

# Buyer Behaviour in Marketing Notes

## Social Influences

### 1. Understanding Social Influence

Social influence is a foundational force in consumer behaviour. It is formally defined as the **information and [implicit or explicit] pressures from individuals, groups, mass media, and social media that ultimately affect how a person behaves.**

To dissect how social influence works, we must analyze its four core dimensions:

- **WHO (The Source):** The entity delivering the influence, such as an organic peer versus a paid corporate message.
- **WHAT TOOLS (The Delivery Channels):** The mechanisms utilized to transmit the influence, which can span across both offline and online ecosystems.
- **WHAT TYPE (The Nature of Influence):** Whether the influence acts as a pressure to conform to social expectations or simply serves as a source of clean, functional information.
- **WHEN (The Temporal Context):** The specific situational timing or market lifecycle stage during which the consumer encounters the influence.

### 2. Sources of Influence: Marketing vs. Non-Marketing

Sources of influence are categorized by their origin and commercial intent, dividing strictly into two primary streams:

- **Marketing Sources:** These are firm-driven, commercial influences delivered via advertising, direct selling, sales promotions, and corporate service personnel. Consumers recognize these as paid efforts designed to induce sales.
- **Non-Marketing Sources:** These carry significantly higher credibility because they are perceived as independent, organic, and objective. They include:
  - **The Media & Organisations:** Independent editorial coverage, news reporting, or non-biased public organizational publications.
  - **Opinion Leaders:** Individuals who possess expertise, specialized knowledge, or deep interest in a specific product category, making their advice highly sought after by peers.
  - **Influencers:** Content creators who leverage digital platforms to build large, targeted followings and command persuasive authority over their audience's lifestyles and choices.
  - **Market mavens:** General marketplace experts who know about multiple products, shopping locations, sales, and retail dynamics, acting as broader consumer guides.
  - **Reviewers:** Third-party entities or consumers who publicly post evaluations of product performance, such as Google Reviews or online ratings.

- **Reference groups:** Collectives of people who serve as structural touchstones for an individual's self-assessment.

### 3. Reference Groups & Brand Communities

A **Reference Group** is defined as a set of people with whom individuals compare themselves for guidance in developing their own attitudes, knowledge, and/or behaviours. These groups serve as vital role models or inspirations, establishing a "**frame of reference**" that dictates an individual's final purchase or consumption decisions (Schiffman, et al., 2014).

#### Types of Reference Groups

The alignment between a consumer and a reference group falls into three distinct structural categories:

Reference Group Type	Core Definition	Consumer Psychology & Marketing Application
<b>Aspirational</b>	A group that an individual admires and intensely desires to be like, but is not currently a member of.	Driven by ideal self-concept. Marketers utilize elite figureheads, such as positioning athletic icons in "Tennis Legends" biographies, to capture this aspirational drive.
<b>Associative</b>	A group or peer collective to which the consumer currently and actively belongs.	Driven by actual self-concept and a need for peer belonging. Brands like <i>Patagonia</i> tap into associative dynamics by featuring real outdoor communities that consumers already identify with.
<b>Dissociative</b>	A group that an individual does not want to emulate, match, or be associated with.	Driven by avoidance behaviour. Consumers deliberately shun certain brands, fashions, or consumption styles to avoid being misidentified with a group they reject.

#### Brand Communities

A **Brand Community** is a specialized, non-geographically bound group of consumers characterized by a structured set of social relationships involving a particular brand, fellow customers of that brand, and the product in use. This is exemplified by the intense subculture of *Harley-Davidson* owners or tech brand enthusiasts celebrating product launches.

# Determinants of Motivation

Motivation is driven by four primary psychological forces: personal relevance; consistency with self-concept, values, needs, or goals; perceived risk; and inconsistencies with previous attitudes.

## 1. Personal Relevance

Personal relevance describes **whether something has a significant implication to an individual's life**. The overarching rule governing this relationship is straightforward: **the higher the personal relevance of a product or message, the higher the consumer's motivation to pay attention and act**. When a product aligns with a consumer's daily life, health, or career, their motivation increases.

## 2. Inconsistencies with Existing Attitudes

Motivation is also triggered by how new information compares to a consumer's existing knowledge or attitudes:

- **Attitude Consistency Dynamics:** This captures whether a new piece of information aligns smoothly with what a consumer already knows or believes.
- **The Moderation Rule:** When incoming marketing information is **moderately inconsistent** with a consumer's existing attitudes, it is perceived as moderately threatening or uncomfortable. To resolve this cognitive discomfort, consumers become highly motivated to carefully process the new message and understand the discrepancy. Extremely consistent information is often ignored as old news, while completely inconsistent information is frequently rejected outright as unbelievable.

## 3. Perceived Risks & Consumer Avoidance

Perceived risk is defined as the **anticipated negative consequences of an action**. A core tenet of consumer psychology is that **the higher the perceived risk, the more motivated consumers are to pay close attention to and carefully process marketing messages** to protect themselves. Perceived risk manifests in six distinct ways:

- **Performance Risk:** The fear that an offering may not perform as well as expected or might fail entirely.
- **Financial Risk:** The concern that an offering may create potential financial harm or monetary loss.
- **Physical Risk:** The fear that an offering may create potential physical harm or compromise a consumer's personal safety.
- **Social Risk:** The anxiety that an offering may do harm to one's social standing or status among peers.
- **Psychological Risk:** The concern that an offering may harm a consumer's inner sense of self or personal identity.
- **Time Risk:** The fear that an offering will lead to a significant loss of time or cause frustrating delays.

## 2. Core Resources Influencing Ability

According to Hoyer et al. (2024, p. 57-58), a consumer's personal ability is determined by six primary resource constraints:

- **Financial Resources:** The available monetary funds, disposable income, or credit access needed to make a purchase happen.
- **Cognitive Resources:** The mental capacity, processing power, and product knowledge required to understand complex specifications or evaluate technical options.
- **Emotional Resources:** The psychological empathy, resilience, and emotional energy necessary to engage with intense or sensitive offerings (such as choosing healthcare plans or charitable giving).
- **Physical Resources:** The bodily strength, health, endurance, and physical capabilities required to use a product or participate in an activity.
- **Social and Cultural Resources:** The network of social connections, cultural capital, and situational relationships that help a consumer successfully navigate a market or purchase environment.
- **Age and Education:** Demographic factors that directly influence a person's processing speed, legal eligibility, literacy levels, and general capacity to make sound market decisions.

## Consumer Opportunity

### 1. Defining Opportunity

Even when a consumer is highly motivated and possesses the ability to act, their behavior can still be limited by external factors. Opportunity is defined as **the extent to which the presence or absence of situational constraints restricts a given behaviour**. If the market context imposes too many barriers, the consumption behavior will fail to occur.

### 2. Factors Influencing Opportunity

According to Hoyer et al. (2024, p. 59), three situational factors regularly limit a consumer's opportunity to process information or complete transactions:

- **Time Constraints:** Consumers operating under severe time pressure or tight deadlines process less information, experience stress, and rely on simpler decision strategies.
- **Distraction:** Environmental interruptions, sensory noise, competing advertisements, or multitasking divide a consumer's attention, making it harder to focus on a brand's message.
- **Information Overload:** When the volume, complexity, or sheer amount of product options and data becomes excessive, consumers feel overwhelmed, which can lead them to abandon the decision-making process altogether.

# Memory and the Progression to Long-Term Storage

## 1. The Memory Pipeline

Before information can alter a consumer's prior knowledge, it must successfully pass through three distinct stages of memory (Hoyer et al., 2024, p. 76, p. 87):

[Sensory Memory] → [Working Memory] → [Long-Term Memory]

- **Sensory Memory:** The temporary storage site that automatically records raw, incoming sensory inputs for a fleeting moment.
- **Working Memory:** The active mental workspace where consumers consciously process, analyze, and manipulate information.
- **Long-Term Memory:** The permanent repository where information is organized and stored for later use.

## 2. Dimensions of Long-Term Memory

Long-term storage is explicitly divided into two informational systems:

- **Episodic (Autobiographical) Memory:** The personal knowledge we hold about ourselves, our identities, and our direct past experiences.
- **Semantic Memory:** General structured knowledge about entities, facts, and concepts that is completely detached from any specific personal episode.

## 3. Explicit vs. Implicit Memory

Memory retrieval processes are classified by a consumer's level of conscious awareness:

- **Explicit Memory:** Occurs when consumers are actively, consciously aware that they are remembering something from their past.
- **Implicit Memory:** Manifests when a consumer displays altered behavior or preferences due to past exposure, without any conscious attempt at actively remembering the stimulus.

## 4. Techniques to Enhance Long-Term Memory

Marketers apply four primary strategic techniques to move information from a consumer's brief working memory into permanent long-term memory:

- **Chunking:** The process of organizing separate pieces of data into meaningful combinations or "chunks" to improve memory retention. For example, companies like 13cabs format numerical sequences or phone pads into distinct chunks, and brands like BCF package their core offerings into the memorable, single-chunk acronym "Boating, Camping, Fishing".
- **Elaboration:** Transferring information into long-term memory by processing it at deeper, more reflective levels. Advertisements accomplish this by using highly relatable situations—such as a

## The Role of Elaboration (High vs. Low MAO)

The process of forming or changing attitudes depends heavily on a consumer's level of **Motivation, Ability, and Opportunity (MAO)**, which determines their cognitive effort and elaboration.

### 1. High MAO (Central-Route Processing)

- **High Elaboration:** Consumers devote significant mental energy and extensive thinking to forming or changing attitudes and making decisions.
- **Central Route:** Processing is driven by a careful, deep, and effortful analysis of the core issues and central arguments contained within a message.
- **Outcome:** Generates strong, highly accessible, and persistent attitudes that are securely stored in memory and are highly resistant to change.

### 2. Low MAO (Peripheral-Route Processing)

- **Low Elaboration:** Consumers devote limited cognitive effort to evaluating messages and making decisions.
- **Peripheral Route:** Processing is driven by tangential, superficial analysis, relying on peripheral cues rather than deep message evaluation.
- **Outcome:** Results in weaker, less accessible, and less persistent attitudes that are highly susceptible to change and less likely to be anchored in long-term memory.

## High-Effort Attitude Foundations (High MAO)

When MAO is high, attitudes are formed via two separate pathways: **Cognitive Foundations** (based on thoughts/cognitions) and **Affective Foundations** (based on feelings/emotions).

### 1. Cognitive Foundations under High Effort

Under high effort, consumers act as active recipients of information, building strong beliefs through several distinct processes:

- **Direct or Imagined Experience:** Creating an attitude through direct interaction with a product or by mentally simulating its usage.
- **Reasoning by Analogy or Category:** Forming attitudes by comparing a new stimulus to a known product category or an analogous brand (e.g., evaluating a brand extension based on the parent brand).
- **Values-Driven Attitudes:** Structuring evaluations around deep-seated personal values or environmental standards (e.g., selecting eco-friendly consumer goods).
- **Social Identity-Based Generation:** Shaping preferences based on a person's sense of identity and their corresponding group memberships.