

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A Quadrennium

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behavior continued to attract additional researchers and publication outlets from 1993 through 1996. Both general interest and domain-specific scholarly contributions are discussed, along with limitations and suggested areas for future research. A concluding section observes that the integrity of consumer research is unnecessarily compromised by the failure of the major scholarly association in the field to develop and adopt a code of researcher ethics.

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior has been defined as the “acquisition, consumption and disposition of products, services, time and ideas by decision making units” (Jacoby 1975, 1976). While the number of disciplines, researchers, and publishing outlets now studying consumer behavior continues to increase, of necessity attention in this review is confined primarily to work published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, and *Journal of Consumer Psychology* from 1993 through 1996. The first three journals have traditionally published the most rigorous research in the field. The contributors and content of the latter two journals, of more recent origin, suggest that they are approaching the former in repute. Because of space constraints, the works cited in this review are representative rather than comprehensive. Not covered but worthy of attention are papers appearing in *Advances in Consumer Research*, the annual proceedings of the Association for Consumer Research.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF BROAD RELEVANCE

Philosophy of Science

GENERAL Several papers possess relevance well beyond consumer research. Particularly noteworthy are the very readable philosophy of science papers that constitute an extended debate between Hunt (1992, 1993, 1994) in defense of scientific realism and others (e.g. Peter 1992) propounding a social reconstructionist perspective. Because these papers rely on general examples, which for the most part are not tied to marketing, they make excellent reading for PhD students and scholars across the social sciences.

POSTMODERNISM Sherry (1991) recognized a certain “tension animating the conduct of inquiry in recent years” among consumer researchers. This tension, which continues to be evident, revolves around differences in philosophical and methodological approaches to the field. Historically, the disciplines of psychology (especially cognitive and social) and economics provided the theoretical foundation for most consumer research. Recently, this hegemony has been challenged by postmodern approaches that focus on other avenues of inquiry such as anthropology, sociology, and history. In the past few years, the field saw numerous postmodern methodological approaches advocated and/or explicated, including projective techniques (McGrath et al 1993), ethnography (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994), historical methodology (Smith & Lux 1993), reader-response theory (Scott 1994), critical theory (Hetrick & Lozada 1994),

deconstruction (Stern 1996), hermeneutics (e.g. Arnold & Fisher 1994, Thompson 1996), and feminist thought (e.g. Bristor & Fischer 1993, Stern 1993). Disagreement was evident: While Gould (1995) advocated introspection, Wallendorf & Brucks (1993) contended that this approach offers little opportunity for theory-building.

Postmodern techniques were used to examine several less traditional areas of inquiry such as skydiving (Celsi et al 1993), gift giving (Belk & Coon 1993), abortion (Patterson et al 1995), baseball spectating (Holt 1995), and pet (Hirschman 1994) and motorcycle (Schouten & McAlexander 1995) ownership. At this point, while some tension continues to be evident, a schism between the positivist and postmodern camps is unlikely. Instead, it looks as if multiple approaches to consumer inquiry will be accommodated in the traditional research outlets.

Methodological Advances

GENERAL Other papers of general interest focused on research methodology. While many psychological phenomena such as information search, attitude formation, and choice are postulated to operate as dynamic, often sequential processes, these phenomena generally have been studied using static, pre-versus-post methodologies. As an alternative, Jacoby et al (1994) outlined a procedure for capturing and studying the dynamic, ongoing molecular changes in such processes and illustrated how the procedure could be used by studying changes in risk perception as consumers acquired and integrated information.

Other papers addressed issues such as the use of conjoint analysis (Carroll & Green 1995), effect sizes (Fern & Monroe 1996), ANOVA interactions (Ross & Creyer 1993), and nonparametric approaches to signal detection theory (Cradit et al 1994). Researchers also ventured beyond the traditional relative frequency approach to probability theory by using Bayesian techniques to assess the value of manipulation checks (Sawyer et al 1995) and replications (Raman 1994).

SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN Much consumer research relies on surveys, and a considerable amount of work has been devoted to questionnaire and survey design. Bickart (1993) and Simmons et al (1993) examined question order effects in surveys, while Menon (1993, Menon et al 1995) examined the memory processes underlying consumers' responses to behavioral frequency questions. Rose et al (1993) suggest that comparative measures (e.g. "Is Brand A superior to Brand B?") are more sensitive in detecting persuasion than noncomparative measures. Webster (1996) found that response quality for surveys is highest when interviewer and interviewee are of the same gender or ethnicity.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY Several papers addressed issues concerning validity and reliability. Peterson (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of Cronbach's coefficient alpha across 832 studies and found that the average value of 0.77 was not affected by research design characteristics. Bagozzi & Yi (1993) discussed shortcomings associated with the multitrait-multimethod approach, while Peter et al (1993) addressed reliability problems associated with the use of difference scores. Fisher (1993) and Mick (1996) examined social desirability bias. Darley & Lim (1993) contended that the incidence of demand artifact is higher than that accounted for by subjects who correctly guess a research hypothesis. They suggest that subjects underreport such behavior because they are unaware of conforming. Shimp et al (1993) responded by noting there is little actual evidence for such a contention.

CONSTRUCT DEVELOPMENT Several studies developed or clarified constructs such as expertise (e.g. Mitchell & Dacin 1996, Park et al 1994), satisfaction (e.g. Mano & Oliver 1993), materialism (e.g. Richins 1994), vanity (Netemeyer et al 1995), and consumer innovativeness (Manning et al 1995).

DOMAIN-SPECIFIC RESEARCH

By focusing on the 42 most published scholars in the *Journal of Consumer Research* during its first 15 years, Hoffman & Holbrook (1993) provided interesting perspective on those whose scholarly contributions exerted the greatest influence upon research published in that journal. Admonishing the field for its changed and, what he believes are, misdirected priorities, Wells (1993) proposed guidelines designed to produce more meaningful and useful research. These include being interdisciplinary in nature, stimulating industry and government participation, and expanding the focus beyond the US marketplace. Research has tended to focus on the mental processes of individual decision makers when acquiring and consuming; scant attention was devoted to disposition (an exception is Taylor & Tod 1995). Much of this work is decidedly psychological in nature, relying largely on the experimental method. While other orientations abound, the cognitive perspective remains dominant. Below we summarize the domain-specific literature in an order suggested by stages in consumer decision-making: the processing of information, formation of attitudes, choice, and factors affecting these processes.

Information Processing

SENSATION AND PERCEPTION Historically, sensation and perception have been accorded little attention by consumer researchers. Not surprisingly, work is confined primarily to visual or auditory processes, as most forms of marketing communications rely on one (i.e. print, radio) or both (i.e. television) of

these modes. An exception is work examining the impact of odors on consumer behavior (e.g. Mitchell et al 1995, Spangenberg et al 1996). Raghurib & Krishna (1996) introduced the notion of spatial perceptions to the field. The relatively underresearched sensory processes of smell, taste, and touch suggest promising avenues for future work.

ATTENTION Attention refers to the momentary focusing of processing capacity on a particular stimulus. Research in this area focuses predominantly on advertising applications. For example, several field studies examined the impact of “zipping” (or fast-forwarding a VCR during commercials) and “zapping” (or changing channels during commercial breaks) on attention. Finding zapped ads more effective than uninterrupted ads in affecting purchase behavior, Zufryden et al (1993) speculate that this is due to increased attention during the zapping process. Attention to packages on store shelves, as measured by eye fixations, was examined in a supermarket simulation by Russo & Leclerc (1994). Janiszewski (1993) examined the impact of pre-attentive ad processing on affective response to brand names.

CATEGORIZATION After being detected and attended to, stimuli must be identified or given meaning, that is, categorized. Goodstein (1993) utilized categorization theory to explain why ads that are atypical of an ad schema tend to provoke more extensive processing. Categorization theory also played a major role in issues related to brand equity and extension strategies (e.g. Broniarczyk & Alba 1994a, Dacin & Smith 1994, Peracchio & Tybout 1996). Ratneshwar et al (1996) used the concept of goal-derived categories to explain when and why consideration sets may include alternatives from different product categories. Lefkoff-Hagins & Mason (1993) showed that products perceived to be similar are not always similarly liked, because cognitive judgments of similarity are based on different product attributes than are judgments of preference.

The use of metaphors, which may be thought of as special types of categories, is gaining favor among consumer researchers. Spiggle (1994) discussed metaphors as a way to interpret qualitative data. Interest in metaphors and analogies is likely to increase, as advertisers of ever more technological products seek ways to communicate product features in an easily understandable manner.

INFERENCE MAKING Consumers may choose to think more about stimuli after they have been categorized and develop additional beliefs based on the stimulus information, that is, engage in inference making. Consumer inference making has generally been examined in terms of applications to advertising communications, and this continued to be true in the past several years. Johar (1995) showed that highly involved consumers draw inferences from incom-

plete comparison ad claims at the time of processing the ad; however, brand belief questions may induce less involved consumers to draw such inferences at the time of measurement. Campbell (1995) examined the negative inferences consumers make about advertiser intent when attention-getting tactics, such as identifying the brand name late in a commercial, are used. Consumer inference making was also examined in terms of pricing (Pechmann 1996), warranties (Boulding & Kirmani 1993), and alpha-numeric brand names (Pavia & Costa 1993). Carpenter et al (1994) examined the brand differentiation inferences consumers make when exposed to product attributes that only appear to create meaningful differences, and Broniarczyk & Alba (1994b) examined the formation of spontaneous inferences about missing attribute information.

INFORMATION SEARCH Most of this work focuses on consumers' conscious efforts to obtain information about durable goods or those associated with high financial or social risk. For example, Putsis & Srinivasan (1994) modeled the search patterns of new car buyers. Leong (1993), on the other hand, examined information search for low-involvement goods among Hong Kong consumers, and Grewal & Marmorstein (1994) examined the amount of price search that takes place as a function of the absolute size of the price of an item. The effects of information type (i.e. search versus experience attributes) on search behavior were examined by Wright & Lynch (1995). Cole & Balasubramanian (1993) found that the elderly were less likely than the young to search for nutritional information. Much of this work now takes place using computer simulations (e.g. Coupey 1994), and this trend is likely to continue. Web site navigation is a natural area for future research.

MEMORY Alba et al (1991) suggested that memory has had a subordinate role in theorizing about consumer decision processes because the majority of this research has focused on advertising effects rather than on choice behavior. This continued to be true in the last several years, but the impact of memory was felt in other areas, such as brand equity (Keller 1993, Loken & Roedder John 1993), and consideration set formation (e.g. Hutchinson et al 1994, Kardes et al 1993). Broniarczyk & Alba (1994a), for example, found that brand-specific associations moderate the well-documented effects of brand affect and product category similarity on consumer evaluations of brand extensions.

Much work on memory continued to revolve around factors that affect memory for advertising. Friestad & Thorson (1993) examined variables, such as encoding strategy, that affect ad retrieval. Although it is generally thought that advertising clutter reduces recall, Brown & Rothschild (1993) found that consumer memory remained steady or improved as number of ads increased.

Singh et al (1994) found that it is better for ads to have been spaced with a significant (short) time lag when memory is measured after a long (short) delay.

Schmitt et al (1994) examined differences in brand recall as a function of ad modality (and memory mode) for consumers with an alphabetic (e.g. English) versus idiographic (e.g. Chinese) native language. Unnava et al (1994) found that message order affected persuasion only for radio, not print, ads. It was suggested that this results from a first-in first-out retrieval strategy used only in the auditory mode. Schmitt et al (1993) reported that congruency among print ad elements facilitates consumer memory. Kellaris et al (1993) also examined the notion of ad memory and congruency but in the context of whether background music evokes message-congruent thoughts.

Attitudes

Research on attitude structure, formation, and change remained a dominant focus, with theoretical models borrowed from social psychology applied and extended in the consumer behavior domain. The uniqueness of the consumer context is illustrated by Friestad & Wright's (1994) persuasion knowledge model. They suggest that knowledge about persuasion agents' goals and tactics can influence attitudes, and that researchers need to incorporate this factor into their models. Relatedly, Kover (1995) reports that even copywriters hold implicit theories of how their ads persuade consumers.

An important issue concerns whether attitudes are cognitive or affective in nature. Fishbein & Middlestadt (1995) argue in favor of the traditional cognitive or belief-based models and suggest that other, more recent models (e.g. mere exposure, affective transfer, peripheral routes) may be the result of methodological artifacts. In contrast, Herr (1995) argues that Fishbein's theory of reasoned action, widely adopted by consumer researchers, is not falsifiable and may apply only to high-involvement purchases.

ATTITUDE FORMATION AND PERSUASION Advertising messages differ from other messages examined in social psychology in that they are more complex, have a persuasion goal, and often contain both verbal and visual elements. Much work on persuasion in advertising applies the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo 1981, Chaiken 1980) or extends one of the central tenets of the model. Haugtvedt & Wegener (1994) offered extent of message-relevant elaboration as a moderator of order effects (primacy vs recency) in persuasion. Meyers-Levy & Peracchio (1995) showed that use of color in an ad improves persuasion only when consumers have the ability (processing resources) to process the message, while Pham (1996) challenged the prevailing view that diminished ability increases reliance on an ad's peripheral cues. Heath et al (1994) found that peripheral ad cues, such as spokesperson fame

and copy vividness, influenced attitudes only in competitive settings. This research has also found that peripheral cues can be processed elaborately and be effective even when involvement is high. Further support for this notion comes from Li & Wyer (1994) and Maheswaran (1994) who examined country-of-origin as an extrinsic cue.

Peracchio & Meyers-Levy (1994) focused on images in advertising and found that cropping objects irrelevant to verbal ad claims enhanced product evaluations of subjects motivated to process the ad. Burnkrant & Unnava (1995) found that the use of self-referencing in ads (e.g. "You know that...") increased message elaboration and persuasion when message arguments were strong. Meyers-Levy & Peracchio (1996) found that, for subjects motivated to attend to an ad, a moderate increase in self-referencing enhances persuasion, whereas an extreme increase undermines it. Research has also focused on attitude toward the advertisement (e.g. Tripp et al 1994).

CONDITIONING Classical conditioning theory suggests that the repeated pairing of a neutral stimulus (such as an ad or brand) with a stimulus known to elicit a desired response (such as pleasant music) will result in a transfer of affect from the latter to the former. While there had been disagreement in the field over whether prior studies had demonstrated conditioning effects or merely demand artifacts, Janiszewski & Warlop (1993) found evidence for classical conditioning effects, reporting that they also increased attention and transferred meaning. Kim et al (1996) found that brand attitudes can be conditioned not only through direct affect transfer but also through the formation of inferential beliefs.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR Instead of measuring the relationship between attitudes and actual purchase or usage, most research examines purchase intent. Lacher & Mizerski (1994), for example, found that different types of affective responses to music were related to purchase intent. Results from Morwitz et al (1993) suggest that measuring purchase intent is reactive—asking questions about intention to buy increased purchase likelihood, but asking those with low levels of intent several times about their intention to buy decreased purchase likelihood.

Some research examined actual behavior. Rook & Fisher (1995) found that impulse buying was affected by normative beliefs about its appropriateness. Smith (1993) examined how advertising attitudes and brand beliefs influence brand attitudes after product trial.

Affect

AFFECT AS INDEPENDENT VARIABLE Affect as an independent variable has been most commonly investigated in terms of the impact of mood on consumer

behavior. Consumers in a positive mood were found to engage in more variety-seeking behaviors except when negative product features were made salient (Kahn & Isen 1993). In a study of stereo speakers, Gorn et al (1993) found that good mood improved product evaluations, unless subjects were made aware that music heard on the evaluated product was the source of their mood. Kellaris & Kent (1994) explored specific characteristics of music, such as tempo, tonality, and texture, on consumer affective responses such as pleasure, arousal, and surprise. Swinyard (1993) found that good mood resulted in more positive shopping intentions only among high involvement subjects with a good shopping experience.

Other research has classified affect as a moderator variable. For example, Holbrook & Gardner (1993) found that the emotion of pleasure moderates the relationship between arousal and consumption duration.

AFFECT AS DEPENDENT VARIABLE Much of this research studies affective reactions to advertising. Bagozzi & Moore (1994) found that compared to rational appeals, emotional appeals in public service announcements led to greater negative emotions, greater empathy, and a desire to help. Further, the greater the magnitude of negative emotions, the stronger the empathic response. Positive emotions may influence evaluations via simple decision heuristics, whereas negative emotions may motivate detailed analysis of the event (Murry & Dacin 1996).

Other research has examined measurement of affect and changes in affect over time. The warmth monitor is an example of a continuous measure of emotional reactions where respondents viewing an ad move a pencil line steadily down the page and to the right when warmth is experienced (Aaker et al 1986). Abeele & Maclachlan (1994) found this measure to be reliable and proposed measuring variations in warmth over different ad segments rather than using the entire ad as the stimulus.

Choice

HEURISTICS AND BIASES Contrary to standard economic theory, which assumes people engage in fully rational, optimizing choice behavior, behavioral decision theory suggests that consumers often use a number of simplifying decision rules or heuristics. Mazumdar & Jun (1993), for example, found that consumers evaluate multiple price decreases more favorably than single price decreases, and a single price increase more favorably than multiple price increases, in accord with Thaler's work (1985) on mental accounting. In a similar vein, Yadav (1994) examined the effects of anchoring and adjustment on evaluations of product bundles. Simonson et al (1993) showed how irrelevant preference arguments bias consumer choice. Heath et al (1995) examined the

effects of stating discounts in percentage versus absolute dollar terms. Research has also investigated the impact of new brand entry on brand preferences (e.g. Heath & Chatterjee 1995, Lehmann & Pan 1994), and of number and type of product features on brand choice and judgment (e.g. Nowlis & Simonson 1996). Sethuraman et al (1994) analyzed consumers' use of brand versus attribute-based processing strategies when consumers use cutoff decision rules. Additional research is needed to develop theoretical explanations for the heuristic strategies uncovered to date.

Interestingly, a backlash to this line of work has become evident, with several articles focusing on how supposedly nonoptimal heuristic strategies can, in fact, be quite appropriate and optimizing in given situations. Wernerfelt (1995), for example, demonstrates how the compromise effect can be a fully rational decision process when understood in terms of how consumers use market data to infer utilities. West et al (1996) demonstrated that consumers exhibit more consistent preferences when provided with a consumption vocabulary, and Kahn & Baron (1995) found that although consumers do not want to use compensatory decision processes when choosing high-stakes products (such as financial investments or medical procedures), they do want their agents/advisers to do so. Baumgartner (1995) showed how consumers' prior expectations can actually improve the accuracy of covariation judgments and hence that prior expectations should not necessarily be considered biasing or dysfunctional.

VARIETY SEEKING AND DECISION TIMING Greenleaf & Lehmann (1995) classified the reasons people delay making consumer decisions. In the related area of variety-seeking behavior, Menon & Kahn (1995) found that behavior is moderated by the amount of stimulation provided by other sources in a given choice context.

SATISFACTION Research on consumer satisfaction has tried to pin down its determinants and to differentiate it from other constructs, such as evaluation. Spreng et al (1996) proposed a new model of satisfaction that builds on the well-established expectation disconfirmation paradigm by including attribute satisfaction, information satisfaction, and the impact of marketing communications in a single model. Arnould & Price (1993) examined satisfaction derived from white-water rafting and described the experience as one of hedonic consumption; they also suggested a weak link between expectations and satisfaction. Ostrom & Iacobucci (1995) suggest customer satisfaction is based on different attributes for different types of services. Mohr & Henson (1996) demonstrated greater customer satisfaction when employees are of the expected gender in gender-typed jobs. Johnson et al (1995) proposed that expect-

tations and satisfaction are dynamic in nature. Gardial et al (1994) differentiated satisfaction from postpurchase evaluation experiences and found that consumers understand the two constructs differently. However, consumers' interpretations of satisfaction do not appear to differ from their evaluations of service quality (Iacobucci et al 1995).

Factors Affecting Information Processing, Attitudes, and Choice

INTRINSIC FACTORS *Age* Young consumers have received considerable attention (cf Peracchio 1993). Macklin (1994, 1996) examined the effects of ad visuals on children's recall of product information and found most effective encoding for dual-mode messages (audio and visual). Macklin (1994) and Gregan-Paxton & John (1995) found developmental differences when comparing preschoolers with school age children. Antismoking (vs control) advertising was found to decrease adolescent nonsmokers' ratings of a smoker's common sense, personal appeal, maturity, and glamour (Pechmann & Rameshwar 1994), suggesting that nonsmoking adolescents are well aware of the dangers of smoking.

Although the population is aging, little research has examined elderly consumers. An exception is work by Tepper (1994) that studied how and why age segmentation cues inhibit responsiveness to discount offerings made to the elderly. Her findings support a stage model such that consumers progress over time through phases of responsiveness to "senior citizen" labeling. Holbrook has taken a different perspective on age by examining nostalgia preferences (1993, Holbrook & Schindler 1994). This research suggests that age and nostalgia proneness (an individual difference variable) act independently to influence nostalgia preferences and that consumers tend to form enduring preferences during a sensitive period in their lives. Some researchers argue that cognitive age (i.e. how old one feels), rather than chronological age, is the important construct (Auken & Barry 1995).

Gender and ethnicity Iacobucci & Ostrom (1993) found that women base their evaluations of services more on relational aspects of the encounter, whereas men base their evaluation more on core aspects of the service and goals achieved.

Research on minority groups has been scarce. Deshpande & Stayman (1994) found that members of minority groups consider an ad spokesperson from their own ethnic group to be more trustworthy and that this leads to more positive brand attitudes. Webster (1994), using Hispanic couples living in the United States, reported that at lower levels of cultural assimilation (as measured by language spoken in the home), husbands were more likely to dominate the decision processes. Some work suggests that numerical minorities in con-

sumption settings (e.g. restaurants) adjust their distinctiveness by reducing perceived dissimilarities rather than increasing perceived similarities between themselves and nonminority members (Wooten 1995).

Personality Research in the area of personality has focused on defining and measuring traits such as materialism (Hunt et al 1996), material possession attachment (Klein et al 1995), vanity (Netemeyer et al 1995), deal proneness (Lichtenstein et al 1995), and compulsiveness (Faber et al 1995). For example, Lichtenstein et al (1995) found that deal proneness is domain specific (e.g. coupon proneness vs sale proneness). Other work has investigated the effects of these variables on attributions, judgments, and choice (e.g. Hunt et al 1996).

Values can also be viewed as a personality variable. Research suggests that values differ across countries and can predict behaviors such as tipping (Lynn & Zinkhan 1993). One stream of research argues that the value of possessions resides in the public and private meaning they have for consumers and that materialistic consumers can be perceived, as well as perceive other people, in terms of their possessions (Hunt et al 1996, Richins 1994).

Perceptions Consumer perceptions of price and risk have been examined. Krishna & Johar (1996) found that offering different deal prices over time affects perceptions of deal frequency, average deal price, and price consumers are willing to pay for the brand. Alba et al (1994) found that frequency of price advantage exerted a dominating influence beyond that of price expectations (i.e. prior beliefs) to influence consumer price perceptions.

Perceived risk has been examined in terms of its antecedents (Grewal et al 1994, Jacoby et al 1994) and consequences (Dowling & Staelin 1994, Morris et al 1994). Grewal et al found that the effect of price on performance risk perceptions is greater when the message is framed negatively (vs positively) and when source credibility is low (vs high). Muthukrishnan (1995) found that decision ambiguity creates advantages for incumbent (vs attack) brands because of overconfidence in the superiority of incumbent brands and consumers' risk aversion. Perceived risk is an important construct that affects risk-handling activities such as search behavior, especially when product-specific risk (an element of perceived risk) is greater than the acceptable risk (Dowling & Staelin 1994).

EXTRINSIC FACTORS *Family, interpersonal, and group influences* Family appears to be an important influence on purchase incidence and choice (e.g. Beatty & Talpade 1994). Some research (Schaninger & Danko 1993) has examined family life-cycle stages. Wilkes (1995) validated the household life-cycle concept by showing that as households pass from one stage of the life cycle to another, their expenditure patterns change.

A number of studies examined interpersonal and group influences from a social influence viewpoint. For example, Howard et al (1995) found that interpersonal influence measured via compliance was greater when the source remembers the target's name, which is perceived as a compliment. Other research on interpersonal and group influences relied on a negotiation paradigm. For example, Corfman & Lehmann (1993) found that negotiators may be influenced by issues other than their own gain (e.g. the opponent's outcomes) during negotiating processes.

Social roles and identity Otnes et al (1993) suggested that gift-givers express different social roles in relation to different gift recipients. Kleine et al (1993) suggested that consumers are attracted to products congruent with their own social identity or role. Research also examined changing social roles and their impact on consumption (Lavin 1995, Oropesa 1993).

Culture Within the United States, Hispanic consumers perceive advertisers of ads that are partly or fully in Spanish as more sensitive to Hispanic culture and prefer these to English ads (Koslow et al 1994). Research also focused on the relation of culture to consumption (Sirsi et al 1996) and suggested that intracultural variation (e.g. between experts and novices) is important.

Source credibility and reputation Some research has examined the consequences of source credibility (e.g. Grewal & Marmorstein 1994). Johar (1996) found contrasting effects of corrective advertising on brand vs advertiser beliefs and attitudes depending on the advertiser's reputation.

Type of claim Much research has focused on the effectiveness of different types of appeals such as fear, comparison, and humor for different product categories. Keller & Block (1996) found that the inverted-U relationship between amount of fear and persuasion is driven by elaboration. Grewal et al (1996) also invoked a processing interpretation to explain why a consumer's response to a semantic price cue (e.g. compare at \$x) depends on the discount size. Stern (1994) contrasted classical TV advertising from vignette advertising and proposed that the two have different effects on consumer attributions and on empathy vs sympathy. Wansink & Ray (1996) differentiated between product-comparison ads and situation-comparison ads and found that the latter were more effective than the former in increasing brand usage in the target situation. Wansink (1994) also showed that brand usage could be increased by encouraging consumers to substitute the brand in situations for which it is not normally used through attributes featured in an ad. Malaviya et al (1996) found that ads for cameras featuring attribute-focused pictures resulted in more favorable judgments when presented in the context of competing brands. Crowley & Hoyer (1994) offered an integrative framework of how two-sided

messages including both positive and negative information work and introduced message structure variables such as the amount and order of each type of information, refutation, importance, etc.

Message framing has also been a research focus. The effects of framing and perceived efficacy on message processing were explored by Block & Keller (1995). Darley & Smith (1993) found that objective claims featuring tangible attributes and factual descriptions are more effective than subjective claims.

Researchers also examined advertising from a social viewpoint. Sen & Morwitz (1996) reported that consumer consumption behaviors were affected by a provider's position on a social issue and the manner in which the position was communicated. Several studies have been devoted to "green" advertising and have tried to suggest how support for the environment can be communicated as an impetus to green consumption behaviors (cf *Journal of Advertising*, Summer 1995).

Ad repetition Advertising repetition was found to have positive effects on brand awareness and preference (D'Souza & Rao 1995) and on attitude persistence (Haugtvedt et al 1994). Haugtvedt et al (1994) demonstrated that repeating varied ads resulted in greater resistance to counterattack compared with other types of repetition and single exposure.

Context Studies have examined how various contextual factors, such as time, service quality, and product form, affect consumer perceptions and behavior. Leclerc et al (1995) found that consumers are risk-averse with regard to losses of time (vs risk seeking for money losses according to prospect theory) and the marginal value of time was higher for shorter (vs longer) waiting times. Hui & Tse (1996) contrasted the effects of waiting duration information (i.e. expected length of wait) with that of queuing information (i.e. position in queue) on acceptability of the wait and affective responses to the wait and service evaluation. Taylor (1994) found that delays do affect service evaluations and this relationship is mediated by negative affective reactions to the delay. Zeithaml et al (1996) suggest that service evaluations are important because of their relationship to customer behaviors that signal whether a customer will remain with or defect from a company.

Product-related context effects include propositions about how product form (Bloch 1995) and package size (Wansink 1996) affect consumers' psychological and behavioral responses. The decision making context—in-store vs at home—was also identified as a key moderator of the relation between type of semantic cue claim and consumer response (Grewal et al 1996). Finally, exposure to political poll results was itself found to affect voter expectations about election outcome, attitudes to candidates, voting intentions, and choice (Morwitz & Pluzinski 1996).

PUBLIC POLICY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Along with the emergence of consumer behavior as an arena meriting scholarly attention has come recognition of the role of consumer research when developing and evaluating public policy. While relevant work appears in a variety of sources, the principal outlet for such research is the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*. A ten-year retrospective on public policy articles appearing in this and other journals is provided by Laverie & Murphy (1993).

Labeling Effects

One major interest in this arena is the effects of warning messages. A review by Stewart & Martin (1994) concluded that consumers selectively attend to warning messages, with the principal impact of such messages being informative rather than persuasive. Related research on the effectiveness of disclaimer labeling suggests that often such labeling is not even attended to; hence, it may never reach being informative (Jacoby & Szybillo 1994). McCarthy et al (1995) provide a thoughtful discussion of criteria for product warnings.

Much attention has focused on the alcohol warning labels federally mandated in 1988. An overview of findings is provided by Hilton (1993). Research has examined warnings on alcoholic beverage containers (Laughery et al 1993), in magazine and television advertising (Barlow & Wogalter 1993), and in posters (Fenaughty & MacKinnon 1993, Kalsher et al 1993). Also examined have been cognitive responses as mediators of label effectiveness (Andrews et al 1993), changes in public attitudes (Kaskutas 1993), and US-Canadian comparisons (Graves 1993). While one study examined the effects of alcohol warning labels during pregnancy (Hankin et al 1993), another linked risk perception to product use (Morris et al 1994). Studies have also looked at alcohol and tobacco cues in daytime soap operas (Diener 1993), and recovering addicts' responses to the cinematic portrayal of alcohol and drug addiction (Hirschman & McGriff 1995).

Food labeling issues are thoughtfully reviewed by Ippolito & Mathios (1993). Research has examined the effects of various nutrition labeling formats (Burton et al 1994) and how providing summary information affects the usage of nutrition information (Viswanathan 1994). Ippolito & Mathios (1994) find producer claims to be an important source of information for consumers. Federal Trade Commission policy toward food advertising is discussed by Beales (1995), and the complex problems associated with the labeling of new biotech foods are discussed by Miller & Huttner (1995) and Douthitt (1995).

Health Care

Moorman & Matulich (1993) developed and tested a model of the effects of various consumer characteristics on information acquisition and health maintenance behaviors. Their survey provided mixed results regarding the importance of motivation in this process. Roth (1994) modeled how to enhance consumer involvement in health care. Sofaer (1994) discusses the need for objective, salient, user-friendly information for consumers making health care decisions. While Franzak et al (1995) discuss how to improve health care delivery to rural residents, Gooding (1994) studied when and why consumers bypass local hospitals in favor of more distant facilities. Scammon et al (1994) studied how to increase the supply of health care professionals for the medically underserved. While communicating with consumers is a thread running through many of these articles, it is a principal focus of Frankenberger & Sukhdial's (1994) paper on segmenting teens for AIDS preventive behaviors and Hoy's (1994) discussion of what needs to be done when prescription drugs are "switched" to over-the-counter status.

Advertising

Advertising is among the most examined issues in the public policy arena (e.g. Johar 1995, 1996). Pollay & Mittal (1993) described the factors, determinants, and segments in consumer criticism of advertising. Williams et al (1995) described a field experiment on racially exclusive real estate advertising, and Bristol et al (1995) discussed racial images in TV advertising. Darley & Smith (1993) tested advertising claim objectivity; "puffery," the other side of the coin, was analyzed by Simonson & Holbrook (1993). Billboard advertising provided the focus for Taylor & Taylor (1994). An enduring focus has been Federal Trade Commission policies and actions in regard to advertising. Simonson (1995) and Preston (1995) discussed the FTC's "clear and conspicuous" standard. Andrews & Maronick (1995) discussed the treatment of consumer research in *FTC v. Stouffer*. Details of the deceptive advertising research proffered in *FTC v. Kraft* were debated by the researchers themselves, Jacoby & Szybillo (1995), and Stewart (1995), with additional commentary provided by Sudman (1995).

CONCLUSION

In an earlier review, Jacoby (1976, p. 345) concluded: "As much as 85% of what had been published under the rubric of consumer psychology prior to 1968 was rather low level and of questionable worth. At most, probably only 50% of the 1975 crop of articles belongs in this category. The amount of truly 'good' work...is certainly increasing. Surely the next octennium will witness

even greater strides.” It did; yet considerable room for improvement remains. Despite a notable increase in the proper application of experimental design, it is often coupled with a tendency to eschew a priori theorizing in favor of constructing a posteriori hypotheses to fit the data. Relying on tests of a single product, too small a proportion of the research reflects a concern with generalizability. Other research generalizes from tests of hypothetical products neglecting external validity. Too small a proportion of the work employs multiple measures of the independent or dependent variables or provides data on the validity and/or reliability of the measures used. Much work seems obsessed with significance testing, unmindful of its limitations for constructing science and arriving at practical findings (cf Cohen 1990, 1994; Schmidt 1996). In the senior author’s opinion, these problems pale in comparison to that noted below.

Mindful of Alberts & Shine’s (1994) important message, our concluding observations pertain to what has been transpiring in the field of consumer research regarding ethics during the period encompassed by this review. Respectively, the presidents of the National Academy of Sciences and National Institutes of Medicine, Alberts & Shine (1994, p. 1660) write: “The responsibility for scientific conduct falls on all parts of the research community, including...*the leaders of scientific societies...*” (italics supplied). Consumer researchers belonging to the American Psychological Association are required to adhere to and be accountable under APA’s Code of Ethics. However, consumer psychology and consumer behavior are studied by researchers from a great many disciplines, the large majority of whom are not APA members. Many belong to no organization having a detailed code of researcher ethics.¹ Yet, because the field focuses on understanding consumer behavior and because its findings may be used to influence such behavior, consumer researchers bear a special responsibility for research integrity and ethical conduct.

Now nearly 30 years old and 2,000 members strong, the Association for Consumer Research has emerged as the preeminent scholarly organization in the field. It has no Code of Ethics—and is witnessing controversy in this regard (e.g. Jacoby 1995). At its October 1995 Board of Directors meeting, its Executive Secretary acknowledged having received more than 40 complaints over the past several years regarding ethical misconduct involving ACR members. In each and every instance, given no Code of Ethics, nothing was done. ACR surveyed its members and found approximately 83% wanted ACR to prepare

¹Although most consumer researchers tend to belong to several organizations, the majority are members of the American Marketing Association. A professional organization of more than 50,000, less than 2,500 of whom are scholars, that organization’s one-page Code of Ethics focuses on marketing practice and contains only a few sentences pertaining to researchers.

and subscribe to some statement on ethics. Yet in March 1997, ACR's leaders sent a Mission Statement to its members that explicitly excluded ethics from the organization's purview. The reasons for this omission were given as follows:

First, any detailed code would attempt to anticipate the specific types of ethical issues that arise given the topics and methods employed. Because consumer researchers are so diverse in their disciplinary roots, it would be extremely difficult to compile an adequately exhaustive list, and harder still to get consensus among the members in the individual provisions of such a list. Second, ACR is not equipped to be in the business of enforcement. We lack the financial and human resources for handling the legal complexities of even a single ethics case per year. We view ethics to be the responsibility of the individual ACR member....

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For scientists, the logic is strange; it implies that researchers from different disciplines would find it difficult to agree that misrepresenting one's findings, misrepresenting the work of others, plagiarism, etc, are examples of misconduct that ACR, as the leading scholarly organization in the field, will not tolerate among its members. As for lacking the resources, unexplained is why other scholarly organizations of similar size, scope, membership, background, and resources (e.g. The American Association of Public Opinion Research) are able to develop and have their members subscribe to a code of research ethics. Most ACR members belong to several scholarly organizations. Although "bystander intervention" research may explain why ACR feels it need not take a position, it does not absolve it of its responsibilities as a scholarly society nor render its position defensible (see Alberts & Shine 1994). The matter would not be so critical were ACR not considered by most to be the preeminent organization in the field.

Thus, while the quality of consumer research seems much improved, without a Code of Ethics and enforcement procedures to hold consumer researchers accountable, questions may be raised regarding the integrity of consumer research. It remains to be seen what the next quadrennium will bring.

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