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CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF DISPLAYED PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES IN ADVERTISING

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CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF DISPLAYED PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES IN ADVERTISING

by

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To Johan, Mom and Dad

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SYNOPSIS

The primary objective of this study was to determine consumer perceptions of displayed product attributes in advertising. To reach this objective, a research project comprising two phases was used.

Content analysis was applied during Phase One to establish an exhaustive list of product attributes featured in magazine advertisements pertaining to the product category lipstick. During Phase Two, a quasi-experimental design was used during which a sample of lipstick users was required to evaluate the importance of the identified attributes for the product category and three brands of lipstick. The statistical technique, factor analysis, was employed to analyse the data.

Factors were extracted and labelled for the product category and the three brands analysed in the study. The results of the study suggested that as explicitly mentioned attributes in advertisements differed, the labelled factors (and therefore the perception of the attributes) differed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Product attributes play an important role in marketing from the perspective of the consumer and the marketer. Consumers value attributes since they are used as the basis for evaluating a product and attributes provide benefits consumers seek when purchasing a product. Consumers also use attributes to make comparisons between competitive brands and perceive attributes important in the decision-making process more positively or negatively. The importance of studying attributes goes beyond the physical features of a product since consumers link attributes to consequences of purchasing and consuming products. Some consequences often lead to certain end states or values that consumers wish to achieve. (Belch & Belch, 1995; Wilkie, 1994; Peter & Olson, 1994; Mowen, 1993; Aaker, Batra & Myers, 1992 and Kotler, 1991)

The marketer therefore needs to recognise and acknowledge consumer perceptions of product attributes since the consumer has valued end-states towards which he strives and chooses between alternative means of reaching those goals. Products and services are valued because they are means to valued ends. The following example may emphasise the difficulty in understanding consumer perceptions of attributes: A consumer wishes to purchase a packet of chips. The chips she chooses are characterised by their flavour (concrete attribute) and strong taste (abstract attribute). She can therefore eat less (a functional consequence) which will ensure that she does not gain weight (psychological consequence). By still looking as attractive as she wishes to be, the consumer accomplishes a higher level of self-esteem (terminal value). As is eminent from the example, consumers attach great value to product attributes.

The importance of attributes to the marketer is that product attributes are used to set the marketer's brand apart from that of the competitors based on a specific attribute or often several attributes or product benefits (Belch et al, 1995).

Attributes are furthermore used by the marketer as the basis for developing new products and the drafting of specific positioning strategies based on the differentiating attributes his product has. Stokmans (1991) adds that a product can be viewed as a bundle of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes or as a bundle of perceived attributes. The description of a product in terms of its intrinsic and extrinsic attributes is usually based on the marketer's perspective. The consumer, on the other hand, uses perceived attributes in the decision-making process.

Peter & Donnelly (1995) emphasise the importance of product positioning strategies based on attributes by stating that these strategies are useful for giving marketers a clearer idea of consumer perceptions of market offerings and for selecting appropriate attributes for positioning products.

In advertising, marketers make use of attributes to state that a product has a certain attribute or that its attributes provide certain benefits to the consumer. Marketers therefore use attributes in advertising to influence the consumer's evaluation of alternatives by featuring the product's salient attributes. The objective is to influence the consumer in such a way that the brand name is associated with the most important attribute. This is done through repetitive advertising.

Although the focus of this study is product attributes and their function in advertising, it is important to note that it is the consumer's perception of product attributes that is of crucial importance to the marketer. Attributes and their function can therefore not be discussed in isolation. Analysis of the perception and the consumer decision-making processes are therefore extremely important to assist the marketer to understand consumer behaviour, draft better positioning strategies and develop more effective advertising campaigns based on product attributes.

The perception process has long been recognised as the most significant barrier to effective communication. It is at this point that the sender does or does not get through to the receiver (Aaker & Myers, 1987), since correct decoding of marketing information hinges on the consumer's perception of the communication content (Van der Walt, in Koekemoer, 1991).

Consumers act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the basis of objective reality. With this in mind (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991), it is important that marketers understand the whole notion of perception and its related concepts so that they can determine more readily what influences consumers to buy.

A problem with perception studies (Schiffman et al, 1991) is that two individuals may be subject to the same stimuli under apparently the same conditions, but how they recognise, select, organise and interpret them is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, expectations and the like. To add to the difficulties in understanding perception is that perception is largely a study of what we subconsciously add to or subtract from raw sensory inputs to produce a private picture of the world.

The comprehension of the perception process is further complicated by phenomena such as thresholds (a point at which an effect begins to occur, Wilkie, 1986), the possible existence of subliminal perception, perceptual defence and the entire selective perception process.

Eminent from the discussion above, is that the perception process is a difficult obstacle in the communication process. If marketers do not know how the perception process influences consumer attitude and behaviour, they cannot try to create a positive perception and attitude towards their products.

The consumer decision-making process is a very difficult field of study. A question that may arise is that if a decision is merely the selection of an action from two or more alternative choices, why is the decision-making process such a difficult topic in the consumer behaviour? Closer examination on the topic of the decision-making process may shed more light on the topic.

For a consumer to make a decision, two or more alternatives have to be available with the exception if only one alternative was available. Important to note is that this does not support the view of early theories on consumer decision-making (stating that a decision-making process does not exist) since the consumer can still decide whether or not to choose the available option.

All decision-making processes begin with need or problem recognition, defined by Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear (1994, p. 118) as : "perception of a difference between the desired state of affairs and the actual situation sufficient to arouse and activate the decision process." Important to note is that "problem" does not always imply a negative state. Belch et al (1995) augment that a goal exists for the consumer, and this goal may be the attainment of a more positive situation. Examples of the sources of need recognition is an out-of-stock situation, dissatisfaction with the current situation, new products and new needs.

The decision-making process is complicated due to the fact that the process is influenced at any, and every, stage of the decision-making process. Factors influencing the process are among others the fact that three specific levels of decision-making can be distinguished. The levels are determined by the effort, ranging from very high to very low, that consumers exert in the decision-making process.

The search for information influences the process since internal search, compiled from existing knowledge and the ability to retrieve information, may not be sufficient for a specific purchasing decision. External search for information is often necessitated if internal search proves inadequate.

Alternatives considered also have to be evaluated. Factors influencing the evaluation of alternatives is that the evaluative criteria used by the consumer to make a specific decision vary from person to person and even from decision to decision. The same person may therefore use different evaluative criteria for the same product, but in different situations. Consumers employ decision rules to aid them in the evaluation process. These decision rules vary from very simplistic procedures that require little time and effort to very elaborated ones that involve considerably more time and processing effort on the part of the consumer.

The purchase process can be fully planned, planned or unplanned. A purchase can also be of an impulsive nature. The postpurchase evaluation is vital to the decision-making process since the acquiring of the preferred alternative can either lead to a satisfied or dissatisfied consumer. The postpurchase evaluation is stored in memory and influences future consumer decisions.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to determine consumer perceptions of displayed product attributes in advertising.

The following are secondary objectives that will contribute towards achieving the primary objective, namely to determine

- the relevant evaluation criteria (attributes) used to evaluate lipstick;
- the perceived importance of each attribute when evaluating lipstick;
- the underlying factors pertaining to the multiple evaluation criteria for the product category lipstick;

- the underlying factors pertaining to the multiple evaluation criteria applied to product-specific advertisements;

- change, if any, in consumer perceptions of attributes for the product category when compared with product specific advertisements; and

- change, if any, in consumer perceptions of product attributes as the explicitly mentioned attributes vary.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the objectives set for this study, the research project will comprise two phases, namely content analysis and a quasi-experimental design. The objective of the execution of content analysis as a research method will be to create an exhaustive list of product attributes that can be used as input variables to a multiple item Likert scale instrument, the results of which can then be subjected to factor analysis to determine underlying consumer perceptions of product attributes.

Content analysis will be used to analyse advertisements pertaining to lipstick. Berelson (in Holsti, 1969, p.3) defines content analysis as: "... a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." The content to be analysed in this study is the copy of lipstick advertisements. Objectivity is ensured due to the fact that the researcher is a male with no specific bias to any particular lipstick attributes or brand. Objectivity will further be ensured by adhering to the methods of content analysis prescribed by Holsti (1969) and Stempel & Westley (1981).

All advertisements pertaining to lipstick placed in three women's magazines will be selected and attributes featured in the advertisements will be identified to draft an exhaustive list of product attributes. Three lipstick advertisements, each containing a different number of attributes, will then be selected and attributes featured in the advertisements identified.

A quasi-experimental design will then be used during which a sample of lipstick users will be required to evaluate the importance of the overall product attributes for the product category and three brands of the product. A questionnaire will be designed to determine the importance ratings of each of the identified attributes when selecting a lipstick. Besides determining the importance ratings, performance ratings on each of the attributes for the three advertisements will also be determined to identify change in consumer perceptions of the exhaustive list of attributes as the explicitly mentioned attributes in the advertisements change.

A statistical technique, factor analysis, will then be used to identify underlying factors pertaining to the product category and the three brands of lipstick portrayed in the selected advertisements. The primary reason for using factor analysis is because it is useful in data analysis for identifying underlying constructs in the data and to reduce the number of variables to a more manageable set (Aaker, Kumar & Day 1995). Factor analysis allows the researcher to reduce the number of variables while still retaining as much information as possible and ensures that the remaining variables are meaningful and easy to work with.

In conducting this study, the Varimax-technique of orthogonal rotation will be used and the methods prescribed by Child (1979) for conducting factor analysis will be closely followed to ensure the greatest level of objectivity.

1.4 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The research project is divided into seven chapters. **Chapter one** constituted an introduction to the study. The objectives of the study, an overview of the research methodology employed in the study and the demarcation of the study are presented.

Chapters two, three and **four** present the theoretical base of the study. **Chapter two** focuses on the consumer decision-making process. A generic decision-making model, consisting of five phases, is presented. Attention is also drawn to the different levels of consumer decision-making and decision-making rules employed by consumers when deciding between alternatives. Chapter two concludes with the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard decision-making model, displaying the comprehensiveness of the decision-making process.

Chapter three provides a detailed discussion on the consumer perception process. Emphasis is placed on the consumer's frame of reference, the different thresholds associated with perception and the concept of perceptual defence. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the selective perception process.

Chapter four focuses on the essence of what is understood under the term product attribute. The importance of attributes to both the marketer and the consumer is emphasised and attention is directed to the topic of product positioning with recognition to the use of product attributes. The chapter ends with a discussion on the Means-end chain model, which suggests that meaning ascribed to attributes is given by the consequences consumers perceive attributes lead to.

The research design is outlined in **Chapter five**. The first part of Chapter five provides a theoretical overview of the first part of the research project employed - content analysis. The second part of the chapter provides the results of the content analysis study. The twenty-two product attributes for the product category lipstick identified through content analysis are provided and the attributes identified for each of the three advertisements selected for the study. The usage patterns and frequency of use for the respondents participating in the research project are presented and Chapter five concludes with the guidelines used in conducting the second part of the research project - factor analysis.

Chapter six analyses the results obtained from the factor analysis study. The underlying characteristics favoured by the respondents for the product category lipstick and the three selected advertisements are identified and labelled appropriately. The statistical results are provided in tabular form and each identified factor is examined thoroughly. An interpretation of the factors concludes the discussion on each of the four sets of data.

The final chapter, **Chapter seven**, summarises the study and draws inferences from the findings of the research project. It concludes with recommendations and the acceptance of the objectives set for the study.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

"Nothing is more difficult and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide."

Napoleon I
Maxims (1804-15)

The classical citation by Napoleon I emphasises the difficulties consumers experience in making decisions. From early research, writers on the topic of consumer behaviour, although they used different terminology, agreed on the following assumptions regarding the decision-making process (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979):

* Two or more alternative actions exist in decision-making and, therefore, choice must occur.

* The consequences of each alternative on the consumer's goals or objectives are forecasted by evaluative criteria.

* A decision rule or evaluative procedure determines the chosen alternative.

* Information retrieved from memory and/or information gained externally is processed in the application of a decision rule or evaluation procedure.

Olshavsky et al (1979) contradicted the above assumption by supporting Kasserjian (in Olshavsky et al, 1979) in raising the question whether or not a decision-making process actually does exist. According to these authors, the validity of their raised question lies in the fact that in applying an evaluation procedure to various alternatives on two or more evaluative criteria requires considerable information. Memory sometimes lacks the necessary quantity and quality information required. Purchasing behaviour occurring without external search for information then supports the notion of nondecision behaviour postulated by these authors. The second condition is insufficiency of stored information suitable for alternative evaluation or nonuse of relevant stored information. Olshavsky et al (1979) concluded that for many purchases a decision process never occurs, not even on the first purchase.

Ursic (1980) commented on the above assumptions by explaining that the prepurchase process is very broad and not only encompasses search as suggested by Olshavsky et al (1979) but also needs recognition and alternative evaluation. Purchase and postpurchase evaluation occurs only after these elements have been used in some sequence.

More recent research acknowledges five different phases to the decision-making process. These phases are need recognition, search for alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and postpurchase evaluation.

Before attending to the decision process, it is important to define the word decision. Schiffman et al (1991) explain that a decision is the selection of an action from two or more alternative choices. For a consumer to make a decision, two or more alternatives have to be available. An exception would be if only one alternative were available. The consumer is then literally "forced" to use the available option. Important to note is that this does not support the statement that there is no decision-making process, since the consumer can still decide whether or not to choose the available option. An example may provide more clarity: A teenager lives in a very small town where there is only a tenpin bowling alley available for entertainment. He may decide to stay at home on a Friday night instead of going bowling with some friends.

Also important to note is that consumers use different levels of decision-making since all decisions are not equally important. These levels of decision-making will be discussed before the actual decision-making process is attended to.

2.2 LEVELS OF CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

Peter & Olson (1994) note that the amount of cognitive and behavioural effort consumers put into their problem-solving/decision-making processes is highly variable (problem-solving refers to thoughtful, reasoned action undertaken to bring about the satisfaction of a need, Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1990). On a continuum of effort ranging from very high to very low, three specific levels of consumer decision-making can be distinguished. These levels are extended, limited and routinised decisioin-making. Before attending to the different levels it is important to note the factors influencing the extent of decision-making. Schiffman et al (1991) note three factors, namely

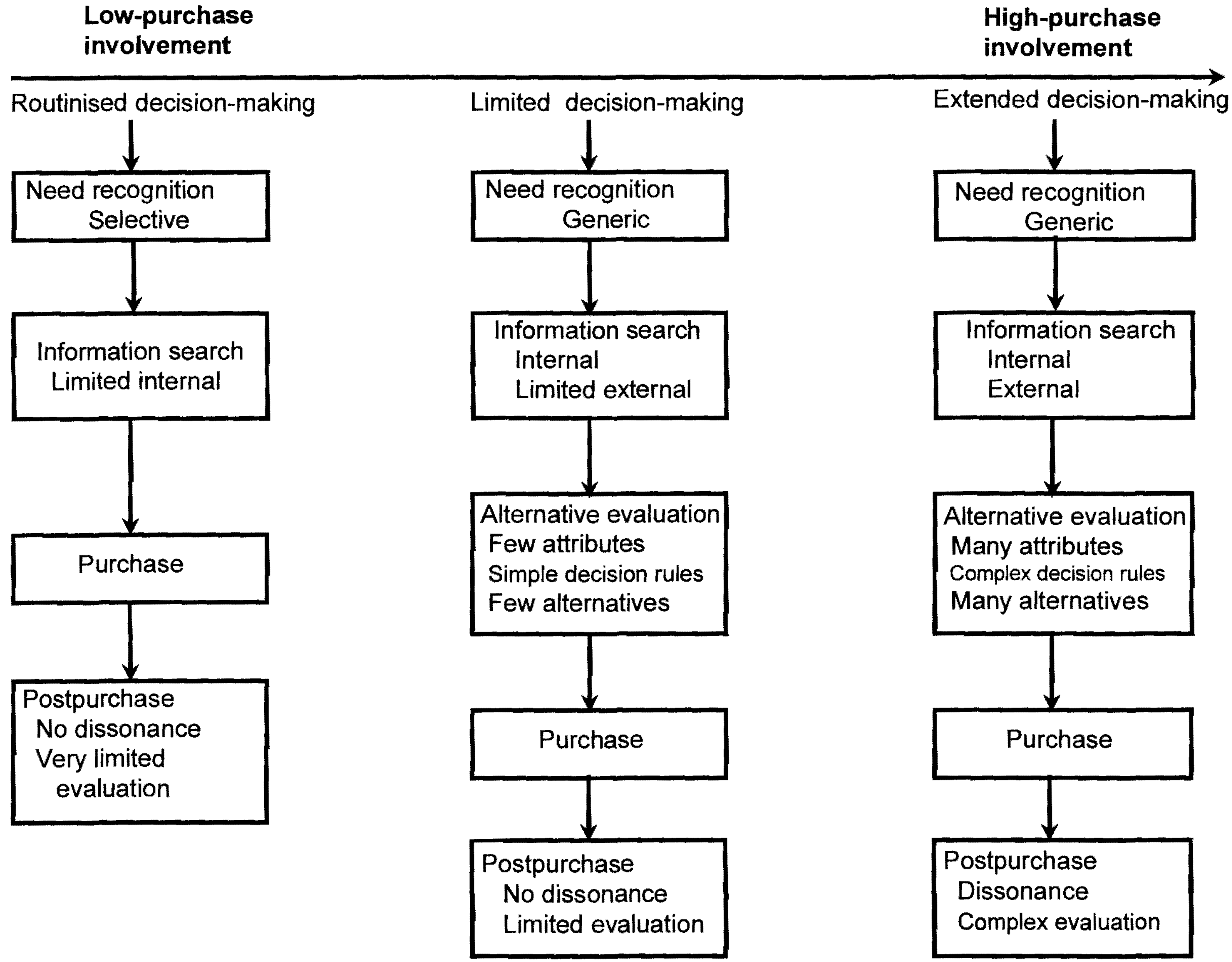
* how well-established the consumer's criteria for selection are;
* how much information the consumer has concerning each brand being considered; and
* how narrow the set of brands (evoked set) is from which the choice will be made.

Engel et al (1990) add to these factors by providing an additional three factors that influence the extent of decision-making. These factors are the

* relevant way in which alternatives are differentiated;
* amount of time available for decision making; and
* degree of involvement accompanying the purchase.

Figure 2.1 provides a detailed assessment of the three different types of decision-making and the sequence of the phases associated with each type.

FIGURE 2.1: TYPES AND SEQUENCE OF DECISION-MAKING



Source: Adapted from Hawkins, Best & Coney (1992, p. 440)

2.2.1 Extended decision-making

According to Engel et al (1990) extended decision-making (referred to by numerous authors, eg Peter et al, 1994; Schiffman et al, 1991; and Wilkie, 1990 as extensive decision-making) may engage in the evaluation of many alternatives and the consultation of a wide variety of information sources. The decision on how and where to make the purchase may also require additional search and evaluation. Schiffman et al, (1991) explain that at this level consumers have no established criteria for evaluating a product category or specific brands within that category, or that they have not narrowed down the number of brands they will consider to some small manageable subset. The consumer needs a great deal of information to establish a set of criteria on which to judge specific brands, and a correspondingly large amount of information concerning each of the brands to be considered. Extended decision-making is therefore likely to occur with first-time purchases in an important product category, and is likely to take a long time because of the search and criteria involved (Peter et al, 1994 and Wilkie, 1990).

2.2.2 Limited decision-making

Limited decision-making is an intermediate type of decision-making with most consumer decisions probably falling in this category (Wilkie, 1990). Engel et al, (1990) add that consumers are not highly involved in the alternatives. Schiffman et al (1991) continue by explaining that consumers have already established the basic criteria for evaluating the product category and the various brands within that category. Fully established preferences concerning a selected group of brands, however, have not been made. In search of information, the consumer has to gather additional brand information to discriminate between the various brands.

It is important to note (Engel et al, 1990) that extended and limited decision-making are not different decision processes per se for both processes involve the same stages. The difference lies in the extent to which time and effort are devoted to the external information search and alternative evaluation.

2.2.3 Routinised decision-making

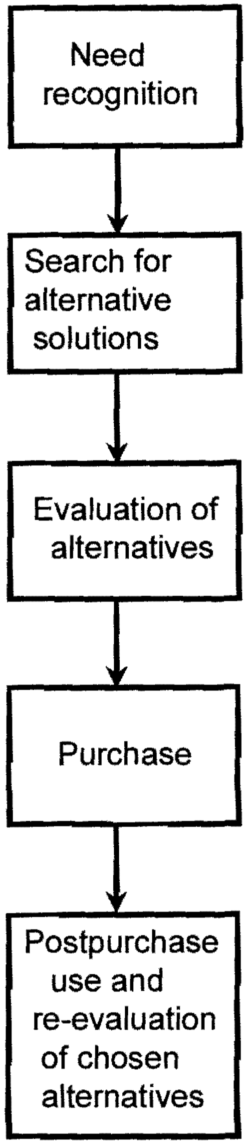
According to Schiffman et al (1991), routinised decision-making (also referred to as habitual decision-making) occurs when consumers already have had some experience with the product category and have a well-established set of criteria according to which they evaluate brands in their evoked sets. Engel, Blackwell & Miniard (1986), supported by Peter et al (1994), add by explaining that consumers basically activate a previously learned decision plan from memory and relatively automatically pursue to produce purchase behaviour. There is no need for external search or additional alternative evaluation. Therefore, purchase intention and choice remain unchanged. An example would be to purchase your regular brand of toothpaste once your stock is depleted (Engel et al, 1990, term this the "buy the same thing" response). Interesting to note (Engel et al, 1986) is that regardless of how initial decisions are made (ie extended or limited decision-making), people attempt to establish repurchase routines as soon as possible. Assuming satisfaction levels have met or exceeded expectations, the same choice will be made in future. Continued satisfaction only reinforces intentions and strengthens the likelihood of continued response.

Peter et al (1994) conclude by explaining that the amount of effort consumers exert in decision-making tends to decrease over a certain period as they learn more about a product and gain experience in making decisions, and therefore tend to develop increasingly routinised, automatic decision-making processes.

2.3 THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

As mentioned earlier, the consumer's decision-making process consists of five phases, namely need recognition, search for alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and postpurchase evaluation. Figure 2.2 provides a generic consumer decision-making model.

FIGURE 2.2: A GENERIC MODEL OF CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING



Perceived difference between ideal and actual state of affairs

Seek relevant information about potential solutions to the recognised need from external environment, or activate knowledge from memory

Evaluate or judge competing alternatives in terms of salient beliefs about relevant consequences and combine this knowledge to make a choice

Buy the chosen alternative

Use the chosen alternative and evaluate it again in light of its performance

Source: Adapted from Peter et al (1994, p. 158)

2.3.1 Need recognition

The consumer decision-process always commences with the recognition of a need (many authors refer to a problem, rather than a need). Wilkie (1990) explains that the consumer perceives a need and becomes motivated to solve the so-called "problem" recognised. Engel, Blackwell & Miniard (1993, p.508) add by defining need recognition as

> "...perception of a difference between the desired state of affairs and the actual situation sufficient to arouse and activate the decision process."

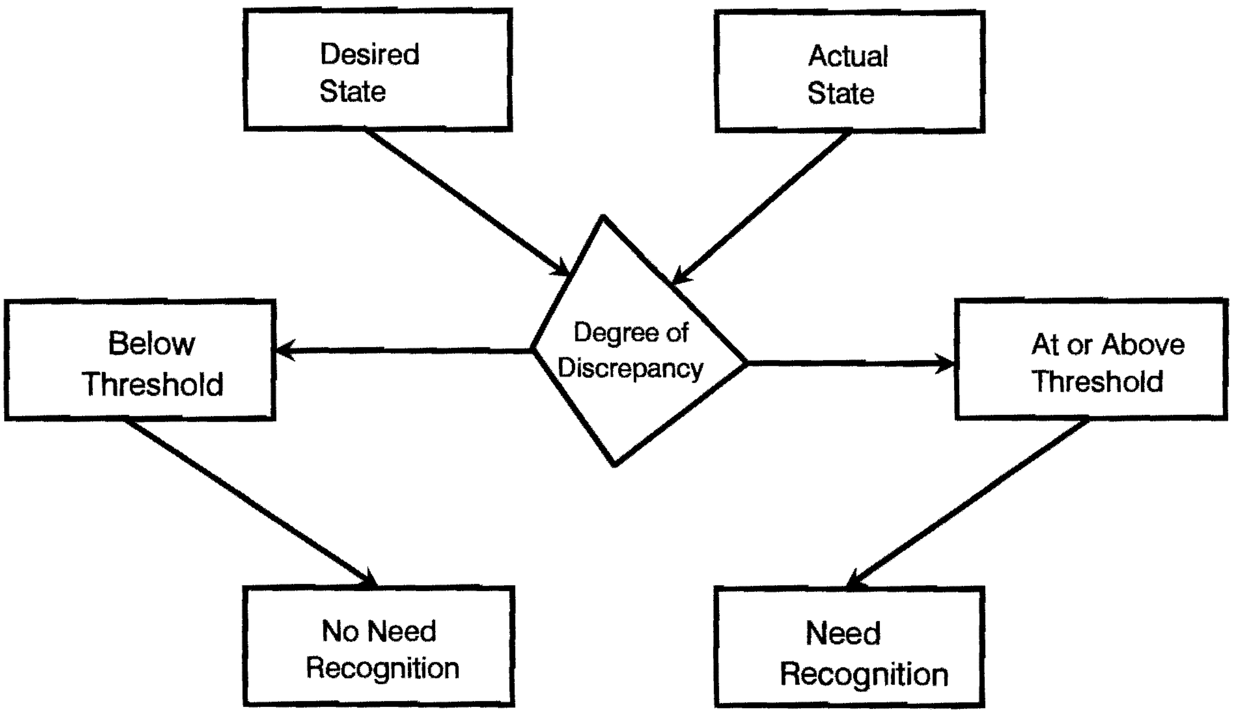
Schiffman et al (1991) continue by suggesting two different need recognition styles among consumers. These styles are actual state types and desired state types respectively. Actual state types imply that consumers perceive a problem when a product fails to perform satisfactory (ie in the consumer's current situation). In contrast, consumers are desired state types when the desire for something new may trigger the decision process (ie the state the consumer whishes to be in).

Hawkins et al (1992) explain that need recognition essentially depends on how much discrepancy exists between the actual state and the desired state as well as the relative importance of the need. Engel et al (1990) add that when this discrepancy exceeds a certain threshold, a need is recognised (Figure 2.3). If the discrepancy is below the threshold level, then need recognition will not occur (thresholds are discussed in Section 3.3).

2.3.1.1 Causes for need recognition

A need must first be activated before it can be recognised. A host of factors will influence the likelihood that a particular need will be activated. These factors can be categorised as either a change in the consumer's actual state or a change in the desired state. Figure 2.4 provides a summary of the need recognition process.

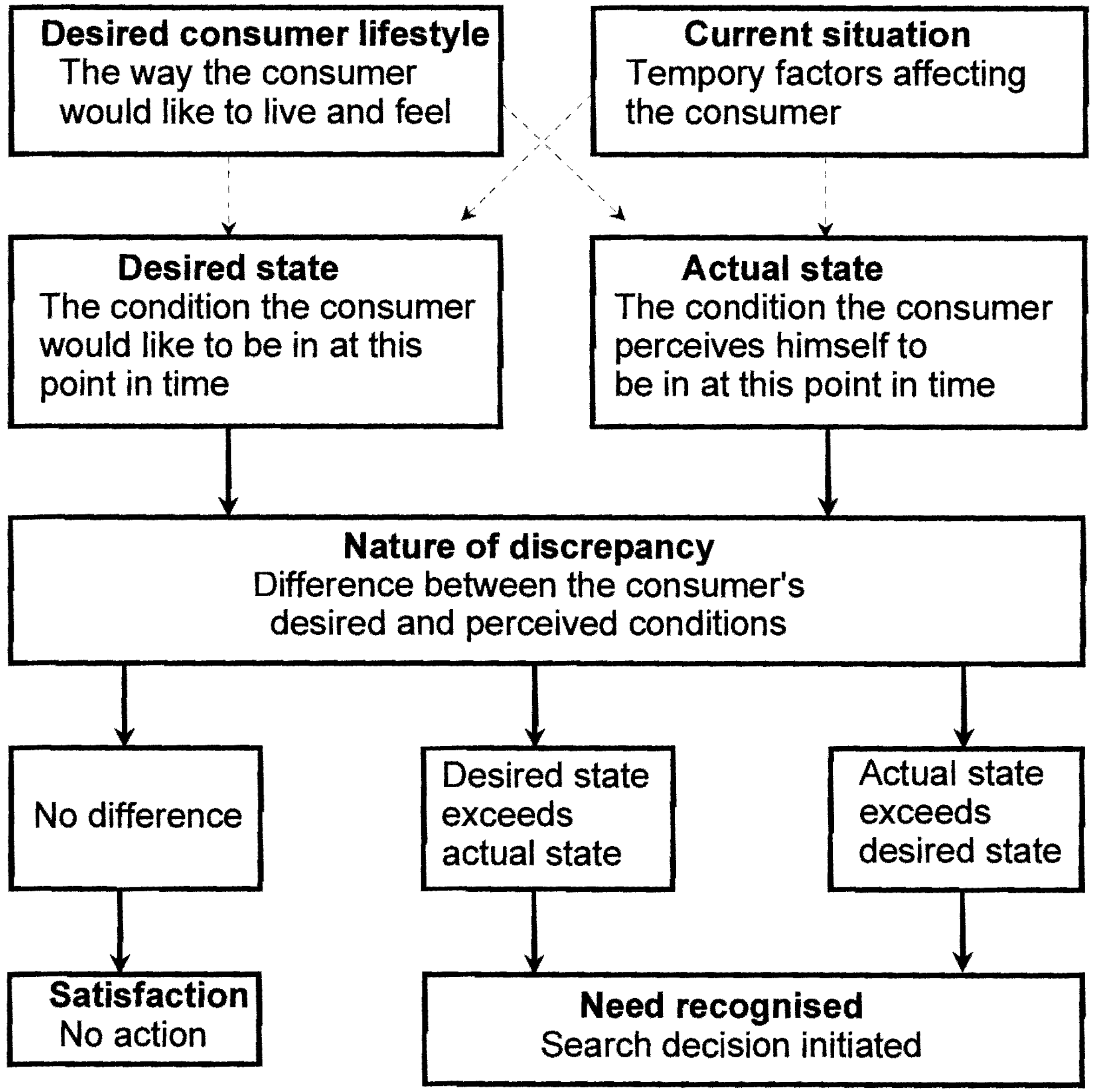
FIGURE 2.3: THE NEED RECOGNITION PROCESS CENTRES ON THE DEGREE OF DISCREPANCY



Source: Engel et al (1993, p. 509)

Wilkie (1990) recognises four different causes in the actual state that can prompt need recognition. A depletion of stock, usually through consumption, will lead the consumer to recognise a need. Dissatisfaction is another factor which could lead to need recognition. This would occur when the consumer perceives that products currently used are insufficient to serve his needs, even though the product may not have been depleted. An example is fashion clothing. A third factor, decrease in finance, will guide the consumer to reduce spending and concentrate on necessities. The final factor is an increase in finance which will convey the consumer to consider the actual state and consider spending the new acquired money. Engel et al (1990) add to these factors by suggesting a generic factor, namely change in circumstances, where any change in the

FIGURE 2.4: THE PROCESS OF NEED RECOGNITION



Source: Adapted from Hawkins et al (1992, p. 444)

consumer's life (eg the birth of a child, unemployment, transfer to another city, etc) will activate need recognition. Hawkins et al (1992) mention yet another factor by stating that past decisions determine one's existing set of need satisfaction. The reason for the aforementioned is that the sum of one's past consumption decisions provides a framework for the actual state.

Wilkie (1990) acknowledges four causes for changes in the desired state. The first is new "need" circumstances. Changes occur in our daily lives and are responsible for entirely new categories of consumer needs. New "want" circumstances occur when consumers recognise a want in changing circumstances. This is possible, for example, when changes are to occur in one's life with the accompanying desire for something. An example would be where a student moves away from home and desires to enroll in classical art classes (the recognition of a new "want"). A third factor is new product opportunities. Prior to becoming aware of a new product, consumers are unlikely to experience need recognition for that product. The final factor, purchase of a new product, could spark need recognition. The reason is that consumers become aware of additional products by acquiring a specific product (eg the purchase of a computer may spark the need for software packages, printers, modems, etc). Hawkins et al (1992) add motives as another factor since the satisfaction of one motive (eg hunger) moves to other (sometimes higher order) motives. Peter & Olson (1993) support this statement by suggesting that consumers strive to achieve a certain goal. If the goal is too complex (or abstract) in nature it will be divided into subgoals, therefore forming a goal hierarchy. The end goal can be achieved by solving the subgoals in order.

In conclusion Engel et al (1990) draw attention to the fact that the presence of need recognition does not automatically activate some action. This will depend on two factors, namely that the recognised need must be of sufficient importance and secondly that the consumer must believe that a solution to the need is within his means.

2.3.2 Information search

The second phase of the consumer decision process, information search, has long been regarded as a significant element of consumer behaviour (Wilkie & Dickson, in Kasserjian & Robertson, 1985) for consumers learn more about their potential purchases at this stage and tend to match their personal desires with external means of satisfying those desires. Information search commences with the perception of a need that might be satisfied with the purchase and consumption of a product. A consumer, therefore, enters this stage when a need is sensed for information upon which to base a choice.

Engel et al (1993, p. 511) provide a summary of the search process by defining it as

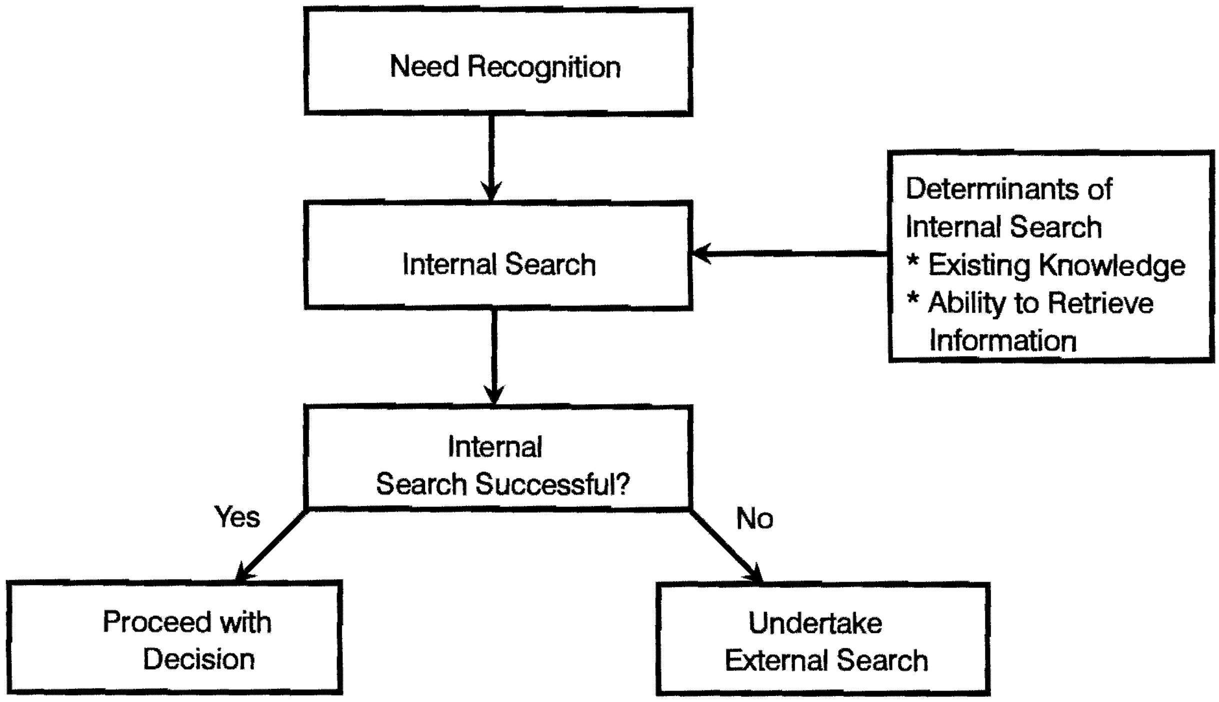
> "...the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment."

As the definition suggests, search can be of an internal nature, an external nature or a combination of both. Engel et al (1993) differentiate between internal and external search by explaining that internal search involves the retrieval of knowledge from memory, whereas external search consists of collecting information from the market-place.

2.3.2.1 Internal search

As portrayed in Figure 2.5, internal search succeeds need recognition. It therefore is a memory scan for decision-relevant knowledge stored in long-term memory. Schiffman et al (1991) support Engel et al (1990) by stating that if past experience (drawn from long-term memory) provides the consumer with adequate information for the present choice, then external search is unnecessary. This leads to the conclusion that the greater the relevant past experience, the less external information the consumer is likely to need to reach a decision. Yet, if no (or insufficient) prior experience exists, the consumer may have no alternative but to engage in external search. Consequently, the consumer's reliance on internal search will depend on the adequacy and quality of his existing knowledge and the degree of satisfaction regarding prior purchase.

FIGURE 2.5: THE INTERNAL SEARCH PROCESS



Source: Engel et al (1993, p. 513)

2.3.2.2 External search

As illustrated in Figure 2.5, consumers may decide to collect additional information from the environment if internal search proves inadequate (or unsuccessful). Two types of external search can be distinguished (Bloch, Sherrell & Ridgway, 1986), namely prepurchase search and ongoing search. Prepurchase search refers to external search that is driven by an upcoming purchase decision. Engel et al (1990) suggest that the motive behind prepurchase search is to make better consumption choices. Similarly, ongoing search may be motivated by desires to develop a knowledge base that can be used in future decision-making since this kind of information acquisition occurs on a relatively regular basis, regardless of sporadic needs. Ongoing search, however, may occur simply because of derived enjoyment from the activity (eg a subscriber to Car magazine may read the magazine for entertainment only. Information obtained through this source may never be used).

Engel et al (1993) augment the discussion by proposing that consumer search is characterised along three main dimensions. These dimensions are the degree, the direction and the sequence of search.

* **Degree of search**

The degree of search implies the total amount of search. Search degree is reflected by the number of brands, attributes, information sources and stores considered during search as well as the time required to do so. Many consumers engage in very little external search prior to purchase. This leads to the suggestion that purchase can occur without being preceded by a decision process. This statement is unjustified because it fails to consider the role of internal search. As was noted earlier, internal search alone may suffice in making purchase decisions. It can therefore be said that the degree of search is directly related to the type of decision-making process. Extended decision-making will entail a considerable amount of search, whereas routinised decision-making will try to minimise search.

* **Direction of search**

The direction of search represents the specific content of search. Emphasis falls on the particular brands and stores involved during search rather than simply the number. It entails the brands, stores and information sources the consumer considers during decision-making. Information sources can either be personal or impersonal, while the type of the source is commercial or noncommercial. Table 2.1 distinguishes among the different sources of information.

TABLE 2.1: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

	Impersonal	**Personal**
Commercial	Advertising In-store information	Sales people
Noncommercial	General purpose media	Social others

SOURCE: Engel et al (1993, p. 519)

* **Sequence of search**

Sequence of search reflects the order in which search activities occur. Consumers can follow one of two different sequences when confronted with a set of brands described along several attributes. One alternative is to follow a brand search sequence (often referred to as processing by brand), where each brand is examined along various attributes. This process is completed before search proceeds to the next brand. Alternatively, an attribute search sequence (referred to as processing by attribute) may be followed where brand information is collected on an attribute-by-attribute basis.

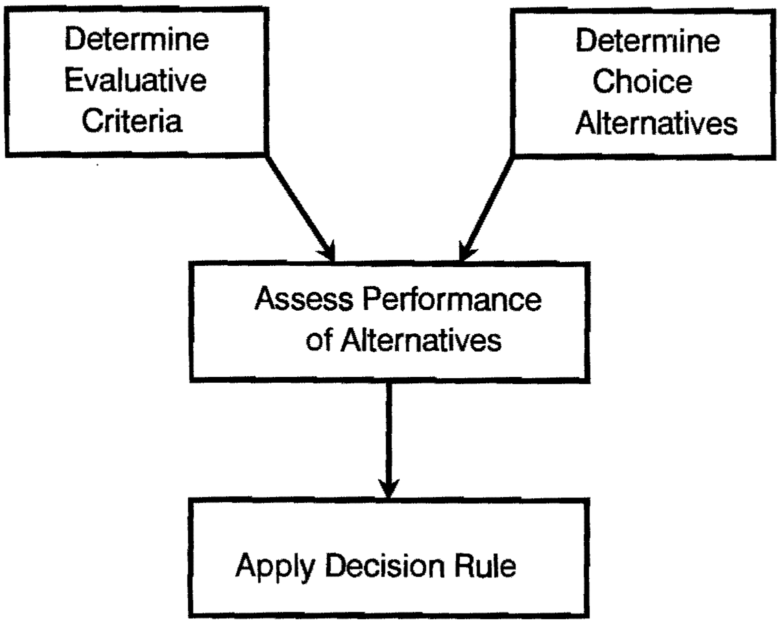
2.3.3 Evaluation of alternatives

Engel et al (1993, p. 534) define the evaluation of alternatives as

> "...the process by which a choice alternative is evaluated and selected to meet consumer needs."

Schiffman et al (1991) express the opinion that consumers tend to employ two types of information when potential alternatives are evaluated. The consumer has to decide which choice alternatives to consider as well as the criteria used to evaluate each brand. Engel et al (1993) add that after these two initial stages, the consumer has to judge the relative performance of the considered alternatives along the evaluative criteria. A decision rule is then applied to these judgements to select a particular alternative. Figure 2.6 presents an overview of the alternative evaluation process.

FIGURE 2.6: BASIC COMPONENTS OF THE ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION PROCESS



Source: Engel et al (1993, p.535)

2.3.3.1 Evaluative criteria

Engel et al (1993), supported by Schiffman et al (1991) explain that evaluation criteria are the specific attributes used by the consumer to judge choice alternatives. These evaluative criteria vary from person to person as well as from decision to decision. Therefore, the same person may use different evaluative criteria for the same product, but in different situations. As an example, the evaluative criteria in the evaluation of a personal computer would be price, quality, brand name, speed, etc.

The impact of different evaluative criteria during the evaluation process differs. Therefore, some criteria will have a greater impact than others. The concept of salience refers to the potential influence each criterion may exert during the comparison process. Important to note (Engel et al, 1993) is that although salient criteria influence the evaluation process, exceptions do take place. For example, if price is considered a very important attribute, but all the brands are of the same price, the impact of price essentially falls away. This phenomenon occurs when alternatives under consideration perform equally well (or poor for that matter).

According to Engel et al (1990), evaluative criteria selection is determined by factors such as the situation (eg the purchase of Nescafé coffee for guests while Frisco is usually used) and similarity of choices. If the decision involves noncomparable alternatives, the consumer needs to use more abstract evaluative criteria (Corfman, 1991 and Johnson, 1989), eg when considering to buy either a television or a refrigerator. Motivation (eg buying the cheapest or the most prestigious brand), involvement (more criteria enter the decision process as involvement increases) and knowledge (knowledgable consumers will already have criteria stored in memory to assist them in decision-making while novices need more information to complete their criteria) also influence the selection of evaluation criteria.

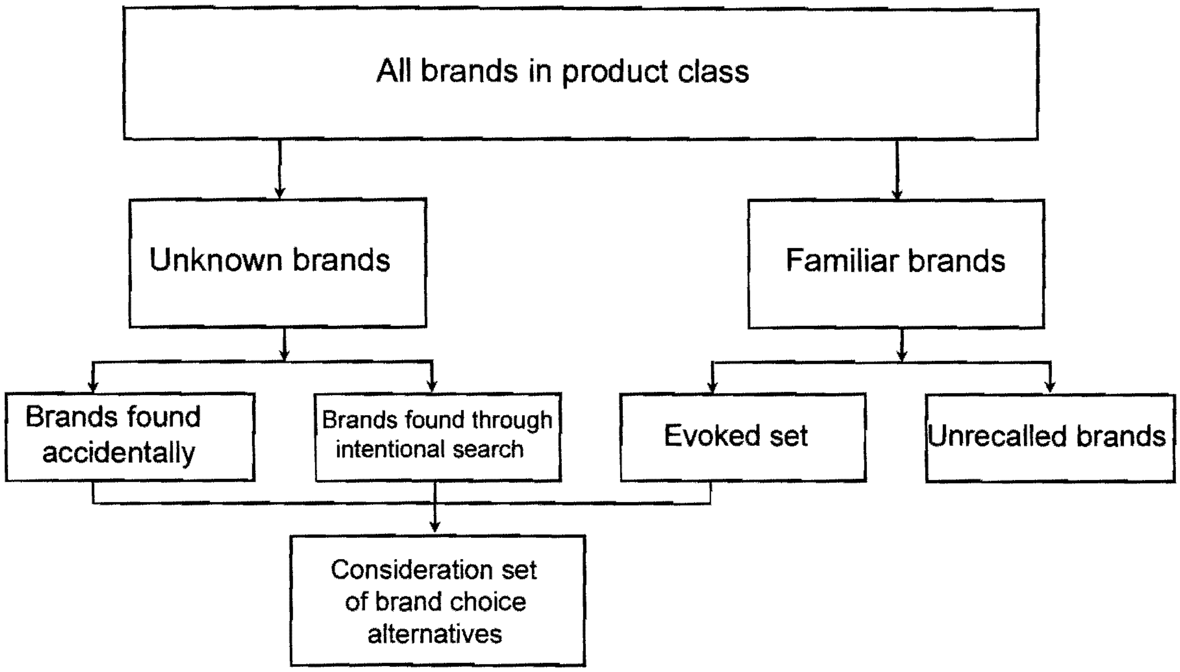
2.3.3.2 Determining choice alternatives

Besides determining criteria used during alternative evaluation, consumers also have to determine the alternatives from which the choice will be made. Hauser & Wernerfelt (1990) supported by Nedungadi (1990) explain that these alternatives define what is known as the consideration set (evoked set) and usually forms only a subset of all possible alternatives.

Roberts & Lattin (1991), supported by Hawkins et al (1992) draw attention to the fact that all potential alternatives available to the consumer can be divided into an awareness set (alternatives of which the consumer is aware) and an unawareness set (unaware-off alternatives). The awareness set is again compiled from three different sets, namely the evoked, the inert and the inept set. The evoked set forms the set of acceptable alternatives to the consumer from which the final choice would be made. The consumer is indifferent towards the inert set because it is not perceived as having any particular advantages, but may be used as backup alternative (Hawkins et al, 1992). Brands falling in the inept set will be entirely excluded from purchase consideration.

Although Peter et al (1994) consider the consideration set to be compiled from an evoked set and unknown brands - Figure 2.7 - (consisting of brands accidentally found and brands found through intentional search), the determination of choice alternatives is essentially the same process as described above.

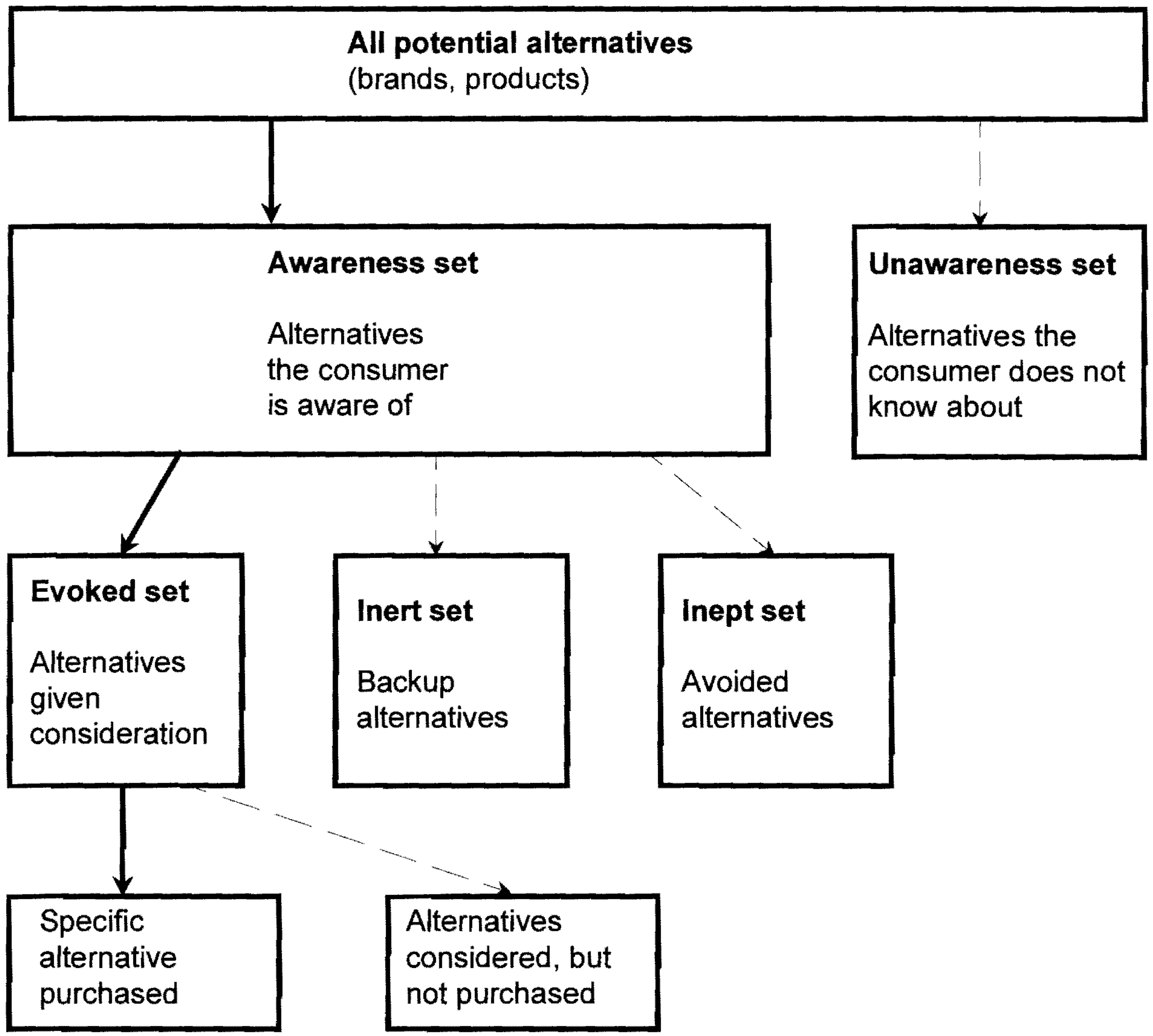
FIGURE 2.7: FORMING A CONSIDERATION SET OF BRAND CHOICE



Source: Peter et al (1994, p. 162)

A possible explanation for the difference in the two viewpoints is that Hawkins et al (1992), Schiffman et al (1991) and Engel et al (1990) explain their process from an origination point after previously unknown brands have been considered. Roberts et al (1991) suggest another explanation by stating that the composition of the consideration set can be modelled at any point in time. For the purpose of this study, the viewpoint of Hawkins et al (1992), Schiffman et al (1991), and Engel et al (1990) will be followed (with consideration of the possible explanation as cited above). Figure 2.8 provides a detailed assessment of the process of determining choice alternatives that will be used for the purpose of this study (note that unknown brands portrayed in Figure 2.8 result from after external search was conducted).

FIGURE 2.8: CATEGORIES OF DECISION ALTERNATIVES



Source: Hawkins, et al (1992, p. 469)

2.3.3.3 Assessing choice alternatives

Engel et al (1990) express the opinion that the performance of choice alternatives needs to be judged along salient evaluative criteria. Often consumers already have judgements or beliefs stored in memory which may strongly affect which alternatives they will eventually choose. Consumers lacking such stored knowledge need to rely on external information by forming the necessary beliefs or judgements. In judging alternatives, consumers can rely on either the use of cutoffs or signals.

A cutoff is a certain restriction or requirement for acceptable attribute values. Alternatives that do not meet a specific cutoff will therefore be rejected regardless of how well they perform on other attributes (eg a consumer who only has the financial means to purchase a Citi Golf, will not be able to buy a Golf GTI, regardless of the better performance, quality, etc of the GTI.) Signals (cues) are also often used to judge alternatives. A classic example is the use of price as a signal of quality.

2.3.3.4 Selecting a decision rule

Engel et al (1990) explain that decision rules represent the strategies consumers use to make a selection from choice alternatives and range from very simplistic procedures that require little time and effort to very elaborate ones that involve considerably more time and processing effort on the part of the consumer. According to Schiffman et al (1991) these decision rules (also referred to as heuristics) serve to reduce the burden of making complex decisions.

Decision rules can be classified in two major categories, namely compensatory and noncompensatory decision rules. Other prominent decision rules are affect referral and various combinations of different decision rules.

2.3.3.4.1 Compensatory decision rules

Hawkins et al (1992) and Schiffman et al (1991) explain that in following a compensatory decision rule, consumers evaluate brands in terms of relevant attributes and compute a summated score for each brand. The score for each brand reflects its merit as a potential purchase choice. An assumption with the compensatory rule is that the brand with the highest score among the alternatives would usually be selected.

Interesting to note (Rice, 1993 and Peter et al, 1994) is a unique feature of a compensatory decision rule, where a positive evaluation of a brand on one attribute is allowed to balance out a negative evaluation on some other attribute.

Engel et al (1990) add to the discussion by providing two types of compensatory rules. They are the simple additive and the weighted additive. In terms of a simple additive rule, consumers simply add the number of times each alternative is judged favourably regarding the set of salient evaluative criteria. The result is that the alternative perceived as having the largest number of positive attributes is chosen. The weighted additive rule is far more complex in nature than the simple additive. The consumer now engages in more refined judgements about the alternatives' performance irrespective of whether it is favourable or unfavourable. The relative salience of relevant evaluative criteria is also incorporated into the decision rule.

2.3.3.4.2 Noncompensatory decision rules

In contrast with the compensatory decision rules, noncompensatory decision rules are characterised by the fact that a weakness in one attribute cannot be offset by a strength in another attribute. For example, if the decision rule is "buy the cheapest brand", a brand that is not the cheapest will not be chosen, no matter how well it performs on other attributes. The brand's weakness in price is, therefore, not compensated by its favourable performance in other attributes. Four types of noncompensatory decision rules are the conjunctive, disjunctive, lexicographic and elimination-by-aspects decision rules.

* **Conjunctive rule**

The conjunctive rule is commonly used by consumers as a means of eliminating a number of alternatives in a fast and simple manner and can be defined (Hawkins et al, 1992, p. 509) as

> "... establishes minimum required performance standards for each evaluative criterion and selects all brands that surpass these minimum standards."

Peter et al (1993) and Schiffman et al (1991) support the definition by arguing that an alternative is rejected if a minimum acceptable level as a cutoff point for any one attribute is not met.

Since the conjunctive rule can result in several acceptable alternatives, it becomes necessary in such cases for the consumer to apply an additional decision rule in order to arrive at a final selection. Engel et al (1990) stress the importance of noting that if none of the alternatives considered meet the cutoff requirements, the consumer either has to alter the cutoffs or the decision rule. If decision making is still impossible, then choice must be delayed.

* **Disjunctive rule**

In employing a disjunctive decision rule, consumers establish a separate, minimally acceptable level as the cutoff point for each attribute (this cutoff, however, may be higher than the one normally established for a conjunctive rule). Therefore, if a brand alternative meets or surpasses the cutoff established for any one attribute, it is accepted (Hawkins et al, 1992 and Schiffman et al, 1991).

By using the disjunctive rule (similarly to using the conjunctive rule) a number of brands might surpass the cutoff point, producing a situation where another decision rule is required. If this occurs the consumer may accept the first satisfactory brand as the final choice or use some other decision rule.

* **Lexicographic rule**

Peter et al (1993), Hawkins et al (1992), and Schiffman et al (1991) explain that in following a lexicographic decision rule, consumers first rank attributes in terms of importance. The consumer then compares the various alternative brands in terms of the single attribute that is considered most important. If one brand is perceived as superior on that one attribute, it is selected. If two or more brands are perceived as equally good, they are then compared on the second most important attribute. This process continues until the tie is broken and only one alternative brand remains.

* **Elimination-by-aspects decision rule**

Hawkins et al (1992) and Engel et al (1990) explain that, as with the lexicographic rule, the elimination-by-aspects rule requires the consumer to rank the evaluative criteria in terms of importance. Now however, cutoffs are established for each individual criterion. All alternative brands are then considered on the most important attribute (criterion). Alternatives not surpassing the cutoff point are expelled from consideration. If more than one brand passes the cutoff point, the process is repeated for those brands on the second most important attribute. This process continues until only one brand remains.

Important to note once again, is that if none of the brands are acceptable, the consumer must revise the cutoffs, or use a different decision rule, or postpone the choice.

2.3.3.4.3 Affect-referral decision rule

Engel et al (1990) and Schiffman et al (1991) explain that the affect-referral rule assumes that consumers have previously formed overall evaluations of each choice alternative. The consumer would, therefore, simply retrieve established evaluations from memory rather than judge alternatives on various evaluative criteria. The alternative perceived as having the highest affect is then chosen. In essence, overall evaluation serves as the single evaluative criterion used in decision-making (supported by Bahn, 1986) and may represent the simplest of all rules.

2.3.3.4.4 Combination of decision rules

Various authors (eg Peter et al, 1993; Schiffman et al, 1991 and Engel et al, 1990) are of the opinion that consumers combine different decision rules. Examples are conjunctive-compensatory, disjunctive-conjunctive and conjunctive-disjunctive decision rules. The reason for combining decision rules is to assist the consumer in deriving a single acceptable alternative during evaluation. Engel et al (1990) suggest two specific combination rules used most often by consumers. These are the phased and constructive decision rules.

- **Phased decision rule**

A phased decision rule, consisting of a two-phased process, involves the sequential use of at least two different decision rules as a means of coping with a large number of alternatives. In the initial stage, one type of rule is used to help narrow down the choice set to a more manageable number. A second decision rule is then applied to the remaining alternatives to make the final choice.

* Constructive decision rule

Consumers may find it necessary to construct a decision rule when alternatives are to be evaluated, ie consumers build a constructive decision rule using elementary processing operations (ie "fragments" of rules), retrieved from memory that can accommodate the choice situation.

In conclusion to decision rules it is important to note two different phenomenon that may drastically alter the choice in rules chosen as well as the alternative chosen. The first is that a distinction has to be made between a necessity (eg a refrigerator) and a more discretionary (eg a second or third wrist watch) purchase situation, and the second is the concept of satisficing.

The importance of differentiating between a necessity and a discretionary purchase situation (Schiffman et al, 1991) is that if a product is considered a necessity and none of the alternatives evaluated are perceived as offering sufficient benefits to warrant purchase, the consumer has to lower his expectations (ie cutoff points) and settle for the best of the available alternatives. If still no choice is eminent, the consumer has to seek additional alternatives, hoping to find one that more closely meets his criteria. If a purchase is more discretionary, the consumer can simply postpone decision-making and transfer acquired information experienced from search to long-term memory to be retrieved when and if the consumer regains interest in making such an acquisition.

The concept of satisficing, combined from satisfy and suffice (Rice, 1993) could also alter the decision rule used by the consumer. Wilkie (1990) supported by Herrmann (1988) explains that the consumer does not always attempt to optimise (ie the best available alternative is sought and chosen) decision procedures. Instead, the consumer only seeks for an alternative that is good enough to be considered acceptable. Rice (1993) concludes by adding that through satisficing, the consumer simply does just enough to obtain satisfaction. It indicates a degree of settling for something rather less than perfection.

2.3.4 Purchase

The fourth stage in the decision-making process, purchase, can be defined as the phase (Engel et al, 1993, p. G-10):

> ".., in which the consumer acquires the preferred alternative or an acceptable substitute."

Purchase is a function of two determinants, environmental influences and/or individual differences (the situation is especially important in the latter category) and intention. Influences in the situation that affect the purchase process are among other factors such as the availability of information (internal and external - discussed earlier as search), the retail environment (eg store atmosphere, layout and display and point-of-purchase materials) and time available for decision-making purposes.

A purchase intention can be categorised as being fully planned, planned and unplanned as well as either a trial or a repeat purchase.

Engel et al (1990) explain that a purchase is fully planned once a consumer has decided precisely which brand within a product category he wishes to purchased. If he only decides on the product category (without a specific brand within that category), the purchase is classified as planned. Unplanned purchases should not be misunderstood as occurring without a decision process. The mere fact that the purchase intention was not articulated prior to purchase (either verbally or on a shopping list) does not mean that the so-called unplanned purchase was not "planned" in a sense. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that consumers use product displays (especially in mass-merchandising outlets) as a surrogate shopping list. In other words, the display provides a reminder of a need, and a purchase is triggered. This is referred to as an impulse purchase.

Rook (1987, p. 191) defines impulse buying as

> "... a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately."

Important to note (Rook, 1987) is that behaviour is not impulsive simply because it occurs swiftly. Routinised decision-making enables the consumer to almost automatically evaluate and choose an alternative. Furthermore, in emergencies consumers often act immediately, but this may be more an instinctive than an impulsive response.

Schiffman et al (1991) distinguish between trial and repeat purchase by explaining that a trial purchase is considered to be a first-time acquisition and of a smaller quantity than usually bought. Therefore, trial can be considered to be an exploratory phase of purchase behaviour in which consumers attempt to evaluate a product through direct use. If a product used during trial is perceived to be satisfactory (or simply better than other brands), the consumer is likely to repeat the purchase.

Important to remember is that trial, unfortunately, is not feasible in every situation. For example, with expensive or durable products (fridge, car, etc) consumers move directly from evaluation to a long-term commitment (through purchase), without the opportunity for actual trial.

2.3.5 Postpurchase evaluation

Engel et al (1990) explain that in the final phase of the consumer decision-making process, postpurchase evaluation, it is not uncommon that the consumer may experience an immediate and often transitory period of postdecision regret or doubt (especially in high-involvement situations) whether the right decision was made. The impact of such a doubt, referred to as postpurchase cognitive dissonance, is that it can have an influence on whether the consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied with the chosen alternative. On its part, satisfaction and dissatisfaction formed in this stage have a direct influence on consumer beliefs and attitudes, future purchase intentions, word-of-mouth communication and complaint behaviour.

2.3.5.1 Postpurchase cognitive dissonance

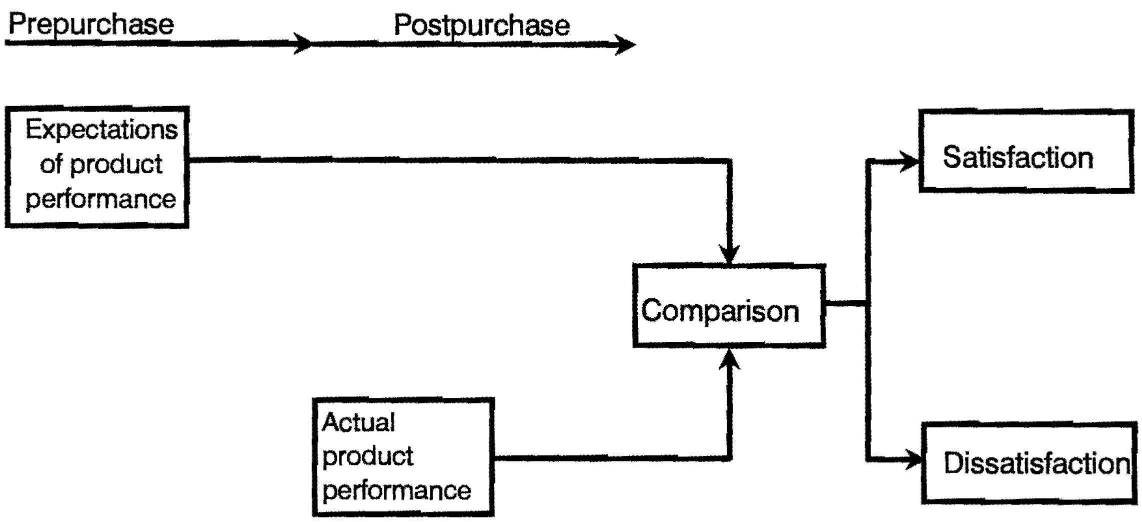
Schiffman et al (1991) suggest that the reduction of postpurchase cognitive dissonance is an important component of postpurchase evaluation since consumers try to reassure themselves that their choice was a wise one. Engel et al (1990) support this statement by providing two options that the consumer may follow in reducing dissonance experienced, first, a confirmation of the choice and secondly a conclusion that an unwise decision was made. Schiffman et al (1991) express the opinion that the consumer can confirm his choice by seeking advertisements that support this choice and actively avoid those of competitive brands. They may attempt to persuade friends to purchase the same brand (and thereby confirm their own choice) or they may turn to other satisfied users for assurance.

2.3.5.2 Consumer satisfaction /dissatisfaction

Engel et al (1990) explain that the consumer enters a purchase situation with certain expectations about the performance of a product once used, trusting that the outcome will be satisfactory. Satisfaction therefore implies that the expectations of the product used are at least met or exceeded. Dissatisfaction is the outcome of negatively confirmed expectations. Hawkins et al (1992) add another possible outcome, namely nonsatisfaction. Nonsatisfaction occurs when a brand's performance confirms a low-performance expectation. The consumer is not likely to feel disappointed and will probably search for better alternatives the next time the problem arises.

Wilkie (1990) summarises postpurchase evaluation by dividing the process of deriving at a satisfaction/dissatisfaction outcome into five components. These are expectations, performance, comparison, confirmation/ disconfirmation and discrepancy (refer to Figure 2.9).

FIGURE 2.9: CONSUMER SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION AS A COMPARISON PROCESS



Source: Adapted from Wilkie (1990, p. 623)

* **Expectations** are developed during the prepurchase phase when consumers develop expectations or beliefs about what they expect to receive from the product. These expectations are carried forward into the postpurchase phase where they are again activated at the time of consumption.

* During consumption of the product, its **performance** is perceived along dimensions important to the consumer.

* **Comparisons** can be made after the product is used between the prepurchase expectations and the postpurchase actual performance.

* The comparison results in either **confirmation** of expectations (when the two performance levels are equal) or **disconfirmation** of expectations (actual performance is either greater than or less than the expected level).

* Unequal performance levels are shown by a **discrepancy** measure. Negative disconfirmation results in larger discrepancies and are likely to produce higher levels of dissatisfaction.

In conclusion to the postpurchase process, Hawkins et al (1992) note that evaluation of routinised and many limited decisions are actively evaluated only if there is a noticeable product failure. If no failure is perceived, postpurchase evaluation may be disregarded entirely, resulting in repurchase of the same product.

2.4 AN EXPANDED DECISION-MAKING MODEL

2.4.1 Introduction

Although a number of comprehensive consumer decision-making models are documented in literature (eg the Nicosia, Howard-Sheth, Engel-Blackwell-Miniard, Sheth family decision-making, and Bettman's consumer choice models, etc) only the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model will be discussed. This model is chosen since it provides a detailed assessment of the consumer decision-making process and includes variables influencing the decision process. Input (especially the influence of attributes, discussed in Chapter 4) to the decision process and the information processing component is also featured.

The generic decision-making model discussed in this chapter portrays a detailed assessment of all the components relevant to decision-making. The Engel-Kollat-Miniard model will, therefore, not be discussed to replace the generic model, but rather to display the comprehensiveness of decision-making with the emphasis on extended decision-making (and to a lesser extent limited decision-making since the decision-making processes, as mentioned earlier, are essentially the same, differing only in the time and effort devoted to external search and alternative evaluation). Before turning to the model, it is necessary to explain the importance of studying expanded consumer decision-making models.

Engel et al (1990) explain that a model is nothing more than a replica of the phenomenon it is designed to represent. It specifies the variables, the way in which it is interrelated and the outcomes when the model is set in motion by various forces. Several advantages are also offered in using models of this type:

* Explanations for behaviour is provided, ie a change in variables and circumstances can be seen visually.

* A frame of reference is provided for research, ie it is possible to establish research priorities since gaps in knowledge and understanding become apparent.

* A model provides a foundation for management information systems, ie essential insights are provided for marketing strategy because the proper use of a model disclose information required to understand differing consumer decision processes.

According to Assael (1992) consumer behaviour models in general also provide the marketer with a basis for market segmentation. While limitations of models are that a model may vary among individuals in the same market, components of a model may not be equally important to all product categories or usage situations. He adds that all purchase decisions are not equally complex.

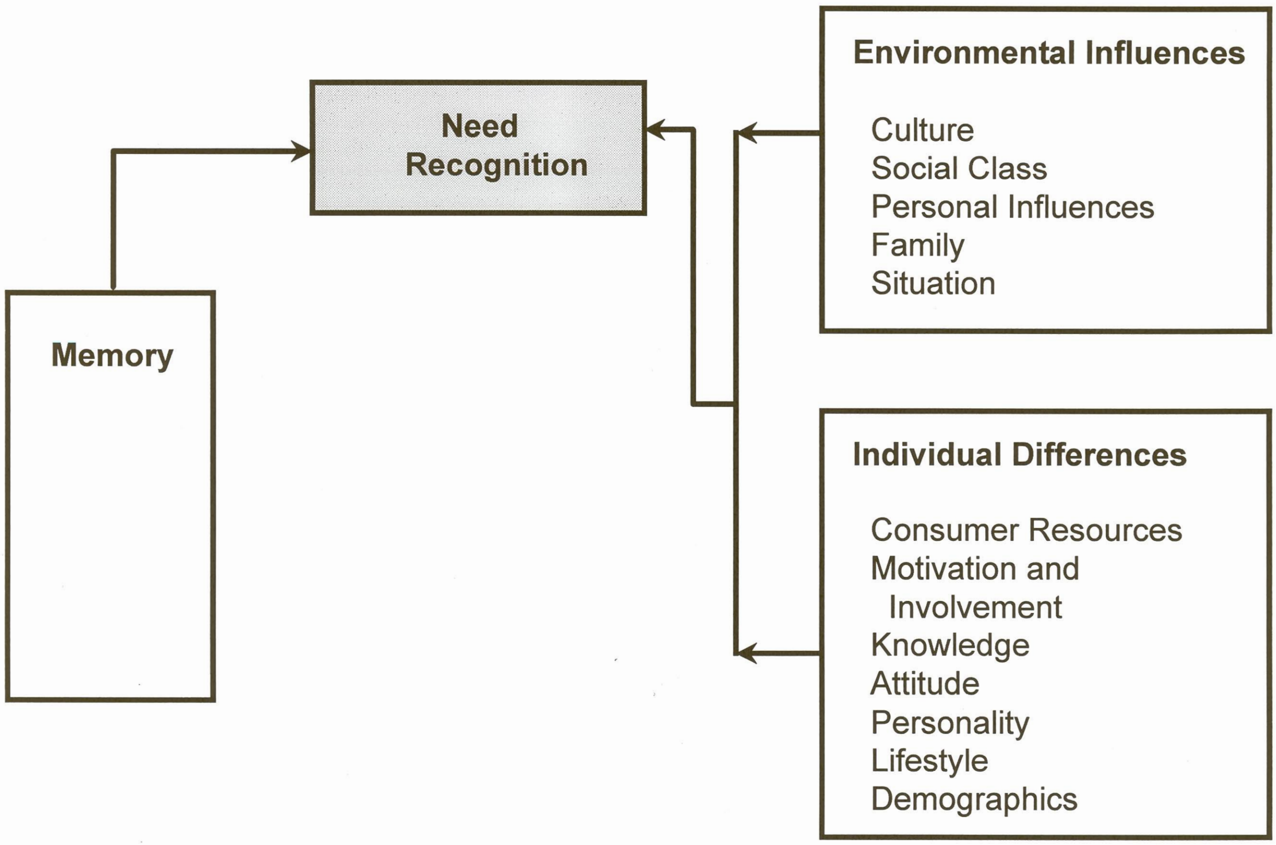
2.4.2 Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model

The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model (also known in previous versions as the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model) portrays an extended decision-making procedure and is based on actively reasoned decisions. This is likely to occur in high involvement situations with considerable brand differentiation and an absence of time pressure. The discussion will be based on the literature of Engel et al (1990) with reference to Engel et al (1993) and Engel et al (1986). Note that the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model (1993 & 1990) is only a refinement of the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (1986) and Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model.

2.4.2.1 Need recognition

Figure 2.10 portrays the need recognition process as a subcomponent to the total Engel-Blackwell-Minniard model.

FIGURE 2.10: THREE DETERMINANTS OF NEED RECOGNITION



Source: Engel, et al (1990, p. 477)

As displayed in the figure, there are three determinants of need recognition, namely information stored in memory, individual differences and environmental influences. Need recognition can be triggered by any of these factors working individually or in combination.

Extended decision-making is generally initiated by activation of motives centrally related to self-concept because of the high level of involvement. Normative social influence can also become relevant in buying situations where the response of others assumes importance. Need recognition is therefore likely to be complex and multifaceted.

2.4.2.2 Information search

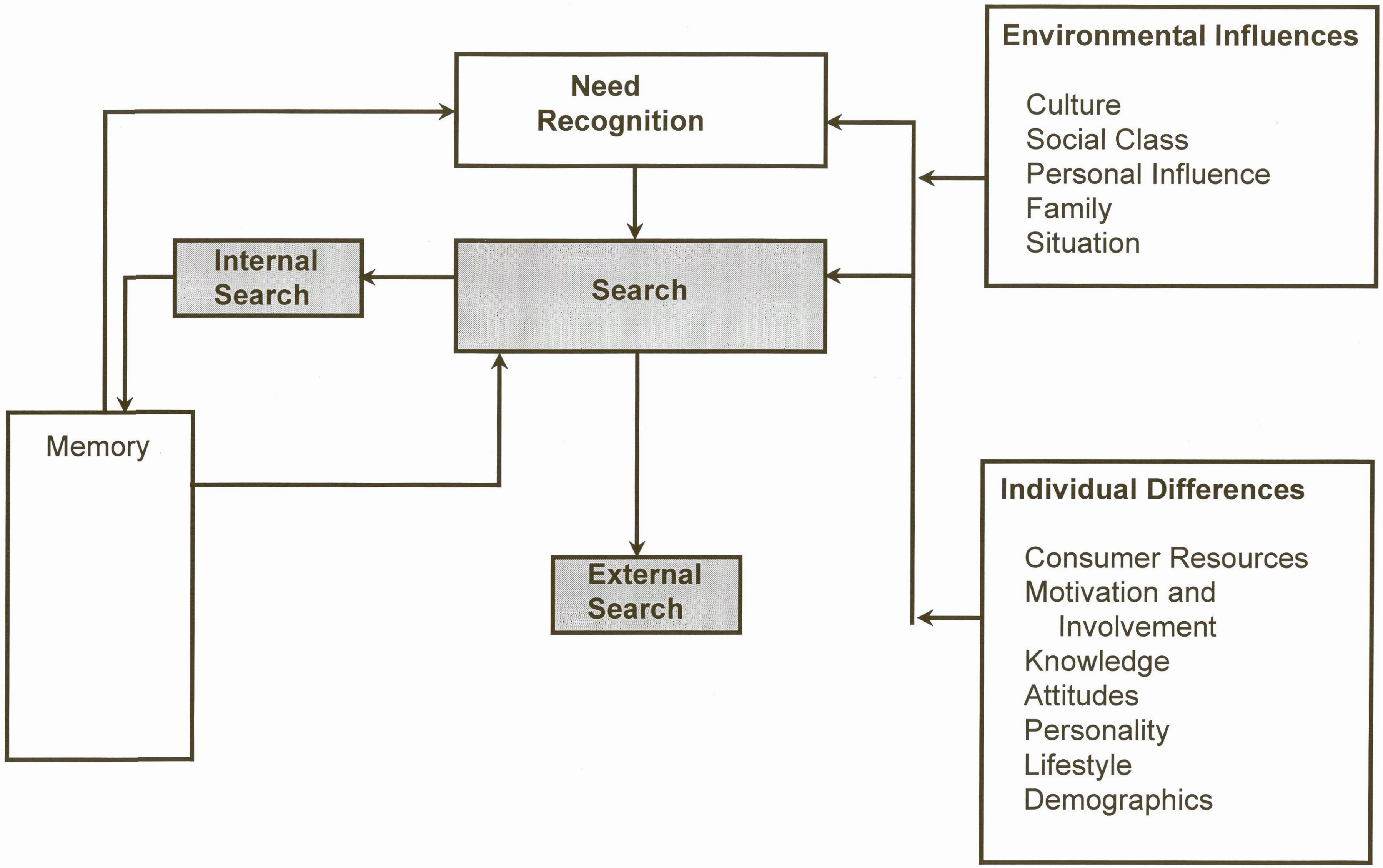
Only when a need is recognised, the consumer must decide what to do. The initial step is a search of internal information contained in memory to determine whether enough is known about alternatives to make a choice without further effort. If insufficient information is contained in memory, the consumer will turn to external search and make use of a variety of outside information sources. As indicated in Figure 2.11, the propensity to engage in external search is affected by individual differences and environmental influences.

2.4.2.3 Consumer information processing

As displayed in Figure 2.12, external input is processed and stored in memory following the information-processing stages. Engel et al (1986) explain that persuasive communication must be revealed to the consumer where he happens to be. This is depicted in the figure as exposure. Exposure does not necessarily guarantee that attention will be attracted. Attention to stimuli implies that the consumer has allocated information-processing capacity to incoming messages.

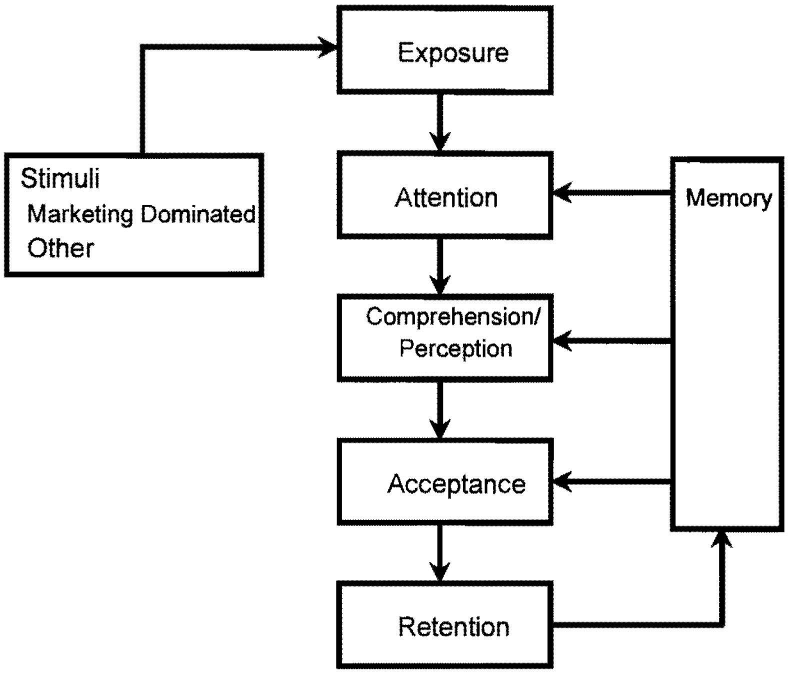
Once attention is attracted, the message is analysed further (in what is referred to as short-term memory) against categories of stored meaning in order to attach meaning to messages. During the next phase, the message is comprehended or perceived, hopefully as originally intended. Focus can only now be directed at the effects of the message. Since the comprehended meaning is compared against existing beliefs, evaluative criteria, attitudes and other factors stored in memory, any or all of these could be modified in some way. If change in any of these occurred, then it can be concluded that acceptance has taken place. The final stage, retention, implies that the message or its effects are retained in long-term memory (Chapter 3 is devoted to the perception process).

FIGURE 2.11: SEARCH FOR INFORMATION



Source: Engel, et al (1990, p. 479)

FIGURE 2.12: INFORMATION PROCESSING IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

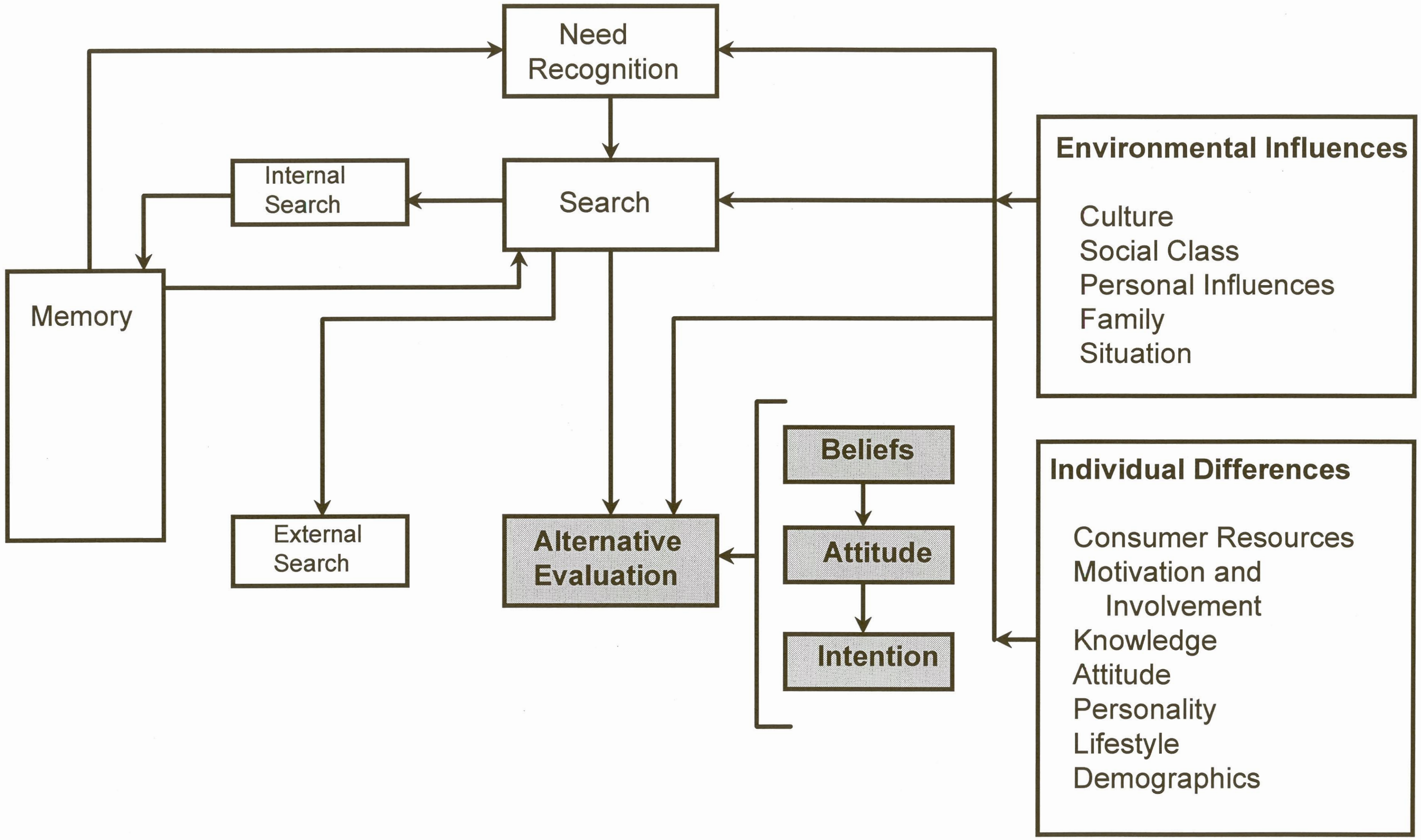


Source: Adapted from Engel et al (1990, p. 480) and Engel et al (1986, p. 33)

2.4.2.4 Alternative evaluation

During the evaluation of alternatives, different products and brands are evaluated along certain evaluative criteria. These evaluative criteria are the consumer's desired outcomes of purchase and consumption of a product, expressed in the form of preferred attributes. As indicated in Figure 2.13, the evaluation process is influenced by individual differences and environmental influences. Figure 2.13 also expresses that beliefs, attitudes and intentions influence the evaluation process. This occurs when judgement is formed and changed regarding the extent to which various options measure up when alternatives are compared with the evaluative criteria (resulting in a corresponding change in beliefs, attitudes and intentions).

FIGURE 2.13: ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION



Source: Adapted from Engel et al (1990, p. 481) and Engel et al (1986, p.31)

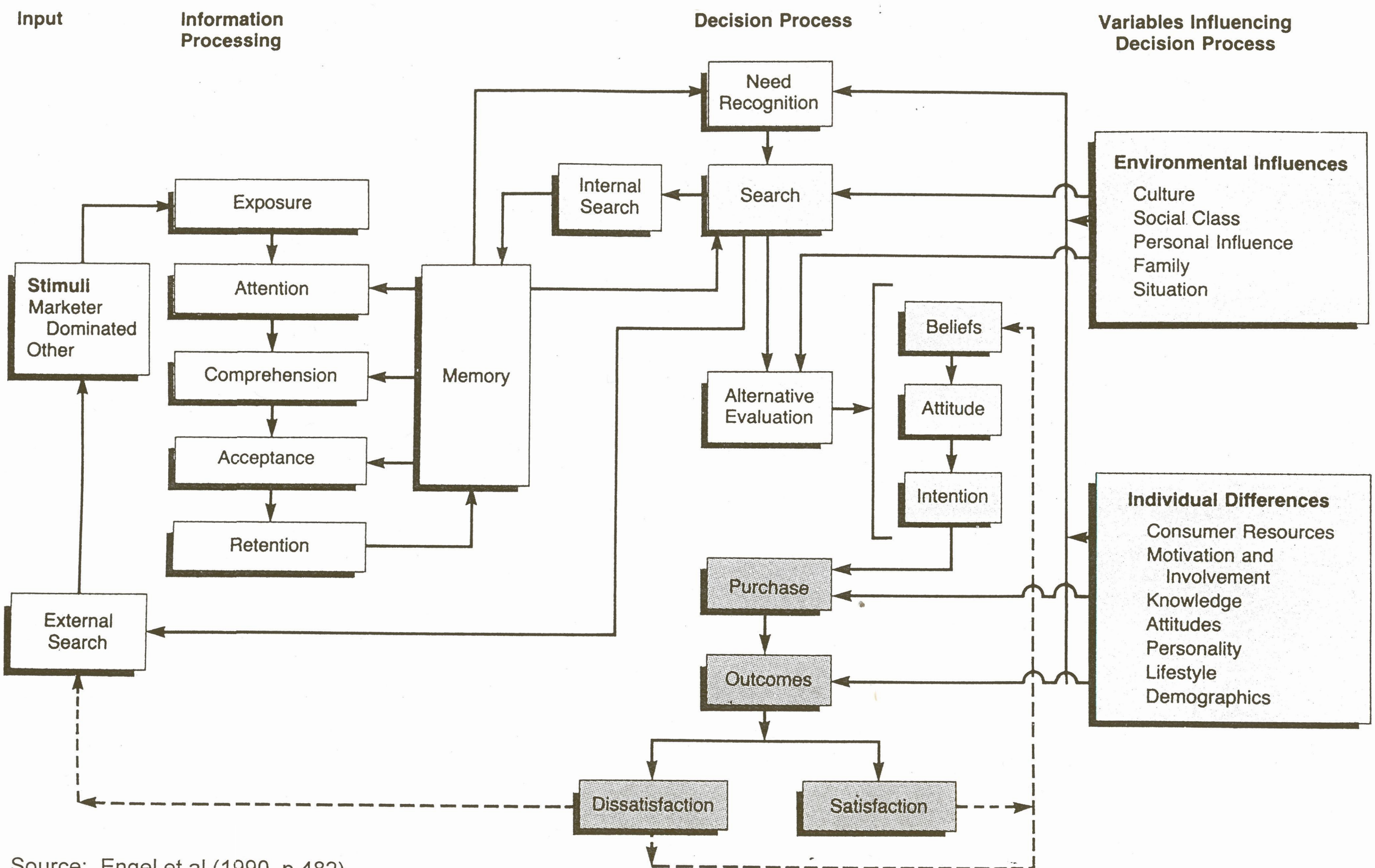
2.4.2.5 Purchase and its outcomes

Figure 2.14 portrays the detailed Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model with all the subcomponents and the interactions thereof. As can be seen in the figure, the final phase in the model, purchase and its outcomes, feeds back to other subcomponents. Note that in the figure variables influencing others directly are shown by a solid arrow. Feedback to the model is depicted by a dotted arrow.

After evaluation of alternatives, the consumer purchases his specific choice. The process does not terminate with purchase, however. Comparisons are first made between actual and expected product performance. A matched outcome will lead to satisfaction, while a perceived shortcoming results in dissatisfaction. The broken feedback arrow displayed in the figure shows how future purchases are strengthened by a satisfactory outcome, while dissatisfactory outcomes may lead to further information search and also influence held beliefs. Rice (1993) comments on dissatisfaction displayed in the model by suggesting that dissatisfaction is likely to result from post-purchase cognitive dissonance.

As conclusion to the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model, Rice (1993) criticises the model because, while it includes useful environmental and social factors, it does not specifically define the relationship between the factors. He furthermore comments that the separation of information search and alternative evaluation is relatively unrealistic. Rice (1993) concludes that, as with most models, the predictive power is also somewhat limited.

FIGURE 2.14: THE ENGEL-BLACKWELL-MINIARD MODEL



Source: Engel et al (1990, p.482)

2.5 SUMMARY

The consumer decision-making process plays a very significant part in studying consumer behaviour since consumers need to decide among different alternative actions every day. They have to decide between going to work and staying at home, watching television or reading a book, purchasing brand X or brand Y, etc.

As discussed, consumers engage in different levels of decision-making ranging from extended to limited decision-making. The extent to which a consumer engages in decision-making depends on a host of factors, including the consumer's experience with the product category, the quality of stored information in memory, the level of involvement in the purchase situation and the time available for external search for alternatives.

Although it has been argued (in historical research) that no decision-making process exists, more recent research acknowledges five different phases in the decision-making process, namely problem recognition, search for alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, purchase of the chosen alternative and postpurchase evaluation. Impulse purchases also require the use of a decision-making process, although it often does not seem to be the case. With impulse purchases, the consumer does recognise a need and often makes use of stored information to base a decision on.

The Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model discussed above portrays an extended decision-making process and provides a detailed overview of the total consumer decision-making process including external variables influencing the process. Chapter 3 is devoted to the consumer perception process.

CHAPTER 3

CONSUMER PERCEPTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In biology, perception refers to the senses that any organism uses to collect information about its environment. Wade & Tavris (1987) note that the senses corresponding to the human sense organs have been categorised at least since Aristotle's time as: vision (our eyes), hearing (our ears), taste (our tongues), touch (our skin) and smell (our noses). Walters & Bergiel (1989) continue the biological viewpoint by explaining that according to the modern outlook, our sense of smell and taste are our olfactory senses due to the fact that our senses of smell and taste are so closely entwined. They continue by stating that humans also perceive in a kinaesthetic mode (using muscles and joints) and in a vestibular mode (through our internal organs).

In consumer behaviour, however, perception refers to much more than just the biological use of our sense organs. It includes the way stimuli are interacted and integrated by the consumer.

Although there are numerous definitions in literature explaining perception from a consumer behaviour perspective, the one used by Walters et al (1989, p. 333) provides particular clarity on the topic:

> "The entire process by which an individual becomes aware of the environment and interprets it so that it will fit into his or her frame of reference."

Walters et al (1989) expand on the definition by stating that every perception involves a person who interprets through the senses some thing, event, or relation which may be designated as the percept. Van der Walt (1991) adds that perception occurs when sensory receptors receive stimuli via the brain, code and categorise them and assign certain meanings to them, depending on the person's frame of reference. A person's frame of reference consists of all his previous held experiences, beliefs, likes, dislikes, prejudices, feelings and other psychological reactions of unknown origin.

From the discussion it is eminent that the perception process has long been recognised as the most significant barrier to effective communication. It is at this point that the sender does or does not get through to the receiver (Aaker et al, 1987), since correct decoding of marketing information hinges on the consumer's perception of the communication content (Van der Walt, 1991).

A problem though with perception and related studies (Schiffman et al, 1991) is that two individuals may be subject to the same stimuli under apparently the same conditions, but how they recognise, select, organise and interpret them is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, expectations and the like. Individuals furthermore act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the basis of objective reality. With this in mind (Schiffman et al, 1991), it is important that marketers understand the whole notion of perception and its related concepts so that they can more readily determine what influences consumers to buy.

The perception process is also complicated due to the possibility that individuals may be stimulated below their level of conscious awareness (known as subliminal perception), ie they can perceive stimuli without being consciously aware of the stimuli in question.

Individuals also experience a certain amount of risk when making a purchasing decision and have a limited capacity to process all the different stimuli directed at them. This leads to a selective perception process where individuals will expose themselves selectively to marketing stimuli, pay selective attention to these stimuli and then interpret it to conform with previous held beliefs and attitudes. Only messages conforming to held beliefs will be retained.

3.2 FRAME OF REFERENCE

The relevance of briefly referring to the frame of reference while researching consumer perception, can be explained by the following statement by Van der Walt (1991, pp. 295-296):

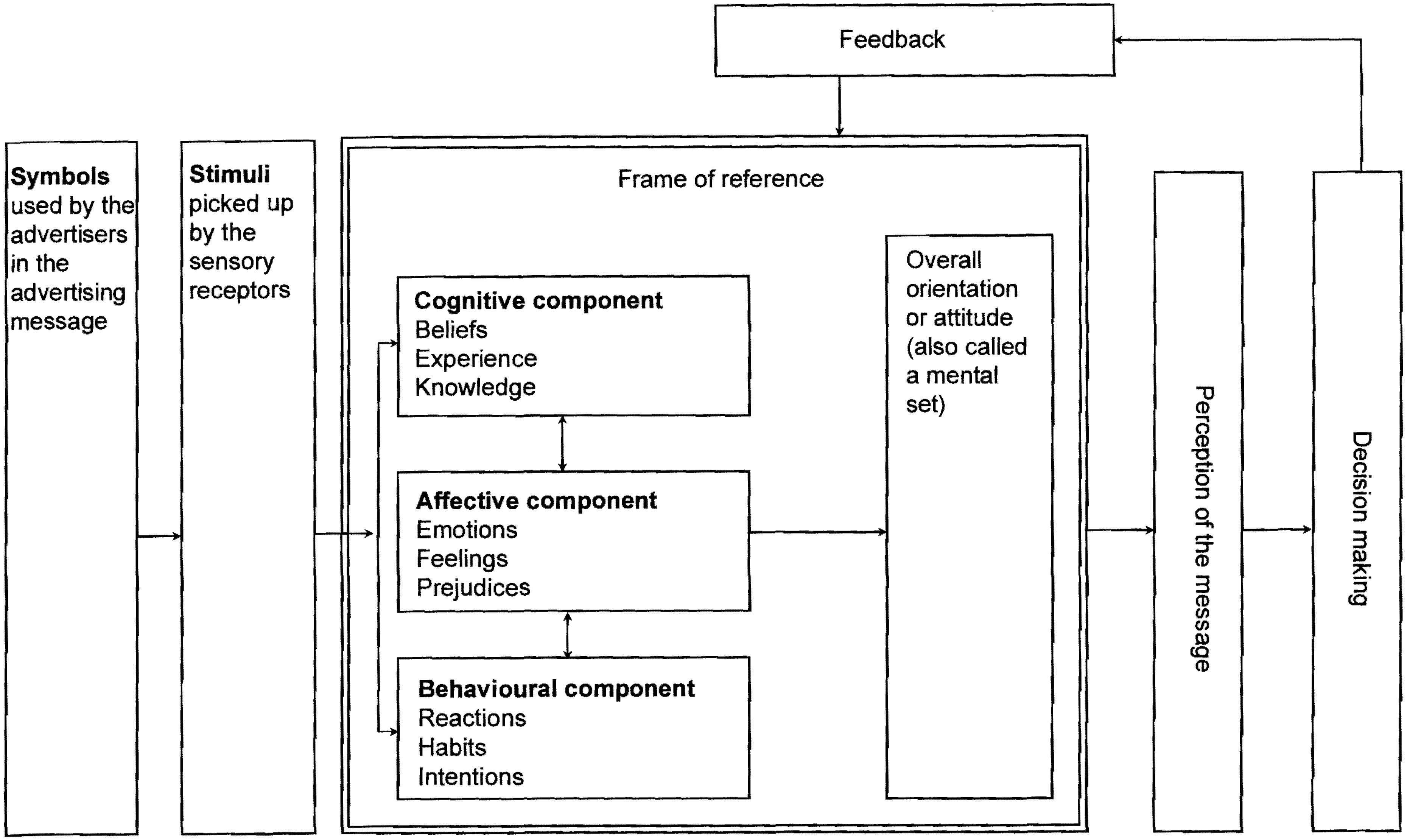
> "Merely seeing or hearing, however, cannot be referred to as perception. Perception is seeing or hearing it in terms of a person's frame of reference."

Van der Walt (1991) continues by explaining that a person's frame of reference consists of all his previous experiences, beliefs, likes, dislikes, habits, prejudices, feelings and other psychological reactions of unknown origin. Furthermore, it is important to note that a person's frame of reference is unique to that person. The frame also acts as a filter for any stimuli that a person is exposed to, or as Mowen (1993) suggests, it acts as an anchor to which any rising issue is compared to on a judgemental scale. Stanton, Etzel & Walker (1991) expand on the latter statement by explaining that if an inconsistency is discovered, the new information will be distorted to conform to the established beliefs.

3.2.1 Operation of the frame of reference

As noted earlier, the frame of reference acts as a filter. According to Van der Walt (1991), however, exactly how this filter works remains a mystery which could possibly never be solved. The frame entails the evaluation of every stimulus to which a person is exposed in the light of previously held emotions, behavioural intentions and beliefs. These evaluations are concluded in an overall orientation or attitude towards a certain object, also referred to as a mental set. Figure 3.1 provides a detailed assessment of the frame of reference.

FIGURE 3.1: INFORMATION FLOW THROUGH THE FRAME OF REFERENCE



Source: Van der Walt (1991, p. 297)

The three main components through which all information must flow in the frame of reference are the cognitive, affective and behavioural components.

* **Cognitive component**

The cognitive component consists of the total configuration of beliefs and knowledge about a certain object, as well as previously gained experience.

* **Affective component**

The affective component involves emotions, feelings and prejudices. Prejudices refer to faulty interpretations made previously, and such prejudices cannot be changed easily.

* **Behavioural component**

The behavioural component has to do with habits, reactions and intentions. Any information contradicting one's habits and intentions will not be accepted easily.

Therefore, it can be said that if it is stated that a message was perceived, it means that the stimuli have passed through all three components of the individual's frame of reference in such a way that the person is ultimately able to come to a decision. The fact that stimuli are passing through a person's frame of reference does not mean that the message was perceived correctly or that the decision that flows from it will be positive.

According to Walters et al (1989) it is important to note that the meaning of the market stimulus depends on the context in which it is perceived. All our senses have some limit to responsiveness to stimulation. These limits are referred to as thresholds.

3.3 THRESHOLDS

Wade et al (1987) note as introduction to the discussion on thresholds that the relationship between the physical properties of stimuli and the human psychological experience of them is studied in the field of psychophysics. Drawing on principles of both physics and psychology, they examine how varying the intensity or strength of a stimulus affects the strength of sensation in an observer.

Schiffman et al (1991) explain that sensation is the immediate and direct response of the sensory organs to simple stimuli (eg an advertisement, a brand name etc.). Human sensitivity refers to the experience of sensation, where the sensitivity to stimuli varies with the quality of an individual's sensory receptors (eg smell or eyesight) and the amount or intensity of the stimuli to which he is exposed. Sensation itself depends on energy change or differentiation of input. It can therefore be said that an unchanging environment, regardless of the strength of the sensory input, provides little or no sensation at all.

The following example by Schiffman et al (1991) may provide more clarity on the above discussion: A person living in a busy street of mid-town Manhattan would probably receive little or no sensation from the inputs of noisy stimuli such as tyres screeching, sirens of fire-engines, or horns honking, since such sounds are so common in New York City. One honk more or less would not make any difference. The reason is that in situations where there is a great deal of sensory input, the senses do not detect small intensities or differences in input. As the sensory input decreases however, our ability to detect changes in input or intensity increases, to the point where we attain maximum sensitivity under conditions of minimal stimulation.

This leads to the statement of Assael (1992, p. 131) which reads as follows: "The ability of consumers to detect variations in light, sound, smell, or other stimuli is determined by their threshold levels." Wilkie (1990) states that a threshold simply is a point at which an effect begins to occur.

There are two different threshold levels, namely an absolute threshold, below which no stimulus can be detected and a differential threshold, the minimum difference between two stimuli that can be detected. A third threshold is often referred to in literature (eg Van der Walt, 1991 and Walters et al, 1989) as an upper threshold, beyond which increased stimulation produces no increased response.

3.3.1 The absolute threshold

Schiffman et al (1991) explains that the lowest level at which an individual can experience a sensation is called his absolute threshold, often referred to as the lower threshold. This means that the point where a difference can be detected between "something" and "nothing" is a person's absolute threshold for that stimulus.

3.3.2 The differential threshold

The differential threshold, also called the just noticeable difference, is the minimal difference in stimuli that can be reliably detected by an observer when two stimuli are compared (Wade et al, 1987, supported by Assael, 1992, and Schiffman et al, 1991). Schiffman et al (1991) explain that the just noticeable difference (j.n.d.) between two stimuli is not an absolute amount, but an amount relative to the intensity of the first stimulus. The latter phenomenon is referred to as Weber's Law.

*** Weber's Law**

Wade et al (1987, p. 164) defines Weber's Law as:

> "A law of psychophysics stating that the change necessary to produce a just-noticeable-difference is a constant proportion of the original stimuli."

Aaker et al (1987) added to the definition by first stating that the degree to which a stimulus will be regarded as different will not depend on the absolute stimulus change but on the percentage of change from some reference point, and secondly by supplying the equation used by Weber's Law to determine the constant that varies across senses:

$$\frac{\Delta I}{I} = K$$

where ΔI = the smallest increase in stimulus intensity that will be perceived as different from the existing intensity;
I = existing stimulus intensity; and
K = constant that varies across senses.

A practical example of Weber's Law might explain the phenomenon more clearly (adapted from Wade et al 1987): Assume a pebble weighs 5 kg. When a second is weighed, the detectable difference between the two pebbles is 100 gram (0,02 kg). Now, suppose a boulder weighs 100 kg. How much must the second boulder weigh to detect a difference? The answer is 102 kg, an addition of 0,02 kg of 100 kg, or 2 kg. The importance of the example is that the proportion of the change necessary to produce the j.n.d. is the same. It is interesting to note, as was seen in the example, that the larger the object (or the higher the price for a product), the larger the difference has to be to be noticed (Assael, 1992).

The principles of Weber's Law (and the related concept of j.n.d) is widely used in marketing decisions such as price increases and reduction in size or quality of products.

Related to the discussion on thresholds is subliminal perception, where it is believed that individuals can be influenced by stimuli without being consciously aware of such stimuli. It is generally accepted that subliminal stimuli are not capable of influencing consumer behaviour or decision-making even though such stimuli may exist. From a marketing perspective, however, it is important to examine subliminal perception. As stated by Moore (1982), if only one per cent of a total audience of ten million is influenced by a subliminal message, such a message can be meaningful in altering the behaviour of individuals.

Before turning to subliminal perception it should be emphasised that each individual has his own, unique threshold limit, applicable only to him (Walters et al, 1989).

3.3.3 Subliminal perception

The controversial topic regarding subliminal perception dates back as far as September 1957 where approximately 45 000 people attended the movie called "Picnic" in a theatre in Fort Lee, New Jersey. This movie allegedly contained subliminal advertising messages displayed at 1/3000 of a second at intervals of five seconds. The subliminal messages invited audience members to "eat popcorn" and "drink Coca-Cola".

After the experiment the researcher, Mr Vicary, reported dramatic increases in Coca-Cola (18%) and popcorn sales (57,8%). Mr Vicary, however, could not provide any documentation regarding the increase in sales.

The reaction regarding the alleged results was immediate and widespread and raised serious ethical questions, since consumers could be influenced by messages without their approval or without them even knowing about it. Laws were drafted prohibiting the use of subliminal advertising on television, while public response included statements such as:

> "... take this invention and everything connected with it and attach it to the centre of the next nuclear explosive scheduled for testing." (Cousins 1957, p. 20 in Moore, 1982, p. 38)

After a second study was conducted, this time controlled and supervised, no change occurred in either the sale of Coca-Cola or popcorn. After being questioned, Mr Vicary admitted that he had fabricated the results hoping he could revive his failing business (Wells, Burnett & Moriarty, 1989 and Weir, 1984).

From the discussion above, one of the major controversies regarding consumer perception arises namely whether consumers can actually perceive marketing stimuli below their thresholds of awareness.

Assael (1992, p. 724) defines subliminal perception as follows:

> "Perception of a stimulus below the conscious level. If the stimulus is beneath the threshold of conscious awareness, but above the absolute threshold of perception, it is known as subliminal perception."

Assael (1992) expanded his definition by adding that the conscious level is referred to as the limen. Therefore, perception beneath the conscious level is subliminal. Schiffman et al (1991) explain that although perception occurs at a level below the conscious level, it is not below the absolute threshold. Perception of stimuli that is above the conscious level of awareness is referred to as supraliminal perception.

Potentially, subliminal perception could be achieved in at least three major ways. The possibilities are the presenting of visual stimuli for a very brief duration; presenting auditory messages through accelerated speech at low volume levels; and embedding or hiding images or words in pictorial material.

The purported benefit of using subliminal perception techniques in advertising, according to Loudon & Della Bitta (1988), is that subliminal messages will not be strong enough to arouse consumers' selective attention and defence mechanisms, but will be strong enough to influence them at an unconscious level. Regarding this statement Peter & Olson (1990), as well as Moore (1982) explain that one of the pioneers of embedded images and words in advertising, a certain Dr Key, believes that humans have at least two sensory input levels, one that encodes data at the conscious level and a second operating at a level below conscious awareness.

According to Dr Key, a concealed word or symbol that is usually invisible to the consciousness appears instantly perceivable at the unconscious level (Moore, 1982). The foundation of the theory of Dr Key, namely that subliminal embeds exist in advertising rests upon numerous different advertisements with embedded microscopic erotica (Moore, 1982). In a liquor advertisement for example, Key found among others the letters "s", "e" and "x" in different ice-cubes. In another advertisement he found them on the back of a child's hand. Other sexual embedded symbols and messages, of which many were male and female genitals, also featured as evidence for Key's claims (Wilkie, 1986; Haberstroh, 1984; and Moore, 1982).

The problem with Key's theory, however, is that not only are none of the embedded images visible to the naked eye (in fact it apparently requires weeks of analysis for many of them to be discovered) but are sometimes also embedded upside down (Moore, 1982). Herberstroh (1984) furthermore claimed that when Key conducted his research, none of the respondents ever discovered any of the subliminal details in the advertisements. Of course, with the expert "guidance" of Dr Key, all were soon able to "see" the objects he pointed out. A further counter argument is that there are no psychological theories or data of the two alleged processing systems that Key refers to (Peter et al, 1993 and Moore, 1982). In conclusion, Moore (1982) stresses that Key appears to invent whatever features of perception and memory would be necessary to achieve the results imputed to embedded stimuli. Haberstroh (1984) supports the view concerning Key, and adds that the broad advertising community and academic profession perceive Dr Key as "crazy", "paranoid" and above all, "obsessed with sex".

But how does one see erotic and other symbols in ice cubes? Mowen (1993) provides one answer by explaining that one can see the shapes for the same reason that you can find dogs, cats, elephant, and faces in complex cloud formations. Schiffman et al (1991) support this statement by adding that a vivid imagination can see whatever it wants to see in just about any situation.

As a final conclusion on the topic of subliminal perception, it can be stated that subliminal advertising is not capable of influencing the individual (Peter et al, 1993; Assael, 1992; Loudon et al, 1988; Schiffman et al, 1991; Haberstroh, 1984; Weir, 1984; Zanot, Pinicus & Lamp, 1983; and Moore, 1982) due to the following reasons:

* The effects of subliminal stimuli are extremely weak and most certainly are overridden by a host of more powerful messages (Mowen, 1987).

* Perceptual thresholds differ from person to person, and even from time to time (Wells et al, 1989).

* Symbols that are subliminal to one person might be perceived consciously by another. A message that is guaranteed to be subliminal to an entire audience would probably be so weak that any effect would be limited (Wells et al, 1989).

* Another problem is the lack of control that the advertiser would have over the distance and position of the message, for this can also affect the recognisability of the subliminal stimulus (Wells et al, 1989).

* The recognisable (supraliminal) material, such as the commercial or the movie used in conjunction with the subliminal message has different effects on people. The supraliminal stimulus might overpower the subliminal material entirely (Wells et al, 1989).

3.4 THE CONSUMER PERCEPTION PROCESS

3.4.1 Introduction

The perception process as displayed in Figure 3.2 consists of five distinct activities. The first activity is that of exposure to stimuli. The second states that attention to stimuli has to occur. During the third activity, organisation, people organise stimuli so that it can be comprehended and retained. The fourth activity is that of interpretation of the message. Information is retained during the last activity. As seen in Figure 3.2, a successful perception process leads to a purchasing and consumption decision. Consumer decision-making models were discussed in Chapter 2.

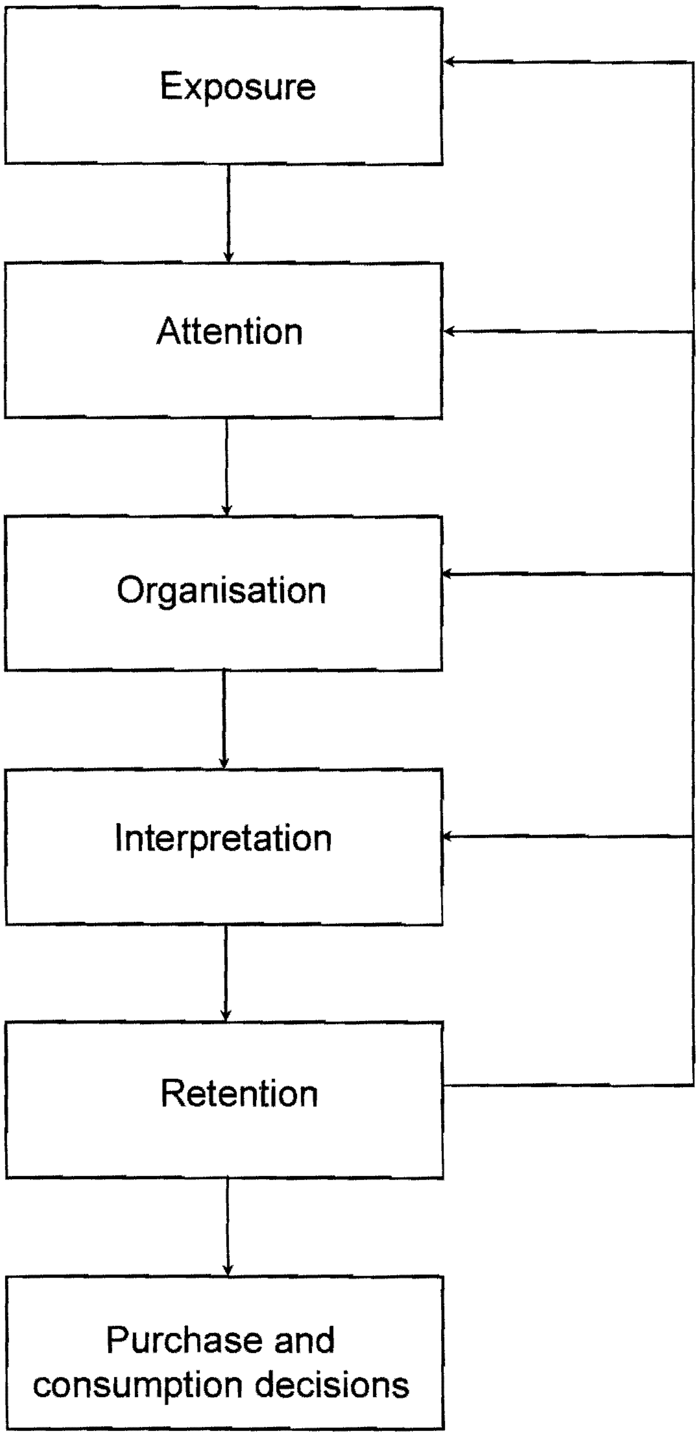
3.4.2 Exposure

Exposure, the first step of the perception process, occurs when a stimulus comes within the range of our sensory receptor nerves, ie when stimuli come within the range of one of our senses. Exposure is therefore simply the minimum requirement of perception. No matter how great a message is, it will not be perceived unless a person is exposed to the stimulus (Wells et al, 1989).

Bisschoff (1992) explains that exposure to stimuli is of either an intentional or an accidental nature. Intentional exposure occurs when an individual is exposed to market-related information because of his own intentional, goal-directed behaviour, ie it reflects a person's interests, reading habits, information needs and life style.

Accidental exposure to stimuli occurs when the individual is exposed to intensive marketing campaigns, such as the messages portrayed by the broadcasting media, billboards, point-of-sale displays in the retail store and the vast number of magazine and newspaper advertisements. Furthermore, the individual is also accidently exposed to information such as testimonies from friends or relatives concerning a specific product. Such testimonies first leads to interest, and then to intentional exposure.

FIGURE 3.2: THE CONSUMER PERCEPTION PROCESS



Source: Adapted from Hawkins et al (1992, p. 222)

Aaker et al (1987) conclude by emphasising the importance of exposure by stating that there can be no communication (or a perception process for that matter) without exposure.

3.4.3 Attention

An individual is exposed, whether intentionally or accidentally, to thousands of different marketing stimuli during a normal living day ranging from thousands of different products in a retail store, all differing in packaging, colour and design to as many as 1 500 advertisements (Belch et al, 1995; Assael, 1992; and Aaker et al, 1987).

From a marketing perspective attention is of crucial importance, since no matter how often a consumer is exposed to marketing stimuli, if no attention took place, the message is of no use.

Assael (1992, p. 709) defines the attention process as:

> "The momentary focusing of a consumer's cognitive capacity on a specific stimulus."

Attention to a given stimulus has taken place only if a consumer notices or attends to the stimulus. If a consumer does not focus on a stimulus, eg an advertisement, although he has been exposed to it, attention did not take place.

The attention process can therefore be viewed as an information filter - a screening mechanism that controls the quantity and nature of information any individual receives (Aaker et al, 1987).

Before attending to the factors determining attention, it is important to note that the so-called attention filter operates at three different levels of effort and consciousness that vary from active search to passive attention.

3.4.3.1 Levels of effort and consciousness in the attention process

Hawkins et al (1992) pointed out the importance of there being three different levels in the attention process. The same person may devote different levels of attention to the same stimulus in different situations. The three levels involved are active search, passive search and passive attention.

According to Aaker et al (1987) a receiver actually seeks information at the first level of the attention filter, active search. Information might be gathered from magazines not normally read, or by soliciting the opinions of friends.

At the second level, passive search, a receiver searches for information only from sources to which he is exposed during the normal course of events. No effort is made to obtain information from sources not usually exposed to.

At the final level, passive attention, a receiver has little immediate need for information. Although no conscious effort is made to obtain information, some may nevertheless enter the system.

3.4.3.2 Factors determining attention

For the marketer to attempt to gain attention to his marketing efforts, it is useful to note the different factors determining attention. The three factors are the stimulus, the individual, and the situation (Hawkins et al, 1992).

3.4.3.2.1 Stimulus factors

According to Hawkins et al (1992) stimulus factors are physical characteristics of the situation itself. Mowen (1993), supported by Assael (1992), Hawkins et al (1992), Schiffman et al (1991), Wilkie (1990), Aaker et al (1987), and Berkman & Gilson (1986), explains that a number of stimulus characteristics tend to attract our attention independently of our individual characteristics. These stimulus characteristics are size and intensity, colour, movement and contrast, position, isolation, format and information quantity.

* **Size and intensity**

The size and intensity of the stimulus influence the probability of paying attention to it. Large stimuli are more likely to attract attention than smaller ones, simply because a consumer is more likely to notice them (Wilkie, 1990). Intensity of the stimulus can be used to draw attention. Loud noises, strong scents and brighter lights are all commonly used for this purpose.

* **Colour, movement and contrast**

Both colour and movement serve to attract attention. Bright colours and moving objects are normally more noticeable. An example of the element of contrast suggests that a black and white advertisement is likely to be noticed in a full-colour context. Wilkie (1990) explains that contrast, because it represents a change to our sensory systems, will activate our sensory receptors and stimulate our attention processes.

* **Position**

Position is one of the most interesting determinants of perception. Position refers to the placement of an object in a person's visual field. Items placed more to the centre of the visual field are more likely to be noticed than those placed near the edge of the field. This explains why consumer goods manufacturers compete fiercely for eye-level space in grocery stores. Likewise, advertisements placed on the upper half of a page get more attention than the lower part and left-hand side more than the right. It is interesting to note that Orientals, Arabs and people used to reading Hebrew will give perceptual emphasis to other portions of the page.

* **Isolation**

Isolation is the process of separating the stimulus object from other objects. For example, if a small object is placed in a virtually blank page, it draws immediate attention due to the isolation principle.

* **Format**

The concept of format refers to the manner in which the message is presented. A general rule is that simple, straight forward presentations receive more attention than complex presentations. The concept of compressed information is related to format since the speeding of a message can increase attention, whereas elements in the message that increase the effort required to process the message tend to decrease attention. Aaker et al (1987) agree that in printed advertising a short, simple copy can be informative, but add that if a reader has real use for information and if the information is well packaged, he can be induced to read a long copy. Format, like the other stimulus elements, must be developed with a specific target market in mind (Hawkins et al, 1992).

* **Information quantity**

Information quantity relates more to the total stimulus field than to any particular item in that field. Although there are substantial variations among individuals, all consumers have limited capacities to process information. Information overload occurs when consumers are confronted with so much information that they cannot or will not attend to all of it. Instead, they become frustrated and either postpone or give up the decision, make a random choice, or use a suboptimal portion of the total information available.

3.4.3.2.2 Individual factors

Individual factors are characteristics of the individual. The most important individual factors are personal interests or needs. Berkman et al (1986) focus our attention on the importance to remember that interests and needs vary from individual to individual and that individual response factors cannot be gauged with the scientific precision of stimulus factors as explained above.

Wilkie (1990) is of the opinion that our physical needs cause us to be more sensitive to potential stimuli that might satisfy those needs. Hawkins et al (1992) refer to interest and explain that interest can also influence personal perceptions since it is a reflection of our overall lifestyle as well as a result of long-term goals and short-term needs. Short-term goals and needs are heavily influenced by the situation. Our goals furthermore cause us to be more attentive to specific stimuli that might help to satisfy them (Wilkie, 1990). A practical example would be to notice how many petrol stations one observes once the petrol gauge begins to drift towards the "Empty" mark.

Aaker et al (1987) continue the discussion by explaining why a person obtains information. It is important to note that there are, of course, as many reasons as there are situations and individuals. It, however, is instructive to examine four general motives for attending to stimuli.

Information is first of all of practical value. It can also be supportive, stimulating and interesting.

* **Information of practical value**

The objective of gaining information of practical value is that it will be of use to a person. In an advertising context, an individual will obtain information that will help him make better purchasing decisions. More information might be needed about certain products such as expensive and new products with which the consumer is not familiar.

Information of practical value would also be used once consumers are actively searching for information. This may result in gathering information from sources normally not exposed to, such as advertisements in specialist magazines, by soliciting information from others, or by reading technical reports, especially when adequate information is not available through prior experience.

Such an active search for information generates exposure that is extremely important because such exposure will be more likely to affect product knowledge and attitude structure than that not associated with effort. Furthermore, the receiver is apt to be close to a purchase and the chances of forgetting the message is therefore lower.

The purchase, however, need not be imminent for a person to collect product information. Individuals often acquire information for future reference, using processes such as passive search or passive attention.

* **Information that supports**

People have a psychological preference for supportive information, ie they may be motivated to be exposed to information that supports their opinion - selective exposure. They therefore tend to avoid non-supportive or discrepant information. Selective exposure will be discussed under Section 3.6.1.

* **Information that stimulates**

It is a common fact that people get bored very easily and are therefore motivated to reduce that boredom by seeking stimuli that are novel, unusual and different. In particular, people may be motivated to seek out information that does not support their positions due to influenced exposure patterns.

* **Information that interests**

People tend to notice information that interests them. In turn, they are interested in subjects with which they are involved. They are essentially interested in themselves and in various extensions of themselves.

3.4.3.2.3 Situational factors

The final factor determining attention, the situation, are stimuli in the environment other than the focal stimulus, focusing only on one stimulus source (eg an advertisement or package), or temporary characteristics of the individual that are induced by the environment, such as time pressure or a very crowded store. As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that one person may devote different meanings to the same stimulus in different situations.

Aaker et al (1987) conclude by stating that advertisers should try to attract attention, but at the same time be cautious not to divert interest from the important points of the message. In particular, it is of no use to attract an individual's attention if the brand and its message get lost in the process.

3.4.4 Perceptual organisation

Assael (1992, p.720) defines perceptual organisation as:

> "The organization of disparate information so that it can be comprehended and retained."

Schiffman et al (1991) explain that people do not experience the numerous stimuli they select from the environment as separate and discrete sensations. They rather tend to organise them into groups and perceive them as unified wholes. The perceived characteristics of even the simplest stimulus are therefore viewed as a function of the whole to which the stimulus appears to belong. Assael (1992) and Wilkie (1990) support this viewpoint by adding that during the perceptual organisation process, consumers group information from various sources into a meaningful whole to better comprehend such information and act on it.

Aaker et al (1987) explain perceptual organisation by stating that because stimuli are perceived not as a set of elements but as a whole, it can be concluded that this total has a meaning of its own that is not necessarily deductible from its individual components. This phenomenon is termed the Gestalt psychology.

Assael (1992, p.715) defines the Gestalt psychology as:

> "A German school of psychology that focuses on total configurations or whole patterns. Stimuli, such as advertising messages are seen as an integrated whole. In short, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts."

Assael (1992) claims that the basic hypothesis of the Gestalt psychologists is that people organise perceptions to form a complete picture of an object. Mowen (1993) supports this view by stating that the Gestalt psychologists attempted to identify the rules that govern how people take disjoint stimuli and make sense out of the shapes and forms to which they are exposed.

Aaker et al (1987) suggest that even when stimuli are incomplete, people strive to form a complete impression of a person or object. The reason for this statement is that an individual has a cognitive drive towards an orderly cognitive configuration or psychological field. An individual desires to make the field as good as possible.

Wilkie (1990)and Aaker et al (1987) conclude by stressing the fact that an important tenet of the Gestalt psychology is that there is a cognitive drive to obtain what they term a "good Gestalt", ie people desire to have perceptions that are simple, familiar, regular, complete, meaningful and consistent.

3.4.4.1 Gestalt principles of organisation

The three basic Gestalt principles of organisation (Mowen, 1993; Assael, 1992; Schiffman et al, 1991; Du Plessis, Rousseau & Blem, 1990; and Wilkie, 1990) centre on closure, grouping (consisting of proximity, similarity and continuity) and context (the principle of figure and ground). Other principles, according to Wilkie (1990), are symmetry and common fate (supported by Mowen, 1993). Mowen (1993) as well as Krebs and Blackman (1988) add illusion as the final element of perceptual organisation. Figure 3.3 displays the various Gestalt principles of organisation.

* **Closure**

Perception favours a complete or closed figure. Closure, therefore, refers to a perceiver's tendency to fill in the missing elements when a stimulus is incomplete. Consumers have a desire to form a complete picture and derive a certain amount of satisfaction in completing a message on their own (Figure 3.3-1).

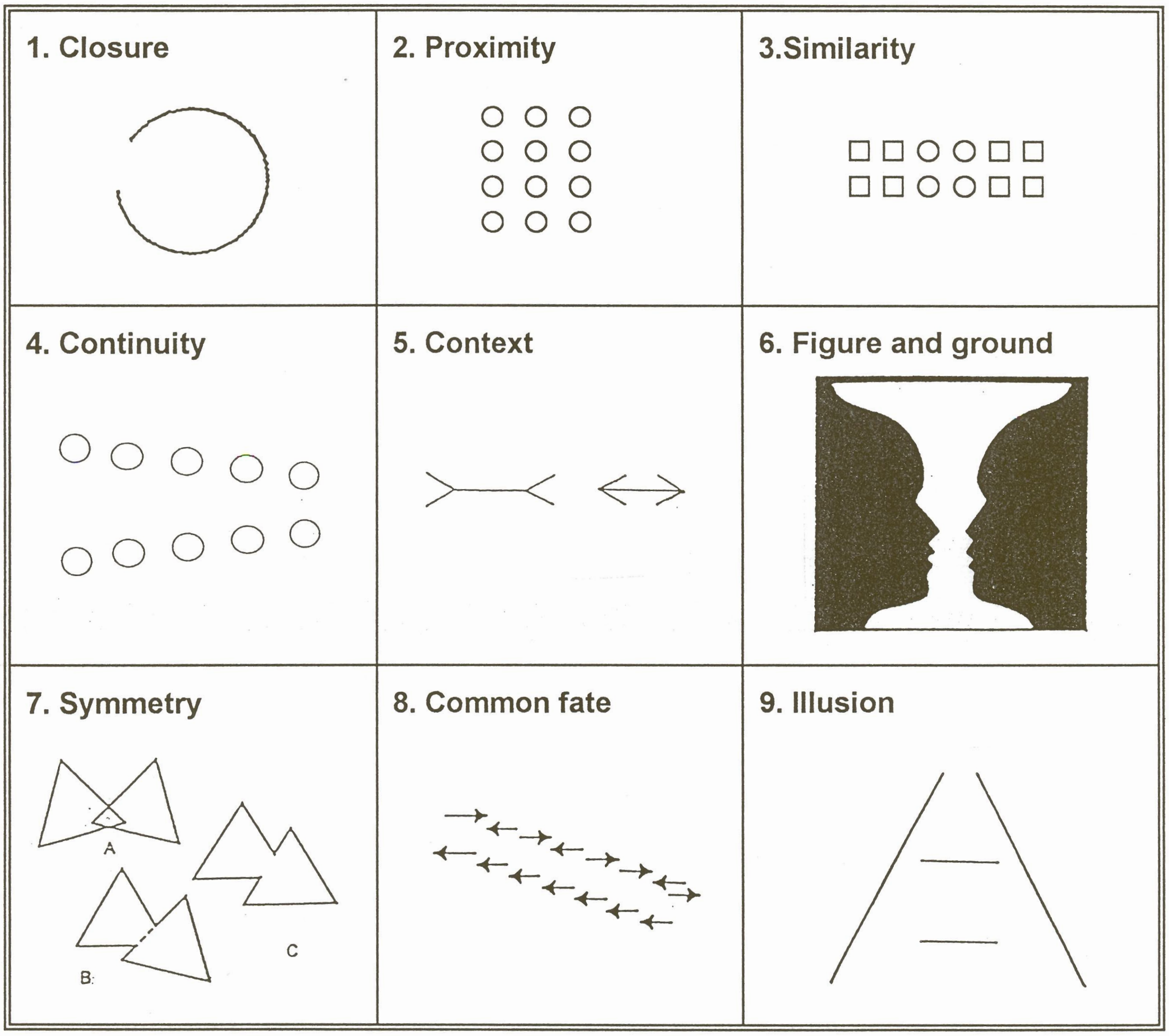
* **Grouping**

Individuals are more likely to perceive a variety of information as groups rather than as separate units. As was noted earlier, principles of grouping that have emerged from Gestalt psychology are proximity, similarity and continuity.

The tendency of **proximity** means that one object will be associated with another because of its closeness to that object. The twelve circles in Figure 3.3-2 are seen as three columns of circles rather than four rows of circles because of their vertical proximity.

According to the principle of **similarity**, elements that are similar in appearance seem to form a unit. In Figure 3.3-3, the circles and squares are grouped in three sets because of their similarity.

<u>FIGURE 3.3:</u> GESTALT PRINCIPLES OF ORGANISATION



<u>Source:</u> Compiled from Mowen (1993), Assael (1992), Krebs <u>et al</u> (1988), and Wilkie (1986).

Continuity suggests that stimuli are also grouped into continuous and uninterrupted forms rather than into discontinuous contours. The circles displayed in Figure 3.3-4 are, because of continuity, more likely to be seen as an arrow projecting to the right than as columns of circles.

* Context

Individuals will tend to perceive an object by the context in which it is shown. Assael (1992) stresses that even the setting of an advertisement will influence the perception of a product (Figure 3.3-5 is an example of the context principle. Both the horizontal lines in the figure are of equal length, but because of the different positions of the arrows - that is the context - the horizontal line on the left is perceived to be longer).

The most important principle of context is that of **figure and ground**. Perception tends to feature one object at a time and view the remaining stimuli as background. Assael (1992) suggests that, according to Gestalt psychology, individuals will in organising stimuli into wholes, distinguish prominent stimuli (the figure that is generally in the foreground) from less prominent stimuli (the ground or background). Figure 3.3-6 is an example of the figure and ground principle. Mowen (1993) explains that the image switches back and forth because our brain cannot decipher whether the figure is the black or the white portion of the drawing.

* Symmetry

Wilkie (1990) explains that perception favours a symmetrical form over an asymmetrical one when both interpretations are possible. Figure 3.3-7 depicts the principle of symmetry. In Figure 3.3-7A, individuals may see separate triangles rather than the overall form. In Figure 3.3-7B, one might focus more on the triangles than the irregular four-sided shape, while the more regular overall outline displayed in Figure 3.3-7C may be "shaped" to a more symmetrical form.

* Common fate

Common fate suggests that moving elements that are travelling in the same direction seem to form a unit. Figure 3.3-8 depicts an example of common fate.

* **Illusion**

Illusion, also termed the Ponzo illusion, suggests that lines of equal lengths are perceived as being of different lengths; in the presence of adjacent angled lines, most people judge the upper horizontal line to be longer than the lower horizontal line (Figure 3.3-9). According to Krebs et al (1988) an important characteristic of illusion is that by simply becoming aware that a misperception is occurring, an individual will not be able to correct the error. In such instances, knowledge available to an individual's cognitive system is not sufficient to correct an error in the operation of his perceptual system.

3.4.5 Perceptual interpretation

Mowen (1993, p. 778) defines interpretation as:

> "A process whereby people draw upon their experience, memory, and expectations to interpret and attach meaning to a stimulus."

Schiffman et al (1991) and Van der Walt (1991) explain that the interpretation phase is uniquely individual, since it is based upon what individuals expect to see in the light of their previous experience, on the number of plausible explanations they can envision, and on their interests and motives at the time perception occurs. Mowen (1993) adds to this by stating that during this phase, people will retrieve from long-term memory information pertinent to the stimulus. Expectancies regarding what the stimulus "should be like" are also retrieved from memory and used to interpret the stimulus.

Mowen (1993) notes a problem with interpretation, namely that individuals may interpret the same stimulus differently. He adds that personal inclinations, bias, and most important of all, expectations of the individual, will influence his interpretation of a stimulus.

Assael (1992), supported by Wilkie (1990), continues by explaining that perceptual interpretation consists of two basic principles, namely categorisation and inference. Categorisation assists the individual to process known information quickly and efficiently and classify new information. Inference involves the development of an association between two stimuli.

3.4.5.1 Perceptual categorisation

Perceptual categorisation is defined by Assael (1992, p. 710) as:

> "Tendency of consumers to place marketing information into logical categories in order to process information quickly and efficiently, and to classify new information."

Wilkie (1990) explains that the categorisation process is extremely important since it underpins all our interactions with our external world. He expands his explanation by stating that the way an individual initially categorises a stimulus, will affect how interested that individual will be in the stimulus, what to expect from it, and whether it will be evaluated positively or negatively. Furthermore, it is important to note that the categorisation process works at an extremely rapid speed, and usually at the unconscious level.

When an individual has previously encountered a specific external stimulus and has a strong category for it in long-term memory (Wilkie, 1986), the process is similar to "recognising" the stimulus pattern and calling forth the right node from long-term memory. If an individual has not encountered a particular stimulus before, the categorisation process must rely on matching "cues" from the stimulus to possible categories in long-term memory, therefore arriving at what possible identity seems right for it.

3.4.5.2 Perceptual inferences

According to Assael (1992, p. 716) inference:

> "Involves the development of an association between two stimuli; .."

Wilkie (1986, p. 397) expands on the definition by stating that "an inference is a belief that we developed based on other information". If a person's name is Sue for example, that person is likely to be a woman; if a product has a high price, it is likely to be of higher quality. Wilkie (1986) explains that not all inferences will be correct, although we would like them to be so. Again, most of these inferences will be made at an unconscious level due to the high speed involved in the processing of stimuli. Perceptual inferences that are made at a conscious level will be termed conscious inferences.

Assael (1992) concludes that there are three types of inferences: evaluation-based, similarity-based, and correlation-based inferences. **Evaluation-based inferences** are judgements leading to a consistently positive or negative evaluation of a brand. **Similarity-based inferences** are beliefs about an object based on its similarity to other objects. Because of similarity, individuals develop inferences about unfamiliar products by linking them to products they are familiar with. **Correlation-based inferences** are those based on associations from the general to the specific.

3.4.6 Retention

Van der Walt (1991) explains that even if the total perception process was successful it serves no purpose if the individual is unable to recall the information when he is required to act on it. The message has failed if a person cannot remember its content.

Retention is therefore the actual storage of processed information in the memory of the individual. Hawkins et al (1992) expand the explanation by stating that memory plays a critical role in guiding the perception process. Memory has a long-term storage component and a short-term active component. Bisschoff (1992) adds to the discussion by explaining that, since short-term memory is the active component, it deals with problem-solving by using newly acquired information. This, however, can only be true if no knowledge about a certain subject exists, and that is rarely the case. Long-term memory is activated to help solve the problem by supplying relevant past stored information. Long-term memory is once again activated to retain the information once the processing has been completed, and this will remain dormant for future reference purposes.

Walters et al (1989) conclude by expressing the opinion that retention is of a temporal nature, ie of short duration. A stimulus with constant intensity therefore needs repetition if it is to be brought to the consciousness.

3.5 PERCEPTUAL DEFENCE

Assael (1992, p. 720) defines perceptual defence as:

> "Distortion of information by consumers so that it conforms to their beliefs and attitudes. This function operates to protect the individual from threatening or contradictory stimuli."

Schiffman et al (1991) view perceptual defence as a subconscious distortion of stimuli that are important for the consumer not to see, even though exposure may already have taken place. Therefore, threatening or otherwise damaging stimuli are less likely to achieve awareness than neutral stimuli at the same level of exposure.

Van der Walt (1991) explains that there are two reasons why people apparently feel a need to defend themselves against information. The two reasons are perceived risk and perceptual overload. Perceived risk deals with the different kinds of risk associated with a purchasing decision, while perceptual overload holds that the consumer has a limited capacity to process the variety of stimuli directed at him.

Because of the above, consumers erect perceptual defence barriers, also known as the selective perception process. Before attending to the selective perception process, the focus will be directed towards perceived risk and perceptual overload.

3.5.1 Perceived risk

Mowen (1993 p. 782) defines perceived risk as:

> "A consumer's perception of the overall favorability of a cource of action based upon an assesment of the possible outcomes and on the likelihood that those outcomes will occur."

Van der Walt (1991) explains that because the consumer constantly needs to make decisions regarding products and services that best satisfy his needs, and the consequences of such decisions are often uncertain, he faces some degree of risk when making a purchasing decision.

Schiffman et al (1991), supported by Van der Walt (1991), stress the importance to note that the consumer is influenced only by the risk he perceives, regardless of whether or not such risk actually exists. If no risk is perceived, there will be no reaction, even in dangerous situations. Schiffman et al (1991) furthermore stress that the amount of money involved in a purchasing decision is not directly related to the amount of risk perceived. Therefore, selecting the right mouthwash may present as great a risk to a consumer as selecting a new television set.

There are several kinds of risk associated with a purchasing decision. Some people are more vulnerable to some kinds of risk than others, and some are more vulnerable to all kinds and experience great difficulty making up their minds.

The different types of risk, as well as the uncertainty associated with the specific risk is shown in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1: TYPE OF PERCEIVED RISK AND RELATED UNCERTAINTY

Type of Risk	Uncertainty
Functional/ Performance	Risk that the product will not perform as expected (eg Will it work? or, Will it last?)
Physical	Risk that the product will physically harm the buyer (eg Is it safe to use?)
Financial	Risk that the outcome will harm the consumer financially (eg Am I wasting money?)
Social	Risk that friends or acquaintances will deride the purchase (eg Will my family and friends approve my choice? or, Will they admire me?)
Psychological	Risk that the product will lower consumer's self-image (eg Will it make me feel (look) good? or, Will it impress others?
Time	Risk that the time spent in a product search may be wasted if the product does not perform as expected (eg Will I have to go through the shopping effort all over again?)
Opportunity loss	Risk that by taking one action the consumer will miss out on doing something else he would really prefer doing (eg Will the purchase of one expensive item deprive me from buying many other, less expensive items?)

SOURCE: Compiled from Mowen (1993, p. 197), Schiffman et al (1991, p.181) and Van der Walt (1991, p. 301).

Van der Walt (1991) explains that all types of risk are involved to a greater or lesser extent with the consumer's ego or self-esteem. High risk perceivers are sensitive to risk, lack self-confidence and have egos which can be easily bruised by making what they see as a "wrong decision" such as wasting a lot of money on a product which in any case may not work properly and may also make them look ridiculous. Schiffman et al (1991) add that high-risk perceivers are narrow categorisers, since they limit their product choice to a few safe alternatives. They would rather exclude some perfectly good alternatives than chance a poor selection. In contrast, low-risk perceivers are broad categorisers since they tend to make their choices from a much wider range of alternatives. They would rather risk a poor selection than limit the number of alternatives from which they can choose.

3.5.2 Perceptual overload

Van der Walt (1991), supported by Walters et al (1989), explains that the second reason why consumers have a need for perceptual barriers (selective perception), is that they have limited capacities to process all the information directed at them. She states that perceptual overload occurs because the mind of the individual fails to comprehend all the sensations, often of conflicting nature, which bombard one's senses at any given moment.

Marketing stimuli bombarding the senses include an enormous number of variables, all of which compete for the consumer's attention. Different shapes, sizes, colours and conflicting messages are but a few examples of the variables.

Van der Walt (1991) concludes that perceptual defence occurs throughout the perception process. Man's ability to be selective when dealing with information helps him to adjust and make consumer decisions without undue difficulty. As stated earlier, it is understandable that these decisions will not always be completely logical or rational.

3.6 SELECTIVE PERCEPTION

Selective perception can be defined (Assael, 1992, p. 722) as the process where:

> "Consumers perceive marketing stimuli selectively to reinforce their needs, attitudes, past experiences, and personal characteristics. Selective perception means that the identical ad, package, or product can be perceived very differently by two consumers"

Schiffman et al (1991) and Wells et al (1989) add to the definition by describing selective perception (referred to as defence barriers by Van der Walt, 1991) as a heightened awareness of stimuli that interest the consumer, a process of screening out information that does not interest him, and retaining information that does.

Belch et al (1995), supported by Van der Walt (1991) and Walters et al (1989), justify the existence of a selective perception process by explaining that such a process is required because of the sheer number of stimuli that a person is exposed to every day (advertisements alone account for between 300 and 1 500 per normal working day). The individual mind simply fails to comprehend and interpret all the sensations that bombard the senses at any given time due to the limited capacity of a person's sensory system.

The selective perception process to be discussed consists of selective exposure, selective attention, selective interpretation and selective retention. The stage of organising stimuli is the same as discussed in the perception process, since individuals will during both the perception and selective perception process attempt to organise stimuli so that they can better comprehend (interpret) and retain it. Figure 3.4 displays the selective perception process.

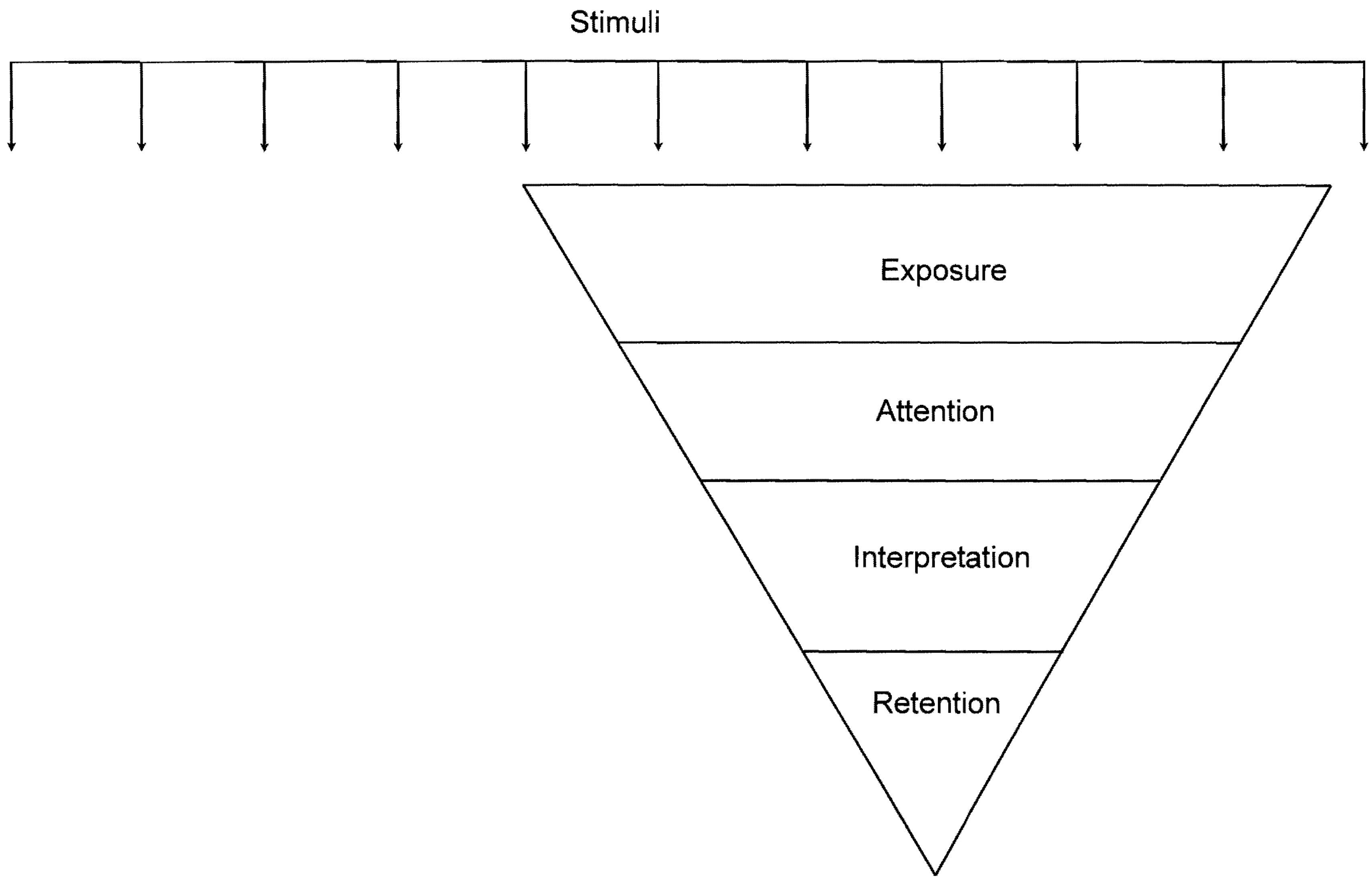
3.6.1 Selective exposure

According to Schiffman et al (1987, p. 710) selective exposure can be defined as the

> "Conscious or subconscious exposure of the consumer to certain media or messages, and the subconscious or active avoidance of others."

Schiffman et al (1991), supported by Van der Walt (1991) and Wilkie (1986), expand on their definition by explaining that consumers actively seek messages that are pleasant or with which they are sympathetic, and actively avoid painful or threatening ones.

FIGURE 3.4: THE SELECTIVE PERCEPTION PROCESS



Source: Adapted from Hawkins et al (1992, p. 223)

Assael (1992) adds to the discussion by stating that selective exposure can be explained by the consistency theories, such as dissonance theory, which suggest that people have a cognitive drive to develop consistent cognitions and behaviours about objects. The dissonance theory predicts that cognitive dissonance, the existence of conflicting cognitive elements, is discomforting and that people will try to reduce it. One mechanism of reducing dissonance is selective exposure, by obtaining supportive information and avoiding discrepant information. Schiffman et al (1991) confirm this viewpoint by adding that consumers selectively expose themselves to advertisements that reassure them of the wisdom of their purchasing intention.

Van der Walt (1991) concludes by stating that exposure to a message only means that it has been seen. There is no guarantee that the individual will choose to pay attention to it.

3.6.2 Selective attention

Wilkie (1990) stresses that while selective exposure vastly reduces the range of stimuli available to a person, it does not decide which remaining stimuli will be perceived. This is determined by selective attention.

Selective attention can be defined (Mowen, 1993, p. 784) as:

> "The concept that consumers selectively decide to which stimuli they should attend."

As stated in the definition, it is clear that the process of selective attention is the focusing of attention on selective aspects of the environment and blocking out of others (Belch et al, 1995; Assael, 1992 ; and Wade et al, 1987).

People vary according to the kind of information they are interested in and the form of message and type of medium they prefer (Schiffman et al, 1991). Van der Walt (1991) adds by stating that a person will only pay attention to a message that fits within his frame of reference. She continues by explaining that consumers have a heightened awareness of stimuli which meet their needs and depressed awareness of stimuli irrelevant to their needs. Therefore, consumers are likely to pay attention to advertisements for products that may satisfy their needs.

In studying the concept of selective attention, it is important to note the following:

* Selective attention shows that the brain is not focused on responding to everything the sense receptors send its way (Wade et al, 1987).

* Because we pay attention by exception, and because of the incredible speed at which our perceptual system works, only those marketing stimuli with the power to capture and hold our attention have the potential of being perceived (Stanton et al, 1991 and Wilkie, 1990).

* Even if the consumer does pay attention to all the details in a message it does not mean that he will interpret it as intended by the marketer (Van der Walt, 1991).

3.6.3 Selective interpretation

Assael (1992, p. 722) defines selective comprehension (selective interpretation) as:

> "Interpreting discrepant information so that it is consistent
> with beliefs and attitudes."

Wilkie (1990) states that once an external stimulus receives attention from an individual, it begins to be consciously processed by his conceptual system. Belch et al (1995) explain that consumers interpret information based on their own attitudes, beliefs, and previous experiences. Furthermore, in selective interpretation, consumers will often interpret information in a manner that will support their own position.

Van der Walt (1991) supports this viewpoint by adding that the information which has succeeded in passing through the exposure and attention barriers, "flows" through the selective interpretation barrier which enables the consumer to discard some bits of information, to change the meaning of others, or to place undue emphasis on certain sections. This may result in the meaning of the message being quite different from the message of the communicator originally intended.

According to Van der Walt (1991), two possible reasons for the faulty decoding of messages due to selective interpretation could be that of misindexing the message or distorting the meaning.

Misindexing refers to the way people tend to classify or categorise the meaning of the message and can often be ascribed to poor message construction. For example, an advertisement is so amusing or novel that the situation itself becomes the message while the originally intended message (product name or benefits) is overlooked. Another possibility is that the attention-getting device becomes the message, resulting in thoughts being steered away from the real meaning.

Distortion refers to the way the meaning of a message is changed by the consumer, whether done purposely or subconsciously. Conflicting stimuli, ie stimuli in contrast with previously held beliefs, habits, likes and dislikes create an imbalance in a person's cognitive structure, making him feel uncomfortable. To rectify the imbalance, the consumer must either change the meaning of the message or bring about changes in his cognitive structure. The meaning of the message can be distorted by either levelling or sharpening.

> * **Levelling** suggests that an important portion of information in the message is overlooked. It is important to note that if the brand name is overlooked, consumers might end up buying the competitor's product.

* **Sharpening** claims that the consumer reads additional information into a message, ie information that does not actually appear in the message.

In conclusion, Van der Walt (1991) adds that if the nature of the message does not fit into the person's frame of reference it may be discarded entirely.

3.6.4 Selective retention

Selective retention can be defined (Assael, 1992, p. 722) as follows:

> "Consumers remember those messages or portions of messages most relevant to the decision and most likely to conform to their beliefs and attitudes."

According to Belch et al (1995) the meaning of selective retention is that consumers do not remember all the information they see, read or hear, even after attending to and correctly interpreting the message. The advertiser should therefore attempt to ensure that information will be retained in the consumer's memory so as to be available when it is time to make a purchase. As noted earlier, repetition of advertising messages aims to increase retention, especially at the time of the purchasing decision.

Van der Walt (1991) mentions two phenomena that may occur during the selective retention process, namely a positive sleeper effect and a boomerang effect.

* The **positive sleeper effect** causes the consumer who has not been convinced by the advertisement to react in the desired way anyway, that is by purchasing the product. The only possible reason for this behaviour is that retention was not complete, and therefore the consumer forgot the nature or theme of the message and remembered only the recommendation that the product should be bought.

* The **boomerang effect** causes the consumer to reverse his previous held

conviction and intention to purchase the product and to take directly the opposite course of action by purchasing a competitive product. A possible reason for this behaviour is that the consumer could not recall the differential product benefits mentioned in the original advertisement. This means that the message did not succeed to cross the just-noticeable-difference threshold.

3.7 SUMMARY

From the discussion it can be seen that the perception process may be the most significant barrier to effective communication due to the number of different influences on the perception process. Important to note is the fact that the total perception process is highly individual and that the same person may devote a different meaning to the same stimuli in different situations. From a marketing perspective it is extremely important to note that consumers act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on object reality.

The stimuli to which an individual is exposed, need to be above the absolute threshold level if they are to be perceived. All stimuli that a person is exposed to first pass through his frame of reference which consist of all his previous held beliefs, experiences, etc.

Information to be retained passes through the perception process. Because of the great number of stimuli that an individual is exposed to and the fact that risk is perceived during decision-making, consumers expose, pay attention, interpret and retain information selectively. All stimuli are also conformed to coincide with existing held beliefs. Information of conflicting nature to a person's frame of reference will not be changed easily.

Chapter 4 examines the importance of product attributes to the marketer and the consumer.

CHAPTER 4

PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Product attributes are important to both consumers and marketers. The consumer uses attributes as the basis for evaluating a product since attributes provide benefits the consumer seeks when purchasing a product and comparing between competitive brands. He also evaluates attributes more positively or negatively, which is perceived as being important in the decision-making process. The marketer uses attributes to differentiate his brand from competitive brands and as the basis for the development of new products. Attributes are also used in advertising by either stating that a product has a certain attribute or that its attributes provide certain benefits to the consumer.

Recent research (Carpenter, Glazer & Nakamoto, 1994) has shown that although the general view is that product differentiation is done through attributes that are meaningful, relevant and valuable, many brands successfully differentiate themselves from competitors by focusing on attributes that appear to be valuable, but on closer examination, however, are irrelevant (also referred to as meaningless differentiation). An example is where a tea manufacturer may claim that his tea bags are round instead of square. The fact is, the flavour and taste of the tea will remain the same no matter the shape of the bag.

Differentiating a product from competitive products on an irrelevant attribute might be useful when a competitor already focuses on the determinant attribute of a product. The irrelevant attribute is then perceived as an additional attribute (and benefit) to the consumer. The use of an irrelevant attribute can be significant if the consumer perceives the attribute as meaningful and unique.

Chapter 4 focuses the attention on what attributes are and how product attributes are used in developing a positioning strategy. When positioning by attribute or consumer benefit, the marketer has the option of focusing on only one attribute or multiple attributes, depending on the positioning strategies of competitors.

The importance of studying attributes goes beyond the physical features of a product and the development of positioning strategies since attributes can be linked to the consequences of purchasing and consuming a product. This is studied through a means-end chain model, where it is assumed that very specific product attributes are linked at levels of increasing abstraction (Solomon, 1994). A person has valued end states and chooses among alternative means to attain these goals.

The basic means-end chain model consists of three elements: products offer attributes to consumers; consumers experience consequences when consuming a product; and consequences help consumers to attain certain values. A carefully developed advertising strategy can assist the marketer to successfully combine attributes to values attained and convey the message in such a way that consumers will purchase its products.

4.2 PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

MacKenzie (1986) explains that consumers are believed to seek information, evaluate products and make purchases in part by their perceptions of the importance of various product attributes. As discussed under Section 2.3.3.4, attributes play a vital role when choosing a decision rule since the outcome of a purchase decision is determined by its attributes. Consumers furthermore evaluate products on attributes that are perceived to be important to them. For example, by using a compensatory decision rule, consumers evaluate brands in terms of relevant attributes and a summated score is computed for each brand. In selecting a noncompensatory decision rule, a minimum acceptable performance level is either selected for each attribute (conjunctive rule), or for any attribute being considered (disjunctive rule), or attributes are ranked in terms of importance (lexicographic rule).

Aaker et al (1992) explain that an important attribute is one that is considered an important benefit towards the satisfaction of consumer needs. Aaker (1991) adds that because most product attributes provide consumer benefits, there usually is a one-to-one correspondence between the two. Before continuing the discussion on attributes, it is important to define what an attribute is and to distinguish between attributes and benefits.

The term attribute can be defined as

> "The characteristics or features that an object may or may not have."
> (Mowen, 1993, p. 771)

Attributes can be classified as being concrete or abstract (Peter et al 1994). Concrete attributes (Aaker et al, 1992 refer to physical characteristics) are the most objective, tangible characteristics of a product and can be measured on some physical scale such as colour, weight or leg-space in a car. Abstract attributes (Aaker et al, 1992 refer to pseudo-physical characteristics), on the contrary, represent intangible, subjective characteristics that are not easily measured, eg creaminess, shininess or the comfort of a car.

According to Aaker et al (1992), benefits refer to advantages that promote the well-being of the consumer. Peter et al (1994) clarify this by stating that benefits represent desirable consequences that consumers seek when buying and consuming a product. Benefits also include the positive affects associated with consumption of a product. Mowen (1993, p.771) defines benefits as

> "The outcomes that product or service attributes may provide."

The discussion on means-end chain models will further distinguish between attributes and benefits.

Interesting to note is that in an advertising context, product attributes and benefits are not only communicated by slogans and copy but also by the visuals (eg pictures or images) that accompany the advertising copy (Smith, 1991). Sutherland (1993) adds that both pictures and words are used to highlight the brand's association with a specific attribute and can be used to make the positive attributes of the advertised product more salient.

Kotler (1991) explains that the most salient attributes to the consumer do not necessarily always imply that they are the most important ones. Because of aggressive advertising campaigns (with high repetitiveness) other attributes may be more salient simply because the consumer is more exposed to the attributes mentioned in the advertisement, hence making these attributes "top-of-the-mind".

Bridges (1993) and MacKenzie (1986) emphasise that attributes that are important in the decision-making process are evaluated more positively or negatively than attributes that are perceived to be unimportant. Consumers, therefore, focus their attention on product attributes that are most crucial when deciding which brand to purchase. This is referred to as determinant attributes. Aaker et al (1992) conclude that although consumers focus their attention on determinant attributes, decision-making will not be affected by the specific attribute if all brands are perceived to be virtually identical with respect to the determinant attribute.

The following section explains the importance of attributes in developing a positioning strategy.

4.3 ATTRIBUTES AND PRODUCT POSITIONING

Mowen (1993, p. 782) defines product positioning as

> "The use of the marketing mix in order to cause consumers to perceive a product in a certain way relative to other brands. A brand's position is usually described in relation to the characteristics of other brands."

Aaker et al (1992) acknowledge that a positioning strategy can be conceived and implemented in a variety of ways. Each approach represents the development of a different positioning strategy, even though all of them have the ultimate objective of either developing or reinforcing an image in the mind of the audience. Peter et al (1993, p. 562) emphasise this viewpoint by providing the following definition of product positioning:

> "Positioning the product relative to competiting products in the minds of the consumers."

According to Peter et al (1993) several different approaches can be used in creating a product positioning strategy. These positioning approaches are derived from attributes associated with the product, the use or application of the product, the product user, the product class and the competitor. Lamb, Hair & McDaniel (1994) add price and quality as an additional approach, while Aaker et al (1992) add culture symbols as the final approach. Only the attribute approach (also referred to as using product characteristics or consumer benefits) will be discussed.

4.3.1 Positioning by attribute or consumer benefit

The product positioning approach used most often is that of positioning by attribute or consumer benefit. According to Peter et al (1993) this approach is followed by associating a product with an attribute, a product feature or a consumer benefit. The problem usually experienced with this approach is to find an attribute that will be perceived as being important by a major market segment that is not already claimed by a competitor (Aaker, 1991). Wilkie (1994) agrees with the latter statement by explaining that the task of the marketer is to identify the determinant attributes of a product. A marketer is not limited to executing the positioning strategy by only using one attribute. A product can therefore be positioned according to two or more attributes.

Marketers that position their product on only one attribute usually do so by aggressively promoting the particular attribute. Kotler (1991) explains that the marketer develops a unique selling proposition through this approach. Belch & Belch (1990) continue by explaining that the attribute claim that forms the basis for the unique selling proposition should dominate the advertisement and be emphasised through repetitive advertising. Important to consider is that the major selling idea should truly offer a unique attribute. For example, a toothpaste marketer claims as a unique selling proposition that his product "Now contains fluoride" or "Brand X for extra fresh breath". The danger with promoting only one attribute or benefit is that it often limits the potential market either implicitly or explicitly. The consumer may, for example, not know the advantage of fluoride in toothpaste or may prefer a toothpaste that prevents plaque and provides a moderately fresh breath instead of extra fresh breath.

A complicating factor is that in a competitive market a competitor may already express that his product possesses a specific attribute (the determinant attribute). In these circumstances Kotler (1991) suggests a double product positioning approach which is particularly important to consider when two or more competitors are expressing the same attribute. The intention of using two attributes then is to find a niche within the target segment. Two examples are that of toothpaste claiming to prevent plaque and at the same time freshens breath, or diet cola stating: "all the flavour but non-fattening".

Kotler (1991) explains that there are situations where three attributes can be used successfully (referred to as triple benefit positioning). An excellent example is that of Aquafresh toothpaste. Aquafresh focuses on three different attributes: "anticavity protection", "better breath", and "whiter teeth". With such an approach, the challenge is to convince the consumer that the brand actually can deliver all the benefits associated with the attributes. Aquafresh achieved this challenge by creating a toothpaste that squeezed out of the tube in three colours, therefore visually confirming the three benefits. An advantage in following a triple benefit approach is that different (and therefore more) segments are attracted.

Sengupta (1993), supported by Kotler (1991), note as a conclusion that positioning strategies involving too many attributes can result in a confused image. The risk is a possible loss of clear position and a resulting disbelief in the specific attribute claims.

The following section, means-end chain models, focuses the attention on a higher level of attribute importance where it is believed that product attributes, consequences and values are linked in the mind of the consumer.

4.4 THE MEANS-END CHAIN MODEL

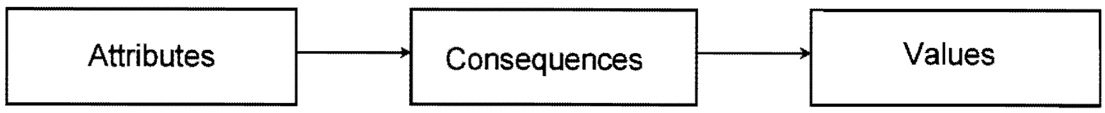
Reynolds & Graddock (1988) explain that according to means-end theory, people have valued end-states towards which they strive and choose between alternative means of reaching those goals. Products and services are valued because they are instruments - means - to valued ends. Therefore, the "means that are in the products" have salience only because they help reach the "ends that are in the people".

Mowen (1993, p. 780) defines the means-end chain model as

> "A model that depicts the relation of a level of abstractness of attributes to the consequences of a behavior and to the values expressed by the behavior."

As depicted in Figure 4.1, the basic means-end chain consists of three elements, namely attributes, consequences and values. The meaning ascribed to the attributes is given by the consequences consumers perceive they lead to. The product attribute is seen as a means to an end, where the end could be an immediate consequence or a more abstract value.

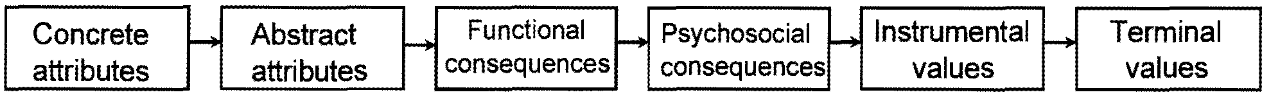
FIGURE 4.1: THE BASIC MEANS-END CHAIN MODEL



Source: Adapted from Wilkie (1994, p.162)

A more detailed means-end chain model can be obtained by dividing each element of the basic model into two separate elements. According to Olson & Reynolds, in Percy & Woodside (1983), the model elaborates from concrete attributes (which are low in abstraction) to product attributes at a higher level of abstraction, that are represented by consequences. At the highest level of abstraction, a product attribute can be represented by a value that can be achieved by the purchase and consumption of the product. The expanded model consists of the following elements: concrete attributes, abstract attributes, functional consequences, psychosocial consequences, instrumental values and terminal values. Figure 4.2 provides a detailed assessment of the expanded means-end chain model.

FIGURE 4.2: THE EXPANDED MEANS-END CHAIN MODEL



Source: Adapted from Wilkie (1994, p.162)

As discussed earlier, attributes can be classified as either being concrete or abstract. Gutman & Reynolds, in Olson & Sentis (1986), distinguish between concrete and abstract attributes by stating that concrete attributes are the characteristics of the product that are literally part of a product (physical characteristics), eg the amount of salt included in flavoured chips or "kilometres per litre". Abstract attributes on the other hand, can be attributed to a product because of the concrete attribute (subjective characteristics), eg tastes good, strong flavour or stylish.

Olson et al (1983) explain that consequences can be divided into functional and psychosocial consequences. According to Gutman et al (1986), functional consequences stem directly from consuming the product. Peter et al (1993) add by explaining that functional consequences are less abstract outcomes from the use of a product and are experienced more directly by the consumer (eg drinking a Lemon Twist eliminates your thirst). Furthermore, functional consequences include the physical, tangible and performance outcomes of using or consuming a product (eg a toaster browns bread evenly).

Psychosocial consequences consist of both psychological and social consequences (Peter et al, 1994). Psychological consequences are less tangible, yet more personal outcomes of product consumption (eg a lady wearing Chanell No 5 perfume may feel more attractive). Social consequences are intangible and relatively abstract (eg a lady believing that her friends will respect her if she wears Chanell No 5). The combination of psychological and social consequences leads to psychosocial consequences (eg not only does a lady feel attractive when wearing Chanell No 5 but her friends also admire her for doing so).

Besides consisting of functional and psychosocial consequences, a distinction also has to be made between positive and negative consequences. Peter et al (1993) explain that benefits represent the desirable, positive consequences of consuming a product (eg if the consumer purchases a microwave oven to save time in preparing food). The negative consequences, referred to as perceived risk (discussed under Section 3.5.1), represent outcomes that people seek to avoid when purchasing and consuming a product (eg physical risk). Reynolds et al (1988) note as a conclusion that if a consumer purchases suntan lotion to avoid sunburn for example, it will not be perceived as being a benefit but rather the avoidance of a negative consequence.

Aaker et al (1992) commence the discussion on values portrayed in the means-end chain model by stating that values represent the desired end states that consumers wish to achieve. Wilkie (1994), supported by Peter et al (1994) clarifies the above statement by explaining that values are the mental representations of important life goals and underlying needs that consumers are trying to achieve.

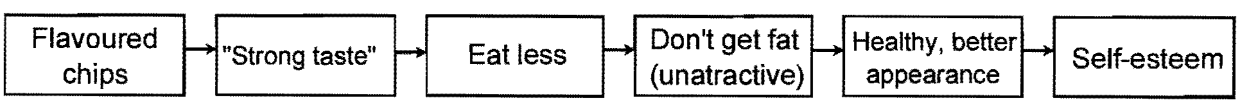
Before turning to the two types of values (instrumental and terminal), it is important to consider that values are more abstract than functional and psychosocial consequences (ie they are several levels away from any physical referent - Olson et al, 1983) and that values change over time and differ from individual to individual (Wilkie, 1994).

Instrumental values (Wilkie, 1994) refer to the beliefs about desirable ways of behaving to assist the consumer in attaining terminal values (ie, they have an external orientation), like being honest, accepting responsibility or feeling accepted. Terminal values represent the beliefs that consumers have about the goals or end-states they strive at (ie, how one views oneself), such as happiness, self-esteem and accomplishment.

The following example (adapted from Wilkie, 1994) may provide more clarity on the means-end chain model by showing how the various levels interrelate (Figure 4.3). A consumer wishes to purchase a pack of flavoured chips (concrete attribute). Since she is figure-conscious and concerned about her health (instrumental value) she will consider buying a pack of chips with a strong taste (abstract attribute) so she can eat less (functional consequence) and not gain weight and become unattractive (psychosocial consequence). By still looking as attractive as she wishes to be, the woman accomplishes a higher level of self-esteem (terminal value). She therefore decides to buy Tango chips.

As can be seen in the example illustrated in Figure 4.3, the chain develops from the physical world on the left to the mental world of values on the right (Wilkie, 1994). The in-between steps represent associations consumers make to go from the so-called "means" (buying a physical product) to the "end" (attaining a particular value).

<u>FIGURE 4.3:</u> AN EXAMPLE OF THE MEANS-END CHAIN MODEL



<u>Source:</u> Adapted from Wilkie (1994, p.162)

In conclusion, Peter et al (1993) note a number of important considerations in developing and evaluating a means-end chain model.

* A means-end chain model contains the personal relevant meanings consumers create for products and are unique to each consumer's background and personal values.

* The model is based on the idea that the dominant meaning of a product attribute is determined by the consequences it is perceived to have.

* A means-end chain model does not necessarily lead to an instrumental or terminal value. The end of a means-end chain model can be a consequence at any level of abstraction, eg a toothpaste that provides fresh breath (a functional consequence), the consumer thinking that his friends would like to be close to him (a psychosocial consequence), the consumer feeling clean (an instrumental value) or the consumer believing that he will be happy (a terminal value). If product attributes have no connection to consequences, consumers will not know what the attributes are good for and consequently they will probably have little effect on their behaviour.

* Product attributes may have multiple means-end chains that sometimes can be conflicting. Therefore, an attribute can lead to both positive and negative ends.

The means-end chain model is practically executed in developing an advertising strategy. Since advertising is meant to be persuasive, an advertising strategy has to provide a framework for developing advertising that has the ability to communicate with consumers. Gutman et al (1986) explain that the perceptual constructs represented by the means-end chain are used as the basis for the development of a strategy that appeal to consumers. The strategy developed to combine advertising with the means-end chain model, referred to as a MECCAS model (Means-Ends Conceptualisation of the Components of Advertising Strategy), consists of five different levels and is executed with care so that the advertiser can communicate his message and successfully combine attributes to consequences and values.

Olson et al (1983) continue by explaining that strategists must select the end states, ie values or benefits, that are to be emphasised in the advertising campaign and also have to determine how the product attributes will be connected to the desired end states. Finally, the specific characteristics of advertising must be selected and combined to effectively communicate the combination between the purchase and consumption of a product and the achievement of the desired end state.

As mentioned earlier, five levels of advertising strategy development can be distinguished when implementing the MECCAS model.

The first level can be classified as the driving force for the strategy, ie the value orientation or the end level on which to focus in the advertisement. The second level, leverage point, refers to the manner in which the advertisement will activate the value or end level of focus (the specific way in which the value is linked to the specific features in the advertisement). The next level, executional framework, consists of the overall scenario and details of the advertising execution. The executional framework also includes the overall style and tone and provides the vehicle by which value orientation is to be communicated. The fourth level, consumer benefits, consists of the positive consequences for the consumer that are to be communicated explicitly, verbally or visually. The final level, message elements, includes the specific attributes, consequences or features of the product that are to be communicated.

4.5 SUMMARY

Attributes play a vital role in the consumer decision-making process since consumers evaluate and compare competitive products based on attributes. The marketer uses product attributes to differentiate between his product and that of the competitors and also develops a positioning strategy based on determining (or even irrelevant, unique) attributes.

An advertising strategy can also be drafted based on attributes where the marketer can either promote one determinant attribute or two and even three attributes to further distinguish his product from competitors. Important to note is that if the marketer only promotes one attribute he can limit his target market implicitly or explicitly. If more than two attributes are used, the marketer can lose the credibility of his claims.

As discussed, the means-end chain model suggests that it is the associational network involving attributes, consequences and values that really represents needs to be understood in developing message content. Effective advertising should, therefore, be developed to address all levels and not just be concerned with product attributes. The major positive consumer consequences should be communicated verbally or visually, and the value should provide the driving force behind the advertising.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the proposed research project was to determine underlying consumer perceptions of product attributes featured in advertising. To reach this objective, a research project comprising two phases was used.

Content analysis was applied during Phase One to establish a list of product attributes featured in magazine advertisements pertaining to a certain product category. It was decided to focus on cosmetic products and to study attributes of lipstick in particular. Lipstick was selected because of its simplicity and because the product is explained by many different attributes, often explicitly mentioned in advertisements. During Phase Two, a quasi-experimental design was used during which a sample of lipstick users were required to evaluate the importance of the overall product attributes for the product category as well as for three brands of the product. Factor analysis was used to determine whether underlying factors exist among the input variables obtained through content analysis.

5.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS

According to Wells, Burnett & Moriarty (1992) content analysis is a type of research that analyses various dimensions of a message. Content analysis follows a systematic process starting with the selection of a unitisation scheme (Cooper & Emroy, 1995). Syntactical units, illustrated by words, will be recorded in executing the study due to their reliability. The reliability of these units is based on the fact that they are the smallest unit of measure of a written document and require no judgment on meaning (Krippendorf, 1980).

The objective of the execution of content analysis as a research method is to create an exhaustive list of product attributes that can be used as input variables to a multiple item Likert scale instrument, the results of which will then be subjected to factor analysis to determine underlying consumer perceptions of product attributes.

5.2.1 Method

Three women's magazines - Cosmopolitan, Fair Lady and Rooi Rose - were selected and all advertisements pertaining to lipstick for the period June 1994 to May 1995 were included in the study. It is important to note that although editorials and promotions regarding lipstick were excluded from the analysis, they were almost always accompanied by an advertisement.

Twenty-two lipstick attributes were extracted from the advertisements, namely

- Moisturises
- Light texture
- Creamy texture
- Long-lasting wear
- Hypoallergenic
- Not tested on animals
- Protects lips
- Nourishes
- Phytospheres
- Smooth
- Innovative formula
- Prevents dryness
- Polished colour
- Perfume-free
- Brand name
- Price
- Colour
- Vitamin E-enriched
- Conditioning colour

- Doesn't run or bleed
- Matt finish
- Stay on lips (won't kiss or rub off)

5.3 QUASI-EXPERIMENT

Once the exhaustive list of featured attributes had been compiled, a questionnaire was designed to determine the importance rating of each lipstick attribute when selecting a lipstick. Besides determining the importance ratings, performance ratings on each of the attributes for three specific brands of lipstick also had to be determined to identify change in consumer perceptions of the listed twenty-two attributes as the explicitly mentioned attributes changed. Three advertisements of lipstick were therefore selected, each containing a different number of attributes with one advertisement featuring a model, displaying the product. The logic of selecting advertisements containing a different number of attributes is to determine whether performance ratings vary as the number of explicitly mentioned attributes vary.

The three advertisements selected were Clarins, Ellen Betrix and Maybelline (Appendix B). The Clarins advertisement featured twelve attributes while Ellen Betrix and Maybelline displayed four attributes each. Maybelline also portrayed a female model displaying the product.

The lipstick attributes featured in the Clarins advertisement are

- Protects lips
- Nourishes
- Phytospheres
- Moisturises
- Smooth
- Light texture
- Creamy texture
- Long-lasting wear

- Hypoallergenic
- Not tested on animals
- Colour
- Brand name

Ellen Betrix depicted the following four attributes:

- Hypoallergenic
- Perfume-free
- Colour
- Brand name

Besides portraying a model, Maybelline also explicitly mentioned the following attributes:

- Polished colour
- Innovative formula
- Prevents dryness
- Brand name

The importance and performance ratings of the lipstick attributes were measured by means of continuous rating scales, where the respondent had to assign a rating by placing a marker at the appropriate position on a dotted line where there was no explicit standard for comparison (Dillon, Madden & Firtle, 1990). When the scales were compiled no explicit value was given to them. They only consisted of dots. Once the questionnaire was completed, numerical values were ascribed to each dot. The extremes for the importance ratings for the lipstick attributes were extremely important (with a numerical value of one) and totally unimportant (numerical value of five).

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was presented to two groups of female respondents at the University of Pretoria. Respondents first had to rate the importance of each of the attributes when selecting lipstick. They were then presented with the first advertisement, Clarins, where they had to indicate the performance of the brand on each of the twenty-two attributes on a scale ranging from excellent to poor. This process was followed for Ellen Betrix and Maybelline.

As indicated in Table 5.1, a total of 187 respondents completed the questionnaire. Of the 187 respondents 177 (94,7%) indicated that they used lipstick with only 10 respondents (5,3%) claiming not to use lipstick at all.

TABLE 5.1: USAGE PATTERNS

Use lipstick	Frequency	Percentage
No	10	5,3%
Yes	177	94,7%
Total	**187**	**100%**

Ten respondents (5,3%) claimed that they never used lipstick and a further 45 (24,1%) indicated that they seldom (0-2 occasions per week) used lipstick. A further 42 respondents (22,5%) indicated they used lipstick regularly (2-4 occasions per week), 41 (21,9%) fairly regularly (4-6 occasions per week) and 49 (26,2%) frequently (more than 6 occasions per week). The frequency, percentage and cumulative percentage of lipstick usage among the respondents are presented in Table 5.2.

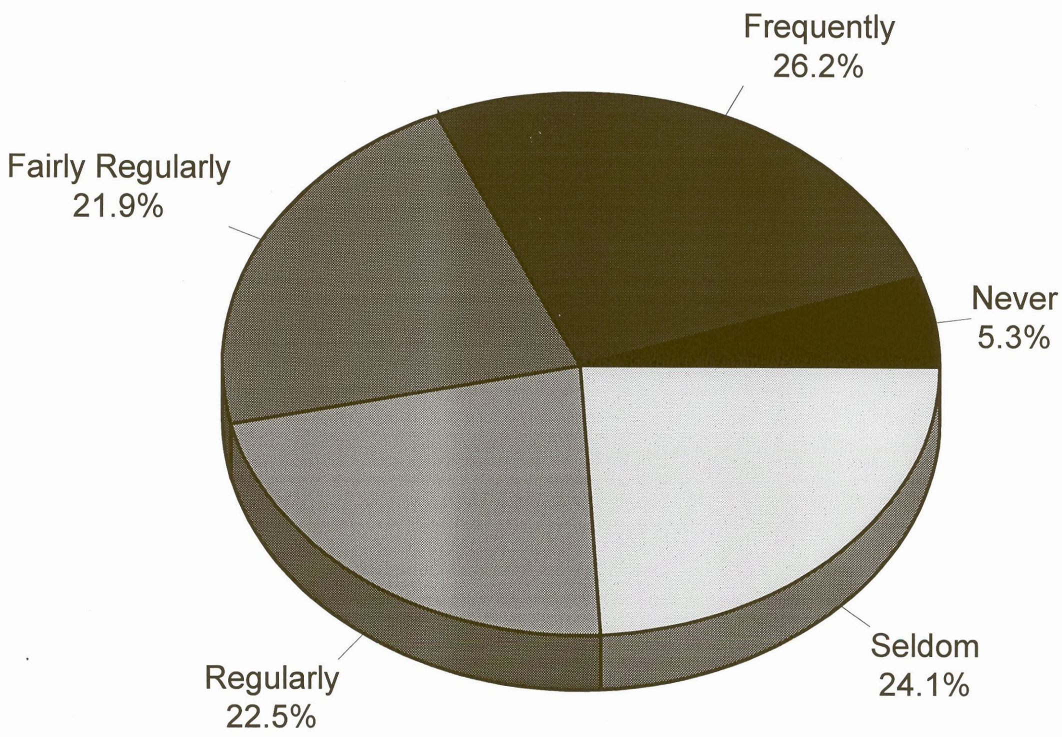
TABLE 5.2: FREQUENCY OF USE

Frequency	Frequency of response	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Never	10	5,3%	5,3%
Seldom	45	24,1%	29,4%
Regularly	42	22,5%	51,9%
Fairly regularly	41	21,9%	73,8%
Frequently	49	26,2%	**100%**
Total	**187**	**100%**	

The results obtained through the questionnaire could be used as input to factor analysis since an acceptable percentage of respondents (70,6%) could be classified as "experts" when selecting lipstick (regular, fairly regular and frequent users of lipstick).

Figure 5.1 provides a graphical presentation in the form of a pie chart of the frequency of lipstick use among the respondents.

FIGURE 5.1: FREQUENCY OF LIPSTICK USE



5.3.1 Statistical analysis

The results obtained from analysing the questionnaires completed by the respondents were then used as input to the factor analysis routine. The purpose of factor analysis (Boyd, Westfall & Stasch, 1989) is to determine whether the responses to several of the statements are highly correlated. If statements are highly correlated, it is believed that the statements measure some factor common to all of them, in other words, factor analysis attempts to reduce a large number of variables to some smaller number by showing which belong together and which seem to measure the same thing (Cooper et al, 1995).

In conducting this factor analysis the Varimax-technique of orthogonal rotation (Bagozzi, 1994) was used. Only factors with eigenvalues greater than one (Child, 1979) were extracted. Although factor loadings greater than 0,30 are often considered significant, it was decided to concentrate on values greater than 0,50 only, due to the small scale of the study.

The results of the factor analysis are presented in Chapter 6, Results and interpretation.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 deals with the factor analysis results and the interpretation of the factors identified for the product category lipstick and the three advertisements to which the respondents were subjected.

Chapter 6 is structured according to the questionnaire completed by the respondents (Appendix A). Section A of the questionnaire dealt with the categorisation of the respondents according to their lipstick usage patterns. The usage patterns were recorded in Chapter 5. Section B of the questionnaire dealt with the importance ratings for the product category lipstick. All variables and factors for the product category lipstick were therefore labelled B.

Section C of the questionnaire focused on the performance ratings of each advertisement, rated on a scale ranging from excellent to poor, on each of the twenty-two variables identified through content analysis. The first advertisement, Clarins, was labelled C. All variables and factors for the second advertisement, Ellen Betrix, were labelled D with the Maybelline data set labelled E.

Important to note is that the description of factors requires some judgement on the part of the researcher. This obviously introduces a measure of subjectivity to any interpretation of a factor analysis. This stresses the importance of deciding which factor loadings are to be considered and which not. As was mentioned in Chapter 5, the Varimax-technique of orthogonal rotation was used to conduct the factor analysis study. Only eigenvalues greater than one were extracted and only factor loadings greater than 0,50 were considered to be significant.

Before discussing each of the four sets of data, it is important to note that the lipstick attributes identified through content analysis are referred to as input variables to factor analysis. It is therefore important to acknowledge, with regard to this study, that the terms "variable" and "attribute" are to be considered the same and not as two differing terminologies.

The mean values, rotated factor matrixes, factor identification and interpretation will now be discussed individually for each of the four sets of data.

6.2 FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR THE PRODUCT CATEGORY LIPSTICK

Section 6.2 deals with the mean values ascribed to each of the twenty-two variables identified through the preceding content analysis study. Attention is also directed towards the rotated factor matrix for the product category lipstick and the labelling of identified factors. The section concludes with an interpretation of the labelled factors.

6.2.1 Mean value scores for the product category lipstick

The importance ratings (expressed as mean values on a scale of one, rated as extremely important, and five, rated as totally unimportant) for the product category lipstick for each of the twenty-two variables are presented in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1: MEAN VALUES FOR THE PRODUCT CATEGORY LIPSTICK

No	Variable	Mean
B1	Moisturises	1,86
B2	Light texture	2,60
B3	Creamy texture	2,72
B4	Long-lasting wear	1,63
B5	Hypoallergenic	2,47
B6	Not tested on animals	2,36
B7	Protects lips	1,89
B8	Nourishes	2,12

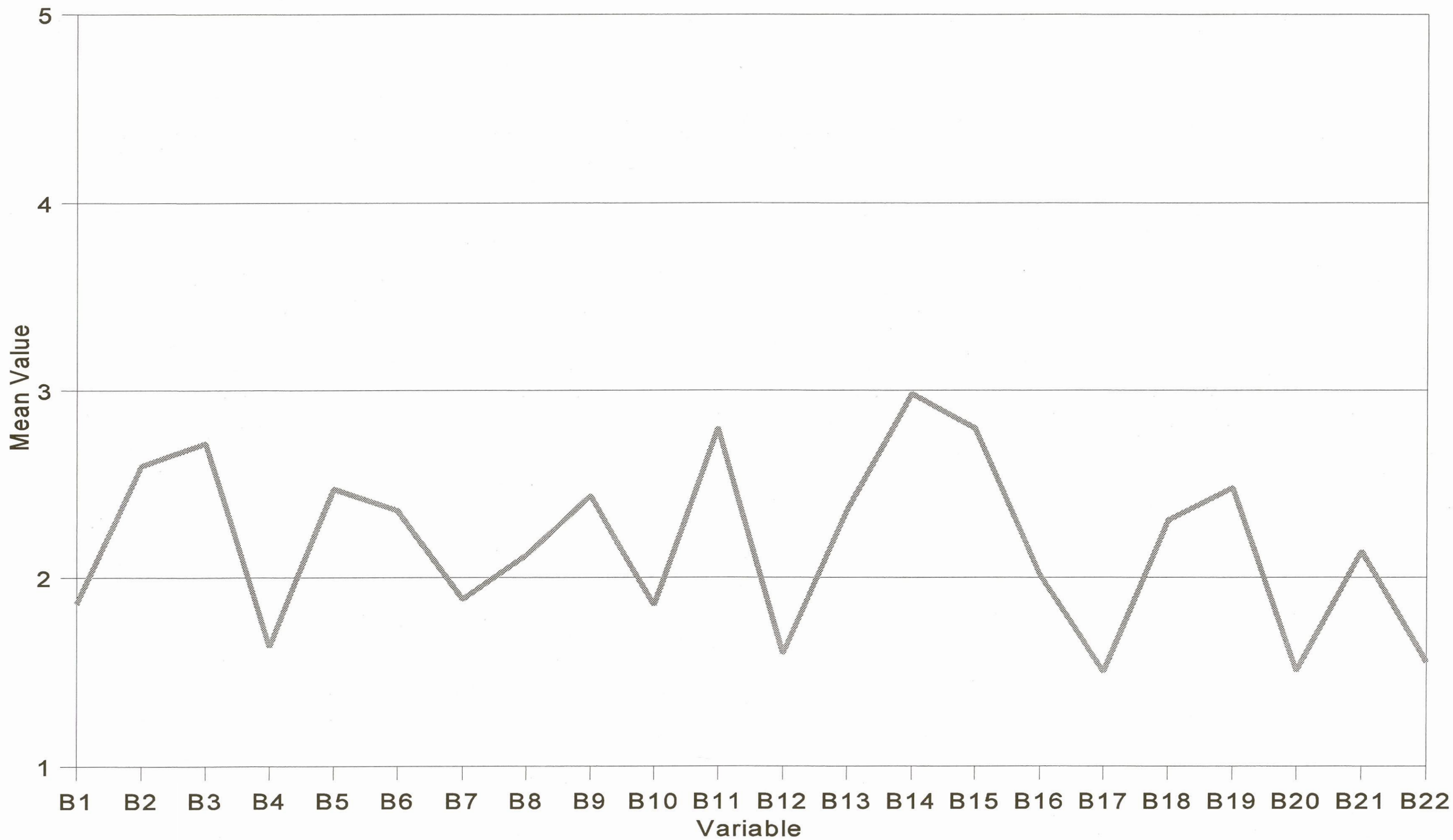
No	Variable	Mean
B9	Phytospheres	2,44
B10	Smooth	1,85
B11	Innovative formula	2,80
B12	Prevents dryness	1,60
B13	Polished colour	2,36
B14	Perfume-free	2,98
B15	Brand name	2,80
B16	Price	2,02
B17	Colour	1,50
B18	Vitamin E-enriched	2,30
B19	Conditioning colour	2,48
B20	Doesn't run or bleed	1,51
B21	Matt finish	2,14
B22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	1,55

Colour was considered to be the most important attribute when selecting a lipstick (mean value of 1,50) with the features that lipstick should not run or bleed, should stay on lips, prevent dryness and have a long-lasting wear being the next important. The least important attributes were the claim that lipstick should be perfume-free (mean value of 2,98), the brand name and the use of an innovative formula.

Although certain attributes were considered to be of greater importance it is important to note that none of the twenty-two attributes were considered unimportant (no mean value was greater than 3,0). The preceding content analysis can therefore be considered to be well-executed with the exhaustive list of product attributes functional to the study.

Figure 6.1 provides a graphical presentation of the mean values for the twenty-two attributes.

FIGURE 6.1: LIPSTICK MEAN VALUES



6.2.2 Rotated factor matrix for the product category lipstick

Table 6.2 depicts the rotated factor matrix with the factor loadings for each of the twenty-two attributes for the product category lipstick. As mentioned previously, only factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted and only factor loadings greater than 0,50 were considered in determining the factors.

TABLE 6.2: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR THE PRODUCT CATEGORY LIPSTICK

No	Variable	Factor					
		B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
B1	Moisturises	**0,52**	0,03	0,11	-0,30	0,32	0,30
B2	Light texture	0,19	0,02	0,04	-0,01	**0,68**	0,05
B3	Creamy texture	0,12	0,03	0,13	0,04	**0,76**	-0,12
B4	Long-lasting wear	0,19	0,12	**0,78**	-0,06	0,09	0,13
B5	Hypoallergenic	0,28	-0,23	0,31	0,29	0,08	0,35
B6	Not tested on animals	0,28	-0,01	0,06	-0,03	-0,14	**0,70**
B7	Protects lips	**0,76**	0,17	0,08	0,17	0,08	0,08
B8	Nourishes	**0,63**	0,21	0,25	0,14	0,11	0,15
B9	Phytospheres	0,24	0,34	0,16	0,30	0,33	0,05
B10	Smooth	0,49	0,24	0,19	0,33	0,31	-0,23
B11	Innovative formula	0,09	-0,03	0,03	**0,77**	0,03	0,18
B12	Prevents dryness	**0,73**	0,07	-0,004	0,06	0,14	0,02
B13	Polished colour	0,15	0,13	0,44	**0,50**	-0,17	-0,14
B14	Perfume-free	0,16	0,43	-0,17	0,19	0,09	0,17
B15	Brand name	-0,15	0,19	-0,06	0,34	-0,04	**0,66**
B16	Price	0,27	**0,56**	0,10	0,04	-0,15	-0,26
B17	Colour	0,04	**0,65**	0,25	-0,05	-0,01	0,06
B18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,15	0,36	-0,05	**0,57**	0,15	0,23
B19	Conditioning colour	0,03	**0,56**	0,15	0,38	0,39	0,10
B20	Doesn't run or bleed	0,19	**0,58**	0,45	0,01	0,13	0,24
B21	Matt finish	0,09	0,30	0,16	0,16	0,21	0,39
B22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	0,03	0,20	**0,77**	0,14	0,20	-0,04
Eigenvalues		**5,30**	**1,74**	**1,55**	**1,31**	**1,13**	**1,09**
Percentage of variance		**24,1%**	**7,9%**	**7,1%**	**6,0%**	**5,1%**	**5,0%**
Cumulative percentage		**24,1%**	**32,0%**	**39,1%**	**45,1%**	**50,2%**	**55,2%**

As identified in Table 6.2, six factors (labelled B1 to B6) were identified. Factor B1 comprised four, B2 four, B3 two, B4 three, B5 two and B6 two variables respectively. The eigenvalues (being the sum of the squared factor loadings for the particular factor) for factors B1 to B6 are 5,30; 1,74; 1,55; 1,31; 1,13; and 1,09 respectively.

The percentage of variance explained is a summary measure of how much of the total original variance of all twenty-two variables is represented by each factor. This is calculated by dividing the eigenvalue by the twenty-two variables. Factor B1 therefore accounted for 24,1%, factor B2 for an additional 7,9%, down to factor B6 that explained 5,0% of the total variance. It is important to calculate the cumulative percentage, because it provides a summary measure that shows how much of the total variance is explained in the relationships between the twenty-two variables by all six of the factors. In this study the six factors explained 55,2% of the total variance, an acceptable percentage for the purpose of factor analysis.

The following section deals with the labelling of the extracted six factors (B1 to B6) for the product category lipstick.

6.2.3 Factor identification

As mentioned in the previous section, six factors were identified for the product category lipstick. In this section these factors will be thoroughly examined and labelled accordingly.

Factor B1

Four of the twenty-two variables loaded heavily on the first factor, namely

No	Variable	Loading
B7	Protects lips	0,76
B12	Prevents dryness	0,73
B8	Nourishes	0,63
B1	Moisturises	0,52

According to the constituent variables of factor B1, it seems as if the most important feature of lipstick is that of lip care. Variable B7 (protects lips) is complimented by variables B12 (prevents dryness) and B1 (moisturises) since sensitive lip tissue is protected by moisturising lips, therefore ensuring that dryness does not occur. Variable B8 (nourishes) prevents dryness through preserving and feeding lips. Factor B1 can therefore be labelled **lip care.**

Factor B2

Factor B2 comprised the following four variables:

No	Variable	Loading
B17	Colour	0,65
B20	Doesn't run or bleed	0,58
B19	Conditioning colour	0,56
B16	Price	0,56

Variable B17 (colour) and B19 (conditioning colour) clearly lean towards the colour characteristic of lipstick. The other obvious explanatory variable is price (B16). The fact that the lipstick should not run or bleed (B20) influences both the colour and price variables. Lipstick that does not run or bleed produces an intense depth of colour. On the other hand, lipstick that tends to run may alter the desired colour and needs to be applied more often (more lipstick is therefore used with obvious financial implications). Factor B2 can therefore be labelled **colour as value for money.**

Factor B3

Factor B3 contained two variables, namely

No	Variable	Loading
B4	Long-lasting wear	0,78
B22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	0,77

Lipstick is notorious for its disappearing act and adds to great frustration by frequently rubbing off, especially when kissing! Factor B3 concentrates on long-lasting wear (variable B4) and staying power (B22) of lipstick. Factor B3 can therefore be labelled **durability.**

Factor B4

The following variables constitute factor B4:

No	Variable	Loading
B11	Innovative formula	0,77
B18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,57
B13	Polished colour	0,50

Variable B18 (vitamin E-enriched), a lipstick ingredient, supports variable B11 (innovative formula) since vitamin E is used as an innovation to smooth and soften lips. The result of smooth, soft lips is that it supports colour all day (and night) long, possibly explaining the inclusion of variable B13 (polished colour). Due to the questionability of the relevance of variable B13 (polished colour), it will be discarded and factor B4 can therefore be labelled as **composition.**

Factor 5

Factor B5 comprised only two variables,

No	Variable	Loading
B3	Creamy texture	0,76
B2	Light texture	0,68

As is eminent from the two variables (B3, creamy texture and B2, light texture), factor B5 is simply labelled **texture.**

Factor B6

The final factor, B6, consists of the following two variables:

No	Variable	Loading
B6	Not tested on animals	0,70
B15	Brand name	0,66

Since factor B6 comprises only brand name (variable B15) and the characteristic that lipstick should not be tested on animals (variable B6), it can be concluded that factor B6 deals with **brand association.**

Table 6.3 below indicates the labelled factors for the product category lipstick.

TABLE 6.3: LABELLED FACTORS FOR THE PRODUCT CATEGORY LIPSTICK

Factor	Description	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage
B1	Lip care	24,1%	24,1%
B2	Colour as value for money	7,9%	32,0%
B3	Durability	7,1%	39,1%
B4	Composition	6,0%	45,1%
B5	Texture	5,1%	50,2%
B6	Brand association	5,0%	55,2%

As indicated in Table 6.3, the six factors identified for the product category lipstick explained 55,1% of the total variance of the twenty-two variables. Factor B1, lip care accounted for 24,1% of the total variance with factor B2 (colour as value for money) explaining a further 7,9%. Durability (factor B3) accounted for 7,1%, composition (factor B4) for 6,0%, texture (factor B5) for 5,1% and factor B6 (brand association) for 5,0% of the total variance.

6.2.4 Interpretation

As mentioned in the previous section, lip care (factor B1) was perceived to be the most important feature when selecting a lipstick. The second most important characteristic of lipstick sought after was that of colour as value for money (factor B2) followed by durability (factor B3).

The three most important factors correlated with the most important mean values for the list of twenty-two lipstick attributes. The attributes rated as the most important were those of colour, that lipstick should not run or bleed (enclosed in factor B2), that it should stay on lips and be long-lasting (enclosed in factor B3) and that it should prevent dryness (enclosed in factor B1).

Important to note is that although colour received the best mean value score, the most important feature considered when selecting lipstick is lip care. Colour is only perceived to be the second most important feature with durability following in importance.

Although the attributes, brand name and an innovative formula received rather unimportant mean value scores, both the composition (factor B4) of the lipstick and the association of the brand (factor B6) were still considered to be important when selecting a lipstick.

6.3 FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR THE CLARINS ADVERTISEMENT

Section 6.3 deals with the mean values ascribed to each of the twenty-two variables specifically applied to the Clarins advertisement. Attention is also drawn to the rotated factor matrix for Clarins and the labelling of factors identified from the Clarins data set. Section 6.3 concludes with a comparison between the explicitly mentioned attributes in the Clarins advertisement and the labelled factors.

6.3.1 Mean value scores for the Clarins advertisement

The Clarins advertisement, rated by the respondents on a scale ranging from excellent to poor on each of the twenty-two variables, comprised twelve explicitly mentioned attributes. The following attributes were explicitly mentioned in the advertisement:

- Protects lips
- Nourishes
- Phytospheres
- Moisturises
- Smooth
- Light texture
- Creamy texture
- Long-lasting wear
- Hypoallergenic
- Not tested on animals
- Colour
- Brand name

The mean values for each of the twenty-two variables, once the respondents were exposed to the Clarins advertisement, are presented in Table 6.4.

TABLE 6.4: CLARINS MEAN VALUE SCORES

No	Variable	Mean
C1	Moisturises	1,81
C2	Light texture	2,47
C3	Creamy texture	2,06
C4	Long-lasting wear	2,12
C5	Hypoallergenic	2,17
C6	Not tested on animals	1,97
C7	Protects lips	1,81
C8	Nourishes	1,81

No	Variable	Mean
C9	Phytospheres	1,86
C10	Smooth	1,67
C11	Innovative formula	2,49
C12	Prevents dryness	2,02
C13	Polished colour	2,14
C14	Perfume-free	2,89
C15	Brand name	1,97
C16	Price	3,01
C17	Colour	2,06
C18	Vitamin E-enriched	2,54
C19	Conditioning colour	2,27
C20	Doesn't run or bleed	2,38
C21	Matt finish	2,63
C22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	2,43

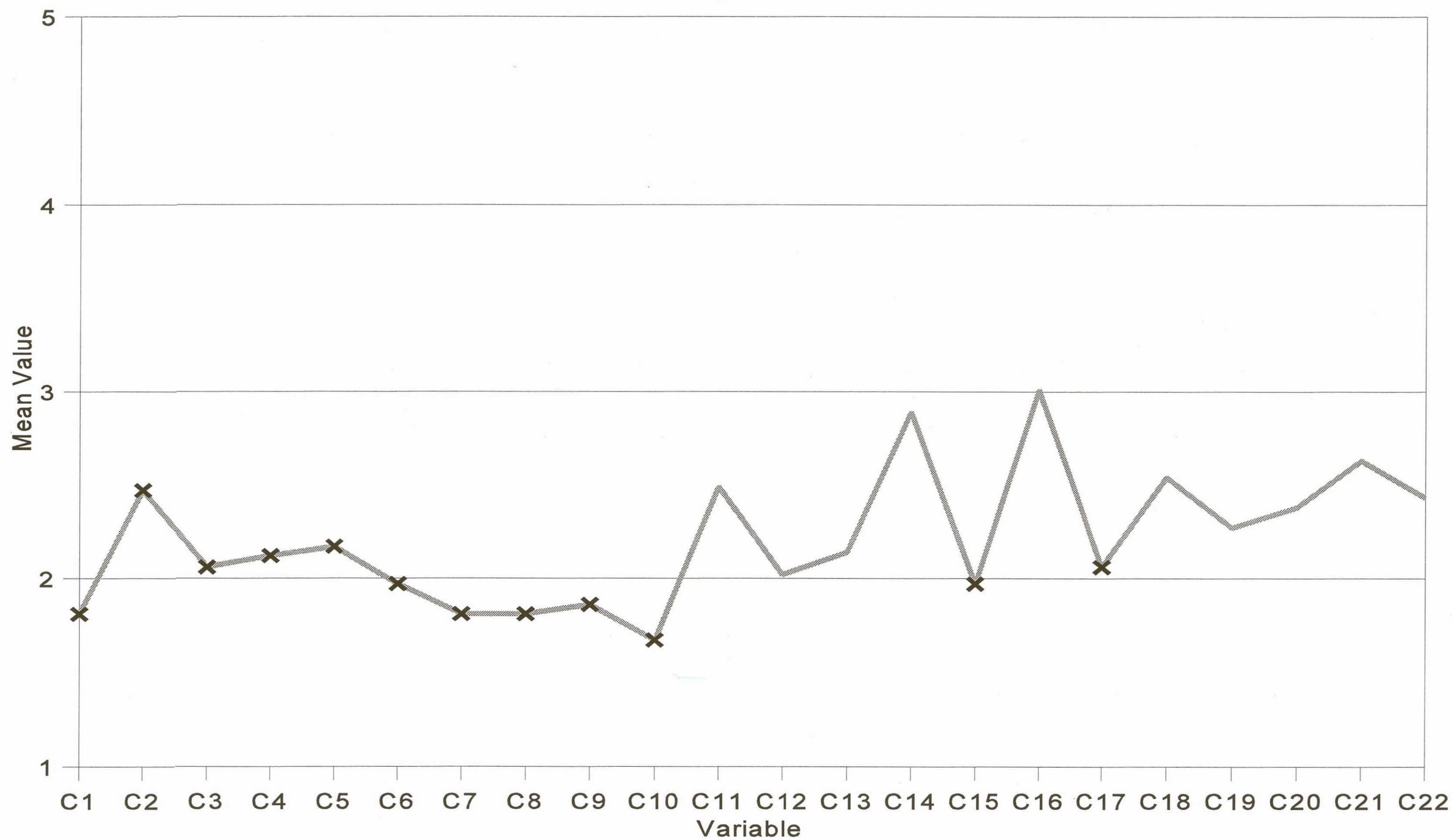
Opposed to colour being the most important attribute respondents considered when selecting a lipstick, Clarins was perceived to be excellent as far as the smoothness of the lipstick was concerned (mean value of 1,67). Other attributes rated as excellent were that Clarins was perceived to protect, moisturise and nourish lips.

Attributes on which Clarins was rated poorly were price (mean value of 3,01) and the claim that the lipstick was perfume-free.

Important to note is that the attributes that were explicitly mentioned in the Clarins advertisement were perceived more positively than those not mentioned, with the only exception being the light texture of the lipstick. Although light texture was not rated as positively as the other mentioned attributes, it is eminent that this attribute was perceived more positively than those attributes not mentioned.

Figure 6.2 clearly display the better ratings of the mentioned attributes (indicated with an X) to those not explicitly mentioned.

FIGURE 6.2: CLARINS MEAN VALUES



6.3.2 Rotated factor matrix for the Clarins advertisement

Table 6.5 depicts the rotated factor matrix for the twenty-two variables once the respondents were subjected to the Clarins advertisement.

TABLE 6.5: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR THE CLARINS ADVERTISEMENT

No	Variable	Factor					
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
C1	Moisturises	0,33	0,09	**0,57**	-0,001	0,12	0,01
C2	Light texture	0,01	0,12	**0,79**	0,09	0,07	-0,09
C3	Creamy texture	0,15	0,15	**0,72**	0,20	0,14	0,19
C4	Long-lasting wear	0,36	0,27	0,22	0,20	0,01	**0,56**
C5	Hypoallergenic	0,19	-0,01	0,12	0,46	0,49	0,21
C6	Not tested on animals	0,14	-0,04	0,10	0,17	**0,75**	-0,12
C7	Protects lips	**0,74**	0,23	0,12	0,11	0,05	0,01
C8	Nourishes	**0,78**	-0,001	0,07	0,14	0,18	0,04
C9	Phytospheres	0,48	0,04	0,35	0,41	-0,07	-0,16
C10	Smooth	**0,55**	0,01	0,34	0,16	0,34	0,04
C11	Innovative formula	0,13	0,01	0,13	**0,78**	0,13	-0,11
C12	Prevents dryness	**0,52**	0,23	0,19	-0,11	0,22	0,07
C13	Polished colour	0,14	0,22	0,10	-0,01	**0,63**	0,08
C14	Perfume-free	-0,05	**0,60**	0,10	0,05	**0,50**	-0,29
C15	Brand name	0,42	0,01	0,12	0,25	0,02	**0,63**
C16	Price	0,09	**0,78**	0,11	-0,06	-0,01	-0,19
C17	Colour	**0,52**	0,34	-0,07	0,09	-0,05	-0,21
C18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,08	0,43	0,05	**0,63**	0,08	0,06
C19	Conditioning colour	**0,51**	0,17	0,12	0,41	0,13	0,07
C20	Doesn't run or bleed	0,29	**0,72**	0,14	0,02	0,11	0,21
C21	Matt finish	0,16	**0,63**	0,10	0,26	0,19	0,17
C22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	0,19	**0,69**	0,11	0,25	-0,06	0,33
Eigenvalues		**6,26**	**1,98**	**1,38**	**1,24**	**1,14**	**1,04**
Percentage of variance		**28,4%**	**9,0%**	**6,3%**	**5,6%**	**5,2%**	**4,7%**
Cumulative percentage		**28,4%**	**37,4%**	**43,7%**	**49,3%**	**54,5%**	**59,2%**

As indicated in Table 6.5, six factors (labelled C1 to C6) were identified. Factor C1 comprised six, C2 five, C3 three, C4 two, C5 three and C6 two variables respectively. The eigenvalues for factors C1 to C6 were 6,26; 1,98; 1,38; 1,24; 1,14 and 1,04 respectively.

As indicated in Table 6.5, factor C1 accounted for 28,4%, C2 for an additional 9,0%, C3 for 6,3%, C4 for 5,6%, C5 for 5,2% and C6 for 4,7% of the total variance of the twenty-two variables. The six identified factors for the Clarins study explained cumulatively 59,2% of the total variance, an acceptable percentage for the purpose of factor analysis.

The following section deals with the labelling of the extracted six factors (C1 to C6) for the Clarins advertisement.

6.3.3 Factor identification

As mentioned in the previous section, six factors were identified for the Clarins advertisement. In this section these factors will be thoroughly examined and labelled accordingly.

Factor C1

Six variables load heavily on the first factor, namely

No	Variable	Loading
C8	Nourishes	0,78
C7	Protects lips	0,74
C10	Smooth	0,55
C12	Prevents dryness	0,52
C17	Colour	0,52
C19	Conditioning colour	0,51

Variables C8 (nourishes), C7 (protects lips) and C12 (prevents dryness) relates to the caring of lips. Variable C10 (smooth) can also be interpreted as caring for lips since the smooth formula smoothens lips by filling lines and lip cracks and protecting delicate lip tissue. Variables C17 (colour) and C19 (conditioning colour) deal with the colour aspect of lipstick. Factor C1 is therefore labelled **lip care and colour.**

Factor C2

Factor C2 comprised the following five variables:

No	Variable	Loading
C16	Price	0,78
C20	Doesn't run or bleed	0,72
C22	Stays on lips (wont' kiss or rub off)	0,69
C21	Matt finish	0,63
C14	Perfume-free	0,60

The variable with the greatest loading, C16 (price), focuses on value for money. Variables C20 (doesn't run or bleed) and C22 (stay on lips) lean towards durability. Variable C21 (matt finish) supports durability in the sense that matt pigments applied to lips don't feather or fade easily.

The perfume-free characteristic (C14) rather leans to naturalness than to durability or value for money and will therefore be discarded as a meaningful explanation to factor C2. Factor C2 is labelled **durability as value for money.**

Factor C3

Factor C3 comprises three variables:

No	Variable	Loading
C2	Light texture	0,79
C3	Creamy texture	0,72
C1	Moisturises	0,57

Variable C2 (light texture) and C3 (creamy texture) clearly identify texture as a label for factor C3. A creamy texture is usually characterised by moisturising lips (C1) and ensures a light texture in stead of a dry finish. Factor C3 is therefore labelled **texture.**

Factor C4

Factor C4 comprised two variables, namely

No	Variable	Loading
C11	Innovative formula	0,78
C18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,63

As mentioned earlier, vitamin E (variable C18) is used as an innovation (C11) to smooth and soften lips. Lips that are smooth and soft supports lasting colour. Factor C4 is therefore labelled **composition.**

Factor C5

Factor C5 comprises three variables:

No	Variable	Loading
C6	Not tested on animals	0,75
C13	Polished colour	0,63
C14	Perfume-free	0,50

The fact that the lipstick is not tested on animals (variable C6) and is perfume-free (C14) characterises the lipstick as being natural. The relevance of variable C13 (polished colour) is not clear and will therefore be discarded. Factor C5 is therefore labelled **naturalness.**

Factor C6

Factor C6 focused on two variables only, namely

No	Variable	Loading
C15	Brand name	0,63
C4	Long-lasting wear	0,56

Factor C6 deals with brand name (variable C15) and long-lasting wear (C4). Factor C6 is therefore labelled **brand association** with regard to long-lasting wear.

Table 6.6 below indicates the labelled factors for the Clarins advertisement.

TABLE 6.6: LABELLED FACTORS FOR CLARINS

Factor	Description	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage
C1	Lip care and colour	28,4%	28,4%
C2	Durability as value for money	9,0%	37,4%
C3	Texture	6,3%	43,7%
C4	Composition	5,6%	49,3%
C5	Naturalness	5,2%	54,5%
C6	Brand association	4,7%	59,2%

As indicated in Table 6.6, Factor C1 (lip care and colour) explained 28,4% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables. Factor C2 (durability as value for money) accounted for an additional 9,0% and C3 (texture) for 6,3%. Composition (factor C4) revealed 5,6% and naturalness (C5) an additional 5,2%. The final factor, C6 (brand association) interpreted 4,7% of the variance.

Together, the six identified factors for the Clarins advertisement explained 59,2% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables.

6.3.4 Interpretation

As mentioned, the Clarins advertisement explicitly mentioned twelve attributes. All of the mentioned attributes received better mean value scores and were therefore perceived to be of greater importance than those attributes not mentioned in the advertisement.

The Clarins advertisement conveyed four lipstick features, namely lip care (the attributes supporting the lip care characteristic are that it protects lips, nourishes, phytospheres, moisturises and smooth), texture (light and creamy texture), naturalness (hypoallergenic and not tested on animals) and long-lasting wear. Colour also featured as a prominant characteristic.

Important to note is that all the factors identified for the Clarins advertisement correspond with the features of lipstick portrayed through attributes in the Clarins advertisement.

The most important factor (lip care and colour, C1) was clearly identified in the mentioned advertisement as stated above. Factor C2 (durability and value for money) can be interpreted by the featured attribute long-lasting wear. Although the factor itself comprises different attributes, the labelling of the factor corresponds with the claim that Clarins lipstick tends to be long-lasting.

Factor C3 (texture) corresponds with the mentioned texture attributes and when labelled also includes moisturises, an attribute explicitly mentioned in the advertisement.

Important to note is that formula was referred to in the advertisement to express the claim that colour was formulated for long-lasting wear. Formula was not expressed as an explicit characteristic of Clarins and was therefore not recognised as a mentioned attribute in the Clarins advertisement. Factor C4, composition, can be explained by the array of attributes mentioned in the advertisement with recognition to the fact that the colour was formulated for long-lasting wear. As mentioned, long-lasting lipstick tends to be drying and uncomfortable, yet Clarins also promotes lip care (through protection, moisturising and nourishing) and could therefore acknowledge its composition.

Factor C5 (naturalness) corresponds with the advertisement claim that Clarins is perfume-free and not tested on animals.

Factor C6 (brand association) associates the Clarins brand with one specific product feature, long-lasting wear, a feature conveyed by the advertisement.

6.4 FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR THE ELLEN BETRIX ADVERTISEMENT

Section 6.4 deals with the mean values ascribed to each of the twenty-two variables, specifically applied to the Ellen Betrix advertisement. Attention is also drawn to the rotated factor matrix for Ellen Betrix and the labelling of factors identified from the Ellen Betrix data set. Section 6.4 concludes with a comparison between the explicitly mentioned attributes in the Ellen Betrix advertisement and the labelled factors.

6.4.1 Mean value scores for the Ellen Betrix advertisement

The Ellen Betrix advertisement presented to the respondents depicted four explicitly mentioned attributes, namely

- Hypoallergenic
- Perfume-free
- Colour
- Brand name

The mean values for each of the twenty-two variables (rated by the respondents on a scale ranging from excellent to poor) for the Ellen Betrix advertisement, are depicted in Table 6.7.

TABLE 6.7: ELLEN BETRIX MEAN VALUE SCORES

No	Variable	Mean
D1	Moisturises	2,06
D2	Light texture	2,07
D3	Creamy texture	2,37
D4	Long-lasting wear	2,61
D5	Hypoallergenic	1,83
D6	Not tested on animals	2,63
D7	Protects lips	2,22
D8	Nourishes	2,13
D9	Phytospheres	2,57
D10	Smooth	2,07
D11	Innovative formula	2,51
D12	Prevents dryness	2,26
D13	Polished colour	2,23
D14	Perfume-free	1,93
D15	Brand name	1,92
D16	Price	2,95

No	Variable	Mean
D17	Colour	1,77
D18	Vitamin E-enriched	2,62
D19	Conditioning colour	2,37
D20	Doesn't run or bleed	2,58
D21	Matt finish	2,49
D22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	2,60

After reading through the Ellen Betrix advertisement, colour received the highest rating (mean value of 1,77) followed by the hypoallergenic, brand name and perfume-free attributes. Attributes with poor ratings were price (mean value of 2,95), not tested on animals, vitamin E-enriched and long-lasting wear.

Important to note, as with the Clarins advertisement, is that attributes that were explicitly mentioned in the Ellen Betrix advertisement were perceived more positively and received better mean scores than attributes not mentioned.

The better mean values for the four mentioned attributes (indicated by an X) are clearly visible from Figure 6.3.

6.4.2 Rotated factor matrix for the Ellen Betrix advertisement

Table 6.8 represents the rotated factor matrix for the twenty-two variables once the respondents were subjected to the Ellen Betrix advertisement.

FIGURE 6.3: ELLEN BETRIX MEAN VALUES

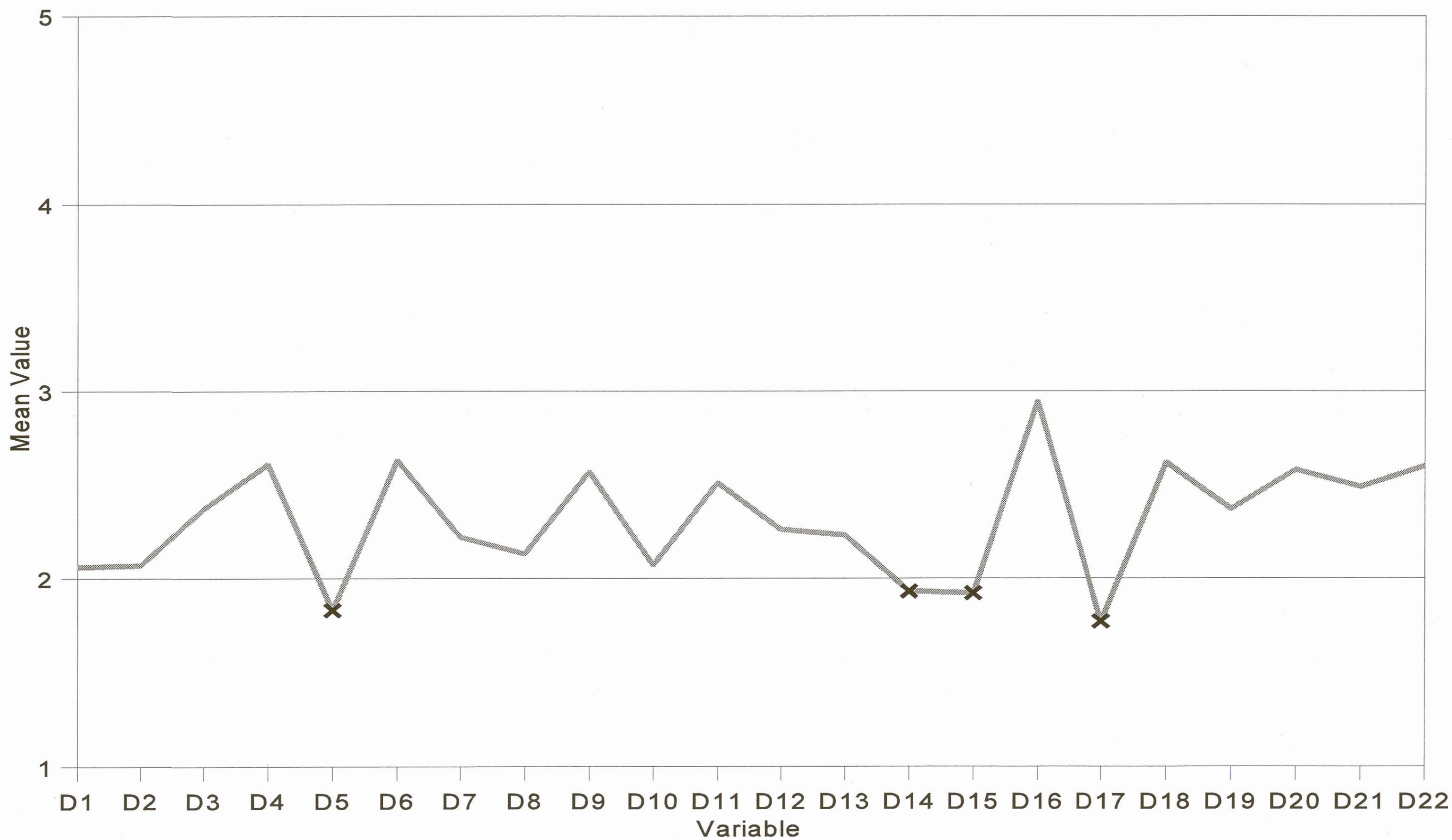


TABLE 6.8: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR ELLEN BETRIX

No	Variable	Factor			
		D1	D2	D3	D4
D1	Moisturises	0,36	**0,66**	0,18	0,08
D2	Light texture	0,08	**0,61**	0,31	0,36
D3	Creamy texture	0,11	**0,71**	0,09	0,28
D4	Long-lasting wear	**0,72**	0,38	0,14	0,16
D5	Hypoallergenic	-0,04	0,25	**0,75**	0,03
D6	Not tested on animals	0,40	**0,61**	0,06	-0,25
D7	Protects lips	**0,54**	**0,58**	0,11	0,14
D8	Nourishes	0,34	**0,61**	0,14	0,32
D9	Phytospheres	**0,58**	0,47	0,22	0,01
D10	Smooth	0,22	0,42	0,35	**0,52**
D11	Innovative formula	0,40	**0,58**	0,22	-0,09
D12	Prevents dryness	**0,60**	0,49	-0,02	0,22
D13	Polished colour	0,18	0,10	0,04	**0,82**
D14	Perfume-free	0,02	0,13	**0,84**	0,04
D15	Brand name	0,14	0,05	**0,72**	-0,002
D16	Price	**0,79**	0,03	0,15	-0,07
D17	Colour	0,33	-0,02	**0,67**	0,28
D18	Vitamin E-enriched	**0,50**	**0,56**	0,08	0,18
D19	Conditioning colour	**0,54**	0,39	0,16	0,36
D20	Doesn't run or bleed	**0,79**	0,32	0,04	0,33
D21	Matt finish	**0,57**	0,32	0,15	0,37
D22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	**0,80**	0,29	0,01	0,18
Eigenvalues		**9,46**	**2,17**	**1,24**	**1,15**
Percentage of variance		**43,0%**	**9,9%**	**5,7%**	**5,2%**
Cumulative percentage		**43,0%**	**52,9%**	**58,6%**	**63,8%**

As displayed in Table 6.8, only four factors (labelled D1 to D4) were identified. Although only four factors were identified, most of the factors tended to comprise of more variables. Factor D1 comprised ten, D2 eight, D3 four and D4 two variables respectively. The eigenvalue for factor D1 was therefore the greatest of all four data sets with a value of 9,46. The eigenvalues for factors D2 to D4 were 2,17; 1,24 and 1,15 respectively.

As indicated in Table 6.8, Factor D1 accounted for 43%, D2 for an additional 9,9%, D3 for 5,7% and D4 for 5,2% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables. The identified four factors for the Ellen Betrix data set accounted for 63,8% of the total variance, an acceptable percentage for the purpose of factor analysis.

The following section deals with the labelling of the extracted four factors (D1 to D4) for the Ellen Betrix advertisement.

6.4.3 Factor identification

As mentioned in the previous section, only four factors were identified for the Ellen Betrix advertisement. In this section these factors will be thoroughly examined and labelled accordingly.

Factor D1

Factor D1 comprised the following ten variables

No	Variable	Loading
D22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	0,80
D20	Doesn't run or bleed	0,79
D16	Price	0,79
D4	Long-lasting wear	0,72
D12	Prevents dryness	0,60
D9	Phytospheres	0,58
D21	Matt finish	0,57

No	Variable	Loading
D19	Conditioning colour	0,54
D7	Protects lips	0,54
D18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,50

Variables D22 (stay on lips), D20 (doesn't run or bleed) and D4 (long-lasting wear) direct factor D1 to durability.

Another prominent feature visible from factor D1 is lip care. Lip care in this factor comprises variables D12 (prevents dryness), D9 (phytospheres, which releases moisture to keep lips soft) and D7 (protects lips). Vitamin E-enriched (variable D18) can also be included in lip care since, as mentioned earlier, vitamin E is used as an ingredient to smooth and soften lips.

Conditioning colour (variable D19) is to a certain extent supported by variable D21 (matt finish) for matt pigments applied to lips don't feather or fade easily and therefore preserve the colour applied to lips. Variables D19 and D21 shall, however, be excluded from the labelling of factor D1 due to the questionability of its relevance.

The last remaining unexplained variable, D16 (price) once again concentrates on value for money. Factor D1 is labelled **lip care and durability as value for money.**

Factor D2

Factor D2 included eight variables, namely

No	Variable	Loading
D3	Creamy texture	0,71
D1	Moisturises	0,66
D2	Light texture	0,61
D8	Nourishes	0,61
D6	Not tested on animals	0,61
D7	Protects lips	0,58
D11	Innovative formula	0,58
D18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,56

Variables D3 (creamy texture) and D2 (light texture) clearly identify texture to be a possible label for factor D2. A creamy texture, however, is usually characterised as a lip moisturiser (D1) and ensures a light texture in stead of a dry finish. The aforementioned together with variables D8 (nourishes) and D7 (protects lips) tends to focus on lip care. This statement is supported by the inclusion of vitamin E (variable D18) since vitamin E (used as part of an innovative formula, D11) is used to soften lips.

Only variable D6 (not tested on animals) raises the question of relevance and will therefore be excluded from the labelling of factor D2. Factor D2 is therefore labelled **lip care.**

Factor D3

Factor D3 comprised four variables, namely

No	Variable	Loading
D14	Perfume-free	0,84
D5	Hypoallergenic	0,75
D15	Brand name	0,72
D17	Colour	0,67

Due to the high factor loading of variable D15 (brand name), it is strongly suggested that factor D3 be labelled brand association. The brand is associated with variables D14 (perfume-free) and D5 (hypo-allergenic). These two variables lean towards the naturalness of lipstick. D17 (colour) is also associated with the brand name.

Factor D3 will therefore be labelled **brand association** with specific recognition to naturalness and colour.

Factor D4

Factor D4 comprised the following two variables:

No	Variable	Loading
D13	Polished colour	0,82
D10	Smooth	0,52

Smoothness (variable D10) allows lipstick to fill lip cracks and protect delicate lip tissue and at the same time prevent colour from feathering. This enables a colour to be displayed more prominently (appears polished, D13) and enhance appearance, keeping in mind that lipstick is the one cosmetic that can truly change the looks of a lady. Factor D4 is therefore labelled **appearance.**

Table 6.9 below indicates the labelled factors for the Ellen Betrix advertisement.

TABLE 6.9: LABELLED FACTORS FOR ELLEN BETRIX

Factor	Description	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage
D1	Lip care and durability as value for money	43,0%	43,0%
D2	Lip care	9,9%	52,9%
D3	Brand association	5,7%	58,6%
D4	Appearance	5,2%	63,8%

Factor D1 (lip care and durability as value for money) explained 43,0% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables. Factor D2 (lip care) added an additional 9,9% with factor D3 (brand association) contributing a further 5,7%. The final factor, D4 (appearance) accounted for 5,2% of the variance. The four factors extracted from the Ellen Betrix advertisement cumulatively explained 63,8% of the total variance.

6.4.4 Interpretation

As with the Clarins advertisement, all the attributes mentioned in the Ellen Betrix advertisement received better mean scores (and were therefore perceived more positively) than those attributes not explicitly mentioned.

Important to note is that although the Ellen Betrix advertisement mentioned only four lipstick attributes, the advertisement's aim was also to position the Pure & Natural Look range of Ellen Betrix products as being natural. The copy of the advertisement was written in such a way to promote the naturalness combined with colour of the Pure & Natural range of Ellen Betrix. This most probably attributed to the better mean values for the naturalness and colour claims as opposed to the other variables. This phenomenon can clearly be seen from Figure 6.3.

If it can be assumed that the objective of the advertisement was not only to promote Ellen Betrix lipstick but also to promote and position the Pure & Natural Look range of products, the advertisement can be acknowledged as being very successful. This assumption can be supported by factor D3, brand association, since the Ellen Betrix lipstick (and therefore the brand itself) was associated with both colour and naturalness. All four mentioned lipstick attributes featured in the advertisement were enclosed in the association of the brand (factor D3).

Although the brand association corresponded with the featured attributes, only 5,7% of the total variance was explained by factor D3.

Factors D1, lip care and durability as value for money, D2, lip care and D4, appearance, contribute to the way in which Ellen Betrix lipstick is perceived. Due to the perceived naturalness of the lipstick, the only possible explanation for factors D1, D2 and D4 is that they were perceived to care for lips while at the same time enhancing appearance. This explanation is merely a suggestion since the mentioned three factors did not correspond to the attributes featured in the advertisement.

6.5 FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR THE MAYBELLINE ADVERTISEMENT

Section 6.5 deals with the mean values ascribed to each of the twenty-two variables specifically applied to the Maybelline advertisement. Attention is also drawn to the rotated factor matrix for Maybelline and the labelling of factors identified from the Maybelline data set. Section 6.5 concludes with a comparison between the explicitly mentioned attributes in the Maybelline advertisement and the labelled factors.

6.5.1 Mean value scores for the Maybelline advertisement

Besides featuring a model displaying lipstick, the Maybelline advertisement also explicitly mentioned the following attributes:

- Polished colour
- Innovative formula
- Prevents dryness
- Brand name.

The mean values for each of the twenty-two variables, once exposed to the Maybelline advertisement (rated by the respondents on a scale ranging from excellent to poor), are shown in Table 6.10.

TABLE 6.10: MAYBELLINE MEAN VALUE SCORES

No	Variable	Mean
E1	Moisturises	1,85
E2	Light texture	2,36
E3	Creamy texture	2,47
E4	Long-lasting wear	2,56
E5	Hypoallergenic	2,94
E6	Not tested on animals	3,24
E7	Protects lips	2,45
E8	Nourishes	2,33
E9	Phytospheres	2,81
E10	Smooth	2,22

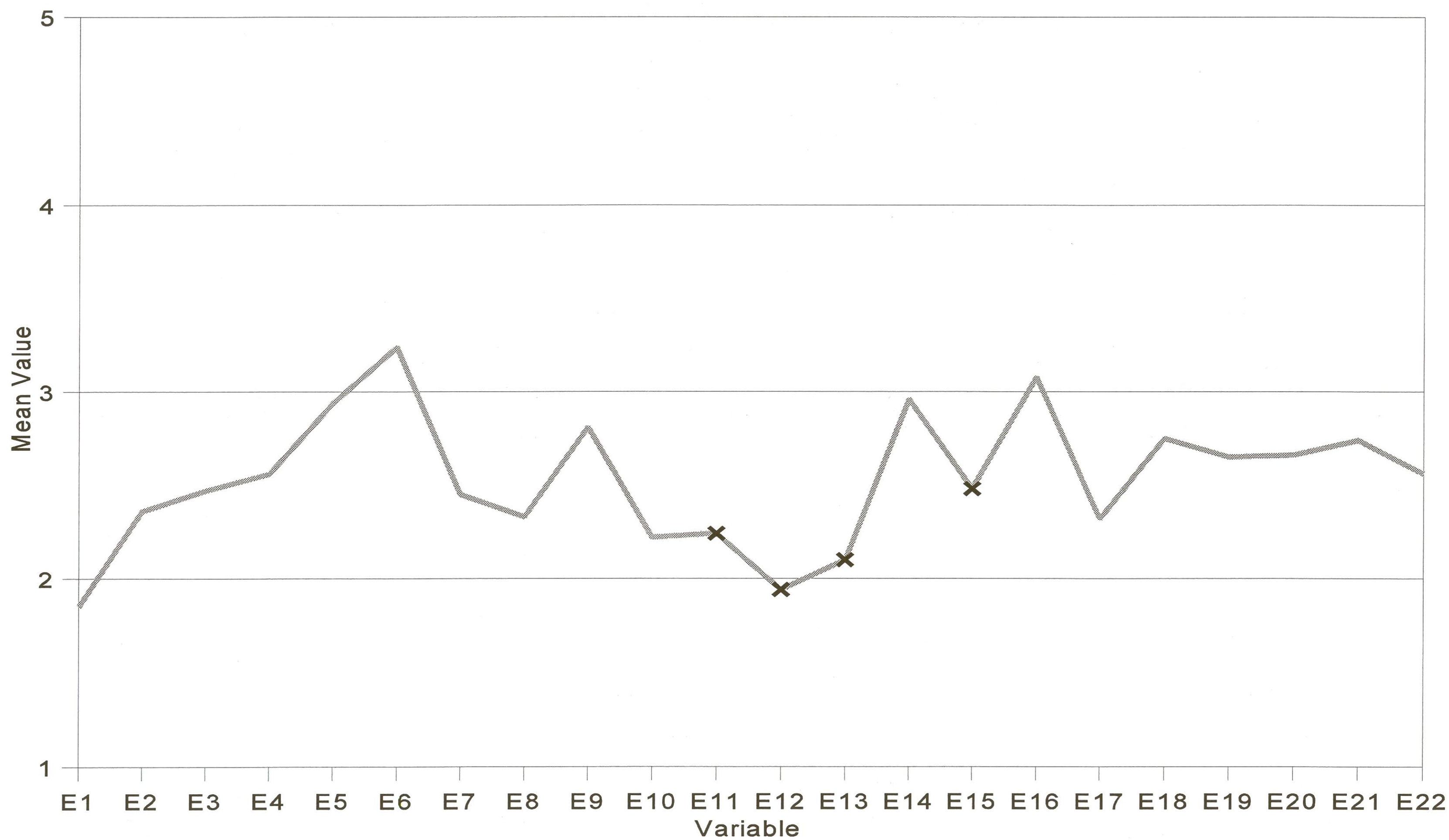
No	Variable	Mean
E11	Innovative formula	2,24
E12	Prevents dryness	1,94
E13	Polished colour	2,10
E14	Perfume-free	2,96
E15	Brand name	2,48
E16	Price	3,08
E17	Colour	2,32
E18	Vitamin E-enriched	2,75
E19	Conditioning colour	2,65
E20	Doesn't run or bleed	2,66
E21	Matt finish	2,74
E22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	2,56

Maybelline was, as indicated in Table 6.10, rated to be excellent on the attributes moisturises (mean value of 1,85), prevents dryness and polished colour. Maybelline performed poorly on the attributes not tested on animals (mean value of 3,24), price, perfume-free and hypoallergenic.

As with the Clarins and Ellen Betrix advertisements, the Maybelline advertisement received better mean scores for attributes explicitly mentioned. The only exeptions were that moisturises, which was not explicitly mentioned, received an excellent score and brand name, which was explicitly mentioned, received a relatively poor score. Although the mean value for brand name (2,48) was not rated as favourable as the other mentioned attributes, the value still performed better than attributes not mentioned in the advertisement.

The more favourable mean value scores of the mentioned attributes (indicated with an X) in the Maybeline advertisement compared to those not mentioned are illustrated in Figure 6.4.

FIGURE 6.4: MAYBELLINE MEAN VALUES



6.5.2 Rotated factor matrix for the Maybelline advertisement

Table 6.11 displays the rotated factor matrix for the twenty-two variables once the respondents were subjected to the Maybelline advertisement.

TABLE 6.11: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX FOR MAYBELLINE

No	Variable	Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
E1	Moisturises	0,17	0,01	0,36	**0,73**	0,04
E2	Light texture	0,12	0,15	0,14	**0,76**	0,22
E3	Creamy texture	0,40	0,24	0,06	**0,65**	0,13
E4	Long-lasting wear	**0,74**	0,30	0,34	0,04	0,03
E5	Hypoallergenic	0,34	**0,60**	0,44	-0,03	-0,04
E6	Not tested on animals	0,11	**0,83**	0,19	-0,01	0,04
E7	Protects lips	**0,54**	0,36	0,46	0,15	0,08
E8	Nourishes	0,34	0,17	**0,64**	0,25	0,05
E9	Phytospheres	0,29	0,46	0,49	0,11	0,06
E10	Smooth	**0,57**	0,08	0,31	0,29	0,17
E11	Innovative formula	0,08	0,01	**0,71**	0,10	0,44
E12	Prevents dryness	0,14	-0,02	**0,69**	0,38	0,31
E13	Polished colour	-0,003	0,24	0,27	0,25	**0,55**
E14	Perfume-free	0,22	**0,71**	-0,04	0,25	0,16
E15	Brand name	0,14	-0,02	0,13	0,10	**0,70**
E16	Price	0,22	**0,77**	-0,02	0,10	0,16
E17	Colour	0,37	0,24	0,17	0,03	**0,65**
E18	Vitamin E-enriched	0,30	0,47	0,07	0,22	0,26
E19	Conditioning colour	**0,56**	0,31	0,01	0,18	0,52
E20	Doesn't run or bleed	**0,74**	0,24	0,15	0,25	0,17
E21	Matt finish	**0,64**	0,28	-0,02	0,18	0,38
E22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	**0,82**	0,16	0,16	0,13	0,12
Eigenvalues		**8,79**	**1,94**	**1,26**	**1,18**	**1,07**
Percentage of variance		**39,9%**	**8,8%**	**5,7%**	**5,4%**	**4,9%**
Cumulative percentage		**39,9%**	**48,7%**	**54,4%**	**59,8%**	**64,7%**

As indicated in Table 6.11, five factors (labelled E1 to E5) were identified. Factor E1 comprised seven, E2 four, and factors E3 to E5 three variables respectively. The eigenvalues for factors E1 to E5 are 8,79; 1,94; 1,26; 1,18 and 1,07 respectively.

Factor E1 accounted for 39,9%, E2 for an additional 8,8%, E3 for 5,7%, E4 for 5,4% and E5 for 4,9% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables. The five identified factors for the Maybelline study explained an acceptable 64,7% of the total variance, the greatest cumulative percentage of all four sets of data.

The following section deals with the labelling of the extracted five factors (E1 to E5) for the Maybelline advertisement.

6.5.3 Factor identification

As mentioned in the previous section, five factors were identified for the Maybelline advertisement. In this section these factors will be thoroughly examined and labelled accordingly.

Factor E1

Factor E1 comprised the following seven variables

No	Variable	Loading
E22	Stays on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	0,82
E4	Long-lasting wear	0,74
E20	Doesn't run or bleed	0,74
E21	Matt finish	0,64
E10	Smooth	0,57
E19	Conditioning colour	0,56
E7	Protects lips	0,54

Variables E22 (stays on lips), E4 (long-lasting wear) and E20 (doesn't run or bleed) display the durability characteristic of lipstick. The matt finish (E21) quality of lipstick supports the durability claim by preserving colour (E19) and ensuring that the colour won't feather or fade.

Protection of lips (variable E7) is supported by variable E10 (smooth) since the lines and cracks in lips are filled resulting in the protection of delicate lip tissue.

Factor E1 is therefore labelled **durability and protection.**

Factor E2

Factor E2 comprised four variables,

No	Variable	Loading
E6	Not tested on animals	0,83
E16	Price	0,77
E14	Perfume-free	0,71
E5	Hypoallergenic	0,60

Factor E2 clearly exhibits naturalness through the fact that the lipstick has not been tested on animals (variable E6), that it is perfume-free (E14) and that it is hypo-allergenic (E5).

Price (variable E16) once again played an important role in indicating the importance of value for money. Factor E2 is therefore labelled **naturalness and value for money.**

Factor E3

Factor E3 comprised the following three variables:

No	Variable	Loading
E11	Innovative formula	0,71
E12	Prevents dryness	0,69
E8	Nourishes	0,64

Although variables E12 (prevents dryness) and E8 (nourishes) suggest protection as label for factor E3, it is important to note that variable E11 (innovative formula) has the greatest factor loading and can therefore not be discarded. Factor E3 should therefore rather be labelled **formula** since the formula ensures the prevention of dryness by nourishing lips.

Factor E4

The following three variables loaded heavily on factor E4:

No	Variable	Loading
E2	Light texture	0,76
E1	Moisturises	0,73
E3	Creamy texture	0,65

Variable E2 (light texture) and E3 (creamy texture) clearly identify texture as label for factor E4. As mentioned earlier, a creamy texture usually characterises moisturised lips (E1) and ensures a light texture in stead of a dry finish. Factor E4 is therefore labelled **texture.**

Factor E5

The final factor comprised three variables, namely

No	Variable	Loading
E15	Brand name	0,70
E17	Colour	0,65
E13	Polished colour	0,55

Factor E5 clearly focuses on both brand name (variable E15) and colour (variables E17 and E13). Factor E5 is therefore labelled **brand association** with specific reference to colour.

Table 6.12 indicates the labelled factors for the Maybelline advertisement.

TABLE 6.12: LABELLED FACTORS FOR MAYBELLINE

Factor	Description	Percentage of variance	Cumulative percentage
E1	Durability and protection	39,9%	39,9%
E2	Naturalness and value for money	8,8%	48,7%
E3	Formula	5,7%	54,4%
E4	Texture	5,4%	59,8%
E5	Brand association	4,9%	64,7%

Durability and protection (factor E1) explained 39,9% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables. Factor E2 (naturalness and value for money) explained an additional 8,8% and factor E3 (formula) 5,7% of the variance. The final two factors, E4 (texture) and E5 (brand association) accounted for 5,4% and 4,9% respectively. Factors E1 to E5 cumulatively explained 64,7% of the total variance for the twenty-two variables.

6.5.4 Interpretation

As mentioned, the Maybelline advertisement explicitly mentioned four lipstick attributes, namely polished colour, innovative formula, prevents dryness and brand name.

As with the other advertisements, the attributes portrayed in the Maybelline advertisement were perceived to be of greater importance than those attributes not mentioned since the featured attributes received better mean value scores.

As can be seen from the mentioned attributes, the advertisement seemed to position Maybelline as a lipstick that focused on colour and protection (by preventing dryness) through the use of an innovative formula.

Factors identified for the Maybelline data set corresponding with the advertisement claims are factor E1, durability and protection, factor E3, formula and factor E5, brand association.

Factor E1, durability and protection, to a certain extent correspond with the claim that Maybelline prevents dryness since this product feature protects lips by either moisturising or nourishing the lips. Although the labelled factor comprised different variables, the resemblance in the fact that Maybelline protects is eminent. The durability claim, however, is unaccounted for.

The fact that the formula used in producing Maybelline lipstick prevents dryness (both mentioned attributes in the advertisement) corresponds to factor E3, formula. The labelled factor also included the variable, nourishes, which would naturally come to mind when lipstick is formulated to prevent dryness. Factor E3 can therefore be regarded as corresponding to the attributes portrayed in the advertisement.

Factor E5, brand association, corresponds with the advertisement since the labelled factor acknowledged that Maybelline is associated with colour. Polished colour was explicitly mentioned as an attribute in the Maybelline advertisement and as mentioned, the advertisement also portrayed a female model displaying the product. Much emphasis was placed on the beautiful colour of the model's lips by portraying a beautiful, striking colour. The lipstick would most likely be associated with the beautiful colour portrayed by the model.

Factors E2, naturalness and value for money, and E4, texture, does however not correspond in any way with either the explicitly mentioned attributes in the advertisement or the features implied by the model. Any meaning ascribed to the unexplained factors as a result of the appearance of the model would only be a suggestion and furthermore highly subjective. The relevance of factors E2 and E4 would therefore be acknowledged as unexplained with specific reference to the Maybelline advertisement.

6.6 SUMMARY

Chapter 6 presented the results and interpretation of the research conducted to determine consumer perceptions of displayed product attributes in advertising.

The mean value scores for each of the twenty-two lipstick attributes for the product category lipstick as well as the three identified advertisements, Clarins, Ellen Betrix and Maybelline were presented. Factors were identified and labelled and the discussion on each data set was concluded with an interpretation for each of the labelled factors.

Chapter 7 concludes the research study by drawing a final conclusion and providing recommendations for the use of product attributes in advertising with specific recognition to the preceding factor analysis study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The area of research undertaken in this study, namely to determine consumer perceptions of displayed product attributes in advertising, is a research project that could aid the marketer to differentiate his brand from competitive brands on the basis of product attributes when developing advertisements or drafting positioning strategies.

The research conducted to accomplish the objectives set for this study comprised two phases, namely content analysis and a quasi-experimental design. The rationale for using content analysis was to draft an exhaustive list of product attributes functional to the product category lipstick. The results obtained through content analysis was then used during the second phase of the research project, quasi-experimental design, to compile a questionnaire that was presented to 187 female respondents familiar with the product category. The results obtained from the questionnaires were then used as input variables to factor analysis. Factor analysis was used to reduce the number of variables but still retaining as much information as possible to ensure that the remaining variables were meaningful and easy to work with.

The theoretical overview of the study presented in Chapters two, three and four indicated the difficulty in understanding the consumer perception and decision-making process. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of product attributes from the perspective of the marketer and the consumer.

The consumer perception process, discussed in Chapter three, has been documented as the most significant barrier to effective communication. The explanation for such a statement is that it is believed that it is at this point that the sender does or does not get through to the consumer, since correct decoding of marketing information hinges on the consumer's perception of the communication content.

The consumer perception process consists of five distinct activities. First the consumer has to be exposed to stimuli. Exposure occurs when a stimulus comes within the range of our sensory receptor nerves, ie when stimuli come within the range of our senses. The importance of exposure is that there can be no communication (or a perception process for that matter) without exposure to stimuli.

Secondly, the consumer has to direct attention to the stimuli. Important from a marketing perspective is that no matter how often a consumer is exposed to marketing stimuli the message is of no use if attention did not take place. The attention process can therefore be viewed as an information filter - a screening mechanism that controls the quantity and nature of information any individual receives. Important to consider is that if the consumer does not attend to the product attributes (or the total advertisement for that matter) he is exposed to, even the explicit mentioning of the attributes is to no avail. It is therefore extremely important for the marketer to ensure that consideration is given to methods of attracting attention when developing advertisements. One such method may be to explicitly mention (or place focus on) the attributes that differentiate the marketer's brand from those of competitors.

The third phase in the perception process, perceptual organisation, suggests that stimuli are not perceived as a set of elements but as a whole. This total is believed to have a meaning of its own that is not necessarily deductible from its individual components, referred to as Gestalt psychology. The marketer needs to acknowledge the Gestalt psychology and perceptual organisation in general when developing advertisements since they may ensure that the consumer pays attention to the marketer's advertisements.

Perceptual interpretation, the fourth phase in the perception process, is uniquely individual since it is based on what individuals expect to see in the light of their previous experience, on the number of plausible explanations they can envisage and on their interests and motives at the time perception occurs. A problem experienced with the interpretation process, from a marketer's point of view, is that individuals may interpret the same stimulus differently. The marketer therefore needs to develop an advertisement with great caution to attempt that a mentioned product attribute is perceived by the consumer as having the same benefit as was envisaged by the marketer.

The final phase of the perception process, retention, is very important for the marketer. Even if the total perception process was successful, it serves no purpose if the consumer is unable to recall the information when he is required to act on it. The message has failed if the consumer cannot remember its content. The marketer therefore needs to ensure that his advertising claims are remembered by the consumer. This is made possible through repetitive advertising by ensuring that attention is captured by the advertisement. The use of differentiating product attributes may assist the marketer to capture attention and thereby "force" the consumer to retain the information when deciding between alternatives.

When deciding between alternatives, the consumer moves through all the major stages of the decision-making process. The process always commences with the recognition of a need, which occurs when a discrepancy exists between the consumers' actual state and the state he desires to be in. Once a need has been triggered (eg through the depletion of current stock, dissatisfaction with his current brand, change in financial status, etc), the consumer enters the second stage, namely information search. The search for information can either be of an internal or external nature or a combination of both. The primary objective of information search is to collect information that could be used as the basis for choosing among alternatives. It is eminent that product attributes play an important role in the information search process since the consumer often has to depend on displayed attributes to differentiate among brands.

Once the search process has been completed, the consumer enters stage three, namely evaluation of alternatives. During the third phase, the consumer not only has to decide what brand he should choose, but also has to consider the criteria (decision rules) he should use in evaluating each brand. The consumer therefore considers the choice alternatives along the evaluative criteria selected. Product attributes often form the basis for evaluating alternatives and are furthermore employed in decision rules.

During the fourth stage, the consumer enters the purchase phase where the selected alternative is purchased for consumption. Interesting to note is that a purchase can either be fully planned, planned or unplanned. A fully planned purchase occurs when the consumer decides precisely which brand within a product category he wishes to purchase. If he only decides on the product category (without a specific brand within that category), the purchase is classified as planned. Unplanned purchases occur when a product is purchased without prior articulation of the purchase (either verbally or on a shopping list). This does, however, not imply that a decision process did not occur. The purchase may be based on product displays, where the display provides a reminder of a need and a purchase is triggered.

In the final phase of the consumer decision-making process, postpurchase evaluation, the consumer consumes the product. If the expectations held for the product are met or exceeded, the consumer is likely to be satisfied with the purchase. Dissatisfaction then, is the outcome of negatively confirmed expectations. The outcome of the postpurchase evaluation, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, has a direct influence on consumer beliefs and attitudes, future purchase intentions, word-of-mouth communications and complaint behaviour.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

All the objectives set for the study, as indicated in Section 1.2, were achieved. The primary objective, namely to determine consumer perceptions of displayed product attributes in advertising, was achieved through the contributions of the secondary objectives set for the study.

The objective to determine the relevant evaluation criteria (attributes) used to evaluate lipstick, was achieved through the use of content analysis during the first phase of the research project. **Twenty-two attributes were identified which in turn were used as input variables to the second phase of the research project, a quasi-experimental design**. A sample of lipstick users was required to evaluate the importance of the overall product attributes for the product category and the three advertised brands the users were exposed to. A statistical analysis, factor analysis, was then used to reduce the number of attributes to a more manageable set. **The result was the identification of a number of underlying factors pertaining to the product category and the brands selected for the study.**

In determining the perceived importance of each attribute when evaluating lipstick, it was found that **all the attributes were perceived by the respondents to be important when selecting lipstick**. None of the attributes received a mean value greater than 3,0, where a mean value of 1,0 was considered extremely important and a mean value of 5,0 totally unimportant. The preceding content analysis was therefore considered to be well executed with the exhaustive list of product attributes functional to the study.

With reference to the explicitly mentioned attributes for all three advertisements (Clarins, Ellen Betrix and Maybelline), it is important to note that the **mentioned attributes were perceived more important and therefore received better mean value scores than attributes not mentioned in the advertisements.** It can therefore be assumed that the respondents took definite notice of the mentioned attributes and perceived these attributes to be of greater importance.

This finding is important since each time the mentioned attributes differed, the attributes that were deemed important differed. It can therefore be suggested that **explicitly mentioned attributes in advertising are perceived to be of great importance with reference to a specific product category** (keeping in mind that in this study, the most important attributes identified when selecting the product were given as reference when each brand was rated, with the mentioned attributes receiving better scores each time).

During the second phase of the study factor analysis was used to determine underlying factors pertaining to the multiple evaluation criteria for the product category lipstick when applied to product-specific advertisements. Factors were subtracted from each of the four sets of data. An interesting finding was that the **factors identified for the product category lipstick, once labelled, differed from the important attributes identified** (in terms of mean values). Colour for example, was rated the most important single attribute when selecting lipstick, but the first identified factor suggested that lip care was the most important feature sought when selecting lipstick. An innovative formula and brand name received relatively poor ratings, yet composition and brand association featured as characteristics considered when selecting a lipstick.

In determining change in consumer perceptions of attributes for the product category lipstick when compared with product-specific advertisements and the change in perceptions as the explicitly mentioned attributes varied, it is important to note that **the level of correspondence between the featured attributes in the advertisements and the identified factors differed with each of the three advertisements.** As more attributes were mentioned in the advertisements, the more the factors identified for the advertisements corresponded with the mentioned attributes.

It can therefore be suggested that **as more attributes are identified in advertisements, the greater the correspondence between the mentioned attributes and the labelled factors becomes.**

A further important finding was that as more attributes were mentioned, the factors identified for the advertisements corresponded to the factors identified for the product category. As the number of explicit mentioned attributes decreased, the correspondence between the mentioned attributes and the identified factors decreased. The correspondence between the factors unaccounted for and the factors identified for the product category increased, leading to the suggestion that **when specific guidelines (attributes) are not provided in advertisements, consumers are "forced" to lean on their previous held beliefs and perceptions.** Acknowledgement is then rather given to the product category than to the advertised brand.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations regarding this study can be applied to the marketer planning to use attributes in drafting a positioning strategy or developing an advertising campaign focusing on product attributes. Attributes can be used by the marketer in an advertisement to position the product in the mind of the consumer according to his product's attributes or to change the perception the consumer currently holds of either the attributes of the product category or of a specific brand. Important to note is that perceptions that consumers hold of attributes often differ from the intended meaning conveyed by the marketer through his advertisements.

It can be suggested that the marketer needs to determine which attributes (characteristics or factors) are perceived to be of value to the consumer for his product category. Once these attributes have been identified, the marketer may benefit by evaluating his brand on these criteria to determine his relative competitiveness. The identified attributes should, if present in the marketer's product, be communicated through the marketer's advertisements.

Besides mentioning the identified attributes, the marketer should also mention his product's differentiating attributes, since attributes that are explicitly mentioned in advertisements are perceived to be of greater importance to the consumer.

The marketer should furthermore note that as more attributes are mentioned in advertisements, the greater the correspondence will be between identified factors and mentioned attributes. As less attributes are mentioned, the consumer is "forced" to lean on previous held beliefs and perceptions. The marketer therefore stands at risk of failing in his intended message (trying to create or change a certain perception in the mind of the consumer) if attributes are not explicitly mentioned in his advertisements.

7.4 SUMMARY

The final chapter provides a short summary of the preceding theoretical overview of the study, referring to the consumer perception and decision-making processes and emphasising the importance of product attributes in both these processes. A short reference is also made to the research methodology applied in the execution of the study.

The final conclusions pertaining to the study are drawn and the acknowledgement that the primary and secondary objectives set for the study have been achieved. The chapter concludes with recommendations to the marketer of lipstick and to the marketer using product attributes in advertising.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE TO MEASURE THE UNDERLYING DIMENSIONS FROM VARIOUS EVALUATION CRITERIA CONSUMERS CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A LIPSTICK

SECTION A: USAGE PATTERNS

1. Do you use lipstick?

Yes	No

2. How regularly do you wear lipstick?

Never (don't use lipstick)	Seldom (0-2 occasions per week)	Regularly (2-4 occasions per week)	Fairly regularly (4-6 occasions per week)	Frequently (More than 6 occasions per week)

SECTION B: IMPORTANCE RATING

When selecting a lipstick, how important would you consider each of the attributes listed below? Indicate the importance of each attribute, ranging from extremely important (EI) to totally unimportant (TU), by marking the appropriate alternative with a "x".

Example:

	Extremely Important (EI)		Totally Unimportant (TU)
Leave lips soft:	(EI)	. . . . X	(TU)

Lipstick Attributes

	Extremely Important (EI)		Totally Unimportant (TU)
Moisturises	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Light texture	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Creamy texture	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Long-lasting wear	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Hypoallergenic	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Not tested on animals	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Protects lips	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Nourishes	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Phytospheres	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Smooth	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Innovative formula	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Prevents dryness	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Polished colour	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Perfume-free	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Brand name	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Price	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Colour	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Vitamin E-enriched	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Conditioning colour	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Doesn't run or bleed	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Matt finish	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)
Stay on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	(EI)	. . . .	(TU)

SECTION C: PERFORMANCE SCALES

A: Based on your opinion, how would you rate each of the attributes listed below, ranging from excellent to poor, after reading through the advertisement for Clarins:

	Excellent (E)		Poor (P)
Moisturises	(E)	....	(P)
Light texture	(E)	....	(P)
Creamy texture	(E)	....	(P)
Long-lasting wear	(E)	....	(P)
Hypoallergenic	(E)	....	(P)
Not tested on animals	(E)	....	(P)
Protects lips	(E)	....	(P)
Nourishes	(E)	....	(P)
Phytospheres	(E)	....	(P)
Smooth	(E)	....	(P)
Innovative formula	(E)	....	(P)
Prevents dryness	(E)	....	(P)
Polished colour	(E)	....	(P)
Perfume-free	(E)	....	(P)
Brand name	(E)	....	(P)
Price	(E)	....	(P)
Colour	(E)	....	(P)
Vitamin E-enriched	(E)	....	(P)
Conditioning colour	(E)	....	(P)
Doesn't run or bleed	(E)	....	(P)
Matt finish	(E)	....	(P)
Stay on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	(E)	....	(P)

B: Based on your opinion, how would you rate each of the attributes listed below, ranging from excellent to poor, after reading through the advertisement for Ellen Betrix:

	Excellent (E)		Poor (P)
Moisturises	(E)	....	(P)
Light texture	(E)	....	(P)
Creamy texture	(E)	....	(P)
Long-lasting wear	(E)	....	(P)
Hypoallergenic	(E)	....	(P)
Not tested on animals	(E)	....	(P)
Protects lips	(E)	....	(P)
Nourishes	(E)	....	(P)
Phytospheres	(E)	....	(P)
Smooth	(E)	....	(P)
Innovative formula	(E)	....	(P)
Prevents dryness	(E)	....	(P)
Polished colour	(E)	....	(P)
Perfume-free	(E)	....	(P)
Brand name	(E)	....	(P)
Price	(E)	....	(P)
Colour	(E)	....	(P)
Vitamin E-enriched	(E)	....	(P)
Conditioning colour	(E)	....	(P)
Doesn't run or bleed	(E)	....	(P)
Matt finish	(E)	....	(P)
Stay on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	(E)	....	(P)

C: Based on your opinion, how would you rate each of the attributes listed below, ranging from excellent to poor, after reading through the advertisement for Maybelline:

	Excellent (E)		Poor (P)
Moisturises	(E)	....	(P)
Light texture	(E)	....	(P)
Creamy texture	(E)	....	(P)
Long-lasting wear	(E)	....	(P)
Hypoallergenic	(E)	....	(P)
Not tested on animals	(E)	....	(P)
Protects lips	(E)	....	(P)
Nourishes	(E)	....	(P)
Phytospheres	(E)	....	(P)
Smooth	(E)	....	(P)
Innovative formula	(E)	....	(P)
Prevents dryness	(E)	....	(P)
Polished colour	(E)	....	(P)
Perfume-free	(E)	....	(P)
Brand name	(E)	....	(P)
Price	(E)	....	(P)
Colour	(E)	....	(P)
Vitamin E-enriched	(E)	....	(P)
Conditioning colour	(E)	....	(P)
Doesn't run or bleed	(E)	....	(P)
Matt finish	(E)	....	(P)
Stay on lips (won't kiss or rub off)	(E)	....	(P)

APPENDIX B

THREE DIFFERENT LIPSTICK ADVERTISEMENTS PRESENTED TO A SAMPLE OF LIPSTICK USERS

Clarins

Ellen Betrix

Maybelline

ROUGE ECLAT CLARINS.

Pure brilliance for lips.

NEW!

Rouge Eclat offers perfect colour.

Rouge Eclat has a stunning range of shades, available in three harmonies: Reds, Pinks and Corals. Each perfectly complements your individual style.

Colour that also treats and protects the lips.

Created to truly care for the lips, Rouge Eclat protects, enhances and nourishes. Phytospheres, unique to Clarins, continuously release moisture to keep lips soft and supple.

Smooth as silk.

The light, creamy texture glides smoothly across the lips. Rouge Eclat delivers pure brilliant colour formulated for long lasting wear.

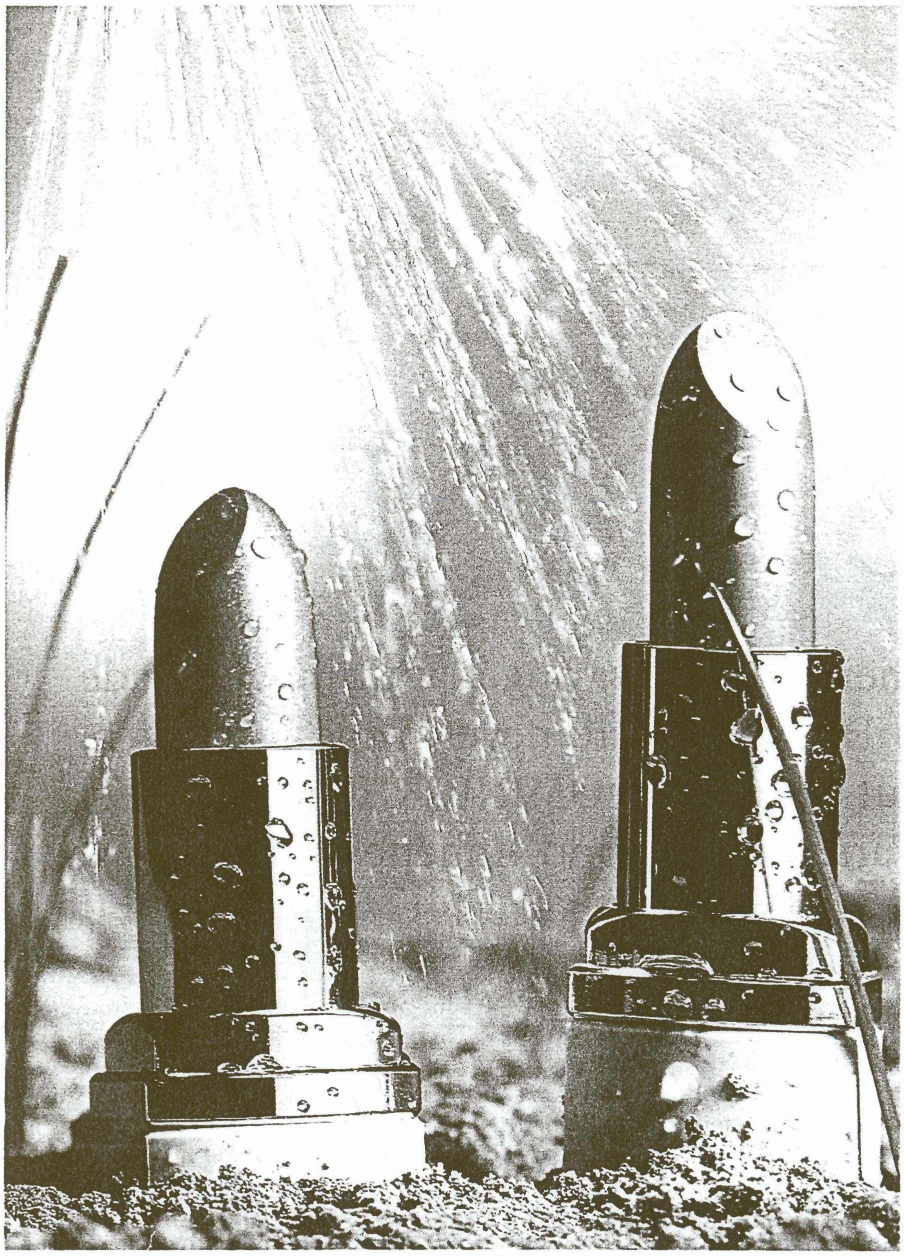
Rouge Eclat is hypo-allergenic and has not been tested on animals.

An object of desire. A jewel for the lips.

CLARINS
PARIS

The natural sequel to skin care

CARTER & A COUPLE 9009



ELLEN BETRIX

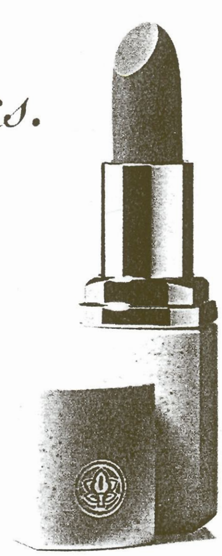
THE CARE COMPANY

Skin as fresh as a spring breeze. Cheeks as fair as the dawn. Lips as delicate as the dew. When it comes to beauty and colour, Mother Nature is simply second to none.

And this is where we went to look for inspiration when we designed our new Pure & Natural Look range of colours. So we bring you dew-fresh lipsticks to pick and choose. Light, tender eyeshadows soft as the spring. Each and everyone available in gentle colours to bring out your natural beauty.

All Pure & Natural products are hypo-allergenic and perfume-free, making them very compatible and gentle with your skin. So if you want to linger in nature a little longer, go to your nearest Ellen Betrix counter and discover Mother Nature's latest wonder: Pure & Natural Look. The colour cosmetics line for the natural look. From Ellen Betrix, naturally.

Fresh from Mother Nature:
Our delightful new dew-fresh lipsticks.



PURE + NATURAL LOOK

THE COLOURS OF NATURE

SONNENBERG MURPHY LEO BURNETT S19034


Exceptional.
A woman who
seems to feel so good in lipstick.
Like it's part of her
and not some heavy
lip-sticky add-on
Kissed by fate?
Nonsense.
Moisture Whip
Lipstick by Maybelline.
Polished colour.
Innovative formula.
With skin care ingredients
to prevent dryness.
MAYBE SHE'S BORN WITH IT.
MAYBE IT'S MAYBELLINE.
Christy Turlington is wearing Moisture Whip Lipstick