

Fashion Consumer Behavior in the Global Marketplace

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I. Introduction

Consumer Behavior has been defined as the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Most marketers recognize that consumer behavior is an ongoing process, emphasizing the entire consumption process, which includes issues that influence the consumer before, during, and after a purchase.

A consumer is generally thought of as a person who identifies a need or desire makes a purchase, and then disposes of the product. In many cases, however, different people may be involved in this sequence of events. The *Purchaser* and *user* of a product might not be the same person. In other cases, another person may act as an *influencer*, providing recommendations for or against certain products without actually buying or using them.

1. The Global Consumer

One highly visible by-product of sophisticated marketing strategies is the movement toward a *global consumer culture*, where people around the world are united by their common devotion to brand name consumer goods, movie stars, and musical celebrities. Some products in particular are associated with a coveted American lifestyle. Levi's jeans, for example, is a

status symbol among upwardly mobile Asian and European consumers, who snap them up even though they retail at over \$80 in many countries. The company sells its jeans in such far-away places as India, Hungary, Poland, Korea, and Turkey.

But companies also must be sensitive to the culture in which they are marketing their product. Not all products will be accepted universally. Consider the case of the "Cosmo Girl." It's an image that is carefully cultivated by the editors of *Cosmopolitan*. The American "Cosmo Girl," as described by founding editor Helen Gurley Brown, expects to get married, but is not in any hurry. She may wait until her late thirties to have children. Sex is " ... very important, but not on the first date." She owns at least one long black skirt with a slit, owns many pairs of shoes, and wears big jewelry. While the American Cosmo Girl is well-defined, the magazine also publishes 25 international editions. In some cases local cultures conflict with the Cosmo Girl's liberated image. In countries such as Hong Kong, the American image fits well, since women are expected to be more independent and ambitious¹ In late 1997, the Indonesian version of *Cosmopolitan* debuted-analysts are divided as to whether the country that is home to the world's largest Muslim population will be ready for The Cosmo Girl².

Rearranged from the manuscript presented at the 2001 International Costume Culture Conference.

¹ Suzanne Cassidy, "Defining the Cosmo Girl: Check Out the Passport", *The New York Times*, 12 October 1992, p. 8.

² Fara Warner, "Advertising: Cosmopolitan Girl Dresses Up for Summer Debut in Indonesia", *The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition*, 9 April 1997.

2. The Meaning of Consumption

One of the fundamental premises of the modern field of consumer behavior is that people often buy products *not* for what they do, but for what they *mean*. This principle does not imply that a product's basic function is unimportant, but rather that the roles products play in our lives go well beyond the tasks they perform. And, the deeper meanings of a product may help it to stand out from other, similar goods and services—all things being equal, a person will choose the brand that has an image (or even a personality!) consistent with his or her underlying needs.

For example, while most people probably couldn't run faster or jump higher if they are wearing Nikes versus Reeboks, many die-hard loyalists swear by their favorite brand. These archivals are largely marketed in terms of their images—meanings that have been carefully crafted with the help of legions of rock stars, athletes, slickly produced commercials—and many millions of dollars. So, when you buy a Nike "swoosh" you may be doing more than choosing footwear—you may also be making a lifestyle statement about the type of person you are or want to be. For a relatively simple item made of leather and laces, that's quite an accomplishment!

II. Discussion

1. Understanding Culture

Culture, a concept crucial to the understanding of consumer behavior, may be thought of as a society's personality. It includes both abstract ideas, such as values and ethics, as well as the material objects and services, such as automobiles, clothing, food, art, and sports, that are produced or valued by a society. Put another way, *culture* is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions among the members of an organization or society.

Fashion and other consumption choices simply cannot be understood without considering the cultural context in which they are made:

Culture is the "lens" through which people view products. Ironically, the effects of culture on consumer behavior are so powerful and far-reaching that this importance is sometimes difficult to grasp. Like a fish immersed in water, we *do not* always appreciate this power until we encounter a different environment, where suddenly many of the assumptions we had taken for granted about the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the way we address others, and so on no longer seem to apply. The effect of encountering such differences can be so great the term "culture shock" is not an exaggeration.

The analysis of dress or fashion in a cultural context is complex in a society such as the United States since it is composed of so many subcultures. And as groups of people migrate from one part of the world to another, they bring their culture with them to a new society. Many exhibit allegiance to their heritage and claim a cultural identity which is visibly shown through their dress. Muslim women cover their face and hair with a veil when in public since their culture defines their idea of modesty in dress. In contrast, American women can appear quite immodest in current fashion which may show considerable skin. Some cultural and ethnic groups become assimilated into the society in which they live and leave behind ways of their cultural heritage. These groups may wear their cultural dress only during holidays and special occasions, while others wear it every day no matter where they live in the world.

1) Consumer Behavior and Culture: A Two-Way Street

A consumer's culture determines the overall priorities he or she attaches to different activities and products. It also mandates the success or failure of specific products and services. A product that provides benefits consistent with those desired by members of a culture at any point in time has a much better chance of attaining acceptance in the marketplace. For

example, American culture started to emphasize the concept of a fit, trim body as an ideal of appearance in the mid-1970s. The premium placed on this goal, which stemmed from underlying values like mobility, wealth, and a focus on the self, greatly contributed to the success of products related to exercise and fewer calories.

The relationship between consumer behavior and culture is a two-way street. On the one hand, products and services that resonate with the priorities of a culture at any given time have a much better chance of being accepted by consumers. On the other hand, the study of new products and innovations in product design successfully produced by a culture at any point in time provides a window onto the dominant cultural ideals of that period.

2) Aspects of Culture

There are several ways to describe the components of culture. Although every culture is different, four dimensions appear to account for much of this variability³.

(1) Power Distance

The way in which interpersonal relationships form when differences in power are perceived. Some cultures emphasize strict, vertical relationships (e.g., Japan), whereas others, such as the United States, stress a greater degree of equality and informality. Look at the dress of your college professors today. In the U.S. they often dress similar to their students.

(2) Uncertainty Avoidance

The degree to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have beliefs and institutions that help them to avoid this uncer-

tainty (e.g., organized religion).

(3) Masculinity/Femininity

The degree to which sex roles are clearly delineated. Traditional societies are more likely to possess very explicit rules about the acceptable behaviors of men and women, such as what is acceptable dress.

(4) Individualism

The extent to which the welfare of the individual versus that of the group is valued. In *collectivist cultures*, people subordinate their personal goals to those of a stable group and stress such values as self-discipline and accepting one's position in life. In contrast, consumers in *individualist cultures* attach more importance to personal goals and emphasize enjoyment, excitement, equality, and freedom. These concepts are certainly expressed in the clothes we choose to wear.

Values are very general standards about what is good and bad. From these flow *norms*, or rules dictating what is acceptable or unacceptable. Some norms, called *enacted norms*, are explicitly decided upon, such as traffic rules. Many norms, however, are much more subtle. These *crecive norms* are embedded in a culture and are only discovered through interaction with other members of that culture. *Creecive norms* include customs, mores and conventions⁴. All three types of crecive norms may operate to define a culturally appropriate behavior.

A *custom* is a norm or practice handed down from the past that is slow to change especially if it has strong emotional or spiritual content, such as the wedding dress (it's white in American culture). A *mores* ("mor-ay") is a

³ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1980); see also Laura M. Milner, Dale Fodness, and Mark W. Speece, "Hofstede's Research on Cross-Cultural Work-Related Values: Implications for Consumer Behavior", in *Proceedings of the 1992 ACR Summer Conference* (Amsterdam: Association for Consumer Research, 1992).

⁴ George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, *Social Psychology: A Sociological Approach* (New York: The Free Press, 1982).

custom with a strong moral overtone. These customs are elevated to a higher level of concern for the welfare of society. A more often involves a taboo, or forbidden behavior. Violations meet with strong punishment from members of a society. The length of skirts or amount of cleavage relates to dress mores. These of course vary across cultures, as in the example of Muslim women covering their faces, while American young women wear shorts and camisoles in public. *Conventions* are norms regarding the conduct of everyday life. These rules deal with the subtleties of consumer behavior, including the "correct" way to furnish one's house or wear one's clothes.

We often take these norms for granted, assuming that they are the "right" things to do (again, until we travel to another country!). It is good to remember that much of what we know about these norms is learned *vicariously*, as we observe the behaviors of actors and actresses in television commercials, TV shows, print ads, and other popular culture media. In the long run, marketers have an awful lot to do with influencing consumers.

3) Fashion and Popular Culture

Some of the characteristics of fashion and popular culture that we might keep in mind as we continue this discussion:

- Fashions often are a reflection of deeper societal trends (e.g., politics and social conditions).
- Fashions usually originate as an interplay between the deliberate inventions of designers and business people and spontaneous actions by ordinary consumers. Designers, manufacturers, and merchandisers who can anticipate what consumers want will succeed in the marketplace.
- These cultural products can travel widely, often between countries and continents. Influential people in the media play a large role in deciding which will succeed.
- A fashion often begins as a risky or unique statement by a relatively small group of

people, then spreads as others increasingly become aware of it and feel confident about trying it.

Most fashions eventually wear out, as people continually search for new ways to express themselves and marketers scramble to keep up with these desires. This is a tall order in a global society.

2. Myths and Rituals

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

1) The Functions and Structure of Myths

A *myth* is a story containing symbolic elements that expresses the shared emotions and ideals of a culture. The story often features some kind of conflict between two opposing forces, and its outcome serves as a moral guide for people.

Myths can be analyzed by examining their underlying structures. Many stories involve *binary opposition* where two opposing ends of some dimension are represented (e.g., good versus evil, nature versus technology). The conflict between mythical opposing forces is sometimes resolved by a *mediating figure* who can link the opposites by sharing characteristics of each. For example, many myths contain animals that have human abilities (e.g., a talking snake) to bridge the gap between humanity and nature, just as cars (technology) are often given animal names (nature) like Cougar, Cobra, or Mustang.

Animals are often used in trademarks by apparel companies. One symbolic analysis of animal apparel trademarks viewed animal icons to signify human dominion over the natural world. Ralph Lauren's Polo trademark with the mounted horseman has been likened as an archetypal symbol of power. The Izod Lacoste

aligator and swan used by Gloria Vanderbilt carry traces of ancient mythology into the present signifying a romantic attachment to tales which describe the world in terms of magic and mystery.

2) Myths Abound in Modern Popular Culture

While we generally equate myths with ancient times, modern myths are embodied in many aspects of modern popular culture, including trademarks, movies, comic books, holidays, and yes, even commercials. Often fashion ads, especially fragrance ads, use fantasy and mythical themes.

Comic book superheroes demonstrate how myths can be communicated to consumers of all ages. Indeed, some of these fictional figures represent a *monomyth*, a myth that is common to many cultures⁵. The most prevalent monomyth involves a hero who emerges from the everyday world with supernatural powers and wins a decisive victory over evil forces. Comic book heroes may even be more credible and effective than real-life celebrity endorsers. Not counting movie spinoffs or licensing deals, comic books today are a \$300 million a year industry.

3) Rituals

A *ritual* is a set of multiple, symbolic behaviors that occur in a fixed sequence and that tend to be repeated periodically. Ritual dress includes items we wear during transitional and important times in our lives. U.S. examples include white gowns worn by debutantes at cotillion balls, prom dresses and tuxedos, graduation gowns, wedding gowns and baptismal

gowns. These often are the types of items we save for years, sometimes such that daughters wear their mother's wedding dress for their own wedding. In addition, rituals are involved with items worn for special functions such as judicial robes, religious garb, and royal regalia. Jewelry such as sorority pins, wedding bands and engagement rings also have deep personal meaning for the owner.

4) Grooming Rituals

Whether brushing one's hair 100 strokes a day or talking to oneself in the mirror, virtually all consumers undergo private grooming rituals. These rituals serve various purposes, ranging from inspiring confidence before confronting the world to cleansing the body of dirt and other impure materials. When consumers talk about their grooming rituals, some of the dominant themes that emerge from these stories reflect the almost mystical qualities attributed to grooming products and behaviors. Many people emphasize a before-and-after phenomenon, where the person feels magically transformed after using certain products⁶.

Two sets of binary oppositions that are expressed in personal rituals are *private/public* and *work/leisure*. Many beauty rituals, for instance, reflect a transformation from a natural state to the social world or *vice-versa*. In these daily rituals, women reaffirm the value placed by their culture on personal beauty and the quest for eternal youth⁷. This focus is obvious in ads for Oil of Olay Beauty Cleanser, which proclaim "...And so your day begins. The Ritual of Oil of Olay."

⁵ Jeffrey S. Lang and Patrick Trimble, "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow? An Examination of the American Monomyth and the Comic Book Superhero", *Journal of Popular Culture* 22 (Winter, 1988): 157.

⁶ Dennis W. Rook and Sidney J. Levy, Psychosocial Themes in Consumer Grooming Rituals, in *Advances in Consumer Research* 10, eds. Richard P. Bagozzi and Alice M. Tybout (Provo, Utah: Association for Consumer Research, 1983), 329-33.

⁷ Diane Barthel, *Putting on Appearances: Gender and Attractiveness*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

5) Gift-Giving Rituals

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

Surveys spanning 25 years and several countries indicate clothing persists to be a frequently given gift for birthdays and holidays. Retail ads for Christmas and other holidays encourage the purchase of clothing as gifts attesting to the economic importance of clothing and fashion as gifts. Giving clothing as gifts involves more than one might think. It not only involves the giver selecting the right combination of attributes (such as style, color, fit, quality, fashionability) but also and most importantly the meaning of the gift for the recipient. Since clothing is such a personal, symbolic item, perhaps only the wearer knows the real meaning of the clothes they like to wear; therefore, giving the "perfect" gift to someone can be difficult.

3. Transferring Product Meaning from Culture to Culture

In modern times cultural products travel across oceans and deserts with blinding speed. Just as Marco Polo brought silk and spice from China, today multinational firms seeking to expand their markets are constantly working to conquer new markets. In the past 20 years much of the world's economy has become increasingly integrated and the value of trade is estimated to have increased three fold to over \$5 trillion.

Just as worldwide consumers want American products, American consumers gobble up new ideas from around the world. As "coolhunters" research new trends for such companies as

MTV and Sprint, they are finding that *fusion* is going to be a term used a lot. With increased and low cost travel, coupled with lots of discretionary income and the Internet, fusion will continue to affect many cultures throughout the world.

As if understanding the dynamics of one's culture weren't hard enough, consumer research becomes more complex when we take on the daunting-but essential-task of learning about the practices of other cultures. The consequences of ignoring cultural sensitivities can be costly. For example, Muslims objected to a logo designed for Nike athletic shoes since the stylized word "Air," which they felt resembled "Allah" in Arabic script was disrespectful when used on shoes. Nike apologized, calling the design an innocent mistake and pulled the shoes from distribution after a threatened boycott of Nike products by the world's one billion Muslims⁸.

As corporations increasingly find themselves competing in many markets around the world, the debate has intensified regarding the necessity of developing separate marketing plans for each culture. A lively debate has ensued regarding the need to "fit in" to the local culture. We'll briefly consider each viewpoint.

1) Adopting a Standardized Strategy

Proponents of a standardized marketing strategy argue that many cultures have become so homogenized that the same approach will work throughout the world. By developing one approach for multiple markets, a company can benefit from economies of scale, since it does not have to incur the substantial time and expense of developing a separate strategy for each culture⁹. This viewpoint represents an *etic perspective*, or global strategy, which focuses upon commonalities across cultures. An *etic* approach is objective and analytical; it reflects impressions of a culture as viewed by outsiders. Benetton, Gap and IKEA are examples of com-

⁸ Joel L. Swerdlow, "The Power of Writing", *National Geographic*, August 1999, 128.

⁹ Theodore Levitt, *The Marketing Imagination* (New York: The Free Press, 1983).

panies using this global approach. These companies are generally vertically integrated and they sell their private label.

2) Adopting a Localized Strategy

On the other hand, many marketers endorse an *emic perspective*, or multinational strategy, which focuses on variations within a country. They feel that each culture is unique, with its own norms, value system, conventions, and regulations. This perspective argues that each country has a *national character*, a distinctive set of behavior and personality characteristics¹⁰. An effective strategy must be tailored to the sensibilities and needs of each specific culture.

Sometimes this strategy involves modifying a product or the way it is positioned to make it acceptable to local tastes. Toys "R" Us is an example of a company that carries brands other than their own and adjusts its offerings and prices according to the location it is entering¹¹. Similarly in India, Revlon adapted the color palette and composition of its cosmetics to suit the Indian skin and climate. Some companies change wordings in product names or promotions to become appropriate in that culture. Other situations demand more than wordplay. Consumers in some cultures simply do not like some tastes that are popular elsewhere.

3) Cultural Differences Relevant to Marketers

So, which perspective is correct—the *emic* or the *etic*? Perhaps it will be helpful to consider some of the ways that cultures vary in terms of norms regarding what types of products are

appropriate or desirable.

Consumers in different societies are accustomed to different forms of advertising. In general, ads that focus on universal values such as love of family travel fairly well, while those with a specific focus on specific lifestyles do not. In some cases, advertising content is regulated by the local government. For example, pricing in Germany is controlled, and special sales can be held only for a particular reason, such as going out of business or the end of the season. Advertising also focuses more on the provision of factual information rather than on the aggressive hard sell. Indeed, it is illegal to mention the names of competitors¹². In contrast, the British and the Japanese regard advertising as a form of entertainment. Japanese advertising avoids comparative messages that are considered impolite¹³.

Marketers must be aware of a culture's norms regarding sensitive topics. Opals signify bad luck to the British, while hunting dog or pig emblems are offensive to Muslims. The Japanese are superstitious about the number four. Shi, the word for four, is also the word for death. For this reason, Tiffany sells glassware and china in sets of five in Japan. Cultures also vary sharply in the degree to which reference to sex and bodily functions is permitted. Economic differences also can be an important factor. Companies with global advertising campaigns in some cases encounter obstacles to acceptance, especially in less-developed countries or in those areas, such as Eastern Europe, that are only beginning to embrace Western-style materialism as a way of life¹⁴. And credit is not as widely

¹⁰ Terry Clark, "International Marketing and National Character: A Review and Proposal for an Integrative Theory", *Journal of Marketing* 54 (October 1990): 66-79.

¹¹ Brenda Sternquist, *International Retailing* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1998).

¹² Matthias D. Kindler, Ellen Day, and Mary R. Zimmer, 1990, "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Magazine Advertising in West Germany and the U.S.", unpublished manuscript, The University of Georgia, Athens.

¹³ Jae W. Hong, Aydin Muderrisoglu, and George M. Zinkhan, "Cultural Differences and Advertising Expression: A Comparative Content Analysis of Japanese and U.S. Magazine Advertising", *Journal of Advertising* 16 (1987): 68.

available in many parts of the world as it is in the U.S. Credit is just beginning to be offered by major retailers in China¹⁵.

The language barrier is also another obvious problem confronting marketers who wish to break into foreign markets. One technique that is used to avoid translation problems is back-translation, in which a translated ad is retranslated into the original language by a different interpreter to catch errors¹⁶.

4) Does Global Marketing Work?

Perhaps the more appropriate question is, "When does it work?" To maximize the chances of success for these multicultural efforts, marketers must locate consumers in different countries who share a common worldview. Who is likely to fall into this category? Two consumer segments are particularly good candidates: 1) affluent people who are "global citizens" and who are exposed to ideas from around the world through their travels, business contacts, and media experiences, and 2) young people whose tastes in music and fashion are strongly influenced by MTV and other media that broadcast many of the same images to multiple countries.

5) Reality Engineering

Many of the environments in which we find ourselves, whether shopping malls, sports stadiums, or theme parks, are composed at least partly of images and characters drawn from products, marketing campaigns, or the mass media. Reality engineering occurs as elements of popular culture are appropriated by marketers and converted to vehicles for promotional strategies¹⁷.

Reality engineering is accelerating due to the current popularity of *product placements* by marketers. *Product placement* refers to the insertion of specific products and/or the use of brand names in movie and TV scripts. It is quite common to see real brands prominently displayed in movies and on television. Some critics argue that the practice of *product placement* has gotten out of hand: Shows are created with the purpose of marketing products rather than for their entertainment value. Some children's shows have been berated for essentially being extended commercials for popular toys, for example Pokemon.

TV and movie personalities wearing fashion can be extremely influential due to the huge exposure of the style or designer. Costumes from movies are sometimes directly copied or offer "inspiration" to other designers, and brand names get immense promotion. When Sharon Stone wore a simple black Gap shirt to the Academy Awards several years ago, Gap stores were flooded with requests for that item. Television, perhaps more than any other medium, has had an impact on worldwide trends and has influenced the acceptance of global apparel brands such as Nike, Levi's, and Calvin Klein.

6) I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke...or a Nike

The West (and especially the United States) is a net exporter of popular culture. Many consumers have learned to equate Western lifestyles in general and the English language in particular with modernization and sophistication. Walk the streets of Lisbon or Buenos Aires and you'll be accosted by the sight of Nike hats,

¹⁴ Russell W. Belk and Guliz Ger, "Problems of Marketization in Romania and Turkey", *Research in Consumer Behavior* 7 (JAI Press, 1994): 123-155.

¹⁵ Brenda Sternquist, *International Retailing* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1998).

¹⁶ David A. Ricks, "Products That Crashed into the Language Barrier", *Business and Society Review* (Spring, 1983): 46-50; "Speaking in Tongues", @ Issue: 3(Spring 1997)1: 20-23.

¹⁷ Michael R. Solomon and Basil G. Englis, "Reality Engineering: Blurring the Boundaries Between Marketing and Popular Culture", *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 16(1994)(Fall) 2: 1-17.

Gap T-shirts and Levi's jeans at every turn. The National Basketball Association sells \$500 million of licensed merchandise every year *outside* of the United States¹⁸. The allure of consumer culture has spread throughout the world. In a global society, people are quick to borrow from other cultures, especially those they admire.

Despite the proliferation of Western pop culture around the world, there are some signs that this invasion is slowing. Some Japanese consumers are exhibiting waning interest in foreign products and more interest in domestic products including green tea and *yukata*, traditional printed cotton robes donned after the evening bath¹⁹. Several locally made products are catching on in parts of Eastern Europe due to their lower prices, and improved quality. Some Muslims are rejecting Western symbols as they adhere to a green Islam philosophy that includes using natural, traditional products²⁰. Critics in other countries deplore the creeping Americanization of their cultures. The French have been the most outspoken opponents of this influence. They have even tried to ban the use of such "Franglish" terms as *le drugstore*, *le fast food* and *le marketing*²¹.

7) Emerging Consumer Cultures in Transitional Economies

People the world over are increasingly surrounded by tempting images of luxury cars, glam rock stars on MTV and modern appliances that make life easier. They begin to share the ideal of a material lifestyle and value well-

known brands that symbolize prosperity. Possessing these coveted items becomes a mechanism to display one's status—often at great personal sacrifice. After the downfall of communism, Eastern Europeans emerged from deprivation into abundance. But attaining consumer goods is not easy for many in transitional economies, such as Russia, China, Portugal and Romania, that are struggling with the difficult adaptation from a controlled, centralized economy to a free-market system. Suddenly exposed to global communications and external market pressures, some of the consequences of the transition to capitalism include an increase in stress as leisure time is sacrificed to work ever harder to buy consumer goods. One analyst observed, "...as former subjects of the Soviet empire dream it, the American dream has very little to do with liberty and justice for all and a great deal to do with soap operas and the Sears Catalogue."²²

As a *global consumption ethic* spreads, the products wished for in different cultures become homogenized. For example, Christmas is now celebrated among some urbanites in Muslim Turkey. Chinese women demand Western cosmetics costing up to a quarter of their salaries, ignoring domestically produced competitors. As one Chinese executive noted, "Some women even buy a cosmetic just because it has foreign words on the package."²³

8) Creolization

Does this homogenization mean that in time consumers who live in Nairobi, New Guinea, Korea, or the Netherlands will all be indistin-

¹⁸ "They All Want to be Like Mike", *Fortune*, 21 July 1997, 51-3.

¹⁹ Jennifer Cody, "Now Marketers in Japan Stress the Local Angle", *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 February 1994, 1B, p. 2. B1 (2 pp.).

²⁰ Ger and Belk, "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke: Consumptionscapes of the 'Less Affluent World'."

²¹ Sherry and Camargo, "May Your Life Be Marvelous"; "French Council Eases Language Ban", *The New York Times*, 31 July 1994, 12.

²² Erazim Kohak, "Ashes, Ashes ... Central Europe After Forty Years", *Daedalus*, 121 Spring 1992, 197-215, quoted on p. 209, quoted in Belk, "Romanian Consumer Desires and Feelings of Deservingness".

²³ Sheryl WuDunn, "Cosmetics from the West Help to Change the Face of China", *New York Times*, 6 May 1990, 16.

guishable from those in New York or San Francisco? Probably not, because the meanings of consumer goods often mutate to be consistent with local customs and values. These processes make it unlikely that global homogenization will overwhelm local cultures, but rather that there will be multiple consumer cultures, each blending global icons such as Nike's pervasive "swoosh" with indigenous products and meanings.

A process called *creolization* occurs when foreign influences are absorbed and integrated with local meanings. This process sometimes results in bizarre permutations of products and services when they are modified to be compatible with local customs. Consider this creolized adaptation: The traditional clothing style *bilum* worn in Papua New Guinea is combined with Mickey Mouse shirts²⁴.

9) Fashion in Postmodern Society

The contemporary social and economic conditions that shape the global apparel marketplace and our multiple possibilities for shaping identity and meaning within it are often referred to as "postmodern." Lyons indicates that a new sort of society is emerging, one structured around consumers and consumption rather than workers and production²⁵. As we have discussed, styles and looks from around the world are available to consumers today through an array of sources such as the Internet, affordable travel and of course television. Along with increased global awareness, traditional cultural categories and boundaries are bending (in some cases collapsing sometimes spurred by the process of creolization) with such ideas as gender bending, retro looks, and international fusions²⁶.

Kaiser describes today's consumers in a

postmodern society as faced with "choice, confusion, and creativity" as they negotiate an image for themselves. The range of fashion choices in the marketplace is tremendous; the assortment of styles and colors can become overwhelming. This complexity and resulting confusion can backfire to a preference of simplicity, hence the popularity of black and classics in much of fashion. Decision making in such an environment can lead to confusion on one hand, but creativity on the other. Image and style seem to be in a constant state of flux with influences such as: apparel manufacturers delivering different lines each month; music videos showing frequent changes of looks, suggesting identity is changeable in a flick of a second; and youth subcultures re-inventing themselves with such labels as punk, goth, boardhead, and so on.

The basis of postmodern looks is the management of styles and component parts in a new way that is perhaps more tolerant of diversity and ambiguity, more exploratory, and more "constructed" of elements from various places around the world. We are commodity consumers and identity producers as we manage appearances and continue to create ourselves.

4. Values

Values are fundamental beliefs that direct or motivate our behavior and decision making. A person's set of values plays an important role in consumption activities, since many products and services are purchased because people believe they will help to attain a value-related goal.

Every culture has a set of values that it imparts to its members. For example, people in one culture might feel that being a unique individual is preferable to subordinating one's

²⁴ This example courtesy of Prof. Russell Belk, University of Utah, personal communication, (July 25, 1997).

²⁵ David Lyon, *Postmodernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

²⁶ Susan Kaiser, "Identity, Postmodernity, and the Global Apparel Marketplace", in ed. Mary Lynn Damhorst, Kimberly A. Miller, and Susan O. Michelman, *The Meanings of Dress* (New York: Fairchild, 1999): 106-115.

identity to the group, while another group may emphasize the virtues of group membership. A study by Wirthlin Worldwide, for example, found that the most important values to Asian executives are hard work, respect for learning, and honesty. In contrast, North American businesspeople emphasize the values of personal freedom, self-reliance, and freedom of expression²⁷. These differences in values often explain why marketing efforts that are a big hit in one country can flop in another.

In many cases, however, values are universal. Who does not desire health, wisdom, or world peace? What sets cultures apart is *the relative importance*, or ranking, of these universal values. This set of rankings constitutes a culture's *value system*²⁸. For example, one study found that North Americans have more favorable attitudes toward advertising messages that focus on self-reliance, self-improvement and the achievement of personal goals as opposed to themes stressing family integrity, collective goals and the feeling of harmony with others. The reverse pattern was found for Korean consumers²⁹.

It is usually possible to identify a general set of *core values* that uniquely defines a culture. These beliefs are taught to us by *socialization agents*, including parents, friends, and teachers. Core values such as freedom, youthfulness, achievement, materialism, and activity have been claimed to characterize American culture, but even these basic beliefs are subject to change. For example, Americans' emphasis on youth is eroding as the population ages. Since

values drive much of consumer behavior (at least in a very general sense), it could be said that virtually *all* consumer research ultimately is related to the identification and measurement of values.

5. Gender Identity

Gender identity is a state of mind as well as body. A person's biological sex does not totally determine whether he or she will exhibit *sex-typed traits*, or characteristics that are stereotypically associated with one sex or the other. A behavior considered masculine in one culture may not be viewed as such in another.

1) Sex-Typed Products

Many products also are *sex typed*; they take on masculine or feminine attributes, and consumers often associate them with one sex or another³⁰. Clothing generally is a product that is obviously appropriate for either men or women. On the other hand, the term unisex refers to a style of clothing worn by men or women which was popular in the 1970s and continues today with many young people and subcultures. The sex typing of products is often created or perpetuated by marketers such as Princess telephones, or boys' and girls' toys. Computers have generally been thought as the domain of men and boys.

2) Androgyny

Androgyny refers to the possession of both masculine and feminine traits³¹. American women's business dress in the 1980s took on

²⁷ Paul M. Sherer, "North American and Asian Executives Have Contrasting Values, Study Finds", *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 March 1996, B12B.

²⁸ Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973).

²⁹ Han, Sang-Pil and Sharon Shavitt (1994), "Persuasion and Culture: Advertising Appeals in Individualistic and Collectivistic Societies", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 30, 326-350.

³⁰ Kathleen Debevec and Easwar Iyer, "Sex Roles and Consumer Perceptions of Promotions, Products, and Self: What Do We Know and Where Should We Be Headed", in *Advances in Consumer Research* 13, ed. Richard J. Lutz (Provo, Utah: Association for Consumer Research, 1986): 210-14; Joseph A. Bellizzi and Laura Milner, "Gender Positioning of a Traditionally Male-Dominant Product", *Journal of Advertising Research* (June/July 1991): 72-79.

masculine elements with tailored, conservative looks. Many felt this was done so that women looked more similar to men, something which was necessary to compete in the male-dominated businessworld. The fashion industry even used the word androgyny in their promotion of masculine looking suits and tailored styles for women.

3) Female Gender Roles/Cheesecake: The Depiction of Women in Advertising

Gender roles for women continue to change rapidly. Social changes, such as the dramatic increase in the proportion of women working outside of the home, and of course the *feminist movement*, have led to an upheaval in the way women are regarded by men, the way they regard themselves, and in the products they choose to buy.

As implied by the ads for Virginia Slims cigarettes—"You've come a long way, baby!"—attitudes about the female sex role have changed remarkably. Still, women continue to be depicted by advertisers and the media in stereotypical ways. Analyses of U.S. ads in such magazines as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Playboy*, and even *Ms.*, show that the large majority of women included were presented as sex objects (so-called "cheesecake" ads) or in traditional roles³². Similar findings have been obtained in the United Kingdom³³. Today's rock videos tend to reinforce traditional women's roles.

Ads can reinforce negative stereotypes. Women often are portrayed as stupid, submissive, temperamental, or as sexual objects. Although

women continue to be depicted this way and in traditional roles, this situation is changing as advertisers scramble to catch up with reality. Some modern ads now feature *role-reversal*, where women occupy traditional men's roles. In other cases, women are portrayed in romantic situations, but they tend to be more sexually dominant. Ironically, current advertising is more free to emphasize traditional female traits now that sexual equality is becoming more of an accepted fact. This freedom is demonstrated in a German poster for a women's magazine. The caption reads "Today's women can sometimes show weakness, because they are strong."

4) Male Sex Roles/Beefcake: The Depiction of Men in Advertising

While the traditional concept of the ideal male as a tough, aggressive, muscular man who enjoys "manly" sports and activities is not dead, society's definition of the male role is evolving. American men in the late 1990s were allowed to be more compassionate and to have close friendships with other men. In contrast to the depiction of macho men who do not show feelings, some marketers are promoting men's "sensitive" side. An emphasis on male bonding has been the centerpiece of many ad campaigns.

Men as well as women often are depicted in a negative fashion in advertising. They frequently come across as helpless or bumbling. As one advertising executive put it, "The woman's movement raised consciousness in the ad business as to how women can be depicted. The thought now is, if we can't have women in these

³¹ Sandra L. Bem, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42 (1974): 155-62; Deborah E.S. Frable, "Sex Typing and Gender Ideology: Two Facets of the Individual's Gender Psychology That Go Together", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56 (1989): 95-108.

³² "Ads' Portrayal of Women Today is Hardly Innovative", *Marketing News* (November 6, 1989): 12; Jill Hicks Ferguson, Peggy J. Kreshel, and Spencer F. Tinkham, "In the Pages of Ms.: Sex Role Portrayals of Women in Advertising", *Journal of Advertising* 19 (1990): 40-51.

³³ Sonia Livingstone and Gloria Greene, "Television Advertisements and the Portrayal of Gender", *British Journal of Social Psychology* 25 (1986): 149-54; for one of the original articles on this topic, see L. Z. McArthur and B. G. Resko, "The Portrayal of Men and Women in American Television Commercials", *Journal of Social Psychology* 97 (1975): 209-20.

old-fashioned traditional roles, at least we can have men being dummies."³⁴ Some ads illustrate the "menbashing" approach taken by some advertisers who are trying to appeal to women. Just as advertisers often are criticized for depicting women as sex objects, the same accusations can be made about how males are portrayed—a practice correspondingly known as "beefcake." Such ads have differential acceptance across cultures.

6. Ideals of Beauty

A person's satisfaction with one's physical image is affected by how closely that image corresponds to the image valued by the culture. Ideals of beauty for both women and men may include physical features as well as clothing styles, hairstyles, skin tone, and body type.

1) Is Beauty Universal?

Recent research indicates that preferences for some physical features over others are genetic, and that these reactions tend to be the same among people around the world. Specifically, people appear to favor features associated with good health and youth, attributes linked to reproductive ability and strength. These characteristics include large eyes, high cheekbones, a narrow jaw and balanced features. Advertising and other forms of mass media play a significant role in determining which forms of beauty are considered desirable at any point in time. An ideal of beauty functions as a sort of cultural yardstick. Consumers compare themselves to some standard (often advocated by the fashion media) and are dissatisfied with their appearance to the extent that they don't match up to it.

While beauty may be only skin deep, throughout history women in particular have worked very hard to attain it. They have starved themselves, painfully bound their feet, inserted plates into their lips, spent countless hours

under hair dryers, in front of mirrors, and beneath tanning lights, and have undergone breast reduction or enlargement operations to alter their appearance and meet their society's expectations of what a beautiful woman should look like. In addition to the millions spent on cosmetics, clothing, health clubs, and fashion magazines, these practices remind us that the desire to conform to current standards of beauty continues to be strong.

We can also distinguish among ideals of beauty for men in terms of facial features, musculature, and facial hair. In fact, one recent national survey that asked both men and women to comment on male aspects of appearance found that the dominant standard of beauty for men is a strongly masculine, muscled body³⁵. Magazines reinforce these ideals.

2) Working on the Body

Because many consumers are motivated to match up to some ideal of appearance, they often go to great lengths to change aspects of their physical selves. From cosmetics to plastic surgery, tanning salons to diet drinks, a multitude of products and services are directed toward altering or maintaining aspects of the physical self in order to present a desirable appearance. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the physical self-concept (and the desire by consumers to improve their appearance) to many marketing activities.

As reflected in the expression "you can never be too thin or too rich," society has an obsession with weight. The pressure to be slim is continually reinforced both by advertising and by peers. Americans in particular are preoccupied by what they weigh. We are continually bombarded by images of thin, happy people. In a survey of girls aged 12 to 19, 55% said they see ads "all the time" that make them want to go on a diet³⁶.

34 Jennifer Foote, "The Ad World's New Bimbos", *Newsweek*, 25 January 1988, 44.

35 Jill Neimark, "The Beefcaking of America", *Psychology Today* (November/December 1994): 32 (11).

3) Body Image Distortions

While many people perceive a strong link between self-esteem and appearance, some consumers unfortunately exaggerate this connection even more, and sacrifice greatly to attain what they consider to be a desirable body image. Women tend to be taught to a greater degree than men that the quality of their bodies reflects their self-worth, so it is not surprising that most major distortions of body image occur among females.

Eating disorders affect mostly women, but some men as well. They are common among male athletes who must also conform to various weight requirements, such as jockeys, boxers, and male models³⁷. In general, though, most men who have distorted body images consider themselves to be too light rather than too heavy: Society has taught them that they must be muscular to be masculine. Men are more likely than women to express their insecurities about their bodies by becoming addicted to exercise. In fact, striking similarities have been found between male compulsive runners and female anorexics.

4) Cosmetic Surgery

Consumers increasingly are electing to have cosmetic surgery to change a poor body image³⁸. There is no longer much (if any) of a psychological stigma associated with having this type of operation; it is commonplace and accepted among many segments of consumers. Going under the knife is not just for women anymore: Men now account for as much as 20 percent of plastic surgery patients. Popular operations include the implantation of silicon pectoral muscles (for the chest) and even calf implants³⁹.

Cosmetic surgeons often try to mold their patients into a standard ideal of beauty. The aesthetic standard used by surgeons is called the *classic canon*, which spells out the ideal relationships among facial features. For example, it states that the width of the base of the nose should be the same as the distance between the eyes. However, this standard applies to the Caucasian ideal, and is being revised as people from other ethnic groups are demanding less rigidity in culture's definition of what is beautiful. Some consumers are rebelling against the need to conform to the Western ideal. Some surgeons who work on African-Americans are trying to change the guidelines they use when sculpting features. For example, they argue that an ideal African-American nose is shorter and has a more rounded tip than does a Caucasian nose. Doctors are beginning to diversify their "product lines," offering consumers a broader assortment of features that better reflect the diversity of cultural ideals of beauty in a heterogeneous society⁴⁰.

7. Demographics : Age/Race/Income and Social Class

1) Age

An age cohort consists of people of similar ages who have undergone similar experiences. They share many common memories about cultural heroes and important historical events. Although there is no universally accepted way to divide up people into age cohorts, each of us seems to have a pretty good idea of what we mean when we refer to "my generation." We call them Generation Y (teens), Generation X (twenty-somethings), baby boomers (40~50 year olds), and so on.

³⁶ David Goetzl, "Teen Girls Pan Ad Images of Women", *Advertising Age* (September 13, 1999): 32.

³⁷ Judy Folkenberg, "Bulimia: Not For Women Only", *Psychology Today* (March 1984): 10.

³⁸ John W. Schouten, "Selves in Transition: Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction", *Journal of Consumer Research* 17 (March 1991): 412-25.

³⁹ Emily Yoffe, "Valley of the Silicon Dolls", *Newsweek*, 26 November 1990, 72.

⁴⁰ Kathy H. Merrell, "Saving Faces", *Allure* (January 1994): 66 (2).

Although many apparel companies claim they design for a certain attitude, not an age group, fashion marketers often target products and services to one or more specific age cohorts. They recognize that the same offering will probably not appeal to people of different ages, nor will the language and images they use to reach them. In some cases separate campaigns are developed to attract consumers of different ages. A marketer needs to recognize this, and to figure out how to communicate with members of an age group in their own language. After years of successfully selling Dockers to Baby Boomers and recent declining sales of jeans, for example, Levi Strauss is trying to figure out how to reach teens. They sponsored a series of music events such as rock concerts to get the attention of young people. "This makes the Levi's brand much more relevant to young people."

2) Ethnicity and Marketing Strategies

Marketers can no longer ignore the stunning diversity of cultures that are reshaping U.S. society. Ethnic minorities spend over \$600 billion a year on products and services, and firms must devise products and communication strategies tailored to their needs. In California the "minority" population is over 50%! The concept of marketing to subcultural groups within a society is similar to marketing to cultural groups in other countries.

Although some people may feel uncomfortable at the notion that people's racial and ethnic differences should be explicitly taken into account when formulating marketing strategies, the reality is that these subcultural memberships frequently are paramount in shaping people's needs and wants. Furthermore, research indicates

that members of minority groups are more likely to find an advertising spokesperson from their own group to be more trustworthy which in turn translates into more positive brand attitudes⁴¹⁾. In addition, the way marketing messages should be structured depends on subcultural differences in how meanings are communicated. Compared to Anglos, many minority cultures in the U.S. are high-context (where meanings go beyond the spoken word), so perceivers will be more sensitive to nuances in advertisements that go beyond the message copy⁴²⁾.

3) Is Ethnicity a Moving Target?

Although ethnic marketing is in vogue with many firms, the process of actually defining and targeting members of a distinct ethnic group is not always so easy in the U.S. "melting pot" society. The popularity of golfer Tiger Woods illuminates the complexity of ethnic identity in the U.S. Although Woods has been lauded as an African-American role model, in reality he is a model of multiracialism. His mother is Thai and he also has Caucasian and Indian ancestry. This trend toward the blurring of ethnic and racial boundaries will only increase over time⁴³⁾. Inter-marriage rates in the U.S. are highest among those of Asian descent; approximately 12% of Asian men and 25% of Asian women marry non-Asians⁴⁴⁾.

Products that are marketed with an ethnic appeal are not necessarily intended for consumption only by the ethnic subculture from which they originate. *De-ethnicitization* refers to the process where a product formerly associated with a specific ethnic group is detached from its roots and made available to other subcultures. For example, the African-American hairstyle called the "Afro" was the natural look proudly

⁴¹ Rohit Desphande and Douglas M. Stayman, "A Tale of Two Cities: Distinctiveness Theory and Advertising Effectiveness", *Journal of Marketing Research* 31 (February, 1994): 57-64.

⁴² Steve Rabin, "How to Sell Across Cultures", *American Demographics* (March, 1994): 56-57.

⁴³ John McCormick, "In Living Color", *Newsweek*, 5 May 1997, 58 (2).

⁴⁴ Linda Mathews, "More than Identity Rides on a New Racial Category", *The New York Times*, 6 July 1996, 1, 7.

worn by black persons in the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. Both the Afro and "cornrows" became fashionable looks for white Americans, albeit not natural for many.

4) Income and Social Class

Every society has some type of hierarchical class structure, where people's access to products and services is determined by their resources and social standing. Of course, the specific "markers" of success depend on what is valued in each culture. For the Chinese, who are just beginning to experience the bounties of capitalism, for example, one marker of success is hiring a bodyguard to protect oneself and one's newly-acquired possessions!⁴⁵⁾

Japan is a highly status-conscious society, where upscale, designer labels are quite popular, and new forms of status are always being sought. To the Japanese, owning a traditional rock garden, formerly a vehicle for leisure and tranquility, has become a sought-after item. Possession of a rock garden implies inherited wealth, since aristocrats traditionally were patrons of the arts. In addition, considerable assets are required to afford the required land in a country where real estate is extraordinarily costly. This helps to explain why the Japanese are fanatic golfers: Since a golf course takes up so much space, membership in a golf club is extremely valuable⁴⁶⁾.

On the other side of the world, Britain is also an extremely class-conscious country, and at least until recently, consumption patterns were preordained in terms of one's inherited position and family background. Members of the upper class were educated at schools like Eton and Oxford. Remnants of this rigid class structure can still be found. Wealthy young men play

polo at Windsor and hereditary peers still dominate the House of Lords. The other end of the class system is a large working class. Recent films such as *The Full Monty*, for example, have focused on the trials of the working class. The dominance of inherited wealth appears to be fading in Britain's traditionally aristocratic society. Even the sanctity of the Royal Family, which epitomizes the aristocracy, has been diluted because of tabloid exposure and the antics of younger family members.

The relatively healthy state of the global economy is creating new pockets of wealth in developing countries. Now, makers of luxury products are going after this new money. LVMH-Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the French conglomerate which is a major player in categories from liqueur to leather, believes its future is in Asia rather than Europe. However, not all ambitious plans to capture the pocket-books of the rest of the world are working out that well. Many firms, for example, flocked to India when they realized that this huge country's emerging middle class was equal in size to the population of the entire United States. Now, many of these multinational companies are finding that middle class means something quite different in India. "... middle class is a family that can afford to eat a balanced diet, send the children well-clothed to school and buy a black and white television."⁴⁷⁾

8. Lifestyles and Psychographics

One's personality and attitudes among other variables including age, education, income, social class, and so on, help determine one's *lifestyle*. "Niche marketing" and "branding" were buzzwords for the 1980s and 90s. In this new decade companies will move more toward an

⁴⁵ Nicholas D. Kristof, "Women as Bodyguards: In China, It's All the Rage", *The New York Times*, 1 July 1993, A4.

⁴⁶ James Sterngold, "How Do You Define Status? A New BMW in the Drive. An Old Rock in the Garden", *New York Times*, 28 December 1989, C1.

⁴⁷ Miriam Jordan, "Firms Discover Limits of India's Middle Class", 1997 *International Herald Tribune*, accessed via ssnewslink, 27 June 1997.

integrative approach by selling across product categories under one concept to suit customer taste and style preferences⁴⁸.

1) Lifestyle: Who We Are, What We Do

One's choice of goods and services indeed makes a statement about who one is. *Lifestyle* refers to a pattern of consumption reflecting a person's choices of how he or she spends time and money. These choices create opportunities for market segmentation strategies that recognize the potency of a consumer's chosen lifestyle in determining both the types of products purchased and the specific brands more likely to appeal to a designated lifestyle segment. Fashion, home decor, fitness, sports and culinary arts are among the industries catering to markets with specific lifestyles.

2) Fashion Lifestyle Marketing

Some apparel and home fashion companies have been extremely successful using the lifestyle marketing approach. In the U.S. leading the ranks is Ralph Lauren whose retail stores not only include clothing for men and women, but furniture and accessories for the home including wallpaper, sheets and towels. Tommy Hilfiger has joined in the lifestyle concept with his new megastores in major cities. Pottery Barn, owned by Williams-Sonoma, was bestowed with a Retailer of the Year honor in 1998. *Home Textiles Today* stated: Pottery Barn epitomizes lifestyle merchandising at its best. With home remodeling and decoration an important trend in the U.S. many other companies such as Crate & Barrel and Restoration Hardware have gained wide popularity. Many other fashion companies fit into this genre of lifestyle merchandising including Victoria's Sec-

ret, Neiman Marcus, and Bloomingdale's who try to serve the many needs of a certain target customer.

3) Products are the Building Blocks of Lifestyles

The adoption of a lifestyle marketing perspective implies that we must look at *patterns of behavior* to understand consumers. We can get a clearer picture of how people use products to define lifestyles by examining how they make choices in a variety of product categories. As one study noted, "... all goods carry meaning, but none by itself ... The meaning is in the relations between all the goods, just as music is in the relations marked out by the sounds and not in any one note."⁴⁹

Indeed, many products and services do seem to "go together," usually because they tend to be selected by the same types of people. An important part of lifestyle marketing is to identify the set of products and services that seems to be linked in consumers' minds to a specific lifestyle. Marketers who pursue co-branding strategies intuitively understand this: That's why L. L. Bean and Subaru are teaming up for a co-branding deal. Another recent example of a co-branding campaign is Ralph Lauren teaming up with Sprite to promote Polo Jeans brand.

4) Psychographics

When personality variables are combined with knowledge of lifestyle preferences, marketers have a powerful lens with which to view consumer segments. A tool known as *psychographics* involves the "... use of psychological, sociological, and anthropological factors ... to determine how the market is segmented by the

⁴⁸ Andrea Lawson Gray, "Lifestyle: The Next Big Thing", *Catalog Age* (November 1998): 105.

⁴⁹ Mary Twe Douglas and Baron C. Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

⁵⁰ See Lewis Alpert and Ronald Gatty, "Product Positioning by Behavioral Life Styles", *Journal of Marketing* 33 (April, 1969): 65-69; Emanuel H. Demby, "Psychographics Revisited: The Birth of a Technique", *Marketing News* (January 2, 1989): 21; William D. Wells, "Backward Segmentation", in *Insights into Consumer Behavior*, ed. Johan Arndt (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1968), 85-100.

propensity of groups within the market-and their reasons-to make a particular decision about a product, person, ideology, or otherwise hold an attitude or use a medium."⁵⁰) Psychographics can help a company fine-tune its offerings to meet the needs of different segments. Demographics allow us to describe who buys, but psychographics allow us to understand why they do. This is particularly suited to societies that are so different in the global economy.

9. Individual Consumer Decision Making

Sometimes consumers go through an extensive rational decision making process especially if their purchase is infrequent, very important or expensive. Other times they make decisions in the marketplace automatically with little thought.

1) Emotional Versus Rational Appeals/ Puffing Versus Informative

Should the appeal to consumers for fashion be to the head or to the heart? The goal of an emotional appeal is to establish a connection between the product and the consumer, a strategy known as *bonding*⁵¹). Emotional appeals have the potential to increase the chance the message will be perceived, they may be more likely to be retained in memory, and they can also increase the consumer's involvement with the product. Many fragrance ads use emotional appeals.

Many companies turned to an emotional strategy after realizing that consumers do not find many differences among brands, especially those in well-established, mature categories. While they can make a strong impression, emotional appeals run the risk of not getting across an adequate amount of product-related information. This potential problem reminds some advertisers

that the arousal of emotions is functional only to the extent that it sells the product. Nike is the master craftman of "in your face" emotional messages about sports that barely acknowledge the shoes they are trying to sell.

2) Heuristics: Mental Shortcuts

To simplify decisions, consumers often employ decision rules that allow them to use some dimensions as substitutes for others. Especially when limited problem solving occurs prior to making a choice, consumers often fall back upon heuristics, or mental rules of thumb that lead to a speedy decision. They range from the very general, (e.g., "Higher-priced products are higher quality products" or "Buy the same brand I bought last time") to the very specific (e.g., "Buy Jockey, the brand of underwear my mother always bought"). Sometimes these shortcuts may not be in consumers' best interests.

3) Country of Origin as a Heuristic

Many of today's consumers choose among products made in many countries. We may buy Brazilian shoes, Japanese cars, or clothing imported from China or SriLanka. Consumers' reactions to these imports are mixed. In some cases, people have come to assume that a product made overseas is of better quality (e.g., cameras, cars, or apparel from Europe), while in other cases the knowledge that a product has been imported tends to lower perceptions of product quality (e.g., apparel from third world countries). In general, people tend to rate products from industrialized countries better than those from developing countries, but many studies have shown that there is no apparent relationship between perception of quality and country of origin of apparel⁵²). However, there

⁵¹ "Connecting Consumer and Product", *The New York Times*, 18 January 1990, p. 19.

⁵² Brenda Sternquist and B. Davis, "Store Status and Country of Origin as Information Cues: Consumer's Perception of Sweater Price and Quality", *Home Economics Research Journal* 15(1986): 124-131; Pamela S. Norum and Lee Ann Clark, "A Comparison of Quality and Retail Price of Domestically Produced and Imported Blazers"; Francesann L. Heisey, "Perceived Quality and Predicted Price: Use of the Minimum Information Environment in Evaluating Apparel".

are often individual personality differences in how people evaluate products and services. One such difference is *ethnocentrism*, which is the tendency to prefer products or people of one's own culture over those from other countries.

Much research has shown that American consumers generally do not care about where their clothing is made, and that price, color, quality, and style or fashion, among other evaluative criteria, are more important⁵³. Learning a product's country-of-origin can have the effect of stimulating the consumer's interest in the product. Recently more and more consumers have become aware of labor conditions involved with the production of clothing and many have consciously decided not to buy clothing made in certain countries.

10. Buying and Disposing

1) Apparel Shopping: Love It or Hate It?

Which way is it? Do people hate to shop or love it? It depends. According to research by Lifestyle Monitor, the number of female consumers who love to shop for clothes is decreasing⁵⁴. Out of a possible score of 100, their "shopping barometer" registers 56 (just above a neutral rating) for all females. (Of course fashion innovators score the highest at 72.)

The largest reasons for Not "loving to shop for clothes" and evidence that consumers are focusing their energies on other things in life than clothes shopping include:

- rather spend money on other things
- not as interested in clothes as I used to be
- current styles don't flatter my shape
- I don't have time to shop for clothes.

Research indicates the important 25~34 age

group is becoming disenchanted with fashion apparel selections with comments such as: "The stuff in the stores today is either not very well made or too expensive for my budget" and "Everything in the department and chain stores looks the same. In order to find really unusual clothes, you have to spend a lot of money, which I am not willing to do for every purchase." Apparel companies should beware of the disenchanted consumer!

Who loves to shop the most? In a survey of women around the world, over 60 percent of women said they enjoy shopping for clothes in every country except Hong Kong, where only 39 percent responded so positively. The "Born to Shop" prize goes to Latin Americans; over 80% of women in countries like Brazil and Colombia agree that clothes shopping is a favorite activity. Other high scoring countries include France, Italy, and Japan. In comparison, only 61 percent of American women said they like or love to go clothes shopping⁵⁵.

2) E-Commerce: Clicks Versus Bricks

There's little doubt that the Digital Revolution is one of the most significant influences on consumer buying right now⁵⁶. You can shop 24 hours a day without leaving home. And, it's not all about businesses selling to consumers (*B2C commerce*). In addition, the cyberspace explosion has created a revolution in consumer-to-consumer activity (*C2C commerce*). People from all over the world are uniting by a shared passion for sports memorabilia, Barbie dolls, Beanie Babies or Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Welcome to the new world of *virtual brand communities*.

As more and more Web sites pop up to sell

⁵³ K. Gipson and Sally Francis, "The Effect of Country of Origin on Purchase Behaviour: An Intercept Study", *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics* 15 (1991): 33-44.

⁵⁴ "Is the Thrill Gone?" *Women's Wear Daily* (March 26, 1998): 2.

⁵⁵ "A Global Perspective...on Women & Women's Wear", *Cotton Inc Lifestyle Monitor*, vol. 14 (Winter, 1999/2000): 8-11.

⁵⁶ Michael R. Solomon and Elnora W. Stuart, *Welcome To Marketing.Com: The Brave New World of E-Commerce*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.

everything from T-shirts to refrigerator magnets, marketers are hotly debating how this new format will affect how they conduct business. Is e-commerce destined to replace traditional retailing, work in concert with it, or perhaps even fade away to become another fad your kids will laugh about someday? That's unlikely: Online consumer sales totaled \$20 billion in 1999 and Forrester Research predicts that by 2004, 49 million households will shop online and spend \$184 billion⁵⁷.

Marketers can now reach customers around the world even if they're physically located 100 miles from nowhere. On the other hand, their competition now comes not only from the store across the street, but from thousands of Web sites spanning the globe. A second problem is that offering products directly to consumers has the potential to cut out the middleman—the loyal store-based retailers who carry the firm's products and who sell them at a marked-up price. The "clicks versus bricks" dilemma is raging in the marketing world. Some companies work their Web sites and stores together to increase sales. The Gap, for example, promotes its Web site in its stores by displaying the slogan *surf.shop.ship*.

One limitation of e-commerce relates to the actual shopping experience. While it may be satisfactory to buy a computer or a book on the Internet, buying clothing and other items where touching the item or trying it on is essential may be less attractive. Timing and delivery can also be a problem. Many promises for quick Christmas deliveries have been broken, and actually large fines have been levied on some U.S. dot-com companies who broke their delivery promises or never delivered at all⁵⁸. Another major concern for consumers is security. We hear horror stories of consumers

whose credit cards and other identity information have been stolen.

What makes e-commerce sites successful? According to a survey by NPD Online, 75% of online shoppers surveyed said that good customer service would make them shop at the site again⁵⁹. And many successful e-tailers are learning that using technology to provide extra value for customers is attracting and keeping customers. For example, The Cover Girl makeup site (*covergirl.com*) allows women to find colors that match their skin and hair types or to design a total look that's right for their lifestyle.

Many e-companies born overnight also liquidate overnight. Some netheads take bets on which will be the next hot site that goes under. Some apparel companies are approaching the Internet slowly by starting an information site rather than a commerce site. Despite drawbacks, some futurists believe that we'll soon reach a point where each of us is wired and online all the time.

3) Retailing as Theater

The competition for shoppers is becoming intense as non-store alternatives from Web sites and print catalogs to TV shopping networks and home shopping parties continue to multiply. With all of these shopping alternatives available, how can a traditional store compete? Shopping malls have tried to gain the loyalty of shoppers by appealing to their social motives as well as providing access to desired goods. The mall is often a focal point in a community. In the United States, 94 percent of adults visit a mall at least once a month.

Malls are becoming giant entertainment centers, almost to the point where their traditional retail occupants seem like an afterthought. As one retailing executive put it, "Malls are

⁵⁷ Seema Williams, David M. Cooperstein, David E. Weisman and Thalika Oum, "Post-Web Retail," *The Forrester Report*, Forrester Research, Inc., September 1999.

⁵⁸ Carol Emert, "E-tailers Fined for Broken Promises", *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 July 2000, B1, B5.

⁵⁹ Jennifer Gilbert, "Customer Service crucial to Online Buyers", *Advertising Age*, 13 September 1999, 52.

becoming the new mini-amusement parks."⁶⁰ For example Metreon, Sony's first "techno-mall" in San Francisco, combines cinema, restaurants, theme park-style attractions and stores such as Sony and Microsoft where games and other products can be experienced before purchase⁶¹. It was so successful, Sony opened two international versions in Berlin and Tokyo. The Map and Guide pamphlet states: "Metreon is the ultimate entertainment experience. Four floors of great entertainment and the best of local culture. Stay for a bite to eat or for the whole day. Eat, drink, shop or play."

Levi's new store in its hometown San Francisco, and Niketown throughout the U.S. offer specialized product services (for example, Levi's "Original Spin" where customers create their own jeans) in addition to constant visual stimulation and activities such as huge video screens and game simulations. Clearly a mix of entertainment and retailing is more evident today.

Some retailers are seeking to combine two favorite consumer activities, shopping and eating, by developing *themed environments*. According to a recent Roper Starch survey, eating out is the top form of out-of-home-entertainment, and innovative firms are offering customers a chance to eat, buy, and be entertained all at once. The Hard Rock Cafe, first established in London in 1971, now has over 100 restaurants in 36 countries. Similarly, Planet Hollywood is crammed full of costumes and props and the chain now grosses over \$200 million a year around the world. With high profit margins on the merchandise sold at these restaurants, it's not surprising that as much as 50% of a theme chain's revenues come from T-shirts and goods other than food⁶².

III. Summary

It appears our global society and economy are here to stay, despite current events. Mass communications including The Internet, increased world travel, and more and more consumers developing the ability to afford consumer goods, are all helping to bring world cultures closer together. Indeed, the world is rapidly changing and the fashion consumer, is especially affected. Despite the increased commonalities of peoples of the world, culture is a concept crucial to the understanding of consumer behavior. Marketers must understand the values, ethics, and customs of societies around the world to be successful in the global marketplace.

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⁶⁰ Jacquelyn Bivins, "Fun and Mall Games", *Stores*, August 1989, 35.

⁶¹ Carol Emert, "Metreon Teeming with Gawkers", *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 September 1999, E1-2; Victoria Colliver, "Celebrating Metreon", *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 June 2000, B1, B8.

⁶² Joshua Levine, "Hamburgers and Tennis Socks", *Forbes*, 20 November 1995, 184-185; Iris Cohen Selinger, "Lights! Camera! But Can We Get a Table?", *Advertising Age*, 17 April 1995, 48.

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