

Explaining Consumer Behavior and Consumer Action: From Fragmentation to Unity

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Abstract

This article begins with an analysis of the state of the field of consumer research and scrutinizes three leading streams of research: the cognitive response paradigm, attitude theory, and the interpretive turn. After arguing that the field lacks direction and risks being overwhelmed by many fragmented additions to knowledge, I propose a unified approach to consumer research integrating consumer behavior with consumer action. The underlying theme is that consumers undergo a fundamental tension between selfhood and sociality, and agency in the form of self-regulation functions to reconcile the tension, thereby helping consumers achieve moral balance, integration of personal and social identity, and personal and social flourishing.

Keywords: consumer research, cognitive response, attitude theory, self-regulation

My thesis in this article is twofold. First, beneath the surface of a seemingly vibrant field of consumer research, there exists a state of chaos and an impending crisis. Second, the way out of this problem is for scholars to uncover that which is fundamental in consumer behavior and consumer action and to weave together an explanatory framework reflecting the core roles of selfhood, agency, and sociality in consumption.

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STATE OF THE FIELD

Our understanding of the consumer springs from three perspectives that seldom inform each other but that nevertheless in totality provide a rich picture of the multifaceted life of consumers. For purposes of discussion, I label these the cognitive response paradigm, attitude theory, and the interpretive turn.

The Cognitive Response Paradigm

Over the past 30 years, more than any other approach, the cognitive response or information processing paradigm has contributed much to our knowledge of how consumers react to marketing stimuli. Through advertising, salesperson-customer interactions, and other forms of communication, marketers influence cognitive responses to pricing, product attributes, and various marketing cues and incentives. Indeed, large bodies of consumer research can be found in each of the following subfields of information processing: attention, perception, categorization, cognitive schemas, memory, information search, inference making, choice, and persuasion (for reviews see Bagozzi, Gürhan-Canli, and Priester 2002, chs. 5&6; Payne and Bettman 2004).

One problem with this subfield of consumer research is that we are experiencing a continual increase in fragmented knowledge with little or no integration and thereby risk being overwhelmed, confused, and misled by the ever growing piecemeal evidence. We lack a sense of how the many splinters of knowledge fit into a unified conceptualization of information processing. We also lack an understanding of the relative importance of the many cognitive responses for explaining consumer behavior and how the responses interface with the constraints consumers face in their everyday lives and with the controllable stimuli at the disposal of marketers. A coherent, comprehensive model of information processing is missing, and the relationship of information processing of consumers to their own actions and marketing efforts remains largely unexplored as

a consequence.

Another problem with the cognitive response paradigm to date is its primary focus on what might be termed the bases for decision making. Not only has research in this area neglected to investigate cognitive responses in post decision making contexts (e.g., concerning how intentions are implemented or thwarted, how planning follows decision making, and how decisions are monitored, modified, or abandoned), but it has largely ignored the critical roles of emotional, motivational, volitional, and social processes in consumption, especially with regard to agency and action.

Two other shortcomings of the cognitive response paradigm are its exclusive reliance on a rather passive conceptualization of information processing and its dependence on a narrow point of view of consumer rationality and how consumer rationality is tested. Most research to date in the cognitive response paradigm has treated consumers from a third-person point of view and attempted to answer such questions as “Why did this choice happen?” or “How did this or that attribute get weighted?” The consumer is seen as a reactor to his/her environment and not as an active participant in it. The assumptions are that all consumer behavior is deterministic and that cognitive laws of regularity underlie information processing. What have been obscured and slighted are first-person points of view, consumer agency, and nondeterministic explanations, rooted not in regularity theory, but in causal powers or in considerations of intentionality and in what Searle (2001) terms “gaps” experienced by decision makers between reasons for acting and decisions and between decisions and acting, whereby the consumer avoids viewing the causal forces as sufficient for deciding or acting but rather actively self-regulates his/her behavior. More on this below when we develop an alternative paradigm for consumer behavior.

A related drawback with the cognitive response paradigm is its over-dependence on experimentation as its preferred method for knowledge generation. This limits the nature of information processing that can be investigated in terms of number of variables, prolonged information processing, and reflection and deliberation, and it fails to address issues of external and ecological validity (Bagozzi 2006). Understanding should not be

limited to knowledge obtained by one methodology but rather should be examined via a variety of means of inquiry because how we gather and investigate phenomena shapes our conceptualization and interpretation of consumer behavior.

Before turning to the second perspective on consumer behavior (i.e., attitude theory), I would like to briefly mention a nascent development in neuroscience research in consumer behavior (e.g., Yoon, et al. 2006; Yoon et al. 2007). Important discoveries are being made in neuroscience concerning both deliberative and automatic information processing and emotional responding. Such developments are likely to particularly inform the cognitive response paradigm but offer less promise for helping us understand sociality because neuroscience is a reductive framework, but social behavior at least in some aspects is nonreductive.

Attitude Theory

Research in attitude theory has always represented an alternative to research as practiced under the cognitive response paradigm. Whereas the cognitive response tradition focuses largely on antecedents of attitudes or related mental events, attitude theory has examined the effects of attitudes and other cognitive/evaluative variables on intentions and action. In this sense, the two traditions complement each other: attitude theory emphasizes primarily the explanation of what consumers decide or do, whereas the cognitive response paradigm is marked largely by what consumers think and how they make evaluations.

Still other contrasts between the two traditions can be pointed out. Instead of exclusive use of experimentation, attitude research chiefly employs survey methods, although on occasion experiments are used to study attitude formation and the effects of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on decisions or intentions. Perhaps the most obvious disparity between the cognitive response paradigm and attitude theory is the scope of research between them. The former is characterized by dozens of variables, processes, and foci, most of which closely parallel the many subfields of social and cognitive psychology; the latter, until recently, has relied on two quite parsimonious models. In particular, the Fishbein model or theory of reasoned

action held sway from the 1960s until the late 1980s (e.g., Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980), whereby intentions were regarded as proxies for behavior and in turn were predicted by attitudes and subjective norms; and the theory of planned behavior, which added perceived behavioral control to the theory of reasoned action as a predictor of intentions, has dominated attitude research from about 1990 to the present (e.g., Ajzen 1991).

The theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior have spawned numerous studies, not only in consumer research, but in such related areas as health care, organization behavior, communication, the adoption of technologies, political behavior, and everyday decision making (e.g., Armitage and Conner 2001). Although practical applications of the theories continue at full force, researchers have found that it is often fruitful to introduce new predictors, reconceptualize variables in the theories, and bring moderators into the theories with an aim to improving their predictive power (e.g., Cooke and Sheeran 2004). Consider below the developments in marketing in this regard in recent years.

A common approach has been to add predictors to the theories of reasoned action or planned behavior. Some studies introduce new predictors to explain attitudes or subjective norms, where the goal is to avoid expectancy-value models, which have scaling problems and are unwieldy because of the large number of beliefs and evaluations involved, and to provide more parsimonious accounts of attitudes and subjective norms. Perceived reliability, accuracy, ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment of a new innovation have been especially effective predictors in this regard (e.g., Davis et al. 1989; Dabholkar 1994; Gaither et al. 1997). Other studies have added predictors of intentions and/or behavior, such as expectations of success and failure and frequency and recency of past behavior (Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990), confidence in performing a behavior (Sutton et al. 1987), and decision process importance, confidence, and effort investment (Bagozzi, et al. 2003). Likewise, anticipated emotions have been added to the theory of planned behavior and found to supplant or add to the effects of attitudes on intentions (e.g., Bagozzi, et al. 2003; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001; Perugini and Conner 2000).

Less common have been attempts to reconceptualize or reformulate the nature or dimensionality of variables already existing in the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior. Bagozzi (1981a, b; 1982) proposed that expectancy-value models can be construed in multidimensional senses in correspondence with distinct reactions people have in particular situations, and this has found application in studies of the purchase of diet suppressants (Oliver and Bearden 1985) and coupon usage (Shimp and Kavas 1984); and in reactions to messages in advertisements for automobiles (Yi 1989). Likewise, so-called global attitudes have been found to occur in separate affective and evaluative dimensions of attitudes towards such acts as participation in leisure activities (Ajzen and Driver 1991) and decisions to donate bone marrow (Bagozzi, Lee, and Van Loo 2001). Unlike multidimensional expectancy-value attitudes, where beliefs and evaluations must be tailored to the specific context at hand, multidimensional global attitudes represent general, overall affective and evaluative responses and thus generalize across contexts.

Still another multidimensional conceptualization of attitudes has been formulated for goal-striving contexts. In a weight loss setting, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) hypothesized and found that three distinct forms of attitude influence intentions to try to attain a goal: attitudes toward goal success, attitudes toward goal failure, and attitudes toward the means or process of pursuing a goal. This approach has been applied in a number of cases, such as the regulation of high-blood pressure (Taylor et al. 2001), exercising and dieting (Bagozzi and Kimmel 1995), dieting decision making (Bagozzi et al. 2004) and body weight maintenance (Bagozzi and Edwards 1998).

Adding predictors to the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior broadens the scope of the theories, whereas reformulating the nature and dimensionality of attitudes deepens the theories. Another way that the theories have been deepened is to posit a new account for how reasons for acting (e.g., attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, anticipated emotions) influence or become transformed into decisions or intentions to act. For example, rather than treating attitudes as passive dispositions to act, as under the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior, Bagozzi and colleagues

(e.g., Bagozzi et al. 2004; Bagozzi 2006) hypothesized that people actively construct their attitudes in an anticipatory manner. Specifically, decision makers are thought to consider their goals, think about and imagine three aspects thereof (i.e., striving to achieve the goal and achieving it, striving to achieve the goal but failing to achieve it, and the process of goal pursuit itself), and express their evaluations of each aspect in a process termed, CIAD: consider-imagine-appraise-decide. A somewhat similar process is proposed for considering positive and negative anticipated emotions in goal striving (Perugini and Bagozzi 2001). In either case, the consider-imagine stages entail a type of forward looking counterfactual thinking as a basis for either attitude formation or the operation of anticipated emotions. Still another type of deepening of the theories has been to introduce desire as an essential mediator between the bases of decision making and either decisions or intentions, in what has been termed, the model of goal-directed behavior (e.g., Perugini and Bagozzi 2001; Bagozzi 2006). We will consider the role of desire in more depth below in the last major section of the article.

The final modifications of the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior that warrant mention are those that consider how other variables not in the theories moderate the effects of the standard predictions. A growing number of such moderators has been studied (e.g., Cooke and Sheeran 2004). In consumer research, Bagozzi et al. (1992) found that, for the prediction of intentions, subjective norms became more important, the more state oriented a decision maker is, whereas attitudes became more important, the more action oriented a decision maker is. State orientation refers to a low capacity for the enactment of action-related mental structures, and action orientation refers to a high capacity of this type of enactment (Kuhl 1985). Other research has shown that the degree of intention formation (ill-or-well-formed; Bagozzi and Yi 1989) and the level of effort needed to execute a behavior (Bagozzi, Yi, and Baumgartner 1990) moderate the attitude-behavior relationship. In still another study, perceived behavioral control in the form of resistance to temptation was found to moderate the effects of subjective norms on intentions (Bagozzi, et al. 2004). That is, subjective norm has an increasing effect on intentions to diet, the greater the resistance of temptations to breaking one's diet. Finally, in a

study of use of technology-based self-service, higher self-efficacy attenuated the relationship between ease of use and attitude, greater novelty seeking attenuated the relationships between performance and attitude and between attitude and intention and strengthened the relationship between fun and attitude, higher need for interaction with service employees strengthened the relationships between ease of use and attitude and between fun and attitude, increased self-consciousness strengthened the relationships between performance and attitude, fun and attitude, and attitude and intention (Dabholkar and Bagozzi 2002).

In summary, attitude theory in one sense both shares and fails to share one limitation with the information processing paradigm. On the one hand, the many variables that have been added as predictors, alterations in the meaning and structure of existing variables, and incorporation of moderators to the theories of reasoned-action and planned behavior threaten to expand the abridgments in seemingly unlimited ways, thereby creating similar dangers of proliferation and lack of integration found with the cognitive response paradigm. But on the other hand, the number of abridgments to the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior is small in comparison to the information processing paradigm, and more importantly, the abridgments all build upon a common core: namely, all start with attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, intentions and behavior; whereas the many studies in the cognitive response literature suggest considerable disorder and formlessness. Thus attitude theory perhaps makes for a more manageable situation in terms of applied work, yet still gives little solace perhaps for researchers hoping for some coherence and accord at the level of a theory providing for a comprehensive understanding and explanation of consumer behavior.

The Interpretive Turn

Some interaction and mutual learning occur for researchers across the cognitive response and attitude theory traditions, but less cross-fertilization has happened between these two programs of research and the third, the interpretive turn. By interpretive turn, I mean the disparate qualitative approaches in

marketing drawing upon ideas and/or methods from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, history, or literature. These approaches can be roughly characterized as post-modern, decentered, narrative, or politicized points of view to understanding consumer behavior. All are marked by rich descriptive content, and most employ first-person accounts. Among others, consumer researchers have drawn upon ideas espoused by Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Irving Goffman, Sylvan Tomkins, and Dan McAdams, as well as developing points of view unique to consumer research. The methodologies employed in this tradition, construed broadly, include ethnomethodology, participant and nonparticipant observation, depth interviewing, content analysis, case studies, focus groups, and other field and grounded research approaches.

The interpretive turn is difficult to characterize; its focus is more on understanding than explanation and prediction, *per se*. However, the basis for understanding is sometimes difficult to evaluate and interpret for people steeped in other traditions. Although seeming to provide knowledge of consumer behavior in and of itself, the interpretive turn in practice has been in a precarious position in the field and more often than not distinguished by its competition and conflict with the information processing and attitude theory perspectives. This is most evident in competition for journal space and faculty positions, where the interpretive turn has suffered in comparison with the other perspectives. More telling, the interpretive turn itself is rather lacking in coherence, and up until now at least has contributed little to a sense of unity or how we might strive for unity in consumer research. But in this regard, it, too, along with the cognitive response and attitude theory perspectives, proves the point of a need for new thinking in consumer behavior.

A PROPOSED DIRECTION

By now it should be obvious that what I am calling for is the specification of a more unified approach to the understanding and explaining of consumer behavior and one that aims for

comprehensive questions and answers. To discover the essence of consumer behavior, we must look above and below the heterogeneous and frequently changing manifestations of such behavior and identify its *common core* and moreover that which is *universal*. Long ago, Leibniz (1981, p. 326) pressed for an analogous point of view in his early (circa 1700) explorations into human understanding, which he portrayed by using such terms as the “psychic unity of humankind” and the “inner essence of man”.

My own approach has been to depict the consumer as being in a tension or dialectic between selfhood and sociality, and where consumer agency complements more deterministic aspects of consumer behavior (e.g., Bagozzi 1992, 2000, 2005, 2006). Consumer agency is manifest in purposive action and self-regulation, whereas selfhood rests in personal identity, and sociality plays out through social identity, group norms, and interpersonal dynamics. The consumer can be thought to navigate his/her life with regard to consumption by resolving the tensions that occur between selfhood and sociality, as he/she purposively self-regulates his/her desires, decisions, and actions. By looking above the fray, I refer to a specification providing guiding, abstract scientific principles; by looking below the surface of seemingly chaotic consumer behavior, I call for identification of basic, universal concepts and processes underlying consumer behavior. My own outlook has been to draw upon ideas and principles from philosophy (especially the theory of action and the theory of mind) and the philosophy of science and to combine these with theory development and testing of specific consumer behaviors by use of a relatively small number of fundamental concepts and procedures.

Before turning to thoughts on this new perspective on consumer “behavior”, I wish to propose that a distinction be made between consumer behavior and consumer action (Bagozzi 2006). I suggest that ‘consumer behavior’ be used to designate the psychological and neural processes that consumers undergo and the psychological and neural states that they experience. I submit that ‘consumer action’ be used to refer to what a consumer does as an actor or agent in a self-regulative or willful way; such actions are typically either goal directed or expressive. The nature of action was captured cogently long ago by Aristotle

who said, “The first principle of action — its moving cause, not its goal — is rational choice, and that of rational choice is desire, and goal-directed reason” (Aristotle, 2000 *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 104).¹⁾ It should be noted that consumer behavior and consumer action need to be integrated into any meaningful theory of who consumers are and why and how they do what they do (Bagozzi 2006).

Basic and Universal Concepts

To identify that which is basic and essential in consumer behavior and consumer action, and that which is universal, and separate this from that which is variable and fragmented, I propose that we re-specify the complex concepts and processes currently proliferating in the literature into simpler concepts and processes. Both in my theoretical and empirical research, as well as in questionnaire design and stimulus construction, I have in recent years attempted to begin with the foundation of conceptual primitives and lexico-grammatical universals. The work of linguists Goddard (1998) and Wierzbicka (1996) has been particularly influential for me in this regard.

Language and words are important to behavior and action for both the person experiencing behavior and enacting an action and other persons (e.g., a partner, a marketing researcher) attempting to explain the behavior or action of another person. The words we use and how we use them shape and are shaped by our thoughts and feelings and ultimately affect how we react and act in the world. Indeed, the words we use or react to are connected to basic psychological events or experiences and are essential inputs to descriptions of behavior and action as well as theory building and testing. Wierzbicka (1996, 1997; see also Goddard 1998) builds her framework of conceptual and linguistic universals on three assumptions. First, all languages are presumed to have a common lexicon and grammar, which form a core that can be used to construct universal concepts in consumer research. Second, Wierzbicka maintains that the

1) Another translation of Aristotle’s words provides further insight: “The origin of action — its efficient, not its final cause — is choice, and that of choice is desire and reasoning with a view to an end” (Aristotle 1915, *Nicomachean Ethics*).

common core in languages is innate and is conditioned by a prelinguistic “readiness for meaning”. Support for this point of view can be found in psychology (e.g., Bruner 1990, p. 22). Third, the common core provides a basis for a mini-language that can be used to define universal hypotheses and descriptions of basic processes in consumer research.

Wierzbicka (1996) terms her framework the ‘natural semantic metalanguage’ where about 60 universal semantic primitives have been identified (see table 1). For our purposes, the most important conceptual primitives and lexical universals occur in the categories of (1) mental predicates, (2) actions, events, and movements, (3) attributes, (4) existence and possession, and (5) substantives. Other categories are important, too, in the sense of being used with instances of the aforementioned categories to build explanations, descriptions, hypotheses, and theories (e.g., instances from the categories of determiners, quantifiers, logical concepts, time, space, similarity, and intensifiers can be used to build hypotheses where the variables entering the hypotheses come from one or more of the 5 categories listed above).

Table 1. Wierzbicka’s Conceptual Primitives and Lexical Universals (from Wierzbicka, 1996, 1997).

Substantives	I, You, someone (person), something (thing), people, body
Determiners	this, the same, other
Attributes	good, bad, big, small
Mental predicates	think, know, want, feel, see, hear
Speech	say, word, true
Actions, events, movements	do, happen, move
Existence, and possession	there is, have
Life and death	live, die
Logical concepts	not, maybe, can, because, if
Time	when (time), now, after, before, a long time, a short time, for some time
Space	where (place), here, above, below, far, near, side, inside
Intensifier, augmenter	very, more
Taxonomy, partonomy	kind of, part of
Similarity	Like (how, as)
Quantifiers	one, two, some, many/much, all

To take an example of the principle of conceptual primes, consider the following explanation or explication of 'customer satisfaction', which I have constructed based on similar cognitive scenarios Wierzbicka has done for emotion concepts (e.g., 'happy'). We can explicate customer satisfaction as follows by use of conceptual primitives and universals from table 1:

Customer satisfaction (Customer X was satisfied)

- (a) Customer X felt something (because he/she thought something)
- (b) sometimes a customer thinks:
- (c) "some good things happened to me
- (d) I wanted things like this to happen
- (e) I do not want anything else now"
- (f) when this customer thinks this, this customer feels something good
- (g) Customer X felt something like this.

Given the act, context, actor and experience (i.e., consumption of a good/service by customer X resulting in a good feeling), we can label the emotion described here as customer satisfaction. Notice that the words used in this explication closely correspond to the concepts shown in table 1. Concepts like 'think', 'feel', 'someone' (customer X), 'good', 'thing', 'happen', 'me', and 'want' are basic in the sense that they cannot be made clearer by further explanations. They are self-explanatory so to speak. Even undefinable. One value of use of such primitives is that they are not merely basic in themselves but can be combined with other primitives to build larger, meaningful configurations: e.g., "some good things happened to me, I wanted things like this to happen, I don't want anything else now". This particular configuration describes the basic customer experience of a goal achieved accompanied by satiation (e.g., "I seek satisfaction of my desire for stimulation in the morning by drinking a cup of coffee, and as a result my desire has been satisfied and I am contented and desire no further stimulation at the moment"). A second value of use of such primitives is that they are universal (i.e., present in all or at least most languages) and can help us understand and explain thinking processes, emotions, and actions across cultures. Not only are conceptual primitives and combinations of primitives universal, but so are many grammatical patterns. All this can aid researchers in uncovering basic consumer behavior

and action and identify that which generalizes and that which does not.

Notice too in the particular explication above of customer satisfaction that it points to an underlying theory of satisfaction. That is, the explication is consistent with the appraisal theory of emotions in psychology (e.g., Lazarus 1991) which maintains that the critical determinant of any emotion is the resultant evaluation and interpretation that arise after comparing an actual state with a desired state (see also my theory of the role of emotional self-regulation — i.e., outcome-desire and outcome-identity units — for the attitude-intention relationship, Bagozzi 1992, pp. 186-194). So above, we see that a satisfied consumer experiences this feeling (“feels something good”) because of his/her appraisals (i.e., “because he/she thought something”) of the outcome of consumption (“some good things happened to me”) and its comparison to his/her goal or desire (“I wanted good things like this to happen” to me).

The Consumer Core

Since about 1992 (e.g., Bagozzi 1992; 2000, 2005, 2006; Bagozzi and Kimmel 1995; Bagozzi, Priester, and Gürhan-Canli 2002; Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters 1998; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001; Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Bagozzi and Lee 2002; Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Basuroy 2003; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006a,b), I have been working on a theory of consumer action and have tested many of its components. For purposes of discussion, it is helpful to talk about this theory in two parts: the consumer core and the augmented consumer core.

Figure 1 presents the consumer core where it can be seen that five central variables are identified: goal desire, goal intention, action desire, action intention, and self-regulation. These five variables constitute the heart of consumer decision making with regard to goal striving. Not shown in the figure are antecedents to goal desires (see dashed arrow at left), which consist of goal setting processes and such psychological reactions as positive and negative anticipated emotions, and antecedents to action desires, which entail such psychological reactions as attitudes, subjective norms, group norms, and perceived behavioral control. Also not shown in the figure are the implications of

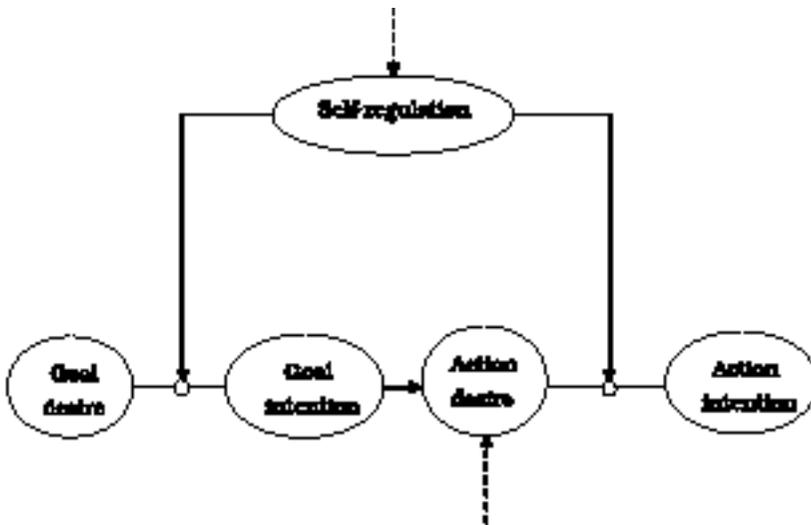


Figure 1. The Consumer Core

action intention (see dashed arrow at right), which include such mental and physical events as planning, trying, monitoring of progress toward a goal, affect resulting from appraisals of rate of progress or lack thereof in goal pursuit, goal attainment/failure, and post-goal outcome thinking and feeling processes. We will have more to say about the antecedents and consequences of the consumer core below when the augmented core is considered. Finally, another set of determinants directly affect self-regulation and are also part of the augmented core (see dashed arrow at top of figure 1).

The five variables in the consumer core can be expressed by use of the universal semantic primitives displayed in table 1. Indeed, goal desire and action desire are both instances of the mental predicate, “want”. A goal intention can be described by use of semantic primitives from table 1 as follows: “I will do something to make something happen”, where “something happen” refers to a specific objective, end, aim, or goal (e.g., acquire X, achieve Y) and “do something” means pursue X or Y. Notice that a goal intention is stimulated by a goal desire but unlike a goal desire implies a commitment to strive to attain a goal. The specific action in the commitment is at this stage in decision making undefined or vague but rather refers to the

general objective to acquire/achieve that which is desired by some action to be determined later. By contrast, an action intention, also termed a behavioral intention or implementation intention in the literature, can be described by the following semantic primitives: “I will do it now”, for an intention to act at the present moment, or “I will do it after now”, where “will do” is an allolexy of “do” when combined with “now” or “after now” (e.g., “later” or a particular time or at a specific occasion and location). Action intentions can be succeeded or accompanied by planning as to when, where, how, and how long one intends to act.

The remaining variable in the consumer core, self-regulation, can also be expressed with semantic primitives. By self-regulation I mean one of two processes that for lack of better words might be termed reflectivity and reflexivity, respectively. Reflective self-regulation for me means the active imposition of personal moral or self-evaluative standards to a felt or possible goal desire or behavioral desire (Bagozzi 2006). That is, consumers evaluate their desires and decide whether they want to have or want to not have the desires that they experience and scrutinize. They do this in such a way as to cancel, override, modify, or postpone further consideration or implementation of the desire to act. More specifically, I propose that, when thinking about one’s desire to act (or one’s goal desire), a consumer asks him or herself such questions as the following:

- Am I the kind of person who should have such a desire?
- Am I the kind of person who acts on this kind of desire?
- Is the desire consistent with the kind of person I wish to be?
- Will acting on this desire lead to personal flourishing?
- What effect will acting on this desire have on other people important to me, other people whom I may not even know, or social welfare writ large?

In a parallel manner, I propose that a consumer can reflect upon his/her lack of felt desire for a goal or to act. Here the person considers whether to accept, embrace, or construct a desire for a goal or to act; questions analogous to those noted above could be posed self-reflectively with regard to a self-perceived lack of felt desire for a goal or to act (e.g., “Is my not feeling a desire to act consistent with the type of person I wish to be?”).

As shown in figure 1, I hypothesize that moral and self-evaluative standards which are reflectively considered in relation to goal and action desires serve to moderate the effects of goal desire on goal intention and the effects of action desire on action intention. In other words, consumers are able to exercise a certain degree of control over their desires. Reflectivity is an active process akin to will power. I propose that consumer desires are stoked externally by marketing stimuli or internally by imagined needs or biologically-based processes. Left by themselves, desires operate deterministically to influence intentions. But by the willful imposition of moral and self-evaluative standards, one can stop the effect of a desire on intentions or create or activate a desire to influence decision making where no such desire currently exists. Reflectivity goes to the very core of the consumer self and constitutes a form of moral agency rooted in who a consumer thinks he/she is or wants to be. Consumers thus are capable of judging and choosing who they wish to be and acting accordingly. They do this in the face of deterministic pressures on their desires.

To the active operation of reflectivity, I propose that a passive or automatic type of self-regulation also functions to control desires at times. I call this reflexivity and claim that it resides in learned values, dispositions, traits, virtues, and vices (Sekerka and Bagozzi 2007). An example would be a virtuous consumer deciding spontaneously to resist his/her personal desire to purchase a product that harms the environment. Here the virtue is presumably internalized and has been operating for a while as a personal policy that is activated upon being confronted with an enticing purchase. Examples of learned virtues deserve pointing out and include such instances as forgiveness, gratitude, generosity, kindness, social justice, and trustworthiness.

Before leaving the topic of the consumer core, it is informative to consider the contents of desires and intentions. Figure 1 shows two kinds of desire: goal desires and action desires. Both can contain biological and hedonic content, and both can contain intellectual and volitive content. A goal desire, sometimes also called an intrinsic or terminal desire, is often biologically and hedonically constituted in the sense of being rooted in neural processes connected to reward and punishment and reflected in feelings of pleasure and pain (“good” and “bad” in

terms of semantic primitives). Yet it is possible, although perhaps less common, for a goal desire to consist of cognitive content, where rational reasons describe the desire. The biological or hedonic desire has been termed an appetitive desire by Davis (1997, p. 136), who notes that linguistically it is expressed as a noun in such sentences as “I have a desire to...” or “I have a desire for...” and is synonymous with appetite, hungering, craving, yearning, longing, and urge. Davis asserts further that “objects of appetitive desires are appealing, things we view with pleasure” (Davis, 1997, p. 136, emphasis in original omitted). By contrast, a more thinking based desire, yet with motivational implications similar to appetitive desires, is termed a volitive desire and appears as a transitive verb in such sentences as “I desire to...” and “I desire...”, and is synonymous with want, wish, and would like (Davis 1997, p. 136). Action desires, sometimes called behavioral and instrumental desires, are generally volitive in the above sense and exist for the purpose of achieving a goal desire. Nevertheless, it is possible on occasion to desire to perform an action for its own sake (e.g., for the aesthetic or kinesthetic pleasure of the action itself), and hedonic feelings can be part of an action desire itself, such as occurs when one desires to exercise but dreads the effort, boredom, and pain entailed by it.

Intentions, too, come in different forms and content. Figure 1 illustrates the role of goal intentions and action intentions in the consumer core. We have already mentioned that desires normally lead to intentions deterministically but can be thwarted or where no desire exists a desire can be generated by self-regulatory processes. Notice further that the processes dealing with goals (goal desire and goal intentions) are linked to processes dealing with means (action desire and action intention). This linkage, too, is a deterministic one, as implied in many dictums or maxims made by such philosophers as Aquinas and Kant: “He/she who wills the end, wills the means”. Yet I would not rule out the possibility that certain social and psychological processes mediate or moderate the path from goal intentions to action desire under certain conditions.

That being said, what forms and content of intentions constitute the consumer core? Most research to date has focused on personal intentions, which may defined as a person’s

commitment, plan, or decision to achieve a goal or carry out an action by him/herself alone (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). The conceptualization and measurement of personal intentions can be criticized on a number of grounds. First, intentions have been either equated with the object or referent of intentions, i.e., with “what the individual is trying to do”, and thereby beg the question of what it is (Allport 1947, p. 186; Heider 1958, pp. 83, 108), or have been left largely undefined, taken for granted, or basically aligned with action (see the treatment in Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Second, Ajzen (1991, p. 181) claimed that intentions “are indicators of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert”, which can be argued is too broad a definition in scope because it includes trying, effort, and planning all in one concept, where it would be better to differentiate all these, inasmuch as they are not only distinct psychological reactions but have potentially distinct causes and distinct effects in consumer behavior and consumer action (Bagozzi 2006). Likewise, it seems that the frequently used “very unlikely” to “very likely” item for measuring intention (i.e., “I intend to X”) is rather limited and misses the mark in terms of capturing volitional aspects of intentions beyond self-predictions that one will act. For example, mental and physical effort, commitment, and conviction can be essential elements of intentions in some cases, but expressions of likelihood of acting may not capture these.

Although personal intentions are obviously important variables for study in consumer research, I would argue that the application of such intentions is limited to individual decision making and that much of consumer decision making is in fact essentially social in nature (Bagozzi 2000, 2005; Bagozzi and Lee 2002). We might term socially based intentions, collective intentions, to contrast with personal intentions. Collective intentions differ from personal intentions in terms of conceptualization, function, and measurement.

Two kinds of collective intentions deserve mention (Bagozzi 2000, 2005, 2006). One is a personal intention to do something with a group of people or to contribute to, or do one's part of, a group activity (e.g., “I intend to play football this afternoon with my friends” and “I intend to help pick blueberries with my family on the weekend”). A personal intention is an individual intention

when one intends to act alone in a personal activity (e.g., “I intend to finish reading the best-seller book I have been reading this evening in bed”); it is a collective intention (i.e., a personal intention to participate as a member of a group) when one intends to act as a part of a group activity (e.g., an intention to do one’s part of a group project). In either case, we have a personal intention: an I-intention to do a solitary act in the former case, an I-intention to do something with one’s group or to contribute to the group’s activity in the latter case.

A qualitatively different form of collective intention is what we might call a “we-intention”. A we-intention is a collective intention rooted in a person’s self-conception as a member of a particular group (e.g., an organization) or social category (e.g., one’s gender or ethnicity), and action is conceived as either the group acting as a unit or the person acting as an agent of, or with, the group. I propose further that we-intentions exist in two closely related versions. The first is the shared we-intention and is expressed in the form, “I intend that our group/we act” (e.g., “I intend that our family visit the Great Wall of China and other historical sites next summer”). The second version of the we-intention is communal and framed in the form, “We (i.e., ‘I and the group to which I belong’) intend to act” (e.g., “We intend to be the most productive group in the company next quarter”).

Collective intentions have been studied recently in a number of studies. See Bagozzi and Lee (2002), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo (2004), Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Mookerjee (2006), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006a,b), and Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Pearo (2007).

In sum, the consumer core captures the central processes in decision making in the sense that it represents the most proximal determinants of volitions (i.e., goal desires and action desires), the decision to pursue a goal, and the decision to perform specific instrumental actions. Desires serve three functions in the consumer core. First, they reflect automatic, nonconscious affective/evaluative somatic markers of objects and actions as being pleasant/unpleasant or good/bad in what Damasio terms the somatic marker hypothesis (Damasio 1994, pp. 173-174; 1999). Second, they function to integrate or summarize multiple reasons for pursuing a goal and multiple reasons for deciding to implement particular means for goal

achievement. By reasons, I mean the bases for desires which reside in distal psychological states and events (e.g., attitudes, subjective norms, anticipated emotions, social identity, self-conscious emotions). Finally, desires summon motivation to form or activate intentions: goal desires incite goal intentions; action desires evoke action and implementation intentions. The reasons for or bases of desires (i.e., many psychological states such as attitudes) often lack motivational content or contain weak or conflicting motives. All these aspects of the consumer core operate deterministically in the sense of constituting complex combinations of hard-wired neurobiological and learned responses. Nevertheless, the course of seemingly deterministic processes can be interrupted, modified, or created anew by self-regulatory processes, which entail willful control of one's decisions and ultimately one's actions. We turn now to discussion of the psychological and social environment in which desires and self-regulation are imbedded, as well as the implications of the consumer core for action.

The Augmented Consumer Core

Figure 2 presents both the consumer core and the augmented consumer core. I will discuss the role of the augmented consumer core in three pieces. The first concerns the determinants of goal desires and action desires. The second addresses the origins of self-regulation (i.e., of moral and self-evaluative standards, which are a type of second-order or meta desires). The third deals with the consequences of action intentions.

Goal and action desires have largely distinct antecedents.²⁾ We can think of a goal desire as the resultant of deliberative or spontaneous goal setting processes. Anticipated emotions refer to

2) It should be noted that intentions in the consumer core might under certain circumstances also be directly influenced by mental events or states instead of indirect influence occurring through desires. Empirical work to date, however, supports the proposition that desires are essential mediators of the effects of many psychological variables on intentions (e.g., Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006; Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Basuroy 2003; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001; Taylor, Bagozzi, and Gaither 2001, 2005; Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Pearo 2007; Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo 2004; Bagozzi and Edwards 1998; Bagozzi and Kimmel 1995).

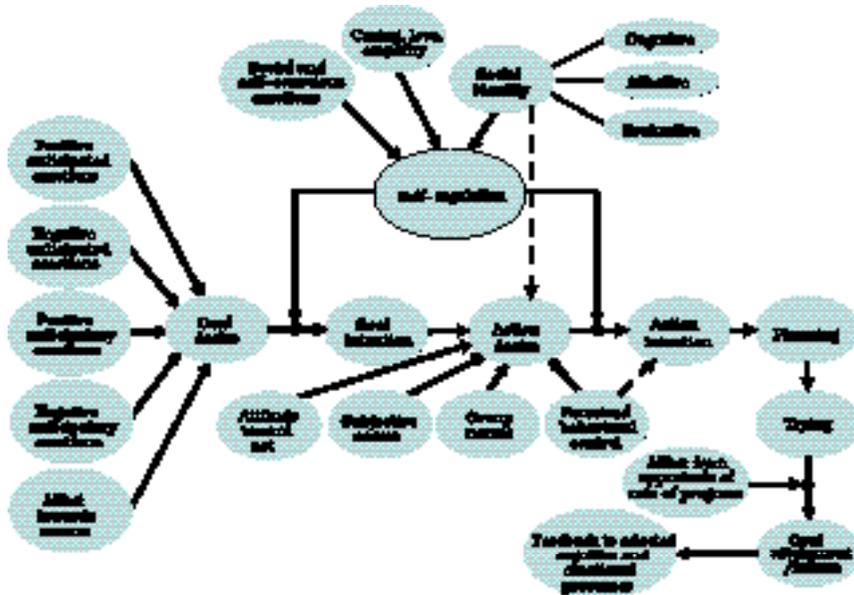


Figure 2. The Augmented Consumer Core (adapted from Bagozzi, 2006)

prefactual processes whereby a consumer considers how they would feel if they were to achieve a goal (anticipated positive emotions) and how they would feel if they failed to achieve a goal (anticipated negative emotions) (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters 1998). The stronger the positive anticipated emotions and the stronger the negative anticipated emotions, the stronger the goal desire (Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Basuroy 2003). Anticipatory emotions are presently felt emotional responses to the prospect of a desired/undesired future event (Baumgartner, Pieters, and Bagozzi 2006). Unlike anticipated emotions which can in principle encompass any positive and negative emotion, anticipatory emotions are limited to instances of the categories of hope and fear. A defining characteristic of an anticipatory emotion is its dependence on the probability of an event happening. Hope and fear (and their cognates) are intimately bound or endogenous to the certainty/uncertainty of an event. The greater the felt hope and the less the fear, the greater the goal desire. Anticipated emotions, similar to attitude toward success and attitude toward failure (Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990), might be conditioned in their effects by expectations of success

and expectations of failure, respectively. These outcome expectancies function exogenously and interact with anticipated positive and negative emotions, respectively, to influence goal desire (not shown in figure 2). The final antecedent of goal desire shown in figure 2 is affect towards the means of goal pursuit. Independent of the outcome of goal striving, a consumer can have emotional reactions to the means or process of contemplated goal pursuit. The more pleasant (less unpleasant) the means, the greater (less) the strength of goal desire (Bagozzi and Edwards 1998; Taylor, Bagozzi, and Gaither 2001).

Another way of looking at goal setting as a precursor to the formation of goal desires is through means-end chain theory and the laddering methodology. These procedures yield goals, values, or motives for a desired end and moreover reveal linkages between goals, values, or motives. A number of studies have taken this perspective: Bagozzi and Dabholkar (1994), Bagozzi and Edwards (1998); Bagozzi and Dabholkar (2000); Bagozzi, Bergami, and Leone (2003); Morandin, Bergami, and Bagozzi (2006); Taylor, Bagozzi, Gaither, and Jemerson (2006).

In a somewhat parallel manner, we can think of action desire as the resultant of goal intention, but with the effects of attitude toward the act, subjective norms, group norms, and perceived behavioral control held constant (see figure 2). These variables have been studied extensively in the theory of planned behavior in terms of their effects on intentions. But here we hypothesize that their effects on intentions will be mediated by action desire (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006a; Dholakia et al. 2004; Perugini and Bagozzi 2001).

Self-regulation can be thought to be influenced by three broad determinants: social and self-conscious emotions, feelings of caring, love, or empathy, and social identity (see figure 2). Social and self-conscious emotions function as consumers' situational sensors to scrutinize whether they or their behavior, action, goals, or desires fit a significant social group or particular social setting based on evaluative signals from members of the target group or setting or based on internalized emotional predispositions. Common social and self-conscious emotions include social anxiety, pride, shame, embarrassment, guilt, envy, and jealousy. These emotions shape, instigate, or condition the consumer's moral and self-evaluative standards.

The role of social and self-conscious emotions has not been studied much in consumer research (cf., Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005), although their capacity in personal selling has been studied extensively (e.g., Bagozzi, Verbeke, and Gavino 2003; Bagozzi, Belschak, Verbeke, and Gavino 2007; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2000, 2002, 2003; Verbeke, Belschak, and Bagozzi 2004, 2006). However, no studies have yet investigated the effects of social and self-conscious emotions on moral and self-evaluative standards. Likewise, the influence of caring, love, and empathy on moral and self-evaluative standards has not been studied in consumer research. We hypothesize that, both developmentally over time and once moral and evaluative standards have been internalized, caring, love, empathy, and social and self-conscious emotions will function respectively, to form assist, or activate self-regulatory responses. We further posit that, before the development of moral and self-evaluative standards or for ill-formed standards, goal desires and action desires will tend to operate unimpeded to trigger their respective intentions. In other words, early in life or for less mature consumers, desires will function deterministically. The self-regulation of desires, and hence decision making and action, will occur in a willful way to the extent that moral and self-evaluative standards become full-grown so to speak. Of course, the operation of moral and self-evaluative desires can involve personal struggle and the confrontation of opposing tendencies.

As shown in figure 2, self-regulatory processes in the form of moral and self-evaluative standards are also proposed to be shaped by a consumer's social identity. Social identity has three components: self-awareness of group membership, which is a cognitive state based on self-categorization processes, affective commitment, which entails emotional feelings of belongingness, attachment, and fidelity toward one's group, and evaluative commitment, which encompasses value connotations and collective self-esteem (Bagozzi and Lee 2002; Bergami and Bagozzi 2000). Some research supports the effect of social identity on desires (see dashed arrow in figure 2; Bagozzi and Lee 2000; Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002, 2006a; Bagozzi, Dholakia, and Pearo 2007). No research to date has examined the effects of social identity on moral and self-evaluative standards, but I suspect that, at least for mature consumers, this is a common

route to self-regulation. I wish to make the point, too, that social identity is not meant here to be limited to a specific group but could conceivably entail identification with some social ideal such as the welfare of mankind, humanity, or communion with nature. Identification with a religious community or religious ideal could also be an aspect of one's social identity.

The final part of the augmented consumer core we wish to discuss concerns the implications of action intentions, which are shown in the lower right hand portion of figure 2. After an action intention has been formed, action might be initiated straightaway, as occurs for some spontaneous and everyday decisions. However, for many decisions, action intentions either will be activated at a later point in time or else will entail performance of many complex steps before they result in action initiation. Gollwitzer (1996) proposed that planning about when, where, and how to act is an important stage in goal striving, and he termed such planning, implementation intentions. Because planning will in the normal case follow a decision to act, I prefer not calling planning, implementation intentions. Rather it is an action intention, I claim, that leads to planning.

Following planning (see figure 2), another complex stage of action initiation occurs: trying. By trying, I mean such mental and physical activities as activation of motor responses, allocation of time and mental and physical energy, monitoring of progress, resistance of temptations deflecting one from goal striving, overcoming impediments to goal attainment, changing plans and making new plans as needed, maintaining willpower and sustaining self-discipline, and reassessing commitments to a goal and chosen means. Various trying activities are shown in figure 2 to interact with affect arising from appraisals of the rate of progress enroute to goal achievement. Here two feedback systems function to guide action: approach and avoidance processes. These are affective responses that occur in reaction to evaluations of a consumer's goal progress such that, when the rate of progress is below a reference value, negative affect occurs, and when the rate of progress is at or above the reference value, positive affect results. When progress is made in pursuit of either a sought-for incentive or avoidance of a threat, a consumer will feel elated or relieved, respectively, and the action implication is to stay the course. When progress wanes in pursuit of an

incentive or avoidance of a threat, one feels sad or anxious, respectively, and the action implication is to try harder to achieve the goal. Of course, when consumers try to achieve a consumption goal, they sometimes alter the target goal or their definition of success or failure; indeed they even might abandon goal striving in certain cases.

The augmented consumer core “ends” with goal attainment or failure. Nevertheless, cognitive responses and emotional reactions therefrom feedback to selected variables and processes depicted in figure 1, as well as to antecedents to these responses and reactions not shown in the figure.

CONCLUSION

My aim in this article has been to sketch a comprehensive, unified framework for integrating and explaining consumer behavior and consumer action. The variables and processes specified in the framework rest on basic, universal concepts that are used to construct processes and hypotheses governing consumer behavior and consumer action. The framework builds a conceptualization of the consumer wherein aspects of the consumer’s selfhood, particularly resting in individual desires and personal identity, function in a dynamic tension with sociality, which is expressed in social identity, including interpersonal, group, and collective forces. The dynamic tension or dialectic between the individual and social self is resolved, or at least partially and temporarily reconciled, through self-regulation. Self-regulation, in turn, resides in processes of reflectivity and reflexivity and is performed in a willful manner so as to thwart, override, modify, or even create desires. It should be noted, too, that the tension or dialectic I refer to is not merely one of give and take but implies the possibility of a dynamic balance between selfhood and sociality. In this way, selfhood and sociality both constrain and nourish each other under the tutelage of self-regulation.

It was not possible to fully describe the processes of sociality that infuse most instances of consumer behavior and consumer action discussed in this article. Elsewhere I have developed the social concepts and processes involved in a theoretical article

(Bagozzi 2005), which entail more detailed explications of collective goals, joint commitment, mutual action, and other group-based thinking. The early stages of ongoing empirical work attempts to test hypotheses concerning sociality.

I began this article by pointing out limitations of the cognitive response or information processing paradigm. My position here should not be taken as a categorical critique of the paradigm and a call to abandon it. Indeed, past and current knowledge from the cognitive response paradigm provide a foundation for many of the variables presented in figure 2, and many opportunities exist for applying cognitive response ideas and conducting experimental research in testing the linkages shown in figure 2 (especially with regard to self-regulation, post intention processes, and emotional processes), and considering new moderators, mediators, and independent variables. Although I would not give up hope that a grand synthesis of the many findings in the cognitive response paradigm might be found, I do not see such a synthesis in sight and doubt that such a search is the best use of our resources. The value of the cognitive response paradigm and interpretive turn may well lie in their potential for providing background and for clarifying aspects of the consumer core and its augmentation.

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