

13

Information Processing Learning and Memory

“Without processing and analysis information is of little value”

This chapter deals with information processing and learning. The student should understand:

- *Information processing*
- *Learning and involvement*
- *Memory and positioning*

Information Processing Learning and Memory

■ 13.1 Introduction

Consumers process information from the stimulus they receive in various forms. This processing helps to buy products of their need and liking. The 5 major ways they use for information derived from their environment. These are:

- (1) They stand and evaluate products and services.
- (2) They attempt to justify previous product choices.
- (3) To decide whether to buy or postpone the decision.
- (4) To satisfy a need from the products available from the market.
- (5) To serve as a reminder to purchase products which must be replenished (soap, beverage and other consumable items.)

Information processing is not the end result but a process which is followed by the consumers. The basic components of information processing is shown in a framework. The basic components can be arranged into 4 groupings or the 4S:

- *Stimuli that serves as a raw material to be processed the receptors are hunger.*
- *Pangs and the 5 senses of test, touch, smell, vision and hearing.*
- *Stages of processing activities as shown in the diagram exposure, sensory processes and attention.*
- *Situation and consumer characteristics that which can influence the nature of these activities.*

Executive System which regulates the type and intensity of processing activities

The figure shows the consumer characteristics and stimulant characteristics which regulates the type and intensity of processing stimulation are units of energy such as light and sound that excite our sensory receptors.

The acquisition process has the elements shown under it. The sensation may be thought as electric impulse the perceptual coding is done in the mind to the prospects in the forms of symbols, words or images.

All the information gathered is integrated or put together to get the outcome. The outcome may be to purchase, or to postpone the purchase for the time being, or to purchase and experience the product and decide to switch to other brand in the future.

The information processed by the stimuli, acquisition, sensation and by encoding goes to the memory which provides a feedback to acquisition, perceptual encoding and to integration of all information.

Information processing is strongly influenced by consumer characteristics. These can be consumer's motives and involvement.

Information processing activities do not act independently of each other. Each activity needs to be coordinated and integrated. The vast majority of information processing activities are internal to the consumer therefore they cannot be observed. What can be observed is the number of stores visited and the brands purchased.

Situational characteristics play an important role. It can be information overload or may provide very little information.

Types of Learned Behaviour

Almost all types of behaviour we exhibit has been learned.

(1) Physical behaviour. The way we walk and talk and conduct ourselves and interact with others. Some adopt the behaviour of celebrities, film stars and is termed modeling.

(2) Symbolic learning and problem solving. Symbols convey meanings. Symbols and brand names communicate. These are Kodak, Mac Donalds, Diet Papsi etc. Problem solving also by thinking and insight. Thinking involves mental manipulation of symbols to form various combinations and meanings. This leads to insight which is the new understanding of relationship involved in the problem. These factors allow consumers to mentally evaluate the product without purchasing them. A person may evaluate a burglar alarm for car. They realise that at home it is parked in a locked garage and in the office in a secured parking. Hence, the burglar alarm is not required and postpones his decision of buying.

(3) Affective learning. This comes by experience and by using the products. One learns about the product and this goes into his memory.

The elements of learning

- (1) What are the purpose or intention of buying.
- (2) Cues are weak stimuli not strong enough to effect a purchase, but provides direction to motivated activity. These cues may be colour, decision etc.
- (3) *Response*. To buy or not to buy.
- (4) Reinforcement. This leads to repeat purchase and confirms the performance to the product.

A representation memory system

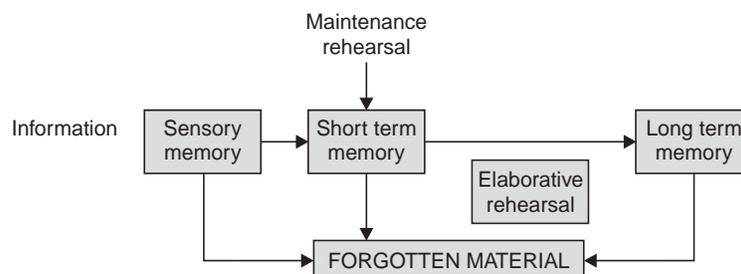


Fig. 13.1

Table 13.1 Characteristics of memory systems

Memory system	Duration	Capacity	Type of coding	Major forgetting mechanism
Sensory memory	Fraction of a second	All that perceptual sensor can deliver	Quite direct representation of reality	DECAY
Short term	Less than one minute	Approximately use terms	Indirect chunking	DECAY
Long term	Upto many years	Almost unlimited	Indirect clustering via meaningfulness	Interference

■ 13.2 Learning Memory and Product Positioning

It is strange how much you have got to know before you know how little you know.

Learning. All organisations are interested in highlighting the features of their products and services. They make the consumer aware to know about these features, so that their behaviour can be influenced. It is through learning that the attitudes, beliefs, values, feelings are influenced. We learn a lot from our culture social class, family influences and all these also reflect on our lifestyle. Learning can be described as any change in the content or organisation of long-term memory. It is a result of information processing. *Learning is the key* to consumer behaviour. We learn through and from our culture, subculture, social class, family friends, and utilise our personal experience, advertising and mass media as shown. These in turn influence our purchase decision as shown in Fig. 13.2 *learning is defined as a permanent change in behaviour occurring as a result of past experience.*

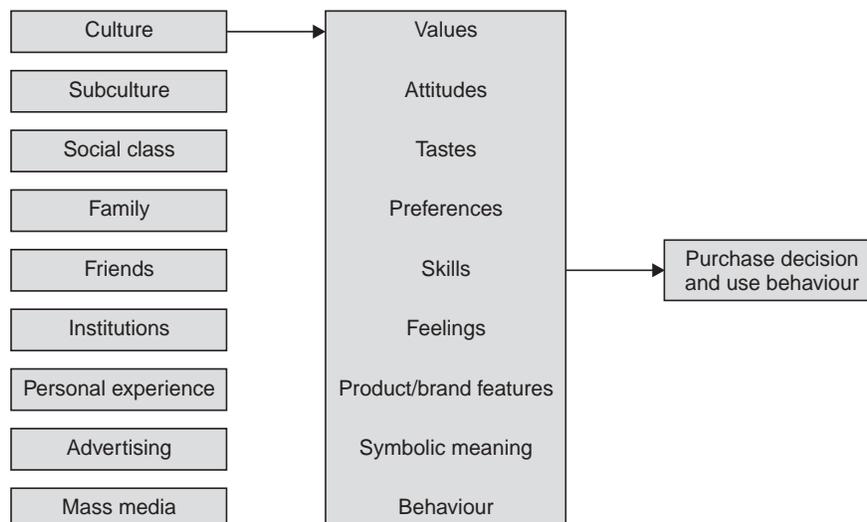


Fig. 13.2

It is a permanent change in behaviour. Behaviour is both a non-observable activity as well as overt or open behaviour which can be observed. Learning is relatively a permanent change. Learning stresses our past experience.

Learning

Learning can be done under a high involvement or low involvement situations. In high involvement learning situation, the consumer is motivated to learn. If a person wants to buy a gadget, he tries to learn about it and is motivated. If a person wants to buy a camera, he learns about cameras. In a low learning situation there is no motivation to learn about the product. Learning situations are of degrees and, depend on situations as well. In low involvement learning, consumers do not have any focussed attention on the advertisements like cigarette Ads, one only glances at the advertisements. The strength of learning can be intensively influenced by four factors which are, importance, reinforcement, repetition and imagery.

Importance

By this we mean how important is the learning for the consumers about the product. If it is important for you to learn about cameras before you buy one, it reflects a high involvement situation.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is something that increases the likelihood of a response to be repeated in future. Reinforcement can be positive or negative. By positive reinforcement we mean a desired consequence. One feels happy after buying the product. One uses a product, feels happy, and repeats the procedure. An imaginary response removes the unpleasant consequence. If a tablet relieves you from a headache you will continue using it because the negative enforcement. Punishment is the opposite of reinforcement. It is a consequence that decreases the likelihood of the response being repeated in the future, *e.g.*, if one deposits money with a company and does not get good returns this will not be repeated in future.

Repetition

Repetition increases the speed of learning. If a TV commercial is flashed a number of times, it will register more in the minds of consumers. The exposure must carry important and interesting information.

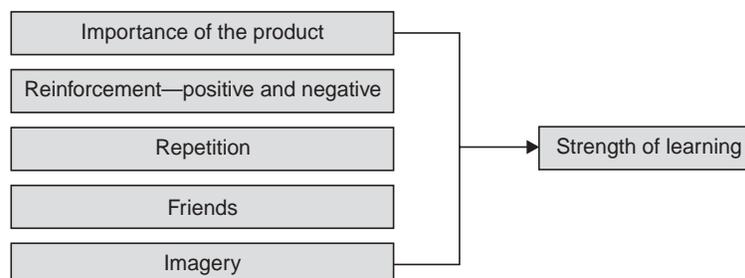


Fig. 13.3 Factors influencing learning

Imagery

By this we mean whether the advertisement is substantiated or accompanied by images. We have brand symbols, names, etc. We have messages substantiated by pictures. The pictures along with the images have a greater impact and can be registered more intensely. The script in which the name is written also gets registered in the mind. The M of McDonald's, the script of Bata, the symbol of Tata. Omega, symbol of Nike, Reebok, etc. are some of the examples which get deeply registered in the consumer's mind.

■ 13.3 Memory

“Your mind is like a camera with a memory, it can take several pictures, which you can file for subsequent use.”

Consumers have prior learning experiences, which are accumulated in their minds. The total accumulation of past experiences are known as memory. Memory can be divided into *short-term memory or long-term memory*.

Short-term memory: It is the memory which can be recalled immediately and, is activated and in use. It can also be referred to as the working memory, which one can work with and refer to, whenever required. Short-term memory can give continued repetition of a piece of information that can be used for problem solving. When elaborate activities are considered, they ride five involvements in the memory. Elaborate activities make use of previously stored experiences, values attitudes, beliefs and feelings, to interpret and evaluate information and add new elements to memory.

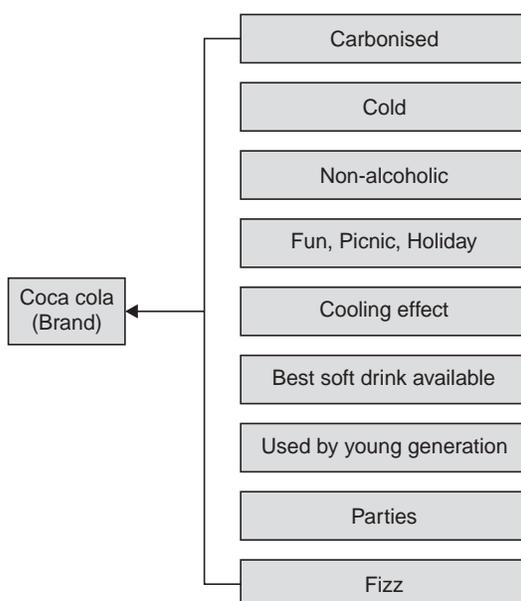


Fig. 13.4

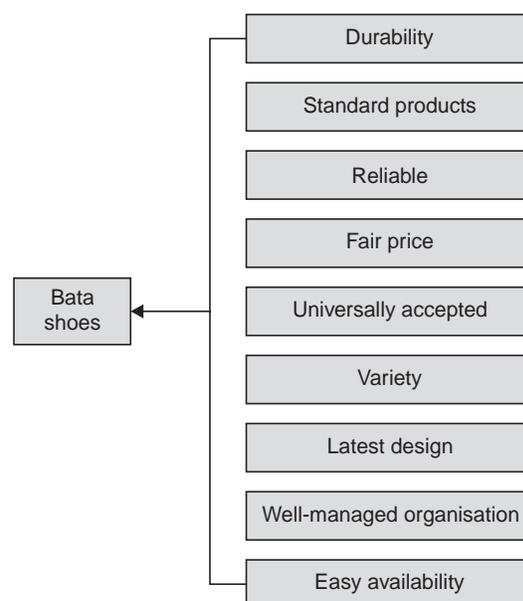


Fig. 13.5

Long-term memory: It is a permanent storage in the minds of the consumer. It is active and can store a variety of information consisting of concepts, decisions, rules, processes, affective states, etc. This is important to the marketer because an image of a brand and the concepts that a consumer had heard about a brand, are made up of various elements and the consumer can have a lot of meanings attached to the brand, when the particular brand is mentioned.

Figures 13.4 and 13.5 explain how one can associate various meanings regarding a brand. The various factors that come to a consumer’s mind when he thinks of Coca Cola or Bata Shoes are shown in the figure. Similarly, meanings can be associated to various brands and products when one thinks of them. These can be recalled both by short-term or long-term memory.

Positioning

Marketeers try to position their brands in the minds of the consumer. It relates to the memory of brand in relation to competing products. By this, the marketer tries to enhance the image of his brand which suits the consumer, promotes the image of the products and the stores as well. Product position evolves over time, as the marketer gets to know more about the preference of the consumers. Consumers usually have an “ideal brand” concept and, they want to be as close to the ideal brand as possible. The marketer also tries to offer a product by positioning and repositioning the product which comes as close as possible to the consumer’s ideal brand. This can be done by finding out the critical dimensions which are preferred. In case of a soft drink, the dimension could be:

If the ideal brand as perceived by the consumer is (X) that is (5,2) on the graph. The marketer tries to make a product as close to the ideal brand as possible.

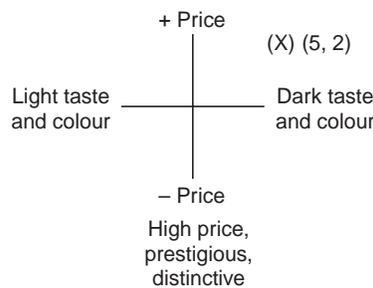


Fig. 13.6

Similarly, if a car has to have the dimensions as shown in the figure.

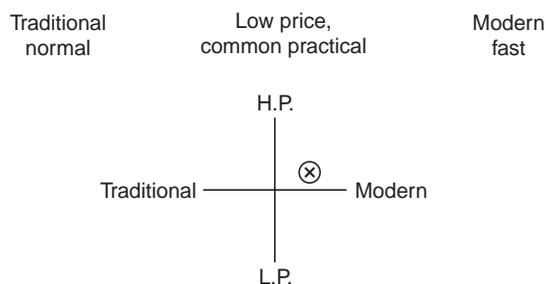


Fig. 13.7

The different consumers refer different combination and have their ideal brand in their minds. The marketer has to find the ideal brand required to cater to the customer's satisfaction.

Questions

1. What is perception? How does it help in decision-making?
2. Attention is determined by three factors, comment.
3. What is long-term and short-term memory?
4. What is positioning? Explain with examples.