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and Fun**



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# The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun

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This paper argues for the recognition of important experiential aspects of consumption. Specifically, a general framework is constructed to represent typical consumer behavior variables. Based on this paradigm, the prevailing information processing model is contrasted with an experiential view that focuses on the symbolic, hedonic, and esthetic nature of consumption. This view regards the consumption experience as a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun.

In its brief history, the study of consumer behavior has evolved from an early emphasis on rational choice (microeconomics and classical decision theory) to a focus on apparently irrational buying needs (some motivation research) to the use of logical flow models of bounded rationality (e.g., Howard and Sheth 1969). The latter approach has deepened into what is often called the "information processing model" (Bettman 1979). The information processing model regards the consumer as a logical thinker who solves problems to make purchasing decisions. The information processing perspective has become so ubiquitous in consumer research that, like fish in water, many researchers may be relatively unaware of its pervasiveness.

Recently, however, researchers have begun to question the hegemony of the information processing perspective on the grounds that it may neglect important consumption phenomena (e.g., Olshavsky and Granbois 1979; Sheth 1979). Ignored phenomena include various playful leisure activities, sensory pleasures, daydreams, esthetic enjoyment, and emotional responses. Consumption has begun to be seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun encompassed by what we call the "experiential view." This experiential perspective is phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primarily subjective state of con-

sciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and esthetic criteria. Recognition of these important aspects of consumption is strengthened by contrasting the information processing and experiential views.<sup>1</sup>

## CONTRASTING VIEWS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Our bases for contrasting the information processing and experiential views appear in the Figure. This diagram is not all-inclusive. It simply represents some key variables typically considered in logical flow models of consumer behavior. In brief, various environmental and consumer inputs (products, resources) are processed by an intervening response system (cognition-affect-behavior) that generates output consequences which, when appraised against criteria, result in a learning feedback loop. Individual differences, search activity, type of involvement, and task definition affect the criteria by which output consequences are evaluated.

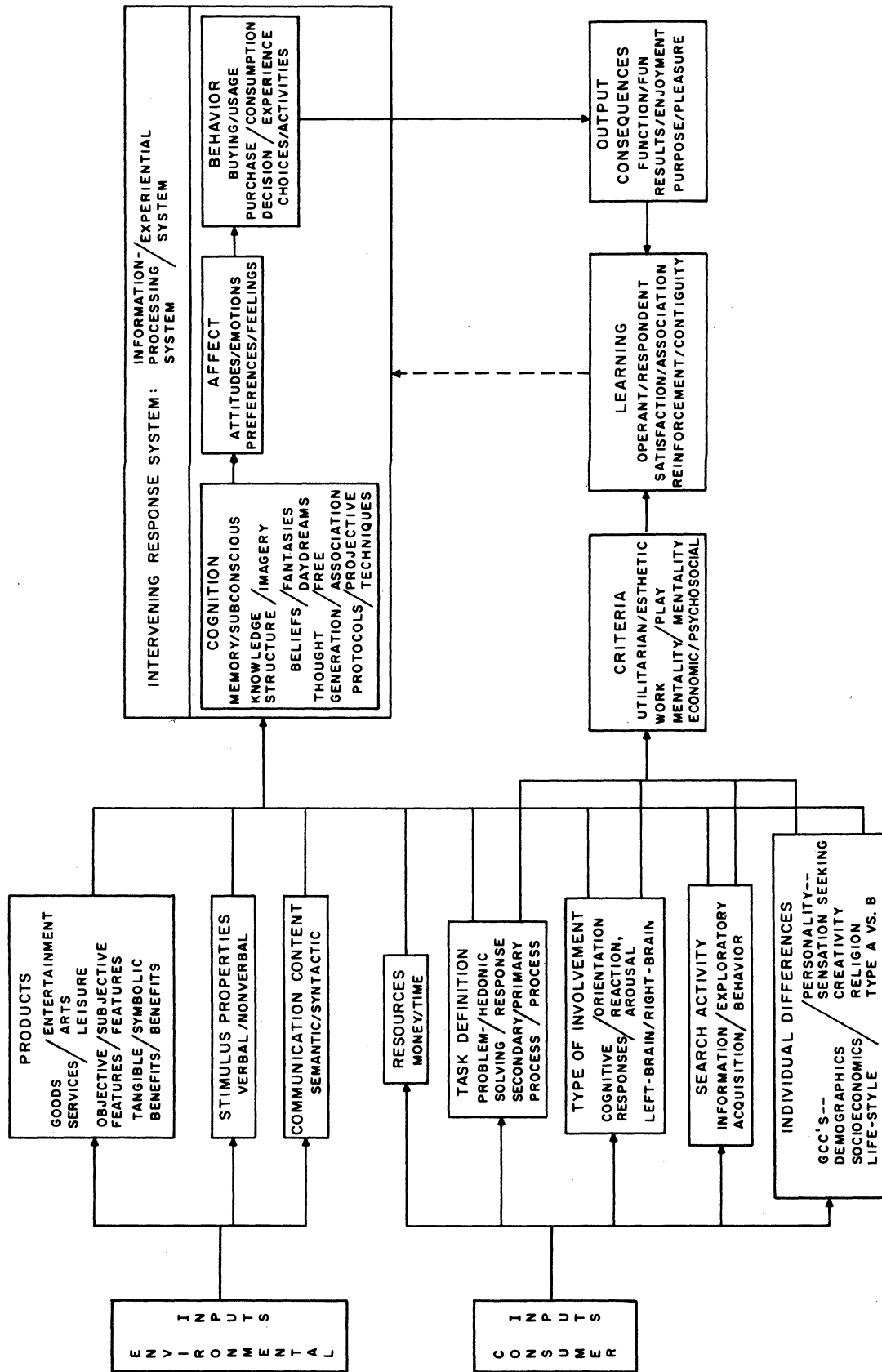
Though the Figure neglects some variables that have interested consumer researchers,<sup>2</sup> it reflects the general viewpoint embodied by most popular consumer behavior models. Moreover, the diagram facilitates the intended comparison between approaches by distinguishing between

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout the discussion, most arguments are supported by one or two key references. Much more extensive documentation appears in earlier versions of the paper that may be obtained from the authors.

<sup>2</sup>For example, the Figure omits the effects of general economic conditions and related expectations, some elements of the marketing mix (e.g., channels of distribution), social influence through reference groups, perceived risk and other conflict-related phenomena, joint decision making in households, and considerations of economic externalities or social welfare.

FIGURE  
 CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE INFORMATION-PROCESSING AND EXPERIENTIAL VIEWS  
 OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR



NOTE: The slash marks indicate a comparison between the information-processing view (left side) and the experiential perspective (right side).

the phenomena of primary interest to the information processing perspective (left side of slash marks) and those of central concern to the experiential view (right side of slash marks). In the following sections, we discuss these distinctions as they pertain to (1) environmental inputs, (2) consumer inputs, (3) intervening responses, and (4) output consequences, criteria, and learning effects.

## ENVIRONMENTAL INPUTS

### Products

Much consumer research has focused on the tangible benefits of conventional goods and services (soft drinks, toothpaste, automobiles) that perform utilitarian functions based on relatively objective features (calories, flouride, miles per gallon). By contrast, the experiential perspective explores the symbolic meanings of more subjective characteristics (cheerfulness, sociability, elegance).

All products—no matter how mundane—may carry a symbolic meaning (Levy 1959, 1980). In some cases, the symbolic role is especially rich and salient: for example, entertainment, the arts, and leisure activities encompass symbolic aspects of consumption behavior that make them particularly fertile ground for research. These areas have recently received increased attention from consumer researchers concerned with products like musical recordings, singers, fashion designs, architectural styles, paintings, museum exhibitions, novels, concerts, performing arts series, and associated patterns of leisure activity (Hirschman and Holbrook 1981). The growth of research on leisure, entertainment, and the arts reflects a shift of attention toward the experiential side of the distinctions shown in the Figure.

Methodologically, this shift promotes certain advantages. One benefit stems from the tendency for leisure, entertainment, and arts products to prompt high levels of interest and involvement among their target markets. The growing body of work in these areas suggests that respondents can typically provide meaningful data on perceptions and preferences across a broad array of relevant objects or activities. Hence, applications of multivariate methods may be more valid with this type of product than with some low-involvement consumer nondurables, such as detergents or canned peas, for which consumers may be unable to make valid perceptual or affective distinctions among more than a few different brands. For this reason, many of our available statistical procedures—especially those directed toward intraindividual analysis across brands—may actually be more appropriate within the context of experiential consumption than for the frequently purchased nondurables to which they have typically been applied.

### Stimulus Properties

Traditional consumer research paradigms have concentrated on product attributes that lend themselves to verbal descriptions. Both conjoint analysis and multiattribute models, for example, have relied heavily on designs that

make use of verbal stimuli. However, many products project important nonverbal cues that must be seen, heard, tasted, felt, or smelled to be appreciated properly. Indeed, in many consumption situations (viewing a movie, eating at a restaurant, playing tennis), several sensory channels operate simultaneously. Yet scant research on nonverbal multisensory properties has been reported in the literature. Accordingly, the experiential perspective supports a more energetic investigation of multisensory psychophysical relationships in consumer behavior.

Turning one's attention from primarily verbal to nonverbal sensory cues requires a very different mode of presenting experimental stimulus objects. While verbal descriptions have often sufficed in conventional research on consumer preferences, an experiential outlook must involve subjects in consumption-like experiences based on real—or at least realistic—product samples.

### Communication Content

Content analyses of communication in consumer research have more often focused on drawing inferences about the source of a message than on explaining its effects (Kassarjian 1977). When the latter perspective has been considered, it has generally involved an information processing orientation toward the study of consumer responses to the semantic aspects of communication content (Shimp and Preston 1981). Focusing on effects attributable to the syntactic aspects of message content—that is, their structure and style—is more germane to the experiential perspective.

In other disciplines, message syntax has often been found to exert a direct effect on hedonic response. This concept is central, for example, to the so-called "Wundt curve" and its relationship to collative stimulus properties such as uncertainty or complexity (Berlyne 1971). This information theoretic perspective has been applied at length in analyses of emotional responses to music and other art forms by researchers exploring its relevance to the esthetic process (Platt 1970).

Work on syntactic structure in consumer research is less well developed. However, Taylor's (1953) "Cloze" technique has been used to measure subjective verbal uncertainty in English prose (Wallendorf, Zinkhan, and Zinkhan 1981) and advertising copy (Zinkhan and Martin 1981).

## CONSUMER INPUTS

### Resources

In examining the resources that a consumer brings to the exchange transaction, conventional research has generally focused on monetary income constraints and the effects of prices. In more recent economic analysis, this money-oriented focus has been expanded to acknowledge the fundamental role played by the consumer's allocation of time resources to the "household production function" (Becker 1976). In this view, households both produce and consume

“commodities” that combine inputs of goods and time to maximize overall utility, subject to resource constraints.

The investigation of subjective time resources may help to unravel the mysteries of the psychotemporal expenditures involved in experiential consumption. Studying the nature and allocation of discretionary time deserves high priority. Movement in this direction has appeared in several review articles, in special conference sessions, and in a recent issue of the *JCR* devoted to the subject of time in consumer behavior (March 1981).

### Task Definition

In making assumptions concerning the consumer's task definition, the information processing and experiential perspectives envision different kinds of consumption behavior. The information processing view conjures up an image of the consumer as a problem solver engaged in the goal-directed activities of searching for information, retrieving memory cues, weighing evidence, and arriving at carefully considered judgmental evaluations. Freud called such mental activities “secondary process” thinking. It is “secondary” in the sense that it reflects the way our mental processes function as a result of socialization (Hilgard 1962).

By contrast, the experiential view emphasizes the importance of primary process thinking in accord with the pleasure principle. Primary process thinking involves a task definition oriented toward hedonic response and is “primary” in the sense that it harkens back to the way a baby pursues immediate pleasure or gratification (Hilgard 1962). This type of consumption seeks fun, amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation, and enjoyment. Indeed, the evidence suggests that consumers typically spend the majority of their lives eating, sleeping, chatting with friends, making love, and watching television (Robinson 1977, p. 35). Surely, any meaningful attempt to model such relatively pleasure-oriented consumption must pay attention to its hedonic components.

Regarding consumption as a primary process directed toward the hedonic pursuit of pleasure raises certain methodological issues. These include: (1) the need to develop better measures of hedonic response—especially valid and operational definitions of what constitutes “pleasure”; (2) the fact that hedonic responses are likely to be unusually susceptible to fluctuations across situations, thereby posing problems of reliability and validity; and (3) the difficulty of using available indices of chronic hedonic energy, such as sensation seeking, in the context of explaining acute, volatile, sensory-emotive phenomena. The experiential view performs a useful role by insistently calling attention to these conceptual and methodological problems.

### Type of Involvement

We focus here not on the degree of involvement (low versus high), but rather on its type (engagement of cognitive responses versus orientation reaction involving arousal). Krugman's (1965) early definition of involvement emphasized the tendency to make personal connections between

one's own life and the stimulus, explicitly excluding components such as attention, interest, or excitement. This early view has proven most congenial to information processing proponents, who define involvement in terms of personal relevance or multiplicity of cognitive responses (Leavitt, Greenwald, and Obermiller 1981). Attention, interest, excitement, and so forth bear more directly on the experiential view by emphasizing degree of activation or arousal, with consequent implications for the availability of psychobiological indices (Kroeber-Riel 1979). Krugman's (1971) later work on brain-wave patterns has moved in this direction and thus appears to represent a shift toward the experiential model.

Further, any argument that involvement is primarily a left-brain phenomenon refers implicitly to cognitive responses associated with analytic, logical, problem-oriented cerebration (Hansen 1981). If one referred instead to “involvement” in the sense of the orientation reflex, its arousal component might be more closely associated with right-brain phenomena related to emotion.

The use of psychobiological indices of arousal and the interest in right-brain hemispheric specialization have prompted increased attention from consumer researchers. Numerous problems arise when interpreting the results of these physiological approaches. Ryan (1980) has challenged the construct validity of psychobiological measures. In this light, Olson, Reynolds, and Ray's (1982) findings on psychophysiological advertising effects raise almost as many questions as they answer. Similarly, Hansen and Lundsgaard (1981) have reported rather discouraging convergent validities among various indices of brain lateralization. Taken together, these difficulties point out that work on the physiological components of consumption remains in its infancy and needs further conceptual and methodological development in measures of arousal and hemispheric involvement.

### Search Activity

The nature of the associated search activity is closely tied to involvement issues. Here, proponents of the information processing perspective adopt various strategies for the study of information acquisition. Those inclined toward laboratory methods have developed ingenious techniques to study how cues are acquired (Russo 1978). Meanwhile, survey researchers have investigated the general characteristics of information seekers at the cross-cultural level (Thorelli, Becker, and Engledow 1975).

By contrast, an experiential view of search activity might draw more heavily from the work by psychologists on exploratory behavior (Berlyne 1960). For example, Howard and Sheth (1969) consider stimulus ambiguity, working through arousal, as a determinant of specific exploration via what they call “overt search.” More diversive exploration—such as that involved in exposure to entertainment media—has sometimes been explained as a form of play, as in the “ludic” theory of mass communication (Huizinga 1970; Stephenson 1967).

Diversive exploration via the entertainment and arts media appears to be a context well suited to the extension of Berlyne's (1960) work on exploratory behavior. Indeed, toward the end of his career, Berlyne (1971) devoted increased attention to the experimental study of esthetics, focusing particularly on a proposed nonmonotonic relationship between stimulus complexity and hedonic value. Aspects of his approach may be usefully applied to an investigation of the consumption experience. However, in making such extensions, three methodological refinements appear critical: (1) esthetic stimuli should be designed to vary in complexity over a range broad enough to permit the full nonmonotonic relationship to appear; (2) the success of this experimental manipulation should be checked by obtaining a measure of subjective uncertainty analogous to the Cloze-based index described earlier; and (3) the subjective uncertainty measure should be treated as an intervening variable that mediates the effect of stimulus complexity on hedonic response.

### Individual Differences

For some time, consumer researchers' interest in individual differences has focused on general customer characteristics such as demographics, socioeconomic status, and psychographics. The relatively poor performance of personality measures in predicting consumer behavior has encouraged their gradual abandonment in favor of the subcategory of psychographics known as life style variables. Recently, in a move toward the experiential view, the concept of life style has been generalized to include more explicit consideration of the use of time (Lee and Ferber 1977).

The investigation of experiential consumption appears to offer considerable scope for the revival of personality and allied variables, such as subculture, though the specific dimensions investigated will almost certainly differ from those of interest to the information processing view. Some experientially relevant personality constructs include:

- *Sensation seeking* (Zuckerman 1979), a variable likely to affect a consumer's tendency to enjoy more complex entertainment, to be fashion conscious, to prefer spicy and crunchy foods, to play games, and to use drugs
- *Creativity* and related variables tied to variety-, novelty-, or arousal-seeking (Raju 1980)
- *Religious world view* (Hirschman 1982), a dimension that affects daydreaming as well as other forms of sensation and pleasure seeking
- *Type A versus Type B personality* (Friedman and Rosenman 1974), a dimension closely linked with perceived time pressure and therefore likely to affect the way one allocates psychotemporal expenditures among work and leisure activities

Research on individual differences in experiential consumption has already found contrasts among religions and nationalities in the types of entertainment preferred, he-

donic motives for engaging in leisure activities, and resulting levels of enthusiasm expressed. These ethnic differences appear to depend on intervening variables such as use of imagery, sensation seeking, and the desire to escape reality.

## INTERVENING RESPONSE SYSTEM

### Cognition

Due to its cognitively oriented perspective, the information processing approach has focused on memory and related phenomena: the consumer's cognitive apparatus is viewed as a complex knowledge structure embodying intricately interwoven subsystems of beliefs referred to as "memory schemas" or "semantic networks" (Olson 1980). Such knowledge structures include what Freudians call "manifest" content—those ideas that are accessible to introspection and therefore form the substance of conscious thought patterns.

By contrast, the experiential perspective focuses on cognitive processes that are more subconscious and private in nature. Interest centers on consumption-related flights of fancy involving pictorial imagery (Richardson 1969), fantasies (Klinger 1971), and daydreams (Singer 1966). Such material often masks embarrassing or socially sensitive ideas and perceptions. This "latent" content does not appear in overt verbal reports, either because it has been repressed or because its anxiety-provoking nature encourages disguise at a subconscious level.

In its treatment of cognitive phenomena, particularly material of a subconscious nature, the experiential view borders somewhat on motivation research (e.g., Dichter 1960). However, there are two methodological differences. First, we believe that much relevant fantasy life and many key symbolic meanings lie just below the threshold of consciousness—that is, that they are subconscious or preconscious as opposed to unconscious—and that they can be retrieved and reported if sufficiently indirect methods are used to overcome sensitivity barriers. Second, we advocate the use of structured projective techniques that employ quantifiable questionnaire items applicable to samples large enough to permit statistical hypothesis testing.

### Affect

It might be argued that, in the area of affect, the conventional information processing approach has been studying experiential consumption all along. After all, the traditional expectancy value models ( $\Sigma E \cdot V$ ) conform in spirit to Bentham's felicific calculus. Fundamentally, however, the information processing perspective emphasizes only one aspect of hedonic response—namely, like or dislike of a particular brand (attitude) or its rank relative to other brands (preference). This attitudinal component represents only a tiny subset of the emotions and feelings of interest to the experiential view.

The full gamut of relevant emotions includes such diverse feelings as love, hate, fear, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, anger, disgust, sadness, sympathy, lust, ecstasy, greed, guilt, elation, shame, and awe. This sphere of human experience has long been neglected by psychologists, who are just beginning to expand early work on arousal in order to develop systematic and coherent models of emotion (Plutchik 1980).

Such psychological conceptualizations of emotion are still in their seminal stages and, understandably, have not yet cross-pollinated the work of consumer researchers. Yet, it is clear that emotions form an important substrate of consumption and that their systematic investigation is a key requirement for the successful application of the experiential perspective.

## Behavior

At the behavioral level, traditional consumer research has focused almost exclusively on the choice process that generates purchase decisions culminating in actual buying behavior. Thus, brand purchase is typically viewed as the most important behavioral outcome of the information processing model.

A quarter of a century ago, however, Alderson (1957) drew a sharp distinction between buying and consuming. This contrast was further elaborated in Boyd and Levy's (1963) discussion of the consumption system with its emphasis on brand-usage behavior. By focusing on the configuration of activities involved in consumption, this viewpoint calls attention to the experiences with a product that one gains by actually consuming it.

Few consumer researchers have followed this lead, although the study of product usage and related activities is clearly a requisite cornerstone to the development of the experiential model. The importance of such study is reinforced by the emphasis on entertainment-, arts-, and leisure-related offerings, which often depend more on the allocation of time than of money. Given the operation of the pleasure principle in multisensory gratification, exciting fantasies, and cathected emotions, one's purchase decision is obviously only a small component in the constellation of events involved in the overall consumption experience.

In exploring the nature of that overall experience, the approach envisioned here departs from the traditional positivist focus on directly observable buying behavior and devotes increased attention to the mental events surrounding the act of consumption. The investigation of these mental events requires a willingness to deal with the purely subjective aspects of consciousness. This exploration of consumption as conscious experience must be rigorous and scientific, but the methodology should include introspective reports, rather than relying exclusively on overt behavioral measures. The necessary methodological shift thus leads toward a more phenomenological approach—i.e., “a free

commentary on whatever cognitive material the subject is aware of” (Hilgard 1980).<sup>3</sup>

A recent state-of-the-art review of theory, method, and application in the study of conscious experience has been provided by Singer (1981/1982). Comparable approaches in conventional consumer research would include problem-solving protocols, thought-generation techniques, and similar ideation-reporting procedures. It remains for the experiential perspective to extend this cognitively oriented work toward the investigation of *all* aspects of the consumption experience. In such a phenomenological approach, experience is “acknowledged as a part of the psychological universe and addressed as an object of study” (Koch 1964, p. 34):

The phenomenologist . . . accepts, as the subject-matter of his inquiry, all data of experience . . . Colors and sounds are data; so are impressions of distance and duration; so are feelings of attraction and repulsion; so are yearnings and fears, ecstasies and disillusionments; . . . These are data, given in experience, to be accepted as such and wondered about (MacLeod 1964, p. 51).

MacLeod's statement comes close to encapsulating our central theme—namely, that the conventional approach to consumer research addresses only a small fraction of the phenomenological data that compose the entire experience of consumption. Investigation of the remaining components of the consumption experience should serve as one key target of future methodological developments in consumer research.

One qualitative approach, advocated by Levy, “accepts introspection as data” and involves the use of personal narratives: “A protocol in which a consumer tells the story of how the product is consumed can be examined for how the consumer interprets the consumption experience” (1981, p. 50). Such relatively unstructured procedures may be usefully complemented by more structured quantitative methods.<sup>4</sup> Toward this end, Pekala and Levine argue for a “phenomenological or introspective approach” to investigate the “structure of conscious experience” (1981/1982, pp. 30–31) and present a Phenomenology of Consciousness Questionnaire (PCQ) consisting of 60 Likert-type items drawn from 15 different content areas. Factor analysis of the PCQ suggests the existence of nine important dimensions: altered experience, awareness, imagery, attention/memory, negative affect, alertness, positive affect, voli-

<sup>3</sup>The recently accumulating studies on the stream of consciousness serve also to introduce the new introspectionism. In this light, consider the avowed objective of the new journal entitled *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*: “An important purpose of this journal is to provide an interdisciplinary forum for those interested in the scientific study of the stream of consciousness, directly relevant to theory, research, and application” (Pope and Singer 1981/1982, p. 2).

<sup>4</sup>Levy (1981) views his analysis as “structural.” The distinction between “structured” and “unstructured” methods pursued here refers to the type of data-collection procedure.

tion, and internal dialogue. This instrument has not (to our knowledge) been applied in consumer research, but future applications may help elucidate the experiential aspects of consumption.

## OUTPUT CONSEQUENCES, CRITERIA, AND LEARNING

### Output Consequences and Criteria

From the information processing perspective, the consequences of consumer choice typically are viewed in terms of the product's useful function. The criteria for evaluating the success of a purchasing decision are therefore primarily utilitarian in nature—as, when judging a “craft,” one asks how well it serves its intended purpose or performs its proper function (Becker 1978). The operative logic behind this criterion reflects a work mentality in which objects attain value primarily by virtue of the economic benefits they provide.

By contrast, in the experiential view, the consequences of consumption appear in the fun that a consumer derives from a product—the enjoyment that it offers and the resulting feeling of pleasure that it evokes (Klinger 1971, p. 18). In this generally neglected perspective, the criteria for successful consumption are essentially esthetic in nature and hinge on an appreciation of the product for its own sake, apart from any utilitarian function that it may or may not perform (McGregor 1974). This is analogous to the appreciation of a work of “art” (versus a “craft”) as a thing in itself, without regard to its functional utility (Becker 1978). In making such appraisals, one conforms to a play mentality (Huizinga 1970) wherein perceived benefits are primarily psychosocial and “episodes designated as playful are assumed to be free from any immediate purpose” (Lancy 1980, p. 474): “Play is disinterested, self-sufficient, an interlude from work. It brings no material gain” (Stephenson 1967, pp. 192–193).<sup>5</sup>

As indicated in the Figure, the relative salience of evaluative criteria is assumed to depend in part on the individual's task definition, type of involvement, search activity, and personality. For example, where the consumption task is defined as the pursuit of hedonic response, esthetic criteria would be likely to apply. A similar play mentality should prevail when involvement is primarily right cerebral hemisphere oriented, when diversive exploration is directed toward the alleviation of boredom, and when a sensation-seeking, creative, non-Protestant, or Type B personality is involved.

<sup>5</sup>Note that, in no sense, do we imply that the esthetic criteria involved in the play mentality are irrational or maladaptive. Indeed, as Becker's (1976) work has made clear, rational economic models can be built to account for playful activities—not to mention child bearing, marriage, and other forms of behavior generally viewed as psychosocial or nonpurposive in origin. We merely wish to indicate that, in our current state of knowledge, the psychodynamics of enjoyment and fun are perhaps less well understood than are the more technological and physiological relationships that underlie the conventional utilitarian approach to customer value (cf. Becker 1976, pp. 13–14).

Consumer researchers have devoted little attention to the underlying determinants of fun and playful activities even though it appears that consumers spend many of their waking hours engaged in events that can be explained on no other grounds. It would be difficult, for example, to account for the popularity of a television program like *Dallas* on the basis of its functional utility in providing solutions to life's many problems. Clearly, its success depends instead on conformity to some set of esthetic standards associated with the play mentality. Better understanding of such standards is a vital link in the further development of the experiential view.

### Learning

Ever since Howard and others included a feedback loop via brand satisfaction in the early models of buyer behavior (Howard and Sheth 1969), it has been clear that learning effects exert a strong impact on future components of the intervening response system (shown by a dotted feedback line in the Figure). The traditional view of learning in consumer behavior has been based on operant conditioning or instrumental learning, where satisfaction with the purchase serves to reinforce future behavioral responses in the form of repeat purchases.

But Howard and Sheth (1969) also recognized a second learning principle, contiguity, which depends on the frequency with which neural events have been paired in experience. The resulting patterns of association, which Osgood (1957) called “associative hierarchies,” exhibit a form of respondent conditioning. When extended to the experiential perspective, this contiguity principle suggests that sensations, imagery, feelings, pleasures, and other symbolic or hedonic components which are frequently paired together in experience tend to become mutually evocative, so that “fantasy, dreams, and certain forms of play can similarly be construed as respondent sequences” (Klinger 1971, p. 35). This argument implies that—though satisfaction certainly constitutes one important experiential component—the stream of associations that occur during consumption (imagery, daydreams, emotions) may be equally important experiential aspects of consumer behavior.

## CONCLUSION

Much buyer behavior can be explained usefully by the prevailing information processing perspective. Conventional research, however, has neglected an important portion of the consumption experience. Thus our understanding of leisure activities, consumer esthetics, symbolic meanings, variety seeking, hedonic response, psychotemporal resources, daydreaming, creativity, emotions, play, and artistic endeavors may benefit from a broadened view.

Abandoning the information processing approach is undesirable, but supplementing and enriching it with an admixture of the experiential perspective could be extremely fruitful. Such an expansion of consumer research will raise



vital but previously neglected issues concerning (1) the role of esthetic products, (2) multisensory aspects of product enjoyment, (3) the syntactic dimensions of communication, (4) time budgeting in the pursuit of pleasure, (5) product-related fantasies and imagery, (6) feelings arising from consumption, and (7) the role of play in providing enjoyment and fun. This is the point of asking questions concerning the nature of experiential consumption—questions such as:

- “Which painting is the most beautiful?”
- “Which tastes better, chocolate or strawberry?”
- “What makes Beethoven great?”
- “How much do you watch television?”
- “What do you see when you turn out the lights?”
- “What makes you happy?”
- “How did you spend your vacation?”

In sum, the purpose of this paper has been neither to advocate a “new” theory of consumer behavior nor to reject the “old” approach, but rather to argue for an enlarged view that avoids any adherence to the “-isms” or “-ologies” that so often constrict scientific inquiry. One cannot reduce the explanation of human behavior to any narrowly circumscribed and simplistic model, whether that model be behavioristic or psychoanalytic, ethological or anthropomorphic, cognitive or motivational: the behavior of people in general and of consumers in particular is the fascinating and endlessly complex result of a multifaceted interaction between organism and environment. In this dynamic process, neither problem-directed nor experiential components can safely be ignored. By focusing single mindedly on the consumer as information processor, recent consumer research has tended to neglect the equally important experiential aspects of consumption, thereby limiting our understanding of consumer behavior. Future research should work toward redressing this imbalance by broadening our area of study to include some consideration of consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun.

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