

4.18: Information Used in Buying Decisions

Learning Objectives

- Describe how a customer finds information to make a buying decision

As you saw in the previous module, there is no shortage of ways that consumers can collect information to support their purchase decisions. This fact is underscored in the description of the buying process, as each model (AIDA, path-to-purchase, and the consumer buying process) includes a stage where consumers gather information or develop interest or consider options. Information can come directly through formal channels, such as from producers or retailers, as well informally, produced by advocates, influencers, and other consumers.

Consumers can commonly find information within advertising, in-store, online, and by word of mouth. Recall the examples we described earlier in the course:

Let's imagine you're planning to buy a new phone. How would you decide on the right one? Would you research online? Would you go to the manufacturers' websites? What about blogs, where users give their feedback and product reviews, would you read them? Would you visit a store to see all the alternatives in-person, asking the associate questions about performance and how each phone compares to the others?

Perhaps you're frequently in-store to see the products in-person. Maybe you shop online, visiting the store or brand's websites? Are you connected with retailers or brands on Facebook? Do you follow them on Twitter to learn about new items, special releases or sales? Have you checked on Instagram to find them? Do you participate in fan boards or blogs to track updates or read reviews?

The reality is that we are constantly exposed to marketing messages. This is the other side of the omni-channel concept, meaning that marketers are communicating across a number of channels. Thus, as consumers, we're inundated with messages—so many, in fact, that it's impossible to recognize, categorize, and process them all. There is simply too much noise and clutter.

Think about your local supermarket and imagine walking down an aisle. Every single item on-shelf, through its packaging—the images and words, the colors and fonts—is trying to communicate to you. It's trying to convey that it can provide the solution to your need. Now, add displays, floor and shelf graphics, and special tags. The volume of messages competing for your attention is massive. If you're actively engaged, meaning you're actively shopping or looking for a specific solution, you might become overwhelmed with the sheer volume of “noise.” If you're passively shopping, you may “tune out” these marketing messages entirely.

Think again about driving in your car down a busy street in your area. You hear advertisements on the radio, you read billboards, you see store signs and marquees, offering specific specials, you notice attention grabbing displays like balloons, flags, and banners.

Online, the volume is no less. You search for a specific term and get served links that best fit that need, but are also served ads by marketers wanting to attract you. On-site, you might notice different “Calls to Action,” prompts urging you to complete specific actions or transactions. If you navigate to another site, you may find that you're followed, as banner ads and videos appear where you go next.

And, of course, there's the domain that's often outside the marketer's control—word of mouth. Certainly, some firms pay spokespeople and influencers to endorse their products and services. And, many consumer organizations have turned to social media, specifically Twitter, to manage customer service issues and resolution. But, there's also a large volume of information directly from consumers available to influence future decisions. For example, many sites provide opportunities for users to leave ratings & reviews. Such sites can be associated with the product & service or independent like Yelp. Independent blogs and forums also allow consumers to provide feedback. In this way, consumers are empowered to share their experience and shoppers are enabled to learn from the experiences of others.

As we saw in the buying process, consumers collect information along the customer journey. It comes directly from marketers through advertising, in-store merchandising and online interaction on websites and through social media. It comes indirectly through consumer feedback in ratings & reviews, on social media and through word of mouth. But, regardless of the source, this information can directly influence consumer attitudes, beliefs and actions.

? Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/9166>

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