

Consumer Behaviour

Teaching Notes and Answer Keys

Subject area: Economics / Social Studies

Topic focus: Consumer Buying Behaviour, Advertising

Learning Aims:

- be aware of factors influencing buying behaviour
- identify priorities when buying an item
- identify different types of advertising techniques
- be aware of the subtle strategies used by advertising
- think critically about purchases
- debate and write about the pros and cons of consumerism

Skills:

Reading: interpreting and classifying information, scanning for specific information, researching

Writing: taking notes, writing an essay, creative writing

Speaking: discussing, agreeing or disagreeing, reporting, planning and making a presentation

Factors that influence consumer behaviour, p. 36

- 1 Have students decide how to rank the broad categories of factors listed. To help them come up with additional factors, write some suggestions on the board, e.g.:
personal factors: mood, emotions, hobbies, celebrations or special occasions
social factors: family, reference groups
economic factors: personal income, special offers, sales
environmental factors: CFC-free, items not tested on animals, energy efficient, bio-degradable
Check glossary on p. 63 for challenging words:
eco-friendly, value for money.
- 2 Have the groups work on their own. Suggestions for coming up with answers to questions 3 and 5: 3) gathered information on product features, price and quality, asked friends for advice, talked about it at home, etc.; 5) friends, media, role models, the group, etc.
- 3 Begin with some brainstorming on the two key concepts of Consumer and Consumer Behaviour.
- 4 This activity develops the ability to classify concepts. If necessary, begin by sharing thoughts on the meaning of the three categories presented in the table:
Social factors = Those influences on individual behaviour that are attributable to the social values and / or behaviour of the groups to which an individual belongs or aspires to belong.
Personal factors = Those factors which are particular to individuals involved in the buying process.
Psychological factors = Those non-physiological drives that are learned through the process of socialization. They represent the higher order drives identified by Maslow such as love (belongingness), esteem and self-actualization.
[definitions from www.westburnpublishers.com/marketing-dictionary/]

4 Possible answers

Social factors: Culture, Family, Reference groups, Opinion leaders, Role in society
Personal factors: Economic environment/Financial situation, Job, Age, Personality, Lifestyle
Psychological factors: Attitudes and beliefs, Perception, Motivation

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, p. 37

- 5 Have students make a list of their latest purchases and categorise them into *needed* and *wanted*. Ask students about their personal experiences with impulsive buying vs. planned buying.

5 (from bottom) basic needs – safety needs – social needs – esteem needs

- 6 Have the groups work on their own. Suggestions for eliciting answers to question 3: *What do you like to do? What makes you feel satisfied? Think of situations and people that make you feel good and "important".*

The Art of Persuasion, pp. 38-39

TR 11 - CLIL_Consumer Behaviour_7

- 7 Before beginning the task, have students answer the following questions and discuss them in small groups: *Where do you usually find ads? Why do manufacturers spend great amounts of money on advertising?*
Have each group share their answers and ideas.
- 8 In this activity students can apply what they have just learned from the text in Activity 7.

8 1 testimonials, 2 emotional appeal, 3 bandwagon, 4 association, 5 humour

- 9 If possible before the lesson, tell the students to do some research on the Internet or to look for ads in magazines that they can bring in to class. Have them work in groups to complete the evaluation grid and then report back to the class.
- 10 Have the students work first on their own and then with a partner. Encourage them to try to defend their position of agreement or disagreement by giving reasons and/or examples, using prompts from the Useful expressions given.

Buy Nothing Day, p. 40

- 11 Write the word *consumerism* on the board: break it into *consumer* (someone who buys and uses a product or service) and *-ism* (an organised way of thinking, like *feminism, patriotism, etc.*). Elicit meaning from students (*it's the belief that it's good for society to buy things – the more, the better*)
Have the students read the text individually, then guide them in a class discussion, using the prompts provided by the phrases in the balloons.

Check your knowledge, p. 40

The essay (Task A) is more focused on language and written discourse competence whereas the project work (Task B) aims to promote and evaluate creative and original production as well as speaking competence. The students will have acquired language knowledge and competence for both tasks from the previous activities presented in the chapter.

Factors that Influence Consumer Behaviour

1 What influences you when purchasing something? Rank these factors from the least to the most important. Add any other factors you think can influence your buying behaviour.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisements | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Look |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eco-friendly trends | <input type="checkbox"/> Likes / dislikes | <input type="checkbox"/> Value for money |

2 Get into groups of three or four: think of a purchase you have recently made, answer the following questions and choose a “speaker” to report back to the class.

- 1 What have you purchased recently?
- 2 Why did you want this particular item?
- 3 What steps did you go through to purchase it?
- 4 Why did you eventually buy the item you did?
- 5 What / Who influenced you before you bought it?

3 Consider the two terms below and try to formulate a definition for each. Next, read the definitions provided and compare with your own.

Consumer

Consumer behaviour

Consumer – A person who generally engages in the activities of searching, selecting, using and disposing of products and services. In other words, a consumer is someone who buys goods, such as food, clothes, mobile phones, books, magazines, etc. for his or her personal use.

Consumer behaviour – “The study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society.” (Lars Perner, Consumer behaviour: The Psychology of Marketing in: www.consumerpsychologist.com)

Consumer behaviour is a comparatively new field of study which evolved just after World War II, at a time when the buyer’s market had replaced the seller’s market which had basically disappeared. This led to a shift in manufacturer’s attention from the product to the consumer and which mainly focused on the behaviour of the consumer.

Buyer behaviour is deeply rooted in psychology and sociology, but since every person in the world is different, it is impossible to come up with simple rules that explain how buying decisions are made. Nevertheless, researchers have spent many years observing and analysing consumer activity and have presented theories that explore the various drivers that push consumers towards their ultimate choice.

4 Read this text and fill in the chart on p. 37 with the words in bold.

The way people choose to spend their money is influenced by many factors which can be broadly seen as either external or internal and classified into three categories.

One major factor that influences behaviour is **culture**, which can be defined as our set of opinions formed as an individual and the shared **attitudes and beliefs** developed not only within our **family**, but also through the interaction with other members of society.

We must take into consideration the fact that consumers belong to groups of people with which they share certain characteristics or ideologies. In addition to cultural influences, there are those of **reference groups** and **opinion leaders**, people who are looked up to, whose views and judgements are respected and even imitated and who can directly or indirectly influence consumers’ buying decisions.

The **economic environment**, in general, and a consumer’s personal **financial situation**, in particular, can impact buying behaviour: Do consumers have a regular income? How much disposable income do they have to spend on goods? Another influencing factor is people’s social status, or their **role in society**. To a great extent, buying habits also depend on the type of **job** consumers have, their **age**, their **personality** and, more generally, on their **lifestyle**, in other words, the way people live and work, including the activities they engage in and the interests they pursue.

Our **perception** is linked to the way we filter stimuli (e.g. ads, media messages, someone talking) and our **motivation** is driven by our needs and wants; these are some of the internal factors underlying our purchasing decisions.

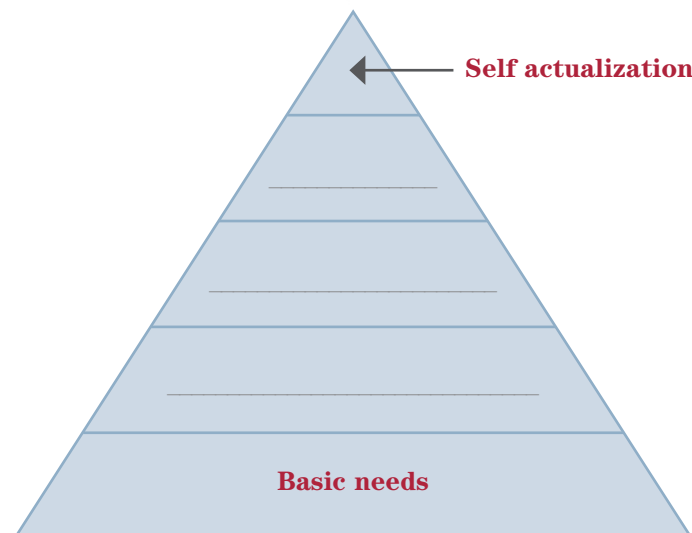
FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR		
Social factors	Personal factors	Psychological factors
<i>Culture</i>	<i>Economic environment / Financial situation</i>	<i>Attitudes and beliefs</i>

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

5 Read this text and complete the pyramid with the appropriate captions.

Motivation is what makes any living creature go in search of something and it relates to our desire to achieve a certain outcome. Customers make purchases in order to satisfy needs: some of these needs are basic (e.g. food, shelter, etc.) while others are not required for basic survival, they are just wants or desires and can vary, depending on the person.

Back in the 1940s, psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a theory about what motivates individuals to achieve certain things in life. He set out his answer in the form of a “hierarchy of needs” which applies to all aspects of human motivations. He suggests that individuals aim to meet the basic physical needs of food, water, air, warmth. When these have been met, they then move up to the next stage of the hierarchy, safety needs, where the priority lies with job security. Social needs are considered to be the next level of the hierarchy, as the need to belong or to be loved is a natural human desire and people make every effort to achieve this sense of belonging. The need for esteem is defined as the need for status and recognition within society which means that you aim to achieve something that makes you feel recognised and gives you personal satisfaction. It is at the self-actualisation level that an individual can be said to have reached his or her highest potential in life and feels fulfilled. The point of self-actualisation is determined solely by the individual. When do you know you have reached your point of self-fulfilment?



6 Think back to your latest purchase (activity 2) and answer these questions. Compare your answers with your friends and teacher.

- 1 Which level of the pyramid applies to your latest purchase?
- 2 What kinds of goods would you consider essential in any of the categories in the pyramid?
- 3 What would make you feel self-actualised?

The Art of Persuasion

7  TR 11 - CLIL_Consumer Behaviour_7 Read and listen.



Advertising Techniques

Advertising Techniques

Advertising, an element of the marketing function, aims to increase sales of a product by making it known to consumers through an advertising medium: this can be a catalogue, a brochure, a flyer, a newspaper or magazine, a radio or TV commercial, an Internet banner, a billboard. It's an industry that spends an enormous amount of time and effort to figure out the best strategies for persuading consumers to buy products that they may or may not need. Therefore, it's in the consumers' best interest to understand the techniques used by advertisers to grab their attention and get them to buy the product a company wants to sell.

The principle techniques used in advertising are outlined below.

Testimonials

The use of celebrities, respected people and/or ordinary people to endorse a product or service is probably the most powerful selling tool that exists. Celebrities and public figures have a strong appeal: their powerful image sticks in people's mind and their words give credit to the product, helping people to remember the product better.

When the "ordinary people" approach is used, the idea is to have consumers relate emotionally to the person describing his or her experience with the product of service.

The Bandwagon Appeal

This approach appeals to the conformist in all of us as it exploits the desire of most people to be on the winning side, to be part of the group. Since no one wants to be left out of what is perceived to be a popular trend, this technique attempts to persuade

the target audience to join the crowd and be "cool" by doing what everybody else is claimed to be doing.

Emotional Appeal

The advertising technique which plays on the emotions of the audience often appeals to peoples' anxieties (fear of being unattractive, rejected, ridiculed, unsafe, in danger) and to peoples' sentiments (beautiful scenery, happy families, babies, cute animals, tender parent-child interaction, nostalgia).

The Association Principle

This technique involves drawing a mental relation between a product and various desirable qualities such as ambition, wealth, luxury, beauty, success, family, good health and fitness. These appeals are usually implicit and show images and story lines with characters that represent these values.

Repetition

One of the simplest techniques adopted is running an ad frequently. Looking closely at any ad it's easy to see how often the product name and logo are repeated, especially in TV commercials and radio ads. When it's time to make a purchase and the name of one of the products on the shelf has been repeated so many times to the consumer, his or her hand will reach for it almost automatically.

Use of Humour

Making an entertaining ad is a very effective way to hook the consumer's attention with a funny sales pitch. People tend to remember an advert if it makes them laugh and may buy a product because of the positive association with it.

8 Read these descriptions of different types of ads and label them with the correct advertising technique described in activity 7.

- 1 A famous athlete says he makes use of a product and recommends it. *Testimonials*
- 2 A little girl is watching her grandma making biscuits in a softly lighted kitchen. _____
- 3 A clothing store ad is shown, with the slogan “Buy at Gino’s, where everyone gets the best deal!”

- 4 A girl is cycling and running her hands through her beautiful hair to show how well her shampoo works. _____
- 5 Two vampires are excitedly looking through a very popular magazine. _____



9 Look for ads in magazines, newspapers or on the Internet. What sort of techniques do they use? What emotions do they play on? Would you buy those products / services? Why? / Why not? Report to the class. Use the following evaluation grid to take your notes.

AD EVALUATION GRID	
Name of product:	
Type of product:	
Media used for ad:	
Technique used:	
Persuasive words used:	

10 Read each of the following statements about advertising and discuss them with your partner. Do you agree or disagree?

- 1 Advertising exerts a manipulative power over our lives.
- 2 Advertising plays on our insecurities and makes us feel that we are inadequate without certain products.
- 3 Advertising sells the concept of a lifestyle most people will never have.
- 4 We can always say no to advertising: making the choice is our responsibility.
- 5 Advertising is an essential part of a country’s economy and creates lots of jobs.
- 6 The Media need advertising to survive.

USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

- I totally disagree, because ...
- I’m not sure about that, but I see your point. An example of this could be...
- You are partly right, yes, but we should also consider the fact that...
- Yes, that’s right! I totally agree, because...
- I don’t quite understand. Could you give me an example?
- This could be true, although...

Buy Nothing Day

11 Read this text and some of the comments people have made, then express your opinion.

The aim of the "Buy Nothing Day" campaign is to make people think about the role of consumerism in our culture and encourage them to actively choose to consume less. It's a day when you challenge yourself to switch off the consumer mode and to abstain from shopping for a day, as a sort of pause for reflection as you detox from consumerism and tune into life! How? By spending a day without spending any money! It was first organised in Canada in 1992 as a personal initiative led by Ted Dave, a Canadian who made his living by working in the advertising world. His idea was to organise a collective protest against the unrelenting calls to over consume, with advertising and marketing professions at the core. His original motto was: "Enough is enough!". Since then, the event has been repeated in many countries around the world on different dates: on the Friday after the fourth Thursday of November each year (the day after the annual Thanksgiving Feast in the US) which is a day usually dedicated to major shopping sprees, while in the rest of the world it takes place on the following Saturday which marks the start of the Christmas shopping season. BND may take many forms, from public protests to relaxed family outings, to free, non-commercial street parties, to credit card cut-ups. BND has turned into a global movement aimed at encouraging citizens to live more simply and to think critically about our culture of excessive and often meaningless consumerism.

... *It's not shopping in itself that's so harmful, it's what we buy. The rich western countries – only 20% of the world population – are consuming over 80% of the earth's natural resources, causing a disproportionate level of environmental damage and unfair distribution of wealth... The idea is to make people stop and think about what they buy and the impact it may have on the environment and on developing countries... Buy Nothing Day isn't about changing your lifestyle temporarily, it's meant to awaken your conscience and maybe even be a life changing experience!* [from <http://www.buynothingday.co.uk>]

It's a great idea! We are flooded by ads everywhere, while watching TV, reading newspapers or walking down the streets. Our ideas and values are unconsciously influenced.

According to me, that's not so! People buy things they want and need. I think people are smart enough to make their own decisions. Consumer demand for certain products tends to speed up the pace of innovation, and companies are pushed to work harder.

BND can help! As consumers we need to look critically at the products we buy and challenge the companies who produce them.

I don't know if it's such a great idea. This no-spending thing only lasts for one day and then people just go right back to buying stuff again the next day.

I don't agree! The economy is based on consumer purchases, so consumerism has a positive impact and makes society more prosperous.

Check your knowledge

A Write an essay (120-150 words) expressing your opinion on one of the following points:

- We buy more things than we really need
- The Media push us to buy things all the time
- BND is an event worth participating in

B Project work

Create an ad for a product you like, using one of the advertising techniques you have learned and adding drawings, pictures and/or persuasive words to make your classmates want to buy your product.