

Fifth Edition

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND MARKETING ACTION



H E N R Y A S S A E L

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New York University



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P R E F A C E



◆ KEY CHANGES IN THE FIFTH EDITION

The fifth edition of *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Action* is a marked departure from previous editions in three important respects.

1. *Greater macro/societal orientation and focus on consumerism.* Consumer rights and the societal/policy implications of consumer behavior and marketing strategy are now a more central focus of the text. Whereas in previous editions the chapter on consumerism was placed last, it is now the second chapter. Further, most chapters now have a section at the end titled “Societal Implications”; for example, Societal Implications of . . .

Brand and Store Loyalty (Chapter 4)

Low Involvement Decision Making (Chapter 5)

Information Processing (Chapter 7)

Attitude Change (Chapter 9)

Segmentation and Positioning Strategies (Chapter 12)

and so forth.

This focus on societal implications serves several objectives. First, it provides a balance between the strategic focus throughout the book and a focus on consumer rights. As before, the consumer’s right to information, adequate choice, and product safety are discussed; however, these rights are now expanded to include a broader set of issues encompassing environmental protection, product labeling and health claims, advertising to children, and targeting minorities.

Second, the greater societal focus conforms to the current emphasis on ethical issues in the business curriculum. Ethical issues that relate to the ability of children to process information or to misleading labeling of food products can be more easily woven into conceptual discussions given their early introduction in the text.

Third, the societal focus reflects a greater macro orientation in the book. This is most evident in the chapter on culture (Chapter 13) which now reflects the latest emphasis on product symbolism, imagery, and purchase and consumption rituals. The chapter also provides a link to Chapter 14 which discusses differences in cultural values around the world and how they affect consumer behavior.

2. Fuller integration of behavioral concepts with strategic applications. When it was introduced in 1981, the text was recognized as the first consumer behavior book to take a marketing strategy approach to the topic by introducing applications of behavioral concepts. This was accomplished by citing strategic applications in each chapter, and also by having a signature section of the book entitled “Marketing Action.” Each chapter in this section reflected one of the “four Ps” of marketing—promotion (marketing communications), product (segmentation and product positioning), place (store choice and shopping behavior), and price (pricing perceptions and influences).

The field has now matured to the point where a separate section on strategic applications is no longer necessary. The fifth edition integrates the material on the four Ps throughout the book. A good example is the treatment of the material from the chapter that covered Store Choice and Shopping Behavior in the fourth edition. The material has been moved as indicated below:

- store choice is discussed in the chapter on complex decision making
- store loyalty is discussed in the chapter on brand loyalty
- impulse purchasing is discussed in the chapter on low involvement
- shopping behavior is discussed in the chapter on market segmentation and
- store image is discussed in the chapter on perceptions.

Similarly, the material on price appears primarily in the chapter on perceptions, and the material on salesperson influences is in the chapter on word-of-mouth influence.

This edition, like prior editions, has strategic applications material integrated into every chapter. But the integration of the section on Marketing Action provides a more cohesive link between concept and strategy.

3. A new section on Communications Processes. In prior editions, chapters on communications were placed in different parts of the text. The fifth edition treats communications processes on an integrative basis in the last section. The three chapters in this section distinguish between communications from groups and from marketing organizations. Group communications are further divided between those that occur within groups (word-of-mouth communication) and those that occur across groups through a process of diffusion of information and influence.

◆ ADDITIONAL CHANGES

Another noteworthy change is the inclusion of the material on social class in the chapter on demographics. Including social class with demographics does not conform to the general convention of treating it as an environmental variable. But social class is defined by socioeconomic variables, and most research studies measure demographic variables as surrogates of social class. Further, social class does not deserve a separate chapter since it has not received much research attention in recent years. Therefore, it makes sense to deal with social class as a socioeconomic factor reflected in demographic variables.

Additional changes of note are:

- The use of a vignette to introduce each chapter. The vignettes provide a strategic foundation for the introduction of the chapter's material and are often interwoven throughout the chapter.
- A complete update of demographic trends in Chapter 10, particularly the growing importance of the teen and preteen markets, the results of an aging baby boomer segment, and the increasing clout of the mature market.
- A consideration of emerging life styles in Chapter 11, such as more emphasis on frugality and a trend toward de-emphasizing the organization and working at home.
- Placing the chapter on Market Segmentation and Product Positioning (Chapter 12) in the section on the individual consumer. In past editions this chapter was in the section on Marketing Action. The chapter is now better positioned in following the material on demographics and lifestyles since most segmentation strategies are based on these variables.
- Expanding the material on culture in Chapter 13 to include a consideration of
 - instrumental and terminal values in a means-end chain
 - semiotics and the role of product symbolism
 - consumption rituals
 - sacred and secular consumption.
- A focus on a "new reality" in consumption values, one which recognizes the limits of future economic growth and consequent earnings potential. The result is more price sensitivity and a greater emphasis on value.
- An update of cross-cultural and subcultural influences in Chapter 14 including the Americanization of consumption values worldwide and the growing importance of the Asian-American market in the United States.

This edition continues to feature a strategic applications box in each chapter. This additional integrative device was designed to further demonstrate strategic applications and was well received in the last edition. The research assignments at the end of each chapter continue to prove useful to students in applying behavioral principles. End-of-chapter questions and the glossary have been updated to reflect changes in the text.

The reception of the first four editions continues to confirm my belief that a consumer behavior text that is suitable for a business school must be applications oriented. Consumer behavior continues to be a dynamic and changing field that challenges the research interests of marketing scholars. I hope that students will continue to find this fifth edition of *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Action* useful and challenging in pursuing careers in marketing.

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Henry Assael

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