

## RESEARCH

## INSIGHT 3.1

Holbrook, M. B., and Hirschman, E. C. (1982), 'The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings and fun', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 132–40.

This influential article reconsidered how we perceive consumer behaviour, moving marketing thought away from the idea that customer behaviour is purely rational and towards a greater understanding of the irrational content of consumer decision making including the importance of our feelings and fantasies, and whether or not we were having fun. The authors developed a useful model contrasting the differences between the information-processing (i.e. rational) and the experiential view (i.e. irrational) perspectives of consumer behaviour.

to meet basic functional needs. Nevertheless, consumers sought out televisions with specific factory numbers, produced in certain factories in certain regions or countries, because they were more reliable and produced better pictures. So, even when a country's government tries to squeeze out human desires, those desires to possess, and possess the best of what is available, continue anyway. These could be termed operational buying motives and are linked to rational purchasing decisions derived from physical performance of the product (Udell, 1964).

By contrast, in modern-day Europe, people are more likely to indulge socio-psychological buying motives. These are linked to irrational buying motives and stem from a buyer's social and psychological interpretation of the product and its performance. Consider our motivations to purchase particular types of music, for example. Let's take the example of Madonna's latest release. A CD is not bought because of what it is. After all, it's just an optical disc or MP3 file. Nor is the box in which it comes particularly useful, except to provide us with information about the disc when we are deciding to buy it or not. The insert on the other hand may be useful once the item is bought because it may contain some details about our pop princess and the tracks on the album. Instead, we are likely to buy her album not because of what it is, but what the music represents to us. In other words, we buy the music because of how it makes us feel (e.g. happy, sad, elated). Perhaps we associate that music with a particular boyfriend, girlfriend, or partner, experience, time, or way of being. We may also buy the music because of what it represents to us (e.g. coolness, fun), a quality which is dependent on how significant others (e.g. our friends) also feel about the music.

## Diffusion Theory

Although we know that consumers may buy using both operational and socio-psychological motives when purchasing, not all customers adopt new products at the same speed or time. Their different attitude to risk, their level of education, experience, education, and needs, means that different groups of customers adopt