Part B
Understanding and Researching the Fashion Purchaser

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Chapter Three
The Fashion Consumer and Organizational Buyer

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the behaviour of fashion consumers and organizations that purchase fashion products and services. The relevance of fashion buyer behaviour is examined and links with marketing research, market segmentation and the marketing mix are established.

An outline of consumers' decision-making is given. The types of decision made by consumers are described and the stages in the decision process are discussed. From the perspective of the buyer as a problem solver the chapter then focuses on the consumer as an individual. The main psychological variables relevant to fashion consumption are identified and outlined. For example, an understanding of the perceptual process allows us to comprehend more easily why some fashion promotional messages are more effective than others.

Fashion goods enable people to show identification with, or separation from, certain social groups. Clothing can be a symbol of belonging or alienation. To understand the fashion consumer, the broader social forces that help to shape individual buying behaviour are assessed. These social dimensions include the family, social stratification, opinion leadership and cultural factors. Some people are more ready to adopt new fashions than others, and the study of diffusion and opinion leadership helps us to understand why this occurs and what may be done to facilitate the process.

Fashion firms not only sell to fashion consumers, they also sell to other firms in the industry. An obvious form of organizational buying is sales within the fashion distribution channel and this is described in Chapter Eight. Another area of organizational buying of relevance is that of the corporate consumer, for instance the purchase of uniforms

and distinctive clothing as part of a company's image. The nature of organizational buying will be outlined, and differences and similarities with consumers will be highlighted.

3.2 Why study the fashion buyer?

A central component of the definition of fashion marketing is satisfying customers' needs profitably. To achieve that it is necessary to understand consumers, their needs and wants, and how they will respond to various marketing efforts.

Everyone interested in fashion marketing brings a particular quality to their studies, i.e. their experiences as a fashion consumer. That experience is a mixed blessing. The benefits are that concepts from consumer behaviour can be understood and readily applied to one's own clothing purchases. The main drawback is the temptation to generalize and assume that all other fashion consumers behave as we do. The unfortunate fact is that the study of fashion marketing will probably change buying behaviour and make the expert fashion marketer atypical. Greater knowledge of products and promotional processes coupled with enthusiasm for fashion mean that there is a dislocation from typical consumers. Interestingly, many serious market research companies exclude marketing personnel as survey respondents because of their tendency to be atypical.

As will be seen when looking at social processes in consumer behaviour, people tend to live within fairly narrow social networks. They interact with others of similar social status and sets of interests. For fashion marketers, the danger is that these narrow social networks reinforce 'world views' of what is good about fashion and this becomes the explanation of what all consumers want. The key point is that opinions should never be accepted without question and that fashion marketing decisions should be based on evidence about the market, and not just on introspection.

Each consumer is unique and that is a good reason to trust sound marketing research rather than hunches based on the extrapolation of personal motives. As a starting point for marketing research hunches are useful when they are regarded as ideas to be tested. Therefore we can ask:

'Do many people share this view?'
'How many?'
'Do they have any other views that are more strongly held?'

For example, a fashion designer may be inspired by the reflection that business travel for the female executive would be enhanced by a

small range of light flexible garments that do not crease. This inspiration may come from the designer or from his or her friends. The next stage is to determine via marketing research, how many women engage in business travel and of those, how many feel that the current clothing market does not meet their precise requirements. Chapter Four provides detailed coverage of marketing research techniques used to measure the behaviour of the fashion consumer.

3.2.1 The role of consumer behaviour in marketing

Consumer behaviour provides a range of concepts to help fashion marketers think about their customers, and marketing research provides the techniques to measure those concepts. Consumer behaviour is also closely integrated with all other aspects of fashion marketing, but most notably with the selection of target markets and the development of marketing mixes. An overview is given in Figure 3.1.
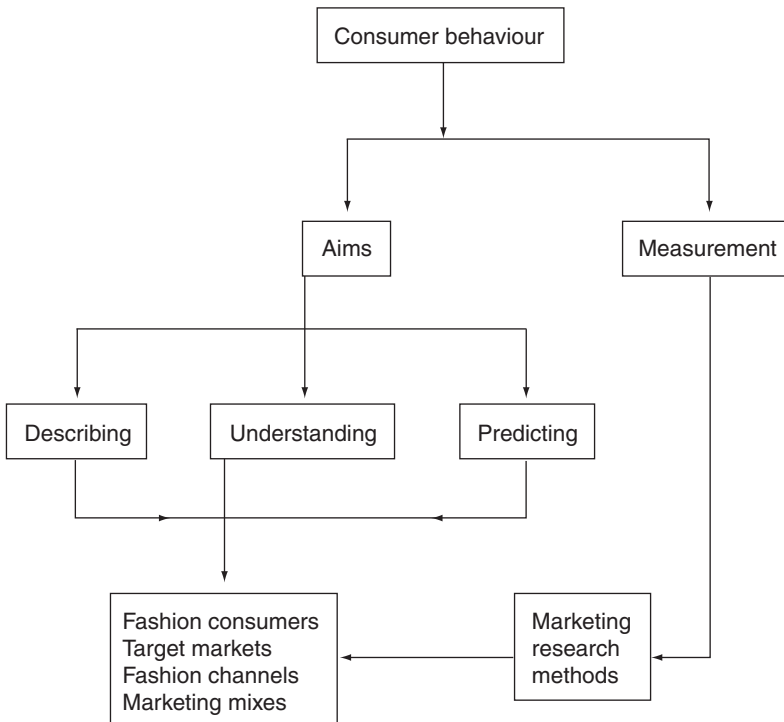

Figure 3.1   The role of consumer behaviour in fashion marketing.

3.2.2 Consumer behaviour and target marketing

As mentioned earlier each consumer is unique. Besides bespoke tailoring and couture items, most fashion marketing is concerned with the provision of standardized garments aimed at particular groups of consumers. All consumers are different from other consumers, but, and this is not contradictory, they are similar to some other consumers. The marketing of volume clothing demands that groups of consumers with similar needs be identified and then supplied with similar products. Chapter Five considers the nature of target marketing further, but for the moment the links with buyer behaviour will be noted.

If the total market for clothing is considered it can easily be seen that it really comprises many smaller segments, each with specialized needs. Obvious bases for the segments include age, gender and income. Less obvious, but as important, may be segments based on psychological or social characteristics that are common to significant numbers of consumers. For example, consumers differ in their levels of aspiration and also in the relationship they see between clothing and the achievement of social mobility. Throughout the twentieth century there were times when conspicuous consumption became a widely used mechanism for emphasizing new distinctions that emerged from changes in wealth and occupational structure. For example, the power dressing phase of the 1980s was followed by the 'dress-down Friday' phase of the 1990s and was succeeded by some companies reintroducing smart dress codes for work in the early 2000s. Socially aspirant groups will often seek clothing to support and reinforce their changing status. The fashion designer of the twenty-first century must meet these needs in a way that engages these social aspirations, yet is sensitive to the prevailing values concerning overt displays of wealth and social distinction. It is the understanding of these types of consumer needs that is the essence of consumer behaviour and the subsequent identification of suitable target markets for fashion firms.

Changes in social structure, or demographics, as identified in Chapter Two, cause new market threats and opportunities and therefore different targeting imperatives. For example, the increasing interest in environmental issues has been accompanied by a whole range of views from ardent advocates to strident opponents. Numerous research studies undertaken between the late 1980s and 2007 have demonstrated that the majority of consumers are concerned about environmental issues. However, there are also large differences among social groups in terms of how much extra they are prepared to pay for products in support of those beliefs. Within the fashion market, consumers can be categorized according to attitudes held on

environmental matters. Clearly, if significant numbers with purchasing power are active supporters of environmental issues, then they probably would be most interested in recycled or recyclable fabrics and fibres and in long-lasting clothing that is manufactured and can be cared for in an environmentally friendly manner.

Investigation of consumer behaviour is sometimes designed specifically to identify particular groups of consumer with fashion interests and buying behaviour in common. The later section on lifestyles will outline one such approach to market segmentation.

3.2.3 Consumer behaviour and the marketing mix

The study of consumer behaviour not only provides a framework for identifying consumer needs and target markets, but it also enables the anticipation of consumer responses to marketing action. When studying the consumer the interest lies not only in describing what is the case, but also in predicting future behaviour.

The marketing mix is the combination of elements that a fashion marketer offers to a target market. It comprises decisions made about products, prices, promotion, services and distribution that are assembled in a coherent manner to represent the firm's offering to the consumer. A detailed discussion of the marketing mix is given in Chapter Five. For the present a consideration of links between consumer behaviour and some elements of the marketing mix will be given.

Consumer behaviour and products

Products are bought because they meet needs. These needs may be mainly physiological such as the requirement for warmth or may include social needs such as the desire to be thought sexually attractive. A psychological need, for example, may relate to vanity and self-image and be manifest in a desire to perceive oneself as smaller or larger than reality. Styling skill can create garments that emphasize or reduce the aspect size as wished, but a limited amount of 'psychological sizing' also can play a part. For example, a well-known bra manufacturer produces its leading brand with labels that are one size larger. The assumption is that some consumers derive satisfaction and confidence from a size label that flatters aspirations or a particular self-image. A similar situation exists with the sizing of boxer shorts where it is well known that very few men want the label small when buying or receiving underwear. Another example relates to perceptions and garment sizing where some women desire to see themselves as a smaller size and manufacturers respond accordingly by classifying what is really a size 18 dress as a 16.

It is not the contention of this book that such examples are to be advocated. Indeed, we would argue that much time and effort is wasted at the retail level and that the net effect upon the consumer is probably counterproductive. When market researchers claim that the majority of British women do not accurately know their own bra size, one wonders whether this ignorance is not perpetuated by the absence of an industry standard on sizing.

Consumer behaviour and promotion

The promotion of fashion items requires an understanding of con-sumers' media habits so that the correct media can be chosen. Understanding consumer behaviour enables the selection of appropri-ate promotional messages. For example, fashion photography often seeks to reflect a particular lifestyle that the consumer can identify with and then perceive the product as a vehicle to the attainment of that lifestyle. The use of celebrities in advertisements also enables fash-ion firms to reach certain target audiences and influence consumers via the process of identification. Further consideration of the use of celebrities in fashion promotion is given in Chapter Nine.

Consumer behaviour and price

Price for many people is a major indicator of quality. Style and design are sometimes difficult to judge, especially for the untrained. Therefore some consumers take surrogate indicators of quality and in par-ticular price. An understanding of the perceptual process and how consumers learn about prices and value is helpful in constructing a pricing policy.

Consumer behaviour and distribution

The choice of an appropriate distribution channel and designing elem-ents within that channel should be based on an understanding of the fashion consumer. Knowing when, where and how consumers wish to buy are fairly obvious applications. Understanding and matching self-images and store images and creating particular store atmospheres to encourage certain moods need research and ideas from consumer behaviour.

3.3 Fashion consumer decision-making

One main way of examining consumer behaviour is to take the view of the consumer as a problem solver. The requirement for clothing,

however it is driven, is seen as a problem for the consumer to solve, usually by exchanging money with a seller. The problem-solving perspective raises many questions that will be addressed; they concern the types of decision fashion consumers must make, the various stages of the decision process consumers progress through and major factors that influence those decisions.

3.3.1 Types of consumer decision

It is tempting to see the purchase of a garment as just one decision, to buy or not to buy. However, it can be useful to break the larger decision down into several separate decisions that collectively comprise the buy or no buy decision. For instance, consumers must decide the following matters:

- How to find out about new styles?
- What style, colour and size to buy?
- Where to buy from?
- How to pay?
- Which bills to pay promptly?
- When to buy?
- How many items to buy?
- Will any accessories need to be purchased?
- Whether to shop alone or accompanied?
- Whether to try the garment on?
- Whether to order an out of stock size or colour option?
- Which sales assistant to approach for help?
- What to do if the product is unsatisfactory?
- What will be the reaction of significant others to the purchase?
- Whether or not to purchase online or mail order?
- If buying online or mail order, how to arrange delivery?

If fashion marketers see consumer decisions as a series of smaller related problems to be solved, then the benefit comes in terms of planning activities to ensure that the consumer is helped when help is needed. For example, a consumer may not be bothered about trying a blouse on if she knows she can easily exchange it later for another size if needed.

Alternatively, another customer may dislike the whole process of shopping for clothes and appreciate speedy service with advice and nearby displays of matching accessories. Marketing research is necessary to determine which decisions are important to the particular target market of the fashion firm.

3.3.2 Consumer involvement

Another way to look at consumer decisions is the level of involvement the consumer has in the decision. Consumers differ considerably in terms of their interest in fashion. Even those people who are very interested in fashion may be more interested in some types of garment than in others. A common way consumer theorists have classified consumer decisions is into high- and low-involvement purchases. This classification, in part, reflects different theoretical paradigms, although some significant attempts at synthesis have emerged over recent years.

The level of involvement depends on the person, the purchase object and the time and place of purchase. For one consumer, the purchase of a pair of socks may involve considerable deliberation and visiting several stores to make comparisons in order to obtain a product that meets fairly precise specifications in terms of colour, size and construction. For another consumer, the purchase of socks may be relegated to a simple commodity purchase undertaken with little conscious thinking through and they may be selected along with other low-involvement purchases in a supermarket.

The implication for fashion marketers is to find out the level of involvement of the target market or markets and design the marketing mix accordingly. A central issue is the provision of marketing information to consumers who may or may not want or use it. A connection between low-level involvement and impulse buying can be shown and this has a bearing on the relative proportion of the promotional budget that goes on in-store promotions rather than on advertising. If consumers do not really pay much attention to information about some fashion products, but simply make decisions in the store, it would be more productive to concentrate promotional efforts in-store.

3.3.3 The decision process

As shown earlier, the consumer decision to buy may be seen as a series of smaller decisions. It also can be shown as consumer progression through a number of discrete stages. Most models of consumer behaviour use the stages or near equivalents as shown in Figure 3.2.

The various phases will be briefly outlined. First, problem recognition occurs when a consumer becomes aware that a need for clothing arises. This may be triggered by garments wearing out, comments from others about how unfashionable existing garments are, a change of social status prompting or facilitating purchase or a change in
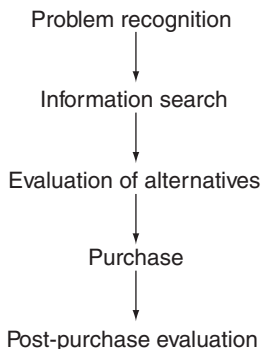
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              Problem recognition
                       │
                       ▼
              Information search
                       │
                       ▼
           Evaluation of alternatives
                       │
                       ▼
                  Purchase
                       │
                       ▼
            Post-purchase evaluation
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Figure 3.2 The consumer decision process.

aspirations or taste. The extent to which fashion marketers are able to influence problem recognition is fiercely debated.

Whether marketers create needs is the question often asked. Blackwell *et al.* (2006) argue that marketers do not create needs, they show consumers better ways of satisfying pre-existing needs. For example, high-status needs can be satisfied by any number of different purchases or activities. The fact that a fashion advertiser captures the imagination of some consumers and secures purchases probably has more to do with the understanding of those needs and careful design of a message than the creation of the needs in the first place. Many powerful social forces operate in society of which advertising is only one and one not often held in very high regard. Advertising both reflects and influences societal values towards consumption. If it were truly able to create needs and exert such a powerful influence then it has been an outstanding failure in the world of fashion.

Having become aware of a need, the consumer reflects on the situation and can decide to proceed with the purchase process and collect information, defer the purchase or conclude that the problem is insignificant or cannot be solved. In deciding to proceed, the consumer reviews information already held in memory. This includes knowledge of brands and stores where solutions may be found. Inexperience or unsatisfactory prior purchases may cause external information sources to be consulted. External sources include personal sources such as friends, neutral sources such as a television programme on eveningwear, or fashion marketing sources such as a window display or a poster advertisement. These three main external types of information sources are usually regarded with different degrees of credibility by the consumer.

When sufficient information is held by the consumer about possible solutions then evaluations take place and a choice is made. The nature of the evaluations varies from individual to individual. Some consumers have extensive repertoires of buying criteria, whereas others have limited and often vague mechanisms for making decisions. The process of making an evaluation may involve the mental ranking or rating of alternatives or simply eliminating items that fail to meet a certain threshold. At times consumers can suffer what is described as information overload where there are too many possibilities or too much information has been presented. An awareness of consumer information needs and the provision of information in an appropriate manner via facts and advice from sales staff or brochures can help the consumer to make a choice. The decisions made by a consumer at the time of purchase have been mentioned earlier and the sales effort to influence purchase is covered in Chapter Nine.

After a purchase consumers may engage in a process of evaluation of the product and to an extent their own efficiency as a consumer. Systematic evaluation is most unlikely except where items are bought primarily for their functional characteristics, such as hiking boots where protection and durability may be closely scrutinized. The extent of evaluation seems related to how socially conspicuous the item is, how central the product is to the self-image of the consumer, the particular consumer orientation and also to the purchase price. For most consumers, the evaluation can involve seeking comments from others perceived to be significant.

Fashion marketers should be interested in this post-purchase behaviour as it can relate directly to repeat purchases, the level of customer complaints and word-of-mouth communications about the firm. The law of effect in psychology states simply that behaviour that is rewarded is likely to be repeated. Satisfied customers are likely to become regular customers. The goal of fashion marketing is to move customers along the continuum from the promiscuous to the insistent, as shown in Figure 3.3.

Careful monitoring of customer complaints can lead to the early correction of faults and avoidance of some future complaints. Sensitive handling of genuine complaints can also help retain goodwill and avoid negative word-of-mouth communication. As research indicates that consumers are more likely to pass on negative rather than positive information about products, onae dissatisfied customer may lead to many more with negative attitudes towards the store or brand.

The above discussion of the decision process has shown the need to consider factors beyond the immediate concerns of the consumer when trying to understand and predict the behaviour of the fashion consumer. The factors to be considered may be

Promiscuous – will shop around for the best deal
Occasional   – will sometimes buy from us
Loyal   – will usually buy from us
Insistent   – will only buy from us

Figure 3.3   Types of customer.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │ The decision process        │
                    ├─────────────────────────────┤
                    │ Problem recognition         │
                    │ Information search          │
                    │ Evaluation of alternatives  │
                    │ Purchase                    │
                    │ Post-purchase evaluation    │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Psychological factors    │        │ Sociological factors     │
├──────────────────────────┤        ├──────────────────────────┤
│ Perception               │        │ Groups                   │
│ Learning                 │        │ The family               │
│ Motivation               │        │ Opinion leaders          │
│ Attitudes                │        │ Diffusion                │
│ Personality              │        │ Social stratification    │
│ Lifestyles               │        │ Culture                  │
└──────────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────┘
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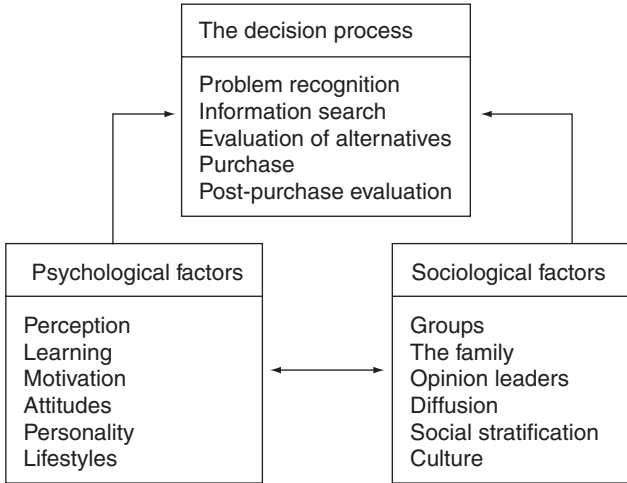
Figure 3.4   A model of consumer behaviour.

grouped under the broad headings of psychological and sociological factors. Psychological factors are taken from the study of individual behaviour while sociological factors are based on the understanding that much consumer behaviour takes place as part of a group process and involves social interaction and patterns of influence. Figure 3.4 illustrates the main explanatory variables related to the decision process.

3.4 Psychological processes

3.4.1 The buyer's perceptual process

Perception is the process whereby buyers select, organize and interpret simple stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. To explain this process further, a distinction between sensation and perception must be made. Sensation refers to the responses of

our sense organs to simple stimuli, whereas perception is the psychological consequence of sensation. An analogy would be to compare a photograph with a painting: the photograph is the 'reality', whereas the painting is a very personal view of 'reality'.

For the fashion consumer, the stimuli presented in a busy fashion store are a bewildering array of sensations that must be made sense of. The consumer goes through a number of stages in the perceptual process that can be seen as steps in filtering and distilling marketing stimuli into a unique marketing experience. The stages in this perceptual filtering and distilling process are:
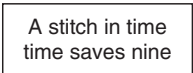
- selective exposure;
- selective attention;
- selective distortion;
- selective retention.

Selective exposure

Age or income can impose some constraints on the exposure to certain stores or media, as can the more deliberate choice by the consumer. This process, where there is a narrowing of the opportunities for experience of the total range of marketing stimuli, is known as selective exposure. Examples of marketing stimuli subject to selective exposure are the fashion page in a daily newspaper, advertisements, brochures and store window displays. The task for fashion marketers is to ensure that the correct media and location for retail outlets are selected to maximize the opportunities for selective exposure.

Selective attention

Selective attention is the next stage, and the range of possibilities is further narrowed when the consumer pays attention only to some marketing stimuli and not to others. Consumer factors that determine consumer attention to marketing stimuli are existing attitudes, attention span, emotional states, motives and expectancy. The last point is illustrated by the following well-known saying (Figure 3.5):

A stitch in time
time saves nine

Figure 3.5

Many people will have 'read' the above statement and not have noticed the double use of the word 'time'; they will have perceived what they expected to see rather than the reality. Existing attitudes and prejudice similarly influence how we perceive marketing messages. Items which are promoted as designer label or sale items may attract attention or may even be screened out by the consumer depending on prior attitudes. Thus the importance of determining consumer predispositions, via marketing research, before designing marketing messages is underlined.

Some factors under the control of the fashion marketer can influence whether the marketing message gains the attention of the consumer. The size and intensity of a message (i.e. very loud) plus novelty, contrast, repetition and movement can all enhance the chances of gaining attention. Thus advertisements in the first 10% of a magazine such as *Company* or *GQ* have a higher potential readership than the latter part of the same magazine. Similarly, a black and white advertisement in a glossy magazine, which is surrounded by colour advertisements, stands a good chance of gaining attention because of the contrast.

Selective distortion

Having gained the consumer's attention the next perceptual filter for the marketer to penetrate is selective distortion. Consumers interpret stimuli in a manner that is consistent with existing attitudes. The perceptual process operates in such a way as to enable and maintain a coherent view of the world; too many contradictions to existing views make the management of everyday life irksome. That is not to say that changing consumers' perceptions is impossible, just that before embarking upon change marketers need to discover the starting points and the strength with which existing views are held. An example of the distorting effect of the perceptual process is easily noted when considering the stereotypes that are brought to bear in judging garments by country of origin. To most British consumers the labels 'Made in France' or 'Designed in Italy' have connotations of higher design content and quality than an item made in a developing country. These connotations can have such an influence that they may, and often do, override the judgements that would emerge in a blind test.

Selective retention

The final perceptual filter is selective retention. This refers to the phenomenon of consumers remembering information about fashion marketers and their products in a highly subjective way. An important

aspect of perception is that the consumer interprets information in terms of current priorities and concerns to such an extent that the individual in effect rewrites their personal history. The main driving force behind this selective retention is a need for consistent and, sometimes, easy explanations for our feelings and past behaviour. In this process good and bad aspects of some items may become exaggerated with, for example, nostalgia for some so-called golden age of fashion when there was 'real pride and skill in tailoring, unlike today'. The close associations that many people have between blue jeans and youth have been recognized by the jeans manufacturers in the targeting of middle-aged consumers with the use of suitable music in advertisements to evoke the nostalgia.

3.4.2 Learning

The fashion consumer is not born with a knowledge of fashion brands, of criteria for judging garments, a knowledge of stores or prices, preferences for certain styles or fabrics or even how to care for garments. All this information has to be learned. Consumer learning is any relatively permanent change in buying behaviour that is a result of practice or experience. Two main sources for consumer learning are the family and peer groups. However, much learning occurs through consumer experience with fashion marketers, their products and promotional methods.

Many explanations of consumer learning are given in the marketing literature, most of which can be classified as association learning or cognitive learning. Although the two main types of theory compete to explain behaviour, neither category is sufficient to explain all learning that occurs. The following discussion presents aspects of both approaches.

Association learning

Association learning occurs when a marketing stimulus and the consumer response are repeatedly paired. Much low-level learning such as brand names occurs at this level. A key explanatory theory for this type of learning is known as the law of effect. When behaviour is rewarded, it will tend to be repeated and when it is punished or not rewarded, it will tend to diminish in frequency. Therefore we have a simple explanation for repeat buying and brand loyalty. The consumer who buys a particular brand of shirt and finds that it meets his criteria in terms of being stylish, comfortable, durable and value for money will tend to buy the same brand again. The main lesson

for fashion marketers is to identify the relevant buying criteria of the consumer and produce products to meet those criteria. Another consumer who finds that the skirt she purchased three weeks ago is starting to come apart at the seams will probably avoid buying another skirt from that supplier. Yet, another customer may learn to avoid certain shoe shops as the sales assistants, paid primarily by commission, all compete to serve the customer and do not allow adequate time for browsing.

An interesting aspect of association learning is the notion of shaping behaviour. This notion allows marketers the opportunity to influence consumers and help them learn more complex forms of behaviour. By selectively rewarding closer and closer approximations to the final goal sought by the marketer, consumer learning is modified. In the section in Chapter Seven on pricing the link between sales discounts and consumer behaviour is described. Some consumers learn, because of regular retailer action, to defer purchase until sale time, as they are rewarded by lower prices.

Shaping behaviour, when effectively planned, permits the fashion retailer to alter behaviour in other ways. Suppose the retailer introduces a new range of cotton underwear with Lycra, the goal is to encourage the consumer to buy several pairs. To launch the range and encourage a trial with minimum risk and maximum reward a coupon offering a discount may be offered. The consumer who buys the product receives another coupon as well, this time of lower value than the initial coupon. The second coupon should induce another purchase at reduced cost, but without coupon support. If the product performance meets expectations, then the beginning of brand loyalty has been shaped. It should be stressed that the main reward should come from the product and not the coupon, otherwise the consumer learns something else, only to buy from the retailer when an incentive is offered.

Cognitive learning

Cognitive learning theories approach the problem of consumer learning by assuming consumers reason and reflect upon the relationship between marketing stimuli and consumer response. Clearly all consumers do think about some purchases in detail and may engage in mental processes to try to reach a reasoned conclusion before purchasing. Inexperience, previous dissatisfaction, expense and high-involvement clothing items are most usually linked with cognitive learning. The cognitive approach concentrates on the thinking through of different courses and the identification of the decision criteria and rules used by consumers. Knowing how consumers make

connections between product features and their buying criteria is obviously helpful for marketing staff in order to provide the right information at the right time. The concentration on the information processing aspect of learning will be developed further in Section 3.4.3.

3.4.3 Consumer attitudes

Attitudes are a learned orientation or predisposition to a given situation, person, object or idea resulting in a tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably. There are three main components to an attitude: the cognitive, affective and conative. The cognitive dimension refers to knowledge or information possessed about the fashion product, service, image, store or prices; the knowledge possessed by the consumer may not be accurate or complete, but it is what is believed to be the truth by the consumer. The affective dimension is concerned with consumer feelings about fashion marketing offerings and is measured in terms such as like and dislike or good and bad. The conative aspect provides the behavioural aspect of attitudes and is usually expressed in terms of an intention, or not, to buy within a specified time. Thus a consumer may know of a new range from Missonia and of the colours, prices and sizes available; the consumer may like the new range and moreover intends to purchase a new sweater within the next seven days.

Fashion marketers are interested in consumer attitudes as they are seen to be closely linked to behaviour. A simple model of the link between attitudes and buying behaviour is shown in Figure 3.6.

The model below oversimplifies matters somewhat as it is argued that sometimes attitudes emerge or become manifest after purchase. Other writers contend that liking may precede knowledge in certain
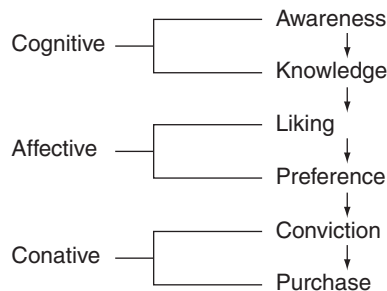

Figure 3.6 Attitude components and buying behaviour.

circumstances. Several attitude theories offer competing explanations for the same phenomenon. It is clear that predicting behaviour from simple measurements of attitudinal components is a problematic and contentious area. Numerous studies have shown that positive attitudes towards fashion products do not always result in higher sales. The work of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) suggests that the crucial factors to consider are the measurement of the attitude towards the act of purchase and the identification of normative beliefs. For example, a consumer may like the designs of Jean Paul Gaultier and have very positive attitudes towards the designs and cut of the garments. However, the same consumer may not buy because of negative attitudes towards the price or a belief that his or her close friends may not like the styling. Techniques for measuring attitudes are described in Chapter Four.

When considering the point that attitudes emerge and/or change after purchase, it should be noted that post-purchase experience with garments can lead to attitude change, both positive and negative. Festinger (1957) proposed that there is a tendency to seek consonance or harmony of thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Post-purchase doubt over a new garment or dissonance then becomes a motivating state of affairs and the consumer acts to reduce dissonance. Dissonance can be reduced in a number of ways, including:

◆ changing behaviour (e.g. exchanging the garment for another colour);
◆ changing attitudes (e.g. deciding that the brand is perhaps not as good as previously thought);
◆ revoking the decision (e.g. asking for a refund);
◆ seeking extra consonant information (e.g. asking a friend for reassurance of the wisdom of the choice made);
◆ avoiding dissonant information (e.g. not visiting other shops in case a lower price is seen for the same item).

A considerable amount of the early research on attitudes was conducted in the USA at the Universities of Yale and Columbia. Much of this research still provides a useful framework for the practising fashion marketer, and its findings are useful in the design of advertising efforts. Some of this work has been incorporated in Chapter Nine.

3.4.4 Consumer motivation

Motivation is the inner force that drives and energizes consumers towards goals. Motivation incorporates need arousal, causing the drive that leads instrumental behaviour to reduce the drive.

Consumer motivation is a complex matter to understand for many reasons. First, motives are inferred, a consumer motive cannot be seen or observed; what is noted is behaviour and then an assumption about the underlying behaviour is made. An important distinction should be made between merely describing behaviour and explaining behaviour. Saying, for example, that a customer buys low-cut tops, because she is the sort of person who likes to reveal her cleavage is mere description, whereas, for example, a particular purchaser of a Prada jacket may be said to be satisfying status needs, especially if the brand name is prominently shown on the garment.

Motivation is a complex concept as similar motives may find expression in different behaviour. Just as in the example above, a status-seeking consumer bought a Prada jacket, other people will seek different brands or may find non-fashion products or activities to satisfy status needs. Furthermore, people may buy the same product, but for different motives. Another purchaser of a Prada jacket may do so primarily for warmth and protection (a physiological motive) or for social motives, e.g. to be accepted by a particular group of friends.

Motives may change over time with, for example, a change in social status. The arrival of a child is often accompanied by a change in motivation towards clothing purchases for most women. Another consideration is that many motives may simultaneously affect purchasing behaviour. Sometimes the motives operate to make the consumer positive towards the clothing item, whereas at other times there can be motive conflict. An example of motive conflict could be a person attracted to the purchase of a coat that will satisfy status needs, but at the same time repelled as the coat may not be warm enough to satisfy a physiological need.

There are several ways of classifying motives and these are described below. Motives can be placed along a continuum from rational to emotional. Buying a waterproof hat clearly has a strong rational element; an evening dress costing several thousand pounds that will be worn only once is obviously near the other end of the continuum. Another question to consider is whether the consumer is conscious of all the motives impelling choice. Freudian theory likens the personality to an iceberg where people are only partly aware of their motives. Many consumers may be unaware of or unwilling to admit to some of the motives that cause them to buy or avoid certain garments. It is easier for many people to assert that an item was bought because it looks nice than to admit that it was bought to impress others. The measurement of consumer motivation is problematic and some qualitative techniques for measuring motives are outlined in Chapter Four.
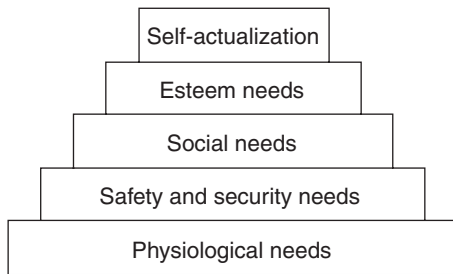
Figure 3.7 Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

A widely cited classification system for motivation was developed by Abraham Maslow. Maslow, a psychologist, stated that motives were organized in a hierarchy and that only when lower-level needs were satisfied did higher-level needs become important (Figure 3.7).

Thus the consumer on a limited income will be concerned with perhaps the functional aspects, such as warmth, of low-cost clothing before matters of social acceptance assume importance. Social needs include the need to belong and be accepted by others. Esteem needs are the need for the consumer to think well of themselves and have others hold a high opinion of them. Self-actualization, for Maslow, was the desire to grow psychologically and it embraces creativity and achievement. For one person knitting needles and some wool may enable self-actualization, whereas for another the participation in the design process by suggesting colours or styling aspects of a garment enables self-actualization. Some clothing purchases may satisfy needs at more than one level, e.g. a Barbour waxed jacket may satisfy the need for warmth and protection from the elements as well as enabling acceptance by a group who are similarly dressed. The translation of product features into specific benefits related to motives is a key selling task and this is described in more detail in Chapter Nine.

3.4.5 Consumer personality

Personality is the particular configuration of qualities that make a person unique. Two main approaches to personality will be considered, psychographics and the self-concept.

Earlier approaches to consumer behaviour concentrated on consumer personality traits and tried to discover consumer types. The hope was that having identified certain types of consumer, buyer behaviour could be predicted and fashion products could be produced and promoted accordingly. Unfortunately, the correlation between

personality type and buying behaviour was very small and this approach was succeeded by one which based consumers not on traits, but on activities, interests and opinions (AIOs). This is known as psychographics or lifestyles. Typically consumers are asked a large number of questions, usually based on a Likert scale, as described in Chapter Four, of general and specific questions relating to AIOs. Examples of such questions are 'I believe regular exercise is essential for good health' (general) and 'I go swimming at least once a week' (specific). The answers to these questions are then analysed together with demographic, purchasing and media data about consumers to derive distinct groupings, or types who have AIOs in common. Some interesting analyses have been undertaken linking clothing lifestyle groups with geodemographics and this work will be discussed later in this chapter.

These lifestyle groups are given names and can be the basis of target marketing efforts or used as a platform for advertising copy design or store design. The major drawback to lifestyle analysis is the lack of theoretical underpinning or measures of reliability or validity of much of the work undertaken. Evidence suggests that general lifestyle analysis is less useful and that research is best conducted into specific products and related areas such as health, beauty and fashion. Some labels given to the groups are plainly insulting to consumers, such as apathetics or dowdies, and at worst are little more than promotional aids for advertising agencies trying to sell their services to retailers and manufacturers. Recent work by Mintel and TGI on fashion lifestyles in Europe examined the incidence of eight lifestyle categories (Big Spenders, Label Admirers, Well Dressed, Stylish, Fashion Conscious, Shopaholics, Individualists and Practical) across four EU countries (UK, Germany, France and Spain). Marked differences were found between Germany and France, for instance where Germans were over-represented as Big Spenders and Label Admirers, whereas French consumers were over-represented as stylish and fashion conscious. The clear implication of this research for retailers is that the influence of culture means lifestyle marketing is perhaps not easily transferred across national boundaries. When done systematically, lifestyle analysis can offer real insights into buying behaviour, but there is no consensus on methodologies and the technique is expensive and needs to be undertaken continuously.

Analysis of the self-concept is another major strand of research from the area of consumer personality studies. The dimensions of the self-concept include:

◆ the self-image, which is how the person sees him- or herself;
◆ the ideal self-image, which is how the person would like to see him or herself;

- the social self-image, which is how the person thinks others see him or her;
- the ideal social self-image, which is how the person would like others to see him or her.

In addition, the self-concept is influenced by situational factors such as who the 'others' are and the context of buying. Thus there seem many 'selves', although there is an enduring sense of continuity and sameness that provides coherence for the consumer and this is known as identity. It should be noted that consumers do not always accurately perceive themselves or the reactions of others towards them. The main tool for measuring the self-concept is the semantic differential scale and that is described in Chapter Four.

For the fashion marketer, the self-concept represents a promising area as clothing is an obvious way in which a consumer may express him- or herself and show how they would like others to judge them. Consumers buy clothes both to maintain and to enhance the self, depending on the ascendency or salience of the self versus ideal self-image. Self-images are affected by many factors, but most notably by age and social class. Perceived opportunities and/or the lack of opportunities can influence not only images of the self, but also the value placed upon the self, namely self-esteem.

3.5 Sociological aspects of consumer behaviour

Consumers are social creatures, who form groups and interact in relation to goals. Consumer behaviour when viewed from a sociological perspective is more than a simple aggregation of individual acts, for the patterns and processes of both individual acts and wider social changes are profound in their impact on fashion marketing. Several social dimensions of consumer behaviour will be examined and these relate particularly to the process of influence over choice and to the basis for segmenting markets.

3.5.1 Social groups

A group may be defined as two or more people who bear a psychological relationship to one another and who interact in relation to a common purpose. People do not just form groups, they form groups for reasons such as to satisfy social needs, for mutual protection and enhancement or to check attitudes and perceptions. The price of group membership is conformity to norms, a norm being a shared expectation of behaviour. Norms are essential to groups as they

Figure 3.8 Escada store.

enable stability and provide a framework within which identities may be expressed and common goals can be pursued.

For many aspects of life there is uncertainty and groups provide a mechanism to check that uncertainty. This checking function is apparent in clothing purchases where the advice and support of friends is sought to check, among other things, the appropriateness of styling of garments and whether the items represent good value for money. Group members do not usually dress identically, but for specific occasions there are norms or unwritten rules about the range of garments and stores that would be considered acceptable. For example, a group of friends may all visit an Escada store (Figure 3.8), but not necessarily buy the same items within that store. The young man whose friends usually wear blue denim clothes doesn't turn up to meet his friends wearing a suit without the anticipation of a little teasing.

The mechanisms of maintaining conformity are rewards for compliance and punishments for deviance. Much of the control is exercised by non-verbal means or joking and teasing. These methods allow group members to retain dignity and comply without the great risk that would follow from blunt verbal demands. Norms for dress are most explicit for formal occasions where the expectations may be printed on invitations. Many workplaces have dress codes, although

these vary in specificity from the rigidly prescriptive uniform through the broad list of exclusions to the vague hints about dress related to status within the organization.

The anticipation of the reactions of others can be a key factor in the choice of clothing. Consumers may not accurately anticipate those reactions or may lack confidence and rely upon friends to advise and accompany them on shopping trips. Everybody differs in their social needs and those with the highest needs will tend to conform the most. The discussion so far has concentrated on face-to-face groups where conformity is often greater.

Consumers also belong to many groups that are not face to face; they also may aspire to belong to certain groups and still further wish to distance themselves from others. Everyone belongs to automatic groups by virtue of age, gender, race, religion, etc. and with membership come sets of expectations of how one ought to dress. Two women may both have legs that are flattered by short skirts, but if one woman is in her fifties and the other in her early twenties, the social influences and pressures to conform may be markedly different.

Groups that individuals identify with are known as reference groups and as noted they can be positive, negative or aspirational. An example of negative reference group influence may be a young man not buying a well-known brand of boot because he thinks they are worn by skinheads and racists. Aspirational reference group influence is most apparent when people apply to join new organizations – for instance most people take care over their job interview outfit. Similarly, parents sending children to school for the first time will make an effort to dress their child in a way that will enable him or her to be accepted quickly. Reference group influence is important not only for styles of fashion products, but also for endorsements and rejections of particular brands. Teenage purchases of trainers are influenced by what brands are regarded as 'in' and what is considered 'out' by the reference group.

3.5.2 Opinion leadership

Opinion leadership refers to the degree of influence exerted where a consumer is faced with a choice. Many people discuss clothing and fashion advertising as a normal part of social interaction. The influence of others is accepted under certain circumstances. When little information about garments or stores is possessed or when the information is out of date, consumers seek information from others. Opinions are also sought where products are highly visible such as outerwear or where the garment involves risk because it may be expensive, go quickly out of fashion or simply prove unpopular with significant others. Opinion
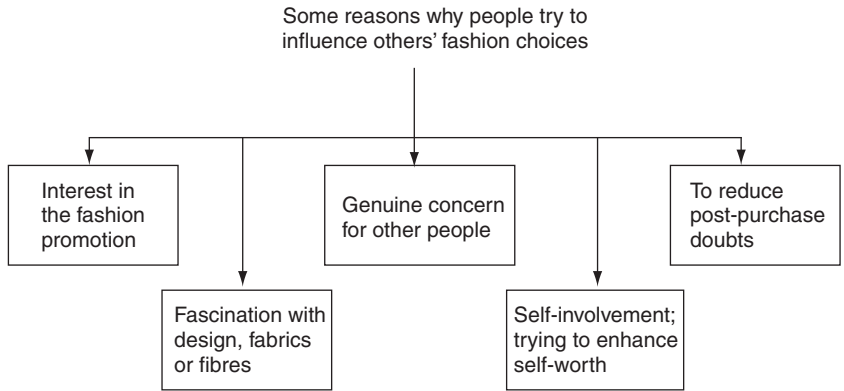
Some reasons why people try to
influence others' fashion choices

Interest in the fashion promotion		Genuine concern for other people		To reduce post-purchase doubts
	Fascination with design, fabrics or fibres		Self-involvement; trying to enhance self-worth	

Figure 3.9 Opinion leadership.

leaders exist in all groups and indeed the role may change according to the issue facing the group; one person may exert much influence over the choice of where to dine, whereas another group member may have sway over which are the best clothing stores to visit.

Celebrity influence is a particular type of opinion leadership. Evidence on celebrity influence shows that it is most powerful when the celebrity selected has credibility, is attractive, is trustworthy and is likeable. The enduring involvement of many leading fashion houses with clothing celebrities at the Oscar Awards is testimony to their belief in the power of such influence. Further examples of celebrity influence and their use in fashion promotion are discussed further in Chapter Nine.

There are many reasons why people try to influence others about fashion products and services, as shown in Figure 3.9. There may be genuine concern for the well-being of a friend and advice is given on obtaining value for money by visiting particular stores. The influencer or opinion leader may talk about fashion products because he or she is fascinated by the design or fabrics used. Sometimes a fashion message via advertising or public relations may prompt discussion and generate much media coverage. Dolce & Gabbana, Sisley, Puma, Benetton and Wonderbra have all used advertisements at times that have provoked strong public reactions. At other times opinion leaders may talk about clothing as a way of establishing self-worth by claims to superior knowledge or taste. In addition, the opinion leader may discuss an item of clothing as a way of reducing his or her dissonance (see earlier).

Fashion marketers often hope to use opinion leadership as a way of encouraging the diffusion of a product range. If opinion leaders can be identified and targeted with promotional efforts, then the hope

is that the message will be distributed via word-of-mouth communications. Fashion media personnel perform an important role in the word-of-mouth process and the marketing efforts directed at them will be discussed in Chapter Nine, particularly with regard to public relations, trade fairs and exhibitions.

3.5.3 The family

The family is the basic social group and the main mechanism by which social values and aspirations are transmitted. The family is important to the fashion marketer because families share finite financial resources and media exposure, and they make some purchases either collectively or in anticipation of the reaction of other family members. Paying attention to the role of the family is important when it is realized that the person buying the item of clothing may not be the wearer. For example, about half of all male underwear in the UK and a significant proportion of knitwear for men are purchased by women.

Families, as defined by government statisticians, are persons related by blood, marriage or adoption who reside together. It is tempting to view the family as in decline when newspaper headlines about divorce rates are considered. However, the family remains a strong institution in British society, most people get married and the majority of those do not get divorced. Over the long term, divorce is a factor that has had a major influence upon the lives of many people and is often accompanied by a reduced purchasing capacity for either or both former marriage partners.

The family life cycle is an attempt to classify people according to the age of the head of household, marital status, and the age and number of children. Early models of the family life cycle, by Wells and Gubar, omitted the occurrence of divorce and made the assumption that everyone followed the same route from birth to old age, namely single, married without children, married with children, etc. Later models of the family life cycle have recognized the role of divorce, but there is still a need to account for the extent of cohabitation, the number of people who remain single all their lives and alternative lifestyles.

Modelling the progress of people through time via the family life cycle is useful for two major reasons. People at the same stage of the life cycle may, because of similar demands upon income, constitute target markets for companies. The fashion retailer Next grew dramatically during the early 1980s by recognizing and responding to a demographic change connected with the family life cycle. Further, knowledge of how many people are at a certain stage in the life cycle enables predictions for future demand. For instance, knowing the

marriage rate and the fertility rate, some fairly accurate estimates can be made about the number of births over the next few years. This information is vital for manufacturers of baby clothes and stores such as babyGAP and Gapkids.

Family decision-making is important for fashion marketers, for it is important to know how decisions are made and who exerts influence over the clothing decisions made by families. Three stages of the purchasing process are relevant: initiation, information search and purchase decision. It may be within a family that the female notices that an item of clothing needs replacing, and she also may collect information via reading magazines or clothing catalogues to narrow the choice. In the same family the male may be the sole wage earner and he may be the person sanctioning the purchase. If such a pattern of decision-making were typical for the target market, then there would be clear implications about which media should be used for advertising.

Family decisions can be classified according to the degree of influence that husbands and wives exert for given product choices. Four types can be considered: husband-dominated, wife-dominated, joint and autonomic. Joint refers to equal influence and a shared decision and purchase. For example a couple may shop together to purchase a new suit for the husband. Autonomic refers to an equal number of decisions made, but those decisions are made separately. Autonomic decisions are perhaps best illustrated by gift purchases, where a female may buy some jewellery herself, but also receives other items purchased by her husband. The factors related to joint decision-making are higher-priced items and where the couple is younger. Whether young couples are more egalitarian or simply less knowledgeable about one another's needs is a matter to be determined by longitudinal research.

Family decision-making requires more research, in particular into the role of children in influencing clothing purchases. Changes in the level of participation in the labour market by married women and relative earnings of males and females mean continuous research is necessary in this area. Discovering the actual level of influence within families is problematic as influence is not always accurately discerned by the participants or even revealed to market researchers. The gender of the interviewer, the presence of the other party, and vanity and modesty from both partners can conspire to make this important research task very difficult to undertake.

3.5.4 Social stratification

All known human societies are stratified. Stratification refers to divisions of people according to their economic position in society, whether

Table 3.1 Socio-economic groups

Class	%	Description
A	4.0	Upper middle class
		Higher managerial, administrative and professional
B	21.9	Middle class
		Intermediate managerial, administrative and professional
C1	29.0	Lower middle class
		Supervisory, clerical or junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	20.7	Skilled working class
		Skilled manual workers
D	16.2	Working class
		Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers
E	8.1	Those at the lowest level of subsistence
		Includes most pensioners and the unemployed

Source: National Readership Survey (NRS Ltd), January to December 2006.

they are aware of that position or not. In the UK the main method of determining social stratification or social class is based on occupation. The most widely used system in the fashion market is the National Readership Survey using A, B, C1, C2, D and E. Table 3.1 gives a brief outline of this system.

This system is not the only system nor is the basis of classification uncontradicted, but it is the most widely used system and can be useful in explaining some of the vagaries found in fashion purchasing. A thorough exposition and critique of theories of social class is beyond the scope of this book; however, its impact is undeniably pervasive. A simple model of the influence of social class is that a person's position in the social structure, as determined by occupation, is associated with purchasing power, sets of aspirations and constraints and membership of social groups, all of which lead to patterns of consumption. The process is not only one way, as how somebody's income is spent can be relevant to some of the causal factors. Savings can be one factor in social mobility, though how particular clothing purchases, in themselves, influence social class is both less clear and less powerful.

The links between clothing purchases and social class are less clear than in the past. Photographs from the 1920s and 1930s reveal that clothing was an easy way to depict class. Hats, in particular, were markers of social status. Nowadays, because of the fragmentation of styles, the range of choice available and the change in classes themselves, clothing is no longer an unambiguous guide to class.

Socio-economic groups have all changed, partly on account of the changing occupational structure of the country – while far fewer workers are employed in large-scale manufacturing operations, the service sector has grown dramatically. To give one stark example, in 1907 over 7 million people worked in production industries in the UK and in 2007 the figure was around 3 million. The provision of better health care, education and higher standards of living through the twentieth century have changed all social classes. Class differences at the beginning of the twenty-first century are not the same as the class differences that prevailed a hundred years ago, but that is not to argue that a convergence of class values, attitudes and behaviour has occurred.

Class remains a significant discriminator of consumer behaviour. Although it is not a linear relationship, there is a link between class and income, and the prospects of increases in income. People do not wear rank overtly via their clothing as in the armed forces, but ways are found by many to indicate status. Within social classes, distinctions can be made between creative professional people such as advertising copywriters and accountants in how they dress. The former may tend to favour less formal attire at work whereas the latter tend to dress more conservatively.

Many working-class people may reach their earnings peak early in their career, whereas many middle-class occupations have incremental salary scales. Such experiences, coupled with different entitlements to, and discretion over, holidays, pensions schemes and other 'perks', are associated with different 'world views'. The daily experience of work impacts on these views where, for example, a manager may exercise discretion and make decisions, and a manual employee may work to a rigid work schedule almost like a robot. Workplace tasks, rules or norms may place restrictions upon clothing that can be worn depending upon a person's position. Where uniforms have to be worn it is usually the lower levels that wear them – even the Japanese companies excuse their senior managers from the need to wear overalls. In consequence, clothing worn during the person's leisure time may be chosen to express a distance from, or affinity to, work identity. Class differences are evident in media use, store selection, ownership and use of credit cards and bank accounts, and annual expenditure on clothing and footwear per person.

3.5.5 Geodemographics

Related to social class is a newer system of classifying consumers based upon where they live. A small number of proprietary systems exist based upon the census and categories of neighbourhoods.

One such system is ACORN, which stands for A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods and is owned by CACI; Pinpoint is another. These systems are derived from statistical analysis of census variables to discover residential areas, usually census enumeration districts comprising about 150 households and approximately 450 people, that are distinct in composition.

The census data can be linked to survey data on purchasing behaviour and information on media usage. Knowing the postcode of a respondent, the market researcher can determine the geodemographic category. ACORN has 5 categories and 17 related groups. The categories are Wealthy Achievers, Urban Prosperity, Comfortably Off, Moderate Means and Hard Pressed. Among the categories in Urban Prosperity category there are groups known as Prosperous Professionals, Educated Urbanites and Aspiring Singles. The owner of the ACORN system is CACI and the hyperlink is: http://www.caci.co.uk.

Geodemographic data have been used by marketers for target marketing, media planning, setting sales targets by area, forecasting, market testing and selecting new locations for outlets. Among fashion firms, the heavy users are the mail order firms, although retailers such as House of Fraser are involved. Geodemographics presents a promising future for marketing, especially when demographic data are interlaced with psychographic data. However, a number of major criticisms can made of geodemographics. First, it relies on census material that, at best, will be at least one-year-old when it is first used and up to 11 years old before the next census material is readily available. The owners of these systems claim they are able to update their databases to take account of changes in the housing mix and local economies. The systems are in competition and currently are much more expensive than data from secondary sources. Geodemographics is not equally predictive of buying behaviour across all product categories. A geodemographic category is a composite of a number of variables such as class, age, ethnic origin and housing amenities, and critics assert that it is either social class subdivision by another name or a statistical artefact looking for a theory.

An interesting recent development is the combination of geodemographics with lifestyles, particularly those focused on fashion segments. One commercial system developed by Experian and TNS has categorized every adult in the UK into 1 of 20 female and 15 male categories called the Mosiac Fashion Segments. The categories are based on attitudes and shopping behaviour in relation to fashion and these are linked to the census and location data. An example of a female is 'Annabel' a type 12 female described as 'best-dressed fashionistas', aged 18–25, often living with parents, interested in designer labels, quality and style and shopping at River Island and Independent

Stores. A male example is 'Stephen' a type 6 described as 'a mainstream father' aged 35–46 who shops at Next and Debenhams, he doesn't rate brands and quality is not a high priority for him, but he does like to spend money on clothing for his children. The actual profiles available give much more detail than that above and readers can access the full dataset via the hyperlink: http://www.business-strategies.co.uk/.

Fashion marketers obviously need better tools for analysis and planning, and geodemographics combined with fashion lifestyles represents a significant advance, but it is not a panacea or even a clear successor to alternative methods of analysis. To ask some obvious questions, why should the type of dwelling have any bearing on the purchase of clothing? Does the buyer of a leather coat live in an inner city flat, an affluent suburb or a rural setting?

3.5.6 Diffusion of innovation

An innovation can be defined in a number of ways. Innovation can be anything that is new to the company, so it could include 'copying' a method of merchandising or a new style of garment. An innovation also can be taken to mean anything that has been taken up by only a small proportion of the market, usually 10% or less, or an item that has only been on the market for a short time. For the purposes of this discussion an innovation will be taken as anything the consumer perceives to be new, thus it could include an 'old' product introduced into a new market.

Obviously different individuals will adopt new fashion products with differing degrees of enthusiasm and at different times. The process by which the acceptance of an innovation is spread by communication to members of a social system is known as diffusion. Diffusion refers to how an innovation is spread among consumers (groups) over time, whereas adoption refers to individual acceptance of new products. Rogers (1983), after an extensive literature review, proposed a scheme whereby consumers are classified on the basis of the time when they adopt any innovation. Rogers' scheme is obviously arbitrary with regard to percentages, and therefore ideal types are presented in Table 3.2. The scheme is based on the common-sense notion that most users do not adopt the innovation simultaneously. Another way of looking at the issue is to conceive the process as being segmentation over time.

Instead of trying to find characteristics of the above five groups, modern research efforts have focused on the differences between innovators and non-innovators. In practice this means researchers have combined innovators and early adopters and compared them with

Table 3.2 A classification of adopters of innovations

Innovators	2.5%
Early adopters	13.5%
Early majority	34%
Late majority	34%
Laggards	16%

Table 3.3 Comparison of opinion leaders and innovators

	Acceptor	Rejector
Active	Opinion leader	Opinion leader
Passive	Innovator	Innovator

the rest. Innovators tend to be more open-minded, inner- rather than other-directed, and younger rather than older. They also tend to be higher than non-innovators in terms of income, education, social mobility, and reading magazines and newspapers. Non-innovators tend to watch more television and perceive more risk in the purchase of new products than do innovators.

There is only limited, and contested, evidence of the super-innovator, i.e. a person who is an innovator across several unrelated product areas. As with opinion leadership, the evidence suggests there is moderate overlap depending on product interests. Therefore we may find an innovator for fashion products to be an innovator for other aspects of appearance, but not necessarily for food or electronic items.

There is often a tendency to equate the innovator and the opinion leader. They may indeed be the same, but there are differences, as shown in Table 3.3. Opinion leaders are active since they tend to communicate with others, positively and negatively, about their purchases.

Fashion marketers are interested in the factors that influence the rate of diffusion, so that appropriate marketing action may be taken to overcome obstacles of speed during the process.

The main factors that influence the rate of diffusion are:

◆ *Relative advantage*: The more immediate and important the benefits, the faster the rate of diffusion in terms of lower cost or long product life.
◆ *Compatibility*: The innovation must match cultural values, beliefs and expectations. An example of a compatibility issue, when first introduced, was the *Next Directory*, one of the first major paid-for catalogues. More recent examples compatibility

concerns are ethical use of labour and the use of sustainable raw materials in garment manufacture.

◆ *Possibility of trials*: The ability to try on garments or easily exchange those that cannot be tried on, i.e. mail order items, is a key factor.

◆ *Observability or communicability*: Ease with which information about an innovation is transmitted.

◆ *The complexity of the innovation*: The more complex, in terms of understanding and use, the slower the diffusion. Newer synthetic fabrics or garments that have complicated care or cleaning requirements are examples.

◆ *Perceived risk*: The greater the risk the slower the diffusion. Risk can be financial, physical or social. In addition, a perception may exist that a delay in purchasing will lead to lower prices.

◆ *Type of target market*: Some groups are more willing to accept change than others, e.g. the young, the affluent or the highly educated.

◆ *Type of decision*: Depends on whether the purchase of the innovation is an individual or a collective decision.

◆ Marketing effort: The rate of diffusion is not completely beyond the control of the firm selling it. Greater promotional spending can speed the diffusion process.

Knowledge of diffusion of innovation may aid planning, particularly concerning setting targets over time and forecasting. The diffusion process is directly related to the product life cycle concept discussed in Chapter Six. The key roles of the innovator and early adopter are examined from the perspective of product planning in Chapter Six and in relation to promotion in Chapter Nine.

3.6 The organizational buyer

The discussion so far has concentrated upon the retail consumer of fashion. It should be remembered that a significant amount of fashion marketing effort is directed at organizations, be they manufacturers or retailers, who buy to sell on, or companies who purchase garments for consumption by their staff. All of the concepts discussed so far have a bearing upon organizational buying, for organizational buyers are still humans with needs and attitudes, who also conform to social norms like consumers. However, there are some differences that do influence behaviour and these points will be addressed.

It is argued that because organizational buyers buy in bulk, are better trained and better informed, are accountable for their decisions

and are often part of a buying team they are more rational than con-
sumers. Organizational buying usually involves more formality with
regard to explicit buying criteria or vendor rating systems and unlike
most consumer buying, there is often negotiation over products and
prices. Given the greater concentration in fashion retailing that has
occurred in recent years (see Chapter Eight), organizational buyers
are subject to personal forms of promotion, more so than consum-
ers who receive mass communications and have impersonal relations
with suppliers.

The preceding arguments support the view that organizational
buyers are more rational. However, there is another perspective that
argues otherwise. Because organizational buyers are spending some-
one else's money they may be less careful than the consumer would
be with his or her own money. Fashion is concerned with personal
taste and the consumer needs only to be certain about his or her pur-
chases, whereas the organizational buyer faces greater uncertainty in
the anticipation of the needs of an assortment of others. This multiple
responsibility for buying can, under some circumstances, lead to
careless action, as personal accountability may be diffused via com-
mittees or teams. The extent of supplier loyalty displayed by retail-
ers and manufacturers could be taken as being counterindicative of
a more rational approach to buying than that of the consumer who
shows no loyalty to any brand or retailer.

Clearly the arguments about relative rationality cannot be easily
resolved, but the point to note is that both types of buyer are influ-
enced by psychological and sociological processes which are expressed
in buying decisions. Key structural factors that enable fashion marketers
to determine specific approaches to organizational buyers are devel-
oped further in Chapters Six to Nine, where the relationships between
the organizations are explored in relation to the marketing mix.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has introduced the concept of buyer behaviour in the
fashion market. It has dealt with:

◆ the importance of understanding buyers;
◆ how individual customers make decisions;
◆ what types of decision they must make;
◆ psychological influences on customer decision-making;
◆ how fashion marketers classify customers and sociological
  influences;
◆ a comparison of organizational and consumer buying.

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Chapter Four
Fashion Marketing Research

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction to some of the main concepts and decisions involved in the research process, as well as the main techniques used in survey research.

Most adults in the UK have had some experience of marketing research, usually through contact with the 'lady with the clipboard' in street surveys. As such, the main emphasis of this chapter will be on the decisions that must be made as part of survey design; from the definition of the research problem to the design of the questionnaire and data collection. The application of marketing research to product development and fashion forecasting international marketing research issues and the impact of the Internet will also be considered.

4.2 The purpose of marketing research

4.2.1 What is marketing research?

Kotler (2000) defines marketing research as 'the systematic design, analysis and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company'.

It is often asked whether there is a difference between market research and marketing research. The difference is in the scope of an investigation, as shown in Figure 4.1. Market research is used to refer to research into a specific market, investigating such aspects as market size, market trends, competitor analysis, and so on. Marketing research is a much broader concept, covering investigation into all aspects of the marketing of goods or services, such as product research and development, pricing research, advertising research,
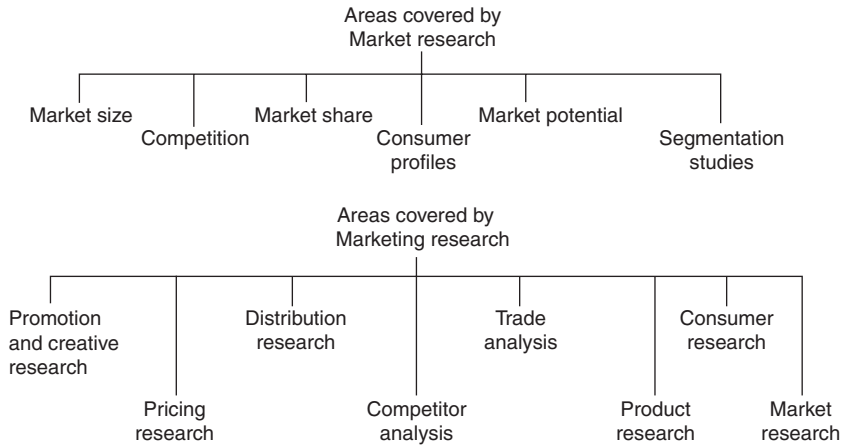
Figure 4.1 Comparison of market research and marketing research.

distribution research, as well as all the aspects of market analysis covered by market research.

4.2.2 Why is information necessary?

In today's fierce market economy the risks faced by businesses are great. Aggressive competitors pose serious threats for both large and small businesses in the constant fight to maintain and increase their market share. To maximize opportunities the successful business person must make the right decisions at the right time. The consequence of making the wrong decision can be financial ruin.

Without the gift of clairvoyance, such decisions are problematic. An understanding of the market and the needs and wants of your consumers now and in the future are rarely based on intuition alone. Sound market information provides the basis for marketing decisions. Marketing research, properly designed and implemented, will provide this information.

4.2.3 Marketing research as part of a marketing information system

The wealth of information flowing into a company has to be organized so that it reaches the right people. Successful companies operate marketing information systems (MIS) to gather accurate, up-to-date information, analyse it and disseminate the results to appropriate

decision-makers in time to allow the company to maximize its opportunities and to avoid potential threats. Along with other information producing departments within the company (sales, accounts, etc.), marketing research can assist management in the decision-making process across the full range of marketing activities, from description of a market segment to prediction of future trends.

4.2.4 The scope of marketing research

There is no area of marketing activity to which the techniques of marketing research cannot be applied. Marketing research can provide information on the size and structure of a specific market as well as information about current trends, consumer preferences, a competitor's activities, advertising effectiveness, distribution methods and pricing research. Marketing research also plays a vital role in the development of new products and new advertising and promotion strategies. It can also monitor performance following implementation of those strategies.

The techniques used in the collection of marketing information depend largely on the nature of the research problem, but will vary from the well-known street interview carried out by the 'ladies with clipboards' to more sophisticated techniques such as projective techniques used in such areas as motivation research.

4.2.5 Types of research

Although marketing research techniques can be applied to all areas of marketing, not all techniques are appropriate to every situation. Broadly speaking, there are two types of research: qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative research uses techniques such as group discussions, individual depth interviews, projective techniques and observation. The information obtained attempts to find out the 'how' and 'why' of a situation, rather than 'how many'. Analysis may be difficult owing to the depth and complexity of the data collected and so it should be carried out by experienced and trained researchers. Qualitative research is invaluable for basic exploratory studies, new product development and creative development studies.

Quantitative research provides information to which numbers can be applied. Quantitative research is the best-known face of marketing research and its main survey method is what most people recognize as marketing research.

4.3 An overview of the marketing research process

The collection of information is a process that must be planned. There are many different areas in which planning decisions need to be made, so good organization is vital.

4.3.1 Stages in the research process

Research procedures will vary depending on the nature of the research problem, but in general, the process of marketing research can be seen to be made up of a number of stages. They are:

1. Define the research problem and set the research objectives.
2. Design the research. This includes:
    (a) data sources;
    (b) select the sampling method;
    (c) select the data collection method;
    (d) design the data collection form (questionnaire).
3. Test the research design (pilot).
4. Collect the data.
5. Analyse the data and interpret the results.
6. Present the findings.

4.4 Problem definition and setting research objectives

Defining the research problem is the most critical step in the research process. Unless the problem is accurately defined, the information collected will be of limited or no use. Careful thought and discussion about the problem, the information needed to address the problem and the relative value of the information collected should take place before anything else. A structured, systematic approach to decision-making will also enable management (or the commissioner of the research) to set the objectives of the research. In other words, what is the problem and what do we want to find out to try to solve it? This preliminary planning is important as it has implications for the design of the research and the quality of the information collected.

4.5 Research design

There are three types of research design: exploratory, descriptive and causal. The choice of research design will depend on the problem previously defined.

4.5.1 Exploratory research

This is most useful in the early stages of research, particularly if the researcher is not familiar with the subject area. There is no formal structure to exploratory research as the researcher needs to look at a wide range of information sources without being restricted. The aim of exploratory research is to uncover any variables that may be relevant to the research project as well as an investigation of the environment in which the research will take place.

4.5.2 Descriptive research

The purpose of descriptive research is to provide an accurate description of the variables uncovered by the exploratory stage. This could be used to investigate the market share of a company's products or the demographic characteristics of the target market (age, gender, income, etc.). Data are usually obtained from secondary data sources or from surveys.

4.5.3 Causal research

Causal research is used to determine the relationship between variables, e.g. the relationship between advertising and repeat purchases.

4.6 Data sources

Data come from two sources, primary and secondary. Secondary data sources consist of information that has already been collected for other purposes and primary sources of information are those used for the purpose of collecting information specifically for the current research project.

4.6.1 Secondary sources

These provide the researcher with a starting point for data collection. It may be possible to solve the research problem either wholly or in part by using secondary data. This reduces the cost of a research project as secondary data are cheaper than collecting primary data. Secondary sources of information, are in the main, fairly accessible, although some sources may remain confidential and others may be too expensive to acquire.

Secondary sources can be separated into the two types as shown in Figure 4.2. Internal sources are those that generate information within
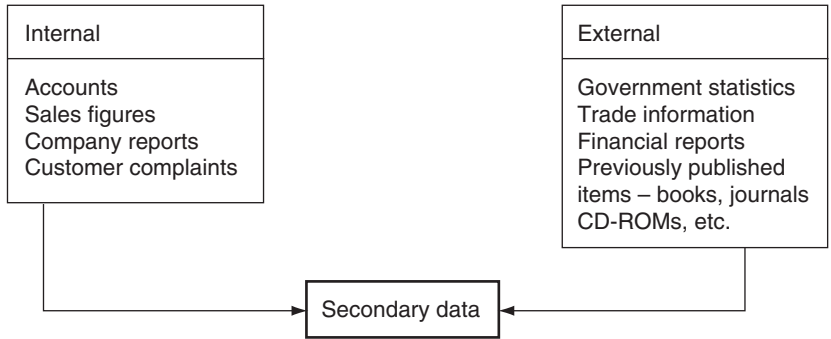
Internal		External
Accounts Sales figures Company reports Customer complaints		Government statistics Trade information Financial reports Previously published items – books, journals CD-ROMs, etc.

Secondary data

Figure 4.2 Sources of secondary data.

a company or an organization, e.g. sales figures and accounts infor-
mation. External sources are those that generate information outside
a company or an organization. These are by far the more numerous,
and some examples of external sources are listed below:

- *Government statistics*: Census data, family expenditure sur-
  veys, trade and manufacturing trends.
- *Trade information*: Trade press, e.g. Fashion Weekly, Drapers
  Record; trade associations, e.g. CBI, trade surveys, company
  reports and competitors' accounts.
- *Financial institutions*: Many major banks publish reports on
  regional and national industries.
- *Commercial research*: Many market research companies
  undertake continuous research and omnibus surveys cover-
  ing an extremely broad range of topics, including consumer,
  media and retail (e.g. Taylor Nelson Sofres, NOP, Ipsos-RSL).
  Various market reports are available, from, Mintel, Keynote
  and Retail Intelligence, for example.

The use of secondary data sources, also called desk research, can be
very time consuming because there is such a lot of information avail-
able, including CD-ROM and 'online' data. Keeping the objectives of
the research in mind will help to ensure that time is spent efficiently.

4.6.2 Primary sources

Most marketing research projects will involve the collection of more
up-to-date information than is available from secondary sources. Primary
sources of information may include consumers, designers, buyers, manu-
facturers, retailers, and so on, depending upon the research problem.

4.7 Practical sampling methods

In designing research a major decision that the researcher must make concerns the selection of a sampling method. Sampling is a very important tool in marketing research. It involves selecting a small number of people from the larger survey population whose characteristics, attitudes and behaviour are representative of the larger group.

Before selecting the sample, however, the researcher must first define the research population from which to draw the sample. Exploratory research can help to define the population to include all the players and variables that are relevant to the survey.

For some surveys, particularly if the survey population is small or concentrated in one geographical area, it may be possible to take a census, which is a useful method in some business surveys. More commonly a representative sample is interviewed as this reduces both the time and the cost of the research.

4.7.1 Deciding sample size

Deciding how many people to include in your sample is as important a decision as how they should be selected. Factors such as cost, time and staff availability, level of accuracy required, data collection method and location of the population all play a part in deciding sample size. In reality, cost-effectiveness is the most important factor in deciding how many should be contacted in the research, followed by time and staff availability. If it is decided to select a large number for the sample, there may be insufficient staff available to contact the respondents within the time constraints of the survey, so a smaller sample size may be accepted as a compromise.

When selecting a sample it is important that there is a high level of confidence that the sample is representative of the research population as a whole. The sample must be large enough to provide accurate results, without being so large as to increase research costs unnecessarily. It is possible to calculate confidence levels for different sample sizes and there are several texts that cover this adequately (see Further reading at the end of this chapter).

4.7.2 Choice of a sampling method

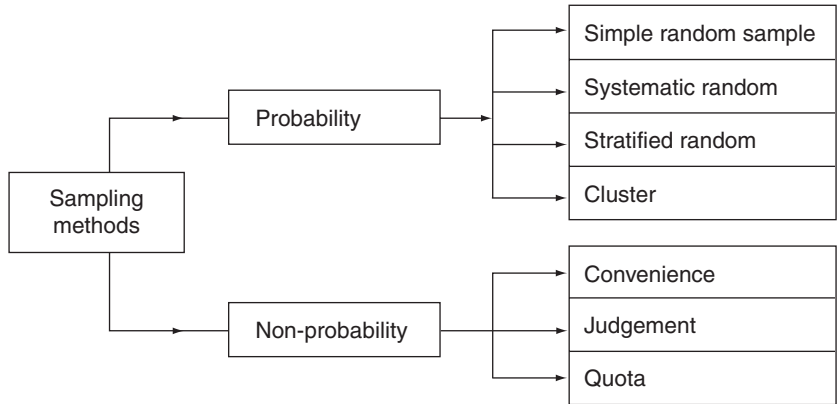The two main types of sampling method – probability methods and non-probability methods – are shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Types of sampling method.

Probability methods

Statistically speaking, these are the best types of sampling method as each respondent has a known chance of being selected, so bias is minimized. They also allow the accuracy of the results to be estimated statistically. Sometimes probability sampling methods are referred to generically as 'random sampling' methods. In fact, this refers to a specific type of very precise probability sample. There is often some confusion over the use of the term 'random'. Selecting people in the street at random is not technically random sampling, but more often refers to selection of respondents by interviewers for quota sampling.

The main types of probability sample are simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling.

Simple random sampling   Items can be selected from the sampling frame by using the lottery method, e.g. taking numbers out of a hat. In the UK, ERNIE the computer selects Premium Bond winners, and does so by using simple random sampling. Random number tables are generated by computer and often used in marketing research.

Systematic random sampling   With larger samples it is more convenient to divide the population by the sample size to calculate the sampling interval (n). A random starting point is selected using random number tables and every nth time after that is selected.

Example   If the sample size is 50, and the population size is 3000, then the sampling interval is calculated as:

$$n = \frac{3000}{50} = 60$$

If the random number picked from the tables was 35, for example, then the first item selected from the sampling frame would be 35. Every 60th number after that would be selected until a sample size of 50 was achieved.

As the first number was selected randomly, this method is sometimes called a 'quasi-random' method.

The advantage of these methods is that they are relatively simple to carry out and sampling error and confidence levels can be calculated statistically. The main disadvantage is that samples may be produced that do not reflect the characteristics of the survey population. For example, if a sample of students were drawn from a list of all students at a university, it is possible that all the students in the sample might be design students. This is clearly not representative of the student population as a whole.

Stratified random sampling   One way to try to overcome this type of sampling error is to use stratified random sampling. This is used when it is felt that different groups within the population have characteristics that are likely to lead to different types of answers. The population is divided into distinguishable groups (strata) who have similar characteristics. Stratification factors should be as relevant as possible to the survey (e.g. consumer surveys are often stratified by age, gender, socio-economic group, and so on). A random sample is then taken from each stratum.

There are two main methods used to stratify samples. First, with a uniform sampling fraction (proportionate sampling), or secondly, with a variable sampling fraction (disproportionate sampling).

Proportionate and disproportionate sampling   If all the strata are equally important to the survey, a proportionate sample would be taken, i.e. the same number selected from each stratum. Frequently, some strata are more important to the research than others. For example, if you were conducting a survey into the purchase of outsize garments (size 18+), it would be reasonable to assume that most of these items would be purchased by those who were larger than size 16 rather than those who were not. It is logical that more of these people should be included in the sample. In other words, a disproportionate sample would be taken. If a proportionate sample were taken, too few of the people who took larger sized clothes would be included in the survey and it would be difficult to extrapolate the results to the general population with any degree of accuracy.

Cluster sampling   Cluster sampling is a variation of stratified random sampling and may be used when the survey population is concentrated

in a relatively small number of groups (clusters) that are considered typical of the market in question. A random sample of these clusters is then taken. A random sample of units from within these clusters is then taken. If the number of units within a cluster is small, a census may be carried out. In a national survey of specialist bridal wear retailers, for example, sales areas could be identified by geographical region and a random sample of these taken. Within each selected sales area, all or a sample of the store managers would be interviewed.

There is a problem with cluster sampling that occurs if the clusters are not sufficiently representative of the survey population. For example, in a small geographical area, it is likely that it will consist of people with similar housing, incomes and lifestyle. Although cluster sampling can be more cost-effective than some other methods of probability sampling, there is a danger that sampling error will increase if the clusters are not carefully defined before the first stage of sampling.

Sampling frames When using probability sampling methods it is necessary to use a sampling frame. This is a list of every element in the survey population. The sample is drawn from this list. A sampling frame is essential for probability-based techniques, as each element must have a known chance of selection, and so must be included in the sampling frame. According to Webb (1999), a sampling frame must have the following characteristics:

- ◆ Each element should be included only once.
- ◆ No element should be excluded.
- ◆ The frame should cover the whole of the population.
- ◆ The information used to construct the frame should be up-to-date and accurate.
- ◆ The frame should be convenient to use.

Examples of sampling frames include electoral rolls, the telephone book, the Royal Mail's lists of postcodes and other similar databases.

In practice, most sampling frames are not perfect. Not everyone with a telephone is in the phone book, for example. Finding a sampling frame that is suitable for your research can occasionally prove difficult.

Non-probability methods

With non-probability sampling methods, some element of judgement enters the selection process. The extent to which judgement is used, and therefore the element of bias introduced, varies in these methods. Non-probability methods do not require a sampling frame and the

chance of each unit being selected is unknown. Statistical estimates of the size of the sampling error cannot therefore be made.

The methods are convenience sampling, judgement sampling and quota sampling.

Convenience sampling Items are selected that are close or easily available. This is useful in the exploratory stage of research, giving the researcher a 'feel' for the subject. Despite being very cheap and quick to carry out, the level of error and bias with this method is likely to be very high and so it should be used with caution.

Judgement sampling Items are selected by the researcher that are felt to be representative of the survey population. This method attempts to be more representative than convenience sampling. Experts also may be consulted for advice on which items are likely to be more appropriate for the survey. For example, in a survey of tex-tile manufacturers, a staff specialist such as a product developer may provide useful advice on which manufacturers would be suitable for selection.

Quota sampling This is the most likely non-probability method to produce a representative sample as items selected are based on known characteristics of the population.

Example Assume that your survey population has the following characteristics:

> Age: 16–29 = 26%; 30–64 = 58%; 65+ = 16%
> Gender: Male = 48%; Female = 52%

If we wanted to interview 150 people who were representative of the above population in terms of the two quota controls (age and gen-der), we would calculate the quotas as shown in Table 4.1.

This is more conveniently represented as shown in Table 4.2.

A survey's accuracy of representation can be increased by narrow-ing the bands and including more characteristics, e.g. social class. Interviewers are then allocated a number of interviews (quotas) with specific types of respondent.

The advantages of quota sampling are that it is relatively quick to carry out and easy to administer from a fieldwork point of view. It is also cheaper to use than probability sampling methods. The disad-vantages of quota sampling involve problems of bias and sampling errors. The responsibility for selection of respondents lies with the interviewer, which may introduce bias. There is the added problem that there is no probability mechanism with quota sampling, so the sampling error cannot easily be calculated.

Table 4.1 Quota sampling frame (A)

	16–29	30–64	65+	Total
M	16–29 = 26%	30–64 = 58%	65+ = 16%	
A	Male = 48%	Male = 47%	Male = 48%	
L				
E	26% of 48%	58% of 48%	16% of 48%	
	of 150 = 19	of 150 = 42	of 150 = 12	
	Quota = 19	Quota = 42	Quota = 12	73
F	16–29 = 26%	30–64 = 58%	65+ = 16%	
E	Female = 52%	Female = 52%	Female = 52%	
M				
A	26% of 53%	58% of 52%	16% of 52%	
L	of 150 = 20	of 150 = 45	of 150 = 12	
E				
	Quota = 20	Quota = 45	Quota = 12	77
TOTAL	39	87	24	150

Table 4.2 Quota sampling frame (B)

Age	Male	Female	Total
16–29	19	20	39
30–64	42	45	87
65+	12	12	24
Total	73	77	150

Quota samples are often used in surveys where fine degrees of accuracy are not required, for instance in product testing for preference between products.

Although many companies who provide continuous research services use probability sampling, the majority of *ad hoc* marketing research is conducted using quota samples. If this method gave consistently biased or misleading conclusions, it would not be used.

4.8 Primary data collection methods

The researcher should not rely on the use of secondary data alone to answer the research problems. Not all secondary data are available to the researcher as some may be unavailable, for example in confidential reports, and other data may simply be too costly to acquire. The information that is available may be out-of-date or not sufficiently
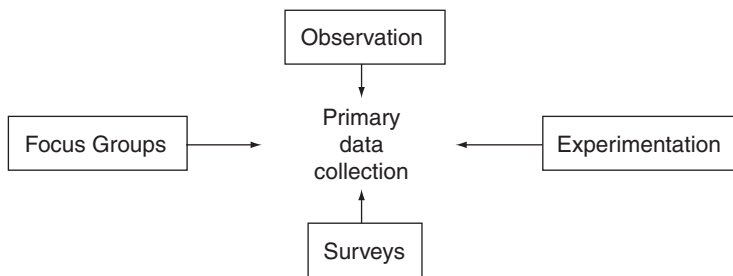
Figure 4.4 Approaches to primary data collection.

detailed to solve the research problem. Usually, primary data need to be collected.

The four main approaches to primary data collection – observation, focus groups, experimentation and surveys – are shown in Figure 4.4.

4.8.1 Observation

There are occasions when it is more useful to observe behaviour than to interview the respondent about it. Observation is usually used to complement other research methods in marketing research, rather than being used alone, as this method can identify patterns of behaviour, but cannot provide information on the reasons behind that behaviour. There are a number of methods available for the observation of behaviour, as follows.

Personal observation

The researcher observes behaviour and records it as it occurs. The skill and the objectivity of the researcher play a key role in the collection of unbiased data. The audit data are collected by taking an inventory of certain products or brands at the premises (at home or office) of the respondent.

This type of ethnographic research (observing respondents in natural settings, e.g. observing fashion buyers at trade fairs) is particularly useful in fashion marketing research. Methods such as accompanied shopping can provide insight into the processes by which decisions are made. Using this method the researcher would accompany the respondent on a shopping trip, often following a prior discussion of the process in the respondent's home, observe the respondent and often use direct questioning to gain insight into underlying reasons for certain behaviour, e.g. why certain products attracted the

respondent's attention. This is a useful tool for store layout research and evaluation of point-of-sale displays. Wardrobe analysis is another observational method employed by many image consultants. Here existing garments and accessories that constitute a respondent's wardrobe are examined. This is combined with information on work and lifestyle needs to provide advice on how best to build on existing outfits and to expand the wardrobe to obtain a desired image. Some companies also offer this service online.

Mechanical observation

Recording devices may be used either in laboratory settings or in natural settings. In the laboratory, devices such as the psychogalvanometer are used to measure the respondent's level of perspiration (and so the level of arousal) following exposure to an advertisement or other stimuli. Other devices include the eye-movement camera that detects the movement of the eye over an advertisement, identifying the visual aspects of the advertisement that gain attention. In natural settings, in-store video cameras may be used to record behaviour, with the film being used later for analysis such as researching store layout.

4.8.2 Focus groups

The focus group (also known as the group discussion) is a form of qualitative research. The group usually consists of between 6 and 12 respondents who discuss products, services, attitudes or other aspects of the marketing process. The discussion is led by a skilled researcher called a group moderator, who guides the discussion, following a checklist of topics. The group usually meets in an informal setting, often someone's home, and the group members are paid a small sum for attending. These discussions can take several hours to complete and are often used as a preliminary to survey research. It is also possible to conduct online focus groups via the Internet (see Section 4.14).

4.8.3 Experimentation

According to Kotler (1994), this is the most scientifically valid type of research. Here, matched groups of respondents are subjected to different treatments and the difference in the responses is observed. All variables outside the scope of the research are controlled and as such, the observed responses are taken to be as a result of the difference in treatment of the group. Experimental research seeks to identify cause-and-effect relationships that are central to marketing work.

4.8.4 Surveys

Survey research is the most well known of the research approaches and is widely used for descriptive research. Surveys collect information from a representative sample of the survey population on such topics as consumer behaviour, attitudes and beliefs, as well as buying intentions. The strengths of these beliefs, attitudes and intentions are measured and the results extrapolated to the population as a whole.

4.9 Data collection methods

If a survey is to be conducted, there are a number of methods available for the collection of data and each has its relative advantages and disadvantages. The three main traditional methods are by personal interview, telephone interview and mail questionnaire. Online data collection methods will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.9.1 Personal interview

Face-to-face interviewing is still the most widely used method of primary data collection in the UK, although telephone interviewing is becoming increasingly popular. This method is labour-intensive and costly, but is more likely to result in a satisfactorily completed questionnaire than any of the other methods. This is particularly true if the questionnaire is long or complicated or covers sensitive subjects. Respondents have the opportunity to build a rapport with the interviewer, who can elicit full and accurate answers to questions without biasing the responses.

In a personal interview there is the opportunity to show supporting material, such as examples of a product or still photographs from advertisements. Open-ended questions can also be included in the questionnaire design as the interviewer is present to record the answers verbatim.

The interviewer or fieldworker also plays a vital role in the selection of respondents for interview when using quota sampling. This, however, may introduce bias into the survey.

There is another type of personal interview, the depth interview, which belongs to the realm of qualitative research. Typically, these interviews can last for over an hour. The interviewer does not have a questionnaire as such, but uses a less structured interview schedule. This may consist of either a series of open questions that must be asked as they are written or a checklist of topics for discussion, as with the focus group. The interviewer must be very highly trained in the art of asking

unbiased questions, and usually, the interviews are recorded for transcription and analysis later. This method is particularly useful and is a rich source of information if the subject of the survey is of a personal or embarrassing nature.

Increasingly technology has made data capture easier for fieldworkers. CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) using laptops has meant that the large amounts of paper questionnaires no longer have to be carried by interviewers. Progress in wireless technology has allowed some market research companies to equip their fieldworkers with XDAs (small hand-held devices, similar to palmtops) for the administration of short face-to-face questionnaires. The questionnaires are sent directly to the XDA and allow for fast data capture and subsequently, fast turnaround of data to the client.

4.9.2 Telephone interviewing

The development of CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing) has greatly increased the extent to which telephone interviewing is undertaken. Interviewing is done from a central location, cutting the costs of fieldwork considerably, providing the sample size is large. It is not a cost-effective method for small samples. With the increased demand for immediate information, particularly for commercial omnibus surveys, CATI is ideally suited for the provision of a very fast turnaround of data as the results are recorded and processed as the questions are answered. The sample also can be drawn from a wide geographical spread, as the fieldworkers do not have to travel.

There are disadvantages to this method of data collection. It is difficult to establish a rapport with the respondent by telephone, which is partly why this method is not successful for the researching of personal or embarrassing topics. Many respondents are fearful of 'sugging', selling under the guise of marketing research, and expect the interviewer to try to sell them double glazing and the like. With a disembodied voice it is also easier for a respondent to refuse or end an interview prematurely. The telephone interview demands the use of very structured, precoded questionnaires that may be completed quickly without having to rely on examples of supporting material. An ideal telephone interview will last no longer than 15 minutes, on average.

4.9.3 Mail (postal) questionnaire

If the survey population is widely dispersed, it may be more useful to send the questionnaire by mail than to have an interviewer call on the respondent. Mail surveys also have the advantage of a reduction in field

staff, and if there is a high response rate, the cost per questionnaire is low. A high response rate is more likely if the survey population consists of members of a special interest group (e.g. keep-fit enthusiasts) and the questionnaire relates to their area of interest. Otherwise, a response rate of 30–40% is not uncommon. The advantage over the telephone interview with this method is that the questionnaire can be lengthy and ask for detailed information.

The disadvantages (apart from the low response rate) are several. A mail questionnaire has to compete with the increasing amounts of junk mail that pour through our letterboxes. If there is a high non-response rate then the cost per questionnaire is high, particularly if a reply-paid envelope is included. There is no guarantee that the selected respondent will actually complete the questionnaire, and in spite of careful design, the control of the question sequence is removed. If the respondent does not understand any of the questions, there is no interviewer present to clarify the problem. There also may be a long time lag between sending out the questionnaires and receiving completed forms.

4.10 Questionnaire design

Questionnaire design is an aspect of research in which many people automatically assume expertise, even those without prior research experience. The questionnaire is a vital part of most surveys and great care must be taken with its design. To the novice, the problems inherent in designing a questionnaire tend not to become apparent until the pilot stage of the survey.

Many factors will affect the design of the questionnaire, such as the nature of the data required (qualitative or quantitative) and how the questionnaire is to be administered (by personal interview, telephone, mail or other self-completion, or whether electronic instruments will be used). However, most questionnaires tend to lie between two extremes: first, the highly structured questionnaire used, for example, in telephone interviewing, where the question wording is fixed and responses are limited; and secondly, an unstructured interview schedule used in qualitative research, which consists of a list of topics to be covered, with the actual wording of the questions left to the trained interviewer.

A well-designed questionnaire will provide the researcher with complete, accurate and unbiased information using the minimum number of questions and allowing the maximum number of successfully completed interviews.

4.10.1 The decision areas

Questionnaires are notoriously difficult to construct, but Tull and Hawkins (1997) suggest that a convenient way of tackling the design is by breaking up the task into a number of decision areas, namely:

- preliminary decisions;
- question content;
- question wording;
- response format;
- question sequence;
- questionnaire layout;
- pretest and revise.

Preliminary decisions

These include decisions on what information is required, who will be included in the survey and how they will be contacted.

Question content

This section is concerned with the content of individual questions: what to include, rather than how to phrase the question. Points to consider include the following:

Is the question necessary? The first decision to be made here is whether or not the question is actually necessary. If the question is not necessary for the purposes of meeting the survey objectives, then leave it out.

How many questions are needed? If the question is necessary, one must take care that the information you elicit will answer the question without ambiguity. For example, if you asked a respondent: 'Do you think woollen trousers are comfortable and warm to wear?' and the response was 'No', would that mean woollen trousers were uncomfortable or did not keep the respondent warm? Rather than ask double-barrelled questions, it is better to use one question for each point of information required, so you would ask: 'Do you think that woollen trousers are comfortable to wear?' and 'Do you think that woollen trousers are warm to wear?'

Has the respondent the information to answer the question? Sometimes respondents are asked questions on subjects about which they are not informed. A husband may not have the necessary information if asked how much his wife spends a month on clothing, for

example. Some respondents will attempt to answer questions without being adequately informed, which will affect the validity of the results.

Is the respondent able to articulate the response? Even if the respondent has the necessary information to answer a question, they may not always be able to articulate their responses successfully. If asked to describe the type of person who might wear a particular fragrance, many respondents would find difficulty in phrasing their answers. It is easier for the respondent if they are presented with a set of alternatives from which they can choose the response that they feel to be the most appropriate. Using aids such as descriptions and pictures makes it easier for the respondent to answer the questions, and so complete the interview.

Asking questions beyond the memory span of the respondent Asking questions about behaviour over a long time span may not produce accurate information. For example, asking the respondent how much they spent on tights in the last year would result in an answer that was pure guesswork. Asking how much they spent on tights in the last fortnight would be more likely to provide accurate information.

Question wording

Great care must be taken with the wording of questions. This is of particular importance when conducting cross-cultural or international marketing research. Decisions about question wording include:

◆ Does the word mean the same to all respondents?
◆ Some words such as 'dinner' and 'tea' mean different things in different parts of the country. Words should be chosen to mean the same to all respondents.
◆ The use of vague or ambiguous words also should be avoided. For example, 'Are you a regular purchaser of nylon tights?' is not specific enough. How often is 'regular'? This may mean different things to different respondents.

Are the questions loaded? Some words or phrases should not be used in questionnaire design as they are likely to result in bias. Emotive words or phrases invite particular responses; for example, 'Are you in favour of sending money to help the poor, starving people in Africa?'

Response format

There are a number of types of response format that may be used. The most commonly used are dichotomous, multiple-choice and

open-ended formats. Most questionnaires contain a mixture of these.

Dichotomous   Only two responses are allowed, such as 'yes' or 'no', 'male' or 'female'. A neutral 'don't know' category is sometimes included. The advantages are that these questions are quick to ask and the responses are easy to record and analyse. The disadvantages are that they do not allow for any shades of meaning to be included in the responses, and many questions would have to be asked to derive information of any detail by using this format alone.

Multiple-choice   Here the respondent is presented with a choice of several possible answers to the question. Frequently, the list of choices is shown to the respondent on a card. The order of the alter- native answers should be rotated to avoid bias. Again, the questions are quick to ask and the responses are easy to record and analyse. This format also allows for more shades of meaning and the respond- ent has more freedom of choice in the response. The difficulty of this format is that it is difficult to ensure that the list of possible responses is complete.

Open ended   The respondent has complete freedom of choice in the response given with this format. This format is often used where lit- tle information exists to construct a multiple choice list, or when great detail is required. The advantage is that the information produced is extensive and is free from any bias of suggested answers. The main disadvantage is that the responses are slow to record as they must be recorded verbatim. This can lead to interviewers selecting what they think are the most important points, resulting in bias. These responses are also difficult to analyse as coding frames must be constructed for each question after the fieldwork has taken place. Coding of responses at a later stage requires grouping of responses, which can lose some shades of meaning.

Question sequence

The questions need to be organized logically to avoid introducing error or bias. Generally, you should move from general questions that the respondent finds easy to answer, to more specific or difficult questions about attitudes or behaviour.

   In some surveys it is possible to ask classification questions, which may appear personal or embarrassing, at the end of the interview. If a quota sample is being used, some of these questions will need to be asked at the start of the interview, as they may form part of the

(A) 15–24	(A) under £5000 p.a.
(B) 25–34	(B) £5000–£9999 p.a.
(C) 35–44	(C) £10 000–£14 999 p.a.
(D) 45–54	(D) £15 000–£20 000 p.a.
(E) 55+	(E) £20 000+ p.a.

Figure 4.5 Sample showcards.

quota control. To overcome this, showcards may be used, e.g. with age or income bands (Figure 4.5).

Questionnaire layout

The overall aim is clarity. There are some procedures that can aid clarity. These include ensuring that all questions are numbered; filter questions (ones that may be omitted in certain situations) should be clearly marked; instructions to the interviewer should be in block capitals; arrows or visual aids may be used.

Pretesting (pilot) and revision

The questionnaire must be thoroughly tested, using respondents similar to those who will take part in the final survey. This is known as the pilot stage and is vitally important to the reliability and validity of your survey results. Once this has been done, any modifications needed can be made, and the questionnaire tested again.

4.11 Attitude measurement and rating scales

These are used to quantify the strength of a response. The two scales most commonly used in attitude measurement are Osgood's semantic differential scale and the Likert summated rating scale.

4.11.1 Types of attitude scale

Attitudes are measured in scales. The main types of scale are as follows.

Nominal scales

These classify individuals into two or more groups, e.g. male/female, agree/disagree.

Favourable _____ Unfavourable

Figure 4.6 Interval scale.

Ordinal scales

These rank individuals according to certain characteristics, e.g. Yves St. Laurent fragrances according to preference:

- ◆ Opium
- ◆ Paris
- ◆ Rive Gauche, etc.

Interval scales

These scales have regular calibrations, for example see Figure 4.6.

The advantage of this scale is that it can be used to measure the strength of a particular attitude. It also allows the use of statistical measures such as standard deviation, correlation coefficients and significance testing.

Ratio scales

These scales have a fixed origin or zero point, which permits the use of all arithmetical functions, e.g. measurement of length or weight. Measurements of market size, market share and number of consumers are also examples of ratio scales.

As previously mentioned, the most widely used attitude scaling techniques are the Likert and semantic differential scales.

4.11.2 The Likert scale

Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about a subject or an object. The statements used are identified as either positive or negative, and scores are allocated for particular responses. The list of possible responses is usually:

- ◆ strongly agree;
- ◆ agree;
- ◆ don't know/neutral;
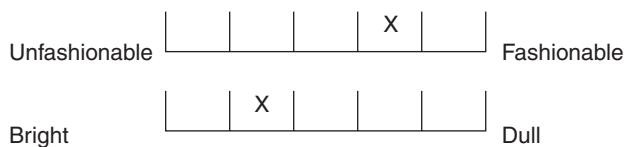- ◆ disagree;
- ◆ strongly disagree.

Figure 4.7 An example of the semantic differential scale.

The Likert scale is not an interval scale, so it is not possible to infer that 'strongly agree' is twice as strong an attitude as 'agree'. The scores achieved by individual respondents are only relative to those achieved by other respondents. Likert scales are popular as they are easy to construct and give reliable information about the degree of respondents' feelings.

4.11.3 The semantic differential scale

This is another widely used technique in marketing research. A series of bipolar (opposite) adjectives of descriptive phrases are presented to the respondent at opposite ends of a five or seven point scale. Respondents are asked to indicate where on the scale best describes their feelings towards the subject or object. An example is shown in Figure 4.7.

Semantic differential scales have been successfully used for such investigations as corporate image, brand image and product image. It is often difficult for consumers to articulate their feelings in these areas, and the semantic differential scale offers them an easy way of expressing themselves. These scales are widely used in marketing research as they obtain information about consumer behaviour that may not be obtained with the same degree of success by direct questioning.

4.12 The role of marketing research in new product development

Marketing research has a vital role to play in ensuring that new products launched onto the market are successful ventures, rather than dismal failures. The main input that marketing research makes into the new product development process is in the areas of:

◆ idea generation;
◆ evaluating and developing new product concepts;
◆ evaluating and developing new products;
◆ pricing new products.

These inputs are similar in the development of fashion.

Since the late 1970s, there has been an increase in the number of stores developing their own product lines. Specialists called product developers create products and test them on customers. There may be numerous reasons why a product is developed or modified to be sold in a particular market; new government legislation, changes in culture, the economy or even the climate may be responsible.

The creation of a marketing strategy for the development of a fashion product involves four stages. Each of the stages (discussed below) involves marketing research with the ultimate aim of testing a product for feasibility prior to its production, and to produce a plan for its production and marketing.

4.12.1 Creation of a customer profile

By identifying potential target markets for the proposed product, it is possible to prepare a customer profile for each one. Profiling characteristics such as age, gender, occupation and geographical location are considered, together with lifestyle characteristics as used in market segmentation.

Once these target markets have been identified, the attitudes and perceptions of potential consumers may be researched. Different groups of consumers have different needs, and by addressing the variables associated with buyer behaviour, it is possible to identify the product attributes that will appeal to each target group.

The information necessary to write a customer profile is available from several sources, both primary and secondary. For example, trade press, reports from fashion shows, sales staff, industry analysis and buyers can all be called upon to supply information.

The identification of specialized target markets is as important to the area of fashion retailing as it is to fashion design. Many fashion retailers (Next and GAP, for example) have deliberately targeted very specific niche markets, in an attempt to differentiate themselves from the competition. Emphasis has been placed on the development and acquisition of appropriate merchandise to satisfy particular market segments.

4.12.2 Preparing a profile of the competitors

Information about competitors' market size, market share, product range, consumers and marketing strategies comes under the scope of marketing research. With this information it is possible to analyse

the relative strengths and weaknesses of the competition, and decide how much of a threat they pose.

Some of this information can be found from secondary data sources such as company reports, trade press, brochures and other promotional materials. Online sources also provide useful information for competitor research. It may also be possible for sales representatives to gather primary data from customers regarding competitors. Buyers, for example, will usually be contacted by a range of alternative suppliers and may be able to provide insight into competitors marketing intentions.

4.12.3 Preparation of a marketing strategy report

Once the target market has been identified and a profile prepared for both the consumer and the competition, a marketing strategy must be prepared. The report will include general information about the market (size, structure, etc.) as well as particular information about the proposed target market. It will also contain information about the product, including the product's differential advantage and pricing policy. An evaluation of potential retail outlets will also be included, and an assessment of the resources will be needed to produce and market the new or modified product.

4.12.4 The merchandise plan

This stage involves product testing, i.e. exposing prototypes of the product to fashion buyers. Any further developments suggested by these 'experts' will be considered, and the prototypes modified, as is the usual practice with product testing.

These are the main steps in developing and evaluating a new fashion product. The steps are slightly different from those involved in the development of more conventional consumer products, but the information necessary for a successful launch (such as an evaluation of the concept, its acceptability, consumer attitudes and preferences, information on the market in general and testing the product) is very similar.

4.13 Forecasting fashion

Estimating future demand for goods or services is extremely difficult in any market, but particularly so in fashion. Anticipating what buyers are likely to do under a given set of conditions is made more difficult by the eclectic nature of fashions, so any predictions about the future should be flexible and open to modification as the seasons change.

There is a problem with the use of formalized techniques for prediction in that many fashion professionals mistakenly believe that their creativity will be inhibited or that their fashion acumen and flair will be trivialized by this process. This is clearly not the case, and these methods should be used to assist the decision maker.

4.13.1 Uses of information

The basis on which forecasts can be made is one of sound information. Past and present consumer purchases are analysed for trend data. The target market for your products must be clearly identified and described by using marketing research techniques. The use of geodemographic systems such as ACORN (A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods) can be used to identify and contact your target market, and collect information about attitudes, preferences and future buying intentions such as 'Are you likely to buy a new coat in the next three months?'

Millers and tanners who often work years ahead of the market can be contacted for primary data on future developments, as can fashion editors and buyers, who are in the forefront of current consumer behaviour. Secondary sources such as trade magazines and newspapers provide information which is readily accessible. Range plans covering such variables as material, product type, colour and price are also an important source of data.

4.13.2 Further techniques

Information gained from the above sources will provide an analytical base for more specialized forecasting techniques. These include the use of ordinal scales to rank product alternatives as well as panels of up to eight people, who are asked to provide a consensus view of forecasts. A consensus is sought to avoid the bias introduced if the opinion of a single person regarding future sales potential was taken. Computer forecasting software has been specially developed for use in the fashion industry, which has facilitated the use of complex statistical techniques.

A form of product testing, called style testing, is used to involve the consumer in the forecasting process. A representative sample of target consumers is shown several provisional styles and ranges for future seasons. The consumers are then asked to state which they believe will be 'winners' and which are likely to be 'losers' in terms of customer appeal.

Test marketing of new styles, colours or silhouettes often takes place using a 'sample, test, re-order' system. Small quantities of garments are made up and placed in selected retail outlets. Customer reactions may be monitored without incurring the costs of full production. Similarly marketing research is used to monitor sales performance at the start of each season to identify any variations away from the forecast that may occur.

Fashion forecasting methods involve much organization and planning, and are not easy to establish in the first instance. All fashion businesses are involved in forecasting to some degree, and an increasing number of companies are being set up solely to provide specialist prediction services.

Fashion buying will always rely on a high degree of intuition and gut feeling about the market. When this is combined with a structured approach to planning and the use of research, more accurate forecasting is possible.

4.14 The Internet as a research tool

Rather than go into specific details of web page design (on which there are numerous available sources), this section will concentrate on the usefulness of the Internet as part of research methodology. Rapid developments in technology and corresponding reductions in costs have meant that the use of the Internet for both business and social use has proliferated in the past few years. Businesses all over the world are considering whether e-commerce can improve profitability. Consumers are increasingly embracing online shopping, with the choice of goods available broadening all the time, particularly with regard to apparel. Designers and retailers alike have websites that can be found easily on the Internet (e.g. Next, Paul Smith, La Redoute).

The increased use of the Internet as part of the marketing process has similarly had a great impact on the marketing research industry. The number of marketing research companies that now provide specialist Internet research services ('e-research') has also grown considerably.

It is easy to be very enthusiastic about the use of the Internet for research, but as with all available research tools, care must be taken to ensure that it is appropriate to the particular study. As with the more traditional research methods, there are advantages and disadvantages. Conducting research via the Internet may increase the speed of research from design to results and reduce costs, as well as appearing to facilitate research on an international level. Problems

related to research via the Internet include using samples that are not representative of the target population and rapid obsolescence of information, such as e-mail addresses. In spite of the problems, the Internet is increasingly being used in marketing research for both primary and secondary data collection, and is proving to be a very useful addition to the researcher's 'tool kit'.

4.14.1 Online secondary data sources

Online commercial databases have been available to researchers for many years (e.g. www.FT.com – *The Financial Times*' website), providing access to news sources, trade publications and market reports. (It is useful to note that as with conventional sources, access to online secondary data is not always free.) The Internet contains a wealth of information but it may be time consuming to find as there is no single index of information available, rather a range of search engines (e.g. AltaVista, Yahoo!, Google), and sources may not necessarily be logically linked. Although online databases and search engines may be searched using keywords, the selection of appropriate keywords may be problematic. It is not always the most obvious keywords that will provide the best information. Searches using short phrases in quotation marks may provide more relevant results. The speed of searching and the breadth, if not always depth, of information available does make the Internet a useful tool for secondary data searches, however, particularly in exploratory research.

The Internet can be a particular useful resource for business-to-business research. It is possible to visit companies' websites which contain much useful information about products or services offered, financial information and an indication of the target market.

It is also possible to gain access to a whole range of market reports and articles online. Not all of these reports are free, which may limit access for some researchers. A useful source for market research information is www.marketresearch.com which offers more than 110 000 market research reports from over 550 publishers. Other online sources include:

www.companieshouse.gov.uk	Provides free information on more than 2 million companies.
www.londonstockexchange.com	Provides a free annual reports service, giving information on the performance of over 1300 listed companies.

For the fashion industry, there are a number of websites providing access to a range of industry information. These include:

www.fashionweb.co.uk	A dedicated web portal for the fashion industry. Also offers a web-site design and hosting service.
www.fashion.net	Provides links for agencies, news, services and employment in the fashion industry.
www.fashioninformation.com	A mainly subscription-only service providing information on trend forecasting for fashion industry professionals.
www.wmd.com	Womens Wear Daily website – giving current information on all aspects of the fashion industry plus access to archived reports available by subscription.

4.14.2 Primary data collection online

The main methods of collecting primary data via the Internet are by e-mail or website-based surveys or by online discussion groups.

With e-mail surveys, questionnaires are sent to respondents at their e-mail address. The questionnaires are then completed and returned online. The advantages of speed of both delivery and return are clear, as are cost savings over mail surveys. Disadvantages of this method are that e-mail is not completely confidential and that respondents selected as having e-mail addresses may not be repre-sentative of the research population. There may also be a time lag for replies as not everyone reads their e-mail regularly! It should also be noted that with the increase in use of the Internet, the amount of e-mail and therefore 'junk' e-mail has increased. The response rate to e-surveys, although often lower, can be compared to mail surveys as similar problems with unsolicited mail exist. Now most e-mail surveys are completed following an e-mail invitation to participate and is a useful means of conducting business-to-business research. The usual problems associated with questionnaire design are still relevant when designing e-mail surveys.

Web-based surveys consist of questionnaires posted on a particular website which are then completed by respondents who 'hit' that given site. Website surveys allow for more complex presentation, using both graphics and sound. This method relies on convenience sampling of

users who access the website. These self-selected respondents may not be at all representative of the target population and as such this method should be used with care. It should also be noted that the costs of setting up a website of this complexity mean that it is more frequently employed by commercial research organizations.

Online discussion groups are frequently used for qualitative research in a similar way to focus groups, for new product development, product testing and evaluation. One key advantage of this method is the fact that results are available immediately and a transcript of the discussion can be taken easily. Research costs are also reduced as travelling expenses, venue hire, etc. are not incurred. The fact that respondents are able to participate from their place of work, however geographically dispersed they may be, has meant that this method is increasingly being used in business-to-business research. An incentive may be paid to the respondents, however, as the costs of connection will be borne by them. Visuals and sound files may also be included within the discussion site, but as respondents cannot touch the items, this method may not be suitable for certain products, e.g. where softness of fabric is important.

4.14.3 Using the Internet for research

The rapid developments in technology have meant that access to information via the Internet is becoming faster and easier for an increasing number of people. There is currently a great deal of enthusiasm about the Internet as a medium for both leisure and business activities, but this should be tempered with caution when considering the Internet as a means for conducting research. Problems associated with access, sampling response rate and quality of information, etc. all need to be considered against economies of time and cost. As with all tools available to the researcher, each must be considered for its appropriateness to the study and selected accordingly.

4.15 International marketing research

International marketing research generally refers to marketing research undertaken in countries other than that in which the research was commissioned. The challenge for the researcher here is to provide information from a culturally diverse, rapidly changing world. Each country in which research is conducted will have its own unique characteristics and mores with which the researcher may not be familiar. At the outset

certain factors need to be taken into account in the research design. These include:

Conceptual equivalence	Do concepts such as 'brand loyalty' have the same meaning and significance in each country selected?
Functional equivalence	Does a product have the same or similar function in the selected countries?
Scalar equivalence	Do scale measurements taken in selected countries produce the same or similar results?
Linguistic equivalence	Does language used when translated provide the same meaning for respondents, whether verbally or in written form?

4.15.1 Cultural influences

Researchers must also understand the culture in which the research will be conducted. Some subjects will be easier to study in some cultures but not in others, depending upon the research population selected. It should not be assumed that a 'one size fits all' approach will be successful. Research design may have to be modified between countries and cultures to ensure comparability of data. For example, in Arabic countries it is generally harder to obtain samples of women respondents. Issues regarding access and culture have to be carefully addressed. In many instances, international marketing research may be designed in one country but administered by local agencies because of their knowledge of local custom and practice.

4.16 Summary

This chapter has covered the nature and scope of marketing research, starting with the survey research process:

- definition of the research required;
- decisions about the survey population;
- sampling methods;
- questionnaire design;
- data collection.

The chapter has also covered types of research design and approach, and the sources of data available to the fashion marketer. The

application of marketing research to the development of new products and fashion prediction has been discussed, as well as a consideration of some of the issues around international marketing research design and the impact of the Internet on research methodology.

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