

Psychological Influences on Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior plays an essential role in effective strategization for marketing.

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Introduction

Understanding the complexities of consumer behavior is essential to developing effective marketing strategies and tactics. Studying consumer behavior can help marketers in a variety of ways, most notably by helping them to understand the psychology behind how consumers think and reason, and ultimately select between different alternatives, whether it be alternative brands, products, retailers, etc. Studying psychological factors of consumer behavior can also assist marketers in understanding how consumers act while shopping and the social influences behind purchases, including influences such as the media and cultural factors. Overall, understanding consumer psychology will help marketers adapt their tactics and improve campaigns in an effort to more effectively reach their consumers.

Introduction (continued)

The first, and arguably most important, factor when considering psychological influences on consumer behavior, is motivation. Motivation is simply what drives a consumer to act in a certain way or purchase certain products.

Consumers are motivated to purchase certain products based on a desire to satisfy a certain need or a certain want. These needs or wants can be based off of physical sensations such as hunger or thirst, or can be based more in psychological needs, such as a desire to feel a sense of belonging.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



The most commonly used descriptor of motivation for any human behavior is the hierarchy of needs, developed by an influential psychologist named Abraham Maslow.

Each level of needs describes a different need that people strive to fill. The five levels of needs are physiological, safety, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow believed that the most basic need, physiological (for example, a need for things essential to survival such as food or water), must be met before any others.

How the Hierarchy of Needs relates to marketing

Marketers can use the basic principles established by Maslow's hierarchy of needs in order to successfully determine what needs their products aim to satisfy and effectively prove to the consumer that they do in fact satisfy that need.

For example, marketers developing a campaign for a popular beauty company may recognize that for many individuals, using beauty products such as skincare and makeup contribute to positively view themselves, and therefore help satisfy their need for self-esteem. The marketers could use this knowledge to develop a strategic campaign to convey to consumers that using their products will improve their self-esteem.

Perception

Perception also plays a vital role in consumer behavior. Perception is the way that individuals select and organize information in order to develop their own meaningful sense of the world.

Three important components of perception are selective attention, selective retention, and selective comprehension. Each of these affect the ways consumers perceive information in a unique way.

Selective attention, retention, and comprehension

Selective attention is an individual's ability to notice and pay attention to specific environmental stimuli, but not others.

Selective retention refers to the fact that individuals cannot retain all of the information that they process. In the sense of consumer behavior, this would mean that consumers are likely going to forget a portion of the messages and/or advertisements they are exposed to.

Selective comprehension refers to consumers interpreting information in a way that confirms their beliefs that they already hold. This can lead to a devoted sense of brand loyalty, where a consumer will purchase certain products because they believe the brand is best, regardless of actual product performance.

Attitudes and beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs are also important factors of consumer behavior. 'Attitudes' refers to a consumer's outlook on a certain brand, product, or service. Attitudes are commonly influenced by social factors. 'Beliefs' refers to a consumer's views on brands, products, or services, that is based on actual factual knowledge or personal opinion.

Marketers should pay close attention to consumer attitudes and beliefs to ensure that consumers have an accurate view on the product or service in question, and if they don't, then the marketer would know to focus campaigns on correcting the false beliefs.

Lifestyle

The final influence on consumer behavior is lifestyle, or how consumers tend to spend their time or money. Lifestyle can include a wide variety of things, from what activities a consumer is involved in to how they spend their time socially, among others. It is important to understand consumer lifestyles and the ways their lifestyle influences their purchasing behaviors to know how to successfully appeal to your target market.

It can also be useful for marketers to develop an understanding of consumer opinions on a variety of social and/or political issues.

Conclusion

Understanding why consumers act the way they act, and why they purchase the things they purchase, is essential to developing successful marketing campaigns that will appeal to them and potentially influence them to act in a certain way or purchase a certain product.

The key psychological factors to understand when considering consumer behavior are motivation, perception, attitudes and beliefs, along with lifestyle. Understanding these factors will assist any marketer in understanding the behavior of their consumers in order to successfully appeal to them.

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