

Instructor's Notes for

A Big Bang Approach to Teaching the Consumer Decision Making Process

Summary of activity: This activity is a fun and effective way to illustrate the consumer decision-making process to students. A five minute clip from the Big Bang Theory shows Sheldon (one of the main characters) trying to decide whether to purchase an Xbox One or a PS4 gaming system. While the video is funny, it also illustrates the steps in the consumer decision-making process as well as sociocultural, psychological and situational factors that influence the process.

Recommended link for video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TeKjcq1YQ8>

This assignment/in-class activity is applicable to a variety of marketing classes, including but not limited to: Principles of Marketing, Personal Selling, and Consumer Behavior.

Depending on the class, this activity can be used to generate in-class discussion, as an in-class assignment, or as an out-of-class assignment. For example, in a Consumer Behavior class, I generally use this on the first day of class as a way to remind the students of the concepts they have learned in previous classes. In Personal Selling, I have used this activity as an in-class assignment while discussing consumer behavior concepts. In Principles of Marketing, I use this as a written out-of-class assignment.

I have included the instructions to students and an instructor's answer key below.

Instructions to students:

First, watch the YouTube video at this web address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TeKjcq1YQ8>

After watching the video, answer the following questions about the video:

1. What evidence of need recognition is in the video?
2. What evidence of information search is in the video?
3. What evidence of evaluation of alternatives is in the video?
4. What evidence of purchase is in the video?
5. What evidence of postpurchase behavior is in the video?
6. What cultural influences are depicted in the video?
7. What social influences are depicted in the video?
8. What individual influences are depicted in the video?
9. What psychological influences are depicted in the video?

NOTE: Depending on the text used or how the consumer decision making process is presented in class, the above questions may need to be slightly modified.

Instructor's Answer Key

1. What evidence of need recognition is in the video?

There is not explicit evidence of need recognition in the video. During class discussions, the instructor may want to point out that need recognition is often not explicit.

2. What evidence of information search is in the video?

Students should be able to identify that Sheldon has spent a fair amount of time searching for information. While at the table with Amy, Sheldon rattles off many features of both the Xbox One and the PS4 demonstrating that he has researched both systems. Later in the video, he polls his friends to see which system they would prefer. When he is in the store contemplating the purchase, he remembers (internal information search) a negative experience from his past where he purchased a Zune from Microsoft versus an iPod from Apple.

3. What evidence of evaluation of alternatives is in the video?

Evaluation of alternatives is present throughout the entire video. His consideration set includes Xbox One and PS4. He never seems to consider other gaming systems such as the Wii. This is another opportunity to point out to students that in some situations, customers may only have a few options.

4. What evidence of purchase is in the video?

In the video, Sheldon enters the store prepared to make a purchase. He has decided that he is ready to purchase, which one he wants to purchase, and where he plans to purchase from. He ends up changing his mind (not being able to decide) and does not make a purchase, but he was clearly in the purchase stage of the consumer decision making process.

5. What evidence of postpurchase behavior is in the video?

For question 5, since Sheldon does not make a purchase, postpurchase behavior is not depicted in the video. However, students may argue that Sheldon experienced pre-purchase cognitive dissonance and that is one of the reasons he did not make a purchase.

6. What cultural influences are depicted in the video?

Students may point out that gaming is a part of American culture or that gamers could be considered a subculture. Sheldon appears to be "middle class" and has the means to purchase a gaming system.

7. What social influences are depicted in the video?

Perhaps the largest social influence in the video are his friends. His friends would be considered a primary membership reference group due to the amount of time he spends with them. Students may infer that an opinion leader also influenced his decision (based on his online research), but there is not explicit evidence of an opinion leader in the video.

8. What individual influences are depicted in the video?

Since Sheldon is male, some students may believe the stereotype that men game more than women. In the video, Sheldon is single with no children and that may influence his ability to play (and purchase) video game systems. Sheldon also has a quirky personality, self-concept, and lifestyle. Fans of the show will know that the characters are often depicted playing games.

9. What psychological influences are depicted in the video?

For this question, students will likely have different answers to Sheldon's perceptions and motivations for buying the new video gaming system. Some students will also discuss learning—Sheldon has previously purchased a Microsoft product (the Zune) when everyone else was purchasing an iPod.