

3.4: Factors Influencing Consumer Decisions

The consumer decision process helps you understand the steps people go through when they are deciding whether and what to buy. Many different factors can influence the outcomes of purchasing decisions.

Some of these factors are specific to the buying situation: what exactly you are buying and for what occasion. Other factors are specific to each person: an individual's background, preferences, personality, motivations, and economic status. Because no two people are exactly alike, it is difficult to predict how the tangled web of influencing factors will ultimately shape a final purchasing decision.

For marketers, an understanding of these factors provides a more complete view into the mind of the customer. As you learn more about what influences decisions for your particular target segment, product category, brand, and competitive set, you can use these influencing factors to your advantage. What you say to customers, the words you use, the people who say them, the images they evoke—all of these things can link back to that web of influencing factors at work in a purchaser's mind. Great marketing uses those connections powerfully and effectively to win the minds and hearts of customers.

The specific things you'll learn in this section include:

- Describe situational factors that influence what and when consumers buy:
 - Buying situation
 - Market offerings
- Describe personal factors that influence what and when consumers buy:
 - Demographics (age, economic status, etc.)
 - Life stage
 - Lifestyle
- Describe psychological factors that influence what and when consumers buy:
 - Motivation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs as it pertains to marketing
 - Perception, learning, belief
- Describe social factors that influence what and when consumers buy
 - Culture, subculture, social class, family, reference groups
 - Culture and marketing in different countries

Learning Activities

The learning activities for this section include the following:

- [Reading: Situational Factors](#)
- [Reading: Personal Factors](#)
- [Reading: Psychological Factors](#)
- [Video: Consumer Attitudes and Heinz Baked Beans](#)
- [Reading: Social Factors](#)
- Self Check: Influences on Consumer Decisions

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