Consumer Psychology and Consumer Behavior

Behavioral Economics and Cognitive Biases simplified – Improve your critical thinking

Max Mittelstaedt
You no longer have to read boring, complicated textbooks or badly written E-Books to learn about business psychology and consumer behavior. In this book, everything you need to know about behavioral psychology, among other things, is summarized in 220 pages without sacrificing important content.

The success or failure of the company is largely decided by a customer’s purchase decision. Those who know what to look out for in terms of human psychology and behavior is in a clear position to better understand the consumer’s decision-making process. The psychology of perception and advertising deals with the human errors of perception and explains how products and advertisements should be designed. Neuromarketing and marketing psychology looks at the errors of thought that the customer makes when making a purchase decision. After all, a purchase decision is less rational than you think. Those who succeed in applying consumer psychology can have a direct influence on the customer’s buying decision. Recognize the mistakes you make in your personal decisions.

In this book, you will find all the topics you need to know about business psychology:

- Psychology of Advertising
- Basics of Critical Thinking
- Neuromarketing
- Behavioral Psychology
- Psychology of Decision Making
- Psychology of Human Perception
- Cognitive Psychology
The book has:

✔️ Simple and comprehensive Business Psychology explanations

✔️ Over 75 illustrations and examples of advertisements

✔️ Case studies, tips and summaries

✔️ More than 90 scientific Sources

✔️ Suitable levels for beginners and advanced users

The book is already very successful in Germany and was ranked among the Top 100 Marketing books as well as the Top 20 in Market Research books.

Start now with a perfect introduction to the world of business psychology. Understand your decisions and apply the knowledge to improve your mental processes. Buy the book and benefit from the latest scientific findings in behavioral psychology.
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Author’s Preface

Every day, business psychologists, are exposed to advertisements that can seem to violate the theories and findings of business psychology. In my opinion, it is not the incompetence of marketers, but the dry and mostly boring publications of scientists that ensure that business psychology is not applied in practice more often. With this book, I hope to successfully convey the psychological and scientific findings to the reader in a concise and accessible way.

A nod to the end of my academic studies, I am happy to be able to present to the reader the best insights from over four years of research in the field of consumer psychology and marketing. My current enthusiasm for this subject area arose rather by chance. Actually, I didn't even know what I wanted to study or what my true calling was. Sometimes you just need a little luck in life.

I was also lucky in choosing my university of applied sciences. It was a privilege to learn from the best professors in Germany. My Professor of business psychology, Dr Felser, is a unique and exemplar expert of consumer and advertising psychology. I hope he will forgive me for always asking so many questions.

Without him, this book would not exist, and that refers not only to the courses in which I was able to learn a lot, but also to the extensive textbook on advertising and consumer psychology written by him.

Much of the knowledge in this book comes from a handful of scientists. That is why I would like to give mention to the books by Kroeber-Riel, Meyer-Hentschel and Kahneman,
who each have made a major contribution to consumer and advertising psychology. My book is in no way intended to make these standard works of business psychology superfluous. Rather, I would like to clearly present the reader with a summary of the theories originate from the most important works in an easy to digest manner.

However, there is another group of people I must pay tribute to aside from the authors who served as a source of knowledge for me. Without the people who dedicate their lives to science, economic psychology as we know it today would not exist. Business psychology is a science based on extensive scientific research. Many focus their professional careers on a research focus and try to find out the truth about human behavior and thinking. I have the deepest respect for this achievement and dedication. This is also why it is so important to make these findings better known in practice.

It is now up to the practical application of these findings should we wish to make Germany once again fit for the future as a business hotspot. You have to understand the customer and respond to him. Ultimately, the customer decides with his purchasing power which business model and which products are successful and which are not. Businesses must reach the customer with their advertising message. The book will hopefully contribute a to clearer understanding of consumer mindset and provide practical applications for the real world.

Introduction

An advertisement has just three seconds to seed the advertising message in the minds of the customers (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993). It does help that people have a negative attitude towards advertising and therefore have little interest in following the message closely. Many people are familiar with this everyday phenomenon: They switch television channels back and forth (so-called "zapping") in order to avoid viewing as much advertising as possible, portraying an example of such an attitude. In social media, annoying banner advertising is clicked away or suppressed. Plugins (software extensions for the web browser) that perform such a function are available in sufficient numbers. These functions have the goal of making the Internet more ad-free.

Most consumers are not interested in the companies' products or brands. There are numerous reasons for this: (House, 2014, pp. 82-83) (see also Figure 1)

- In Germany alone, over 50,000 brands are actively advertised.
- On average, a supermarket carries 10,000 objects.
- Every year 26,000 new products are launched on the market.
- 500 million websites want to be visited.
- Every year there are an additional 350,000 print ads and 2,000,000 commercials.
If an advertising message was noticed by a consumer, the question remains as to whether the customer has already been completely overloaded with information beforehand. According to a calculation of the Institute for Consumer and Behavioral Research, less than 2% of the information offered by mass media is absorbed by residents in the Federal Republic of Germany, while the rest lands unnoticed as “garbage”. In the realm of advertising, one can count on an information surplus of 95% (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 90), as illustrated in Figure 2. At least one third of consumers use only one source of information, even for expensive products (Küß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 116).
The marketer should also bear in mind that the level of information overload does not seem to decrease. On the contrary, it increases as a result of the digital age. The smartphone is now so pervasive that almost all population groups can become the target of a mobile marketing campaign. In 2018, approximately 57 million people in Germany used the smartphone. According to the study, 8 out of 10 people in Germany use a smartphone (Bitkom Research, 2019).

These developments mean that the opportunities and risks of advertising have never been as high as they are today. Never before have so many people been reached so quickly. Yet the challenges have also heightened when it comes to drawing people’s attention to an advertising message and to get the advertising message into the minds of customers, even though these are exactly the functions that advertising should fulfil. Rosenstiel and Kirsch discussed the following points on this (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 15):

![Figure 2. (Image by author): Overall societal information overload of 98%. Source: see (Esch F.-R., 2010, p. 29).](image-url)
1. First of all, the advertising must be observed by the recipients completely.
2. The recipients must then not forget the message that has been observed.
3. Consumers must develop a positive attitude towards the product they are buying.
4. Consumers must spend enough time and energy to really take an interest in the product.
5. Finally, the consumer must make the decision to actually buy the product.

Kroeber-Riel (2003) describes various functions of advertising from the consumer's perspective. The advertising should invoke:

- Pastimes and entertainment,
- Emotional consumer experiences,
- Information for consumer decisions,
- Communicate standards and models for consumer behavior.

These functions place enormous demands on marketing managers and their advertising strategies. An advertisement should therefore be interesting, exciting, emotional, informative and entertaining all at the same time. How should one meet such demands?

The definition of advertising, according to Kroeber-Riel, is particularly important for companies: "Advertising is defined as attempts to influence attitudes and behavior by with special means of communication.” (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 605).
Advertising should therefore influence consumers in their attitudes and behavior. How can a company manage to avoid the risks mentioned above and exploit the potential? How should an advertisement be designed, to have an effect on the consumer? "I know that half of my advertising spending is money thrown out," Henry Ford once remarked, "I just don't know which half." (Bauer, Stokburger, & Hammerschmidt, 2006, p. 310).

How can the effect of advertising be improved?

This is just one of many riddles that companies are currently facing. Rosenstiel et al. describe further problems of advertising (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 21):

- Advertising must overcome the perception threshold of consumers.
- Perceived advertising is quickly forgotten.
- Consumers have many rigid attitudes and prejudices towards advertising and the products and brands presented in it.
- The consumer often views advertising apathetically.
- Consumers use a variety of information sources, not all of which the company can control.

Business psychology has a number of answers to these questions and challenges. Until now, the main field of application for business psychologists has been in market research, but new perspectives and applications are now taking place. Still, one thing is clear: the success of advertising depends on the customer.
No other field of science is as familiar with consumer behavior as business psychology. This book is intended to help you take the first step into the complex and exciting field of advertising and consumer psychology and ultimately improve the success of your business and marketing activities.

**The human perception**

It should be clear that human perception is a decisive factor for consumer behavior. Every human (purchasing) behavior has a stimulus to the cause, so understanding how to process these stimuli is extremely important. Environmental stimuli can directly influence our perception, as the following example in Figure 3 shows. It’s worth asserting that the circles in the middle are the same size, making this a great example that context does influence human perception.

![Figure 3](image)

Figure 3. (Image by author): A human error of perception.
Source: see (Ariely, 2008, p. 29).

Essentially, people recognize objects in their environment only in relation to other objects or reference points. In advertising, such environmental stimuli can be versatile and include other prices, other customers, other products, other brands and the like, amongst other factors. These can be divided into internal and external stimuli.
Some examples of internal stimuli would be the (one’s own) heartbeat or metabolic processes. With external stimuli, aspects of advertising play an important role. These include sounds, images or texts (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 70).

Human perception is based on the processing of stimuli and according to Felser, consists of three components (Felser, 2015, p. 28):

- A physical component
- A physiological component
- A psychological component

In addition, one should also distinguish between emotion, motivation, mood and attitude, which are important terms which will be utilized in the course of this book.

The simple S-O-R model can serve as a basis for processing in advertising psychology (see Figure 4). The behavior of the customer (R-Response) reacts to certain stimuli (S-Stimulus). Between these two areas of the model are the processes within the customer himself (O-organism); this aspect is of interest to business psychologists (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 48-49).

![Figure 4. (Image by author): The S-O-R model as basis. Source: see (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 49).](image-url)
This perception of stimuli and the course of processes can take place consciously or unconsciously within the customer. The majority of the stimuli are processed unconsciously. There are therefore two processing systems in the brain. The first system (the pilot) is responsible for cognitive reactions such as thinking and reasoning. The second system (the autopilot) is responsible for partially unconscious reactions such as emotions or attitudes (see Figure 5).

Nobel Prize winner Kahneman refers to these systems as "Systems 1 and 2" (Kahneman, 2012). I would also like to thank his long-time friend and colleague A. Tversky for his many years of work. Unfortunately, he passed away before being awarded the Nobel Prize.

![Figure 5](image_url)

Figure 5. (Image by author): Autopilot (System 1) and Pilot (System 2). Source: see (Häusel, 2014, p. 84).

The division of human perception into two systems also explains why customers perceive emotions faster than cognitions.
This enables people to react quickly and reflexively to dangers. A practical application of this theory can be found in image processing: advertising images are first perceived emotionally (autopilot) before the customer consciously processes an advertising image (Häusel, 2014, p. 160).

The perception of quantity, numbers & time

Quantity perception

Customers perceive quantities quite intuitively. There are different methods used in quantity perception, such as:

- The consumer counts all the elements, but this involves a lot of effort.
- He only counts a part and then makes a projection.
- He estimates the number completely intuitively.

Misjudgements often occur, especially for the intuitive approach. If the customer proceeds intuitively, many small identical products may appear to him as having a higher quantity than the same number of different-sized articles. Product or object that looks even slightly different can destroy this effect (Felser, 2015, p. 376).

Perception of area and volume

When estimating the volume of an object, the customer may underestimate the floor space and overestimate the height of the object. For instance, the customer may overestimate the capacity of a tall thin vessel.
In practice, if the intention is to let the customer get the impression that he is getting a lot of content (e.g. in drinks) for his money, a tall thin glass is an advantage. However, he will then also assume that he has already consumed a lot and will therefore reorder less. Consequentially, for very expensive drinks which are not likely to be reordered, it might be best to use long thin glasses.

Another misjudgement in volume occurs for objects that are conspicuous in colour, which are usually overestimated in size (Felser, 2015, p. 377-378).

**The perception of weight**

Dark-coloured objects are considered heavier than they are when viewed. This misjudgement of weight also applies to objects that are large – they are assessed as heavier although the customer has no further information available, such as actual facts regarding the object’s density or structure.

There is also an "Up-Bottom-Left-Right" effect, where objects placed at the top of an image or advertising poster can appear lighter than those placed at the bottom. This perceptual error can be explained by gravity; experience shows that when something resists gravity, it weighs less. In addition, objects appear lighter if they are placed on the left instead of on the right. The reason for this is the reading direction of the customer and the law of leverage (Felser, 2015, p. 378-379).

**The perception of numbers**

Customers usually do not interpret numbers in absolute terms, but in relation to their environment. The number “5”, for example, can serve as a reference point against which
the other numbers are evaluated. In addition, a numerical jump from 1 to 2 is perceived to be greater than one from 8 to 9, and this knowledge can be used in marketing to change the subjective perception of the discount. A discount from 122 to 121 is therefore subjectively greater than a discount from 119 to 118.

Many prices (especially discounts) are visually highlighted in marketing practice. However, the marketer should actually make smaller prices or discounts optically smaller than higher prices. To highlight price differences, it is also advisable to write or place prices relatively far apart (Felser, 2015, pp. 372-374).

**Relationship between package size and quality**

Smaller packaging or product units are generally rated better by the customer, mainly because these units are often more expensive than large packages. The price-quality rule thus influences the customer's perception.

In addition, labels such as small, medium, large, etc. have an influence on consumers' purchasing decisions as described above; the customer makes his purchase decision in relation to the other options.

For example, if the customer was in a restaurant that offers different portion sizes (small portion - 300g, medium portion 500g and large portion 700g), the customer would probably pay more attention to the labels than to the weight information, even though the gram number is the more accurate information.
The customer consumes more from large packages. Especially for food products, they may feel compelled to want to eat everything so that the package is empty. The reason for this can be found in the anchor effect, design psychology, group norm and consistency theory, among other things (Felser, 2015, p. 380-381).

The anchor effect maintains that a quantity of food taken from a large package with a lot of content is perceived as less than a quantity taken from a small package with little content.

**The connection between time and money**

An exciting finding in business psychology is that people are usually willing to exchange time for money, but not the other way around. People get paid for "sacrificing" their time (through work). But the same people are not willing to pay for more available time. So how does this anomaly occur?

Time is a very vague entity. You can do many things with it and it has no exact opportunity cost. In addition, time cannot be saved, invested or increased. The mentioned points are functions which can be very well assigned to money. With money it is, above all, crucial that the person knows exactly what his alternatives are in relation to the possible expenditure. Humans have tangible notions of what money is worth. With time, many are unable to decipher its value and are not sure what to do with it (Felser, 2015, p. 382-383).

What would happen if time took over the functions of money? The main character Momo, from the novel of the same name, by Michael Ende has experienced this. Time is saved, all people live as efficiently as possible and have no more time for the pleasures of life.
The perception of time

The peak-end rule is particularly concise in the perception of time (see Figure 6). This rule states that the customer perceives the peak (most significant moment) and the end of a service or event in a focused manner. Thus, when the customer evaluates an experience or service in terms of its duration and quality, these two points influence the assessment (Felser, 2015, p. 382 & 252). As the saying goes, "Stop while you're ahead".

A service should therefore place special emphasis on the most intensive moment and the end of the offer.

Figure 6. (Image by author): The Peak-End-Rule.
The permanent heuristic

In principle, services are rated better if they subjectively take more time to be completed. If there is no perceived effort put into the service, the customer’s rating will decrease. A service should, from the customer's point of view, involve a certain amount of effort for the service provider.

Waiting or the passing of time can also increase the enjoyment of a product, for example with a good wine or a mature cheese (Felser, 2015, p. 384 & 386).

In addition, customers tend to perceive exciting and varied experiences momentarily and rapidly, which is the opposite for monotonous experiences. Varied experiences remain in the customer’s memory longer. In fact, the memory takes ‘pictures’ of every new exciting moment; the more pictures and impressions the customer collects, the faster time passes in the moment and the longer this memory remains in retrospect (Felser, 2015, p. 384).

Here is an excerpt from Momo by Michael Ende, that greatly illustrates the points above, "There is a great and yet quite ordinary secret. Everyone has a part in it, everyone knows it, but very few people ever think about it. Most people just take it for granted and are not surprised at all. That secret is time. There are calendars and clocks to measure it, but that doesn't mean much, because everybody knows that a single hour can seem like an eternity, but sometimes it can also pass like a moment - depending on what you experience during that hour. For time is life." (Ende, 2018)

The permanent heuristic can also be applied in practice. In general, it can be said that waiting times pass faster if the customer has to wait actively and not passively.
The customer should therefore follow an activity or distract himself while waiting in the queue or while waiting.

It is also an advantage if the queue moves forward relatively quickly, because each step contributes to active waiting.

Ideally, things should start right from the beginning; in the restaurant, the waiters should attend to diners right away and not wait until the first drinks are ordered. Doing this will have a positive effect on the customer's mood while waiting since he knows how many customers are already behind him and not how many are still being served before him.

Finally, it would be better if the waiting time is displayed in descending order. A countdown subjectively shortens the actual waiting time in the minds of customers (Felser, 2015, p. 384-385).
The Emotions

Emotions are internal excitation processes that are felt as pleasant or unpleasant and are experienced more or less consciously. Emotions help in evaluating an object (Felser, 2015, p. 89) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 59). Furthermore, the experience or the occurrence of emotions cannot be suppressed, while only the expression of emotions (facial expressions & gestures) can be controlled (Heath, 2012). Consumers react to emotional stimuli in a largely similar way, as they trigger automatic reactions (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 103).

Izard specifies ten human emotions which are largely the same in all cultural groups. They include *interest, joy* (pleasure), *surprise* (shock), *sorrow* (pain), *anger* (rage), *disgust* (disgust), *contempt, fear, shame* and *guilt* (Izard, 1999, p. 66) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 62).

In addition, emotions differ in the four dimensions (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 105) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 48):

- **Excitation (activation):**
  Advertising that includes emotional aspects activates consumers. Consumers then absorb more content, have faster information processing and store the advertising message better (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 114).

- **Direction (positive/negative):**
  Both positive and negative emotions have the potential to influence people. Negative emotions often activate a stronger reaction from the customer but are not suitable for conditioning the customer and improving the brand image.
• **Quality (experience):**
  In the modern consumer society, products must not only differentiate themselves solely on the basis of their basic benefit, but also promote their additional benefit (For an overview of basic and additional benefits, see Mittelstaedt, 2019a). Emotional additional benefits are important reasons that can prompt customers to buy. Advertising messages that include eroticism, social recognition, freedom, adventure, nature, health, enjoyment, joie de vivre or sociability are particularly and frequently used as additional benefits. The basic functional benefits are becoming less important. The experience orientation with the additional benefit homes in on the consumer’s desires. The marketer should therefore keep an eye on current value trends in society (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 115 & 124).

• **Consciousness:**
  Emotions can be perceived by the customer in varying degrees. Some emotions, e.g. fear, penetrate the consciousness more strongly and faster.

Emotions play an important role in consumer behavior. Unlike moods, emotions can directly influence an action. Whether one feels remorse or dissatisfaction after the purchase makes a big difference after the purchase; with remorse, one may attribute their behavior with wrong decisions. For example, a customer may blame himself for selecting a wrong product and seek to undo the action as quickly as possible. Remorse therefore tends to lead to a different product selection than, for example, disappointment (Felser, 2015, p. 90).
However, emotions can also have a positive effect on the purchase decision. Certain symbols or images arouse positive emotions in us. For example, in advertisements on watches, the hands are placed at an open angle facing upwards (see Figure 7). It would be even better to place them at a curved and upwardly open angle to resemble a smile (Felser, 2015, p. 90).

Figure 7.: Use of hidden emotions in advertising.
Image kindly provided by Fossil Group Europe GmbH.
Emotions play a role not only in the design of products or advertisements. A marketer should also try to create emotional shopping experiences. The design of the shopping environment should carefully consider how the type of business equipment, music, scent and trained behavior of the staff has an influence on the customer’s positive perception of the store (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 49).

As already described according to the dimensions of emotions, marketers should try to differentiate the products from the competition using emotional experiences. With objective product characteristics however, this differentiation is increasingly difficult. The brand experiences (additional benefits) are perceived more often than the functional quality (basic benefits) (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 128 & 129). There are hardly any objective differences in quality, and consumers are usually little involved. An emotional positioning is therefore very well suited.

Figure 8 shows how animal imagery can evoke certain associations and be used to position a product based on their added value. The bar is said can give the impression that users can be particularly strong and get a lot of energy.

Figure 8.: Example of emotional positioning. Image kindly provided by Nestlé Deutschland AG ®.
Emotional positioning can also be used for the classic marketing tools, such as the positioning model (see Figure 9). The emotional assessment dimensions span the competitive situation in which the individual companies position themselves with their offerings. Each company can stand for very specific additional benefits or emotional aspects. In the case of the Lion 2Go® chocolate bar (Figure 8), the company conveys a special functional additional benefit by positioning the chocolate bar with the lion as being particularly rich with energy.

Figure 9. (Image by author): Example positioning model. Source: see (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 170).
Four strategies for the marketer are derived from these positioning models (von Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, pp. 177-178):

- Special features of the product are highlighted in the advertising.
- These special features must be perceptible and relevant to the customer.
- The product range should stand out from that of the competition.
- The marketer should pursue a clear and long-term marketing strategy.

Marketers should make the product distinctive and differentiate it from the competition. The Unique Selling Proposition (USP) must be clearly communicated to the customer. At best, the product positions itself in a successful niche and is positively charged with emotions (Neumann, 2013, p. 188).

When does it make sense to use emotional advertising? Here are some instances (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 110):

- In saturated markets where quality differences play a minor role.
- For products that require little explanation.
- For pleasure and experience-oriented target groups.

The next question, is how can we apply the knowledge about emotions and later also about motivations in marketing?

Emotions and motives have a behavior-activating effect. The product or brand can be enhanced by emotions to trigger a buying action (Häusel, 2014, p. 57).
Häusel has developed the Limbic Map to illustrate our motif system. It describes a motif space that consists of three dimensions:

![Image: The Emotion System According to Häusel](source)

**Figure 10.** (Image by author): The emotion system according to Häusel. Source: see (House, 2014, pp. 58-59).

There are possible combinations of these three emotions (Häusel, 2014, p. 61):

- balance + stimulation = pleasure
- balance + dominance = discipline
- dominance + stimulation = adventure.

These emotions should now be addressed through advertising in order to position the product correctly, in which the Limbic Map from Häusel can help (see Figure 11). The marketer can use the emotions of the customer to differentiate the company from the competition.
Consumers differ in their personality structure, so the emotions to be addressed should be adapted to the respective types. Besides personality differences, there are also social and cultural differences that influence the right choice of emotions and motives for advertising (House, 2014, p. 203). These insights can be used in marketing to build the right brand image that resonates with the customer, to place the product multi-sensorially at the point of sale and to formulate the advertising message in an emotionally appropriate way. As many of the customer's senses as possible should therefore be addressed at the sales stand or on the sales shelf.
The motivation

Motivation consists of emotions and drives that are linked to a goal orientation in terms of behavior. Motivations do not have to be conscious to the consumer but can be determined through research and enquiries. A motivation results in an action (Felser, 2015, p. 89) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 108) and it should clarify the question of why (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 141).

Brands are rewarding incentives for the customer and arouse certain rewarding ideas in the consumer (Mittelstaeedt, 2019b, p. 21). For a stimulus to have a reward value, it should relate to the goals, motivations, wishes and needs of the target group. Motives and the associated motivation can be awakened by advertising or sales techniques: For example, a subtle feeling of hunger can be awakened by providing food samples which customers can taste in a grocery store (Felser, 2015, p. 99 & 101). An advertising strategy that makes use of motivation should first activate or reinforce an emotion and then make clear that the product or brand contributes to the realization of this emotion. The consumer learns this connection between emotion and the brand or product not only through the advertisement itself, but also through reward ideas that arise from the pleasant consumer experience (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 148 & 158).

Among the motives are the biological drives and innate emotions, which are particularly strong driving forces (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 143).

The basic idea of motivation is that man will always try to keep himself and his species alive. Survival can therefore be called the strongest human motive (Mittelstaeedt, 2019b, p. 21).
Another way to classify motivations is to divide the motives into two parts. The division separates between the motives that are related to pleasure or pain. The person wants to move away from something (rejection) or towards something (affection). Basically, the customer wants to avoid pain and win pleasure (Mittelstaedt, 2019b, p. 21).

"In negotiations, for example, the approach focus is more favourable than the avoidance focus. People who try to achieve a good result and concentrate on the best possible conclusion achieve better negotiation results than people who concentrate on the just acceptable conclusion and try to prevent a bad result. [...] If the avoidance focus dominates, features such as utility and reliability of the product are important. Features that are more aimed at the pleasure of use or even attractiveness are more important under an approach focus" ((Felser, 2015, p. 99) also (Galinsky, Leonardelli, Okhuysen, & Mussweiler, 2005), (Chernev, 2004) & (Werth & Förster, 2007)).

There are also some basic motivational systems in psychology, such as Maslow's pyramid of needs or the division of motives into three parts: performance, power and connection (see Figure 12). However, all motive theories have the same implication for advertising: an advertising message can be enhanced with advertising stimuli that match the customer's motives.

The advertisement should therefore address and activate the customer's motives (see also Limbic Map) (Felser, 2015, p. 102).
With Maslow, the needs are still differentiated according to a principle of progression: Needs at a high level only become effective when the needs at the lower level are satisfied (see Figure 13). This means that the customer is primarily concerned with their basic needs, such as hunger, health and social norms. Once these so-called deficit needs are satisfied, the customer can focus on his own goals and work on self-realization (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 46).
There are now special consumption motives for consumers such as thriftiness, prestige, social affiliation, desire, risk aversion, consistency, reward, and much more (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 114).

The customer does not necessarily need to have a feeling of lack to have the intention to buy. Basic economic theories suggest that before buying, people are generally looking to satisfy a certain need (Mittelstaedt, 2019b, p. 21). However, consumers tend to follow the view that it is better to buy than not to buy and thus to do without. In advertising, it should therefore be sufficient to stimulate behavior by presenting products as the implementation of a goal. A need does not necessarily have to exist (O'Shaughnessy, 1987).

As an example, Felser (2015, p. 103) cites the fact that combating body odour was not part of the norm for a long time and was certainly not associated with attractiveness. By consistently presenting the use of deodorant with the aim of being healthy, attractive and clean, advertising has a share in this social development. The iconic Axe brand of deodorants consistently used this goal in its advertising (See also Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 494).

The idea of reaching the (customer’s) goal has a similar effect as the actual achievement and arouses positive emotions (Felser, 2015, p. 105). In advertising one can also already anticipate this achievement of objectives in order to put the customer in a positive mood.

If someone knows in the evening that he will get up early the next morning and to head to the gym, he should pack his gym bag in the evening. A routine (going to the gym in the morning) can be automatically triggered by certain environmental stimuli (packed gym bag) without cognitive processes (excuses) getting in the way.
Advertising can take advantage of this aspect by suggesting that a certain action or situation results in another action. Advertising should describe or anticipate the purchase situation or the trigger to consumption as precisely as possible.

"Knoppers" uses this strategy in its advertisements, to encourage customers to eat their products - the chocolate wafer - at "9:30 a.m. in Germany". The advertisements consistently show people taking a break at exactly 9:30 am and eating a chocolate wafer (Felser, 2015, p. 107). However, it is questionable whether the time of day is a sufficiently strong trigger to announce or trigger a subsequent purchase action in consumers.

These mental aspects also play a major role in brand choice: consumers use products to improve their self-image. The purchased brand should say something about the customer. Certain brands stand for exclusivity and prestige, for example (Mittelstaedt, 2019b, p. 6).

The customer does not buy a product to own it. He consumes in order to solve a problem and achieve certain goals. This goal achievement or problem solution should be addressed in marketing (Mittelstaedt, 2019a). Advertising should clearly show how the product contributes to solving the problem.
The Involvement

The involvement can also be described as product interest. Felser (2015, p. 111) describes involvement as "a measure of inner involvement as well as the depth and quality of information processing" and "a measure of the cognitive control exercised by the customer in making a decision". He elaborates by saying, "How a particular marketing measure affects consumers will depend to a large extent on how involved consumers are.” (Felser, 2015, p. 111). Involvement is therefore an important factor influencing consumer behavior.

Kroeber-Riel describes involvement as: "Inner participation, the commitment with which consumers turn to communication", and also, "Ego-participation or the commitment associated with behavior, for example the inner participation with which someone makes a purchase decision." (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 92 & 175). The large majority of consumers (approx. 90%) have a low level of involvement (Lachmann, 2002, p. 46).

Involvement has many different influences on the areas of application in business psychology: For example, consumers with low involvement perceive information from advertising only fleetingly and with little attention (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 92).

Product Involvement is about the perceived personal relevance of a product. Accordingly, it should address the needs and values of the customer in order to involve the customer (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 74).
Involvement is a relatively rigid influencing variable that can hardly be changed by advertising. Involvement consists of several aspects, including situational or personal factors that determine consumer involvement.

Only the irritation-dependent involvement (see advertising design) can be influenced by advertising, but it plays a subordinate role in the general strength of the involvement (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 92).

How can the involvement of customers be increased? (Lachmann, 2002, p. 238) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 80)

- A high level of involvement can be achieved by actively approaching customers, for example on the Internet or through the sales team. Personal communication usually also automatically leads to high involvement. This also applies to consumers who were previously only slightly involved.
- Product differentiation – innovations or the highlighting of a unique product feature – can increase the customer's product involvement compared to similar products.
- Advertising is also suitable for highlighting a product in comparison to similar products. Testimonials or influencers can increase product involvement.
- A well-known brand, which is perceived with great involvement, can be associated with a product.
- It is important to address the values and standards of the customer. Direct marketing that refers to the customer can increase involvement.
According to Felser, there are three prerequisites that lead to low involvement: "Low subjective purchase risk (situational), low reference of the consumer action to personal values and no identification with the products in question (personal) ((Felser, 2015, p. 111) see also (Lachmann, 2002, p. 30)).

Kuß and Tomczak divide this subjectively perceived (purchase) risk even further into (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 75):

- Financial risk (expensive goods)
- Social risk (see group standards)
- Psychological risk (worry or fear of making a wrong decision)

The experts describe the consequences of the low level of involvement of the customer as follows (Felser, 2015, p. 111) & (Heath, 2012) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 75) (see Figure 14):

- low attention (e.g. in the reception of advertising),
- no intentional search for product information,
- relative indifference to price and quality differences,
- low depth in the information processing processes involved,
- higher receptivity for emotional appeal (in the difference to a rational one),
- no cognitive control in the formation of judgement (thus also increased susceptibility to automatic and irrational effects),
- communication effect (e.g. of advertising) only in case of frequent repetition,
• only low cognitive resistance to influencing communication,
• weak memory traces of the event (e.g. encounter with advertising, purchase action).

![Figure 14](image)

Source: see (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 49).

Typical examples of product categories with high involvement are cars, houses, travel or hobbies (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 76). On the flipside, typical examples of product categories with low involvement are lightbulbs, household items, stationery and food (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 76).

The difference between low and high involvement customers when buying household cleaners or buying a car is outlined in Figure 15.
Figure 15. (Image by author): Case comparison of low vs. highly involved customers. Source: see (Foscht, Swoboda, & Schramm-Klein, 2015, p. 138) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 77).

If the customer has a high interest in and a great inner involvement with the products, he will usually have the feeling that he is buying something important or something he can identify with later; there is a connection here with the functions of brands. Among other things, brands have an identification function for the customer (Mittelstaedt, 2019b). High product involvement also occurs when customers assume that there are quality differences between suppliers and that it is worth comparing prices and products. In other words, when the customer feels there is a possibility to make a wrong purchase decision, they will be more involved (Felser, 2015, p. 112).

Here, one could draw parallels to the basics in marketing: Products can be sorted according to their procurement effort.
Products with high procurement costs are associated with price comparisons. Essentially, these are goods with high acquisition costs which the consumer rarely buys (Mittelstaedt, 2019a).

Product innovations can also encourage high product involvement (Felser, 2015, p. 113).

The marketing measures should be adapted according to the involvement of the customers (see Figure 16). By repeating the advertising frequently, it is possible to reach customers who are less involved. In addition, a few central advertising messages should be used to attract those who are only slightly involved. In this case, the actual arguments for a purchase recede into the background; what’s more important is the mention of the brand name and logo. Less involved customers can be influenced more by point-of-sale measures and special offers (Küß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 81).

![Figure 16.](image)

Figure 16. (Image by author): Differences between high vs. low involvement in marketing. Source: see (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 50).
A low or high level of involvement is not good or bad per se, but the consequences of a low or high level of involvement must be taken into account. Depending on the advertising media or advertising objective, a low involvement can also be useful.

The mood

Moods are more general and not as intense as emotions. They have a clear positive or negative effect without the customer being able to name a clear trigger. Moods can have a motivating effect and influence our decisions, making them an important subject in consumer behavior studies (Felser, 2015, p. 89 & 92).

The purchase of products can be a real reward factor where certain brands or products are bought in order to do something good for oneself (Mittelstaedt, 2019a). Mood plays a role here because people with a bad mood tend to choose products impulsively and spontaneously and buy products that have a rewarding effect, like sweets for example (Mooradian & Olver, 1996).

The mood also has an influence on product evaluation: consumers use their moods during product evaluations. It is also found that they evaluate products better in a positive mood (Felser, 2015, p. 93) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 64). The implication for marketers is that along with sales scripts and advertising, consumers must be put in a positive mood. For example, salespeople could offer the customer a hot drink and select commercials slots that are not right after the news or TV shows with negative content.
Studies also showed that recall performance also decreased when advertising was shown after exciting feature films. A quiet environment is the best environment for the customer to remember the advertising message (Neumann, 2013, p. 147).

By the way, improving the mood with a warm drink is no joke; the temperature of a drink influences the customer's judgement. With a warm drink in your hand, the assessment of something becomes a more positive process. This points to the notion that physical objects are connected with mental concepts (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 18-20).

It is important to prevent consumers from gaining awareness of the influence of mood, since such an awareness of the influence nullifies the effect of the mood (Felser, 2015, p. 93 & 137). In addition, controlling the consumer’s mood is particularly effective in the purchase of products or brands where the affects (emotions) play a relevant role in the purchase decision. This includes, for example, products that increase pleasure or have a particularly high reward value (Felser, 2015, p. 138).

The mood also plays a major role for a later chapter: In a positive mood, consumers increasingly use heuristics and rules of thumb in decision-making. It is easier to influence customers in a positive mood. For example, customers pay much more attention to testimonials, customer ratings or influencers in advertising.

In a negative mood, on the other hand, arguments are listened to and compared, with secondary advertising messages fading into the background. Sad customers tend to use more product information for the purchase decision than happy ones (Felser, 2015, p. 93 & 277) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 64).
Facial expressions, gestures and emotions are in the same category yet can influence each other. For example, a facial expression arises from an emotional experience. However, even a deliberately changed facial expression can have an influence on the emotions felt.

In advertising, products should be positioned and made accessible through the perspective of customers. It makes a difference whether a product is shown for men using a fine or power grip and whether the smartphone is used in advertising with a point finder or thumb (Felser, 2015, p. 97). This difference in operation in turn activates other mental codes and motives (see Figure 17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Touchscreen, one-handed</th>
<th>Keyboard, two-handed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Play, fun, easy communication, easy handling</td>
<td>Power, work, control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17. (Image by author): Different mobile phone use activates different motifs. Source: see (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 73)

In Figure 18, for example, cutlery is missing from the imagery, indicating the plot. This is an advertisement for an aid organisation with the slogan: "Less is empty".
It is important for the viewer to be able to immerse in the plot.

Advertising should therefore be designed as if the consumer were looking at the product from his own perspective. In the second advertisement (see Figure 19) of Brot für die Welt, the embodiment was already better implemented. Here cutlery was placed in a more tangible from the viewer's perspective.

Figure 18.: Missing embodiment in the advertisement. Image kindly provided by Brot für die Welt e.V.
In advertising, it’s important to present products in an inviting manner. In the second ad, the embodiment was better implemented. The spoon without content is turned to the right and thus directly ‘accessible’ for the multitude of right-handed people. The scene matches the perspective of the viewer and is hypothetically effective.
The attitude

In a recruitment process, motivation is linked to a cognitive assessment - "I think the product is good." (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 169) (see Figure 20).

![Diagram of the components of the attitude]

Figure 20. (Image by author): The components of the attitude.
Source: see (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 51).

Such attitudes are relatively and rigidly stored in the minds of customers and are difficult to change. It may therefore make sense to align products with existing customer attitudes instead of trying to change them (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2007, p. 294).

Attitudes are linked to knowledge and relate to a specific topic (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 146). If a customer has strong preferences in his choice of food, he has probably informed himself extensively about healthy eating beforehand. Attitudes are linked to knowledge, and hence can be considered as learned mental outlooks.
The customer's attitudes are based on experience and on information that the customer has with the products or the brand (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 50).

If the term attitude is applied to marketing, it can be understood as "the ability of a product to satisfy motivation". In the end, attitudes also determine behavior: The more positive the attitude towards the product, the more likely a purchase becomes (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 169) (see Figure 21).

![Figure 21](image_url)

Figure 21. (Image by author): Relationship between attitude and purchase probability. Source: see (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 172).

If the circumstances of the purchase situation do not change, the customer should behave in a way similar to times during previous purchase decisions. If he has a particular attitude towards the products, this attitude ensures that he behaves in a predictable manner.
Still, the settings do not only determine the behavior. Many marketers overlook a situational influence on the purchase decision. It is also advisable to completely change the direction of gaze because behavior can also change attitudes (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 173) & (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 162).

The connection between attitude and behavior must therefore be seen in a differentiated way and is very controversial (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 152).

An example where the attitude is based on behavior is clearly shown when a low-involvement customer buys a product that is unknown to him. In this case, a positive attitude towards the product was not the reason for buying it. However, through the product and brand experience, the customer develops a positive attitude towards the brand in retrospect (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 173).

Attitudes towards products arise in the following ways (Felser, 2015, p. 255) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 204):

- Regarding product experience,
- Regarding emotional aspects (see emotions),
- For genetic reasons,
- From social aspects (e.g. recommendation marketing),
- Reminders of the attitude,
- The customers concluding their attitudes towards the product based on their purchase decisions (self-perception of the customers).
You can recognize an optimal attitude of the customer to a product by the fact that the attitude (Felser, 2015) & (Bohner & Wänke, 2002):

- is stable over time – usually settings are relatively stable (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 179).
- is resistant to other influences.
- predicts buying behavior.

The last point on behavioral prediction is especially controversial among experts. There are simply too many variables that can influence behavior or, as disturbing variables, make accurate behavioral prediction more difficult to achieve.

These (disturbance) variables are, among others (Felser, 2015, pp. 255-258) & (Bernays, 2011) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 55):

- **Situation**: The influence of the buying situation, such as special offers or the design of the salesroom, which is often underestimated.
- **Reward and punishment**: Incentives (discounts) can lead to (buying) behavior, but not to a change in attitude towards the product.
- **Friendship and sympathy**: A sympathetic seller is more likely to influence customers to buy a product.
- **Authority and obedience**: Experts, doctors or well-known advertising figures can take on an authoritative function.
- **Positive attitudes towards several products**: Customers have positive attitudes towards several products from a product category. They buy a different product from time to time, which they also like.
The frequency of the purchase action also has an influence on the attitude (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 175) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 118):

- **Initial purchases**: The consumer is highly involved though he may not have any product experience. The customer makes a purchase decision through consideration and comparison (extensive purchase decision). These extensive purchases mainly concern significant and novel products. Only over time will he develop an attitude through interactions with the brand or product.

- **Habitual purchases**: The consumer has a medium level of involvement. He has already formed slight preferences for a brand or a product. The behavior is hardly controlled by thought.

- **Impulse purchases**: The customer has a low involvement. The purchase decision is made on the basis of situational stimuli or, as a true brand fan, he decides to buy the same brand over and over again.
Some factors have an impact on the customer's purchasing actions:

![Diagram of factors influencing the purchase decision](image)

Figure 22. (Image by author): Factors influencing the purchase decision. Source: see (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 115).

Rosenstiel and Kirsch (1997, pp. 205-206) also make a similar categorization of purchase decisions, where they divide decisions into those that are made emotionally and those that are made more cognitively (see Figure 23). The division again depends strongly on the involvement of the customer.
Even if a consumer has an attitude towards a product, this does not mean that they are aware of their attitude: many attitudes are unknown to them and therefore cannot be named when asked. In this sense, an attitude can also be implicit (Felser, 2015, p. 260). Attitudes that the customer is not aware of also have a small influence on the decision. Marketing should nevertheless try to bring to consciousness any positive attitudes towards the product before the purchase (Felser, 2015, p. 258).

For advertising, the changes in attitudes are of particular interest. Depending on their level of involvement, consumers process the arguments in an advertisement differently. For consumers with high product interest, the quality of the arguments is decisive since they are familiar with key criteria of what makes a good product in purchase decisions. The marketer must find the right arguments to convince the customer of the product's benefits.

Additionally, consumers with little product interest process the advertising message superficially.
They pay more attention to the design of the advertisement, the number of arguments and are easier to convince through influencing techniques. These two methods of attitude changes are called the central and external way (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) & (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 101) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 65).

It is beneficial to note the following on the external path with little involved customers (Felser, 2015, p. 275-276, 280, 282-283) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 65):

- Arguments are not examined by experts.
- The sympathy of the salesperson or the advertising person is important.
- The behavior of the seller is observed.
- The seriousness of the information source is crucial.
- There is no comparison of offers.
- The credibility of the testimonial is evaluated on whether it consists of expertise and trustworthiness.
- The more arguments are put forward, the more likely it is that a change of attitude will take place.
- Whether the former and the latter information decisive (primacy recency effect).
- Whether the assessment of the product be influenced by environmental stimuli, such as pleasant music.
- Whether (advertising) information should contain positive as well as negative aspects. The seller should at least pretend to compare the advantages and disadvantages. It would be best to name disadvantages in the advertising, but at the same time present them as advantages. Concerns of the customer should be tried to invalidate in advance (this characteristic applies to both high and low involved customers).
In conclusion, it can still be said that environmental incentives can play a role even for highly involved customers who take the central path of changing attitudes. There is an increasing duplicity and similarity between product types in the modern consumer world. If the central processing path of comparing arguments and product characteristics does not provide a solution because the products are too similar, the well-known environmental stimuli (e.g. advertising design) are important purchase decision criteria (see Figure 24) (Felser, 2015, p. 277).

Figure 24. (Image by author): The settings change model. Source: see (Felser, 2015, p. 276).
Apart from motivation and involvement, there is another way to influence the change in attitude – self-conviction.

If the salesperson manages to get the customer to find convincing arguments for the purchase decision himself, the customer will then be more likely to be on the central path of attitude change.

This onus is on the salesperson to instil a notion of owning the product in such a way that can lead to a change in attitude and an appreciation of the product (see Endowment Effect).

Arguments found by the customer himself prove to be particularly advantageous. Role-playing can help to stimulate the buyer to find arguments and reasons for buying (Felser, 2015, p. 286).

**The resistance against the influence**

What happens if the customer is aware of the influence of advertising? In principle, consumers do not react positively to manipulation. The expectation of an influence is sufficient for consumers to become more critical of advertising. Sometimes below-the-line communication measures can effectively mitigate these issues. In this case, the advertising measures are very subtle for the customer and are usually not noticed (Mittelstaedt, 2019a). Don't worry; advertising works despite resistance to influence.

There are many ways to influence the purchase decision. These influencing possibilities work not only consciously but also unconsciously, allowing the marketer to avoid resistance to the advertisement (Felser, 2015, p. 286).
Personality traits also play a role in influencing people: people with low self-confidence are easier to influence. In addition, younger people are more impressionable than older people (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 207).

There are five additional methods to reduce the perception of an intention to influence (for a detailed overview see Felser, 2015, pp. 280-281):

- The consumer should not see himself as the addressee of the advertisement. If he does, he might have the feeling that the information does not serve to convince him of the product. In advertising, one should try to address the consumer indirectly, for example in an advertisement two customers could talk to each other and the consumer should have a passive and receptive role (eavesdropper or voyeur).

- Spontaneous communication reduces the perception of attempts to influence, particularly when presenting the product in an everyday situation with the help of influencers (see for example Sponsoring or Product Placement, Mittelstaedt, 2019a).

- Reducing signals from the salesperson, including certain signs in the sales conversation which imply an attempt to influence the salesperson. They span across comparisons, rhetorical questions, flattery, inappropriate mention of the product, exaggerations, and so on (Felser, 2015, p. 288).

- Using distraction in advertising to divert the consumer's attention away from the actual influence. Musical or scenic advertising content that has nothing to do with the advertising message are examples of this.
However, the distraction should not hinder the understanding of the advertisement (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 211).

- Reducing the risk of purchase by addressing the drive to seek additional information and compare products and prices. This can increase when the perceived risk of purchase is high (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 251).
The stimulus processing

Not all stimuli that our body absorbs are consciously perceptible. Some changes or stimuli are so small that you cannot notice them. Just because you can measure a change in temperature with a thermometer does not mean that the human body necessarily feels this change. And even if the customer could perceive something, he or she is not necessarily consciously aware of it. This is usually the case where actively focusing attention on certain body parts will allow one to sense changes. For example, actively concentrating on breathing will allow a person to feel. There is therefore a difference between perceptible and non-perceptible perception.

If a person perceives something because of the intensity of the stimulus, this intensity is called the absolute stimulus or sensation threshold (Felser, 2015, p. 28). Since people differ in their ability to perceive certain stimuli, the threshold is set at 50%. At this sensitivity threshold, half of the people can perceive a stimulus. It is quite clear that not everyone can hear, see, feel, etc. equally well. If the stimulus is perceived by more than 50% of the people, the threshold is considered to be exceeded (Felser, 2015, p. 28).

If you were to continuously increase the volume at a party, the differences would have to become greater and greater for people to still perceive a difference in volume. The new sound must be 9% louder than before to be recognized as louder by a person (Bourne & Ekstrand, 1992).
To what extent must the stimuli now differ so that the change is noticeable in humans? This is outlined in Figure 25 below, which show that the sense of hearing is more sensitive than the sense of taste.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory modality</th>
<th>Objective perception</th>
<th>Difference threshold</th>
<th>At a level of</th>
<th>Subjective perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Intensity of electromagnetic oscillations</td>
<td>1/62 (1.6%)</td>
<td>1000 Photon</td>
<td>&quot;It's a little brighter (or darker).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Length of mechanical vibrations</td>
<td>1/333 (0.3%)</td>
<td>2000 Hertz</td>
<td>&quot;It sounds a little higher (or lower).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Sound pressure of mechanical vibrations</td>
<td>1/11 (9.1%)</td>
<td>100 Decibel</td>
<td>&quot;It sounds a little louder (or quieter).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle</td>
<td>Mass</td>
<td>1/53 (1.9%)</td>
<td>300 grams</td>
<td>&quot;It's a little lighter (or heavier).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>Molecules</td>
<td>1/10 (10%)</td>
<td>200 Olfactin</td>
<td>&quot;It smells a little more (or less) like...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>Molecules</td>
<td>1/5 (20%)</td>
<td>3 Mol</td>
<td>&quot;It tastes a little bit, like saltier (less salty)&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 25. (Image by author): Difference thresholds of the human body. Source: see (Neumann, 2013, p. 323).

The same principle can also be applied to taste and, of course, all other stimuli. If you wanted to make the taste of an already salted soup even saltier, for whatever reason, you would have to increase the new amount of salt more and more (see Figure 26).
Felser (2015, p. 29) argued that "[t]he higher the intensity of the stimulus, the greater the differences must be in order to be perceived." Thus, human perception is not a linear but a logarithmic function. This function also plays a role in the perception of product benefits.

**Example:** A person has been walking for in the desert, lost amidst hot sand, with his drinking water running out. The value of a small amount of water increases enormously for him. Although his drinking water here in Germany would be worth just a few cents, it is invaluable to him in this situation. This is because in Germany, the drinking water demand can be saturated at any time, whereas in the desert there is no easy way to get supplies.
It can therefore be concluded that the value of a product depends on many variables, such as the urgency of the need.

In addition, it is hardly possible to define an objective value or benefit for products, but it depends on each individual customer. The art for the marketer is now to increase the subjective value of a product. This increase proceeds logarithmically: the more a customer already has of a product, the greater the increase in quantity must be in order for the increase in benefit to be still perceptible to the customer. Customers quickly get used to consuming products.

Marketing has a fundamental task which is to increase the perceived benefit and reduce pain in consumers (Mittelstaedt, 2019a) (see Figure 27).

![Value = Benefit / Pain](image)

Figure 27. (Image by author): The marketing objective.

The related question is, “When does a customer buy a product?” He buys when the benefit of the product or service exceeds the pain he feels because he has to pay for it (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2007). If the customer thinks that the product is worth more than the price he has to pay, he will make the purchase.
The goal of marketing is to intervene in this value formula. The higher the customer's level of perceived benefit is, the more difficult it is for the marketer to increase the perceived benefit even further (difference threshold).

**Tip:** In an online or offline shop it makes sense to offer additional products at the end of the purchase. The pain experienced in the form of spending money is subject to the same logarithmic function: the additional amount added is perceived as small, as the amount has already reached a certain level (Felser, 2015, p. 30).

This tip is also strongly related to the anchor effect. Humans do not perceive objects absolutely, but in relation to certain reference points, which include sensory impressions (Felser, 2015, p. 30). Basically, it can be said that one sensory perception can trigger or influence another sensory perception. For example, an acidic taste is linked to freshly appearing colours (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 123).

The taste may also depend on haptic sensory impressions; from an angular vessel, a drink tastes more intense and bitter (see Figure 28) (van Rompay, Finger, Saakes, & Fenko, 2017).

![Figure 28: Influence of haptics on taste.](image_url)

Image kindly provided by van Rompay, Source: (van Rompay, Finger, Saakes, & Fenko, 2017).
The following are some summarized notes on sensory perception:

- In the middle of the visual field, colourfulness is the right means of attention control. In the peripheral area of the advertisement, moving objects are more attention-grabbing (Felser, 2015, p. 31).

- The sound of a product can be taken as an indicator of its quality (Felser, 2015, p. 33). Sounds in advertising can also be used to reach people who deal with other media, such as the newspaper (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 97).

- The sense of smell is sensitive. Small changes are already perceived but getting used to an odour happens in a split second. Odours (e.g. body odour) are remembered very well (Felser, 2015, p. 35).

- The sense of touch is not susceptible to perceptual illusions (Nuszbaum, Voss, Klauer, & Betsch, 2010) & (Hartmann & Haupt, 2016). The sense of touch is very sensitive and helps us to perceive product characteristics. The endowment effect is created by the sense of touch and the possession. Hartmann and Haupt assign different abilities to the sense of touch, including the improvement of memory, the generation of attention, the increase of credibility, the increase of product value and finally the increase of purchase probability (Hartmann & Haupt, 2016).

Not only do the senses influence our perception; the brand does so as well as shown in Figure 29, where "[t]he products of different marks may be objectively different even if the difference cannot be established without knowledge of the mark" (e.g. Allison & Uhl, 1964). This consideration is also supported by neurological research. In a blind test,
consumers preferred Pepsi to Coca-Cola, but this preference was reversed when the brand is known.

![Influence of presentation of brands on valuation](image)


Now, for example, it has been shown that the neuronal excitation patterns that accompany the consumption of Coca-Cola with and without brand awareness differ significantly (McClure et al., 2004). This could indicate that knowledge of the brand and thus the activation of the experience value does indeed generate an objectively different product experience" (Felser, 2015, p.13 and p.40).

The fact that mere notions also have an influence on human perception is also shown by the numerous studies on placebo effects.
The attention

For advertising to be perceived at all, the customer must first direct his attention to it. Attention therefore means that the customer makes a certain selection of stimuli (Lachmann, 2002, p. 21). Man cannot absorb all the information / stimuli that surround him. He consciously or unconsciously chooses what to focus on. This can be called selective attention control (Felser, 2015, p. 41). The advertisement should try to bring certain aspects of the message to the fore so that they get the attention they need. The problem here is that attention is not available indefinitely (Felser, 2015, p. 42). The consumer cannot consume any number of advertising media simultaneously or in quick succession without being highly selective.

Activation and attention control influence all processes of information processing (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 78). Activation is the basic excitation or inner tension (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 58). Activation is then necessary to generate attention for the product and can extend the viewing time of an object (Lachmann, 2002, p. 43). The attention sensitizes the consumer to certain stimuli and thus to certain aspects of the advertising message (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 61). It is not true that greater activation and thus greater attention is automatically better. In fact, medium attention span is best suited for the consumption of advertising (Felser, 2015, p. 42) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 43).

The justification for this principle is provided by the Lambda Hypothesis, also known as the Yerkes-Dodson Law. This principle states that with increasing activation, the performance and thus the consumer's receptiveness also increases (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 82-83).
From a certain activation point on, however, the performance decreases again strongly, so there is an optimal point of activation (see Figure 30) (Felser, 2015, p. 88).

Figure 30. (Image by author): The Yerkes-Dodson law. Source: see (Felser, 2015, p. 89, & Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 79).

Three conclusions for advertising can be drawn from this figure (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 80):

- A minimum level of activation is necessary, otherwise the performance is at zero.
- With increasing performance, the ability to understand the advertising and to absorb the advertising message increases.
- If the advertising activates the consumer too much, his performance decreases.

The last remark is negligible in advertising, and this is agreed upon by experts (Felser, 2015, p. 89) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 80 & 99), as a normal advertisement will not manage to activate the consumer too much.
How can a high level of attention be triggered in the customer? Trommsdorff formulates the following methods (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 46):

- Use a stimulus that addresses a physical need.
- Use a stimulus that triggers feelings.
- Use strong or unusual stimuli that trigger biological reflexes, such as sounds.

Neumann also presents other stimuli that improve the attention-grabbing effect of advertising (Neumann, 2013, p. 100-101):

- Humour,
- people in general and especially eroticism,
- animals (baby animals),
- signal colours,
- special printing techniques (haptic effects),
- unusual headline,
- surprising elements,
- scents and music.

Higher activation is not only related to higher performance, as activating advertising also has an impact on the mental control of arguments. With a high activation, the arguments of the advertising message are controlled, and the consumer is inclined to look for counterarguments and to invalidate the attempt to convince (Felser, 2015, p. 42). Kroeber-Riel (2003, p. 82) comes to a similar conclusion by concluding, "If you give communication a more activating effect, you can expect more efficient processing of the message, but not necessarily better communication success". If the customer is activated only by a little, he is only slightly resistant to advertising and does not develop any counterarguments (Heath, 2012).
The marketer must therefore succeed in finding a middle ground. On the one hand, a high level of activation with good information processing and customer performance should be the goal. On the other, the equally increasing critical attitude of the customer towards advertising must be considered.

Finally, the following aspects should be considered for activation and attention:

- Activation has a positive influence on information reception and processing (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 86). Activating advertisements attract attention and are fixed more frequently and for a longer time (Witt, 1977) & (Leven, 1986).
- With increasing activation, the ability of the advertisement to be remembered by the customer also increases (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 87). If it is not possible for the marketer to show a strongly activating advertisement, he should try to increase the recall ability by means of repeated and long-term broadcast of the advertisement (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 88).
- Repeated contacts with advertising can compensate for the low performance of consumers in the case of weak activation (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 93).
- The customer's gaze is directed at strong stimuli, but also distracts attention from the information in the environment. Key information in advertising should therefore be designed to be activating, otherwise the key message is lost (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 89).
- In order to attract new customers or customers from the competition and to attract their attention to the previously uninteresting product range, the marketer is dependent on activation techniques.
• The psychological activation (colour, size perception, etc.), which is so important for advertising, is a process that is triggered largely automatically (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 91).

• The consumer turns selectively and actively to an advertisement. If he is exposed to many advertisements, he will focus on one or a few advertising messages. Important and conspicuous stimuli in the advertisement control this attention (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 61).

• The limitation of attention leads to the fact that it is very important which advertisement the consumer looks at first. When looking at advertising, fatigue will set in with time. Each advertising message that is viewed after another advertisement gets less attention than the previous advertisement (Felser, 2015, p. 43).

• A consumer views an advertisement for about 2 seconds (Felser, 2015, p. 43) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 92). The customer's attention and time should be considered a scarce and rare commodity. Many forms of complexity in advertising damage this perception of scarcity.

• The advertising success is greater if the advertising message is processed and absorbed efficiently. This goal is achieved by activation (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 99).

• In order for advertising to prevail against the distracting environment, it should be designed to attract attention (von Keitz, 1998).
The psychology of appearance

Before moving onto the chapter on advertising design (which takes a closer look at the individual components of an advertisement), it can be beneficial to apply Gestalt psychology to look at the effects of the advertisement as a whole. Advertising overall is more than the sum of its individual parts (Felser, 2015, p. 32). People have a natural sense of beauty. Similar to the individual elements of an advertisement, the design as a whole also has an influence on the perception of people. A good design is always an advantage. The marketer can only benefit from an advertisement that is quickly noticed, recognised and remembered (Felser, 2015, p. 32).

But what characteristics does a "good figure" consist of?

Figure and footprint: An object should stand out from its background. In an advertisement, it should be immediately recognizable what is in the background and what is in the foreground. The advertising message (in the form of text or pictures) should immediately stand out and have clear outlines (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 45). By making products stand out from a background in advertising, they can be emphasized. White areas, for example, are not a waste of space if they highlight certain objects in a meaningful way (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 64). If a figure does not stand out clearly from the background, it can also lead to perception difficulties (see Figure 31).
Similarity: Objects that are similar are perceived as belonging together (Felser, 2015, p. 32).

Unity: A good design has no gaps or missing parts (Felser, 2015, p. 32). Meyer-Hentschel (1993, p. 45) describes the unity as strength of shape.

Closeness: Objects that are close together are also perceived as belonging together. The advertising message is assigned to a product if it is placed close to the product.

Continuity: People like to create a film in their minds: If many pictures are shown one after the other, the consumer puts them together to form a self-contained story. Perceptual impressions that lie one behind the other in time and space are perceived as belonging together.
Experience and expectation: "Consciousness is just a public-relations action performed by your brain to make you think you have something to say." (quote from Allan Snyder). The consumer approaches an advertisement with expectations and experiences. As can be seen in the quote, this context influences our perception.

Tip: At the end of the chapter on perception, the following quotation sums up an often forgotten aspect very well, "The best perception values of a campaign are of no use if the advertising message is not right, if the objective is strategically wrong, if the underlying marketing concept contains errors." (Lachmann, 2002, p. 252). The marketing plan helps the marketer to keep track of this marketing concept (Mittelstaedt, 2019a).
The advertising design

How can the insights of human perception, with all its aspects, be used to improve the design of advertisements?

Without an advertising and communication goal that is aligned with the marketing strategy, no successful advertisement can be designed. Consumers have several advertising filters when viewing an advertisement, since the latter must stand up to a large number of other advertisements and attract the attention of the customer. The customer must then deal with the advertising message. He then has to accept the message and at best agree with it. Once all these advertising filters have been overcome, the customer should actively implement the message (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 41).

Figure 32a. (Image by author): Customer communication filters. Source: see (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 41).
According to Meyer-Hentschel, advertisements should, "[b]e seen, read, understood and retained quickly. They should shape attitudes and influence purchase decisions." (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 12) (see Figure 32).

![Figure 32b. (Image by author): The model of the advertising effect. Source: see (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 22).](image)

The advertising filters and the planning process are related to the so-called copy strategy. This strategy states that advertising messages and advertisements should be formulated and designed concisely, concisely and clearly (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 42).

The copy strategy includes the following tasks (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 43):

- Definition of the target group
- Formulation of the communication goals
- Brand positioning
- Defining the customer benefit, the reason for purchase and the unique selling points.
It is particularly important that an advertisement is accepted quickly: Your own advertisements must reach the customer faster than those of your competitors. The reason for this development is the fact that customers are overloaded with information, there is little interest in advertising copy, and customers are more inclined to use pictures and video (see Figure 33) (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 14).

Figure 33. (Image by author): The stimulus satiation in everyday life. Source: (Bitkom, 2011).
The information overload for the individual media gives a more remarkable outlook:

![Information overload in the Federal Republic of Germany](image)


Many aspects of an advertisement can be influenced and changed. The ability to attract attention, for example, increases with the perceived level of creativity of an ad (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 27).

This is followed by an overview of the components of an advertisement and what influence they have on the consumer's perception, starting with the emotional stimuli.

**The emotional stimuli**

The emotional stimuli serve to activate the target person and are based on the biologically pre-programmed behavior patterns of mankind. Since humans are biologically similar, it can be deduced that they also react very similarly to the same emotional stimuli (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 30).
Emotional stimuli include a variety of stimulus categories, such as eroticism, fear, babies, faces, humour, and so on (see Figure 35) (For an overview, see Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 30. & Felser, 2015, p. 358.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erotic stimuli</td>
<td>Compared to the other key stimuli, erotic stimuli unleash the strongest activation effects (Meyer-Hentschel, 1988, p. 30). However, there is an increased risk that they distract from the original intention of the advertising message or trigger reactance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child scheme</td>
<td>Small birds, dogs or children's faces trigger automatic reactions such as sympathy and care behaviour in the viewer. The &quot;stimulus-sum regulation&quot; states that the exaggeration of characteristics typical of small children (large head or saucer eyes) leads to an intensification of the impression (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1987, p. 729ff.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archetypical</td>
<td>Based on the findings of analytical psychology, the aim is to address factors that are located in the human subconscious. A visualization of these impulses is often found in dream images, fairy tale figures, figures from legends and mythological phenomena (Dieterle, 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language</td>
<td>Facial expressions in particular can communicate a multitude of different emotions. Mimic expressions of joy, anger, rage, disgust, sadness and surprise are considered genetically anchored and universally understandable (Izard, 1994 &amp; Ekman, 1988).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 35. (Image by author): Overview of biological key stimuli. Source: see (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 535).

Erotic stimuli can be used in many ways, such as over naked skin (illustration 37), romance or allusions (see illustration 36). In Figure 36, the slogan on the advertisement reads: “Oral consumption - there's no faster way to enjoy your seed”. This is a well-known German beverage company for smoothies. Gender differences do not have as strong an effect as might be expected. Men and women can be activated to a similar extent by erotic stimuli; both sexes consequently rate the erotically charged product better ("Sex Sells") (Felser, 2015, p. 362).
Erotic stimuli are too distracting when the advertising is consciously processed, which occurs with interested customers, and thus reduces the memory retention of the advertising message.

For less involved and uninterested customers erotic stimuli are especially helpful in activating the customer. With this group of customers even unsuitable erotic stimuli seems to have a positive effect (Felser, 2015, p. 358). Lachmann writes about erotic stimuli, pointing out that (Lachmann, 2002, pp. 153-154):

- Erotic pictures are viewed more often and for longer periods of time.
- Erotic pictures are better remembered.
• The other display elements are viewed for the same length of time regardless of the erotic stimulus.
• Advertisement without an erotic appeal gave a weaker memory retention effect for the advertisement’s products and brands.

Figure 37.: Discreet use of erotic stimuli and good colour design. Image kindly provided by © Beiersdorf AG.
Despite erotic advertising universal appeal, there is still the recommendation to create a thematic proximity to the product. For example, erotic advertising applied to advertisements for insurance companies or banks is considered inappropriate (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 114).

Animals can also be used in advertising and can emit certain associations (see Figure 28). Some animals stand for very specific attributes (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, pp. 123-124):

- Gecko = Accountability
- Fox = Cleverness
- Dog = Family
- Birds = Lightness
- Tiger = Power

**The cognitive stimuli**

Intellectual stimuli are usually at odds with Gestalt psychology. They stimulate reflection, cause amazement or provoke. Meyer-Hentschel lists surprise, mental conflict, complexity or alienation as some examples of mental stimuli (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 40) Since advertisements with mental stimuli have to be processed longer than emotional stimuli, they should be used for consumers with a high level of involvement (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 40).

Innovations attract the attention of the customer. The irritation technique can consciously turn against Gestalt psychology. The novelty is best used in combination with known stimuli – if too many elements are new and unfamiliar, the consumer turns away from the advertisement (Kover, Goldberg, & James, 1995). As a marketer, you should therefore be careful with this attention technique.
"Irritation occurs above all when intense physical stimuli are perceived as intrusive or when surprising and emotional stimuli appear stupid, embarrassing or tasteless. Examples of this are: Too loud music, garish colours, obtrusive scents or emotional stimuli that offend common decency or moral standards." (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 77).

**The contrast**

If a brand or product differs from what the competition offers, there is a greater chance of getting attention. The contrast to the environment is therefore decisive due to the conspicuousness in the quantity of comparable offers (Andrews, Akhter, Durvasula, & Muehling, 1992).

**The colour**

Bright colours are superior to black or white (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 77). However, this is mainly due to the contrast effect: colours promote contrast and thus increase attention (Felser, 2015, p. 45). Signal colours also have an activating effect (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 73).

Meyer-Hentschel recommends checking the contrast effect of the colours in the advertisement by creating a black and white image. If the black-and-white image shows a striking image with contrasts in shades of grey, the advertisement will probably also be effective in colour (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 54).

Colours are particularly pleasant when they are bright and saturated, which can be perceived more positively (Felser, 2015, p. 344) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 432).
If colours stand out from their surroundings by being bright, new, eye-catching and warm, these colours attract the attention of the customer. However, you should not overdo it here, otherwise the colour design will be experienced as a manipulation method or as being too intrusive (Felser, 2015, p. 343). The selected colours should primarily match the culture and product category as well (Felser, 2015, p. 343) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 432).

In conclusion, it can be said that every consumer also has certain associations for colours (Felser, 2015, p. 340). Colours match brands and their products and are stored together with the product properties (see Figure 38). The colour can be a characteristic that belongs to a brand, such as a logo or name (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 53). Think about what your favourite brand would look like in black and white. In Figure 38 you can see the effect of colour on two very well-known German brands.

Figure 38.: Colours and brands belong together. Image kindly provided by Haufe-Lexware GmbH & Co KG. Source: (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 53).
Some colours stand for special associations:

- **Blue** is cool, relaxing and stands for discipline (Felser, 2015, p. 339). Blue is the most popular color (Heller, 1993, p. 23).
- **Red** can stand for love, prohibition, avoidance, dominance, higher status, aggression and warmth. There are many connotations to the colour red (Felser, 2015, p. 339 & 341), which can produce the strongest effect of excitation (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 432).
- **Green** stands for hope and health, and has a pleasant effect (Felser, 2015, p. 339). It is not overtly arousing (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 432).
- **Yellow** is for envy. It is the brightest and most luminous colour (Felser, 2015, p. 339).
- **Orange** is the natural colour of fire and therefore particularly exciting (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 432).

Geffken and Kalka also write that colours produce automatic reactions. This process is similar to emotional stimuli and depends on the context. The cultural influences on the perception of colours should also be taken into account. Colours have a completely different effect in the oriental or Asian region than in Europe (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, pp. 132-133). According to the authors, colours are associated with the following associations:

- **Red**: love, hate, emotional, blood and fire, drama, vitality, eroticism, aggressiveness, anger, cheerfulness, activity, optimism, power.
- **Blue**: calm, sovereignty, consistency, sincerity, loyalty, seriousness.
- **Yellow**: vitality, hope, cheerfulness, intellect, productivity, pride, responsible
- **Orange**: funky, haunting, exciting, different
- **Purple**: loneliness, narcissism, dreamlike, escape into dreams
- **Pink**: sweetness, femininity, tenderness, vanity
- **White**: purity, enlightenment, innocence
- **Black**: mourning, intellectual, magic, dominance, distance, mystery, evil

**The brightness and saturation**

Black and white have a strong connection in human language. Positivity is associated with white and negativity with black (see Figure 39) (Felser, 2015, p. 340) & (Meier, Robinson, & Clore, 2004). Therefore, in terms of automatic positive perception, the colour white is generally preferred (Felser, 2015, p. 340).

An advertisement should use bright and saturated colours, as both colour characteristics are experienced as positive, with saturation being associated with excitement and brightness with relaxation. Combining these findings, it therefore can mean that colour is rated better when it is bright and saturated (Felser, 2015, p. 340).
Figure 39. (Image by author): The effect of brightness and saturation. Source: see (Puhalla, 2008) coloured illustration also on request.

Brightness and saturation do not only play a role in advertising design. The perception of colours and their characteristics should also be considered. For example, light versions of foods are perceived more quickly and easily if the product packaging is designed in desaturated colours (see Figure 40) (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 51).
The Fonts

The gaze of people jumps from word to word. It is important that the form of the word is quick and easy to read. While the individual letters of the word are less important, the layout can be a deciding factor. Long words can be subdivided into sections with hyphens. This technique improves the quick and easy recognition of words (Felser, 2015, p. 344).

Words in capital letters degrade the simplicity of the words as illustrated next. HERE, THE READING FLOW IS INTERRUPTED AND EACH LETTER MUST BE READ INDIVIDUALLY (Felser, 2015, p. 344).
All changes to the usual typeface, such as white lettering on a black background, semi-circular as well as sloping arrangements or extravagant fonts should be avoided (Felser, 2015, p. 345), depending on the purpose.

Figure 41 shows some negative examples (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, pp. 90-91):

Figure 41. (Image by author): Headlines should be easy to read (negative examples). Source: see (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 90-91).

However, fonts can also evoke certain associations and thus address specific target groups, emotions or motives (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 162):

- strangely old
- playful, personal
- witty, not serious
- credible, informational
- childishly naive
- conservative
According to Neumann, texts can be read easily if the texts (Neumann, 2013, p. 97):

- are written in traditional fonts, such as Arial or New Times Roman.
- consist of upper- and lower-case letters.
- have a well-structured layout.
- are formatted with sufficient line spacing.

**The heading**

The subject area of the writing naturally includes the heading. Since the headline is usually the most strikingly designed, it is often the first thing to be considered together with the picture. Physical features play a particularly important role in headlines.

The headline should be large and colourful and contain emotional words. Thought stimuli and irritations should be avoided, as they work too slowly (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 69 & 150).

The reader must be able to look at the headline in isolation and still understand the message. The headline must not be misunderstood without the picture or the continuous text (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, pp. 69 & 150).

You should also avoid splitting a heading in the advertisement and placing it in different positions. If one part of the headline is placed above and the other part below the picture, the customer usually only perceives part of the headline (Lachmann, 2002, p. 169).
Felser (2015, p. 337) gives an overview of the optimal characteristics of a heading. A headline should therefore (see also (Ogilvy, 1984, p. 71) & (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993)):

- be short (approx. 5-8 words), contain as many nouns as possible, not be formulated as a question, not be passively formulated, not contain any negations and be directly addressed to the client.

Geffken & Kalka also summarise some important characteristics of headings (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, pp. 169-179):

- Headlines are read 5 times more often than continuous text.
- Headlines in quotation marks are said to increase the memory of the headline by 28%.
- One should not use negations like "un-" or "non-".
- Punctuation marks should be avoided. Dots or exclamation points lead to the mental end of the message and interrupt the customer's attention.
- The headline should be self-explanatory.
- Question marks should be avoided.
- The brand name should be integrated into the headline.
- The headline should also be designed to be stimulating.

The style of the text can also have an influence on the perception of the advertising message. Different styles have different effects on the consumer (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 200-201 and Urban, 1995).
The advertising texts

As with headings, nouns help to increase the speed at which information is absorbed. In addition, it is recommended to integrate the most important product property into the (product) name (Felser, 2015, p. 350). For example, the name "gentle soap" should be used for "soap that is gentle on your hands and the environment".

The body text should be as short as possible and key stimuli should be used in a way that combines different information (Neumann, 2013, p. 126).

Since the continuous text is usually not read, it is advisable to improve the layout and increase the probability of reading it by using paragraphs, subheadings and abbreviations. Even consumers with a high level of product interest use just six gaze fixations (observations) for the continuous text (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, pp. 117-118).

Consumers see the advertising text as an everyday form of communication. As a result, customers usually assume that certain standards of communication are met (Felser, 2015, p. 351). The text should only complement the image due to the superiority of the image. Above all, the picture and also the text should be understandable for the customer without any further elements to explain (Felser, 2015, p. 351).

For advertising texts, a sentence should not contain more than 25 words; ideally the sentence should only contain 15 words. Advertising copy should avoid complex sentences with subordinate clauses. The sentence statement should also be recognizable relatively quickly (Felser, 2015, p. 354).
Abstract words like efficient, trust or future can be processed too slowly and have no advertising effect on the customer (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 96-98).

An advertising text must be understandable. It must be self-explanatory without the help of a sales representative and therefore should not contain, for example, inside-jokes that not every customer understands (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 102).

Proper names can be used for advertising. If a surname is used, ensure that this name is associated with the product. A proper name can be a designation of origin, for example. Ideally, the product or brand name stands for the entire product category. For example, Cola stands for Coke drinks or Tempo for tissues (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, pp. 82-83).

Product or brand names can also stand for isolated words. In this case, the name can be associated with a picture or object that already exists. Apple, Puma or Eagle Owl are brands that use already existing terms. But a name can also be completely new and be a creative new creation (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 84-85).

But the name is in any case relevant. The customer can remember the name better if it makes sense. Words without meaning should be kept as short as possible. Generally, it is a good idea to place the brand name in front of the product, as is the case with Coca-Cola (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 84-85).
After these rather devastating findings on advertising or continuous text, one should not neglect a positive aspect. The continuous text makes an advertising statement more credible. The customer perceives it as if they were arguments that prove the advertising message regardless of whether the continuous text is actually read (Felser, 2015, p. 152).

**The size**

The size of an ad naturally plays a role, in the sense that large ads increase attention and are therefore seen particularly quickly (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 44). This works especially for the acquisition of new customers, whose attention can be captured through a large advertisement, since they have a low interest in new brands and therefore need to be activated more.

Incidentally, many small ads that could be shown to the customer do not have the same positive effect as a large ad (Felser, 2015, p. 338). One should find an optimally-sized measure, because the advertising effect does not increase proportionally with the size of the advertisement. It may be that the increase in attention brought about by a larger ad is unjustified especially when considering the higher costs incurred for larger ads (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 44).

The size effect could not only meant that the advertisement is particularly large in its extent. Close-ups or images within a relatively small display that are very large compared to the text also create a size effect (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 45). The attention can therefore be increased by the absolute or relative size of the advertisement.
Double-page ads are used in the print sector to enhance the absolute size effect. These can be placed over two pages, whereby the following points should be considered in addition to the cost-benefit calculation: The headline and the central image should run across both pages so that the pages are perceived as being cohesive. The product, brand and advertising message should be shown on both sides so that both sides contain a reference to the sender (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 129).

However, when considering the size of an ad, one should still consider that "[t]he size of an ad doesn't matter when it's boring (Hopkins, 1966).

Of course, physical stimuli can be used several times. For example, you can combine colour and size in an advertisement (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 135).

**The placement and viewing behavior**

Two characteristics are decisive for the placement of text and images. Firstly, the customer should be able to understand the advertisement in a line of sight, and on the other hand, the line of sight should follow the direction of reading. Jumping back and forth between different points of view should be avoided. From this, it can be deduced where the individual elements of an advertisement should be placed:

- Information located at the top left is read or viewed earlier than information located at the bottom right (Felser, 2015, p. 338) & (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 80).
If you look at the structure of an eye, according to Wimmer, you can conclude further design guidelines for the advertisement. "The eye does not start at the headline and then works its way down to the bottom right, point by point. There are clear priorities for the eye movement. Pictures are more prominent than text, especially persons in front of landscapes or backgrounds, faces in front of the body; eye, mouth and nose first." (Wimmer, 1988)

We can interpret that to mean that people are more attention-grabbing than landscapes and faces are even more so than bodies, with eyes taking more prominence than bodies. Eyes attract attention above all when they are directed at the reader (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, p. 96-98).

Meyer-Hentschel (1993, p. 124) mentions, "Headlines that are below the picture are noticed by 10 percent more readers than headlines above the picture. Likewise, texts and headlines to the right of the picture are read more often than those to the left. It is dangerous to overload ads with elements".

A layout with the image on the left and the text on the right corresponds to the natural division of the brain into the left and right hemispheres with the appropriate brain functions (see Figure 42). Ads that follow this layout are preferred (Felser, 2015, p. 338-339).

Placing text in the middle is also a good idea. When viewing a two-dimensional object, the view starts slightly above the center (Geffken & Kalka, 2001, pp. 95 & 127).
Kroeber-Riel writes the following about the customers' gazing behavior, "More is fixed at the top than at the bottom, the most is fixed at the top left, the least is fixed at the bottom left (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 258) & (Bernhard, 1978).

A brand name or logo also plays a role in the correct placement. Often the logo or brand name has too small of a design in the advertisement. In any case, the brand name or logo should already be placed in the headline or bottom right according to the reading direction.

The primacy recency effect provides the psychological justification for this placement. Due to habit, the consumer habitually looks for the sender of the advertising message in the bottom right-hand corner, so the marketer should not violate this (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, pp. 107-108).
The recommended order for placing the ad elements is therefore as follows: Image - Headline (with brand name) - Package / Product - Continuous text (consider if this is really necessary?) - Logo (large & bottom right) (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 127).

The pictures

Pictures say more than a thousand words. In fact, Stone-Age paintings show that pictures are one of the most original and primal forms of communication. It helps that pictures are liked and appreciated by people (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 17).

Due to technical development, images are also being used more frequently and is especially useful for advertising. Some social media platforms, such as Instagram, rely entirely on the use of images. Emotions find their way into our text messages via emojis (emotion pictures). However, physical and mental stimuli also play a role in the right choice of images.

Pictures are what provides the consumer with the most important information quickly and easily. They can reduce the information overload of the customers, because pictures are concise and can be processed quickly (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 17).

Concrete images not only support the activation potential of ads, but also help to improve the ability to remember the ad. This can be best achieved if the image shows a concrete product benefit (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 173).
Images meet with great approval from consumers as a whole, as shown in Figure 43.

![Number of people in Germany who find texts without pictures boring. (in millions)](image)

Figure 43. (Image by author): The evaluation of texts without images. Source: see (IfD Allensbach, 2019).

According to Meyer-Hentschel, pictures can greatly improve the advertising effect since images are viewed first, do not need to be translated, are processed quickly, are credible, and the central message is quickly grasped and images are quickly learned (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 18).

Trommsdorff writes about the effect of images, say that "[i]mages have superior activating and emotional effects. They are perceived and processed largely automatically, and they are better remembered than text." (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 100).

Forms that can be used in pictures also differ in their effect:
closed, regular, uniform, symmetrical, simple and concise forms are more concise. These include circles, equilateral triangles or even squares (see Figure 44).

This knowledge can also be applied to the design of brand logos, for example (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 64).

Figure 44.: The triangle as a striking trademark. Image kindly provided by Hochschule Harz.

The advantages of using images can however, pose some disadvantages. As is well known, pictures attract attention. Some specific motifs particularly stimulate the consumer – eroticism, children or faces (especially eyes) have strong attraction factors. However, pictures also slow down the eye movement and can have a distracting effect (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 81). It’s important to note that images should not contain unimportant elements. If an advertisement contains unimportant picture elements, they should only be placed in the margins.

What is important (is that the advertising message, the product or the brand) in the picture must be emphasized (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 81). Images should relate to the knowledge of the consumers. Otherwise, the images should relate to the needs or interests of the target group (Felser, 2015, p. 348). Pictures should definitely address positive emotions and feelings and trigger an approaching behavior (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 143).
In order for an image such as a logo to be saved in the mind, this image should be used continuously and over a longer period of time (see Figure 45). Frequently changed "key images" are not advantageous. Figure 45 shows how a well-known German brand has hardly changed their logo over the decades.

In advertising, singular and few key images which are used over a longer period of time, have more impact (Ruge & Andresen, 1994).

Of course, the image must be unique and must not be confused with that of the competitor’s (Meyer-Hentschel, 1993, p. 143).

![NIVEA Tin Evolution](image_url)

Figure 45.: Consistency in the brand logo is important. Image kindly provided by © Beiersdorf AG.

A special type of image is the inner images which the customer recalls from memory, and which activates an object or an advertising message even in the absence of the actual advertisement. Inner images are recalled spontaneously in the presence of external stimuli or considerations.
A product can thus be stored in the minds of customers through a variety of ways. For example, an inner image of a car can be activated by a smell, a sound, a logo or the word "car". Hence, there are acoustic images, olfactory images and haptic images. These inner images are particularly effective in terms of shaping behavior.

Advertising should therefore address as many senses as possible (Kroeber-Riel, 1996, pp. 40-43). The Underberg company used both haptic (see Figure 46) and acoustic images in its advertisement. The "Underberg" melody is the first sound mark still alive today, which was registered at the German Patent and Trademark Office on 1 January 1995 (the date that the trademark form "sound mark" was introduced in Germany).

Figure 46.: Haptic signals in the advertisement.
Image kindly provided by Underberg GmbH & Co KG.
The Limbic Map of Häusel, which has already been discussed in the chapter on emotions, can also be implemented with pictures. The motive and emotion systems should be transmitted with certain picture codes. Symbolic and pictorial codes play an important role here due to the positive characteristics of pictures. An advertisement can be used to create an emotional positioning, and the marketer should try to address the emotions and motives of the customer correctly. For example, the landscapes could address adventurous motifs. Also, the car stands for control over situations, while good weather represents positive emotions (see Figure 47).

Figure 47. (Image by author): The implementation of the motif approach with advertisements. Source: see (Häusel, 2014, p. 107).

Through these codes (signals), mental concepts can be activated if they fit the implicit goals and needs of the client. Codes translate these implicit needs into product characteristics.
The goals of a customer are like a filter; if the information in the advertisement does not fit the goal or need of the customer, the advertisement is not even consciously perceived (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 29-32). Codes need not be exclusively images but can be perceived by all senses (see Figure 48).

Figure 48. (Image by author): The perception of codes via the senses. Source: see (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 44).

At a conference in 1994, Rolf Grapentin from GFK presented the most important features of advertisement design. Lachmann (2002, pp. 175-176) summarizes the aspects as follows:

- The main message should be transported through the picture.
- Concise pictures should be used.
- Activating stimuli should be used.
- One should not expect to read the continuous text.
• The logo and product must be placed in the central line of sight.
• One should not use complex analogies or riddles.
• The ads should be able to stand for themselves.
• The marketer should not cram content into the ad.
• The headline should be short and concise.
• The brand should be mentioned in the headline.

The salesroom design

One topic that uses the same theories as pictures is the design of salesrooms. It’s important to note that products that belong together should be placed next to each other. In this case, the sense of belonging is less in the product category, but rather in the groups of different products since a product is rarely consumed individually. This results in various possible combinations of products, or so-called compound groups. The customer therefore does not only buy a specific product but has a demand for different products that may complement each other. This is particularly the case in the consumer goods sector (Mittelstaedt, 2019a). One should therefore place products next to each other that meet a common need and are usually in demand together, like bread and butter for example. The customer is thus indirectly reminded of similar products (Mehrabian, 1987, p. 178).

The colour scheme should also be taken into account when designing the sales area. Bright and saturated colours are experienced more pleasantly. Grey tones should be avoided, while blue and green have the greatest pleasure-enhancing effect. These colours can also be integrated via objects in a room. Houseplants are ideal for this and make the room stand out more.
In an attractive environment, e.g. in a large department store, you should avoid overly stimulating colours such as red, orange or yellow.

Colours can not only be exciting or pleasant in a room but can also make the room appear wider or narrower, warm or cold. As a marketer, you should pay attention to such connections (For an overview see below (Mehrabian, 1987)).

Lighting fixtures should use daylight above all. If this is not possible, lamps providing an effect similar to daylight can be used. Ideally, the sales room should be well lit. With the help of bright colours and lots of light, a warm and inviting atmosphere can be created (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 247).

Music has a mostly underestimated effect on the perception of a sales room. Pleasant music can enhance the mood of the customers and make the sales room appear more positive. Relaxed music in particular has an additional positive effect – it can increase the length of time customers stay in the store and thus ultimately increase sales (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 432-433) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 243).

Carefully used fragrances that are appropriate to the department or product range have similar positive properties on the salesroom perception. They can create an activating and emotionally stimulating atmosphere (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 121).

The larger the shop area appears to the customer, the longer he will linger in the shop. So you should use colours and furnishings that make the sales area appear larger (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 431-432).
The sales opportunity of products on the sales floor depends on their perceptibility. Unpopular products, or articles that sell badly, should be placed at eye level so that they are immediately perceptible. It helps that customers are used to seeing the more expensive products at this height. On the flipside, articles that are bought frequently should be placed at the bottom of the shelf. In other words, the item you want to sell should be easily perceptible and ideally placed at eye level (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 177) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 245).

Kroeber-Riel formulates other aspects of the "store layout" (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 436-437) & (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 178) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 162) (see also Figure 49):

- Customers usually walk through the sales rooms in an anti-clockwise direction.
- Customers usually orientate and start their shopping experience from the retail store exterior before entering the interior, meaning they prefer the outside aisles of the shop.
- Aisles with a U-turn and shop corners should be avoided.
- Customers are increasingly turning their attention to shelves placed on the right.

The perceived size of the store increases the likelihood of visitors to spend more time in the store, as consumers are very curious and like to explore new things.
In general, the salesroom can be staged as an experience in which all senses interact, and an experience is conveyed. The time a consumer spends in the store increases with his or her excitement. An approaching behavior promotes interaction with the surroundings, for example the sales staff. However, you care should be taken not to over-stimulate consumers, as they are usually already overloaded with information (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 125 & 437).

However, salesroom design is only one aspect of the brick-and-mortar shopping experience (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 161). There are other factors that influence the customer's perception of the store:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High quality sales areas</th>
<th>Low quality sales areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Main channels of business</td>
<td>• Aisles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sales area to the right of the customer flow.</td>
<td>• Sales areas to the left of the customer flow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dead ends that the customer automatically sees</td>
<td>• Entrance zones that are quickly passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aisle crossings</td>
<td>• Dead ends of the sales area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Checkout areas</td>
<td>• Rooms behind the cash desks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 49. (Image by author): The sales zone design.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Important criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Availability of parking spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility by public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location (city centre, transport connection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Architecture, shop window design, Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store layout</td>
<td>Size and floor plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length and width of aisles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail space easily visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price level</td>
<td>Special offers available?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product range width and depth</td>
<td>Number of articles in the assortment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of product categories on offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff</td>
<td>Quality of advice, customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop atmosphere</td>
<td>Multisensorics (smells), colours, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>Number and mood of customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the products</td>
<td>Branded or &quot;no-name&quot; products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting time</td>
<td>Duration and perception of waiting time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication policy</td>
<td>Display and in-store advertisements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 50. (Image by author): Important features of a shop design. Source: see (Foscht, Swoboda, & Schramm-Klein, 2015, p. 205) & (Antonides & van Raaij, 1998, p. 416).
Consumer behavior on the Internet

Before covering the psychology of consumption on the Internet, the question naturally arises, why do consumers shop on the Internet at all. Some justifications include (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 44-45):

- High price transparency and better price orientation of customers on the Internet
- Ease of use
- Time saving (no need to walk to the store)
- Simple information procurement

The Internet represents a platform for rather highly involved customers (Lachmann, 2002, p. 207). Customers expect immediate access to information in real time, as loading a website should only take a few seconds. Consumers also expect the information on the website to be kept up-to-date (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 103 & 291).

Many consumers actively search for a product or very specific information. The customer therefore not only determines to a large extent what they look at, but also where and when they look at a product or brand.

A company should take this basis into account when advertising online. A form of communication takes place with a consumer who has actively chosen a website and has already shown interest. The chapter on involvement therefore plays a particularly important role here.
Communication with the customer goes not only through online advertising, but also through various elements of a website. Newsletters, live chats, emails and other forms of communication should encourage the customer to get in touch with the company (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 151).

The perceived risk and the perceived information content play an important role in building a positive perception of a website or online shop. The overall risk for the customer consists primarily of financial loss due to a failed online payment, return of goods, the need for repairs or a possible loss of time. Poor customer service can add to the frustration and also cost in terms of time (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 35).

In order to reduce the perceived risk, the customer should be informed of data security policies and reviews from other customers should be published. A few positive test ratings from "Stiftung Warentest", "Google My Business" or "Trustpilot" (see Figure 51) can also help to increase the customer's trust in a website (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, pp. 18-19). With Trustpilot, users can rate a company and award stars.
Figure 51.: Via "Trustpilot" you can increase trust on the Internet through customer ratings. Image kindly provided by Trustpilot A/S, accessed on 09.11.2019. Source: (Trustpilot A/S, 2019).

Banner advertising for a product should match the theme of the website on where banner is embedded. Otherwise, the banner ad may be perceived as annoying.

The Internet, in particular, offers many opportunities to place suitable advertising for those consumers who are also interested (Lachmann, 2002, p. 210).

Unlike the print sector, animated advertisements are more than possible on the Internet – a possibility that marketers should look into. Animations such as flashing, illuminated lettering or movements can grab the consumer’s attention more effectively. However, the consumer quickly gets conditioned to exposure to this type of advertising (Lachmann, 2002, p. 212). In addition to attracting attention, an animation also increases the probability of remembering the advertisement and reinforces the call to action (Lachmann, 2002, p. 211) & (Felser, 2015, p. 334).
An advertising banner should contain images and consist of minimal elements. In general, the discussed characteristics and theories of the classical advertisement can also be applied to a banner advertisement (Lachmann, 2002, p. 211).

Place the banner ad near the scroll bar, ensuring it is within the eye line of the consumer, to achieve a higher click-through rate. However, the banners could just as well be integrated into the content area itself or appear directly in the middle of the screen (Felser, 2015, p. 334). This form of overt advertising would be undesirable from the consumer's point of view and might lead to reactive advertising. Advertising should therefore be primarily informative or at least entertaining.

There is much more to consider when arranging objects on a website than the mere placement of advertising banners. Customers should be able to instantly understand the information on and have expectations met through websites (see Figures 52 & 53).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of the website</th>
<th>Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>In the middle of the upper edge of the screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal links</td>
<td>In the middle of the left edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External links</td>
<td>On the right edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home page link</td>
<td>In the upper left corner or integrated in the logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal search</td>
<td>In the middle of the upper third of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Cart</td>
<td>In the upper right corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My account</td>
<td>At the top edge of the page to the right of the centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help/Service</td>
<td>In the upper right corner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 52. (Image by author): The placement of elements of a web page, Source: see (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, pp. 87-88) & (Bernard, 2002).

Figure 53. (Image by author): A sample page. Source: see (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 94).
An oft forgotten aspect of website design is to increase the speed of the website and make it easy for the customer to interact with it. The website visitor should not always be interrupted in his action. This is the only way for the customer to get into a flow experience and get the feeling of control over his buying behavior (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 123).

Users who search for content themselves are usually on the Internet and they are usually impatient. Changing a website to appeal to a customer requires little effort and must be done, especially in a world where customers have various competitor options to choose from (Lachmann, 2002, p. 212).

The term gamification is currently on everyone's lips. The customer's playful interaction with a website also improves the advertising effect. A website should therefore have a minimum level of interactivity (Felser, 2015, p. 334) & (Lachmann, 2002, p. 211). It may be beneficial to integrate interactive elements such as infographics, diagrams, sliders or navigation buttons into the website.

According to a study, the overall assessment of a website attachment (Chen & Wells, 1999) depends on three factors in the following order (see also Felser, 2015, p. 335):

1) A high level of information and content on the website
2) The entertainment value of the website
3) The organization of the site

Another study mentions the following points for the quality assessment of a website in descending order of importance (Bauer, Rösger, & Neumann, 2004, p. 210):
Entertainment (emotional activation)
Customer care
Transaction (security, speed)
Communication with the customer
Content on the website (information quality)
Design of the website (user-friendliness)

The Learning

Kroeber-Riel describes learning as “a change in behavior based on experience. An individual has experienced a situation, i.e. has gained experience with this situation and therefore reacts differently than before. Learning can therefore be defined as a relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience” (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 322).

Learning is of particular interest to the marketer when making purchasing decisions since people learn by doing. The majority of human action is learned. The buying behavior of the customer can be changed by the experiences the customer makes (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2007, p. 293).

Unfortunately, what has been learned is stored only momentarily in the customer's brain (see Figure 54).
Ebbinghaus (1885) checked his own learning progress and how much information he forgets over time. Most of the information that the customer learns, he will probably forget quite quickly (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 94).

Figure 54. (Image by author): Forgetting curve after Ebbinghaus. Source: see (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 93).

Nevertheless, there are several learning variants that can be used to improve the learning effects of customers. Heath divides learning into active, passive and nonattentive learning (Heath, 2012).

Many commuters who travel by train or public transport every day are unwittingly learning. Through frequent contact with the names of the stops, they know the timetable by heart after a certain time, although they did not want to learn the stops actively.
A consumer also collects knowledge through daily contact with advertisements or information about the products and brand. The contact could also arise from product experiences, where the customer uses the products repeatedly and thus learns knowledge about the packaging, design or quality (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 33).

Evaluative conditioning (learning), which can be classified as active or passive learning, has the ability to change attitudes towards a product.

A product could be perceived more positively with the help of advertising. If a product is associated with a positive stimulus, the positive characteristics and the emotions of the stimulus could be transferred to the product. In the chapter about the advertisement, it has already been described how different stimuli influence perceptions. A product could be enhanced with positive emotional images. For example, the product could be shown in setting of a beautiful natural scene. Even the faces of children and babies can positively enhance a product or brand through conditioning processes. Children can also evoke certain protective needs in adults, as in Figure 55, which is a plaster advertisement.
It does not matter whether a positive or negative stimulus is used to increase or decrease the value. In both cases, the valuation remains stable, although of course in most cases the product or brand should be positively charged. Non-profit organisations can, however, also use these conditioning processes to devalue behavior such as smoking or environmental pollution (Felser, 2015, p. 53).

Learning emotional product differentiation can be based on two experiences:
• A direct experience with the product (product test, use of the product) or,
• A symbolic experience where product or brand names are given emotional meanings (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 129).

An emotional appeal is shown together with an emotionless brand. Through consistent repetition with similar emotional stimuli, the brand can be given emotional values. Here, the involvement as a variable again plays an important role: Repeated conditioning is needed when the involvement is low. Customers who are not interested in the product or the brand need to be shown the emotional stimulus and the product more often.

In the case of casual learning from consumers with little involvement, the repetition of the advertising message therefore plays an important role, because casual learning takes time (Lachmann, 2002, p. 71). The success of this emotional product differentiation is independent of whether additional information (product information & continuous text) is presented (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 131 & 135).

Evaluative conditioning is not only useful for upgrading a product and improving attitudes towards the product but can also help with scandals or negative news. Instead of denying and appeasing the scandal or negative news, the company should utilize counterconditioning tactics (see also Availability Heuristics). Instead of working against the negative aspect, the positive aspects should be highlighted (Felser, 2015, p. 54) & (Hofmann, De Houwer, Perugini, Baeyens, & Crombez, 2010).
In addition, there is the possibility in advertising to present the advertising message together with the positive stimuli piece by piece. It is even very good if in the advertisement initially only individual components of the product (i.e. name or image) are positively charged by conditioning. This optimally prepares for a later upgrading of the other components. If all components were presented immediately instead, they would "steal the show" from each other and the conditioning effect would, in the worst case, be completely absent (Felser, 2015, p. 54) & (Walther, Ebert, & Meinerling, 2011).

Kroeber-Riel had a similar opinion and addressed further aspects. "If the number of repetitions or learning processes is spread over a longer period of time (for example over eight weeks), the average learning performance achieved over the entire eight weeks is higher than if the repetitions are concentrated on a short period of time (for example on the first week). Through temporally distributed repetitions of information (advertising), higher learning performance is achieved on average" (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 365).

It thus makes sense to plan entire advertising campaigns instead of individual advertising measures. Advertising will be forgotten relatively quickly if it is not continuously shown to the customer. A frequent repetition of the advertising message is essential.

How often you show the advertisement should depend on the advertising objective. The success of quick reminder is achieved by showing the advertisement frequently within a short duration (1 week). However, this success is not as sustainable (see Figure 56).
The learning effect can be directed in different ways at the customer. There does not have to be a connection between the product and a positive stimulus, as in product enhancement through eroticism. Furthermore, it does not matter whether the consumer is aware of the effect and attempts to influence it (Felser, 2015, p. 56). Such conditioning processes similar to the "Marlboro Man" have a very subtle effect.

Marketers can also perform evaluative conditioning by employing famous people or influencers. Testimonials or influencers have the same effect on the product as the stimuli already mentioned.

However, it should be noted that not only the positive characteristics of a person are transferred to the product, but all characteristics associated with the person.
One should therefore check beforehand exactly what characteristics and features the person stands for, as these values are then ultimately transferred to the product. In a meta-analysis by Amos et al (2008), the potential for scandal proved to be the most important factor in the selection of testimonials. Thus, the influencer should under no circumstances stand out through scandals or have been in connection with a scandal in the past.

In addition, trustworthiness, sympathy and competence are other important factors to consider when selecting influencers or advertisers. If the influencer advertises many products or brands, for example, this behavior may have a negative influence on the aforementioned factors. It is therefore advisable to conclude exclusive contracts with the advertising person (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008).

Despite the robustness and simplicity of conditioning, there are some conditions and features that need to be considered (a detailed overview can be found in Felser, 2015, pp. 60-61).

- The product and advertising interest of consumers is negligible for conditioning.
- The conditioning effects are primarily found with new brands or product innovations.
- In classical conditioning, the product or brand should be shown before or at least at the same time as the positive stimulus. However, several commercials violate this principle.
- Repetition and constancy reinforce the conditioning, so the images in advertising should often resemble or remain the same. The stimulus should be shown as often as possible before or with the product or brand.
• The intensity of the stimulus plays a subordinate role in conditioning. It is not important that images are very emotional or attention-grabbing to produce a learning effect.

• Conditioning works with stimuli and objects that are actually unrelated.

• There is also a link to advertising design in conditioning; images are better suited than language to condition consumers because they have a more direct and faster effect (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 119).

The sales promotion measures are known from the communication policy of marketing measures (Mittelstaedt, 2019a). These measures may consist of discounts, special offers or similar rewards. These rewards may also play a role in conditioning. A purchase that was rewarded with an incentive, like loyalty or payback points, is more likely to be repeated in the future than behavior without a reward.

This reward does not be of a monetary nature. A positive product experience or satisfaction with the sales staff also has a rewarding effect. In "after-sales management" it is therefore appropriate to "reward" the customer with congratulations and praise.

A reward can therefore be expressed in different ways with monetary and non-monetary amplifiers. The probability that an activity will be learned is higher if the reward occurs frequently (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 339). Offering a lot of small loyalty or bonus points therefore makes a lot of sense.

In any case, one should distinguish between rewards that influence the consumer before or after the purchase. Rewards, such as discounts, tend to act as an incentive to buy.
Rewards, such as loyalty points, are more likely to have an effect after the purchase, since the customer must first become active himself. Once the customer has become active and has decided to make a purchase, negative penalties should be avoided. Negative penalties can be that the product is no longer in stock or that the customer has a bad experience with the product (Felser, 2015, p. 65).

The memory

When reminding, information is retrieved that has already been saved. When this information is saved, not only the key information along with several context information is saved. When a piece of information is successfully retrieved, this key information helps in the form of so-called "cues". They are particularly important for product evaluation and to combine several pieces of information (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 284). The key information can give an indication of quality, price, brand, exclusivity, values and standards (Neumann, 2013, p. 124). A brand name or logo could be a key stimulus for the customer, combining several pieces of information (see also Association network). Other key stimuli are prices, product ratings (see Figure 57), product tests, advertisers, awareness of the advertisement or the geographical origin of the company (e.g. Made in Germany) or the origin of the product (wine from Burgundy) (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 82) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 134). Figure 57 shows an assessment of a well-known German product testing institute.
When storing product experiences, therefore, not only the product or brand name is stored, but also all information related to the situation. This information can be, for example, smells, images (see advertising design), tastes or even music.

The decoding (retrieval) of the memory of a brand then retrieves not only the brand with its name, but also other key information associated with the brand.

When consumers think of Nespresso, they may also automatically think of George Clooney (from the advertising), the slogan ("What else") or the Nestlé umbrella brand. Marketing should therefore ensure that the product or brand is accompanied by advertising or other positive information (Heath, 2012).

In any case, experts agree that real objects support memory performance better than pictures and images better than text and concrete words better than abstract words (Felser,
For the advertising message, one should use the fact that some information is retained better than others (Felser, 2015, p. 70-72) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 65):

- **Information that has been deeply processed**: The question of why or how it is connected improves the depth of processing. The marketer should ask himself how thoroughly the customer deals with the information or topic.
- **Personal approach**: In advertising approaches, customers should be addressed personally and directly.
- **Self-expression**: Information that you have expressed yourself can be remembered better. When a customer explains to other customers why they bought the product, they will remember the reasons for their purchase better. The attitude also benefits from self-generated arguments. Customers should therefore be asked for their reasons for buying or have the product recommended to others.
- **The retrieval and storage situation**: The situation in which the information is stored should be as identical as possible to the situation in which the information is retrieved. The purchase situation in the advertisement or the use of the product in the advertisement should correspond as closely as possible to reality, akin to the point of sale in the supermarket. One could also use elements from the advertisement for the product packaging to link the storage and retrieval situation. The well-known products from the TV series "Lion's Den", for example, use references to the appropriate TV show on the product packaging.
After one knows how information is stored, the question of whether this information is forgotten also arises. Forgetting is not a question of deleting the advertising information in the brain but is based on the fact that the information can no longer be retrieved. The key stimuli of the recall situation might not have been strong enough or the storage of the information was not sufficient. Most of the time, too much information has been added to the storage situation, covering up the actual key information. The "cue" is no longer strong enough (Felser, 2015, p. 72). Especially in advertising, differentiation is important. Through clear positioning and differentiation from the competition, you can create a unique key stimulus (Felser, 2015, p. 73). The retrieval key of the brand must be unique.

Knowledge about products or objects can even influence the perception of customers. Customers can immediately assign certain brands or products to specific assortments, brands, value propositions or other associations based on their experience.

The best thing would be to make the product conform within a certain product category. If you order a cola in a restaurant, you will always get a Coca-Cola. This behavior was learned from the people.
Visual information, for example, can create connections that do not exist in the first place:

![Image of a triangle created by perception](Image by author): Perception constructs a triangle, although there is no such triangle in the picture. The knowledge about triangles influences perception. Source: see (Neumann, 2013, p. 68).

Similar to learning, there are also some ways for the marketer to influence the customer's memory. Some points can already be deduced from the storage of information. Other possibilities are (Felser, 2015, p. 74-75) & (Fiedler, 2000):

- **Uncertainty**: If trust in memory is destroyed, the consumer is easier to influence externally.
- **Distraction during the retrieval situation**: If the customer does not find any memory traces under time pressure, he interprets the non-appearance as a lack of information, although it is simply due to the time pressure.
• **Assume incorrect information**: Marketers could already assume false information in advertising to customers. They could make a product characteristic the norm or assume that it is already the norm: "You have seen how effective our product is ...".

• **Repeating queries**: You can ask the same question more than once, thereby destroying the confidence that you have given a correct answer. "Are you really sure this drawback is still relevant?"

• **Allegations**: Merely considering or thinking about information already makes it more plausible. The customer should be made to think about the positive aspects of the product. If these do not occur to him, he should think about whether he really cannot remember them. A mere idea is usually enough.

**The Priming**

When information is retrieved, not just a single piece of information is retrieved, but a multitude of interconnected information and associations are retrieved as well. For example, a product is retrieved together with its product features, or a brand is retrieved together with information from an advertising spot. Information can therefore influence the subsequent information processing.

Products that provide related information do not only become better available after priming; all sensorial and neurological associations and information related to the product are activated as well.
The association network means that an association or a specific trigger will result in a large number of additional connections being retrieved. This association network is also called a semantic network, which can be used to explain the emergence, change and properties of knowledge structures. These knowledge structures reflect the most important characteristics of the product or brand, are hierarchically ordered and are abstract in different ways (see Figure 59) (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, pp. 232-233).

According to Kuß & Tomczak, the consumer knowledge that is called up during priming can also be divided into four areas (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 21):

- Awareness of the products
- Knowledge of product characteristics
- Shopping knowledge (special offers, shopping location)
- Application knowledge

The priming is done according to a very specific sequence. First, the links of the product category are retrieved, followed by the individual brand associations that the customer has specifically established with the brand (Mittelstaedt, 2019b).

The more associations are built up, the more likely it is that the information will allow for easy recall of the brand and its products.

For example, packaging that represents information and is part of consumer knowledge can address a specific product category and thus activate a brand in the minds of customers.
If the association process is called up, the consumer draws conclusions about very specific product characteristics that can result from the packaging design. As a result, the customer could continue to infer certain brands or mentally recall his personal product evaluation. Moods can also be part of this association network (Felser, 2015, p. 138). Information is retrieved more easily if it matches the congruent mood. For example, chocolate = happy = reward = delicious = ...

![Association scheme example using BMW](image)

Figure 59. (Image by author): Association scheme example using BMW - If information, such as driving pleasure, is activated, the associations spread among customers. Source: (Mittelstaedt, 2019b).

The spread of the association is not unlimited. Strong association connections are called up first (Felser, 2015, p. 78). The priming can, among other things, also be behaviorally effective.
When certain meanings or buying signals are primed, the behavior is subsequently activated and controlled. An idea or association with the consumer action can actually trigger this in reality (Felser, 2015, p. 119).

One way of introducing the product is the product demonstration about influencers, where an influencer displays a behavior. The consumer also imagines the behavior (imitation) and wants to imitate it (see also embodiment).

Further possibilities to use priming for advertising are mainly metaphor, but also stimuli already known to the customer are possible ((Felser, 2015, p. 121-123). & for haptic priming see also (Hartmann & Haupt, 2016)):

- The words "close" and "near" can activate social components (see also psychological distance).
- The words "high" and "low" can evoke different associations.
- An upward orientation has a more positive and powerful effect. This insight can be implemented in advertising design by arranging pictures and objects.
- The positive characteristic of being down-to-earth can be activated by ground contact. A brand or products that are down-to-earth should therefore be designed or placed accordingly.
- The colours white and black stand for quality and exclusivity (see Figure 60).
- The sense of touch can also evoke different associations: Materials evoke different temperature sensations. For example, rough surfaces activate a sense of danger.
- Warmth activates social needs, e.g. closeness. With a hot drink you can convey a positive human relationship to the customer.
- Weight activates valence. A solid quality is associated with heavy objects.

Figure 60.: The use of black for premium products, kindly provided by Haufe-Lexware GmbH & Co KG. Source: see (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 54).

For the marketer, priming is particularly exciting because even knowledge of its effect does not reduce the effect. So even if the customer knows the existence of the effect, he will be influenced by the priming, because priming is a very subtle way of influencing (see also: subliminal influencing) (Felser, 2015, p. 123).
The Primacy Recency Effect

When it comes to the storage of information, two specific points are of great interest to the marketer, which are the first and last point of illustration of an advertisement. This is because the primacy recency effect means that the first and last elements of an advertisement are particularly well remembered. The recency effect is somewhat stronger. A justification for this effect was already given in the Fundamentals of Memory.

The customer would like all (advertising) information to be taken into account during storage. Any further information shown with the key stimulus will lead to an overlay of the key information. The customer's learning performance decreases over time, only shortly before the end of the advertisement does it increase again briefly (Neumann, 2013, p. 140-141).

Figure 61. (Image by author): The primacy recency effect. Source: see (Neumann, 2013, p. 140).
However, it does not matter what is shown in the middle of a commercial, even if that is where memory performance is weakest. The primacy recency effect occurs mainly in the case of coherent advertising material or information (Felser, 2015, p. 79).

The recency effect is no reason to wait until the end of a commercial to show the brand or product. The fact that it makes sense to show the brand name already, within the advertisement for certain advertising targets, was discussed in the chapter on conditioning (Stewart & Furse, 2000). Incidentally, the primacy recency effect cannot only be used for your own advertising design; it can not only influence at which time of the video clip you show which content, but also at what time your own clip should be broadcast during the entire commercial break. Commercials that are shown at the beginning or end of a commercial break have an advantage.

Figure 62. (Image by author): The recall of TV spots depending on placement, Source: see (Lachmann, 2002, p. 237).
The Mere-Exposure-Effect

The mere display of information already leaves a memory track in the brain (Zajonc, 1968). This track in turn serves the customer as information to better evaluate a product and thus change his attitude towards it (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 64). The product is better valued by facilitating information processing, which occurs as the frequency of the customer being exposed to the product or advertising increases. The product or brand is then known to the customer and can be called up more easily. Even if this effect is not a real memory effect, it is a feeling of recollection. This rapid processing of information and the positive feeling of memory is called processing liquid (Felser, 2015, p. 82) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 242).

This effect will reassure any marketer that no advertising is money lost. As soon as the advertisement is only casually seen by the customer, it increases jog’s consumer's brain. The customer does not need to consciously remember the product or brand and the mere illustration of the brand/product already leads to a better rating (see Figure 63) (Zajonc, 1968, p. 1).

Zajonc (1968) presented his subjects with characters which they had not known before, so the participants did not know what the characters meant. Zajonc only varied the illustration frequency of the characters and found that the characters were rated better with the more frequent short viewing.
Figure 63. (Image by author): The valuation of properties in relation to the frequency of illustration. Source: see (Zajonc, 1968).

Here are some features of the Mere-Exposure effect (Felser, 2015, p. 83):

- The effect can be created by images (logos), people, texts, etc.
- The effect cannot be increased at will. It is even helpful if the stimulus is presented in a small number (about < 20 performances).
- Short illustration times of the stimulus are conducive to the effect.
- A temporal distance between the illustration of the advertisement and the purchase situation or evaluation of the product supports the effect.
- It is not about the recognition of the brand or the product, but only about the mere facilitation of memory.
The effect of the mere illustration is implicit. You can reach consumers who are less involved and who look passively at the advertising. The mere-exposure effect therefore also helps to reach customers who are highly distracted. In addition, the unconscious memory information is not "forgotten" as quickly as the consciously stored information. The processing liquid is preserved. After all, the mere feeling of memory is already enough to make the product or brand more valuable (Felser, 2015, p. 85-86).

Every point of contact that the customer has with the brand or product helps the marketer by improving the processing fluency.

At the end of this chapter on memory lies a small hint; a good memory is not one that remembers everything. A good memory is one that remembers the important things in life. What is important is in the eye of the beholder.
The subliminal marketing

The priming and the mere-exposure effect (effect of mere illustration) already make up two examples of subliminal influence.

Other possibilities of subliminal influence include distraction (preventing critical processing of the advertising message), suggestive questions (questioning techniques in sales), product placement (placing products as part of the film or video), foot-in-the-door technique or door-in-the-face technique (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 280).

If the definition of subliminal perception is very narrow, it refers to the illustration of a stimulus below the absolute threshold. The absolute stimulus threshold is the threshold at which the average person can no longer perceive the stimulus. A somewhat broader definition is that the customer cannot recognize the stimulus in advertising because it is covered by other stimuli (e.g. in the form of a logo) (Felser, 2015, p. 125) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, pp. 277-278).

All subliminal advertising techniques have one thing in common. No matter whether the customer focuses his attention on the stimulus or not, the stimulus should not be recognized in the case of subliminal influence. The customer does not know that he is being influenced (Felser, 2015, p. 126).
The subliminal Priming

It’s every marketer’s dream that the subliminal advertising can subconsciously influence customers to buy a certain brand. In practice, the plan could be implemented by showing an advertising message in the millisecond range.

To this wishful thinking there is also a notorious experiment: "Mr. Vicary (Vicary, 1957) had used a tachistoscope to fade in the advertising messages Eat Popcorn and Drink Coca Cola in the dark breaks between the images of a film that was shown in a movie theatre in Fort Lee. These only 1/3000 second short insertions were shown to have increased sales of popcorn by 57.8 percent and Coca-Cola by 18 percent (Neumann, 2013, p. 76). However, other studies have shown that the method often does not work (Felser, 2015, p. 126).

If you want to increase the probability of success of this subtle influencing technique, you should consider the following characteristics: (Felser, 2015, p. 126-127)

1) A product or brand is only activated if there is already a need for such a product. You cannot activate a soft drink subliminally if the consumer is not already thirsty anyway.

2) Therefore, the customer must have a concrete need.

3) One should pay attention to the appropriate stimulus: If you want to activate a logo, you should show the logo subliminally. If you want to activate the brand name, you should show the name instead.

4) The customers are optimally in an already activated state.
The subliminal conditioning

Subliminal conditioning does not attempt to actively persuade the customer to buy. Instead, the aim is to improve the evaluation of the product. Before the actual product is presented, for example in an advertisement, a positive stimulus (like a pleasant word or picture) is presented subliminally.

This stimulus also automatically enhances the product. A product that has previously been neutrally evaluated should receive a positive evaluation and a reward value from itself. The company's product should then have a positive effect on the customer, who should then perceive the consumption as a reward.

If the subliminal conditioning was successful, the product is rated better even though the original subliminal stimulus is removed (Felser, 2015, p. 128).

If a product is shown in advertising together with a subliminal positive stimulus, the product will be rated better over time. If at some point the positive stimulus disappears, the customer would have by then already learned the link, allowing the appreciation of the product to remain even without the stimulus. It can then be said that the customer was subliminally conditioned, and the probability of purchase increases with the help of subliminal conditioning.

The advantage of subliminal conditioning is that the effect is more stable and requires fewer conditions than subliminal priming (Felser, 2015, p. 128).
One might question how strong the effects of subliminal advertising techniques are.

The attention span of the customer is what makes subliminal influencing techniques so interesting. In the introduction to advertising psychology, it has already been described that customers are overloaded with information and are often not interested in the products. With such low-involved customers, the use of subliminal advertising techniques makes perfect sense. If a supra-threshold stimulus is viewed with very little attention, the supra-threshold stimulus has almost the same effect as subliminal stimuli. Nevertheless, supra-threshold stimuli are usually stronger and more stable. The effect of subliminal priming is often overestimated, whereas conditioning is underestimated (Felser, 2015, p. 129 & 287).

One possibility makes these subliminal psychological influencing techniques exciting. If you combine subliminal and supra-threshold advertising techniques, you can reach customers who process the advertising with high as well as low attention.
The availability heuristic

Trust comes before familiarity. The processing fluency already plays a role in the mere-exposure effect: "What is easy to process, for example, is more likely to be believed to be true. In a general sense one can hold on to something: The experience of information processing is itself information again and is integrated into judgments and decisions [...] The mental availability of an information itself is thus regarded as an indicator for other characteristics. The fact that something comes to our mind quickly and without much thought can be experienced as evidence for many important characteristics, for example, that an information is true, relevant, pertinent or important.” (Felser, 2015, p. 134)

We ascribe a higher benefit to the information that is currently present and evaluate it better.

Example: In a sales conversation, you could turn the sales situation around and ask the customer why they should not buy the product. The customer should spontaneously give seven reasons. The customer will not be able to cough up the seven reasons and will probably break off at the third reason. Then ask the customer for three reasons that support a purchase. He will be able to list these three reasons himself without any problems. This ease of generating reasons is in turn information that the customer will use. The list of the three reasons that speak for a purchase is more convincing than the list of the three reasons against it.

All advertising messages that increase the processing fluency support the availability heuristic. Another example would be the frequent mention of positive product characteristics.
The processing fluency provides another reason why, in the event of a scandal or a false assertion, one should not always take up the negative information again (see also learning theory). Every mention of the false information increases its processing liquid and thus also the subjective credibility or plausibility in the customer's point of view, regardless of whether the information is true or false (Felser, 2015, p. 136).

In addition, the mere mention of information (see also the mere-exposure effect; for example, in the form of a question) already influences customer’s behavior. The processing fluency, with which the information and the behavior are related, is increased again (Felser, 2015, p. 136) & (Levav & Fitzsimons, 2006).

One could therefore hypothetically ask consumers whether they would be prepared in principle to buy the product or to book a consultation. The mere mention already has a positive influence on later behavior.

The psychological distance

The psychological distance, also called Construal Level, deals with the thinking processes of the consumers, more precisely how abstractly the customers perceive something. The psychological distance is thus a measure of the abstractness of thinking. There is a difference between abstract and non-abstract thought processes that can be used for advertising (Felser, 2015, p. 138).
In principle, consumers can have a high or low psychological distance. The marketer can influence this psychological distance in several ways (Felser, 2015, p. 138):

- **Spatial distance**: Objects that are spatially close also activate a small psychological distance. Objects that are spatially far away activate a wide psychological distance.

- **Temporal distance**: Points in time that arrive very soon activate a close psychological distance. Points of time that lie far in the future activate abstract thinking.

- **Social distance**: People from the personal environment activate a close psychological distance.

- **Probabilities**: The word "certain" has a closer psychological distance than "highly probable".

- **Questions about the how and why**: A how-question activates the close psychological distance and a why-question activates a wide psychological distance.

- **Luxury and money** activate a wide psychological distance.

So, what are the concrete differences between the psychological distances?

At a great psychological distance (Felser, 2015, pp. 139-140) & (Martin, Gnoth, & Strong, 2009) & (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007):

- Does the consumer pay attention to superior significant features?
- Does the customer form rough (product) categories?
• Are values, standards and attitudes for the consumer in the foreground?
• Is the focus of the issue on the why, meaning the reason for purchase, rather than the implementation (the how)?
• If the customer does not compare options on minor features.
• If the consumer is less focused on minor advantages and disadvantages.

The differences can be transferred to marketing and advertising. With a high psychological distance, the customer tends to look at the big picture. The basic benefit moves into focus and the additional benefit seems rather secondary. He considers why he needs the product at all, and which values and standards are satisfied. The customer is less concerned about the purchasing process (the how). He rarely compares the advantages and disadvantages of the products, but rather forms superordinate product categories. A high psychological distance facilitates the discovery of connections and the customer pays more attention to the brand (Felser, 2015, pp. 139-141).

**Example:** The example is a car purchase. If the salesperson activates a high psychological distance with the customer beyond the dimensions just described (e.g. by pointing out that the purchase will be made in the future or by asking the customer why he wants to buy a car at all), this influence has various effects. When buying a car, the customer is more likely to recognise the basic benefit of the car (transport function).

He will also think more about his values, such as sustainability. Properties such as fuel consumption or electric drive might therefore be of interest to the customer.
The individual model features of the cars move into the background, as does the colour or number of horsepower. What comes into focus for the customer are the rough correlations between the cars, which makes them attach more importance to the brand. The salesperson should above all focus on the values and standards of the customer.

Sales or marketing should therefore always pay attention to the motive and psychological distance from which the consumer views the situation. Otherwise, it is possible that people will talk past each other very quickly and bring arguments into play that are not relevant to the customer at the moment.

The Storytelling

Storytelling helps the marketer to anchor the advertising message in the minds of the customers. A story improves the advertising success in two ways. Firstly, the customer can remember the advertising message better afterwards and he does not critically examine the advertising message. Secondly, the customer does not resist the advertising message and gets involved with the story (Felser, 2015, p. 295). Every piece of information that is incorporated into stories increases the processing fluency. This processing liquid improves on one hand the evaluation of the advertising message, but also the credibility.

Several characteristics of stories, which will be discussed further, are helpful for marketing (Felser, 2015, p. 293-294) & (Appel & Richter, 2010) & (Escalas, Moore, & Britton, 2004)

- Stories increase the interest of the customer.
- Stories can arouse positive emotions.
- Stories reduce resistance to advertising.
- History activate (buying) actions.
- The information from stories is integrated into the customer's views.

**The truth effect**

The truth of a piece of information is not based (contrary to widespread belief) on whether it is actually true or false. It is based solely on what the person thinks about the information/situation and how it reflects his personal opinion. If all people believe the same information, but this information is false, is the information true or false?

That the question of truth is a question of faith and not of knowledge is shown by the Truth Effect: the mere repetition of an advertising message or the mere illustration of information increases the feeling that this message is true (Felser, 2015, p. 297).

Again, involvement plays a major role here: this effect occurs primarily with customers who are only slightly involved. The source of information is secondary: A research report or study is of course more credible source of information, but it may be forgotten over time. Gradually, the stories become more plausible, as the (dubious) Source is no longer associated with the information (Felser, 2015, p. 304).
The number of repetitions and familiarity with the advertising message is decisive. In addition, scepticism or a critical attitude towards stories is unusual; in an action film, you usually don't think about whether the plot makes sense or not. Three recommendations can be derived for practical use (Felser, 2015, p. 297-301):

- Known advertising statements are more likely to be perceived as true than unknown ones.
- The advertising message is not perceived as true immediately after the first repetition.
- This effect also applies to false advertising messages: The mere illustration of a fact leads to it being considered true, whether it is right or wrong.

Hence, marketers should repeat the advertising message as often as possible (see also Learning). However, the turn-truth effect only affects the product features that were also present in the advertising message.

The customer does not therefore draw conclusions about other product characteristics. Only the advertising message may appear more plausible to the consumer (Felser, 2015, p. 298).

The marketer, on the other hand, should avoid repeating a false statement by a competitor or information concerning a scandal. This repetition would again lead to the information being perceived as more accurate. Information that one actually wants to invalidate is therefore reinforced.
The evaluative conditioning also comes to a similar conclusion. Also, in conditioning it is more helpful to emphasize the positive aspects than to try to invalidate the negative aspects.

**Stories and imitation**

Stories are related to another learning theory: Model learning. In stories, there are protagonists (advertising figures or influencers) with whom customers can identify. This identification increases the probability of imitating a behavior. So, if the product is presented by a person in an advertising story, this increases the chances of model learning. This effect is particularly great if the target group can identify with the model. A story reinforces the idea of carrying out an action itself. The narrative form translates the purchase intention into concrete purchasing behavior (Felser, 2015, p. 299 & 302).

This idea could also be activated in the sales conversation by asking the customer hypothetical questions like, "What will you do with the car once you have bought it?" or "Where are you going with your car?" or "Who do you want to show your new car to first?" Such question types can also be incorporated into the advertising message.

Furthermore, it makes sense to underpin the story with emotions. Emotional reactions remain for a long time, even if the actual objective arguments or criteria are forgotten. If a product information is presented in a positive and emotional way, but turns out to be wrong in retrospect, the emotional link to the product is still retained (Felser, 2015, p. 302). No customer actually believes in the Axe effect. However, the emotional aspects (success with women, more self-confidence) of the advertising story remain.
The contrast and context effects

The environment has a great influence on the customer's perception. Depending on the situation, information can be perceived, processed and stored very differently (see Figure 64). The context in which the information is shown is decisive (Neumann, 2013, p. 70).

![Image]

Figure 64. (Image by author): Depending on the context, one perceives a B or a 13. Source: see (Böhringer, Bühler, Schlaich, & Sinner, 2014, p. 6).

Many products are purchased because the products have proven to be the best option in a previous product comparison. Products are constantly being compared with each other, which can be used to your advantage with the contrast effect. A very simple implementation would be to show the product to be sold with other bad alternatives. The contrast would mainly emphasize the advantages of the advertised product (Felser, 2015, p. 141).
In conditioning, on the other hand, the aim is that the positive stimulus or environment should enhance the product. The effect is not a contrast but a combination of a positive stimulus and the product offering. The offer in combination with a pleasant context should improve the perception of the product. Here, information, with which the product is seen, flows into the judgement (Felser, 2015, p. 142).

A practical example of the contrast effect would be a real estate agent who first shows his customers unattractive houses. If the customers have seen enough properties that are not shortlisted and do not meet the requirements, it is time to show the customers a "normal" property. This object now seems particularly attractive compared to the previous alternatives (Cialdini, 1993, p. 15).

Another well-known example of a context effect would be the halo effect. Kroeber-Riel describes the halo effect. "Once a judgement has been made about the overall quality, this in turn influences the perception of individual characteristics. This halo effect can be observed in all areas of human judgment: [...] If someone judges an object well, he also tends to positively evaluate individual characteristics of this object which he does not perceive and which have no connection whatsoever with the previous assessment." (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 310)

Halo effects are particularly strong when: (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 260)

- The customer is not familiar with the object of perception (e.g. no product knowledge).
- The closer the characteristics are related, the easier it is to see the connections.
A well-studied halo effect consists of attractiveness: People who spontaneously appear attractive to you are also associated with positive qualities such as humour, intelligence, and sympathy to name a few (Dion & Berscheid, 1972). The halo effect could be used in advertising, for example, so that a brand image rubs off positively on the products or a likeable salesperson also appears trustworthy (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 260).

**The creation of contrast and context effects**

For advertising, it is now important when the consumer forms contrasts (real estate example) and when he forms contexts (halo effect example), that a question is raised. When is the product highlighted and when is it perceived in its context?

Basically, it can be said that contrast effects are more costly for the customer. When he is exhausted, the customer is more likely to assimilate (form contexts). In principle, it is therefore assumed that a context is formed (Martin, Seta, & Crelia, 1990).

Special psychological techniques are needed to achieve the contrast effect (see Felser, 2015, pp. 142-150.):

**Explicit exclusion from the context category:**

The information that should lead to the contrast can be deliberately excluded from the assessment. In market research, one could ask the customer what they think of cafés other than Starbucks. Another group of customers is generally asked about cafés and then the answers are compared. The first group would have explicitly excluded Starbucks from the context.
Large temporal distance between target and context stimulus:

The target stimulus (the product or brand) should be shown as far in time as possible from the context stimulus. In brand management, a distinction can be made between individual, family and umbrella brand strategies.

In the umbrella brand strategy, all products are combined under one brand umbrella (Mittelstaedt, 2019b). In the case of a new product innovation, the new product should be integrated into the existing brand as quickly as possible. In this case, a short distance between the stimuli makes sense in order to create a contextual effect and not a contrast. The brand strategy should be congruent in the long term with little change (see Figure 65: Brand with uniform brand design).

![Image of Nivea products](image.png)

Figure 65.: Continuity in the brand strategy leads to a context effect. Image kindly provided by © Beiersdorf AG.

Few common characteristics between product and contextual stimulus:

If the product is not to be associated with its context, one can give the product and the context as few common characteristics as possible. In other words:
For the product and the context to be perceived as belonging together, the two stimuli should have some common characteristics. Such characteristics could be the colour, the design, the name or the product category. If a product innovation is not to be associated with the previous brand, a new logo and brand name can be used. Mercedes-Benz has implemented this with its Smart car brand. Although Smart belongs to the Mercedes-Benz company, it has a different logo and brand name.

Form very small categories:

If the product category is very small and specific, the product is experienced as independent. A niche is characterized by the fact that there are few possibilities of comparison and the product represents an innovation. In a product niche, it is more difficult to put the product in context with other products because there are no comparable offers.

It is therefore exciting for the marketer to know whether there are certain "star products" that are particularly popular and positively evaluated. If a new product is to be associated with the star product, it is advisable to emphasize the brand affiliation. In the small product niche, the product is not assigned anywhere and is perceived as independent (contrast effect).

When advertising with the brand affiliation, the new product can benefit from the other products. It is placed in context with the other products of the brand and can therefore benefit from the brand image. If, on the other hand, one wants to advertise a real innovation, it makes sense that the product is experienced as independent and no context to the previous brand is created.
In this case, it is advisable to focus on what the product’s different features in the advertising message. What distinguishes the product from other products of the same brand? You can create a completely new product category in the minds of your customers (Ries & Trout, 1994).

Do not use stereotypes:
If you want to present a product as a contrast, you should not utilize stereotypes of the product category. Products that are very exemplary and typical for the category will most likely be assimilated to the category.

Make the contextual effect conscious:
The customer always forms contexts. If you want the customer to perceive a product in a contrast, you can make the customer aware of the effect of context formation. The train of thought for marketers should go along the lines of, "Note that our product is next to products that appear similar at first glance, but which actually have nothing to do with our product."

Extreme expression of the differences:
If a product is to stand out from other products, it is advisable to make the differences appear as great as possible. The difference between sports shoes from Nike and Adidas is perhaps far too small to lead to a noticeable contrast in terms of products, but design elements could still be used to make the sports shoe stand out from its surroundings.

The mood of the consumers:
Contextual effects are often applied under the influence of negative moods. Differences are mainly perceived in negative moods as well. Brands and products can also be perceived positively or negatively.
The marketer should carefully consider beforehand, whether to create a contrast or context in the advertisement. The contrast and context effect influence many strategic decisions in brand management and product policy.

**The psychology of the purchase decision**

Consumers use mental shortcuts in their purchase decisions and tries to simplify the decision, which may lead to errors in thinking. The use of these errors of thought and judgement (heuristics or rule of thumb) in a purchase decision has many causes – the mood, attitudes, attention and above all the involvement of the customer. Other conditions when heuristics are used by customers in a purchase decision are time pressures, large amounts of information, low involvement, little product experience and knowledge (Felser, 2015, p. 173) & (Pratkanis, 1989).

Also, the type of purchase already has an influence on the use of heuristics (errors in reasoning) and thus also on the purchase decision. This type of purchase can be determined by the procurement effort for (Mittelstaedt, 2019a):

- **Convenience goods**: The customer buys these goods regularly and he has a good knowledge of them. The goods are easy and cheap to obtain (e.g. food).
  - These purchase decisions should be made without great cognitive effort. The purchase is made out of habit or impulsively. Customers are less involved and follow mental shortcuts that shorten the buying decision.
- **Shopping goods**: are more expensive for the customer to purchase. The customer compares prices and obtains product information before buying. Examples include clothing.
  - This procurement effort is also characterized by the use of heuristics, since it usually involves everyday goods that the customer buys at regular intervals.

- **Special goods**: are bought very rarely. These goods are used to fulfil dreams. The price-performance ratio is important, that customers usually compare prices. The special goods are very expensive and involve a great deal of procurement effort. Examples are a trip around the world or a car purchase.
  - The customers have a great interest in the product and follow the advertisements with great attention. The customers may actively search for information and compare the offers very closely.

If one knows the exact conditions for the use of heuristics, it is now time to take a closer look at the individual errors of reasoning.
The heuristics of the purchase decision

The Prospect Theory

The best-known decision model is the Prospect Theory of Kahneman and Tversky (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). It consists of two phases: A simplification phase in which the decision is simplified and an evaluation phase in which the options are evaluated differently (see Figure 66).

Figure 66. (Image by author): The Prospect Theory
Source: see (Felser, 2015, p. 167).
The model has many implications for the decision-making behaviors of consumers (Felser, 2015, p. 166-168):

- Losses and gains are not experienced the same way.
- The subjectively perceived benefit and pain of the customer does not increase linearly.
- Losses hurt more than the pleasant effects of similar gains.
- Consumers prefer to keep to the initial situation.
- Consumers judge from a point of reference.
- The consumers' judgement is subjective.
- Consumers have a greater fear of loss than a desire to win.
- People are more willing to take risks if it is possible to avoid losses.

**The consensus heuristic**

The consensus heuristic can be described with a simple way of thinking – "I should like what other customers like." The online retailer Amazon uses this heuristic on their product pages, "Customers who bought this item also bought..." or "Often bought together" In advertising you can use this heuristic by using words like "best-selling" or "other people say the product is ..." (Felser, 2015, p. 150 & 206).
The ambiguity of advertising information

A fast food restaurant advertises that its dishes only requires 10 minutes of preparation time. This information could be interpreted to mean their food is convenient and time saving, but it could also be interpreted to mean that a dish that is ready so quickly will not taste good (see perception of time). A garden furniture manufacturer advertises that his furniture is particularly light. The customer could interpret this information positively. But he could also say to himself, "What is so light won't last long and will be unstable."

Customers can interpret some advertising information in two ways, one of which is through an advantageous or an unfavourable interpretation for the company. This depends on what information was given to the customer before the evaluation and is then active at the time of the evaluation (Felser, 2015, p. 151). When selling garden furniture, the seller should therefore find out beforehand whether the weight of the furniture is an important purchase criterion and thus activate this aspect of the purchase decision. One should never leave the responsibility of interpreting the advertising message to the customer, since there might be chances of negative interpretations.

The availability heuristic

The availability heuristic is based on the processing fluency, for which some practical examples have already been mentioned. How quickly and easily something comes to the customer's mind and can be recalled in his thoughts is in turn information that he uses to make decisions. The customer attributes a higher benefit to the information or products that are present and evaluates them better (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 121).
If he has trouble finding positive product characteristics (low processing fluency, this leads to a worse product evaluation (Felser, 2015, p. 176-178). One should therefore try to achieve through advertising, positive impressions of a product for the customer’s instant retrieval (See also chapter Availability Heuristics).

### The recognition heuristic

The issue here is not how quickly and easily the consumer can retrieve information, but whether he remembers at all. The consumer must decide between two products. One of them looks familiar to him and he remembers the design or the product/brand name. This memory in turn becomes information that influences the purchase decision. In contrast to availability heuristics, it is not about the simplicity of the recall, but whether the product is remembered or not. The recognition heuristic only applies to a purchase decision if only one of the available products is remembered, otherwise the effect would enhance all products equally (Felser, 2015, p. 179).

### The representativity heuristic

The probability with which we assign products to a category depends on the similarity that this product has to the product category. If an assignment is possible, stereotypes and prejudices are activated (Felser, 2015, p. 180) (see context and contrast effects).
The mental account management

Consumers form mental accounts in their heads to which they assign various costs and revenues. If the consumer buys a general ledger, he will most likely assign this expenditure to the "education account". If the consumer buys a cinema ticket, he will mentally assign it to the "entertainment account". These mental accounts are linked to specific goals and help the customer to keep control over the different areas of their life. The customer tries to distribute the expenses in a controlled way (Felser, 2015, p. 182).

Nevertheless, misjudgements do occur: For example, a loan and the associated costs are not linked to the appropriate entertainment account. If the customer buys a car on credit, the following happens. When thinking about the car, the product benefit (driving pleasure) comes to his mind. The fact that he has taken out a loan for this becomes irrelevant. However, if the customer now thinks about the credit, it is again justified with the car. On the one hand, the customer therefore links effort and benefit, on the other hand, the customer only considers the benefit. Furthermore, mental account management can be used for marketing by addressing different accounts with the customer.

If an account is mentally "saturated" or satisfied, the purchase of the product can be justified with another account. In the example above, one could try to activate the education and fun account equally in order to spread the mental costs (documentary).
The effort to provide information

The extent to which the customer makes an effort to obtain information, in turn, has an influence on the purchase decision. Information that the consumer has procured for himself is weighed more heavily in the purchase decision than information that was available from the beginning. For the sales department, this error in thinking means that the salesperson should openly communicate obvious disadvantages from the outset. In the sales talk, some advantages should also be mentioned - the aim, however, is that the customer himself asks about some advantages of the product. This causes him to feel a certain amount of effort and he will therefore attach particular importance to the positive characteristics he is asking for (Felser, 2015, p. 184-185).

This technique can also be applied to advertising. In any case, avoid instances where the customer encounters disadvantages through active searches, such as on the Internet, which he did not know about before. In this case, these self-discovered disadvantages are given a higher weightage in the purchase decision.

The dilution effect

The customer has a tendency to use all the information available to him. He therefore also uses information that has little to do with the actual purchase decision. For a practical application Felser (2015, p. 184) suggests that, "The dilution effect could be used in advertising where an actual diagnostic information should be given less weight. If a customer buying a used car wants to assess the risk of a repair being carried out soon, the seller could weave in some non-diagnostic information (e.g. tyres, fuel consumption, interior
fittings) in addition to the diagnostic features (e.g. age, mileage, previous accidents and breakdowns).
For us, as judges, the dilution effect is, of course, an urgent warning, as it demonstrates our fundamental tendency to use information that is offered to us, even if this information is not at all important for the issue at hand".

**The attraction effect**

By providing a dummy, you can move the customer's preferences to an option. For example, if the customer is to choose between two products that differ in some options, you should provide a third option that shifts the customer's preferences and ranking. It is important that the third option remains the same in some characteristics and focuses on other selected characteristics that differ (see Figure 67). Thus, the dummy increases the contrast between the products and is optimally chosen to put one of the products in a better light (Felser, 2015, p. 187-188).

![Figure 67](image.png) (Image by author): The provision of a bait changes the preferences of the customer. Source: see (Huber, John, & Christopher, 1982) & (Lichters, 2016).
The anchor effect

Any number can influence the customer's purchase decision. An estimate or the customer's price perception is adjusted to a previous number. The first number, whether or not it makes sense, serves as an anchor (Raab & Unger, 2005, pp. 124-125). The anchor effect plays a major role in price negotiations, as the abovementioned first figure acts as an anchor for all subsequent price comparisons. The seller should therefore attempt to quote the highest possible starting price which he can always deviate from later. However, this high starting price serves as a high anchor. Subsequent prices thus appear comparatively cheap to the customer. The anchor effects also occur when the price anchor is not really relevant for the customer’s judgement. Anchor effects can be generated as desired, such as with a waiting number, a customer number or an offer number (Felser, 2015, p. 186-187).

The probabilities

Customers tend to underestimate high probabilities and overestimate the occurrence of unlikely events. In addition, consumers include emotions in their decisions. In the case of highly improbable but emotion-inducing options, like a plane crash, customers rate the probability of occurrence as being higher than in the case of decisions that are less emotional (Felser, 2015, p. 188). The false perception of probabilities can be used to offer insurance to the customer. The insured event may be very unlikely. Yet due to the unlikely situation being emotional, the customer will still be willing to take out an expensive insurance policy.
The comparative asymmetries

The factors affecting choice between product A and B may be different from those between product B and A.

The consumer usually focuses on the outstanding features of the main product. This focus can be created by first mentioning or emphasizing an option. The question of which option is in focus therefore depends on the individual situation. However, the attention of the observer is definitely unequally distributed. When comparing products, marketers should therefore try to focus on their products so that they represent the benchmark (Felser, 2015, p. 190-191).

Comparative asymmetry also plays a role in product innovations: the new product should be compared with the old one and not the other way around.

The endowment effect

What the customer owns has a greater value to him than what he could own. The endowment effect can therefore also be called the possession effect. The endowment effect is related to the prospect theory, where possible losses (own items) are valued higher than equivalent gains (new products). The consumer wants to secure what he already has and maintain the status quo (Felser, 2015, p. 189). Felser (2015, p. 190) describes a practical application as follows, "Let's consider, for example, the bonus system for dentures. Part of the bonus payment depends on whether one goes to the dentist regularly. This rule can be communicated in different ways. For example: "You are entitled to a co-payment from the health insurance company for your dental prosthesis. You'll lose 10% of that bonus pay if you don't go to the dentist regularly.""
A logically equivalent, but psychologically much less effective formulation would be, "If you go to the dentist regularly, you can increase your health insurance company's co-payment for dental prostheses by 10%". The words "gamble" and "raise" set different framework conditions (frames) for the decision.

In one variant, a loss is avoided while in the other variant a profit is made. Customers should be led to believe that they are avoiding a loss. It is better to use the following sentence in a discount campaign: "You could lose 10% discount if you do not use the coupon code now" than "save 10% with the code now...".

Another area of application is the offer of additional insurance. Customers love to secure their property with guarantees, maintenance, etc., no matter how unlikely the occurrence is (see also the probabilities) (Häusel, 2014, p. 41).

By the way, the endowment effect does not only occur in case of actual possession, but also if the customer only mentally imagines the possession. This aspect can easily be activated in sales talks or in advertising: "What if ..." or "Imagine ..." (Felser, 2015, p. 36).

**The door-to-face technique**

Once someone has refused a favour to a person, it is much easier to persuade them to do a smaller favour. You can weaken the first demand and accommodate the other person. This accommodation leads to the target person building the need to give something back (Felser, 2015, p. 218).
The request at issue should be similar in both cases. The second request should only be slightly toned down. Ideally, the requests should be social and altruistic and should be made in person, one after the other (O'Keefe & Hale, 1998). You can play a little too high at the beginning of a sales talk with the customer, only to be able to give in slightly afterwards. The anchor effect in price negotiations is based on a similar principle.

**The counterfactual thinking**

People like to think about situations differently from the case. In itself, this thinking is unwanted behavior, but mostly people think about better alternatives in the past (Felser, 2015, p. 249). Counterfactual thinking can therefore be associated with repentance. This way of thinking naturally also has an influence on the mood of the customers and the consumer’s behavior itself. People buy, if they imagine the remorse after a bad purchase, rather familiar products or branded articles to secure their purchase decision (Felser, 2015, p. 249). In a similar fashion of mitigating dissonance after purchase decisions, marketers should also congratulate the customer on his purchase so that he does not think too much about lost alternatives.

Counterfactual thinking can also be reduced by provide closure on a purchase transaction. If there is no way back for the customer after the purchase decision, which is the case for a lack of right of return or no guarantee, he has to "whitewash" the product after the purchase (Felser, 2015, p. 250).
The Too-much-Choice-Effect

With a manageable number of alternatives, not only does the probability of purchase increases, but also the satisfaction with the purchase decision. With a large selection of product options, the probability of purchase decreases. This effect occurs particularly with products for which there were no clear preferences beforehand, prompting the customer to spend a long time on the selection for his decision (Felser, 2015, p. 251).

The question that the marketer should ask himself is whether all the product alternatives offered in the shop are really necessary. A product range that is too varied might deter the customer from making a purchase because he cannot make a decision.

Do we really have to offer the product in different colours, shapes and sizes or can we simplify the purchase decision for the customer?

The prediction of future product satisfaction

Consumers are usually mistaken about how much they will like a product in the future. The marketer should pay particular attention here, and ensure that expectations are met. A product experience that is worse than expected reduces satisfaction, which by itself is not a surprising finding.

It must be noted that the negative effect of disappointment is greater than the effect of positive surprise; if a product is experienced better than expected then consumers will usually seek the cause of the disappointments (Felser, 2015, p. 246). This search for causes can also contribute and lead to the negative effect. Markets should thus make sure that the expectations of the products and brands are fulfilled.
The social-psychological influences

A customer is surrounded by many other people in his environment and makes purchasing decisions based on his social environment. These influences are particularly significant for products that are perceived by the social environment, which are products that are socially conspicuous and serve demonstrative consumption (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 485). These include luxury items and goods that (Felser, 2015, p. 198) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 485):

- are consumed in public. (e.g. e-cigarette)
- are visible. (e.g. cosmetics)
- are topics of conversation. (e.g. holidays)

Kotler et al. have compiled an overview in which the group influences on product and brand choice are presented. Essentially, if the product/brand is publicly visible, the group influence is strong (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2007, p. 278). Kuß and Tomczak make a similar statement, saying that goods that are consumed publicly in full view of others, prompt consumers to consider the social value of brand as being paramount, while this is less so for privately-consumed household products such as kitchen towels (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 221). In the case of private consumption, such group influences are rather marginal:
The self-esteem of consumers can be increased by belonging to a group (Felser, 2015, p. 199). Many customers use merchandise articles to express their affiliation with certain clubs, companies, organizations or individuals. Since these institutions also represent a brand, brands can also become part of a self-image. What others think of the consumer is important to them, and this motivates them to meet certain social standards (Snyder, 1974).

**The group standards**

Norms can be seen as rules of conduct, which are becoming increasingly important in an experience and value-oriented society. For example, standards such as sustainability can influence purchasing decisions (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 490 & 492). Such group standards have an influence on purchasing decisions, whereby customers who go shopping in a group have a greater consistency in their purchasing behavior than customers who go shopping alone (Felser, 2015, p. 201).
If the goal of the customer is not to be recognized as an outsider in a group, this is called conformity. Group standards can, for example, lead to quality assessments of products being adapted to the group standard. The customer is likely to evaluate the product in the same way as other customers did before (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 482).

The group norms depend on the current social environment; a customer behaves differently in a family environment than among friends. Family tends to stand for long-term norms while friends represent momentary enjoyment of time. The group influence is greater if the group is very homogeneous and the person does not have a strong opinion of a product or brand. Another cultural and therefore also social norm is that diversity and variety are more positively valued than equal and constant behavior (at least in Western cultures).

In Asia, on the other hand, conformity is rated better (Felser, 2015, pp. 202-203) & (Ariely, 2008, p. 284).

Attentive readers may recognize a small contradiction. On the one hand, the consumer may desire to belong to a group, yet conversely he wants to be different and show a varied behavior. In essence, this is exactly what the consumer wants. To be different to a certain degree yet still belong to a group (Felser, 2015, p. 204).

In advertising, social norms can be used by building a sense of unity. Many influencers have managed to unite people with similar interests and needs in a group. Nevertheless, these groups stand for very specific standards and thus differ from other groups. This affiliation can be made public through merchandise or Facebook groups. The aspects mentioned can also be applied to brands.
At "Harley Davidson", for example, you can not only buy a motorcycle but also a membership card. The members organise joint rides and Harley-Davidson meetings all over the world. The common experience of the "Harley myth" is the focus. Members are even willing to get the logo tattooed on themselves (see Figure 69) (Esch F.-R., 2010, p. 331).

![Image](image_url)

Figure 69. (Image by author): The "Harley Myth". Image kindly provided by Harley Davidson Germany.

The more precisely the advertisements address the group in which the customers are located, the better the group standards work (Felser, 2015, p. 208).

For example, an advertising message could be upgraded with a group standard – "Are you one of the 95% of women who positively evaluate our new skin cream?"
In addition, advertising could make specific references to certain groups: The marketer could include the social group in the advertisement and describe how other customers, who are similar or belong to the same social group, have behaved in a certain situation (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 488).

**The model learning**

Learning also plays a role in the socio-psychological approach to buying behavior. A behavior can already be tested by someone else, meaning that the customer only has to imitate the behavior. Learning therefore takes place via observation or imitation (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 649). A behavior that is desired by the customer can therefore be executed by a model (Felser, 2015, p. 209). Such a model can be a celebrity, influencer or a person from the personal environment of the client.

This technique is implemented in advertising, and illustrated with the help of very popular "Unboxing Videos", in which customers unpack sealed products and try them out for the first time. In the process, the behavior of the model is observed and learned from the customer. In suitable buying situations, the customer can then implement what he has learned (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 650).

In advertising, however, it is also possible to make the benefits of a product perceptible through a model person. In the case of cosmetic products, for example, testimonials can be utilized to show how the product works.
In any case, the model person should fit in with the target group and be as similar as possible to this customer group (Felser, 2015, p. 210). In addition, the effect of model learning can be enhanced by rewarding the behavior of the model (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 649). Advertising should therefore show exactly what positive effects the product has after application. In the advertisement for Axe, this reward is shown at the end of the advertisement. Through use of the deodorant, the model person in the advertisement has success with women (reward).

This form of testimonial advertising works so well because consumers overestimate the influence of personality traits and attitudes on buying behavior. This means that customers neglect the influence of the situation on the model's behavior.

Hence, the customers do not think that the person only participates in the advertisements because they have received a lot of money for it. Instead, the customer will assume that the advertiser is promoting the product/brand because he/she likes it (Felser, 2015, p. 211). Of course, the attempt to influence should not be too obvious.

What characteristics should such a model have so that it has the greatest influence on a purchase decision?

The sympathy of the advertiser is the most important characteristic, so that the advertiser can motivate other customers to act.
According to Felser (2015, pp. 212-216) sympathy depends on six factors (see also Neumann, 2013, p. 84):

- **Similarity**: Similar attitudes, motives and the appearance of the person promote sympathy.
- **Closeness**: People who are often seen (mere-exposure-effect) and those who are spatially close are experienced as more likeable.
- **Exchange**: Interactions, including the act of giving gifts, increase sympathy.
- **Sympathy towards the customer**: Interest towards the customer is perceived as positive.
- **Physical attractiveness**: The halo effect plays an important role here – attractive people are experienced as trustworthy, clever and friendly, to name a few characteristics.
- **Affiliation**: The testimonial should fit the target group and the offer.

**The reciprocal effect**

People do not like to be in the debt to their fellow men. If a favour was done to you, it’s natural that you would like to "pay it back".

Applied to advertising, this effect means that if the customer is done a favour, he likely would like to return the favour. The gift (e.g. loyalty points, discounts, product samples, etc.) does not even have to be explicitly desired by the customer since unwanted gifts also have this effect (Felser, 2015, p. 217).

The compensation that customers return in the process usually goes beyond the initial amount.
One usually returns more than one receives (Felser, 2015, p. 217). The effect of a gift can be enhanced by providing the customer with the impression that you have given some thought to the choice (Felser, 2015, p. 398). It is therefore necessary to individualize and personalize a promotional gift for the customer.

Further socio-psychological considerations can also be found in consensus heuristics and the door-in-the-face technique (see purchase decision psychology).

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The theory of consistency and dissonance

The core assumption of the consistency theory is that consumers like to eliminate contradictions in their thoughts and actions or do not want to let them arise at all. Customers want to be consistent in their actions, thoughts, feelings and memories. They want to avoid inner conflicts (Felser, 2015, p. 224) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 182).

If the points raised do not coincide, cognitive dissonance occurs. This dissonance is perceived as a deficiency or a feeling of discomfort and should be avoided or eliminated (Felser, 2015, p. 225).

**Example:** If the customer is a regular customer of a certain brand and for some reason has to switch to another brand, dissonance occurs. He could not, as is usually the case, continue to consistently choose his product.
The actual attitude ("The brand's product has the best quality.") and the behavior ("I always buy my favourite product.") no longer fit together, because the customer now has to choose another product from another brand. Kroeber-Riel divides dissonance into two types, namely dissonance after purchase decisions and dissonance after processing new information (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 185).

According to Felser, the deficiency or dissonance can be resolved in two ways. Firstly, the customer can either change his opinion (cognition) about something or secondly, he can adapt his future behavior. The resolution of the dissonance is usually unconscious (Felser, 2015, p. 226).

**Example:** A smoker can either not admit the harmful effect of the action on health (cognition) or consider it unimportant. Alternatively he/she could change his/her behavior and stop smoking (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 182).

Kroeber-Riel describes four possibilities to solve inner conflicts (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 184):

1) The consumer remains loyal to his brand so that a new brand choice does not create a conflict because he would have to make a different choice.

2) Attitudes or buying patterns are changed in order to be able to buy new products of other brands. The customer now has several favourite brands.

3) A wrong purchase decision is reinterpreted as a slip. Neither the attitude nor the behavior is changed.

4) The customer suppresses the purchase decision and does not think about it anymore. No changes take place here either.
Raab & Unger describe six ways of resolving dissonance. They include eliminating, adding or replacing the settings, changing the purchase goal, denying or reversing the purchase action (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 44).

Consistency theory occurs particularly strongly under certain conditions (Felser, 2015, p. 226-228):

1) **Bonding**: The topic and the product at stake should be relevant to the customer.

2) **Strength of dissonance**: The change in behavior or cognition must be intrinsically motivated. The consumer must not be made to choose another product by overly strong rewards. Otherwise, the customer can justify his new product choice with the special offer and does not change his attitude after this one-time decision.

3) **Freedom of choice**: The customer must have made his own choice and this choice must not come through coercion, otherwise he can attribute his behavior to an external influence.

4) **Expenses**: The more the customer has already invested in an action, the greater the consistency and commitment to a behavior. The longer he has been a regular customer, the greater the loyalty to a product or brand.

5) **The commitment to a behavior**: This can also be strengthened by the customer writing down or publicly expressing his attitude. If the customer publicly recommends a product to others, this strengthens their loyalty to a company.

6) **Binding objects that you own**: The customer develops a bond with his property.
The application of the consistency and dissonance theory in practice is manifold. There is a wide range of possibilities to use the dissonance theory for marketing:

1) Build and retain existing customers

Customers will probably stick with the decision they once made (Felser, 2015, p. 229). This psychological theory would partly explain why it is so difficult to attract new customers and easier to retain existing customers. The consistency theory leads to a stable buying behavior of the customer.

In order to gain existing customers using the consistency theory, marketers should (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 151):

- Make the product as easy to grasp as possible and available at all times, so that the customer does not have to break through the consistency.
- The product quality should be consistent so that the customer can get used to a product experience.
- Product samples or special offers can trigger the very first purchase action, through which consistency will develop over time.

2) The dissonance after purchase decisions

After the purchase, customers try to be consistent in their behavior. As a result, customers pay more attention to information that justifies their decision after a purchase (Felser, 2015, p. 229). It can therefore be assumed that after purchasing, a customer looks primarily at advertising from the brand he or she has previously purchased. He will therefore also avoid advertising from competitors (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 186).
There is a similar principle in counterfactual thinking. The seller should therefore support the purchase decision made, in order to maintain consistency.

The customer can also be congratulated on his purchase with a simple e-mail ("Congratulations on your purchase..."). The dissonance after purchase decisions is particularly strong when (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, pp. 203-204):

- Due to the product selection, other attractive products could not be purchased.
- The chosen product did not meet the actual requirements.
- After the purchase, the consumer receives information that speaks against the purchased product.

3) The foot-in-the-door technique

How are you doing? Fine? Then we can continue with the theories? Can we? I'm glad. Do you like the book so far? I hope you've just given me four yesses and one very good answer. According to the consistency theory, you will also answer positively to any other question. This effect is based on the fact that the consumer does not need a reason to continue with a behavior (in the example, consent).

Changing this consistency is much more difficult. You should maintain contact with the customer and remind him continually that he is a customer with you. It will be more difficult for the customer to change their behavior and move to a new company (Felser, 2015, p. 230).
4) The Low-Balling

Another way to use the consistency and dissonance theory is to advertise a product as positively as possible by means of a particularly good characteristic (e.g. price). Shortly before the purchase is completed, when the customer has already established a relationship with the product, the original advantage unfortunately disappears. However, the customer has already built up a possession effect and has already imagined what it would be like to own the product. He has already built up a consistency and perhaps has even mentally justified his purchase. It is difficult for him to break through this consistency again, even if the actual reason for the purchase, such the particularly low price, is no longer prominent in his mind (Felser, 2015, p. 231).

5) The sunk costs

Customers include expenses and investments from the past in future decisions, even if the past and future do not belong together economically. Every expenditure, whether financial, temporal or physical, increases the commitment and thus the desire to act consistently when looking at the past (Felser, 2015, p. 233). A customer who has put a lot of effort into selecting a product has already established a bond with that product.

6) The Reward Effect

A reward or a bonus is usually reason enough to maintain consistent behavior. A loyalty bonus or customer cards help to promote consistent behavior among customers (see Figure 70) (Felser, 2015, p. 233).
**A little tip:** The effect of the bonus card can be intensified, as shown in the picture. Loyalty programmes should give the customer some bonus points right at the beginning so that the customer has the urge to complete the bonus booklet. Furthermore, the customer has already built up a possession effect and is afraid of losing the bonus points if he does not collect all the loyalty points (see Reactance).
The Reactance Theory

Reactance is the appreciation of an option that is lost or already lost. The customer feels restricted in his buying decision, through penetrative advertising or a sell-out of the product (restriction of freedom) and therefore values the lost product better (Neumann, 2013, p. 233) & (Felser, 2015, p. 235). The reactance can be assigned to the theory of motivation (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 207).

This restriction of freedom can occur in three different ways (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 65-66):

- Social influence (e.g. communication of instructions, aggressive sales)
- Environmental developments (e.g. closure of the shop, shortage of products)
- Own behavior (Some purchase decisions are not reversible.)

Reactance manifests itself in different ways (Felser, 2015, p. 235):

- Emotional: Anger against the Source of restriction of freedom
- Cognitive: Better valuation of the lost option
- Behavior: The change of the purchase decision
The reactance model consists of the following process:

![Diagram of the reactance model]

What happens if not all conditions are met?

If there was no freedom of choice but compulsion, or if freedom of choice and product selection were not important, the sour grape effect occurs. The sour-grape effect reverses the reactance and means that the lost alternative is not upgraded but devalued. Instead, the products still available are upgraded (Felser, 2015, p. 237).
What happens if the original freedom of choice cannot be restored?

Then there are painful signs of disintegration (Felser, 2015, p. 244) & (Kuß & Tomczak, 2007, p. 65). The customer suppresses the product choice, or he tries to "talk himself into buying". Perhaps anger is also expressed against the source of the restriction of freedom.

The reactance can therefore have two completely different results. In one case, the lost option is upgraded (reactance) and in the other case, it is devalued (sour grape effect).

This narrow balancing act of influencing is intensified by the boomerang effect, which says that an attempt to influence should not be made too obvious. If a person is manipulated too much, this manipulation can in turn be understood as a restriction of freedom and trigger reactance (Felser, 2015, p. 235) & (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, p. 182). However, the reactance then does not point in the direction originally intended by the marketer/seller.

**Example:** Many young people go through a difficult age. They are told by everyone, everywhere, what to do and what not to do. Parents and teachers set the rules according to social conventions that adolescents have to follow. A restriction of freedom takes place, causing the young people become reactive and do exactly the opposite. They evaluate the forbidden option as being better.
There are some conditions (see Figure 71) that must be met for the reactance to work (Felser, 2015, p. 235-237) & (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 208):

1) The freedom to choose and thus to dispose freely of all offers must be restricted, recognisable and important.
2) The choice between the products must be significant and not irrelevant. When is a product option important?
   a. The benefit must be safe and must not depend on chance.
   b. A significant need is being met.
   c. There must be no equivalent alternative for the lost option.
3) If the product option is lost in front of the customer's eyes and another customer is responsible, the reactance is particularly strong.
4) High influencing pressure increases the reactance.

The reactance theory can also be used by a marketer/salesperson as a prevention to avoid the sour grape effect or it can be used to enhance the value of your own products.

**Prevention:** Advertising is a form of influencing. A marketer should try not to be too obvious with his advertising message or his attempt to influence. Otherwise, the Boomerang effect would occur, leading the customer to resist the obvious manipulation (Felser, 2015, p. 238).

An advertising spot should therefore not be shown too often during a feature film or the product placement should not be too conspicuous or disturbing (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 209). One should combine the advertising message with a sales goal – "Our first priority is customer satisfaction."
One could also use continuous text for an argumentative effect, and incorporate credible sources (e.g. test results) into the advertisement or distract from the advertising message with the help of pictures (from Rosenstiel & Kirsch, 1996, pp. 183-184).

Furthermore, if the original freedom cannot be restored, the customer may turn against the source of the restriction of freedom (Kroeber-Riel, 2003, p. 209).

If the company has supply bottlenecks, for example, the bottleneck is good in terms of reactance for the time being. The scarce good is upgraded and appears valuable. However, if the company does not manage to deliver the item in a reasonable time, the reactance turns into a rage against the source of the supply bottleneck and the company is rated badly.

This (preventive) reactance can be improved by several factors as outlined by Neumann (2013, p. 237):

- One should keep the pressure of influence towards the customer low.
- The customer should continue to have several options.
- The salesperson should establish a good relationship with the customer.
- If the forced product choice has a great benefit, the reactance is low.
- The customer may not expect to be influenced.
The revaluation of our own products: Reactance means that a product is upgraded when it is lost or already lost. This effect can therefore also be used for your own marketing in these various ways (Felser, 2015, p. 239-242):

Exclusivity: Products for special groups like wealthy people, or those that are only available with membership, restrict the freedom of all customers who are not part of this group. This restriction of freedom leads to reactance by the excluded customers. This effect partly explains the popularity of branded or luxury items. If they are very expensive, the average consumer cannot afford the luxury goods financially. The freedom of choice is restricted, and the luxury product is upgraded accordingly.

Limited edition: The product should be offered in a limited edition and for a limited time, such as through early bird sales. Here, too, the customer is affected, and the limited product is upgraded, as it is only available at a certain time and not freely available.

Limited distribution: Reactance can be used for one's own products by restricting the sale of the products to customers and distributing the products only in limited quantities (see Figure 72).
The reactance makes statements about the purchase probability, but not about the purchase quantity which can be induced in the customer by simple means. One should definitely consider the balancing act between too much influence and too little restriction of freedom.
The price psychology

Pricing policy is, along with product policy, the most obvious feature for customers. Prices determine the value of a product and can inform the customer how useful it is. The price therefore has two functions, a utility and an information function (Mittelstaedt, 2019a).

Psychology's view of prices gave rise to some important concepts on pricing policy (Mittelstaedt, 2019b, p. 21):

**Price interest**: Price interest refers to the customer's need to search for price information and take this into account when making a purchase decision (Diller, 2008). The customer compares the prices before buying. This characteristic determines whether the target group reacts to the pricing policy at all. If the customer was not interested in the price and bought the product regardless of the price, price-related advertising would not be worthwhile.

**Price affordability**: Price affordability refers to the comparison of the prices offered with those of the competition. Which similar product is cheaper and which more expensive (Scharf, Schubert, & Hehn, 2012)?

**Value for money**: Is the product worth the price? Does the customer get a corresponding service for the price he has to pay? Through this, we can see that the price is set in comparison to the benefit (Scharf, Schubert, & Hehn, 2012).
The level of the price is usually a secondary criterion for most purchasing decisions. Consumers even pay attention to the price of products that they rarely buy. At the very least, customers are rarely able to name the price they have just paid for a product in retrospect (Felser, 2015, p. 388).

Nevertheless, one should not be deceived by these findings. A customer likes to save money. However, there are some exceptions where the customer voluntarily pays more:

If the customer gets more social attention through consumption and can strengthen his self-image, he will gladly pay a higher price for a product of prestige. Different values and norms such as luxury, prestige, status, extravagance, and bragging rights, even eco-consciousness, mean that the customer is happy to pay more (Felser, 2015, p. 395). Customers increasingly pay more for a product if they can decide for themselves how much they pay for it. They do not want to damage their self-image and pay attention to social norms (For a detailed overview of conspicuous consumption and "pay what you want" see Felser, 2015, pp. 395-397).

**The price-demand function**

The price-sales function describes that with rising prices, demand decreases. The more expensive a product becomes, the less demand there is for it. Customers judge a price as expensive or cheap depending on a subjective reference price (Felser, 2015, p. 390). One could also call this price the "fair price of the customer". A price evaluates a transaction and is thus an indication of how fair an exchange transaction is.
In fact, it’s beneficial to recall that a customer buys a product if the benefit of the product is higher than the pain (price) he feels (Thaler, 1985).

The price-demand function is not monotonous, however. There are so-called price thresholds (see Figure 73), where demand rises or falls sharply. Within these price levels, a change in price is hardly noticed by consumers (Felser, 2015, p. 391).

![Price thresholds](Image)

**Figure 73.** (Image by author): Example: Price threshold. Source: see (Raab & Unger, 2005, p. 181).

The intervals of the price thresholds do not always have to be the same size, since the price thresholds also depend on the buying habits of the consumers.
Branded products or products with strong preferences are less affected by the threshold prices (Felser, 2015, p. 392).

The price threshold mentioned is relative and refers to the valuation of the price. In contrast, there is also an absolute price threshold, which determines whether the customer buys the product at the determined price or not (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 93).

Some other interesting findings about prices are ((Felser, 2015, pp. 392-392) & (O'Shaughnessy, 1987, p. 153) & (Schindler, 1994) & (Christensen, 1989)):

- A price can also be too low (see price-quality rule).
- A low price stands for a low level of confidence in the seller.
- If the customer has already spent a lot of money, the price interest decreases.
- Price differences between customers are problematic – price differences between new and existing customers are often perceived as unfair. Price promotions (time-limited discounts) can reduce this effect.

**The price-quality rule**

The price-quality rule is nothing more than a rule of thumb, which says that a high price is an indicator of better quality. If you combine the classic price function and the price/quality rule, you get the following price function:
If the price is too low, mistrust of the product quality arises. Above a certain price threshold, the price is considered reasonable and the probability of purchase increases. In this case, the classic price function sets in. As the price rises, demand falls (Neumann, 2013, p. 46).

A high price is thus understood by the customer as a certain signal to which expectations are linked. The customer expects a high price to be matched by a corresponding quality (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 187).
The price-quality heuristic has an increased probability if (Felser, 2015, p. 393) & (Mittelstaedt, 2019a, p. 68) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, p. 97):

- the customer has a lot of product and price information and actually wants to make a quick decision.
- the customer has a low level of involvement.
- there is no method other than price to determine quality.
- the customer has a lack of product knowledge.
- there are many differences in quality between the products.
- the customer wishes to make particularly risk-averse decisions (see prospect theory).
- the products and prices are difficult to compare with each other, because it is a bundled offer with different articles (see illustration 75). Marketers should use price bundles if they want the customer to apply the price-quality rule. It is known from price psychology that price bundles are particularly useful when you combine items that would otherwise appear expensive individually. Favourable articles of items should be offered individually (Felser, 2015, p. 408).
It is interesting to note that the price-quality rule is particularly pronounced for certain products. For computers and telecommunications, for example, the effect is stronger than for food (Kirchler, 2011, p. 355).

Furthermore, low prices are almost never associated with quality. The connection between a price and quality only increases above a certain price threshold and with an increasing price. Prices can also influence the perception of the product. Expensive products lead to a greater sense of reward and can trigger placebo effects (high price = stronger effect) (Felser, 2015, p. 394).

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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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Figure 75. (Image by author): Example of price bundling.
The effect of the last digit

In the supermarket, you might have surely noticed that many product prices have the number nine as the last digit. This might be common to you but this is statistically proven pricing strategy. From a psychological point of view, there are certainly reasons for a company to use broken prices (for a detailed overview see: Felser, 2015, p. 398-400) & (Trommsdorff, 2009, pp. 92-94):

1) Impact

The number nine suggests that the price was calculated particularly strictly. We believe we know that the price has not been increased for a long time and that this must be the cheapest price. Out of socialisation, we were educated that a price with a nine as the last digit is a well calculated price.

2) Drop-off effect

Consumers tend to omit the last number in the series when there are several numbers. This is a miscalculation; the customer will round up rather than down.

3) Attention and memory effects

The attention that the customer gives to the different digits of a number decreases from left to right. The left digit is always the most important. This error of reasoning is a memory error, because the customer only estimates or guesses some digits when constructing a number.

Example: With the number 2499.99€, the customer may remember mainly the first two digits and neglect the 99er digits, so when constructing from memory. The remembered number may be between 2400 and 2499. It always makes
sense to use 99 numbers, because there is no situation where the number is remembered more than it actually is. Whether or not the customer applies this effect is mainly determined by his reference price. If the prices of the products are close together, the customer pays more attention to the first figure (Felser, 2015, p. 400).

**Example:** When comparing prices, it makes a difference whether a product is offered at a price of 2.99€ or 3.00€. The marketer should definitely choose the .99 price, because the customer pays more attention to the first number (2), which is known to be smaller than the 3.

The distance of one cent is at first irrelevant for the perception of the customer. However, if the customer compares a price of 500.00€ with 199.99€ or 200.00€, the company can demand the one cent more. The numbers are too large and are too far away from the reference price of 500€ for the one cent to play a role.

It is not only the last digit that plays a role in price perception. The currency unit is also important in the perception of prices. For the customer, prices are signals that are connected to the pain areas in the brain. A monetary unit (€ sign) is a signal for a price for the customer. The € sign thus activates the pain centres in the brain.

A study has shown that omitting the euro symbol in the price marking of products has led to more sales (see Figure 76) (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 189).
Figure 76. (Image by author): The illustration of the price without the euro symbol increased sales in the study. Source: see (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, p. 189).
The special offer

Basically, it can be said that the motivation to buy increases with the savings, but this effect does not occur immediately (see Figure 77). The savings must have a certain relative amount in order to be noticed at all (see price thresholds). Especially in the case of everyday trading goods, too small a saving is not noticeable to the customer. The situation is different for branded goods though. Here, the customer immediately has a greater motivation to buy even with small savings.

In addition, regardless of the product, the motivation to buy does not increase proportionally with the savings. The notion that "[t]he lower the price, the more likely the customer is to buy the product.", is therefore a false assertion (see price-quality rule) (Felser, 2015, p. 401).

Free products are of particular importance here. The perception for promotions, such as "two for the price of one", differs from the perception for very low prices. Definitely, a price of one cent is perceived differently than a free offer. The number zero stands for a different mental concept (free) and activates other associations (a gift) in the customer, because demand is increasing rapidly. A marketer should therefore not halve the price of a product, but rather carry out an action: "Take two, pay one" (Scheier, Bayas-Linke, & Schneider, 2011, pp. 190-191).

If you have a special price, you should avoid mentioning the cheaper price, but rather leave the old reference price and work with discounts in percent, which are only charged at the cash desk. Otherwise there would be a disadvantage in that customers would save the special price as the new normal price. It makes sense to offer several discounts for one
product: A reduction of the item price by 20% and then again by 25% has a better effect than a big discount of 40% (Felser, 2015, p. 401).

One should also keep product or service prices as low as possible. If you have a monthly premium, it makes sense to reduce the premium to a daily or weekly premium. Instead of "30€ per month" it is better to use the term, "1€ per day" (see anchor effect) (Felser, 2015, p. 410-411).

**Example:** Many mobile games or apps for the smartphone are available as paid or free versions. The free versions are much more successful and are downloaded more often. The business model is that the customer can carry out many small transactions. Instead of a large initial price, there are now many small transactions during use of the app. This means that a larger amount is spread over many small amounts.
Consumers do not really take non-binding price recommendations seriously. On average, consumers expect to save 10-12% on a special offer. Therefore, if the discount is less than 10%, it is advisable to highlight only the special offer itself.

The customer will automatically deduct about 10%. Consider the other way round – if the price discount is higher than the average discount of 10%, the marketer should advertise the discount separately (Felser, 2015, p. 401).

It is not surprising that special offers are always good. Nevertheless, they do have some effect on the evaluation of the product and satisfaction.

Directly after the purchase, the customer is happy about the bargain and the gained savings. Satisfaction, however, decreases sharply after the purchase and even leads to the choice being devalued in comparison to an equivalent higher-priced product. How does business psychology explain this phenomenon?

If the price is high, the customer has to justify the purchase of the product mentally and count more on the positive product features, since he cannot argue that he has made a particularly good deal. The customer has to mentally emphasize the advantages and positive characteristics of the product, as he persuades himself into purchasing the product. On the other hand, if the price is particularly good, he can only justify the purchase with the price. The perceived savings and the resulting satisfaction therefore do not relate to the absolute price, but always are in relation to the subjective reference price (Felser, 2015, p. 402).
A short summary

On the whole, consumer psychology is thus an interplay of a multitude of psychological processes. Humans are such complex beings, that it will be difficult to put all the findings into practice from the very beginning.

You may have found that I have not written down my opinion on specific topics. They are scientifically sound findings based on numerous studies. There is no need to discuss the theory. There is no compromise in business psychology. The facts are clear.

No other science will help shape the future as much as business psychology. Change management, work and organization theory, personnel management, market research and, last but not least, advertising and consumer psychology enjoy great popularity.

If you have any questions or would like to delve further into the topic, I can confidently recommend the authors mentioned in the preface with their books.

I hope that the book and its contents have assisted you greatly in acquiring knowledge about business psychological for marketing. If you enjoyed this book, a positive review on Amazon is greatly appreciated, especially more so for an independent author without a publishing house to back him up.

If you have any further questions you can also contact me via my website.

I wish you continued success and all the best!
Bibliography


About the author

After successfully completing a commercial apprenticeship, Max Mittelstaedt embarked on his studies in business psychology and marketing at the Harz University since 2016. Since then, he realized how much business psychology is connected to marketing. He enjoys applying the knowledge gained in the lectures directly to such a practical topic. Since 2018, Max has been running a YouTube channel on business psychology and marketing.

In Germany, Max Mittelstaedt is already a well-known content producer in marketing and business psychology, with exciting content on his YouTube channel, Scientific Economics. He has already attained more than 45000 viewers and has successfully published several books in the field of marketing and business psychology. His books, Marketing Management and Consumer Psychology, are cemented in the Top 100 ranks for the categories of Marketing, International Management and Market Research.

At www.scientific-economics.com, you can find extensive further information on various topics, including business psychology (in German language).

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**Bonus: Checklist**

At a congress in 1994, Rolf Grapentin from GFK presented the most important features of advertisement design. Lachmann (2002, pp. 175-176) summarizes the aspects as follows:

- The main message should be transported through the picture.
- Concise pictures should be used.
- Activating stimuli should be used.
- One should not expect to read the continuous text.
- The logo and product must be placed in the central line of sight.
- One should not use complex analogies or riddles.
- The ads should be able to stand for themselves.
- The marketer should pack little into the ad.
- The headline should be short and concise.
- The brand should be mentioned in the headline.

Questions on the target group include (Joliet, 1991, p. 31) & (Werler, 1993):

- Does the product or advertisement meet the customer's advertising interest?
- Is the target group known and supported by statistical data?
- Does the advertisement arouse curiosity in the customer because it addresses a relevant problem?
- Is the advertising message immediately understandable for the viewer?
Questions on the headline include (Joliet, 1991, p. 48):

☐ Does the headline contain a reference to the brand or product?
☐ Is the headline congruent with the image idea?
☐ Is it formulated in legible letters?
☐ Is the headline short and concise?
☐ Does it activate the reader and make the customer curious?
☐ Can the target group understand the headline without thinking?

Questions on the continuous text include (Joliet, 1991, p. 51):

☐ Does the text say why the product or brand brings benefits and advantages to the target group?
☐ Does the text directly address the topic and is it related to the advertising message?
☐ Does the advertisement require a continuous text at all, or does it get by without explanation?
☐ Are the sentences legible and understandable?
☐ Could the same content be said in shorter terms?
☐ Were unknown words avoided?
☐ Are there subheadings and paragraphs in the text?

Questions on the picture include (Joliet, 1991, p. 67):

☐ Does the picture contain the advertising message?
☐ Does the image convey a product experience?
☐ Are there activating elements in the image?
Questions on the typography include (Joliet, 1991, p. 98):

- Are the elements of typography calm and relaxing?
- Were normally readable fonts used?
- Were capital letters largely omitted?
- Has the designer stuck with a single font or a few fonts?
- Is a font style (bold, italic, large and small) maintained or does the font style change involuntarily?

Questions on the Influencer advertisements include: (Joliet, 1991, p. 133)

- Does the brand with the testimonial stand out from the competition?
- Can the advertiser credibly identify with the product and the brand?
- What is the real image of the influencer and has the image been proven by a study?
- Is the product shown in an everyday situation?

Also available on Amazon: Marketing Management

The book includes:

✔️ All relevant Marketing Theories are explained in an understandable way

✔️ Over 65 images as an overview

✔️ Practical examples, tips and summaries