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# PRACTICE PAPERS

## The consequences of unmet needs: The evolving role of motivation in consumer research

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### Abstract

*This paper proposes that dominant theories of human motivation rest on the notion of salient unmet needs. Motivational theories, represented by biological instinct theories (thesis) and social cognitive theories (antithesis), are now showing signs of synthesis within the domain of consumer research. Consumer and marketing research techniques can be made more insightful and actionable by introducing measures of the behavioural and emotional meaning of unmet needs through integration of the key elements of motivation research within a quantitative measurement system.*

### Keywords:

Motivation, needs, segmentation, psychology, drive, instinct

Human hopes and human creeds

Have their root in human needs.  
(Ironquill, 1896)

Need and struggle are what excite and inspire us;

our hour of triumph is what brings the void. (William James, 1897)

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of *motivation* in psychological theory (and in marketing theory and consumer research, by extension) has a long and dynamic history, from Ernst Dichter's (1964) interpretive, psychoanalytic studies of consumer motivation in the 1950s and 1960s, through the era of psychophysiology (1970s and 1980s), to the current focus on defining consumer

'needs' (ie as in 'needs-based' segmentation and the focus on unmet needs). Viewing the current focus on needs through the lens of motivation theories may permit a common thread to be found in these seemingly disparate paradigms.

Motivation has been defined as an emotion or desire operating on the will and causing it to act (Merriam-Webster, online). In this respect, 'motivations provide the motor for behavior' (Fiske and Taylor, 1984). Motivation as a psychological construct has played many roles as paradigms have risen and fallen over the decades; however, the central concept that *motivation is the result of unmet needs* has remained unchanged throughout these theories and systems.

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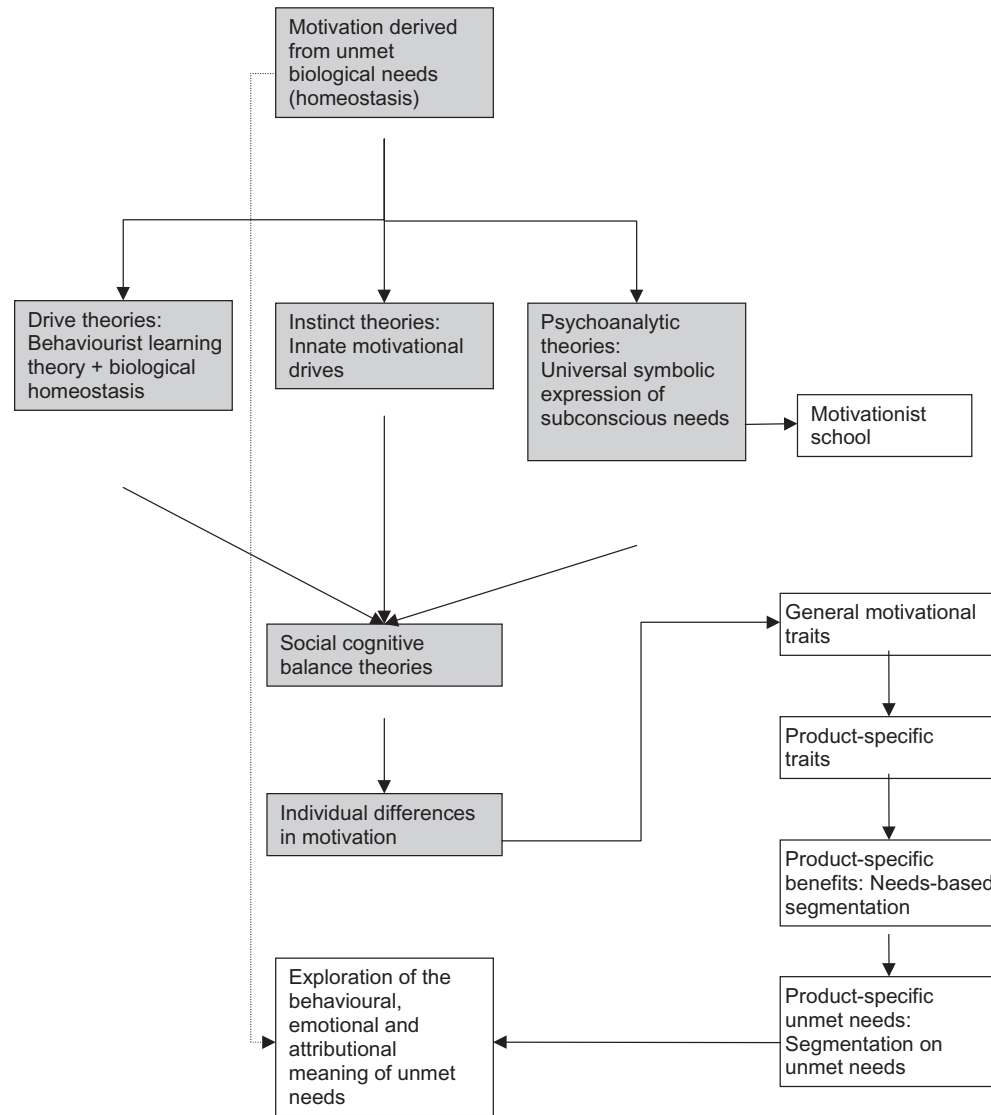


Figure 1: The evolution of models of motivation

Motivation theories have evolved from a sole focus on biology to more complex social-cognitive motivations. The paradigms of motivation theory have a long, interconnected history, which continue to leave their mark on contemporary theories of motivation. The following sections briefly review the primary models grouped into two classes: theories that emphasise automatic/subconscious, biological and/or instinctual drives and theories that emphasise social cognitive processes and traits.

**LOWER-ORDER THEORIES OF MOTIVATION: INSTINCT, DRIVE, AND PSYCHOANALYTIC INSTINCT THEORIES (THESIS)**

**Instinct theories**

Instinct theories, picked up on Darwin’s insight that species harbour behavioural instincts that are adaptive, play a large part in determining the survival of species.

- William McDougall’s hormic psychology (from the Greek *hormé*, meaning ‘urge’) emphasised that all

- purposive behaviour is motivated by the attainment of goals and taps into 'instinctive energy' that is triggered by 'propensities', states such as hunger, pugnacity, sexual desire, gregariousness, etc (McDougall, 1908).
- A central tenet of ethology (see Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1984; Lorenz; Tinbergen) is that complex, innate, unlearned patterns of behaviour ('fixed action patterns') are encoded in all members of the same species, which are triggered by 'releasing stimuli' (also known as 'sign stimuli'; releasers are markings or behaviour rituals that activate patterns of behaviour in same-species observers).
  - Ross Buck's primes theory (1988) provides a philosophically appealing, broad definition of motivation as *potential energy*. In Buck's theory, even plants and inanimate objects may be seen as containing energy that powers them towards equilibrium or homeostasis within their respective energy system (eg a tightly coiled spring, a round boulder on top of a hill, high voltage lines etc). Emotion, in this theory, is the subjective experience of the 'reading out' of the motivational state.
- homeostasis drive organisms to act to restore balance.
- Clark Hull's behavioural theory (1943) described primary drives as motivating forces that energise behaviour due to disruptions in bodily organs, eg the need for air, food, water, sleep or pain avoidance. Primary drives can generate acquired or secondary drives (eg the need to escape) by association. In Hull's model, food deprivation causes a drive state (hunger), which motivates behaviour (finding food); reduction of the drive state reinforces the stimulus (food). Because Hull's model introduced motivational concepts that were not directly observable, the behaviourists of the 1930s to 1950s roundly criticised the model.
  - Robert Woodworth's dynamic psychology (1958) posited the dichotomy of 'mechanism' (the functional process of behaviour) and 'drive' (motivational force), and proposed that mechanisms could take on motivational properties through repeated practice. The concept of *intrinsic motivation*, ie motivation based on obtaining a reward directly from an activity itself ('I enjoy mowing the lawn'), may be traced to Woodworth's theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

### Drive theories

Drive theories were postulated during the heyday of the behaviourists, and represent a dualistic bridge between (observation-based) behaviourism and (inferred) motivational theories. Drive theories define needs as physiological states of deprivation in an organism, whereas drives are seen as psychological states that impel the organism towards a goal.

- The biological concept of homeostasis — that organisms strive to maintain a balanced internal state — in essence, is a drive theory, as disruptions of

### Psychoanalytic theories

The motivationist school of consumer research is a direct descendant of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

- Freud's theories were based on his clinical experience and provide compelling metaphors for the origins and dynamics of psychological motivation. Freud posited that there are different types of 'psychic energy' (Freud's term for motivation or drive), divided into the two camps of libido or eros (self-preservation, sexual reproduction)

and thanatos (death, hate, aggression). Psychic energy is created by the Id, and directed by the Ego towards goal attainment in a manner deemed appropriate by society. In accordance with drive theories, accumulated psychic energy is aversive and its release is pleasurable.

- Harry Stack Sullivan's theory of personality proposes two sources of *tension* (motivation): needs and anxiety. Needs are conceptualised as biologically-based, the fulfilment of which is accompanied by feelings of satisfaction. Anxiety is seen as a disruptor of the normal process of need recognition and satisfaction; reduction in anxiety is accompanied by feelings of security.

#### *Application of psychoanalytic motivation to consumer research*

The motivationist school, led by Ernst Dichter (1964), an émigré from Vienna to the USA who had studied Freud, (1964) applied psychoanalytic theories and methods to the study of consumer behaviour. Other well-known motivationists include Bill Schlackman, an associate of Dichter's who brought his approach to the UK, Louis Cheskin, director of the Color Research Institute of America, and James Vicary, the researcher behind the notorious subliminal Coke advertisement at a New Jersey drive-in theatre. Dichter's (1964) motivational approach employed the one-on-one format of in-depth interviews and projective techniques borrowed from clinical psychology.

Dichter's (1964) method was indirect questioning, as opposed to the direct approach typically used in early quantitative research. Whereas most survey research directly asks respondents their reasons for purchasing/using products (or, more typically, their degree of agreement with prepared statements), the motivationists focused questioning on the conditions surrounding different

purchase and consumption occasions, and looked for evidence of the symbolic expression of hidden motivations.

Reaction to this work created the initial schism in consumer research between 'qualitative' motivational research and the more mainstream quantitative research being conducted by polling firms (notably, George Gallup, Elmo Roper and Alfred Politz). Quantitative research and qualitative motivation research competed against each other, resulting in the compromise approach that has existed in marketing research for the past 30 years, namely, the reliance on qualitative research (usually focus groups) to elicit consumer marketing issues and to identify consumer language for use in follow-on questionnaire development. True synthesis of motivation research within quantitative practice has remained elusive, with a few notable exceptions.

#### **HIGHER-ORDER THEORIES OF MOTIVATION: GESTALT, COGNITIVE AND PERSONALITY THEORIES (ANTITHESIS)**

The primary deficiency of the theoretical systems reviewed above is their inability to account for the many human motivations that clearly exist apart from any bodily need or function, as well as learning situations that exist apart from any drive reduction. The insight that humans are inherently curious, active seekers of stimulation helped to steer psychology towards cognitive models and applied problems, as well as towards models of individual differences in motivation. These theories allowed for motivations to be created from social and cognitive needs, in addition to physiological needs. The cognitive revolution first reached consumer research in the form of individual differences in motivation.

#### **Social-cognitive balance theories**

Within social psychology in the late 1940s through to the 1960s, a variety of

theories were put forth that elevated human motivation from the biological bases of earlier theories to sources within the complexities of social relations. Among the most influential formulations were the following:

- **Balance theory** (Heider, 1946) proposed that social relations are either balanced or imbalanced, and a state of imbalance creates a psychological disturbance that motivates either behavioural or attitudinal change.
- **Field theory** (Lewin, 1951) asserts that unmet psychological and physiological needs result in increasing *tension*, causing previously neutral stimuli to accumulate a 'valence', similar to a magnetic attraction (which can be weak, moderate or strong, depending on the intensity of the need state). For example, the attractiveness of freshly baked bread is largely dependent on when and how much was last eaten. Vectors or forces represent the strength of the attraction towards or repulsion from the stimulus in question.
- **Cognitive dissonance theory** (Festinger, 1957) holds that humans are universally motivated to validate their opinions and abilities relative to those held by others.
- **Reactance theory** (Brehm, 1966) posits that humans have a need to see themselves as free, and are motivated to react against perceived limitations of their freedom.

### Effectance motivation

Robert White (1959) reviewed the body of psychoanalytic instinct and drive theory and concluded that none of the core constructs could explain adequately the vast majority of human behaviour that is devoted to exploring the environment and seeking stimulation. White cited Jean Piaget's study (1952) of the patterns of play of

young children, concluding that humans have a need for 'effective interactions with the environment', once their basic physiological and social needs have been met. White proposed that this motivation is an inherent part of the neurological system's design and functioning.

### Humanistic theory

Abraham Maslow's (1954) famous theory postulates that humans have a natural hierarchy of needs, beginning with physiological needs (hunger, thirst, safety), and evolving to psychological needs for belongingness and love, esteem (achievement, competence and independence), and self-actualisation (the need to live up to one's unique potential). In Maslow's model, humans are primarily motivated to meet the lowest unmet need in the hierarchy; only when this need is satisfied does the next tier have the power to motivate. In this way, Maslow's hierarchy can be used to differentiate and classify individuals (as evidenced by his book's title, *Motivation and Personality*) or groups of individuals, communities or entire societies according to their primary unmet needs at any point in time.

### Specific individual differences in motivation

Whereas Maslow's hierarchy is a universal theory of human motivation, a host of mini theories were proposed to account for individual differences in motivation which suggested the existence of motivational traits.

- Need for achievement (the need to make a significant accomplishment and/or receive praise) (McClelland, 1961)
- Need for cognition (the need to think) (Cohen *et al.*, 1955)
- Need for affiliation (the need to fit in) (Atkinson, 1958)
- Need for power (the need to exert

control over others) (Atkinson, 1958).

### **Application of individual differences to consumer research**

By the early 1970s, consumer researchers had begun experimenting with segmentation of consumer markets according to motivational/personality traits and lifestyles (eg VALS and VALS 2), in addition to demographics. Early attempts sought to segment consumers according to personality traits as defined in psychological theories of personality. Among these attempts were the direct application of Maslow's theory to consumer research (consumer self-actualisation test, Brooker, 1975); David Riesman's inner-directed versus outer-directed theory (I-O social preference scale, Kassarian, 1962); Snyder's self-monitoring scale (1974); Festinger's social comparison theory (consumer susceptibility to reference group influence, Park and Lessig, 1977); see Figure 2 (many examples of personality scales applied to consumers are given in chapter two of Bearden *et al.*, 1993).

### **In search of applicability and actionability: Product-specific attitudes**

These purely psychological segmentations were criticised as non-actionable because they were not specific to any brand, product or category, and because personality traits were unknowable in the general

population (ie marketers could not buy a list of inner-directed, authoritarian consumers). To overcome this limitation, marketers became increasingly interested in traits that were specific to products. Whereas early psychographic segments clustered individuals on general traits ('I worry about getting sick or injured'), product-specific psychographic segmentation sought to tie traits directly to product choices ('A car's safety record is the most important consideration').

The move towards specificity was propelled by both the need of marketers to align segments with product features and copy points, as well as by academic research within social psychology that found that the most predictive attitudes are those that are measured with specificity. That is, intention to engage in a particular behaviour (eg intention to vote for Howard Dean) is a much better predictor of future behaviour (whether or not the individual actually votes for Howard Dean) than measures of general attitudes (general measures of liberalism) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977; Davidson and Jaccard, 1979; and Weigel and Newman, 1976). The rush towards specificity of measures is a hallmark of the Association of National Advertisers' (ANAs) *DAGMAR* research programme (Colley, 1961), which sought to measure the effectiveness of advertising over time by measuring levels of awareness, comprehension, conviction and action within specific target segments and within specific time parameters. The

**Beauty/fashion:** self-concept, self-esteem, locus of control, sex roles

**Luxury items:** materialism, social comparison processes, lifestyle/values

**Food/meal preparation:** related to traditional roles, role overload

**Online communities:** self-actualisation, values, locus of control

**Charitable giving:** self-actualisation, values

**Investments:** values, materialism, locus of control

Figure 2: Relevance of personality traits to product categories



benefits of measurement specificity led to the definition of some of the most common dependent variables in marketing research (eg purchase intention within the next three, six or 12 months), and provided the basis for the most common consumer segmentations (eg heavy versus light versus non-users).

### Needs-based segmentation

The focus on product-specific attitudes gave rise to the innovation of *needs-based segmentation*, or the grouping of consumers according to their predilection for product benefits.

Because of its tremendous actionability (ie segments are defined in terms of the elements of the marketing mix to which they are most responsive), needs-based segmentation has become the segmentation method of choice in contemporary marketing research (Myers, 1996). Segmentation of consumers based on the similarity of the appeal of various product features and benefits makes the unspoken assumption that such market segments are differentially motivated by the presence of these features and benefits.

### The return to motivation: Segmentation by unmet needs

Needs-based segmentation has been enhanced further by the application of the key insight shared by all motivation theories: that satisfied needs are not motivating. Only salient *unmet* needs are motivating; hence, the discovery of segmentation of consumers according to the similarity of their *unmet* needs. Unmet needs are typically operationalised in terms of the relative magnitude of gap scores representing the difference between ratings of *importance* (or *ideal* or *expected* performance) and actual brand/product performance; less typically, unmet needs may be represented by the degree of incongruity between ratings of *oneself* (or, one's *ideal* self) and brand/product performance. There are several

problems with these operational definitions of unmet needs which may be categorised as problems of *overstatement* of needs (or requirements), *understatement* of needs and ambiguity regarding the *meaning of gaps*.

### Overstatement of needs

As any veteran survey researcher will attest, there is a clear tendency among consumers to give the highest importance ratings to functional benefits; such benefits are often referred to as *category mandatories*. In many cases, rated brands (which are typically chosen to represent the nearest competitors) do not substantially differ on these attributes; thus, groups defined by unmet needs for basic functional benefits will not align with any particular brand. Another cause of overstatement is found in the presence of attributes that represent higher-order constructs of which one can never have too many (eg honesty, trustworthiness, safety, value). Similarly, attributes that tend to elicit unrealistic product wishes/dreams/fantasies (eg chocolate-induced ecstasy; perfume that makes the wearer irresistible) receive inflated importance ratings. The effect of need overstatement is to inflate apparent unmet needs on certain sets of attributes, out of proportion with the actual motivational force associated with the unmet need.

### Understatement of needs

Survey researchers commonly find that when abstract attributes (ie brand symbolism, brand personality or emotional attributes) compete with concrete, functional attributes, the former attributes rate much lower in importance, although this depends on the product category. This tendency is likely to be due to a combination of the left-brain, analytical nature of the rating exercise and the social desirability of rational decision making. The effect of need understatement is to mask unmet

needs, especially in areas that may be particularly motivating.

#### *The meaning of gaps*

Due to simultaneous processes of need overstatement and understatement, the motivational meaning of gaps is unclear. This is especially true in cases where importance ratings are spatially or temporally separated from brand/product ratings, as respondents are less likely to remember the response-set context of their previous ratings on corresponding attributes. In order to simultaneously validate reported gaps and find the motivational reasons behind 'true' gaps, it can be effective to present key or particularly large gaps to respondents during the course of the interview (for validation and explanation): 'To briefly review, you've rated brand A seven points lower than your ideal rating for "reassures me that I've made the right choice". Does this accurately reflect your opinion, or would you like to change your rating? What are your needs in this area and how is brand A failing to meet them?'

### **THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW SYNTHESIS**

#### **Synthesis now**

In several ways, synthesis of certain motivational perspectives is already taking place in consumer research and applied marketing research. Although qualitative research (focus groups and in-depth interviews) was originally adapted from a psychoanalytic technique with its early practitioners steeped in psychoanalytic theory, these techniques have migrated among typical practitioners towards interviewing and reportage of consumer-driven category structure and idiom. It must be said, however, that many practitioners have never left the motivationist fold, and the rise of ethnography, which, again, focuses on the complex conditions surrounding purchase and consumption, is testimony to a kind of synthesis.

Perhaps the most telling example of the new synthesis is Zaltman's Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET), which has become the dominant paradigm in qualitative brand research. ZMET asks consumers to provide their thoughts and feelings about purchases and consumption by collecting pictures and creating collages, which are then explored in two-hour clinical in-depth interviews. The goal is to bypass the superficial verbal responses typical of most marketing research to uncover deeply latent motivations and emotions that are expressed as metaphors, which are then available for use in quantitative research.

In addition to the rise of ZMET, there is some evidence that consumer researchers and their clients are turning towards methods that address domains that have been difficult to access within traditional marketing research. These include emotional responses, subconscious processes and reactions, nonverbal behaviour, and real time measurement (Hill, 2003; Pincus, 1992). Suggested methods include physiological measures (eg ECG, electrocardiogram; EMG, electromyography; EEG, electroencephalogram and MRI, magnetic resonance imaging), facial coding of emotional expressions, eye tracking and pupillometry, coding of nonverbal behaviour (eg posture, proximity and vocal analysis), and unobtrusive observational measures (Hill, 2003; Bagozzi, 1991; Kroeber-Riel, 1979).

#### **Synthesis in quantitative research**

This synthesis has also begun to take hold in quantitative survey research. Segmentation based on unmet needs classifies consumers based on their individual differences in motivational state. Additionally, segmentation of *occasions* is well on its way to becoming the dominant paradigm for understanding the consumption of



consumer packaged goods. Occasion-based segmentation explicitly seeks to identify the specific conditions surrounding purchase and consumption, eg goals, social factors, activities, time (day part, week part) etc. By so doing, this form of segmentation fulfils the requirement of understanding the conditions *surrounding* consumption, espoused by the psychoanalytically-based motivationist school of consumer research, while allowing for social-cognitive factors to act as motivators for consumer behaviour within occasions. An opportunity for deeper synthesis exists for this type of analysis, as the motivationists would encourage understanding of the symbolic expression of unspoken motivations driving behaviour within each occasion.

An opportunity exists to integrate the insights of motivation theory further within the confines of quantitative consumer/marketing research, in the systematic exploration of the meaning and potential impact of both met and unmet needs. This goal can be achieved quantitatively through the use of interactive interviewing techniques (ie computer aided telephone interviewing, CATI, online), wherein consumers can be dynamically probed regarding the meaning of need fulfilment.

### The need to capture the motivational and emotional meaning of need fulfilment

Unpacking the motivational characteristics of need fulfilment is key to understanding the psychological dynamics that determine actual purchase, retention, defection, recommendation and other essential consumer behaviour. Conversely, the usual 'drivers' analysis' (note the clear connotation of motivational causality in the term *driver*) conducted against typically multicollinear attribute ratings at best can isolate a factor that is statistically associated with a dependent variable of interest. In order to conduct an *explanatory drivers' analysis* (that is,

to explain causal linkages that motivate consumer behaviour), however, the researcher must begin with a theoretical model of motivation and causality; in effect, explanatory drivers' analysis is a deductive approach, in which a stated causal theory is tested. Most 'drivers' analyses' are conducted as purely atheoretical *predictive* exercises, and the resulting drivers are cobbled together into an *ad hoc* inductive 'explanation'. One should always bear in mind that statistical algorithms by themselves are unable to penetrate the motivational meaning of need fulfilment, they need active guidance.

### Direct measurement of need fulfilment

Rather than attempting to infer unmet needs from gaps between importance and performance ratings, researchers could replace the brand/product performance scale with a need fulfilment scale. A need fulfilment scale would be similar to a satisfaction scale with some notable differences. Satisfaction is a global evaluative judgment regarding how one feels about an experience, whereas need fulfilment is more granular. Satisfaction has been defined as experience contrasted against prior expectations regarding the brand/product/service (a property of the external stimulus), whereas need fulfilment contrasts experience against intra-individual standards and requirements (a property of the perceiver). The proposed need fulfilment scale also supports measurement of over-delivery of benefits.

Does not meet any of my need for \_\_\_\_\_

Meets very little of my need for \_\_\_\_\_

Meets some of my need for \_\_\_\_\_

Meets my need for \_\_\_\_\_ completely

Provides more \_\_\_\_\_ than I need

Figure 3: A 5-point need fulfilment scale

### Towards a typology of motivational-emotional states

The meaning and implications of need fulfilment ought to be considered within a hierarchical framework, such as Maslow's (1954). Unmet needs should be noticed (at some level) and should matter (at some level) to consumers; if they are not, they can hardly be considered to be true needs in the first place. Once attended to, unmet needs ought to elicit a corresponding motivational-emotional state, which may range from physiological homeostatic reactions; to primary emotions of shock, sadness, disgust or anger/rage/aggression; to social emotions of annoyance, aggravation, frustration, contempt, resentment, disappointment or guilt. Conversely, delivery against needs at a level equivalent to, and moderately beyond, expectations may be associated with satiety, surprise, happiness, delight, pride or loyalty-bonding attachment. Dramatic over-delivery against needs might be associated with feelings of unease, discomfort and the brand/product/service is 'not for me'. For additional relevance to marketing, a typology of consumer motivational-emotional states ought to include a dimension of *frequency* of need and *substitutability* of satisfiers, to address issues of purchase/consumption cycles, product rotation, competition etc.

A variety of motivational-emotional states can be expected to intervene; however, far and away the most common response in consumer settings will be *indifference*, depending on the level of involvement associated with the interaction of the consumer and the brand/product/service in question. 'Personal involvement' or 'issue involvement' is typically operationalised as 'high' versus 'low' involvement. This type of involvement has been differentiated from 'response involvement' or 'task involvement', wherein attention is focused in order to complete a task or obtain situational

rewards (ie not because the person cares about the issue at hand). Both kinds of relevance are seen as sources of motivation to process stimuli (messages or events). Consumer expressions such as 'It's to die for', 'craving', 'obsession', 'addiction', 'got to have it' suggest a high level of involvement in brands/products/services, which should be expected to have strong motivational-emotional mediation surrounding need fulfilment.

### Direct measurement of motivational impact on behavioural intentions and attributions of causality

Once the degree of need fulfilment has been measured, there is an opportunity to measure the corresponding motivational impact directly on *behavioural intentions, attributions of causality* and the corresponding *emotional state*. Motivational impact will vary by product category, but should be narrowed down to one or two behavioural intentions that are critical in determining business success. For example, in retail banking, the key behavioural intentions are the intention to commit a greater share of the wallet (on the positive side of the equation) and the intention to defect (on the negative side).

Attributions by consumers regarding the locus of causality, or responsibility, for either delivery on needs or the failure to do so will affect the implications for managerial action dramatically. Attributions may be measured directly, as consumers may ascribe responsibility for need fulfilment to the brand/organisation, the representatives of the brand/organisation at a particular touchpoint, consumers themselves, or to no one at all (ie to external forces beyond anyone's control).

### Direct measurement of corresponding emotional state

Because typologies of primary emotions/instincts lack the subtlety

needed for most purchase and consumption situations, more subtle typologies are required. This is particularly the case when needs are socially constructed, eg 'needing' a new suit, jewellery, or a BMW to project a positive self-image (cf. Goffman, 1959). The pleasure, arousal and dominance (PAD) model of emotional response (Russell and Mehrabian, 1977) has provided a useful typology and measurement system in advertising research. Although the measurement system associated with PAD theory has been available in the form of verbal checklists (semantic differential scales), more recently a system has been developed to measure the three PAD dimensions using visual iconic labels on a nine-point scale (self-assessment manikin (SAM); Morris, 1995). Although developed for advertising research, the SAM system lends itself to measurement of the emotional consequences of need fulfilment in a variety of purchase, consumption, and other experiential domains. Supportive evidence for the use of the PAD model for profiling of consumption experiences is presented by Havlena and Holbrook (1986).

#### **Need fulfilment, motivation and customer loyalty**

A synthesised focus on the motivational and emotional consequences of need fulfilment is perhaps most relevant to, and needed by, customer loyalty research and customer relationship management. Customer loyalty definitions have sought to tap into need fulfilment through satisfaction scales, have included measures of behavioural intentions, and generally have relied on regression-based drivers analysis to link together behavioural intentions (eg advocacy, repeat purchase, attrition and brand switching) with satisfaction in certain areas of service delivery. These correlations, however, are devoid of the *meaning* that is essential to the consumer experience of service delivery and the

corresponding opportunity for actionability. Adopting the direct measurement of need fulfilment and directly linked behavioural intentions and emotional responses would permit profiling of specific service interactions by their motivational effects. For example, there is a well-known finding that former customers with the lowest levels of satisfaction tend to spread word of mouth more assiduously than current customers with the highest levels of satisfaction. The action implication is: 'do not let customers leave mad'. It would be far more useful to know, for instance, that particular service experiences engender feelings of threat (being taken advantage of), attributions of causality to the organisation or brand (as opposed to the individual rogue service representative), and behavioural intentions of revenge. Conversely, it would be useful to profile service interactions on their ability to instil feelings of personal gratitude towards an individual service person or organisation, leading to a sense of indebtedness, resulting in customer evangelism.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has attempted to trace the theoretical antecedents that have shaped current marketing research and consumer research theory and practice related to consumer motivation. The idea that only unmet needs are motivating is a common thread extending throughout higher- and lower-order psychological theories of motivation, an insight that has been incorporated into contemporary segmentation approaches. A tremendous opportunity exists, however, for a more ambitious synthesis between the goals and methods that explicitly seek to tap directly into motivations (ie qualitative, metaphoric, physiological) and more mainstream quantitative survey research methods.

There are potential payoffs in multiple areas from a successful

synthesis. Achieving a deeper understanding of the *meaning* of consumer needs and motivations provides the platform for designing relevant and distinctive brand positioning, for supporting the development of motivating product/service/communication bundles, and for providing sophisticated motivational–emotional levers for effective customer interactions (sales, service, etc). As marketing and brand management increasingly focus on designing the *total brand experience*, managers will need to define clearly all levels of meaning associated with their brands/products/services/communications in order to manage actively the emotional responses of their customers and prospects. This will also necessitate the development of systematic emotional intelligence processes. As a result, effective organisations will have an increasing need, and appetite, for the complexity of motivational, emotional, attributional and behavioural data.

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