Chapter Summary

LO1 Understand the elements of consumer perception.

Perception can be thought of as a consumer’s awareness and interpretation of reality. Perception essentially represents one’s subjective reality. During the perceptual process, consumers are exposed to stimuli, devote attention to stimuli, and attempt to comprehend the stimuli. Exposure refers to the process of bringing some stimulus within the proximity of a consumer so that it can be sensed by one of the five human senses. Attention is the purposeful allocation of information processing capacity toward developing an understanding of some stimulus. Comprehension occurs when the consumer attempts to derive meaning from information that is received.

LO2 Know the phases in the consumer perception process.

Consumers develop perceptions through the perceptual process. The perceptual process consists of three stages: sensing some stimuli by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching; organizing the input from these human senses; and reacting as a result of this organization. This perceptual process allows consumers to interpret stimuli.

Glossary Terms

- **absolute threshold** level over which the strength of a stimulus must be greater so that it can be perceived
- **accommodation** state that results when a stimulus shares some but not all of the characteristics that would lead it to fit neatly in an existing category and consumers must process exceptions to rules about the category
- **assimilation** state that results when a stimulus has characteristics such that consumers readily recognize it as belonging to some specific category
- **attention** purposeful allocation of information processing capacity toward developing an understanding of some stimulus
- **behaviorism approach to learning** theory of learning that focuses on changes in behavior due to association without great concern for the cognitive mechanics of the learning process
- **classical conditioning** change in behavior that occurs simply through associating some stimulus with another stimulus that naturally causes some reaction; a type of unintentional learning
- **cognitive organization** process by which the human brain assembles sensory evidence into something recognizable
- **comprehension** attempt to derive meaning from information
- **conditioned response** response that results from exposure to a conditioned stimulus that was originally associated with the unconditioned stimulus
- **conditioned stimulus** object or event that does not cause the desired response naturally but that can be conditioned to do so by pairing with an unconditioned stimulus
- **contrast** state that results when a stimulus does not share enough in common with existing categories to allow categorization
- **discriminative stimuli** stimuli that occur solely in the presence of a reinforcer
- **explicit memory** memory that developed when the person was trying to remember the stimulus
- **exposure** process of bringing some stimulus within proximity of a consumer so that the consumer can sense it with one of the five human senses
3 Be able to apply the concept of the JND.

The JND (just noticeable difference) represents how much stronger one stimulus is relative to another so that someone can actually notice the two are not the same. The key to using the JND concept is to realize that when some positive change is made to a stimulus, the best strategy is usually to make the change in a big enough increment that consumers notice something has changed. When some negative change must be made, marketers may consider small incremental changes that are less likely to be noticed.

4 Apply the concepts of implicit and explicit memory.

Implicit memory is memory for things that a person did not try to remember. Thus, when someone learns something after only a simple exposure to a stimulus, implicit memory is the explanation. Preattentive processes like mere exposure can produce implicit memory. Information processing and cognitive learning result in explicit memory, wherein a consumer actively tries to remember the stimuli to which he or she has been exposed.

5 Know the ways in which a consumer’s attention can be enhanced.

Attention is the purposeful allocation of information processing capacity toward developing an understanding of some stimulus. Consumer attention can be enhanced in a number of ways. These include the use of stronger stimuli, contrast, movement, and surprise.

6 Know the difference between intentional and unintentional learning.

Learning is a change in behavior. Learning takes place in one of two ways. Either consumers learn things without trying to do so or they actively expend some effort. The first approach corresponds more to a behavioral theory of learning, while the second approach corresponds more closely to an information processing, or cognitive learning, perspective. Learning without trying only requires that a consumer be exposed to a stimulus. In contrast, the information processing perspective requires an active learning and the ability to pay attention to information.

**extinction** process through which behaviors cease because of lack of reinforcement

**implicit memory** memory for things that a person did not try to remember

**information processing perspective** perspective that focuses on changes in thought and knowledge and how these precipitate behavioral changes

**instrumental conditioning** type of learning in which a behavioral response can be conditioned through reinforcement—either punishment or rewards associated with undesirable or desirable behavior

**intentional learning** process by which consumers set out to specifically learn information devoted to a certain subject

**involuntary attention** attention that is beyond the conscious control of a consumer

**involvement** the personal relevance toward, or interest in, a particular product

**JND** just noticeable difference; smallest amount of change in a stimulus that would influence consumer consumption and choice

**learning** change in behavior resulting from some interaction between a person and a stimulus

**mere exposure effect** effect that leads consumers to prefer a stimulus to which they’ve previously been exposed

**negative reinforcement** removal of harmful stimuli as a way of encouraging behavior

**orientation reflex** natural reflex that occurs as a response to something threatening

**perception** consumer’s awareness and interpretation of reality

**positive reinforcers** reinforcers that take the form of a reward

**preattentive** effect that occurs without attention

**product placements** products that have been placed conspicuously in movies or television shows

**punishers** stimuli that decrease the likelihood that a behavior will persist

**selective attention** process of paying attention to only certain stimuli

**selective distortion** process by which consumers interpret information in ways that are biased by their previously held beliefs

**selective exposure** process of screening out certain stimuli and purposely exposing oneself to other stimuli

**sensation** consumer’s immediate response to a stimulus

**shaping** process through which a desired behavior is altered over time, in small increments

**subliminal persuasion** persuasion that results from subliminal processing

**subliminal processing** way that the human brain deals with very low-strength stimuli, so low that one cannot notice anything

**unconditioned response** response that occurs naturally as a result of exposure to an unconditioned stimulus

**unconditioned stimulus** stimulus with which a behavioral response is already associated

**unintentional learning** learning that occurs when behavior is modified through a consumer-stimulus interaction without any effortful allocation of cognitive processing capacity toward that stimulus

**Webber’s law** law stating that a consumer’s ability to detect differences between two levels of the stimulus decreases as the intensity of the initial stimulus increases

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