The Psychological Core: Exposure to Comprehension

Exposure

Exposure is the process by which the consumer comes into contact with a stimulus.
Marketing stimuli contains information communicated by the marketer (via ads, symbols, packages, salespeople) or by non-marketing sources (news media, word of mouth, reviews).

What affects exposure?

1. The way marketers promote a product – enhancing exposure
   - The **position of an ad** within a medium (i.e. back cover or inside cover of a magazine is best for greatest exposure, TV ads at the end or beginning of a break is best for exposure)
   - **Product distribution** - the more stores carrying the product/brand, the more likely it is that consumers will see it.
   - **Shelf placement** - the products location on a shelf or in a supermarket can play a part in exposure

2. The way consumers respond to exposure (Selective Exposure)
   - Blocking pop-up ads, using ad-block software
   - During ad breaks, consumers will go and do something else, or talk over them
   - Zipping (fast forward) through commercial breaks on recorded TV
   - Zapping - channel surfing on the TV during the ad break

Attention

Attention reflects how much mental activity consumers devote to a stimulus. A certain amount of attention is necessary for information to be perceived – for it to activate our senses.

Characteristics of attention:

- Attention is selective: consumers decide what to focus on at any one time, choosing not to focus on or mentally process other stimuli
- Attention can be divided: consumers can allocate attention to one task and sone attention to another at once
- Attention is limited: Consumers may miss some stimuli, especially when in unfamiliar surroundings

Note: eye-tracking can be used as a measurement of visual attention.

Enhancing Consumer Attention (Similar to drivers of motivation)

Although consumers can process general information, marketing stimuli competes with many other stimuli for attention, and consumers may have little motivation or opportunity to actually look at marketing stimuli. Thus, marketers try to enhance consumer attention in various ways:

- Personally relevant
   - By appealing to our needs, emotions, values or goals, marketers can more adequately capture attention, as you are more likely to pay attention to something that appeals to you.
   - They can also use 'typical consumers' e.g. 9/10 say this works
   - Marketers can also use dramas or mini stories, or ask rhetorical questions

- Pleasant
  - This can be done by using attractive models, models arouse positive feeling or basic sexual attraction. However, there are differing beauty standards worldwide.
  - Using music can also make an ad more pleasant, especially by using familiar songs and popular entertainers
  - Using humour can be effective in gaining attention

- Surprising
  - Using novelty items such as QR codes or something new may add novelty to an ad and make it more engaging
  - Using a level of unexpectedness, where what we expect to be in a certain place is not there. This can affect humour.
  - Using puzzles such as visual rhymes, antithesis, metaphors and puns attract attention because they require resolution.

- Easy to process (e.g. Infomercial)
  Four characteristics make a stimuli easy to process:
  - Using prominent stimuli, such as size, colour and volume
  - Using concrete stimuli, which is stimuli that is easy to imagine in our heads. This uses real activity and symbols such as a cross to say 'no' or 'stop'.
  - Amount of contrasting stimuli: stimuli are easier to process when there are fewer things competing for our attention
  - Contrast with competing stimuli: something with contrast can capture attention.

Now, the question is: We may be exposed to stimuli, it may grab our attention… but how do we perceive it?

Perception

Perception is the process by which incoming stimuli activate our sensory receptors: eyes, ears, taste buds, skin, & hearing. However, consumer perception is not always correct:

There are many different ways that we can perceive, through our five senses:

- Vision
  - *Size and shape* - there is a perception that products in eye catching shapes contain more
  - *Lettering*- Logo, symbol, texts

- *Colours* - Warm generally encourage activity and excitement, whereas cool colours aim encourage relaxation. Thus, warm are generally used in fast food, whereas cool is used in spas or doctor's office.
  - o Hearing
    - *Sonic Identity* - using sounds to support or identify a brand. This is achieved by McDonald's and Intel.
    - *Sound symbolism* – consumers infer product attributes using information acquired just from hearing the brand's name, syllables and words. E.g. Nissan LEAF

  - o Smell
    - *The effect of smells on psychological responses and moods* – smell can produce physiological responses, such as incense inducing relaxation, or emotional responses, where the smell of the ocean can bring back emotional memories.
    - *Smell and the influence on liking and buying* – firms strategically use aromas to attract customers, get them to stay longer in a shop, and make purchases. E.g. bakeries, A&F, M&M World

  - o Taste
    - Food and beverage marketers must stress taste perceptions in their marketing stimuli, such as fruity soft drinks

  - o Touch
    - What we touch with our fingers and the way things feel when they come into contact with our skin is an important part of any offering

When do we perceive stimuli? We don't perceive it all the time!

As our senses are exposed to numerous inputs at any time, to perceive all of them would be overwhelming. Luckily, our sensory processing is simplified by the fact that many stimuli do not enter our conscious awareness, but for us to perceive it, it must be sufficiently intense. Intensity is measured in various ways, such as decibels, lightness, pounds, bitterness units.

- Absolute threshold: the minimum level of stimulus intensity needed for a stimulus to be perceived. The amount needed for someone to detect a difference.

- Differential threshold – the intensity difference needed between two stimuli before people can perceive that they are different. It is often called a JND – Just noticeable difference.