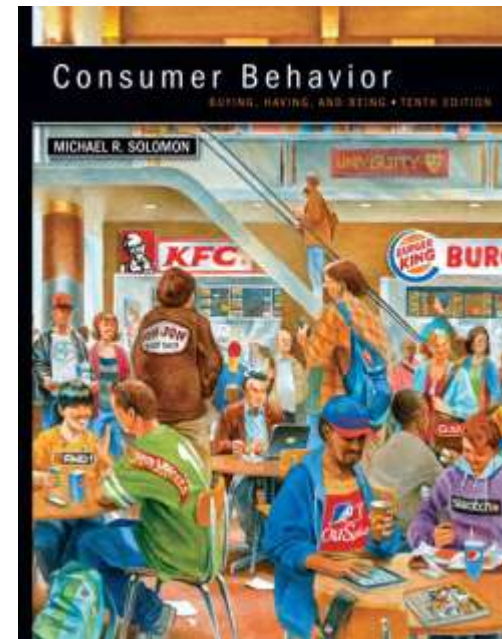


Chapter 5

The Self

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR, 10e Michael R. Solomon



Chapter Objectives

When you finish this chapter, you should understand why:

1. The self-concept strongly influences consumer behavior.
2. Products often play a key role in defining the self-concept.
3. Society's expectations of masculinity and femininity help to determine the products we buy to meet these expectations.

Chapter Objectives (continued)

When you finish this chapter, you should understand why:

4. The way we think about our bodies (and culture tells us we should think) is a key component of self-esteem.
5. Our desire to live up to cultural expectations of appearance can be harmful.
6. Every culture dictates certain types of body decoration or mutilation.

Learning Objective 1

- The self-concept strongly influences consumer behavior.



Self-Concept

- Self-concept: the beliefs a person holds about his/her own attributes, and how he/she evaluates these qualities
- Attribute dimensions: content, positivity, intensity, stability over time, and accuracy



Self-Concept

- The self-concept is a very complex structure. We describe attributes of self-concept along such dimensions as **content** (for example, facial attractiveness versus mental aptitude), **positivity** (in other words, self-esteem), **intensity** and **stability** over time, and **accuracy** (specifically, the degree to which one's self-assessment corresponds to reality).

Self-esteem

- Self-esteem refers to the positivity of a person's self-concept. People with low self-esteem do not expect that they will perform very well, and they will try to avoid embarrassment, failure or rejection.

Actual



Ideal



Real and Ideal Selves

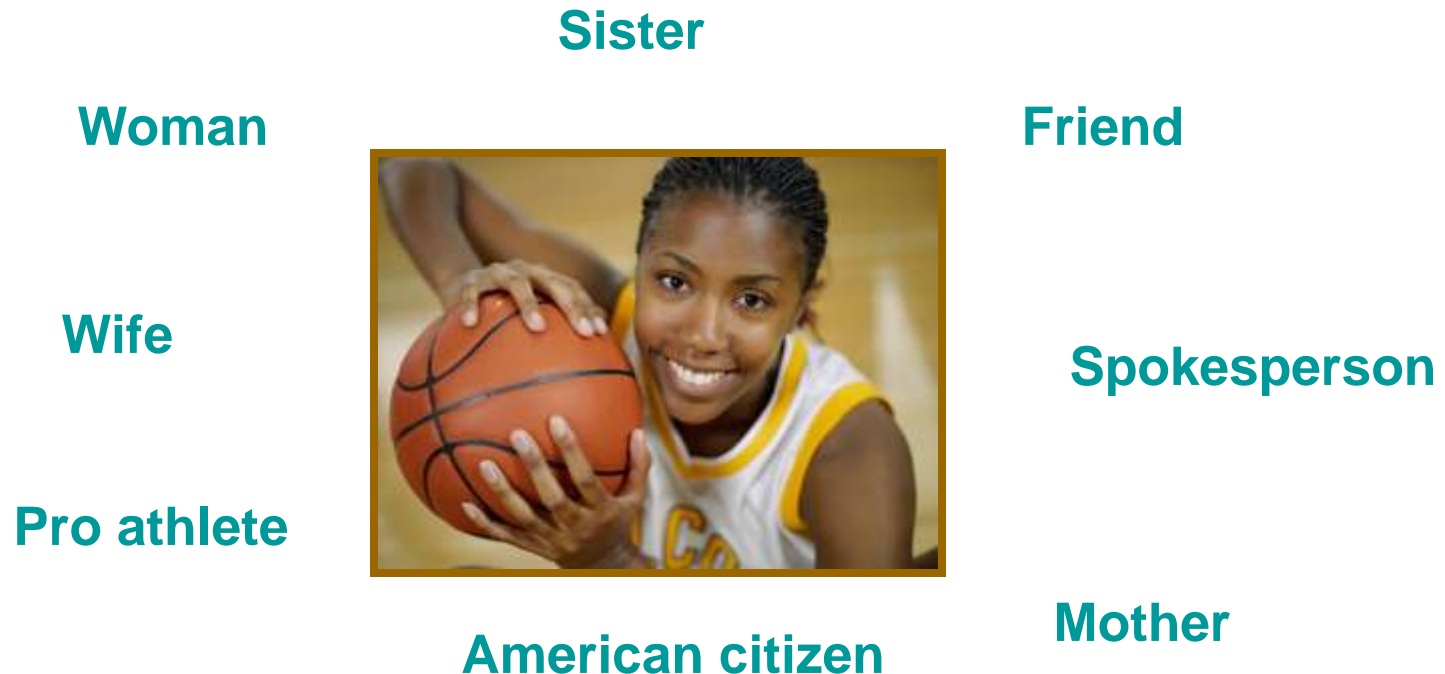
- Ideal self: our conception of how we would like to be
- Actual self: our more realistic appraisal of the qualities we have
- Products can:
 - Help us reach ideal self
 - Be consistent with actual self
- Impression management means that we work to “manage” what others think of us

Virtual Identity



Multiple Selves

- Marketers pitch products needed to facilitate active role identities



Symbolic interactionism

- If each person potentially has many social selves, how does each develop and how do we decide which self to 'activate' at any point in time? The sociological tradition of **symbolic interactionism** stresses that relationships with other people play a large part in forming the self. This perspective maintains that people exist in a symbolic environment, and the meaning attached to any situation or object is determined by the interpretation of these symbols. As members of society, we learn to agree on shared meanings. Thus, we 'know' that a red light means stop, or that McDonald's 'golden arches' mean fast food.

Looking glass Self



The looking-glass self

- This process of imagining the reactions of others towards us is known as ‘taking the role of the other’, or the **looking-glass self**. According to this view, our desire to define ourselves operates as a sort of psychological sonar: we take readings of our own identity by ‘bouncing’ signals off others and trying to project what impression they have of us.
- The looking-glass image we receive will differ depending upon whose views we are considering.

Self-consciousness

- There are times when people seem to be painfully aware of themselves. If you have ever walked into a class in the middle of a lecture and noticed that all eyes were on you, you can understand this feeling of *self-consciousness*. In contrast, consumers sometimes behave with shockingly little self-consciousness.
- For example, people may do things in a stadium, a riot or a student party that they would never do if they were highly conscious of their behaviour.

Self-consciousness

- Several measures have been devised to measure this tendency. Consumers who score high on a scale of *public self-consciousness*, for example, are also more interested in clothing and are heavier users of cosmetics.
- A similar measure is *self-monitoring*. High selfmonitors are more attuned to how they present themselves in their social environments, and their product choices are influenced by their estimates of how these items will be perceived by others.

For Reflection

- Advertising can utilize a consumer's self-esteem in promoting a product by offering the product as a remedy to low self-esteem. Self-esteem advertising: products provide remedy to low self-esteem.
- How effective do you think this form of advertising is?

Learning Objective 2

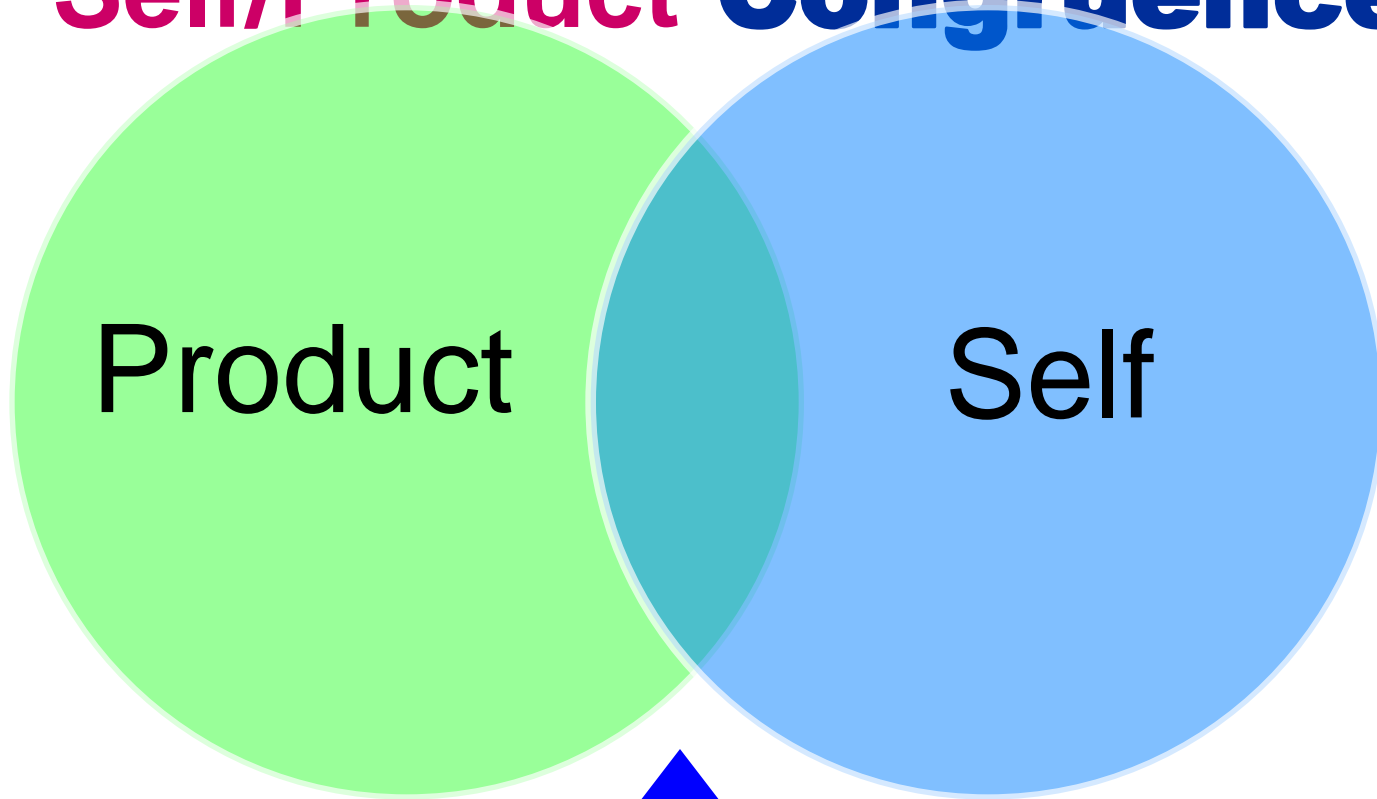
- Products play a key role in defining the self-concept.



You Are What You Consume

- Social identity as individual consumption behaviors
 - Question: Who am I now?
 - Answer: To some extent, your possessions!
- Inference of personality based on consumption patterns
- People who have an incomplete self-definition complete the identity by acquisition

Self/Product Congruence



More overlap - better
you like the product

OBJECTIVE:

Self/Product Congruence

- Consumers demonstrate their values through their purchase behavior
- Self-image congruence models: we choose products when attributes matches the self

Product Usage

=

Self-Image

Self/Product Congruence

- Research tends to support the idea of congruence between product usage and self image.
- One of the earliest studies to examine this process found that car owners' ratings of themselves tended to match their perceptions of their cars – drivers of the sporty Pontiac model saw themselves as more active and flashier than did Volkswagen drivers.

The Extended Self

- Individual: personal possessions (cars, clothing)
- Family: residence and furnishings
- Community: neighborhood or town where you live
- Group: social or other groups



For Reflection

- Construct a “consumption biography” of a friend, family member, or classmate.
- Make a list of his/her most favorite possessions, and see if you or others can describe this person’s personality just from the information provided by this catalogue.

Learning Objective 3

- Society's expectations of masculinity and femininity help to determine the products we buy to meet these expectations.



Gender Differences in Socialization

- Gender roles vary by culture but are changing
- Many societies still expect traditional roles:
 - Agentic roles: men are expected to be assertive and have certain skills
 - Communal roles: women are taught to foster harmonious relationships

Sex-Typed Traits and Products

- Sex-typed traits: characteristics we stereotypically associate with one gender or the other.
- Sex-typed products: take on masculine or feminine attributes
 - Princess telephones



Female Sex Roles



Love isn't blind.
If it were,
there would be
no such thing
as makeup and
pushup bras.



Sex Role Assumptions



For Reflection

- What are two examples of sex-typed products?
- Are there situations for which promoting sex-typed products might limit the market for a product?

Learning Objective 4

- The way we think about our bodies (and the way our culture tells us we should think) is a key component of self-esteem.



Ideals of Beauty

- Exemplar of appearance
- “What is beautiful is good” stereotype
- Favorable physical features:
 - Attractive faces
 - Good health and youth
 - Balance/symmetry
 - Feminine curves/hourglass body shape
 - “Strong” male features

For Reflection

- What is considered the ideal of beauty among your peers?
- How does this ideal affect your choices as a consumer?

Learning Objectives 5 and 6

- Our desire to live up to cultural expectations of appearance can be harmful.
- Every culture dictates certain types of body decoration or mutilation.

Working on the Body

- Fattism
- Cosmetic surgery
- Body decoration and mutilation
- Body piercing



Body decoration and mutilation



OBJECTIVE:

Body decoration and mutilation

**Separate Group
Members**

**Placement within
Social Org.**

**Place within
Gender**

**Enhance Sex-Role
Identification**

**Indicate Desired
Social Conduct**

**Indicate High
Status**

Provide Security

For Reflection

- Do you have a tattoo? If so, what motivated your decision? If not, why not?
- Can you see the influence of culture on your decision to tattoo or not?

Chapter Summary

- Self-concept as an influence on behavior
- The role of products in defining self-concept
- The influence of sex-role identity on purchases
- Self-esteem and our body image
- Cultural expectations of appearance