

# Learning and memory

## Learning defined

Learning is a change in behaviour that is caused by experience. Learning can occur through simple associations between a stimulus and a response or via a complex series of cognitive activities.

## Behavioural learning theories

Behavioural learning theories assume that learning occurs as a result of responses to external events.

- Classical conditioning.
- Operant (instrumental) conditioning.

## Classical conditioning

Classical conditioning occurs when a stimulus that naturally elicits a response (an unconditioned stimulus) is paired with another stimulus that does not initially elicit this response. Over time the second stimulus (the conditioned stimulus) comes to elicit the response as well.

This response can be extended to other stimuli via stimulus generalization.

Stimulus discrimination occurs when a stimulus similar to a conditioned stimulus is not followed by unconditioned stimulus.

# Operant conditioning

Operant (instrumental) conditioning occurs as the person learns to perform behaviours that produce positive outcomes and avoid those that result in negative outcomes.

Operant conditioning occurs in three ways:

- positive reinforcement – where a reward is delivered following a response.
- negative reinforcement – where a negative outcome is avoided by not performing a response.
- punishment – where a response is followed by unpleasant events.

## Operant conditioning rules

An important factor in operant conditioning is the set of rules by which appropriate reinforcements are given for a behaviour.

- Fixed interval reinforcement.
- Variable interval reinforcement.
- Fixed ratio reinforcement.
- Variable ratio reinforcement.

# Types of learning operant learning outcomes

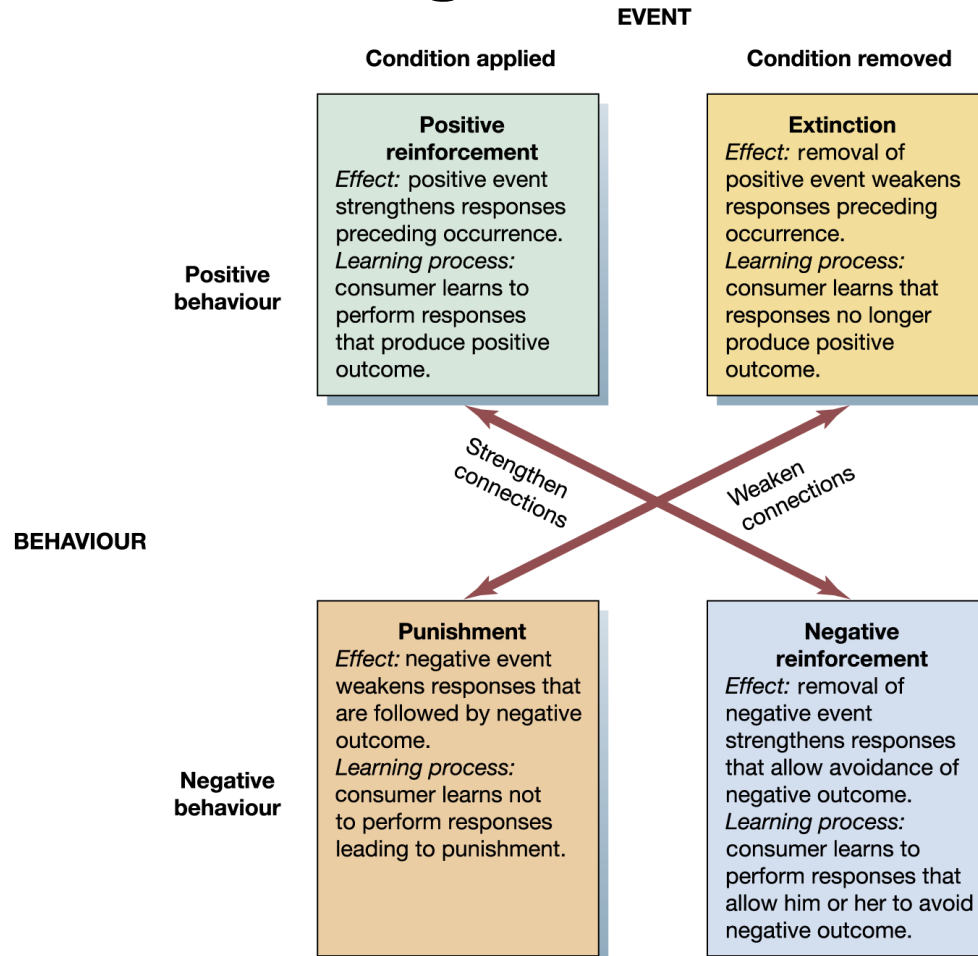


Figure 3.2

## Cognitive learning

Cognitive learning occurs as a result of internal mental processes. For example, observational learning takes place when a consumer performing a behaviour as a result of seeing someone else performing it and being rewarded for it.

This perspective views people as problem solvers who actively use information from the world around them to master their environment.



## Observational learning

Observational learning occurs when people watch the actions of others and the reinforcements they receive for their behaviours.

This type of learning can be a complex process as people store these observations in their memory and use it at a later date to guide their own behaviour.

# Components of observational learning

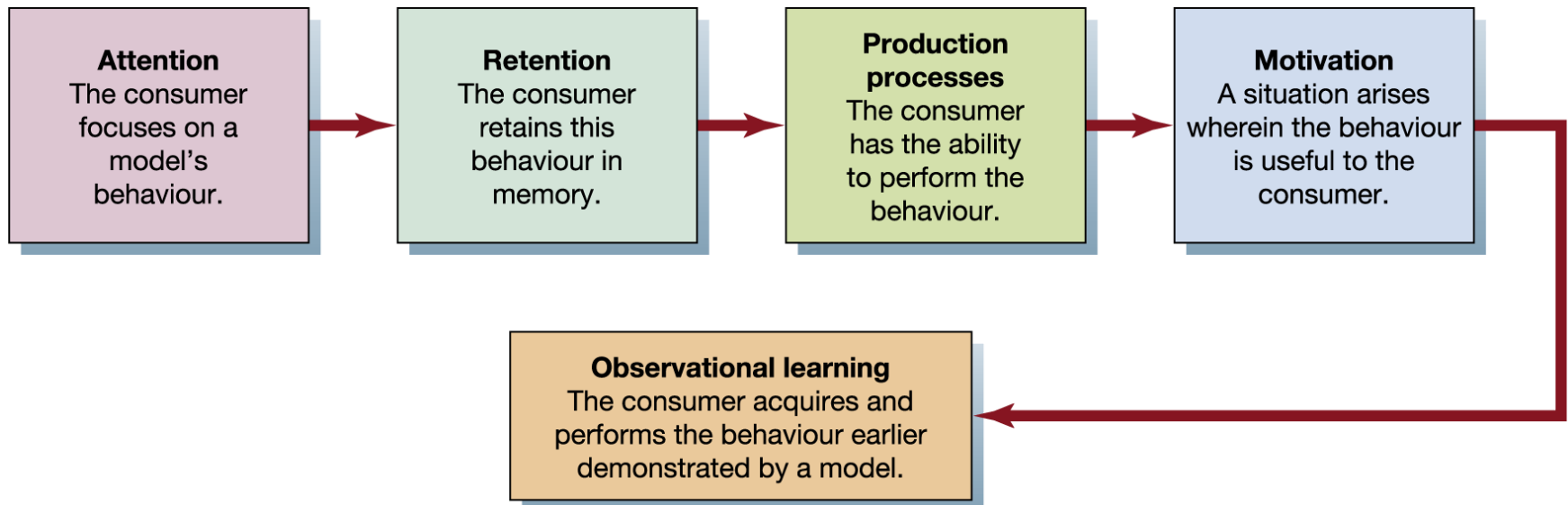


Figure 3.3

# Marketing applications for learning principles

- Many marketing strategies focus on the associations between marketing stimuli and consumer responses.
- Behavioural learning principles apply to many consumer phenomena, for example in the creation of a distinctive brand image to the perceived linkages between a product and the underlying needs.
- The transfer of meaning from an unconditioned stimulus can explain why certain made-up brand names can exert such powerful effects on consumers.
- Marketers adopt strategies such as repeating adverts, pairing products with positive stimulus, etc.

# Applications of stimulus generalization

Marketing strategies based on stimulus generalization include:

- family branding – where a variety of products capitalize on the reputation of a company name.
- product line extensions – where related products are added to an established brand.
- licensing – where well-known names are ‘rented’ by others.
- look alike packaging.

## Applications of stimulus discrimination

Marketing strategies based on stimulus discrimination include:

- communicating a product's distinctiveness from the competition (an important part of positioning). It enables consumers to differentiate the brand from others in the market place.
- promoting the unique attributes of a brand.

## Taking advantage of instrumental and cognitive conditioning principles

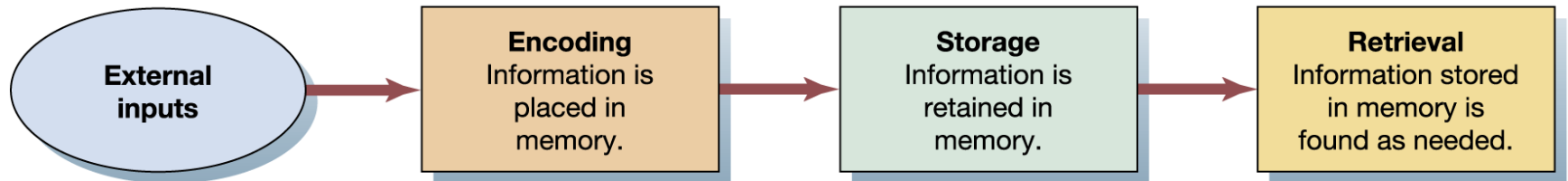
Principles of instrumental conditioning are at work when a consumer is rewarded or punished for a product decision. Rewards can include thanking the consumer for the purchase, rebates, discounts, loyalty points, etc.

Consumers ability to learn by observing how the behaviour of others is reinforced (cognitive learning) makes the marketers role easier. Marketers can show what happens to desirable models who use their products.

## The role of learning in memory

Memory involves the process of acquiring information and storing it over time so that it will be available when needed.

# The memory process



**Figure 3.4**



# Relationships among memory systems

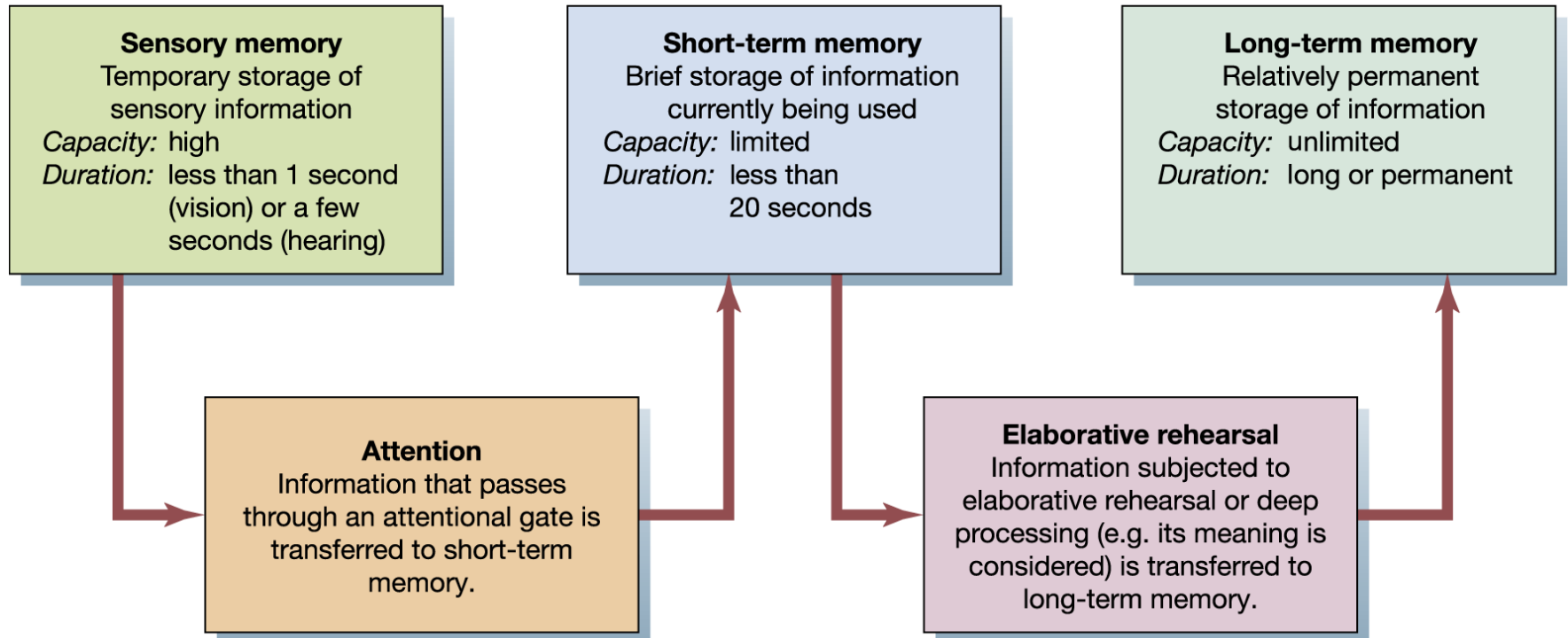


Figure 3.5

## Factors affecting memory retrieval

Retrieval is the process where information is accessed from long-term memory.

There are a number of factors that can affect memory retrieval.

- Physiological.
- Situational.
- Viewing environment.
- Mood congruence.
- Familiarity.
- Salience.

## Products as memory markers

- Products and advertisements can act as powerful retrieval cues.
- They are used by consumers to retrieve memories about past experiences and are often valued for their ability to do this.
- Marketing strategies are often used to evoke nostalgia.

## Measuring memory in marketing

Memory for product information can be measured through recognition and recall techniques.

Consumers are more likely to recognise an advertisement if it is presented to them than to recall one without being given any cues.