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# Media Influence and Advertising

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## **Introduction**

It was never going to work. That seemed to be what those at Hershey's home office thought after fellow executive Jack Dowd unveiled a plan to use the new and then still-unpopular Reese's Pieces in an upcoming movie about an alien who befriends a 9-year-old boy in suburban California. Director Steven Spielberg had intended to follow the script and use M&Ms. However, the Mars company got cold feet after hearing of the \$1 million compulsory promotion agreement coupled with no ability to screen the film or approve shots before release.

Dowd's plan worked better than anyone could have imagined. Hershey company historian Joël Glenn Brenner (1999) reported:

The movie set all-time box office records, and the publicity was incredible. Sales of Reese's Pieces took off, tripling within two weeks of the film's release. Distributors reordered as many as ten times in that fourteen-day period. It was the biggest marketing coup in history. We got immediate recognition for our product, the kind of recognition we would normally have to pay fifteen to twenty million bucks for. It ended up as a cheap ride.

(pp. 277-278)



Figure 7.1ET was a popular film that was used to market Reese's Pieces.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/istanbul-turkey-december-</u> 19-2017-wax-778338964 Although in use prior to the 1982 film *E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, product placement (PP) for Reese's Pieces seen in the movie became a watershed event in advertising, launching new opportunities for relationships between entertainment products and consumer brands (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006).

Advertising is not an incidental, haphazard landscape but, rather, a wellmapped territory distinctly marked with unique signs and traffic patterns that guide savvy companies to marketing success. The superhighway of advertising is the field of consumer psychology that came to prominence with the research of academic psychologist John B. Watson in the 1920s. Modern advertising recognizes that an effective ad campaign identifies consumer motivations, constructs realistic buyer personas and brand archetypes, creates a narrative that facilitates transportation, and utilizes social influences across multiple forms of media. This chapter outlines the co-evolution of consumer and brand psychology with emerging technologies and demonstrates how that alliance has revolutionized the way people make purchases and think about brands. In addition, we examine the overarching field of the psychology of motivation.

As the science of consumer psychology grew, a variety of topics were studied such as what made a product more appealing or memorable. In addition, researchers studied how consumers choose brands and products in order to meet intrinsic human needs (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). What emerged was "individual buyer personas" or "fictional purchasers" that manifested the necessities, urges, and objectives of real consumers (Revella, 2015). Using personas, advertisers have been able to create meaningful, targeted brand messages that are readily understood, remembered, and acted on by consumers.

Narrative is a main vehicle of mediated advertising. Visual and auditory cues invite consumers to become cognitively transported into an ad's story (Escalas, 2004). Once a viewer enters the marketing narrative, the ad connects to identity cues that cast the buyer as a player in the tale (Green & Brock, 2013). Effective marketing follows a storied framework, resolved with the consumer being persuaded to act according to the ad's intent. Companies coordinate with media producers, creating product placements that embed brands into television programs and films. The narrative then passively promotes the brand to preoccupied viewers (Gillespie & Joireman, 2016).

Moreover, companies have adopted the use of media celebrities and influencers to enhance the brand narrative. Studying media's capacity to facilitate behavioral change, Bandura (2009) found that self-efficacy and agency could be conveyed using mediated models. Advertisers have learned to utilize brand messages and the corresponding mediums to promote self-efficacy and agency, resulting in higher sales and positive brand associations. For example, celebrity endorsements are effective and highly sought after because mediated personae used in ads are familiar to the consumer and/or may be aspirational figures (Trivedi, 2018).

As media has become more pervasive, personal, and social with the rise of Web 2.0 and mobile phones, the capacity of advertisers to reach and influence consumers has soared, making it easier to impact buying decisions. Cialdini (2004) delineated six social influences observed to drive behavioral change: reciprocity, scarcity, authority, consistency, liking, and consensus. These have been adopted by advertisers and are used in growing frequency (Cial-dini, 2008).

# **Behaviorism and John B. Watson**

In a 2007 episode of *Mad Men*, advertising wunderkind Don Draper addressed executives of Lucky Strike cigarette brand about how to sell cigarettes in the new era of government oversight in which the public was becoming increasingly health-conscious. Draper declared,

Advertising is based on one thing—happiness. And you know what happiness is? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear. It's a billboard on the side of the road that screams reassurance that whatever you are doing is okay. You are okay.

(Weiner & Taylor, 2007, 31:54)



Figure 7.2Advertising for cigarettes used to be commonplace.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/november-2013-berlin-</u> logo-electronic-sign-170445089

Modern media persuasion in advertising began with behaviorism, introduced in 1913 by John B. Watson (Jansson-Boyd, 2010; Kreshel, 1990). In 1920, Watson left academic psychology to pursue a career in advertising. He became a pioneer in the process of attaching meaning to products and brands designed to satisfy the impulses of the human id, ego, and superego, conditioning consumers to buy (Watson, 1913, 1919; Watson & Rayner, 1920). Responsible for several successful print and radio ad campaigns (D. Cohen, 1979), Watson proposed a dramatic shift

in psychological inquiry. His vision was that scientific measurement would yield findings that could be applied in a variety of practical contexts.

Behaviorism grew and was bolstered through extensive research in animal psychology (Tolman, 1922). Russian researcher Ivan Pavlov's series of experiments habituated dogs to salivate by ringing a bell, referred to as classical conditioning (CC). In the CC, a neutral stimulus (NS) or an inactive motivational cue such as a bell is selected. The NS is presented to the dog just prior to an unconditioned stimulus (UCS), or a naturally occurring motivational cue. For Pavlov's dogs, this was meat-flavored powder, which produced an unconditional response (UCR)—the dogs salivating. What Pavlov found was that through multiple pairings of the NS with the UCS, eventually the dogs would salivate (UCR) at the sound of the bell without the meat powder being used. Thus, the salivating became a conditioned response (CR).

Animal studies conducted by Edward Thorndike and B. F. Skinner (Catania, 1999) in the early to mid-1900s were key in the formulation of operant conditioning (OC). OC asserts that a behavior is more likely to occur again when reinforced or strengthened. Skinner was able to show, with both rats and birds, that behavior can be conditioned by adding a reinforcer or stimulus just after a desired response. Infomercials provide great examples of OC. In these ads, viewers are positively reinforced to purchase the product by enticements such as "If you buy now, we'll double your order for free!" and negatively reinforced by statements such as "No shipping if you call today."

Watson became the vice president of the J. Walter Thompson advertising firm and ushered in a new era in advertising and sales (MacGowan, 1928; Winkler & Bromberg, 1939). He introduced advertising to observational science, used to study consumerism, salesmanship techniques, and influence. In addition, Watson is credited for inventing the use of testimonials in modern advertising (Buckley, 1989). Watson's only goal in pushing for change, as recorded by biographer David Cohen (1979), was "We want the man to reach in his pocket and go down and purchase. This is the reaction. What we are struggling with is the finding of the stimulus which will produce that reaction" (p. 187).

Watson believed that the most effective way to persuade customers to buy was to manipulate their emotions, using the three primary emotions most exploitable: rage, fear, and love. He devised a successful ad campaign for Penn Railroad that played on the anger of travelers at congested railway stations. Commuters were portrayed as cattle being herded into overcrowded cars on the New York subway. This scene, designed to produce an angry response in consumers, persuaded them to travel with Penn. Watson combined his emotional manipulation tactics with three basic human needs: food, shelter, and sex. Thus, according to Watson, "[g]ood copy had to harp on fear, love and rage and be linked to food, shelter and sex" (D. Cohen, 1979, p. 188).

Two contemporaries of Watson who made major contributions to advertising and motivational research were Edward Bernays and Ernest Dichter. Edward Bernays, an American nephew of Sigmund Freud, took his uncle's theories and devised an understanding of human motivation that was far less logical than previously conceived and applied that approach to the mind of the crowd. Noting the way Nazi propaganda was able to persuade the masses, Bernays conceived of a similar technique for those living in a democracy. To remove the harsh overtones of Nazism, Bernays coined the term "public relations" as a euphemism for propaganda and successfully employed the "new" field by advising presidents and other politicians and large corporations on how to influence large swaths of people. Bernays argued that people were not governed by logic but by unconscious irrational forces. Bernays "showed American corporations for the first time how they could make people want things they didn't need by linking massed produced goods to their unconscious desire" (Curtis, 2002 as cited in Lessig, 2015, 0:57). Bernays is credited for creating the American consumer culture that largely exists today.

Like Watson, Ernest Dichter advocated for employing scientific psychological research in advertising. He would assemble a group of random consumers and ask them to explain what was happening in various pictures or finish sentences that he provided them. He was a Vienna-born psychologist trained in the Freudian psychoanalytic school of thought and believed that "all roads led back to the consumer and, specifically, his or her unconscious" (Samuel, 2010, p. 56). His methods centered on mining the inner motivations of consumers such as those gleaned from his picture and story exercises (Williams, 1957).

In 1939, Dichter conducted 100 interviews for Ivory Soap, receiving \$2 an interview from the Compton Advertising Agency. In these interviews, he purposely did not mention the brand but rather queried consumers on their bathing habits. Through insightful questioning, people would reveal how they felt about a product, which according to Freudian concepts was much more valuable

in assessing motivation than questioning directly. This methodology revealed that consumers' choice of soap was based on more than basic customer concerns of price, appearance, and lather; rather, it hinged on what Dichter (1960) referred to as personality. He discovered that it was how a soap made a consumer feel that motivated buying. This led to the successful tagline "Wash your troubles away" (Stern, 2004, p. 166).

## Social Identity Theory

The world inhabited by persuasion practitioners such as Watson, Bernays, and Dichter was based on Freudian psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Although effective at engineering consumer demand for mass-produced goods, this approach was characterized primarily by finding and exploiting deficits in consumer identities. In examining the accepted social constructs of identity posited by Hogg and Abrams (1988), Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, and Scabini (2006) asserted that individual identity necessarily involves constant self-appraisal. Indeed, the human condition is one of perpetual judgment about where one belongs or fits in it. It follows that identity is changeable (Brewer, 2001; Lewis, 1990), and people have the capacity to inhabit more than one identity at a time. The never-ending desire to harmonize one's identity with life events and groups one belongs to produces constant social categorization and comparison (Tajfel, 1981).

Categorizing involves classifying those around us to discover sameness or contrast. This informs our overall identity as we perceive that we are either in the in-group or the out-group; those perceptions may change based on life experience or group dynamics (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Stets & Burke, 2000). Moreover, one's impression of others tends to be impacted by the physical objects people possess and the recognition of physical possessions is profoundly influenced by how they are marketed. For example, in 1959, VW Beetle launched its "Think Small" campaign that was positioned in stark contrast to the commercials for the massive automobiles of the day (Hamilton, 2015). The VW ad appealed to consumers who felt marginalized by the dominant "bigger is better" mindset and instead were ready to embrace the small price tag, running costs, and size of a compact car. In addition, thinking small resonated with the burgeoning counterculture movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thus, VW's campaign was successful because it impacted how consumers viewed themselves and how others saw them.

Fueled by the innate desire to maintain positive self-esteem, social comparison is a method of learning about oneself through examining differences and similarities with others (Festinger, 1954). Humans may make downward social comparisons, whereby they evaluate themselves with people who are perceived to be lacking, or upward social comparison, which refers to measuring oneself against others who are thought to be better. Downward comparison tends to raise self-appraisal while upward comparison often leads to diminished self-esteem.



Figure 7.3Vintage 1959 Volkswagen Type 1 Sedan.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/adelaide-australia-</u> <u>september-25-2016-vintage-550451389</u>

Apple demonstrated a capacity for both downward and upward social comparison in their iconic "Think Different" campaign ad launched in 1997 (Renesi, 2018). By juxtaposing the Apple brand with recognized luminaries, the commercial primed consumers to compare themselves to revolutionary thinkers and leaders. Consumers who did not own an Apple product evaluated themselves negatively in comparison to the icons portrayed. This dissonance was aimed at prompting people to become Apple owners and thereby remove the unfavorable comparison. Conversely, those who had already bought Apple products were inclined to make downward social comparisons because they identified with the brilliance and noble rebellion of the visionaries shown in the ad. Thus, Apple owners were persuaded to have positive brand associations and to think and behave according to brand attributes (Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008). In short, the Apple campaign made people feel good by either buying a new product or owning one already.



Figure 7.4Apple: Think different.

source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/january-2017-berlin-logo-</u> <u>brand-apple-609423551</u>

## Social Cognitive Theory

From his research on how children behave after watching both the physical world and mediated models, Albert Bandura posited that viewing others establishes a blueprint for human motivation and learning (Krcmar, 2020). Acknowledging that one's identity and beliefs are socially derived, Bandura (2004) argued that changes in one's identity can be facilitated through socially mediated pathways. Social cognitive theory (SCT) asserts that the basis of human motivation is to build and maintain a sense of self-efficacy or the perception of control over one's personal actions and life events. Life has many hurdles and setbacks to goal attainment. Thus, the persistent sense of competence to meet challenges is necessary for selfesteem. SCT recognizes the power of social modeling, observing persistence and goal attainment in others who are perceived to be similar to oneself (Bandura, 2004). This produces a transfer of confidence from the model to the viewer. Advertising persuades consumers to buy using a mediated socially constructed view of self-efficacy. For example, products often employ social models in ads to portray a version of the consumer who must use the product to master a problem.

In 2017, Clorox debuted a commercial for their Scrubstastic Power Scrubber. The ad portrayed a woman on hands and knees hopelessly trying to clean her dirty bathroom as a voiceover questioned, "Are you tired of the backbreaking scrub, scrub, scrub to clean your messy bathroom toilet and tub?" (Hutton Miller, 2017, 0:01). After the leading question, the ad abruptly segued to a spotless bathroom, and the voice-over began listing the benefits of the device. The commercial's primary appeal was that the device would dramatically increase a user's self-efficacy in cleaning the bathroom.

In recent years, using social models in advertising has expanded. While early advertising characterized consumers as somehow incomplete without a product, this contrasting approach persuades consumers by imbuing self-efficacy through mediated models. In 2014, popular athletic apparel brand Under Armour (2014) launched a female empowerment marketing campaign that featured several prominent female athletes with the tagline "I will what I want." Under Armour's objective for the campaign was to appeal to female consumers in hopes of tearing them away from activewear brand powerhouse, Nike.



Figure 7.5Under Armour logo shown on a baseball cap.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/nakhon-pathom-</u> <u>thailandseptember-2-2017-under-708698476</u>

Under Armour casts the buyer as powerful and perseverant. Misty Copeland, an accomplished ballerina featured in one of the campaign s ads, is observed practicing ballet movements to music. A youthful voice-over reads a rej ection letter to a ballerina academy Copeland had received, outlining reasons why she would never be a worthy ballerina. Once the voice-over is finished, Copeland, instantly transported to a concert hall, executes a series of breathtaking ballet maneuvers. The commercial finishes with an epilogue composed of Copeland s ballerina credentials: "MISTY COPELAND/BALLERINA SOLOIST AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE."

Nike had been first to position themselves in the women's market for athletic shoes and apparel (Grow, 2008). Recognizing a new opportunity, Under Armour sought to distance itself from traditional woman's athletic apparel advertising. In an article that praised the campaign and named Under Armour as *Ad Age*'s marketer of the year, Leanne Fremar, Under Armour's senior vice president and creative director for the campaign, was interviewed. The article explained,

While Under Armour women's line had progressed from its early "shrink it and pink it" days, the brand had yet to launch a global woman's line. Ms. Fremar calls the campaign strategy a "woman-a-festo." The goal was to celebrate women "who had the physical and mental strength to tune out the external pressures and turn inward and chart their own course."

Bandura's social model approach to motivation demonstrates how an empowerment marketing message of self-efficacy persuades the consumer. Copeland, a social model, overcame difficulties with determination and the belief that she was good enough to be a star ballerina. Viewers are invited to treat Copeland's story as illustrative of their own struggles with her triumph representative of their future victories. Under Armour used Copeland as a vicarious motivator associating female empowerment with its brand (Bandura, 2004).

## Brand Psychology

In a 2009 TED Talk, advertising and branding expert Rory Sutherland shared a story that demonstrated the power of branding. Back in the 18th century, Frederick the Great of Prussia sought to introduce potatoes to his nation's diet. This change was designed to add another quality starch to daily food intake and reduce the cost of wheat; both outcomes were aimed at reducing the chance of famine. There was widescale resistance to the idea, and Fredrick enacted laws to force his subjects to participate. Most still refused to grow potatoes, and a few were even executed. Frederick then declared the potato a royal vegetable that could only be eaten by members of the royal family. A potato garden was put in on the royal estate, and guards watched over the sovereign spuds. However, the guards were instructed only to appear to defend the plants. The people who once scorned the potato would remove the noble vegetables because anything worth guarding is worth stealing. The plan paid off. Subjects routinely came and spirited away the potatoes and began gardens of their own. Frederick successfully rebranded the potato.

A brand is a changeable collection of meanings that consumers are invited to cognitively unpack (Batey, 2016). In this way, companies and consumers are cocreators of every brand. The company provides the brand meaning, archetype, and story, while customers naturally investigate and acclimate to brands that fit their identities (Mirzaee & George, 2016).

On a trip to Thailand in the 1980s, Austrian Dietrich Mateshitz came up with the idea for Red Bull energy drink and co-founded the company with Thai business mogul Chaleo Yoovidhya (BetterMarketing, 2020). Since selling its first can in 1987, Red Bull has captured 43% of the \$61 billion 2020 market share (T4, 2021). A large part of Red Bull's success has been superb branding.

Brand meaning involves both primary and implicit meanings (Batey, 2016). Primary brand meanings involve foundational connections consumers make with brands. For example, Red Bull primarily means energy drink. Implicit brand meanings refer to latent emotional and cognitive values that prompt consumers to unearth significance. While Red Bull's primary brand meaning is energy drink, its implicit brand meaning is empowerment, liberating consumers by supplying them with energy to boost their bodies and morale. Media brands that are not given context and meaning get lost in a storm of competing brands. One way to do this is to use archetypes, embodied meanings that companies use to symbolize and give form to their brands (Mark & Pearson, 2001; Mirzaee & George, 2016). Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung proposed archetypes as a universal set of patterns and symbols that come from the unconscious human imagination. These serve as universal symbols (Poon, 2016).

In his study of mythology and religion, Joseph Campbell identified common motifs and archetypes among differing groups. This led Campbell (1968) to produce his seminal book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, which discusses how each culture has an embodiment of the hero and versions of the transformative and transcendent journey heroes take. In referring to Freud and Jung, Campbell (1968) affirmed that "the logic, the heroes, and the deeds of myth survive into modern times" (p. 4).

How do ancient archetypes inform brand decisions today? Marketing and branding experts Mark and Pearson (2001) declared,

Archetypal psychology helps us understand the intrinsic meaning of product categories and consequently helps marketers create enduring brand identities that establish market dominance, evoke, and deliver meaning to customers, and inspire customer loyalty—all, potentially, in socially responsible ways.

(p. 12)

The heart and soul of a company's brand are their meanings. However, to be effective at persuading customers, these meanings are best expressed in archetypal symbols. Archetypes need

129 stories to come alive (Adi, Crisan, & Dinca, 2015). For example, in 2021, Apple beat out Amazon and Google to become the world's most valuable brand at more than \$260 billion (Dailey, 2021). The tech giant's brand was constructed around the ancient Gnostic narrative that cast the serpent in the Garden of Eden as the benevolent liberator who offered Adam and Eve a choice versus the tyrannical corrupt god who only wanted to enslave and ultimately destroy the humans. Campbell pointed out that contrary to Western depictions of the serpent as a subtle deceiver, many ancient religious belief systems worldwide identified the serpent as an agent for good. The decision to "think different" was symbolized by taking a bite of the apple. Thus, the company's logo of an apple with a bite taken out succinctly conveys the brand's meaning (empowerment and autonomy), archetype (magician), and narrative (break free from tyranny).



Figure 7.6Race cars are often used to market brands and products.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/sepang-malaysia-</u> <u>september-30-2017-max-793909036</u>

"Archetypal images signal the fulfillment of basic human desires and motivations and release deep emotions and yearnings" (Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 14). Similar to Apple, Red Bull (2020) embodies the magician archetype. Just like the portrayal of an ancient magician offering the hero (consumer) a potion to rise above circumstances, overcome the villain, and save the kingdom, Red Bull "gives you wiiings" or energizes the consumer to do superhuman things. Thus, brand meaning often comes wrapped in an archetype situated in a story. Young men who make up most of Red Bull's consumer base are unconsciously motivated by this three-part dynamic. The best brands insightfully convey meaning, archetypes, and story across media.

In 2004, Red Bull established its own Formula One racing team that integrated the product into all facets of the high-performance competition. In addition, the brand sponsored a variety of extreme sporting events that corresponded to the energy-boost adventure narrative. This strategy situated the brand in front of the drink's target audience with multiple media impressions simultaneously generating opportunities for fans to talk about Red Bull on social media (Jankovic & Jaksic-Stojanovic, 2019).

## Narrative in Advertising

## Life Is Story

Strong brands tell stories that matter to the consumer. This is because narrative has been evolutionarily engineered into the human psyche as a primary way of processing, storing, and retrieving information (Adi et al., 2015; Bruner, 1991). Master storyteller and narrative researcher Kendell Haven declared that story has transcended the capacity to merely transmit information and is now "literally woven into our DNA" (Stanford, 2015, 23:52). This view corresponds to cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1991, 2004), who asserted that humans unconsciously construct information in an autobiographical framework through two mechanisms: cognition and culture. The elements of cognition fuel the story of self with constant information that informs a person's reality. If data are taken in that contradicts our personal narrative, cognitive dissonance is generated and we either must change our story or our thinking (Aronson, 1969; Festinger, 1957).

Bruner (2004) outlined three components of culture that add to one's autobiography: theme, discourse, and genre. These refer to the shared morals, language, and changeableness of human intention and behavior. Identity, as one of the most basic elements of human psychology, has been observed to be organized and conceptualized in the framework of story (McAdams, 2001). Thus, each person is the author, editor, and protagonist of an autobiographical narrative that brings order and meaning to life events.

How does the human penchant for story help marketers influence people for brands? In every society, there is an endless struggle for what stories are told (Sachs, 2012). News, entertainment, propaganda outlets, activism, and brands all vie for the public's attention. In the past, only those who had access to massive distribution networks (e.g., owned a major television network) achieved success at persuasion. However, Web 2.0 technology has democratized persuasion, allowing people to tell stories without conceding to corporate gatekeepers.

## Story at Work in Branding and Advertising

Despite the conventional wisdom that people are mostly persuaded by logical arguments, consumer psychology asserts that emotional heuristics or shortcuts often inform one's logical decision-making. The best way to deliver an emotionally persuasive appeal is through story. As mentioned earlier, humans are evolutionarily wired for story so that it is the most universally recognized persuasive language. Moreover, an immersive narrative will invite consumers into a brand's story. This is referred to as narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000, 2013).

Several factors must be present for narrative transportation to take place.

First, mental simulation, or one imagining themselves engaging with the product, is a crucial component (Escalas, 2004). The details of an advertising appeal must invite the audience to mentally simulate brand interaction. For example, online retailer TOMS (2015) launched the One Day Without Shoes Campaign during which the brand asked followers on social media to post pictures of their bare feet using the #withoutshoes hashtag. Thousands of followers posted their bare feet to Instagram, which invited followers to engage in the brand's social message and highlight the one-for-one business model. For every pair of shoes the company sold, it donated a pair to nonprofit groups in developing countries.

Another factor involved in transportation is narrative self-referencing (Escalas, 2007). This is when consumers convey their own personal stories and include the brand (Ching, Tong, Ja-Shen, & Hung-Yen, 2013). For example, Frank's Red Hot Dipping Dance challenge asked social media users to record themselves doing a unique interpretation of a Super Bowl dance while dipping a favorite snack into the brand's product (Shorty Awards, n.d.b). This fun challenge facilitated a narrative self-reference of consumers using the product. In addition, posting the videos online created almost 5 million impressions, helping convince others to use the product.

Imagery and absorption are the final factors in narrative transportation. Imagery involves all the visual elements that draw consumers into an ad (Green & Brock, 2013). For example, car commercials often feature the dynamic movement of vehicles. This is to capture the attention of viewers so that they may imagine themselves driving the vehicles. Absorption refers to the loss of self in favor of the story world. In the 2020 Super Bowl ad for Amazon Alexa, featuring Ellen DeGeneres and wife Portia De Rossi, the ad invited viewers to imagine entertainment, news, information searching, communication, and house functions through the ages before modern technology and media (The Ellen Show, 2020). When our imagination is engaged for a few seconds for most ads, we get lost in the story.

## **Elaboration Likelihood Model**

When a consumer takes in a piece of persuasive media such as a television commercial, the brain processes the individual elements of the ad. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) asserts two avenues of persuasion that messages may take: central and peripheral (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). The central route of persuasion refers to a higher likelihood of elaboration in which the consumer tends to devote more cognitive resources to the ad. These commercials are more fact-oriented, relying on audiences to logically derive meanings from the arguments made. In addition, consumers are invited to engage their memories for appeal-relevant information that would justify the claims being made. Central route persuasion demands the attention of the audience. Indeed, Berger (2007) asserted that persuasive advertising must grab attention to be effective.

Television pharmaceutical ads are likely to persuade viewers by delivering logical arguments. For example, in 2017, the blood sugar-lowering drug Trulicity began airing a commercial aimed at diabetics. The commercial used actors to portray diabetics that became empowered to lower their A1C with the drug. The ad presented a steady stream of logical arguments. It is important to note that centrally persuasive communication offers information from the perspective of the influencer aimed to lead the audience to an intended conclusion. These ads need not be factual in the sense they are completely true but simply accurate as the advertiser sees them. Political ads steeped in rhetoric are good examples of this. The peripheral route of ELM asserts that even when persuasive communication does not

The peripheral route of ELM asserts that even when persuasive communication does not engage the logical cognitive processes of the brain, persuasion still occurs through a low likelihood of elaboration. In short, during conditions of low attention, persuasive techniques may be employed to influence audiences. Two popular examples of this are celebrity endorsements (CEs) and product placements (PP).

## Celebrity Endorsements

Celebrity inhabits mediated space. Without conversations about celebrities (some would call it "gossip"), there is no fame or celebrity, and without a medium within which to hold the conversations, celebrity simply does not exist. Celebrity is a social thing. It does not exist in isolation.

(Stever, 2019, p. 1)

As Stever (2019) asserted, celebrity and media have always coexisted, even in early America. For example, author and traveling orator Mark Twain (1835–1910) successfully endorsed two separate cigar brands, a flour brand, and a whiskey brand, all the while being paid to help publicize the introduction of railroads in the United States (Goyal, 2018). Celebrity ad appearances and endorsements work because they leverage the popularity of the celebrity to influence audiences toward brand likability and buying intentions. ELM asserts that peripheral persuasion is conveyed by elements other than the message itself such as who delivers the idea (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Therefore, the influence of a celebrity is a superb example of peripheral persuasion.

In 2012, celebrity chef Paula Deen agreed to appear in commercials for the diabetes medication Victoza for \$6 million (Moskin & Pollack, 2013). Deen had recently announced that she had been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, which often affects older adults. As a celebrity endorser, Deen seemed ideal, having cultivated parasocial relationships among her TV audience (Hung, 2014). Ongoing broadcasts on the Food Network implied Deen was a trusted influential friend to many of her fans. Moreover, Deen had a history of marketing and branding successes involving her personal brand in retail outlets such as Sears, Target, J.C. Penney, Kmart, and QVC (Moskin & Pollack, 2013). Despite the promising aspects of Deen's endorsement, the campaign was a colossal failure. Several months in, all ads were removed from media outlets, and Victoza dissolved the brand's relationship with Paula Deen. Both Deen and Victoza endured scathing rebuke from consumers who viewed the ads as patronizing. Fans of the celebrity chef were outraged and contended that Deen, who was known for her unhealthy cooking style, was just cashing in on her diagnosis.

Simply using a celebrity and a mediated advertisement does not guarantee success. There are specific components to celebrity endorsement effectiveness. Axiomatic in marketing is the notion that people prefer to buy from those whom

they know and trust. Celebrity endorsements expand on that idea by offering the public a living, breathing embodiment of trust. Citing the many technological and media changes that have impacted CEs, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) presented an updated explanation of the term from McCracken's (1989) still widely accepted definition: "A celebrity endorsement is an agreement between an individual who enjoys public recognition (a celebrity) and an entity (e. g., a brand) to use the celebrity for the purpose of promoting the entity" (p. 644).

Four principal theories are used to explain the effectiveness of celebrity brand endorsement: the source credibility model, the source attractiveness model, the match-up hypothesis, and the meaning transfer model (Seiler & Kucza, 2017). The source credibility model, first posited by Hovland and Weiss (1951), asserts that celebrities who are perceived as credible or trustworthy will have a favorable impact on brand appraisals and intentions. As we witnessed with Paula Deen, some celebrities are not considered credible.

An example of credibility is wireless provider Mint Mobile's owner, actor Ryan Reynolds (2020). Reynolds delivers a signature sarcastic pitch for his brand that fans appreciate and expect. Another example of credibility in celebrity brand endorsement is the 2020 Corona ad featuring Snoop Dogg (Schultz, 2020). Both celebrities delivered an authenticity in their commercials that rings true to audiences.



Figure 7.7Snoop Dog, July 2007.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/snoop-dogg-comedy-</u> <u>central-roast-flavor-112665878</u>



Figure 7.8Jennifer Aniston, June 2019.

# Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/los-angeles-jun-10-jennifer-aniston-1425930359</u>

Audiences are persuaded by celebrities who may possess not only physical beauty but also similarity to the consumer, familiarity with the consumer, and are liked by the consumer (McGuire, 1985). Jennifer Aniston has been the spokesperson for the antiaging brand Aveeno since 2013, when the actress was 44 years old. Since Aveeno is pitching to the target market of middle-aged women hoping to stave off the effects of aging on the skin, presenting an attractive model, similar in age, was crucial to their success. Aniston may also engender support from audiences because of her public divorce from Brad Pitt after he had an affair with Angelina Jolie (Booth, 2020). Aniston is a highly visible and attractive celebrity and fans of her hit TV series *Friends* may view the star multiple times a week, streaming or watching the show on syndicated TV.

The beauty Aniston displays might be achieved through Aveeno, but Aniston would not be a typical Aveeno user. The celebrity reportedly has had plastic surgery and spends around \$20,000 a month on various health and beauty products, treatments, and experts to maintain her appearance (Currid-Halkett, 2010). Nevertheless, Aniston's attractiveness continues to influence consumers. Beauty brands are not the only ones to capitalize on endorsements by attractive celebrities. Tennis star Naomi Osaka appeared in an ad for Beats by Dre (2020). The young athlete presents an appealing aspirational model for viewers not only

for her achievements on the court but for the stand she takes for social justice as well.

The match-up hypothesis declares that for an endorsement to be persuasive, the product brand and the celebrity persona or a character the celebrity plays must agree (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Kamins, 1990). One might assume from the often-repeated mantra "sex sells" that an attractive celebrity is all that is needed to market goods to consumers. Advertisers have often succumbed to the misunderstanding that "beautiful is good" (Kamins, 1990, p. 4). However, the match-up hypothesis argues that although attractiveness is a key element, it is more important that the celebrity's appearance and persona match the presented image of the brand.

Furthermore, the celebrity/brand match must be congruent with the celebrity/ consumer match for an effective endorsement (Choi & Rifon, 2012). For example, actor Jim Parsons who played the part of Dr. Sheldon Cooper, a brilliant, eccentric scientist on the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* (*TBBT*), was selected to advertise for the technology company Intel. Parsons was given a similar persona to his television role so that fans would make the connection. *TBBT* costar Mayim Bialik used her show persona as a neuroscientist coupled with the actress's real background in neuroscience when she appeared in an ad for Nectar Sleep called "Real Science for Mayim Bialik" (The Drum, n.d.). Contrasting Paula Deen's failure with Victoza, Parsons's and Bialik's advertising successes using both character personas and real identities demonstrate how compelling the correct brand–celebrity match up can be.



Figure 7.9Naomi Osaka of Japan celebrate victory in U.S. Open 2018.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/new-york-ny-september-6-</u> 2018-1173727003

The meaning transfer model asserts that a celebrity imports meaning into the endorsement via their other roles such as athlete, entertainer, or internet personality. These associations may be positive or negative (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; McCracken, 1989). For example, in 2015, Derrick Rose, a professional basketball player, appeared in a Powerade commercial that depicted his bleak, oppressive upbringing in Englewood, Chicago, and his rise to NBA greatness (Michael Boamah, 2015). In addition, a voice narration from edited excerpts of the poem "A Rose from Concrete" by late rapper Tupac Shakur played throughout the commercial. The ad presented a powerful mosaic of meanings drawn from Rose's life that were aimed at associating the star player's persistence and hard work to overcome adversity with Powerade (Roy, 2018). The implicit invitation was for those who wished to be like Rose—drink Powerade.

### Parasocial Relationships and Celebrity Endorsements

Michael Jordan is considered by some to be the most successful celebrity endorser in history, paving the way for the bevy of lucrative athletic endorsements today (Shuart, 2007). This is because Jordan was able to leverage his celebrity persona with fans countless times with an established parasocial relationship. Parasocial interaction, first identified by Horton and Wohl (1956), refers to the one-sided relationship a celebrity has with an audience. People build connective relational bonds with a celebrity persona or a mediated character (Shackleford, 2020). As Stever (2020) asserted, people form parasocial bonds to celebrities, which is part of normative development and informs one's self-concept throughout the life span. For example, fans of Michael Jordan who watched him play basketball, followed his career, and consumed the mediated narratives over time cultivated a parasocial relationship with the superstar.



Figure 7.10Michael Jordan in 2014.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/new-york-ny-august-26-</u> <u>michael-213473086</u>



Figure 7.11Taylor Swift in 2015.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/las-vegas-may-17-taylor-</u> <u>swift-280165400</u>

Advertisers use celebrities as aspirational figures in commercials and on social media to influence consumer brand decisions. Moreover, Chung and Cho (2017) found that social media presents a more profound sense of intimacy with celebrities than do traditional endorsements. This is because the communicative functions of social media heighten the depth of the parasocial connections fans feel with celebrities, an example of parasocial attachment. Fans seek proximity to

target celebrities in order to feel better about themselves (Stever, 2021). Marketers use this dynamic to attract attention and create favorable impressions of their brands (Aw & Labrecque, 2020). In addition, parasocial relationships facilitate a friend-to-friend communication dynamic between celebrities and followers (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). A recommendation from Taylor Swift about what brand of jeans to buy resonates to fans as the recommendation of a trusted friend.

### The Rise of Social Media Influencers

Celebrities win favor with the public typically by exposure through their occupations such as actor, athlete, musician, or politician (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Social media has given rise to non-traditional celebrities called social media influencers (SMIs) or micro-celebrities (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019) that appeal to others without an alternate media presence. SMI marketing is expected to reach \$15 billion by 2022 (Insider Intelligence, 2021). Kylie Jenner, who has been at or near the top SMI in the world for the last several years with currently 144 million followers on Instagram, receives around \$1.2 million per post (BBC, 2019). What is the attraction to SMIs?

According to Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2017), SMIs sprang from self-branding (Peters, 1997) through multiple internet channels such as social media, blogs, and video-sharing sites. Labrecque, Markos, and Milne (2011) explained that "personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience" (p. 39). Moreover, Thomson's (2006) human brand theory (HBT) asserts that consumers may develop a strong attachment to a unique influencer persona if that human brand imbues a sense of self-determination through competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, followers may feel empowered and emotionally connected to human brand influencers. Influencers leverage those feelings when they endorse products to their audiences (Cuevas, Chong, & Lim, 2020).

The communication functions of Web 2.0 invited users to share intimate details of their lives online. In return, followers pay attention, which then becomes monetized by influencers and brand endorsement specialists. Jin and Feenberg (2015) refer to this dynamic as the **attention economy** where the masses of would-be influencers and traditional celebrities constantly creating and posting vie for attention online. Attention is a scarce resource online. Therefore, for SMIs attention is money and drives influencer–branding partnerships. From the attention economy marketplace, there has emerged influence- and statusmeasuring



#### Figure 7.12Vloggers receive money to promote various brands on their vlogs.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/professional-camera-</u> <u>device-shooting-african-american-1481307245</u>

| Table 7.1 Types of Social Media Influencers |                     |   |  |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
| SMI Type                                    | # of<br>Followers   | SMI Description   |  |
| Celebrity<br>Influencer                     | Over 1<br>million   | Recognized for occupation (e.g.,<br>entertainer, athlete); established brand;<br>endorsement deals; Beyoncé, Patrick<br>Mahomes, Dwayne Johnson |  |
| Megainfluencer                              | Over 1<br>million   | No celebrity status before; created celebrity<br>status by demonstrating expertise; Hudda<br>Kattan, Zoë Sugg, Zach King                        |  |
| Macroinfluencer                             | 100k - 1<br>million | Have a particular subject domain; not<br>celebrities; Matthew Rosenweig, Jean Lee,<br>this_girl_is_a_squirrel                                   |  |
| Microinfluencer                             | 10k-100k            | Localized audience; partner with many companies to provide enough revenue   |  |
| Nanoinfluencer                              | Less than<br>10k    | Followers are comprised of friends, family, acquaintances, and others in a localized region   |  |
|   |                     |   |  |

Source: Campbell and Farrell (2020).

companies, such as Klout, that apply complex algorithms to assess the raw influence a potential SMI may assert in the form of a score (Schaefer, 2012). SMIs use these scores in negotiations with brands. As the SMI market has grown, there has been fragmentation and several forms are now recognized. See <u>Table 7.1</u>.

There are several reasons why SMI marketing continues to grow. First, the public has shifted their media consumption to online channels and specifically to social media. Thus, SMIs simply follow the followers in the sense they follow the attention economy to where the attention is being paid (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Second, younger consumers have become fatigued by overt advertising, which is a big reason why many migrated to the internet in the first place. Situating a product in a piece of SMI created content or simply having a micro-celebrity mention a brand in an Instagram post feels more authentic and less contrived.

Third, social media segmentation allows for a variety of groups to gather around common interests. It follows that SMIs may have small, medium, or large followings based on how popular a shared interest is on a particular platform. Fourth, the communication environment of social media has changed the way consumers buy. Online word of mouth (OWOM) begins with the SMI but then continues into each follower's bank of followers as consumers share marketing messages to gather information to make a buying decision (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006; Lindsey-Mullikin & Borin, 2017). Similar to traditionally mediated celebrity brand endorsements, effective SMIs must project an archetypal meaning to followers, share stories that facilitate parasocial engagement, and always endorse products that are consistent with their self-brand.

Finally, SMIs benefit from the application of social comparison theory (SCT). SCT, first posited by Festinger (1954), asserts that people have an innate desire to measure themselves using others as a gauge. Followers go online to compare themselves to influencers who reap the benefits of a public that is always looking for social models for comparison. Jiang and Ngien (2020) reported that increased usage of Instagram correlated to an elevated level of social comparison that tends to raise social anxiety and lower self-esteem. Given the popularity of SMIs among young people, it is concerning that too much exposure to a self-edited online SMI may diminish their self-concept. For marketers, however, SCT means that young followers will sense the urge to buy whatever their favorite influencer presents.

## Product Placement (PP)

PP historian Kerry Segrave (2004) noted the sentiment of famed American film producer Darryl Zanuck (1902–1979), who believed that "you could sell almost anything but politics or religion by way of motion pictures" (p. 85). PP or brand integration began with silent film and radio and progressed into TV and movies and is now used extensively in video games and social media marketing (Guo et al., 2019). In 2019, PP accounted for \$20.57 billion in advertising spent, 14.5% over the previous year (PQ Media, 2020). Although the delivery has changed the definition, PP is the same: the addition of a paid brand placement or message in mediated communication (Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006).

The peripheral path of persuasion is the ideal conduit for PP in media. For example, in films and television, audiences are focused on cognitively unpacking the story and being physically and/or emotionally aroused while brand messaging embedded in the content surreptitiously primes them for positive brand attitudes and later recall. It is important to note that although many studies have been conducted on PP and explicit memory, the critical area in which brand integration functions most optimally is ones implicit memory (Law & Braun, 2000). This is because, as ELM asserts, there is a lower likelihood of elaboration because audiences are focused on the story.

A superb example of creative brand integration in a television series is the hit 1990s' sitcom *Seinfeld*. Sitcoms are ideal showcases for PP because most companies prefer their products to be associated with positive emotions (Güdüm, 2017). The objective of humor in a comedy series is to make people laugh, which is compatible with happiness (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Moreover, humorous television shows have been shown to elicit a lower likelihood of elaboration, which makes them optimal for PP messaging (Zhang, 1996). In short, media that does not make the viewer think a lot is perfect for PP.



Figure 7.13Jerry Seinfeld in 2007.

# Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/jerry-seinfeld-bee-movie-premiere-amc-181658873</u>

Seinfeld displayed several different types of PP throughout the nine-season run of the show. For example, some products such as Dawn and Sunlight dishwashing soaps were displayed in the background of certain scenes. Other brands such as Rold Gold pretzels were used as props in scenes and given a catchphrase such as "These pretzels are making me thirsty." Many of these unofficial taglines live on today, displayed on mugs and other merchandise available online. Still other products, Twix and Junior Mints, were embedded in an episode's story line and were seen and referred to throughout the program.



Figure 7.14Morgan Spurlock, documentarian, 2011.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/morgan-spurlock-l-premiere-pom-wonderful-92120402</u>

Integrating brands into new media has garnered attention from industry leaders, scholars, and consumer watchdogs all wanting to know exactly what effect this strategy has on younger audiences. Martí-Parreño, Bermejo-Berros, and Aldás-Manzano (2017) reported a large spike in PP in video games in recent years. Consistent with other entertainment media, video games provide a low likelihood of elaboration and therefore are excellent vehicles for PP (Kim, Lloyd, & Cervellon, 2016; Terlutter & Capella, 2013). As a player's attention is directed at making game decisions, a stream of embedded brands may present themselves vying for implicit memory space. Moreover, recurring exposure to PP in games may lead to what Spielvogel, Naderer, and Matthes (2020) referred to as persuasion knowledge (PK) through implicit priming. However, it is debated whether continued play increases or reduces overall susceptibility to brand messaging.

As a part of his 2011 film on PP in films, documentarian Morgan Spurlock interviewed Robert Weisman, president of the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen, on the possible dangers of inserting brands in media entertainment:

Spurlock: With product placement what do you think should be done in films and television?

Weissman: The most important thing especially for television is to have simultaneous labeling when people are being hit with an advertisement—at the moment they are. There should be some little pop up that comes on and says, 'Advertisement.' Could be a scroll at the bottom or a pop up whatever. At the moment people are being advertised to, they should know they are being advertised to.

(Spurlock, 2011, 32:38)

Brands are not likely to be labeled per Weissman's recommendation or to disappear completely from television, movies, and video games anytime soon. Indeed, PP has evolved on social media to just a few clicks to a point of sale. This means that followers may see an influencer on social media and immediately buy the brands they see. This also includes fan merchandise.

# **Robert Cialdini on Influence**

Similar to other persuasion researchers, Robert Cialdini began his career in academia and transitioned to outside roles in which he has consulted with large companies and government organizations. Through scientific research, Cialdini studied the ways in which people would say yes to persuasive influence. From his research, Cialdini developed six fundamental principles of influence based on universal cognitive shortcuts people take when we process information. Cialdini found that these principles may be applied across contexts from business to personal life.

**Reciprocity** works because of the social sense of obligation that is ingrained in most cultures (Cialdini, 2009). Once someone is given a gift or help in some way, the brain reacts instinctively by keeping an unconscious score that must be made equal. For example, the food and beverage industry often offers consumers free samples of new products to attract new customers (Basari & Shamsudin, 2020). When walking through a supermarket, shoppers may be offered a light snack or small serving of a new drink ostensibly to introduce customers to a new product. However, the larger invisible effect is inducing an unconscious feeling of obligation to buy.



**Figure 7.15** There are many ways to market products including offering something free in order to invoke reciprocity.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/salesman-offering-cheese-</u> <u>samples-customers-shop-414153787</u>

Scarcity refers to the human desire to want what is in small supply (Cialdini, 2009). Although curtailed in recent years, retailers have used the unofficial Black Friday holiday that marks the beginning of the Christmas shopping season to create a sense of scarcity. Black Friday deals are often too good to pass up and are available for only a limited time. Online retailers have followed suit and use Black Friday and Cyber Monday to offer one-of-a-kind deals. The public is often shocked when violence erupts at a Black Friday event. However, scarcity, even if it is contrived for a sale, is a powerful motivator (Morales, McFerran, Dahl, & Kristofferson, 2014). In January 2020, as news of the novel coronavirus pandemic spread around the world, consumer behavior shifted sharply as many communities saw widescale hoarding of basic items such as toilet paper. This demonstrates that while scarcity may be employed routinely by companies to invite consumers to spend, it may present localized and national threats in the future during times of prolonged disaster (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020).

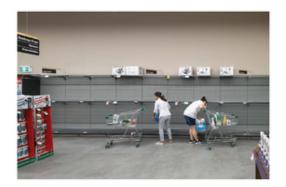


Figure 7.16March 9, 2020: Empty toilet paper shelves in a supermarket amid coronavirus fears, shoppers panic buying and stockpiling toilet paper preparing for a pandemic.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/gold-coast-australia-march-</u> 9-2020-1667895181

Cialdini (2009) described the **authority** principle as the natural human penchant to follow experts. Expertise is expressed through titles, clothes, and trappings (Coombs-Hoar, 2020). For example, supplement commercials usually include a quote and/or a cameo appearance of a doctor assuring consumers that the product is safe and that it works. This is referred to as the white coat effect. Prospective influencers who wish to use the authority principle should display authority cues before trying to persuade. For example, doctors hang diplomas on the walls of their practice as a way of latently influencing patients to follow their advice. It is important to note that the authority domain has been expanded in the advent of social media influencers. For example, with more than 31 million Instagram followers, beauty blogger Huda Kattan is considered "one of the most influential women in the Middle East" (Richardson, 2021, para. 4). The former makeup artist built a billion-dollar beauty brand and continues to reach out to followers on social media who regard Kattan as an expert.

People dislike disagreeing with their own past beliefs and behavior. Aronson (1969) pointed out that this creates cognitive dissonance whereby one is driven to reduce the discrepancy. This is because humans strive to maintain a consistent self-concept. Cialdini s consistency principle utilizes the human desire to avoid or reduce dissonance, asserting that by offering small choices that are easy to agree to early in the persuasion process, an individual may be led to a larger yes decision later. This is because psychologically the individual wants to remain consistent with past choices to maintain a congruent identity (Bern, 1972).

Brands have followed the example of social media influencers in asking followers to like, follow, and share content. Although seemingly insignificant, engaging in small positive social media behaviors encourages followers to become favorably entangled with the brand and to buy. When a brand or influencer invites light engagement, they are helping inform the user's identity. The further a brand attaches to one's identity, the more difficult it is to say no. In 2020, Bomb Pop novelty treat brand launched a campaign on TikTok that stretched across social media such as Twitch, SoundCloud, YouTube, and Instagram appealing to the Tween (aged 9–14) demographic. The company's stated goal was to "make Bomb Pop synonymous with Tween culture by putting the brand at the center of their universe, with content that celebrated them for all that they are—Not One Thing" (Shorty Awards, n.d.a, para. 2). To reach this objective Bomb Pop invited Tweens on social media to create and post user-generated content (UGC) such as memes and interact with paid influencers online. Each small action was designed to influence users to say yes to the brand later. Since early connection to a brand

only builds a stronger desire to remain consistent, it follows that the Bomb Pop campaign was aimed at cultivating extended brand loyalty into adulthood.

It is not unreasonable to assume that people prefer to say yes to those they like. Cialdini's **liking** principle acknowledges this universal human characteristic and presents three factors that determine whether someone is likable: similarity, compliments, and cooperation. In the previous example, Bomb Pop's mission was to show tweens how similar they were to the brand using the tagline "Not One Thing" to demonstrate how diversity characterizes both tweens and Bomb Pop. Indeed, brands that endure take time to show consumers that they know them. For example, Apple (2020) launched an almost 7-minute webisode that humorously portrayed the pitfalls of working from home amid the pandemic, while showcasing many product functions that met user's needs. By aligning the brand with the struggles of adults forced to work from home, Apple endeared its brand to consumers as likable.

Who does not like compliments? Cialdini persuasion model acknowledges that we all like praise. However, the way in which compliments are delivered may determine their effectiveness. People sensing a message that simply panders to them offering insincere honor will reject the persuasive appeal. Multi–Grammy Award winner, singer, songwriter, Billie Eilish was selected to appear in a Telekom Electronic Beats (2020) T-Mobile commercial. The artist provided a moving voiceover praising young Gen Z technology users who face the constant stereotyped refrain that they are screen-obsessed and therefore not connected to the real world. Eilish's monologue was a tribute to prominent global values of young people such as determination, social justice, climate change, and privacy.

Companies are constantly trying to show that they cooperate with consumers. For example, Match.com (2020) released a series of satirical ads that portrayed Satan finding a perfect partner, a woman that represented the year 2020. The dating site mirrored popular public sentiment that 2020 was a hellish year and showed that while the brand agreed with consumers, it was the perfect time to seek romance. People like brands that agree with them. Match. com's ads acknowledged the widespread disappointment felt by consumers and introduced a humorous spin.

It is important to note that many brands engage the liking principle by selecting a celebrity or character endorser to influence consumers. Celebrity endorsements were discussed earlier in this chapter, however, Cialdini (2009) adds that there is an association principle at work when stars are linked together with brands. In 2021, a bevy of Hollywood celebrities appeared in a commercial for Netflix, showcasing the streaming service's unique lineup of upcoming content. The ad depicted celebrities led by Dwayne Johnson interacting on a group text chain. In the final seconds of the ad, Johnson named the text chain "Netflix film fam 2021" further generating a familial aura to the ad (Netflix Film Club, 2021, 1:41). Celebrities can take something unfamiliar like Netflix's new content list and make it appealing.

Cialdini (2009) demonstrated how celebrities reduce skepticism with the illustration of Oprah Winfrey's early endorsement of the then nationally unknown junior senator from Illinois, Barack Obama. Although President Obama would make history time and again, he benefited from Winfrey's star power when he was not yet recognized by the public. This is also an example of uncertainty reduction theory, which posits that brands associate with celebrities in the same way a friend vouches for a blind date (Berger & Calabrese, 1974). The likability of the star reduces the uncertainty a customer has about a candidate, product, or brand.

The final persuasion principle Cialdini (2009) described is **consensus** or social proof. The actions of others are often used as touchstones for people presented with persuasive appeals, especially if the decision involves uncertainty. In short, we want to make sure others have made the same choice before we do. Online reviews are a superb example of how consensus influences consumer buying decisions. Information about a product, such as the UGC in online reviews that originate with the consumer, is perceived as more truthful than brand messaging (Dickinger, 2011). When a product or service has a positive rating with many reviews, it persuades others to have a favorable attitude (Van Der Heide & Lim, 2016). Even when negative reviews are present, positive reviews may mitigate their unfavorable views (Dai, Van Der Heide, Mason, & Shin, 2019).



**Figure 7.17Oprah Winfrey introduces Michelle and Barack Obama at a campaign rally, December 9, 2007.** 

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/michelle-obama-oprah-</u> <u>winfrey-barack-attending-181470788</u>



Figure 7.18Being asked to rate products is commonplace for smartphone users.

Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/consumer-reviews-</u> <u>concepts-bubble-people-review-1654957381</u>

## **Neuromarketing**

In 2013, French neuroscientist Patrick Renvoisé gave a TED Talk during which he humorously explained, "In neuromarketing you have 'neuro' which means the brain and 'marketing' as in I'm going to try to sell you something that maybe you don't even need" (Renvoisé, 2013, 0:33). Renvoisé went on to delineate how the brain subconsciously responds to advertisements and other persuasions, showing that influential messages are most effective when certain elements that favor the brain's evolutionary architecture are included. While all segments of persuasion research focus on getting consumers to say yes, neuromarketing asserts a fundamental assumption that separates the field from other approaches—people do not know what they want (Lee, Broderick, & Chamberlain, 2007; Morin, 2011). Thus, traditional market research such as focus groups where people self-report is considered flawed because consumers tend not to be aware of why they choose the way they do.

<complex-block>

Brain evolution

Figure 7.19Triune brain: reptilian complex (basal ganglia for instinctual behaviors), mammalian brain (septum, amygdalae, hypothalamus, for feeling), and neocortex (cognition, language).

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/brain-evolution-triune-</u> <u>reptilian-complex-basal-1345040750</u>

The reason for consumer blindness may be explained by looking at the dualbrain model (DBM) first posited by Stanovich and West (2000) which argues that humans make choices in two separate regions of the brain. System 1 of the DBM is situated lower in the brain and is often referred to as the reptilian brain because it is older evolutionarily, functions automatically, and is primarily focused on survival (Zurawicki, 2010). In addition to the reptilian brain, System 1 comprises the midbrain or the mammalian brain which is responsible for processing emotions. System 2 of the DBM, the neocortex or the analytical brain, evolved more recently and is responsible for cognition, language, sensory perception, and spatial reasoning and thus requires more cognitive engagement to function (Fugate, 2007). These systems were outlined in the celebrated book *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman (2011), who received the Nobel Prize in Economics for his research.

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Figure 7.20The Cola Wars were a form of brand competition that set them up as the two leading competitors.

#### Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/poznan-pol-feb-13-2020-</u> <u>two-1646970103</u>

The key to understanding neuromarketing research and application is knowing that the reptilian brain governs the analytical brain in what Morin and Renvoisé (2018) call the "bottom-up effect of persuasion" (p. 47). This is the basis of the neuro map used to understand how people make decisions. Many believe that they arrive at buying judgments based on logical reasoning. The bottom-up neuro map contradicts this notion and asserts that when a persuasive message appeals to the reptilian brain, that primal portion of the brain transmits signals of acceptance or rejection upward to the analytical brain. Thus, while they may appear logical, most decisions are made subconsciously and then cloaked in rational cognitions.

There are two primary domains that neuromarketers study to make advertisements and branding more effective: attention and emotions (Morin & Renvoise, 2018). It is crucial to understand that these domains are measured on a neural level and not just outwardly observed. Therefore, research is conducted with biometrics and neurometries to discern human buying behaviors. Biometric data involve reactions from the autonomic nervous system that is acquired through eye tracking, facial coding, and skin conductance. Neurometric data are collected from electroencephalography (EEG) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

A classic study conducted by McClure et al. (2004) used fMRI imaging to study consumer soft drink preferences between the megabrands Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Despite the opinions of diehard fans on both sides, the chemical makeup of the two beverages was observed to be almost indistinguishable. Sixty-seven participants were divided into four groups—two groups anonymously drank—two groups were semi anonymous in that they were told they were drinking either Coca-Cola or Pepsi. Participants were asked to drink the beverage while in an fMRI machine, which shows brain activity by way of images that depict blood flow to various regions of the brain. Results of the study indicated that those who were informed that they were drinking Coca-Cola had dramatic activation in the hippocampus and the midbrain. Pepsi drinkers had no such response. This suggests that participants were emotionally triggered when they knew that they were drinking Coke. McClure et al. (2004) explain this phenomenon by asserting that Coca-Cola's labeling biases consumers because it appeals to the reptilian brain and emotion-processing midbrain.

Renvoisé (2013) declared that neuromarketing is "really about finding that buy button" in the brain (17:39). This involves creating branding and marketing that appeals primarily to the primal brain which is activated by certain stimuli (Morin and Renvoisé, 2018). Branding consultant and author Darryl Weber (2016) declared that "all advertising is subliminal" (p. 224). By this, Weber was not claiming that advertisers hide concealed messages in their ads. Rather, as neuromarketing suggests, effective marketing appeals to one's subconscious. At \$50.3 million, the global market for neuromarketing is still small but increasing (Sousa, 2020). In the future, more companies, candidates, and movements may be turning to insights gleaned from neuro-marketing to give their ads the edge to succeed in an overcrowded media landscape.

# Web 2.0 Marketing

#### **Democratization of Consumer Actions Through Technology**

Technology has brought changes to the way people are persuaded. The theories discussed in this chapter have not been outmoded by Web 2.0; rather, there has been a convergence that has seen these theories from psychology and communications used in tandem across new media. In this section, we discuss the impact of emerging technologies on marketing and persuasion. In addition, we will peer into the future and consider how the media landscape will continue to evolve. Speaking broadly about the convergence of old and new media Jenkins (2006) asserted,

This circulation of media content—across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders—depends heavily on consumers' active participation . . . convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek new information and make connections among dispersed media content.

(p. 3)

The internet facilitated a liberation of information that has empowered consumers with knowledge to make more informed buying choices (Strauss & Frost, 2016). This has initiated

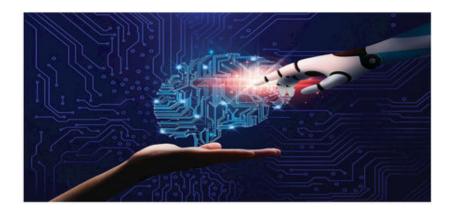


Figure 7.21 Source: <u>www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/human-robotic-hand-touching-circuit-board-1805545831</u>

147 a long-term evolution of business architecture (Pires, Stanton, & Rita, 2006). In short, the availability and application of big data coupled with the connectivity that the internet affords are perpetually reshaping buying and selling.

A primary domain that has seen transformation is access. Internet communication technologies provide consumers increased and often real-time access to information in three avenues. First, the internet has moved products from brick-and-mortar locations to virtual storefronts. This provides consumers more choices than in-store locations could ever offer. In addition, the showroom floor is now wherever the customer is. Buyers may compare brands and prices from several different online retailers without leaving home.

Second, consumers have access to relevant information about brands, products, and services from recent buyers via UGC in online review systems on buying platforms or on social media. As discussed earlier in the chapter, social proof is a compelling motivator to buy or pass on a product or service. The exchange of information may be asynchronous, which refers to when one leaves a review for another user to view, or synchronous, such as instant messaging on social media.

Finally, consumers have increased access to brand managers. Corporate gatekeepers are no longer tolerated as consumers reach out to companies directly with compliments, concerns, and complaints.

#### User/Buyer Personas

The upshot of empowering consumers is that they have been invited to become co-creators with brands in the buying/persuasion dynamic. By this, companies accomplish two goals: first, by perpetuating the empowerment condition consumers are imbued with self-efficacy, which tends to lead to more sales, and, second, by advocating for continued freedom, companies can then be the architects of the consumer-centric sales experience. Consumer-centric marketing is marked by three elements: personas, user experience (UX) design, and big data.

Adlin and Pruitt (2010) explained that "personas are fictitious, specific, concrete representations of target users" (p. 1). Amazon founder Jeff Bezos pointed to an

obsession with customers as the foundation to his company's success, disclosing that in every meeting, a chair is left open to remind those present of the customer (Koetsier, 2018). Personas allow companies to anticipate consumer needs and preferences. Using either ad hoc information from general research or big data distilled from consumer engagement, personas are populated into living, breathing reflections of target consumers. Although they can be much more complex, simple personas usually consist of demographic information such as age, gender, location, career, annual income, marital status, and number and ages of children. In addition, personas include the overall motivations of the individual. Even data that may seem irrelevant to how one views the product or service are included. For example, a persona for a dog food buyer may look like that provided in Table 7.2.

As the table demonstrates, information is organized to create a picture of the consumer and what motivates her to buy and keep buying. When brands make purchasing their product/s the trigger to self-efficacy or self-direction in the buyer, brand loyalty is engendered. For example, in the persona provided in <u>Table 7.2</u>, Jessica is accepting of brand messaging that casts her as Oscar's mother who makes sure he gets fed the correct nutrients.

# Co-Creation of Brand Narratives and User Interface and Experiences

Although personas are valuable in anticipating consumer motivations and behaviors, the next necessary step is platform delivery, which involves online retailers who must create an easy, intuitive user interface (UI). In the mediated marketplace, UI refers to the website features

| Table 7.2 Example Ad Hoc Persona |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Name                             | Jessica  |
| Age                              | 35   |
| Gender                           | Female   |
| Location                         | Redmond, Washington                            |
| Education                        | BS in Communications Michigan State University |
| Employment                       | Works as an analyst for Microsoft              |

| Family                  | Male partner; 2 children (aged 6 and 4)   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Buying<br>Motivations   | Primary consumer buyer in the house; real ingredients;<br>healthy; mobile shopping on phone; convenient shipping  |
| Relevant<br>Information | Dog breed/s: Beagle "Oscar" (aged 7); Jessica and her<br>partner adopted Oscar before their first child was born;<br>Oscar is middle-aged; while Oscar has not shown signs<br>of aging, Jessica is worried about Oscar getting older and<br>wants to make sure he is getting the nutrition he needs;<br>Oscar is treated like the family's first child. |
| Related<br>Behaviors    | Jessica reads animal food labels for natural versus<br>artificial ingredients; Jessica is active with Oscar; Jessica<br>shops online for food and consumer goods; Jessica is<br>willing to pay more for quality ingredients for her family<br>— including Oscar; Jessica reads blogs occasionally about<br>canine health.                               |

and navigation that customers interact with when they visit an online retailer. Consumer research has characterized online purchasing as experiences (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2017). Thus, it is up to the seller to provide a straightforward, meaningful mediated UX through UI (Humphreys, 2020). For example, many retailers have introduced mobile apps that allow users to browse and purchase (Inman & Nikolova, 2017). This marks the transition that many consumers have made from desktop or laptop buying in one's home to anywhere on the go shopping. In addition, mobile shopping encourages using electronic couponing, self-scanning, and e-checkouts. These engagements bring the empowered user/buyer and brands closer as they work together to meet the needs of consumers.

#### IOT, Big Data, and AI

What is the "Internet of Things" (IOT), and what does it mean for media psychology? Throughout daily life, there are a growing number of objects or devices that are embedded with various tools of technology from software to sensors, a variety of types of electronics, that connect with each other and engage in a sharing of data. Indeed, so ubiquitous are such devices that forensic examiners

are tapping into such data sources when investigating crimes (Chung, Park, & Lee, 2017). Along with these devices, there are corollary devices that are voice-activated and engage in voice recognition in order to answer questions from the user. Users know these as Siri, Cortana, Alexa, and other such monikers. Most of these are used through either smartphones or embedded speakers within the home.

Reeves and Naas (1996) observed that when research participants engaged with computers during studies, they tended to treat computers as if they were persons, doing such things as exhibiting polite behavior or avoiding anything that might "hurt the feelings" of the computer, even though they were able to state very clearly that the computers had no such feelings. Humans default to a standard of behavior in interactions that presumes a sentient partner, even where no such sentience exists. Commenting on the IOT devices that have become ubiquitous in homes and offices all over the world, Dumaine (2020) revealed,

To consumers, voice-driven gadgets are helpful and sometimes entertaining "assistants." For Amazon and other tech Giants that make them—and keep them connected to the computers in their data centers—they're tiny but extremely efficient data collectors . . . a voice-powered home accessory can record endless facts about a user's daily life.

(p. 114)

One must then consider how the tendency to anthropomorphize devices might affect the way users interact with devices and voice activated assistants like Siri. In a humorous episode of *TBBT*, Raj, who had a great deal of difficulty speaking to women, gets involved in a relationship with his cell phone and Siri, treating her as if she were the missing woman in his life, much to both the amusement and concern of his friends. As voice-activated artificial intelligence (AI) becomes more nuanced and adept at information collection, one might conclude that Siri or Alexa knows a person as intimately as a spouse. See <u>Box 7.1</u> for more on this idea.

#### Box 7.1 IOT and AI Turn Science Fiction Into Reality

In 1964, the *Twilight Zone* episode titled "The Brain Center at Whipple's" aired for the first time. The show's plot centered on Wallace V. Whipple, the second-generation owner of a large manufacturing company. Whipple decided to install a machine that would automate his assembly lines and, in turn, laid off many of

his employees. Whipple was not swayed by the emotional protests of longtime staff. Over time, the company's profits grew as the computer-led machine took over more and more responsibilities and forced more layoffs until only Whipple remained as president. Near the end of the episode, Whipple himself was let go. The board of directors inevitably decided to fire Whipple, concluding that an allmachine workforce and president was more efficient and profitable than humans could ever be.

We are living on the threshold of the broad application of Rod Serling's fantastical 1964 vision driven by AI, big data, and the IOT. Journalist and author of *Bezonomics*, Brian Dumain (2020) described the methodology that went into Amazon's AI construction,

Amazon. a company full of *Star Trek* aficionados—and led by a true Trekkie in Bezos— began dreaming about replicating the talking computer aboard the *Starship Enterprise*. "We imagined a future where you could interact with any service through voice," says Rohit Prasad, Amazon's head scientist for Alexa AI, who has published more than a hundred scientific articles on conversational AI and other topics. What if Amazon's customers could order books and other goods, download movies and music, just by talking?

(p. 109)

This description reveals what experts had long ago concluded, Amazon is not just an online retailer, or a supply chain behemoth, or a media company. Rather, at its core, Amazon is a technology company that survives and thrives on collecting UI through IOT technology, processing the incoming yottabytes of big data every day with AI and then employing insights gleaned from the data with AI to impact consumers in thousands of large and small ways.

#### Looking to the Future

In 2018, Amazon was unofficially reported to sell more than 600 million goods and was worth more than any other company in the world at \$1 trillion (Dumaine, 2020). Amazon's model of tech-enabled consumer psychology eliminates the laboratory and the researcher. Instead, AI is used to collect, process, and implement data-driven solutions directly to the consumer. This is referred to as machine learning (Dove, Halskov, Forlizzi, & Zimmerman, 2017). See Figure 7.22.

As AI applications become faster and need less human guidance, the process of consumer psychology may flip so that it becomes the domain of machines to inform humans.

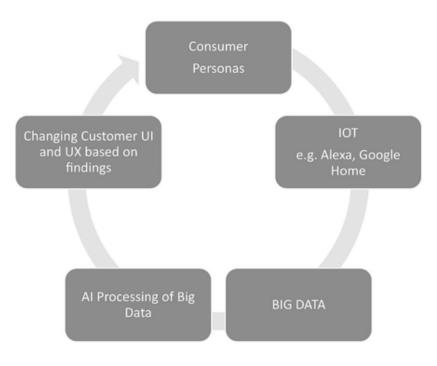


Figure 7.22 Consumer-Focused Machine Learning Model of Consumer Research.

What does this mean for the future? One consequence has been reported by tech visionaries such as Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and Elon Musk, who have begun advocating for a universal basic income (Clifford, 2017). The reasoning behind the argument according to experts is that the rapid advancement and deployment of AI will eventually lead to wide-scale job loss. The future will be an exciting time for media psychology scholars who continue to study the interface between humans and machines and the resultant thoughts and behaviors.

### **Conclusion**

In his book *Storynomics*, author Robert McKee (McKee & Gerace, 2018) predicted, "Before long, all public and private communication—entertainment, news, music, sports, social media, online searches—will be ad-free" (p. XV). McKee's declaration conveys what experts have been saying: We are on the threshold of a postadvertising world. This does not mean post-persuasion. Rather, as demand for ad free media such as paid streaming services continues to grow, companies, marketers, and influencers must find new ways to tell their stories. As we observed in this chapter, advertising has evolved with media and must continue to do so. Nonetheless, the methods that work will be centered on a story and will convey self-efficacy to consumers.

# Questions for Thought and Discussion

- 1. What brands do you use? Construct a brand collage of the brands you use employing images from the internet. What are the main meanings these brands convey? What does that reveal about your identity?
- 2. Construct a 300-word self-brand story that conveys what you are all about. You may want to use this on social media account such as LinkedIn.
- 3. Pick a persuasion principle from Cialdini. Give a detailed recent example of how that principle was applied in a media marketing or branding campaign.
- 4. Pick a product and brand and then construct an ad hoc persona of someone you know (could be yourself). What is the best media to target that individual? Write a one-page strategy to target that person with a branding message. What are the buyer behaviors that an ad could target?



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