# **Chapter 12: Consumer Decision-Making** **Information Search**

One of the critical stages in the consumer decision-making process is the information search. This stage occurs after the initial recognition of a need, and it informs the next stages of the decision-making process. This chapter delves into the intricacies of the information search stage, discussing its various types, the factors influencing it, and its implications for consumers and marketers alike.

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Discuss different types of information searches underlying the consumer decision-making process.
2. Recognize different types of decision-making and their role in consumer behavior.
3. Recognize different types of information sources.
4. Discuss factors influencing different information sources.
5. Recognize how different information search patterns influence marketing.

Key Concepts to Remember:

* Types of information searches:  
  Internal, external  
  Pre-purchase, ongoing
* Types of decision making:  
  routine, extensive
* Types of purchases:  
  low-involvement, high-involvement
* Types of criteria  
  Determinant, non-determinant
* Types of alternatives sets:

Awareness set, evoked set, consideration set, inert set

* Types of information sources:  
  personal networks, marketing communications, objective evaluations, direct experiences

low-involvement vs. high-involvement learning,

perceived risk

Chapter Contents

[Types of information searches 3](#_Toc190764011)

[Types of Decision Making and information search 4](#_Toc190764012)

[Evalaution Criteria 4](#_Toc190764013)

[Set of Alternatives 5](#_Toc190764014)

[Types of Information Sources 6](#_Toc190764015)

[Insights from Personal Networks 6](#_Toc190764016)

[Marketing communications 7](#_Toc190764017)

[Objective Evaluations 7](#_Toc190764018)

[Direct experience 8](#_Toc190764019)

[Factors Influencing Information Sources 8](#_Toc190764020)

[Credibility and Trustworthiness 9](#_Toc190764021)

[Accessibility 9](#_Toc190764022)

[Context of the Purchase 9](#_Toc190764023)

[Social Influence 9](#_Toc190764024)

[Low Involvement vs. High Involvement Learning 10](#_Toc190764025)

[Perceived Risk 10](#_Toc190764026)

[Conclusion 11](#_Toc190764027)

[Marketing Implications Based on Information Search Patterns 11](#_Toc190764028)

[Routine/Nominal Decision Making 12](#_Toc190764029)

[Limited Decision Making 12](#_Toc190764030)

[Extended Decision Making 13](#_Toc190764031)

## **Types of Information Searches[[1]](#footnote-1)**

The information search phase is an important stage of the consumer decision-making process, characterized by the active pursuit of information regarding products or services. This stage serves as the bridge between recognizing a need and making a choice, enabling consumers to gather data about available alternatives. It often consists of two primary forms of search: internal and external.

*Types of Information Searches*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Search | Description | Example |
| Internal Search | Retrieval of information from memory based on prior experiences and knowledge. | Recalling past experiences with smartphone brands when considering a new purchase. |
| External Search | Seeking information from outside sources when internal knowledge is limited. | Consulting friends, reading online reviews, and exploring advertisements for a car purchase. |

**Internal search** involves retrieving information from memory. Consumers reflect on prior experiences and knowledge related to the product category in question. For example, when considering which smartphone to purchase, a consumer might recall their previous understanding of brands, features they value, and considerations based on past experiences with various models. A positive experience with a specific brand may lead them to prioritize it during the search process.

Conversely, **external search** entails seeking information from outside sources, which is particularly important when internal knowledge is limited. Consumers might consult friends or family, browse online reviews, or explore advertisements to gather insights. A real-world example is a prospective car buyer seeking recommendations from friends who have recently purchased vehicles. They may also read online reviews and visit car dealership websites to compare features, prices, and available financing options.

The nature and extent of information searches can vary depending on consumer motivation and the perceived importance of the purchase. Broadly, searches can be classified into two categories: pre-purchase and ongoing search.

**Pre-purchase searches** are undertaken when consumers actively seek information before making a decision. This type of search is heavily influenced by factors such as the perceived purchase risk, consumer confidence, and urgency of the need. For instance, when planning a vacation, a consumer may conduct intensive research on destinations, accommodations, and activities. Online travel blogs, review sites like TripAdvisor, and social media platforms all serve as important information sources in this scenario, as the consumer seeks assurances about the quality and suitability of their choices.

On the other hand, **ongoing searches** refer to the continuous acquisition of information regardless of an immediate purchase intention. In this scenario, consumers are driven by intrinsic interests or a desire to remain informed about market developments. For example, a tech enthusiast may regularly follow blogs, podcasts, and news sites that provide updates on the latest advancements in gadgets and software. Their ongoing engagement keeps them prepared for future purchasing decisions, such as upgrading their laptop or smartphone.

*Reflect*

1. When do you rely more on **internal** versus **external** searches? Can you give examples of both?
2. Do advertisements influence your information search, or do you rely more on word-of-mouth recommendations?

## **Evaluation Criteria[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Consumers rely on several criteria to assess their options. These criteria often fall into two categories: determinant and non-determinant criteria.

*Determinant and Non-Determinant Criteria*

**Determinant criteria** encompass the features that consumers consider most important and that significantly impact their decisions. For example, when purchasing a laptop, key determinant criteria might include processor speed, storage capacity, battery life, and brand reputation. Consumers might prioritize these aspects based on their specific usage needs, such as gaming, business, or graphic design.

In contrast, **non-determinant criteria** are additional attributes that consumers consider but have less influence on the final decision. Using the laptop example again, color or design aesthetics may fall into this category. While these features could sway a decision if negative, they wouldn’t typically be deciding factors for most consumers.

## Set of Alternatives[[3]](#footnote-3)

The decision-making process encompasses several types of sets that influence consumer choice, including the awareness set, evoked set, consideration set, and inert set.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Set Type | Description | Example |
| Awareness Set | A collection of brands or products that a consumer is conscious of as they enter the information search phase. Influenced by marketing efforts, personal experiences, peer recommendations, and advertising. | A consumer is aware of brands like Apple, Samsung, and Google when looking to buy a new smartphone. |
| Inert Set | Brands that the consumer perceives in a neutral way. Open to receiving additional information but not proactively seeking it. Considered if preferred alternatives are unavailable. | A consumer is aware of certain brands but not actively seeking information about them. |
| Inept Set | Brands that the consumer is aware of but considers unworthy of further evaluation due to negative associations or experiences. Unlikely to process positive information about these brands. | A consumer recognizes lesser-known laptop brands but does not view them as viable options. |
| Consideration Set | Brands or products that a consumer readily recalls when prompted. Evaluated during the decision-making process. Marketers aim to include their brand in this set through strategic branding and advertising. | A consumer immediately suggests Starbucks, Dunkin', and Peet's when asked about coffee brands. |

The **awareness set** refers to the collection of brands or products a consumer is conscious of as they enter the information search phase. The brands that populate this set can be influenced by multiple factors, including marketing efforts, personal experiences, earlier exposure, peer recommendations, and advertising. For instance, a consumer looking to buy a new smartphone might be aware of popular brands like Apple, Samsung, and Google, having encountered these names through advertising or discussion with friends. Marketers strive to ensure their products are included in consumers' awareness sets through effective branding, advertising, and word-of-mouth promotion.

The **inert set** consists of brands that the consumer is aware of and perceives in a neutral way. The customer might be open to receiving additional information about the brands in the inert set, but they do not proactively seek information about these brands. They are also open to considering purchasing them if they cannot have their preferred alternatives.

Meanwhile, the **inept set** consists of brands that the consumer is aware of but considers unworthy of further evaluation. For example, a consumer might recognize certain lesser-known laptop brands but does not view them as viable options for their needs due to a lack of positive associations or negative experiences. If the brand is in one’s inept set, the customer is unlikely to consider and process positive information about it.

The **consideration set** (evoked set) encompasses the brands or products that a consumer readily recalls when prompted. These are the products that a consumer evaluates during the decision-making process. For instance, when a consumer is asked to think of pasture-raised eggs brands, they may immediately suggest Vital Farms, Pete and Gerry’s, or Farmers Hen House. Marketers aim to enhance the likelihood that their brand is included in this set through strategic branding and advertising initiatives. These options surpass the initial screening and warrant further contemplation. For example, when looking to purchase a laptop, a consumer may refine their consideration set to include a specific number of brands that meet their budget and performance needs.

*Alternative Sets*

*Reflect*

1. Can you think of an example of different sets (awareness, evoked, inert, inept, selected) in a recent purchasing decision you made?

## **Types of Information Sources**

Consumers navigate an intricate landscape of information sources during the search process, each playing a pivotal role in shaping their decision-making experience. The diversity of these sources reflects the variety of ways consumers gather, evaluate, and interpret information, influencing their purchasing behavior. The effectiveness of these sources can vary depending on factors such as credibility, accessibility, relevance, consumer trust, and the purchase context.

*Types of Information Sources*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Source Type | Description | Example |
| Personal Networks | Recommendations and insights from friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances. | Seeking advice from relatives who have traveled to the same vacation destination. |
| Marketing Communications | Brand-focused information disseminated by companies through advertisements, sales personnel, etc. | Encountering smartphone advertisements highlighting cutting-edge features. |
| Objective Evaluations | Unbiased evaluations from expert reviews, consumer reports, and independent product-testing organizations. | Consulting Consumer Reports for washing machine performance ratings. |
| Direct Experience | Direct interactions with products through trials, samples, and demonstrations. | Testing makeup products in a cosmetics store. |

### Insights from Personal Networks[[4]](#footnote-4)

Personal sources include recommendations and insights from friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances. These individuals often possess firsthand experience with products or services and can provide subjective evaluations. Personal sources carry significant weight in consumer’s search process because they generally exude higher levels of trust compared to unknown entities or advertisers.

For example, when planning a family vacation, a consumer may seek advice from relatives who have traveled to the same destination. A recommendation from a trusted family member regarding the best hotel or local attractions can heavily influence the consumer’s choices. The emotional bond and shared values between the consumer and the personal source enhance the credibility of the information shared.

Moreover, personal networks are often tapped into through social media platforms, where consumers engage with friends, family, and even influencers who impact their perceptions of products. For instance, a consumer considering skincare products may turn to a friend who has successfully treated similar skin concerns, valuing their personal testimony over generic advertising.

### Marketing Communications[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Brand-focused sources** encompass a wide range of information disseminated by companies aiming to promote their products or services. These include advertisements (television, print, online), sales personnel, brochures, and promotional materials. The primary objective of commercial sources is to inform and persuade consumers of the benefits and features of their offerings.

While commercial sources are crucial for raising brand awareness and conveying product attributes, their **credibility** can be perceived as lower than that of personal sources. Consumers often recognize that commercial sources are designed to present products in the best possible light, which may lead them to seek confirming information from other sources.

For example, a consumer interested in purchasing a new smartphone might encounter various advertisements highlighting their favored brand’s cutting-edge features. However, they may suspect the exaggerated claims in these commercials and subsequently turn to independent reviews to validate their impressions. Furthermore, promotional offers can influence consumers, drawing them to in-store displays that showcase discounts or bundles, but the perceived reliability of such promotions often hinges on previous experiences with the brand.

### Objective Evaluations[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Public sources** are critical as they deliver unbiased evaluations and insights into products and services, aiding consumers in making informed decisions. These sources include expert reviews, consumer reports, independent product-testing organizations, and platforms that aggregate user-generated reviews.

Websites such as Consumer Reports provide comprehensive assessments based on empirical data and expert analysis, enabling consumers to compare products across various categories. For instance, a consumer shopping for a washing machine may consult Consumer Reports to evaluate performance ratings, energy efficiency, and reliability based on rigorous testing methods. Such public evaluations lend substantial credibility to the source, as they are perceived as objective assessments rather than marketing strategies.

Similarly, review platforms like Yelp or TripAdvisor allow consumers to read numerous reviews and ratings from other users. A consumer seeking a local restaurant may prioritize a restaurant with consistently positive reviews, valuing the collective experiences of fellow diners as more reliable than a single advertisement.

However, it is essential to consider that public sources can also present challenges. The potential for fake reviews or biased critiques may lead to skepticism. For this reason, consumers often seek patterns in feedback, for instance, if multiple reviews highlight a common issue, it may weigh heavily in the consumer's decision-making process.

### Direct Experience

**Experiential sources** involve **direct interactions with products**, allowing consumers to develop personal impressions before committing to a purchase. These sources can include product trials, samples, demonstrations, and experience-based marketing initiatives.

For instance, a consumer contemplating a new makeup product may visit a cosmetics store where they can test various shades on their skin. Such hands-on experiences enable consumers to evaluate texture, color accuracy, and overall satisfaction before making a financial commitment, reducing perceived risk and fostering confidence in their choice.

Another example is when consumers attend a product launch event or participate in free workshops. A major electronics brand may host an event to showcase its latest gadget, allowing potential buyers to interact with the product and receive demonstrations from knowledgeable staff. Such experiential interactions change the consumer's engagement, creating a sense of connection with the brand while delivering authentic information beyond what traditional advertising could convey.

In conclusion, the multitude of information sources available to consumers enriches the decision-making landscape, impacting search processes in diverse ways. Personal, commercial, public, and experiential sources each carry unique advantages and challenges. Understanding the effectiveness of these sources, alongside the factors influencing their use, is important for marketers seeking to connect with consumers effectively. By aligning marketing strategies with consumer behaviors, preferences, and trust dynamics, brands can enhance visibility and desirability, ultimately guiding consumers through an increasingly complex search landscape.

*Reflect*

1. Which sources do you trust the most when making purchasing decisions, and why?
2. How do **social media influencers** affect consumer information searches?

## **Factors Influencing Information Sources**

Various factors influence the types of information sources consumers depend on during their search process. Understanding these factors is vital for marketers striving to align their strategies with consumer preferences and behaviors.

*Factors Influencing Information Sources*

### Credibility and Trustworthiness[[7]](#footnote-7)

Consumers tend to prioritize reputable sources that foster trustworthy relationships. Personal sources, such as friends or family, typically rank high in perceived credibility due to the emotional bonds and direct relationships. In contrast, commercial sources may garner skepticism, prompting consumers to countercheck information with public sources.

For example, an individual may evaluate a home security system based on an advertisement but will likely cross-examine the claims by checking consumer reviews or ratings to confirm credibility.

### Accessibility[[8]](#footnote-8)

Accessibility of information plays a crucial role in shaping consumer searches. With the rise of digital platforms, consumers have unprecedented access to reviews, comparisons, and insights at their fingertips.

For instance, a consumer shopping for running shoes may rely on online resources such as athletic blogs, review sites, and forums to explore options.

### Context of the Purchase[[9]](#footnote-9)

The context of a purchase significantly affects the sources consumers rely on**. High-stakes purchases**, such as buying a vehicle or home, typically lead to more extensive information searches, relying heavily on public sources, expert reviews, and experiential evaluations. Conversely, for **low-stakes purchases** such as snacks or personal care items, consumers may depend more on routine choices driven by brand loyalty and personal sources without extensive searching.

For example, someone purchasing a new laptop is likely to explore multiple information sources, assessing reviews from Consumer Reports and seeking insights from technology-savvy friends. In contrast, a consumer buying a bottle of shampoo might quickly grab their usual brand based on familiarity and past satisfaction without further investigation.

### Social Influence[[10]](#footnote-10)

Social influence, stemming from opinion leaders or social networks, can shape consumers' choices about which information sources they prioritize. Individuals often look to peers or influencers for guidance, especially when they share similar tastes or lifestyles. Social media platforms have amplified this phenomenon, enabling consumers to access curated content by trusted influencers.

A consumer contemplating travel plans may turn to popular travel bloggers they follow for firsthand experiences and tips, prioritizing this input above traditional marketing channels. Marketers can harness this social influence by partnering with relevant influencers and creating authentic content that resonates with target audiences.

### Low Involvement vs. High Involvement Learning[[11]](#footnote-11)

Consumer learning can occur differently depending on additional variables, specifically the level of involvement associated with the purchase.

Low-involvement learning takes place in situations where consumers perceive low risk and low cost. In these cases, learning is often incidental. For instance, a consumer may frequently see advertisements for a specific snack food while waiting for their show to commence. As a result, they might effortlessly brand it into their memory, enough to eventually choose it during their next grocery run. Consumers often rely on observable cues such as packaging design, brand logos, and in-store promotions during these low-risk purchasing scenarios, depending more on brand familiarity than detailed information.

In contrast, high-involvement learning occurs in situations characterized by significant perceived risk and a higher purchase cost. Such decision-making processes induce extensive information search and cognitive engagement. For instance, consumers contemplating a major electronics purchase, like a new television, are likely to compare specifications, read reviews, and discuss options with knowledgeable individuals. These consumers actively seek detailed information from multiple sources, weighing the pros and cons of each alternative thoroughly to mitigate perceived risks.

Moreover, the depth of learning and information gathered during this stage can influence future purchases, as experiences, feedback, and opinions are likely to shape their knowledge and attitudes toward similar products or brand categories.

### Perceived Risk[[12]](#footnote-12)

Perceived risk denotes the consumer’s assessment of the potential negative outcomes that could arise from a product purchase. The concept is vital in consumer behavior as it directly influences the extent of the information search and the decision-making process itself.

Perceived risk can manifest in various forms, including financial, performance, social, and psychological risks. **Financial risk** refers to concerns about potential monetary loss from a poor purchasing decision. For instance, a consumer considering a luxury vehicle may fear that the car’s maintenance costs will exceed their budget, prompting them to seek comprehensive information on warranty options and customer service reviews.

**Performance risk** revolves around uncertainties regarding how well the product will fulfill its intended function. When a consumer considers a home appliance, like a washing machine, they might worry about its durability and ability to clean clothes effectively. This concern may lead to extensive research, comparing models, energy efficiency ratings, and customer satisfaction surveys.

**Social risk** encompasses worries about the implications a purchase may have on how peers or society perceive the consumer. A person deciding on a high-end fashion brand may deliberate over whether purchasing a trend-driven item will enhance or negatively impact their social standing among friends or workplace associates.

**Psychological risk** highlights potential misalignment between the characteristics of the product and the consumer's self-image or personal beliefs. For example, consumers choosing environmentally-friendly products may scrutinize brands for their sustainability practices to avoid feelings of guilt stemming from non-ethical purchases.

*Mitigating Perceived Risks*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Perceived Risk | Description | Example | Marketing Strategies |
| Financial Risk | Concerns about potential monetary loss from a poor purchasing decision. | A consumer fearing the high maintenance costs of a luxury vehicle. | Offer comprehensive warranty options, transparent pricing, and customer service reviews. |
| Performance Risk | Uncertainties regarding how well the product will fulfill its intended purpose. | A consumer is concerned about a washing machine's durability and effectiveness. | Provide detailed product specifications, energy efficiency ratings, and customer satisfaction surveys. |
| Social Risk | Worries about the implications a purchase may have on how peers or society perceive the consumer. | A person deliberating over the social impact of purchasing a high-end fashion brand. | Highlight positive social endorsements, influencer partnerships, and testimonials from satisfied customers. |
| Psychological Risk | Potential misalignment between the characteristics of the product and the consumer's self-image or personal beliefs. | Consumers are scrutinizing brands for sustainability practices when choosing environmentally-friendly products. | Emphasize ethical practices, sustainability certifications, and transparent information about product sourcing. |

Understanding perceived risk allows marketers to craft communication strategies aimed at alleviating consumer concerns and developing trust. Providing comprehensive information, customer testimonials, and transparent policies regarding returns and warranties can reassure consumers during the search process.

The information search stage is an integral component of the consumer decision-making process, laying the groundwork for product evaluation and determining subsequent purchasing choices. Recognizing the variety of information searches, decision-making types, types of criteria, and perceived risks allows marketers to curate targeted strategies that align with consumer needs and preferences.

As consumer behavior continues to evolve in an increasingly complex marketplace, an in-depth understanding of this stage will facilitate more effective product positioning and, ultimately, drive sales revenues. By keeping consumers informed and confident throughout the search process, marketers can foster enduring loyalty and cultivate lasting relationships with their customers. As the journey through information search continues to grow, adapting marketing strategies to meet consumers at this critical stage will remain essential for success in the dynamic landscape of consumer behavior.

*Reflect*

1. How does **perceived risk** (financial, social, or psychological) impact your willingness to research before a purchase?

2. Have you ever been **influenced by a product trial**? Did it change your perception of the brand?

## **Types of Decision Making and Implications for Information Search[[13]](#footnote-13)**

Understanding consumer information search patterns is important for developing effective marketing strategies. The type of decision-making process—routine/nominal, limited, or extended—influences how consumers gather information and what sources they prioritize. By tailoring marketing approaches to these decision-making categories, companies can enhance their relevance in the consumer's journey and effectively drive purchasing behavior.

Consumers exhibit different decision-making behaviors based on the complexity of the purchase and the level of perceived risk associated with it. These behaviors can be categorized into routine, limited, and extensive decision-making processes.

*Decision-Making Types*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decision-Making Process | Involvement Level | Information Search | Example |
| Routine Decision-Making | Low | Minimal to none | Purchasing a household product like laundry detergent |
| Limited Decision-Making | Moderate | Moderate | Choosing between two brands of breakfast cereal |
| Extensive Decision-Making | High | Extensive | Buying a house or a car |

### Routine Decision Making[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Routine decision-making** occurs with **low-involvement purchases**, where consumers make quick decisions based on habit or brand loyalty with little to no active information search. Consumers make low-involvement purchases based on habitual behavior or brand loyalty. This process typically requires minimal information search, as consumers often rely on familiar brands or products without extensive evaluation. A common example is purchasing a household product such as laundry detergent. Consumers familiar with a particular brand may rely on their past experiences to make a purchase without conducting further research. When purchasing everyday items like toothpaste or laundry detergent, consumers frequently choose brands they have used in the past.

Marketers employ different strategies to influence consumers engaging in routine decision-making:

1. **Brand Reinforcement**: To capitalize on routine decision-making, brands should focus on maintaining visibility and reinforcing their identity through consistent advertising and branding efforts. Utilizing familiar packaging, jingles, and slogans can strengthen brand recall and reinforce loyalty.
2. **Promotional Incentives**: Implementing loyalty programs, discounts, or promotions can further entice repeat purchases. For example, offering a points-based rewards system encourages customers to continue choosing the brand by providing tangible benefits for their loyalty.
3. **Point-of-Sale Engagement**: As consumers often make these decisions in-store, it is critical to ensure that products are easily accessible and engagingly displayed. Eye-catching shelf placement and attractive packaging can catch consumer attention and facilitate impulse purchases.

### Limited Decision-Making[[15]](#footnote-15)

**Limited decision-making**, as the name suggests, involves moderate search and evaluation processes. This situation often arises for familiar products that warrant some thought but do not necessitate an exhaustive search. It occurs when consumers invest moderate effort in the information search process, evaluating several familiar brands or alternatives but not as rigorously as in extended decision-making scenarios. For instance, a consumer deciding between two brands of breakfast cereal may check the nutritional information and the price of each before making a decision. Another typical example is selecting a restaurant where consumers actively seek additional information but do not conduct an exhaustive search.

Marketers employ different strategies to influence consumers engaging in routine decision-making:

1. **Comparative Advertising**: Marketers can employ comparative advertising strategies that highlight their products' features or benefits relative to competitors. By showcasing unique selling propositions that matter to consumers—such as quality, price, or convenience—advertisers can influence selection during this evaluation phase.
2. **Informational Content**: Providing consumers with in-depth information, comparisons, and how-to guides can assist in their decision-making process. For instance, electronics brands may create detailed product comparison charts and informative videos to guide consumers toward informed choices.
3. **Customer Reviews and Testimonials**: Displaying user reviews and testimonials prominently on product pages can also enhance credibility and influence potential customers. By highlighting positive experiences, marketers can reassure consumers during their limited information search.

### Extensive Decision-Making[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Extensive decision-making** is characterized by high involvement, significant perceived risk, and extensive information search, weighing options across various criteria. This often applies to substantial investments, such as buying a car, a home, or luxury items. In these scenarios, consumers are typically risk-averse and thoroughly evaluate alternatives. In such instances, consumers actively seek out detailed information, comparing different options and analyzing features, prices, and reviews. A prospective car buyer may visit multiple dealerships, test drive various models, read consumer reports, and consult online forums to ensure they make a well-informed choice that meets their needs.

Marketers employ different strategies to influence consumers engaging in routine decision-making:

1. **Educational Marketing**: Providing comprehensive educational content that allows consumers to understand product features, benefits, and potential risks is paramount. This could include webinars, detailed brochures, FAQs, and expert reviews. Marketers should emphasize building a narrative that addresses consumer concerns and enhances knowledge.
2. **Building Trust and Credibility**: Brands can differentiate themselves by establishing authority and trust within their product categories. Engaging with industry experts and influencers to validate products can enhance perceived credibility. Additionally, third-party endorsements from reputable organizations can influence consumer confidence.
3. **Experiential Experiences**: Facilitating hands-on experiences can significantly impact consumers' choices during the extended decision-making process. Hosting product demonstrations, trials, or immersive events allows consumers to interact with the product directly, thereby forging emotional connections and reducing perceived risk.
4. **Personalization and Follow-Up**: Leveraging data analytics and customer insights can enable businesses to personalize communication effectively. Following up with potential customers through tailored content and reminders can help them remember the brand during their protracted decision journey.

Understanding the dynamics of information search patterns and their relationship to consumer decision-making processes allows marketers to devise tailored strategies. By distinguishing between routine/nominal, limited, and extended decision-making scenarios, brands can more effectively engage consumers at each stage of their journey, ultimately increasing conversion rates and fostering consumer loyalty. Whether reinforcing brand presence, providing educational resources, or building trust, aligning marketing efforts with the decision-making context will yield beneficial results in meeting consumer needs and driving purchasing behavior.

*Decision-Making Type and Marketing Strategies[[17]](#footnote-17)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Decision Making** | **Marketing Strategy for Considered Set** | **Marketing Strategy for Not Considered Set** |
| **Routine/Nominal** | Reinforce brand loyalty through consistent advertising and promotions. | Create awareness campaigns highlighting key benefits and differentiators. |
| **Limited Decision Making** | Utilize comparative advertising to showcase advantages over competitors. | Develop informative content, such as blogs or videos, to educate customers about the brand. |
| **Extended Decision Making** | Provide detailed educational resources, testimonials, and in-depth product information. | Build trust through expert endorsements and partnerships with reputable organizations. |

**Routine Decision Making**: For brands in this category, reinforcing brand loyalty through consistent advertising and promotions helps to maintain consumer preferences. For not-considered brands, the focus should be on creating awareness campaigns that highlight what makes them unique and beneficial to the consumer.

**Limited Decision Making**: In this scenario, brands in the considered set can benefit from comparative advertising that emphasizes their advantages over competitors. For brands in the not considered set, developing informative content—such as blog posts or videos that educate consumers about their offerings—can help shift perceptions and increase consideration.

**Extended Decision Making**: For brands in the considered set during high-involvement purchases, providing comprehensive educational resources, including testimonials and extensive product information, is essential to guiding the consumer’s decision. Meanwhile, brands not in the considered set should work on building credibility and trust through expert endorsements and partnerships, which can help position them as serious contenders worth consideration.

*Reflect*

* 1. Can you describe a time when you engaged in **extensive** decision-making? What factors influenced your process?
  2. How do you decide when a product is worth **more research** before purchasing?

*End-of-Chapter Self-Reflection*

1. Think about your last major purchase. How much information search did you conduct before buying?
2. Have you ever ignored an advertisement but trusted a friend’s recommendation instead? Why?
3. Do you think you rely on objective sources enough? How can you improve your decision-making process?
4. What factors make you stop searching for information and finalize your purchase decision?

**CC BY-NC-SA**

Parts of this textbook have been created or enhanced with the help of generative AI (ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly). AI was also used to assist with proofreading and formatting.

Parts of this textbook have been adapted, revised, and remixed from the following OER resources:

* Introduction to Advertising: Advertising Practices  
  <https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/business-textbooks/10/>
* Launch! Advertising and Promotion in Real Time by Solomon et al. 2009: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/launch-advertising-and-promotion-in-real-time>
* Principles of Marketing by Lumen Learning <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/waymakerintromarketingxmasterfall2016/>
* Introduction to Marketing   
  <https://pressbooks.nscc.ca/nsccprinciplesofmarketing2e/>
* Introduction to Marketing by USG Ecore   
  <https://go.view.usg.edu/d2l/home/2366486>
* Exploring Intercultural Communication  
  <https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Courses/Butte_College/Exploring_Intercultural_Communication_%28Grothe%29/05%3A_Nonverbal_Processes_in_Intercultural_Communication/5.02%3A_Types_of_Nonverbal_Communication>
* Exploring Relationship Dynamics  
  <https://open.maricopa.edu/com110/chapter/4-4-nonverbal-communication-in-context/>

**Other references**/Read more:

Alba, J. W., & Hutchinson, J. W. (1987). Dimensions of consumer expertise. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*(4), 411–454. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209080>

Alpert, M.I. (1971). Identification of determinant attributes: A comparison of methods. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8(2), 184–191. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3149759>

Bakshy, E., Rosenn, I., Marlow, C., & Adamic, L. (2012). The role of social networks in information diffusion. *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on World Wide Web*, 519–528. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2187836.2187907>

Bauer, R. A. (1960). Consumer behavior as risk taking. In R. S. Hancock (Ed.), *Dynamic marketing for a changing world* (pp. 389–398). American Marketing Association.

Bettman, J. R. (1979). *An information processing theory of consumer choice*. Addison-Wesley.

Bettman, J. R., Luce, M. F., & Payne, J. W. (1998). Constructive consumer choice processes. *Journal of Consumer Research, 25*(3), 187–217. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209535>

Bloch, P. H., Sherrell, D. L., & Ridgway, N. M. (1986). Consumer search: An extended framework. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*(1), 119–126. [https://doi.org/10.1086/209052](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1086/209052)

Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 14*(3), 350–362. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209118>

Cacioppo, J. T., Petty, R. E., Kao, C. F., & Rodriguez, R. (1986). Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: An individual difference perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(5), 1032–1043. [https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.5.1032](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.51.5.1032)

Fernando, G.A., Aw, .Cheng Xi-E., S. (2023). What do consumers want? A methodological framework to identify determinant attributes. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 70, 103335. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0969698923000826>

Fogg, B. J., Soohoo, C., Danielson, D. R., Marable, L., Stanford, J., & Tauber, E. R. (2003). How do users evaluate the credibility of Web sites?: A study with over 2,500 participants. *Proceedings of the 2003 Conference on Designing for User Experiences*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1145/997078.997097>

Gemunden, H.G. (1985). Perceived risk and information search. A systematic meta-analysis of the empirical evidence. International Journal of Research in Marketing., 2(2), 79-100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-8116(85)90026-6>

Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A. L., & Nordfält, J. (2017). The future of retailing. *Journal of Retailing, 93*(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2016.12.008>

Haridasan, A., Fernando, A. G., & Saju, B. (2021). A systematic review of consumer information search in online and offline environments. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 56(2), 234–253. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RAUSP-08-2019-0174>

Honka, E., Seiler, S., & Ursu, R. (2024). Consumer search: What can we learn from pre-purchase data? *Journal of Retailing*, 100(1), 114–129. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022435924000034?via%3Dihub>

Howard, J. A., & Sheth, J. N. (1969). *The theory of buyer behavior*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Ji, M. F., & Wood, W. (2007). Purchase and consumption habits: Not necessarily what you intend. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 17*(4), 261–276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S1057-7408(07)70037-2>

Johnson, E. J., & Payne, J. W. (1985). Effort and accuracy in choice. *Management Science, 31*(4), 395–414. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.31.4.395>

Kardes, F. R., Kalyanaram, G., Chandrashekaran, M., & Dornoff, R. J. (1993). Brand retrieval, consideration set composition, consumer choice, and the pioneering advantage. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(1), 62–75. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489200>

Khan, S. (2013). The influence of formal and informal sources on consumer buying behavior. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research, 13*(6), 1–7. <https://globaljournals.org/GJMBR_Volume12/1-The-Influence-of-Formal-and-Informal.pdf>

Koo, D-M (2016). Impact of tie strength and experience on the effectiveness of online service recommendations. Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 15, pp. 38-51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2015.12.002>

Macdonald, E. K., & Sharp, B. M. (2000). Brand awareness effects on consumer decision making for a common, repeat purchase product: A replication. *Journal of Business Research, 48*(1), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(98)00070-8>

Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J., & Medders, R. B. (2010). Social and heuristic approaches to credibility evaluation online. *Journal of Communication, 60*(3), 413–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01488.x>

Mitchell, V. W. (1999). Consumer perceived risk: Conceptualisations and models. *European Journal of Marketing, 33*(1/2), 163–195. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569910249229>

Moorthy, S., Ratchford, B. T., & Talukdar, D. (1997). Consumer information search revisited: Theory and empirical analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research, 23*(4), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209482>

Narayana, C. L., & Markin, R. J. (1975). Consumer behavior and product performance: An alternative conceptualization. *Journal of Marketing*, 39(4), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224297503900401>

Ocepek, M. G. (2016). Shopping for sources: An everyday information behavior exploration of grocery shoppers' information sources. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 53*(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.2016.14505301134>

Park, C., & Kim, Y. (2003). Identifying key factors affecting consumer purchase behavior in an online shopping context. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 31*(1), 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550310457818>

Punj, G., & Staelin, R. (1983). A model of consumer information search behavior for new automobiles. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(4), 366–380. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208931>

Roberts, J. H., & Lattin, J. M. (1991). Development and testing of a model of consideration set composition. *Journal of Marketing Research, 28*(4), 429–440. [https://doi.org/10.2307/3172783](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.2307/3172783)

Rowley, J. (2000). Product search in e-shopping: A review and research propositions. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 17*(1), 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760010309528>

Senecal, S., & Nantel, J. (2004). The influence of online product recommendations on consumers’ online choices. *Journal of Retailing, 80*(2), 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2004.04.001>

Verplanken, B., & Aarts, H. (1999). Habit, attitude, and planned behaviour: Is habit an empty construct or an interesting case of goal-directed automaticity? *European Review of Social Psychology, 10*(1), 101–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792779943000035>

Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research, 12*(3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208520>

1. Read more:  
   Bettman, J. R. (1979). *An information processing theory of consumer choice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

   Haridasan, A., Fernando, A. G., & Saju, B. (2021). A systematic review of consumer information search in online and offline environments. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 56(2), 234–253. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RAUSP-08-2019-0174>

   Fernando, G.A., Aw, .Cheng Xi-E., S. (2023). What do consumers want? A methodological framework to identify determinant attributes. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 70, 103335. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0969698923000826>

   Bloch, P. H., Sherrell, D. L., & Ridgway, N. M. (1986). Consumer search: An extended framework. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*(1), 119–126. [https://doi.org/10.1086/209052](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1086/209052)

   Honka, E., Seiler, S., & Ursu, R. (2024). Consumer search: What can we learn from pre-purchase data? *Journal of Retailing*, 100(1), 114–129. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022435924000034?via%3Dihub> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Read more:  
   Alpert, M.I. (1971). Identification of determinant attributes: A comparison of methods. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8(2), 184–191. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3149759>

   Fernando, G.A., Aw, .Cheng Xi-E., S. (2023). What do consumers want? A methodological framework to identify determinant attributes. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 70, 103335. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0969698923000826> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Read more:  
   Howard, J. A., & Sheth, J. N. (1969). *The theory of buyer behavior*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

   Narayana, C. L., & Markin, R. J. (1975). Consumer behavior and product performance: An alternative conceptualization. *Journal of Marketing*, 39(4), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224297503900401>

   Roberts, J. H., & Lattin, J. M. (1991). Development and testing of a model of consideration set composition. *Journal of Marketing Research, 28*(4), 429–440. [https://doi.org/10.2307/3172783](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.2307/3172783) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Read more:  
   Koo, D-M (2016). Impact of tie strength and experience on the effectiveness of online service recommendations. Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 15, pp. 38-51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2015.12.002> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Read more:  
   Khan, S. (2013). The influence of formal and informal sources on consumer buying behavior. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research, 13*(6), 1–7. <https://globaljournals.org/GJMBR_Volume12/1-The-Influence-of-Formal-and-Informal.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Read more:  
   Moorthy, S., Ratchford, B. T., & Talukdar, D. (1997). Consumer information search revisited: Theory and empirical analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research, 23*(4), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209482>

   Ocepek, M. G. (2016). Shopping for sources: An everyday information behavior exploration of grocery shoppers' information sources. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 53*(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.2016.14505301134> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Read more:  
   Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J., & Medders, R. B. (2010). Social and heuristic approaches to credibility evaluation online. *Journal of Communication, 60*(3), 413–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01488.x>

   Fogg, B. J., Soohoo, C., Danielson, D. R., Marable, L., Stanford, J., & Tauber, E. R. (2003). How do users evaluate the credibility of Web sites?: A study with over 2,500 participants. *Proceedings of the 2003 Conference on Designing for User Experiences*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1145/997078.997097> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Read more:  
   Rowley, J. (2000). Product search in e-shopping: A review and research propositions. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 17*(1), 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760010309528>

   Park, C., & Kim, Y. (2003). Identifying key factors affecting consumer purchase behavior in an online shopping context. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 31*(1), 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550310457818> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Read more:

   Bettman, J. R. (1979). *An information processing theory of consumer choice*. Addison-Wesley [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Read more:  
    Bakshy, E., Rosenn, I., Marlow, C., & Adamic, L. (2012). The role of social networks in information diffusion. *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on World Wide Web*, 519–528. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2187836.2187907>

    Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 14*(3), 350–362. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209118> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Read more:  
    Cacioppo, J. T., Petty, R. E., Kao, C. F., & Rodriguez, R. (1986). Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: An individual difference perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(5), 1032–1043. [https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.5.1032](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.51.5.1032)

    Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research, 12*(3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208520> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Read more:  
    Bauer, R. A. (1960). Consumer behavior as risk taking. In R. S. Hancock (Ed.), *Dynamic marketing for a changing world* (pp. 389–398). American Marketing Association.

    Gemunden, H.G. (1985). Perceived risk and information search. A systematic meta-analysis of the empirical evidence. International Journal of Research in Marketing., 2(2), 79-100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-8116(85)90026-6>

    Mitchell, V. W. (1999). Consumer perceived risk: Conceptualizations and models. *European Journal of Marketing, 33*(1/2), 163–195. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569910249229> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Read more:  
    Bettman, J. R., Luce, M. F., & Payne, J. W. (1998). Constructive consumer choice processes. *Journal of Consumer Research, 25*(3), 187–217. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209535> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Read more:  
    Ji, M. F., & Wood, W. (2007). Purchase and consumption habits: Not necessarily what you intend. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 17*(4), 261–276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S1057-7408(07)70037-2>

    Verplanken, B., & Aarts, H. (1999). Habit, attitude, and planned behaviour: Is habit an empty construct or an interesting case of goal-directed automaticity? *European Review of Social Psychology, 10*(1), 101–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792779943000035> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Read more:  
    Kardes, F. R., Kalyanaram, G., Chandrashekaran, M., & Dornoff, R. J. (1993). Brand retrieval, consideration set composition, consumer choice, and the pioneering advantage. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*(1), 62–75. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489200>

    Alba, J. W., & Hutchinson, J. W. (1987). Dimensions of consumer expertise. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*(4), 411–454. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209080> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Read more:  
    Johnson, E. J., & Payne, J. W. (1985). Effort and accuracy in choice. *Management Science, 31*(4), 395–414. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.31.4.395>

    Punj, G., & Staelin, R. (1983). A model of consumer information search behavior for new automobiles. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(4), 366–380. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208931> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Read more:  
    Macdonald, E. K., & Sharp, B. M. (2000). Brand awareness effects on consumer decision making for a common, repeat purchase product: A replication. *Journal of Business Research, 48*(1), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(98)00070-8>

    Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A. L., & Nordfält, J. (2017). The future of retailing. *Journal of Retailing, 93*(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2016.12.008>

    Senecal, S., & Nantel, J. (2004). The influence of online product recommendations on consumers’ online choices. *Journal of Retailing, 80*(2), 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2004.04.001>

    Mitchell, V. W. (1999). Consumer perceived risk: Conceptualisations and models. *European Journal of Marketing, 33*(1/2), 163–195. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569910249229>

    Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research, 12*(3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208520> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)