

SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND BEHAVIORAL COMPLIANCE

CHAPTER

13

OBJECTIVES After studying this chapter, you will be able to ...

- 1 Define behavioral compliance
- 2 Explain the automaticity principle
- 3 Explain the commitment and consistency principle
- 4 Explain the reciprocity principle
- 5 Explain the scarcity principle
- 6 Explain the social validation principle
- 7 Explain the liking principle
- 8 Explain the authority principle



The Power of Influence

Sarah recently graduated from college and landed a new job requiring some travel to and from work. She decided to shop for a new car. Sarah was leaning towards a mid-sized hybrid SUV with all-wheel drive. After several hours of comparing models and prices on the Internet, she was ready to visit a dealership.

After browsing a car lot with several brands of hybrids, an unassuming salesperson approached her and said, "I'm here to help you find the right automobile for *your* needs." The salesperson was not pushy at all. In fact, he seemed genuinely curious about her life. "Where do you live? Tell me about your new job. What are your hobbies?" As it turns out, the salesperson seemed remarkably similar to Sarah. He had graduated from the same high school as she, enjoyed the same hobbies, listened to the same music, and rooted for the same sports teams.



Sarah was initially overwhelmed with all the possible options available in different hybrid models such as engine size, gas mileage, safety features, and so on. The salesperson indicated that he could simplify the decision. He asked Sarah a series of questions about her driving habits. After a few calculations, the salesperson recommended the Ford Escape Hybrid. The base model happened to be on sale this weekend for only \$29,999, or \$2,000 off the original price. In fact, The Ford Escape Hybrid was listed as a "best buy" in a leading consumer magazine. "Thousands of satisfied customers have already chosen it; they can't all be wrong," claimed the salesperson. Sarah took a test drive and liked the car. "Another customer was looking at this vehicle today," he said cautiously. "If I were you, I'd purchase it while it's still available."

Sarah had become committed to the Ford Escape Hybrid, and she seized the opportunity to buy the last remaining unit. She waited patiently for the salesperson to return with the paperwork. Upon returning, the salesperson told Sarah, "This particular vehicle includes a number of important upgrades, such as rearview camera system and optional Active Park Assist to aid in parallel parking. They are not included in the base price—but the difference is only an additional \$2,999. You're going to love the automatic parking feature." The salesperson went on, "I assume that you would like the three-year, Easy-Care warranty?" "It covers on-site service with no trip charge, all non-technical service calls, and common repairs due to normal use. That's an additional cost of only \$1,999, but it practically pays for itself in two years," the salesperson noted. Sarah wasn't expecting an expensive warranty fee, so she declined this particular add-on. "I understand," the salesperson remarked

sympathetically. “How about the one-year Easy-Care for only \$999? It will save you some much time and stress.” Sarah quickly accepted this more reasonable deal and drove off in her new hybrid, thanks in large part to a well-trained salesperson who understands the principles of social influence.

OBJECTIVE 1 Defining Compliance

The car salesperson is not the only influence agent in the marketplace. Fund-raisers, politicians, con artists, bosses, parents, friends, family members, and even professors use a variety of techniques to get consumers to say “yes.” The wording of their requests is crucial—a request worded one way may be effective, but if the same request is worded just a little differently, it may be completely ineffective. Timing is also important, as the window of opportunity when people may be susceptible to a request is narrow. Consumer psychologists use the term **verbal compliance** to describe a situation where someone says “yes” to a specific request. The term **behavioral compliance** describes a situation where someone actually carries out that request. Researcher Robert Cialdini has conducted many pioneering scientific investigations of behavioral compliance techniques and has uncovered numerous principles about their effectiveness. You can be sure that con artists and others who like to persuade us wish that Professor Cialdini had kept his findings to himself.¹ This chapter discusses some findings uncovered by Cialdini and other researchers and offers a glimpse of the interesting experiments that generated the principles. Specifically, seven key principles of behavioral influence are explained: automaticity, commitment and consistency, reciprocity, scarcity, social validation, liking, and authority. Knowing these principles helps consumers become more influential with people. Perhaps even more important, understanding how these principles work helps consumers stay on guard against unwanted influence.

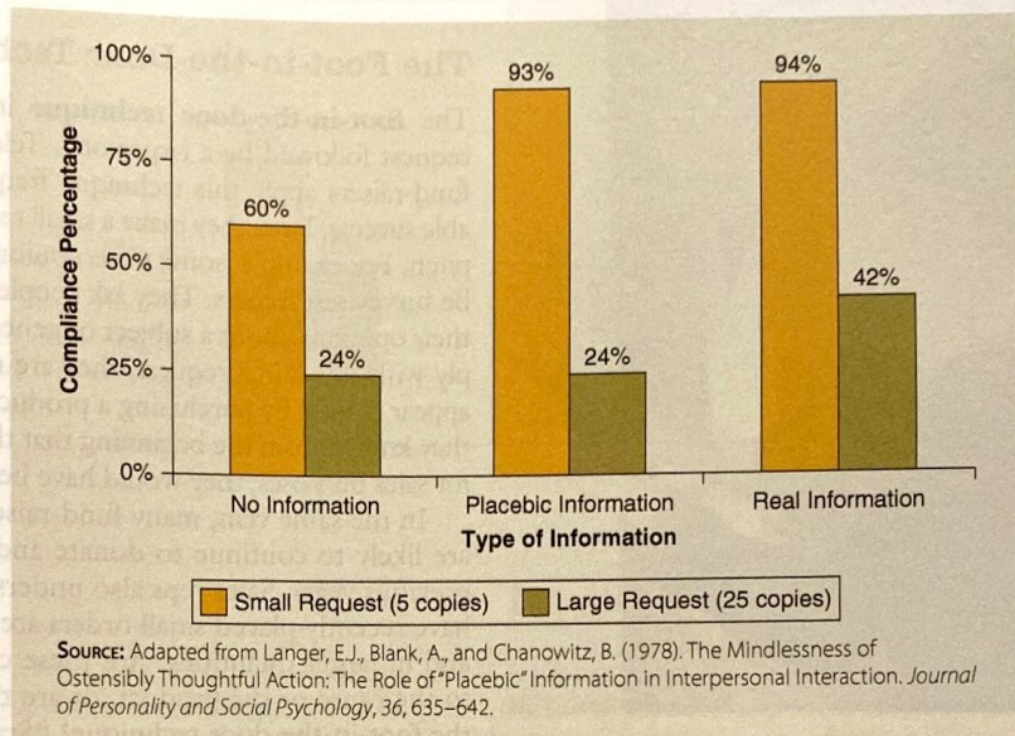
OBJECTIVE 2 The Automaticity Principle

People often use simple heuristics when evaluating the requests of others, sometimes automatically. The **automaticity principle** is the cornerstone of all influence techniques. As the name suggests, this principle asserts that people often think mindlessly and as a result, behave automatically, without fully evaluating the consequences of a request. Harvard University psychologist Ellen Langer² finds that people typically spend a large portion of their day in a mindless state. Routine, habitual behaviors (like answering a text message or responding to “good morning”) are performed over and over with relatively little conscious thought because

people don't have the time or resources to think carefully about everything they do. Only a few important behaviors receive careful consideration; others are carried out mindlessly.

Suppose a student is about to use the photocopier in the school library and another student approaches her and says, "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the copy machine?" Such a small request typically involves little thought, and many people simply agree without considering the consequences. After all, five pages isn't much. Moreover, people are more likely to comply with a small request if you give them a real reason to comply. In fact, this is precisely what happened in a classic field experiment conducted by Langer and her colleagues.³ (A field experiment is an experimental study conducted in the real world, as opposed to a laboratory setting.) When the request was basic (i.e., no additional information was provided), compliance was 60%. This is called the control group. In contrast, when the request included real information (e.g., "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the photocopier *because I'm in a rush?*"), compliance rates increased to 94%. The most interesting results, however, occurred when the word *because* was used without any real information (known as placebo information). The request, "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the photocopier *because I have to make copies?*" generated compliance of 93%, statistically equivalent to compliance for the real request. How could this happen? Clearly, placebo information is less compelling than real information. According to the **because heuristic**, however, people tend to process small requests mindlessly. So, merely hearing the word *because* may be enough to trigger compliance. With mindless processing, people don't evaluate the specific reasons for a request. If they hear the word "because," they simply move forward with compliance. "Because" is a signal—a green light for carrying out the request. But that's not the entire story. When the request was changed from small (5 copies) to large (25 copies) the results also changed. People don't automatically agree to everything. Relatively larger requests tend to encourage more purposeful thinking, which reduces the effect of the because heuristic. This is exactly what happened in Langer's study. When the request was, "Excuse me, I have 25 pages. May I use the photocopier?" compliance rates dropped to 24%. Furthermore, the because heuristic did not increase compliance in this large request condition; it remained at 24%. In contrast, when real information was given with the large request, compliance increased from 24% to 42%. These findings suggest that when people have a substantial request, providing real information is the best strategy. In contrast, if a request is relatively small, people may respond favorably simply by hearing the magic word "because." There's no need to come up with elaborate excuses. Figure 13.1 provides a summary of this interesting study.

The because heuristic involves the use of only one cue or piece of information—the word "because." Other, potentially more relevant pieces of information tend to be neglected. Although the rationale provided *after* the word "because" should be important, people often ignore it as a result of mindless thinking. They respond automatically.

FIGURE 13.1 | Mindless Compliance Experiment

OBJECTIVE 3 The Commitment and Consistency Principle

Pressure to maintain consistency is surprisingly powerful. People are expected to exhibit beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are stable and coherent. Inconsistencies often invite interpretations of personality flaws or, in extreme cases, mental illness.⁴ This principle is known as the **commitment and consistency principle**. When people identify an inconsistency in their pattern of beliefs, they often change one or more beliefs to balance the system. People also attempt to keep their relationships and attitudes consistent. Similarly, when people initially say "yes" to a request or offer, they are likely to continue to say "yes" to subsequent requests regarding the same topic or task. After complying with an initial small request, people tend to comply with larger requests. And after initially saying "yes" to a deal, people tend to stick with their initial commitment—even if the deal changes.

The influence of commitment and consistency extends to fund-raising drives. An interesting study shows that consumers' own self-prophecy can increase their donations.⁵ Self-prophecy is founded on two psychological effects. First, asking people to make predictions about socially influenced behaviors can cause people to respond as they think they should. Second, when later asked to perform those same behaviors, people tend to remain consistent with their predictions. In this particular study, when asked to predict whether they would donate to their university fund drive, 49% of the people predicted they would



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Foot-in-the-door tactics often involve asking consumers for their opinions, followed by a sales pitch.

do so. In contrast, only 30% of the group that was simply asked to donate up front actually did so.

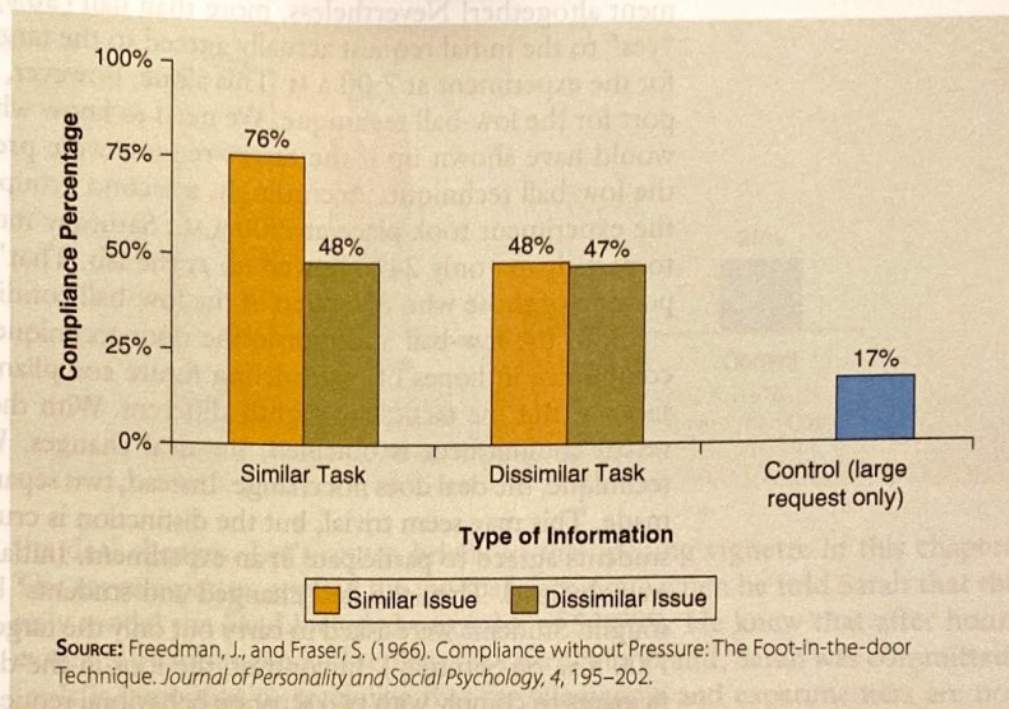
The Foot-in-the-Door Technique

The **foot-in-the-door technique** involves making a small request followed by a larger one. Telemarketers, sales reps, and fund-raisers apply this technique frequently and with considerable success. First, they make a small request. Then comes the real pitch. For example, some unscrupulous telemarketers pretend to be survey researchers. They ask people if they are willing to share their opinions about a subject of general interest. If people comply with this initial request, they are more likely to continue to appear helpful by purchasing a product or service. However, had they known from the beginning that the phone call was primarily for sales purposes, they would have been more resistant.

In the same vein, many fund-raisers know that past donors are likely to continue to donate and at greater levels than in previous years. Sales reps also understand that customers who have recently placed small orders are likely to continue to buy and in larger quantities. Are these customers genuinely loyal to the cause or the product, or are they simply falling prey to the foot-in-the-door technique? “Start small and build” foot-in-the-door tactics are surprisingly simple to recognize and dangerously effective.⁶

In another classic field experiment, people went door-to-door asking California residents to post a large, ugly sign on their front lawns.⁷ The sign read, “Drive Carefully.” Not surprisingly, only 17% of the residents agreed to this target request. The results changed dramatically, however, when the foot-in-the-door technique was applied. When people were first asked to carry out a small favor (posting a small “Be a Safe Driver” sign in their yards), 76% complied with the larger, target request and posted the bigger, uglier sign. These results are even more interesting when you realize that the large request was made nearly two weeks after the small request and that two different people made the requests. In contrast, if the small favor dealt with a *topic* that was unrelated to the large request (e.g., posting a small “Keep California Beautiful” sign instead of a “Drive Carefully” sign) or if the initial, small *task* was different from the larger request (e.g., sign a petition instead of posting a small sign), compliance for the larger, target request decreased significantly from 76% to 48%. These results demonstrate a critical lesson. The foot-in-the-door technique is not as effective if the task or topic of the initial, small request is unrelated to the larger, target request. In both cases, people feel less connected to the original request and correspondingly their need to behave consistently attenuates.

The most widely accepted psychological explanation for the foot-in-the-door technique is based on self-perception theory.⁸ **Self-perception theory** suggests that complying with a small request leads people to label themselves as helpful, good citizens or as reasonable people. Once people have labeled themselves as such, they have a strong desire to maintain this self-perception, and they are likely to continue complying. Figure 13.2 is a bar graph depicting the findings of research on foot-in-the-door technique.

FIGURE 13.2 | Foot-in-the-Door Technique

The foot-in-the-door technique is surprisingly easy to apply. Complying with small requests like, “Will you do me a small favor?” “Would you like to test drive this vehicle?” “Would you like to try on this suit?” “Try a sample of this perfume,” and “Sign up for a free 30-day trial membership for Internet anti-malware protection” is all that is necessary to establish an initial commitment. Once the foot is in the door, consumers too often comply with the larger, more substantial request that follows.

The Low-Ball Technique

Car salespersons are notorious for their use of the **low-ball technique**. They try to get an initial commitment, and then they change the deal. First, the salesperson offers a consumer an attractive deal. Next, the consumer completes half a dozen forms and falls in love with the car. But after the consumer is committed, the deal changes. The consumer learns that the car is actually more expensive than originally thought. Perhaps the salesperson made a mistake, or the cost of an expensive option was not included. Maybe the salesperson’s boss did not approve the sale. Sometimes the deal changes at the last possible moment, even when a consumer is signing the financial agreement. Whatever the case, once consumers commit to a deal, they tend to stick with it, even when it is no longer as attractive.

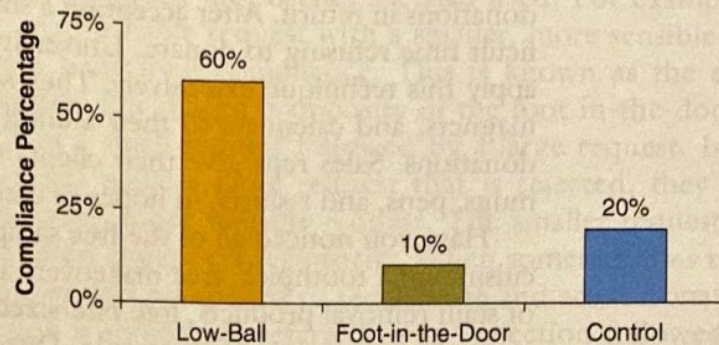
Professor Cialdini first learned about the low-ball technique while pretending to be a sales trainee at a Chevrolet dealership. After experiencing the technique first-hand, he returned to his psychology lab and began conducting a series of experiments.⁹ Both experiments involved college students. In the first study, students were approached on their way to classes and asked if they would be willing to participate in an experiment. This is a reasonable request. Experiments can be fun, and so most students said, “Yes.” But then the deal

changed. After agreeing to participate, students were told that the experiment would begin at 7:00 A.M. on a Saturday morning. That's a different arrangement altogether! Nevertheless, more than half (56%) of the students who said "yes" to the initial request actually agreed to the target request and showed up for the experiment at 7:00 A.M. This alone, however, doesn't demonstrate support for the low-ball technique. We need to know what proportion of students would have shown up if the target request were presented up front, without the low-ball technique. Accordingly, a second group of students was told that the experiment took place at 7:00 A.M., Saturday morning. Of those agreeing to participate, only 24% showed up at the lab. That's fewer than half the proportion of those who complied in the low-ball condition.

Both the low-ball and foot-in-the-door techniques involve obtaining initial compliance in hopes of engendering future compliance through mindless consistency. But the tactics are slightly different. With the low-ball technique, after verbal commitment is obtained, the deal changes. With the foot-in-the-door technique, the deal does not change. Instead, two separate behavioral requests are made. This may seem trivial, but the distinction is crucial. In the low-ball study, students agreed to participate in an experiment. Initially, only verbal compliance was obtained. Then the deal changed and students' behavioral compliance was sought. Students were asked to carry out only the target request (e.g., show up at 7:00 A.M. on Saturday). In contrast, the foot-in-the-door experiment asked participants to comply with two separate behavioral requests. After first agreeing and complying with a small request (posting a small sign), they were asked to comply with the second, target request (posting a larger sign). The low-ball technique is convincing. But so is the foot-in-the-door technique. Which is more influential? Professor Cialdini matched the two techniques, head-to-head, in a second study.

In this field experiment, students were approached in their dorms. In the low-ball condition, students were first asked if they would be willing to help with the United Way—a request requiring verbal compliance only. After obtaining the crucial "yes," the deal changed and students were then told that they needed to go to the dormitory's front desk to get the door posters. This was the target request. In the foot-in-the-door condition, students were first asked to display a small window poster that was given to them—a small behavioral request. If they complied with this small request, they were asked to go to the dormitory's front desk to get the door posters, the same target request as in the low-ball condition. In the control group, students were simply asked, up front, to go to the dormitory's front desk to get the door posters. The low-ball technique was the winner. Only 10% of the students complied with the target request in the foot-in-the-door condition, but 60% complied when the low-ball technique was employed. Interestingly, 20% complied in the control condition. Figure 13.3 provides a summary of the results.

Why is the low-ball technique so effective? Research shows that it works through the principle of commitment and consistency. **Commitment theory** suggests that the purpose of obtaining an initial commitment is to impart resistance to change. People don't like to change their minds. It suggests internal contradiction that creates psychological disharmony. The low-ball technique works by first gaining closure and commitment to an idea or deal. When people become committed to a deal, they feel compelled to behave in such a way that maintains their consistency. Thus, they sustain their commitment, even after

FIGURE 13.3 | Low-Ball versus Foot-in-the-Door

SOURCE: Cialdini, R. B., Cacioppo, J. T., Bassett, R., and Miller, J. A. (1978). Low-ball Procedures for Producing Compliance: Commitment Then Cost. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36, 463–476.

the deal changes. Let's return briefly to the opening vignette in this chapter. The car salesperson applied the low-ball technique when he told Sarah that the only model she liked included upgrades of \$2,999. He knew that after hours evaluating various cars and settling on a particular brand, Sarah was committed.

It is important to recognize that car salespeople and experimenters are not the only ones who use the low-ball technique. People get low-balled every day. The low-ball technique is particularly effective when the initial agreement is a no-brainer—quick and easy. Obtaining public commitment is also crucial. People are especially resistant to change when others hear them agree to a deal. People don't want to appear wishy-washy in front of others. Finally, research shows that the low-ball technique is most powerful when people believe that they agreed to the initial request by their own free will. So, the next time someone asks, "Would you do me a favor?" the correct answer is, "It depends. Tell me what the favor is *first*."

The **bait-and-switch** tactic is a special case of the low-ball technique. Sometimes known as the *lure procedure*,¹⁰ this approach "lures" customers by advertising a low-priced product or service. When customers discover that the product is not available, a salesperson encourages them to purchase a substitute that, of course, costs more. Bait-and-switch is considered fraud if the supplier is not capable of actually selling the advertised product. However, if the seller is able to sell the advertised product, but simply chooses to aggressively promote a competing product, no fraud exists. The bait-and-switch tactic operates under the same principle as the low-ball technique. Customers become committed to the low-priced "bait." When the good deal is taken away, customers feel uncomfortable and seek to reduce this discomfort by accepting the "switch," so long as the new offer is a reasonable substitute.

OBJECTIVE**4****The Reciprocity Principle**

When someone does you a favor, you feel obligated to return it in kind. This is the premise of the **reciprocity principle**. It is not just a principle of social etiquette; it's also a surprisingly powerful influence technique. The problem

is that people are often tricked into returning much larger favors than they receive. For example, nonprofit organizations often give people small gifts—such as flowers, buttons, and return address labels—and then ask for charitable donations in return. After accepting a small gift, people have a surprisingly difficult time refusing to donate. University groups, such as alumni associations, apply this technique extensively. They send free bumper stickers, refrigerator magnets, and calendars to their alumni and then follow up with appeals for donations. Sales reps give their clients specialty gifts or *swag*, such as coffee mugs, pens, and t-shirts, in hopes of creating a feeling of reciprocity.

Have you noticed all of the free samples given in shopping malls? Japanese cuisine on a toothpick, free makeovers at cosmetic boutiques, demonstrations of stain removal products, free bite-sized cookies. Sometimes it's hard to walk away after accepting a free sample. Door-to-door distributors such as Amway and Avon also understand the principle of reciprocity. Their salespeople offer free “test drives” of their products. For example, the BUG consists of a bag of Amway products (e.g., furniture polish, window cleaner, detergent, shampoo, deodorizer, pesticide). Amway salespersons leave the BUG with clients for a few days and ask them to try the products for free. After accepting the BUG bait, people are more likely to purchase items from Amway.

A free sample invokes the reciprocity principle, where the recipient of the sample oftentimes feels obligated to make a purchase in return.



Sheldon Lewis / Alamy

Infomercial sponsors are particularly skilled at applying reciprocity. Proactiv Solutions, Boflex Extreme, Total Gym 1500, One-Touch Can Opener, Magic Bullet Blender, Hip-Hop Abs, and Core Secrets all offer “no-obligation” deals, which operate similarly to free samples. Even children’s magazines, such as *Highlights*[®], offer evaluation samples to induce trials for their brands. Of course, after consumers use the products in their homes for several weeks, the likelihood of returning them is low.

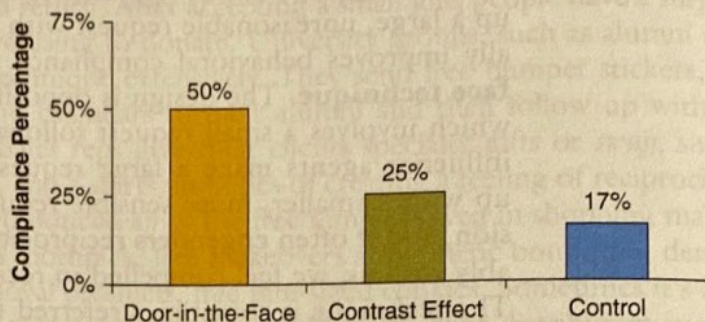
The Door-in-the-Face Technique

Invoking the reciprocity principle need not involve free gifts, samples, or test-drives. More subtle approaches are also used. For example, following up a large, unreasonable request with a smaller, more sensible request usually improves behavioral compliance. This is known as the **door-in-the-face technique**. The design is opposite of the foot-in-the-door technique, which involves a small request followed by a large request. Instead, when influence agents make a large request that is rejected, they often follow up with a smaller, more sensible request. The smaller request is a concession, and it often engenders reciprocity. When someone tries to act reasonably with us, we feel compelled to reciprocate and act reasonably in return. The technique is sometimes referred to as “rejection followed by moderation.” Salespersons and other influence agents know full well that the initial, unreasonable request will be rejected, and the likelihood of obtaining compliance will increase with the second, more moderate request. For example, salespersons often try to sell expensive three-year service plans and extended warranties. Initially, they use fear tactics to sell the general idea of a warranty. After the expensive plan is rejected, they offer a less expensive, one-year service plan. On the basis of reciprocity, consumers often accept the more reasonable offer. Returning again to the opening story in this chapter, the salesperson offered Sarah an expensive three-year, Easy Care warranty for \$1,999. When she rejected it, the salesperson quickly offered a more reasonable, one-year warranty for \$999—which Sarah accepted without resistance.

A series of interesting field experiments was designed to test the effectiveness of the door-in-the-face technique.¹¹ In the first experiment, college students were approached on their way to class and asked to work for two years as unpaid volunteers for the Juvenile Detention Center. Not surprisingly, no one complied. Immediately after rejecting this request, students were asked to volunteer to take a group of juveniles to the zoo for two hours. Fifty percent agreed to this more reasonable target request. But is the door-in-the-face technique more effective than simply making the target request up front? A control condition was included to test this possibility. A separate group of students was simply asked to volunteer to take a group of juveniles to the zoo for two hours. Only 17% agreed. In other words, the door-in-the-face technique was more effective than simply making the target request up front.

Still, it is possible that the 50% who verbally complied did so not because of their feelings of reciprocity but because of a simple contrast effect. After all, two hours of volunteer work looks relatively small when contrasted with two years. A third experimental condition tested this hypothesis. A separate group of students was asked, up front, to choose directly between the two alternatives (volunteer for two years *or* two hours). In this condition, only 25% agreed to take the juveniles to the zoo for two hours (half the rate of the door-in-the-face technique). This provides strong evidence that the door-in-the-face technique does not operate through a simple compare and contrast effect. Figure 13.4 provides a graphic of these results.

Although the door-in-the-face technique appears not to operate via contrast, a second study evaluated reciprocity as the underlying mechanism. In this experiment,

FIGURE 13.4 | Door-in-the-Face Technique

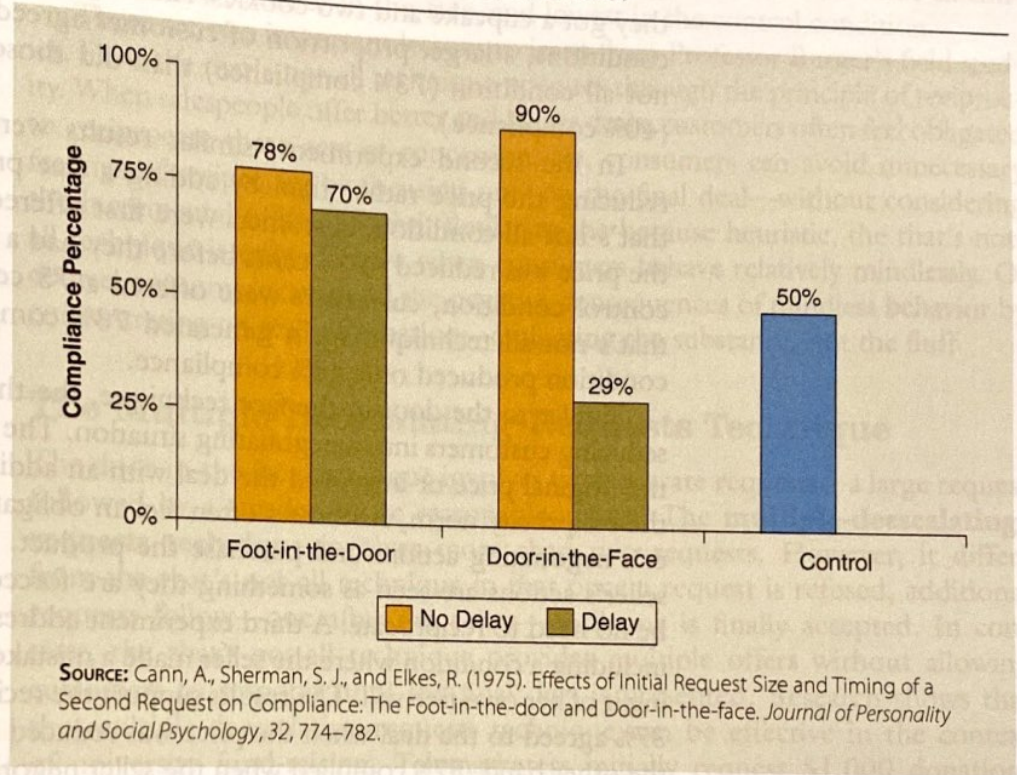
SOURCE: Based on Cialdini, R. (1996). Activating and Aligning Two Kinds of Norms in Persuasive Communications. *Journal of Interpretation Research*, 1, 3–10.

students were asked to serve as unpaid volunteers for a group of low-income children (not juvenile delinquents). After this request was rejected, students in the door-in-the-face group were asked to take the children to the zoo for two hours (the same target request as in the first study). Again, the door-in-the-face technique was effective, as 54% agreed to the target request. A second group of students was also exposed to the door-in-the-face technique, with one critical twist: Two *different* people made the requests. One individual made the initial large request, and a different individual made the second, more reasonable request. Consistent with the reciprocity principle, the two-requestor condition approach was less effective, as only 33% complied. Thus, a concession occurs only when the *same* individual makes both requests. This is intuitively appealing. Reciprocity is about relationships. People feel reciprocity to other people—not to abstract objects or ideas.

Which is more effective, the door-in-the-face technique or the foot-in-the-door technique? You probably know the answer already: “It depends.” In a study that directly compared the two techniques, the timing of the requests was varied.¹² In a no-delay condition, the initial and target requests were administered back-to-back, as in the previous studies. In the delay condition, however, seven to ten days separated the requests. The target request was the same for both techniques. Participants were asked to distribute 15 traffic safety pamphlets to their neighbors. In the door-in-the-face condition, this request was preceded by a very large unreasonable request: “Would you keep a record of traffic flow at a busy intersection for two hours?” In the foot-in-the-door condition, the target request was preceded by a very small request: “Would you answer a few short questions about driving safety?” The results of the study clearly indicate that the door-in-the-face technique was more effective than the foot-in-the-door technique when there was no delay in the requests. Conversely, the foot-in-the-door technique outperformed the door-in-the-face technique when the second request was delayed. The illusion of concession is shattered after a period of several days. Consumers’ feelings of reciprocity dissipate over time, and thus, the rejection-then-moderation approach is only effective when the requests are close in time. Consistent with the self-perception explanation of the foot-in-the-door technique, the start-small-and-build approach is effective regardless of the timing of the requests. Labeling oneself as helpful and

compliant apparently has more long-lasting consequences than does reciprocity. Thus, these two multiple-request techniques operate by different psychological processes. Figure 13.5 provides a summary of the findings.

FIGURE 13.5 | Door-in-the-Face versus Foot-in-the-Door



Victor Budnik/Coble Group/Getty Images

The That's-Not-All Technique

The Ginsu knife, blue-light specials at Kmart, and vacation packages to Cancun, Mexico, are classic examples of the **that's-not-all technique**. Infomercials and shopping networks are notorious for applying this technique to drowsy viewers at 3:00 A.M. How does it work? Opposite of the low-ball-technique, the that's-not-all technique starts high and builds in a downward fashion. The initial deal is changed into an even better deal *before* the consumer has an opportunity to reject the first offer. Long before the consumer can generate counterarguments, extra gifts, deeper discounts, and more attractive financing are incrementally added to the original offer (e.g., "Today only, the Ginsu Stainless Block Set has been reduced in price from \$129.95 to \$89.95. But that's not all. Order today and you get a free pair of kitchen shears. And if you order with a credit card right now, we'll make the first payment for you!"). The that's-not-all technique invokes the norm of reciprocity: with each increment, the sponsor appears to be offering a better and better deal, so the customer feels an increasing obligation to comply in response to these concessions. It is all part of a social norm—a general rule of behavior.

Firms that sell knives and other household items via infomercials often use the that's-not-all technique.

Professor Jerry M. Burger conducted a series of field experiments to test the effectiveness and underlying causes of the that's-not-all technique.¹³ In the first experiment, customers in the that's-not-all condition were offered a cupcake for 75 cents at a college bake sale, but the deal was sweetened (literally) by adding two free cookies before the customers had a chance to respond. In the control condition, customers were told up front that for 75 cents, they got a cupcake and two cookies. Although the deal was identical for both conditions, a larger proportion of customer agreed to the deal in the that's-not-all condition (73% compliance) than did those in the control condition (40% compliance).

In the second experiment, similar results were obtained—this time by reducing the price rather than by adding a free product to the deal. In the that's-not-all condition, customers were first offered a cupcake for \$1.00, but the price was reduced to 75 cents before they had a chance to say “no.” In the control condition, customers were offered a 75-cent cupcake up front. The that's-not-all technique again generated 73% compliance, while the control condition produced only 44% compliance.

Similar to the door-in-the-face technique, the that's-not-all tactic works by seducing customers into a negotiating situation. The seller has come down from the original price or improved the deal with an additional product. Abiding by the reciprocity norm, customers often feel an obligation to reciprocate the seller's negotiating actions and purchase the product. On the other hand, if the seller's actions are seen as something they are forced to do, then there should be no need to reciprocate. A third experiment addressed this very hypothesis by including a condition where the seller made a mistake in price rather than reducing it of her own free will. The results support the reciprocity explanation, as only 37% agreed to the deal when the price was reduced as a result of a *mistake*. On the other hand, 57% complied when the seller negotiated the price downward.

The next experiment tested a simple contrast-effect explanation. Is reciprocity really the motivation for complying, or does 75 cents simply compare favorably to \$1.00? One group of customers was told that the cupcakes sold for 75 cents; a second group was told that they cost \$1.00. Next, both groups were asked how much they would be willing to pay for the cupcakes. The groups estimated similar price points. This indicates that a contrast effect is not driving customers' decisions.

A follow-up experiment compared the that's-not-all-technique against a common bargain technique. Prices were raised beyond the prices in the earlier studies to reduce mindless compliance. In the that's-not-all condition, \$1.25 cupcakes were reduced to \$1.00 because the students wanted to close down the bake sale. In the bargain condition, customers were told, “These are only a dollar now. We were selling them for \$1.25 earlier.” Compliance was significantly higher in the that's-not-all condition (55%) than in the bargain condition (25%). This provides evidence that a perceived bargain cannot account for the effectiveness of the that's-not-all technique.

If reciprocity is the underlying motive for both the that's-not-all and the door-in-the-face techniques, which tactic is superior? In the final experiment, these two techniques were matched head-to-head. Recall that the door-in-the-face technique allows customers the opportunity to refuse the initial deal or request and a second, more reasonable offer follows. In contrast, the that's-not-all

technique offers a better deal immediately, eliminating the opportunity to refuse the initial offer. In the that's-not-all condition, the price of the cupcakes was reduced from \$1.25 to \$1.00 as in the previous study. In the door-in-the-face condition, cupcakes were initially offered for \$1.25. If customers refused this deal, *then* the price was reduced to \$1.00. In the control condition, cupcakes were sold for \$1.00 up front. Compliance was highest in the that's-not-all condition, second for door-in-the-face, and lowest in the control condition.

There are two important lessons to learn from Professor Burger's field studies. First, the that's-not-all technique operates through the principle of reciprocity. When salespeople offer better and better deals, customers often feel obligated to reciprocate these acts of concession. So, consumers can avoid unnecessary feelings of reciprocity by focusing only on the final deal—without considering the incremental offers. Second, similar to the because heuristic, the that's-not-all technique is only effective when consumers behave relatively mindlessly. Of course, consumers can avoid the negative consequences of mindless behavior by concentrating on real information—evaluating the substance, not the fluff.

The Multiple-Deescalating-Requests Technique

The door-in-the face technique involves two separate requests—a large request followed by a smaller, more reasonable appeal. The **multiple-deescalating-requests technique** involves more than two requests. However, it differs from the that's-not-all technique in that once a request is refused, additional requests follow—one after the other—until one is finally accepted. In contrast, the that's-not-all technique provides multiple offers without allowing customers to respond until the final deal is presented. Research shows that the multiple-deescalating-requests technique can be effective in the context of university fund-raising. Telemarketers initially request \$1,000 donations for their university. If this request is rejected, a request of \$750 follows. If this fails, there is an appeal for \$500, and so on. This approach yields greater compliance rates and donation amounts compared with a standard request. Moreover, the multiple-deescalating-requests technique is more effective than presenting statistical information about typical donation levels and ranges (a common fund-raising technique). In fact, presenting statistical information is no more effective than the standard request.¹⁴ These results are consistent with the automaticity principle and with research on consumers' tendency to neglect statistical information.

The Even-a-Penny Technique

Influence agents can appear to be reasonable and induce clients to comply through a wide variety of reciprocity-based tactics: free gifts, concessions, or multiple concessions. Another way to appear reasonable is to make extremely small requests. This approach is known as the **even-a-penny technique**, and it involves the legitimization of trivial contributions (e.g., a penny, a dollar, one minute of your time). Research shows that this approach can be effective in increasing compliance rates without decreasing the average amount donated by contributing individuals in fund-raising efforts. One field study tested the effectiveness of the even-a-penny technique by soliciting donations door-to-door for



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the American Cancer Society.¹⁵ In the control group, potential donors were given the standard plea, “Would you be willing to help by giving a donation?” In the even-a-penny condition, the solicitor added, “Even a penny will help.” The even-a-penny technique generated almost twice the compliance rate (50%) as the control condition (28%). More interesting, the median dollar contributions by individuals were identical. This is a powerful lesson for nonprofit organizations: The even-a-penny technique does not sacrifice dollar contributions for higher compliance rates. Further research shows this technique

can increase donations to the American Heart Association¹⁶ and the Reye’s Syndrome Foundation. Finally, this reciprocity-based technique appears to be equally effective in both face-to-face and telemarketing contexts.¹⁷

OBJECTIVE

5

The Scarcity Principle

“While Supplies Last,” “Limited Edition,” “Sale Ends Soon,” and “One-Time-Offer” all proclaim a sense of urgency to imply scarcity for products and services. Do consumers prefer items that are abundant or rare? According to the **scarcity principle**, people often want what they cannot have. Consumers also want things that may not be available in the future. Stamp collectors covet the rare Curtis Jenny inverted airmail stamp. Only 100 were created in 1918, all on a single sheet created by a printer error. Baseball card collectors dream about the scarce 1909 T206 Honus Wagner tobacco card, also known as the “Holy Grail of baseball cards.” Incredibly, this 1-7/16" × 2-5/8" card was once owned by hockey great Wayne Gretzky and recently sold for \$2.35 million to an anonymous Los Angeles buyer.¹⁸ The scarcity principle rests on the premise that because valuable objects are rare, it follows that rare objects must be valuable. This backwards logic is known as **affirmation of the consequent**, or confusion of the inverse. In fact, there are lots of scarce items that have little value—obsolete mainframe computers, turntable record players, and manual typewriters, to name a few. Still, consumers associate scarcity with value. Clever marketers create scarcity by limiting production or supply. Some manufacturers, including Harley-Davidson and Porsche, deliberately limit production on expensive models. In the case of Harley-Davidson, some customers are willing to wait more than a year to take title to their new motorcycles. Other marketers influence perceptions of scarcity by limiting distribution. Until July 2000, L.L.Bean resisted expanding its bricks-and-mortar retail stores beyond its single outlet in Freeport, Maine. White House Black Market (WHBM), a high-end women’s clothing boutique, does not distribute its products through discount retailers such as Walmart. Firms like WHBM understand that consumers’ perceptions of exclusivity are inversely related to distribution intensity and that exclusive (or scarce) products command higher margins. For decades, the DeBeers Company has successfully convinced consumers that diamonds are

rare. Diamonds, which are basically compressed carbon, have not been “rare” since their discovery in South Africa in 1867. Today, diamonds are mined in about 25 countries, on every continent except Europe and Antarctica.

Government attempts to limit the availability of a product via prohibition or censorship often backfire because telling us we cannot have a product makes us want it even more. During the Prohibition Era in the United States, alcoholic beverages became scarcer and so, more desirable. Consequently, consumers went to great lengths (even committing crimes) to obtain alcohol. Similarly, telling us *not* to do something makes the behavior more desirable. For example, some research raises questions about the effectiveness of the D.A.R.E. Program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education).¹⁹ Similar criticisms have been raised against programs aimed at reducing teenage smoking and alcohol consumption. In the mind of a teenager, “If everyone is telling us not to do it, it must be *really* good.” Censorship can also increase demand.²⁰ The publication of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 provoked violent reactions from radical Muslims because it was perceived as irreverently portraying the prophet Muhammad. Rushdie received threats and a fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini, calling for his execution. How did the book sell? It headlined on *The New York Times* bestseller list for more than a year and has produced 14 hardcopy editions since, quite a feat for a modern-day novel that received mixed reviews and was generally regarded as not being an easy read.

Research on the effects of scarcity show that reducing availability increases desirability. Field experiments demonstrate that something as simple as the number of chocolate chip cookies in a jar can exert a surprisingly powerful effect on the desirability of a product.¹ Participants in a field study selected more cookies when there were only two (versus ten) cookies in the jar. This effect was more pronounced when limited product availability was the result of an accident (i.e., the experimenter grabbed the wrong jar). Moreover, desire for the scarce cookies was highest when product availability was reduced because of demand (i.e., the product was chosen frequently by previous participants). Interestingly, these scarcity effects did not occur because of preferences in taste.

It is important to guard against the power of the scarcity effect when marketers inundate us with claims of product shortages or limited time offers. Recall the Xbox 360 shortage during Christmas, 2005? Rumors of retail shortages sent consumers scurrying to eBay to buy the product for as much as \$3,000. The bidding wars that ensued only pushed prices higher (the manufacturer’s suggested retail price was about \$399). Judging by the thousands of Xbox 360 listings on eBay during that holiday season, one might wonder if the shortage was real or simply crafted to benefit the scalpers.



WAGNER, PITTSBURG

The Honus Wagner baseball card is an extremely scarce, incredibly valuable asset for collectors.



eBay/ZUMAPRESS/Newscom

the thousands of Xbox 360 listings on eBay during that holiday season, one might wonder if the shortage was real or simply crafted to benefit the scalpers.

OBJECTIVE

6

The Social Validation Principle

Thousands of satisfied customers can't be wrong, and firms like Procter & Gamble, Toyota, and Verizon Communications spend more than \$1 billion in advertising each year reminding us of the popularity of their brands. For decades, McDonald's has proclaimed "over one billion [hamburgers] sold." Public broadcasting stations, charity telethons, and university fund-raisers delight in presenting long lists of names of individuals who have been involved in their causes in the past. Salespeople often provide prospects with their list of clients, emphasizing that some of the names are friends or acquaintances of the prospect. In televised fund-raising drives, dozens of telephones are ringing and volunteers are answering them, supposedly taking the names of eager contributors. Shopping networks show a digital count of the number of units sold along with the time remaining until the product sells out, and eBay displays the cumulative number of bids and times the page has been visited for each auction item. Bartenders, street musicians, and deli-clerks, among others, salt their tip jars to give the impression that many people leave tips—and large ones. Nightclub ushers limit the number of people allowed into the club so that long lines form outside the door, suggesting that the club is extremely popular. Canned laugh tracks are still used on television sitcoms to make the shows seem funnier (even though people claim not to like canned laughter).²¹

What do all these examples have in common? They are applications of the **social validation principle**, also known as "proof in numbers." The social validation principle maintains that the perceived validity (or correctness) of an idea increases as the number of people supporting the idea increases. In fact, the opinions of other people can be extremely informative, especially under conditions of ambiguity or uncertainty.²²

Presenting a list of supporters or donors to a prospect is known as the **list technique**. Research on the list technique shows that it can significantly increase compliance. In a door-to-door fund-raising campaign for the American Heart Association, one group of prospective donors was shown a long list of names of previous donors prior to the request. The control group received only the standard request for a donation. Forty-three percent donated in the list technique condition, but only 25% donated in the control condition.²³

People also look to the behavior of others when they decide *not* to do something. On March 13, 1964, Catherine "Kitty" Genovese parked her car by the Long Island Railroad parking lot and began walking home. Winston Mosley chased her down and began attacking her. Injured and terrified, Kitty screamed, "Oh my God! He stabbed me! Please help me!" Mosley fled when nearby apartment lights went on and a man shouted, "Let that girl alone!" But Mosley returned and stabbed Kitty again when no one actually came forward to help. At 3:25 A.M., Mosley returned a third time and stabbed Kitty as she lay inside the front door of her apartment. It wasn't until 3:50 A.M. that the police finally received a call from one of the 38 witnesses to the murder. Tragically, by the time police reached Kitty, she was already dead.²⁴ Why did none of the witnesses help? What kind of people would simply watch and not intervene?

These questions have been asked over and over again. The truth is, the witnesses' behavior—though disturbing—is normal. Classic research on bystander nonintervention shows that people are less likely to help a person when many other people are present.²⁵ One explanation for this bystander nonintervention is that people don't think others need help if no one else appears alarmed or concerned. People look for cues from other group members. If no one quickly steps forward to act, then the likelihood of anyone acting decreases and a snowball of pluralistic ignorance ensues. This peculiar inaction among group members is known as the **diffusion of responsibility**. In fact, people are much more likely to help when they perceive themselves to be the only person available to help, i.e., responsibility for helping the person in need cannot be diffused.

Do consumers diffuse their responsibilities in the marketplace? Do they ignore good causes when few people seem to support them (e.g., world hunger)? Do consumers shy away from superior products that lack advertising clout (e.g., blood pressure monitors)? Conversely, do they jump on the bandwagon of brands because we see others buying them (e.g., iPads and smartphones)? Classic research indicates that people observe and model (imitate) the behavior of others.²⁶ Moreover, the effects of peer pressure and conformity on consumers' perceptions of what is correct can be powerful.²⁷



Global Perspectives

Persuasion versus Negotiation: East versus West

According to Don E. Schultz, professor emeritus-in-service at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, Western countries view marketing communication differently than do the Chinese. The West uses marketing communication primarily to persuade—to get people to accept the value of their propositions and agree with their arguments. This is evident in their advertising appeals: proofs, demonstrations, testimonials, and comparisons. Each of these is designed to convince and persuade the audience. In contrast, the Chinese see marketing communication as a tool for negotiating—situations to be considered, bargained for, and haggled over.²⁸ Each is designed to come to an arrangement on a price or value on which both parties agree and are comfortable.

Professor Schultz argues that in the United States, “we... try to convert others to our way of thinking. We try to convince them to forego present products and services and to switch to our brand of offering. Alternatively, the Chinese are consummate negotiators. They’ve practiced the skill and art

of negotiation for 50 or so centuries—trading and bartering and sharing value through negotiation during that entire period.”

Shultz maintains that marketing has become difficult in the West because we live in a *negotiated* marketplace, and yet Western marketing communication is designed to be *persuasive*. New media forms such as social media, blogs, and interactivity are negotiated, unlike traditional media, such as TV, magazines, or newspapers, which serve as one-way forums for persuasion. Hence, the mismatch: the West is attempting to force persuasion into negotiated media, and it doesn't fit. Ironically, a majority of social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and even Twitter were invented in the United States. Perhaps marketing communication will adapt to the new media in an attempt to bring people together, not just for the purposes of selling, but to create sharing, conversation, and long-term, value-laden, win-win relationships. After all, isn't that the purpose of marketing?²⁸

Cultural and Individual Differences

All consumers are not equally susceptible to peer pressure. High self-monitoring individuals (those who are highly sensitive and responsive to social cues) are more susceptible to social influence than are low self-monitors.²⁹ Individuals from collectivistic (versus individualistic) cultures are also more given to social influence.³⁰ Members of individualistic cultures tend to define themselves as independent from groups and focus on personal goals, while members of collectivistic cultures define themselves in terms of group membership and emphasize group goals. In general, Western cultures such as North America and Western Europe are individualistic and Eastern cultures such as Japan, South Korea, and China are more collectivistic. Even within a culture, however, people differ. Those with a strong collectivistic (versus individualistic) orientation tend to be more responsive to social influence, regardless of the prevailing culture. In fact, research indicates that individual differences may be more important than cultural differences.³¹

An interesting study tested the effectiveness of social-validation procedures versus commitment and consistency techniques for influencing consumers in the United States and Poland. The United States is considered an individualistic culture, while Poland is considered relatively more collectivistic. Individual differences were also measured using an individualistic/collectivistic personality scale. Students were asked to imagine that they had been approached by a representative from the Coca-Cola Company who wished to ask them some questions about Coca-Cola. In the social-validation condition, students were told that all (or half) their classmates had agreed to participate. In the commitment and consistency conditions, students were told that, in the past, their classmates had always (or never) complied with survey requests. Two important findings emerged. First, the social-validation procedure was more effective with the Polish students, but the commitment and consistency technique worked better with the American students. Second, students' personal orientation (individualistic versus collectivistic) had a stronger impact on their compliance than did the overall cultural orientation.³¹

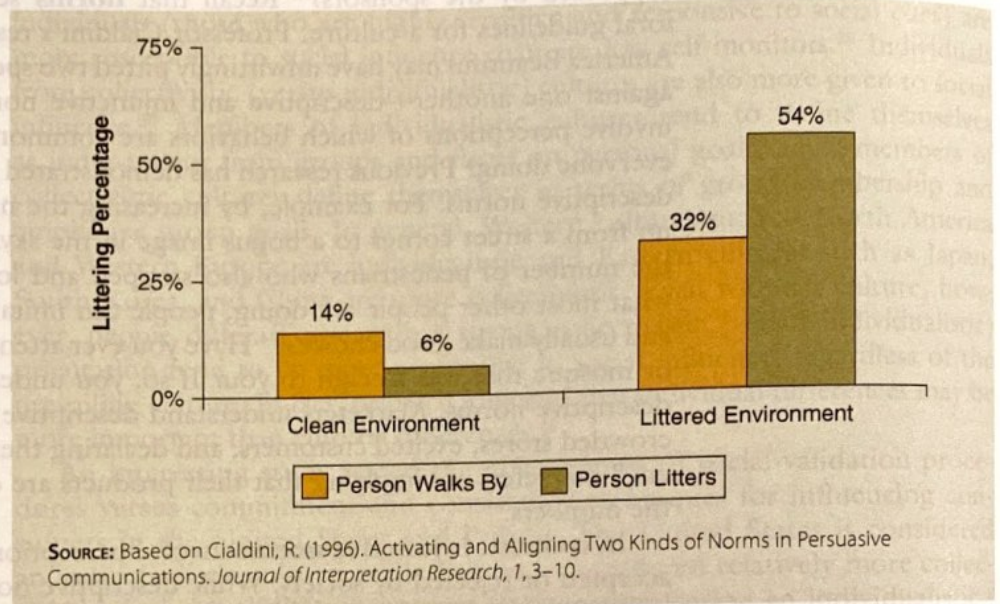
Injunctive versus Descriptive Norms

Sometimes well-intended communications may actually send the *wrong* message. In 1971, Keep America Beautiful, Inc., created a dramatic public service announcement hoping to convince Americans to stop littering. The first spot aired on Earth Day and featured Iron Eyes Cody, a famous Native American actor, quietly canoeing through a polluted river. As Iron Eyes Cody emerged from the river near a busy highway, a motorist threw a bag of garbage, which splattered at the Indian's feet. The ad ended with a close-up of Iron Eyes' solemn face, and a tear trickles down his cheek (this classic PSA can be viewed online at www.kab.org, on the About Us page). Titled "People Start Pollution, People Can Stop It," the ad became a classic and was partially credited with helping to establish the nascent environmental movement in the United States. But did it send the wrong message?

Despite the drama created by the “Iron Eyes Cody spot,” research shows that the ad contains features that may encourage behavior opposite of that supported by the sponsors.³² Recall that **norms** serve as important behavioral guidelines for a culture. Professor Cialdini’s research suggests that Keep America Beautiful may have unwittingly pitted two specific types of social norms against one another—descriptive and injunctive norms. **Descriptive norms** involve perceptions of which behaviors are common or popular, i.e., what is everyone doing? Previous research has demonstrated the powerful influence of descriptive norms. For example, by increasing the number of people looking up from a street corner to a bogus image in the sky, experimenters increased the number of pedestrians who also stopped and looked up.³³ By observing what most other people are doing, people can imitate these common actions and usually make good choices.³⁴ Have you ever attended a church, synagogue, or mosque that was foreign to you? If so, you understand the importance of descriptive norms. Marketers understand descriptive norms, too. By showing crowded stores, excited customers, and declaring their brands to be “best sellers,” marketers are implying that their products are desirable. The proof is in the numbers.

In contrast, **injunctive norms** involve perceptions of which behaviors are accepted or rejected by society. While descriptive norms tell us what *is* done, injunctive norms tell us what *should* be done. Injunctive norms motivate us with social rewards for appropriate behavior and social punishment for inappropriate actions. Both kinds of norms motivate human action because people tend to do what is popular *and* what society approves.³⁵ As such, the two norms could be potential competitors, descriptive norms pulling consumers in one direction and injunctive norms tugging the other way. Could it be that the “Iron Eyes Cody spot” sends a mixed message to its audience by showing a regrettable but common behavior? By featuring a littered environment, the audience may simply interpret the message as validating their belief that everyone litters. Worse, if the ad focuses attention on the undesirable behavior (e.g., showing someone in the act of littering), then the effect may be to increase that very undesirable behavior. If everybody’s doing this, it must be normal. Here, the descriptive norm (what people actually do) may win the battle against the injunctive norm (what people ought to do). Even the voice-over for the ad, “People Start Pollution ...” invokes a descriptive norm—everyone pollutes.

Professor Cialdini tested this hypothesis in a field study.³² Flyers regarding automotive safety week were tucked under the windshield wipers of parking garage patrons. One area was filled with litter; the other was clean. In addition, patrons either witnessed a person drop a large flyer on the floor (littering condition) or witnessed a person walk by (walk-by condition). The results showed that parking patrons were more likely to litter in the littered environment than in the clean environment. More important, patrons who witnessed a person litter in the littered environment also littered more (54%) than did those patrons who saw no littering in the littered environment (32%). Finally, patrons who witnessed a person litter in the clean environment littered less (6%) than did those patrons who saw no littering in the clean environment (14%). This important interaction is depicted in Figure 13.6.

FIGURE 13.6 | Descriptive versus Injunctive Norms

The results of this study are intuitively appealing. The rationale to litter in a dirty garage may involve something like, “Littering won’t do much additional damage here; it’s already a mess.” Moreover, observing someone else litter in a dirty environment increases littering behavior (54%). Here the descriptive norm (everyone litters) overpowers the injunctive norm (littering is wrong). Conversely, witnessing someone litter in a very clean environment may invoke a more powerful injunctive norm, “Why would he litter? This place is clean!” The lesson from this research is important. When communicating that a particular behavior is socially objectionable, advertisers should not portray the undesirable behavior as common. Instead, they should focus their message on the desired outcome. Otherwise, they run the risk of emphasizing the descriptive norm (e.g., lots of people perform the unwanted behavior) over the injunctive norm (e.g., the unwanted behavior is wrong).

Changing behavior is important for many nonprofit organizations and cause-related marketers. Stopping smoking, driving under the influence, and texting while driving all require cessation of a negative behavior. In contrast, getting mammograms, exercising regularly, and eating healthy foods all involve the adoption of a positive behavior. In both cases, marketers who understand descriptive and injunctive norms are better equipped to obtain the desired outcome. In *The Tipping Point*, author Malcolm Gladwell discusses how social phenomena like fashion trends and crime begin, gather momentum, and finally “tip” to become epidemics.³⁶ He also argues that America’s anti-smoking messages during the previous two decades may have backfired. Recent data from the American Lung Association indicate that approximately 20% of college students are regular smokers. But the American Lung Association notes that smoking rates among students fluctuate greatly, and they attribute the most recent decline to higher prices for cigarettes and more regulations barring smoking in public areas and colleges.³⁷ Gladwell argues, however, that health

organizations should stop trying to change attitudes about tobacco. Smoking, *per se*, has never been cool. It's the *smokers* who are cool. From James Dean to Steve McQueen to Sarah Jessica Parker, each embodies rebellion, sexuality, and most of all, sophistication. Though Gladwell makes a case for limiting the nicotine in cigarettes and reducing smoking by understanding its links to depression, he would probably agree that emphasizing injunctive norms (smoking is bad) just fuels teenage interest in smoking. Ad campaigns that portray teenage smokers as delinquent or antisocial simply acknowledge the frequency of the behavior. Besides, teenagers are often drawn to rebellious behavior; it's part of being a teenager. The current anti-smoking campaigns run parallel to the Keep America Beautiful campaign. Both emphasize the common, descriptive norms over the prescriptive, injunctive norms. And the descriptive norms are likely to win; in other words, if everyone is doing it, it must be normal.

Marketing in Action

Back by Popular Neglect

Research in consumer behavior can be helpful to nonprofit organizations looking for solutions to national problems, such as littering. Professor Cialdini's 1996 study demonstrates that previous techniques aimed at stopping littering may actually endorse and increase littering behavior.³² The 1971 Iron Eyes Cody public service announcement from Keep America Beautiful (KAB) is a perfect example. By showing a littered environment to the audience, with an implicit warning that littering is harmful, the audience actually views a scene validating their belief that everyone litters. KAB didn't know about Cialdini's research in 1971, but they did by 1998.

First aired on April 21 (Earth Day) in 1998, KAB's sequel to the 1971 ad recalls the famous face and tear of Iron Eyes Cody. The ad begins with a scene at an urban bus stop. Prior to climbing on the bus, a young African American woman prepares to litter her gum, a middle-aged Caucasian businessman litters his newspaper, an African American man innocently places his Styrofoam cup on the ground, while a casually dressed white man tosses his cigarette and extinguishes it with his foot. After the litterbugs get on the bus, the ad focuses on the littered environment, where a breeze tosses the trash about. Finally, the camera pans to a large poster of Iron Eyes Cody, which is strategically positioned inside the bus stop shelter. In high drama, a tear rolls down his face—the same tear he cried some 35 years ago. Unfortunately, as with the 1971 ad, the same effects are likely to occur. Once again, the ad features both a littered environment and copious littering behavior, and this time the message is even stronger—people of all races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds litter. It's a recipe for misinterpretation and an invitation to litter. The tagline, "Back by

Popular Neglect," refers to environmental neglect. However, it could just as easily refer to KAB's disregard for consumer research. As recently as 2012, KAB continued to emphasize littering as a descriptive norm. A link from KAB's web page, "Littering is Wrong Too," encourages consumers to write in or shoot videos of other people littering. Doesn't this just legitimize the descriptive norm?

So what is the correct approach? According to research, the lowest frequency of littering occurs when people view *one* thoughtless person littering in a *clean* environment. This approach would send the message that *few* people litter, and any individual who does so significantly harms the environment. How about a scene of Iron Eyes Cody wiping away his 42-year-old tear and replacing it with a smile as a sole litterbug changes his course by picking up not only his litter but also a misplaced item near a tidy and conspicuously positioned recycling bin?

KAB isn't the only organization that appears to ignore the recommendations of consumer research. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) seat belt enforcement campaign, "Click It or Ticket," shows various scenes of police officers ticketing motorists who have failed to buckle up. The NHTSA cites the campaign as helping to create 82-percent seat belt usage nationwide. One can't help but wonder how high usage would be if the NHTSA's ads featured a majority of drivers buckling up and avoiding traffic tickets. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Sir, Have you been Drinking Tonight?" campaign presents a series of drunk drivers opening their car doors, while various forms of alcoholic beverages pour out. All of the drivers are arrested. An ad with a series of sober drivers successfully negotiating a check-point while one drunk gets caught seems more in line with Cialdini's research.

OBJECTIVE

7

The Liking Principle

The **liking principle** is remarkably simple—we tend to comply with the requests of those whom we like. So, the more an individual likes you, the more power you have over him or her. Your overall social power is proportionate to the number of people who like you. Take Joe Girard, for example. Joe is the famous Chevrolet salesman who won the title “Number One Car Salesman” 12 years in a row and earned more than \$200,000 annually.¹ Girard is also listed as the world’s greatest car salesman in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. How does he do it? Joe claims people like him because he offers his customers a fair deal. But he also does something else. Each month, Joe sends more than 13,000 greeting cards to his customers. The message inside is always the same three words, “I like you.” Let’s explore the formula for the liking principle. It rests on four primary factors: familiarity, attractiveness, similarity, and ingratiation.

Familiarity

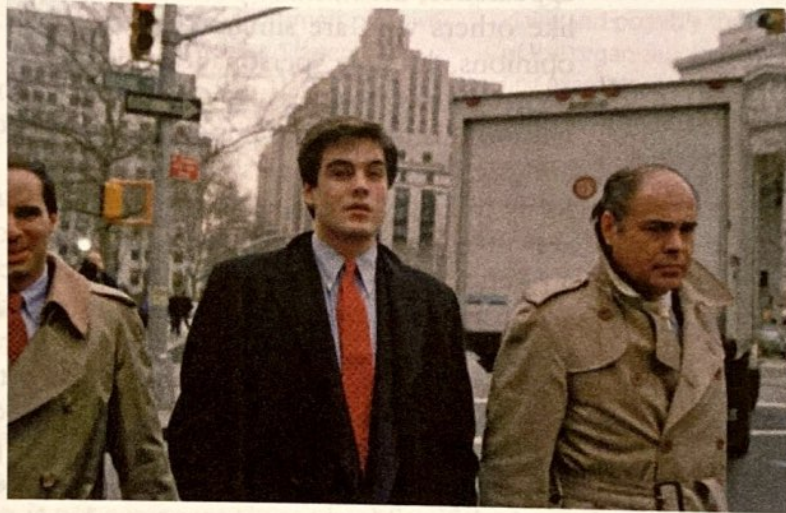
The *mere exposure effect* suggests that the more familiar we become with an object, the more we like it. This explains why an initially unfamiliar stimulus such as a new song becomes more likable over time. We aren’t too sure about the song the first time we hear it. After repeated exposure, however, the tune becomes more familiar; by the third or fourth play, we are singing along. Recent research shows that the mere exposure effect is also applicable to our familiarity with specific people. In a recent study, participants repeatedly viewed photographs of people’s faces and then viewed the same photographs again, along with photographs of new (similarly attractive) faces. The familiar faces were rated as more likable and evoked more smiles than did the unfamiliar faces.³⁸ The lesson is simple: we tend to like familiar people.

Physical Attractiveness

Of all the factors influencing likability, physical attractiveness may be the most intriguing. Research shows that we automatically assume attractive people to be intelligent, kind, and honest.³⁹ This *halo effect* suggests that we may over-generalize, assuming that one positive trait (e.g., physical attractiveness) implies the presence of many other positive traits. Accordingly, successful marketers closely attend to the latest fashions and try to appear attractive. And they should. Research demonstrates that well-groomed female job candidates can receive more favorable hiring decisions.⁴⁰ A recent study shows that attractive men and women are more likely to be hired than less attractive applicants.⁴¹ Another study shows that attractive employees earn approximately 12 to 14% more income than their less attractive colleagues.⁴² Similarly, attractive individuals are found to experience superior levels of professional and academic development.⁴³

Attractiveness effects don’t necessarily end in the workplace. A mesmerizing criminal trial, known as “The Preppy Murder Trial,” began during 1986. Robert Chambers was charged with and tried for the second-degree murder of Jennifer Levin, whose semi-clad body was found by a bicyclist near Fifth

Avenue and 83d Street, behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Robert Chambers was an attractive young man. Standing 6'4" and weighing 200 pounds, his blue eyes and movie-star proportions won favor with the media. Chambers was described as a handsome "altar boy" with a promising future. In contrast, the media attacked Levin's reputation. Although the jury was deadlocked for nine days, Chambers' legal team ultimately struck a plea bargain—manslaughter. In the end, Chambers was sentenced to serve only 5 to 15 years in prison. He served all 15 years, mostly because of his bad behavior while incarcerated.



The movie-star persona of Robert Chambers may have influenced those involved in "The Preppy Murder Trial," leading to an alleviated sentence.

AP Images/Mario Suriani

Does physical attractiveness affect the legal process? An experiment demonstrates that attractive defendants who serve time are less likely to return to jail than their less attractive counterparts.⁴⁴ A group of New York City inmates underwent plastic surgery to remove facial disfigurements. A second group received only the typical rehabilitation services, such as counseling and training. The group who received cosmetic surgery was significantly less likely to be re-incarcerated. There's more. Attractive people are more likely to receive help in times of need (from both sexes) than are less attractive people.⁴⁵ Finally, physically attractive politicians have been shown to receive more than twice as many votes as their less attractive opponents.⁴⁶ Overall, attractive people enjoy significant social advantages in our culture. They are viewed as more intelligent, earn higher incomes, and receive preferential treatment. Given this background, it's not surprising that Hooters of America, Inc. quickly settled a class action lawsuit for more than \$3 million in exchange for the right to hire only (attractive) women as waitresses. Men are permitted to work at the Hooters restaurants, but only as cooks, dishwashers, and managers. The company website argues that "Hooters Girls" have the same right to use their natural female sex appeal to earn a living as supermodels. Hooters understands that attractiveness generates liking, and liking generates power.

It also should come as no surprise that in 2010, almost a quarter of a million cosmetic procedures were performed on young people between the ages of 13 and 19, including about 47,000 nose jobs and 9,000 breast augmentations.

This represents nearly a 10% increase in teen cosmetic surgeries since 2002.⁴⁷ At a more mundane level, how many men have grown mustaches or beards, and how many women have changed their hair color? How many people wear contact lenses to improve their youthfulness or lose weight in order to improve their body appearance? Perhaps these measures are less extreme than surgery, but they are still just a variation on an important theme—attractiveness.

Similarity

For those people who are happy with (or resigned to) their perfectly normal appearance, the *similarity tactic* can be tapped to influence liking. People tend to like others who are similar to themselves in terms of appearance, attitudes, opinions, lifestyle, personality, and social or educational background.⁴⁸ Of course, the opposite is also true. We tend to dislike those who are dissimilar to us, and this finding has important implications for understanding stereotyping and prejudice.⁴⁹ One classic study from the 1970s shows that people are more likely to help those who dress as they do. An experimenter dressed either conservatively or in “hippie” garb and asked college students for a dime to make a phone call (obviously, the study took place in the pre-cell phone era). When the experimenter was dressed the same as the students, more than two-thirds of the students complied. In contrast, when the experimenter dressed differently than the students, fewer than half met his request.⁵⁰ Even trivial similarities can be influential. Recent research demonstrates that an incidental (trivial) association between individuals can have a persuasive influence in a sales context. Consumers who found that they shared the same birthday or birthplace with a service representative reported more favorable attitudes and higher purchase intentions for the salesperson’s promotion.⁵¹ Accordingly, salespeople are trained to find out what hobbies and leisure activities potential clients enjoy and to feign similar interests. Car salespeople are even trained to look in the trunks of potential clients’ cars for clues. In fact, many sales training programs instruct trainees to “mirror” their client’s body posture, mood, and verbal style.⁵² Remember how the car salesperson in the opening vignette preferred the same music and sports as the customer? What a coincidence. The *Little Red Book of Selling* specifically instructs salespeople to establish some kind of rapport that includes finding some common ground with a customer.⁵³ Rapport with customers is usually established by identifying similarities in attitudes, opinions, and experiences. Because similarities can easily be manufactured and masqueraded, consumers should pay special attention to influence agents who claim to be just like them.¹

Ingratiation

If you suspect that someone is paying you compliments because they want a favor, you’re probably right. **Ingratiation** is a tactic commonly used to engender liking. It involves purposefully bringing oneself into the good graces of another person. In fact, we tend to like those who like us, and we are hopelessly addicted to compliments. Research shows that even when consumers realize that they are being flattered, they still like the flatterer. What’s more, the ingratiation doesn’t have to be accurate to work. Research shows that compliments



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precise—so long as you think the salesperson is knowledgeable.⁵⁴ Every day, consumers encounter dozens of numerical estimates. When talking with friends, one person might tell you that the average salary for new marketing majors last year was about \$36,000 annually. Another friend reports that it was about

If a salesperson at Best Buy tells you the battery of the laptop you're considering lasts "about 500 minutes," as opposed to "almost eight hours," you are likely to view his estimate as more

\$3,000 a month. A third friend indicates that the average pay was approximately \$692 per week. Which estimate would you find more accurate? Similarly, let's say you wanted to place a custom order for furniture, and you asked the service rep how long it would take until delivery. Would it make a difference if the rep answered, "two months," "eight weeks," or "120 days"? In both examples, the respective expressions of time are identical. However, consumers perceive the speakers' reports as differentially precise and reliable.

A new study shows that the same time expression is perceived as more precise when expressed in finely-tuned units, rather than larger, coarser units. But the advantage of using fine-grained units only occurs when

the communicator is assumed to have relevant knowledge and is generally trustworthy.⁵⁵ Could marketing and public relations professionals use this knowledge to deceive consumers? Not necessarily. While consumers may infer low precision from large, or coarser units, if the finely-tuned information is perceived to exceed the communicator's knowledge level, it could undermine the credibility of the claim and possibly the trustworthiness of the organization. Returning to the first example, if you believe your friend could really estimate a new marketing major's salary in weekly wages, then he'll be perceived as the most accurate. On the other hand, if you don't think his knowledge warrants that level of precision, he'll lose credibility.

by an evaluator produced the same liking whether the compliments were true or not.⁵⁶ Remembering a client's name⁵⁷ and asking a person how he or she is doing can also facilitate liking and thus, produce compliance.⁵⁸ Ingratiation, however, is not a panacea. It can backfire if the ingratiation goes too far with the flattery, making it exaggerated or inappropriate. This is known as the "ingratiator's dilemma."⁵⁹ Thus, ingratiation should be subtle. Some tactics include paying compliments about someone to a third party, agreeing with someone only *after* expressing some initial resistance, and performing useful (versus superfluous) favors, i.e., favors that actually help the target of the ingratiation.⁶⁰

Creating **indirect associations** to a positively evaluated stimulus (such as a popular university, sports team, or brand) can also increase liking for the stimulus. For example, when our team wins, we are more likely to wear hats, hoodies, and T-shirts adorned with the team's logo. This is known as basking in reflected glory, or BIRGing. Although fans don't have much to do with the performance of the team, a victory feels like a personal triumph. On the other hand, when our team loses, it feels like a personal defeat.⁶¹ Simply by wearing NFL gear or drinking from a mug that displays our favorite brand, we increase our likability for that particular organization. If the team or brand performs poorly, however, we tend to disassociate from the brand or cut off reflected failure, also known as CORFing.

People also like to be the first to communicate *good news*—with good reason. The positive feelings created by the good news often transfer to the communicator. **Affect transfer** is a special case of classical conditioning. It occurs when the positive affect (or feelings) created by an unconditioned stimulus becomes associated with a conditioned stimulus. Advertisers are famous for attempting to transfer the positive feelings created by the drama in an ad to the sponsored brand. Conversely, people are reluctant to communicate bad

news, because the bad feelings created by unfavorable news can also be indirectly associated with the communicator. The tendency to keep mum about unpleasant messages is called the **MUM effect**.⁶² Research demonstrates that the MUM effect is more pronounced when future contact with the message recipient is anticipated, because communicators are concerned about the consequences of their message.⁶³ In fact, the MUM effect has been around for centuries. Ancient Persian kings used to “kill the messenger” when the news was bad. In summary, the liking principle suggests that how we look and what we say makes a strong impression on others.

OBJECTIVE 8

The Authority Principle

Why do people comply with the requests of police officers, physicians, priests, and flight attendants? They all share one important characteristic—uniforms. According to the **authority principle**, authority figures use titles, clothes (such as uniforms), or expensive possessions that convey status to impress and influence others. Disobeying authority figures can produce obvious negative consequences, but how far will people go when following the orders of someone in authority? Yale University professor Stanley Milgram attempted to answer this question in one of the most influential and controversial studies in the annals of experimental psychology.⁶⁴ Participants were told that they would take part in an experiment intended to measure the effects of punishment on learning. Participants playing the role of “teacher” read questions to other persons who played the role of “learner.” The teacher was directed to inflict a series of electric shocks on the learner, increasing the intensity of the shocks with each incorrect response. An impressive array of shock switches with very clear labels (i.e., slight shock, strong shock, intense shock, danger—severe shock, and maximum 450 volts) was positioned directly in front of the teachers. As shock intensity increased, the learner screamed louder and louder, begging to be released from the experiment. However, anytime the teacher hesitated, an authority figure (dressed in a white lab coat) told the teacher that he or she must continue. How many people would administer the shocks, all the way to the maximum 450 volts?

These exact experimental procedures were described to a group of 39 psychiatrists who were asked to predict how many participants would “go all the way” and use the maximum shock on the learner. The psychiatrists predicted that only one person in a thousand, or one tenth of a percent, would pull the maximum-volt switch. The actual results are startling. Sixty-five percent of the participants complied. Fortunately, the learner was just an actor, and no real shock was delivered. Milgram was “shocked” by the results, and so he conducted the study with different people, using newspaper ads to recruit the learner and the teacher and he varied the distance between away from the university. Nevertheless, the results were similar. When an authority figure in a lab coat was present, a majority of the participants continued to deliver the highest shock. Milgram’s experiments showed no significant difference in compliance rates between women and men,



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Uniforms are not present simply for the sake of fashion; they exude an air of authority necessary to strengthen public compliance.

and other researchers replicated the results in countries beyond the United States.⁶⁵ In an attempt to partially explain the Holocaust, Milgram originally hypothesized that Germans may be more blindly obedient to authority than Americans. In the end, however, Milgram concluded that ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, are astonishingly obedient to authority. He warned that blind obedience to authority could happen anywhere, not just in Nazi Germany.

Do consumers blindly comply with authority figures in the marketplace? A physician prescribes a series of complicated medical tests; a technical advisor instructs consumers to purchase new software; an automobile mechanic tells automobile owners that they need new brakes; a beautician recommends supplementary hair products; and a cashier tells shoppers to move to another checkout line. Usually, consumers comply. Waiters escort diners to a table (of the waiter's choice); credit card companies change their lending policies; flight attendants ask customers to switch seats with someone; orthodontists tell parents that their children need braces; even professors change their test dates. And still consumers comply. In fairness, the cost of disobeying can often be greater than the cost of complying. If patients don't submit the complicated (and expensive) medical tests, they may not survive the consequences. Foregoing anti-virus software may result in the loss of valuable data, and so on. Nevertheless, consumers should avoid *mindless* compliance. Two simple questions usually answer the question of whether consumers should comply: What is the influence agent's motive and what are the consequences of *not* complying?

Chapter Summary

People are susceptible to a wide variety of influence techniques. This chapter identifies seven key principles of influence on consumer behavior: automaticity, commitment and consistency, reciprocity, scarcity, social validation, liking, and authority. The automaticity principle recognizes that people often think mindlessly, without fully evaluating the consequences of their compliance. The commitment and consistency principle indicates that people try to maintain consistency in their belief systems. The foot-in-the-door and low-ball techniques take advantage of consumers' tendencies to choose courses of action consistent with past commitments and decisions. The reciprocity principle shows that consumers often feel obligated to return favors—often beyond the value of what they received. The door-in-the-face, that's-not-all, multiple-deescalating-requests, and even-a-penny techniques capitalize on this tendency. The scarcity principle suggests that because

valuable objects are rare, consumers often assume that rare objects are valuable. Marketers create perceptions of scarcity for their goods and services by limiting distribution and emphasizing the uniqueness of their brands. The social validation principle rests on the premise that the validity of an idea increases with the number of people supporting it. In the marketplace, consumer popularity begets more popularity. Conversely, diffusion of responsibility occurs when people look for others to react first. Efforts to influence consumers can backfire if descriptive norms overpower injunctive norms. Likability is also a powerful weapon of influence; consequently, similarity, attractiveness, and impression management can be used to increase liking for a person or brand. Finally, most people are compliant with authority figures. Understanding these seven key principles of social influence can help people avoid being unduly compliant.