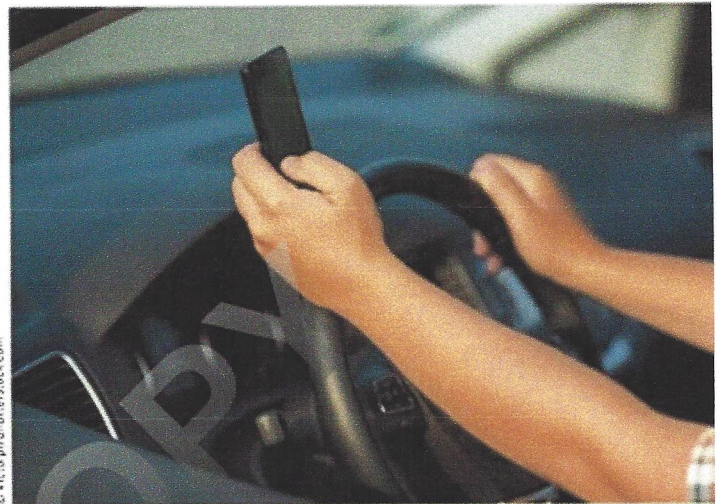


cleaners to get high. Marketers therefore work hard to ensure that consumers understand the ways in which products should be used. However, even when warnings and instructions are provided, consumers still misuse products. Injuries that result can be very costly. In fact, statistics from the Consumer Product Safety Commission reveal that deaths and injuries resulting from product consumption cost the United States over \$800 billion annually.³¹

Why do consumers use products in unsafe ways? A number of explanations have been offered. Consumers may simply not pay attention to what they are doing, may feel as though they generally get away with risky behaviors, may have a tendency to be error prone, or may focus more on the thrill of misuse rather than the actual risk of the behavior.³⁴ Although product misuse may apply to any number of products, many issues revolve around automobiles, cell phones, and prescription medication.

Aggressive Driving. Aggressive driving may range from mild displays of anger to seriously violent acts while driving. Although aggressive driving is often thought of as an act by a solitary consumer, aggressive driving problems often involve multiple drivers, as victims retaliate with their own aggression.³⁵ Younger, less-educated males have been shown to be more likely to engage in aggressive driving behavior.³⁶ Situational factors, such as intense traffic congestion and driver stress, as well as personality traits play a part. Traits like instability and competitiveness have been found among aggressive drivers.³⁷

Drinking and Driving. Statistics reveal that as many as 13,000 people die from alcohol-related traffic accidents in the United States each year and that nearly three out of every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives. Although drunk driving incidents have decreased in recent years, on average, approximately 30 Americans die from these accidents each day.³⁸ Sadly, one out of every six fatalities among children aged 14 and younger is due to an alcohol-related accident.³⁹ Statistics also reveal that men are responsible for four in five episodes of drinking and driving and that young men aged 21–34 are responsible for 32% of all instances of drinking and driving. This is a telling statistic, given that this group only makes up 11% of the total U.S. population.⁴⁰ While the cost in terms of human life is high, there is a high monetary cost of drinking and driving. Estimates reveal that drinking and driving costs over \$52 billion annually, based on the most recent data.⁴¹



Texting while driving is extremely dangerous

Furthermore, one study estimates that nearly 25% of all drivers aged 15–20 who are killed in fatal accidents have blood alcohol levels above 0.08.⁴² Of course, this group is under the legal drinking age. Drunk driving and binge drinking are often related. In fact, one study indicated that over 80% of respondents who reported alcohol-impaired driving also reported engaging in binge drinking behaviors.⁴³

Cell Phone Use and Driving. There were more than 7 billion cellular subscriptions worldwide as of 2015 and there are currently over 355 million wireless subscriptions in the United States alone.⁴⁴ The effective U.S. penetration rate is now over 100% (many consumers have more than one subscription) and more than 90% of American adults have cell phones.⁴⁵ With such widespread adoption, one area of concern involves the use of cell phones while driving. While not everyone will agree that simply using a cell phone while driving is a consumer misbehavior, texting and driving is certainly a dangerous issue. And, this behavior is against the law in many states. Texting while driving is currently the single largest form of distracted driving. While the phrase may sound funny, “DWI—Driving While Intoxicated” is anything but.

Studies reveal that consumers who use cell phones while driving are four times as likely to get into serious accidents, and the problem is particularly serious for teens particularly when it comes to texting. One recent study found that only 43% of teens surveyed, aged 16–17, had *never* texted while driving, which of course suggests

that 57% have!⁴⁶ A 2012 study also revealed that teen girls are twice as likely as teen boys to use cell phones while driving.⁴⁷ While the problem appears to be serious among younger drivers, the behavior actually cuts across age groups, and texting is not the only problem. One study revealed that 43% of drivers 18–29 surfed the internet while driving.⁴⁸

As of late 2016, eighteen U.S. states prohibit all drivers from using handheld cell phones while driving, and while no state completely bans cell phone use, 38 states ban all use by novice drivers. Regarding texting, as of late 2016, Montana and Arizona were the only states that did not have at least some ban on texting while driving.⁴⁹

SEXTING

One growing form of misbehavior is “sexting.” Sexting is taking nude photos of oneself and sending them to another person via cell phone. It seems to occur most frequently among teen-aged consumers, and the app Snapchat has been criticized by some as making sexting easy and secure.

Multiple media reports indicate that many teens feel like sexting isn't harmful. Parents and school administrators don't feel the same way. Parents are concerned that the images can be passed from person to person, and even onto the internet. Sexting also raises moral, ethical, and legal issues.⁵⁰ The behavior can result in severe psychological and social problems. The effects of sexting range from minor psychological distress to intense emotional trauma.⁵¹ As of mid-2016, 20 states had reportedly enacted legislation aimed at banning the practice.⁵²

16-2b Consumer Problem Behavior

Consumer problem behaviors include other acts that do not necessarily break any specific laws or societal norms. For example, consumers shop too much, rack up large amounts of debt, and sometimes harm their own bodies in desperate attempts to look

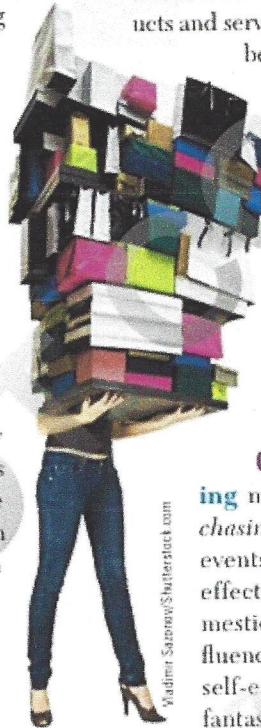
thin. Psychological problems can cause or influence these behaviors.

COMPULSIVE CONSUMPTION

Compulsive consumption refers to repetitive, excessive, and purposeful consumer behaviors that are performed as a response to tension, anxiety, or obtrusive thoughts.⁵³ The term *compulsive consumption* is often used broadly and consists of a number of specific behaviors related to the purchase and use of consumer products and services.⁵⁴ Compulsive consumption should not be confused with *addictive consumption*. **Addictive consumption** refers to a physiological dependency on the consumption of a product. The word *dependency* is important, and in the strictest sense, addictions are characterized by the physical inability to discontinue a behavior, or a physical reliance. A person who is addicted to a product physically needs it. Compulsive consumption often takes two forms: *compulsive buying* and *compulsive shopping*.

Compulsive Buying. **Compulsive buying** may be defined as chronic, repetitive *purchasing* behaviors that are a response to negative events or feelings.⁵⁵ The behavior has harmful effects, such as the accumulation of debt, domestic problems, and feelings of frustration. Influencers of the behavior include feelings of low self-esteem, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, fantasy-seeking motivations, and materialism,⁵⁶ as well as a focus on the short term.⁵⁷ Research reveals that a need for prestige also motivates the behavior, particularly among college students.⁵⁸ Among adolescents, the behavior can be a response to family problems.⁵⁹ The same negative feelings that influence compulsive buying can also result from the behavior itself. So a consumer who buys compulsively as a reaction to negative feelings often experiences even more negative feelings after going on buying binges.⁶⁰ In short, it can be a vicious cycle.

Compulsive Shopping. **Compulsive shopping** refers to repetitive *shopping* behaviors. The word *oniomania* is sometimes used to describe this behavior. Compulsive shoppers often feel preoccupied with shopping, exhibit uncontrollable shopping tendencies, and experience guilt from their behaviors.⁶¹ The key difference between compulsive shopping and buying is the buying process



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compulsive consumption

repetitive, excessive, and purposeful consumer behaviors that are performed as a response to tension, anxiety, or obtrusive thoughts

addictive consumption

physiological dependency on the consumption of a consumer product

compulsive buying

chronic, repetitive purchasing that is a response to negative events or feelings

compulsive shopping

repetitive shopping behaviors