

CONSUMER CHOICE

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MANAGEMENT

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Preface

In an exploratory paper presented in 1976 to a conference of the Marketing Education Group (the leading representative body of British marketing academics), I suggested that consumer researchers were too ready to conceive of buyer behaviour as a function of 'the black box of the consumer's psyche' and argued that more attention should be given to situational, especially social, influences on consumer choice. At that time, my argument rested upon the observation that the former approach was producing few advances in the prediction of consumer behaviour compared with the effort it demanded. The small amount of research into the situational context of consumer choice which had been carried out seemed far more promising.

This book is also concerned with these themes. However the large amount of research material in both social psychology and marketing which has appeared in the past six years permits a more sophisticated and, I hope, convincing argument. It is intended as an introduction to wider reading for students and teachers of marketing at all levels, rather than as a conventional textbook of consumer behaviour. In particular, because one aim of the book is to encourage the critical re-evaluation of much that is familiar to consumer researchers and marketing educators, I have not used valuable space to provide detailed descriptions of what is readily found elsewhere. I have as a rule summarised the results and conclusions of others that are widely available in the expectation that interested readers will evaluate my interpretations by reference to the original sources.

I have found this a fascinating book to write. Although it is concerned with familiar themes, its recommendations for consumer research and marketing management are novel. Because of this I have welcomed the opportunities I have had to discuss its contents with social psychologists and marketing specialists. The presentation of a paper at a marketing theory seminar chaired by Professor Michael Baker resulted in valuable encouragement and guidance from the chairman and other participants, notably Malcolm Cunningham. Subsequently Professors R. P. Bagozzi, A. S. C. Ehrenberg and G. Goodhardt read and commented upon the paper and offered useful

advice on how to proceed. At the University of Birmingham, I have benefited from the suggestions and advice of Dr David Booth, Reader in Psychology, and John Driver, Lecturer in Marketing. Linda Williamson typed the manuscript. I am grateful to them all for their assistance. Naturally, I take responsibility for the final version and offer my own attitudinal-behavioural inconsistency as a feeble explanation why I do not always heed their advice.

G.R.F.