

Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 22,1995

COMMUNICATING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A LONG-TERM INTEGRATED EXERCISE USING PERSONAL CONSUMPTION JOURNALS AND CONSUMER ANALYSIS PAPERS

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behavior is an integral part of the undergraduate marketing curriculum. For this reason, instructors should be concerned with providing experiential exercises, which improve the student's basic understanding of consumption behavior. The purpose of this paper is to describe the use of consumption journals and consumer analysis papers to expand students' understanding of consumer behavior principles. Included in the description of the assignment are administration procedures, examples of students' work, and grading procedures. Overall, this exercise satisfies the critical components of experiential learning and is thought to be a valuable learning experience by students.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior is an integral part of the undergraduate marketing curriculum. Any student interested in becoming a marketing practitioner should have a basic understanding of how consumers search for, purchase, and use products and services. In addition to these basics, students should also be exposed to the social and psychological influences on these behaviors. Given these broad guidelines and the great amount of information, which should be covered, consumer behavior is not an easy class to teach. There are numerous concepts to cover in a short amount of time. In addition, it is difficult for students to integrate all of the concepts in such a short period of time. Therefore, instructors are faced with the problem of determining how to best present the class material, such that students receive the most benefit.

When making a decision about how to solve this problem, instructors may choose among a number of alternatives. First, the instructor may wish to use a lecture format, where students attend presentations of consumer behavior concepts. Lectures have the advantage of allowing the instructor to cover more material in a shorter period of time; however, students are not required to be involved in the learning process. Thus, if the instructor's goal is to get students involved in learning, lectures should be supplemented by experiential exercises. One such alternative is case studies.

Case studies provide students a means to work through real-world business encounters, by analyzing problems, making decisions, and learning how problems are handled by actual companies. Another alternative is a simulation game, where students practice making decisions in a simulated business context. Third, instructors may choose to conduct experiential exercises on specific topics. Finally, the instructor may wish to assign a long-term activity, which integrates a number of concepts. This last alternative is particularly relevant to consumer behavior, as most CB classes are dedicated to explaining the process and factors which influence consumer decision-making and it is difficult to consider the concepts in isolation.

Obviously, the best solution would be to include as many of the alternatives as are appropriate to the class structure. Since consumer behavior does lend itself well to the use of long-term integrative assignments, the purpose of this paper is to describe such an activity, which has been successfully used in CB classes. This activity enables students to not only observe and record their own consumption habits, but also to explore the social and psychological factors which may be influencing their and others' purchase decisions.

THE ASSIGNMENT

This student exercise may be considered a two-part assignment. In the first part, each student completes a personal consumption journal. In a composition notebook, students record descriptions of the products and services that they purchase. Although a broad definition of consumption behavior would include other types of exchanges, for simplicity this assignment is constrained to monetary exchange. In the second part of the assignment, each student is given a list of ten products or services, which represent the consumption behavior of a fellow student consumer and is asked to write a report describing the student consumer. Students are required to apply segmentation, psychographic, culture, communication, learning, and motivation descriptors where appropriate to construct a portrait of the consumer. The following section describes how the assignment may be introduced to the students and integrated with a class lecture.

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Introduction of the Assignment

Most CB classes include a lecture on research methods. During this time, students are introduced to both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. This discussion provides an appropriate time to introduce students to the consumption journal assignment and to explain to the students how journals can be used to collect consumer data. The advantages and disadvantages of collecting qualitative data, as well as the primary uses for such data collection methods are also discussed. Students are further informed that the objective of the two-part assignment is to enable them to integrate consumer behavior concepts as they relate to their own and others' consumption behaviors. The following discussion provides detailed instructions for each part of the assignment.

Consumption Journal

Each student is responsible for keeping a consumer journal which describes the products and services which they purchase. Descriptions include what products and services are purchased, where the items are purchased, why the items are purchased, and what feelings are associated with the purchase.

As a minimum reference point, students are required to complete three journal entries per week. Each journal' entry must include all of the information listed in Figure 1. To illustrate the type of detail expected in journal entries, an example journal entry is provided to the students. In addition, students are provided with the grading policy associated with the consumption journal. Three student journal entries are provided as examples in Figure 1.

The length of time that students are required to maintain consumption journals is six weeks. Of course, when considering the amount of time available in a course and the time required to complete the second part of the assignment, instructors may wish to shorten or lengthen the exercise.

Consumer Analysis Paper

At the completion of the consumer journal, students are instructed to review their consumption behavior and to create a list of ten products or services, which they own and/or regularly use. Students are asked to select only those products and services, which best portray their personality, values and lifestyle. Similar to the journal entry, the list is required to contain detailed information, such as brands, sizes, colors, and/or models, of the products and services.

Once students' product lists are collected, five lists are selected from each class section to be analyzed by students. Instructors should examine the students' lists and select five, which include detailed descriptions of products and services, which could be interpreted as associated with particular sub-groups. An example of a product and service list is provided in Figure 2. Ideally, the instructor would have more than one section of consumer behavior, such that product lists would not be redistributed to the same class section. When the exercise is administered more than one time, another alternative is to select product lists from prior classes. When neither of these alternatives is available, the instructor should make sure that no student receives his or her own product list to analyze. In addition, students should be asked not to discuss their product lists with each other.

Analysis of the list will require the application of consumer behavior theories and principles. In a paper, students are asked to describe their assigned consumer in terms of segmentation bases, personality characteristics, psychographics, cultural membership, and values. Students are also asked to hypothesize as to the factors which led to the products or services' purchase (i.e. learning, interpersonal and impersonal communication, attitudes, and reference group) and the likely importance of the product or service to the user (i.e. needs and motivation). All conclusions made on the part of the student should be well supported and reliant on course material.

Students are told that there is no right answer, only a well constructed analysis. The criteria for a well-constructed analysis (i.e. the topics which should be covered in the analysis) and the corresponding grading policy are provided to the student with the instructions for the assignment. An example of one student's consumer analysis is provided in Figure 3. The preference of the instructor will dictate style and length constraints for the paper. Students are given approximately three weeks to write the paper.

Grading

The entire two-part assignment is worth 150 points (or 33%) toward the student's final grade. For the consumer journal, 60 points are attributed to weekly progress checks. As an incentive and as a way to monitor students' progression, students are instructed to turn in the journal every week. As the assignment lasts six weeks, 10 points are allocated for each week in which the student completes entries. Students are not offered the option of making up missed weeks. Of the weekly 10 points, two and a half points are attributed to each required entry. The remaining two

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and a half point are gained by exceeding the required minimum effort of three entries, with a half point given for each additional entry over three.

In addition to the grade assigned for each week's journal entries, students are provided written feedback from the instructor as to the strengths and weaknesses of the journal entries. In some cases, students are encouraged to delve into the "feelings" side of a purchase and to record not only their cognitive reasoning for a purchase, but also their emotional motivations. Where necessary, students are encouraged to be more descriptive.

At the completion of the journal, twenty additional points are allocated as a measure of the quality of the journal entries. Of the twenty points, ten points are given for complete journal entries, meaning that all of the required information is included. This allocation includes an assessment of the degree to which students respond to written comments about improving their work. The remaining ten points serve as a subjective judgment as to the detail and thought given to the journal assignment.

As a portion of the consumer analysis grade, the creation of the ten product and service list is worth 20 points. Like the journal entries, grading relies not only on the completion of the assignment, but also on the quality and descriptive nature of the list. Students receive 10 points for completing the list. The remaining 10 points is a subjective assessment of the descriptive nature of the list.

Finally, 50 points are attributed to the consumer analysis paper. Overall, papers are graded on the use of consumer behavior theory and principles. Specifically, four points are assigned for the description of each of the following topics: segmentation bases, personality characteristics, psychographics, cultural membership, and values. Sixteen points (approximately four points each) are allocated to the students' analysis of the learning, interpersonal and impersonal communication, attitudes, and reference group influences on the purchases. Third, a description of the needs and motivation is worth four points. Finally, the remaining ten points are used as a subjective assessment of the quality of the total analysis.

BENEFITS TO THE STUDENT

First and foremost, this activity enables the student to become involved in learning consumer behavior. Specifically, this assignment satisfies the critical components of experiential learning, as outlined by Gentry (1990). These components are business curriculum-related, applied, participative, interactive, whole-person emphasis,

contact with the environment, variability and uncertainty, structured exercise, student evaluation of the experience, and feedback. Each of these components is discussed briefly below.

First, this exercise is specifically related to consumer behavior, an integral part of any marketing curriculum. As such, this exercise qualifies as business related. Second, the exercise is applied, in that the activity has educational objectives, which may be articulated and readily achieved. As previously noted, the objectives of both the consumption journal and the consumer analysis paper are communicated to the students in detail.

Participative means that the student takes an active role in the process. During both parts of the assignment, students benefit from taking an active part in the observation, recording, and analysis of their own and others' consumer behavior. To be interactive, the exercise must involve more than a simple interaction between the instructor and a student. This two-part assignment requires that the student interact, not only with the instructor, but also with classmates and the environment.

As experiential learning is conceptualized, student activities should involve "the whole person", including cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. This assignment is constructed specifically so that students benefit by involving all three. Students record their behaviors (purchases) in the consumption journal and include cognitive reasons and emotional feelings associated with the decision. In addition, students are asked to cognitively evaluate a product list of a fellow student consumer.

Experiential learning should also involve contact with the environment. In this assignment, students are required to observe and record their personal purchase decisions in a real-world context. As time progresses, students benefit from being able to better analyze their interactions with the environment and to determine how the environment influences their decisions.

Variability and uncertainty refers to the notion that students should encounter the ambiguity inherent in real-world phenomena. Although many consumer behavior concepts, such as personality and values, may be readily communicated to students in a lecture format, students gain a better feel for how difficult it may be to apply such concepts when they are asked to take a product and service list of an anonymous consumer and to describe that consumer using the concepts. In fact, many students noted in their

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consumer analysis papers that concepts which they thought that they had understood during class lecture were much “fuzzier” in application.

Next, for the student to realize the best results, the exercise should be structured and monitored. Although students are given the freedom to record anything they spend money to purchase in the journal, they are given structure as to the information, which must be included in the journal entry and how many journal entries per week are required. In addition, students are informed at the onset of each part of the assignment what is expected of them in terms of content and deadlines and how the assignment will be graded.

Experiential learning should also include feedback. As is noted above, students completing this assignment receive both process and outcome feedback. During the six weeks, which the consumption journal is kept, students are required to submit the journal every week for progress checks. In addition to grading associated with the weekly requirements, students also receive written feedback as to their performance and expectations for future performance. These written comments serve as process feedback. Following the completion of the journal and the consumer analysis paper, students receive outcome feedback. This is in the form of grades and written comments as to the areas where the student met expectations and where the student could have improved his or her work.

Finally, students should be given the opportunity to evaluate the exercise. As the next section will demonstrate, each student is given the opportunity to articulate his or her opinion about the assignment. Overall, students feel that the exercise is a valuable experience which enables them to become more involved in learning consumer behavior.

In addition to involvement, students benefit from learning to apply consumer behavior principles to real world phenomena. In both journal entries and consumer analysis papers, students use consumer behavior theory and principles, as well as marketing terminology, to support their points. Students demonstrate an understanding of bases of segmentation, motivation personality, psychographics, learning, attitudes, sources of communication, reference group influence, and the influence of culture. In addition, throughout the semester, students are encouraged to use examples from this activity to explore topics discussed in class.

A final benefit of this assignment is the students’ exposure to a qualitative research method. Since the marketing research classes at most universities require the collection and analysis of quantitative data, this assignment gives

students experience with alternative methods which may not be practiced in any other class.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

At the end of the semester, each student is provided an anonymous evaluation form to discuss the aspects of the class, which are most and least valuable. Most students refer to the journal assignment as a valuable learning experience. For example, one student writes, “Although the project (journal) and paper (10 product list) were a pain, they did help me to realize what marketing is all about and how much goes into it.” A second student feels that “...the journals we had to keep were enjoyable. I think its interesting to see what people purchase and why they do so.” Other students refer to the journal as a means of self-discovery. For instance, a student writes, “I really liked the consumer journals we wrote because it made me analyze my own consumer behavior.” Another says, “The diaries made me think a lot about what I was purchasing.” Finally, across a number of students the journal is described as “enjoyable,” “interesting,” “fun,” “different,” and “an excellent idea.”

Students also discuss how the creation of the product list and the consumer analysis report are valuable experiences. One student writes, “The paper involves us more in thinking and understanding how consumers actually do behave.” Another feels that, “The 10 product list paper was a good way for us to see part of a marketer’s job.”

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, several teaching alternatives are available to instructors of consumer behavior, including lecture, case studies, simulations, experiential exercises on specific topics, and long-term activities. As most students will agree, restricting instruction to one method is often not desirable. Students not only enjoy, but are also more likely to learn, integrate, and retain class materials when the presentation format is interesting.

One way to make the instruction of consumer behavior more interesting is the assignment of this two-part exercise. Through the consumption journal and the consumer analysis paper, students not only record and observe their personal consumption habits, but also explore what social and psychological factors are influencing their and others’ purchases. Each student has the opportunity to learn to apply consumer behavior principles to real world phenomena. Although the instructor may find the time required to administer

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and grade the assignment to be immense, the outcome for the students is well worth the effort.

REFERENCE

Gentry, James W. (1990) "What is Experiential Learning?" *Guide to Business Gaming and Experiential Learning*. East Brunswick / Kogan Page, London: Nichols/Gp Publishing. James W. Gentry (ed), 9-20.

FIGURE 1 SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRIES

Date: October 13

Place of Purchase: Movart's Cleaners

Item Purchased: Dry cleaning services

Price: 11.56

Other Descriptive Information: 2 slacks, 3 shirts washed and starched

Feelings Associated with Purchase: I've really got to get to my bank back home Friday afternoon. My account has now gone into double digits. I hate that. I felt uncomfortable with the purchase for a couple of reasons. One, I usually press and starch my clothes myself. I rarely take my clothes to the cleaners, except when I am pressed for time (no pun intended) like this week, so I really don't compare rates. I've taken my clothes to Premier Cleaners a couple of times. I went there because a friend of mine thought that their prices were good. The first time my clothes came back smelling like kerosene, the second time they over starched them. I will never go back. My father uses Movarts when he comes into town. I picked up some of his clothes there one day and was impressed with the quality and the personal service. From that point on, anytime I need something cleaned or starched I go there. Second, my account is getting dangerously low and it is hard to predict any other surprise expenses I might incur before Friday.

Date: 10/17

Place of Purchase: At home; order over the phone

Item Purchased: Domino's Dominator Pizza with pepperoni, Canadian bacon, and extra cheese

Price: \$12.99

Reason For Purchase: The kid's choice for an award for doing good work and behaving in school during the past week.

Feelings Associated with Purchase: I'm glad my kids do well in school, although their behavior isn't always good, but then neither was mine! The reward is positive reinforcement for them, plus it limits or controls going out for fast food. The down side is that I wind up cooking more. I do the majority of the cooking, not only because I like to cook and cook

better than my wife, but also because the kids like my green eggs, blue rice and red macaroni and cheese.

Date: October 18

Place of Purchase: Hair Visions Item(s) Purchased: Haircut

Price: 10.00

Other Descriptive Information: The haircut cost 7.00; I gave a 3.00 tip.

Reason For Purchase: really needed a cut. I had put it off for too long.

Feelings Associated with Purchase: I'm very picky about who cuts my hair. Actually, I'm pretty selective about a lot of things. I needed a haircut last week, but Becky was out of town, so I waited. I found that place through a friend when I first moved into town. My friend suggested I go there and give them a try because I was complaining that I couldn't find any place that did a good job for a reasonable price. I had gone to LockWorks and paid \$17.00 for an "o.k." haircut. Most of the \$17.00 goes to them for kissing up to you. I'm pretty secure with myself and could do without the ego stroking. Then, I went to SuperCuts and got a bad haircut. That's when my friend suggested Hair Visions. I like Hair Visions because they do a good job for a reasonable price in a time efficient manner. I left a three dollar tip because Becky was busy with another client when I went to pay. It was close to closing and she was there alone, so I just left a ten on her counter.

FIGURE 2 EXAMPLE PRODUCT AND SERVICE LIST

1. **Indian CD's** All types of Indian Music including dance, movie soundtracks, and Ghazals, which are defined as poetic love songs. I buy mostly CD's because of quality and clearness of sound. The better companies which produce the Indian CD's which I purchase include IMI, Venus and TIPS. Indian CD's are marked up \$3.00 to \$10.00 higher than average CD's because they are imported. I listen to them anytime of the day, in any mood I'm in, usually stressed.

2. **Coca - Cola Soft Drink** Coke to me has the best taste and is more refreshing than others. I usually buy the 2 or 3 liter bottles, or I buy it in a can at the vending machines in between classes. I'll have a glass a day with lunch or dinner or with a snack after I come home from school.

3. **Gillette Sensor Razor** Gives me the smoothest shave possible. I've used others like disposables and tracers, but this one gives me a better, clean-cut shave. I usually have to buy the disposable blades for it often. They come in packs of 3, 5, 10 and 15. I usually buy the 5 or 10 so it can last me for a while.

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4. Right Guard Deodorant I use this deodorant because it has a nice smell to it. You can choose from 3 different kinds: the sports scent, unscented and regular scent. I usually get the regular scent. The deodorant I buy is always a spray, I don't prefer roll on or stick. Sprays are a lot easier with no mess, no hassle, one spray does it all. It takes care of the whole day for me.

5. Jergens hand and body lotion I use this lotion after every shower to take care of dry skin problems. I always buy the dry-skin, Aloe-Vera which is in a big, white, rectangular bottle. This big bottle usually takes care of the dry skin problem for a good time period until there is a need for more. It's very easy to squirt out, no mess, just keeps you feeling and smelling fresh.

6. Crest Toothpaste It takes care of that morning bad breath smell and works wonders on my teeth. I don't buy others like Aqua-Fresh or Colgate because I don't like the taste. Usually, the big tube is the one I buy, but sometimes I'll get the small "vacation version" or "on the road" tube, which always comes in handy instead of carrying the big tube.

7. Panasonic Answering Machine My Panasonic answering machine always keeps me on the go and makes sure I'm not missing any important calls while I'm out. I think these answering machines are very innovative, keeping track of all missed calls and performing other functions like leaving private messages with a special code, providing a special code to listen to your messages outside of your home and displaying the number of messages received. This machine is very important because rarely come home before 8 or 9 p.m. every night.

8. Coast or Irish Spring Soap I always like using Coast or Irish Spring because of the fresh scent that it gives you when you finished showering. I don't know what it is, but I guess I like soap that is green. I like the size of both of these because some soaps like Ivory run out too quick. Coast and Irish Spring are a handful and last a lot longer than your average soap.

9. Levis 550 Jeans I prefer to wear these jeans at all times. They have a good fit and are available in a variety of colors. They have perfect size measures to every individual according to waist and length. I prefer the zippered version.

10. Maxwell Audio tapes Maxwell tapes are the only type I buy for recording from CD's or other tapes, because of the clear quality sounds and very fine tuned mechanisms that go into the tape. I usually get the 100 minute recording tapes in packs of 4.

FIGURE 3 CONSUMER ANALYSIS EXAMPLE

This abbreviated analysis is based on the following products:

Bernard's Seafood Entrees, Tresseme mousse, Pantene Pro-V shampoo, Tropicana apple juice, Cortagen vitamins, Secret deodorant, Pop Weavers Light popcorn, Showbiz, Rawhide Chews, Almay face and skin products.

By segmenting the market, one can avoid head-on competition and differentiate his/her product from others offered. There are many different types of segmentation,

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDENT

Market Segment, Psychographics, and Sub-culture including: geographic, demographic, and user behavior, among others. Looking at geographic segmentation, it is easy to see that this subject is in the south; this is because Bernard Seafood Entrees are only distributed in the south. It can also be seen that she lives in...due to the fact that she always rents movies from Showbiz Video, a local rental company.

Looking at demographic information, one can see that she is between 18 and 34 years of age. This is because of her statement that she buys a bottle of Tropicana apple juice on her way to school every morning and her statements concerning her consciousness of her hair, appearance and smell. It is obvious she is a female due to her use of Secret deodorant and Almay skin products. It is also apparent she is single because of her use of entrees for one and her concern for her appearance. Her income is probably below twenty thousand dollars because she is a student and she is very concerned with thriftiness (i.e. "I just try to find the cheapest kind", and shops a lot at Wal-Mart).

She is probably an introvert because she rents movies quite often. She also has a dog and is very conscious about her appearance. When one looks at the big picture she can be seen as a shy, "homebody," who is self-conscious and strives for romantic ideals (due to Almay's positioning of their products). She is from a middle class family because she has the tendency to look at purchases from many different angles, not just one personal level. The point she is at in her life cycle is bachelorhood due to the reasons mentioned above.

She spends a lot of time at home because all of the products mentioned are at home usage products. She likes to be efficient and does not like to waste time on tedious processes (due to microwave popcorn and pre-prepared entrees), although, she does indulge herself in videos. She shows extreme brand loyalty and a high rate of usage for microwave popcorn and Tropicana apple juice.

Another inference that can be made of the subject is by looking at her psychographic statements. The statements: "I like this kind the best because it makes your hair feel thicker," "I think this is the best smelling deodorant, that's why I like it," and "I like this popcorn

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because it is lowest in fat" show that she is quite conscious about her weight and appearance. Her inferences to Wal-Mart and value lead one to believe that she is thrift oriented.

FACTORS LEADING TO THE PURCHASE

Needs and Motivations

One way to look at the purchase behavior of an individual is through the needs and motivations that spawned the decision. There are many different ways to categorize needs and motivations. However, the easiest to understand and most widely used technique is Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

In looking at her purchases with respect to Maslow's initial or basic need stage, physiological needs, one can see that her purchases of Bernard Seafood Entrees, Pop-Weavers Light Popcorn, and Tropicana Orange Juice all fall within these bounds. Her purchases of Cortagen vitamins and rawhide chews for dogs (which shows that she has a dog) satisfy Maslow's second tier of need hierarchy, safety and security needs. Her purchase of Cortagen vitamins satisfies the stability component of this need hierarchy, while the dog satisfies her protection component.

Maslow's next tier of need hierarchy is social needs. Her purchases of Tressemine Mousse, Pantene Pro-V Shampoo, Secret deodorant all satisfy the affection and belonging component on this need hierarchy. They accomplish this by making her hair look good and her body small nice, two qualities she eludes to in her product list. Her purchase of Pop-Weavers Light Popcorn also satisfies this component because she is more concerned with the fact that it is low in fat rather than the nourishment it provides. The purchases of Showbiz Videos and Almay Skin products fall under the belonging component of this need.

Almay face and skin products also fall into Maslow's fourth need hierarchy of ego needs. The reason for this is that she seems more concerned with the name Almay and the romantic image she associates with it. However, any of the personal hygiene products she listed could fall under this need due to the need for self-esteem and self-respect.

This consumer is definitely rationally motivated with respect to her day to day purchases. She considers all of the alternatives and makes a well-informed decision relying quite a bit on value. However, when considering her purchase of Almay skin products, she is probably emotionally motivated because of her subjective criteria in purchase decision mentioned above.

Personality and Learning

As was stated earlier, the consumer in question is extremely product loyal. There are many factors that one can look to for this loyalty. One such area of behavior is personality. It can be determined from the product list that she is dogmatic. She appears to be quite rigid concerning

unfamiliar products and likes to stay with what she knows. This also correlates to a risk aversion. Her social character is more inner-directed, except her purchase of Almay skin products tends to be other directed. This can be attributed to her romantic connotation of this particular product. She can be pegged as a narrow categorizer with respect to the category width dimension. This is due to her risk aversion and product loyalty.

As far as this consumer's learning as a function of her purchase behavior, she mainly possesses highly involved reasoning. Her purchases, especially Tresseme Mousse, show that she thinks through even mundane purchase decisions. However, when purchasing treats for her dog, she uses low involvement reasoning (i.e. the cheapest). She uses high-affective involvement with respect to her purchase of Almay skin products due to her perceived symbolic quality and image dimensions of the product as well as her perceived emotional imagery of the product. Due to this overall high involvement, and the reasons stated earlier, she is extremely brand loyal.

Perceptions

This particular consumer has a high loyalty to her evoked set. Of all of these products, Almay skin products seem to have the most perceived quality in her mind. This quality can be evaluated on many levels. However, the manufacturer's image seem to influence this purchase the most. As was stated earlier she is a narrow categorizer, which translates into a high-risk perceiver. This is again the reason behind her extreme product loyalty.

IMPORTANCE TO THE USER

Social Class Characteristics and Core Values

As was mentioned in the segmentation portion, she is from the middle class. This was determined by the perception of her purchases and the way she communicates these perceptions. She looks at her purchase decision on various levels and does not personalize or concrete her evaluations.

The core values an individual possesses are clearly shown through in their purchasing decisions. This particular consumer has a core value of activity as can be seen through her use of microwave popcorn and pre-prepared entrees. These purchases also reflect her efficiency and practicality. She portrays her individualism and her value of youthfulness through her purchase of Almay skin products. The youthfulness component can be easily seen, however, the individualism takes the form of self-interest and self-esteem. One can also determine that she is fitness and health conscious due to her purchases of Cortegen vitamins and Tropicana apple juice.