ASSIGNMENT: Research Methods Chapter (outside reading)

You are responsible for designing advertising for a new digital audiotape machine. Because of the new technology and the fact that many consumers may not believe some of the claims you want to make (even though they are supported by engineering studies), you propose spending additional funds to use expert and highly credible spokespeople in your advertising. You are asked, however, to provide evidence to justify these expenditures, or they will not be made. You will need to demonstrate that consumers' responses to the claims will be more favorable if such spokespeople are used in the advertising rather than having the company itself make the claims. Your task is to design such a study.

1. Consider two study options that are proposed by research suppliers:

   A. Introduce the digital audio tape machine in a test market. For the first month, use company-claim ads without a high credibility/expert spokesperson. For the second month use ads with a high credibility/expert spokesperson. Compare the sales figures to see which ad is more effective. Based on the reading, are there any threats to the validity of this study? For each, be specific about such problems: how do they apply to this study?

   B. Run a consumer survey. Read people a list of the claims you intend to make. Ask people how likely they are to believe the claims: (1) if the company made them, and also (2) if the particularly high credibility/expert spokesperson you are considering made them on behalf of the company. Are there specific problems associated with this study design? Are there different ways to run this survey to overcome such problems? (Do not discuss survey research issues in general—closed-end versus open-end questions, sampling, etc.)

2. Design and develop an experiment that would provide better evidence. Begin by stating your guiding hypothesis in as clear a fashion as possible. To do this, identify the independent and dependent variables and what you expect the effect of the former to be on the latter. How will you manipulate the independent variable? What will be your operational definition of a "more favorable response" to the advertising? Describe the research design (based on the reading) and detail the realistic procedures you will use to test your hypothesis.

3. While planning the experiment you learn that management is considering a change in marketing strategy. The revised plan would place the ads in technical magazines read primarily by highly knowledgeable consumers until the product becomes better established. Later on the product would be marketed to more of a mass audience. How would you modify your experiment to provide evidence as to whether the presence/absence of expert/credible spokespeople would impact differently on these two groups of consumers? Would it be better to rely on some measurement of consumer knowledge in selecting or assigning people to the experiment, or would it be more valid to create different levels of consumer knowledge prior to exposing people to the manipulation of the independent variable?
ASSIGNMENT: Diffusion of Innovations (Chapter 19)

Consider your own or your family's first time purchase of (what for them is) a new and different product -- an innovation. This cannot be a “new” replacement product (e.g., replacing the family car). It can range from a major technological advance (e.g., TiVo, cordless phone) to a substantially new version of a product concept that has been around for a while. What type of innovation was this and why (see page 481)? Identify each of the key characteristics of innovations (see the discussion starting on page 494) that played some role on either the likelihood or rate (speed) of adoption during the acquisition process (note: not how people responded to the innovation after acquisition) for this product. Explain how these characteristics impacted your family’s adoption process leading up to product acquisition.
ASSIGNMENT: Consumer Attitudes (Chapter 6)

This assignment is based on the expectancy-value model discussion on page 136 and the measures used in the TORA model (see page 138-139). For this assignment we will focus on the prediction of \( A_{ACT} \) and skip the SN part of the model. Your group should reach agreement on the information needed for steps 1 and 2 below. Following that, each person should separately provide the information needed in steps 3 through 7 below. Rely entirely on the data for steps 8-10.

1. Identify two cars (makes and models) that you think are fairly similar. Next, identify three cars that are moderately different (in various ways) from both of these. Place the names of these five makes and models of cars as column headings in a table.

2. Assume you have just graduated from college and have accepted an attractive job offer. Congratulations! You are now in the market for a new car. Decide what automobile characteristics / benefits / outcomes (e.g., aspects of performance, appearance, cost) you believe constitute salient beliefs that should affect your attitude, and list these as rows in this same table. (For this exercise, 5-7 salient beliefs would be fine.)

3. Assume you were going to buy one of these cars. Rank order the 5 cars in terms of your overall attitude toward buying each, with 5 being the most preferred and 1 being the least preferred.

4. Provide your set of evaluative ratings \( (e_i) \) for each salient belief (e.g., owning a safe car).

5. For each salient belief, assess the likelihood \( (b_i) \) that this outcome will occur (or benefit will be realized) if you purchased each of the five cars that appear in the table.

6. Calculate your attitude toward buying each of these cars \( (A_{ACT}) \) as indicated at the top of page 139. (Note that you are not considering the subjective norm (SN) portion of the TORA model in this assignment.)

7. Take the role of a consumer in a very different demographic/life cycle category (with respect to age, family situation, income, etc.) and describe this person in a sentence or two. Repeat steps three through six for this consumer.

8. How useful would this type of data be (assuming a sound consumer survey) in predicting peoples' brand preferences (and possibly behavior)? (Hint: did this assignment produce any evidence that would allow you to verify this opinion?)

9. Assume the data you generated came from a large nationwide sample. First, consider the similarities and differences in scores as a function of person-to-person differences exhibited in steps 4, 5, and 7. What insights does this give you that should be important to these car manufacturers? Provide specific examples from your data.

10. Next, consider the similarities and differences in scores only as a function of car-to-car differences. Using the data, give some specific examples as to how this research might guide a marketing/advertising program. (Take the role of a marketing executive for several car companies in thinking about what the data is telling you.)
ASSIGNMENT: Individual Differences and Market Segmentation (Part I) (Chapter 17)

This is part one of a two-part assignment. In an overall sense, what you will be doing is identifying some fairly basic need, value or personality trait and carrying out a research study to see whether people who have different levels of that individual difference variable are led to behave differently as consumers.

Part one (i.e., this assignment) consists of selecting some need, value or personality trait identified in this chapter or in Exhibit 3.6, stating a hypothesis regarding how it may affect a consumer's behavior and developing measures to assess the resulting behavior (i.e., its presence or frequency). Part two will focus on the measurement of the individual difference variable itself and the collection of data to test your hypothesis. For this assignment, ignore part 2.

Choose the need, value or trait carefully by thinking about how likely each is to be expressed in a person's consumer behavior.

1. Choose one of these needs, values or traits that, if strong (for a given consumer) or heightened (say by an advertising appeal), will affect some aspect of consumer behavior (e.g., what is purchased, what brand the consumer intends to purchase).

2. State a hypothesis indicating the relationship between high and low levels of the individual difference variable and its resulting effect on consumer behavior (e.g., "People who have higher levels of need "X" will eat more hot dogs; buy Palm Pilots; switch channels more often.")

3. Since some of these relationships don’t appear to make good sense, explain why you think the need, value or trait you identified could have that specific effect on a consumer's behavior. Discuss whether or not you think there are substantial and enduring differences in the strength of that need, value or trait across people, or whether most people have about the same level, though its strength varies depending on situational factors.

4. For today's assignment assume that you will be able to identify people who have higher (and lower) levels of that need (i.e., you will deal with that issue in part two of the assignment). Your focus, here, is only on the dependent variable and how you will measure it. What will you do to determine if their consumer behavior was consistent with what you predicted it would be? Be specific. Could you simply observe what they did; is that practical? If not, develop a set of survey questions that will allow you to determine whether their behavior was consistent with your prediction. (“How many hot dogs did you eat last week?” “Are you likely to buy a PDA; which brand of PDA are you likely to buy?”) Note that you can combine a manipulation (e.g., some aspect of an advertisement) intended to heighten the specific need with questions to determine whether those whose needs were heightened behaved as predicted.
ASSIGNMENT: Individual Differences and Market Segmentation (Part II)

(1) Develop 5 to 10 items designed to measure the need, value or personality trait you selected in Part I. To do this think about questions you would like to ask people if you wanted to know whether they had a high level of the particular need, value or personality trait. Imagine you are a “detective” interviewing the respondent. Consider what questions you would ask that would provide strong clues as to the strength of that particular need, value or personality trait. You cannot simply ask the person for a self-rating (e.g. “would you say you are an introvert or an extrovert?”) on the need, value or trait both because the person may not have thought enough about it (and so may not know) and because you may not get a truthful response to such a direct question.

Questionnaire items can deal with opinions, preferences, activities, interests or anything you think indicates the strength of that need, value or trait. Items typically require a response along an "agree-disagree," "always-never" or some similar continuum. You can also confront people with a choice if you think the choice they make provides evidence about whether a particular need is strong or weak. ("When I have free time I prefer to spend it doing x,y,z.") Beware of items that people will give the same response to for very different reasons or to achieve different goals (e.g., most people prefer name brands, sometimes for higher perceived quality and sometimes for other reasons). It is also very important to avoid “circularity.” That is, your assessment of the strength of a person’s need, value or trait must be broadly based (i.e., must truly capture that relatively unchanging aspect of the person), rather than some preference that is narrowly linked to the consumer behavior you are trying to predict.

(2) Gather the data you need to test the hypothesis you developed in the previous assignment. To do this you need to combine two separate sets of items in one questionnaire: (1) the individual difference-assessment inventory described above and, (2) the measures you developed in the previous assignment to assess the consumer behavior of interest. To be sure that your small and unrepresentative sample contains people who are high as well as low on the need you selected, deliberately pick half who you think are likely to be high and half who you think are likely to be low. Administer the total questionnaire to six people per study team member.

(3) Graph your data relating scores on the individual difference-assessment inventory (i.e., the independent variable) to scores on the consumer behavior of interest (i.e., the dependent variable). Every person, in essence, becomes a single point on the graph defined jointly by their scores on the two variables. Discuss and evaluate the relationship you found. Was your hypothesis confirmed: did the "highs" display different consumer behavior than the "lows"? Based on what you have learned why, aside from sampling issues, do you think your results turned out the way they did?