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CONSUMER LIFESTYLES
AND PSYCHOGRAPHICS

The Art of Writing Consumer Biographies

RIPPED JEANS. T-SHIRTS, POLOS, AND PEARLS—
PLEASE GIVE ME MY **IDENTITY!**

Bianca Hutton, a not-so-ordinary consumer, still discovering her identity

Hello, I am Bianca Hutton, the surfer, golfer, fashionista girl from Finland, now “living it up” in the American marketplace.

I am an upbeat, positive girl who likes to smile. I never really get angry or annoyed but feel that people sometimes act in a very disappointing way. I like attention but do not put myself in the spotlight. I aspire to be something great, but I cannot plan my life to the last detail. I live by the motto that everything happens for a reason. I also believe that people need to educate themselves constantly and I try to look for cues in books, in TV series, and from work and school experiences. I am compassionate and, in addition to my hobbies (golf, tennis, piano, horse riding, choir, skiing), I volunteer my time for many different causes.

Back home I am strictly the pearls-and-Polo girl. Here in the U.S., on any given day you can find me in as many as five different outfits: a casual, student look for the classroom; athletic sweats for the gym; a golfer ensemble in the afternoon; sorority girlwear in the evening; and a preppy business-suit look somewhere in between. My wardrobe betrays my inner dilemma—I have not yet determined exactly who I am inside.

My surfer girl outfit unlocks my passion for a carefree lifestyle, and the Bohemian side of me comes through more in conversation. My grown-up look makes me feel determined and motivated, ready to succeed in life and tackle any problem with a level-headed, intelligent approach. I have come to the conclusion that although I can put up a front of being mature and well-rounded, my desire to wear ripped jeans and a T-shirt with a surfer brand logo on it means that I am still a child at heart and that I am still discovering who I am and who I want to be.

*With brands, I
build my identity*

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TO UNDERSTAND

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

Bianca, the star of our story above, is in some ways a typical, recently graduated 20-something woman. And yet, in some ways she is unique as well. Like many consumers of her age and life stage, she juggles school, work, sports, and family and friends. But she juggles as well her many identities. Her brief autobiography is a window into her personality and her sense of self. It is also a window into her consumption habits (although her present essay is limited to consumption of clothing). Marketers wish they could get every consumer to write such autobiographies. So they do the next best thing—they write them for their consumers. And call them psychographics.

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

P psychographics are characteristics of individuals that describe them in terms of their psychological and behavioral makeup. They describe a person in terms of his or her mental makeup and the behaviors it produces. They comprise the sorts of things people do in everyday life and what they think about matters that fill their worlds. All these clusters of thoughts and actions make up psychographics.

LIFESTYLE

Bohemians, Soccer Moms, and Other Consumer Types

Values, personality, and self-concept are abstract ideas. It is in our lifestyles that they materialize and take concrete shape. They form both the engine and the navigator of our lifestyles, driving and guiding their flow. Lifestyle is simply the way we live—our patterns of living. Patterns of living comprise the activities we undertake, the ways we spend our money, and the ways we use our time. Consider these two portraits:

Candice Candice is a working mom. She likes to go out rather than stay at home and dislikes household chores. She attends parties where there are a lot of people and a lot of music and dancing. She also frequents art galleries, theaters, and museums. And she likes to dress in high fashion and loves to shop in boutiques

Thelma Thelma stays at home, taking care of her two children. She spends her days productively, immersed in running a household. She enjoys cooking and baking, especially baking cakes. She sews her own clothes and dresses modestly. She wears very little makeup. And she spends most of her time at home even on the weekends, entertaining relatives and friends.¹



How do consumers live their lifestyles? How else, but by engaging in activities that entail, inevitably, the use of products and services? Thelma obviously eats out less, but she buys more food items from the supermarket than Candice does. Candice, on the other hand, uses baby-sitting services more than Thelma does. Candice also uses dry cleaner services more, whereas Thelma buys more laundry detergents. Candice is a frequent visitor to fashion boutiques, whereas Thelma sews most of her own and her family's clothing and buys the rest at a department store. Candice's ideal vacation would be a trip to Europe, whereas Thelma's would be a camping trip with family. When it comes to building a lifestyle, consumers are like artists, producing a piece of art, and they use products to build the beautiful mosaics of their lifestyles. Products are the building blocks of lifestyles. Because commercial products play a major role in consumers' enactment of their lifestyles, lifestyles can explain consumer behavior significantly.

Every consumer has a unique lifestyle. Consider, for example, two lifestyle types—both urban, identified through research—called *Bohemian Mix* and *Kids & Cul-de-sacs*.²

Bohemian Mix The Bohemian Mix are young residents of urban hodge-podge neighborhoods. The majority (3 out of 4) are never-married or are divorced singles, and they are predominantly students, artists, writers, actors, and the like. They live somewhat adventuresome, funky lives, exercising both their bodies and minds, hanging out at sidewalk cafes, public libraries, bookstores, and health food stores. They participate heavily in social and voluntary organizations, benefit programs, and protest campaigns on social issues.

Kids & Cul-de-sacs This group defines the typical suburban family. With young children at home, they are predominantly upper-middle-class professionals, soccer moms, and barbecue dads. Their leisure activities are centered around their children: school games, class projects, video rentals, visits to the zoo or local theme park, and trips to fast food or pizzeria restaurants. Their favorite vacation spot is Disneyland.

Notice how dramatically different these two lifestyles are. Do these lifestyles require different products? Of course, they do. How else would consumers live their lifestyles differently?

Products Consumed by the Bohemian Mix Bohemians shun domestic cars and disproportionately buy foreign cars. Since they live on apartment-lined city streets, their cars are compact—a MINI Cooper or a Volkswagen Beetle, or, if they can afford it, a used BMW. They consume healthy foods, and they shun fast food restaurants like McDonald's or Jack in the Box, both because they perceive the food to be unhealthy and because they dislike cookie cutter restaurants. You also won't find them hanging out in bars; instead, their hangouts are art galleries, coffee shops, and leftist bookstores.

Products Consumed by the Kids & Cul-de-sacs These consumers own multiple vehicles, at least one of which is usually a minivan or an SUV, perfect for carting around their kids. Their preferences are spread equally between domestic (e.g., Mercury Villager) and import cars (e.g., Toyota Previa). They read such magazines as *Golf Digest* and *Travel & Leisure*. On TV, they watch *Wall Street Week* and news and talk shows. They are not excessively health-conscious. They often barbecue, and they seek out family-style mainstream restaurants.

PSYCHOGRAPHICS—LIFESTYLES BY NUMBERS

Values, personality, self-concept, and lifestyle—these all describe consumers' psychological makeup. Each one looks at it with a different lens, but together they provide a more comprehensive view. This view is woven together by psychographics. *Psychographics* are, as mentioned previously, characteristic profiles of consumers that describe them in terms of their psychological and behavioral makeup. By *makeup*, we mean a relatively enduring arrangement. Thus, psychographics include permanent mental (psychological) entities; e.g., values, self-concepts, even opinions. **Opinions** are our beliefs about things,

