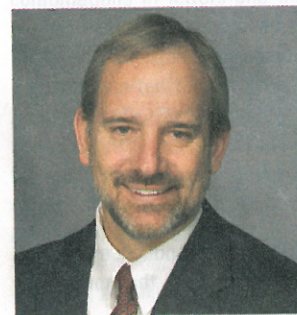


CB AS I SEE IT

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In our view, consumer research is about “digging deeper” for insight into the mind of the market in a way that elicits useful knowledge for the marketing manager. Our research embraces this proposition by expanding knowledge about the complexities of consumer memory and framing that understanding in a way that enhances how practitioners approach their consumers.

A particular focus of our research is on consumer experience, particularly memory for experience. Experience is *noetic*, coming from Greek *nous* meaning intellect or understanding; knowledge as experienced directly with a feeling of certitude. Consumers genuinely believe that their experiences drive their decision making, and external

information like advertising has little impact. Our research has found otherwise. In early research, Kathy LaTour (formerly Braun) introduced the *theory of memory reconstruction* to marketing, and looked at how postexperience advertising could alter what consumers remembered about their direct tasting experience. In one experiment she had participants taste a sample of orange juice that had been doctored with vinegar, salt, and excess water. She found that when participants received advertising after that taste experience suggesting that the juice was fresh and flavorful, they “remembered” having tasted a better juice—in fact, identifying a better-quality juice as the one they had tasted earlier in the hour. In other research with Elizabeth Loftus (one of the most prominent cognitive psychologists studying human memory), we found that autobiographical advertising for Disneyland that included a false reference (to Bugs Bunny) led a significant portion of participants to “recall” that they had themselves met and shook Bugs Bunny’s hand when they visited a Disney park as a child (an impossible event, as Bugs is a Warner Bros. character and so is not allowed to set foot on a Disney property).

Memory is paradoxical: Sometimes people remember great details about events, other times (as evidenced in our research mentioned earlier) people can be quite suggestible. Though the memory of Bugs Bunny was false in our experiments, the participants believed that they had had that experience, and in fact listed the overall

Disney vacation as one of their most significant childhood events. In our qualitative research, we have looked at how certain childhood experiences can extend their influence into adulthood, ranging from preference to car design to fast-food choice to cola choice to gambling style.

Our most recent research has looked at how marketers can teach consumers to better learn from their experiences. In that research we looked at wine aficionados, whom we define as drinking a lot of wine but having little conceptual knowledge about it. We found aficionados to be overconfident in their ability to judge a wine, acting more similarly to novices than expert sommeliers in blind taste tests. However, we found that providing these aficionados with a vocabulary (wine aroma wheel) led them to better retention of their taste experience, making them overall more accurate and less likely to be swayed by misleading marketing communication. Currently Kathy LaTour is training for her sommelier certification as a means both to understand the processes involved in obtaining expertise in wine and to learn important issues from a practitioner perspective that might guide future research projects (and Mike is enjoying the wine learning as well!). One of our goals is to develop research projects that can guide managers in their experience design in order to provide consumers experiences that are more memorable. The larger framework we work under is to develop innovative research projects and have fun in the process.⁵³

between the two types of memory; it emphasizes the interdependence of the systems. According to this work, depending on the nature of the processing task, different levels of processing occur that activate some aspects of memory rather than others. We call these approaches **activation models of memory**.⁵² The more effort it takes to process information (so-called deep processing), the more likely it is that information will transfer into LTM.

OBJECTIVE 7

The other products we associate with an individual product influence how we will remember it.

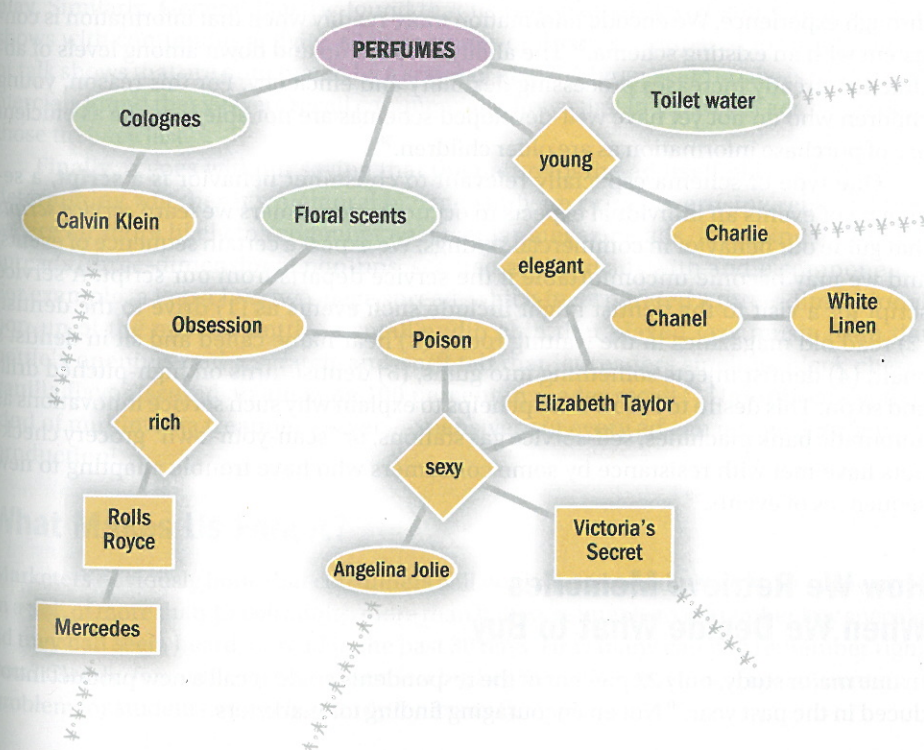
Associative Networks

According to activation models of memory, an incoming piece of information gets stored in an **associative network** that contains many bits of related information. We each have organized systems of concepts that relate to brands, manufacturers, and stores stored in our memories; the contents, of course, depend on our own unique experiences.

Think of these storage units, or *knowledge structures*, as complex spider webs filled with pieces of data. Incoming information gets put into nodes that connect to one another (if you haven’t guessed, this is also why we call cyberspace the World Wide Web). When we view separate pieces of information as similar for some reason, we chunk them together under some more abstract category. Then, we interpret new, incoming information to be consistent with the structure we have created (recall the discussion in Chapter 2 about how prior expectations influence current experiences).⁵⁴ This helps explain why we are better able to remember brands or stores that we believe “go together”; for example, when Titleist rather than Chanel sponsors a golf tournament. Recent research indicates that people can recall brands that are not as obviously linked (for example, when an unlikely product sponsors an event), but in these cases marketers have to work harder to justify why the two things go together.⁵⁵

In the associative network, links form between nodes. For example, a consumer might have a network for “perfumes.” Each node represents a concept related to the category. This node can be an attribute, a specific brand, a celebrity the consumer identifies with a specific perfume brand, or even a related product. A network for perfumes might include concepts such as the brand names Britney Spears Curious for Women, Calvin Klein Eternity, and Elizabeth Arden Red Door, as well as attributes such as sexy and elegant.

When we ask the consumer to list perfumes, this consumer recalls only those brands that show up in the appropriate category. This group constitutes her **evoked set**. The task of a new entrant that wants to position itself as a category member (e.g., a new luxury perfume) is to provide cues that facilitate its placement in the appropriate category. Figure 3.5 shows a sample network for perfumes.



The Tangled Web



In the age of Google, Facebook, and Wikipedia, sometimes our problem is not remembering too little—it’s remembering *too much*. The Internet records everything and forgets nothing, even when we wish it would. A survey Microsoft conducted found that 75 percent of U.S. recruiters do online research about job candidates, and many use social media sites like Facebook and photo-sharing sites to get the real 911 about prospective employees. Seventy percent have rejected candidates because of information they found online. It’s hard to get away with anything when your behavior seems to get as much attention as the misdeeds of celebrities like Charlie Sheen! One 26-year-old woman told a reporter she dreaded being tagged in online photos because people would see the outfits she wears when she’s out on the town. As she observed, “You have movie-star issues and you’re just a person.” This constant scrutiny means it’s getting harder and harder to get a “mulligan” (a golf term for a replay)—in a wired world your former transgressions are never forgotten.⁵¹

Figure 3.5 AN ASSOCIATIVE NETWORK FOR PERFUMES