1. Four Models of Consumer Learning
2. Roles of Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Rewards in Winning Consumer Loyalty
3. Consumer Memories: Short-Term, Long-Term, Episodic, and Semantic
4. Three Methods of Transferring Information from STM to LTM for Brands
5. Six Innovation Characteristics that Aid Consumer Adoption
6. Two Motives for Nostalgia and Marketer Response to Satisfy Them

TO UNDERSTAND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

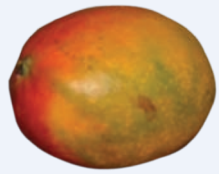
Every marketer wants consumers to learn—learn the brand name, the product's benefits, its image, its story. The world of goods is filled with thousands of brands, and consumers learn about them over a lifetime. Some of these are things consumers are motivated to learn; others they learn inadvertently—without motivation, without trying, sometimes even without being specifically aware. Whether garnered with motivation or assimilated effortlessly, learning is critical to our growth as humans. And learning about the marketplace is absolutely essential for us to navigate the world of goods and pluck from it what will meet our needs and make our lives easier. And happier.

Since marketers are busy teaching consumers all sorts of things about their products, it would help to understand how consumers learn. We are going to explain consumer learning in this chapter, for marketers' benefit and for your benefit as well. Let us begin at the beginning: by defining ***learning***.

Consumer Learning Defined

Learning is acquiring a response to a stimulus. Suppose you are in a fruit and vegetable store in an Asian country (or an ethnic store in your own country) and you see persimmons—a fruit you have never seen before. What would you do? And if you saw, say, mangoes—a fruit you tried recently at a friend's home and liked—what would you do? Most likely, you would put the mangoes in your shopping basket and ignore the persimmons. Thus, you would have learned a response to mangoes but not to persimmons. And once you had acquired a response, you would use it automatically in similar future situations.

Persimmon



Mango

A learned response can be mental, or it can be behavioral. When we see a shirt with the Kenneth Cole name on it, we conjure up an image of well-made, prestigious clothing (a mental response); when we hear Adele Live is coming to town, we quickly buy a ticket for her concert (a behavioral response). As humans, we learn because it helps us to respond better to our environment. For instance, a child who accidentally puts his hand on a hot light bulb learns never again to touch a hot light bulb. Or, a consumer who gets trapped into buying a substandard product from a mail-order company learns never again to buy anything from that company, or perhaps from any mail order firm. Conversely, when consumers, wary of the authenticity of sellers on eBay, receive the product just as they expected, they learn to trust eBay sellers. Along the way, as they bid for items a few more times, they even learn the best strategies for bidding, avoiding the mistakes made the first time. With each experience, they learn to adapt their responses better. Thus, the purpose of all human learning is to acquire a potential for future adaptive behavior.

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FOUR MODELS OF CONSUMER LEARNING

Or How the Dog, Pigeon, Monkey, and Computer Get It

There are four mechanisms, or models, of consumer learning. Although we may not know them by their names, we use all four of them in our everyday lives. They are called *classical conditioning*, *instrumental learning*, *modeling*, and *cognitive learning*. See Figure 4.1.

CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

The Most Famous Dog in Psychology

We will talk about consumers in a minute, but first a story about the most famous dog in psychology—known simply as Pavlov's dog. Ivan Petrovich Pavlov was a Russian psychologist interested in understanding the learning processes of humans and animals. A giant in the field in his time (1849-1936), with a Nobel Prize in Physiology, Pavlov studied the human learning process by experimenting on animals. In his experiments, Pavlov harnessed a dog, gave him some meat powder, and observed that the dog salivated. This salivation is an inherited reflex. Next, Pavlov rang a bell just before giving the dog meat powder, and repeated this sequence several times; the dog salivated every time. Then, he merely rang the bell without giving the dog any meat powder. Now, we wouldn't expect the dog to salivate just with the ringing of the bell, would we? Yet in this experiment, the dog did!

This finding was groundbreaking in the study of human learning, but to appreciate it fully, we must first learn a few technical terms. In this experiment, the meat powder is called an *unconditioned stimulus*, and the bell is called a *conditioned stimulus*. An **unconditioned stimulus** (UCS) refers to a stimulus to which the consumer already has a pre-existing response. A **conditioned stimulus** (CS) is a stimulus to which the consumer either does not have a response or has a pre-existing response that needs modification, so a new response needs to be conditioned.[1]

In summarizing his findings, Pavlov said he had conditioned the dog to salivate to the bell. In other words, the dog had "learned" the salivating response to the bell. Note that the salivation response to the meat powder itself did not have to be learned, since it already existed as an instinctual response. Rather, the transfer (i.e., conditioning) of this response to the ringing of the bell, a previously neutral stimulus, is what constitutes "learning."

Because we may have heard this story many times, nothing may seem unusual about it on the surface. But let us think deeper. The sound of the bell was not inherently appealing to the dog, and the dog had never before salivated on hearing it. However, now the bell successfully elicits that response.

This is **classical conditioning** at work—a process of learning by an extension of a pre-existing response from one stimulus onto another stimulus, through exposure to the two stimuli simultaneously.

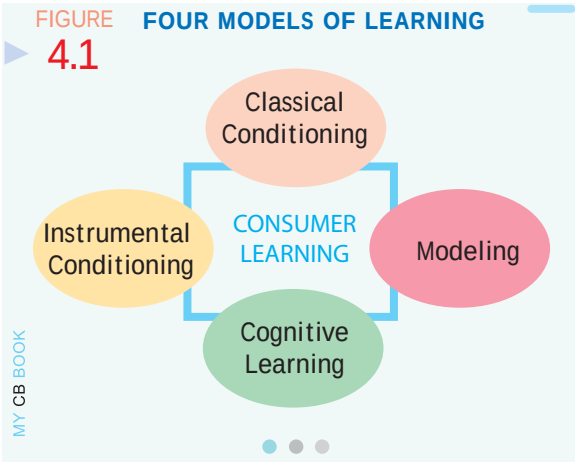
What Does Pavlov's Dog Have to Do with Marketing?

Believe it or not, as humans, consumers learn the same way. If we see a new product or brand paired with a rugged terrain, then we come to perceive that brand as rugged and masculine (e.g., ads for Wrangler brand of jeans). On the contrary, if we see a brand in a setting with soft colors and silky textures, then we come to identify that brand with a delicate, feminine image (e.g., ads for Dolce & Gabbana clothing).

Gender change for Marlboro—Courtesy of Classical Conditioning!

Perhaps the most famous case of classical conditioning is the repositioning of Marlboro cigarettes. In the 1960s, it was a woman's cigarette, complete with a filter and pink tip (so the lipstick wouldn't smudge it)! Then the company decided to change its image. It created a fictional cowboy, in a fictional countryside, out in the Wild, Wild West. Of course, it also removed the pink-tip filter. Today, if consumers were asked what type of cigarette Marlboro is, they would invariably say it is a masculine cigarette: and one for

FIGURE 4.1 FOUR MODELS OF LEARNING



the independent, rugged, adventuresome, macho guy (and for women who see themselves that way). This is the power of classical conditioning!

Classical Conditioning is Everywhere

For classical conditioning to work, what is absolutely essential is constant pairing—our brand should be paired constantly with a desirable setting or with another desirable stimulus. The setting can include any number of things in the ad: color, look and feel of the ad, scenery, music in the jingle or commercial, or even the event being depicted (e.g., two people fighting versus showing affection). Other stimuli in the ad can include other objects or products (e.g., pair our brand of water, say, with a luxury car), sound bites (e.g., lyrics from an Elvis song or the voice of Modern Family star Sofia Vergara), and, of course, specific persons (e.g., pair our brand of toupee with a tycoon or, alternatively, a hard-working athlete).[2]

The magic of such pairings is constantly at work in ads everywhere. Thus, CK perfume is "youthful" because of the teenage models used in the brand's advertising, and Giorgio is "mature" and "richer" because of its Beverly Hills heritage. Pepsi appoints Beyonce (born 1981) as its new brand ambassador to broaden its "New Generation" positioning toward more mature audiences; and Diet Coke signs a more youthful pop star Taylor Swift (born 1989) to etch out a more youthful image.

SAVVY MARKETER

How do consumers learn which brand of shoes and clothing is for whom? Stacy Adams shows its shoes and clothing with fashionable, urban, trendy, young men; the brand and the wearer add to each other's allure. Here classical conditioning is at work, superbly, alluringly!

(Courtesy: Stacy Adams)

Source: MYCBBook. www.MyCBBook.com