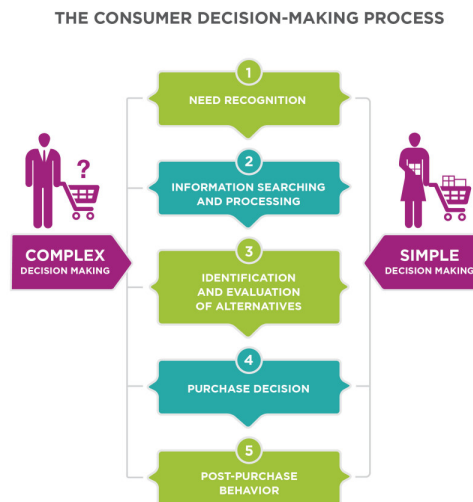


## 3.5: Putting It Together- Consumer Behavior

### Applying the Concepts: Finn's Family Buys a Pet

Do you remember Finn, the newest little consumer who arrived at the beginning of this module? Let's suppose that Finn's parents decide they want him to grow up with an animal friend. This gives us a chance to apply what we've been discussing about consumer behavior and see what happens as they go through the consumer decision process to buy a pet.

Since finding a pet is definitely a high-involvement decision for them, these are the steps they will go through:

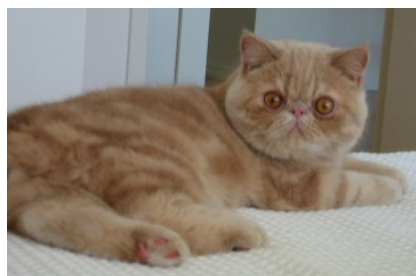


#### Recognize Needs

**The Consumer Perspective:** Finn's parents, Robert and Amanda, know they want a pet. They're not sure what kind of pet. They're pretty sure they want it to be cuddly and lovable—something a child can interact with and not get too wet, bitten, or diseased (or maybe just a little). They also want a pet with some longevity, so that Finn can grow up with his animal friend. Although they are busy getting used to a new infant in their lives, Robert and Amanda are both on leave from their jobs for eight weeks, so it could be a good time to get used to a new animal, too. They decide it's time to get serious about finding a pet.

**The Marketer's Perspective and Tactics:** You manage marketing for an animal rescue organization in your local community. Somehow you need to get in front of Finn's family to let them know about your animals and why they should start their search with you. Fortunately, you've been working with Google to get a paid placement for your organization near the top of Google searches for kittens and puppies in your area, so when Robert does his first search, he sees your listing. You also routinely post fliers on information boards around your community, and you've been working on your Web site to make sure it is search optimized for people searching for pets in your area.

#### Search for Information



I am so much better than a dog. Take me home.

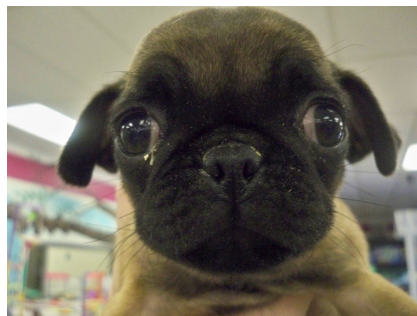
**The Consumer Perspective:** Robert has grown skilled at searching the Internet while rocking Finn to sleep at the same time. He and Amanda need to research a few questions:

- What kind of pet should they get: dog, cat, guinea pig, ferret, something else?
- Where should they get the pet: pet shop, breeder, online provide, animal rescue, someplace else?
- How much should they expect to pay for the pet?
- How should they take care of the pet once they get it?

Robert is already leaning strongly toward getting a dog. His family had dogs when he was growing up, and he loves the idea of his son having the same experience. Amanda is on the fence, until they start reading about best pets for kids in parenting articles online, and they start talking to friends. Robert's family preference for dogs is validated in articles claiming that dogs are good pets for children and that potential problems (allergies, behavior issues) can be minimized by having the dog around children from a young age. As they begin to investigate places to get a dog, Amanda and Robert are disturbed to read about puppy mills and warnings against buying dogs from unscrupulous online sellers. They agree that they should stay local and check out pet shops, breeders, or animal rescue organizations in their area. Animal rescue would probably be the cheapest option, but they want to shop around and see what's available.

**The Marketer's Perspective and Tactics:** One of your organization's board members is a well-known mommy blogger who feels passionately about pets and kids. At your request, she's written a few posts over the past several months providing advice for parents who are considering a pet, and recommending animal rescue as the way to go. You've cross-posted her pieces on the rescue organization's Web site blog, and she's linked to your Web site in her posts. You know from Google Analytics that you're getting pretty good traffic to your Web site from that link and her posts. The Web site also contains information to educate people about the advantages of adopting rescue animals, reinforcing how rewarding it is to offer these pets a loving home. You know from research that families tend to get interested in pets when they have young children, so you update the Web site with adorable recent-adoption photos showing young families welcoming their new pets. You also know that people have lots of questions when they're looking for pets, so you prominently feature "Adopting a Pet: What To Expect" on your Web site.

### Evaluate Alternatives



Sad pet-store dog. Eye problems.

**The Consumer Perspective:** Now that Robert and Amanda know they want a dog, they are honing in on what type of dog and where to get it. They've been reading dog owner sites about different breeds, and they've been reading Yelp reviews about people's experiences with the local pet shops, breeders, and rescue organizations. They are keeping an eye on Craigslist to see what shows up there, and they've made a couple of visits to see some of the breeds they are considering. Robert is really charmed by a local breeder's labradoodles, and online communities rave about how good these dogs are with children, but there is a yearlong waitlist for the puppies and they cost upwards of \$1,500. Amanda has joined a mothers' group, and two of the moms have dogs. One has a golden retriever. She bought the dog at a local pet shop and loves him, but she has been surprised by the number of health problems he's had. The other mom has a friendly terrier mix she got from a local rescue organization, and she was very happy with the experience.

**The Marketer's Perspective and Tactics:** You're trying to do more with word-of-mouth and social media promotion, so you've started asking each family that adopts one of your animals to post about their experience on Yelp and Google reviews. You've been doing more with Facebook and Instagram, building up followers and posting pictures of some of the sweet rescue animals people can meet and adopt. Since it's free, you also post regularly in the "Pets" area of Craigslist and you've found that is a great way to connect with local area families looking for pets. Craigslist shoppers tend to be good candidates for adopting rescue animals. When people come in to the center, you find out what they are looking for, and you make sure they learn about the advantages of adopting

a rescue animal and how simple the process can be. You also get their contact information so you can stay in touch with them electronically and let them know when a new animal arrives that might be a good fit for their family.

### Make a Purchase

**The Consumer Perspective:** Amanda is very moved by their visit to the local animal rescue center. She is impressed with several of the dogs they met, and she loves the idea of adopting an already-house-trained pet, instead of starting from scratch with a puppy. Robert's heart is still with the labradoodles, but they agree that the yearlong wait and hefty price tag probably aren't worth it. Although the pet store puppies are adorable, Amanda keeps thinking about her friend's golden retriever and health problems, which are probably linked to overbreeding. After thinking things over, they decide to return to the rescue center with Finn and meet the dogs there again. This time, one of the dogs is a standout: a smart little Scottish terrier mix named Bonnie who makes Finn's eyes light up every time she comes near. The choice is made, and the James family is delighted.

**The Marketer's Perspective and Tactics:** Once a family comes to the center a second time, you know from experience that they're hooked. You need to make sure they fall in love with an animal that will be a good fit for their children and living situation. You've designed the application process to make sure that it helps you screen people and also match them with the best pets. But it's also a thoughtful, informative experience for the people who come in, so they can learn about what it takes to be a good pet owner. Once a new pet owner finds "The One," you snap photos for the happy family bulletin board at the center and ask permission to share the pictures on your Web site and social media. You also invite them to post the picture on social media and share their experience with the center in a Yelp or Foursquare review. A going-home packet includes useful information about caring for their new animal and contact information in case they have questions or concerns.

### Post-Purchase Behavior



Bonnie, the  
winner.

**The Consumer Perspective:** The new addition to the James family is everything Amanda and Robert had hoped for. Bonnie is sweet-tempered, playful, gentle with Finn, and smart as a whip. For Robert, Bonnie brings back the joy and companionship he remembers from his childhood pets. Amanda is so delighted that she tells everyone who will listen about their wonderful experience adopting a rescue animal. Next time they are considering a pet, they'll know exactly where to go.

**The Marketer's Perspective and Tactics:** You've developed a process for checking in on adoption families after a couple of weeks to make sure things are working out. If they haven't done so already, you nudge them to write a review about their adoption experience on Yelp or another review site, assuming their experience has been good. If they aren't doing so well, you try to find out why and suggest some tips and strategies for turning things around. If red flags come up during these conversations, you make a note for one of the center's volunteers to do a wellness check on the owner and animal, so that the center can intervene and avoid serious problems. Fortunately the follow-up process usually results in happy stories about how much the animals and their new families love each other. And that's a major reason why you keep doing this job.

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