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*Full Length Research Paper*

## Analysis of Some Selected Theories Applicable to Consumer Behaviour Research

Ojo, James Olanipekun<sup>1\*</sup> and Adedayo, Simeon Oludare<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Business Administration & Marketing, McPherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Business Administration & Marketing, BBS, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

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### **Abstract**

This article reviewed some theories, numbering twelve, that are applicable to consumer behaviour research. It evaluated the scientific theoretical approach to the verifiability and reliability of the marketing concepts as guards against bias, preservation and prejudice. The article also appraised the applicability of cognitive dissonance, learning, sociological, cognitive, role, income, perception, uses and gratification, social exchange, psychoanalysis, attention and recognition-by-components theories to the analyses in consumer behaviour science. The article concluded that the selected theories have predictive power: when outcomes are perceived to be greater, individuals disclose more. The theoretical propositions with the theories are consistent with each other. These theories generate new hypotheses, therefore expanding the range of potential knowledge and embellishing existing knowledge.

**Keywords:** Marketing science, marketing theories, consumer behaviour, theoretical foundation.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A robust theoretical foundation could form the basis on which the perception of an entity would be judged. Although, the existence of individual differences is a reflection of different levels of perception among people (Eze, 2004). A theory is a statement of invariant relationship among measurable phenomenon (Folarin, 2000). It is against this backdrop that Asika (2006) stresses that a theory is an embodiment of all components of scientific thinking. According to Severin and Tankard (2001), a set of ideas of systematic generalizations based on scientific observation that leads to further empirical observation is referred to as a theory.

This ordinarily means that one can make predictions about the outcome of certain events. It also means that when emphasizing outcomes' prediction, consumer research in marketing strives to predict what kinds of effects certain marketing strategies would have on some individual and/or corporate customers.

Meanwhile, Kerlinger (1993) as cited in Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008) had earlier given a comprehensive and celebrated definition of theory to wit: a theory is a set of inter-related constructs, definitions and propositions that give a systematic view about phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of predicting and explaining such phenomena. In this scientific definition, verifiability and reliability readily serve as guards against bias and prejudice. To this end, marketing theory, according to Asika (1996), is a set of ideas which provides an

explanation for marketing phenomena. The literature suggests that theories applicable to consumer behaviour research in marketing are not new. As a matter of fact, theories had impacted the growth of consumer behaviour research immensely.

In today's evolving market place, while there is abundance of choices available to consumers in most product categories, availability of relevant information about them, similarities of many offerings, demand for value and the ever present lack of time to find a particular brand, there is great concern that interest, involvement, commitment and loyalty to particular brands are decreasing amongst many product categories. It is therefore important for marketers to understand how consumers interpret their brand awareness strategies and the resultant effect on their purchase decisions. Therefore, the application of some basic concepts that have their theoretical foundations in Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences becomes imperative to marketing research and practice. Evidently theory and research are closely related through the scientific method. Theory provides the logical support while research provides the empirical support (Anaeto *et al.*, 2008). For obvious reasons, a scientific assertion needs to have both logical and empirical support (Babbie, 1990).

## **SELECTED THEORIES AS APPLICABLE TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR RESEARCH**

Marketing and consumer- behaviour related theories are mutual, in the sense that they both use the systematic and scientific methods. A well-researched subject forms a theory; and a theory, on the other hand, can also spring up from a hypothesis that begins a research. However, the link between marketing theory and consumer behaviour research goes deeper. In practice, they both interact through a never-ending circle of two approaches to scientific inquiry, known as deduction and induction. The deductive approach means using research to test theories, while the inductive approach is simply developing theories from analysis of research data.

Hence, marketing theory and research, be it consumer behaviour or others, are interwoven. One cannot do without the other as the existence of one depends on the other. For the purpose of this paper, here are some selected theories that are applicable to research in modern consumer behaviour:

### **Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

The cognitive dissonance theory, propounded by Festinger (1957) is important to consumer behaviour studies. The term 'cognition' suggests any knowledge, opinion or belief about the environment, about one's behaviour and about one's self. For example, when

people smoke (behaviour); even with the knowledge that smoking causes cancer (cognition). Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviours. This produces a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviours to reduce the discomfort and restore balance (McLeod, 2008).

Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance) by all means. According to Festinger, we hold much cognition about the world and ourselves; when and if they clash, a discrepancy is evoked, resulting in a state of tension known as cognitive dissonance. As the experience of dissonance is unpleasant, we are motivated to reduce or eliminate it and achieve consonance (i.e agreement) (McLeod, 2008). A major premise of this theory is that individual prefers to be in harmony or consistency and avoid situations of disharmony or inconsistency. The theory postulated that individual in a state of inconsistency will attempt to seek harmony. It is this inconsistency or disharmony that Festinger (1957) denoted as a state of dissonance. Dissonance is therefore a transient state of being and it is not restricted to post-purchase decisions but can even occur prior to a consumer's decision (Costanzo, 2012).

It is a matter of interest to marketers that attitudes are evaluative mental orientations that provide a pre-disposition to behave or respond in a certain manner towards an organization and its marketing mix or marketing programmes. Attitudes are evaluative because consumers make use of them to examine, analyse and evaluate things as good or bad, right or wrong, cheap or expensive. In the same vein, they are orientations because individual consumers focus their judgement on particular items, products or brands, people and places. Therefore, given positive readings from the components of their attitudes, consumers will be as favourably disposed to buy the brand as is possible.

It is clear that Festinger acknowledged the existence of pre-decisional dissonance while asserting as well that dissonance can occur throughout the consumer decision-making process. It is also important to recognize that the recognition of a state of dissonance will prompt or initiate a response from the individual to attempt to restore harmony and alleviate the tension (dissonance). The addition of harmonious cognitions will assist an individual in the restoration of consistency also known as consonance.

The theory of cognitive dissonance is premised on two bi-polar but related components; dissonance or disharmony and consonance or harmony. Each can actually present itself either prior or after a consumer has made a decision; a choice. The choice alternatives for the consumer in a state of dissonance is to remove dissonant cognitions, add consonant cognitions or change the

intensity of the dissonant or consonant elements to achieve consistency (Achumba, 2006).

### **Learning Theory**

Learning theory is also germane to consumer behaviour studies because a lot of human behaviour actually depends on it. Learning theory postulates that buying behaviour occurs as a simple stimulus-responses relationship and that going forward; responses which are reinforced most positively become internalized as permanent behaviour (Osselaer and Alba, 2006). Essentially, learning takes place when stimulus and response relationships are strong or strengthened (Achumba, 2006).

Each dimension of the learning process present us with a choice. Since it is virtually impossible, for instance, to simultaneously drive a car (concrete experience) and analyse a driver's manual about the car's functioning (abstract conceptualization), we resolve the conflict by choosing. Because of our life experiences, our hereditary equipment including the demands of our environment, we develop a preferred way of choosing through which we resolve the conflict between active or reflective, between concrete and abstract in some overtly patterned characteristic (Kolb and Boyatzis, 2000). All in all, learning theory helps marketers understand how links are established between learning, experience and development across the social spectrum. In the emerging networked world of information – based economies, learning is becoming more important than productivity in determining consumers' adaptation, survival and growth (Kelly, 1999).

### **Sociological Theory**

Sociologists have also propounded some theories which are relevant to the study of consumer behaviour.

Reisman (1980) classified the society into three groups:

- i). Traditional directed
- ii). Inner directed
- iii). Other directed

The traditional directed are slow changing family oriented societies. Typically, they are not easily receptive to innovation and change. The inner directed society is characterized by greater reception to innovation, mobility and capital accumulation. Other directed people as the name suggests are more influenced by external or peer group. These characteristics certainly do affect the effectiveness of any advertisement directed to any of the groups. For example, Oando's Oleum Head Mechanic character on behalf of others to vehicle owners and co-mechanics. In line with Reisman's usage, sociological theory consists of abstract and testable propositions

about society. It often relies on the scientific method which aims for objectivity and attempts to avoid passing value judgements. It is commonplace for an individual consumer to focus his or her judgement on a particular brand or product just as it can be based on other people or places. Such judgement can be related or passed on to friends, colleagues and relatives with a measure of confidence and trust.

Therefore consumer's attitudes towards a company and its marketing programmes affect the success of the company. When, for instance, consumers have negative attitude towards a company and by extension its products, they may simply stop buying the product and can even go to the extent of advising friends, relatives and group members to do same. There is however a way out: Let it be the key task of marketing practitioners to identify means of encouraging consumers to form favourable attitude towards their companies, their products and their programmes across all segments.

### **Cognitive Theory**

The cognitive theory explains buying behaviour as a problem solving process. In the circumstance, the consumer recognizes the existence of a problem-need then gathers and processes relevant information and then makes the relevant decision (Achumba, 2006). Essentially, this is making use of the 'awareness set' in closing in on the choice of an alternative. Ordinarily, the cognitive theory presents a natural flow or desire to solve a need problem and the expectation is that it will be easy.

However a major problem with this position is that it is extremely dependent on the need recognition quality and the quality of information available to the consumer in the circumstance. Even if the need is properly diagnosed, there would still be some difficulty when seeking relevant information to aid choice. Additionally, 'cognitivism' assumes the consumer is rational, discerning, logical and active in decision making. But then researchers have found time to question these assumptions (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007) (Foxall, 1993) (Bozinoff, 1982).

Thus, the cognitive theory requires some level of modification to primarily test some predictions made by the theory about what kind of response order effect would be expected (a primary effect) and among which respondents is strongest (those in low cognitive sophistication) (Krosnick and Duane, 1987). Obviously, it is important to pay attention to a theory like this since every purchase decision takes off from that initial problem solving desire that follows needs recognition.

### **Role Theory**

The role theory presents individuals as role players to convey certain messages. It is pertinent to note that such role playing function includes location, expectation,

demands, skills and audience for whom the role would be played. To achieve a meaningful whole the actor and the audience must interact (Achumba, 2006). This concept of role theory is therefore very relevant to the discussion of products as well as its attributes and choice. Role theory concerns one of the most important features of social life, characteristic behaviour patterns or roles. It further explains roles by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their own behaviours and those of other persons. It is the study of the degree to which a particular part is acted appropriately (role enactment) as determined by the reactions of fellow actors and observers (the audience).

Each role that one plays is learned. One's confidence that one is doing the right thing leads to satisfaction with a performance (role validation) and success in interacting with others, who are, of course, also playing their respective roles (Peters, 1997). One's role specific self-concept is formed by the reactions of others to the quality of one's role enactment. Some roles are more central to the individual than others (Lutz and Kakker, 1976). Biddle (1979) however argued that the role theory is weak when it comes to motivational aspects of behaviour. The theory does not explain very well why people enact expected behaviours or not. Biddle concluded that a motivational component of role theory may not even be necessary.

Role theory has also been criticized because it does not examine the individual's subjective experience while performing a role. The theory largely ignores the experiences of individuals who try to change existing social practices and in the process ignore the creative nature of individuals as they adapt to their environment on a daily basis. Role theory acknowledges that people respond to role discrepancies, but it does not provide a framework for examining how people create meaning and purpose for their own lives. Suffice to add therefore that its relevance to this study can be found not only in its vocabulary but more in its concern for the following perspectives: functional, symbolic interactive and cognitive role theory. There is therefore need to review the concept of consensus, conformity, conflict and role taking in delivering product messages or attributes. Recent developments suggest that there are both centrifugal and integrative forces within the role field to reinforce the needed 'interaction' between the actor (role taker) and the audience.

However, there is a problem inherent in this application from the view point of individual differences, that is, whether or not people act as this theory predicts. Many people are likely to do so while some others can differ. In support of their roles, consumers will make product choices that may vary depending on which role they are assuming. For instance, a staff that is responsible for selecting snack food for an office party his boss will attend may choose higher quality products than he would choose when selecting snacks for his family.

## **Income Theory**

The income theory, though an economic theory, is quite relevant to consumer behaviour. Simply put, it states that consumers' income has effects on consumption behavioural patterns. In addition, economic laws confirm that as income rises, family expenditure tend to increase in all categories. The percentage spent on food however tends to decline but housing and furniture tends to stay consistent while the percentage allotted to both luxury and savings tends to increase (Achumba, 2006).

There seems to be very little argument on the significance of the income theory on consumers. While the economic law cited is generally a truism about consumers, some differences driven by value and perception still surface and it is no longer generally acceptable. For example, there have been concerns on the importance of the permanent income hypothesis, centring on the weight of current income to determine the permanent income. Whether income is current or permanent, a consumer will try to satisfy their most important needs first and in line with the constraints of his or her budget and when and if the consumer succeeds in satisfying that important need, he or she will then try to satisfy another one (need), not only next in terms of importance but as allowable by his budget. (Ferber, 1973).

The income theory ultimately helps marketers understand and consider strategies on how various products fit into the plans, needs and lifestyle pattern of many consumers (Anderson, 1983). Another implication is that marketers need to pay conscious attention to differences (in income, age, education, experience, etc) amongst consumers because the same stimulus may activate different knowledge levels in different consumers.

## **Perception Theory**

According to the perception theory developed from the writings of Berelson and Steiner (1994), marketing communicators want audiences to pay attention to their messages, learn the contents of the messages being passed across via marketing promotion tools, and make appropriate changes in attitudes, or produce the desired behavioural response by patronizing the products/services on offering. The perception theory states that these goals to enhance positive consumer behavioural response and sustainable customer patronage may be difficult to achieve.

Berelson and Steiner (1994) further states that perception is a complex process by which individual select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Bennett, Hoffman and Prakash (1989) states that perception is notably active: it involves learning, updating perspective,

and interacting with the observed. Arnould, Price and Zinkhan (2004) however, expresses that perception is the process of giving meaning to sensory stimuli. People act and react on the basis of their perceptions, i.e. the way they sense and interpret the world around them. Consumers' perceptions are fundamental to understanding acquisition, consumption, and disposal of goods and services. The symbols used in language and writing, in marketing communication in all forms, gain meaning by reference to perceptions.

According to Arnould *et al.*, (2004), the perception theory is so fundamental to the understanding of consumer behaviour. However, the perception theory is also applicable in studies relating to the management of trade marketing channel, strategic marketing, advertising and public relations (PR) among others. Nonetheless, there is something elusive about perceptions, and they have many aspects – the cultural, social, psychological, and physiological bases of perception. Many aspects of perception remain mysterious to Marketing Science. While considerably, more is known about the way neurons work when exposed to light, sound, taste, smell, and touch than was known even 30 years ago, much is still yet to be understood about subjective awareness of perceptual phenomena. Meanwhile, there is no gainsaying that human perception of the world is created through indirect inference that psychologists call phenomenal absolutism which points out that average consumer, by nature, assume that all other consumers perceive sensations as he/she does.

If others respond differently than he/she does, it is assumed that it is error or bad intention rather than, as it often the case, because they are acting on different perceptual inferences. An important fact remains that perceptions are learned as part of the enculturation process; as a result, they may be manipulated and altered (Segall, Campbell and Herskovits, 1996; and Scott, 1994 as cited in Arnould *et al.*, 2004). The subjective nature of perception presents challenges for global marketers. Meanwhile, culture and the social world as well as the media can play an important role in influencing consumers' subjective perceptions and interpretations.

Selective perception is the term applied to the tendency for an individual's perception to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes, and other psychological factors. Selective perception plays an important role in public relations and other marketing promotion tools. It means that different individuals can react to the same corporate brand message in very different ways. No marketer can assume that a marketing promotion's message will have the same intended meaning for all target audience. This complicates our models of marketing communication. Perhaps marketing communication is not just a matter of hitting a target with an arrow of message, as some models suggest but that the message can reach (or hit)

the target audience and still fail to accomplish its purpose because it is subject to the interpretation of the receiver (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008).

According to Severin and Tankard (2001), the process of receiving and interpreting a message is referred to in communication models as decoding. The process involves the perception or the taking in of stimuli through the senses and the subsequent processing of that information. Severin and Tankard further state that three other processes which are similar to selective perception sometimes come into play in marketing communication. These are: selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention.

Selective exposure is the tendency for individuals to expose themselves to marketing promotion's messages that are in agreement with their existing attitudes and to avoid those that are not. The notion of selective exposure follows nicely from Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance which suggests that one way to reduce the effects of dissonance after making a decision is to seek out information that is in consonance with the decision (Festinger, 1957).

Selective attention is the tendency for individuals to pay attention to those parts of a message that are consonant with strongly held attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours and to avoid those parts of a message that go against strongly held attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours, while selective retention is the tendency for the recall of information to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes, and other psychological factors, and to avoid the recall of those that are not.

### **The Uses and Gratification Theory**

This theory was propounded in 1974 by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. The assumptions of the theory, according to Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) as cited in Anaeto *et al.*, (2008), are as follows:

- i). The consumer is conceived as active. This idea focuses around the assumption that the consumers are goal-oriented and attempt to achieve their goals via marketing communication process.
- ii). In the marketing communication process, much initiative in linking the need gratification and choice of marketing promotion lies with the consumers/ publics. This is encompassing the idea that corporate organizations use marketing promotion to their advantage more often than the consumers/ publics do.
- iii). The corporate organizations compete with other sources of need satisfaction. This focuses on the idea that each consumer has several needs. In response to this, they have created a wide range of choices that will meet these needs. The strongest rival to marketing communication includes face-to-face communication. This can often help individual consumers to cope with

circumstances surrounding them most effectively. As a result of this, marketing communication must compete strongly with non-media-related sources and help create a need for itself as well as a proper balance between the two.

iv). Many of the goals of marketing communications can be derived from data supplied by the individual consumers themselves. This idea claims that consumers are very aware of their motives and choices, and are able to explain them verbally, if necessary.

v). Value judgements about socio-cultural significance of marketing communication should be suspended while consumers' operations are explored on their own terms. The theorists believe that the consumer can only determine the value of the marketing communications' content. It is the individual consumers who make the decision to view the efficacy of the marketing communication process. Therefore, they place the value on it by their individual decision to view it.

vi). Where is the place of social media in all of these? The growth of Nigeria's on-line culture is largely facilitated by the advent of social media. Besides engaging and connecting people social media has become a marketing function that allows businesses target consumers with personalized offers and deals. (Axelrod, 1968) No doubt, social media influences and inspires purchases. What is more? Many on-line shoppers are active users of social media and their purchases are influenced by social media trends, adverts as well as engagements. Since inception, social media platforms like face book, twitter, whatsApp, google, etc for instance, have been a primary vehicle for the promotion of businesses as it allows consumers engage in a discussion about a product or service which they like and intend to purchase. Evidently, this influences consumer purchasing behaviour. (Donthu and Garcia, 2000).

The uses and gratification theory belongs to the indirect effect theory. It is concerned with what consumers do with the marketing communications, instead of what the marketing communications do to the consumers. The assumption is that the consumers influence the effects that the marketing communications have on them. It becomes imperative to emphasise that the uses and gratification theory is highly applicable in studies relating to sales promotion, reputation management, pricing strategy, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty among others.

The consumers are not passive receivers of the promotional messages, but active influences of the message effect. This is because they selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs, beliefs, etc. The uses and gratification theory takes a more humanistic approach to evaluating the marketing promotion concept. Katz *et al.*,

(1974) as cited in Anaeto *et al.*, (2008) believe that there is not merely one way that the consumers/ publics use the marketing communications' messages. Instead, they believe there are as many reasons for using the marketing promotion, as there is promotion mix. According to the theory, consumers have a free will to decide how they will use the marketing promotional messages at their disposal and how it will affect them.

The uses and gratification theory is the optimist's view of marketing promotions. The theory takes out the possibility that the marketing communication media can have an unconscious influence over consumers' lives and their perceptual levels. The idea that marketing communication is simply used to satisfy a given corporate need does not seem to fully recognize the efficacy of power of the marketing communication in today's global market. Some scholars have contended that the uses and gratification theory is not a rigorous social science theory. Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) as cited in Anaeto *et al.*, (2008) argue just the opposite. Any attempt to speculate on the future direction of the marketing communication theory must seriously include the uses and gratification approach. They assert that the emergence of computer-mediated communication has revived the significance of the uses and gratification theory. They stress that the theory has always provided a cutting –edge theoretical approach at the initial stage of each new marketing communication medium: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity and public relations, and now the e-marketing.

Furthermore, some degrees of selectivity of marketing communication media and context is clearly exercised by consumers/ publics – for instance, choice or avoidance of advertisement on TV soap operas. However, instrumental (goal directed) accounts assume a rational choice of appropriate marketing communication media for predetermined purposes. Such accounts overemphasize the informational purpose and ignore a great deal of consumers' engagement with the media. TV viewing, for example, can be an end in itself. There is the evidence that media use is often habitual, ritualistic and unselective (Barwise and Ehrenberg, 1988 as cited in Anaeto *et al.*, 2008). But more positively, TV viewing can sometimes be seen as an aesthetic experience in which an intrinsic motivator is also involved ([http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/documents/shor/use grat](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/documents/shor/use%20grat)).

Uses and gratification research has been concerned with why people use media. Whilst this approach sprang from 'mainstream' research in social science, an interpretive tradition has arisen primarily from the more art-oriented cultural studies. The approach, sometimes referred to as the reception theory, focuses on what people perceive in the media, and on the meanings which people produce when they interpret media texts. In conclusion, the theory perceives the receipts of the messages that emanate from the marketing communication

as actively influencing the effect process, since they selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs, beliefs, motives, etc. The focus was therefore shifted from media production and transmission functions to the media consumption function.

## **SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY**

This theory was propounded in 1952 by Thibault and Kelly. The fundamental assumptions and principles of the social exchange theory states that:

- i). Every interaction involves an exchange of goods or services.
- ii). Consumers try to get from producers as much as they have given to them.

The social exchange theory explains how individual feels about a relationship with another person, depending on an individual perception of the balance between the quality of what he puts into a relationship and the quality of what he gets in return; the kind of relationship someone deserves, the chances of having a better relationship with someone else (<http://www.socialexchangetheory.com>).

The theory is based on the exchange of rewards and costs to quantify the values or quality of outcomes from different situations for an individual. However, the social exchange theory is also applicable in studies relating to selling and sales management, industrial marketing, marketing of services, marketing promotion, customer relationship management, among others. People strive to minimize costs and maximize rewards, and then base the likeness of developing a relationship with someone on the perceived possible quality outcomes. (<http://www.uky.edu/drlane/capstone/interpersonal/socexch.html>).

The viability of social exchange theory rests on the assumption that human beings recognize each other's needs, and in some ways are likely to engage in reciprocity – a condition in which a response is correlated to the worth or quality of the original message. In other words, humans act with other humans in full recognition that their acts will be noticed and in some way reciprocated; for example, that they will receive a return on their communicative investment. The social exchange theory encourages explicit acknowledgement of the costs and benefits of actions to be promoted in a marketing communication activities, and efforts to minimize costs and maximize the benefits. In practice, to persuade someone to take part in an exchange, the person must believe that the benefits of adopting preventive behaviours outweigh the costs of purchase or adoption (<http://www.comminit.com/changetheories/ctheories/changetheories-27.html>).

[//www.comminit.com/changetheories/ctheories/changetheories-27.html](http://www.comminit.com/changetheories/ctheories/changetheories-27.html)).

Folarin (2002), however, contends that the rewards are devalued when the exchange becomes too frequent or too obvious. In line with the philosophy of social exchange theory, consumers give loyalty in return for the marketing promotional effort of an organization, while the organization may fulfil corporate social responsibility in return for continuous patronage from the customers.

## **Psychoanalysis Theory**

This theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud (1946) where he assumed that the psychological forces shaping people's behaviour are largely unconscious and that a person cannot fully understand his or her own motivations. A technique called "laddering" can be used to trace a person's motivation from the stated instrumental ones to the more terminal ones. Then the marketer can decide at what level to develop the message and appeal. When a person examines specific brands, he or she will react not only to their stated capabilities but also to other less conscious cues, to wit: shape, size, weight, material, colour and brand name. Indeed, all of these can trigger certain associates and emotions.

## **Theory of Attention**

The first set of theories on attention emphasised that people are extremely limited in the amount of information that they can process at any given time. A common metaphor in these theories was the concept of a bottleneck. This metaphor was particularly appealing because it matches the introspections about attention. The neck of a bottle restricts flow into or out of the bottle. Bottleneck theories proposed a narrow passageway in human information processing. Put differently, the bottleneck limits the quantity of information to which individuals can pay attention to. Thus when one message is currently flowing through a bottle neck the other messages must be left behind. (Broskhan and Velayutham, 2013; Axelrod, 1968)

## **The Recognition-By- Components Theory**

The basic assumption of this theory which is also known as structural theory is that a given view of an object can be represented as an arrangement of simple 3-D shapes called geons. In general terms, an arrangement of three geons gives people enough information to classify any object. Research on the recognition-by-components theory has tested both normal human and even people with specific visual deficits. Furthermore, the recognition-by-components theory requires an important modification because people recognise objects less quickly when

those objects are seen from a usual viewpoint rather than the standard one. (Zeithaml, 1988)

## CONCLUSION

All the theories identified above are scientific in approach from their orientations and their philosophical foundations. They have explanatory power owing to their behavioural antecedents. In addition, these theories present predictive power: when outcomes are perceived to be greater, individuals disclose more. Put differently, they are also simple and capable of being false. The theoretical propositions with the theories are consistent with each other. These theories generate new hypotheses, therefore expanding the range of potential knowledge and organizing existing knowledge (<http://www.uky.edu/drlane/capstone/interpersonal/socexch.html>).

However, the thrust of this paper is anchored on the user and gratification theory supported by the cognitive dissonance theory. In today's evolving market place, consumers are better aware, better informed and better involved in the market delivery process – communication. Consumers embrace on-line shopping for a variety of reasons ranging from convenience to options, price and competitiveness. Consequent upon this, brands are constantly using social media to direct, capture and retain attention and at the same time influence sales (.Donthu and Garcia, 2000). While, for instance, business owners can't make customers use social media they can however influence the kinds of things a social media connected shopper finds. This is why it is indeed important to establish a social media presence. Ultimately, business owners can even encourage people to use social media and get engaged while shopping by including social media in their point-of-sale marketing. Chances remain that if consumers know they can find out about special deals and offers on social media they will definitely check them out. It is therefore important for marketers to understand how consumers interpret their brand awareness strategies as well as the resultant effects on their purchase decisions.

All of us are consumers one way or the other. We consume things of daily use, we also consume and buy products according to our needs, preferences and purchasing power. These can be consumable goods, durable goods, speciality goods, and/or industrial goods. What we buy, how we buy, where and when we buy, in how much quantity we buy depends on our perception, self-concept, social and cultural background and our age and family cycle, our attitudes, belief values, motivation, personality, social class and many other factors that are both internal and external to us. While buying, we also consider whether to buy or not to buy and, from which source or seller to buy McCarthy (1996). The term Consumer Behaviour refers to the totality of behaviours

that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using and evaluating and disposing of products and services they expect will satisfy their needs (Achumba,2006). Put differently, it can be described as activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services (Bazerman,2001).

The study of consumer behaviour therefore is the study of how consumers, be it individuals or organizations, make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption related items. ( Achumba, 2006). In other words, it includes the study of what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it, how often they buy it and how often they use it. Little Wonder marketers try to understand the needs of different consumers and having understood the different behaviours which require an in-depth study of their internal and external environment, they now formulate their plans for marketing.

Consumer behaviour is a complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional process whereupon all marketing decisions are based on assumptions about consumer behaviour. There can be many benefits of a product. For example, for owning a motor bike one can be said to be looking for ease of transportation, status, pleasure, comfort and feeling of ownership. On the other hand, the cost is the amount of money paid for the bike, the cost of maintenance, petrol, parking, risk of injury in case of an accident, pollution and frustrations such as traffic jams. The difference between this total benefit and total cost constitutes the customer value (Hansen, 2005).

Finally, in an attempt to expand the frontiers of consumer research, all theories identified in this article could form the basis on which some of the variables of market-based resources would be evaluated to arrive at logical conclusions in consumer research undertakings that could ensure and enhance sustainable customer satisfaction, loyalty and delight.

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