



# Decoding Consumer Choice: A Comprehensive Exploration of Psychological Influences on Consumer Buying Behavior

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## Abstract

This research paper explores the multifaceted area of psychological factors that intricately shape consumer behavior in the marketplace. Anchored in the perceptual process, comprising exposure, attention, and interpretation, the study examines how individuals interact with stimuli, make decisions, and form relationships with products and brands. Additionally, the research delves into the role of learning and expertise, highlighting the continuous learning process that fosters expertise development, guides decision-making, and influences consumer preferences. In addition, the study explores the relationship between learning and expertise, emphasizing how ongoing learning promotes the growth of expertise, directs decision-making, and shapes consumer preferences. A detailed outline of the complex network of psychological elements influencing consumer behavior is given in this research study. Through the process of dissecting exposure, attention, interpretation, memory, familiarity, learning, expertise, and attitudes, companies can acquire important knowledge that helps them develop customized marketing strategies that genuinely engage customers and build enduring relationships within the cutthroat industry. The findings of this study highlight how important it is to identify and address the many psychological factors that influence people's decision-making processes while they shop.

**IndexTerms – Consumer Psychology, Consumer Choice, Decision making, Perception, Attitude, Memory, Learning.**

## I. Introduction

As the factors influencing and shaping customer behavior change quickly, marketers are faced with both fascinating and difficult issues. Marketing has changed in terms of what it offers and how it interacts with customers. The situation has evolved as customers have gained control over advertisers. Consumer behavior is said to be influenced and conditioned by several circumstances, much like any other human behavior. "Consumer behavior is the activities and decision-making processes of people who acquire products and services for personal consumption," (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard). Thus, consumer behavior is the study and analysis of the processes and activities that individuals, groups, or organizations undertake when searching for, selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of products and services to satisfy their needs and wants. Successful

marketing decisions require organizations to collect information about the specific consumers involved in the marketing decision at hand.

Numerous processes are frequently involved in consumer decisions, which are impacted by a range of factors such as cultural values, lifestyle, and demography. When families must choose where to go on vacation or where to have supper, for example, the needs and desires of several people or groups are taken into account, which further complicates consumer selections. Businesses, charitable institutions, and government agencies must comprehend the mechanisms driving customer behaviour to make effective marketing decisions. This has to do with knowing the ideas behind the when and why of consumer behavior. Marketing choices that are supported by research, assumptions, and explicit theories of customer behaviour are more likely to be effective than those that are made based on gut feelings or intuition, giving them a competitive edge. Reducing the likelihood of failures may be achieved by having a thorough grasp of consumer behaviour.

## II. Importance of Consumer Behavior in Marketing

An organisation must offer its target consumers greater value than its rivals do in order to thrive in a competitive climate. The difference between the overall advantages of a product and the whole expenditures incurred in obtaining those benefits is known as customer value. A company needs to think about value from the standpoint of the client. An experience is primarily internal to every consumer, whereas goods and services are mostly external. A person who has been involved on an intellectual, physical, emotional, or even spiritual level has the experience in their mind. Without a thorough grasp of customer behaviour, it is impossible to predict and respond to the wants and requirements of customers. To understand the consumer, one must comprehend the behavioural concepts..

It is crucial to comprehend how customers make purchases. Kotler & Keller (2015) state that the methods in which consumers select their goods and services may be crucial for producers and suppliers alike, as it provides them with a number of advantages over rivals.

Because customer behaviour has a significant influence on the viability and success of any organisation, it is crucial for marketers and businesses to understand it. The following main points emphasise how important it is to research customer behavior:

- 2.1 Informed Decision-Making:** Businesses may make well-informed decisions regarding product development, marketing tactics, and resource allocation by having a thorough understanding of customer behaviour. It enables businesses to match their efforts to the real requirements and preferences of their intended market.
- 2.2 Effective Marketing Strategies:** A deep understanding of consumer behavior helps in crafting more effective marketing campaigns. Marketers can tailor their messages, channels, and promotional activities to resonate with the psychological and emotional drivers that influence consumer choices.
- 2.3 Product Development and Innovation:** Innovation and product development are driven by consumer insights. Businesses may develop goods and services that have a higher chance of satisfying customer needs and being accepted by the market by knowing what customers value and desire.
- 2.4 Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty:** In order to create loyalty and increase client satisfaction, it is imperative to meet and above their expectations. Through an awareness of the elements that affect customer happiness, companies may improve their goods and services to make customers happy and foster brand loyalty.
- 2.5 Market Segmentation:** Businesses may discover discrete customer categories with specific demands and characteristics by using consumer behaviour analysis to help with market segmentation. This segmentation makes it easier to target marketing campaigns according to the tastes of particular audiences.
- 2.6 Risk Mitigation:** Businesses may predict market trends and shifts in customer preferences by analysing consumer behaviour. Companies may proactively modify their strategy thanks to this foresight, which lowers the risks brought on by changes in the market environment.

- 2.7 Competitive Edge:** Companies may obtain a competitive advantage by investing in their understanding of customer behaviour. By providing experiences and goods that closely match customer expectations, they may set themselves apart from the competition and establish a distinctive value proposition.
- 2.8 Optimized Pricing Strategies:** Price strategies are informed by consumer behaviour analysis, which takes into account how customers react to discounts, evaluate value, and base their purchases on pricing structures. For pricing to be both lucrative and competitive, this information is essential.
- 2.9 Adaptation to Technological Changes:** It's important to comprehend how customers use and interact with technology in this age of exponential technical breakthroughs. Companies can guarantee a smooth integration of technology into the customer experience by matching their digital strategy with consumer preferences.
- 2.10 Long-Term Relationship Building:** Understanding customers' changing wants and habits is essential to establishing long-lasting connections with them. Prioritizing customer data helps businesses build long-term connections, credibility, and trust—all of which help to improve their brand image.

In essence, the importance of understanding consumer behavior lies in its ability to guide businesses toward strategies that resonate with consumers, create value, and foster sustainable growth in an ever-changing market environment. Businesses that invest in consumer behavior research are better equipped to navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and build enduring success.

### III. Psychological Underpinnings of Consumer Behavior

Factors influencing consumer behavior are the actions, occurrences, and environments that influence people's decisions to buy products and services. Some of them are on the "visible range" of the forces, therefore it is reasonably easy to identify and quantify their effect. Other's function "under-layer" and appear in other ways, but their influence on psychological elements is evident. Each person's psychological components are significant on their own. Their impact is substantial, yet it's challenging to research. The particulars of that set of elements are that they stand for the distinct characteristics and reactions of customers.

Researchers indicate a preference for the ideas and methodological formulations in cognitive psychology when it comes to the explanation of the psychological aspects of consumer behavior. The latter facilitates a deeper comprehension of the structure and operation of the mental states and processes that underlie the decision-making processes of consumers (Lichev, G. t., 2017). The dynamic and broad subject of consumer behavior psychology research examines the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements that affect people's judgments while making purchases of products and services. Several research works explore different facets of consumer psychology, providing insight into important areas including attitudes, emotions, motivation, perception, and decision-making processes. It investigates the complicated processes that govern the ideas and deeds that sway people's purchasing decisions. It is a branch of psychology that seeks to comprehend the attitudes, emotions, and thought processes that affect customers' choices of goods and services.

The subfield of psychology called "consumer psychology" studies the complex and dynamic interactions that people have with the marketplace. It focuses on comprehending the thought processes, feelings, and actions that affect the decisions that customers make while making purchases of goods and services. Using knowledge from cognitive psychology, social psychology, and neuroscience, consumer psychology is a dynamic field that offers a thorough grasp of the complex interactions people have with the market.

Psychological variables exert a significant impact on consumer behavior, forming the complex terrain of personal decision-making inside the marketplace. These elements, which have their roots in the depths of human emotion and thought, add to the diverse range of choices and preferences made by consumers. The symphony of consumer decision-making is orchestrated by the intricate interaction of perceptions, motives, attitudes, and the underlying cognitive processes. It is crucial for organisations to comprehend these psychological aspects in order to effectively navigate the always-changing world of customer behavior. By exploring the subtle nuances of the human psyche, companies can tailor their strategies, marketing efforts, and product offerings to resonate

authentically with the diverse and dynamic needs of their target audience. In the realm of consumer behavior, the exploration of these psychological factors unveils a captivating journey into

### 3.1. Consumer Memory and Familiarity

Our memory is a record of our history. As a result, it helps with memory. However, memory is much more than that; it also includes the ability to learn, be impacted by past experiences, and change one's behavior in the wake of an encounter. All learned human behavior, including speech, conceptual knowledge, skillful tasks, social relationships, and consumer choices, is controlled by memory.

Memory and familiarity are two psychological factors that intricately shape the consumer shopping experience, contributing to the dynamic tapestry of decision-making. Memory, as a cognitive process, plays a crucial role in influencing product recall and recognition. Consumers often rely on their memories to retrieve information about brands, products, and past shopping experiences. Positive memories associated with a brand or product can enhance brand loyalty and influence repeat purchases, while negative memories may deter consumers from revisiting certain products or brands.

Familiarity, on the other hand, is closely tied to the recognition of brands and products within the consumer's cognitive framework. Familiarity can instill a sense of comfort and trust, influencing consumers to gravitate towards well-known brands or products during their shopping journeys. This sense of familiarity can be established through consistent branding, advertising, and positive past interactions with a brand.

Together, memory and familiarity create a symbiotic relationship in consumer behavior. Positive memories contribute to the development of familiarity, and a sense of familiarity enhances memory retrieval during the decision-making process. Businesses that strategically leverage these psychological factors can optimize their marketing efforts, reinforcing positive memories, building brand familiarity, and ultimately influencing consumer choices during the shopping experience. Understanding the intricate interplay between memory and familiarity provides valuable insights for businesses aiming to create lasting impressions and connections with consumers in the competitive marketplace.

The way that academics interpret empirical data and continue to create concepts of memory is a constant process. Even while the underlying theories governing memory often evolve extremely slowly, conceptual shifts do happen. Nonetheless, there hasn't been much focus on making sure we comprehend the parallels and differences between the terminologies, ideas, and presumptions associated with memory.

### 3.2. Learning and expertise

Since at least the 1960s, consumer learning has been a key concept in models of consumer behaviour (e.g., Howard & Sheth, 1969; Massy, Montgomery & Morrison, 1970). Consumer behaviour is heavily influenced by knowledge and experience, which adds to the complex dynamics that determine how people behave in the marketplace. Learning is a psychological process that includes gaining experiences and information that affect how consumers make decisions. Through a variety of channels, like as suggestions, ads, and personal experiences, consumers are constantly learning about companies, goods, and their preferences. This is a dynamic process of learning that changes as users take in new information and incorporate it into what they already know.

Conversely, expertise denotes a higher degree of understanding and skill in a certain field. In the context of consumer behaviour, exposure to particular product categories or sectors on a regular basis, in-depth study, or a personal passion can help people become experts in such areas. A keen awareness of industry trends and product attributes enables expert consumers to make well-informed choices by drawing on their wealth of information.

Learning and expertise have a symbiotic connection. Ongoing education helps people become more knowledgeable, and knowledgeable people are better at teaching. Experienced buyers may display distinct decision-making styles, depending on their wealth of information to assess items fast and choose wisely.

A wide range of experiences, such as searching for information, making decisions repeatedly, using and consuming a product repeatedly, and intentional practise, can lead to product familiarity. It has been discovered that although some of these experience kinds do enhance competence, others do not. High degrees of skill, however, are seldom attained without a successful information search or without prompt, explicit feedback on the results of choices made and things used and consumed. Deliberate practice is frequently necessary in consumer realms such as artistic expression or competitive performance. In a similar manner, product familiarity may lead to the development of consumer knowledge and other benefits.

First, since knowledge enables consumers to understand, remember, recall, and infer more, customers might become more fully and perfectly informed.

Second, since they acquire more effective tactics, depend less on crude heuristics, have greater future reasoning capacity, and adhere more closely to conventional conceptions of "rational," utility-maximizing conduct, consumers may be able to make more optimum judgments.

Third, when individuals grow more adept at these tasks or pick up new, more productive habits and tactics, customers may experience reduced expenses associated with searching for information, using products, and consuming it. These expenses would consist of money, time, and both physical and mental labour.

Finally, since the final utilitarian and hedonistic effects of these activities are partly generated by consumers themselves, and knowledge may build more efficient production functions, consumers could gain more or better outcomes from information search, product usage, and consuming.

Companies may take advantage of these psychological aspects by giving customers the chance to learn, by providing educational resources, and by organising events that broaden their knowledge bases. Acknowledging the significance of knowledge and proficiency in customer behaviour enables businesses to customise their product offerings and marketing approaches to meet the varied demands and skill levels of their intended audience. To put it simply, firms looking to successfully connect and interact with customers may benefit from a nuanced viewpoint that comes from knowing how learning and knowledge intersect in the consumer decision-making process.

### 3.3. Perception

Perception is a process that begins with consumer exposure and attention to marketing stimuli and ends with consumer interpretation. Kotler points out that perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets incoming information (Kotler, 1992). Perception is a fundamental psychological factor that significantly influences consumer decision-making, shaping how individuals interpret and make sense of information in the marketplace. In the context of consumer behavior, perception plays a pivotal role in the way consumers perceive products, brands, and overall shopping experiences.

Favorable customer attitudes and preferences can result from positive impressions, such as the association of a brand with reliability or a product with quality. Negative opinions, on the other hand, might cause people to shun or reject particular companies or items. The subjective nature of perception is shaped by a multitude of elements, such as personal experiences, cultural background, and marketing messages.

Companies that create branding, packaging, and marketing methods that are consistent with the intended image are able to strategically control perception. In order to influence customer decisions, it is imperative to maintain consistency in message, provide pleasant sensory experiences, and address possible causes of unfavourable impression.

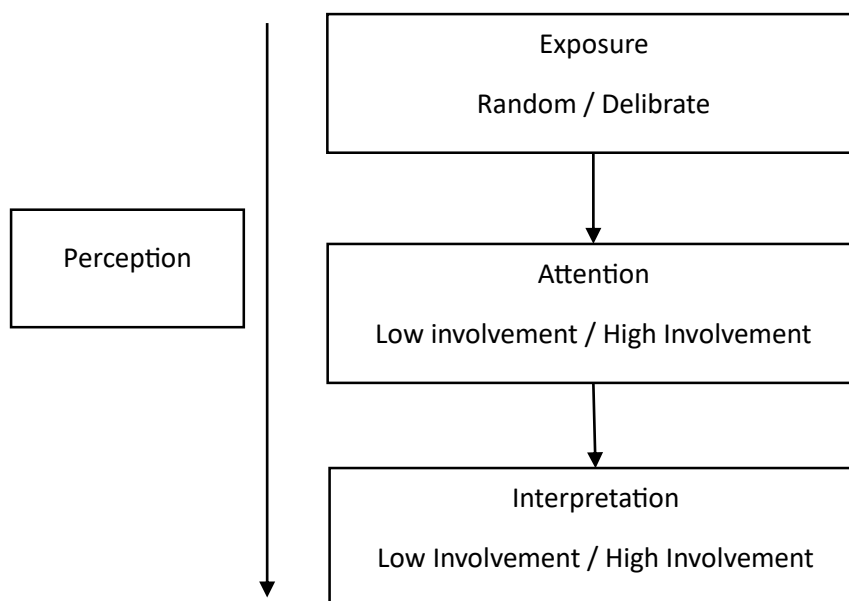
Businesses may create strategies that improve the perceived value of their products and create great customer experiences by comprehending the role that perception plays in consumer decision-making. Businesses may establish a more appealing and powerful presence in the market by matching their informational strategies to the ways that customers perceive and understand it.

### 3.3.1. Perceptual Process

People use a set of procedures called the perceptual process to interpret and make sense of the sensory data they receive from their surroundings. In order to produce meaningful experiences, it entails the exposure, attention, and interpretation of inputs. The receiving, interpreting, and organising of sensory data from the surroundings are all parts of the perceptual process. When forming opinions about goods and companies, consumers rely on their senses—such as sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. These impressions help shape perceptions, which in turn influence how decisions are made in the future. It follows the steps mentioned in Figure 1.

#### 3.3.1.1. Exposure

When a stimulus is positioned in a person's appropriate surroundings and comes into contact with their sensory receptor nerves, exposure takes place. Although exposure gives customers the chance to pay attention to the information that is accessible, it does not ensure it. A stimulus, which can be any sensory input from the outside world, starts the process. There are many different kinds of stimuli, including as noises, tastes, scents, tactile sensations, and visual signals. In terms of consumer behaviour, exposure is the extent to which people are exposed to environmental stimuli like goods, commercials, or brand messaging. To identify stimuli, consumers employ their sense organs—such as their eyes, hearing, and touch. For example, hearing a song on the radio or seeing a product display at a store



**Figure 1: Perceptual Process in Consumer Decision-making**

### 3.3.1.2. Attention

When a stimulus fires on one or more sensory receptor nerves, the brain receives the sensations and processes them to produce attention. Customers must focus their limited mental resources on digesting incoming stimuli, such as packages displayed on shop shelves or online banner advertisements, in order to pay attention. The cognitive process of attention involves allocating mental resources to certain stimuli, eliminating extraneous information, and concentrating on what is considered significant. Based on their own interests, requirements, or relevance, consumers rank different stimuli in order of priority. By making their ideas or goods stand out, marketers want to attract attention—a tactic known as selective attention.

### 3.3.1.3. Interpretation

Giving meaning to feelings is the process of interpretation. Understanding and making meaning of information that is presented to us depends on the stimulus, the person receiving it, and the circumstances. This process is known as interpretation. The cognitive process of giving the inputs meaning based on the experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of the consumer is known as interpretation.

The fact that interpretation is often subjective and susceptible to various psychological biases is an essential component of interpretation. The process of interpretation is very subjective. Since customer behaviour is driven by subjective experience rather than objective truth, marketers need to be aware of psychological meaning. A company's efficiency may allow it to launch a premium new brand at a lesser cost than its rivals. But regardless of the objective truth, the new brand will fail if customers believe—as they frequently do—that the cheaper price equates to inferior quality. Personal experiences, cultural background, and values are examples of individual elements that operate as filters to impact how stimuli are processed. Because each consumer is distinct, their perspectives on the same product may differ.

It is important for marketers to comprehend the perceptual process involved in customer behaviour. It is more likely that consumers will generate favourable judgments and that these perceptions will influence their purchase decisions when stimuli are designed to not only acquire exposure but also to grab and hold attention while fitting in with their interpretation processes. Companies may adjust their marketing strategy to establish significant and lasting relationships with their target audience by understanding the nuances of the perceptual process.

### 3.4. Attitude

An attitude is an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of our environment. It is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. Thus, an attitude is the way one thinks, feels, and acts toward some aspect of his or her environment, such as a retail store, television program, or product. In the context of consumer behavior, attitude is a fundamental psychological concept that plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' responses to products, brands, and the overall marketplace. Attitude refers to a person's enduring evaluation, feelings, and behavioral tendencies toward a particular object, be it a product, brand, or service.

### 3.4.1. Components of Attitude

Attitudes is described as having three components: cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings), and behavioral (response tendencies). As described in Figure 2, the Attitude formation follows three steps and as the result an overall attitude is formed towards any stimulus or object.

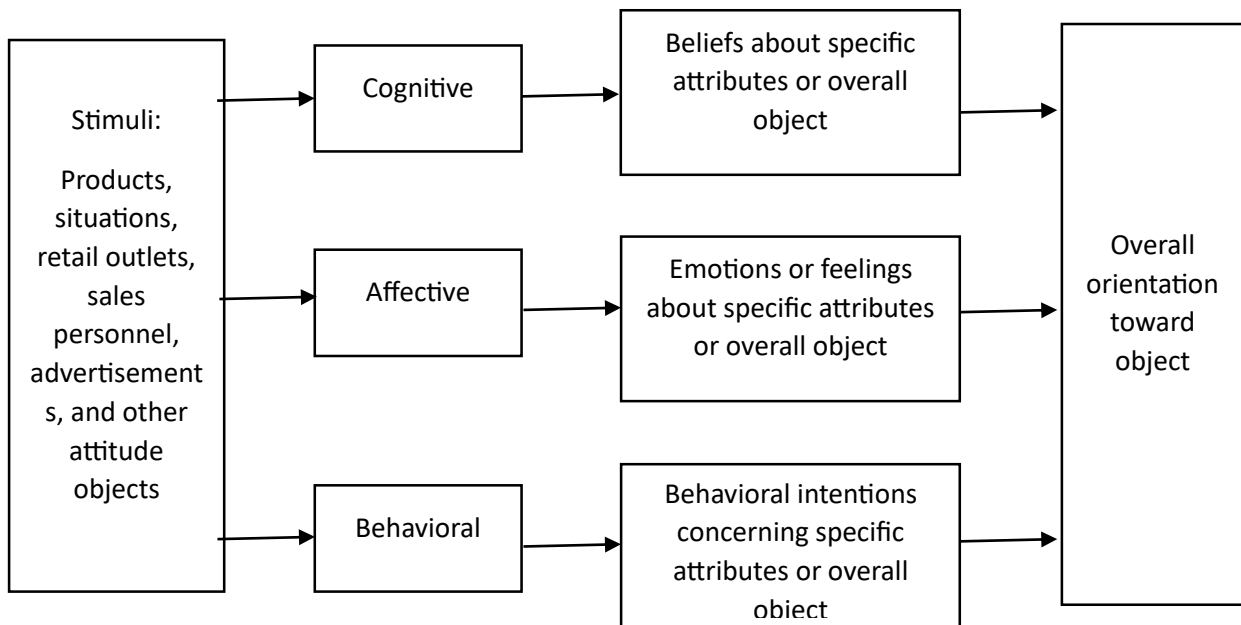


Figure 2: Attitude Components

SOURCE: Mothersbaugh and Hawkins, 2016

#### 3.4.1.1. Cognitive Component

The cognitive component consists of a consumer's beliefs about an object. or most attitude objects, people have a number of beliefs. The cognitive component of attitude involves beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions related to a product or brand. Consumers form cognitive attitudes based on their knowledge, information, and rational evaluation of attributes and features.

#### 3.4.1.2. Affective Component

Feelings or emotional reactions to an object represent the affective component of an attitude. The affective component deals with the emotional or feeling aspect of attitudes. It reflects consumers' emotional responses and sentiments toward a product or brand. Marketers are increasingly turning their attention to the affective or "feeling" component of attitudes to provide a richer understanding of attitudes than that based solely on the cognitive or "thinking" component.

#### 3.4.1.3. Behavioral Component

The customer's perceptions of an item include the cognitive component. Individuals hold diverse ideas, or most people have an attitude object. A brand or product's perceptions, ideas, and beliefs make up the cognitive component of attitude. Consumers build cognitive attitudes based on their knowledge, information, and rational evaluation of attributes and features. One's propensity to react a specific way to an item or activity is the behavioural aspect of an attitude. The observable behaviours or intents of customers with regard to a product or



brand are included in the behavioural component. It represents the propensity to engage in specific actions, such as buying, endorsing, or staying away from a product.

Consumer behaviour attitudes are dynamic and subject to change over time as a result of new knowledge, experiences, or changes in personal preferences. Through branding, advertising, and strategic communication, marketers want to change people's perceptions. Positivity toward a product or brand is linked to favourable word-of-mouth, brand loyalty, and a higher chance of purchase.

Comprehending the many characteristics of attitudes enables organisations to customise their marketing tactics to target particular elements. A comprehensive strategy to forming and influencing customer attitudes includes, for example, highlighting the good aspects of a product (cognitive), arousing pleasant feelings in advertising (affective), and promoting positive actions (behavioural). Effective marketing initiatives that connect with the target audience and build enduring connections with them depend heavily on the analysis and response of consumer sentiments.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Consumer behaviour is influenced by a multitude of psychological elements that interact in a complicated way to affect how people interact with the marketplace, make decisions, and build connections with brands and goods. Consumers engage with stimuli in their surroundings through the perceptual process, which consists of exposure, attention, and interpretation. Exposure controls how often a person is exposed to stimuli, attention directs brain resources toward certain stimuli, and interpretation entails interpreting information based on one's own experiences and senses. In conclusion, exposure to stimuli, attentional allocation, information interpretation, memory formation, familiarity building, ongoing learning, expertise development, and attitude formation are all intricately intertwined with psychological aspects that influence consumer behaviour. This sophisticated knowledge enables companies to design customized marketing strategies that engage customers in a genuine way, building goodwill, loyalty, and long-lasting connections in the cutthroat industry. The complexities of consumer behaviour highlight how crucial it is to acknowledge and address the psychological factors that influence people's decision-making processes.

In summary, the intricate web of psychological factors in consumer behavior involves exposure to stimuli, allocation of attention, interpretation of information, memory formation, familiarity building, continuous learning, expertise development, and the formation of attitudes. This nuanced understanding empowers businesses to create tailored marketing approaches that connect authentically with consumers, fostering positive perceptions, loyalty, and lasting relationships in the competitive marketplace. The dynamics of consumer behavior underscore the importance of recognizing and responding to the psychological intricacies that guide individuals through their decision-making journeys.

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