

- 3 Below are a number of European retail websites. After reviewing the sites, give an analysis of target market and age segmentation strategies used by these firms.
www.waf.it.mall (a weekend of shopping in Florence?)
www.one4you.be (interested in beer from Belgium?)
www.bexley.fr ('trend-resistant' shoes - French classics)
www.demon.co.uk/mace/cacmall.html (desert plants, offered in a variety of languages)
www.creor.com (high-value jewellery from Italy, priced in dollars)
www.classicengland.co.uk (Anglophile heaven - historical newspapers, teapots, etc.)
- 4 Why did baby boomers have such an important impact on consumer culture in the second half of the twentieth century?
- 5 How has the baby boomlet changed attitudes towards child-rearing practices and created demand for different products and services?
- 6 Is it practical to assume that people aged 55 and older constitute one large consumer market? What are some approaches to further segmenting this age subculture?
- 7 What are some important variables to keep in mind when tailoring marketing strategies to the elderly?
- 8 Find good and bad examples of advertising targeted at elderly consumers. To what degree does advertising stereotype the elderly? What elements of ads or other promotions appear to determine their effectiveness in reaching and persuading this group?

■ NOTES

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15. See the following set of recent articles researching how European children 'learn' to be consumers:

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 26. Scott Donaton, 'The media wakes up to Generation X', *Advertising Age* (1 February 1993): 16 (2); Laura E. Keeton, 'New magazines aim to reach (and rechristen) Generation X', *Wall Street Journal* (17 October 1994): B1.
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 34. 'Shades of grey'.
 35. 'Trends in households in the European Union: 1995–2025': 93.
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Consumption of gold and gold jewellery in Turkey

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Turkish consumers love gold and gold jewellery. While Turkey is not a major gold producing country, it constitutes one of the world's biggest gold consuming markets, ranked fifth in world demand. It is also the world's second biggest exporter of gold jewellery products after Italy. Gold jewellery is one of the fastest growing sectors in Turkey, with around 35,000 jewellers' shops scattered all over the country.

An important distinction must be made between consumption and investment demand for gold. Typically, gold bars and coins are treated as investment and jewellery as consumption items. However, the term jewellery refers to a wide range of products with different characteristics. In Western developed markets, gold jewellery is usually low carat and bought primarily for adornment purposes. In Asia and the Middle East, on the other hand, most gold jewellery is high carat, which can be easily converted back to raw gold. Thus, gold jewellery functions as both adornment and saving tools.

There are three forms of gold products in Turkey: gold bars, coins and jewellery. Gold bars are traded on the Istanbul Gold Exchange and used solely for investment. Gold coins and jewellery, however, serve multiple purposes. Gold coins, which are termed 'Republican coins' are available in five different sizes. Gold jewellery, on the other hand, comes in 14, 18 or 22-carat forms. The 14 and 18 carat items of jewellery are usually modern designs while the 22 carat jewellery is more highly valued for investment purposes. This gold jewellery includes plain bracelets - *ray bilezik* - which are among the most frequently purchased items for saving purposes. Most of the traditional designs, such as *Trabzon* and *Tel Kare*, are also 22 carat.

Turkish people use gold coins and jewellery for three different purposes: ornamentation, gift-giving and investment.

Gold jewellery adorns the bodies of many Turkish consumers. Factors such as design, size, carats and accompanying stones determine whether the jewellery is appropriate for day or night wear. Typically, smaller and simpler designs are preferred for daily use whereas larger items of gold jewellery with precious stones are worn at night and on special occasions. Moreover, women try to match the gold jewellery to the clothes

they are wearing in order to convey a particular desired self-image. Some women state that they purchase new gold jewellery when they realize that they don't possess a design that suits a particular dress. For many, gold jewellery connotes ostentation, and they believe that women wear gold jewellery for social occasions in order to show off and impress others.

Although gold coins are typically purchased for investment purposes, they might be used for self-ornamentation as well. The most common example of this is *besi bir yerde* - a special type of necklace made out of coins. Since these necklaces are 22 carats of gold, they can easily be converted into money without any loss of value. Wearing these necklaces, however, seems to be a dying tradition, confined mostly to village women.

Gold jewellery and gold coins are also given as gifts on various occasions. In Turkey, it is customary to give gold jewellery or coins as gifts to women getting engaged or married, to newborn babies, and to boys who are being circumcised. In these contexts, the gift operates as an artefact marking the role transition and signifies the strength of the bond among family members and close friends. Gold can also be an appropriate gift item for celebrating occupational events such as retirement or promotion and personally symbolic days such as birthdays or wedding anniversaries. The choice between an item of jewellery and coins as a gift depends on three factors: the existence of a traditionally appropriate gift item for a particular occasion, the intimacy of the relationship, and the taste of the giver and the receiver. For example, if the gift is for a newborn baby, then it is always a gold coin. The decision, in this case, is about the size of the coin and ultimately depends on the intimacy of the relationship. Typically, the closer the relationship is, the bigger the size of the gold coin. However, when there is no clear norm about the type of gold gift, the selection is guided by a combination of factors. For example, when the gift is to be given to a woman getting married, gold jewellery is preferred if the relationship is close and the giver is knowledgeable about the taste of the recipient. If, however, the taste of the recipient is not known, gold coins, which are standard and non-personalized items, are given.

Both gold jewellery and coins can be purchased for investment purposes. Although gold offers no rate of return or dividend apart from the potential capital gain that may result if its market price rises, its high value and easy portability renders it a prominent saving tool. Jewellery items with less craftsmanship, such as plain bracelets, are preferred as they preserve their value better and can be more easily converted into money in times of need. Consumers from lower economic classes especially prefer plain designs so that they do not pay for the craftsmanship. Consumers from the higher income groups, on the other hand, tend to select crafted models, but they prefer items that do not contain stones. However, even when gold jewellery is purchased for investment reasons, aesthetic concerns are present. These items of gold jewellery are still used for adorning the body and worn by the owner in her daily life.

Gold coins also function as an investment tool, an alternative to foreign currency or deposit accounts. Especially in rural areas where access to a bank is limited, collecting gold coins is an attractive option. They can be stored at home, and during times of personal financial difficulty or political or economic turmoil they can easily be converted into cash. The practice of

purchasing gold coins is also common in the cities. Many urban housewives engage in a social activity referred to as 'gold days'. Every two or four weeks, women meet at the house of one of the participants to drink afternoon tea and chat. Every time they meet, each brings a gold coin or money equivalent to a fraction of it. At the end of the day, the host gathers all the gold coins and money. Typically, drawing a name determines who will be the next host, and eventually all women have their turn to collect gold coins. The benefit of gold days is that they help women to save little amounts of money, and then receive a lump sum amount which they can either continue to save or spend for other needs.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What types of rituals is consumption of gold jewellery and coins a part of?
- 2 What kinds of utilitarian and symbolic motives might underlie the practice of giving gold jewellery and coins as gifts?
- 3 How might social class affect jewellery consumption?
- 4 What kind of messages do personal adornments communicate about self-identity?

Socially excluded? Low income consumers' grocery shopping behaviour¹

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Barimore is a housing estate in Scotland. It is approximately 6 kilometres from Newvale, the nearest town, and 12 kilometres from the city of Glasgow. The area has been classified as moderately deprived, based on measures of male unemployment, overcrowding, social class, car ownership and home ownership. In the past there were a number of food retailers based in the community but, over time, these have closed down due to the competitive pressures of major supermarkets and changing shopping habits. Yet none of the major supermarkets have opened stores near to the housing estate. The remaining local shops are not primarily food retailers and have a poor range of foodstuffs, which tend to be low quality (especially fruit and vegetables) and relatively expensive. There is a small supermarket and a number of small independent retailers approximately 1.5 kilometres from Barimore in Falton, which is a walkable distance for fit and healthy consumers but a bus journey away for those with limited mobility. There is a regular and reasonably reliable bus service to the community, but bus fares are perceived to be expensive and many people find it difficult to carry large amounts of shopping home on the bus, particularly people with disabilities, the elderly, those with small children or large families. As a result, some residents of Barimore feel that they have poor access to grocery stores and experience substantial constraints in acquiring the groceries that they need to provide adequately for their families.

Among the community, people have developed diverse shopping habits and some cope with their constraints better than others. Many people undertake a main grocery shopping trip to a major supermarket such as Asda or Tesco, discounters² such as Lidl or Aldi or a combination of these and specialist independent stores that offer them a satisfactory range of goods and enable them to get best value for money. Sometimes people struggle home from this shopping trip on the bus, others have an arrangement to get a lift home in a friend's, a family member's or a neighbour's car, but many people resort to taking a taxi. The latter option is expensive and has to be restricted but it is regarded as an unavoidable necessity. This main shopping trip is typically supplemented with numerous 'top-up' shopping trips,

either to local retailers or to the nearest town - Newvale - where people might undertake other shopping tasks and pick up small amounts of groceries that they are able to carry home on the bus. This pattern of shopping suits these consumers from a convenience perspective. For some, it also fits in with the periodicity of their income: they do a 'big shop' when the money comes into the household, but as it starts to run out they spend small amounts to tide them over until the next pay day or social security payment.

On the whole, residents of Barimore who shop in this way are content that the constraints they face are not too severe and that they cope adequately with them. Alison's opinion, that the shopping options are reasonably satisfactory, is quite typical:

'we have the shops down there [in Falton], which is quite good, and there's two grocers, there's quite a selection really, but I think it's a stop gap for people, they have their weekly shopping, say, in Newvale.'

However there is, of course, some variability in how well people manage. The quote below highlights how Mary copes with the difficult task of meeting the needs and wants of a family of five, including three teenage boys, on a limited income. Mary purchases foodstuffs that meet her preferred standards immediately after receiving her benefit payment, but is obliged to make compromises in the period leading up to the next payment. Asked why she bought fruit and vegetables only 'sometimes', she explained that it was due to:

'Financial reasons. I can only get a giro [social security payment] once a fortnight so I've got to get what I want, because the second week comes along and I don't have any more money.'

Mary noted that while waiting for the next benefit payment she is restricted to shopping for 'bits' from local stores but, referring to the previous week when she had spent £50 on one such trip, she emphasized that this 'top up' shopping often works out as very expensive. By contrast, Lilly, an older woman whose family has grown up and left home, is illustrative of someone who is confident and has a strong sense of control despite difficult circumstances:

'Some of the things, I could shop for at Newvale you know, I'm very thrifty. I could tell you the price of a pound of onions in that shop and a pound of onions in that shop, they are a penny dearer so we'll go in that one, that's just me, I've always lived on a budget so I've always shopped on a budget.'

The relation of grocery shopping to the experience of disadvantage is not, therefore, simply explained in terms of income. An individual's ability to cope with their circumstances and develop strategies that best serve their needs and resources is an important factor. This is not, nevertheless, a simple problem of learning to manage on a budget. People who face problems of money 'running out', often find themselves in that position because of other family members. For instance, in families with older children, parents (generally the mother) are sometimes unable to keep sufficiently tight control over the family's consumption to be able to manage the task of providing food over the period that the income has to last.

In contrast to the pattern of shopping described above, some residents of Barimore – typically people living alone and people who have more severe mobility problems – do all of their shopping at local stores. These are the most constrained consumers. They are more dissatisfied with the groceries that they are able to buy and irritated by the poor value for money at local retailers but they do not see that they have any choice because they lack the resources needed to access better retail facilities. In many instances, these are older people who have benefited from better shopping facilities in the past.

Other Barimore residents, primarily those with a car and in paid employment, acquire nearly all of their groceries on a weekly shopping trip to a major supermarket, which is more resonant of contemporary shopping habits in the wider population.

Although grocery shopping tends to be a more functional task, there are often social and personal motives that influence shopping behaviour. One of the main reasons disadvantaged consumers cite for going shopping is to 'get out of the house'. Those who view grocery shopping excursions as having a leisure dimension include other types of activities in the shopping trip, such as visits to a café where they treat themselves to some form of refreshment, be it on their own or with a friend, partner or child. Penny, a mother with three young children, one of whom required a lot of medical care, enjoys shopping as a form of 'outing':

'sometimes when I take James [son] into town we go to a café for lunch for a wee treat, for something a bit different.'

People who shop at Barimore's community-based food co-operative³ enjoy the opportunity for social interaction with other people who live in the community. John highlighted that this is particularly important for groups such as single mothers and the elderly. However, Anna comments that social interaction could be better facilitated:

'I think it should be more spread out. A lot of people like talking and meeting their friends, which is good and you get to know the people that are serving there. It could be set out better.'

Shopping is an important activity for disadvantaged consumers, as for everyone else; it is an important activity in acquiring the essential goods and services they need for their everyday life, but it is also a form of leisure and it affects people's sense of social in/exclusion in contemporary society. In particular, grocery shopping is important because of the implications for diet and health. A range of government and voluntary sector initiatives continue to seek to improve grocery shopping access for disadvantaged communities, and the related improvements in diet, but the challenge remains a substantial one.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the main constraints on residents of Barimore that influence their grocery shopping behaviour? How might restrictions differ for other low-income communities?
- 2 How do the constraints faced by consumers in Barimore influence their grocery shopping behaviour? What 'types' of shoppers are typical in this community?
- 3 The constraints experienced by consumers in this community vary in severity. Identify characteristics of consumers that experience the constraints more severely.
- 4 What public policy, voluntary sector and commercial initiatives might reduce the constraints experienced by the residents of Barimore in acquiring grocery shopping? What can individuals themselves do to cope better with the situation?

Notes

1. This case study draws on M. Piacentini, S.A. Hibbert and H. Al Dajani (2001), 'Diversity in deprivation: Exploring the grocery shopping behaviour of disadvantaged consumers', *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* 11(2): 141–58.
2. Discounters are 'no frills' retailers that offer a restricted range of products at low prices, sometimes selling only in bulk.

3. The community-based food co-operative is a local government funded retail initiative staffed by volunteers from Barimore. The co-op sells fruit and vegetables in Barimore's community centre twice a week.

Further reading

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Scenes from the lives of Athenian mothers and daughters

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Michaela, Danae and Artemis live in Kifissia, a prosperous suburb in northern Athens with lovely apartment houses and villas, and elegant designer shops, within 30 minutes' drive of the centre of Athens and the upmarket shopping district of Kolonaki.

Michaela, at nearly two years old, already has very strong views about some aspects of consumption, particularly her clothing, which is chosen for her by her mother, Danae. She wears little T-shirts with trousers or dungarees for playtime in the morning; and dresses when going out to social gatherings and events. Michaela has already developed a sense for colour coordination and she has strong preferences with regard to her clothes (there are some clothes she refuses to wear and others that she cannot wait to put on). Sometimes in the mornings she checks her appearance in the mirror, looking closely at what she is wearing; she is also really delighted when someone compliments her on her outfits. As Michaela has got older she has been increasingly involved in choosing what to wear each day. Michaela is especially picky about her shoes and will not let anyone else choose which pair she wears. Each morning she stands in front of the cupboard where all her shoes are stored and picks out a pair herself; each time she chooses those that match her clothes. She particularly loves a pair of shoes that are identical to a pair her mother Danae owns; Michaela feels very proud each time they wear their matching shoes.

Michaela loves going to the park every day with her grandmother, Artemis – playing on the rides and in the sand. She has a favourite hat that she puts on to go to the park, a round pink and white one, which her father bought for her. Usually she ends the day completely worn out – and yet always surprises everyone by how much she revives after a good night's sleep and at seven o'clock every morning is always raring to go again – starting with breakfast of warm milk, followed at around nine o'clock by fruit (pears, bananas and strawberries are her favourite), orange juice and a piece of her favourite baby biscuit. She has her main meal around one o'clock, then a substantial snack (yogurt or baby porridge) at five o'clock and her milk at bedtime.

Michaela has already developed some strong preferences about food. There are some things that she

just loves (fish, meat, brown bread, fresh salads, cooked vegetables, lentils, parmesan cheese, olive oil, baby porridge, yogurt) – and some things she is much less keen on (beans, eggs). Michaela has started to develop a real taste for Greek delicacies, and her grandmother's home-made moussaka, pastichio, oven lasagne (pasta with lots of different types of cheese, mushrooms and fresh cream) and pasticciada (spaghetti with red sauce and beef), are now some of her favourite dishes. However, she still has not developed a taste for feta cheese – and continues to pull a horrible face when she finds herself eating some by mistake. Michaela has a strong preference for certain brands or varieties of food, e.g. bananas and milk. She seems able to spot subtle differences in taste between the varieties, which makes her love one type and refuse to eat the others. Even though other members of the family cannot discern any difference, when shopping they choose these products according to her preferences.

Danae, a first-time mother in her late twenties, is a member of generation X. She worked hard after Michaela's birth to get fit again. Before Michaela was born she had read a lot about new babies, and after Michaela's arrival she continued to check with her paediatrician, the *Mother and Baby* book which she had come to rely on, her friends who were themselves young mothers, and her own mother, Artemis. She was very careful with Michaela's diet, as well as her own – and tried to make sure Michaela did not eat chocolates and sweet things. She had watched her own diet very carefully while she was pregnant. When she was expecting Michaela Danae had eaten fish twice a week and red meat regularly; drunk a litre of milk every day; and always eaten lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. She had avoided soft cheeses (because of fears of listeria); undercooked eggs; raw or undercooked meat (because of fears of salmonella) and some processed foods such as pâté, salami and prosciutto (which had always been one of her favourites). She had abstained from alcohol, cut down on coffee (allowing herself only one cup a day, which had at first been difficult to accept); cut out tea (because it prevented the absorption of iron) as well as biscuits and cakes; and had avoided parsley, raspberry tea and mango since they all seemed to be associated

with miscarriage. She had continued to watch her diet carefully, especially in the first year whilst she was still breastfeeding Michaela. She didn't reintroduce alcohol into her diet until Michaela was fully weaned, and still only allows herself one cup of coffee a day. Danae and her husband also reduced to a minimum their own consumption of soft drinks, chips, toffees, cakes and chocolate. They both thought this was necessary to set Michaela a good example.

There had been many things to prepare and buy before Michaela was born - lots of little Babygros and outfits, as well as equipment, such as a cot, pram, baby carrier, baby bath, baby monitor and a buggy that turned into a car seat (which would be ideal for trips out). As first-time parents, Danae and her husband did not know what they would need once the baby arrived, and they ended up buying far more things than they needed, as they realized later on. They started by visiting two well-known large baby stores and getting their catalogues. It took a number of visits to both stores, while Danae was still pregnant, to tick off all the items on their (continuously expanding) shopping list.

One of Danae's pleasures, after Michaela was born, was going shopping for a new wardrobe for herself, and new clothes for Michaela. Even though she had managed to get back to her pre-pregnancy figure, Danae needed the reinvigoration and the self-pampering feeling that new clothes seem to bring. Managing to maintain her femininity along with her new image as a young mother was challenging but important to her. She also now needed two different sets of outfits. As a professional woman she needed a couple of new trouser suits with some tops for the office; and as a mother she needed lots of smart casual clothes which looked appropriate in the park as well as on the high street. For the first time in her life she discovered the advantages of in-wash stain removers to cope with the fruit juice stains which seemed to be attracted to her clothing whatever she did... and however careful she was.

Artemis is just about to celebrate her 50th birthday and is a baby boomer. She spends a lot of time with her granddaughter, Michaela, so she has also had to adjust her wardrobe to take account of days spent in the park and at the swimming pool with her. She recently bought a number of smart casual clothes and flat everyday shoes; she found this change to her wardrobe quite reinvigorating. Artemis is an 'empty nest parent'. She had missed Danae a lot when her daughter had first gone off to university abroad, but Artemis had had no real difficulty in filling her time. She had always been very active with charity and social work, and with more time to spare she was able to devote more time to these activities - she discovered she had a real knack

for management and organization, and enjoyed running fund-raising and social events in Athens.

Artemis also absolutely loves throwing parties at home: she enjoys all the preparation that goes into it, organizing the house for guests, planning the menu and doing some of the cooking, if not all (depending on the number of guests each time). She and her husband frequently organize dinner parties for 4-8 guests but also quite a few big parties for 30-50 guests every year. Even now that caring for Michaela takes a lot of her time, she still enjoys them; they are just a bit more challenging to organize.

Artemis and her husband belong to a social club which meets each week. There are numerous social activities organized by the club every month (guest lectures, visits to exhibitions, visits to archaeological sites, etc.). They also love classical music and they enjoy going to Lyriki Skini (the Opera House), Megaro Moussikis (the concert hall) and Herodion in the summer (the ancient open theatre at the centre of Athens, directly below the Acropolis).

One of the things Artemis missed when Danae went away was going shopping with her daughter - one of their treats when they have a chance is to spend time together shopping. They love the shops in Kolonaki but they do most of their shopping in Kifissia and in the centre of Athens, such as in the busy Ermou street. When it comes to clothes, Artemis prefers to shop at a couple of stores she really likes, where they know her and she gets good personalized service. Still, she enjoys window shopping and does go to different stores for the odd item or for shoes and accessories.

Artemis does all her food shopping locally, working from a shopping list, but also responding to what foodstuffs are seasonal, fresh and available. There is an excellent market close to where she lives where she can buy fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as meat and fish. There is also a big supermarket close to home. They eat a lot of fish - usually grilled with herbs and served with salad. Fresh salads and cooked vegetables are always part of their daily menu.

A significant aspect of shopping activities for Artemis is gift shopping. Gift-giving is an important ritual in the Greek society and one that needs a big investment of time, effort and money. Artemis in principle enjoys buying gifts but sometimes gets a bit overwhelmed; there are quite a few gift-giving occasions every year: gifts are exchanged at Christmas; Easter; and also on birthdays and name-days (the feast day of a saint whose name one has). This makes choosing and giving gifts an all-year round activity and, due to the number of gifts that need to be bought each time, an activity that needs to be planned carefully.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe and assess the key consumer socialization factors identified in the case.
- 2 What intergenerational influences on consumer behaviour can you identify from this case study?
- 3 Compare and contrast the different sets of beliefs, motivations and values associated with baby boomer and generation X consumers, and their respective influences on patterns of consumption. Examine similar sets of consumers in your own country - identify and evaluate similarities and differences between baby boomer and generation X consumers in your society with the Greek examples given in the case.
- 4 Discuss the rituals and occasions associated with gift-giving in Greece. Compare these gift-giving rituals and occasions with your own country context.

Consuming across borders: four vignettes

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The once unique products, images and perceptions of Paris and its small chic shops, the diamonds of Amsterdam, Belgian chocolate, Swiss watches, German cars and London's bespoke tailors, are becoming increasingly accessible to all European consumers. The economic, political, legislative and social harmonization among the EU member states has led to the ever-increasing mobility of inter-European travellers, with many migrants living and working abroad. For some this move is more long term than for others. Whatever their consumption patterns, choice and competition are being reshaped and reconstructed with the creation of a 'truly' European, or even 'global', consumer. In an attempt to illustrate this new type of shopper, we present four vignettes portraying the expansion and progression of the consumption process.¹ The first provides the example of a household from the UK choosing to live indefinitely in another European country. The second explores the impact of consumption patterns on 'weekenders', who represent an ever-growing segment of affluent consumers that is taking an ever-increasing number of short break holidays abroad every year. The third case is about the consumption patterns of an international student who is only staying for a limited period of time in the UK. The final vignette reflects on the consumption process of two foreign-born long-term residents of the UK.

VIGNETTE 1

Going native: Roger and Miriam

Over the past ten years a clear trend has emerged whereby increasing numbers of English households have decided to uproot and relocate to sunnier European climes. Like many, Roger and Miriam, now in their fifties, with their son finishing his postgraduate studies at university, decided to leave the doom and gloom of the UK for sunny Spain. Roger was a successful management consultant and Miriam was a homemaker. Having secured their pension position, they decided to make the most of the upbeat situation in the UK housing market by paying off their mortgage and downsizing, which would better suit their new lifestyle in retirement.

After many holidays and much deliberation, they finally decided to settle abroad, in the south of Spain on the Costa Blanca. Their original idea was to be close to an airport, not too far south because of fear of the intense summer heat, and not too close to other English families (in order to distance themselves from the cliché of 'Brits abroad'). Initially they didn't really consider issues such as language; local amenities such as hospitals, retail provision and leisure activities; the cost of living and potential job opportunities. It was very difficult for them to evaluate the extent to which they would need and use such services.

'Blinded by the sun' and the excitement of the new, they quickly bought a house, but resold it within their first year abroad. They then went on to buy what they really wanted, not what the Spanish estate agent thought they wanted: he had concentrated on a holiday home whereas they had wanted a property as a permanent home. Consumption of staple goods, such as groceries, was originally expensive as they tended to buy from familiar outlets and favourite brands. At this stage they felt that their lifestyle and consumption patterns were more enjoyable back in the UK. At home in England they could use the internet in English for many aspects of their daily consumption (e.g. food, banking, ticket reservations). In Spain they realized how big the language barrier was for them. With time, they went through a consumer resocialization process, learning anew about products, services, brands and places. At this point they started to realize the true potential of their new location. After about a year and a half, they realized that they had made the right choice. Rather than cutting links with their 'previous' lives, they successfully integrated aspects of their 'old' consumption patterns with the new. They still buy English newspapers, but also purchase local newspapers as well. They installed satellite TV so that they could keep up with news and programmes from the UK. They now feel much more settled, relying on their son, and a few 'holidays' back in the UK every year, to stock up on special treats and products for which there are no substitutes available locally.

VIGNETTE 2**The weekenders: Davina**

A new generation of regular travellers has emerged as a result of the availability of cheap fares with low-cost airlines, combined with the opening of local airports which are convenient and offer an increasing number of routes for city-based and traditional holidays all year around. Davina, a widow in her late fifties, lives in a small town in the north of England. She enjoys travelling regularly, 6-8 times a year, with a close-knit group of friends. Davina is a member of the Women's Institute, has two daughters with their own families, is financially secure, has a permanent job as an office manager and owns her own house. As she is IT literate, she has the technical knowledge to access travel information and book flights and accommodation online in advance. She does not have a large budget but is well organized and benefits from the support of her close group of friends travelling with her (group prices). Davina enjoys culture and festivals, food and drink, fashion and meeting new people. She likes busy European capitals and short-break destinations. Davina feels that she deserves regular treats as she has worked hard all her life and now has only herself to take care of. She is aware that in the future, as she gets older, she will probably not be able to do as much so she really wants to enjoy life to the full while she still can.

While Davina can afford the costs of travel, she is restricted in terms of what souvenirs she can bring back. First of all, she does not speak any foreign languages and sometimes finds it difficult to get what she wants from shopkeepers. In addition, it is never the same spending in foreign currency as it seems like using 'Monopoly money'. Second, she is restricted by the small weight allowance of budget airlines across Europe, and has to remember to buy from Duty Free stores items that have been pre-ordered. What she really enjoys is bringing home stories and anecdotes that she can share with others. For example, she laughs at her behaviour or purchases in some situations and reflects that she would never do that at home (such as bargaining). She likes travelling with her close-knit group of friends as she feels the responsibility and stress of travelling is taken away from her.

VIGNETTE 3**Overseas student: Frederick**

The British education system attracts an increasing number of overseas students. The UK has a long-established reputation as a multicultural society, with images of warm beer, fish and chips, bad food, the Royal Family, Manchester United and the Beatles. Fredrick is

a student from Sweden studying Marketing. He comes from a small business school outside Stockholm. This is the first time that he has lived on his own outside the family home. He is only in the UK for one term. He lives on campus and arrived with two suitcases and without any private transport. Fredrick has a scholarship and also works in the local pub two evenings a week to help pay for his social life and learn more about the (in)famous British 'pub' culture. His room is a re-creation of his bedroom at home with photographs of friends and family and posters of Sweden.

As a student, Fredrick has come as much for the educational experience as he has for the consumption of what he refers to as 'quintessential Englishness'. He is, however, in constant contact with home and his close circle of friends. As he is not familiar with many types of stores and products available in the UK, he buys what he needs on a daily basis. He does not stockpile as he may have an opportunity to go out somewhere at short notice and his purchases are largely driven by the activities he undertakes. Fredrick borrows wherever possible from other 'local' friends so that he can take part in a variety of activities, e.g. squash racket, waterproof clothing, camping equipment.

Although his social life is important to him, he feels a certain responsibility to perform well so that his marks will be accepted by his Swedish university.

He does not spend much time in his room. He does not try to understand all the local products and brands, for example he always sends home for his usual medicines when he catches a cold. He compares prices and quality but does not purchase very often. He meets up regularly with other Swedes and goes with them to visit all the historical attractions. He likes trying local food specialities. As he is independent for the first time he is also keen to bring back home evidence of his own personal development.

VIGNETTE 4**Semi-permanent residency: Nathan and Leyla**

With the enlargement of the EU and the Common Market, job opportunities are now available across the entire region. An increasing number of European expats now live all over the UK for medium-term periods. Nathan was born in the south of France, where he got his degree in Economics, and decided, once he had completed his undergraduate studies, that it was time to see the world. He registered for a Masters' degree in the UK and was subsequently offered a scholarship to do a Ph.D. Having established a social network of contacts within UK universities he was offered a short-term

contract as a lecturer. He got married to a fellow overseas student (Leyla from Turkey) and they bought a house while they were expecting their first child. While they are still discovering many aspects of life in their new country (e.g. NHS, taxes, DIY, guarantees, white goods, credit cards) they are now very used to what to expect and how to get a good deal as they have now lived in the UK for nearly ten years. They are nearly perfectly fluent in the consumption patterns and practices of both their countries of origin and of the UK. They see themselves as demanding consumers, comparing both price and quality and taking advantage of all three countries' systems (e.g. running a continental car so that they do not have to have an MOT; also a continental car makes it more difficult to be traced for parking tickets). The patterns of consumption have adapted the longer they have stayed in the UK. They now regularly have takeaway meals and buy most of their everyday needs (clothes, poster art, furniture) through local retailers or online. They rely on a close group of UK friends for advice when they need it. Some specific purchases, mainly food, they delay until they have the opportunity to go home. They also do not hesitate to fly home for specific needs, such as visiting their own dentist. However, they are not engaged in the local community as much as they might be, and this leaves them feeling slightly outside of things when there are political campaigns or national debates (such as about the Iraq war). They also have problems because they always tend to think that the quality of all goods is better at home, for example, that clothes in France and Turkey really fit better, and that there is more choice. Leyla's size is smaller than the average UK size and she has problems finding things to fit every time she goes shopping for clothes. It is also harder to find clothes made from natural fibres in the UK. Nathan tries to recreate French home comforts by installing mixer taps for the kitchen sink, for example, rather than freezing or burning his hands each time he tries to rinse the plates when he is doing the washing up after dinner. Even after ten years he still finds it hard to adapt to certain social norms. They both like drinking, but prefer drinking wine with food at a local restaurant rather than going to their local pub. They hope to leave one day and retire to a place the sun.

QUESTIONS

- 1 To what extent are we all 'global' consumers now?
- 2 Discuss the extent to which consumption patterns are culturally innate, and the extent to which they are (or can be) adapted through experiences of the host culture. Identify and evaluate the factors which influence the consumer resocialization processes experienced by these different groups of consumers.
- 3 To what extent is the consumption experience of place, culture and art becoming increasingly important within contemporary consumer culture?
- 4 Discuss the potential effect of global diasporas on consumer identity and self-concept.

Note

1. The vignettes were compiled from a series of short interviews conducted by the authors.

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Advertising targeted towards children: are the legal controls effective? The case of Belgium

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In February 2001, during its presidency of the European Community, Sweden argued in favour of a complete ban in the European Community on advertising targeted towards children. Although the Swedish position did not meet with the other EU members' approval, in Belgium it triggered off new debates about the need to control advertising directed at children. This issue is not new and advertising restrictions have already been implemented in some European countries. Two types of restrictions exist: those that control ad content (for example: children can only play a 'passive role' in ads for sweets in Finland) and those that restrict ad placement (ban on ads during children's programmes in Austria; ban on toy ads between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. in Greece, etc.). In the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, advertising was rapidly forbidden for five minutes before and five minutes after children's programmes (the so-called 'five minutes' rule). The French-speaking part of Belgium recently adopted the same measure. This raises the question: are such ad placement restrictions really efficient? If the objective of such measures is to avoid possible confusion between an ad and the surrounding or next programme (that may have very similar formats), it makes sense. However, from an ad effectiveness point of view, placement restrictions could be questioned. Indeed, is an advertisement more efficient if it appears during or around children's programmes rather than during or around family programmes, as suggested by the 'five minutes' rule (to the extent that children also watch family programmes)? In order to provide answers to these questions, two experiments were conducted.

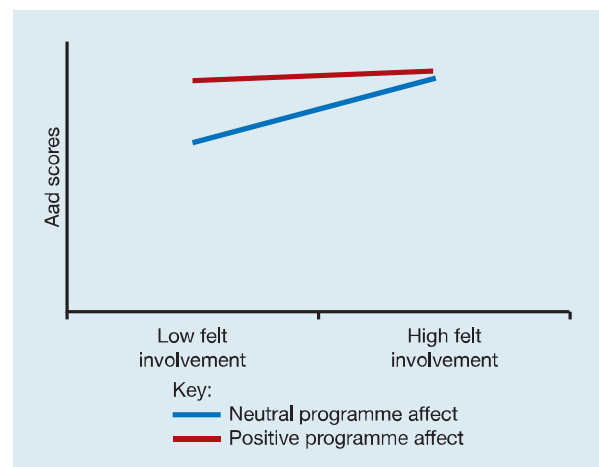
STUDY 1

The first experiment focused on the affect (mood) generated by the programme and on its impact on the effectiveness of a TV ad. Two mood-generating TV programmes were selected: *The Flintstones* was chosen on the basis that it generated a positive mood, and a programme teaching children how to recycle plastic was selected as a neutral mood inducer. One hundred and eighty-one children aged from 8 to 12 participated in all sessions of the experiment (a prior session consisted of assessing participants' cognitive age, knowledge and enduring involvement in the test product class). For the

main session, upon their arrival children had to take part in a mood-neutralizing task, followed by instructions which manipulated involvement in the ads (either high or low). One of the two programmes was then broadcast, and was interrupted by a string of commercials. A new advertisement for a new brand of biscuits targeted at children (but unknown to Belgian children) was used as the test ad.¹ It was placed first and last in a pod (collection) made of five ads targeted at children. Immediately after exposure to the ads, children had to complete measurement scales for ad attitude (Aad), brand attitude (Ab), brand beliefs, purchase intent and brand choice. In this research, the key constructs were all measured by multiple-item scales especially developed for children and recently published.

The results showed that programmes which generated positive affect (feelings) lead to more positive ad evaluations when compared with programmes that generated a neutral affect, although this was not true for brand evaluations. As far as the interaction effect is concerned, it means (see Figure 1) that the impact of positive affect (feelings) on ad evaluations is much clearer in the case of low felt involvement than in the case of high felt involvement. In other words, ad scores increase more when going from neutral to positive

Figure 1 Interaction between programme affect and felt involvement



affect in the case of low felt involvement rather than in the case of high felt involvement.

Regressions were computed and showed that Aad was always a good predictor of Ab. The relationship between Aad and Ab is thus significant irrespective of the level of felt involvement. Additional and classic variables such as brand beliefs add nothing to the explanation of brand attitude when Aad is already in the model, even in the case of high felt involvement (whereas brand beliefs are usually highly significant among adults in the case of high felt involvement). In conclusion, the impact of Aad illustrates how affective variables and processes dominate among children exposed to commercials. This last result actually supports what others (Phelps and Hoy 1996; Derbaix and Bree 1997; Moore-Shay and Lutz 2000) have shown concerning the way children process and are persuaded by ads. This process is mainly affective, children 'reacting' to the ad and to its executional features, much more than analysing it.

STUDY 2

The second experiment aimed at achieving a better understanding of the role that programmes could play on ad effectiveness, when the programmes are varied along different dimensions. In that respect, two programme-related variables were used. The first one, 'programme liking',² is measured in this research by two items (dealing with the extent to which children liked/enjoyed the programme and to what extent they would like to watch it again). The second one is the target of the programme: the child versus the family. After a pre-study,³ three programmes were selected: *The Simpsons* (a programme liked by children and targeted at them); *Star Academy* (a programme liked by children and targeted at the family); and the *News* (a programme not liked by children and targeted at the family⁴).

One hundred and twenty-six⁵ children aged from 8 to 12 participated in the experiment which took place in schools (children were interviewed one at a time in a small room equipped with a TV monitor). Upon arrival in the room, a mood measure was taken before children were told they would watch a TV programme and that questions would be asked afterwards (no mention of the ads was made to either of the groups). About ten minutes of the programme were broadcast (except to the control group where no programme was shown) followed by a string of commercials announced by a jingle. After the first ad (first test ad), the TV was turned off in order to ask questions about the thoughts generated by the ad and ad attitude. The TV was then turned on again and the commercial break resumed. The last ad of the sequence was the second test ad about which questions were asked immediately. Then the

children watched the second part of the programme, and this was followed by questions about the programme (programme liking and familiarity with this programme) and brand attitude. The children were then debriefed and thanked for their participation.

After some manipulation checks on programme liking, we compared the average scores obtained for both ad and brand attitude (for the two test ads). While the results do not show significant effects for brand attitudes (which may not be that surprising given the fact that the brands were known brands), interesting conclusions can be drawn for the ad attitude. Indeed, comparisons of means show that the ad evaluations are significantly more positive in the case of a programme not liked by children (the *News*) than in the case of the two programmes liked by children (*Star Academy* and *The Simpsons*). No significant difference is obtained, however, between these last two programmes.

Table 1 Study 2 - average aad

Group	Aad first ad	Aad last ad
<i>Star Academy</i> (liked) n = 35	16.66	18.00
<i>Simpsons</i> (liked) n = 32	16.66	17.94
<i>News</i> (disliked) n = 29	18.41	20.07
Control group n = 31	18.90	19.06

Aad scores range from 6 to 24.

What does this suggest? If we refer to the 'five minutes' rule implemented in Belgium, the results of Study 2 tend to suggest that such a rule is inefficient to the extent that it does not target the programmes around which the ads are the most efficient. Ads are indeed not more efficient in programmes targeted at children. They are more efficient around programmes that children do not like because in that particular case a contrast effect may operate between programmes and ads. Children seem to be 'relieved' to be watching something else.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Do you think that these two studies really answer the question about the relevancy of the 'five minutes' rule which was recently implemented in Belgium? Why?
- 2 Write down the design used in Study 2. What are the pros and cons of such a design?

- 3 What are the main arguments against and in favour of the Swedish position advocating a complete ban of advertising targeting children in the European Community?
- 4 Discuss the attitudes to advertising to children in your country.

Notes

1. The ad came from Switzerland where it was regularly aired.
2. And 'non weariness'.
3. About 40 children were interviewed about what they usually watched on TV and what they liked.
4. Even though children do not like the *News*, in many families children are in the room with their parents when the *News* is

broadcast. Therefore, they are passively exposed to this programme.

5. After removing incomplete questionnaires.

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Port wine: ruby, tawny, white and the premiums

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Port is a fortified wine named after Porto, the second-largest Portuguese city, from where it has traditionally been shipped. However, port begins its life in the Douro valley which starts some 100 km east of Porto (or Oporto in its anglicized form), and extends as far as the Spanish border. The valley is an administratively demarcated region where an estimated 30,000 farmers grow what is considered to be one of the great wines of the world.

The three most popular styles of port are ruby, tawny and white. The first is a young wine, somewhat full-bodied and fruity, with an open red colour. It is usually bottled after three years' ageing in wood and it is ready to drink immediately. It is usually consumed after dinner as a dessert wine. It goes very well with cheese, chocolate and dried fruits. Tawny is also a red wine but is aged longer than ruby. The wine becomes smoother, and acquires a brownish and lighter style. Tawny is considered the most 'versatile' of ports: it can be appreciated both as a dessert wine and as an aperitif (preferably chilled). In this case it goes very well with pâté, smoked ham and nuts. White port is, as its name suggests, made only with white grapes, and can be sweet or dry. After ageing usually 3–5 years in concrete vats, it is consumed chilled as an aperitif or summer drink. A good example is Portonic, a long drink made up of equal parts of white port and tonic water, served over ice with a slice of lemon.

In addition to these basic types, there are several special categories which correspond to the premium wines. Their prices are much higher than for a standard port. This is because their quality in terms of flavour and colour is better. However, there are also other reasons.

Firstly, the maturation process is longer and more complex, which tends to increase cost. Secondly, there are intangible aspects related to port: history and culture. In fact, a bottle of port not only includes wine in the strictest sense: it also embodies the history of port, which, in many respects, is linked to the history of Portugal over the past four centuries. And it also carries all of the social, cultural and geographical factors related to the environment of the Douro valley, a region that was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO. This means that when setting the price of port, especially premium ports, the shipping houses know that consumers value such intangible aspects.

Vintage, late bottled vintage and port with an indication of age are some of the best categories of port. The aristocrat of the wines is vintage port since it is produced with grapes of an outstanding year. It is bottled two years after the harvest and it matures in the bottle thereafter. Ten years is generally the absolute minimum, but 15 or 20 years might be needed. Vintage port and cheese are considered to have been created to be consumed together. An excellent example of this is the most classic and British combination: Stilton and Vintage.

Late bottled vintage (LBV) is also port of a single year but with a lower quality than vintage. It is bottled between the fourth and the sixth year after the harvest. New-style LBVs (which are becoming the majority) are filtered before bottling, and do not need further maturation in the bottle. Enjoy it during a meal, for example, with roasted duck or as a dessert wine with a wide range of chocolate of different textures.

Port with an indication of age can be 10, 20 or 30 years old or, rarely, over 40 years old. These ages, it should be noted, are average ages, and the old wines in the blend gain enormously from being refreshed by the addition of younger wine. These wines are aged in the cask and should not be further aged in the bottle. Ten-year-old port is fresh and fruity; the older ports

Table 1 Average port prices in 2004

Types of Port	Average Price (euros/litre)
<i>Standard port</i>	
Ruby	3.50
Tawny	3.49
White	3.67
<i>Special categories</i>	
Vintage	17.83
LBV*	6.81
With indication of age	11.84
*LBV = Late Bottled Vintage	

Source: Port and Douro Wines Institute.

are progressively nuttier, with less overt fruit. These ports are particularly pleasant when accompanying fresh fruit, light puddings, ice creams and not very rich cakes. They are also splendid as a digestive after coffee, when one enjoys the contentment that follows a good meal.

PORT TRADE

Although port is produced in the Douro valley, only a very small amount is shipped from there. In fact, almost all port produced in the valley is transported during the spring following the vintage to Porto where shippers' lodges are located. On arriving there, the wine is analysed in laboratories, tasted and classified. Then it matures for at least three years before being ready for commercialization.

There are dozens of shipping houses. Some of them are descendants of old British families established in Porto in the early seventeenth century. Croft (est. 1678), Warre & Co. (est. 1670) and Taylor, Fladgate & Yeatman (est. 1692) are examples of firms over 300 years old. Alongside the houses owned by the British families, there are important Portuguese-owned companies such as Real Companhia Velha and Ferreira. Some multinationals related to the drinks business have also taken a position in the sector. This is the case with Gran Cruz, owned by the multinational Martiniquaise, and Cockburn, owned by Allied Lyons.

Traditionally, nationality differences have been connected with distinct market orientations. In general, the Portuguese sector has dominated the home market along with very strong positions in France and Belgium. On the other hand, the British shippers have dominated the after-dinner segment, where quality and brand prestige are important factors in consumers' preferences. The United Kingdom is the largest market for premium ports, though in recent years this segment has grown considerably in some other countries such as the United States and Canada.

THE MARKETS

Although port is shipped to more than 100 countries, its sales are highly concentrated in just a few markets. The top three (France, Portugal and the United Kingdom) account for more than 50 per cent of total sales.

Each market has its own characteristics, and it is interesting to note that the top three countries are representative of distinct patterns of consumer behaviour.

France is the leading market. In 2004 it accounted for almost a quarter of total sales of port. Its profile is very typical: consumers are in general interested in cheap and young ports, and have little or no brand loyalty. Most trade is conducted via distributors who retail under their

Table 2 Port trade in 2004

Markets	Sales		Price
	10 ³ euros	%	Euros/litre
France	92,525	23.1	3.50
Portugal	62,476	15.6	4.82
United Kingdom	55,270	13.8	5.14
Netherlands	50,624	12.7	3.31
Belgium	39,694	9.9	3.68
USA	29,861	7.5	7.88
Canada	18,986	4.7	8.39
Germany	9,822	2.5	3.75
Denmark	6,846	1.7	4.82
Spain	5,672	1.4	4.45
Others	28,248	7.1	4.51
Total	400,024	100.0	4.31

Source: Port and Douro Wines Institute.

own labels. In general, price is the critical factor in securing contracts. For the shipping house, this means uncertainty about orders, low profit margins, and minimal influence over the market.

In contrast to France, the United Kingdom, the third top market, is the largest market for premium ports. Special categories of port represent the majority of the total volume consumed there. Although vintage is considered to be the symbol of the British market, consumers are now moving towards lighter ports such as old tawny. For this reason, most shippers have launched new types of port in this segment – e.g. Cockburn's Special Reserve Tawny, Graham's 40-year-old tawny, and Croft's Distinction. But even these more standard ports have, in general, very good quality. As a result, their price is higher than the average price of standard ports shipped to France. Nevertheless, a significant part of port distributed in the UK is under the purchasers' own label, which reduces, to some extent, the shippers' control over the market.

Portugal, the second leading market accounting for 15.6 per cent of total sales, is neither a low quality nor a premium market. Consumers tend to prefer standard quality ports, particularly tawny and white port. Shippers' well-known brands have had a major impact on consumer preferences, although recent cases of heavy advertising and aggressive discounts have also succeeded in influencing consumer preferences.

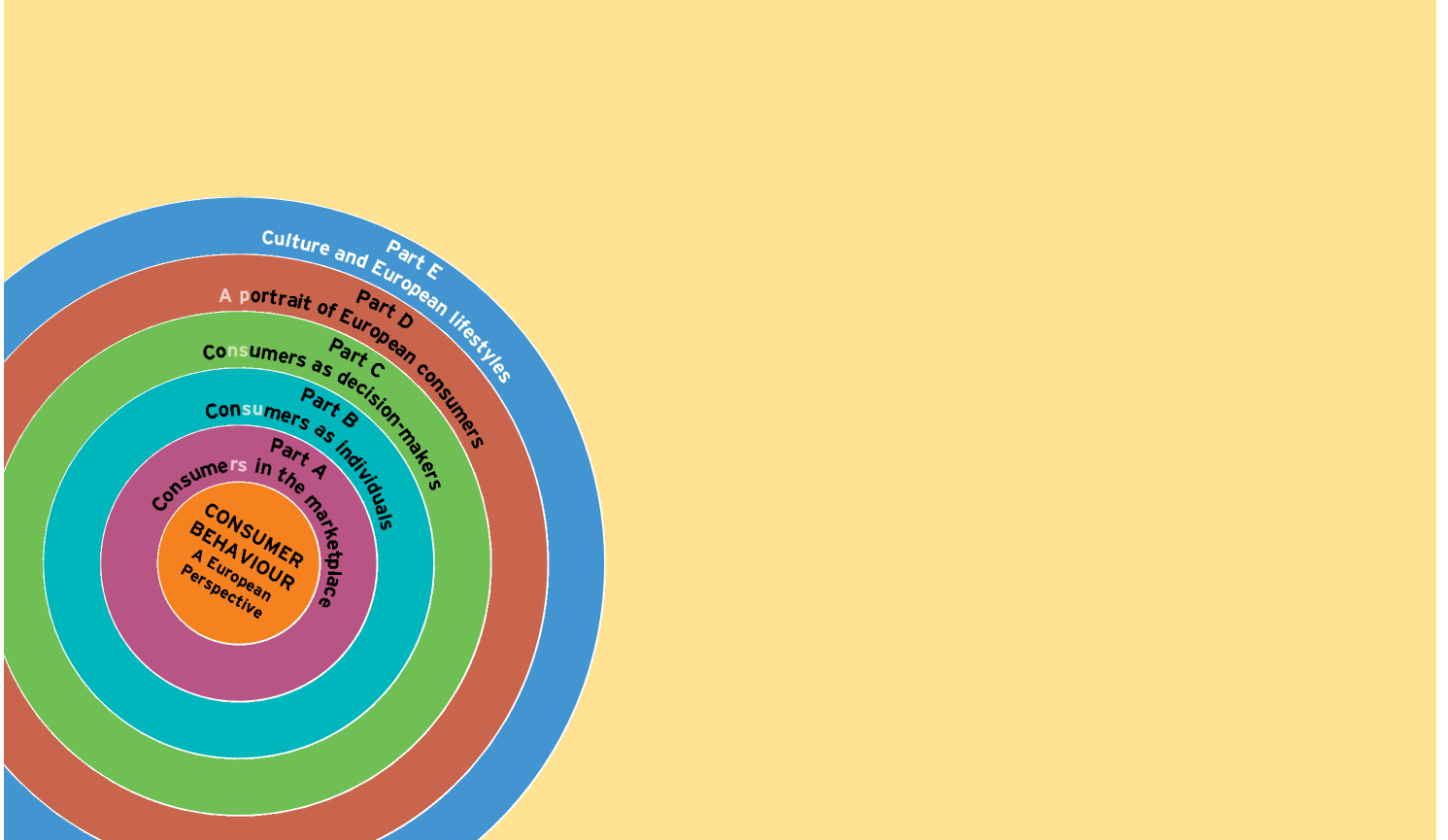
Each market for port has its own different characteristics. One of the idiosyncrasies of the Portuguese market has to do with the reasons for buying port. A significant part of buying is for gift-giving

inasmuch as it is common to give a bottle of port on special occasions such as anniversaries, parties and, especially, at Christmas. This fact has important consequences. Almost every family has at least one bottle of port at home – but did not buy it. Rather, it was given by someone else. This means that for a majority of consumers, the port they drink was chosen by someone else. Marketing strategies are affected by this fact. For instance, bottles, cases and labels are designed to take into account that in most instances port is bought as a gift. A good example of this is the form of the exterior packaging. Quite often bottles of port are sold inside a wooden or paper box. In addition to being a protective covering, its objective is to create promotional value since consumers tend to pay more for the appearance and prestige of better packages. But there is another interesting aspect. Square cases are more valued than round cases – because it is easier to wrap a square case.

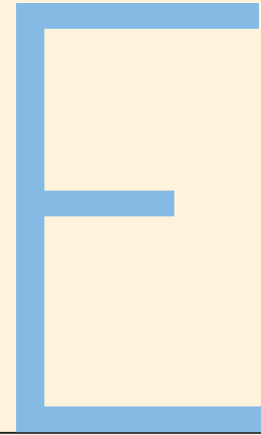
France, Portugal and the United Kingdom are just three out of dozens of markets for port. In each one, consumer behaviour is different. This is undoubtedly one of the major challenges faced by the companies that produce and trade port: a great product but with many offerings.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the factors which influence product evaluation and choice in this case study?
- 2 Assume you are a marketing manager for the Portuguese market of a large port shipping house. Suggest some guidelines for an ad to promote a standard white port.
- 3 Use the port wine case to illustrate the concept of glocalization.
- 4 Discuss how you might market port in your own country.



CULTURE AND EUROPEAN LIFESTYLES



The final part of this book considers consumers as members of a broad cultural system. Chapter 14 starts this part by examining some of the basic building blocks of culture and consumption, and shows how consumer behaviours and culture are constantly interacting with each other. Chapter 15 looks at the production of culture, and how the 'gatekeepers' of culture help shape our sense of fashion and consumer culture. Chapter 16 focuses on the importance of understanding consumers' lifestyles throughout Europe, and illustrates the lifestyle concept and its marketing applications with a discussion of food, drink and cars. Finally, in Chapter 17 we look at some new perspectives on consumers' behaviour, including environmentalism, postmodernism and globalization. We try to place our western European consumer behaviour into the larger context of the global marketplace. These reflections on social changes in consumption bring our study of consumer behaviour into the new millennium.

14

Culture and consumer behaviour

15

Cultural change processes

16

Lifestyles and European cultures

17

New times, new consumers

Case studies
15-20

CULTURE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

14

chapter



It's Thursday night, 7.30. Sean puts down the phone after speaking with Colum, his study partner in his consumer behaviour class. The weekly night out for the Irish marketing students has begun! Sean has just spent the summer months travelling in Europe. He was always amazed, and delighted, to find a place claiming to be an Irish pub – regardless of how unauthentic the place was, an Irish pub always sold Guinness, a true symbol of Ireland, he reflected. Sean had begun to drink when he started university. Initially, bottled beers straight from the fridge had been his preference. However, now that he's in his third year and a more sophisticated, travelled and rounded person, he feels that those beers

were just a little too – well, fashionable. He has thus recently begun to drink Guinness. His dad, uncle and grandad, in fact most of the older men he knows, drink Guinness. That day in consumer behaviour the lecturer had discussed the 'Guinness Time' TV commercial which had been run the previous year. It featured a young man doing a crazy dance around a settling pint of Guinness. The young man saved his most crazed expression for the point when he took his first sip. The lecturer had pointed out that the objectives of the ad were to associate Guinness with fun – an important reason why young people drink alcohol – and to encourage them to be patient with the stout, as a good pint takes a number of minutes to settle.¹

Sean has arranged to meet his friends in the local pub at 8.30. They will order 'three pints of the finest black stuff' and then have their own Guinness ritual. To begin, they watch it being poured and then look for the rising rings of the head – the best indication of a good pint. Once settled, a small top-up, and then ready for action. But they always wait and study their glasses before taking the first mouthful together – what a thing of beauty!

DAMIEN MCLOUGHLIN, University College, Dublin, Ireland

■ CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION

Consumption choices cannot be understood without considering the cultural context in which they are made: culture is the 'prism' through which people view products and try to make sense of their own and other people's consumer behaviour.

Sean's beer-drinking reflects his desire to associate with and dissociate from (with help from the media and marketers) a certain style, attitude and trendiness. Being an Irishman, his attachment to Guinness has a very different meaning in his world than it would have in, for example, trendy circles in continental cities, where Guinness may be associated with the very fashionability that Sean tries to avoid.

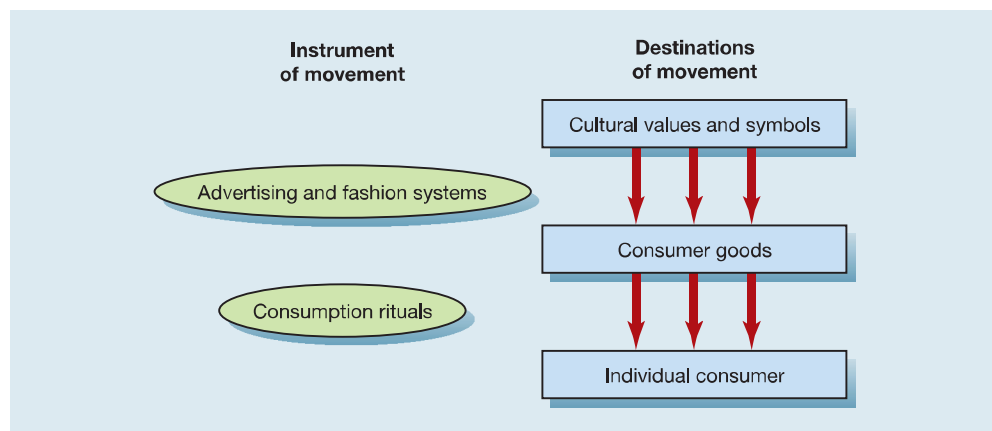
Indeed, it is quite common for cultures to modify symbols identified with other cultures and present these to a new audience. As this occurs, these cultural products
 ► undergo a process of **co-optation**, where their original meanings are transformed and often trivialized by outsiders. In this case, an Irish beer was to a large extent divorced from its original connection with the Irish traditional working class or rurality and is now used as a trendy way of consuming 'Irishness' abroad (but without the rural or lower-class aspect).²

This chapter considers how the culture in which we live creates the meaning of everyday products and how these meanings move through a society to consumers. As Figure 14.1 shows, meaning transfer is largely accomplished by such marketing vehicles as the advertising and fashion industries, which associate products with symbolic qualities. These goods, in turn, impart their meanings to consumers through different forms of ritual and are used to create and sustain consumer identities.

This chapter deals mainly with the way cultural values and symbols are expressed in goods and how consumers appropriate these symbols through consumption rituals. The next chapter will then take a closer look at fashion and other change processes in consumer culture. The first part of this chapter reviews what is meant by culture and how cultural priorities are identified and expressed. These social guidelines often take the form of *values*, which have already been discussed in Chapter 4. The second part considers the role of myths and rituals in shaping the cultural meaning of consumer products and consumption activities. The chapter concludes by exploring the concepts of the sacred and the profane and their relevance for consumer behaviour.

► **Culture**, a concept crucial to the understanding of consumer behaviour, may be thought of as the collective memory of a society. Culture is the accumulation of shared

Figure 14.1 The movement of meaning

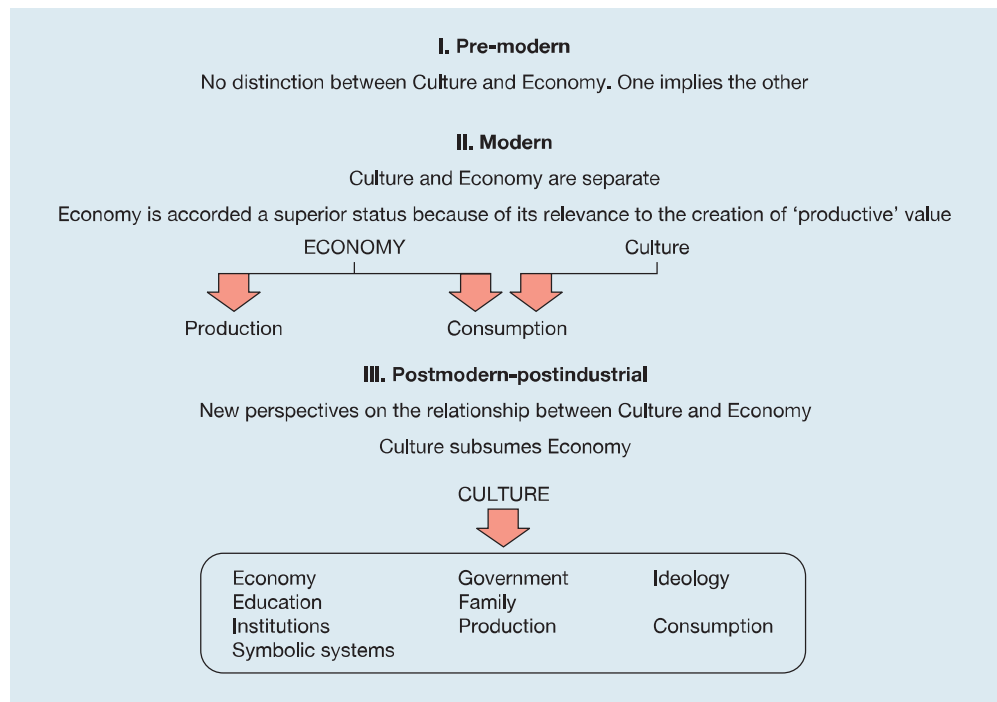


Source: Adapted from Grant McCracken, 'Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods', *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (June 1986): 72. Reprinted with permission of The University of Chicago Press.

meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organization or society. It is what defines a human community, its individuals, its social organizations, as well as its economic and political systems. It includes both abstract ideas, such as values and ethics, and the material objects and services, such as cars, clothing, food, art and sports, that are produced or valued by a group of people. Thus, individual consumers and groups of consumers are but part of culture, and culture is the overall system within which other systems are organized. This is a relatively new idea. Until recently, many researchers treated culture as a sort of variable that would explain differences in what they saw as the central dimension in society: economic behaviour. However, in our post-industrial society it has become increasingly evident that the principles of economy are themselves expressions of a specific kind of culture. Figure 14.2 provides an overview of this evolving approach to the relationship between culture and economy, indicating the all-encompassing influence that culture has on consumers.

Ironically, the effects of culture on consumer behaviour are so powerful and far-reaching that this importance is sometimes difficult to grasp or appreciate. We are surrounded by a lot of practices, from seemingly insignificant behaviours like pressing the start button of our Walkman to larger movements like flying to an exotic honeymoon in Thailand. What is important is that these practices have meaning to us, that we know how to interpret them. Culture is basically this interpretation system which we use to understand all those daily or extraordinary **signifying practices**³ around us. Culture as a concept is like a fish immersed in water – we do not always appreciate this power until we encounter a different environment, where suddenly many of the assumptions we had taken for granted about the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the way we address others and so on no longer seem to apply. The effect of encountering such differences can be so great that the term 'culture shock' is not an exaggeration.

Figure 14.2 Relationship between culture and economy



Source: Alladi Venkatesh, 'Ethnoconsumerism: A New Paradigm to Study Cultural and Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior', in J.A. Costa and G. Bamossy, eds, *Marketing in a Multicultural World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

The importance of these cultural expectations is only discovered when they are violated. For example, while on tour in New Zealand, the Spice Girls created a stir among New Zealand's Maoris by performing a war dance only men are supposed to do. A tribal official indignantly stated, 'It is not acceptable in our culture, and especially by girlie pop stars from another culture.'⁴ Sensitivity to cultural issues, whether by rock stars or by brand managers, can only come by understanding these underlying dimensions – and that is the goal of this chapter.

Consumer behaviour and culture: a two-way street

A consumer's culture determines the overall priorities he or she attaches to different activities and products. It also determines the success or failure of specific products and services. A product that provides benefits consistent with those desired by members of a culture at any point in time has a much better chance of attaining acceptance in the marketplace. It may be difficult to guess the success or failure of certain products. Some years ago, the American business magazine *Forbes* predicted the imminent bankruptcy of the Danish stereo manufacturer Bang & Olufsen, and advised everybody to sell off their stocks in the company. In addition, they mocked the company's new product as a ghetto blaster, with the difference that the price was \$3,000 and not \$300. The product was the new 'on-the-wall' stereo with automatic sliding doors – the product was an instant success and the value of Bang & Olufsen stocks multiplied by 40!⁵ Here was a product that was launched when the time was right – something that *Forbes* overlooked.

The relationship between consumer behaviour and culture is a two-way street. On the one hand, products and services that resonate with the priorities of a culture at any given time have a much better chance of being accepted by consumers. On the other hand, the study of new products and innovations in product design successfully produced by a culture at any point in time provides a window on the dominant cultural ideals of that period. Consider, for example, some products that reflect underlying cultural processes at the time they were introduced:

- Convenience foods and ready-to-eat meals, hinting at changes in family structure and the decline of the full-time housewife.
- Cosmetics like those of The Body Shop, made of natural materials and not tested on animals, which reflected consumers' apprehensions about pollution, waste and animal rights.
- Unisex fragrances, indicating new views on sex roles and a blurring of gender boundaries, as exemplified by Calvin Klein.

Aspects of culture

Culture is not static. It is continually evolving, synthesizing old ideas with new ones. A cultural system can be said to consist of three functional areas:⁶

- 1 *Ecology* – the way in which a system is adapted to its habitat. This area is shaped by the technology used to obtain and distribute resources (for example, industrialized societies vs. less affluent countries).
- 2 *Social structure* – the way in which orderly social life is maintained. This area includes the domestic and political groups that are dominant within the culture (the nuclear family vs. the extended family).
- 3 *Ideology* – the mental characteristics of a people and the way in which they relate to their environment and social groups. This area revolves around the belief that members of a society possess a common **worldview**. They share certain ideas about principles of order and fairness. They also share an **ethos**, or a set of moral and aesthetic principles.



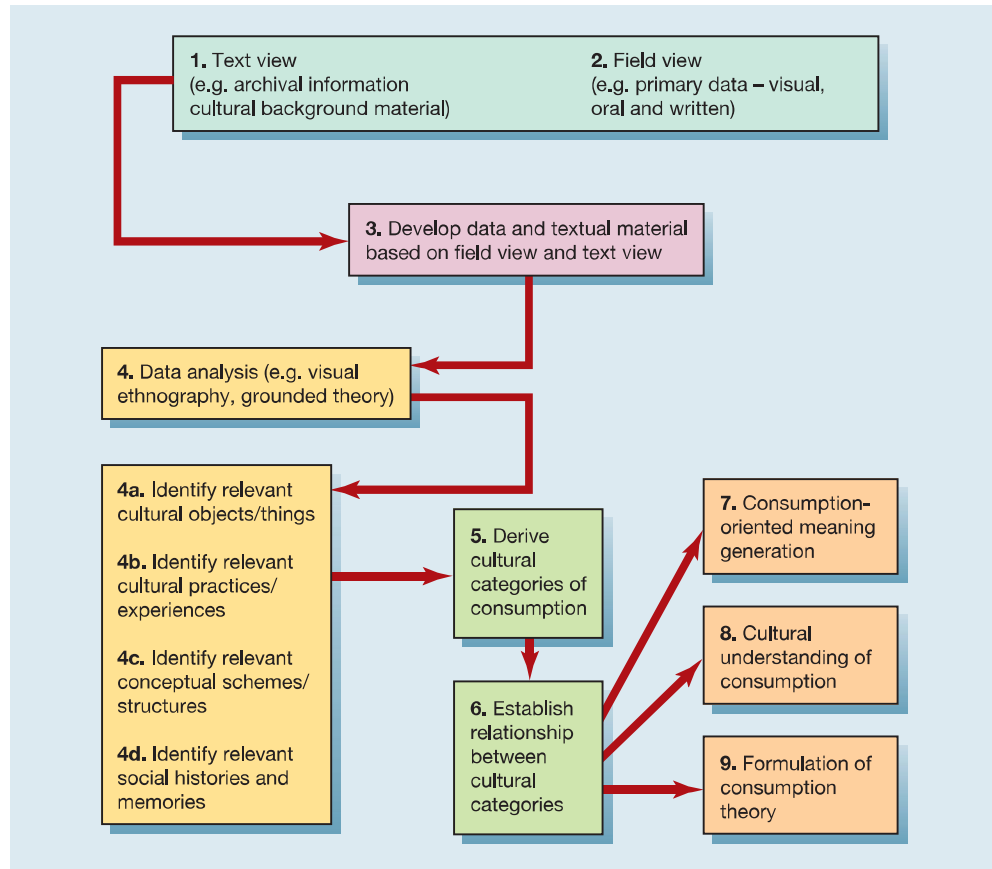
Contemporary ads blur the lines between subjects in this D.O.G. ad, and play upon the brand's name. Is this an ad that is well received in your country's culture?

Corbis/Sygma

How cultures vary

Although every culture is different, a lot of research has aimed at reducing the cultural variation to simpler principles. Cultures differ in their emphasis on individualism vs. collectivism. In **collectivist cultures**, people subordinate their personal goals to those of a stable in-group. By contrast, consumers in **individualist cultures** attach more importance to personal goals, and people are more likely to change memberships when the demands of the group (e.g. workplace, church, etc.) become too costly. A Dutch researcher on culture, Geert Hofstede, has proposed this and three other dimensions, the relation to differences in social power, handling of uncertainty and risk, and the degree of masculine and feminine values, to account for much of this variability.⁷ However, Hofstede's and similar approaches have been much criticized. The four dimensions do not account for the differences in the meaning and the role of the concepts in each culture. That each culture has to cope with problems of power, risk and uncertainty, gender roles and the relationship between the individual and society is obvious. But that the solutions to these problems are reducible to different levels on one and the same scale is dubious, to say the least. For example, it is difficult to assume that concepts such as 'risk' or 'masculine' would mean the same in all cultures.

Although we must be able to compare behaviour across cultures by using general concepts, we must do so by initially understanding and analysing every culture, and hence every consumer culture, on the basis of its own premises, an approach known as **ethno-consumerism**.⁸ In Figure 14.3 the principles of an ethnoconsumerist methodology are depicted. Note how central the notions of cultural categories and cultural practices are to this approach to studying consumption. To illustrate the contribution of such an approach to the study of consumer behaviour, consider a classic study of the meanings

Figure 14.3 Principles for an ethnoconsumerist approach to studying consumption

Source: Laurie Meamber and Alladi Venkatesh, 'Ethnoconsumerist Methodology for Cultural and Cross-Cultural Consumer Research', in R. Elliott and S. Beckmann, eds, *Interpretive Consumer Research* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press, 2000): 87-108.

and roles of the Italian scooter in the Italian and British market contexts. Whereas in Italy the scooter was mainly positioned as a symbol of the new, modern and liberated Italian woman, epitomized in the Italian superstar actresses of the 1950s, the scooter in Britain became caught in a cultural clash between the more 'masculine' heavy industry and the blue-collar jobs expressed in subcultural terms among the 'rockers' and their motorcycles, and the more white-collar youth subculture of the 'mods', heavily engaged in conspicuous consumption activities. The latter adopted the scooter as their prime symbol and dominant mode of transport.⁹ Even a simple thing like drinking a cup of coffee does not hold the same meaning in different cultures.¹⁰

Rules for behaviour

Values, as we saw in Chapter 4, are very general principles for judging between good and bad goals, etc. They form the core principles of every culture. From these flow norms, or rules, dictating what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Some norms, called *enacted norms*, are explicitly decided upon, such as the rule that a green traffic light means 'go' and a red one means 'stop'. Many norms, however, are much more subtle. These *crescive norms* are embedded in a culture and are only discovered through interaction with other members of that culture. Crescive norms include the following:¹¹

- ▶ ● A **custom** is a norm handed down from the past that controls basic behaviours, such as division of labour in a household or the practice of particular ceremonies.

- ▶ ● **Mores** are customs with a strong moral overtone. Mores often involve a taboo, or forbidden behaviour, such as incest or cannibalism. Violation of mores often meets with strong censure from other members of a society.
- ▶ ● **Conventions** are norms regarding the conduct of everyday life. These rules deal with the subtleties of consumer behaviour, including the 'correct' way to furnish one's house, wear one's clothes, host a dinner party, and so on.

All three types of prescriptive norms may operate to define a culturally appropriate behaviour. For example, mores may tell us what kind of food it is permissible to eat. Note that mores vary across cultures, so eating a dog may be taboo in Europe, while Hindus would shun beef steak and Muslims avoid pork products. Custom dictates the appropriate hour at which the meal should be served. Conventions tell us how to eat the meal, including such details as the utensils to be used, table etiquette, and even the appropriate apparel to be worn at dinner time.

We often take these conventions for granted, assuming that they are the 'right' things to do (again, until we are exposed to a different culture!). And it is good to remember that much of what we know about these norms is learned *vicariously* (see Chapter 3), as we observe the behaviours of actors and actresses in films and TV series, but also television commercials, print ads and other popular culture media. In the long run, marketers have a great deal to do with influencing consumers' enculturation!

■ MYTHS AND RITUALS

Every culture develops stories and practices that help its members to make sense of the world. When we examine these activities in other cultures, they often seem strange or even unfathomable. Yet our *own* cultural practices appear quite normal – even though a visitor may find them equally bizarre!

It works like magic!

To appreciate how so-called 'primitive' belief systems which some may consider irrational or superstitious continue to influence our supposedly 'modern', rational society, consider the avid interest of many Western consumers in magic. Marketers of health foods, anti-ageing cosmetics, exercise programmes and gambling casinos often imply that their offerings have 'magical' properties that will ward off sickness, old age, poverty or just plain bad luck. People by the millions play their 'lucky numbers' in the lottery, carry lucky charms to ward off 'the evil eye', or have 'lucky' clothing or other products which they believe will bring them good fortune. Often consumers construct marketplace mythologies to serve multiple and sometimes competing ideological agendas – this is particularly true in the product categories which consumers use to deal with issues of health, healing and well-being.¹²

An interest in the occult tends to be popular, perhaps even more so when members of a society feel overwhelmed or powerless – magical remedies simplify our lives by giving us 'easy' answers. Marketing efforts are replete with more or less open references to magical practices.¹³ And it is not just a matter of fooling consumers: magic is an active part also of our modern lives. Customers at river-rafting trips in America speak about the magical capacities of the river to transform their lives, heal psychological wounds and bring out the best in people.¹⁴ Even a computer is regarded with awe by many consumers as a sort of 'electronic magician', with the ability to solve our problems (or in other cases to make data magically disappear!).¹⁵ This section will discuss myths and rituals, two aspects of culture common to all societies, from the ancients to the modern world.

Myths

- ▶ Every society possesses a set of myths that define that culture. A **myth** is a story containing symbolic elements that expresses the shared emotions and ideals of a culture. The story may feature some kind of conflict between two opposing forces, and its outcome serves as a moral guide. In this way, a myth reduces anxiety because it provides consumers with guidelines about their world.

An understanding of cultural myths is important to marketers, who in some cases (most likely unconsciously) pattern their strategy along a mythic structure.¹⁶ Consider, for example, the way that a company like McDonald's takes on 'mythical' qualities.¹⁷ The golden arches are a universally recognized symbol, one that is virtually synonymous with American culture. Not only do they signify the possibility for the whole world symbolically to consume a bite of Americana and modernity, but they also offer sanctuary to Americans around the world, who know exactly what to expect once they enter. Basic struggles involving good vs. evil are played out in the fantasy world created by McDonald's advertising, as when Ronald McDonald confounds the Hamburglar. McDonald's even has a 'seminary' (Hamburger University) where inductees go to learn appropriate behaviours and be initiated into the culture. But of course, one of the most fundamental myths of the Western world is the myth of the 'exotic Other' which is basically different from ourselves, expressed by Kipling in his 'East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. This is reflected in consumer behaviour in the attraction to and collection of exotic goods such as Oriental carpets.¹⁸

The functions and structure of myths

Myths serve four interrelated functions in a culture:¹⁹

- 1 *Metaphysical* – they help to explain the origins of existence.
- 2 *Cosmological* – they emphasize that all components of the universe are part of a single picture.
- 3 *Sociological* – they maintain social order by authorizing a social code to be followed by members of a culture.
- 4 *Psychological* – they provide models for personal conduct.

Myths can be analysed by examining their underlying structures, a technique pioneered by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss noted that many stories involve *binary opposition*, where two opposing ends of some dimension are represented (good vs. evil, nature vs. technology). Characters and products often appear in advertisements to be defined by what they *are not* rather than by what they *are* (for example, this is *not* a product for those who feel old, *not* an experience for the frightened, *not* music for the meek, etc.).

Recall from the discussion of Freudian theory in Chapter 4 that the ego functions as a kind of 'referee' between the opposing needs of the id and the superego. In a similar fashion, the conflict between mythical opposing forces is sometimes resolved by a *mediating figure*, who can link the opposites by sharing characteristics of each. For example, many myths contain animals that have human abilities (e.g. a talking snake) to bridge the gap between humanity and nature, just as cars (technology) are often given animal names (nature) like Jaguar or Mustang.

Myths are found everywhere in modern popular culture. While we generally equate myths with the ancient Greeks or Romans, modern myths are embodied in many aspects of popular culture, including comic books, films, holidays and even commercials.

- ▶ Comic book superheroes demonstrate how myths can be communicated to consumers of all ages. Indeed, some of these fictional figures represent a **monomyth**, a myth that is common to many cultures.²⁰ The most prevalent monomyth involves a hero who emerges from the everyday world with supernatural powers and wins a decisive victory

over evil forces. He then returns with the power to bestow good things on his fellow men. This basic theme can be found in such classic heroes as Lancelot, Hercules and Ulysses. The success of the Disney movie *Hercules* reminds us that these stories are timeless and appeal to people through the ages.

Comic book heroes are familiar to most consumers, and they are viewed as more credible and effective than celebrity endorsers. Film spin-offs and licensing deals aside, comic books are a multi-million dollar industry. The American version of the monomyth is best epitomized by Superman, a Christ-like figure who renounces worldly temptations and restores harmony to his community. Heroes such as Superman are sometimes used to endow a product, store or service with desirable attributes. This imagery is sometimes borrowed by marketers – PepsiCo tried to enhance its position in the Japanese market by using a figure called ‘Pepsiman’, a muscle-bound caricature of an American superhero in a skin-tight uniform, to promote the drink. Pepsiman even appears in a Sega game called *Fighting Vipers*.²¹

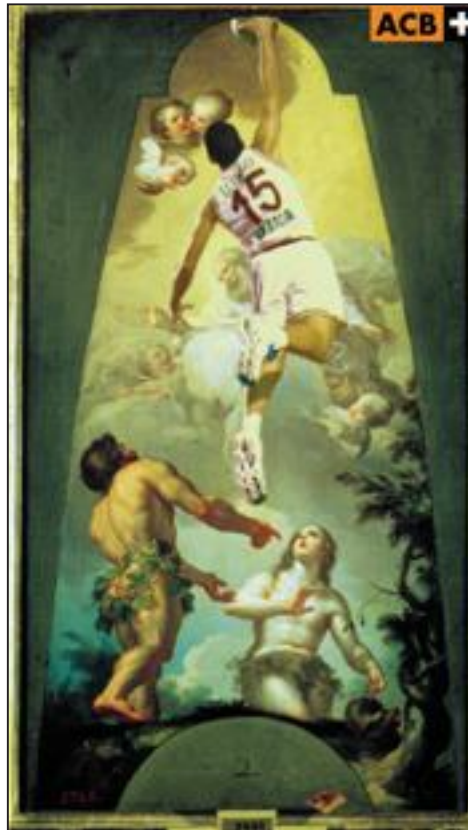
But there are many other, less obvious, mythological figures surrounding us. For example, the role of Einstein as a mythological figure, and one that is used for giving meaning to and promoting certain consumable objects such as films or posters, or in advertisements as a sort of indirect endorsement, has been studied by consumer researchers.²²

Many blockbuster films and hit TV programmes draw directly on mythic themes. While dramatic special effects or attractive stars certainly don’t hurt, a number of these films perhaps owe their success to their presentation of characters and plot structures that follow mythic patterns. Examples of these mythic blockbusters include:²³

- *The Big Blue*. The sea is the offspring of many myths. Its inaccessibility and depth have always inspired humans to create imagery about this other world. The film depicts the search for a lost symbiosis between man and nature, where the only person with real access to this must give up his human life to become one with the purity and the graciousness of the sea, symbolized by the dolphins.
- *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial*. *E.T.* represents a familiar myth involving Messianic visitation. The gentle creature from another world visits Earth and performs miracles (e.g. reviving a dying flower). His ‘disciples’ are local children, who help him combat the forces of modern technology and an unbelieving secular society. The metaphysical function of myth is served by teaching that the humans chosen by God are pure and unselfish.
- *Easy Rider*. This 1969 cult film can be seen as the forerunner of the much-beloved road movie genre that has been among the most popular in recent decades, and which got its definitive feminist version with *Thelma and Louise*. These films feature myths of freedom and rebelliousness against the banalities of daily life (as expressed in one of the theme songs from *Easy Rider*, Steppenwolf’s ‘Born to be Wild’), which are recycled in a lot of commercial contexts. For instance, in a commercial for Ford’s Cougar (another wild animal!) model, Dennis Hopper (anno 1998) driving a Cougar raced with himself riding a motorbike in the original *Easy Rider* film.²⁴
- *Jaws*. This and films constructed around similar themes draw on myths of the beast, representing the wild, dangerous, untamed nature that is culture’s (human being’s) enemy. Such myths are known from Christianity and other religious mythologies, such as Norse mythology (the Midgaard Snake, the Fenris Wolf), and have played a central role in the way the Western world has regarded nature over the centuries.

Commercials as myths

Commercials can be analysed in terms of the underlying cultural themes they represent. For example, commercials for various food products ask consumers to ‘remember’ the mythical good old days when products were wholesome and natural. The mythical theme of the underdog prevailing over the stronger foe (i.e. David and Goliath) has been



This Spanish ad melds modern-day athletes with mythical figures.

Canal/ACB-Contrapunto BBDO Ad Agency

used by the car rental firm Avis in a now classic campaign where they stated 'We're only no. 2, we try harder'. Other figures from mythical narratives have been used by advertisers, such as the villain (a brand teasing its competitors), the hero (the brand in control) or the helper (the brand that helps you accomplish something).²⁵

Rituals

- A **ritual** is a set of multiple, symbolic behaviours that occur in a fixed sequence and that tend to be repeated periodically.²⁶ Although bizarre tribal ceremonies, perhaps involving animal or virgin sacrifice, may come to mind when people think of rituals, in reality many contemporary consumer activities are ritualistic. Four major types of rituals are possession rituals, exchange rituals, grooming rituals and divestment rituals.²⁷ Below, we shall take a closer look at some of these.

Rituals can occur at a variety of levels, as noted in Table 14.1. Some of the rituals described are specifically American, but the US Super Bowl may be compared to the English FA Cup Final or the traditional ski jump competition in Austria on the first day of the new year. Some rituals affirm broad cultural or religious values, like the differences in the ritual of tea-drinking in Great Britain and France. Whereas tea seems a sensuous and mystical drink to the French, the drinking of coffee is regarded as having a more functional purpose. For the British, tea is a daily drink and coffee is seen more as a drink to express oneself.²⁸

The ritual of going to a café with a selection of coffee opportunities was unknown outside the most metropolitan areas of the United States until recent times. No longer. The Starbucks Corporation has experienced phenomenal success by turning the coffee break into a cultural event that for many has assumed almost cult-like status. The average Starbucks customer visits 18 times a month, and 10 per cent of the clientele stops by twice

Table 14.1 Types of ritual experience

Primary behaviour source	Ritual type	Examples
Cosmology	Religious	Baptism, meditation, mass
Cultural values	Rites of passage Cultural	Graduation, marriage Festivals, holidays (Valentine's Day), Super Bowl
Group learning	Civic Group Family	Parades, elections, trials Business negotiations, office luncheons Mealtimes, bedtimes, birthdays, Mother's Day, Christmas
Individual aims and emotions	Personal	Grooming, household rituals

Source: Dennis W. Rook, 'The ritual dimension of consumer behavior', *Journal of Consumer Research* 12 (December 1985): 251-64. Reprinted with permission of The University of Chicago Press.

a day.²⁹ Starbucks has opened shops in Paris, in competition with the city's 2,000 traditional cafés and 31 Columbus Café outlets, in order to try and introduce the 'to go' coffee culture among Parisians. Preliminary results for Columbus Café for 2003 indicate that revenue was over 8 million euros.³⁰ The UK market for on-the-go food and drinks is predicted to grow by 262 million euros to 20.1 billion euros by 2008.



Gift giving has long been a cultural trait among the Japanese. In recent years, it has become popular within the context of a westernised Christmas season in Japan.

Getty Images/Taxi/Gen Nishino

Ritual artefacts

- Many businesses owe their livelihoods to their ability to supply **ritual artefacts**, or items used in the performance of rituals, to consumers. Birthday candles, diplomas, specialized foods and beverages (e.g. wedding cakes, ceremonial wine, or even sausages at the stadium), trophies and plaques, band costumes, greetings cards and retirement watches are all used in consumer rituals. In addition, consumers often employ a ritual script, which identifies the artefacts, the sequence in which they are used and who uses them. The proliferation of 'manners and style' books in recent years bears witness to the renewed interest in rituals after the belief of the beat generation that they could abolish ritual behaviour and just act 'normal' and be 'natural'. Of course, such behaviour required a whole new set of rituals . . .

But rituals are not restricted to the special occasions described above. Daily life is full of ritualized behaviour. Wearing a tie on certain occasions can be seen as a ritual, for example. The significance attached to rituals will vary across cultures (Valentine's Day is slowly gaining popularity in several European countries, and in the Middle East),³¹ and will often be a mixture of private and public (generally shared) symbolism.³²

Grooming rituals

Whether brushing one's hair 100 strokes a day or talking to oneself in the mirror, virtually all consumers undergo private grooming rituals. These are sequences of behaviours that aid in the transition from the private self to the public self or back again. These rituals serve various purposes, ranging from inspiring confidence before confronting the world to cleansing the body of dirt and other profane materials. Traditionally a female market, the grooming sector for men is a booming business. For example, Unilever has opened a new chain of barbershops in the UK that also offer facial treatments and manicures on top of the shaves and beard trims. The adaptation to the male market is almost perfect: the waiting rooms feature PlayStations and personal CD players instead of glossy magazines.³³

When consumers talk about their grooming rituals, some of the dominant themes that emerge from these stories reflect the almost mystical qualities attributed to grooming products and behaviours. Many people emphasize a before-and-after phenomenon, where the person feels magically transformed after using certain products (similar to the Cinderella myth).³⁴

Two sets of binary oppositions that are expressed in personal rituals are *private/public* and *work/leisure*. Many beauty rituals, for instance, reflect a transformation from a natural state to the social world (as when a woman 'puts on her face') or vice versa. In these daily rituals, women reaffirm the value placed by their culture on personal beauty and the quest for eternal youth.³⁵ This focus is obvious in ads for Oil of Olay beauty cleanser, which proclaim: 'And so your day begins. The Ritual of Oil of Olay'. Similarly, the bath is viewed as a sacred, cleansing time, a way to wash away the sins of the profane world.³⁶

Gift-giving rituals

- The promotion of appropriate gifts for every conceivable holiday and occasion provides an excellent example of the influence consumer rituals can exert on marketing phenomena. In the **gift-giving ritual**, consumers procure the perfect object (artefact), meticulously remove the price tag (symbolically changing the item from a commodity to a unique good), carefully wrap it and deliver it to the recipient.³⁷

Gift-giving used to be viewed by researchers primarily as a form of economic exchange, where the giver transfers an item of value to a recipient, who in turn is somehow obliged to reciprocate. However, gift-giving is interpreted increasingly as a symbolic exchange, where the giver is motivated by acknowledging the social bonds between people.³⁸ These might then be seen as more economic and reciprocal but may also be guided by unselfish factors, such as love or admiration, without expectations of anything in return. Some

Table 14.2 Effects of gift-giving on social relationships

Relational effect	Description	Example
Strengthening	Gift-giving improves the quality of a relationship	An unexpected gift such as one given in a romantic situation
Affirmation	Gift-giving validates the positive quality of a relationship	Usually occurs on ritualized occasions such as birthdays
Negligible effect	Gift-giving has a minimal effect on perceptions of relationship quality	Non-formal gift occasions and those where the gift may be perceived as charity or too good for the current state of the relationship
Negative confirmation	Gift-giving validates a negative quality of a relationship between the gift-giver and the receiver	The selection of gift is inappropriate, indicating a lack of knowledge of the receiver. Alternatively the gift is viewed as a method of controlling the receiver
Weakening	Gift-giving harms the quality of the relationship between giver and receiver	When there are 'strings attached' or gift is perceived as a bribe, a sign of disrespect or offensive
Severing	Gift-giving harms the relationship between the giver and the receiver to the extent that the relationship is dissolved	When the gift forms part of a larger problem, such as a threatening relationship. Or when a relationship is severed through the receipt of a 'parting' gift

Source: Adapted from Julie A. Ruth, Cele C. Otnes and Frederic F. Brunel, 'Gift receipt and the reformulation of interpersonal relationships', *Journal of Consumer Research* 25 (March 1999): 385-402, Table 1, p. 389.

research indicates that gift-giving evolves as a form of social expression: it is more exchange-oriented (instrumental) in the early stages of a relationship, but becomes more altruistic as the relationship develops.³⁹ One set of researchers identified multiple ways in which giving a gift can affect a relationship.⁴⁰ These are listed in Table 14.2.

Every culture prescribes certain occasions and ceremonies for giving gifts, whether for personal or professional reasons. The giving of birthday presents alone is a major undertaking. Business gifts are an important component in defining professional relationships, and great care is often taken to ensure that the appropriate gifts are purchased.



multicultural dimensions

The importance of gift-giving rituals is underscored by considering Japanese customs, where the wrapping of a gift is as important (if not more so) than the gift itself. The economic value of a gift is secondary to its symbolic meaning.⁴¹ To the Japanese, gifts are viewed as an important aspect of one's duty to others in one's social group. Giving is a moral imperative (known as *giri*).

Highly ritualized gift-giving occurs during the giving of both household/personal gifts and company/professional gifts. Each Japanese has a well-defined set of relatives and friends with whom he or she shares reciprocal gift-giving obligations (*kosai*).⁴²

Personal gifts are given on social occasions, such as at funerals, to people who are hospitalized, to mark movements from one stage of life to another (such as weddings, birthdays) and as greetings (when one is meeting a visitor). Company gifts are given to commemorate the anniversary of a corporation's founding or the opening of a new building, as well as being a routine part of doing business, as when rewards are given at trade meetings to announce new products.

Some of the items most desired by Japanese consumers to receive as gifts include gift coupons, beer and soap.⁴³ In keeping with the Japanese emphasis on saving face, presents are not opened in front of the giver, so that it will not be necessary to hide one's possible disappointment with the present.

The gift-giving ritual can be broken down into three distinct stages.⁴⁴ During *gestation*, the giver is motivated by an event to procure a gift. This event may be either *structural* (i.e. prescribed by the culture, as when people buy Christmas presents), or *emergent* (i.e. the decision is more personal and idiosyncratic). The second stage is *presentation*, or the process of gift exchange. The recipient responds to the gift (either appropriately or not), and the donor evaluates this response.

In the third stage, known as *reformulation*, the bonds between the giver and receiver are adjusted (either looser or tighter) to reflect the new relationship that emerges after the exchange is complete. Negativity can arise if the recipient feels the gift is inappropriate or of inferior quality. The donor may feel the response to the gift was inadequate or insincere or a violation of the reciprocity norm, which obliges people to return the gesture of a gift with one of equal value.⁴⁵ Both participants may feel resentful for being 'forced' to participate in the ritual.⁴⁶

Self-gifts

People commonly find (or devise) reasons to give themselves something; they 'treat' themselves. Consumers purchase **self-gifts** as a way to regulate their behaviour. This ritual provides a socially acceptable way of rewarding themselves for good deeds, consoling themselves after negative events or motivating themselves to accomplish some goal.⁴⁷ Figure 14.4 is a projective stimulus similar to ones used in research on self-gifting. Consumers are asked to tell a story based on a picture such as this, and their responses are analysed to discover the reasons people view as legitimate for rewarding themselves with self-gifts. For example, one recurring story that might emerge is that the woman in the picture had a particularly gruelling day at work and needed a pick-me-up in the form

Figure 14.4 Projective drawing to study the motivations underlying the giving of self-gifts



Source: Based on David G. Mick, Michelle DeMoss and Ronald J. Faber, 'Latent Motivations and Meanings of Self-Gifts: Implications for Retail Management' (research report, Center for Retailing Education and Research, University of Florida, 1990).

of a new fragrance. This theme could then be incorporated into a promotional campaign for a perfume. With the growing evidence of hedonic motives for consumption in recent decades, self-gifts may represent an increasingly important part of the overall consumption pattern.

Holiday rituals

Holidays are important rituals in both senses of the word. Going on holiday was one of the most widespread rituals and tourism one of the biggest industries of the late twentieth century, and the trend looks set to continue.⁴⁸ On holidays consumers step back from their everyday lives and perform ritualistic behaviours unique to those times.⁴⁹ For example, going to Disneyland in Paris may mean a ritualized return to the memories of our own dreams of a totally free (of obligations, duties and responsibilities) fantasy land of play.⁵⁰ Holiday occasions are filled with ritual artefacts and scripts and are increasingly cast as a time for giving gifts by enterprising marketers. Holidays also often mean big business to hotels, restaurants, travel agents and so on.

For many businesses Christmas is the single most important season. Concerning the holidays of celebrations, most such holidays are based on a myth, and often a real (Guy Fawkes) or imaginary (Cupid on Valentine's Day) character is at the centre of the story. These holidays persist because their basic elements appeal to deep-seated patterns in the functioning of culture.⁵¹

The Christmas holiday is bursting with myths and rituals, from adventures at the North Pole to those that occur under the mistletoe. One of the most important holiday rituals involves Santa Claus, or an equivalent mythical figure, eagerly awaited by children the world over. Unlike Christ, this person is a champion of materialism. Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that he appears in stores and shopping centres – secular temples of consumption. Whatever the origins of Santa Claus, the myth surrounding him serves the purpose of socializing children by teaching them to expect a reward when they are good and that members of society get what they deserve. Needless to say, Christmas, Santa Claus and other attached rituals and figures change when they enter into other cultural settings. Some of the transformations of Santa Claus in a Japanese context include a figure called 'Uncle Chimney', Santa Claus as a stand-in for the newborn Christ and Santa Claus crucified at the entrance of one department store with the words 'Happy Shopping' written above his head.⁵² What does this tell us about the globalization process?

On Valentine's Day, standards regarding sex and love are relaxed or altered as people express feelings that may be hidden during the rest of the year. In addition to cards, a variety of gifts are exchanged, many of which are touted by marketers to represent aphrodisiacs or other sexually related symbols. It seems as if many people in consumer societies are always on the lookout for new rituals to fill their lives. This ritual was once virtually unknown in Scandinavia but is slowly becoming part of their consumption environment.⁵³ Also, the American ritual of celebrating Hallowe'en is now becoming fashionable in Europe, where the French in particular have adopted it as an occasion for festivities, dancing and the chance to show off new fashions.⁵⁴

Rites of passage

- What does a dance for recently divorced people have in common with 'college initiation ceremonies'? Both are examples of modern **rites of passage**, or special times marked by a change in social status. Every society, both primitive and modern, sets aside times where such changes occur. Some of these changes may occur as a natural part of consumers' life cycles (puberty or death), while others are more individual in nature (divorce and re-entering the dating market). As we saw with some of the other rituals, there seems to be a renewed interest in transition rites. They are increasingly becoming consumption objects in themselves as well as occasions for consumption. In order to satisfy the 'need' for rituals, not only do we import new ones from abroad, as we have

seen, but in times of globalization many cultures also experience a renewed interest in the old rituals that have traditionally framed the cultural identity.⁵⁵

Some marketers attempt to reach consumers on occasions in which their products can enhance a transition from one stage of life to another.⁵⁶ A series of Volkswagen ads underlined the role of the car in the freedom of women who were leaving their husbands or boyfriends.

Stages of role transition Much like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, consumers' rites of passage consist of three phases.⁵⁷ The first stage, *separation*, occurs when the individual is detached from his or her original group or status (for example, the first-year university student leaves home). *Liminality* is the middle stage, where the person is literally in between statuses (the new arrival on campus tries to work out what is happening during orientation week). The last stage, *aggregation*, takes place when the person re-enters society after the rite of passage is complete (the student returns home for the Christmas holiday as a 'real university student'). Rites of passage mark many consumer activities, as exemplified by confirmation or other rites of going from the world of the child to the world of the adult. A similar transitional state can be observed when people are prepared for certain occupational roles. For example, athletes and fashion models typically undergo a 'seasoning' process. They are removed from their normal surroundings (athletes are taken to training camps, while young models are often moved to Paris or Milan), indoctrinated into a new subculture and then returned to the real world in their new roles.

The final passage: marketing death The rites of passage associated with death support an entire industry. Death themes are replete in marketing.⁵⁸ Survivors must make expensive purchase decisions, often at short notice and driven by emotional and superstitious concerns. Funeral ceremonies help the living to organize their relationships with the deceased, and action tends to be tightly scripted down to the costumes (the ritual black attire, black ribbons for mourners, the body in its best suit) and specific behaviours (sending condolence cards or holding a wake). (However, more and more seem to emphasize a certain personal touch to commemorate the individuality of the deceased.) Mourners 'pay their last respects', and seating during the ceremony is usually dictated by mourners' closeness to the individual. Even the cortège is accorded special status by other motorists, who recognize its separate, sacred nature by not overtaking as it proceeds to the cemetery.⁵⁹

■ SACRED AND PROFANE CONSUMPTION

- As we saw when considering the structure of myths, many types of consumer activity involve the demarcation, or binary opposition, of boundaries, such as good vs. bad, male vs. female – or even 'regular' vs. 'low-fat'. One of the most important of these sets of
- ▶ boundaries is the distinction between the sacred and the profane. **Sacred consumption** involves objects and events that are 'set apart' from normal activities, and are treated with some degree of respect or awe. They may or may not be associated with religion,
 - ▶ but most religious items and events tend to be regarded as sacred. **Profane consumption** involves consumer objects and events that are ordinary, everyday objects and events that do not share the 'specialness' of sacred ones. (Note that profane does not mean vulgar or obscene in this context.)

Domains of sacred consumption

Sacred consumption events permeate many aspects of consumers' experiences. We find ways to 'set apart' a variety of places, people and events. In this section, we'll consider some examples of ways that 'ordinary' consumption is sometimes not so ordinary after all.



Sacred places are revered, not only in 'real life' but also in advertising, since they are immediately recognizable, highly visible and normally connote positive values. The present mythologies of the grandeur of antiquity and more generally myths attached to sacred places of world heritage are used here in a humorous (but also sacrilegious?) way for maximum attention and mind-provocation.

Sacred places

Sacred places have been 'set apart' by a society because they have religious or mystical significance (e.g. Bethlehem, Mecca, Stonehenge) or because they commemorate some aspect of a country's heritage (e.g. the Kremlin, Versailles, the Colosseum in Rome). Remember that in many cases the sacredness of these places is due to the property of contamination – that is, something sacred happened on that spot, so the place itself takes on sacred qualities. Tourism is one of the most common and rapidly spreading forms of consuming the sacred.⁶⁰

Other places are created from the profane world and imbued with sacred qualities. When Ajax, the local football team of Amsterdam, moved from their old stadium, De Meern, to a larger, more modern stadium (De Arena), the turf from the old stadium was carefully lifted from the ground and sold to a local churchyard. The churchyard offers the turf to fans willing to pay a premium price to be buried under authentic Ajax turf!

Even the modern shopping centre can be regarded as a secular 'cathedral of consumption', a special place where community members come to practise shopping rituals.⁶¹ Theme parks are a form of mass-produced fantasy that takes on aspects of sacredness. In particular, the various Disneylands are destinations for pilgrimages from consumers around the globe. Disneyland displays many characteristics of more traditional sacred places, especially for Americans, but Europeans too may consider these parks the quintessence of America. It is even regarded by some as the epitome of child(ish) happiness. A trip to the park is the most common 'last wish' for terminally-ill children.⁶²

In many cultures, the home is a particularly sacred place. It represents a crucial distinction between the harsh, external world and consumers' 'inner space'. In northern and western Europe the home is a place where you entertain guests (in southern Europe it is more common to go out), and fortunes are spent each year on interior decorators and home furnishings; the home is thus a central part of consumers' identities.⁶³ But even here there are vast differences between, for example, the dominant traditionalist style of British homes and the modernist style of Danish homes.⁶⁴ Consumers all over the world go to great lengths to create a special environment that allows them to create the quality of homeliness. This effect is created by personalizing the home as much as possible, using such devices as door wreaths, mantel arrangements and a 'memory wall' for family photos.⁶⁵ Even public places, like various types of cafés and bars, strive for a home-like atmosphere which shelters customers from the harshness of the outside world.

Sacred people

People themselves can be sacred, when they are idolized and set apart from the masses. Souvenirs, memorabilia and even mundane items touched or used by sacred people take on special meanings and acquire value in their own right. Indeed, many businesses thrive on consumers' desire for products associated with famous people. There is a thriving market for celebrity autographs, and objects once owned by celebrities, whether Princess Diana's gowns or John Lennon's guitars, are often sold at auction for astronomical prices. A store called 'A Star is Worn' sells items donated by celebrities – a black bra autographed by Cher sold for \$575. As one observer commented about the store's patrons, 'They want something that belonged to the stars, as if the stars have gone into sainthood and the people want their shrouds.'⁶⁶ More recently, the UK firm of ASOS (AsSeenOnScreen) has started a thriving online business targeted at 18–30-year-olds (primarily female) which offers for sale products that are identical to products that are seen in television shows. The company owners got the idea after reading an article reporting that the broadcasters of *Friends* (the television show) received over 28,000 telephone calls enquiring about a lamp that had appeared in one of the character's apartment.⁶⁷

Sacred events

Many consumers' activities have taken on a special status. Public events in particular resemble sacred, religious ceremonies, as exemplified by the playing of the national anthems before a game or the reverential lighting of matches and lighters at the end of a rock concert.⁶⁸

For many people, the world of sport is sacred and almost assumes the status of a religion. The roots of modern sports events can be found in ancient religious rites, such as fertility festivals (e.g. the original Olympics).⁶⁹ Indeed, it is not uncommon for teams to join in prayer prior to a game. The sports pages are like the Scriptures (and we describe ardent fans as reading them 'religiously'), the stadium is a house of worship, and the fans are members of the congregation. After the first Scottish victory in many years in a football match against England at Wembley Stadium, Scottish fans tore down the goals to bring pieces back home as sacred relics. Indeed, grass from stadiums of important matches, like World Cup finals, has been sold in small portions at large prices.

Devotees engage in group activities, such as tailgate parties (eating and drinking in the car park prior to the event) and the 'Mexican Wave', where (resembling a revival meeting) participants on cue join the wave-like motion as it makes its way around the stadium. The athletes that fans come to see are godlike; they are reputed to have almost superhuman powers (especially football stars in southern Europe and Latin America). Athletes are central figures in a common cultural myth, the hero tale. As exemplified by mythologies of the barefoot Olympic marathon winner (Abebe Bikila from Ethiopia, 1960), or of boxing heroes (legally) fighting their way out of poverty and misery, often the person must prove him- or herself under strenuous circumstances. Victory is achieved only through sheer force of will. Of course, sports heroes are popular endorsers in commercials, but only a few of these sports personalities 'travel' very well, since sports heroes tend to be first and foremost national heroes. However, a few people are known worldwide, at least within the key target for the ads, so that they can be used in international campaigns.

If sport is one domain that is becoming increasingly sacred (see the section on sacralization below), then the traditionally sacred realm of fine arts is considered by some in danger of desacralization. In a sale of a publishing company of classical music, various representatives voiced the fear that a takeover by one of the giants such as Sony, Polygram or EMI would mean the introduction of a market logic that would destroy its opportunities to continue to sponsor unknown artists and make long-term investments in them. It is argued that classical music is not a product that can be handled by any marketer, but requires special attention and a willingness to accept financial losses in order

to secure artistic openness and creativity.⁷⁰ Such reactions (as justified as they may be) indicate that artists and managers conceive of themselves as dealing with sacred objects that cannot be subjugated to what is conceived as the profane legitimacy of the market.⁷¹ Indeed, art and marketing is the subject of study for more and more marketing and consumer researchers, for example in considering art as a kind of service.⁷² Famous film directors make commercial campaigns and music videos (and music video-makers turn into great film directors), while commercial film-makers celebrate each other with their own sets of prizes for creativity. And consider 'art placement': one artist proposed a series of films featuring a mysterious 'Mr Who' engaging in a lot of daily consumption activities and used clippings from commercials to portray Mr Who's consumer universe.⁷³ Art and marketing, in short, are becoming increasingly blurred.⁷⁴

Tourism is another example of a sacred, non-ordinary experience of extreme importance to marketers. When people travel on holiday, they occupy sacred time and space. The tourist is continually in search of 'authentic' experiences which differ from his or her normal world (think of Club Med's motto, 'The antidote to civilization').⁷⁵ This travelling experience involves binary oppositions between work and leisure and being 'at home' vs. 'away'. Norms regarding appropriate behaviour are modified as tourists scramble for illicit experiences they would not dream of engaging in at home.

The desire of travellers to capture these sacred experiences in objects forms the bedrock of the souvenir industry, which may be said to be in the business of selling sacred memories. Whether a personalized matchbook from a wedding or a little piece of the Berlin Wall, souvenirs represent a tangible piece of the consumer's sacred experience.⁷⁶

In addition to personal mementoes, such as ticket stubs saved from a favourite concert, the following are other types of sacred souvenir icons:⁷⁷

- Local products (such as goose liver from Périgord or Scotch whisky).
- Pictorial images (postcards).
- 'Piece of the rock' (seashells, pine cones). Sometimes this can be problematic, however. For example it is forbidden to bring home corals and seashells from a lot of diving places around the earth, in order to prevent tourists from 'tearing down' the coral reef. But temptations are great. Even at Nobel Prize dinners approximately 100 of the noble guests each year cannot resist bringing home something, typically a coffee spoon, as a souvenir.⁷⁸
- Symbolic shorthand in the form of literal representations of the site (a miniature Little Mermaid or Eiffel Tower).
- Markers (Hard Rock Café T-shirts).

From sacred to profane, and back again

Just to make life interesting, in recent times many consumer activities have moved from one sphere to the other. Some things that were formerly regarded as sacred have moved into the realm of the profane, while other, everyday phenomena are now regarded as sacred.⁷⁹ Both these processes are relevant to our understanding of contemporary consumer behaviour.

Desacralization

- **Desacralization** occurs when a sacred item or symbol is removed from its special place or is duplicated in mass quantities, becoming profane as a result. For example, souvenir reproductions of sacred monuments such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Eiffel Tower, 'pop' artworks of the *Mona Lisa* or adaptations of important symbols such as the Union Jack by clothing designers, tend to eliminate their special aspects by turning them into inauthentic commodities, produced mechanically and representing relatively little value.⁸⁰

Religion itself has to some extent been desacralized. Religious symbols, such as stylized crosses or New Age crystals, have moved into the mainstream of fashion jewellery.⁸¹



marketing pitfall

'Brand new Dolce & Gabbana rosary beads. These are becoming increasingly sought after. The item is brand new with all of the original tags and box. The authenticity hologram, and the serial number are integral - Jesus is on a cross. Virgin Mary is in the middle of the necklace and at the end a metal Dolce & Gabbana tag. Fabulous necklaces. Worn by super stars like David Beckham, Britney Spears also seen on BONO U2.'⁸²

Rosary beads as a style statement, not a prayer ritual, are hot fashion with celebrities, again. In the mid-1980s, Madonna, who was brought up a Catholic, raised eyebrows and launched a fashion craze by wearing crucifixes and rosaries with corsets. Eventually, the look became 'cheesy' and faded away. But, like many '80s trends, rosaries 'are cool again' with celebs. Britney Spears and Marlon Wayans have been spotted by paparazzi wearing rosary beads with several chains and necklaces, and David Beckham, Soccer's hunky Brit was photographed for the cover of the July 2004 issue of *Vanity Fair*. He brought along his own rosary beads by Dolce & Gabbana, the favourite designers of Beckham and wife Victoria 'Posh Spice' Beckham.⁸³ Sales of rosary beads have been very strong across the UK and Italy in the past years, and this has not gone unnoticed by officials of the Catholic Church. In the UK, one Father pointed out that while this fashion trend is 'not doing wicked things and leading us astray, I am sorry that people are wearing them as fashion accessories and are not mindful of their religious significance'.⁸⁴ As an accessory line for men, rosaries have been very successfully promoted by Dolce & Gabbana. The significant difference in wearing the rosaries is that men adorn themselves with rosaries as necklaces, rather than carrying them in their hand, which is the more traditional use. Having rosaries displayed in a stylish context of a high fashion store window alongside other fashion items such as shirts and sunglasses serves to move the rosary beads from one (religious) meaning to another (commercial and fashionable) context.⁸⁵

Religious holidays, particularly Christmas, are regarded by many (and criticized by some) as having been transformed into secular, materialistic occasions devoid of their original sacred significance. Benetton, the Italian clothing manufacturer, has been at the forefront in creating vivid (and often controversial) messages that expose us to our cultural categories and prejudices, but at times they have touched upon the issue of desacralization.⁸⁶

Even the clergy are increasingly adopting secular marketing techniques. Especially in the United States, televangelists rely upon the power of television, a secular medium, to convey their messages. The Catholic Church generated a major controversy after it hired a prominent public relations firm to promote its anti-abortion campaign.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, many religious groups have taken the secular route, and are now using marketing techniques to increase the number of believers. A Danish bishop addressed a number of major food producing companies for a joint venture in profiling Pentecost as a holiday season equally as important as Christmas and Easter.⁸⁸ The question is whether the use of marketing changes the 'product' or 'service' of the churches?⁸⁹



multicultural dimensions

The American 'market for religious belief' with its televangelists and its heavy promotion of various churches and sects is a very exotic experience for many Europeans. The ad depicted on page 518 for a Minneapolis church to help recruit worshippers is typical of the American trend towards secular practices being observed by many organized religions. It even uses a pun (on the curing of a headache?) to pass on the message of salvation.



Religious symbols have become fashion symbols for many. Celebrity users, such as Madonna, have speeded up the transition, moving the original meaning of sacred objects to a popular culture context, where the meaning is no longer religious, but is, instead, associated with secular goods.

Corbis/Neal Preston

Sacralization

- **Sacralization** occurs when objects, events and even people take on sacred meaning to a culture or to specific groups within a culture. For example, events like the Cannes Film Festival or Wimbledon and people like Elvis Presley or Princess Diana have become sacralized to some consumers.

Objectification occurs when sacred qualities are attributed to mundane items. One way that this process can occur is through *contamination*, where objects associated with sacred events or people become sacred in their own right. This explains the desire by many fans for items belonging to, or even touched by, famous people. One standard procedure through which objects become sacralized occurs when they become included in the collection of a museum.

In addition to museum exhibits displaying rare objects, even mundane, inexpensive things may be set apart in private *collections*, where they are transformed from profane items to sacred ones. An item is sacralized as soon as it enters a collection, and it takes on special significance to the collector that, in some cases, may be hard to comprehend

- by the outsider. **Collecting** refers to the systematic acquisition of a particular object or set of objects, and this widespread activity can be distinguished from hoarding, which is merely unsystematic collecting.⁹⁰ Collecting typically involves both rational and emotional components, since collectors are fixed by their objects, but they also carefully organize and exhibit them.⁹¹

Name an item, and the odds are that a group of collectors are lusting after it. The contents of collections range from various popular culture memorabilia, rare books and autographs, to Barbie dolls, tea bags, lawnmowers and even junk mail.⁹² The 1,200 members of the American McDonald's Collectors' Club collect 'prizes' like sandwich wrappers and Happy Meal trinkets – rare ones like the 1987 Potato Head Kids Toys sell for \$25.⁹³ Consumers are often ferociously attached to their collections; this passion is exemplified by the comment made in one study by a woman who collects teddy bears: 'If my house ever burns down, I won't cry over my furniture, I'll cry over the bears.'⁹⁴



The ad for the Episcopal church discussed in the multicultural dimensions box on p. 516.
Church Ad Project, 1021 Diffley, Eagen, MN 55123

Some consumer researchers feel that collectors are motivated to acquire their 'prizes' in order to gratify a high level of materialism in a socially acceptable manner. By systematically amassing a collection, the collector is allowed to 'worship' material objects without feeling guilty or petty. Another perspective is that collecting is an aesthetic experience: for many collectors the pleasure emanates from being involved in creating the collection, rather than from passively admiring the items one has scavenged or bought. Whatever the motivation, hard-core collectors often devote a great deal of time and energy to maintaining and expanding their collections, so for many this activity becomes a central component of their extended selves (see Chapter 7).⁹⁵



marketing opportunity

Make your brand a collectable, and enhance your exposure and your brand loyalty. Certain products and brands become cult objects for devoted collectors. In the early 1990s, 'Swatch fever' infected many people. The company made more than 500 different models, some of which were special editions designed by artists. Collectors' interest made a formerly mundane product into a rare piece of art (e.g. a 'Jelly Fish' that originally sold for \$30 was sold at auction for \$17,000). Although thousands of people still collect the watches, the frenzy began to fade by around 1993.⁹⁶ Some collectors' items are more stable. One of the corporations exploiting this opportunity to its fullest is the Coca-Cola Company. With the plethora of Coca-Cola collectables, a lot of devoted and often highly specialized collectors have been created all over the world. They appear as 'spokespersons' for the brand when they account for their sometimes fabulous collections in the media, and they create a lot of extra and extremely positive exposure for the brand. As one researcher noted: 'These are brand owners. Coca-Cola is theirs.'⁹⁷

CONSUMER SOCIETY - MATERIAL CULTURE

New books and art exhibitions witness the increasing importance of branding and advertising in our societies.⁹⁸ In 2000, it was announced that Huntington Beach, a Los Angeles

suburb, had made Coca-Cola the official drink of the community. For \$600,000 per year the company will exclude Pepsi and other soft drinks from official buildings and put up drink dispensers and advertisements all over the city. The city council initiated the deal, saying it was an alternative to higher taxes.⁹⁹

- Many people use the notion of the **consumer society** in order to describe the current type of social organization in the developed world. This is not only because we live in a world full of things, which we obviously do. Almost 24 hours a day we are surrounded by consumer objects, and lots of leisurely activities we engage in can also be characterized as consumption. But the most decisive step in the construction of consumer society is the new role of consumption activities. In most of the modern time period, it has been people's role in a production context that has been decisive for our social identity. The impact of our self-consciousness as workers, farmers, professors, artisans, etc. cannot be underestimated. But in recent decades we have seen a trend towards an increasing role for consumption patterns and style in people's identity formation. With the increase in consumption possibilities and the multiplication of styles and fashions, consumption has to some extent been cut off from its old connections to those production-defined roles. The plethora of goods and their varieties in range and styles has to a still higher degree made consumption choices statements about our personality, our values, aspirations, sympathies and antipathies, and our way of handling social relations.

Modern consumer culture is thus characterized by consumption-based identities, but other related features of a consumer society include many of the other topics discussed in this book: more and more aspects of human interaction available through the market, shopping as leisure activity combined with the variety of shopping possibilities including the new 'temples of consumption', the shopping centres, easier access to credit, the growing attention to brand images and the communicative aspects of product and packaging as well as the pervasiveness of promotion, the increasing political organization of consumers in groups with a variety of purposes and the sheer impossibility of not being a consumer and still participating in ordinary social life.¹⁰⁰ Things do matter.¹⁰¹

However, not all is well in consumer society. Many critics have attacked consumer society for a variety of reasons: that it erodes cultural differences, that it creates superficial and inauthentic forms of social interaction and that it inspires competition and individualism rather than solidarity and community. Whereas most of these assertions may not bear close scrutiny,¹⁰² consumer society in general does represent some serious challenges for our future development, not least in terms of the pressure on the environment. While we will address environmental issues and consumption in the final chapter, the pressure of consumer society is not only felt on the environment but also on

- the individual consumer, sometimes with negative outcomes. **Consumer addiction** is a physiological and/or psychological dependency on products or services. While most people equate addiction with drugs, virtually any product or service can be seen as relieving some problem or satisfying some need to the point where reliance on it becomes extreme. In some cases, it is fairly safe to say that the consumer, not unlike a drug addict, has little or no control over consumption. The products, whether alcohol, cigarettes, chocolate or diet colas, control the consumer. Even the act of shopping itself is an addictive experience for some consumers.¹⁰³

■ CHAPTER SUMMARY

- A society's *culture* includes its values, ethics and the material objects produced by its people. It is the accumulation of *shared meanings* and traditions among members of a society. A culture can be described in terms of ecology (the way people adapt to their habitat), its social structure and its ideology (including people's moral and aesthetic

principles). This chapter describes some aspects of culture and focuses on how cultural meanings are created and transmitted across members of a society.

- Members of a culture share a system of *beliefs* and *practices*, including *values*. The process of learning the values of one's culture is called enculturation. Each culture can be described by a set of core values. Values can be identified by several methods, though it is often difficult to apply these results directly to marketing campaigns due to their generality.
- *Myths* are stories containing symbolic elements that express the shared ideals of a culture. Many myths involve some binary opposition, where values are defined in terms of what they are and what they are not (e.g. nature vs. technology). Modern myths are transmitted through advertising, films and other media.
- A *ritual* is a set of multiple, symbolic behaviours which occur in a fixed sequence and tend to be repeated periodically. Rituals are related to many consumption activities which occur in popular culture. These include holiday observances, gift-giving and grooming.
- A *rite of passage* is a special kind of ritual which involves the transition from one role to another. These passages typically entail the need to acquire products and services, called ritual artefacts, to facilitate the transition. Modern rites of passage include graduations, initiation ceremonies, weddings and funerals.
- Consumer activities can be divided into *sacred* and *profane* domains. Sacred phenomena are 'set apart' from everyday activities or products. People, events or objects can become sacralized. *Objectification* occurs when sacred qualities are ascribed to products or items owned by sacred people. *Sacralization* occurs when formerly sacred objects or activities become part of the everyday, as when 'one-of-a-kind' works of art are reproduced in large quantities. *Desacralization* occurs when objects that previously were considered sacred become commercialized and integrated into popular culture.
- *Collecting* is one of the most common ways of experiencing sacred consumption in daily life. It is simultaneously one of the domains where consumption and passions are most heavily intertwined.
- The importance of consumption for understanding social interactions is now so big that we have begun to talk about our own societies as *consumer societies*, indicating that consumption might well be the single most important social activity.

► KEY TERMS

Collecting (p. 517)
Collectivist cultures (p. 501)
Consumer addiction (p. 519)
Consumer society (p. 519)
Conventions (p. 503)
Co-optation (p. 498)
Culture (p. 498)
Custom (p. 502)
Desacralization (p. 515)
Ethnoconsumerism (p. 501)
Ethos (p. 500)
Gift-giving ritual (p. 508)
Individualist cultures (p. 501)

Monomyth (p. 504)
Mores (p. 503)
Myth (p. 504)
Profane consumption (p. 512)
Rites of passage (p. 511)
Ritual (p. 506)
Ritual artefacts (p. 508)
Sacralization (p. 517)
Sacred consumption (p. 512)
Self-gifts (p. 510)
Signifying practices (p. 499)
Worldview (p. 500)



CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE

- 1 Culture can be thought of as a society's personality. If your culture were a person, could you describe its personality traits?
- 2 What is the difference between an enacted norm and a prescriptive norm? Identify the set of prescriptive norms operating when a man and woman in your culture go out for dinner on a first date. What products and services are affected by these norms?
- 3 How do the consumer decisions involved in gift-giving differ from other purchase decisions?
- 4 The chapter argues that not all gift-giving is positive. In what ways can this ritual be unpleasant or negative?
- 5 Construct a ritual script for a wedding in your culture. How many artefacts can you list that are contained in this script?
- 6 What are some of the major motivations for the purchase of self-gifts? Discuss some marketing implications of these.
- 7 Describe the three stages of the rite of passage associated with graduating from university.
- 8 Identify the ritualized aspects of various kinds of sports that are employed in advertising.
- 9 Some people have raised objections to the commercial exploitation of cultural figures. For example, in the United States many consumers deplored the profits that film-makers and business people made from films such as *Malcolm X* (e.g. by selling a 'Malcolm X' air freshener). Others argued that this commercialization merely helps to educate consumers about what such people stood for, and is inevitable in our society. What do you think?
- 10 Interview two or three of your fellow students about collecting, talking about either their own collections or a collection of somebody they know of. Use concepts about the sacred to analyse the responses.

■ NOTES

1. According to tradition, the slow pour takes exactly 119.5 seconds as the bartender holds the glass at a 45-degree angle, fills it three-quarters full, lets it settle and tops it off with its signature creamy head. When Guinness tried to introduce *FastPour*, an ultrasound technology that dispenses the dark brew in just 25 seconds, to make the pull faster and thus increase the number of drinks staff can pour on a busy night, the brewer had to scrap the system when drinkers resisted the innovation. Note: Diageo

(which owns Guinness) hasn't given up and is experimenting with other techniques in markets where this ritual isn't so inbred. A system under test in Tokyo called *Guinness Surger* is intended for bars that are too small to accommodate kegs. It lets a bartender pour a pint from a bottle, place the glass on a special plate, and zap it with ultrasound waves that generate the characteristic head. See Dennis W. Rook, 'The ritual dimension of consumer behavior', *Journal of Consumer Research* 12

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CULTURAL CHANGE PROCESSES



Joost and Lieke are riding the Intercity train from Amsterdam to Nijmegen after a fun day of shopping in Amsterdam with friends. Lieke takes out a small electronic device from her bag. 'What's that?' Joost asks. 'It's the new J.K. Rowling novel - *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*,' Lieke answers. 'What?' Joost is surprised. 'You mean that this is a book?' 'Well, not exactly,' says Lieke, 'it's an e-book. It has software that lets me download novels and other things and read them like I would read a book - no scrolling the text and all that. I got the download at Boekhandel Atheneum a few hours ago, and I wanted to start reading on the train ride home.' 'Argh!' Joost gives Lieke a look of bewilderment

as Lieke puts in her iPod ear pieces and listens to the newest Coldplay album that she legally downloaded from the internet and settles in to 'read' her electronic version of Harry Potter. Joost thinks to himself that this electronic book gadget and Lieke's iPod are perfect examples of brand offerings from mainstream marketing companies that he so loves to avoid. Lieke notices the look of mild contempt on Joost's face and says, 'It's just getting started, but they expect e-books to cover 10 per cent of the book market in a few years.' Joost doesn't reply. Instead he digs out his old 256 KB MP3, and starts listening to his alternative electronic music from Aphex Twin that he downloaded for free from the internet. Never mind that their record label, Warp, accepts all major credit cards on their website . . .

■ INTRODUCTION

The Rolling Stones. Miniskirts. Kipper ties. Fast food. High-tech furniture. New architecture. James Bond. We inhabit a world brimming with different styles and possibilities. The food we eat, the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, the places we live and work, the music we listen to – all are influenced by the ebb and flow of popular culture and fashion. Consumers may at times feel overwhelmed by the sheer choice in the marketplace. A person trying to decide on something as routine as what to have for lunch has many hundreds of alternatives from which to choose. Despite this seeming abundance, however, the options available to consumers at any point in time actually represent only a *small fraction* of the total set of possibilities. In this chapter, we shall follow marketers and cultural gatekeepers' attempts to set their marks on which possibilities get the most attention and which trends and tendencies become victorious in the battle for a place in our minds as consumers. We will take a closer look at processes of change driving the ever-changing styles of consumption we are presented with. And, referring back to Figure 14.1, we will look at how fashions and consumption styles spread within and among societies.

Even though most of the consumers we have been dealing with in this book may live in Western middle-class areas each with their national and local characteristics, they are often able to 'connect' symbolically with millions of other young consumers by relating to styles that originated far away – even though the original meanings of those styles may have little relevance to them. The spread of fashions in consumption is just one example of what happens when the meanings created by some members of a culture are interpreted and produced for mass consumption.

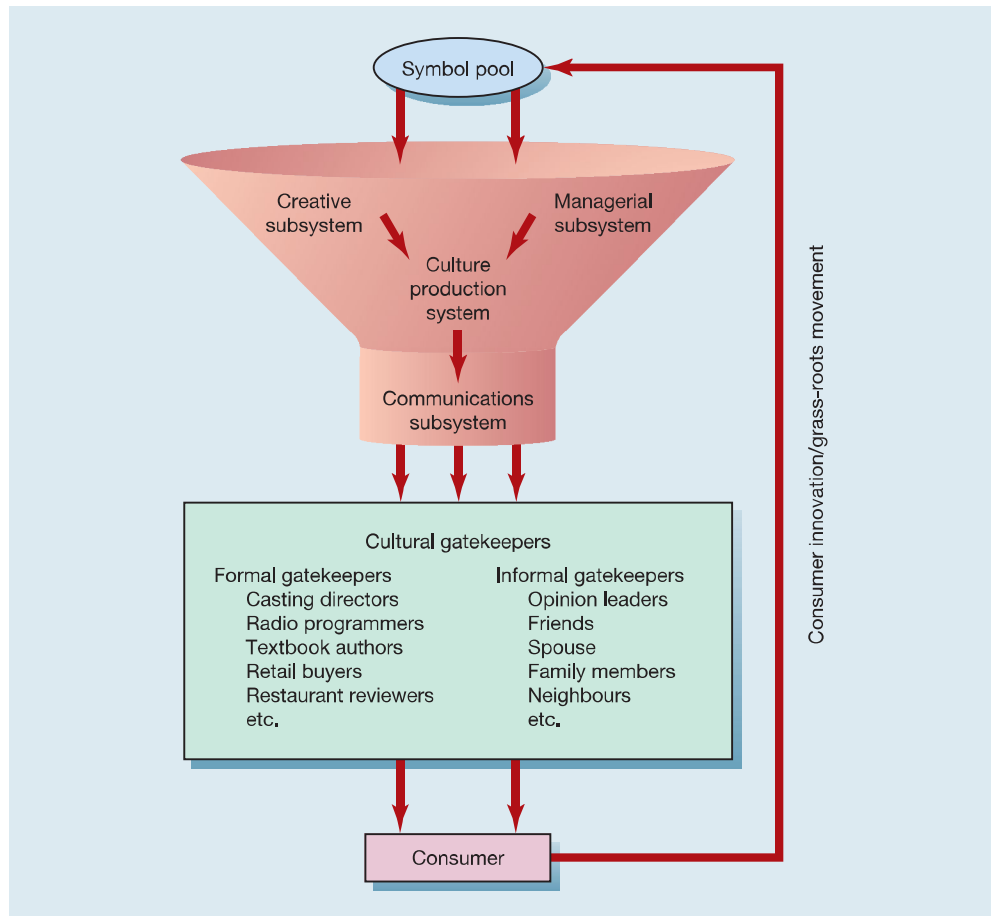
Take the example of rap music. Baggy jeans and outfits featuring gold vinyl skirts, huge gold chains and bejewelled baseball caps which used to be seen only on the streets of impoverished urban areas are being adapted by haute couture fashion designers for the catwalks of Manhattan and Paris. In addition, a high proportion of people who buy recordings of rap music are white. How did rap music and fashions, which began as forms of expression in the black urban subculture, make it to mainstream America and the rest of the world? A brief chronology is given in Table 15.1.

Table 15.1 The mainstreaming of popular music and fashion

Date	Event
1968	Bronx DJ Kool Herc invents hip hop.
1973-8	Urban block parties feature break-dancing and graffiti.
1979	A small record company named Sugar Hill becomes the first rap label.
1980	Manhattan art galleries feature graffiti artists.
1981	Blondie's song 'Rapture' hits number one in the charts.
1985	Columbia Records buys the Def Jam label.
1988	MTV begins <i>Yo! MTV Raps</i> , featuring Fab 5 Freddy.
1990	Hollywood gets into the act with the hip-hop film <i>House Party</i> ; Ice-T's rap album is a big hit on college radio stations; amid controversy, white rapper Vanilla Ice hits the big time; NBC launches a new sitcom, <i>Fresh Prince of Bel Air</i> .
1991	Mattel introduces its Hammer doll (a likeness of the rap star Hammer, formerly known as M.C. Hammer); designer Karl Lagerfeld shows shiny vinyl raincoats and chain belts in his Chanel collection; designer Charlotte Neuville sells gold vinyl suits with matching baseball caps for \$800; Isaac Mizrahi features wide-brimmed caps and takeoffs on African medallions; Bloomingdale's launches Anne Klein's rap-inspired clothing line by featuring a rap performance in its Manhattan store.
1992	Rappers start to abandon this look, turning to low-fitting baggy jeans, sometimes worn backwards; white rapper Marky Mark appears in a national campaign wearing Calvin Klein underwear, exposed

Table 15.1 (cont'd)

Date	Event
	above his hip-hugging pants; composer Quincy Jones launches <i>Vibe</i> magazine and it wins over many white readers. ¹
1993	Hip-hop fashions and slang continue to cross over into mainstream consumer culture. An outdoor ad for Coca-Cola proclaims, 'Get Yours 24-7'. The company is confident that many viewers in its target market will know that the phrase is urban slang for 'always' (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). ²
1994	The (late) Italian designer Versace pushes oversized overalls favoured by urban youngsters. In one ad, he asks, 'Overalls with an oversize look, something like what rappers and homeboys wear. Why not a sophisticated version?' ³
1996	Tommy Hilfiger, a designer who was the darling of the preppie set, turns hip hop. He gives free wardrobes to rap artists such as Grand Puba and Chef Raekwon, and in return finds his name mentioned in rap songs - the ultimate endorsement. The September 1996 issue of <i>Rolling Stone</i> features the Fugees, several band members prominently display the Hilfiger logo. In the same year the designer uses rap stars Method Man and Treach of Naughty by Nature as runway models. Hilfiger's new Tommy Girl perfume plays on his name but also is a reference to the New York hip-hop record label Tommy Boy. ⁴
1997	Coca-Cola features rapper LL Cool J in a commercial that debuts in the middle of the sitcom <i>In the House</i> , a TV show starring the singer. ⁵
1998	In their battle with Dockers for an increased share of the khaki market, Gap launches its first global advertising campaign. One of the commercials 'Khakis Groove' includes a hip-hop dance performance set to music by Bill Mason. ⁶
1999	Rapper turned entrepreneur Sean (Puffy) Combs introduces an upscale line of menswear he calls 'urban high fashion'. New companies FUBU, Mecca and Enyce attain financial success in the multibillion-dollar industry. ⁷ Lauryn Hill and the Fugees sing at a party sponsored by upscale Italian clothier Emporio Armani and she proclaims, 'We just wanna thank Armani for giving a few kids from the ghetto some great suits.' ⁸
2000	360hip-hop.com , a Web-based community dedicated to the hip-hop culture, is launched. In addition to promoting the hip-hop lifestyle, the site allows consumers to purchase clothing and music online while watching video interviews with such artists as Will Smith and Busta Rhymes. ⁹
2001	Hip-hop dancing becomes the rage among China's youth, who refer to it as <i>jiew</i> , or street dancing. ¹⁰
2002-3	Toy manufacturers mimic the hip-hop practice of using the letter 'Z' instead of the letter 'S' in names. This trend started with the 1991 film <i>Boyz n The Hood</i> (a title that was itself borrowed from a 1989 song by the rap group N.W.A.). It caught on with other hip-hop terms like 'skillz', 'gangstaz' and 'playaz'. Musical artists including 504 Boyz, Kidz Bop Kidz, Xzibit, the Youngbloodz and Smilez incorporated the popular 'Z' into their names. During the 2002 Christmas season, Target created a children's section called 'Kool Toyz', where parents can buy dolls with names like Bratz (Girlz and Boyz), Diva Starz and Trophy Tailz - and a doll's house to put them in called Dinky Digz. They can find a toy called Scannerz, a karaoke machine named Loud Lipz, and Marble Moovz, a toddlers' marble set. There's more, including Rescue Rigz, ControlBotz, 4Wheelerz and the American Patriotz action figures. ¹¹
2004-5	The global fast-food chain McDonald's offers to pay rappers 4.15 euros every time a song is played which drops the name of the 'Big-Mac'. Artists who have 'referenced' well-known products include Jay-Z, 50 Cent and Snoop Dogg. Among the happy beneficiaries have been brands such as Courvoisier, Gucci, Dom Perignon, Bently and Porsche. ¹² Hip Hop and rappers are also part of the growing fusion of music and sports, with rap artists busting a move into a field formerly dominated by pro athletes and celebrities. Rappers 50 Cent, Snoop Dog and Xzibit, have their own signature shoes through Reebok Pony and Da Da footwear. Missy Elliott has teamed with Adidas to sell her own Respect Me line of trainers, jackets and bags. The casual shoe segments (used more for fashion than sports) they endorse have emerged as the fastest growing piece of the \$17 billion athletic footwear market. Casual shoe sales grew 24.5 per cent in 2004, compared with less than 5 per cent for athletic shoes. ¹³ Even electronic gadgetry has been targeted by rap artists. 50 Cent has broken into the digital music hardware scene with his new 'G-Unit' MP3 Watch. The 256 MB version boasts a price of 405 euros! While the watch does not have any cutting edge features, it is clearly a price which is targeted to the high end of MP3 players. ¹⁴

Figure 15.1 The culture production process

Source: Adapted from Michael R. Solomon, 'Building Up and Breaking Down: The Impact of Cultural Sorting on Symbolic Consumption', in J. Sheth and E.C. Hirschman, eds, *Research in Consumer Behavior* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988): 325-51.

Cultural selection

The selection of certain alternatives over others – whether cars, dresses, computers, recording artists, political candidates, religions or even scientific methodologies – is the culmination of a complex filtration process resembling a funnel, as depicted in Figure 15.1. Many possibilities initially compete for adoption, and these are steadily narrowed down as they make their way down the path from conception to consumption in a process of

► cultural selection.

The internet has made the spotting and selection of the various trends and changes in society, the symbol pool, easier. New trend-watching services can be paid for scouring the world for new possibilities in colours, fabrics, designs or combinations. They can access pictures from runways of great fashion shows, look at store decorations from H&M or Banana Republic, or look at photos of cool London/Paris/Amsterdam/Berlin youngsters sporting the latest rebellious twist to the clothing companies' standard offerings. Even though the subscription to these services is costly, many companies think they are well worth their price, because they save in business trips and other types of costly trend-spotting fieldwork.¹⁵

Our tastes and product preferences are not formed in a vacuum. Choices are driven by the images presented to us in mass media, our observations of those around us, and even

by our desires to live in the fantasy worlds created by marketers. These options are constantly evolving and changing. A clothing style or type of cuisine that is 'hot' one year may be 'out' the next.

Culture production systems

- No single designer, company or advertising agency is solely responsible for creating popular culture. Every product, whether a hit record, a car or a new fashion, requires the input of many different participants. The set of individuals and organizations responsible for creating and marketing a cultural product is a **cultural production system (CPS)**.¹⁶

The nature of these systems helps to determine the types of product that eventually emerge from them. Factors such as the number and diversity of competing systems and the amount of innovation versus conformity that is encouraged are important. For example, an analysis of the Country & Western music industry has shown that the hit records it produces tend to be similar to one another during periods when it is dominated by a few large companies, whereas there is more diversity when a greater number of producers are competing within the same market.¹⁷

The different members of a culture production system may not necessarily be aware of or appreciate the roles played by other members, yet many diverse agents work together to create popular culture.¹⁸ Each member does his or her best to anticipate which particular images will be most attractive to a consumer market. Of course, those who are able to forecast consumers' tastes consistently will be successful over time.

Components of a CPS

A culture production system has three major subsystems: (1) a *creative subsystem* responsible for generating new symbols and/or products; (2) a *managerial subsystem* responsible for selecting, making tangible, mass-producing and managing the distribution of new symbols and/or products; and (3) a *communications subsystem* responsible for giving meaning to the new product and providing it with a symbolic set of attributes that are communicated to consumers.

An example of the three components of a culture production system for a record would be (1) a singer (e.g. Missy Elliott, a creative subsystem); (2) a company (e.g. Atlantic Records, which manufactures and distributes Madonna's records, a managerial subsystem); and (3) the advertising and publicity agencies hired to promote the albums (a communications subsystem). Table 15.2 illustrates some of the many *cultural specialists*, operating in different subsystems, who are required to create a hit CD.

Cultural gatekeepers

- Many judges or 'tastemakers' influence the products that are eventually offered to consumers. These judges, or **cultural gatekeepers**, are responsible for filtering the overflow of information and materials intended for consumers. Gatekeepers include film, restaurant and car reviewers, interior designers, disc jockeys, retail buyers and magazine editors. Collectively, this set of agents is known as the *throughput sector*.¹⁹

Speaking the language of beauty

A recent study of cultural gatekeepers in the fashion and beauty industry illustrates how some cultural 'products' (in this case, fashion models) are selected and championed over other stylistic possibilities.²⁰ Editors at such women's magazines as *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, *Depêche Mode* and *Elle* play an important role in selecting the specific variations of beauty that will appear in the pages of these 'bibles of fashion'. These images, in turn, will be relied on by millions of readers to decide what 'look' they would like to adopt – and, of course, which particular products and services (such as hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing styles, exercise programmes) they will need to attain these images.

Table 15.2 Cultural specialists in the music industry

Specialist	Functions
Songwriter(s)	Compose music and lyrics; must reconcile artistic preferences with estimates of what will succeed in the marketplace
Performer(s)	Interpret music and lyrics; may be formed spontaneously, or may be packaged by an agent to appeal to a predetermined market (e.g. Elton John or Green Day)
Teachers and coaches	Develop and refine performers' talents
Agent	Represent performers to record companies
A&R (artist & repertoire) executive	Acquire artists for the record label
Publicists, image consultants, designers, stylists	Create an image for the group that is transmitted to the buying public
Recording technicians, producers	Create a recording to be sold
Marketing executives	Make strategic decisions regarding performer's appearances, ticket pricing, promotional strategies, and so on
Video director	Interpret the song visually to create a music video that will help to promote the record
Music reviewers	Evaluate the merits of a recording for listeners
Disc jockeys, radio programme directors	Decide which records will be given airplay and/or placed in the radio stations' regular rotations
Record shop owner	Decide which of the many records produced will be stocked and/or promoted heavily in the retail environment

In this study, decision makers at a group of influential magazines identified a small set of 'looks' that characterize many of the diverse fashion models they evaluate on a daily basis – what is more, though each editor was studied independently, overall respondents exhibited a very high level of agreement among themselves regarding what the 'looks' are, what they are called, which are more or less desirable *and* which they expect to be paired with specific product advertisements. This research suggests that cultural gatekeepers tend to rely on the same underlying cultural ideals and priorities when making the selections that in turn get passed down the channel of distribution for consideration by consumers.

High culture and popular culture

Do Beethoven and Björk have anything in common? While both the famous composer and the Icelandic singer are associated with music, many would argue that the similarity stops here. Culture production systems create many diverse kinds of products, but some basic distinctions can be offered regarding their characteristics.

Arts and crafts

- ▶ One distinction can be made between arts and crafts.²¹ An **art product** is viewed primarily as an object of aesthetic contemplation without any functional value. A **craft product**, in contrast, is admired because of the beauty with which it performs some function (e.g. a ceramic ashtray or hand-carved fishing lures). A piece of art is original, subtle and

valuable, and is associated with the elite of society. A craft tends to follow a formula that permits rapid production. According to this framework, elite culture is produced in a purely aesthetic context and is judged by reference to recognized classics. It is high culture – ‘serious art’.²²

High art vs. low art

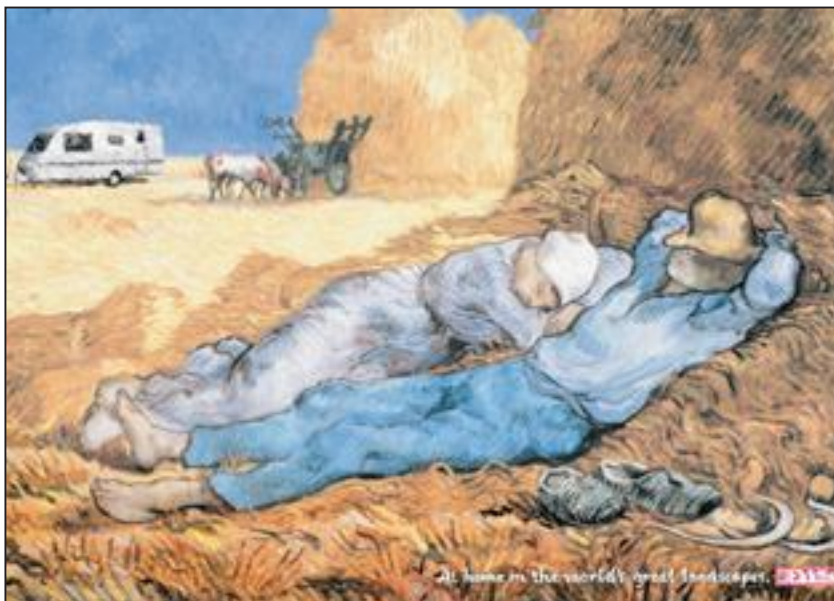
The distinction between high and low culture is not as clear as it may first appear. In addition to the possible class bias that drives such a distinction (i.e. we assume that the rich have culture while the poor do not), high and low culture are blending together in interesting ways. Popular culture reflects the world around us; these phenomena touch rich and poor. In many places in Europe, advertising is widely appreciated as an art form and the TV/cinema commercials have their own Cannes festival. In France and Great Britain certain advertising executives are public figures in their respective countries. For over ten years, Europeans in different countries have paid relatively high entrance fees to watch an all-night programme in a cinema consisting of nothing but television commercials.²³

The arts are big business. All cultural products that are transmitted by mass media become a part of popular culture.²⁴ Classical recordings are marketed in much the same way as Top-40 albums,²⁵ and museums use mass-marketing techniques to sell their wares. The Parisian museums even run a satellite gift shop at the Charles de Gaulle airport.

Marketers often incorporate high art imagery to promote products. They may sponsor artistic events to build public goodwill or feature works of art on shopping bags.²⁶ When observers from Toyota watched customers in luxury car showrooms, the company found that these consumers tended to view a car as an art object. This theme was then used in an ad for the Lexus with the caption: ‘Until now, the only fine arts we supported were sculpture, painting and music’.²⁷

Cultural formulae

Mass culture, in contrast, churns out products specifically for a mass market. These products aim to please the average taste of an undifferentiated audience and are predictable because they follow certain patterns. As illustrated in Table 15.3 many popular art forms,



This advertisement demonstrates the adaptation of famous paintings ('high art') to sell products ('low art').

Used with permission of Robson Brown Advertising, Newcastle upon Tyne, England

Table 15.3 Cultural formulae in public artforms

Artform/genre	Classic western	Science fiction	Hard-boiled detective	Family sitcom
Time	1800s	Future	Present	Any time
Location	Edge of civilization	Space	City	Suburbs
Protagonist	Cowboy (lone individual)	Astronaut	Detective	Father (figure)
Heroine	Schoolmistress	Spacegirl	Damsel in distress	Mother (figure)
Villain	Outlaws, killers	Aliens	Killer	Boss, neighbour
Secondary characters	Townfolk, Indians	Technicians in spacecraft	Police, underworld	Children, dogs
Plot	Restore law and order	Repel aliens	Find killer	Solve problem
Theme	Justice	Triumph of humanity	Pursuit and discovery	Chaos and confusion
Costume	Cowboy hat, boots, etc.	High-tech uniforms	Raincoat	Normal clothes
Locomotion	Horse	Spaceship	Beat-up car	Family estate car
Weaponry	Sixgun, rifle	Rayguns	Pistol, fists	Insults

Source: Arthur A. Berger, *Signs in Contemporary Culture: An Introduction to Semiotics* (New York: Longman, 1984): 86. Copyright © 1984. Reissued 1989 by Sheffield Publishing Company, Salem, WI. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

- such as detective stories or science fiction, generally follow a **cultural formula**, where certain roles and props often occur consistently.²⁸ Computer programs even allow users to ‘write’ their own romances by systematically varying certain set elements of the story. Romance novels are an extreme case of a cultural formula. The romance novel and other formulae reflect the consumer society by the way consumption events and different brands play a role in the story and in the construction of the different atmospheres described.²⁹

Reliance on these formulae also leads to a *recycling* of images, as members of the creative subsystem reach back through time for inspiration. Thus, young people in Britain watch retro channels like Granada Plus and UK Gold broadcasting classic decades-old soaps, and old themes are recycled for new soap series. Designers modify styles from Victorian England or colonial Africa, DJs sample sound bits from old songs and combine them in new ways, and The Gap runs ads featuring now-dead celebrities including Humphrey Bogart, Gene Kelly and Pablo Picasso dressed in khaki trousers.³⁰ With easy access to VCRs, CD burners, digital cameras and imaging software, virtually anyone can ‘remix’ the past.³¹

Artists and companies in the popular music or film industry may be more guided by ideas of what could make a ‘hit’ than by any wish for artistic expression. And creators of aesthetic products are increasingly adapting conventional marketing methods to fine-tune their mass-market offerings. In the United States, market research is used, for example, to test audience reactions to film concepts. Although testing cannot account for such intangibles as acting quality or cinematography, it can determine if the basic themes of the film strike a responsive chord in the target audience. This type of research is most appropriate for blockbuster films, which usually follow one of the formulae described earlier. In some cases research is combined with publicity, as when the producers of the film *Men in Black*, featuring Will Smith, showed the first 12 minutes of the film to an advance audience and then let them meet the stars to create a pre-release buzz.³²

Even the content of films is sometimes influenced by this consumer research. Typically, free invitations to pre-screenings are handed out in shopping centres and cinemas. Attendees are asked a few questions about the film, then some are selected to participate in focus groups. Although groups’ reactions usually result in only minor editing changes,



This Werther's Original ad illustrates how a mass produced product (sweets) can be portrayed as a link between generations, and evoke a strong emotional link too.

The Advertising Archives

occasionally more drastic effects result. When initial reaction to the ending of the film *Fatal Attraction* was negative, Paramount Pictures spent an additional \$1.3 million to shoot a new one.³³ Of course, this feedback isn't always accurate – before the megahit *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* was released, consumer research indicated that no one over the age of four would go to see the film!³⁴

Reality engineering

Let us take a short trip to a cosy corner of the United States. The village of Riverside, Georgia has a colourful history. You can look at the sepia photographs showing the town in the nineteenth century, or read excerpts from period novels lauding the settlement's cosmopolitan flair. You'll also discover that the town was used as a Union garrison during the American Civil War. There's only one hitch: Riverside didn't exist until 1998. The account of nineteenth-century Riverside is a clever fabrication created to promote a new housing and commercial development. The story 'is a figment of our imagination', acknowledges the developer.³⁵

Like Riverside, many of the environments in which we find ourselves, whether shopping centres, sports stadiums or theme parks, are composed at least partly of images and characters drawn from products, marketing campaigns or the mass media. **Reality engineering** occurs as elements of popular culture are appropriated by marketers and converted to vehicles for promotional strategies.³⁶ These elements include sensory and spatial aspects of everyday existence, whether in the form of products appearing in films, scents pumped into offices and shops, advertising hoardings, theme parks, video monitors attached to shopping trolleys, and so on.

The people of Disney Corporation are probably the best worldwide-known reality engineers, through their theme parks in California and Florida, and their newer parks in Japan and Europe. Disneyland-Paris got off to a problematic start when it opened in 1991. Fewer visitors and especially too few clients for the hotel and congress facilities created economic problems. But the conceptualization of the park was changed, made less American and more European, and now the park is drawing huge crowds. Also other consumption facilities and housing areas have been created around it, including a giant

shopping centre where one of the streets will be a recreation of a 'typical street' of one of the local villages.³⁷ But other themed environments like the Asterix park, future parks or artificially created tropical environments are becoming increasingly popular for shorter holidays throughout Europe. The British-owned chain Center Parcs now has 14 villages in Europe – five in the Netherlands, four in the UK, two each in Belgium and France, and one in Germany – all of them built on the concept of constructing a happy and safe environment for the confirmation of family values – a life 'in brackets' away from the risks and hassles of the 'real society'.³⁸

The Lost City, a new resort in South Africa, blurs the boundaries even further; it has created a 'fake' Africa for affluent guests. The complex is drought-proof and disease-proof, and it features a three-storey water slide, an 'ocean' with a panic button that will stop the wave motion on command, and a nightly volcanic eruption complete with 'non-allergenic' smoke.³⁹ The melding of marketing activity with popular culture is evident in other contexts as well. A British coffee ad recently borrowed the words from the Beatles' song 'A Day in the Life' and went so far as to include a shot of John Lennon's signature round-framed glasses sitting on a table. The British Boy Scouts announced that they would begin accepting corporate sponsorships for merit badges.



multicultural dimensions

One of the most controversial intersections between marketing and society occurs when companies provide 'educational materials' to schools. In the United States, many firms, including such companies as Nike and Nintendo, provide free book covers covered with ads. Almost 40 per cent of secondary schools in the United States start the day with a 'video feed' from Channel One, which exposes students to commercials in the classroom in exchange for educational programming. Similarly, an internet company called ZapMe! gives client schools free computers and internet connections as well as a network of 11,000 educational sites in exchange for a promise to use the computers at least four hours a day. Commercials run continuously on the lower left-hand quarter of the screen, and the company has permission to monitor the students' browsing habits, breaking down the data by age, sex, and zip code. In a few cases companies are contracting with schools to run focus groups with their students during the school day in order to get reactions to new product ideas. Coca-Cola signed a ten year \$8 million exclusive beverage contract with the Colorado Springs, Colorado school system. In some schools 9-year-olds practise maths by counting Tootsie Rolls (a brand of sweets), and use reading software that sports logos from KMart, Coke, Pepsi and Cap'n Crunch cereal.

Corporate involvement with schools is hardly new – in the 1920s Ivory Soap sponsored soap-carving competitions for students. But, the level of intrusion is sharply increasing as companies scramble to compensate for the decrease in children's viewership of television on Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons and find themselves competing with videos and computer games for their attention. Many educators argue that these materials are a godsend for resource-poor schools that otherwise would have hardly any other way to communicate with students. What do you think?⁴⁰

Nor is this a purely American phenomenon any longer. The Danish consumer 'ombudsman' attacked a new series of mathematics books for primary schools for including references to brand names. The publishers defended themselves with the argument that it was to provide more realistic cases for the school children.

Marketing sometimes seems to exert a self-fulfilling prophecy on popular culture. As commercial influences on popular culture increase, marketer-created symbols make their way into our daily lives to a greater degree. Historical analyses of plays, best-selling novels and the lyrics of hit songs, for example, clearly show large increases in the use of brand names over time.⁴¹

Reality engineering is accelerating due to the current popularity of product placements by marketers. It is quite common to see real brands prominently displayed or to hear them discussed in films and on television. In many cases, these 'plugs' are no accident. **Product placement** refers to the insertion of specific products and/or the use of brand names in film and TV scripts. Today most major releases are brimming with real products. Directors like to incorporate branded props because they contribute to the film's realism. When Stephen Spielberg did the film *Minority Report* he used such brands as Nokia, Lexus, Pepsi, Guinness, Reebok and American Express to lend familiarity to the plot's futuristic settings. Lexus even created a new sports car model called the Maglev just for the film.⁴²

Some researchers claim that product placement can aid in consumer decision-making because the familiarity of these props creates a sense of cultural belonging while generating feelings of emotional security.⁴³ One recent study found that consumers are more persuaded by embedded products when they are consistent with the plot.⁴⁴ On the other hand, a majority of consumers polled believe the line between advertising and programming is becoming too fuzzy and distracting (though, as might be expected, concerns about this blurring of boundaries rose steadily with the age of respondents).⁴⁵ For better or worse products are popping up everywhere:

- Although IBM sells a lot more computers, Apples are seen in many more TV shows and films such as *Mission Impossible* and *Independence Day*. Producers like to use the Apple because its image is more hip. But Apple will only let that happen if the brand is identified onscreen.⁴⁶
- Philip Morris paid to place Marlboro cigarettes and signs in *Superman* movies and doled out \$350,000 to have Lark cigarettes featured in the James Bond film *Licence to Kill*.⁴⁷
- The American hit reality show *Survivor* portrayed the adventures of 16 people stranded on a desert island near Borneo for 39 days. They battled for a chance to wear Reeboks, drink Budweiser, and sleep in a Pontiac Aztec sport-utility vehicle.⁴⁸

Product placement has been an American phenomenon – until recently. Now, marketers in other countries are discovering the value of placing their brand messages wherever they can.⁴⁹ In France, cafés are turning table tops into advertising space for United Airlines, Swatch watches and other companies. Although some patrons decry the invasion of such commercialism into the 'sacred' French practice of lounging at bistros, the owner of a firm that is supplying the ads observes, 'We want to make cafés more interesting places for people to visit.'⁵⁰ *Sacre bleu!*

In China, product placement is emerging as a new way to get noticed. Most commercials on Chinese state-run TV play back-to-back in ten-minute segments, making it difficult for any one 30-second ad to attract attention. So, enterprising marketers are embedding product messages in the shows instead. A soap opera called *Love Talks* features such products as Maybelline lipstick, Motorola mobile phones and Ponds Vaseline Intensive Care lotion.⁵¹

In India, the booming Bombay film industry (known as Bollywood) is discovering the potential of films to expose viewers to brand names (Indian cinema attracts huge local audiences, even in villages where television is not available). Coca-Cola paid to have its local soft drink, Thums Up, prominently featured in a Hindi-language remake of the Quentin Tarantino classic *Reservoir Dogs*. Just in case the audience misses the placements, in one scene just before bullets start flying a group of slickly dressed gangsters flash each other the thumbs-up sign.⁵²

Media images significantly influence consumers' perceptions of reality, affecting viewers' notions about such issues as dating behaviour, racial stereotypes and occupational status.⁵³ Studies of the **cultivation hypothesis**, which relates to media's ability to

shape consumers' perceptions of reality, have shown that heavy television viewers tend to overestimate the degree of affluence in the country, and these effects also extend to such areas as perceptions of the amount of violence in one's culture.⁵⁴ Also, the depiction of consumer environments in programmes and advertisements may lead to further marginalization of, for example, unemployed people, who cannot afford to buy into the depicted lifestyle,⁵⁵ or to outright addicted consumers, who cannot refrain from constantly buying various goods, although they may not use these at all.

■ THE DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

- New products and styles termed innovations constantly enter the market. An **innovation** is any product or service that is perceived to be new by consumers. These new products or services occur in both consumer and industrial settings. Innovations may take the form of a clothing or fashion accessory style (such as Jean-Paul Gaultier's skirts for men, or Dolce & Gabbana's rosary beads necklaces for men), a new manufacturing technique, or a novel way to deliver a service. If an innovation is successful (most are not), it spreads through the population. First it is bought and/or used by only a few people, and then more and more consumers decide to adopt it, until, in some cases, it seems that almost everyone has bought or tried the innovation. Diffusion of innovations refers to the process whereby a new product, service or idea spreads through a population. There is a tendency for technical goods especially to diffuse more rapidly these days. Sixteen per cent of the Swedish population possessed a mobile phone in 1994 – six years later, in 2000, the number was 80 per cent. Likewise, the number of Swedes with internet access was 74 per cent in 2004, up from 55 per cent in 2000.⁵⁶

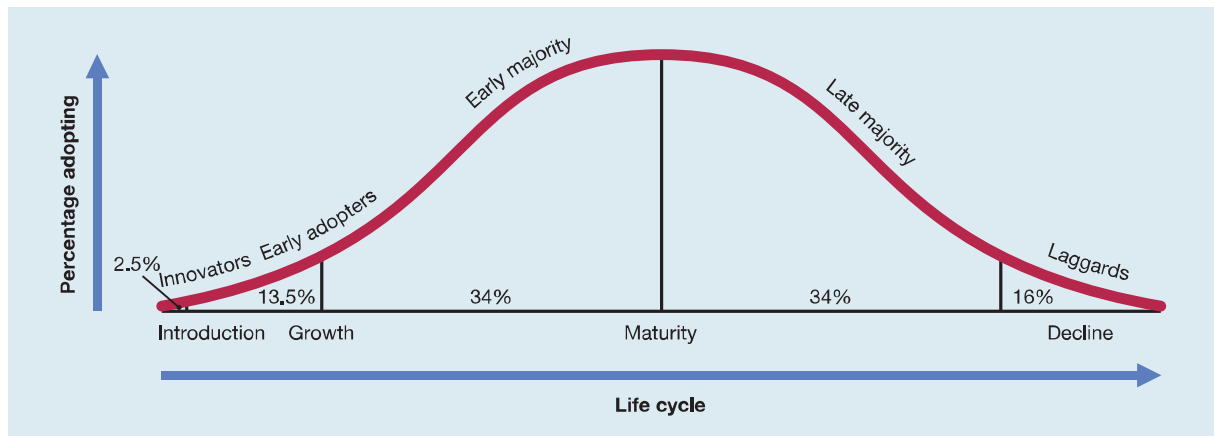
Adopting innovations

A consumer's adoption of an innovation may resemble the decision-making sequence discussed in Chapter 8. The person moves through the stages of awareness, information search, evaluation, trial and adoption, although the relative importance of each stage may differ depending on how much is already known about a product,⁵⁷ as well as on cultural factors that may affect people's willingness to try new things.⁵⁸ A study of 11 European countries found that consumers in individualistic cultures are more innovative than consumers in collective cultures.⁵⁹

However, even within the same culture, not all people adopt an innovation at the same rate. Some do so quite rapidly, and others never do at all. Consumers can be placed into approximate categories based upon the likelihood of adopting an innovation. The categories of adopters, shown in Figure 15.2, can be related to phases of the product life-cycle concept used widely by marketing strategists.

As can be seen in Figure 15.2, roughly one-sixth of the population (innovators and early adopters) is very quick to adopt new products, and one-sixth of the people (laggards) is very slow. The other two-thirds are somewhere in the middle, and these majority adopters represent the mainstream public. In some cases people deliberately wait before adopting an innovation because they assume that its technological qualities will be improved or that its price will fall after it has been on the market.⁶⁰ Keep in mind that the proportion of consumers falling into each category is an estimate; the actual size of each depends upon such factors as the complexity of the product, its cost and other product-related factors, but possibly also varies from country to country.

Even though innovators represent only 2.5 per cent of the population, marketers are always interested in identifying them. According to standard theory, these are the brave souls who are always on the lookout for novel developments and will be the first to try a new offering. Just as generalized opinion leaders do not appear to exist, innovators

Figure 15.2 Types of adopter

tend to be category-specific. A person who is an innovator in one area may even be a laggard in another. For example, someone who prides himself on being at the cutting edge of fashion may have no conception of new developments in recording technology and stereo equipment.

Despite this qualification, some generalizations can be offered regarding the profile of innovators.⁶¹ Not surprisingly they tend to have more favourable attitudes towards taking risks. They are also, at least in an American context, likely to have higher educational and income levels and to be socially active. However, in a European study of the fashion and clothing market, the same correlation between socio-demographic variables and innovative or early adopting behaviour could not be found.⁶² On the other hand, a Spanish study, perhaps not surprisingly, concluded that innovators tend to be younger and, more interestingly, that publicity and advertisement would have the biggest influence on product adoption in the early years of commercialization of a product, whereas word-of-mouth and other non-producer controlled information becomes more important thereafter.⁶³

- **Early adopters** share many of the same characteristics as innovators, but an important difference is their degree of concern for social acceptance, especially with regard to expressive products such as clothing, cosmetics and so on. Generally speaking, an early adopter is receptive to new styles because he or she is involved in the product category and also places high value on being in fashion. The universality of the dichotomy of innovators and adopters has been challenged by research pertaining to health foods, suggesting that (1) three groups can be distinguished, namely innovators, more-involved adopters and less-involved adopters, and (2) there is not a big difference between the purchase rate of new products between innovators and adopters; rather the difference lies in the kind of innovations tried and the approach to trying new products.⁶⁴ Table 15.4 gives a brief description of the different types of consumers and their approach to new product trials.

Types of innovations

Innovations can contain a technological level and involve some functional change (for example, car air bags) or be of a more intangible kind, communicating a new social meaning (like a new hairstyle). However, contrary to what much literature states,⁶⁵ both are symbolic in the sense that one refers to symbols of technical performance and safety and the other to less tangible symbols, such as courage and individuality. Both types refer to symbols of progress.⁶⁶ New products, services and ideas have characteristics that

Table 15.4 Decision styles of market segments based on adoption, innovation and personal involvement

Adoption decision process stage	Less-involved adopters	Innovators	More-involved adopters
Problem recognition	Passive, reactive	Active	Proactive
Search	Minimal, confined to resolution of minor anomalies caused by current consumption patterns	Superficial but extensively based within and across product class boundaries	Extensive within relevant product category; assiduous exploration of all possible solutions within that framework
Evaluation	Meticulous, rational, slow and cautious; objective appraisal using tried and tested criteria	Quick, impulsive, based on currently accepted criteria; personal and subjective	Careful, confined to considerations raised by the relevant product category; but executed confidently and (for the adopter) briskly within that frame of reference
Decision	Conservative selection within known range of products, continuous innovations preferred	Radical: easily attracted to discontinuously new product class and able to choose quickly within it. Frequent trial, followed by abandonment	Careful selection within a product field that has become familiar through deliberation, vicarious trial, and sound and prudent pre-purchase comparative evaluation
Post-purchase evaluation	Meticulous, tendency to brand loyalty if item performs well	Less loyal; constantly seeking novel experiences through purchase and consumption innovations	Loyal if satisfied but willing to try innovations within the prescribed frame of reference; perhaps tends towards dynamically-continuous

Source: Gordon R. Foxall and Seema Bhate, 'Cognitive style and personal involvement as explicators of innovative purchasing of health food brands', *European Journal of Marketing* 27(2)(1993): 5-16. Used with permission.

determine the degree to which they will probably diffuse. Innovations that are more novel may be less likely to diffuse, since they require bigger changes in people's lifestyles and thus more effort. On the other hand, most innovations are close to being of the 'me too' kind, and thus do not necessarily possess qualities that would persuade the consumer to shift from existing product types. In any case, it should be noted that in spite of all the good intentions of the marketing concept to ensure that there is a market before the product is developed, the failure rate of new products is as high as ever, if not higher.⁶⁷

Behavioural demands of innovations

Innovations can be categorized in terms of the degree to which they demand changes in behaviour from adopters. Three major types of innovation have been identified, though these three categories are not absolutes. They refer, in a relative sense, to the amount of disruption or change they bring to people's lives.

- A **continuous innovation** refers to a modification of an existing product, as when a breakfast cereal is introduced in a sugar-coated version, or Levi's promoted 'shrink-to-fit' jeans. This type of change may be used to set one brand apart from its competitors. Most product innovations are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Small changes are made to position the product, add line extensions or merely to alleviate consumer boredom.

Consumers may be lured to the new product, but adoption represents only minor changes in consumption habits, since innovation perhaps adds to the product's convenience or to the range of choices available. A typewriter company, for example, many years ago modified the shape of its product to make it more user friendly. One

simple change was the curving of the tops of the keys, a convention that was carried over on today's computer keyboards. One of the reasons for the change was that secretaries with long fingernails had complained about the difficulty of typing on the flat surfaces.

- ▶ A **dynamically continuous innovation** is a more pronounced change in an existing product, as represented by self-focusing cameras or touch-tone telephones. These innovations have a modest impact on the way people do things, creating some behavioural changes, although the touch-tone telephone is an expression of a larger innovation involving many discontinuous renewals of daily life: the digitalization of communication. When introduced, the IBM electric typewriter, which used a 'golf ball' rather than individual keys, enabled typists to change the typeface of manuscripts simply by replacing one ball with another.
- ▶ A **discontinuous innovation** creates major changes in the way we live. Major inventions, such as the aeroplane, the car, the computer and television have radically changed modern lifestyles, although, as can be seen from these examples, major changes normally take some time from the point of introduction. The personal computer has, in many cases, supplanted the typewriter, and it has created the phenomenon of 'telecommuters' by allowing many people to work from their homes. Of course, the cycle continues, as new innovations like new versions of software are constantly being made; dynamically continuous innovations such as the keyboard 'mouse' compete for adoption; and discontinuous innovations like wristwatch personal computers loom on the horizon.



marketing opportunity

These years, the new interactive communication technologies provide a lot of opportunities for product innovations. Electrolux, the large Swedish appliance producer, is currently testing household reactions and changes in consumer lifestyles in 50 Danish homes following the installment of the world's first intelligent refrigerator, the Electrolux Screenfridge. In collaboration with an Ericsson subsidiary, the company has developed this new communication center of the home, with built-in touch screen on the refrigerator door that provides perpetual access to broadband communication technology (including automated shopping lists), internet, TV and radio. Even more 'intelligent features' are being developed for the product. Says one young mother from one of the test households: 'I enjoy the on-line internet access in the kitchen, as it is the place we spend most of our time. I believe I'll use the Screenfridge for everyday information, like looking up phone numbers, finding bus schedules or getting dinner ideas. I know I'll also try internet food shopping; with two children it would be great to have the groceries delivered to the home.'⁶⁸

Prerequisites for successful adoption

Regardless of how much behavioural change is demanded by an innovation, several factors are desirable for a new product to succeed:⁶⁹

- *Compatibility.* The innovation should be compatible with consumers' lifestyles. As an illustration, a manufacturer of personal care products tried unsuccessfully several years ago to introduce a hair remover cream for men as a substitute for razors and shaving cream. This formulation was similar to that used widely by women to remove hair from their legs. Although the product was simple and convenient to use, it failed because men were not interested in a product they perceived to be too feminine and thus threatening to their masculine self-concepts.
- *Trialability.* Since an unknown is accompanied by high perceived risk, people are more likely to adopt an innovation if they can experiment with it prior to making a commitment. To reduce this risk, companies often choose the expensive strategies of distributing free 'trial-size' samples of new products. For example, the Swedish coffee brand Gevalia has distributed free samples targeted especially at young people, because there is some evidence that fewer young people are drinking coffee, and those that do, begin later in life.



A cultural emphasis on science in the late 1950s affected product designs, as seen in the design of cars with large tail fins (to resemble rockets).

Corbis/R. Gates

- *Complexity.* The product should be low in complexity. A product that is easier to understand and use will often be preferred to a competitor. This strategy requires less effort from the consumer, and it also lowers perceived risk. Manufacturers of DVD players, for example, have put a lot of effort into simplifying usage (such as on-screen programming) to encourage adoption.
- *Observability.* An innovation that is easily observable is more likely to spread, since this quality makes it more likely that other potential adopters will become aware of its existence. The rapid proliferation of 'bum bags' (pouches worn around the waist in lieu of wallets or purses) was due to their high visibility. It was easy for others to see the convenience offered.
- *Relative advantage.* Most importantly, the product should offer relative advantage over alternatives. The consumer must believe that its use will provide a benefit other products cannot offer. For example, the success of many environmentally friendly product alternatives may be due to the fact that, once consumers have been convinced about the environmental advantages of the product, it is a clear and easily understandable advantage compared to competing products.

The social context of innovations

One critical but relatively little researched aspect is the importance of the social context of product adoption behaviour.⁷⁰ This is linked to the importance of visibility of the product innovation as well as the influence of the reference group which is seen as related to the new product. For example, Western products are admired in many contexts in Asia and Africa, or the marketizing economies of Eastern Europe, for the sole reason of being linked to the status of the Western world, which is seen as 'better', more 'developed' and generally of a higher status.⁷¹ Likewise, in Europe the association of new products with the American way of life will have a significant impact on the adopting behaviour of various groups in society but will differ in different European countries.

Another aspect of the social dimension of innovation is the pitfall of being caught up in too many continuous innovations due to an ever finer market segmentation and customization approach. This may take resources away from more strategic considerations of changing 'the way things are done'.⁷² For example, a British bank had created such a complex structure of financial services and accounts, as well as charges attached

to these services, that customers began to complain about waiting time and lack of understanding of their own financial affairs. The bank simplified the structure to one account type and a much simpler charge system and successfully made this a unique selling proposition in a market dominated by more complex offerings.⁷³

■ THE FASHION SYSTEM

- ▶ The **fashion system** consists of all those people and organizations involved in creating symbolic meanings and transferring these meanings to cultural goods. Although people tend to equate fashion with clothing, be it haute couture or street wear, it is important to keep in mind that fashion processes affect *all* types of cultural phenomena from the more mundane (what do you think of high fashion nappy bags in unisex style?⁷⁴) to high art, including music, art, architecture and even science (i.e. certain research topics and scientists are 'hot' at any point in time). Even business practices are subject to the fashion process; they evolve and change depending on which management techniques are in vogue, such as total quality management or 'the learning organization'.

Fashion can be thought of as a *code*, or language, that helps us to decipher these meanings.⁷⁵ However, fashion seems to be *context-dependent* to a larger extent than language. That is, the same item can be interpreted differently by different consumers and in different situations.⁷⁶ The meaning of many products is *undercoded* – that is, there is no one precise meaning, but rather plenty of room for interpretation among perceivers.

- ▶ At the outset, it may be helpful to distinguish among some confusing terms. **Fashion** is the process of social diffusion by which a new style is adopted by some group(s) of consumers. In contrast, *a fashion* (or style) refers to a particular combination of attributes. And, to be *in fashion* means that this combination is currently positively evaluated by some reference group. Thus, the term *Danish Modern* refers to particular characteristics of furniture design (i.e. a fashion in interior design); it does not necessarily imply that Danish Modern is a fashion that is currently desired by consumers.⁷⁷

Cultural categories

- ▶ The meaning that does get imparted to products reflects underlying **cultural categories**, which correspond to the basic ways we characterize the world.⁷⁸ Our culture makes distinctions between different times, between leisure and work, between genders and so on. The fashion system provides us with products that signify these categories. For example, the clothing industry gives us clothing to denote certain times (evening wear, resort wear), it differentiates between leisure clothes and work clothes, and it promotes masculine, feminine or unisex styles.

Interdependence among product meanings

These cultural categories affect many different products and styles. As a result, it is common to find that dominant aspects of a culture at any point in time tend to be reflected in the design and marketing of very different products. This concept is hard to grasp, since on the surface a clothing style, say, has little in common with a piece of furniture or with a car. However, an overriding concern with a value such as achievement or environmentalism can determine the types of product likely to be accepted by consumers at any point in time. These underlying or latent themes then surface in various aspects of design. A few examples of this interdependence will help to demonstrate how a dominant fashion motif reverberates across industries.

- Costumes worn by political figures or film and rock stars can affect the fortunes of the apparel and accessory industries. The appearance in a film of the actor Clark Gable not wearing a vest (unusual at that time) dealt a severe setback to the men's apparel

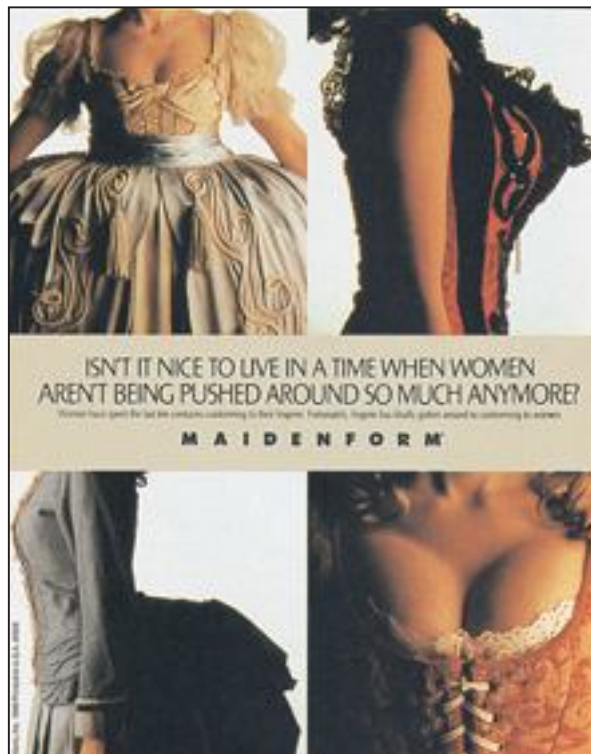
industry, while Jackie Kennedy's famous 'pillbox' hat prompted a rush for hats by women in the 1960s. Other cross-category effects include the craze for ripped sweatshirts instigated by the film *Flashdance* or the singer Madonna's legitimization of lingerie as an acceptable outerwear clothing style.

- Some years ago, the Louvre in Paris was remodelled to include a controversial glass pyramid at the entrance designed by the architect I.M. Pei. Shortly thereafter, several designers unveiled pyramid-shaped clothing at Paris fashion shows.⁷⁹
- In the 1950s and 1960s, much of the Western world was preoccupied with science and technology. This concern with 'space-age' mastery was fuelled by the Russians' launching of the Sputnik satellite, which prompted fears that the West (and here, most importantly the United States) was falling behind in the technology race. The theme of technical mastery of nature and of futuristic design became a motif that cropped up in many aspects of popular culture – from car designs with prominent tailfins to high-tech kitchen styles.

Collective selection

Fashions tend to sweep through countries; it seems that all of a sudden 'everyone' is doing the same thing or wearing the same styles. Some sociologists view fashion as a form of *collective behaviour*, or a wave of social conformity. How do so many people get tuned in to the same phenomenon at once, as happened with hip-hop styles?

Remember that creative subsystems within a culture production system attempt to anticipate the tastes of the buying public. Despite their unique talents, members of this subsystem are also members of mass culture. Like the fashion magazine editors discussed earlier, cultural gatekeepers are drawing from a common set of ideas and symbols, and are influenced by the same cultural phenomena as the eventual consumers of their products.



This ad for Maidenform illustrates that fashions have accentuated different parts of the female anatomy throughout history.

Copyright © 1994 by Maidenform, Inc.

- The process by which certain symbolic alternatives are chosen over others has been termed **collective selection**.⁸⁰ As with the creative subsystem, members of the managerial and communications subsystems also seem to develop a common frame of mind. Although products within each category must compete for acceptance in the marketplace, they can usually be characterized by their adherence to a dominant theme or motif – be it the grunge look, sixties nostalgia, Danish Modern or nouvelle cuisine.

Behavioural science perspectives on fashion

Fashion is a very complex process which operates on many levels. At one extreme, it is a macro, societal phenomenon affecting many people simultaneously. At the other, it exerts a very personal effect on individual behaviour. A consumer's purchase decisions are often motivated by his or her desire to be in fashion. Fashion products are aesthetic objects, and their origins are rooted in art and history. For this reason, there are many perspectives on the origin and diffusion of fashion. Although these cannot be described in detail here, some major approaches can be briefly summarized.⁸¹

Psychological models of fashion

Many psychological factors help to explain why people are motivated to be in fashion. These include conformity, variety-seeking, personal creativity and sexual attraction. For example, many consumers seem to have a 'need for uniqueness': they want to be different, but not too different.⁸² For this reason, people often conform to the basic outlines of a fashion, but try to improvise and make a personal statement within these guidelines.

- One of the earliest theories of fashion proposed that 'shifting **erogenous zones**' (sexually arousing areas of the body) accounted for fashion changes. Different parts of the female body are the focus of sexual interest, and clothing styles change to highlight or hide these parts. For example, people in the Victorian era found shoulders exciting, a 'well-turned ankle' was important at the beginning of the twentieth century, while the back was the centre of attention in the 1930s.

While these shifts may be due to boredom, some have speculated that there are deeper reasons for changes in focus; body areas symbolically reflect social values. In medieval times, for example, a rounded belly was desirable. This preference was most likely a reflection of the fact that multiple pregnancies were necessary to maintain population growth in an age when infant mortality was high. Interest in the female leg in the 1920s and 1930s coincided with women's new mobility and independence, while the exposure of breasts in the 1970s signalled a renewed interest in breastfeeding.⁸³ Breasts were de-emphasized in the 1980s as women concentrated on careers, but some analysts have theorized that a larger bust size is now more popular as women try to combine professional activity with child-rearing. Now, some suggest that the current prevalence of the exposed midriff reflects the premium our society places on fitness.⁸⁴ It's important to note that until very recently the study of fashion focused almost exclusively on its impact on women. It is to be hoped that this concentration will broaden as scholars and practitioners begin to appreciate that men are affected by many of the same fashion influences.

Psychological research suggests that it is possible to distinguish between two different personality types, respectively more or less sensitive to the opinion of their social surroundings (also called high and low self-monitors). The high self-monitors have been demonstrated to stress the brand of a consumer good (specifically clothing) more than low self-monitors, who are on the other hand more positive to functional product attributes.⁸⁵

Economic models of fashion

Economists approach fashion in terms of the model of supply and demand. Items that are in limited supply have high value, while those readily available are less desirable. Rare items command respect and prestige.

- ▶ Veblen's notion of **conspicuous consumption** proposed that the wealthy consume to display their prosperity, for example by wearing expensive (and at times impractical) clothing. The functioning of conspicuous consumption seems more complex in today's society, since wealthy consumers often engage in *parody display*, where they deliberately adopt formerly low status or inexpensive products, such as jeeps or jeans. On the other hand, new hierarchies develop between generic jeans signalling a traditional, work-oriented, classless or lower-class environment, and designer jeans expressing an urban, upmarket, class-distinctive and more contemporary lifestyle.⁸⁶ Other factors also influence the demand curve for fashion-related products. These include a *prestige-exclusivity effect*, where high prices still create high demand, and a *snob effect*, where lower prices actually reduce demand ('only a cheapskate would pay so little for that!').⁸⁷

Sociological models of fashion

The collective selection model discussed previously is an example of a sociological approach to fashion. In addition, much attention has been focused on the relationship between product adoption and class structure.

- ▶ The **trickle-down theory**, first proposed in 1904 by Georg Simmel, has been one of the most influential approaches to understanding fashion. It states that there are two conflicting forces that drive fashion change. First, subordinate groups try to adopt the status symbols of the groups above them as they attempt to climb up the ladder of social mobility. Dominant styles thus originate with the upper classes and *trickle down* to those below. However, this is where the second force comes into play: those people in the superordinate groups are constantly looking below them on the ladder to ensure that they are not imitated. They respond to the attempts of lower classes to 'impersonate' them by adopting even *newer* fashions. These two processes create a self-perpetuating cycle of change – the engine that drives fashion.⁸⁸

The trickle-down theory was quite useful for understanding the process of fashion changes when applied to a society with a stable class structure, which permitted the easy



Some people argue that consumers are at the mercy of fashion designers. What do you think?

Diesel S.p.A.

identification of lower- versus upper-class consumers. This task is not so easy in modern times. In contemporary Western society, then, this approach must be modified to account for new developments in mass culture.⁸⁹

- A perspective based on class structure cannot account for the wide range of styles that are simultaneously made available in our society. Modern consumers have a much greater degree of individualized choice than in the past because of advances in technology and distribution. Just as an adolescent is almost instantly aware of the latest style trends by watching MTV, *elite fashion* has been largely replaced by *mass fashion*, since media exposure permits many groups to become aware of a style at the same time.
- Consumers tend to be more influenced by opinion leaders who are similar to them. As a result each social group has its own fashion innovators who determine fashion trends. It is often more accurate to speak of a *trickle-across effect*, where fashions diffuse horizontally among members of the same social group.⁹⁰
- Anybody who has been on a skiing holiday will have noticed the *subcultural fashions* demonstrated among the skiers. In fact, more and more consumption-based subcultures, sailing enthusiasts for instance, adopt their own fashions in order to reinforce their community feeling and distinguish themselves from outsiders.⁹¹
- Finally, current fashions often originate with the lower classes and *trickle up*. Grass-roots innovators typically are people who lack prestige in the dominant culture (like urban youth). Since they are less concerned with maintaining the status quo, they are more free to innovate and take risks.⁹² Whatever the direction of the trickling, one thing is sure: that fashion is always a complex process of variation, of imitation and differentiation, of adoptions and rejections in relation to one's social surroundings.⁹³

This blurring of origins of fashion has been attributed to the condition of postmodernity when there is no fashion, only fashions, and no rules, only choices,⁹⁴ and where the norms and rules can no longer be dictated solely from the haute couture or other cultural gatekeepers but where the individual allows him- or herself more freedom in creating a personal look by mixing elements from different styles.⁹⁵ This obviously has the consequence that the relatively linear models of fashion cycles discussed below become less able to predict actual fashion developments.⁹⁶

A French researcher followed the development in the editorial content of a French fashion magazine since 1945. It turned out that the content became more global and less 'French' over the years, but also that the magazine gradually shifted away from a dictate of one certain fashion style at each point in time to an approach in the 1990s where several styles were promoted in each issue and consumers were invited to mix and match and create their own personal style independently of high fashion.⁹⁷ A similar blurring of high and low fashion was demonstrated by a prize-winning campaign, where a charity organization used former international top model Renee Toft Simonsen for promoting clothes from their second-hand shops.⁹⁸ Neither she nor the agency got any payment for their participation.

The fashion system, then, is becoming increasingly complex. Brands may be very significant to consumers and they may be less ashamed to admit that than previously but they are less committed to any one brand over a longer period. The fashion industry is trying to compensate for this by overexposing their brands, putting the brand name very conspicuously all over clothing, bags, accessories, etc. in order to get a maximum of exposure out of the 'catch'.⁹⁹ The fashion industry is also exploring the individual styles for new market opportunities and new meanings of fashion goods for wider distribution.¹⁰⁰ Even those trying to rebel against fashion dictates by turning to ugliness as a motif for their choice of 'look' cannot escape. Ugliness in a variety of forms is becoming increasingly fashionable; as one consumer said: 'these shoes were so ugly I just had to have them'.¹⁰¹ The ugly and disgusting seems to form a specific trend in certain companies' marketing strategies.¹⁰²



marketing pitfall

A *knock-off* is a style that has been deliberately copied and modified, often with the intent to sell to a larger or different market. Haute couture clothing styles presented by top designers in Paris and elsewhere are commonly 'knocked off' by other designers and sold to the mass market. The Web is making it easier than ever for firms to copy these designs - in some cases so quickly that their pirated styles appear in stores at the same time as the originals. Wildcatters such as First View have set up websites to show designers' latest creations, sometimes revealing everything from a new collection. Things have become so bad that The House of Chanel requires photographers to sign contracts promising their shots will not be distributed on the internet.¹⁰³ But, isn't imitation the sincerest form of flattery?

Cycles of fashion adoption

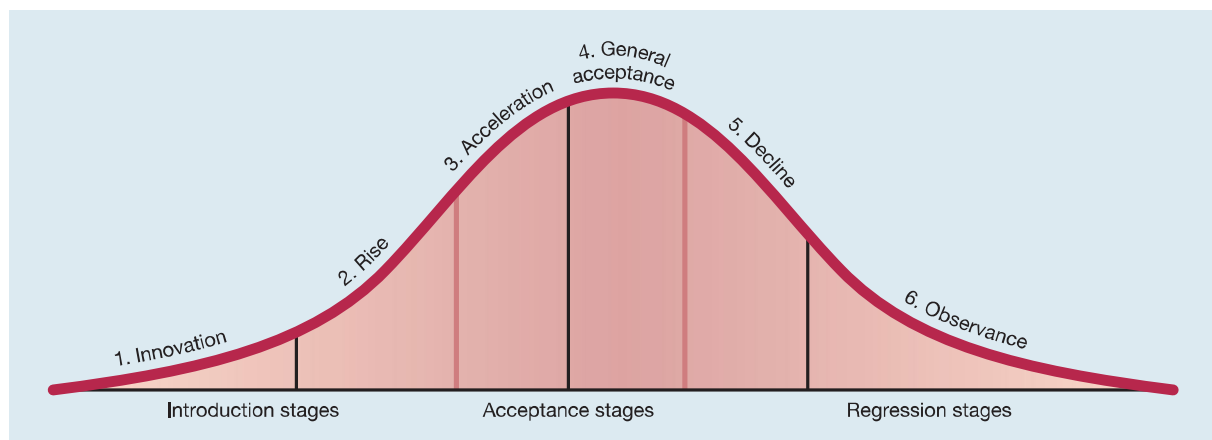
In 1997, a little digital animal swept across the planet. After enjoying considerable success in Japan in 1996 with about 3 million units sold, it spread throughout the world during 1997 where the population by the summer had increased to a total of 7 million with approximately twice that number in back orders. The Tamagochi, as it is known, is an electronic pet that must be nurtured, played with and taken care of just as a living being. Failure to do so means it will weaken and show signs of maltreatment until it eventually dies. That is, in the Japanese version it dies. This unhappy ending did not appeal to Americans who therefore created their own version where it flies off to another planet if not treated well. Needless to say, the Japanese 'authentic' versions quickly became collectors' items (see the discussion of collections in the previous chapter). Today, many consumers might not know what a Tamagochi is, but anybody with children will know what a Pokémon is.

The stories of the Tamagochi or the Pokémon show how quickly a consumer craze can catch on globally. Although the longevity of a particular style can range from a month to a century, fashions tend to flow in a predictable sequence. The **fashion life cycle** is quite similar to the more familiar product life cycle. An item or idea progresses through basic stages from birth to death, as shown in Figure 15.3.

Variations in fashion life cycles

The diffusion process discussed earlier in this chapter is intimately related to the popularity of fashion-related items. To illustrate how this process works, consider how the

Figure 15.3 A normal fashion cycle



Source: Susan Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing* (New York: Macmillan, 1985). Reprinted with permission.

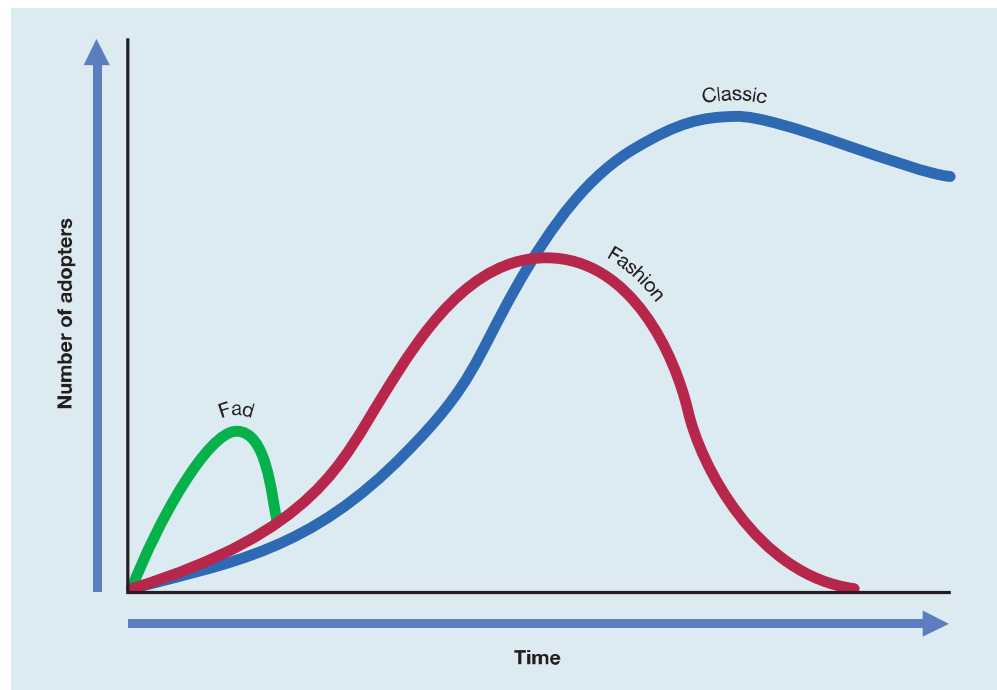
► **fashion acceptance cycle** works in the popular music business. In the *introduction stage*, a song is listened to by a small number of music innovators. It may be played in clubs or on 'cutting-edge' radio stations, which is exactly how 'grunge rock' groups such as Nirvana got their start. During the *acceptance stage*, the song enjoys increased social visibility and acceptance by large segments of the population. A record may get wide airplay on 'Top-40' stations, steadily rising up the charts 'like a bullet'. This process may of course be supported or even generated by marketing efforts from the record company.

In the *regression stage*, the item reaches a state of social saturation as it becomes overused, and eventually it sinks into decline and obsolescence as new songs rise to take its place. A hit record may be played once an hour on a Top-40 station for several weeks. At some point, though, people tend to get sick of it and focus their attention on newer releases. The former hit record eventually winds up in the discount rack at the local record store.

Not everybody shares the same musical tastes. Nor, as we discussed above, is everybody necessarily influenced by the same fashion in clothing anymore. As society may become more characterized by lifestyles than by generalizable consumption patterns spreading through social classes as in the class-based fashion models, the social groups in question may consist more of a particular lifestyle than actual social classes. For example, one may distinguish generally between the more risk-prone and the more prudent fashion consumers, and each of these two groups have their own independent fashion cycles that do not necessarily influence the other groups.¹⁰⁴

Figure 15.4 illustrates that fashions are characterized by slow acceptance at the beginning, which (if the fashion is to 'make it') rapidly accelerates and then tapers off. Different classes of fashion can be identified by considering the relative length of the fashion acceptance cycle. While many fashions exhibit a moderate cycle, taking several years to work their way through the stages of acceptance and decline, others are extremely long-lived or short-lived.

Figure 15.4 Comparison of the acceptance cycle of fads, fashions and classics



Source: Susan Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing* (New York: Macmillan, 1985). Reprinted with permission.

► A **classic** is a fashion with an extremely long acceptance cycle. It is in a sense 'anti-fashion', since it guarantees stability and low risk to the purchaser for a long period of time. Keds sneakers, classic so-called 'tennis shoes' introduced in the United States in 1917, have been successful because they appeal to those who are turned off by the high-fashion, trendy appeal of L.A. Gear, Reebok and others. When consumers in focus groups were asked to project what kind of building Keds would be, a common response was a country house with a white picket fence. In other words, the shoes are seen as a stable, classic product. In contrast, Nikes were often described as steel-and-glass skyscrapers, reflecting their more modernistic image.¹⁰⁵

► A **fad** is a very short-lived fashion. Fads are usually adopted by relatively few people. Adopters may all belong to a common subculture, and the fad 'trickles across' members but rarely breaks out of that specific group.¹⁰⁶ Some key characteristics of fads include:

- The fad is non-utilitarian – that is, it does not perform any explicit purpose function.
- The fad is often adopted on impulse; people do not undergo stages of rational decision-making before joining in.
- The fad diffuses rapidly, gains quick acceptance, and is short-lived.

Distinguishing beforehand between fads or more lasting tendencies of change is not easy, and many consulting agencies make a living out of being trend-spotters. However, here are a few points that may be helpful in distinguishing short-lived fads from longer-lasting innovations:¹⁰⁷

- Does it fit with basic lifestyle changes? If a new hairstyle is hard to care for, this innovation will not be consistent with women's increasing time demands. On the other hand, the movement to shorter-term holidays is more likely to last because this innovation makes trip planning easier for harried consumers.
- What are the benefits? The switch to leaner meats and cuts came about because these meats are perceived as healthier, so a real benefit is evident.
- Can it be personalized? Enduring trends tend to accommodate a desire for individuality, whereas styles such as mohawk haircuts or the grunge look are inflexible and don't allow people to express themselves.
- Is it a trend or a side effect? An increased interest in exercise is part of a basic trend towards health consciousness, although the specific form of exercise that is 'in' at any given time will vary (e.g. low-impact aerobics vs. in-line skating).
- What other changes have occurred in the market? Sometimes the popularity of products is influenced by *carry-over effects*. The miniskirt fad in the 1960s brought about a major change in the hosiery market, as sales of tights grew from 10 per cent of this product category to more than 80 per cent in two years. Now, sales of these items are declining due to the casual emphasis in dressing.
- Who has adopted the change? If the innovation is not adopted by working mothers, baby boomers, or some other important market segment, it is not likely to become a trend.

■ CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The styles prevalent in a culture at any point in time often reflect underlying political and social conditions. The set of agents responsible for creating stylistic alternatives is termed a culture production system. Factors such as the types of people involved in this system and the amount of competition by alternative product forms influence the choices that eventually make their way to the marketplace for consideration by end consumers.
- Culture is often described in terms of high (or elite) forms and low (or popular) forms. Products of popular culture tend to follow a cultural formula and contain predictable components. On the other hand, these distinctions are blurring in modern society as imagery from 'high art' is increasingly being incorporated into marketing efforts and marketed products (or even marketing products like advertisements) are treated and evaluated as high art.
- The *diffusion of innovations* refers to the process whereby a new product, service or idea spreads through a population. A consumer's decision to adopt a new item depends on his or her personal characteristics (if he or she is inclined to try new things) and on the characteristics of the item. Products sometimes stand a better chance of being adopted if they demand relatively little change in behaviour from consumers and are compatible with current practices. They are also more likely to diffuse if they can be tested prior to purchase, if they are not complex, if their use is visible to others, and, most importantly, if they provide a relative advantage vis-à-vis existing products.
- The fashion system includes everyone involved in the creation and transference of symbolic meanings. Meanings that express common cultural categories (for instance, gender distinctions) are conveyed by many different products. New styles tend to be adopted by many people simultaneously in a process known as collective selection. Perspectives on motivations for adopting new styles include psychological, economic and sociological models of fashion.
- Fashions tend to follow cycles that resemble the product life cycle. The two extremes of fashion adoption, classics and fads, can be distinguished in terms of the length of this cycle.

► KEY TERMS

Art product (p. 532)	Dynamically continuous innovation (p. 541)
Classic (p. 550)	Early adopters (p. 539)
Collective selection (p. 545)	Erogenous zones (p. 545)
Conspicuous consumption (p. 546)	Fad (p. 550)
Continuous innovation (p. 540)	Fashion (p. 543)
Craft product (p. 532)	Fashion acceptance cycle (p. 549)
Cultivation hypothesis (p. 537)	Fashion life cycle (p. 548)
Cultural categories (p. 543)	Fashion system (p. 543)
Cultural formula (p. 534)	Innovation (p. 538)
Cultural gatekeepers (p. 531)	Product placement (p. 537)
Cultural production system (CPS) (p. 531)	Reality engineering (p. 535)
Cultural selection (p. 530)	Trickle-down theory (p. 546)
Discontinuous innovation (p. 541)	



CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGE

- 1 Construct a 'biography' of a product, tracing its progress from the time it was introduced. How long did it take to diffuse to the mass market? Do the same consumers use the product now as those who first adopted it? What are its future prospects - is it destined for obsolescence? Would you characterize the product as either a classic or a fad?
- 2 Some consumers complain that they are 'at the mercy' of designers: they are forced to buy whatever styles are in fashion because nothing else is available. Do you agree that there is such a thing as a 'designer conspiracy'?
- 3 What is the basic difference between a fad, a fashion and a classic? Provide examples of each.
- 4 What is the difference between an art and a craft? Where would you characterize advertising within this framework?
- 5 Think about some innovative products that you can remember, but which disappeared. Try to reflect on the reasons why these innovations failed.
- 6 Then try to remember some successful innovations. What characteristics made them successful? Do the successes and failures fit with the criteria mentioned in this chapter?
- 7 The chapter mentions some instances where market research findings influenced artistic decisions, as when a film ending was reshot to accommodate consumers' preferences. Many people would oppose this use of consumer research, claiming that books, films, records or other artistic endeavours should not be designed merely to conform to what people want to read, see or hear. What do you think?
- 8 Many are claiming a more individualistic style of fashion these years. Discuss whether individualism in style and fashion has actually increased or whether we are being conformist in new ways.

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LIFESTYLES AND EUROPEAN CULTURES

16

chapter



Margaret and Karin are both executives in an advertising agency. After a particularly gruelling week, they are looking forward to a well-deserved weekend off. Margaret is enthusiastically telling Karin about her plans. Since she won't have to get up early in the morning, she's going to sleep late in her new apartment. Then she's planning to go window-shopping and maybe meet some friends for lunch in one of the cafés where she knows that some of them will be. Then she'll go back and rest in the afternoon until it's time to join her friend Anna to go to the new techno and rave place, which she heard about the other day. There, they'll dance their hearts out all night.

Karin just chuckles to herself: while Margaret's wasting her time in bed in the city, *she's* going to get up early to join a tour to a nearby bird sanctuary organized by the environmental group of which she's a member. She has heard that it will also be possible to see some rare orchids. By four o'clock, she plans to be comfortably planted in front of the computer in order to write an open letter to the municipal authorities concerning the current debate on whether to stop using pesticides in public parks and along the roadsides. Then she'll just sit back and relax, perhaps watch a rented video of one of the good films she missed due to lack of time . . .

Karin is sometimes amazed at how different she is from Margaret, though both think of themselves as sophisticated and in touch with the times. They also earn the same salary and do almost the same things at work all week long. How can their tastes be so different at the weekend? Oh well, Karin sighs to herself, that's why they make chocolate *and* vanilla.

■ LIFESTYLES AND CONSUMPTION CHOICES

Karin and Margaret strongly resemble one another demographically. They were both raised in middle-class households, have similar educational backgrounds, are about the same age and they share the same occupation and income. However, as their leisure choices show, it would be a mistake to assume that their consumption choices are similar as well. Karin and Margaret each choose products, services and activities that help them define a unique *lifestyle*. This chapter first explores how marketers approach the issue of lifestyle and then how they use information about these consumption choices to tailor products and communications to individual lifestyle segments. It then considers how lifestyle choices are affected by where people live, and it considers some issues that occur when firms attempt to market their products in unfamiliar cultures.

Lifestyle: who we are, what we do

In traditional societies, which place a high value on a collective mentality, consumption options are largely dictated by class, caste, village or family. In a modern consumer society, however, people are freer to select the products, services and activities that define themselves and, in turn, create a social identity that is communicated to others. One's choice of goods and services makes a statement about who one is and about the types of people with whom one wishes to identify – as well as those from whom we wish to maintain some distance!

- **Lifestyle** refers to a pattern of consumption reflecting a person's choices of how he or she spends time and money, but in many cases it also refers to the attitudes and values attached to these behavioural patterns. Many of the factors discussed in this book, such as a person's self-concept, reference group and social class, are used as 'raw ingredients' to fashion a unique lifestyle. In an economic sense, one's lifestyle represents the way one has elected to allocate income, both in terms of relative allocations to different products and services and to specific alternatives within these categories.¹ Other distinctions describe consumers in terms of their broad patterns of consumption, such as those that differentiate between consumers in terms of how proportions of their income are allocated to various sectors of consumption. Often, these allocations create a new kind of status system based less on income than on accessibility to information about goods and how these goods function as social markers.²

Lifestyles may be considered as group identities. Marketers use demographic and economic approaches in tracking changes in broad societal priorities, but these approaches do not begin to embrace the symbolic nuances that separate lifestyle groups. Lifestyle is more than the allocation of discretionary income. It is a statement about who one is in society and who one is not. Group identities, whether of hobbyists, athletes, or drug users, take their form based on acts of expressive symbolism. The self-definitions of group members are derived from the common symbol system to which the group is dedicated. Such self-definitions have been described by a number of terms, including *lifestyle*, *public taste*, *consumer group*, *symbolic community* and *status culture*.³

Each lifestyle is (somewhat) unique. Patterns of consumption based on lifestyles are often composed of many ingredients that are shared by others in similar social and economic circumstances. Still, each person provides a unique 'twist' to this pattern which allows him or her to inject some individuality into a chosen lifestyle. For example, a 'typical' student (if there is such a thing) may dress much like his or her friends, go to the same places and like the same foods, yet still indulge a passion for running marathons, stamp collecting or community service, activities which make him or her unique.

Lifestyles don't last forever, and are not set in stone; unlike deep-seated values, people's tastes and preferences evolve over time, so that consumption patterns that were viewed favourably at one point in time may be laughed at or sneered at a few years later.

If you don't believe that, simply think back to what you, your friends and your family were wearing, doing and eating five or ten years ago: where *did* you find those clothes? Because people's attitudes regarding physical fitness, social activism, sex roles for men and women, the importance of home life and family, and many other things, do change, it is vital for marketers to monitor the social landscape continually to try to anticipate where these changes will lead. Empty nesters, for instance, who are adults whose children have left home, represent an increasingly attractive market, especially for food, drink and personal care. In terms of disposable income, the UK, Holland and Germany have particularly wealthy empty nesters.⁴ As the article in the Marketing opportunity box shows, changing patterns of earnings and consumption challenges our assumptions about traditional consumer responsibilities and roles.



marketing opportunity

'It is difficult to schedule an interview with Joanna Public these days - she simply doesn't have the time. Busy enjoying her youth, advancing her career and spending her large disposable income, she represents the most influential sector in modern British society. Once it was middle-aged Joe Public senior who wielded the power, followed by his fresh-faced son, Joe Public junior. Now it's Joanna and her 10 million twenty-to-thirtysomething girl friends who are the new darlings of the retailers and politicians who want their money and their votes. Joanna's value to the economy is immense: she not only chooses the larger purchases for herself and her partner but also decides where they eat, how they decorate their home and what they wear.

According to a recent 'Project Home' study conducted by Allegra Strategies, a UK consumer retail and lifestyle consultancy, women have always controlled the high street but in the past five years they have completely dominated it. Allegra's Project Home research suggests that not only do Joanna and her pals now make up eight out of 10 customers in homeware shops, but the most successful stores are those that have 'feminised' to appeal to their tastes: selling a carefully packaged lifestyle, instead of individual products, in an environment that is attractive, relaxing and sexy. Study results conclude that young women now drive the decisions on what to buy and, unlike older women, it is she, and not her boyfriend or husband, who decides how much to spend.

We all know Joanna: the university-educated professional who is having too much fun socialising and spending the £24,500 she earns each year to have children. Women in this group are key shoppers and are increasingly emancipated in exercising that power. They control their own budgets and will go on to control household budgets.

Patrick Gray of Experian, the consumer research organisation, agrees on the need to understand how important Joanna will be as she ages: 'If retailers win Joanna over now, she will probably become the decision-maker in the household and use similar brand values when it comes to buying for her children and partner.' So successful have retailers been in attracting Joanna that, according to Experian, she spent 18 per cent more on clothing, footwear and accessories in 2004 than in 2003.

'This is extraordinary considering that women in Britain still earn just 82 per cent of the wages that men do; one of the lowest figures in Europe, while for part-time workers, the pay gap has actually widened in the past year - part-time women now earn 41 per cent less than part-time men,' said Will Galgey, director of the Henley Centre market research company. 'Despite this, women's borrowing doubled between 1996 and 2001, with the average woman in debt owing more than 13 times her monthly income and more likely than men to possess store cards with outrageously high interest rates.'⁵

■ LIFESTYLE MARKETING

The lifestyle concept is one of the most widely used in modern marketing activities. It provides a way to understand consumers' everyday needs and wants, and a mechanism

- ▶ to allow a product or service to be positioned in terms of how it will allow a person to pursue a desired lifestyle. A **lifestyle marketing perspective** recognizes that people are increasingly conscious about the fact that we all sort ourselves and each other into groups on the basis of the things we/they like to do, how we/they like to spend our/their leisure time and how we/they choose to spend disposable income.⁶ These choices in turn create opportunities for market segmentation strategies that recognize the potency of a consumer's chosen lifestyle in determining both the types of products purchased and the specific brands more likely to appeal to a designated lifestyle segment.

Products are the building blocks of lifestyles

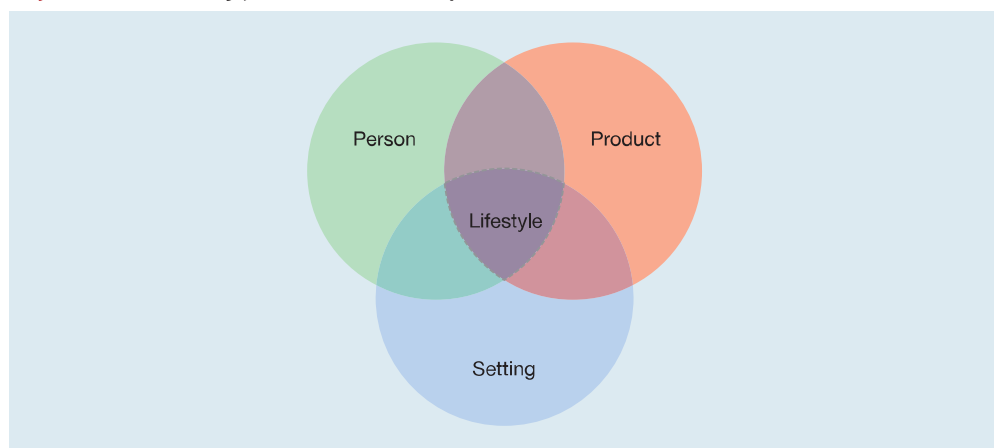
To study lifestyles is to appreciate the profoundness of the superficial, as one lifestyle analyst has put it.⁷ According to a German survey of 291 of the biggest marketing research and advertising agencies, 68 per cent of them used lifestyle research of some kind, mostly for the sectors of food, cosmetics, cars, drinks and fashion and clothing.⁸ Consumers often choose products, services and activities over others because they are associated with a certain lifestyle. For this reason, lifestyle marketing strategies attempt to position a product by fitting it into an existing pattern of consumption. That explains why cool restaurants, bars, and hotels like the Buddha Bar and Man Ray in Paris (as well as the Standard Hotel in Los Angeles and the Sunset Beach hotel/restaurant in New York's Hamptons) are branching out by selling CDs featuring the music playing on site. Aspiring lounge lizards can recreate the 'insider' experience without leaving home.⁹

Because a goal of lifestyle marketing is to provide consumers with opportunities to pursue their chosen ways to enjoy their lives and express their social identities, a key aspect of this strategy is to focus on product usage in desirable social settings (see Chapter 10). The goal of associating a product with a social situation is a long-standing one for advertisers, whether the product is included in a round of golf, a family dinner or a night at a glamorous club surrounded by the hip-hop elite or sporting and football stars.¹⁰ Thus people, products and settings are combined to express a certain consumption style, as shown in Figure 16.1.

Product complementarity

The adoption of a lifestyle marketing perspective implies that we must look at *patterns* of behaviour to understand consumers. We can get a clearer picture of how people use products to define lifestyles by examining how they make choices in a variety of product

Figure 16.1 Linking products to lifestyle





This ad illustrates how a product offering can be highly complementary to the lifestyle of the decision maker - in this case, the wife.

S, C, P, F . . . , Patricia Luján, Carlitos. Photo: Biel Capllonch

categories. Indeed, many products and services do seem to 'go together', usually because they tend to be selected by the same types of people. In many cases, products do not seem to 'make sense' if unaccompanied by companion products (e.g. fast food and paper plates, or a suit and tie) or are incongruous in the presence of others (e.g. a big, upholstered chair in a high-tech office or the IKEA ad, shown above). Therefore, an important part of lifestyle marketing is to identify the *set* of products and services that seems to be linked in consumers' minds to a specific lifestyle. As one study noted, 'all goods carry meaning, but none by itself. . . . The meaning is in the relations between all the goods, just as music is in the relations marked out by the sounds and not in any one note.'¹¹

- **Product complementarity** occurs when the symbolic meanings of different products are related to each other.¹² Bacardi rum and Coca-Cola have for some time advertised their products together. And, research evidence suggests that even a relatively unattractive product becomes more appealing when evaluated with other, liked products.¹³ Some marketers have gone as far as putting their brands on the same product, a phenomenon known as *co-branding*.¹⁴ For example, in various European countries one product variant of Häagen-Dazs ice cream was co-branded with Bailey's Irish Cream liqueur. The German car maker Porsche has teamed up with Canada's Fairmont Hotels & Resorts chain to appeal to one another's customers. Fairmont's best-known properties are its Regal Hotel on San Francisco's Nob Hill and New York's Plaza Hotel, but the chain wants to spread its cachet to other lesser-known properties. In turn, Porsche figures Fairmont's upmarket clientele is the perfect market for its upgraded Boxster convertible and new Cayenne sport-utility vehicle.¹⁵ A more recent venture has been Courvoisier's entry into the world of fashion with the parent company Allied Domecq (the world's second-largest spirits company) launching a collection of luxury sportswear for men and women in its 'Atelier Courvoisier' collection, and planning similar extensions for its other brands (such as Stolichnaya vodka and Malibu coconut rum).¹⁶ Most often, though, consumers themselves, inspired by opinion leaders and other parts of the culture

production system (see Chapters 10, 14 and 15), will construct the product complementarities themselves.

- ▶ These sets of products, termed **consumption constellations**, are used by consumers to define, communicate and perform social roles.¹⁷ For example, the (American) 'yuppie' of the 1980s was defined by such products as a Rolex watch, BMW car, Gucci briefcase, a squash racket, fresh pesto, white wine and brie. The yuppie culture eventually spread to Europe and somewhat similar constellations could be found for what were called 'Sloane Rangers' in the United Kingdom and 'Bon Chic Bon Genre' in France. While people today take pains to avoid being classified as yuppies, this social role had a major influence on defining cultural values and consumption priorities in the 1980s.¹⁸ Sometimes these constellations do actually take the form of anti-constellations from the very beginning, at least for some consumer segments. That is, people define their own style more in terms of what they are not, through a set of non-choices (due to lack of affordability, accessibility or availability) or anti-choices (due to abandonment, avoidance or aversion) of products and/or brands.¹⁹ What positive and/or negative consumption constellations might characterize you and your friends today?

Psychographics

As Margaret and Karin's lifestyle choices demonstrated, consumers can share the same demographic characteristics and still be very different people. For this reason, marketers need a way to 'breathe life' into demographic data to identify, understand and target consumer segments that will share a set of preferences for their products and services. Chapter 7 discussed some of the important differences in consumers' self-concepts and personalities that play a big role in determining product choices. When personality variables are combined with knowledge of lifestyle preferences, marketers have a tool

- ▶ with which to view consumer segments. This tool is known as **psychographics**, which involves the description of consumers based mainly on such psychological and social psychological factors as values, beliefs and attitudes, and is used to explain why these consumers have a propensity to consume certain products or brands, use certain services, devote time to certain activities and use certain media.²⁰

Psychographic research was first developed in the 1960s and 1970s to address the shortcomings of two other types of consumer research: motivational research and quantitative survey research. *Motivational research*, which involves intensive personal interviews and projective tests, yields a lot of information about individual consumers. The information gathered, however, was often idiosyncratic and deemed not very useful or reliable.²¹ At the other extreme, *quantitative survey research*, or large-scale demographic surveys, yields only a little information about a lot of people. As some researchers observed, 'The marketing manager who wanted to know why people ate the competitor's cornflakes was told "32 per cent of the respondents said *taste*, 21 per cent said *flavour*, 15 per cent said *texture*, 10 per cent said *price*, and 22 per cent said *don't know* or *no answer*".'²²

In many applications, the term 'psychographics' is used interchangeably with 'lifestyle' to denote the separation of consumers into categories based on differences in choices of consumption activities and product usage. While there are many psychographic variables that can be used to segment consumers, they all share the underlying principle of going beyond surface characteristics to understand consumers' motivations for purchasing and using products. Demographics allows us to describe *who* buys, but psychographics helps us understand *why* they buy.

Conducting a psychographic analysis

Some early attempts at lifestyle segmentation 'borrowed' standard psychological scales (often used to measure pathology or personality disturbances) and tried to relate scores

on these tests to product usage. As might be expected, such efforts were largely disappointing (see Chapter 7). These tests were never intended to be related to everyday consumption activities and yielded little in the way of explanation for purchase behaviours. The technique is more effective when the variables included are more closely related to actual consumer behaviours. If you want to understand purchases of household cleaning products, you are better off asking people about their attitudes towards household cleanliness than testing for personality disorders.

Psychographic studies can take several different forms:

- *A lifestyle profile* looks for items that differentiate between users and non-users of a product.
- *A product-specific profile* identifies a target group and then profiles these consumers on product-relevant dimensions.
- *A general lifestyle segmentation* places a large sample of respondents into homogeneous groups based on similarities of their overall preferences.
- *A product-specific segmentation* tailors questions to a product category.²³

AIOs

Most contemporary psychographic research attempts to group consumers according to some combination of three categories of variables – activities, interests and opinions – which are known as **AIOs**. Using data from large samples, marketers create profiles of customers who resemble each other in terms of their activities and patterns of product usage.²⁴ The dimensions used to assess lifestyle are listed in Table 16.1.

To group consumers into common AIO categories, respondents are given a long list of statements and are asked to indicate how much they agree with each one. Lifestyle is thus teased out by discovering how people spend their time, what they find interesting and important and how they view themselves and the world around them, as well as demographic information.

Typically, the first step in conducting a psychographic analysis is to determine which lifestyle segments are producing the bulk of customers for a particular product. Researchers attempt to determine who uses the brand and try to isolate heavy, moderate and light users. They also look for patterns of usage and attitudes towards the product. In some cases, just a few lifestyle segments account for the majority of brand users.²⁵

Table 16.1 Lifestyle dimensions

Activities	Interests	Opinions	Demographics
Work	Family	Themselves	Age
Hobbies	Home	Social issues	Education
Social events	Job	Politics	Income
Holiday	Community	Business	Occupation
Entertainment	Recreation	Economics	Family size
Club membership	Fashion	Education	Dwelling
Community	Food	Products	Geography
Shopping	Media	Future	City size
Sports	Achievements	Culture	Stage in life cycle

Source: William D. Wells and Douglas J. Tigert, 'Activities, interests and opinions', *Journal of Advertising Research* 11 (August 1971): 27–35.

After the heavy users are identified and understood, the brand's relationship to them is considered. Heavy users may have quite different reasons for using the product; they can be further subdivided in terms of the *benefits* they derive from using the product or service. For instance, marketers at the beginning of the walking shoe craze assumed that purchasers were basically burned-out joggers. Subsequent psychographic research showed that there were actually several different groups of 'walkers', ranging from those who walk to get to work to those who walk for fun. This realization resulted in shoes aimed at different segments.

Uses of psychographic segmentation

Psychographic segmentation can be used in a variety of ways.

- *To define the target market.* This information allows the marketer to go beyond simple demographic or product usage descriptions (such as, middle-aged men or frequent users).
- *To create a new view of the market.* Sometimes marketers create their strategies with a 'typical' customer in mind. This stereotype may not be correct because the actual customer may not match these assumptions. For example, marketers of a facial cream for women were surprised to find their key market was composed of older, widowed women rather than the younger, more sociable women to whom they were pitching their appeals.
- *To position the product.* Psychographic information can allow the marketer to emphasize features of the product that fit in with a person's lifestyle. Products targeted at people whose lifestyle profiles show a high need to be around other people might focus on the product's ability to help meet this social need.
- *To communicate product attributes better.* Psychographic information can offer very useful input to advertising creatives who must communicate something about the product. The artist or writer obtains a much richer mental image of the target consumer than that obtained through dry statistics, and this insight improves his or her ability to 'talk' to that consumer.
- *To develop overall strategy.* Understanding how a product fits, or does not fit, into consumers' lifestyles allows the marketer to identify new product opportunities, chart media strategies and create environments most consistent and harmonious with these consumption patterns. For example, inexpensive airline tickets have become very popular in Germany, with intra-country fares often lower than the price of a train ticket. The increase in flights has sparked concern of environmental worries among 'the Greens', even though the Greens are one of the market segments most likely to book the low fare airline tickets. Research has shown that conflicting values (in this case, low fares vs. air pollution) can be addressed in promotions by better understanding the motives that cause the tensions.²⁶
- *To market social and political issues.* Psychographic segmentation can be an important tool in political campaigns and can also be employed to find similarities among types of consumers who engage in destructive behaviours, such as drug use or excessive gambling. A psychographic study of men aged 18 to 24 who drink and drive highlighted the potential for this perspective to help in the eradication of harmful behaviours. Researchers divided this segment into four groups: 'good timers', 'well adjusted', 'nerds', and 'problem kids'. They found that one group in particular – 'good timers' – is more likely to believe that it is fun to be drunk, that the chances of having an accident while driving drunk are low, and that drinking increases one's appeal to the opposite sex. Because the study showed that this group is also the most likely to drink at rock concerts and parties, is most likely to watch MTV, and tends to listen

to album-oriented rock radio stations, reaching 'good timers' with a prevention campaign was made easier because messages targeted to this segment could be placed where these drinkers were most likely to see and hear them.²⁷

Lifestyle segmentation typologies

Marketers are constantly on the lookout for new insights that will allow them to identify and reach groups of consumers that are united by a common lifestyle. To meet this need, many research companies and advertising agencies have developed their own *segmentation typologies* which divide people into segments. Respondents answer a battery of questions that allow the researchers to cluster them into a set of distinct lifestyle groups. The questions usually include a mixture of AIOs, plus other items relating to their perceptions of specific brands, favourite celebrities, media preferences and so on. These systems are usually sold to companies wanting to learn more about their customers and potential customers.

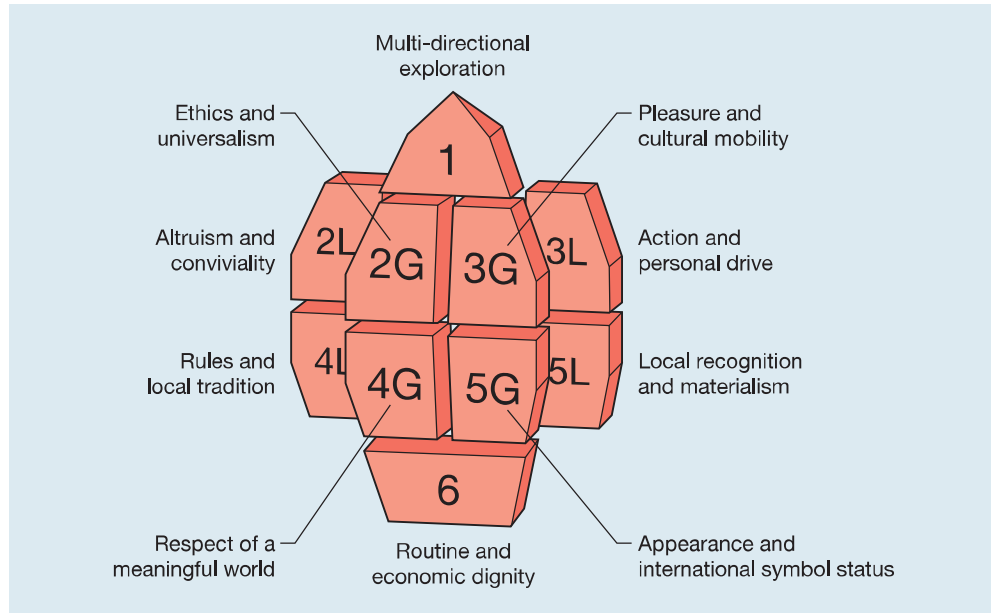
At least at a superficial level, many of these typologies are fairly similar to one another, in that a typical typology breaks up the population into roughly 5–10 segments. Each cluster is given a descriptive name, and a profile of the 'typical' member is provided to the client. Lifestyle categories in this system include such segments as 'avant guardians' (interested in change), 'pontificators' (traditionalists, very British), 'chameleons' (follow the crowd) and 'sleepwalkers' (contented underachievers). Unfortunately, it is often difficult to compare or evaluate different typologies, since the methods and data used to devise these systems are frequently *proprietary* – this means that the information is developed and owned by the company, and the company feels that it would not be desirable to release this information to outsiders.

Lifestyle analyses are widely used in Europe. For example, one British company recently unveiled ConsumerBank, a database with 240 pieces of information on each of 40 million consumers.²⁸ Increasingly sophisticated efforts are being made to develop lifestyle typologies that transcend national borders. Many of these systems have been developed to understand European buying habits, and in particular to determine if it is possible to identify 'Euro-consumers', who share the same lifestyle orientations despite living in, say, France rather than Italy. These studies have had mixed success, with most researchers reporting that people in each nation still have a lot of idiosyncrasies that make it difficult to group them together.²⁹ Below we will provide some examples of such international lifestyle segmentation efforts.

RISC

Since 1978, the Paris-based Research Institute on Social Change (RISC) has conducted international measurements of lifestyles and sociocultural change in more than 40 countries, including most European countries. The long-term measurement of the social climate across many countries makes it possible to give more qualified guesses and anticipations of future change. It makes it possible to see signs of change in one country before it eventually spreads to other countries. For example, concern for the environment appeared in Sweden in the early 1970s, then in Germany in the late 1970s, in France at the beginning of the 1980s and in Spain in the early 1990s.³⁰

The values and attitudes questions are the foundation of the measurement of 'trends', defined as the degree of agreement or disagreement with a set of attitudes that have been selected to define this trend. Based on statistical analysis of the respondents' scores on each trend, each individual is located in a virtual space described by three axes, representing the three most discriminating dimensions in the data material. The vertical axis (Exploration/Stability) separates people motivated by change, creativity, volatility and openness from people motivated by stability, familiarity, tradition and structure. The horizontal axis (Social/Individual) distinguishes people oriented towards collective

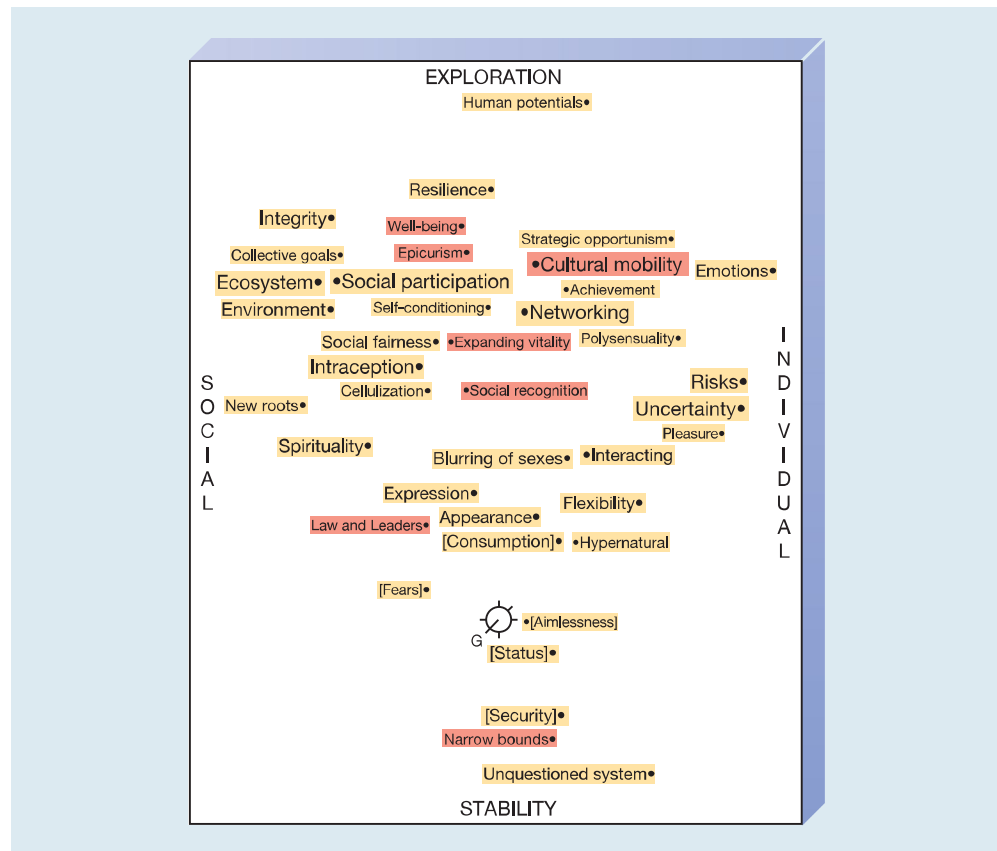
Figure 16.2 The ten RISC segments

Source: *RISC Methodology* (Paris: RISC International, 1997): 14.

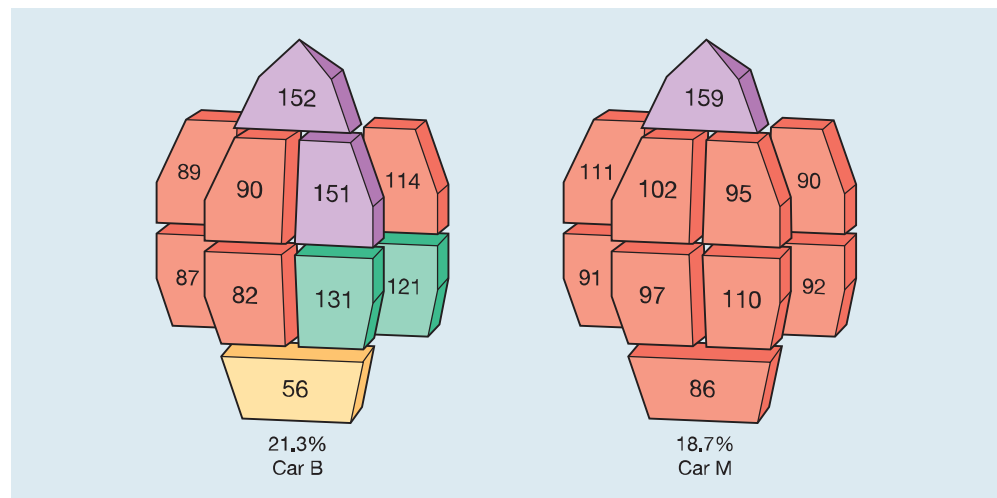
needs from people oriented more towards satisfaction of individual needs. The third axis (Global/Local) indicates a distance between people who are comfortable with broad and unfamiliar environments, multiple loose connections and large-scale networking from people preferring close-knit relationships and a desire for the elements of life to be connected in a predictable manner. The population is then divided into ten segments referring to their position in this virtual space. Figure 16.2 illustrates the ten segments (G for global, L for Local (behind)) and their main life aspirations.

Each of the 40 trends can also be located in the space according to the gravity point of the people who scored highest on the particular trend. Trends that are related to exploration will thus be located near the top of the map, individualism trends to the right, locality trends are smaller because they are at the back, and so on. While the position of the trends tends not to vary greatly, the percentage of various populations (countries, age groups, heavy users of a brand) supporting each trend will differ greatly. In the example in Figure 16.3, the indices are for the United Kingdom as compared to the European total. Darker colours indicate the trends that are more important in Britain as compared to the European average: cultural mobility, expanding vitality, narrow bounds, law and leaders, social recognition, well-being and epicurism (a quality-of-life orientation towards 'the finer things' in life).

The use of RISC typically involves identifying users of a brand and understanding those users better; it is also used to monitor changes in the profiles of users over time. Furthermore, potential target groups, the product benefits and the kind of communication that would attract and reach them can be indicated by systems such as RISC. In the example in Figure 16.4 we see the lifestyle profiling of German car brand B (approximately 21 per cent of the population) and car brand M (approximately 19 per cent) as their first, second or third choice if they were going to buy a new car. Car brand B has a strong profile, individual and experimental, with both global and local orientations. Car brand M, in contrast, has a more uniform profile, with evidence of popularity across all segments of the population. However, there is a very strong presence in cell 1, the group that is most interested in new designs, technologies and functions.

Figure 16.3 Trend map of the UK

Source: RISC Methodology (Paris: RISC International, 1997).

Figure 16.4 Choice of brand for the next new car, Germany, brand B/brand M, 1995

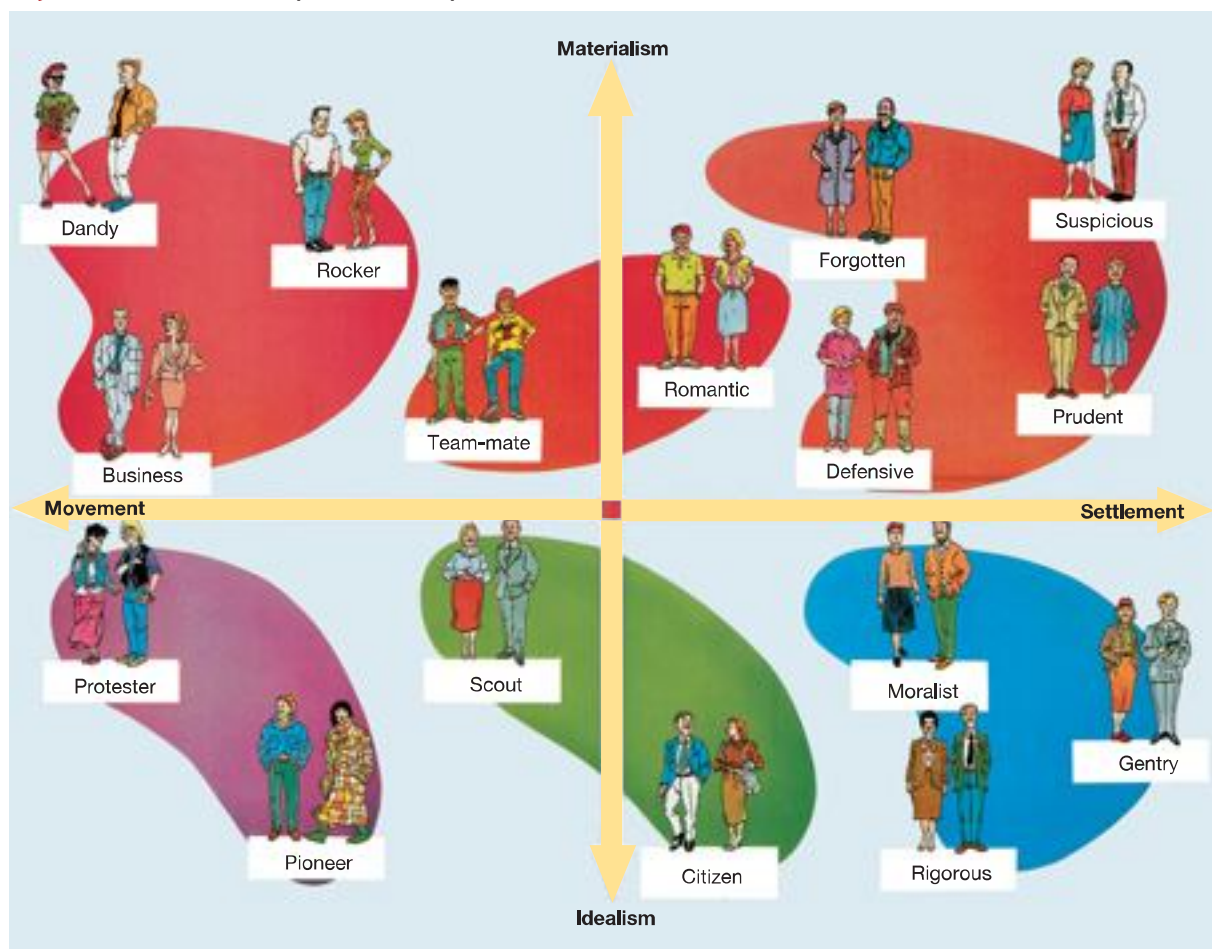
Source: RISC Methodology (Paris: RISC International, 1997).

CCA socio-styles

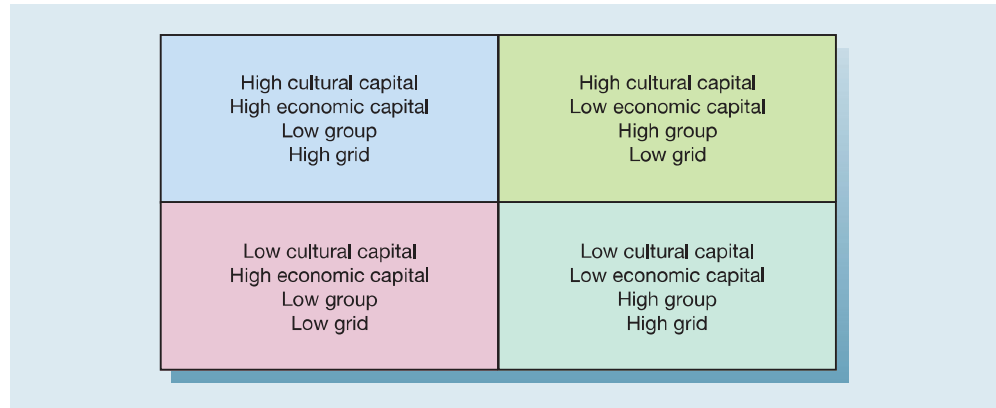
A Paris-based agency, the CCA (Centre de Communication Avancé), introduced a European lifestyle typology in the early 1990s. Although the mapping principle of this lifestyle typology is similar to that of most other typologies, they use a somewhat different methodological approach since their questionnaires are not attitude-based, but use a variety of question formats and also projective techniques, such as various scenario descriptions of future social forms or consumption types that the respondent must relate to, or suggestive drawings and vignettes.³¹

The CCA study divided the European population into 16 lifestyles, regrouped into 6 so-called 'mentalities'. The resulting lifestyle map, presented in the usual suggestive vignette format, is seen in Figure 16.5. One of the advantages of this system was that the 16 individual lifestyles could be gathered in other larger groups rather than just the mentalities to form marketing segments specifically adapted to a specific product sector. So some lifestyles would be grouped to form food segments, others to form car segments. In terms of innovative approaches used for lifestyle segmentation, this is probably one of the more interesting ones.³²

Figure 16.5 CCA Eurostyles, 16 lifestyles in 6 mentalities



Source: CCA, Paris, 1990.

Figure 16.6 A theoretically based lifestyle model

Source: Adapted from Henrik Dahl, *Hvis din nabo var en bil* (Copenhagen: Akademisk forlag, 1997).

Towards a theoretically based lifestyle approach?

One leading French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, proposed a lifestyle concept that is closely linked to social class. In a major empirical study, he tried to demonstrate how people's tastes and lifestyles in French society are dependent on what he named **habitus** (systems of classification of phenomena adopted from our socialization processes) and our economic and cultural capital.³³ He distinguished between various forms of capital that the individual can use as assets to construct his or her lifestyle, tastes and consumption patterns. This approach has been applied within American consumer research to distinguish between consumer tastes among various social groupings.³⁴ More recently, an attempt has been made to translate Bourdieu's terms into a relatively simple lifestyle categorization scheme. Based on Bourdieu's notions of economic capital (income and wealth) and cultural capital (education plus the ability to distinguish between cultural styles and categories) combined with Mary Douglas's grid-group theory,³⁵ four different but fundamental consumer types are proposed. This model, depicted in Figure 16.6, has so far been applied only in Denmark, but since it has a strong theoretical base it is likely to function in other countries as well.

The distinction between grid and group refers to an individual's relation to his or her own social group and to the general social system (or grid). So the model distinguishes between people with high and low group identification and a more or less affirmative (high and low) relation to the organization of society (the grid). The model ends up with the following segments:

- **1st quadrant:** Professional, career-oriented people, with higher education and income, and with a rather individualistic attitude and an unproblematic relation to the social organization (they are responsible for much of it anyway). Their search for meaning is characterized by ambition for power and wealth.
- **2nd quadrant:** Well-educated intellectuals with less well-paid career opportunities (many university professors here), with a high degree of identification with their professional group, but with a critical attitude towards society. Their search for meaning lies in the realization of their own intellectual ideals.
- **3rd quadrant:** Relatively wealthy people, with low education or not so culturally interested (the stereotypical self-made (wo)man). They do not show any particular interest, neither on a group level nor on a social level, and they may even tend to consider the rest of society (and everything strange) as relatively hostile.

- *4th quadrant*: Low on both types of capital, money and education, but with strong group affiliation and a relatively affirmative attitude towards society, these people tend to be locally oriented. The search for meaning is rooted in their daily activities and daily lives.³⁶

Lifestyles outside western Europe

VALS

- The most well-known and widely used segmentation system in America is **VALS**, developed at SRI International and now operated out of SRI Consulting Business Intelligence in California. Originally, VALS combined two perspectives to create lifestyle clusters. One was based on the Maslow hierarchy of needs (discussed in Chapter 4). Maslow's hierarchy stipulates that people's needs must be satisfied sequentially – that is, companionship is not a priority until physical needs are met, and so on. The second perspective was based on the distinction made by the sociologist David Riesman between *inner-directed* people, who value personal expression and individual taste, and *outer-directed* people, who tend to be swayed by the behaviour and reactions of others.

Responding to criticisms of the VALS model, as well as to changing social values, the developers decided to update the system.

Increasing social diversity made social values less effective as predictors of consumer behaviour. The current VALS system measures consumer behaviour on the basis of psychological dimensions, which are more resilient in periods of social change, and key demographics.

The current VALS system divides US adults into eight groups determined both by psychological characteristics and 'resources', which include such factors as income, education, energy levels and eagerness to buy. In the VALS structure, groups are arrayed vertically by resources and horizontally by self-orientation, as shown in Figure 16.7. Actualizers are at the top of the figure because they have the highest level of resources. Actualizers are successful, sophisticated, take-charge people. They are open to change and enjoy self-discovery. The next three groups also have sufficient resources but differ in their self-orientations.³⁷

- *Fulfilleds* are satisfied, reflective and comfortable. They tend to be practical and value functionality.
- *Achievers* are career-oriented and prefer predictability over risk or self-discovery.
- *Experiencers* are impulsive, young and enjoy offbeat or risky experiences.

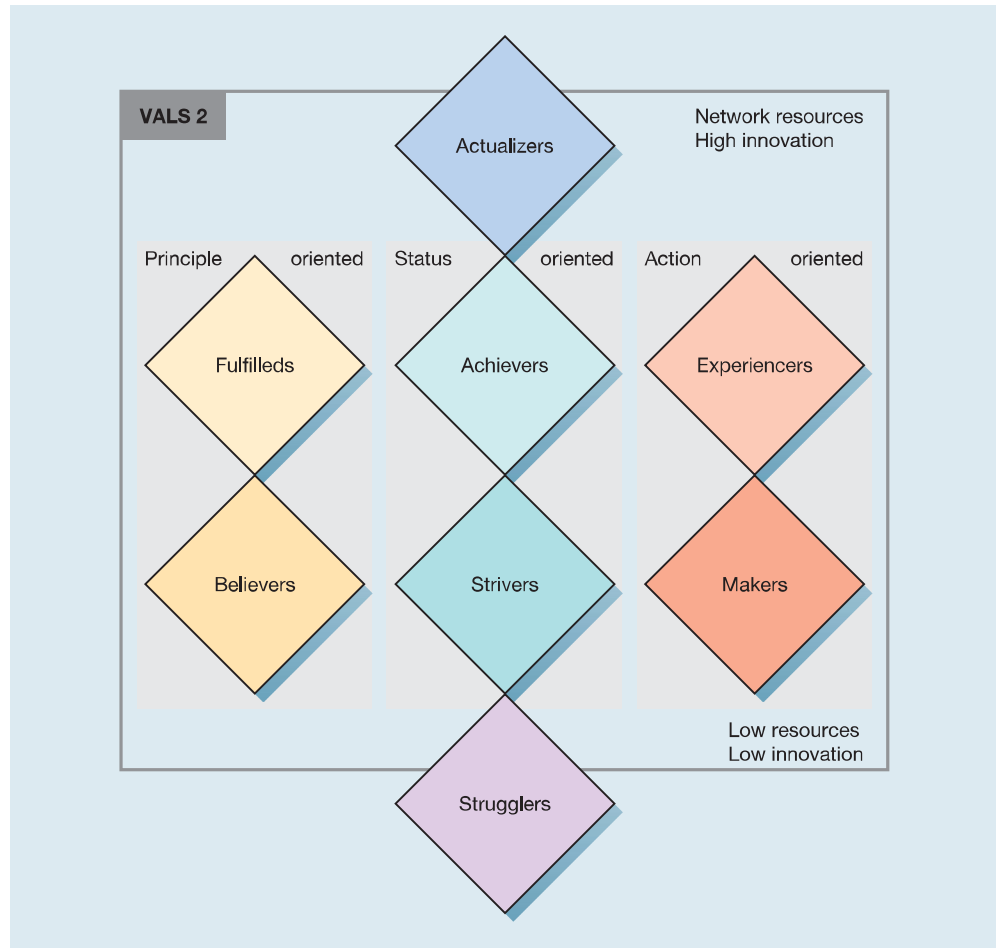
The next three groups have fewer resources but also differ in their self-orientation:

- *Believers* have strong principles and favour proven brands.
- *Strivers* are trendy, approval-seeking and resource-constrained, favour stylish products and emulate the purchases of people with greater material wealth.
- *Makers* are action-oriented and tend to focus their energies on self-sufficiency. They are more likely than other groups to work on their cars, can their own vegetables, or build their own houses.

Strugglers are at the bottom of the resource ladder. They are most concerned with meeting the needs of the moment.

Other international lifestyle segmentations

Japanese culture values conformity; one way to refer to the desire to fit in is *hitonami consciousness*, which translates as 'aligning oneself with other people'. Despite this overall emphasis, there is a growing segment of Japanese consumers who are swimming against

Figure 16.7 VALS 2 segmentation system

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the tide. These people have been called 'life designers' to reflect their interest in crafting their own lifestyle patterns. One Japanese segmentation scheme divides consumers into 'tribes' and includes among others the 'crystal tribe' (which prefers well-known brands), 'my home tribe' (family oriented) and 'impulse buyer tribe'.³⁸



multicultural dimensions

'The surging popularity of HBO's hit series *Sex and the City* among single, working women in Asia has spawned a cross-marketing bonanza. 'The series speaks for everything that is in the minds of most women,' declares Bunyapattr Boribalbureephun, a single, 30-year-old public-relations consultant who lives in Bangkok. Sporting a skin-baring gown and Chanel jewelry as she sips champagne at a 'Shoes in the City' fashion show at Bangkok's elite Central Department Store, Ms Boribalbureephun insists the show has real resonance. 'Carrie's being a fashion chameleon and self-assured inspires me the most,' she says of the show's lead character, Carrie Bradshaw, played by Sarah Jessica Parker. The Shoes in the City night, one in a three-day whirl of themed fashion shows, public mall displays and invitation-only cocktail parties, was the first in a series of such events that will be co-hosted by HBO and retail companies in top malls in Bangkok and Manila throughout August. The target market: fans like Ms Boribalbureephun, who live for each episode. The show has a tremendous resonance

with a small but powerful segment of consumers – independent, middle-class working women – that has proved an irresistible attraction for retailers.

Part of the show's appeal in the region reflects a demographic shift among women in Asia, who are marrying and giving birth later. In Thailand, the number of babies being born to women in their 20s will decline 25% between 1990 and 2010, estimates Asian Demographics. At the same time, the number of babies born to women in their 30s will rise 1%. Single, working women in their 20s and 30s are precisely the kind of consumers that companies like Johnson & Johnson are trying to reach. In Manila, the Philippines, the company is using events in Manila which take place in the upscale Rockwell Mall, to show off a new black-colored Carefree panty liner launched in Manila last month. The promotional event managers feel that they are talking to women who are upscale, trendy, and fashion conscious about the products shown in *Sex and the City*.

Though many Asian women follow the show closely, its sexually explicit content is often out of step with conservative middle-class Asia. Censors in Malaysia, a predominately Muslim country, routinely ask HBO to snip out the more outrageous bits. Even in Singapore, where the show is banned, the characters wield serious fashion clout. Singaporeans evade censors by ordering DVDs online and watching the show when they go abroad. It is so widely followed that it has become part of the consciousness of fashionable Singaporeans.

In China, the average annual income in urban centers has soared 315 per cent between 1990 and 2000 to 6,317 yuan (\$763 or €821), according to the *China Statistical Yearbook*. And while Chinese officials don't break down income growth between sexes, women's slice of the pie clearly has grown. The portion of the female work force in managerial positions doubled to 6.1% in 2000 from 2.9% in 1990, and those women employed in professional or technical jobs rose to nearly 23% from 17 per cent, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China.

But to really understand how sophisticated and complex the Chinese woman has become, just talk to a Chinese man. 'Modern women are independent, open, sometimes wasteful, never stingy to themselves,' wrote a 50-year-old Shanghainese man. Companies have taken note of the evolution. In 1998, for example, Procter & Gamble Co.'s marketing strategy for Rejoice shampoo, one of the country's top-selling hair-care brands, pulled an ad that featured an airline hostess and replaced it with one of a woman working as an airline mechanical engineer. The change was driven by consumer surveys that showed women had become more career-focused. Since then, women again have raised the bar, and Rejoice has tried to keep pace. The latest ad for Rejoice Refresh shampoo, running now on Chinese TV, features a girl playing beach volleyball. 'You find a lot of these girls in China,' says Mr Cheng. 'They're very demanding, they want to be better, but they also want to fulfill other aspirations. Previously, that was career fulfillment, but these days it's "I would also like myself to become a more beautiful lady".'

A key driver of this new attitude, besides rising incomes, is the dramatic change in the retail landscape itself: Women are more focused on fashion because there is simply more fashion available to them. The offerings have increased dramatically. For example, shampoo for women has always been offered, but consumers used to have three or five to choose from. Today, there are over 300 brands from which to choose. At the same time, quality has gone up and price has come down.

During this period of rapid change, the income gap between women and men actually has grown. Urban Chinese women make about 63% of what men make for similar work, more than seven percentage points lower than in 1990, according to a survey last year by the All China Women Federation. Nonetheless, women's attitudes are evolving at a breakneck pace. One-quarter of urban, unmarried woman say they want to marry but not have kids, according to a survey conducted by Sinofile Information Services. An additional 11% of unmarried women say they would prefer to stay single. 'The traditional archetypes in China were the ingenue and the caregiver. Marketers can explore newly evolving archetypes: woman as hero, woman as lover, woman as creator, explorer.'³⁹

As countries in *eastern Europe* convert to free market economies, many marketers are exploring ways to segment these increasingly consumption-oriented societies. Some Western products such as Marlboro cigarettes and McDonald's are already firmly entrenched in Russia. The D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles Advertising Agency, which has offices in Moscow and St Petersburg, conducted a psychographic study of Russian consumers, and has proclaimed that the country's 150 million consumers can be divided into five segments, including 'Cossacks' (status-seeking nationalists who drive BMWs, smoke Dunhill cigarettes and drink Rémy Martin cognac), 'Kuptsi' (merchants who value practical products and tend to drive Volkswagens, smoke Chesterfields and drink Stolichnaya vodka) and 'Russian Souls' (passive consumers who drive Lada cars, smoke Marlboros and drink Smirnoff).⁴⁰

The value of lifestyle typologies

Generally, lifestyle analyses of consumers are exciting because they seek to provide a sort of complete sociological view of the market and its segments and trends, but their general character is their biggest weakness, since the underlying assumption – that these general segments have relatively homogeneous patterns of consumer behaviour – is far from proven.⁴¹ One needs only to consider the index numbers in Figure 16.4 to realize that the predictive power of this typology is not extraordinary. Add to this the generally weak theoretical foundation and the problems of reliability and validity linked to the large-scale questionnaires and to the operationalization of complex social processes in simple variables, and it is understandable why some marketers see lifestyles more as a way of 'thinking the market' and as an input to creative strategies than as descriptions of segments defined by their consumer behaviour.⁴²

One attempt to overcome the problem of generally defined segments is the introduction of sectorial lifestyles, an idea proposed by the CCA in the 1980s. The principle behind sectorial lifestyles is that only variables (attitudes, behaviour, etc.) that are considered relevant to a specific domain of consumption are included in the survey. The lifestyles defined on the basis of such an approach thus pertain to this specific sector of consumption only. Later in this chapter, we shall discuss an example of such a sectorial lifestyle system: food-related lifestyles.

■ GEOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES ON LIFESTYLES

The consumption patterns of different countries' regions have been shaped by unique climates, cultural influences and resources. These national and regional differences can exert a major impact on consumers' lifestyles, since many of our preferences in foods, entertainment and so on are dictated by local customs and the availability of some diversions rather than others. The lifestyles of people in each country and each region differ in a variety of ways, some quite subtle and some quite noticeable, some easy to explain and some not so obvious. Needless to say, between northern and southern Italy, northern and southern Germany, Paris and Provence, London and Scotland there may be large differences in terms of consumption patterns and lifestyles and, consequently, in marketing and marketing research practices.⁴³

Regional consumption differences: the macro-level

In some cases, it may make sense to distinguish between larger regions comprising several countries. For example, many companies operating in Europe consider Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) or the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) to be more or less one market due to the perceived similarities between the countries. That there are relative similarities between these countries is a matter of fact, but