage might be to alter systematically the perception of a brand on a dimension and observe the change on the overall attitude scale. Attributes that had the greatest impact on overall attitude would be those with the highest leverage. Yet another approach is to obtain evaluative beliefs on a set of attributes and correlate these with brand attitude scores or buying intentions. The attributes with the highest correlations are considered to have the highest amount of leverage and are called *determinant attributes*.

James Myers and Mark Alpert[17] examined correlations of five attributes of a snack mix with a measure of overall attitude and buying intention. The new snack food was placed in 200 homes in the Los Angeles area, and homemakers were asked to serve it to families and friends. After serving, they were asked to rate the snack food in terms of color, appearance, taste, strength of flavor, and spiciness. Overall opinion (attitude) and buying intention measures were also obtained. The correlations (a number between −1 and +1 that indicates the degree of association) between these scales are given in Table 8–1. Of the five product attributes, taste has a much higher positive correlation with buying intention. Not only was taste by far the best predictor of buying intention, but it was a better predictor than overall attitude. Taste is obviously important in judging a snack food, but it may not be a useful criterion for distinguishing one brand of snack food from another.[18]

The Grey Advertising Agency has applied a similar conceptual approach by using different data collection and analysis procedures in well over twenty studies of attitudes and product usage over an eight-year period. Those attribute dimensions that correlate most highly with overall attitude are considered to be those with the highest leverage. Achenbaum,[19] in describing the Grey approach, points out that in many practical situations, it has provided information useful for prod-

Table 8–1. Correlation Matrix of Product Ratings for Snack Mix.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Overall opinion		0.325	0.209	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2. Color			0.498	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
3. Appearance				[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4. Taste					[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
5. Strength of flavor						[illegible]	[illegible]
6. Spiciness							[illegible]
7. Buying intention							

Source: James H. Myers, "Finding Determinant Buying Attitudes," Journal of Advertising Research, *10, December 1970, p. 11. © 1970 by the Advertising Research Foundation.*

uct development and packaging, as well as for advertising. In general, it is a diagnostic tool for understanding why particular attitude states exist. He points out that certain factors, such as safety, although relevant, rarely had competitive leverage among the major brands rated. Presumably most consumers consider the major brands to be safe to use although this may not be the case with some of the less well-known brands.

USING MULTIATTRIBUTE ATTITUDE MODELS . . . .

There are dozens of models and theories about the connection between perception and preference or attributes and attitudes.[20] In this section, the basic principles underlying each of these model classes are presented and assessed, and examples are given of their application to advertising.

Evaluative Belief Models of Cognitive Structure

A *cognitive structure model* assumes that a person forms an attitude toward an object by developing beliefs about that object and then combining those beliefs into a general overall attitude toward the object. The most commonly used cognitive structure model in advertising is the *evaluative belief model,* in which the attitude is the sum of the evaluative beliefs about how well each brand scores on each attribute, weighted by the importance of that attribute:

$$A_o = \Sigma\, w_d a_{od}$$

where

A_o = attitude of an individual or segment toward object o

a_{od} = evaluation of an individual or segment toward object o with respect to attribute or dimension d, the evaluative belief

w_d = measure of the relative importance or weight of attribute d to the individual or segment.

Suppose that A_o represents the attitude for a particular model of automobile, a Ford Escort, for example, and three characteristics—size, miles per gallon, and price—are most important to a particular segment. A study of the segment revealed the following set of weights and evaluative beliefs:

$$\begin{aligned} A_o &= w_1 a_{o1} + w_2 a_{o2} + w_3 a_{o3} \\ &= 2(-2) + 5(+1) + 3(+1) \\ &= +4 \end{aligned}$$

Using Cognitive Structure Models for Message Strategy

How could advertising improve the attitude toward the Escort? Clearly, the objective is to increase the total sum of the (weights times beliefs). There are three routes to increasing this sum. The first is to change the weights. Advertising might attempt to decrease the importance of the size factor, for example, either by explicitly downplaying it or by ignoring it altogether and emphasizing good gas

mileage instead. Second, the segment could be enticed to include new attributes, such as reliability, in their appraisal. Third, their evaluative beliefs could be altered by advertising. For example, a comparative advertisement could show that the Escort gets better mileage than its nearest competitors, and at the same time, costs less. This would raise the beliefs for the Escort and lower those for its competitors.

Examples of ads trying to increase the weights on attributes on which the brand is strong are Figure 8–9 (in which Subaru tries to make its all-wheel drive advantage more important) and Figure 8–10 (in which Fleischmann's margarine tries to raise the weight on its "no water added" attribute).

It should be obvious from the assumptions of this model that ads should not attempt to play up those brand features that are either not unique to the brand (i.e., the brand has no competitive superiority on these beliefs), or where the brand's belief superiority is not on highly rated attributes. Yet this does happen more often than you might imagine!

Model Assumptions

The model just discussed includes several explicit assumptions that may not always hold. For example, it assumes that there are a limited number of known attributes with known weights. In some circumstances, a consumer may not be aware of all the attributes used. A consumer, for example, may rationalize the purchase of a small sporty convertible on the basis of gas mileage but actually buy it because of a subconscious drive to lead an exciting life. Further, the model assumes that the weighted evaluative beliefs are added when there could be interactions present. A person may want some combination of attributes and will not value the object highly unless the desired set of attributes is included.

Another assumption is that a person first obtains belief information and then uses that information to alter attitudes. However, the process could actually work the opposite way. In one clever study, the psychologists Richard Nisbett and Timothy Wilson had subjects observe an interview with a person with a European accent.[21] For one group the person spoke in an agreeable and enthusiastic manner, whereas for another group, the same person appeared autocratic and distrustful. The students then rated the person's likability and three other attributes that were the same for both groups: physical appearance, mannerism, and accent. Subjects in the "warm" condition found these attributes attractive, whereas subjects in the "cold" condition found them irritating. Further, subjects in both conditions were certain that their liking of the teacher did not influence the attribute ratings, but rather, the reverse was true.

Ideal-Point Models

There are dozens of other attitude models that are elaborations of the basic evaluative belief model. Some, such as *ideal-point models*, rely on different approaches to data collection and an assumption that a particular combination of levels on each attribute can be found that represents a person's or total market's "ideal" combination. These models involve the perceptual mapping and multidimensional scaling procedures that were reviewed in Chapter 6.[22] The obvious message strat-

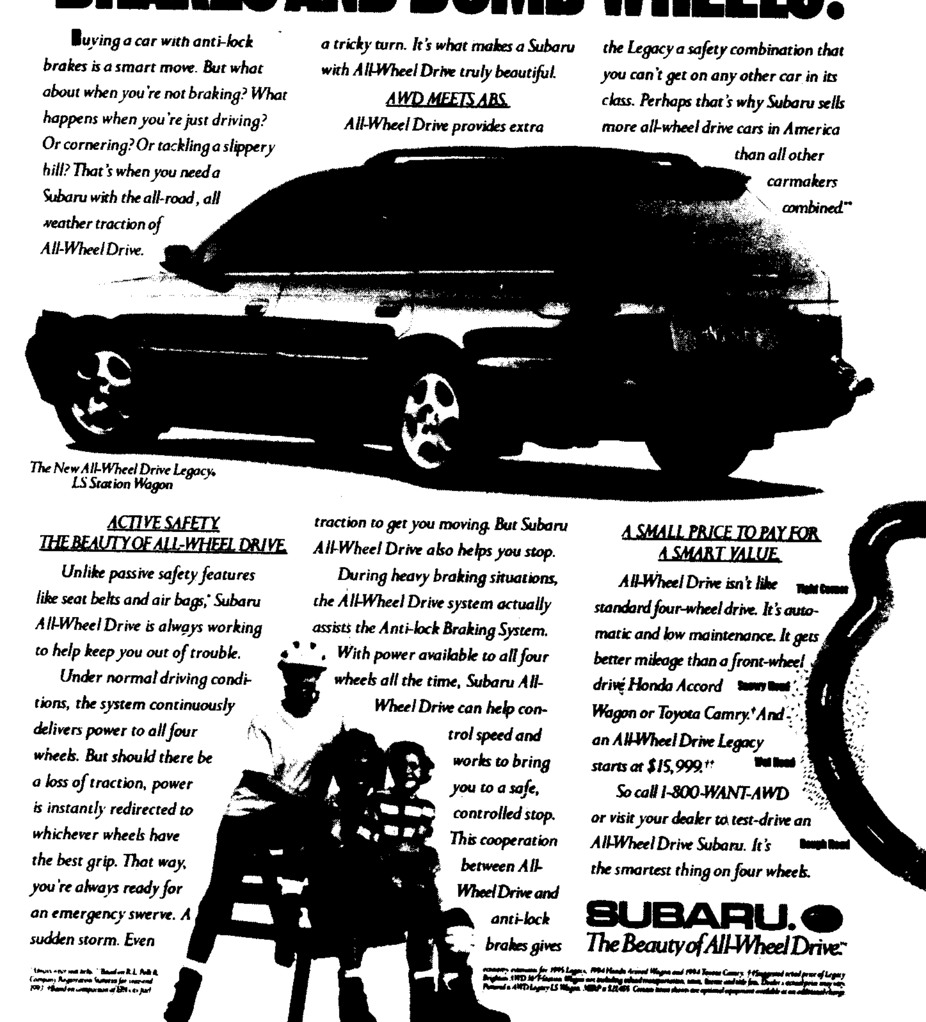


Figure 8–9. Trying to increase an importance weight: Subaru.
Courtesy of Subaru of America, Inc.

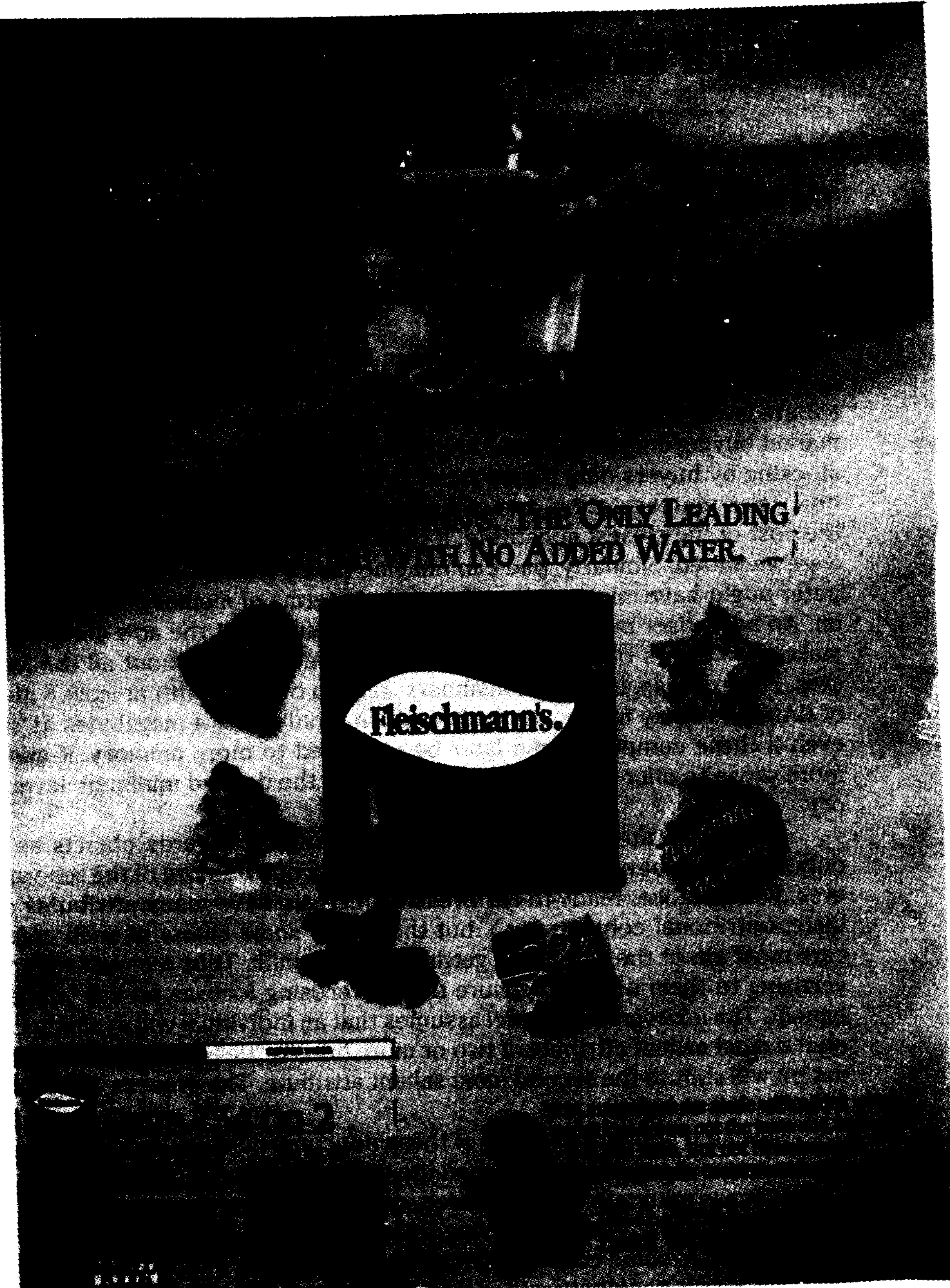


Figure 8-10. Trying to increase an importance weight: Fleischmann's.
Courtesy of Nabisco, Inc.

egy implications of these models is to make the advertised brand seem perceptually closer to the ideal brand by using the positioning tactics discussed in Chapter 6.

Noncompensatory Models

The evaluative belief models we discussed are examples of *compensatory models.* A low rating on one dimension can be compensated for by a high rating on another dimension. There are also a set of *noncompensatory models* that might be better in certain situations. Three such models are the conjunctive, disjunctive, and lexicographic.

The *conjunctive model* emphasizes low ratings on the various attributes. An object will be deemed acceptable if it meets a minimum standard (a minimum attribute level) on each attribute. This process has been shown to operate in supermarket buying decisions. In one study,[23] new grocery products were considered for stocking by buyers only if they rated at least average in quality, company reputation, sales representation, and category volume and were less than 110 percent of the cost of the closest substitute. If they failed to meet any of these criteria, they were excluded. Similarly, one can imagine that a student buying a personal computer might have minimum requirements in terms of memory, chip speed, and so on. An advertiser must, in such situations, ensure that the ad's content does not make any "errors of omission" and present information about all the key attributes. For example, if target consumers want to buy PCs with at least 8 megabytes of RAM, they may ignore ads for brands that only offer 4 megabytes as standard, even if these computers can later be upgraded to more memory. It might make more sense to offer and advertise the PC with the desired minimum level of memory.

The *disjunctive model*; stresses high ratings. It regards objects as positive only when they have been rated outstanding on one or more of the relevant attributes. For instance, ready-to-eat breakfast cereals have many attributes (such as taste, nutritional content, etc.), but there may some eaters of such cereals who care most about the cereal not getting soggy in milk. Thus a cereal advertiser advertising to them needs to ensure that advertising focuses on the "stays crispy" benefit. The *lexicographic model* assumes that an individual will evaluate the brand on the most salient attribute. If two or more brands "tie" on this attribute, the evaluation will shift to the second most salient attribute. The process will continue until a brand is selected.

Research shows that some of these noncompensatory models (e.g., the lexicographic one) are often used when the consumer is not really very involved or is under time pressure to make a choice, so that choosing the very best brand is not the prime concern, just a brand that "is good enough." It is also quite possible that an individual in some contexts may use more than one model. He or she could, for example, use a conjunctive model to determine a set of brands to consider and then use a compensatory model to make the final decision. Clearly, the existence of such multimodel decision processes makes model evaluation more difficult.

Category Evaluation Models

The implicit assumption of cognitive structure models is that products are made up of discrete attributes and the decision makers combine these attributes to form an overall product attitude. A very different approach is *category-based evaluation*, which is based on the premise that people often divide the world into categories. In evaluating a new stimulus, it is placed into a category, and the attitude toward that category is retrieved from memory and applied to the stimulus. Reactions toward an individual can result from matching up that individual to a person category and applying the established attitudes toward that category.

For the category-based evaluation approach to operate, consumers develop a set of expectations about the product category. This expectation can be represented by either a typical example of the category, a *prototype*, or by a good example of the category, an *exemplar.*[24] To implement an advertising strategy based on the category-based model, the advertising should focus on positioning the brand with respect to some category exemplar. There would be no effort to communicate explicitly at the attribute level. One example is the humorous advertising for Parkay margarine which has a voice coming out of a box saying "butter." The advertising serves to position margarine with butter.

Another good example are the ads for the Yugo, the boxy Yugoslavian car that was introduced into the U.S. market at a base price under $5,000. The goal was to communicate that it was not only small and inexpensive but also dependable and reliable. The solution was to associate it with the Volkswagen Beetle. A TV commercial opened with a Beetle sitting in a white one-car garage with a voice-over saying: "The beloved Beetle. Once the lowest-priced car in America. Dependable. Basic transportation. But homely. And then it went away. Leaving an emptiness in the hearts of America." A Yugo print ad is shown in Figure 8–11. (Yugo has since left the U.S. market.)

SEGMENTATION USING ATTITUDE STRUCTURE . .

When the attitude is specified for a group rather than an individual, the attribute values are themselves averaged over those in the group. In such averaging, an implicit assumption is that the group is not excessively heterogeneous so that this average is representative of the total group, rather than only a small portion. As suggested in the section in Chapter 4 on segmentation, it is unlikely that all attributes are equally important to all people. In fact, it is much more likely that while consumer perceptions of how well the different brands perform on the different attributes are similar across consumers, their ratings of the relative importance of different attributes in brand selection will likely be different. Thus, while all consumers may agree that the Honda Civic car is very good in terms of fuel economy and that Volvos are very highly rated on safety, these consumers will probably differ in the relative importance they place on fuel economy or safety in their choice of a car.

It is therefore usually inadvisable simply to look at the average importance

Figure 8–11. Positioning a brand with respect to a category.
Courtesy of Yugo-America.

ratings for attributes in any market. Instead, these differences across consumers in the importance placed on different product category attributes should be used to create segments for advertising campaigns and marketing strategy. In Chapter 6, for instance, we saw an example of benefit segmentation, where toothpaste users were placed into segments of the sensory consumers (highly valuing the attributes of flavor and appearance), sociables (highly valuing the brightness benefit), worriers (highly valuing decay prevention), and so on. The typical way to create these segments, as we discussed, was to collect research data from individual consumers on their attribute importance ratings, then to use cluster analysis techniques to create benefit segments, and then to compare, profile, the different segments in terms of their demographics, brand preferences, and media habits so that only appropriate segments could be targeted and messages created just for them.

Another example should illustrate this process (see Table 8–2 for some "made-up" data to illustrate the example). Suppose you were the advertising manager for AT&T's residential long-distance service. It is possible that research might show that AT&T was widely perceived as being the higher-quality telephone service, with better reliability, better customer service, and better operator assistance than its competitors (such as MCI). On the other hand, MCI might be rated higher on price (i.e., perceived as the lower-priced service). These perceptions might be pretty much the same for all consumers. However, consumers might differ in the importance placed on these attributes. One segment might want simply the lower-priced service, placing a greater weight on the price attribute than on quality, customer service, and operator assistance (let us call this the "price segment"). A second segment might place higher ratings on quality, customer service, and operator assistance, and lower value on cheaper prices (the "quality segment").

If this is what the research data showed, then it would make sense for AT&T to target the quality segment, because this segment places greater value on the attributes that AT&T is strong on, so that AT&T is at a greater competitive advantage in this segment. (Conversely, MCI might decide that it makes more sense to target the price segment.) Research would show who the quality segment is (for example, older and more affluent consumers, heavy readers of business magazines), and so AT&T could then develop advertisements for them demonstrating AT&T's superiority on these quality attributes and place them in appropriate media.

In the longer run, however, AT&T might also try to convert the price segment, by aiming campaigns at them that AT&T is not in fact more expensive in price (trying to change brand attribute adequacy perceptions), or by trying to convince them that they ought to place a greater weight on quality than on price (thus increasing consumer importance weights for an attribute that AT&T is competitively strong on). Conversely, MCI might in the longer run try to convert the quality segment by showing it was as good (or better) on quality as AT&T, or by increasing the importance weight on price.

As a different strategy, of course, AT&T (as the market leader, with close to 65 percent of the market), might try to increase total primary demand for residential

Table 8–2. Possible Analysis of Attitude Segments for Long-Distance Telephone Residential Market.

Attribute	"Price segment"			"Quality segment"		
	Importance weight[a]	Ratings of[b] AT&T	MCI	Importance Weight[a]	Ratings of[b] AT&T	MCI
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	5.7	6.2

[a]7 = *most important, 1 = least important*
[b]7 = *rated better, 1 = rated worse.*

long-distance phone calls. As discussed in Chapter 4, this strategy makes more sense for the market leader than for a small-share brand.

SUMMARY

Once the target market has been identified and communication and positioning objectives set, decisions must be made about the content of the advertising message. This is called message strategy. Should the message focus on communicating product benefits, on developing/reinforcing brand image or personality, on evoking specific feelings and emotions, or on developing group associations? This chapter has focused on the benefits question. Benefits are the characteristics or attributes of a product that consumers perceive positively. In order to decide which and how many of them to focus on in an advertising campaign, we must understand attitude structure and processes of attitude formation and change. Attitude is a central concept in social psychology and has become, perhaps, the most significant focus of study in the fields of advertising management and consumer behavior. The most well-accepted view is that attitude is made up of three interrelated components called cognitive, affective, and conative. There are numerous approaches to attitude measurement, but they can be broadly classified into those that involve direct overall measures and those that involve derived multiattribute measures.

Direct measures involve questioning or observations of respondent behavior in which no explicit attribute criterion concerning the product is provided. Derived measures, on the other hand, rely on deriving overall attitude from a combination of subject response to attributes of the product. Attitude models generally refer to models which use attributes and derived measures to determine attitude. Such models provide useful diagnostic information, not generated in the direct case.

A market can be segmented on the basis of varying degrees of attitude-positive, neutral, and negative-held by customers or potential customers of a brand. Advertising objectives can then be cast in attitude terms with respect to specific segments or the market as a whole. In general, the two broad classes of objectives from this viewpoint are to attempt changes in the market from some negative or neutral to some positive position, or to sustain and to maintain a positive attitude and avoid attitude decay. Competition in this context is a force attempting to shift attitudes in the opposite direction.

Although knowing the overall market attitude for his or her brand is very useful for the advertiser, it is equally significant to identify the reasons for the attitude. In other terms, the advertiser needs to know what attributes, beliefs, and benefits are most important in the product-market situation, and in particular which of them are determinant in brand choice. The means-end chain model is useful in explaining the links between product attributes, consumer consequences, and personal values. Identify the relevant set of attributes is crucial to the analysis. Several procedures for doing this have been developed. Specific importance weights on each attribute can be derived by rating, ranking, and conjoint analysis methods. Conjoint analysis has undergone rapid development and is now widely used in industry. Leverage and determinant attribute research show how attrib-

utes that appear to have the greatest leverage in affecting an attitude structure or are most closely related to brand choice and behavior can be identified.

Attributes, benefits, and beliefs and their relation to overall attitudes have been formally studied in the context of evaluative belief attitude models. It is possible to focus on the two central constructs of an attitude model, evaluative beliefs and importance weights, and perform a segmentation analysis useful for diagnostic purposes. Each construct provides a criterion for classifying consumers into different market segments that have important strategy implications.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the strategy implications of a bimodal (two-humped) distribution of brand attitude rather than the distribution shown in Figure 8–3.
2. Day recommends the following seven-point scale for obtaining direct measures of brand attitude:
   a. This brand is the best that is available.
   b. I like this brand very much, but there's another just as good.
   c. I like this brand, but other brands are better.
   d. This brand is acceptable, but most other brands are better.
   e. I neither like nor dislike this brand—it doesn't have any particular merits.
   f. I don't like this brand very much, although it is not as bad as some.
   g. I don't like this brand at all—it is one of the worst available.

   Administer this scale to twenty to thirty friends using five to ten brands in an appropriate product class. What are the shapes of the resulting distributions? What explanation could you offer for the shapes?
3. Discuss ways in which you could assess the strength (sometimes called the "valence") of an attitude. Is it true that a highly valenced attitude is always more stable than a weak one?
4. Compare and contrast the several methods used for identifying important attributes.
5. What fundamental assumption about belief-attitude relations underlies the "leverage" approaches to assessing the relative worth of alternative attributes? Why might an attribute be regarded as important but have low leverage? How might leverage be determined?
6. Explain the concepts of benefit, belief, attribute, and cognition.
7. Use the means-end chain model to explain the associational network that needs to be understood in developing message content for buying
   a. an automobile
   b. an expensive wristwatch
   c. shampoo
8. Collect data on attribute beliefs and weights for a Macintosh personal computer. Explain the alternative strategies Apple could use to advertise the Mac based on these data.
9. Suppose other research showed that personal computers were usually purchased based on noncompensatory evaluations. What does noncompensatory

mean in this context. Be specific and give examples. How would this affect message strategy for the Mac?

10. Assume the following information is available to you concerning the locations of four cereal brands on the two benefits of sweetness and crunchiness:

Brand	Sweetness	Crunchiness
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Calculate the segment's attitude for each brand using the benefits information only. Rank the brands on this basis. Suppose that the importance weight for sweetness was found to be 0.80 and for crunchiness, 0.20. Recalculate attitude for each brand using the weighted belief model in the chapter. How would this change the rankings? Now suppose attitudes were formed using a conjunctive model in which the minimal desired sweetness level was 2. How would this change the rankings? What about a disjunctive model where only crunchiness mattered? Assume that you are the manager of brand B. Discuss the implications of these results for product and advertising strategy.

11. Think of a product category to which you can meaningfully relate, perhaps something you have contemplated buying. What comes to mind first as you contemplate the purchase: the attributes and benefits you would like to have satisfied, or the brands that are available to satisfy them? Will all people tend to follow this processing sequence? If so, why? If not, why not?

12. Write down the attributes that are meaningful to you and assign importance weights to each for jogging shoes or sneakers. Compare your results with two or three friends doing the same exercise. What problems occur in developing "importance weights" in this fashion?

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APPENDIX: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CONJOINT ANALYSIS

Conjoint analysis has become well known and widely used in marketing and advertising research. Some marketing research companies such as Sawtooth Software and Bretton Clark have specialized in the techniques whereas other full-service marketing research firms such as Elrick and Lavidge have offered conjoint analysis as one of their service offerings. Some lesser-known methods focus on estimating preference functions at the aggregate or segment level [25] One of the most popular applications is in new product development. Conjoint analysis is useful in identifying attribute importance weights, part-worth utilities of attribute levels, and in simulations of various combinations of potential new products in a product category. P. Cattin and D. R. Wittink [26] found that almost three out of every four applications involved new product concept identification as one of the purposes. Pricing and market segmentation were also often mentioned as reasons for conjoint projects. Wittink and Cattin [27] provide similar data in an updated paper.

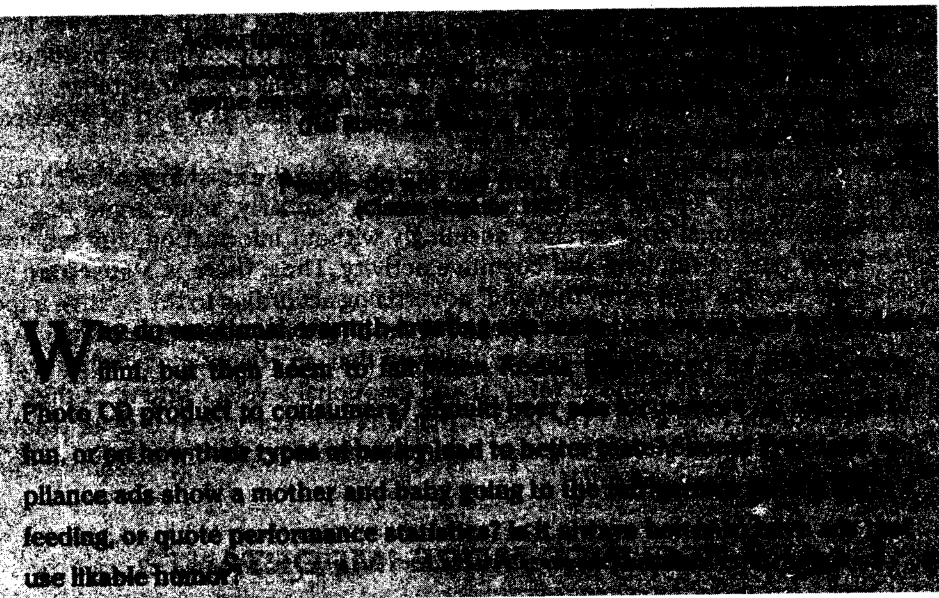
In yet another study, D. R. Wittink, Marco Vriens, and Wim Burhenne [28] surveyed European companies located throughout Europe, mostly in Germany and Britain. The authors found that the diffusion of conjoint analysis in Europe has been especially strong in recent years, particularly so in Germany and Britain. It is interesting that pricing was the most frequently mentioned use and that market segmentation was also ranked higher than in the United States. In contrast, use for

competitive analysis was about twice as frequently mentioned in the United States. The personal interview was the most frequently used method of data collection in both Europe and the United States. The computer-interactive method called Adaptive Conjoint Analysis[29] (ACA) was a close second in Europe and has become much more widely used in the U.S. Concerning stimulus presentation, ACA is the most frequently used in Europe, followed by full-profile and tradeoff matrix formats. The vast majority of applications involve verbal descriptions for the presentation of stimuli. Rating scales also dominant as the most popular method of measuring response. Concerning estimation procedures, the authors found that OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) because it is easier to apply and commonly avaliable was used more often than the nonmetric procedures such as MONANOVA and LINMAP. Sample sizes ranged from as low as 30 to as high as 1,000 (the average was 268). As can be seen from these studies, conjoint is expanding in use in both the United States and Europe and is becoming a standard part of the arsenal of marketing and advertising research techniques.

Paul Green and V. Srinivasan[30] provide a relatively recent review of conjoint analysis. Their review updates an earlier 1978 review and addresses topics such as which type of preference model to use, data collection methods, stimulus set construction, stimulus presentation, measurement scales for the dependent variable, and estimation methods. The authors note that a relatively new data collection method called TMT (telephone-mail-telephone) has been developed. Respondents are recruited by telephone screening and the main interview materials (questionnaires, stimulus cards, incentive gifts, and other items) are mailed shortly afterwards. An appointment is scheduled for collecting all data by telephone and the conjoint exercise usually reserved for interviewer-interviewee interaction at the time of the followup call. The procedure can reduce selection bias, can include visual stimulus materials, completion rates are usually high, and there is no missing data problem.

An interesting problem in conjoint which has received a significant amount of research attention is called the attribute levels problem. D. R. Wittink, Lakshman Krishnamurthi, and Julia Nutter[31] and in several follow-up studies by Wittink and his colleagues found that the relative importance of an attribute increases as the number of levels on which it is defined increases, even though the minimum and maximum values for the attribute are held fixed. For example, the relative importance of price went up by 7 percentage points when two more intermediate levels were added to the three levels used for price. In their review, Green and Srinivasan suggest that the addition of intermediate levels to an attribute makes the respondent pay more attention to that attribute, thereby increasing its apparent importance in determining overall preferences. D. R. Wittink, Joel Huber, Peter Zandan, and Richard Johnson[32] argue that the source of the level effect is algorithmic rather than behavioral; it occurs more because of the algebra involved than because respondents give more attention to attributes with greater numbers of levels.

9 ASSOCIATING FEELINGS WITH THE BRAND



To answer these questions, we need to understand the mechanisms through which ad-evoked feelings can shape consumers' attitudes towards brands. In Chapter 8, our discussion of message strategy focused on the thinking or cognitive response to advertising. The consumer processed information which potentially could change beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. This response often involves a logical, rational, thinking process. Advertising that attempts predominately to communicate or inform and thus activate the thinking process is termed "thinking" advertising.

In this chapter, however, we will focus on advertising which works by creating feelings that can ultimately influence attitudes and/or behavior. Thus, a commercial could portray active teenagers playing volleyball at the beach and enjoying 7-Up. A feeling of energy, vitality, fun, and belonging could be created that gets associated with the brand and thereby affects brand attitudes and behavior. Since these feeling responses usually are considered positive (liked) or negative (disliked), they are also termed affective responses. These specific feeling or affective responses (such as happiness, or warmth, or sadness) evoked by an ad are quite distinct from a consumer's overall rating of how likable or enjoyable or interesting the ad is, though they obviously will help determine such overall ratings of the ad's characteristics.[1]

The term *"feeling" advertising* is used here to describe advertising for which audience feeling response is of primary importance, and usually (but not always) little or no information content is involved. It usually is very much execution fo-

cused, as opposed to message focused, and relies on the establishment of a feeling, emotion, or mood and the association of this feeling, emotion, or mood with the brand. The association of such a feeling with the brand has been labeled a process of "emotional bonding" by some advertising agencies. Some of these feelings can also lead to brand imagery and personality, which we discuss in the next chapter. These associated feelings can also change the "symbolic or cultural meaning" that consumers associate with the brand: Kodak film, for instance, is now seen not just as a high-quality photographic film, but also as a part of American life, a part of families' warm experiences.

It should be clear that all commercials, even the most logical and informative, can develop feeling or affective responses. Similarly, some argue that even the most emotional commercials, seemingly without information content, can evoke some type of thinking and cognitive activity. Thus, there is a spectrum between pure "feeling" and pure "thinking" advertising according to the relative importance of the thinking response as opposed to the affective or feeling response. In fact, the Lowe and Partners/SMS agency believes that an effective advertisement should communicate at both the rational and emotional levels, using what they term the "emotional hard sell."[2] The idea is that it is necessary to arouse an emotional response, but the advertising also needs a rational hook—the tangible end benefits that the product will fulfill.

WHEN ARE FEELINGS MORE IMPORTANT? . . . . .

The Role of Involvement and Life-Cycle Stage

The role of feelings in advertising is most important when consumers don't have (or don't care to have) deeply considered attitudes towards brands. Michael Ray and Rajeev Batra have suggested that attitudes toward a brand have two components, an evaluative component that is influenced by beliefs about the brand and a brand-specific "liking" component that cannot be explained by knowledge about beliefs.[3] This "liking" component is presumed to be based on the attitude toward the ad as well as by exposure effects. The relative importance or "percentage contribution" of "liking" will be high when the amount of brand attribute information and associated processing effort are low. This suggests that feelings are probably more important in shaping brand attitudes in low-involvement situations.

Chris Allen, Karen Machleit, and Susan Kleine have also shown that specific feelings or emotions can have an effect on a consumer's behavior that go beyond the effects of a consumer's attitude toward the brand or behavior in situations where consumers don't really have well-thought out attitudes (for instance, towards the act of donating blood, which is often done out of habit or out of a desire to please others). In such situations when attitudes aren't well formed, the feelings that consumers associate with a brand or behavior can be especially important in determining whether they will actually choose that brand or perform that behavior.[4]

Consistent with these views, humor—as one example of feeling-evoking appeals—has not tended to be appropriate for high-involvement situations. As will

be discussed when we look at the overall model of how feelings work in advertising, when ads evoke positive feelings it can sometimes reduce the total amount of thinking that consumers go through about the reasons stated in the ad why that brand is better. Such reductions in total thinking also occur when a feeling-oriented ad evokes what have been called "autobiographical memories." Thus, if a brand really has strong reasons why it should be preferred, and it is to the advantage of that brand to get the consumer to think about those reasons, then evoking positive feelings which reduce those kinds of thoughts doesn't make much sense. (See also our comments about the potentially harmful effects of "distractor thoughts" in Chapters 7 and 12).

Several advertising case-histories are consistent with the reasoning just presented. Federal Express Corporation dropped its lighthearted, humorous campaigns in favor of more serious, technology-based arguments (such as spare jets and backup computers, used to increase reliability), when competition intensified in the overnight package delivery business intensified in 1989.[5] The use of the Peanuts characters by Met Life (see Figure 9–1) to create a warm, likable feeling for the insurance company (and its agents) did not succeed in communicating its unique products and performance record.[6] Alka-Selzer's famous and well liked "I can't believe I ate the whole thing" humor ads did not stop the brand from losing sales when consumers decided they wanted antacid products with different formulations.[7] A series of field studies promoting audience attendance at social and business events found that a humorous promotion succeeded in improving attendance for a social event, but not for a business event.[8]

Similar reasoning would suggest that ads evoking feelings are most likely to be needed when consumers have a low level of intrinsic interest in the product category or brand, so that they are not forming deeply considered attitudes. This is most likely to happen in the mature stages of a product category's life cycle. In contrast, when a product category is new, and consumer interest in it is high, consumers might seek more "hard" product information (partly to educate themselves about the category or brand). Having feeling-oriented ads then might serve to reduce the amount of positive product information the consumer is looking for (because ads that evoke feelings reduce a consumer's ability and desire to "think"), and this might not be an advisable strategy. Thus, when Kodak launched its new Photo-CD product in late 1992, they initially ran warm, fuzzy ads for it (just like typical ads for Kodak film) but then discovered they needed more informative ads instead. By early 1993, they had switched to thirty-minute infomercials.[9]

The FCB and Rossiter-Percy Grids

However, consumer involvement in the product category (the consumer's need for information to choose the "best" brand) is only part of the story. According to the Foote, Cone & Belding (FCB) advertising agency, product categories (and different segments of product categories) can be classified into four categories, based on whether they are high or low in involvement and on whether they are "thinking" or "feeling" products. Thus "feeling" products can be either high-involvement (as in

Figure 9–1. Creating a warm, likable feeling: MetLife.
Courtesy of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

the case of cosmetics, jewelry, and fashion clothing) or low-involvement (e.g., beer, cigarettes, and candy, "life's little pleasures"). On the thinking products side, high-involvement products are illustrated by big-ticket items such as cars, appliances, and insurance, while low-involvement products are represented by paper towels, household cleaners, and gasoline. (See Figure 9–2.) Obviously, different sub-segments of product categories (such as cosmetic shampoos and medicated shampoos) can fall into different parts of the grid, and consumers can vary in where they would place different brands or categories. This "grid" has been extensively researched by FCB in many countries, and the firm recommends that feeling advertising is most appropriate for products and services that fall on the feeling side of the grid.[10] Other researchers have also found distinctions similar to FCB's thinking-feeling classification, such as Rajeev Batra and Olli Ahtola's classification of products into "utilitarian" versus "hedonic."[11]

John Rossiter and Larry Percy have recently offered an improvement on the FCB grid, with the notable expansion of the FCB think-versus-feel dichotomy into one with many more "motives" why consumers might wish to buy brands in different product categories. (See Figure 9–3.) They then show how ads can be designed to address each buying motive.

For instance, a "thinking" product could be purchased for one of several different "informational motives" that all have to with the consumer's desire to reduce certain negative feelings. Here, a product might be purchased either to remove a problem (in which case ads can show anger turning into relief through using that brand), for problem avoidance (show how fear changes to relaxation), or because of incomplete satisfaction with a prior purchase (show disappointment giving way to optimism), and so on.

On the "feeling" side, where various "transformational motives" can apply, consumers seek to increase certain positive feelings. Thus, something being bought for sensory gratification might be advertised emotionally by showing dullness changing to elation; something being bought for a sense of achievement or mastery needs to show how boredom can be changed to excitement through that brand purchase; and a product bought for social approval needs to show how the consumer's apprehension about social approval can be changed into feeling flattered.[12]

In the Rossiter-Percy model, the grid again has four cells, with low and high involvement being crossed with informational or transformational motives. In their view, ads in the low-involvement–informational quadrant need to focus on one or two key benefits, perhaps exaggerating them enough to provoke a trial purchase, and use a simple problem-solution format, without being concerned about likability. (Examples: Wisk's "ring around the collar" ads, or Charmin's original "Mr. Whipple.") Ads in the high-involvement–informational quadrant need convincing and logical brand claims, perhaps using refutational or comparative formats (we discuss these in Chapter 12). Ads in the low-involvement–transformational cell need a unique and authentic emotional benefit, delivered through a frequently repeated likable ad, that might use the "drama" format we will discuss later in this chapter.

Both the FCB and Rossiter-Percy models would thus predict that beer ads try-

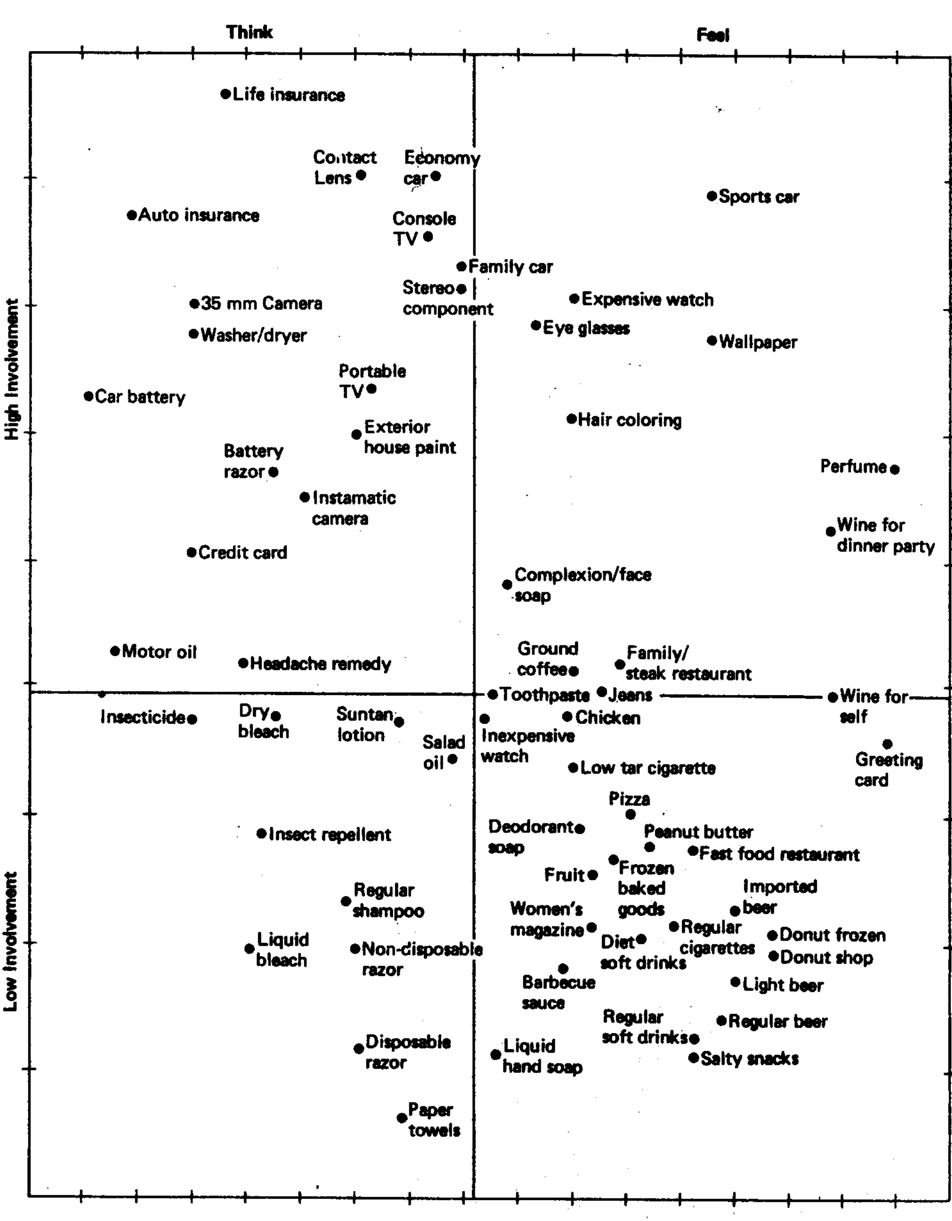


Figure 9–2. FCB grid for 60 products.

Source: Modified from Ratchford, "New Insights About the FCB Grid," Journal of Advertising Research. *August/September 1987, p. 31. © 1987 by the Advertising Research Foundation.*

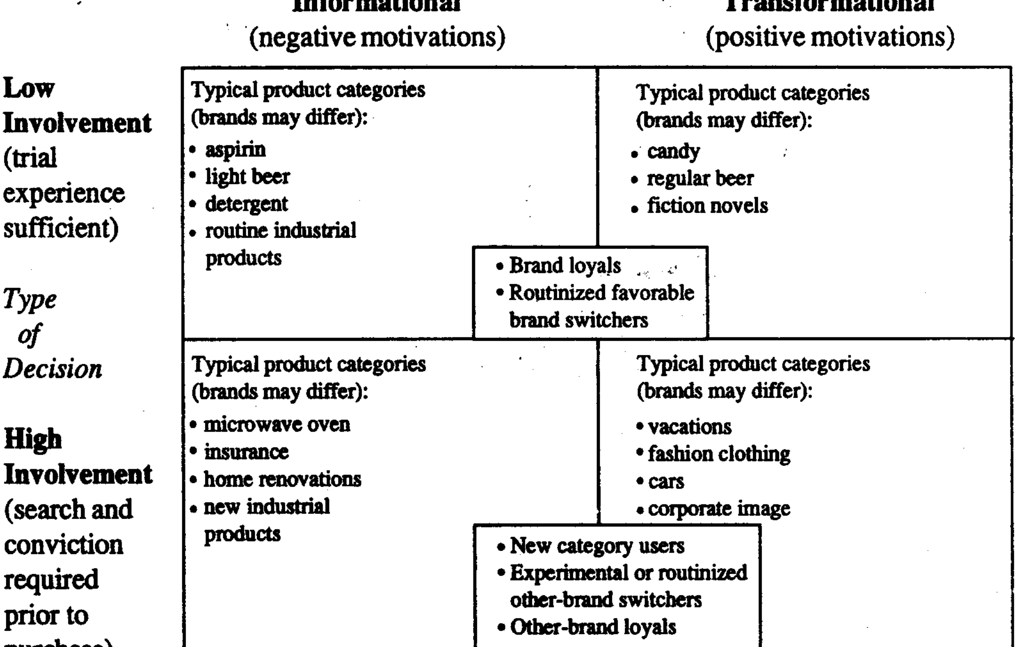


Figure 9-3. The Rossiter-Percy grid.

Modified from Rossiter, Percy, and Donovan, "A Better Advertising Planning Grid," Journal of Advertising Research *(October/November 1991), pp. 11–21. © 1991 by the Advertising Research Foundation.*

ing a logical brand claim (such as ads in 1992 for Miller Reserve saying "Taste what barley does for a beer") would fail, as would attempts to sell washing machines or refrigerators using warmth (such as the 1993 ads for Kitchen-Aid refrigerators that said the refrigerators were "designed from a blueprint designed by Mother Nature").[13]

In the fourth high-involvement–transformational cell, the Rossiter-Percy model suggests that an ad has to not simply be liked but also create a feeling of lifestyle identification from the consumer, with some supportive "hard information" thrown in. Again, high repetition may be needed here. Other researchers have also suggested that ads for this fourth cell require appeals that show how the brand can reflect or reinforce the deeper life-values that the target consumer sees as part of his or her "self."[14] Thus, the ad here has to not only be likable but must create a brand image or personality that captures some deeper and richer meanings the consumer is attempting to get closer to by buying brands that have managed to associate themselves with those cultural, symbolic meanings. We discuss such advertising strategies in more detail in the next chapter, on Brand Equity, Image, and Personality (Chapter 10).

MODELING THE FEELING RESPONSE TO ADVERTISING

In Chapter 8 we have discussed a variety of models and approaches that were most relevant to understanding the thinking response to advertising. Most of these models are relatively well developed and accepted. In contrast, remarkably little is known about the *feeling*, or *affective*, *response* to advertising and how it works. Models of feeling advertising are just beginning to emerge and are incomplete. But even these limited models can help us better understand the situations when emotional advertising is most appropriate.

Emerging models of feeling or affective response tend to introduce one or more of four constructs. The first are the feelings that are engendered by the advertisement, feelings such as warmth, excitement, fear, and amusement. The second is the attitude toward the advertisement, the degree to which an audience member likes or enjoys the advertisement. The third is the transformation of the use experience, whereby attributes that may be intangible are effectively added to the brand. The fourth is the process, usually considered the classical conditioning process, by which the feelings, the attitude toward the advertisement, or the transformed use experience get associated with the brand.

Figure 9–4 provides one model of how feeling or affective response works.[15]

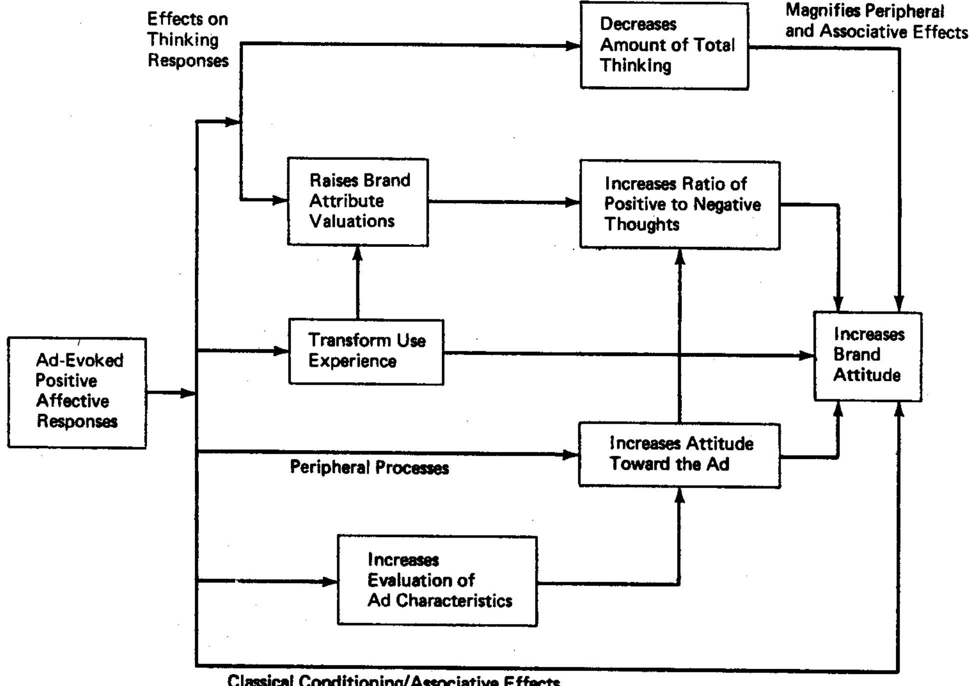


Figure 9–4. A model of the feeling response to advertising.

The advertisement exposure can first have a thinking response, which usually involves factual learning, discussed at length in Chapter 8. The second (simultaneously felt) response is the affective response, the feelings that are created or aroused by the advertising. Feelings can be positive, such as feeling warm, cheerful, happy, energetic, active, or giving. Or, they could be negative, such as feeling afraid, depressed, guilty, anxious, or irritated. Feelings consist of both moods and emotions; moods are usually not as extreme or pronounced as emotions, although they have been described as mild emotions. We will use the terms *moods, feelings,* and *emotions* interchangeably.

Feelings are shown in Figure 9–4 as having four possible types of impact.

First, they can affect the amount and nature of the thinking response. Positive feelings may promote positive thoughts, leading to an increase in the ratio of support to counterarguments evoked by an ad. This is partly because people in good moods want to stay in good moods, and thus evaluate neutral or positive brand attribute arguments in the ad more positively than they otherwise would. It is also partly because when an ad puts people in a good mood they automatically think about other positive feelings that are stored in memory, which again gives a positive bias to evaluative thoughts about the ad. (Research by Barbara Kahn and Alice Isen has also found that such increases in the amount of "positive thinking" can also lead to people feeling generally more exploratory about things, and indulging in more variety-seeking behaviors among brands, as long as these brands are all considered safe and enjoyable.[16])

In addition to thinking more positive thoughts, however, people in good moods also sometimes think fewer total thoughts than they otherwise would, because thinking is effortful and can reduce their good mood. While the relative increase in the ratio of support to counterarguments serves to increase brand attitudes, the decrease in the number of total thoughts can serve to make brand attitudes based more on peripheral cues and attitude to the ad (discussed shortly), than on central message arguments.

Second, feelings can also work by "transforming" the use experience. The theory is as follows. After many exposures to a McDonald's commercial (to pick one example) showing a happy, family scene, a family's felt experience at McDonald's will actually be different because of the exposure to the advertising. The advertising exposures make their visit to McDonald's feel warmer and happier than it would otherwise be. Their McDonald's experience is transformed into one more closely matching that shown in the advertising. This transformation has the effect of adding a "warm and happy" attribute to an assessment of McDonald's, thus creating a "new belief" about McDonald's. This raises brand attitudes toward McDonald's. The effect is not simply one of increasing brand attitudes, however: as discussed earlier with Kodak film, the transformational effect can also add layers of rich meaning to what a brand begins to stand for in the consumer's mind.

Third, Figure 9–4 shows that feelings can also work by creating a positive attitude toward the advertisement (1) directly, through the kinds of "peripheral" mechanisms discussed in Chapter 5 and (2) indirectly, through increasing the favorability of evaluation of the ad's characteristics. For example, ads for Kodak film are usually extremely warm commercials. These warm feelings themselves lead to

a liking for these ads, but they additionally lead to a more favorable assessment of the way the ad was made (its executional characteristics). Thus the Kodak ads tend to be well liked for both these reasons. The model suggests that this attitude toward the advertisement then becomes directly associated with or transferred to the brand.

The fourth and final way in which these ad-evoked feelings can become directly associated with the brand is through processes such as classical conditioning or other associative mechanisms. The result of this association could be an effect on the brand attitude or brand choice or both. The feelings of warmth that the audience experienced when being exposed to the Kodak commercials could, over time and with multiple exposures, become associated with Kodak film, and this association could directly affect the attitude toward the brand and purchase behavior. This impact would occur simply because of the association formed between the feeling and the brand through many repetitions.

This model shows a fairly complex network of effects, and certain aspects of feeling-oriented ads can thus have fairly complex consequences. For instance, likable music in an an ad that has strong ties to emotion-laden experiences can evoke positive feelings that get linked to the brand, which is good in low-involvement situations in which the consumer isn't really carefully picking a brand, but these can also distract consumers from processing information in the ad on why the brand is better—which can hurt ad effectiveness in high-involvement situations.[17]

The Association Process

Note the important role that the associative processes play in the model. In particular, the positive feelings or positive attitudes toward the advertisement or the transformed use experience created by the advertisement need to be associated with the brand. Advertising history is full of examples of campaigns that have been extremely entertaining and well liked but had no impact in part because the ads did not get associated with the brand. Audience viewers could recall much of the ad but not the brand advertised. It is thus obviously crucial to make sure an association gets made between the brand (its name and/or logo) and the feelings evoked by the ad. The association is enhanced when the brand is made the hero of the ad and when some kind of unique link is suggested between the brand and the feeling.

Creating such associations is vital because the brand choice is obviously going to be made at some point much later than the point when the ad gets seen (as we pointed out in Chapter 5). Thus, it is of little use for an ad to evoke some feelings when the ad gets seen, if these feelings fail to be connected to the brand name and fail to be "felt" again, or remembered, by the consumer when the brand is later being evaluated for purchase. Fortunately, Douglas Stayman and Rajeev Batra have shown that a consumer who feels certain feelings when a brand name is mentioned can remember those feelings much later, when the brand name is being thought about. In other words, ad-evoked feelings and brand names can and do become linked and associated in consumers' minds.[18] Obviously, some types of advertising

do this more successfully than others, and this chapter will discuss how to create such successful feeling-oriented ads.

Theory and research from psychology can provide insights into how this association is created. One such theory, the exposure effect, was discussed in Chapter 5. Some other ways in which such associations can be created, as depicted in the components of the Figure 9–4 model, will now be explored.

TRANSFORMATIONAL ADVERTISING: TRANSFORMING THE USE EXPERIENCE . . . .

As Figure 9-4 pointed out, one way in which feeling-oriented advertising succeeds in associating feelings with brands is *transformational advertising*, a concept associated with Dr. William Wells of DDB Needham. Such advertising involves developing associations with the brand or brand use such that the experience of using the brand is transformed or changed into something quite different.[19] An example might be advertising for Marlboro cigarettes, which leads to a Marlboro smoker experiencing feelings of independence, masculinity, ruggedness, and so on—presumably being felt by the Marlboro cowboy.

Transformational advertising involves two types of associations. Creating and maintaining both are crucial to its success. The first are the associations of certain feelings with the use experience. It may be desired to associate feelings with the use experience (e.g., the use of Grandma's Cookies generates "motherly" feelings) or the type of user (e.g., active, stylish people wear Levi's jeans). The second kind of association is the association between the use experience or user (that now has those feelings "attached" to it) and the brand.

Christopher Puto and William Wells note that through these two kinds of associations, transformational advertising contains the following characteristics:[20]

1. **It must make the experience of using the product richer, warmer, more exciting, and/or more enjoyable than that obtained solely from an objective description of the advertised brand.**
2. **It must connect the experience of the advertisement so tightly with the experience of using the brand that consumers cannot remember the brand without recalling the experience generated by the advertisement.**

The association of feelings with the use experience and/or the brand may be created through a story vignette, through the use of "drama advertising" techniques, or through specific ad elements such as specific kinds of music.

Drama Advertising

Drama advertising dramatizes a situation involving the use experience and the brand, and draws in the viewer into the action it portrays (contrasted with the more usual "lecture" form, which makes straightforward arguments about why

the brand is better). For example, an ad for McDonald's might show a father taking a son out to McDonald's because the son now has a younger baby brother and is feeling neglected. The father talks to his son at McDonald's and tells him that he is now the "big brother" on whose help the father is going to be counting on as they both teach the baby brother how to grow up. The feelings in this situation are very warm and believable and are felt spontaneously by the viewer without anyone "telling" the viewer to feel them.

A good drama has both a plot and distinct characters. When a drama is successful, the audience becomes "lost" in the story and experiences the concerns and feelings of the characters.[21] If the dramatized action in the ad naturally and spontaneously evokes memories from the consumer's own lives, so-called "autobiographical memories," the feelings linked to those memories can also add to the affective charge of the ad, often raising ad evaluations.[22]

Specific ad elements such as music can also be used to assist in the transformational effects being discussed here and to add desired "meanings" to the brand. As Linda Scott points out, several ads in the Levi's 501 ad campaign center around the color and word "blue," and use blues music. Such blues music (originally a black musical form), she argues, is particularly liked by white working-class urban youth because it is linked to their feelings of alienation, their exclusion from mature roles, and their consequent adoption of hedonistic approaches to life. Thus the choice of such music in Levi's jeans ads can help associate Levi's jeans, too, with these feelings of alienation and transform what Levi's jeans stand for (e.g., they are more than just garments; they are symbols of a lifestyle).[23]

When and How to Use Transformational Advertising

Effective transformational advertising should be positive. It should make the experience richer, warmer, and more enjoyable. An implication is that transformational advertising may be inappropriate for some products. It will be difficult to turn scrubbing the floor, cleaning the oven, or taking a laxative into a fun, upbeat experience. However, transformational advertising has been used to mitigate an unpleasant experience. For example, some of the transformational airline advertising has probably helped some face the anxieties of flying.

Conversely, there are some situations when transformational advertising is more likely to work. Steven Hoch and Young-Won Ha have suggested and shown that advertising is more capable of influencing consumers' perceptions about the quality of products—and, by implication, the nature of their usage experiences—when these consumers are less able to make quality judgments for themselves (situations that they label "ambiguous").[24] For instance, if I walk into a fast-food establishment that is clearly and unambiguously filthy, it will be more difficult for advertising to transform that into a warm and enjoyable experience. Transformational advertising is more likely to work when a consumer cannot make quality judgments for himself or herself and needs advertising to help interpret the product or use experience because the situation is open to multiple interpretations. This is more likely in service situations, situations when sensory experiences are

involved (fragrances, liquor, food, etc.), and when consumer expertise and knowledge are minimal.

Transformational advertising must also ring true. It will not be effective if it is disconfirmed by real-life experiences with the product. No amount of "ride the friendly rails" would transform the experience of riding dirtier sections of the New York subway. This does not mean that the ad must be *literally* true; most people watching an ad for Keebler don't believe in elves, but they do accept that elves would behave as depicted in those ads, if elves did in fact exist. This property of "ringing true" (even if not literally true) has been called *verisimilitude* and is discussed further later in this chapter.

Requirements for Successful Transformational Advertising

To achieve such transformational associations, it is necessary to

- **Have a substantial media budget.**
- **Maintain consistency over time.**
- **Closely connect the brand with the advertising.**

Adequate Budget

Informational advertising can sometimes work with a single exposure. However, transformational feeling advertising requires heavy repetition to build the associations. The link between the advertiser and the use experience requires constant reinforcement. If Marlboro were to stop advertising, someone else could "occupy Marlboro Country." Thus, a media budget and schedule delivering frequent exposure are necessary. Further, advertising testing must also adjust to the reality that the advertising impact is based on many exposures. Thus, single-exposure tests will probably understate the impact and may actually have little relevance in the evaluation of a commercial's ultimate performance in a transformational campaign.

Consistency

To obtain and retain the desired associations, transformational advertising must be consistent over time. The thrust of the campaign cannot be allowed to change frequently. It might be desirable or even necessary to be consistent for decades. That does not mean that the advertising needs to be repetitive (variations on a theme, rather than the same identical execution, could be used). It simply means that it needs to be cohesive, supporting the same associations.

Links to the Brand

The advertising needs to connect the use experience that is being created to the brand so tightly that people cannot recall one without thinking of the other. What will be ineffective is to establish the right use experience but not the association with the brand. Wells notes that a series of soap ads used the lines.[25]

- **"New blouse?" "No, new bleach."**
- **"New dress?" "No, new bleach."**
- **"New shirt?" "No, new bleach."**

Almost everyone remembered the line but almost no one remembered the advertiser.

WHAT AFFECTS THE INTENSITY OF FEELINGS? . .

Whether part of a transformational ad or not, the intensity of feelings or emotions precipitated by the advertising will depend on many factors. Although research is still preliminary, it seems likely that an advertisement attempting to generate an emotional response should be believable and engender empathy.[26]

Believability

If a person is to share an emotional experience vicariously or to be stimulated to relive a prior emotional experience, it may be necessary for there to be literal believability. If the scene is not realistic, if it could not happen in real life, it will be more difficult to generate a meaningful emotional response.

For any emotional response to occur, it seems evident that the advertisement must have *verisimilitude*—the appearance of truth or the depiction of realism, as in the theater or literature. The scene may not be literally true, but the commercial generates a willing suspension of disbelief. It has a ring of truth—if paper towels could speak, they would speak that way. There is no distracting thought that the scene is phony, contrived, or silly. For example, the introduction of a mouthwash solution to a social situation might be so contrived as to disrupt the verisimilitude and prevent the desired emotion from emerging. Thus, believability can act as a block to and/or an enhancer of an emotional response.

Empathy

If empathy is high and thus the understanding of another's situation is deeper, the emotional response should be more likely and more intense. Empathy will tend to be higher if the characters in the commercial are similar to the audience member and the settings are familiar. It will also tend to be higher when the audience member has had an experience identical or similar to that shown in the advertisement. The expectation is that a prior experience should make it easier to experience another's feelings vicariously. If a viewer has experienced the exultation of winning a tennis championship, he or she may be more likely to share vicariously the emotions of a commercial character who is clearly experiencing such emotions. Patricia Stout and John Leckenby have argued that what good feeling-oriented ads do is not only to describe or display certain feelings but to get consumers to *empathize* with those feelings and even, best of all, to *experience* those feelings vicariously.[27]

As discussed earlier, one way to increase the amount of consumer empathy (and also the amount of verisimilitude, discussed earlier), is to make an advertisement that uses a "drama" form, that depicts a situation and draws in the viewer

into the action it portrays (contrasted with the more usual "lecture" form, which makes straightforward arguments about why the brand is better). When a drama is successful, the audience becomes "lost" in the story and experiences the concerns and feelings of the characters.[28] A drama's appeal is processed empathically; it succeeds if the viewer is in fact pulled into the story.

Interestingly, it also appears from research that consumers exhibit more intense emotional reactions if the ad shows actual situations that differ from desired imagined situations by only a little, rather than a great amount. For instance, more intense emotional responses might occur to an ad soliciting organ donations if the ad tells of a stoic child who died because a liver became available for a transplant one week (rather than one year) too late. Such shorter "temporal distance" apparently amplifies feelings of regret, the level of empathy, and so on. It was also found, however, that these effects of temporal distance only occur, and only have an effect on persuasion, when the consumer operates at a low level of involvement. That is because short temporal distance apparently evokes more intense feelings because it gets consumers to think more deeply about "what might have been." Since high-involvement consumers are already thinking such thoughts, no extra effects emerge with them.[29]

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ADVERTISEMENT . . . . .

Perhaps the simplest explanation of how a feeling advertisement works is that people like it or dislike it *as an ad*, and this attitude gets transformed to or associated with the brand in the ad. There is thus the potential for a direct causal link between the attitude toward an advertisement and attitude and behavior toward a brand. As noted in Figure 9–4, feelings engendered by an ad can create or influence an attitude toward the ad directly, as well as indirectly, through assessments of the quality of the ad's executional characteristics. In fact, some researchers believe that attitude to the ad really has two different components: an affective one, reflecting the direct effect of the feelings evoked by the ad, and a second, more cognitive, one, reflecting how well made and useful the ad (and the information in it) is considered to be.[30]

Andrew Mitchell and Jerry Olson, and Terence Shimp, demonstrated in academic studies that the attitude toward an ad (liking for the ad) provided an impact on brand attitudes over and above any ability of the ad to communicate attribute information.[31] Several ad industry studies, notably one for the Advertising Research Foundation directed by Russell Haley, have also confirmed the importance of ad likability in creating brand persuasion effects, although it is only one of several ad-related factors that determine an ad's persuasion score.[32] Other studies have found that attitude toward an ad affects brand choice as well.[33] It is not clear whether this direct effect of ad liking persists over time, or whether it is short-lived; both kinds of conclusions have been reported. In fact, it has even been suggested that if a likable ad draws so much attention to itself that brand attributes in the ad are not processed by the consumer, after a time lag, the ad liking would have decayed and the consumer would have weaker attitudes to the brand than if the ad had not taken away attention from brand attributes in the first place![34]

McCollum-Spielman, a copy-testing company, suggests that ad disliking has more of an effect than ad liking on brand liking and that the effects of ad liking are more important for mood ads than for hard-sell (information-based) ads.[35] Research has also uncovered other conditions that determine whether the effects of ad liking on brand attitudes will be high or low. According to a recent review of several studies by Brown and Stayman, the effects are greater for novel and unfamiliar brands than for well-known ones, and for products that are not consumer nondurables.[36] Not surprisingly, the effects of ad liking on brand liking are also greatly reduced when actual brand trial has occurred.[37]

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the mechanisms through which the thoughts and feelings evoked by an ad lead to a favorable attitude to the ad, and how (and under what conditions) the attitude to the ad leads to favorable brand attitudes. According to researchers Scott MacKenzie, Richard Lutz, and George Belch, attitude to the ad is influenced by the cognitions (thoughts and feelings) that the ad viewer has about the ad; this ad attitude then affects brand attitudes, which then affects the intention to buy or not buy the brand. In addition, however, the attitude toward the ad also affects the viewer's cognitions that relate to the brand, which, of course, also affect attitude to the brand. In other words, attitude toward the ad affects attitude toward the brand both directly, and indirectly (through shaping brand cognitions).[38] If we like an ad we are predisposed to being less critical about what the ad is saying about the brand. This is similar to the top portion of Figure 9–4, where we said that positive feelings evoked by an ad can lead to more positive (and fewer negative) thoughts about the brand. This model has received support in several follow-up studies.

Researchers have also tested if the attitude to the ad has a greater effect on brand attitudes under low-involvement conditions. Intuitively, just as the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) suggests a greater effect of peripheral cues on brand attitudes under low-involvement conditions, one would expect a greater effect of attitude to the ad on brand attitudes under low-involvement conditions (since the feelings that play a major role in shaping attitude to the ad are clearly peripheral in nature). Yet the research on this question has not always shown this relationship; it seems instead that attitude to the ad is often a contributor to brand attitudes under both high- and low-involvement conditions.[39]

Why this is so is not totally clear, but it seems that the different components of attitude to the ad (evaluation of the pleasure from it, and its usefulness), taken together, require both central and peripheral processing, so that it becomes an important variable under *both* high- and low-involvement conditions.[40] In other words, while the feelings on which we are focusing in this chapter are a major contributor to the attitude to the ad, they are not the only factors leading to it: a more cognitive, "central," appraisal of how useful the ad is, how informative it is, and how well made it is also plays a major role. Feelings may be the most important determinant of ad liking under low-involvement conditions, but both feelings (or other "peripheral" aspects of the ad) and the ad's usefulness (and other "central" aspects) jointly shape overall ad liking in high-involvement conditions.[41]

In any event, it is clearly important, in understanding how an ad ultimately af-

fects brand attitude, to see what kind of attitude people develop toward the ad itself. If the feelings that the ad creates are positive, and if the way the ad is made (and the information in it) are evaluated favorably, then the ad should elicit a favorable attitude toward itself. Again, it is very important to remember than an can be liked either because it is entertaining or because it is considered useful, or both.[42] We need to understand more clearly how ad liking is created.

What Makes an Ad More Likable?

According to a recent model,[43] the attitude to the ad is influenced by the feelings evoked by the ad and the mood of the ad viewer; the ad viewer's attitude toward all ads in general; his or her attitude toward this advertiser, in general; his or her perceptions of the executional characteristics of the ad; and his or her perceptions of the credibility and believability of the ad. Obviously, one of the key factors shaping attitude to the ad is the nature of the execution, and that is where we shall focus here.

Different ads can lead to the same overall level of attitude to the ad by following very different executional strategies. For example, three equally liked commercials (i.e., having the same levels of attitude to the ad), one using slapstick humor, another employing serious informative copy, and a third with warm, sentimental copy, may impact the consumer in completely different ways, as could two equally disliked commercials, one that is considered boring and the other irritating. There has been a fair amount of research attempting to determine what it is that makes some commercials liked and how the liking level is affected by repetition.

One study by David Aaker and Donald Bruzzone found that the ads with higher irritation levels (and thus lower likability) tended to portray an unbelievable situation, a "putdown" person, a threatened relationship, graphic physical discomfort, tension, an unattractive or unsympathetic character, a suggestive scene, poor casting, or a sensitive product with a product-focused message. Irritation levels were lowered when the commercial included or conveyed a happy mood, a warm mood, a credible spokesman, humor, or useful information.[44]

According to an exhaustive review of the literature by Darrel Muehling and Michelle McCann, studies have found attitudes to the ad to be higher if the ad

- Is more credible.
- Evokes positive, likable feelings.
- Uses humor.
- Uses relevant or liked music, sex appeal, or other such executional devices.
- Uses likable and attractive celebrities.
- Uses endorsers of the same race as the target market.
- Doesn't have excessively high levels of fear (if using fear appeals, discussed below).
- Is for a brand the consumer already likes.
- Contains useful information, but not too much too make it boring.
- Is interesting and (reasonably) complex.

- **Contains information that is itself liked (e.g., about a special deal).**
- **Is placed in a media environment that itself is liked.**

Other research has shown that older and/or more educated consumers are less likely to like ads.[45]

Recall Effects of the Attitude toward an Advertisement

A positive attitude toward an advertisement, in addition to creating higher levels of attitude to the brand, can also affect advertising impact in a variety of other ways, such as improving the recall of the advertised material.[46] Remember from Chapter 5 that recall and attitudes are different goals, achieved through different information processing mechanisms. A well-liked ad, not surprisingly, is also remembered longer (though some standard recall copy tests actually show feeling ads performing more poorly on recall measures than they should, a point discussed later in our copy-testing chapter, Chapter 14). Interestingly, there is an argument that even disliked commercials can be effective in terms of recall and that, in fact, it is much better to be disliked than to be ignored. That is, both liked and disliked ads are supposed to be better on recall than are neutral ads.

There is no shortage of anecdotal evidence that irritating commercials have been effective. The classic example is the strong Rosser Reeves campaigns of past decades featuring his Unique Selling Propositions for Anacin, in which a hammer hitting a head was shown again and again and again. There are two explanations as to why a disliked ad can be effective in leading to brand preference via creating high recall.[47] First, in some contexts, attention to the ad, and processing of the information in it, could be increased without the negative feeling reaction being transferred to the product. Second, brand familiarity is created, which, particularly for low-involvement products that are bought on the basis of awareness rather than attitudes, may lead to increased brand choice. These effects are most likely to take place if, over time, the negative ad becomes disassociated from the brand (termed the *sleeper effect*). Thus, the impact of the ad-created negative feelings on the attitude to the brand declines over time, while the brand's awareness and familiarity remain high.

THE ROLE OF CLASSICAL CONDITIONING . . . .

One explanation as to why the liking for the ad gets transferred onto the attitude toward the brand draws on the theory of classical conditioning, which is based on Pavlov's work in the 1920s. Pavlov exposed a neutral stimulus, a metronome, termed a *conditioned stimulus* (*CS*), to a hungry dog. The conditioned stimulus was followed by another stimulus, the *unconditioned stimulus* (*US*), namely, food. The food automatically evoked a response, called the *unconditioned response* (*UR*), namely, salivation. As a result of the pairing of the two stimuli, the metronome (CS) and the food (US), the dog eventually salivated even when only the metronome stimulus was present, a response which is called the *conditioned response* (*CR*)—the dog became conditioned to it. Diagrammatically,

UNCONDITIONED STIMULUS (US)→	UNCONDITIONED RESPONSE (UR)
Food	Salivation
Commercial	Positive attitude or feelings
CONDITIONED STIMULUS (CS)⟶	**CONDITIONED RESPONSE (CR)**
Metronome	Salivation
Brand or brand use	Positive attitude or feelings

Notice that there is no reinforcement present. The conditioned response does not occur because the subject has been rewarded or reinforced. It simply occurs as a result of the fact that the conditioned and unconditioned stimuli are related systematically in time (i.e., one always follows, precedes, or occurs simultaneously with the other), and the two thus became associated.

In our context, there could be an ad with actors and a scene that represents the unconditioned stimulus. The positive attitude toward the ad or the positive feelings are the unconditioned response. The idea is to pair the brand or use of the brand, which is the neutral or conditioned stimulus, with the ad content, the unconditioned stimuli. The goal is to have the unconditioned response become the conditioned response—that is, the brand or use of the brand should precipitate the same positive attitude or feelings that the ad did. Research by Janiszewski and Warlop has also shown that, in addition to leading to this transfer of feelings, classical conditioning procedures can also have an affect on attention levels for the CS: the conditioned brand starts getting attention more quickly than if it was not conditioned.[48]

There is a good deal of controversy as to whether this classical conditioning model can be used to explain the use of advertising, particularly feeling advertising, to create positive attitudes. Four influential studies addressing this very point are described in the paragraphs that follow.

Recent Conditioning Experiments

In a controversial experiment, Gorn argued that background music (UC) could be associated with a colored pen (CS).[49] Two hundred students heard music played while watching a slide containing a print ad with little information for an inexpensive pen costing 49 cents. Half the group heard a known "liked" one-minute segment of music from a popular musical. The ad showed a beige pen for half of this group and a light blue pen for the other half. The other half heard classical Indian music, known to be disliked by these students. All subjects later were invited to select one of the two colored pens. A total of 79 percent picked the color associated with the liked music. When asked why, 62 percent said they had a reason. Most said they had a color preference and no one mentioned the music. However, while Gorn's study suggests that conditioning processes do work in advertising, with just one exposure, two subsequent studies failed to get results similar to Gorn's, and it is not really clear whether Gorn's results were actually due to conditioning, or to some other processes.[50]

Another study, by Calvin Bierley and others, exposed 100 subjects to four sets of three colored arbitrary geometric stimuli.[51] In the first two sets, red stimuli

were always followed by well-liked music, and yellow was never followed by this music. In the second set, the colors were changed. In the third, continuous music was in the background, and, in the fourth, no music was present. The preference for a stimulus was higher when it predicted music than when it did not for both colors.

In another study, Werner Kroeber-Riel paired a model brand name with emotion-loaded pictures in slide advertisements.[52] The pictures conveyed emotional events concerned with eroticism, social happiness, and exotic landscapes. A day after the conditioning the name alone aroused significant emotional reactions. Importantly, the conditioning worked only after thirty five-second exposures (twenty was inadequate), and only if the stronger of two emotional scenes was used.

In a fourth set of studies, Terence Shimp, Elnora Stuart, and Randall Engle performed twenty-one conditioning experiments using ads for various brands of colas. They found that effects were strongest for unknown and moderately known brands and occurred only when subjects became aware of the contingency (relationship) between the conditioned and the unconditioned stimuli.[53]

Some Relevant Classical Conditioning Findings

There has been an enormous amount of classical conditioning research conducted over the past five decades, and many of the findings have relevance to advertising. Research has consistently shown that for conditioning effects to emerge, you need (1) multiple exposures; (2) the CS consistently preceding the US in time, so that the consumer becomes aware that the two are associated—that one follows the other; (3) a CS and a US that somehow "fit" or "belong" together; (4) CSs that are novel and unfamiliar, such as brands that are new; and (5) USs that are biologically or symbolically salient (i.e., they "stand out").[54] Typically, conditioning effects cannot emerge with single exposures, or if the US is an already familiar stimulus (such as a well-known piece of music, unless the music is being used in a very novel way or a different context).

In addition, consider the following relevant phenomena:

Acquisition

The strength of the conditioned response increases as a function of the number of pairings of the US and the CS. However, each pairing results in a smaller increase in strength than the previous one until, after many pairings, the strength of the CR does not increase meaningfully. Thus, advertisers should plan to use enough repetitions to create the necessary associations. The speed of acquisition of the CR will depend on the salience of the US—how interesting and important it is to the audience. Therefore, it is important to involve strong US (the advertisement should make an impact), and the CS (the brand or its use) needs to be prominent and strongly linked to the US.

Extinction

Classical conditioned behavior will disappear if the relationship between the US and the CS is broken because, for example, a new advertising campaign does not maintain the same US. Suppose that a jingle (US) which generates a positive, up-

beat feeling (UR), has been associated with a soft drink (CS). If the soft drink advertising is presented without the jingle, the CR will also disappear. Note that extinction is different from forgetting. The jingle may still be recalled, but the association will not be there.

Generalization

Generalization occurs when a new conditioned stimulus (CS_2) resembles the original conditioned stimulus (CS_1) and thus generates the same conditioned response. The color preferences generated in the experiment by Bierley and others generalized to colored shapes different from those used in the experiment. Thus, product extensions such as new varieties of a breakfast cereal might be presented in such a way as to create generalization.

SPECIFIC FEELINGS EXPERIENCED BY AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Undoubtedly, there are countless numbers of feelings and combinations of feelings that could potentially be precipitated by advertising. The fact is that we not only know little about how such feelings affect the persuasion process, but we do not even really know which feelings are the most relevant. There do exist many lists of feelings, emotions, and moods that may be helpful.

The psychologist Robert Plutchik, for example, developed a list of forty emotion words, including[55]

Defiant	Adventurous	Disgusted
Surprised	Inquisitive	Expectant
Enthusiastic	Affectionate	Curious
Receptive	Shy	Hopeless
Unhappy	Perplexed	Hesitant
Afraid	Bewildered	Annoyed
Hesitant	Sad	Cheerful
Joyful	Elated	Hostile

Any of these could be important to a given advertisement. Sadness would be aroused by a commercial showing an older woman reflecting on the loss of a mate or by an advertisement attempting to gain support for resources for a famine stricken country such as Somalia by portraying an undernourished child. Enthusiasm and joy might be created by commercials showing people playing volleyball at a beach with upbeat, active music in the background. A political ad might try to raise hostility toward the opponent.

Some ads can create a feeling of confidence. Other ads can create feelings of elegance. A perfume ad showed a sophisticated woman preparing for a ball. A BMW ad showed a stylish, elegant woman slowly entering a car. Both ads surely engendered feelings of elegance, style, and class for some audience members. The Lufthansa ad in Figure 9–5 shows yet another feeling, that of serenity. A quiet, warm day out in the country is the feeling evoked by the L. L. Bean ad in Figure 9–6.

You're 37,000 feet over the Atlantic and you wish you could sleep. The engines hum. The Mozart lulls. You feel secure. You feel taken care of.

Zzzzzz.

Figure 9–5. Evoking a feeling of serenity: Lufthansa.
Courtesy of Lufthansa Airlines.

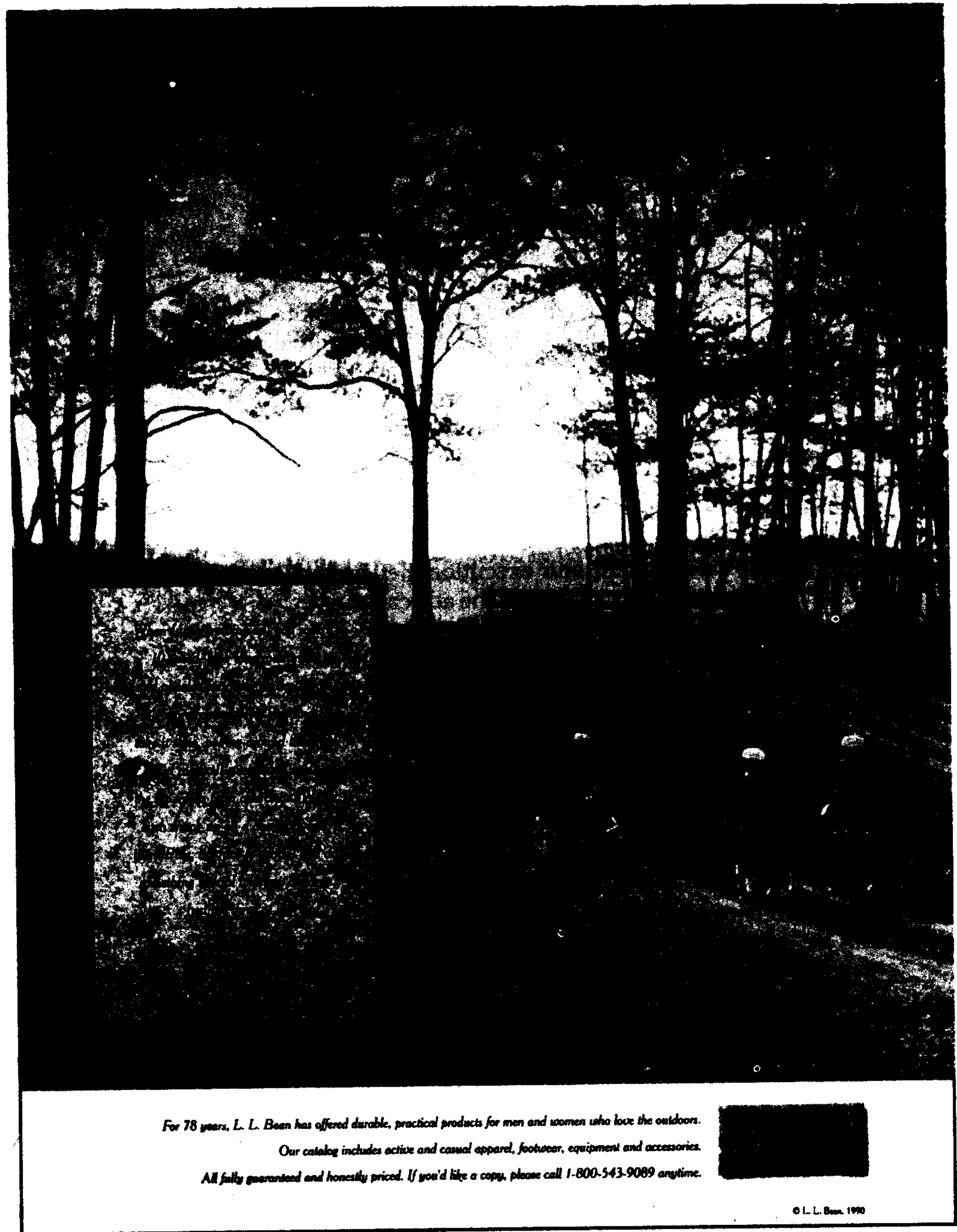


Figure 9–6. Evoking feelings of outdoors, "with nature" relaxation: L. L. Bean.
Courtesy of L. L. Bean.

Clearly, many of the feelings evoked by ads are not technically called emotions; some theorists call them *quasi-emotions* that may be of interest in these respective product categories.

There has by now been substantial research on the different types of feelings that can be and are created in advertising and on how different kinds of ad content can lead to different kinds of feelings. Rajeev Batra and Morris Holbrook, for instance, have identified twenty different types of distinct feelings that ads can create and have shown how to measure them validly and reliably. They point out that other researchers, such as the psychologist Carroll Izard, have developed classification schemes that contain even fewer types of emotions, while psychologist James Russell has argued that all feelings fall into one of four cells in a grid defined by two axes, "pleasant-unpleasant" (or positive-negative) and "low-to-high arousal." Thus, while anger is unpleasant and highly arousing, fear is unpleasant but less arousing, and while joy is positive and high arousal, a feeling of relaxation is positive but low arousal. Similar dimensions (axes) have been found using feeling-evoking ads, by researchers Julie Edell and Marian Burke, and by Holbrook and Batra.[56]

Based on such research, some advertising agencies consciously decide which kinds of feelings they need to create in particular situations and then design ads that have appropriate content and executional elements (such as the type of music, visual editing, and celebrity used). The ads can then be copy-tested to see if the targeted feelings are indeed being created, and if feelings that are not sought are inadvertently emerging. Some of the methods used to target and copy-test feeling responses are discussed later in Chapter 14. For instance, BBDO uses a card deck of people's faces, each of which displays a distinct emotional state. McCann-Erickson uses a list of emotional adjectives, as does Ayer.

Among the feelings that have been studied in the advertising context in some depth are warmth, humor, and fear.

Warmth in Advertising

When audiences are asked to describe advertisements, one dimension that is used can be interpreted as *perceived warmth.* The Aaker and Bruzzone study found a warmth dimension associated with commercials that utilized sentimental/family/kids/friends-feelings/feel-good-about-yourself creative approaches.[57] Wells and others included adjectives such as gentle, tender, soothing, serene, and lovely in a dimension they termed *sensuousness.*[58] Mary Jane Schlinger found an "empathy factor" associated with commercials involving affectionate couples, warm relationships, mother-child interactions, attractive products, vacation settings, or appealing characters such as Pillsbury's soft and cuddly doughboy.[59]

The warmth construct emerging from these dissimilar studies, although certainly complex, has some consistent characteristics and associations. It has been defined by Aaker, Stayman, and Hagerty to be "a positive, mild, transitory emotion involving physiological response and precipitated by experiencing directly or vicariously a love, family or friendship relationship."[60] A detached expression of love or friendship without concurrent involvement and physiological arousal would not