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Marketing Theory 2004; 4; 91

DOI: 10.1177/1470593104044088

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How advertising works: Alternative situational and attitudinal explanations

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Abstract. Cognizant of the need to provide for situations ranging from high to low consumer involvement, this article proposes seven new models that recognize different purchase situations and varying attitude formation processes. Specifically, four high involvement models, two variants of a medium-to-lower involvement model, and two low involvement models are proposed. Each model provides for both first-time and repeat-purchase situations. All seven have been developed with the intention of providing advertisers with frameworks upon which to develop integrated marketing communication strategies. In addition to providing for a variety of purchase situations including differing levels of involvement, the models recognize situations where product trial is possible/not possible, as well as differences between first-time and sequential buying situations. They also distinguish between conceptual and experiential attitudes and accordingly, emphasize the importance of conation (direct experience) in the process of attitude formation. **Key Words** ● attitude ● communication models ● involvement ● past experience ● purchase situations ● repeat purchase

Introduction

Our knowledge of how advertising works has until now been opaque, incomplete and variable in quality. And although some influential analysis remains bemused by the difficulties, generations of practitioners and academics have developed unshakeable (and often contradictory) views on the subject. (Jones, 2002: ix)

Perhaps the most enduring challenge for those involved in the advertising industry is to explain how it actually works, or more specifically, how individuals



respond to advertising. Unfortunately, this is a gargantuan task. Despite more than a century of work in the area, numerous fundamental questions remain largely unanswered. Much of what is known is disaggregated, incomplete, inconsistent or quite simply, incorrect (what Jones refers to as 'Knowledge Types B through E' [1992: 206]). The purpose of this article is not to provide a 'catch all' or holistic explanation of how advertising works (as desirable as that might be). Rather, it will reorganize and integrate some of the extant knowledge into a more useful and indeed usable form. More specifically, it will offer advertisers and their agencies a much-needed framework accounting for a cross-section of purchase situations and incorporating differing levels of involvement to distinguish between conceptual and experiential attitudes, and thereby recognizing the importance of direct experience in the process of attitude formation. Such a framework could potentially be used by practitioners to formulate advertising and communication objectives and consequently to determine the specific role of each of the various marketing communication tools. The article begins by tracing the evolution of advertising theory from the late 19th century through to the early 21st century. Then, it revisits a number of existing advertising response models, before reconsidering the direct and indirect effect of past experience on attitude formation and behavior. Finally, seven new models are introduced and discussed. The proposed models recognize the role of experience in the attitude formation process by emphasizing the distinction between conceptual and experiential attitude formation. This is significant in the different sequences shown for high involvement purchases, where trial is not possible. Moreover, differences in the attitude formation processes between first time and repeat purchase situations are shown in each of the models. Conclusions are then drawn, limitations noted and directions for future research outlined.

Tracing the evolution of advertising theory

The earliest published model of the marketing communication process is generally acknowledged to be St Elmo Lewis's (1898) famous AIDA (attention-interest-desire-action) model of selling. This was followed, in the early part of the 20th century, by a variety of sales communication models (Eastman, 1916; The International Correspondence School, 1911; Kitson, 1921; Sheldon, 1902; Strong, 1925, 1938) and a number of advertising models (Adams, 1916; Hall, 1915; Osborn, 1922; *Printer's Ink*, 1910; Ramsay, 1921; Scott, 1903, 1908; Starch, 1923). Not surprisingly, the early advertising models emulated the sales models as the prevailing view was that advertising was selling in print. Starch expressed this in an often quoted statement:

There are two types of selling: oral selling and printed selling. Many, if not all, of the fundamental processes of these two types of salesmanship are essentially the same. Oral salesmanship deals ordinarily with one person at a time; printed salesmanship deals with many people at a time. The former is individual selling, while the latter is mass selling. (1923: 5)



These early models of communication appeared at the time of the evolution of the mass market and mass communication (initially confined to print media). The underlying assumption of communication in this era was a stimulus-response concept commonly referred to as the 'magic bullet' theory. It was believed that media messages could be implanted into an audience in a uniform manner and that the audience would then directly respond to the advertising message. It was also believed that consumers were rational decision makers actively seeking product information. However, with the advent of television and the rapid economic growth post-World War II, the ability of the media to influence consumers began to be questioned. This gave rise to a renewal of interest in the subject of how advertising works and in 1959 a committee of the (American) Association of National Advertisers was formed to examine the role of advertising. This led to the publication of the DAGMAR (*Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results*) thesis attributed to Colley (1961). Interest in advertising models was further stimulated by Lavidge and Steiner (1961), whose work was later dubbed the 'hierarchy-of-effects' model (Palda, 1966). In the wake of these two models, a profusion of variant models were developed during the 1960s and early 1970s, some of which were specific advertising models (Advertising Research Foundation [Gerhold, 1970; McGuire, 1969]; Grey Advertising, 1962; Mendelsohn, 1962; National Industrial Conference Board, 1962; N. W. Ayer Model [Claycamp and Liddy, 1969]); extensions of the DAGMAR model, (for example, DAGMAR-G.M. [Smith, 1967] and CAPP [Maloney, 1966]); a part of a buyer behavior model (Andreasen, 1965; Engel et al., 1968; Howard and Sheth, 1969; Nicosia, 1966; Robertson, 1971); or models derived from other fields (Rogers, 1962). These models were largely based on the underlying assumption that one universal model could embrace all types of purchase and communication situations. Moreover, they were also based on the underlying assumption of a cognitive-affective-conative sequence of attitude formation.

In the 1970s and 1980s models recognizing a multiplicity of advertising situations were developed (Preston, 1982; Preston and Thorson, 1984; Ray et al., 1973; Rossiter et al., 1984; Smith and Swinyard, 1982; Vaughn, 1980). These models addressed phenomena such as different levels of involvement and the sequence and significance of cognitive and affective processing. All of these models made significant contributions to the understanding of the advertising and communication processes and to the promotion of the need for advertising planners to develop marketing communication objectives and strategies on an explicit model of the communication process. However, it seems that interest in marketing communication models began to wane in the 1990s with the exception of limited research into the Vaughn model (Ratchford, 1987; Ratchford and Vaughn, 1989) and Rossiter and Percy models, and subsequent debate concerning the superiority of one model over the other (Rossiter et al., 1991). Given the increasing interest in integrated marketing communication and the need for marketing communication planners to develop strategies encompassing elements of the marketing communication mix, it seems that further conceptual development and empirical investigation of marketing



communication models is timely. The aim of this article is to present such a conceptualization.

Revisiting existing advertising response models

In reviewing communication response models ranging from the earliest sales and advertising models, discussed above, to the most recent advertising models developed by Vaughn, Rossiter and others, it would appear that since the publication of Ray et al.'s model in 1973 all theorists have posited models that have included involvement as a critical dimension. Moreover, both the Vaughn and Rossiter et al. models have been depicted as a 2×2 matrix or grid with involvement (high and low) forming one dimension and either thinking-feeling forming an attitudinal dimension (Vaughn), or type of emotion forming an attitudinal/behavioral dimension (Rossiter et al.). The main point of difference between the two models involves definitional and operational methodology concerning involvement and different conceptualizations of the cognitive-affective-conative aspects of attitude formation. The problem for both sets of theorists here is that they have locked themselves into a two-dimensional approach to a process that is complex and not capable of being portrayed in an oversimplified grid, no matter how well 'the grid format is easily grasped and will stimulate the manager . . .' (Rossiter et al., 1991: 11). Eliminating the imperative of reducing complex processes to a two-dimensional construct facilitates the development of models that take into account the following factors.

Involvement

In other words, the degree of personal importance ascribed to a product or situation by an individual including the perceived risk involved in the purchase decision. Involvement is target audience specific as different individuals can purchase the same product with different levels of involvement. The level of involvement ranges from high involvement (also described as extensive problems solving by Howard [1977]) to low involvement. Additionally, there are situations where individual involvement cannot be described simply as high or low. Howard (1977), for example, conceptualizes limited problem solving where an individual encounters a new brand in a known product class while Engel and Blackwell (1982) propose models based on routine decision making under high involvement and repeat purchase behavior for low involvement products. The point here is that the involvement dimension should not be restricted to a high or low dichotomy. It is therefore proposed that involvement is best conceptualized as a continuum ranging from high to low involvement. Examples are presented later focusing on three key locations on the continuum, namely, high involvement, medium-low involvement and low involvement.



First-time versus subsequent purchase

Moreover, it is proposed that the models need to provide for the differences between first-time buying within a product category and subsequent and repeat purchasing situations. The differences in these communication response processes have particular importance for the development of integrated marketing communication campaigns directed at first-time users (conquest marketing communication strategies) and marketing communication directed at people who have purchased one of the brands in the product category previously (defensive or brand-switching marketing communication strategies).

Other purchase situations

In addition to providing for differences between high, medium and low involvement and between first-time and subsequent purchasing, provision needs to be made, in the construction of marketing communication response models, for additional purchase situations. Under high involvement two aberrant situations sometimes occur: emotional distortion and information overload. Emotional distortion is based on Howard's (1977) concept of excessive arousal which occurs when emotion-producing stimuli are persistent and intense and become disruptive, resulting in non-adaptive behavior. Information overload is based on Ray et al.'s (1973) concept of dissonance-attribution where the purchaser becomes overloaded with technical information, becomes frustrated and makes a snap decision in order to deal with his or her frustration. The concepts of excessive arousal and dissonance-attribution are similar but differentiated in this article to distinguish between emotional and rational overload situational contexts. For example, the purchase of a luxury product may lead to emotional distortion whereas the purchase of a product such as a financial service may overload the potential purchaser with technical (rational) information. Under low-involvement situations purchases are often unplanned and provision needs to be made in the development of communication response models for *impulse buying*.

Attitude formation

In the wake of Lavidge and Steiner (1961), models of the advertising communication process developed during the 1960s and 1970s were on the whole based on an underlying assumption that attitude formation consists of three components: cognition, affect and conation. Considerable debate has focused on the relationship and sequencing of cognitive and affective processing and more recently whether the conative (behavioral) dimension is a separate process altogether. Whereas the traditional assumption is that cognition precedes affect, Vaughn's (1980) FCB grid was one of the first communication models to challenge this assumption. Vaughn's high involvement (feeling) model proposes an affective-cognitive-conative processing sequence. Indeed, by incorporating a thinking-feeling (cognitive-affective) dimension as one dimension of his two-dimensional



grid, Vaughn's model emphasizes the importance of affective processing. The importance of affective processing is also highlighted by van Raaij (1984) who argues that a stage of primary affective reaction precedes cognition. Cognition, in turn, is preceded by a stage of secondary affective reaction.

However, while Vaughn's FCB grid emphasizes the role of emotion, the positioning of cognition and affect on opposite ends of a continuum is problematic. As Vaughn states, 'thinking and feeling are a continuum in the sense that some decisions involve one or the other, and in many involve elements of both' (1980: 30). A situation that is highly rational is positioned towards the rational end of the continuum and vice versa for highly emotional situations. However, what if a purchase situation involves optimal levels of both rational and emotional processing? Positioning such a situation towards the mid-point of the continuum implies a minimal level of processing for each element. In this article it is contended that cognitive and affective processing can occur contemporaneously and that the significance of each can range from minimal processing to a very high level. That is, on a ten-point scale for example, the extent that each element is involved can range from 0 to 10.

Most importantly, it is argued that there is a need to distinguish between *conceptual attitudes* and *experiential attitudes* (Mackay, 1984). Conceptual attitudes are those attitudes which are developed prior to purchase. They consist of either cognitive or affective elements, or both. Either may dominate and each can range in significance from insignificant to highly significant. Conceptual attitudes, accordingly, can range from being very weakly developed to being very strongly developed. Experiential attitudes are those attitudes that are developed after purchase or trial, in other words, the conative element. Experience may confirm or reinforce previous conceptual attitudes where they have existed or conflicted with them (such as with cognitive dissonance).

Past experience: understated or overrated?

Much of the credit for first articulating the role of past consumer experience in shaping future behavior and attitude formation must go to the British analyst Andrew Ehrenberg. His work is strongly rooted in empiricism and focuses on awareness, trial and reinforcement (Jones, 1992). Despite finding increasing support in Europe and the Antipodes through the 1970s until today, the 'Ehrenbergian doctrine' has until recently been *terra incognita* in the United States. Essentially, Ehrenberg argues that consumer purchasing behavior exhibits a high degree of regularity and predictability. In fact, it appears as if a consumer's habits are a more important determinant of brand purchasing than either advertising or promotions (Jones, 1992). For a more detailed analysis see Ehrenberg (1974). Twenty-five years later, in a seminal meta-analytic synthesis of over 250 journal articles on how advertising works, Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) arrive at a strikingly similar conclusion. Their analysis could find little support for any hierarchy or temporal sequence and they propose that advertising should be



studied in a space with affect, cognition and *experience* as the three dimensions. In fact, Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) conclude that the persuasive hierarchy models are fundamentally flawed in that they exclude experience effects. This is where the present study is positioned. It will attempt to progress the discourse and extant knowledge on the role of past experience in shaping future behavior and attitude formation.

The proposed models

Taking into account the need to provide for situations ranging from high to medium-low to low involvement, various purchase situations and varying attitude formation processes, seven marketing communication response models are proposed:

High involvement models

- 1 Item of high personal involvement. Costly. Lasts a long time (five years or more). Trial is not possible.
- 2 Item of high personal involvement. Costly. Lasts a long time (five years or more). Where trial is possible (e.g. test drive, home demonstration).
- 3 Emotional distortion. Item of high personal importance. Emotion is excessive and distorts rational processes.
- 4 Information overload. Item of medium to high personal importance. Technical (rational) attributes dominate. Little perceived brand differentiation. Purchaser attempts to be rational but becomes confused.

Medium to lower involvement models

- 5 Both of these purchase situations, in other words, medium and lower involvement, follow a similar hierarchy-of-effects sequential path and are therefore shown as one model.
 - 5.1 Medium involvement. Items replaced annually such as auto insurance or every two to three years such as expensive clothing (for example, a suit).
 - 5.2 Lower involvement. One-time purchases such as small appliances that are not relatively costly – but at the same time the purchase decision is more important than low involvement goods or services.

Low involvement models

- 6 Frequently purchased goods/services. Regular purchases such as grocery shopping.
- 7 Impulse buys. Unplanned purchases of low-cost products or services.

Each of these models provides for both first-time and repeat purchase situations. Following is a brief overview of each model.



I Item of high personal involvement. Costly. Lasts a long time (i.e. > 5 years). Trial is not possible.

Examples White goods such as refrigerators, washing machines and dishwashers. Expensive electrical appliances such as microwave ovens. Services such as bank mortgages, investment policies, holiday travel and enrolment in an MBA program. An expensive gift such as a watch for a birthday or Mother's Day or an electric shaver for dad on Father's Day. Furniture such as a bed. Home heating or air conditioning.

Description For a first-time purchase, the process commences with cognitive and affective processing occurring concurrently. Cognitive (rational) processing includes product category awareness, brand awareness, comprehension of product attributes and benefits, pricing information and shopping location information. Affective (emotional) processing includes interest, feeling, evaluation and conviction. The cognitive and affective components of attitude are derived not only through advertising but also to varying degrees from publicity, word of mouth, personal selling and the Internet. The intensity of cognitive and affective processing ranges from low to high depending on the specific situation and the personality of the individual involved. In some cases cognitive processing can dominate, in others affective processing, while in other situations both may be more-or-less equal. That is, it is possible for a situation to be both highly emotional and highly rational at the same time. It does not have to be one or the other.

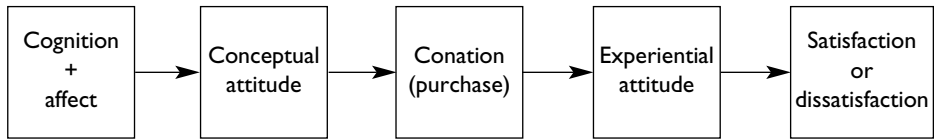
Cognitive and affective processing results in the formation of a conceptual attitude towards the brand. If the conceptual attitude is positive then the next stage is purchase (conation). If the conceptual attitude is not as positive as it is for a competitive brand or it is neutral or negative then the process ceases at this stage.

The purchase event (conation) is the final stage in the conceptual processing routine. At the point of purchase positive conceptual attitudes towards the brand are reinforced and the purchase is transacted. In some instances additional cognitive and/or affective processing occurs modifying the conceptual attitude. This could result in a previously held positive conceptual attitude becoming negative with a resultant switching of brand preference. Following purchase, an experiential attitude is formed, comprising the cognitive, affective and conative elements of attitude formation. Experiential attitudes lead to either a state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Subsequent purchase processes commence with a previously established experiential attitude towards the brand. The experiential attitude may be one of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and accordingly, an important consideration for marketing communication planning is the strength of that attitude. In the subsequent purchase mode new additional cognitive and affective information (in varying strengths) may be added to the existing experiential attitude, thereby either modifying or reinforcing that attitude. The role of advertising is to reinforce experiential attitudes of existing customers and remind them of why they are satisfied with the brand. Ideally, this should lead to repurchase (conation) and reinforcement of existing satisfaction with the brand. However, if the product



First time purchase



Subsequent purchase

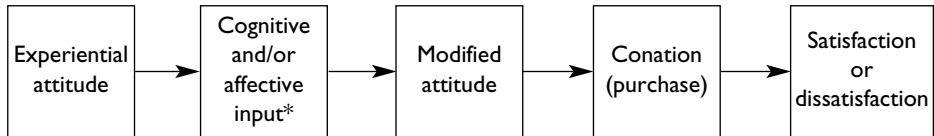


Figure 1

High involvement where trial is not possible

* New or additional information

under-performs relative to the customer's increased expectations, dissatisfaction may result.

Supporting literature This model basically follows the typical first and second generation hierarchy of effect sequence of Learn – Feel – Do, which has also been adopted in third generation models such as Ray et al.'s (1973) Learning hierarchy, Howard's (1977) Extensive Problem Solving, Vaughn's (1980) High Involvement/ Thinking quadrant, Smith and Swinyard's (1982) path no. 1 and Engel and Blackwell's (1982) High Involvement model.

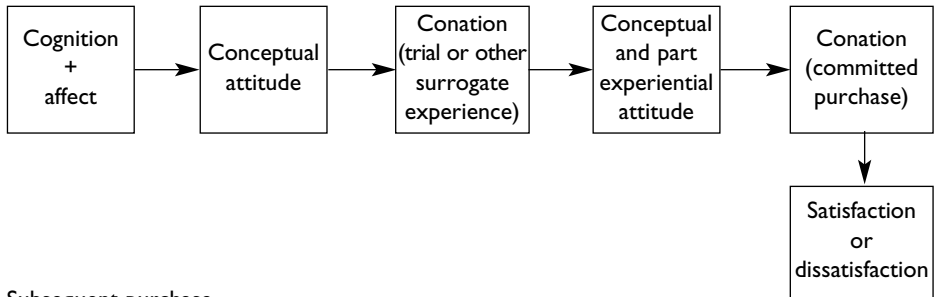
2 Item of high personal involvement. Costly. Lasts a long time (> 5 years). Where trial is possible (e.g. test drive, home demonstration).

Examples Automobiles, personal computers, stereo equipment, television sets and video cameras (on display at retailer), display houses and swimming pools (on display). Electrolux uses home demonstration as a major part of its promotion strategy.

Description This model is similar to the process described above except that trial experience is an added dimension to the process. The sequence, once again, commences with the occurrence of cognition and affect which leads to the formation of conceptual attitudes. The role of advertising and other marketing communication techniques is to develop positive conceptual attitudes. For example, in the case of an automobile, the motoring press and comparative websites might play a role that is just as important as advertising in developing a first-time purchaser's



First time purchase



Subsequent purchase

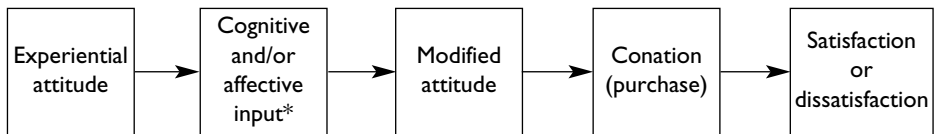


Figure 2

High involvement where trial is possible

* New or additional information

conceptual attitude. Consequently, some auto manufactures are offering 24- to 48-hour test drives (that is, using a sampling sales promotion technique). This stage of trial is a conative step leading to the formation of an experiential attitude. The strength of the experiential attitude will vary according to the strength of the prior conceptual attitude and the evaluation formed by the (trial) experience. Depending on the effectiveness of the trial, experiential attitudes range from weak to strong. This sequence then follows the previously described process, which consists of purchase leading to satisfaction or dissatisfaction followed by the same type of subsequent purchase sequence. The role of advertising is to reinforce satisfaction with the purchase or to reduce post purchase dissonance. As in Model 1, the role of advertising for existing customers, who repurchase the brand, is one of reinforcement (of their experiential attitudes and subsequent satisfaction).

Supporting literature Ehrenberg (1974), Smith and Swinyard (1982) and Mackay (1984)

3 Emotional distortion. Item of high personal importance. Emotion is excessive and distorts rational processes.

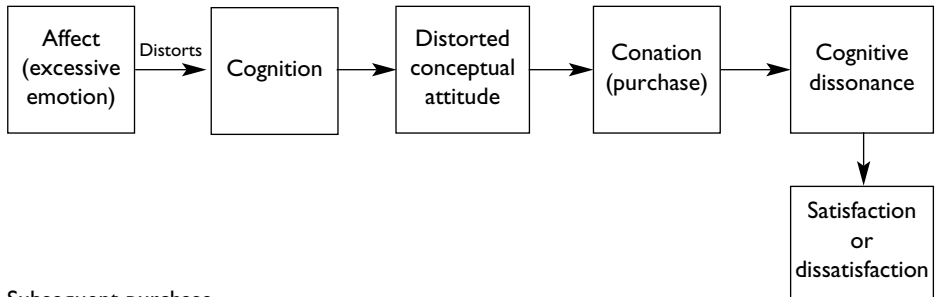
Examples Purchasing a premium brand which has an exceptionally strong, prestigious image. There is a high level of self-esteem involved in possessing such an item and emotional processing overwhelms rational processing in the development of conceptual attitudes. Expensive jewellery, personal items such as a Rolex



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First time purchase



Subsequent purchase

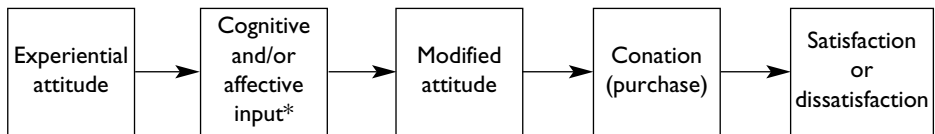


Figure 3

High involvement with emotional distortion

* New or additional information

watch, or a prestige automobile such as a Porsche or a Mercedes Benz are possible examples – for some segments of a market. Some first-time buyers might fit this model. For example, when BMW released its 316i compact, a significant proportion of the market were first-time BMW buyers. The mere thought of owning a BMW might have emotionally overwhelmed some buyers and rational considerations such as value-for-money, performance and product features might have been overlooked.

Description This model is based on Howard's concept of excessive arousal, which he argues is an 'exception to normal information processing when arousal is too high to permit it' (1977: 147). Similar in basic sequence to Model 1 above, it commences with the cognitive and affective elements of attitude formation. However, in this situation the affective element is very strong (excessive emotion), and dominates the formation of conceptual attitudes. This excessive emotion distorts the cognitive processing resulting in the formation of a distorted conceptual attitude. The role of advertising is to provide rational benefits to balance cognitive and affective processing. For example, a consumer might 'fall in love' with a Saab convertible, based on a highly emotional television advertising campaign. In the absence of some rational justification, that same consumer might dismiss the desire for a Saab as a flirtatious (emotional) whim. However, an effective print campaign might focus on some of the (rational) features and benefits of a Saab convertible which would enable the consumer to post-rationalize his or her emotional desire for the product. In this way, a balance is achieved and emotional



distortion is managed. Ideally, purchase would then follow (conation) and, in turn, experiential attitudes are formed. A favorable or unfavorable attitude expressed in terms of 'satisfaction' or 'dissatisfaction' follows. Cognitive dissonance is a most significant factor in this development. The subsequent purchase process follows the same sequence as described for Model 1 above. There is also a possibility that in some instances, such as purchasing a prestige automobile, trial may be possible. In this sequence trial would play a part in the first state of excessive emotion.

Supporting literature The model is an elaboration and modification of Howard's concept of excessive arousal (1977: 147–8). McGuire's (1978) *compensatory principle* supports the need to counterbalance high affective processing with cognitive information. The model also draws on aspects of Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance.

4 Information overload. Item of medium to high personal importance. Technical (rational) attributes dominate. Little perceived brand differentiation. Purchaser attempts to be rational but becomes confused.

Examples Purchasing radial tyres, electronic products such as a video cassette recorder, personal computer or sound equipment. The purchaser becomes overloaded with technical information and becomes frustrated in trying to compare features and prices of different brands.

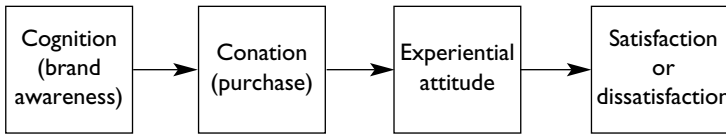
Description This model is essentially a modified adaptation of Ray et al.'s (1973) Dissonance-Attribution model. Ray et al.'s model is based on a sequence of Do – Feel – Learn, whereby action (purchase) is the starting point of the process. The process commences with cognition, specifically brand awareness. At this stage the purchaser attempts to process information but finds this difficult and frustrating. The role of advertising in this initial stage is to generate favourable brand awareness. Skilled sales people and the availability of effective point-of-sale material should be sufficient to stimulate purchase. The purchaser knows little about his or her purchase but is happy to have at least made a decision. This would provide an ideal opportunity for the marketer to provide information via direct marketing and customer support. For example, a customer decides to purchase a PDA. Advertising has led this (inexperienced) customer to be aware of Palm, but a salesperson convinces him/her to buy a Sony. Subsequent Sony direct marketing reinforces the purchase decision and the customer's experiential attitude. This leads to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The subsequent purchase process follows the same sequence as the above models (1, 2 and 3). That is, the purchaser starts a subsequent purchase process with a well-developed (experiential) attitude and pursues a limited problem-solving process, adding new information to his or her existing bank of knowledge and feeling toward the brand.

Supporting literature Ray et al.'s (1973) Dissonance-Attribution model.



First time purchase



Subsequent purchase

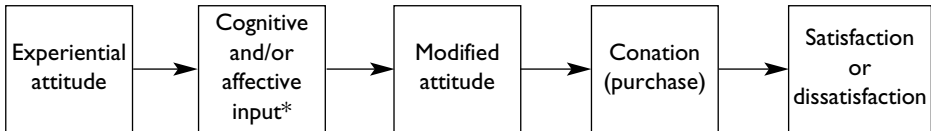


Figure 4

High involvement with information overload

* New or additional information

5 Medium to lower involvement model

This category provides for purchase situations that fall between the extremes of high and low involvement. The purchase process for products and services that fit this category involve a reasonable amount of consideration by the purchaser and the products or services tend to be purchased more regularly than higher involvement goods and services. The key consideration is the degree of importance of the purchase to the individual consumer. The purchase should be of medium importance, not of vital significance, but also not trivial in nature.

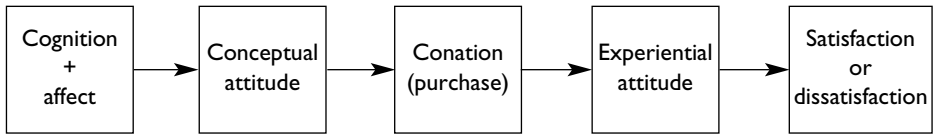
Howard's (1977) concept of Limited Problem Solving falls into this category. In this case consumers need less information than they do with Extended Problem Solving, and their decision time is faster. It occurs when a consumer encounters a new brand in a known product class. This category of involvement can be subdivided into two groups:

- 5.1 Medium involvement. Items replaced annually such as auto insurance or every two to three years such as expensive clothing or holidays are examples of goods and services that may fit this model.
- 5.2 Lower involvement. One-time buys such as a small appliance that is not relatively costly (compared to high involvement purchases), but at the same time is more important to the consumer than low involvement goods or services.

Both of these purchase situations, i.e. medium and lower involvement, follow a similar sequential path and are therefore shown as one model.



First time purchase



Subsequent purchase

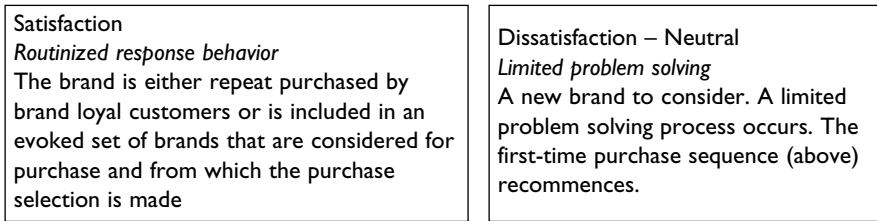


Figure 5

Medium to lower involvement purchasing

Description For a first-time purchase situation the sequence commences with cognitive and affective processing. The strength or significance of each can vary from being very weak to very strong, leading to the formation of a conceptual attitude which, in turn, can also range from being weak to strong. The role of advertising in the first instance is to create brand awareness. If the conceptual attitude is positive the next step is the conative stage of purchase. At the point of purchase the prospect will, in many cases, compare different brands by physical examination, reading the labeling, talking to sales assistants in a final evaluation process which leads to a final purchase decision. Here point-of-purchase, packaging, personal selling and sales promotion techniques are important. For example, the original purchase decision might easily be switched due to an emotional response (such as like or dislike of the packaging or the shape or feel of it) or for a rational response (such as price, product composition, product attributes/features, place of manufacture, or service and warranty conditions). After purchase an experiential attitude is formed. Depending on the product category the experiential attitude may be formed more-or-less immediately after purchase (for example, clothing) or gradually over time (for example, a video cassette recorder).

If this attitude is satisfactory then the next purchase in this product category could become what Howard (1977) describes as Routinized Response Behavior. Consumers become brand loyal and tend to buy the same brand, or a group of brands (an evoked set) regularly. Here the role of advertising is one of reinforcement. If, however, the experiential attitude is one of neutrality or dissatisfaction, then a Limited Problem Solving (Howard, 1977) situation occurs whereby consumers recommence the sequence described above for a first-time buy. However,



this time the sequence may be shorter as the consumer is adding information to what is already known of this product category from experience.

Supporting literature Howard's (1977) concepts of Limited Problem Solving, and Routinized Response Behavior.

Low involvement

Low involvement situations are divided into two categories: commodity purchases and impulse purchases.

6 Frequently purchased goods/services

Examples This category involves the purchase of goods bought weekly or very regularly for everyday household consumption.¹ Grocery and personal products are examples of the type of goods purchased under low-involvement situations. For services, low-involvement purchases may include eating at a fast-food restaurant or buying a lottery ticket.

Description For a first-time purchase situation, the hierarchy-of-effects sequence commences with cognition, namely brand awareness. However, at the same time, there may be some form of affective processing such as a good feeling towards the family brand name of the new product. In many cases the level of affective processing is minimal but for some product categories affective processing can be significant. The role of advertising is to create brand awareness and/or sampling to encourage trial. Sales promotion also plays a major role in encouraging product sampling. Products such as soft drinks, alcohol, cosmetics and other personal products may have a strong emotional appeal for users of a particular brand. Brand image reflecting product quality and reliability, even safety, may be important emotional appeals for products and services such as food, toys, personal products and services.

Cognitive and affective processing leads to the formation of a conceptual attitude towards the brand. At this stage, a conceptual attitude is formed but it is not likely to be a strongly held attitude even for goods and services where brand image is important. The purchase of a low involvement product or service is not a significant consideration for the individual but, in cases where interest is aroused, a strong desire to trial purchase can be stimulated by mere awareness of a new product's existence.

The next stage (conation) follows either one of two variations. In some cases an individual may sample (experience) a new product via a taste test at a retail outlet or a free sample in the mail or in a magazine. Alternatively the individual may experience eating or drinking, for example, a new confectionery product or a new drink product offered by a friend. An enjoyable experience may then lead the individual to a trial purchase of the new product. In other cases the individual does not have the opportunity to sample the new product and goes straight into a (trial) purchase situation.

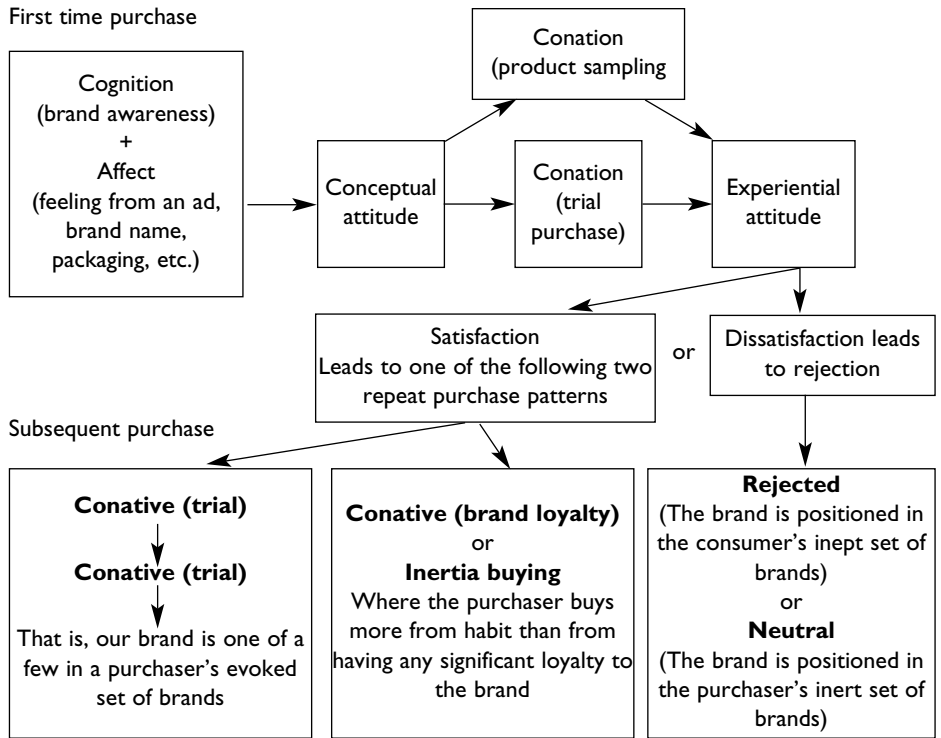


Figure 6

Low involvement – frequently purchased products

Following trial purchase, via either of the two above routes, the next stage is the formation of an experiential attitude towards the new product. Repeat purchase behavior, which follows, depends on whether the experiential attitude was one of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Satisfaction leads to two purchase situations: The brand is included amongst a group of brands that are considered for purchase (an evoked set). This process of purchasing from a select group of evoked brands is described by Ehrenberg (1974) and Smith and Swinyard (1982). Alternatively, the brand is bought regularly by brand-loyal customers. Note, however, that the purchase may be what Assael et al. (1995) describe as *inertia* purchasing. The purchaser regards the purchase as unimportant and chooses the same brand time and time again with no information processing and brand evaluation. However, if the brand is out of stock the purchaser would simply buy an alternative brand.

The role of advertising in both instances is to maintain brand awareness and to reinforce positive brand attitudes. From an Ehrenbergian perspective, advertising's role is also a defensive one – whereby by occupying a position in the consumer's mind, the brand is effectively preventing competitors from occupying a similar position.



Dissatisfaction leads to either rejection or neutrality. The brand may be positioned in either an *inept set* or an *inert set* in the consumer's mind. An *inept set* is where the consumer has developed a negative attitude towards a brand. An *inert set* is where the consumer does not hold any positive or negative attitudes towards the brand and essentially does not know or think much about it at all.

Supporting literature Low involvement: Ehrenberg (1974), Engel and Blackwell (1982), Krugman (1965), Ray et al. (1973). Repeat purchase behavior: Assael et al., (1995), Ehrenberg (1974) and Smith and Swinyard (1982).

7 Impulse buying

Examples Magazines bought at the check-out counter of supermarkets, confectionery, ice cream, soft drinks and toys.

Description Items bought on the 'spur of the moment'. This category of low involvement was posited by Howard (1977). The process of impulse low-involvement purchasing commences with conation with the purchase of the

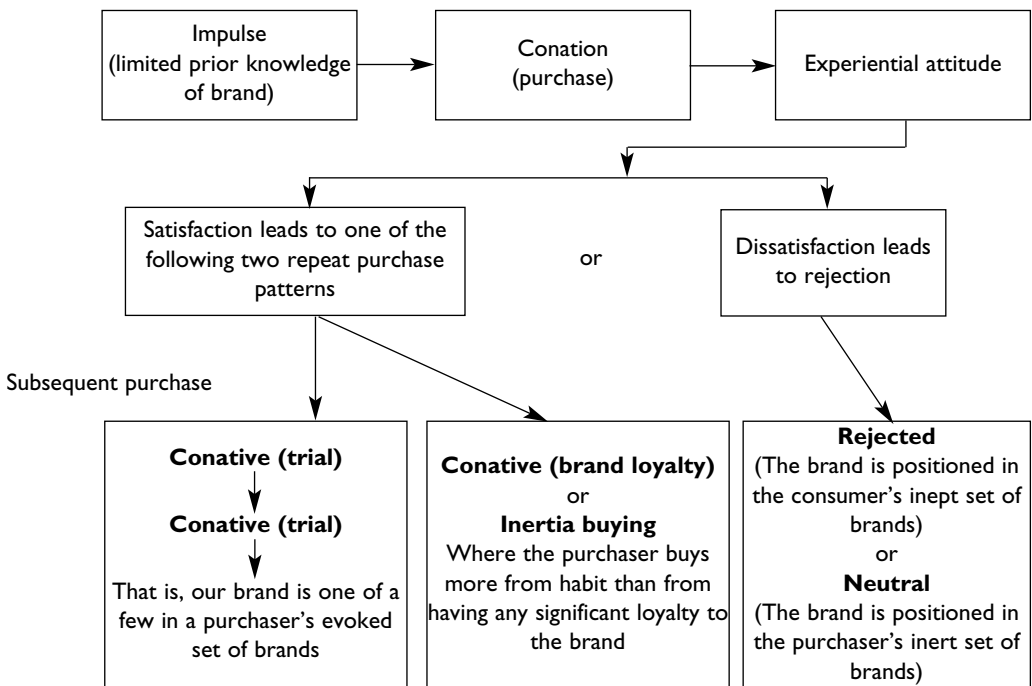


Figure 7

Low involvement – impulse buying



product item or service. This leads to the formation of an experiential attitude, which in turn is followed by either one of three repeat purchase behavior modes: conation (Trial – Trial – Trial); conation (either brand loyalty or inclusion in an evoked set of brands); or rejection. In the first instance advertising may play a role in creating brand awareness but it may be equally possible that a consumer makes a purchase with no advertising-induced prior brand knowledge. In this case, point-of-sale, personal selling and other promotional and merchandising material are important in leading the consumer towards making a purchase. Advertising plays an important post-purchase reinforcing and reminding role.

Supporting literature Howard's (1977) concept of 'impulse products'.

Discussion

In common with all hierarchy-of-effects models, the seven models proposed in this article have both practical and theoretical implications. For marketing communication strategists the models provide frameworks to draw on for developing marketing communication objectives and strategies. For marketing communication researchers the models provide a basis for organizing related studies and planning future research.

The major contribution of the proposed models is the recognition of the role of experience in the attitude-formation process. This is emphasized with the distinction hypothesized in the models between conceptual and experiential attitude formation. This is significant in the different sequences shown for high-involvement purchase behavior where trial is and is not possible. Moreover, differences in the attitude-formation processes between first-time and repeat purchase situations are shown in each of the seven models. In this respect the models extend and refine the recent conceptual work of Vakratsas and Ambler (1999).

The proposed models also allow flexibility by showing a variety of response sequences that provide for different levels of involvement and for different types of purchase situations, including aberrant behavior in high involvement purchasing and impulse purchasing for low-involvement situations.

Contribution to advertising theory

Consistent with this special issue theme, we conclude by articulating and reiterating the specific contributions of this article. In tracing the evolution of advertising theory from the late 19th century to the early 21st century, it provides a comprehensive foundation upon which to begin to consolidate and then advance the theoretical boundaries of the discipline. By revisiting existing advertising response models in a critical and objective manner, it highlights both their strengths and weaknesses. It then proposes seven new models that attempt to account for weak-



nesses in the existing models. Moreover, it also provides numerous practical examples to support each of the seven proposed models. These seven new models, collectively, make three important contributions. First, they highlight the importance of experience and they differentiate in terms of types of experience; they also emphasize the distinction between conceptual and experiential attitude formation. Second, they emphasize different sequences for high-involvement attitude formation where trial is possible and where trial is not possible. Third, they recognize and account for differences between first-time and repeat purchase behavior. Despite Ehrenberg's (1974) seminal work (on repeat purchase behavior), the concept has still been largely overlooked in the literature (Jones, 1992), with one notable exception (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). Collectively, the seven models provide a useful and holistic point of departure for students attempting to understand advertising theory, for academics attempting to advance advertising theory and for practitioners attempting to apply advertising theory. In sum, they attempt to capture a broad range of advertising effects and give multiple practical examples of each. Finally, the existing models were, without exception, developed in what may be termed the 'pre-IMC' era. In other words, they tend to focus exclusively on advertising and ignore the potential contribution of other marcom techniques. Our models have been developed in recognition of so called 'below-the-line' tools, to provide IMC planners with a framework for establishing specific objectives for each of the marketing communication functions.

Conclusion

The seven models presented here provide for a variety of purchase situations including different levels of involvement, situations where product trial is possible or is not possible, and differences between first-time and sequential buying situations. The models distinguish between conceptual and experiential attitudes and, accordingly, emphasize the importance of conation (direct experience) in the process of attitude formation.

The seven models are conceptualizations building on and extending work in the area of advertising response models, which date back to the end of the 19th century. They address a number of limitations of earlier work and in particular provide for a more extensive range of purchase situations than popular models developed by Vaughn (1980) and Rossiter et al. (1984) that are constrained by their use of 2x2 grid formats. Both of these models show a dichotomous relationship between cognition and affect; Vaughn with 'thinking' and 'feeling' on opposite ends of continuum and, similarly, Rossiter et al. with 'informational' motivations (the equivalent to the 'thinking' side of Vaughn's grid) and 'transformational' (the equivalent of 'feeling') opposed to one another. The models proposed in this article provide for varying levels of both cognitive and affective processing including situations where both can operate at optimum levels.

The main limitations of the proposed models are concerned with the macro nature of the conceptualization process. By drawing on and combining concepts



from several fields of study, detail tends to become obscured. For example, the models do not account for the lagged effects of advertising, nor do they adequately recognize any moderating or mediating effects. Moreover, more work is required in the area of definition of key concepts and in operationalizing the models for the purpose of empirical research investigation. Finally, the proposed models have yet to be tested. This is an obvious direction for future research.

Note

- 1 Known in North America as frequently purchased packaged goods, and in most other markets, as fast moving consumer goods (FMCG).

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