Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategy

CHAPTERS

1 | Understanding Consumer Behavior and Consumer Research

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**AN INTERVIEW WITH CHERYL STALLWORTH**

Cheryl Stallworth is the Chief Executive Officer for the Greenfield Consulting Group, a global marketing research firm that specializes in qualitative research methodologies. The Greenfield Consulting Group is part of Millward Brown, one of the top ten global marketing research agencies. As a marketing generalists with expertise in qualitative research methodologies, Greenfield Consulting Group focuses on using insights to develop effective marketing strategies.

**Q** Why is it important for companies to acquire a deep understanding of their consumers?

Without a deep understanding of consumers it is impossible to meet their expectations. Going beyond the fundamental “functional” needs, e.g., the need for food and shelter, it is important to understand deeper needs like the need for social acceptance. These are the higher order needs that only surface when marketers dig deeper into brand relationships and how these relationships allow consumers to express themselves. For example, a consumer can tell me that they are purchasing a car because they need transportation. A deeper exploratory of their real need is to convey a certain image . . . so this consumer doesn’t need just a car . . . they need a Toyota Prius because they want to be accepted within the tribe of people that are environmentally conscious opinion leaders.

**Q** What research techniques do you use to learn about your consumers?

Our company specializes in qualitative research, so these are tools that are not designed to be projectable to large populations. They are designed to allow us to probe deeply into motivations and desires. In addition to focus groups, we practice “qualographies” which are “ethnographic-like” tools that enable us to actively observe and interact with people in real life environments like their kitchens, or in-store in order to:

- Understand how people interact with categories and brands in a socio-cultural context
- Understand people’s rituals, artifacts, and folklore to help de-codify the role and meaning of brands

We also use a number of digital tools that enable us to speak to creative consumers across broad geographies to understand trends, social development, and differences in attitudes based on geographic influencers.

**Basic focus groups** are a terrific way of letting consumers “play off of” perceptions relative to categories and brands. In order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a brand’s equity, we can create a “consumer brawl” in a focus group with consumers taking opposing sides to “argue” the benefits or drawbacks of a brand and highlight issues and opportunities for positioning enhancement.

These are just examples of the many tools that can be employed to “dig deeply.”

**Q** How can knowledge about consumer behavior be used to develop more effective segmentation strategies?

Consumers can be clustered based on similar attitudes and behavior to determine which clusters are most similar. This then enables marketers to develop messages that appeal to specific clusters. The size of clusters is often quantified to determine if a viable business opportunity exists.

**Q** How can knowledge about consumer behavior be used to develop more effective positioning strategies?

Understanding consumer motivations, attitudes and ensuing behavior helps determine the role of a category or brand in the consumer’s world. Uncovering the brand’s role provides the context or language for talking about that brand in a way that makes sense and is useful for the consumer. So for example, understanding that a consumer feels better about the world that they are...
living in when they are doing something active to care for the environment, taps into a basic need for well-being (for them and their family). Not saying that Toyota has done this, but a brand like Toyota Pruis can become part of the consumer’s "personal toolkit" of products that help them to achieve a personal sense of well-being. Thus, this can then be an own able positioning for Prius to play in, based on an insight that wellbeing is an important attribute/feeling/state-of-mind for environmentally conscious consumers.

How can knowledge about consumer behavior be used to help consumers make better choices?

This knowledge can help marketers develop products and shape messages that actually meet people’s needs instead of creating products that “trick” consumers into buying them based on gimmickry. In other words, identifying and delivering against real needs allow marketers to develop sustainable long-term relationships with consumers, which is much more efficient and profitable in the long run.
Reality programming had its humble beginnings in MTV’s *The Real World*, now the longest running reality television drama with 22 seasons over 17 years, as of this book’s writing. Today, blockbuster challenge shows, such as CBS’s *Survivor* and Fox’s *American Idol*, underscore reality programming as a legitimate and predominant genre of television entertainment that is not going to go away, according to many. Indeed, the most popular reality TV programs, such as *Survivor*, *American Idol*, and *The Bachelorette*, have been among the top-rated shows over the last several seasons. Every major American television network and cable network has produced at least one reality show; there are well over 100 of them currently on the airwaves. Even the Public Broadcasting System has joined in with their *Colonial House* and *1900’s House* series, where participants don period costumes and try to live within the era. Furthermore, reality television
isn’t produced just for American viewers’ tastes. *Trading Rooms* (like the American *Trading Spaces*)
and *Bargain Hunt* (an antique purchasing contest) appear on UK television, and *Australian Idol*
and *Big Brother Italy* (similar to their U.S. counterparts) are popular in those countries.

Reality TV programming is a product, just like t-shirts and coffee, and consumers can’t
seem to get enough of it. But why do consumers keep watching? This is one type of question
that consumer behavior researchers are interested in answering: why are consumers continually
and passionately tuning in to watch a woman in search of Mr. Right, dating a group of eligible
bachelors and weeding them out one by one? According to consumer behavior researchers,
reality TV programs offer several benefits to consumers, including satisfying their fundamental
voyeuristic tendencies. “We all like to watch people in situations where we ourselves might
be pressured or tense. . .It is a safe way of experiencing a socially traumatic event. . .We can
vicariously feel what they are feeling but at a safe distance,” says Professor Kip Williams of
Macquarie University.3 We also role-play with ourselves in the context of the show, imagining
how we might react in a similar situation compared to the show participants, which researchers
say, can teach us to be self-improving and improve feelings of self-worth, like learning how to
decorate our space on a dime, stand up to our peers, or navigate the world of business.4

Reality TV also satisfies the notion that anyone can achieve fame—if only for “fifteen
minutes,” and provides the enjoyment of rooting for the underdogs of life, believing that the
average guy really can get the beautiful girl, or the skinny redhead from nowhere can become a superstar, for instance.

Knowing that these shows satisfy consumers and keep them viewing is the biggest reason television producers keep churning them out. But there are also lots of reasons for marketing executives to love reality programming, the most obvious of which is that people are watching, and high ratings mean that the advertisements are also potentially viewed. Who is watching is also important. Reality television appeals most to older teenagers and young adults, highly desirable and sought-after groups of consumers.\(^5\)

Another added benefit of reality programming is that marketers can place their products in the settings of the program, allowing consumers to view the products in the contexts of everyday living. These subtle product endorsements can’t be tuned out like an advertisement; they appear to consumers as unsolicited. The judges on *American Idol* drink from Coca-Cola cups; the *Trading Spaces* crew cleans up with a Swiffer mop; and the kids on *The Real World* drink Starbucks coffee. In fact, product placement is so popular (thanks in large part to reality TV programming) that Nielsen Media Research began tracking products that appear in television programming in 2003.\(^6\)

Finally, reality programs are often cheaper to produce than other forms of programming, such as dramas or situation comedies, so an advertiser can afford to sponsor a show, place products in the show, run 30-second commercials during the breaks, and block competitors from running advertisements. Coca-Cola is reported to have paid $35 million in one season for its role on Fox’s *American Idol*.\(^7\) And the profits don’t end there. There are instant messaging and phone charges for voting, cross promotions on Web sites, and show gear for sale. Who doesn’t want a buff from *Survivor*?

With the winning combination of consumer devotion and a surplus of revenue-generating opportunities, reality TV is a phenomenon that shows how consumers’ behaviors can influence an entire industry.

People engage in behaviors as consumers on a daily (even hourly) basis. What purchases have you made in the last few days? Maybe you bought a cup of coffee or something more expensive and long-lasting, like a new cell phone or a new outfit. What were you thinking when you made the purchase? What were you feeling? Even if you didn’t actually buy something, you were probably exposed to marketing information in the form of
advertisements, product information on packages, opinions from friends or family, and brand symbols on almost everything. Simply being exposed to marketing information is a form of consumer behavior, albeit a passive one. Consumers devote a great deal of effort, time, and material wealth to evaluating products and services and purchasing and using products of all kinds. Thus, people's behavior as consumers is a critical component of their everyday lives. In our role as consumers, we define our world and our place in it; we interact with the world and collectively, we even shape and change that world, creating phenomena like reality TV.

What Is Consumer Behavior?

Not many years ago, when students opened a textbook on consumer behavior, they read that consumer behavior (usually called buyer behavior) involves the study of how consumers decide to buy products. While this definition is accurate, it is an inadequate description of the full scope of activities in which consumers engage prior to purchase and during and after consumption. Contemporary definitions are much broader and try to capture the full range of consumer activities. Consumer behavior entails all consumer activities associated with the purchase, use, and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental, and behavioral responses that precede, determine, or follow these activities (see Figure 1-1.).

This definition covers a lot of ground. Let's break down the definition and examine consumers, consumer activities, and consumer responses more closely.

Consumers: Individual versus Organizational

The term “consumer” can describe either individual or organizational consumers. Individual consumers purchase goods and services to satisfy their own personal needs and wants or to satisfy the need and wants of others. Purchases for others include satisfying household uses, such as filling the family car with gasoline or paying the home's electric bill; gift purchases, such as buying a birthday gift for a brother; or charitable contributions, such as buying cookies from a Girl Scout or a raffle ticket at a school fundraiser. Individual consumers come in all ages, life stages, and social backgrounds;
they range from the six-year-old boy begging his mother for green ketchup in the grocery aisle to the 20-something college graduate renting her first apartment to the retired couple in their 70s browsing in antique shops while on vacation.

Organizational consumers purchase goods and services in order to
• produce other goods or services
• resell them to other organizations or to individual consumers
• help manage and run their organization

For example, Starbucks Coffee purchases coffee beans, brewing equipment, and paper cups in order to produce and offer its products. The company also purchases (and repackages) coffee beans to resell to individual consumers and other organizations, such as restaurants and grocery stores. Finally, Starbucks purchases office equipment, uniforms, and cleaning supplies, and may even hire a tax accounting firm, all to help keep the organization running smoothly.

Organizational consumers include for-profit firms, such as manufacturers, farmers, financial institutions, wholesalers, and retailers, and not-for-profit businesses, such as charities, political groups, and civic clubs. Local, state, and federal government agencies and other public institutions like schools, hospitals, and libraries are also organizational consumers. Although organizational consumer behavior is an important area of study, this book concentrates on individual consumer behavior.

Now that we understand who consumers are, let’s examine consumer activities as they relate to our definition of consumer behavior.

Consumer Activities

Consumer behavior is broken down into purchase, use, and disposal activities. Categorizing consumer behavior by type of activity is useful because consumers’ responses to stimuli may differ depending on whether they are purchasing, using, or disposing of a single product or service. For example, when leading up to purchase,
A long line outside a night club is a positive factor in evaluating that club. Long lines imply that everyone wants to go there, and that club is probably very good. But, after you have purchased your ticket, that long line is no longer a desirable factor, as you impatiently wait to get in. Furthermore, once you make it to the door, that long line ahead of you now means that the club is overly crowded, and therefore, a lot less appealing. So, from this example, categorizing activities by whether they occur prior to purchase versus during use shows how consumer responses can change significantly within a situation. Before we closely examine consumers’ responses, let’s first consider consumer purchase, use, and disposal activities in more detail.

*Purchase activities* are those through which consumers acquire goods and services. Purchase activities also include everything done leading up to the purchase, such as gathering and evaluating information about the product or service and choosing where...
to make the purchase. The purchase method and any additional services desired—home delivery and installation, and extended warranties, for instance—also influence purchase activities. So too are factors unique to the situation, such as the atmosphere of a store, the design of a Web site, the reason for the purchase, and the amount of time the consumer devotes to the buying decision.

Use activities describe where, when, and how consumption takes place. For example, do consumers immediately consume the product after purchase, like an ice cream cone or a haircut, or do they delay consumption, such as when they buy new clothing for a future occasion or an airline ticket? Is the product consumed as part of a special event, such as going on vacation or attending a wedding, or as part of a special occasion, such as a holiday or birthday? Is the entire product consumed before disposal, such as a movie theater ticket or a battery, or is some left unconsumed, such as chewing gum or ink remaining in a toner cartridge?

Finally, disposal activities are the ways consumers get rid of products and/or packaging after consumption, and include recycling, reuse, and resale. For example, sorting biodegradable trash, giving outgrown clothing to charity, and using paper grocery bags for book covers are recycling and reuse behaviors. Resale opportunities, like garage sales, classified ads, and flea markets have met their match in Internet auction sites like eBay.

**Consumer Responses**

Central to our definition of consumer behavior are consumers' emotional, mental, and behavioral responses to goods and their marketing.

Emotional responses (also called affective responses) reflect a consumer's emotions, feelings and moods. For example, when a consumer buys his first car, both excitement and uncertainty are probably among his affective responses.

Mental responses (also referred to as cognitive responses) include a consumer's thought processes, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions about products and services. Weighing the pros and cons of financing a new car, making a mental list of attributes the car should have, and imagining oneself driving that car are some of the cognitive processes a consumer might experience in purchasing a new automobile. Mental responses can be evaluative, involving making a judgment that assigns value to something. They can also be non-evaluative, involving thinking about something without making a value judgment. Cognitive responses can be very specific and refer to one brand or even one attribute of that brand; they can also be very broad and deal with entire categories of products.

Finally, behavioral responses include a consumer's overt decisions and actions during the purchase, use, and disposal activities identified earlier. To continue the car purchase example, a consumer is likely to pay close attention to various car advertisements, read sales literature at the car dealership or on a manufacturer's Web site, test drive a car prior to purchase, discuss the decision with friends or family, and regularly maintain the car with oil changes after the purchase. Each of these actions exemplifies behavioral responses.

**Why Study Consumer Behavior?**

People study consumer behavior for a variety of reasons and in a variety of contexts, such as a student in a university class, a marketing executive working in an organization, an advertising designer working at a large agency, or a professor teaching and doing scholarly research. Let's examine a few of the benefits of studying consumer behavior, specifically, to improve business performance, to influence public policy, and to educate and help consumers make better decisions.
To Improve Business Performance

Organizations that market products and services often study consumer behavior—or use the results and recommendations of others’ research—to improve business performance through customer-focused strategies. Marketers who understand their customers can create better products and services, promote their products and services more effectively, and develop marketing plans and strategies that foster sustainable competitive advantages. Their goal is to understand the general dynamics of consumer behavior that remain constant regardless of fads or trends. This understanding enables marketers to predict what motivates people to buy and then to deliver products that respond to those motivations, thereby successfully meeting and exceeding customer expectations over time.

Crest Whitestrips Create Competitive Advantage with Consumer-Focused Strategy

When consumer packaged goods giant, Procter & Gamble, introduced Crest Whitestrips nationally in May, 2001, it was the first product of its kind to offer over-the-counter whitening at an affordable price in a convenient delivery system. The product comes in strips that are applied to upper and lower teeth for 30 minutes twice a day for 14 days. The clear, flexible strips contain a peroxide-based gel that bleaches the teeth. Most customers do notice a difference, and the company claims the product whitens teeth 10 times better than traditional whitening toothpaste.

Procter & Gamble also employed a strategically clever and unique marketing campaign for Whitestrips. Knowing that demand for this innovative technology would outpace production capabilities, Procter & Gamble introduced the product in a limited capacity, placing Whitestrips in dentists’ offices, on home shopping television channels, and on the Internet and charging premium prices for kits, a pricing tactic referred to as market skimming. An added benefit of this marketing strategy was that the brand gained dentist approval and recommendation, because they were able to track the product’s performance firsthand, and they also shared in early profits.

According to Procter & Gamble officials, a “consumer focus...is at the heart of everything we do. The consumer is the boss, and the consumer demands the best value every day.”27 Part of offering better value is through unique, new-to-the-world products like Crest Whitestrips. In order to deliver this value to the customer, Crest conducts extensive consumer behavior studies and draws upon everything it knows about consumers when developing and marketing new products. The company has invested millions in consumer research in the United States and other countries, and even has several dedicated research facilities that watch, record, interview, and measure consumers in the laboratory. Recently, Procter & Gamble has focused its consumer behavior research efforts out in the field, going into consumers’ homes and studying consumers in “real life.” Procter & Gamble’s dedication to understanding consumers’ needs and staying focused on the consumer appears to be well-founded. According to a research study examining products that consumers reported they were willing to buy, innovative products, such as Crest Whitestrips, that improve physical health or sense of well-being topped the list.28

Crest Whitestrips have become one of the most successful new products in Procter & Gamble’s history. More than 10 million people have used Whitestrips, and the product was among the top 10 best-selling new non-food products in United States in 2001. Whitestrips continue to be one of the top-selling items in Crest’s product line—now a $200 million plus business. Crest recently introduced Crest Premium Whitestrips that do the same job in half the time (seven, rather than 14 days), using a concentrated peroxide gel. It seems there is no end in sight for our brighter, whiter smiles.29

MARKETING IN ACTION

PRNewsFoto/Crest Whitestrips/Newscom
For example, in 2001, global consumer goods producer Procter & Gamble (P&G) introduced Crest Whitestrips, the first product of its kind to offer over-the-counter tooth whitening affordably in a convenient delivery system. Crest had conducted extensive consumer behavior studies and drew upon everything it knew about consumers when developing and marketing this product. As a result, P&G gained a significant competitive advantage over its competitors in the home dental products market, an advantage it still enjoys today.

To Influence Public Policy

People working in government agencies or in non-profit organizations often are called to influence public policy and improve society’s well-being. Public policy is the establishment of laws and regulations that govern business practice in order to protect consumers. Those interested in shaping public policy study consumer behavior to understand the public’s needs and wants, and at the same time, to protect the public from unfair, unethical, or dangerous business practices. For example, in the packaged foods industry, the use of chemicals and preservatives has steadily increased as manufacturers have developed longer-lasting and more convenient forms of packaged food. In response, consumers have become increasingly concerned about the ingredients in processed food products because of their potential health risks and the nutritional consequences of synthetic additives. As a result, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations now require marketers of food products to supply nutritional information on product packages in the form of “Nutritional Food Panels.”

To Educate and Help Consumers Make Better Decisions

Many people study consumer behavior because they want to educate consumers or help them act responsibly. For example, in addition to enacting labeling laws to protect consumers, the FDA provides detailed advice to consumers on how to interpret this dietary information. You can visit the FDA’s Web site on food and nutrition to learn more at http://www.fda.gov. How consumers gather, process and use information, and what motivates them, are important research topics for those interested in consumer education.

Finally, agencies and organizations involved in consumer education and assistance study consumer behaviors that are socially (or individually) destructive. These behaviors are often referred to as the “dark side of consumer behavior.” This dark side includes consumer actions that are unhealthy, unethical, illegal, and potentially dangerous to individuals or society, such as misusing or over-using products, compulsive purchasing, shoplifting, and product tampering. Governments, businesses, and consumer interest groups want to curb these undesirable behaviors. Accordingly, these groups often study consumer behavior to best formulate strategies to promote positive behaviors (e.g., getting regular mammograms) or aid in the cessation of negative behaviors (e.g., quitting smoking).

Understanding the definition of consumer behavior and examining some of the benefits of studying consumer behavior provide a foundation for how research measures consumer behavior. First, let’s look at how consumer behavior became a scientific field of study. This subject is useful in understanding how the current scientific discipline of consumer behavior evolved and suggesting future directions for consumer research. In the next few pages, we also discuss how this text approaches the study of consumer behavior.
Consumer Behavior as a Field of Study

Consumer behavior is an applied social science that draws on theories and concepts of psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and statistics. A fairly young science, the study of consumer behavior emerged in the late 1940s when many firms shifted from a selling orientation (selling consumers the excess inventory of what they produced) to producing goods that consumers actually needed and wanted. This change in focus was the beginning of the marketing concept, the idea that firms should discover and satisfy customer needs and wants in an efficient and profitable manner, while benefiting the long-term interests of society.

Today, the marketing concept is a core philosophy for many successful organizations. As for the future, the field of consumer behavior is likely to emphasize satisfying basic customer needs and wants. As a result, organizations are already focusing on delivering customer perceived value and customer delight. **Customer perceived value** is the

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**Eye on International**

*L'Oréal: Delighting Customers with Beauty Inside and Out*

L’Oréal, the French cosmetic company known worldwide for its cosmetics and hair-care products, is at the forefront of a new marketing concept designed to deliver customer delight and to “change the lives of women everywhere,” according to Laurent Attal, Managing Director of L’Oréal’s Active Cosmetic division. The concept, called **Nutricosmetics**, combines cosmetics and nutrition to offer consumers nutritional supplements with beauty benefits that work from the inside out. The company’s first product in its nutricosmetic line, launched in March, 2003, is called Innéov Firmness, an oral supplement that firms the skin, according to laboratory research. Of course, L’Oréal claims the supplements are even more effective when used in conjunction with the company’s line of topical anti-aging creams. L’Oréal teamed up with Nestlé, a Swiss multinational company with expertise in nutrition, to create the product. The “beauty pill” contains lago-lycopene, which is similar to a natural molecules found in tomatoes and soy. The supplement is designed for women over 40 who are concerned about aging and want to improve skin tone and elasticity.

Known for the famous slogan, “Because I’m worth it,” L’Oréal hopes its new slogan, “This pill could change women’s lives forever,” is also taken to heart by its consumers worldwide. So far, it seems to be working. L'Oréal's Active Cosmetic Division, Innéov's home in the company, enjoyed an 11.9 percent increase in sales in 2003. The company claims that the pill has conquered the market and is the leader in anti-aging nutritional cosmetics. In addition, according to a consumer research study done by the company in August, 2003, loyalty to the new product is very strong. Some 80 percent of women who had taken the supplements over a three-month treatment period reported that they would purchase the product again.

Available in Europe, Innéov Firmness was not available in the United States as of the publication date of this book, but the company has obtained FDA approval for the product. Plans are underway to launch the product in both the United States and Southeast Asia. Other L’Oréal brands well known in the United States include Maybelline, Garnier, Lancôme, L’Oréal Professional, Carson, and Matrix.**
consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given. In other words, it is the estimated net gain customers receive from their sacrifice of time, money, and effort expended to purchase, use, and dispose of a product or service (i.e., benefits vs. costs). **Customer delight** goes a step beyond customer perceived value, suggesting customer benefits that not only meet, but also exceed expectations in unanticipated ways. Procter & Gamble executives state that offering customers better value when they purchase products and delighting customers during their usage experience with those products represent fundamental “moments of truth” for the company. In other words, generating value and delight for consumers is essential for long-term success. Likewise, L'Oréal, a French cosmetic company, attempts to create customer delight by creating a new market called *Nutricosmetics* that combines cosmetics and nutrition. The company has launched a “beauty pill” that reportedly firms the skin. While both cosmetics and vitamins satisfy customer needs and wants, the interconnection of the two creates unanticipated benefits for the consumer, and hence, customer delight.

Most competitors in a product category can satisfy customers’ expectations about the functional benefits of a product or service, but firms gain competitive advantage by anticipating and providing benefits that customers are initially unaware of and/or will desire in the future. Identifying and satisfying consumers' latent demand is critical to providing customer delight. Thus, the overarching goal of a consumer-centered firm is to maximize long-term customer value and delight, while also maximizing profits and doing so better than the competition.

**The Evolution of Consumer Behavior Research**

How researchers study consumer behavior has also evolved over the past several decades. Three prominent approaches are examined here: motivation research, behavioral science, and Interpretivism.

**Motivation Research**

One of the earliest approaches to studying consumer behavior, motivation research applied psychoanalytic therapy concepts from clinical psychology to consumer behavior research. The method was developed by Ernest Dichter, a Freudian psychoanalyst, shortly after World War II. He used in-depth interviewing techniques to uncover a person's hidden or unconscious motivations. In consumer research, an *in-depth interview* (IDI) is a lengthy (sometimes several hours), probing interview, where a carefully trained interviewer extensively questions a subject about his or her purchase motivations. Depth interviews are more formally described later in this chapter under specific research methods.

During the peak of motivation research, Dichter performed in-depth interviews in more than 200 different product categories. He applied Freudian interpretations to consumer actions and viewed consumers as largely immature, irrational, and driven by hidden erotic desires. For example, Dichter believed that an underlying reason for the popularity of canned soup was that women unconsciously associated it with breast milk—nutritious and warm—and so, didn’t feel guilty about serving it in place of preparing a full meal. A man who lights a woman’s cigarette represented a form of eroticism—the physical act of lighting a match or lighter created a tension-filled moment, peaking with pressure (as the match is struck) and followed by relaxation.

Over the years, many advertisers have embraced motivation research because of its seeming ability to tap deep-rooted needs. For example, Dichter’s contention that baking cakes fulfilled a woman’s inner desire for children led to Pillsbury’s doughboy
character and slogan, “Nothing says lovin' like something from the oven.” Exxon’s tiger mascot with the slogan, “Put a tiger in your tank!” was created based on the supposed masculine and sexual symbolism conveyed by the animal.15

Motivation research fell out of fashion in the 1960s. Critics of the approach pointed out methodological limitations, such as the subjective nature of interview interpretations, as well as the strategic and practical limitations of applying sexual explanations to most consumer actions. However, motivation research left two important legacies to the field of consumer research: (1) a focus on consumer motivations, i.e., trying to answer the question of why people behave as they do, and (2) the technique of in-depth interviewing. Today, motivation research is still used occasionally, but usually in conjunction with other, more rigorous techniques; strong Freudian sexual interpretations are de-emphasized.
A Behavioral Science Perspective

Since the 1960s, a behavioral science perspective (also referred to as Positivism and social science) has dominated the field of consumer research. Behavioral science applies the scientific method, relying on systematic, rigorous procedures to explain, control, and predict consumer behavior. Thus, behavioral scientists study people and their behaviors in the same way that natural scientists study physical phenomena. Because behavioral scientists study people however, research findings are more difficult to interpret. The primary methods of behavioral science include the experimental approach—conducting controlled experiments—and the marketing science approach—employing computer-based simulations and mathematical models to explain and predict consumer behavior.

Behavioral scientists who study consumer behavior tend to view consumers as largely rational; they seek causes for behavior, conduct research to be used for strategic marketing decision making, and primarily use quantitative research methods. In quantitative research methods, empirical data are collected. Empirical data are numerical, based on observation, experiment, or experience, rather than speculation or theory. This data is used to perform sophisticated statistical analyses. Because quantitative research methods typically use representative samples of a larger consumer group of interest (also called a population of interest), these results can typically be generalized from the study group to the larger group.

This textbook uses a predominantly behavioral science perspective for studying consumer behavior, although alternative approaches are also discussed. The scientific approach is advantageous for those interested in developing consumer-focused strategies and provides a foundation for critical thinking, creative problem solving, and decision making. This approach is based on the scientific method, a collection of systematic activities that enables researchers to study problems and find answers to questions. Like a roadmap, the scientific method leads scientists in the right direction, but different researchers may take different routes to arrive at the same destination. But they always follow the rules of the road. (See Figure 1-2.) The steps of the scientific method include:

1. **Observe and ask the question**: Observations we make of the world around us are the basis for formulating questions or problems we want to solve.

2. **Form a hypothesis and make a prediction**: When a question or problem emerges from observation, we generate a potential explanation called a hypothesis that may provide the answer. A prediction is what we expect to happen if our hypothesis is correct.

3. **Test the hypothesis**: We test our hypotheses under controlled conditions, including testing only one hypothesis at a time and limiting the circumstances/environment of the testing to see if our predictions are correct. Hypotheses that cannot be confirmed through testing must be rejected, and hypotheses must be tested and re-tested before they can be accepted as true. When behavioral scientists test a hypothesis, an empirical confrontation ensues, i.e., empirical data are collected, and the results are compared to those suggested by the hypothesis.

4. **Theory generation**: If a hypothesis is confirmed via testing and re-testing, we generate a theory, which is a general answer to our original question. Once a theory is established, it also guides future research.

A scientific foundation should serve you well as a student and in your chosen career. Depth of understanding is key to success in today’s complex marketplace. Marketers and business practitioners who possess in-depth, scientific understanding of their customers are more likely to succeed where others fail.
**Interpretivism**

An alternative research approach to behavioral science that relies less on scientific and technological methodology is called **interpretivism** (or Postmodernism). Researchers working from this perspective view consumers as non-rational beings and their reality as highly subjective. These researchers’ goal is to collect data to describe and interpret this reality. Interpretivist consumer researchers are often especially interested in the consumption experience and stress understanding consumers from a broader societal perspective. They also tend to reject the quantitative approach of behavioral science in favor of qualitative research methods. In qualitative research methods, descriptive, non-empirical data are collected that describe an individual consumer’s subjective experience with the product or service. Because qualitative research methods typically do not include large, representative samples from the population of interest, their results cannot be generalized. But while these techniques typically lack generalizability, they provide in-depth, detail-rich descriptions of a few consumers’ experiences that can be very useful in developing further questions and understanding consumers on an abstract level.

The field of consumer behavior has a rich heritage of diverse scientific disciplines on which to draw. And, regardless of the perspective or methods used, the primary goal is to advance the field of consumer behavior in order to benefit students, marketers, business, scholars, and society. The following sections of this chapter discuss how consumer behavior is examined and measured through marketing research.

**Consumer Behavior Research**

Consumer researchers study consumer responses and activities by using marketing research methods. **Marketing research** is a systematic process of planning, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data and information relevant to marketing problems and consumer behavior. Marketing research also enables businesses to better understand the market(s) in which they compete and the broader environment in order to identify opportunities and threats. Finally, consumer researchers use marketing research to analyze the effectiveness of marketing strategies, programs, and tactics. Ultimately,
effective marketing and consumer research should provide marketers with relevant information for making decisions, reducing uncertainty, and improving profits.

Unfortunately, sometimes marketers forego conducting marketing research. Instead, they often rely on their intuition. Intuition is simply common sense, a guess, or “gut feeling.” Decisions based on intuition are often made with limited or incomplete information. Relying too heavily on intuition and “gut feelings,” rather than on sound research, can lead to costly business mistakes. This is one reason so many new products fail, as many as 95 percent by some estimates. For example, not long ago, Heinz introduced a new clam chowder made with the finest ingredients, including expensive, very tender clams, working under the assumption that consumers would prefer high quality ingredients—a rather common sense assumption. The product was a huge failure. If the company had done systematic research on consumer preferences, it would have discovered that, counter to the common sense assumption, consumers actually prefer lower quality, tough, rubbery clams in their chowder.

Another area of concern in studying consumer behavior is the unethical and/or unintended manipulation of research data or results. Firms sometimes manipulate, alter, or misinterpret—intentionally or unintentionally—research results, often to their own advantage.

The following sections of this chapter review:

- major classifications of research: basic versus applied
- two special relationships, correlations and causal
- two main sources of research data: secondary and primary
- popular methods for collecting primary data: observation, direct questioning, experimentation, and projective techniques

**Basic versus Applied Research**

Consumer research is divided into two broad categories based on the goals of the research: basic research and applied research. **Basic research** looks for general relationships between variables, regardless of the specific situation. For example, basic research has shown that using celebrity endorsers in advertising can increase consumers’ positive attitudes toward a brand, especially when the celebrity is well liked and fits well with the product or the product’s image. Examples include Tiger Woods endorsing Nike golf equipment and Britney Spears endorsing Pepsi Cola.

The key benefit of basic research is that conclusions drawn from it generally apply across a variety of situations, and researchers can use these generalizations to guide strategic planning and develop marketing tactics. Thus, basic
research findings apply not only to Tiger’s hitting Nike golf clubs and Britney’s singing about Pepsi, but to most celebrities and brands in general. This helps marketers make more informed decisions, such as whether to use a celebrity endorser in advertising.

Basic research variables studied can include those related to the consumer, such as personality or demographic variables; they can also relate to the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion). Examples include advertising tactics involving humor appeals or sex appeals and the consumer’s environment or personal situation, such as music played in a retail store, or shopping when pressed for time, e.g., 5:00 P.M. on Christmas Eve.

Applied research examines many of these same variables, but within a specific context of interest to a marketer. Applied research is more common than basic research because consumer researchers want to solve particular business-related problems of immediate interest.

Let’s revisit our celebrity endorser example. Given what researchers know about the influence of celebrity endorsers from basic research, a company, let’s say Kraft, decides to use a celebrity endorser to advertise a new line of kids’ yogurt. The company develops two or three advertisements, each with a different celebrity endorser. These celebrities are people who might fit with the product or convey an image desired by the company, such as Kelly Ripa, the famous mom and talk-show host, or Hillary Duff, a popular young actress. The company then conducts applied research to test which of the endorsers is most effective. In this case, the research is aimed at evaluating a specific brand and endorser combination, and the results would not apply to other situations.

Correlations and Causal Relationships

Consumer researchers are especially interested in uncovering two special types of relationships—correlations and causal (cause-and-effect). When a statistically testable and significant relationship exists between two variables, we say the variables are correlated (see Figure 1-3). A variable is simply any factor that can potentially change. For example, if researchers are studying the relationship between advertising and sales, those would be the variables of interest. There are three types of correlations: positive, negative,
and zero. In a positive correlation, the two variables increase or decrease together. A negative correlation means that as one variable increases, the related variable decreases. For example, research has shown that there is a positive correlation between advertising expenditures and level of sales. As advertising increases, sales also increase. On the other hand, a negative correlation between product malfunctions and customer satisfaction exists—as product malfunctions increase, customer satisfaction tends to decrease.

A zero correlation means that there is no predictable relationship between two variables. For example, there is zero correlation between the quality of non-frozen, concentrated orange juice and the physical distance between the orange grove and the processing facility. This may surprise you, because many consumers believe (and many orange juice marketers imply) that the closer the processing plant is to the field, the fresher and higher quality the orange juice. Believing there is a correlational relationship between variables where none actually exists is called an illusory correlation.

**Figure 1.3** Graphs Showing Correlations between Advertising and Sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Correlation</th>
<th>Negative Correlation</th>
<th>Zero Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollars invested in advertising</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One limitation in identifying correlations is that they tell us nothing about which variable influences the other. This means that even if we know that two variables (A and B) are correlated, we still do not know whether variable A influences variable B; B influences A; or A and B influence each other. Applying the advertising and sales example, even though we know that sales and advertising are positively correlated, advertising may influence sales, sales may influence advertising, or both variables may influence each other simultaneously.

In contrast, causal relationships capture both correlation and direction of the relationship. A causal relationship between two variables means that the variables are correlated and that one variable influences the other, but not vice versa (see Figure 1-4).

**Figure 1.4** The Cause and Effect Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause (Independent variable)</th>
<th>Effect (Dependent variable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Advertising</td>
<td>Increase in Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Advertising</td>
<td>Increase in Sales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increase in Advertising → Increase in Sales
Increase in Advertising → Increase in Sales
In other words, a causal relationship exists if the following requirements are met:

1. the two variables are correlated
2. the cause must precede the effect
3. other potential causes are ruled out

Let’s look again at the positive relationship between advertising and sales. Of course, marketers are interested in whether advertising actually drives sales. They know that the variables are correlated, and it seems logical to conclude that advertising is the cause and must precede sales, and not vice versa, but does this constitute a causal relationship? Does this relationship satisfy all the requirements for a causal relationship? While intuition may point marketers toward answering “yes” to these questions, they cannot truly establish a causal relationship between advertising and sales without some scientific evidence. Can they obtain such evidence? Yes, by employing the scientific method, they can conduct experiments to test causality. In fact, there is a causal relationship between advertising and sales. Experiments are discussed in more detail under “Research Methods.”

Interestingly, marketers suspected the causal relationship between advertising and sales for centuries, and anecdotal evidence suggests that this relationship was tested systematically as long ago as the early 1800s in Boston. As the story goes, there was a lady, Lydia Pinkerton, who invented and marketed a tonic to women for “medicinal needs.” To promote his mother’s product, Mrs. Pinkerton’s son created large banners advertising the tonic and placed them in neighborhoods and on bridges and buildings. Much to his amazement, he discovered that every time he moved the banners into a new neighborhood, sales increased in that area. So, he decided to specifically test the relationship. He went into several neighborhoods where sales were very high, and he removed all the banners. Not surprisingly, sales dropped in the neighborhoods that had been stripped of the advertisements. Mr. Pinkerton concluded that advertising was related to sales and that the more he advertised in a given geographic area, the better were his sales. This is one of the first recorded marketing research studies examining this relationship.

Systematic testing allows researchers to determine causal relationships with a high degree of certainty. However, whereas a scientific approach allows researchers to establish causality among variables in a controlled setting, variables seldom exist in isolation in the real world. Rather, confounding elements introduce uncertainty, making research difficult. Causal relationships also tend to overlap, with some effects—like increased sales—having many different causes that may work together or independently, such as amount of advertising, product quality, and price. Fortunately, although uncertainty can’t be completely eliminated, scientific techniques described in this book allow consumer researchers to minimize it.

Up to this point in our discussion of consumer behavior research, we have seen that marketers are interested in whether advertising actually drives sales. They know that the variables are correlated, and it seems logical to conclude that advertising is the cause and must precede sales, and not vice versa, but does this constitute a causal relationship? Does this relationship satisfy all the requirements for a causal relationship? While intuition may point marketers toward answering “yes” to these questions, they cannot truly establish a causal relationship between advertising and sales without some scientific evidence. Can they obtain such evidence? Yes, by employing the scientific method, they can conduct experiments to test causality. In fact, there is a causal relationship between advertising and sales. Experiments are discussed in more detail under “Research Methods.”

Secondary versus Primary Data

Where do marketers collect data? There are two broad sources of data: secondary data and primary data. Secondary data are data that already exist and readily accessible. One source could be internal organizational sources, such as a company’s sales history records, customer database, sales force observations, or even previous company research projects. Secondary data is also available from outside sources, including U.S. and foreign government agencies that offer a variety of reports, such as the U.S. Census Population...
Report and the Vital Statistics Report; academic and trade publications, such as Moody's Manuals, Journal of Consumer Research, and Advertising Age, that often publish the results of both basic and applied research; and finally, commercial syndicated data sources, such as Nielsen TV Ratings Reports and InfoScan data from supermarket scanners. Syndicated data are data that are periodically collected using standardized procedures and analyzed by a commercial firm, which then makes the results available for purchase. For example, Nielsen Market Research Company monitors people's television viewing habits. Research participants are asked to keep journal information on their viewing habits and an electronic monitor attached to the television records channel selection and viewing time. Table 1.1 lists some examples of secondary data sources.

**Table 1.1 Secondary Data Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Sources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Company customer records and databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Financial statement, such as annual reports, profit/loss statements, and balance sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Sales Call Sheet and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Inventory records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Prior research study reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Sources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Online Indexes and Databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business Source Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Global Market Information Database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IBISWorld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Marketline (Datamonitor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• MRI + (Mediamark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SRDS Media Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Country Profiles and Country Commerce Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Europa World Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sports Business Research Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Specific Periodicals and Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Standard and Poor's Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moody's Manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Handbook of Consumer Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Advertising Age Encyclopedia of Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trade Magazines such as Advertising Age, Progressive Grocer, Sales and Marketing Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Government Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• U.S. Bureau of the Census (<a href="http://www.census.gov">http://www.census.gov</a>). The census includes reports not only on general population, but also on housing, the labor force, manufacturers, business, agriculture, and foreign aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (<a href="http://www.ipums.umn.edu">http://www.ipums.umn.edu</a>). This series of data includes samples of the U.S. census gathered for over 100 years and historical census files from other countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bureau of Labor Statistics (<a href="http://stats.bls.gov">http://stats.bls.gov</a>) This source collects data on employment, industrial relations, prices, earnings, living conditions, occupational safety, technology, and productivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The advantages of secondary data are that it is usually readily available, rich in detail, and may not cost any more than the time and effort it takes to search the Internet or go to the library. The disadvantages of secondary data are that they may lack currency and relevancy. For example, the U.S. Census is done every 10 years, and eight- or nine-year-old information may not be timely enough to address our current problems. Furthermore, secondary data are often aggregated, which means they are reported as a whole, rather than broken down in detail. So, these data may not be specific enough to directly relate to a marketer’s situation.

Primary data are new data collected specifically for the research purpose at hand. For example, prior to this textbook’s availability for sale, the publisher collected primary data, in the form of questionnaires sent to potential users, to predict how students and instructors would like the book.

The advantages of primary data are that the information is specific and relevant to a specific project, is current, and data collection can be controlled. On the downside, primary data tend to be very expensive and may require considerable time to collect, organize, and analyze.

**Primary Data Collection Methods**

A diverse set of methods enable researchers to “get inside the mind of the consumer” through primary data. There is no one perfect primary research method. Each has strengths and weaknesses so, the best methodology is the one that achieves the individual researcher’s objectives. Let’s examine four common primary research methods:

1. observation
2. direct questioning
3. experimentation
4. projective techniques

**Observation**

By using observational techniques, researchers can record people’s behavior, either with or without their knowledge. When a person is aware of the observation, the research is referred to as obtrusive observation. For example, toy manufacturers routinely invite children in for “playtime.” In a research facility made to resemble a classroom, playground, or family room, children are encouraged to play with toys while researchers record all their behaviors and comments.

When a person is unaware of being observed, the research is unobtrusive observation. For example, in addition to monitoring security, cameras in retail stores can track traffic patterns, examining path and pace as customers move through the store and see where traffic jams occur. Consumer goods markerer Procter & Gamble sends employees into grocery stores to casually observe consumers shopping for its products. These observations yield valuable information about how much time customers spend at the store shelf, how many products they examine, where customers’ attention is focused, and whether they seem confused.

A specialized form of observation called participant observation occurs when a researcher joins a family or group for an extended period and observes members’ behaviors. Adapted from cultural anthropology, this type of research is also called ethnographic research. This type of research is growing in popularity,
especially when the researcher needs an honest, behind-the-scenes peek into consumers’ lives. For example, Whirlpool recently conducted an ethnographic research project for a new line of luxury jet-bathtubs by filming participants while they soaked in the tub. Innovations Focus, a firm that uses ethnographic research for new product development, was interested in understanding how women use lipstick. To that end, they observed Mary Kay in-home make-up parties run by a make-up consultant, participated in several in-home make-up application sessions, and even accompanied women while shopping for lipstick.  

Observational techniques are valuable because they can measure what consumers actually do, but observation alone cannot reveal a person’s underlying motivations, attitudes, and preferences. In addition, observation may also raise ethical issues when it is used to collect data that consumers regard as private.

**Direct Questioning: Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups**

Direct forms of questioning are probably the most popular types of consumer research methods because researchers can collect a wide variety of data, such as group versus individual, brief answers versus long answers, and qualitative versus quantitative. Researchers can also collect large amounts of data with direct questioning, and the variety of direct questioning methods adds flexibility to the data collection task. Questioning the consumer directly can take a number of forms, including written and oral surveys, which can be administered via mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, the Internet, or face-to-face.

A **survey** is simply a set of structured questions to which a person is asked to respond. For example, The Harris Poll, run by Harris Interactive, is one the country’s largest Internet survey providers, with an active multi-million participant database covering 40 countries. Mail and e-mail surveys are relatively inexpensive, but response rates are typically low—from 5 to 20 percent. Phone surveys achieve higher response rates but reduce the number of questions that can be asked because many answer options have to be repeated, and few people are willing to stay on the phone for more than 5 to 10 minutes. To talk to customers face-to-face, companies often recruit research participants in malls and shopping centers, a technique referred to as **mall-intercept**. Mall-intercepts are a convenient way to reach consumers, but respondents may be reluctant to discuss anything sensitive face-to-face with an interviewer.

Surveys are useful for collecting specific, often complex, information from a large number of individuals. They are typically easy to administer, and the general public is familiar and comfortable with this technique. However, as is true of all research techniques, surveys are vulnerable to bias. Wording questions correctly can be very difficult, and the language can influence a consumer’s response. For example, consider the question, “In order to prevent terrorism, should airports be allowed to conduct passenger searches based on racial profiling and suspicious behavior?” This question has a number of potential problems. First, it is ambiguous. What behavior exactly is considered suspicious behavior in an airport? Second, the question is double-barreled, which means that it is really asking more than one question. What if the respondent approves of passenger searches on the basis of racial profiling but not on the basis of suspicious behavior—how should the respondent answer? Third, it is a leading question. Qualifying the question with, “In order to prevent terrorism. . .” clearly tips the respondent off to the fact that a “yes” answer is desired. This question may also suffer from what is referred to as social desirability bias. In this situation, respondents may not answer a question honestly or completely because they feel that the information is too personal or socially sensitive.
In face-to-face interviews, interviewer bias is an additional problem. Interviewer bias occurs when responses are influenced by variables such as the interviewer’s age, gender, appearance, verbal or non-verbal reactions, or by a desire to please the interviewer. For example, male respondents may hesitate to give personal information to a female interviewer. Or, a respondent may fabricate answers in an attempt to not appear ignorant to an interviewer.

Another method of direct questioning is the in-depth interview (IDI), a one-on-one, interview of at least one hour in length, but sometimes considerably longer. A highly trained interviewer establishes rapport with a respondent and then proceeds to lead him or her through a loosely structured discussion of the research topic. This method is particularly appropriate for sensitive or emotionally charged topics, or when the researcher is attempting to gather detailed information about very complicated behaviors. In an in-depth interview, the research can peel away layers of respondents’ emotions, thoughts, or behaviors. The disadvantages of in-depth interviews are that they tend to be time-consuming and costly, because the interviewer must be highly trained. Furthermore, respondents are typically compensated for their time, and the data can be difficult to analyze and interpret.

Extending interviewing to the group level, a focus group consists of 6 to 12 current or potential customers run by a facilitator who monitors and guides the group discussion. Focus groups are conducted for a variety of reasons, including brainstorming for ideas, assessing new products, and evaluating promotional campaigns. With a skilled facilitator, focus groups are opportunities to generate energy and group synergies that can result in new ideas or unique insights. On the downside, like interviews, focus groups require a skilled facilitator and may yield unwieldy data. In addition, focus groups are vulnerable to problems associated with group dynamics. For example, groupthink is the tendency for groups to make poor quality decisions for the sake of unanimity. Groupthink occurs when groups are highly cohesive, and when they are under considerable pressure to make a quality decision.

**Experiments**

Experiments manipulate variables in a controlled setting to determine their relationship to one another. Researchers use experiments to rule out all but one explanation for a particular observation. In designing an experiment, researchers first identify any variables that can possibly change. There are three broad types of variables:

- **Independent variables** are the factors that are changed or manipulated.
- **Dependent variables** are factors that change in response to researchers’ manipulations of the independent variables.
- **Constants** are factors that researchers do not allow to change, but instead control.

Recall our discussion of the potential causal relationship between advertising and sales. Experiments are the best methods for determining causality. For instance, a marketer could manipulate advertising (the independent variable) by showing an advertisement for a product to one group of participants and not showing the advertisement to a second, control group—a group that is not exposed to any independent variables and serves as a standard of comparison. The marketer could then examine the resulting influence of the advertisement on average sales (the dependent variable). If sales
are significantly higher in the ad-group than in the no-ad group, the marketer could conclude that changes in advertising are likely to cause changes in sales.

Participants in experiments should be randomly assigned to the conditions, which means the assignment is determined by chance, such as flipping a coin. Random assignment helps to rule out other possible causes for the results, such as different personalities among participants and varying levels of product knowledge and interest, among others. Random assignment forces these individual differences to cancel out. Ideally, researchers would replicate the experiment a number of times and in different settings to show additional support for their findings.

Experimentation is the most effective technique for determining causal relationships, but it does have a drawback in that consumers are removed from their natural surroundings. The contrived laboratory setting may prevent consumers from acting as they would in a real market setting.

**Projective Techniques**

Borrowed from psychology, **projective techniques** are an “unstructured, indirect form of questioning that encourages respondents to project their underlying beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and motivations in an apparently unrelated or ambiguous scenario.” In other words, projective techniques use seemingly meaningless exercises to uncover consumers’ unconscious points of view. Projective techniques consist of a variety of tests that fall under four broad categories:

1. **Word-association tests**, which ask subjects to respond to a list of words with one or more associated words that come to mind
2. **Completion tests**, which ask subjects to fill in the blanks by finishing sentences or stories

![Figure 1.5 Example of a Construction Projective Technique](image)
3. **Construction tests**, including cartoon construction, which ask subjects fill in the word/thought “bubbles” in a cartoon; or picture construction, where subjects tell a story about a picture.

4. **Expression tests**, including role-play activities and third-person techniques, which ask subjects to describe the actions of typical others.

Projective techniques can often generate responses that participants would be unwilling or unable to give if questioned directly. For example, the makers of Old Spice High Endurance Antiperspirant-Deodorant use an expression-type projective technique, asking research participants to describe a “typical” user of their product and a “typical” user of a competing product. This technique helps paint a rich picture of how each brand is perceived and reveals subtle differences between brands that research participants are not able to articulate directly. On the negative side, projective techniques can be time-consuming and awkward to code (input as data) and analyze, and interpretation can be subjective.

**Chapter Summary**

Welcome to the exciting world of consumer behavior research! Now you have an idea of what consumer behavior entails, how it fits into the larger field of marketing, and how we study it. Consumer behavior comprises all consumer activities associated with the purchase, use, and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer’s emotional, mental, and behavioral responses that precede, determine, or follow these activities. One dominant approach to studying consumer behavior is the behavioral science perspective, which relies on rigorous quantitative research methods and procedures to describe, explain, control, and predict consumer behavior. An alternative approach, which relies less on scientific and technological methodology and more on the qualitative approach, is called Interpretivism.

Understanding, explaining, and predicting consumer behavior are complicated tasks. This textbook adopts a scientific approach to achieve a deeper understanding of consumer behavior. In this approach, researchers are especially interested in two special types of relationships between variables, namely, correlational and causal relationships. When a statistically testable and significant relationship exists between an event and a condition, we say that the event and the condition are correlated. A causal relationship between two variables means that the variables are correlated and that one variable influences the other, but not vice versa.

Consumer researchers conduct basic and applied research to identify important variables relevant to consumer behavior. Basic research aims at understanding relative relationships between variables, whereas applied research examines variables within a specific context of interest to the marketer. There are two broad sources of research data—secondary data and primary data. Secondary data are data that already exist and can be accessed within an organization or from external sources. Primary data are new data collected on a project-by-project basis.

Consumer researchers collect primary data by a number of methods, including observation, direct questioning, experimentation, and projective techniques. Observational techniques record people’s behavior, with or without their knowledge. Questioning the consumer directly takes a variety of forms, including surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Experiments manipulate of variables in a controlled setting to determine their relationship to one another and are the most effective technique for determining causal relationships. Projective techniques are indirect forms of questioning that uncover unspoken feelings and attitudes.

Researchers analyze consumer behavior research data in order to discover customer need and wants, deliver products and services that satisfy those needs and wants, and ensure that the customer remains satisfied over time. Ultimately, effective consumer behavior research provides marketers with relevant information for making better decisions and reducing uncertainty.
Key Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Behavior</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
<th>Secondary Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Consumers</td>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>Primary Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Consumers</td>
<td>Marketing Research</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Concept</td>
<td>Basic Research</td>
<td>In-Depth Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Perceived Value</td>
<td>Applied Research</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Delight</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Science</td>
<td>Causal Relationship</td>
<td>Projective Technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Research</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review and Discussion

1. Based on the definition of consumer behavior, identify some of the consumer behavior-related activities you have engaged in today.
2. What is/are the key difference(s) between customer perceived value and customer delight?
3. How do public policy makers use the results of consumer research?
4. How might an Interpretivist researcher attempt to examine why more men (versus women) have an emotional attachment to their automobiles? How would a behavioral science researcher approach the same question?
5. Define qualitative research and quantitative research and highlight the differences between them. Provide one example of each technique.
6. Discuss the advantages of conducting marketing research, rather than relying on intuition and common sense.
7. Give an example of a correlational relationship and a causal relationship that you have observed in daily life. Explain how each example illustrates the relationship.
8. Describe the major differences between secondary and primary data collection, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each.
9. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using observational techniques of data collection.
10. Why is random assignment important in any experiment that seeks to determine causality?

Short Application Exercises

1. Find an advertisement that attempts to influence consumers’ disposal activities and describe the disposal activity. Is the advertisement effective, in your opinion? Why or why not?
2. Design an experiment that tests the effect of using a celebrity endorser on consumers’ brand attitudes. In addition, identify the independent and dependent variables and state the hypothesis.
3. Conduct a library search and find one article that describes either a basic or applied marketing research project. What were the goals of the project, the research method employed, and the major results of the project?
4. Using the Internet, conduct a secondary data collection to investigate aging trends in the United States. Hint: you may want to start at the U.S. Census Bureau Web site.
MANAGERIAL APPLICATION

The truths and power of consumer analysis become real when you observe consumers in real shopping situations. This is a common technique (sometimes called mystery shopping) used by many companies to better understand their customers. Your challenge is to use observational research to answer a behavioral research question.

Procedure:

Step 1: Choose one of the observational research tasks shown here to complete or make up a question/task of your own.

Possible Research Tasks:

1. Compare the behaviors of men shopping alone for groceries with those of women shopping alone for groceries.
2. Compare the behaviors of preadolescent boys shopping with an adult with those of preadolescent girls shopping with an adult.
3. Compare the shopping behaviors of senior citizen couples with those of young couples.
4. Observe the behaviors of teenage boys and girls shopping without a parent.
5. Compare the purchase of a specific food or beverage item in a supermarket versus a restaurant/bar.
6. Observe the purchase of impulse items at the point of check-out.

Step 2: Plan to go on at least two data-gathering trips.

Step 3: Collect your observations. You should collect at least five (5) observations of each type of subject (for example, five men and five women for a total of 10). You will definitely want to take notes on each observation and know what types of information you are looking for before you start. (And while you are observing, make sure that you do not distract or disrupt your subjects. You should make sure that you are inconspicuous as possible.)

Step 4: Summarize the information you collected and see if there are differences among the groups you selected. What are your findings? What are the potential implications for a company who wants to market to those groups?