Social Psychology and Consumer Psychology
An Unexplored Interface

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Purchase decisions often occur in a social context. Furthermore, the communications that influence these decisions frequently refer to people who use the product being evaluated and to social events in which the product is found. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that research and theory in social psychology have had a major impact on research in consumer behavior.

However, this impact is of relatively recent vintage. Marketing research actually developed independently of research in psychology. Early studies of the factors that influence purchase decisions were usually performed by marketing research groups (Fox, 1997). These groups were typically more interested in establishing the effectiveness of a particular advertising strategy in promoting a given line of products than in developing general theoretical principles of consumer behavior. In pursuing this objective, they tended to rely on intuition and to explore phenomena on an ad hoc basis.

Correspondingly, consumer psychology developed independently of the concerns of industry. Early work in this area reflects a desire to understand how consumers respond to advertising. However, it was stimulated by a few pioneering psychologists (e.g., E. W. Scripture, Harlow Gale, and Walter Dill Scott) who chose to study consumer phenomena because they found it inherently interesting (Schumann, Haugtvedt, & Davidson, 2008). As a result, consumer psychology emerged as an academic discipline with few if any a priori theories and concepts of its own to use in characterizing the phenomena with which it was concerned. Rather, it tended to borrow from theory and methodology developed in other areas, notably social psychology.
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

This tendency is decreasing. As consumer psychology has continued to evolve, researchers have become more sensitive to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the situations to which they wish their research to generalize, and have begun to develop conceptualizations that take these characteristics into account. As a result, they are beginning to ask questions that have not previously been considered in either social psychology or other areas but are nevertheless important in understanding the phenomena of concern in these areas.

Unfortunately, this importance has not yet been fully recognized. Many social psychologists have become aware of the challenge of understanding judgment and decision processes in the consumer domain. However, they have often used theoretical and methodological tools developed in their own discipline that fail to capture the characteristics of a purchase situation. In doing so, they have failed to identify and examine the potential implications of consumer phenomena for research in their own area.

In short, social psychologists have begun to examine consumer phenomena, but their work has often had limited implications for consumer behavior. At the same time, consumer research has begun to examine phenomena that have theoretical and empirical implications for research in social psychology that have not been recognized by social psychologists themselves. In this chapter, we attempt to document these assertions. We review several areas of social psychological research and theorizing, pointing out instances in which this work has limited applicability to consumer phenomena. At the same time, we identify consumer research that has unexplored implications for phenomena of concern in social psychology. To provide a more general context for our discussion, however, we first review the assumptions that traditionally guided marketing and advertising strategies in the many years before consumer research emerged as a major academic discipline. The theoretical and empirical approaches that have been taken in investigating the more specific issues we discuss are often traceable to these assumptions.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A historical review of advertising strategies over the 70 years prior to the advent of academic consumer research reveals that practitioners based their approach on intuitions about the factors that influence the impact of advertisements rather than on evidence that these factors actually had much impact. The success of the ads was often a hit-or-miss proposition. Nevertheless, the intuitions that guided this earlier period in marketing history anticipated, if not dictated, the areas of psychology to which contemporary consumer researchers have paid most attention.

A detailed historical analysis of consumer psychology is provided by Schumann and colleagues (2008). Here, we briefly review the major perspectives that dominated advertising strategies in the years before academic consumer psychology emerged. This history reflects a vacillation between (1) reason-why strategies that emphasized the factors that led a product to be useful, and (2) emotion-based strategies that focused on consumers' global feelings about a product. The history of these divergent approaches, which are reflected in contemporary consumer
research, provides insights into the reasons why certain research paradigms became popular.

Advertising in the Nineteenth Century

The late 1800s marked the beginning of large-scale advertising and gave it the somewhat dubious reputation that it continues to have in many quarters today. As Fox (1997) notes, those were the days of patent medicines when any type of product could be sold and any promise could be made. All that was required was knowledge of the periodicals available in the area and their rates, and an ability to haggle. During this period, products owed their success simply to the fact that they were advertised whereas other products were not. For example, St. Jacob’s oil was initially marketed as something that was used by Caesar’s legions. When this tactic failed, it was reintroduced as a product made by German monks in the Black Forest. This was more palatable to the public and increased its sales substantially. Once advertising diminished, however, so did sales. Similarly, ads for Lydia Pinkham’s vegetable compound appeared around this time and led to the product’s popularity. These ads, which may provide the earliest examples of source effects and testimonial advertising, owed their success to the fact that they showed her trustworthy face and were advertised heavily.

Even during these early days of advertising it is possible to track a shift from more direct advertising approaches to more subtle ones. Ivory soap advertised itself as the only soap that floats. The advertisers of Sapolio soap came up with a mysterious ancient saying, “Olipas Eau,” ostensibly found in an Egyptian tomb, to sell their product. The audience found this puzzling until they discovered that it was “Use Sapolio” spelled backwards. Thus, the hard sell gave way to softer appeals with catchy slogans. By the end of the 1800s, this advertising approach was used to introduce several new products, including Kodak cameras, Coca Cola, and Campbell’s soup.

Advertising at the Turn of the Century

Advertising in the first decade of the twentieth century was marked by three shifts between soft sell and hard sell. The decade began with a focus on getting people’s attention. Thus, unornamented text gave way to delicate, colorful visuals, trade characters such as Aunt Jemima, catchy rhymes and jingles, and humorous appeals. However, advertisers soon realized that although these approaches might help maintain visibility and sales for established products, they did not sell new products. Consequently, reason-why advertising emerged (Fox, 1997). The idea was that advertising should say on paper what a good salesperson would say face-to-face.

Although this approach was proclaimed as a new style of advertising, however, it bore a remarkable resemblance to the patent-medicine advertising mentioned earlier.

The second decade of the century, however, saw a return to “atmosphere advertising” or “soft-sell” in which pitches were made by suggestion. This advertising often used pictures to convey a message, and verbal references to the brand were oblique. The objective of this strategy was not to stimulate the consumer to buy per
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

so. Rather, it focused on building an enduring relationship with the consumer (e.g., by developing an image of reliable quality). This return to atmosphere advertising and the techniques used were validated by psychologists such as Walter Dill Scott, who said that reason-why copy was oversold and that consumers had to be persuaded by "suggestion."

The beginning of World War I interestingly created a home for both styles of advertising. Support for the war was drummed up using reason-why advertising. However, atmosphere advertising, which created an image of quality and reputability, helped to keep company names in the public mind as manufacturers switched to war-time production.

Advertising After World War I

The end of the war saw a tremendous increase in advertising budgets as the economy flourished and new products flooded the market. Advertising and marketing flourished in such an environment and this marked the beginning of the period when the ownership of new products ostensibly paved the way to happiness (Fox, 1997). The use of psychology to sell products emerged when John B. Watson (a former academic psychologist) joined the J. Walter Thompson agency. He claimed that the consumer would react only to fundamental or conditioned emotional stimuli that activated basic human drives such as love, fear, and rage. The appeal to basic human drives and emotions soon became pervasive. Woodbury Facial Soap, for example, used a muted sex appeal ("A skin you love to touch"). Ads for products to combat body odor, halitosis, and athlete's foot induced fear of being physically unappealing. At the same time, these feelings stimulated a desire to emulate others who were more attractive. Thus, although testimonials had fallen into disrepute during the "patent medicine" days, they made a comeback through endorsements by famous Hollywood stars for brands such as Lux beauty soap and Lucky Strike cigarettes.

The years after the 1929 stock market crash were dark days for advertising, as consumption decreased. This led advertisers to make extravagant, often ridiculous claims in a desperate attempt to sell their products. Although the credibility of ad agencies was severely damaged as a result of this strategy, it was partly restored by George Gallup, a Northwestern University journalism professor, who performed a systematic study of reader preferences for different appeals, font types, and layouts. This period also marked the emergence of radio as an advertising medium. Radio advertising typically consisted of sponsored shows with the name of the sponsor being inserted into the script as often as possible. Advertising style during this period swung back to a more hard-hitting character and comparative advertising made its appearance. However, a rapid growth of consumerism led to the general sentiment that advertising promotes waste. This sentiment persisted until the advent of World War II, which again led advertising agencies to focus their efforts on selling the war and distracted consumers from the negative effects of advertising.
Advertising After World War II

The fifteen years of prosperity following World War II marked the second boom in advertising, as the demand for products again increased. During this period, a debate emerged between the role of creativity and that of research. To quote Fox,

Within any given agency, the ascendant researchers found little common ground with the denizens of art and copy. The former thought of advertising as a science and spoke a dense mathematical patois. The latter regarded advertising as an art, or at least a craft, that responded to one's creative muse. Given the tendencies of the day, creatives felt displaced and defensively blamed their problems on "research and other things," as Les Pearl of BBDO put it: "Merchandising men and research men are statistic-ing the creative man to death." (Fox, 1997, p. 182)

Emotion-based research appeared to offer a solution. This research did not treat the consumer as a rational person who knew why he was buying the product, but as a person whose subconscious had to be tapped in order to persuade him. Symbolism in advertising could tap into these unconscious needs. The advert of the Marlboro man image perhaps reflected the zeitgeist of the times. Subliminal advertising also made an appearance when a consultant named James Vicary claimed that sales of cola and popcorn increased when subliminal images were flashed on the screen during a movie.

At the same time, it would be incorrect to say that soft-sell strategies totally dominated this period. The Ted Bates agency, for example, promoted the idea of identifying a "unique selling proposition" for a product and then repeating it continually in ads until consumers got the message. Thus, the focus was not on coming up with new creative approaches but rather on pure repetition of the same message over and over.

Summary

As the preceding discussion testifies, the years of advertising that preceded the advent of academic consumer research was characterized by cycles of both reason-based and emotion-based advertising. These approaches became more refined with each iterative process. By the middle of the 1960s, however, a need to understand empirically the factors that influenced the effectiveness of these approaches became clear. In investigating these approaches, consumer research used psychology for guidance in understanding both the theoretical basis for the effects and the techniques for investigating them. A general question surrounded the extent to which people's judgments and purchase decisions were influenced by what came to mind and how previously acquired knowledge was brought to bear on the decision. Obvious questions stimulated by hard-sell or reason-based approaches included (1) the procedures that consumers use to extract the evaluative implications of different product features (e.g., brands and attributes) and combine them to form an overall judgment or decision, and (2) the dynamics of communication and persuasion. A consideration of soft-sell or emotion-based approaches, however, gave
rise to questions about the role of affect in consumer judgment and the impact of visual imagery.

Many of these questions were all being investigated in social psychology. It was reasonable, therefore, for consumer researchers to turn to social psychology in an attempt to answer them. As we have noted, however, this strategy may have had costs as well as benefits. Methodological tools developed in social psychology may often be of limited applicability to consumer phenomena outside the laboratory. At the same time, they can prevent more central questions from being identified and investigated. Before discussing specific areas of consumer research in which social psychology has had an impact, it may be helpful to review more generally some of the limitations of the paradigms that have been traditionally used in social psychology along with characteristics of the situations they need to consider in order to capture phenomena in consumer judgment.

**GENERAL PARADigmatic CONCERNS**

With few exceptions, theories are constructed to account for a circumscribed range of phenomena that can be identified using a fairly restricted set of procedures and stimulus materials. In such cases, the applicability of the theories may often be limited by the procedures that have been used to evaluate them. Two extensive bodies of research, each of which dominated theorizing in person impression for many years, exemplify these limitations. In both cases, the procedures employed may have created a new phenomenon rather than examining a phenomenon that exists independently of the methods used to investigate it.

**Two Examples of Paradigmatic Limitations**

Impression formation research during the 1960s and 1970s was largely concerned with how the evaluative implications of trait adjective descriptions of a person combine to influence liking for the person. Algebraic models were often quite successful in describing the integration of this information (N. H. Anderson, 1971, 1981).

An evaluation of these models, however, required that participants make ratings of persons based on numerous sets of adjectives in a within-subjects design under conditions that were very unlikely to capture the way in which people form impressions of single individuals whom they encounter in daily life. As Wyer and Carlston (1978) pointed out, the early success of simple averaging models in describing the integration of this information was likely to be an artifact of the paradigm used to evaluate them.

In a later phase of impression formation research, which was popular during the 1980s and early 1990s, people were often asked to form impressions on the basis of a randomly ordered list of behaviors, each described out of the social context in which it occurred (for a review, see Srull & Wyer, 1989). By analyzing characteristics of the information that was recalled in these conditions, rigorous models were developed of the processes that underlie the formation of impressions on the basis of such information. However, the type of information conveyed and how it was presented bore little resemblance to the way that people acquire and
use information about the persons they encounter outside the laboratory. In fact, when similar information was conveyed in the context of an ostensibly informal conversation, the theories that had successfully captured impression formation processes in the usual paradigm were inapplicable (Wyer, Budesheim, & Lambert, 1990; Wyer, Budesheim, Lambert, & Swan, 1994).

Social psychologists are obviously not alone in their tendency to investigate phenomena that have little generalizability beyond the paradigms they use to examine them. Consumer researchers are guilty of this tendency as well. Because of the difficulty of investigating actual purchasing behavior under conditions that systematically differ with respect to variables that are assumed to influence this behavior, consumer researchers frequently make use of guided scenarios in which participants are asked to imagine themselves in different purchasing situations and to infer what they would do in these imagined situations. Although the use of these procedures can generate interesting results, the similarity of these results to those that might occur in actual purchase situations is sometimes questionable. In fact, the results may reflect differences in participants’ implicit theories of shopping behavior, the validity of which is sometimes rather questionable (Ross, 1989; Wyer, 2004).

This is not to say that laboratory research bears no relation to phenomena that occur in the real world. Several studies (see Anderson, Lindsay, & Bushman, 1999) have shown a close correspondence between the implications drawn from laboratory research and those drawn from field studies (see Kardes, Fennis, Hirt, Tormala, & Bullington, in press, for a specific example). Nevertheless, this correspondence is only likely when the paradigms used in the laboratory can capture the factors that potentially influence behavior in daily life. Unfortunately, the situational and informational context of consumer judgments and decisions that typically occur outside the laboratory are rarely taken into account in applying either social psychological research or the theorizing that underlies it.

**Representative Concerns of Consumer Research**

Several features of consumer situations that are rarely captured by social psychological research may be worth summarizing.

1. **Much of the information conveyed in advertisements and television commercials is received under conditions in which people have little interest in either the ad or the product it promotes and, therefore, are unlikely to think about the material in any detail.**
2. **Product information is often acquired days and even weeks before a purchase decision is made. There can be a long period of time between the transmission of product-related information in an advertisement or television commercial and the decisions on which it bears.**
3. **Some reason-based purchase decisions might involve a consideration of a single product. More often, however, they require the computation of a preference among several alternatives. (For example, people who wish to buy a television usually do not decide between purchasing a particular model and buying nothing at all. More generally, they decide whether**
they should buy a SONY or a Panasonic, or which of two SONY televisions they would prefer.) In principle, consumers could compute their preferences by first estimating the favorableness of each alternative independently and comparing these overall evaluations. When more than one alternative is being considered, however, this may not be the case (but see Posavac, Kardes, Sanbonmatsu, & Fitzsimons, 2004, 2005). Rather, consumers appear to conduct a dimension-by-dimension comparison of the choice alternatives and determine their preference on the basis of these comparisons (Simonson, 1989). This procedure can be performed without making an overall evaluation of any of the alternatives.

4. Product information is usually conveyed both verbally and in pictures. Moreover, the verbal descriptions are sometimes communicated orally as well as in writing. In such cases, the impression that is formed of a product is likely to reflect an integration of the implications of information that is transmitted simultaneously in two or more of these sense modalities.

5. Some of the information presented about a product might consist of a list of attribute descriptions. In other cases, however, the information describes a series of events that are intended to stimulate viewers to imagine themselves using the product in an attractive situation (e.g., driving a Toyota through a scenic mountain pass), independently of any particular features the product may have.

6. At times, purchase decisions are based on purely utilitarian considerations (e.g., the ability of the product to perform a particular function) and are guided by reasons-to-buy. However, other decisions are more likely to be based on affect (i.e., the feelings that a product elicits or that one anticipates to result from using it) independently of any specific features the product might have.

The conditions summarized in the previous list arise in many social judgment and decision situations as well as consumer situations. That is, people often state preferences for the persons with whom they interact; their impressions are often based on visual as well as verbal information about a person (physical appearance, observations of his or her behavior); they do not always think very much about the information they receive, and they are often called upon to make judgments and decisions some time after they receive information to which these responses are relevant. Of the conditions we have outlined, however, only the sixth (concerning the impact of affect and judgments and decisions) has been investigated in any detail in social psychology (see Schwarz & Clore, 1996, for a review). And even in this case, research on product evaluation has identified several ways in which affect can influence the processing of information that were not uncovered in social psychological theory and research (cf. Adaval, 2001, 2003).

The discussion in the remainder of this chapter focuses on several representative areas of social psychology that have guided both reason-based and emotion-based research, thus reflecting the historical variation in these emphases placed on these two advertising strategies. These areas include (1) knowledge accessibility, (2) attitude-behavior relations, (3) communication and persuasion, and (4) the
influence of affect and subjective experience. In doing so, we point out limitations on the applicability of this research to consumer judgment and behavior. In several instances, we note research in consumer judgment and behavior that is likely to have implications for social psychological phenomena but have yet to be examined. Although the areas we cover are hardly exhaustive, they are representative of the concerns that existed in the minds of early consumer researchers as well as contemporary ones.

KNOWLEDGE ACCESSIBILITY

Perhaps the most well-established phenomenon to emerge in the past three decades of research on social information processing concerns the impact of knowledge accessibility (for reviews, see Förster & Liberman, 2007; Higgins, 1996; Wyer, 2008). People who are called upon to make a judgment or decision do not normally use all of the relevant information or previously acquired knowledge they have available (Taylor & Fiske, 1978). Rather, they consider only a subset of this information and knowledge that comes to mind most quickly and easily. Consequently, objectively irrelevant experiences that influence the cognitions that are most accessible in memory at the time a judgment or decision is made can influence the nature of this response. Moreover, the experiences that cause these cognitions to be accessible can occur without conscious awareness (Bargh, 1997).

The effect of knowledge accessibility is normally investigated by unobtrusively (often subliminally) stimulating participants to use a selective subset of concepts or knowledge in one situation and observing the impact of these concepts on judgments and behavior in a later, ostensibly unrelated situation. This technique has been successful in demonstrating the impact of accessible trait concepts on the interpretation of ambiguous behavior (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1979), the effect of describing a stimulus (e.g., a person or event) on both memory for the stimulus (Adaaval & Wyer, 2004) and judgments of it (Higgins & Rholes, 1978), the impact of judging a stimulus at one point in time on judgments and decisions at a later time (Carrollton, 1980; Higgins & Lurie, 1983; Sherman, Ahlm, Berman, & Lynn, 1978), the effect of beliefs in a proposition on beliefs in other, syllogistically related propositions (Wyer & Hartwick, 1980), the effects of imagining a hypothetical event on predictions of its actual occurrence (Rose, Lepper, Strack, & Steinmetz, 1977; Sherman, Skov, Hervitz, & Stock, 1981), the impact of accessible relational concepts on creative problem solving (Higgins & Chaires, 1980), the selection of standards of comparison for use in assessing a product's expensiveness (Adaaval & Monroe, 2002), the use of implicit theories in making causal inferences (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000) and the influence of cultural norms on values and behavioral decisions (Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2000, 2005; Briley & Wyer, 2001).

A particularly provocative stream of research, initiated by Bargh, Chen, and Burrows (1996), shows that unobtrusively (e.g., subliminally) priming concepts associated with a social stereotype can influence people's own overt behavior. Similarly, subliminally priming a goal can stimulate behavior that is relevant to the attainment of this goal without participants being aware of the goal to which
the behavior is relevant (Chartrand & Bargh, 1996, 2002). Several explanations of these phenomena have been proposed (e.g., DeMarree, Wheeler, & Petty, 2005; Dijksterhuis, Smith, van Baaren, & Wigboldus, 2005; Janiszewski & van Ossewa, 2005; Wyer, 2004). One fairly straightforward possibility is suggested by J. R. Anderson’s (1982, 1983) conception of cognitive productions (see also Smith, 1990). Specifically, people acquire through learning a number of implicit “if [X], then [Y]” rules, where [X] is a configuration of internally or externally generated stimulus features and [Y] is a sequence of behavior that is activated spontaneously when the conditions specified in [X] are experienced. The features that compose [X], which could include a goal specification as well as other concepts or percepts, need not all be subject to conscious awareness. Thus, although a sequence of behavior might lead to the attainment of a general or specific goal, it can often be activated and pursued without consciousness of the goal to which it is relevant.

Note that the eliciting conditions of a production can include not only subliminally primed concepts but features of the immediate situation in which one finds oneself. The sequence of behavior that is elicited is a joint function of both. Thus, although Bargh and colleagues (1996) found that subliminally priming faces of African Americans led White participants to display more anger and irritation upon being asked to repeat a boring task, Colembe (2001) found that these same primes led White participants to perform less well on a test of mathematical ability and to perform better on a test of rhythm memory. Therefore, different aspects of the primed stereotype came into play, depending on the features of the situational context at hand.

These results emphasize the point that the subliminal priming of behavior-relevant concepts is unlikely to elicit the behavior unless the situational context is one in which the behavior is particularly applicable. Seeing a movie that contains scenes of violence is unlikely to stimulate patrons to walk up to someone spontaneously outside the theatre and kick them in the shins. However, it might lead them to react with more anger and irritation if someone steps on their toe while leaving.

Implications for Consumer Behavior

The potential role of knowledge accessibility in consumer judgment and decision making is self-evident. The evidence reported by Bargh and colleagues, for example, could have general implications for the effects of movies and television on consumption and other behavior. They could also account for the effect of unobtrusively using brands as props in television shows. As already noted, however, primed concepts are often insufficient to activate behavior unless the behavior is applicable to the situation at hand. In the case of consumption behavior, the situational cues that determine the applicability of prime-related behavior may be generated internally. Strahan, Spencer, and Zanna (2002; see also Karremans, Stroebe, & Claus, 2006), for example, showed that subliminally priming thirst-related words led participants to drink more of a beverage they were provided in the context of a simulated taste test. However, this was only true of participants who had gone without drinking for several hours before the experiment and were thirsty at the time the primed concepts were activated.
These findings could help to explain the failure to replicate Vicary's unpublished (and, perhaps, bogus; see Pratkanis, 1992) evidence that subliminally flashing "drink Coca Cola" on a movie screen increases sales of the beverage. This should occur only if consumers are thirsty. Moreover, thirsty customers may be primed by the drinks available at the concession stand at the time they enter the theater, and so additional, more subtle priming may be irrelevant.

There is a second possible qualification on the implications of past research on knowledge accessibility for consumer judgment and decision making. In most studies of the effects of activating concepts and knowledge on judgments and behavior, only a short period of time separates the activation of knowledge and the judgments or behavior it influences. As Higgins, Bargh, and Lombardi (1985) found, the effect of recently activated concepts may be quite transitory, whereas the effect of frequently activated concepts, which determines their chronic accessibility in memory, are more enduring. This implies that repeated exposures to a purchase-related stimulus (e.g., a brand name) may have more influence on the likelihood that it comes to mind in a shopping situation than a single encounter with the stimulus in the context of a television show. (This possibility confirms the assumption underlying some of the early advertising strategies devised by Ted Bates where constant repetition of a unique product feature increased its influence in the purchase situation.)

**Implications of Consumer Behavior**

The theoretical underpinnings of knowledge accessibility are very well established and research in consumer behavior does not call them into serious question. Nevertheless, consumer behavior research has uncovered several phenomena whose potential relevance in social psychology has not yet become fully recognized.

**Effects of the Media on Perceptions and Attitudes**  The assumption that watching television leads viewers to have a distorted perception of reality has had a long history (for a review, see Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1994; Shrum, this volume). In particular, heavy television viewers tend to overestimate the incidence of situations and events that are overrepresented on television. Until fairly recently, however, an explanation of the effect was unclear. For example, people who watch television frequently perceive violent crimes to occur more often than occasional viewers. However, this might not reflect a causal influence of television viewing on perceptions. Rather, it could be the result of socioeconomic factors that independently influence both individuals' viewing behavior and their exposure to crime in their social environment.

Research by Shrum and his colleagues (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997; Shrum, Wyer, & O'Guinn, 1998; for a review see Shrum, this volume), however, traced heavy viewers' disposition to overestimate the incidence of events that occur frequently on television to the increased accessibility of these events in memory. That is, individuals who are asked to estimate the incidence of a particular event or state of affairs may search memory for instances of the event and base their judgment on the ease with which these instances come to mind (Schwarz, 2004). Memory
for the context in which information is received normally decays more rapidly than memory for the information itself and so it often becomes dissociated from the information over time (Pratkanis, Greenwald, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1988). If the event is shown frequently on television, therefore, heavy viewers are likely to retrieve instances of it more easily than less avid viewers without considering the context in which the event was encountered. Consequently, they may judge it to occur relatively more often. Thus, for example, heavy viewers overestimate the incidence of not only violent crime but also manifestations of an affluent lifestyle (e.g., having a swimming pool in the back yard). Furthermore, they respond in estimating the incidence of these manifestations (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997).

The tendency for heavy television viewers to overestimate the incidence of affluence seems likely to have a more general impact on attitudes and values associated with materialism. However, this may be true only if viewers actively think about the implications of affluence-related material at the time they encounter it. Shrum, Burroughs, and Rindfleisch (2005) found that this is indeed the case. Data from both a laboratory study and a national survey indicate that although television viewing increased materialistic attitudes and values, this effect was particularly pronounced among viewers with high need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). In short, television viewing influences perceptions of social reality, but these perceptions have an influence on attitudes and values only among viewers who actively think about the shows they see rather than watching them mindlessly. This has obvious implications for the impact of television on consumer behavior. Frequent television viewing can increase familiarity with the products that are advertised, but it is likely to increase liking for these products only if viewers think about the products at the time the advertisements are encountered.

The evidence that the information transmitted on television has little impact on the attitudes and values of individuals who are prone to watch mindlessly without actively thinking about its implications is of considerable importance in understanding media effects on attitude formation and change in social psychology as well as consumer psychology. For example, people may not only differ in the extent to which they think about the information they receive in the media but also may think about it in different ways. Briley, Shrum, and Wyer (2007) provide an example. African American and Caucasian participants viewed a series of clothing ads that varied in the relative proportion of Black and White models that were shown. Caucasian participants paid particular attention to the Black models when the models occurred infrequently. Because these models were highly accessible in memory, they overestimated their incidence when the actual number presented in the ads was low but became more accurate as the number presented increased. African Americans, on the other hand, did not consider individual Black models to be particularly novel but were nevertheless concerned about their representation in the media. Therefore, they did a subjective frequency count of their number that was more accurate when the actual number presented was low than when it was high. Thus, these different processing strategies can lead to different conclusions concerning the representation of minority groups in the media, an issue with clear implications for social psychology.
Pricing Consumers presumably evaluate the expensiveness of a product with reference to a standard, judging the product to be fairly inexpensive if the price is lower than the standard and as expensive if it is higher. However, the selection of the standard can be influenced by situational factors of which persons are not always aware. Adaval and Monroe (2002) subliminally exposed participants to high or low numbers while they performed an ostensibly irrelevant perceptual task. Then, participants evaluated a target product whose price and other attributes were provided. Participants used a higher standard if they had been primed with high numbers than if they had been primed with low numbers. Consequently, they judged the target to be relatively less expensive in the former condition.

Related phenomena were detected in a field study by Nunes and Boatwright (2004). Individuals in a beachfront shopping area were asked how much they were willing to pay for CDs that were on sale at one of the booths. They were willing to pay more for the CDs if the prices of sweaters on sale at a nearby booth were high than if they were low. Apparently, the high-priced sweaters increased the standard that participants used in evaluating the subjective expensiveness of products in general. Therefore, they subjectively regarded the CDs as less expensive and were willing to pay a higher price for them than they would have been otherwise.

The effects of unobtrusively priming price information are of little direct interest in social psychology. However, social judgments, like consumer judgments, are influenced by the standards that individuals use in computing these judgments (Higgins & Lurie, 1983; Ostrom & Upshaw, 1968). The evidence that the accessibility of these standards can be influenced by factors of which people are unaware and that the effects generalize over both stimulus domains and dimensions of judgment (Adaval & Monroe, 2002) has clear implications for an understanding of the factors underlying judgments of both types.

Effects of Mindsets on Judgments and Decisions The knowledge that people acquire can include not only simple concepts and descriptive information about persons, objects, and events that are used as a basis for decisions, but also more general strategies that are used in arriving at these decisions. The use of a problem-solving strategy in one situation may increase its accessibility in memory. Consequently, it can produce a mindset that, once activated, may be applied in other situations as well. This possibility, which was suggested many years ago by Luchins and Luchins (1959) and more recently by Gollwitzer and Bayer (1999), has been examined in several recent studies of consumer decision making.

For example, Dhar, Huber, and Khan (2007) assumed that a purchase decision is a two-stage process. That is, once individuals have decided that they want to make a purchase, they must consider how they can implement this goal. Thus, a decision to make a purchase activates a second, implemental stage of processing. However, the activities involved at this second stage may induce an implemental mindset that generalizes to later purchase situations, leading consumers to perform this second stage of processing without ever deciding whether they actually wanted to buy something. This means that individuals who have decided to make a purchase at one point in time (thereby activating an implemental mindset) are
more likely to make a second, later purchase than they otherwise would be. Dhar and colleagues (2007) found evidence of this shopping momentum. That is, participants who were induced to purchase an inexpensive product early in an experiment were more likely to purchase a second product later than were individuals who had not been confronted with the first purchase decision.

A related finding was reported by Xu and Wyer (2007). They assumed that when consumers are confronted with a choice between two alternatives, they not only must decide whether they want to buy anything at all but also, having done so, must decide which alternative they want. However, computing a preference for one of the alternatives at the outset may activate a "which-to-buy" mindset that presupposes that a decision to purchase something has already been made. Thus, it increases the inclination to make a purchase relative to conditions in which a preference for the alternative was not computed. Furthermore, once this mindset is activated, it may generalize to future purchase situations. Xu and Wyer found that asking participants to state a preference for two computers in an initial task increased their willingness to purchase a vacation package in a second, imaginary purchase situation. Stating preferences for a series of unrelated consumer activities also increased participants' likelihood of actually purchasing one of two types of candy that were on sale after the experiment.

Xu and Wyer's conceptualization of the processing strategy that underlies a which-to-buy mindset may be too narrow, however. In subsequent research (Xu and Wyer, 2008), some participants were asked to state their relative liking for wild animals, and others were asked to compare them with respect to physical attributes (e.g., "Which is heavier, a hippopotamus or a giraffe?"). In yet another study, they were asked simply to indicate how similar one stimulus was to another (e.g., "How similar is Korea to Japan?"). Performing each task appeared to activate a general comparative-judgment process that influenced participants' willingness to purchase a computer in an unrelated situation that they encountered later. That is, almost any comparative-judgment task was sufficient to activate the which-to-buy mindset that mediated purchase decisions.

Xu and Wyer's (2007) studies indicate that when a goal-directed activity consists of a series of steps, increasing the accessibility of the processes involved in performing an intermediate step in the sequence may stimulate people to apply this step without referring to other steps that normally precede it. This, in turn, may affect the goal-relevant decision that is ultimately made. Analogous situations exist in the social domain. It is interesting to speculate, for example, that people who are offered a choice between two high-calorie deserts at a party are more likely to choose one alternative rather than refusing both if the individuals have been arguing about which of two baseball teams will win the National League pennant. Similarly, they might be more inclined to decide which of two blind dates they will accept rather than declining to accept either.

Hirt, Kardes, and Markman (2004) found that increasing the accessibility of one procedure can induce processing that might not otherwise occur. In their studies (see also Hirt & Markman, 1995), participants who were stimulated to consider alternative courses of action in making a decision in one situation developed a "consider alternatives" mindset that influenced their decision strategies in other,
quite unrelated situations. These effects were evident only among individuals with low need for closure. However, participants with high need for closure were generally resistant to considering alternatives, and so attempts to induce a mindset were unsuccessful.

A quite different processing strategy was identified in a series of studies by Briley and his colleagues. Based on Higgins's (1998) conceptualization of promotion and prevention focus (Lee & Higgins, this volume), Briley postulated that individuals often acquire a disposition to focus their attention on either positive consequences of a choice (a promotion mindset) or negative consequences (a prevention mindset) and that once this mindset is activated, it generalizes to situations that are unrelated to the conditions that gave rise to it. In one series of studies (Briley & Wyer, 2002), a “prevention” mindset was activated by leading participants to perceive that they were members of a group (thereby inducing feelings of social responsibility and an unwillingness to take unnecessary risks). Once this mindset was activated, it affected behavior in other, unrelated situations. In a resource allocation task, for example, it increased the tendency to base allocations on equality (thus minimizing the negative feelings that would result if one party's share was less than another’s). It also induced participants to choose products that had the least negative features, independently of the favorableness of the positive features they possessed. Finally, it induced a tendency to choose candles of different kinds rather than the same kind when leaving the experiment (thus minimizing the regret that might result from making an incorrect choice).

A prevention mindset can be induced in other ways as well. In a series of studies by Briley, Morris, and Simonson (2005), participants performed a product choice task similar to that employed by Briley and Wyer (2002; see also, Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2000). The study, which used Hong Kong bilinguals as subjects, was conducted either in English or in Chinese. Conducting the experiment in English activated concepts associated with the promotion orientation typical of Western cultures, whereas conducting it in Chinese activated concepts associated with the prevention motivation typical of Asians. Thus, participants were more likely to choose products that minimized the magnitude of negative attributes in the second case than in the first.

Information Search Strategies The cognitive procedures that underlie behavior and decisions may often reflect the use of cognitive productions of the sort postulated by J. R. Anderson (1983) and noted earlier. Once activated, these productions are applied automatically with little cognitive deliberation. Evidence that these productions can operate at early stages of processing was obtained by Shen and Wyer (2008). In a representative study, some participants first rank-ordered a set of stimulus attributes from most to least favorable, leading them to focus their attention on favorable attributes before unfavorable ones. Others ranked the attributes from least to most favorable, which required them to focus on unfavorable attributes first. The search processes activated by this task generalized to an ostensibly unrelated task that required a consideration of several pieces of information. Thus, participants who were unable to consider all of this information made more favorable judgments of the target in the first condition than the second. Similar effects
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

were obtained by simply asking participants to indicate whether they would choose each of a set of products (which induces them to focus on positive features; see Shafir, 1993) or, alternatively, whether they would reject them (which stimulates attention to negative features).

Concluding Remarks

Although the studies described in the preceding section were all stimulated by issues of importance in consumer research, they have implications for social psychological phenomena more generally. In evaluating these implications, it may be worth noting that the concepts and knowledge that have been shown to affect judgments have been activated in the same experimental situation as the judgments they affect. As Smith (1990) points out, these effects are likely to be of very short duration. However, recently activated knowledge and frequently activated knowledge theoretically have similar effects on its accessibility and use (Bargh, Bond, Lombardi, & Tota, 1986). To this extent, laboratory demonstrations of the effects of recently activated concepts and knowledge may indeed provide insight into the effects of chronic individual differences in the accessibility of knowledge that result from learning experiences outside the laboratory.

ATTITUDES AND ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR RELATIONS

Attitudes were initially conceptualized as a disposition to behave in a positive or negative way toward an object (Allport, 1935). A somewhat later conceptualization (e.g., Rosenberg & Hoveryland, 1960) defined attitudes as having three components: affective (feelings toward an object), cognitive (beliefs about the object), and conative (behavior toward the object), each of which was an independent manifestation of a single underlying construct.

The adoption of this definition had two related effects. First, it stimulated the construction of measures of attitude along one (e.g., affective) dimension (e.g., Edwards, 1957; Thurstone, 1931) under the implicit assumption that if the measures were valid, they would predict overt behavior. Second, it stimulated the single most heavily researched area in social psychology, concerning the factors that influence attitude formation and change.

A tripartite definition of attitudes is empirically and conceptually unworkable, however, as Zanna and Bempeel (1988) pointed out (see also Breckler, 1984). For one thing, it implies that if positive affective or cognitive responses to an object are not accompanied by positive behavior toward the object, they are not, by definition, indicators of an attitude. Contemporary conceptions, therefore, have tended to view an attitude as simply an evaluation of an object along a good-bad dimension (cf. Engly & Chaiken, 1993), leaving its determinants and effects to empirical investigation. Nevertheless, the implicit assumption that attitudes are related to behavior continues to pervade both social psychology and consumer research.

In fact, attitude measures are often very poor predictors of the behavior toward the object to which the attitude pertained. As Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action asserts, a much better predictor of a person’s behavior toward
an object is the person's attitude toward the behavior (for recent extensions of this theory and reviews of its implications, see Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). These two attitudes are often not the same. (Weight watchers, for example, may have a positive attitude toward chocolate candy per se but a negative attitude toward buying or eating it.) Although the difference seems self-evident in retrospect, it escaped researchers' attention for generations.

The Fishbein-Ajzen model further specifies the factors that contribute to attitudes toward a behavior and, therefore, intentions to engage in it. In doing so, it formalizes an assumption that implicitly underlies the reason-why advertising strategies used in past advertising. That is, attitudes are an additive function of the evaluations of the possible consequences of the behavior, each weighted by the likelihood that the behavior would actually have this effect. The precise relation among these factors has been questioned (e.g., Minard & Cohen, 1981; Wyer & Carlston, 1979). Furthermore, the factors that determine the specific subset of consequences that are taken into account are somewhat unclear. If these consequences are simply the ones that happen to be most easily accessible in memory at the time (Higgins, 1996; Wyer, 2008), it would mean that attitudes are inherently unstable. These considerations, of course, do not negate the general implication that situational and individual difference variables influence attitudes toward a behavior through their mediating impact on beliefs that the behavior will have specific favorable and unfavorable consequences. This implication is important in conceptualizing the impact of persuasive communications.

Perhaps a more important constraint on the applicability of the Fishbein-Ajzen conceptualization is reflected in the authors' own description of their theory as concerned with "reasoned action." That is, the theory assumes that attitudes are formed as a result of a deliberative assessment of the likelihood and desirability of its consequences. This may not always be the case. In many instances, attitudes can reflect a conditioned affective response to the object or behavior in question (see De Houwer, this volume) that occurs spontaneously with little cognitive mediation (Zajonc, 1981). Furthermore, individuals are often unable or unmotivated to engage in the cognitive activity required to assess the consequence of a behavior. In this case, their attitudes are likely to be based on other criteria that are easier to apply (e.g., the affect they happen to be experiencing; see Albarracin & Wyer, 2001). We elaborate this possibility presently.

Although attitudes toward a behavior may generally be a stronger determinant of intentions to engage in it than are attitudes toward the object of this behavior, this does not mean that attitudes toward the object play no role at all. However, one's attitude toward an object is not the only basis for a behavioral decision, and the likelihood of applying it depends on how quickly it comes to mind at the time the decision is made (for an elaboration, see Fazio, 1990, 1995). In effect, this suggests that the use of an attitude as a basis for a behavioral decision is governed in part by situational factors that influence its accessibility in memory.

Alternative Conceptualizations. The generalizability of the Fishbein-Ajzen conceptualization is also called into question by evidence that behavior is often the determinant of an attitude and not the consequence of it. Cognitive dissonance
theory (Festinger, 1957) provides the most formal statement of this effect. That is, if people engage voluntarily in behavior that is inconsistent with their attitude toward a particular referent, they may attempt to rationalize this behavior by convincing themselves that they actually favor the position they have activated. Thus, they change their attitude in the direction implied by their behavior (Cooper, 1998; Cooper & Fazio, 1974; Cooper & Zanna, 1985; Wicklund & Brehm, 1976).

Still other conceptualizations (Bem, 1972; Janis & King, 1954) assert that people use their past behavior to infer their present attitude, and that this can occur without consulting any attitude that they may have formed previously (Albarracin & Wyer, 2000).

In this regard, a refreshing challenge to the assumptions often made by attitude researchers was provided by Schwarz and Bohner (2001). Their conceptualization, which incorporates the possibilities raised by Bem (1972), asserts that all attitudes are constructed at the time they are solicited, based on whatever subset of relevant knowledge happens to be accessible in memory at the time. This knowledge could sometimes include a memorial representation of a previously reported attitude as well as other relevant information. However, this is not always the case.4

Schwarz and Bohner’s conceptualization suggests that although people’s attitude toward an object and their decision to engage in behavior toward the object may both be based on a subset of judgment-relevant knowledge that happens to be accessible at the time, the nature of these subsets may differ. Even if each subset necessarily includes a previously formed representation of an attitude, other subsets of knowledge can come into play as well. Viewed in this way, theory and research should be directed toward understanding the factors that determine the subsets of knowledge that people use as a basis for a behavioral decision, and not with the impact of attitudes per se.

Implications for Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior researchers have long been interested in the effects of situational and informational variables on attitudes toward an ad and the product being advertised under the assumption that these attitudes have something to do with intentions to purchase the product. Thus, early advertising that focused on building an image of reliability through soft-sell and implicit suggestions were based on this assumption (for example, the General Motors ad for Cadillac; see Note 2). However, Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) observation that behavior is better predicted by attitudes toward the behavior than by attitudes toward the product was often ignored. Although factors that affect attitudes toward the ad, the product, and the behavior may be of theoretical interest, it should not be too surprising if the relations among these effects are low.

Perhaps the most important concern in applying the Fishbein-Ajzen model to consumer judgment and decision processes was noted earlier. Some consumer decisions (e.g., whether to use condoms, to go on a cholesterol-free diet, or to buy a luxury car) undoubtedly involve a careful evaluation of the alternative consequences of the action. Most purchasing decisions, however, are made with very little deliberation at all, and are based on criteria that happen to be salient at the
time of purchase. Many such decisions are based on affective reactions toward the product in question, particularly if participants are preoccupied with other thoughts (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). It is clearly of interest to understand when participants are likely to engage in deliberative processing and when they are not (for a review see Friese, Hofmann, & Wänke, this volume). (We discuss this matter more fully in the context of communication and persuasion.) It nevertheless seems likely that the purchase decisions that stimulate the sort of deliberative processing described by the Fishbein-Ajzen model are a very small subset of those that occur in daily life.

As noted earlier, quite different subsets of knowledge may be brought to bear on attitudes toward an ad. A related consideration is made salient by Schwarz and Bohner's (2001) observation that attitudes are constructed at the time one is asked to report them. That is, the subset of knowledge that enters into the construction of an attitude toward a product at one point in time may differ in important ways from the subset that is later retrieved and used as a basis for a decision to purchase it at a later time. These considerations raise questions about the utility of the attitude construct in predicting consumer behavior.

**Implications of Consumer Research**

A substantial body of research in consumer judgment and decision making raises questions concerning whether attitudes come into play at all. Purchase decisions often involve a choice among attractive alternatives. In principle, these preferences can be determined by assessing one's attitude toward each alternative separately and then comparing these overall evaluations. However, research by Huber, Payne, and Puto (1982), Simonson (1989), and others suggest that consumers often make preference judgments by performing a dimension-by-dimension comparison of the alternatives and basing their choice on the relative number of dimensions on which one product is superior to the other. A particularly provocative series of studies was reported by Simonson (1989) and his colleagues (Shafrir, Simonson, & Tversky, 1993; see also Huber et al., 1982). When A is more desirable than B along one dimension but is inferior to B along a second, people's preferences for A and B may not differ. However, if a third option, C, is added, and if A is superior to C but B is not, participants' preference for A over B will increase. Furthermore, this decision might be made without ever computing the overall attitude toward any of the choice alternatives. In fact, when people are asked explicitly to evaluate each choice alternative separately before reporting their preferences, their decision is often quite different (Park & Kim, 2006).

A second series of studies of consumer decision making has identified other effects of comparison processes. For example, when people are asked to choose between two alternatives, A and B, they tend to focus their attention on features of the second product they consider that the first one does not have while ignoring features of the first that the second does not have. Thus, if A and B have unique positive features and people happen to consider A before they consider B, they are more inclined to prefer the second alternative, B. If the alternatives have unique negative features, however, they are more inclined to prefer A (Houston &
A by-product of this comparison process is that the features that the alternatives have in common are generally given little weight in computing a preference. The effect of this reduced weight is evident later when the alternatives are evaluated individually (Brunner & Wänke, 2006; Dhar & Sherman, 1996; Wang & Wyer, 2002). Thus, after stating a preference for alternatives with common negative features, people evaluate both the preferred and the rejected alternative more favorably, whereas after choosing between alternatives with common positive features, they evaluate both alternatives less favorably.

The conditions in which comparative judgments of the sort identified by Huber and colleagues (1982) occur outside the laboratory have yet to be circumscribed either theoretically or empirically. Wang and Wyer (2002) found evidence that people make dimension-by-dimension comparisons only if they are explicitly asked to do so. Posavac and colleagues (2004, 2005) also argue that people do not make comparative judgments even if alternatives are available, and that explicitly asking them to do so decreases the favorableness of their ratings. In contrast, Brunner and Wänke (2006) reported that comparison processes do occur spontaneously and that cancellation effects can occur even without instructions to consider the alternatives in relation to one another. Whether the choice alternatives are equally salient at the time a decision is made (Posavac et al., 2005) and whether the attributes of the alternatives are described along comparable dimensions are undoubtedly important considerations.

Be that as it may, the evidence that preference judgments and the decisions based on them are made without a prior computation of overall attitudes toward the alternatives raises additional questions about the importance of attitudes or attitude-related judgments as bases for purchase decisions. However, an understanding of preferences and the processes that underlie them are obviously of concern in social psychology as well as consumer behavior. Nevertheless, these processes have received little attention in social psychological research. Investigations of impression formation have normally concentrated on the evaluations of single persons, objects, and events. Yet, many social judgments and decisions obviously require a comparison of persons with one another or with oneself. The processes identified by Simonson, Huber, and their colleagues may be worth considering in conceptualizing these processes and examining them empirically.

COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION

Although research on attitude formation and change was stimulated by its assumed implications for behavior change, it has normally been conducted in social psychology as an end in itself, without regard for its behavioral implications. In much of this research, participants are asked to read communications that advocate a position with which they initially disagree. The communication is often attributed to a particular source. The factors that potentially influence the impact of such a communication typically concern (1) characteristics of the information itself and how it is presented, (2) characteristics of the information's source, and (3) situational and individual difference factors that influence receptiveness to the information.
Informational Factors  Research on the informational characteristics that influence the impact of a persuasive message, conducted by Carl Hovland and his colleagues many years ago, permitted several conclusions to be drawn concerning these matters. For example, arguments that oppose one's initial position on an issue have greater impact if they are preceded by arguments that support one's position (thereby increasing the perception that the message is unbiased) than if the opposing arguments are presented in isolation. Second, the initial information presented about an issue normally has greater effect than later information (but see Miller & Campbell, 1959, for an exception).

Independently of these more general order effects, a message is often more effective in inducing people to engage in a behavior if it is preceded by a vivid description of the problem that the behavior potentially Remedies (Leventhal, 1970). However, this may be true only if individuals feel capable of engaging in the behavior being advocated. If they feel unable to cope with the danger, fear may lead to denial of the problem's seriousness and personal relevance. (For example, a vivid portrayal of the consequences of smoking may be more effective than a mild appeal on smokers who feel capable of quitting, but may have less effect on smokers who feel unable to do so.)

A provocative series of studies by McGuire (1964) concerning the effects of inducing resistance to persuasion suggests that exposing people to a mild attack on their position, which makes them aware of their vulnerability to influence, stimulates them to bolster their defenses. As a result, they are less persuaded by a subsequent counterattitudinal message than participants who were not exposed to the attack. Similarly, persons who are forewarned that a message is intended to influence them are normally more resistant to persuasion than those who receive the message without being forewarned (Jacks & Devine, 2000; Wood & Quinn, 2003).

The effect of forewarning and the "inoculation" effect identified by McGuire may be traceable to the influence of these factors on both the motivation and the ability to counterargue the implications of the message at the time it is received. Situational factors that distract recipients from engaging in this cognitive activity are likely to increase the impact of the message (Festinger & Maccoby, 1964; Osterhouse & Brock, 1970). This, of course, assumes that individuals have received and comprehended the message's implications; people cannot be persuaded by information they have not received. If distraction is so great that individuals do not process the information at all, the impact of the message content is likely to be negligible.

McGuire's (1968, 1972) information-processing model conceptualizes the combined effects of these factors. A simplified version of this model (Wyer, 1974) that conveys the functional relations among influence, reception, and counterarguing is given by the equation

\[ P(I) = P(R) [1 - P(CA)] \]

where \( P(I) \) is the probability of being influenced by an argument, \( P(R) \) is the probability of receiving and comprehending its implications, and \( P(CA) \) is the likelihood of counterarguing it effectively. According to this equation, influence is less when
Individual Differences. Individuals' differences in responses to a communication can also be conceptualized in terms of differences in the components of the preceding equation. The most widely applied individual difference measure in social psychology, and among the most successful in capturing differences in responses to information, is the index of need for cognition developed by Cacioppo and Petty (1982). This measure purportedly assesses differences in the motivation to engage in effortful cognitive activity and the intrinsic enjoyment of doing so. A second, less well-known but important index, need for closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), assesses intolerance of ambiguity, or the desire to reach a definite conclusion or decision. Individuals with high need for cognition may gain pleasure in deliberating over decisions, whereas individuals with high need for closure may find deliberation aversive and try to make a decision without much thought. The relation between these motivational dispositions and the interdependence of their effects are unclear. Perhaps people with low need for cognition or high need for closure think less about judgment-irrelevant information they receive and may use criteria that require little thought, albeit for quite different reasons. Whether these differences would be reflected in differences in P(R), P(CA), or both is not clear, however. The responses to information by persons with both high need for cognition and high need for closure is also difficult to predict.

Source Effects on Persuasion. The impact of a communication may often depend on characteristics of its source (for recent reviews of source effects in persuasion, see Chaiken and Maheswaran, 1994; Johnson, Maio, & Smith-McCaffrey, 2005). The source of a message could influence acceptance of the message independently of the arguments contained in it. It could also influence the attention that is given to the message, the interpretation of its content, or the weight that is given to it in relation to other available information. The nature of the influence may depend on the particular source characteristics in question. For example, expertise and trustworthiness, which are among the most commonly investigated source characteristics (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Johnson et al., 2007), may exert their influence in different ways. That is, expertise may influence the weight that is attached to the information presented, whereas trustworthiness may affect the interpretation of the information's implications (Birnbaum & Stegner, 1979).

Other characteristics were identified by Kelman (1958). For example, a message from a source with the power to influence one's personal well-being may be
endorsed only if the source has access to one's responses. When the same message comes from someone who is used as a standard for social desirability, however, it may be temporarily accepted regardless of whether one reports one's position publicly or privately. However, the magnitude of this influence decreases over time. Only when the message is attributed to someone with expert knowledge about the issue at hand does its influence appear to be fairly enduring.

Kelman's research raises the possibility that the impact of a message's source can be conceptualized independently of the effects of its content. This assumption underlies research on the Sleeper effect (that is, the tendency for a message from a negative source to increase its effect over time; see Gruder et al., 1973; Kunkale & Albarracin, 2004). Attitudes toward the source and implications of the message content may both exert an influence immediately after it is presented. Therefore, if the effects of these factors are in opposite directions, they can partially offset one another. However, memory for contextual features (e.g., the source) decay more rapidly than memory for the message content (Pratkanis et al., 1988). Consequently, the influence of the message content becomes more apparent as time goes on. The assumption that message and source effects are independent also underlies the hypothesis that a message's source is used as a "heuristic" basis for judgments under conditions in which recipients do not have the time or motivation to conduct a detailed analysis of the message content (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; see also Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Implications for Consumer Behavior Research

Magazine advertisements and television commercials are essentially persuasive communications that are intended to influence recipients to purchase the product being advertised. It might therefore be reasonable to suppose that the enormous literature on communication and persuasion performed in social psychology (for reviews, see Albarracin, Johnson, & Zanna, 2005) would have clear implications for the effects of these communications. However, the implications may be limited. As noted earlier, research in social psychology has traditionally been concerned with the effectiveness of verbal communications in persuading individuals to change an opinion that they have already formed and are more or less motivated to maintain. Thus, recipients of these messages may often differ in their intrinsic motivation to think about the content of the message, as reflected in differences in need for cognition and need for closure (but see Bruñol & Petty, 2005, for qualifications on this assertion).

In contrast, individuals often have little interest in analyzing the content of the advertisements and television commercials and have no strong a priori opinions concerning the products being advertised. Although individuals may generally have a somewhat cynical view of the trustworthiness of advertisements, they are unlikely to devote much cognitive effort to a refutation of the message content. Therefore, the factors that influence communication effectiveness in the consumer domain are likely to have an effect through their influence on the attention to and comprehension of the message (i.e., P(R)) and not through their impact on attempts to refute it (P(CA)).
Individual Differences in Motivation  The role of individual differences in the motivation to engage in information processing is also worth considering in this context. When a communication is counterattitudinal, recipients are likely to pay attention to the information conveyed unless they are particularly low in need for cognition. However, people are normally uninterested in advertisements and television commercials. Even recipients with high need for cognition might not think about the content of these messages unless the messages provide some intellectual stimulation. More generally, ads and commercials might not be thought about extensively regardless of individuals' need for cognition. (Indeed, consumers who enjoy challenging intellectual activity might even be less attentive to such ads than other consumers are.)

For similar reasons, differences in need for closure seem less likely to influence the processing of information in ads and television commercials. These differences may be more evident in actual purchasing behavior. That is, people with high need for closure are presumably less likely to evaluate choice alternatives carefully and, therefore, may be more inclined to make premature decisions. This possibility is interesting to consider in the context of differences in the disposition to focus on positive vs. negative consequences of a decision outcome (Higgins, 1998). When choice alternatives have both positive and negative features, some individuals may be disposed to focus on positive features before considering negative ones, whereas others may be inclined to focus on negative features at the outset. The effects of these different dispositions should be more evident in individuals with high need for closure.

Source Effects  When individuals are unmotivated and unable to process the message content extensively, characteristics of the source are particularly likely to have an influence (Chaiken, 1980). To this extent, source effects should be particularly evident in advertisements. The assumption that this is true is evident from the widespread use of celebrity endorsers in advertisements both in past and current advertising. Conceptual issues arise in considering the nature of this influence, however. For one thing, it is unclear whether the source of information contained in an ad should be considered to be the ad itself or, if the ad contains an endorsement by a celebrity, the endorser. (In some instances, the source may be considered to be the product's manufacturer; see Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990.) These distinctions could be important. People often consider ads to be untrustworthy and infer that the information they convey is likely to be misleading. Yet, they apparently believe that celebrities like the products they endorse despite the fact that they are being paid vast sums of money to promote these products (Cronley, Kardes, Goddard, & Houghton, 1999). The relative influence of these factors is unclear.

A second question that arises in the case of celebrity endorsers surrounds the reason for their effect. Kelman's (1958) research suggests several source characteristics other than trustworthiness that could come into play, including the endorser's expertise in the domain to which the product pertains, the social prestige of the endorser (and, therefore, the desire to "be like" him or her by using similar products), and the standard set by the celebrity for what is generally socially desirable. In
addition, celebrity endorsers may stimulate attention to the ad, leading its content to have more influence. Alternatively, celebrities might draw attention to themselves and, therefore, distract viewers from thinking about the ad's implications.

One implication of social psychological research is nonetheless important. Once a stimulus has been evaluated on the basis of information that is available at the time of judgment, this evaluation is stored in memory and may later be retrieved and used as a basis for subsequent judgments independently of the information that gave rise to its construction (Carlston, 1980; Srull & Wyer, 1980; Sherman, Ahlm, Berman, & Lynn, 1978). In the present context, this suggests that if people spontaneously form a favorable impression of a product on the basis of a celebrity endorser's recommendation, the evaluation may later be retrieved and used as a basis for a purchase decision without considering the conditions that surrounded the construction of this impression.

Implications of Consumer Behavior Research

The impact of advertisements and television commercials on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions is obviously a central concern of consumer research. A summary of its implications for communication and behavior in general is beyond the scope of this chapter. We focus on only one area in which the implications of consumer research for social psychology are particularly obvious.

Most social psychological research on attitude formation and change has focused almost exclusively on the impact of verbal information, and has rarely considered conditions in which information is conveyed visually as well. In the consumer domain, however, verbal and visual information about a product are frequently presented simultaneously. Although message characteristics (e.g., argument strength) have been studied extensively in social psychology, the manner in which information in different modalities combines to influence attitudes and decisions has rarely been examined. Three series of studies in consumer research exemplify the different roles that pictures can play in a consumer context. These studies, which are interesting to consider in the context of the emotion-based advertising strategies that were applied in the early days of marketing, have implications for contemporary research in social information processing.

Effects of Pictures on Initial Impression Formation. Several studies of the impact of pictures and verbal attribute information on product evaluations were conducted by Yeung and Wyer (2006). They found that when products were described by verbal attribute information alone, participants' evaluations of the product depended on whether they were told to use hedonic (i.e., affective) or utilitarian criteria. When they were shown a picture of the product before receiving the verbal attribute information, however, they formed an initial impression of the product on the basis of the picture alone (and the affect the picture elicited). That is, the attribute information they received later (as well as the criteria they were told to use in making their evaluations) had little effect.

In a quite different study (Sengupta & Fitzsimons, 2000), participants evaluated a product on the basis of an attractive or unattractive picture along with favorable...
or unfavorable verbal attribute descriptions. Some participants wrote down the reasons for making their evaluations and these reasons, along with the attitude they reported, were determined largely by the verbal attribute descriptions they received. Then, either immediately or five days later, participants were asked to choose which candy they would like to receive as a reward for participating in the study, being shown the pictures of the products they had seen earlier.

When participants had explained their attitude, this attitude was highly correlated with the choice they made immediately after reporting it. However, this correlation decreased substantially after a delay. In the latter case, participants apparently based their candy choices on the attractiveness of the packaging (which was salient at the time their decision was made), and their previously formed reason-based attitude had little impact. In other words, the effects of participants' spontaneous reactions to the pictures overrode any effects of the attitude they had constructed on the basis of the verbal information. Note that this finding indirectly supports the use of emotion-based advertising strategies. More generally, it provides yet another indication that attitudes are often not an important predictor of behavioral decisions in the consumer domain.

Effects of Pictures on Information Processing The aforementioned studies show that pictures exert an influence on product evaluations independently of the verbal information they accompany. Other research suggests that the nature of their influence depends on how the verbal information is processed. This processing, in turn, may depend on the format in which the verbal information is conveyed. In two series of studies by Adaval and her colleagues, consumers read either a travel brochure describing the events that occurred during a vacation trip (Adaval & Wyer, 1998) or a campaign brochure describing the events that occurred in a political candidate's career (Adaval, Isbell, & Wyer, 2006). In each series of studies, the information was conveyed in either the form of a narrative that conveyed the temporal order in which the events took place or an ostensibly unordered list. Finally, the verbal description of each event was either accompanied by a picture relevant to the event or presented alone.

When the information was conveyed in a narrative, participants appeared to suspend judgment until they had received all of the information available and they could base their impression on the sequence of events as a whole. In this case, pictures increased the vividness of the "story" conveyed by the sequence and increased the extremity of the evaluations. When the information was conveyed in a list, however, participants appeared to engage in an on-line integration of the evaluative implications of each event separately, updating their impression with the implications of each new event as it was presented. In this case, the pictures that accompanied the event descriptions interfered with this piecemeal integration and decreased the extremity of the evaluations that participants made.

Other recent studies also show that pictures do not necessarily increase the effectiveness of an advertisement. In a study by Hung and Wyer (2007), for example, participants received advertisements consisting of (1) a description of a problem (e.g., hair loss), (2) a recommendation to use a particular product, and (3) a description of the result (reduction in hair loss). However, the modality of the
problem description (picture vs. verbal statement) and that of the solution description were independently varied.

Participants were expected to apply two normative principles in responding to the ads: a general principle that communications are generally intended to be both informative and truthful (Grice, 1975), and a domain-specific principle that advertising claims are likely to be exaggerated. When one component of the ad (either the problem description or the solution description) was pictured and the other was described verbally, participants attempted to interpret the verbal component in a manner that was consistent with the implications of the pictured component, based on their prior knowledge about the type of problem being advertised and the principle that communications are informative and truthful. Having expended this cognitive effort, however, they were not motivated to expend the additional effort required to apply the principle that advertising claims were exaggerated. As a result, they evaluated the product favorably. When both components were pictured, however, the literal implications of the ad could be construed with little effort, and so participants were willing to expect the effort required to apply the principle that ad claims were exaggerated. Consequently, the ad was disparaged and the product was evaluated unfavorably.

The Role of Imagery in Information Processing  Pictures may exert an influence on judgments through their mediating impact on the images they provide of the situations they describe. However, images may be elicited by verbal descriptions of situations as well. The role of imagery in consumer behavior (for a review, see Wyer, Hung, & Jiang, 2008) has been recognized in research by Escalas (2004; see also Green & Brock, 2000, 2002). That is, individuals who read a story may often imagine themselves as a protagonist in the narrative. As a consequence of being "transported" into the situation portrayed in advertisement, they may be more influenced by it.

However, advertisements are often encountered in the context of other information that can also lead recipients to become transported (e.g., a television movie or a magazine story). In this case, the information may intrude on the processing of the ad, depending on when the ad is encountered. Wang and Calder (2006) showed, for example, that when people encounter an ad at the end of a story they are reading, their tendency to be transported into the story increases the impact of the ad on product evaluations. If, on the other hand, the ad is introduced in the middle of the story, thus breaking up the flow of the story, becoming transported into the story has a negative impact on the ad's effectiveness. Although Wang and Calder restricted their consideration to the effects of reading a story, analogous effects seem likely to occur when watching episodes on television that are interrupted constantly by commercials.

The Impact of Visual Imagery on Information Process Is Not Universal  The disposition to form images on the basis of verbal information may be either chronic (Childers, Houston, & Heckler, 1985) or situationally induced. In a series of studies, Jiang, Steinhart, and Wyer (2008) found that when people with a disposition to form visual images (i.e., visualizers) receive attribute descriptions of a product...
that is unfamiliar to them, they often find it difficult to construct an image of it and react unfavorably to the product being described. However, providing a picture of the product can substantially increase their evaluations of it, but the impact of a picture on visualizers’ evaluations depends in part on whether the verbal and pictorial information can be integrated into a single image. In contrast, when individuals have a disposition to process information semantically without forming visual images, they are unaffected by these factors.

Concluding Comment  The research summarized in this section concerned the facilitating and disruptive effects of both pictures and visual images on consumer information processing. However, the phenomena identified in these research streams are clearly relevant to an understanding of impression formation more generally. People often read or hear about a person or event in the course of informal conversation under conditions in which a picture of the individuals involved may or may not be available. The impact of this information on the impressions that recipients form may depend on whether they typically form mental images on the basis of such verbal descriptions and, if so, whether a picture or previously formed visual image is available. These contingencies, however, have not been addressed in social psychological research.

AFFECT AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

General Considerations

Influences of Affect on Judgments and Behavior  Before the advent of information processing research and theorizing in the mid-1970s, affective reactions were normally viewed as socially conditioned responses to stimulus persons and objects that became associated with these stimuli through learning. The emotion-based advertising strategies employed during the first half of the twentieth century reflect this assumption. For example, if someone experiences positive feelings at the time a person is present or a product is described, these feelings become associated with features of the person or product as well as other features of the situation. Consequently, exposure to these features is likely to elicit similar feelings, providing the basis for liking them (Clore & Byrne, 1974).

However, information processing research and theory has led to the postulation of several additional ways in which affective reactions can potentially influence judgments and behavior. For example, positive or negative affect might activate affect-congruent evaluative concepts in memory that are either brought to bear on the interpretation of new information (Bower, 1981; Forgas, Bower, & Krantz, 1984) or serve as retrieval cues for previously acquired knowledge (Bower, Gilligan, & Monteiro, 1981; Isen, Shalker, Clark, & Karp, 1978). Furthermore, people often base their evaluations of a stimulus on the feelings they happen to be experiencing and attribute to the stimulus they are judging. In such instances, feelings have a direct, informational influence on judgments and decisions (Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1988, 1996).
Affect can also influence the attention that people pay to the information they receive and use as a basis for judgment (Schwarz, 1990; for a review see Pham, this volume). For example, people who feel happy are inclined to perceive the situation they are in as benign and, therefore, as needing little attention. In contrast, those who feel unhappy are more inclined to judge the situation as problematic and as requiring more detailed consideration. As a result of this difference, people who experience positive affect are less influenced by details of a communication they receive (Bless, Bohner, Schwarz, & Strack, 1980), and are more inclined to use heuristic bases for judgment (Bodenhausen, 1983) than are people who feel sad.

Finally, affect can have a direct, motivational influence. Because positive affect is pleasant, people are often motivated to maintain this affective state and resist engaging in activities that are likely to bring them down. In contrast, negative affect is aversive and people are motivated to eliminate it. (See Isen, 1984, for a discussion of factors that motivate mood-maintenance and mood-repair.) That is, people who feel unhappy may be particularly attracted to activities that permit them to overcome the negative feelings they are experiencing.

Several of the aforementioned conclusions should be qualified. Niedenthal and her colleagues (Niedenthal, Halberstadt, & Setterlund, 1997; Niedenthal & Setterlund, 1994), for example, found that the experience of affect per se increases the accessibility in memory of only those concepts that describe the particular type of affect that people are experiencing (e.g., “happy,” “sad,” etc.) and do not influence the accessibility of valenced concepts in general. This result raises questions about the influence of affect on memory and comprehension. Furthermore, the impact of affective reactions on the amount of effort expended in activity can depend on the purpose for which the activity is being performed (Martin, Ward, Achee, & Wyer, 1993). That is, people who are motivated to perform well may use their feelings as a basis for evaluating their performance and may persist less long if they are feeling happy (and infer that their performance is satisfactory) than if they are not. If people are performing the same activity for enjoyment, however, they may infer that they are enjoying it more if they are happy and may persevere longer than they would if they were sad.5

The Role of Nonaffective Subjective Experience Affective reactions are only one of several subjective experiences that potentially influence people’s judgments and decisions. Stepper and Strack (1993), for example, showed that persons who complete a question while standing upright report being more assertive than persons who complete the questionnaire while slouched at a low table. Proprioceptive cues associated with posture apparently elicited feelings of either assertiveness or lack of it, and these feelings were used as a basis for judgment.

Of greater relevance to the concerns of this chapter is evidence that feelings of ease or difficulty in processing information can have an impact on evaluations of the objects to which the information pertains (Winkelman & Cacioppo, 2001; for reviews, see Schwarz, 1998, 2004; Schwarz, Song & Xu, this volume). For example, people who are asked to generate many instances of assertiveness judge themselves less assertive than people who are asked to generate only a few (Schwarz et al, 1991). Although people generate more instances in the first case, they find it difficult to
achieve and so they infer that they may not have the attribute to which the instances refer. For similar reasons, people who have been asked to generate many reasons why an event occurred predict the event is less inevitable than do people who have been asked to generate just a few (Sanna, Schwarz, & Stocker, 2002).

**Implications for Consumer Research**

The assumption that happy consumers are more inclined to evaluate products favorably and to make purchases has guided advertising and promotions for many years. This is evidenced by the playing of pleasant music in shopping centers and the use of humor and attractive women in ads and television commercials. That is, the affect elicited by contextual stimuli is assumed to become associated with the product, leading the product to elicit the feelings later and increasing the likelihood of purchasing it (Corn, 1992; Shimp, 1991).

This process may not be the only one that underlies the impact of affective reactions on consumer judgments and decisions, however. The research on the impact of affect as information (Schwarz & Clore, 1996; Wyer, Clore, & Isbell, 1999; Pham, this volume) suggests that affect is likely to be used as a basis for judgments of a stimulus only if it is likely to be considered a viable basis for evaluating it. This is not always the case. In the product domain, for example, many products may be evaluated on the basis of functional, utilitarian criteria. Consequently, the affect that people are experiencing is unlikely to influence their evaluations of such products (Adaval, 2001; Pham, 1998; Yeung & Wyer, 2004).

When affect is an appropriate criterion for evaluating a stimulus, however, the evaluation of the stimulus may be influenced not only by the feelings that the stimulus actually elicits but also by the affect that people happen to be experiencing for other, objectively irrelevant reasons (Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 1996; for a review see Pham, this volume). People usually cannot distinguish clearly between the various sources of affect they are experiencing at any given time. Consequently, some portion of the affect that they are experiencing for reasons that have nothing to do with the object they are judging may be misattributed to their feelings about the object and, therefore, are likely to influence the evaluation they make.

Much of the research that has been conducted to demonstrate the impact of affect on product evaluations has capitalized on this fact. That is, participants are exposed to feelings that elicit positive or negative affect for reasons that are ostensibly irrelevant to the stimuli they are being asked to judge or the decision they are asked to make. If subjects’ judgments of a product are normally based on hedonic, or affective criteria, then extraneous affect, which is likely to become confused with the affect that the object actually elicited, will have an impact as well. If, however, affect is not normally a basis for judgments, either because the stimulus is not affect-eliciting or because affect is considered irrelevant, the extraneous affect that people are experiencing should have no effect (Adaval, 2001; Yeung & Wyer, 2004).

Although the informational influence of affect on product evaluations has been demonstrated in several studies (Pham, 1998, this volume; Yeung & Wyer, 2004, 2005), its motivational influence has been less frequently examined (but see Pham, this volume). It seems reasonable to suppose that people who are feeling unhappy
and perceive that a consumption activity (going shopping, treating oneself to a meal at a gourmet restaurant, etc.) will improve their mood are likely to be attracted to it. If, however, they do not believe that the activity will have this effect, they may use the feelings they are experiencing as a basis for evaluating the behavior and, consequently, may be less inclined to engage in the behavior than they otherwise would (Andrade, 2005; Cohen & Andrade, 2004; Shen & Wyer, 2008).

As noted earlier, affective reactions are not the only subjective experience that can influence individuals’ judgments. The subjective ease of processing may be of particular interest (see Schwarz et al., this volume). For example, individuals are less likely to report liking a product if they find it difficult to generate positive attributes of the product than if they find it easy, regardless of the number they actually list (Menon & Raghunir, 2003; Wänke, Bohner, & Jurkowitz, 1997). Furthermore, when persons receive information about a product, their evaluations may be influenced by their subjective difficulty in processing it. Thus, people evaluate a product less favorably if the information describing it is conveyed in a font that is difficult to read (Novemsky, Dhar, Schwarz, & Simonson, in press). By the same token, difficult-to-process information that one encounters before reading product descriptions may make these descriptions seem easier to read and, therefore, lead the product to be evaluated more favorably than it otherwise would be (Shen, Jiang, & Adaval, 2007).

**Implications of Consumer Research**

As the preceding summary indicates, social psychological research and theory on the impact of subjective experience on judgments are quite applicable to an understanding of consumer behavior. This distinguishes it from the other areas of research we have reviewed. To date, however, the influence has largely been in only one direction. Many important implications of consumer research for the impact of affect on judgments have thus far not been pursued. The role of affect in judgments and behavior has been investigated extensively and new theoretical breakthroughs are rare. Nevertheless, research in consumer behavior and judgment has identified at least three phenomena with general theoretical implications for a more general understanding of affect and information processing.

One concerns the point in time at which affect is likely to exert its influence. Most social psychological research has assumed that the informational influence of affect occurs at the time of judgment (but see Martin et al., 1980). In contrast, Yeung and Wyer (2004) showed that this influence can also occur at earlier stages of processing. When individuals receive an affect-eliciting picture of a product before receiving verbal information, for example, they spontaneously form an impression of the product and the affect they are experiencing influences this impression. Once formed, the impression is retained in memory and is later recalled and used as a basis for evaluating the product independently of the implications of information available about its specific attributes. Pictures have not normally been presented in social psychological research on person impression formation, and so this possibility had not previously been identified. It seems likely, however, that people often form spontaneous impressions of a person on the basis of the person's
physical appearance before they receive more specific information about him or her. To this extent, Yeung and Wyer's findings have obvious implications for the role of affect in person judgments outside the laboratory.

Affect-Confirmation Processes  Adaval (2001) found that when judgments are based on specific attributes of a product, attributes that elicit affect similar to the feelings that participants are experiencing for other reasons have greater impact. However, this is not simply a result of selective attention. Rather, when an attribute is evaluated on the basis of the affect it elicits, feelings that consumers are experiencing for other reasons appear to confirm or disconfirm the implications of this affect, thus either increasing or decreasing confidence that these implications have been accurately assessed. This, in turn, leads these attributes to have more or less weight when they are integrated with other information at the time of judgment. (Note that when the attributes are favorable or unfavorable but do not elicit affect, this differential weighting does not occur.) These affect-confirmation processes, which had not been previously identified, are not only important in understanding the impact of affect in impression formation more generally but could also have implications for the differential weighting of arguments presented in a persuasive communication.

Processing of Categorical Information  The impact of affect on the influence of more global, categorical information may differ from its impact on the influence of specific attributes. A second series of studies (Adaval, 2003) provides new theoretical insights into the nature of this impact. People who experience positive affect may pay relatively more attention to global, categorical criteria for judgment (Bless, 2001; Schwarz, 1990). However, the effect of increased attention could be twofold. On one hand, people who experience positive affect may be more inclined to use categorical criteria as a heuristic basis for judgment, thus giving these criteria relatively more weight than other, more detailed information (Schwarz, 1990). Another possibility, however, is suggested by Tesser's (1978) research on the effects of thought on attitude polarization. That is, people who experience positive affect think more extensively about categorical criteria for judgment, with the result that they interpret the implications of this information as more extreme.

Adaval's (2003) research supported the second possibility. That is, inducing positive affect increased the impact of brand name on judgments. Using sophisticated methodology (N. H. Anderson, 1981) to separate differences in the weight attached to information and differences in its scale value (perceptions of its evaluative implications), however, she found that this increase was due to the impact of positive affect on the extremity with which the brand information was interpreted rather than on the weight attached to this information when integrating its implications with those of other product information. If this finding generalizes to the social domain, it might have implications for the impact of affect on the influence of stereotypes and other categorical bases for person impressions.

In summary, social psychological research on the influence of affect on information processing has had a substantial influence on research and theory on advertising effectiveness and on product evaluations more generally. At the same time,
research on the role of affect in consumer behavior calls attention to theoretical and empirical issues of particular importance in traditional areas of social psychology that have yet to be examined.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have reviewed several areas of social psychology that have had an impact on research in consumer judgment and behavior. Our review is by no means exhaustive. It is nonetheless interesting to note that the main themes of research and theory in consumer behavior are reflections of the implicit theories that guided reason-why and emotion-based advertising strategies in the first half of the twentieth century, before experimental consumer research emerged as an academic discipline. Although research on attitude formation, communication and persuasion, and affect have implications for the factors that influence the effectiveness of each type of strategy, the conditions that determine which strategy is most likely to be effective is less well established.

Although social psychological theory and research has called attention to fundamental issues of relevance to consumer behavior, the paradigms that have been used to investigate these issues have often been inapplicable to the sorts of situations that exist in situations outside the laboratory. At the same time, research and theorizing that has been stimulated by a concern with consumer judgment and decision making has often identified phenomena of importance in developing a more comprehensive theory of judgment and behavior in domains of traditional interest to social psychologists (see also Wänke, this volume).

In short, the influence of social psychology and consumer psychology is (or should be) reciprocal, with each area calling attention to issues of theoretical interest that have not been addressed in the other. This observation is hardly profound, as evident from the increasing frequency with which social psychologists publish in consumer research journals and with which consumer researchers publish in social psychology outlets. The two areas of inquiry have indeed begun to merge. We look forward to a continuation of this trend in the decades to come.

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ENDNOTES

1. Our concern with the interface of consumer research and social psychological research should not be confused with a concern about the generalizability of laboratory research and phenomena that occur in natural settings. In fact, comparisons of the results obtained in laboratory and field experiments suggest that the generalizability
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

is very high (Anderson, Lindsay, & Bushman, 1999; see also Kardes, 1996). The comparisons we make concern the applicability of theory and research across disciplines independently of where the research is conducted.

2. For example, General Motors instituted a "The Penalty of Leadership" ad after their Cadillac model with an eight-cylinder engine failed, pointing out that only the very best had to deal with criticisms by the envious. With no picture and no mention of Cadillac or the V-8, it became one of the most successful campaigns of the period.

3. These effects are likely due to the set of values associated with the African-American stereotype. That is, African Americans are stereotypically uninterested in intellectual achievement whereas they value musical ability. Priming the stereotype may activate these values, leading individuals to exert different amounts of effort, and their performance may reflect this effort.

4. Note that according to this view, a difference between the attitude that a person reports at one point in time and the attitude that the person reports at a later time does not necessarily indicate that the individual consciously changed his or her attitude. Rather, it simply indicates that different subsets of knowledge were used to construct their attitudes at the two times.

5. This result suggests another possible explanation of the influence of positive affect on the impact of persuasive communications. That is, people who are feeling happy may anticipate that careful reading of a counterattitudinal message will be aversive and they may avoid thinking about it carefully. Consequently, the strength of arguments contained in such a message may have little influence on their responses to it. If happy persons anticipate that reading the message will be enjoyable, however, they might pay more attention to it than they otherwise would and might be more sensitive to the quality of arguments contained in it (Wegener, Petty, & Smith, 1993).

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR


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