

# Attitudes

## Defining attitudes

- A predisposition to evaluate an object or product positively or negatively.
- Is lasting because it tends to endure over time.
- Is general because it applies to more than a momentary event.
- Has three components – beliefs, affect, and behavioural intentions.

## Functional theory of attitudes

- *Utilitarian function* – related to the basic principles of reward and punishment.
- *Value expressive function* – attitudes that express the consumers' central values or self concept.
- *Ego defensive function* – formed to protect consumers from external threats or internal feelings.
- *Knowledge function* – attitudes formed as the result of a need for order, structure, or meaning.

## The ABC model

- **A**ffect – how a consumer feels about an attitude object.
- **B**ehaviour – the consumer's intention to do something with regard to an attitude object.
- **C**ognition – the beliefs a consumer has about an attitude object.

The model emphasises the interrelationships between knowing, feeling, and doing.

## Three hierarchies of effects

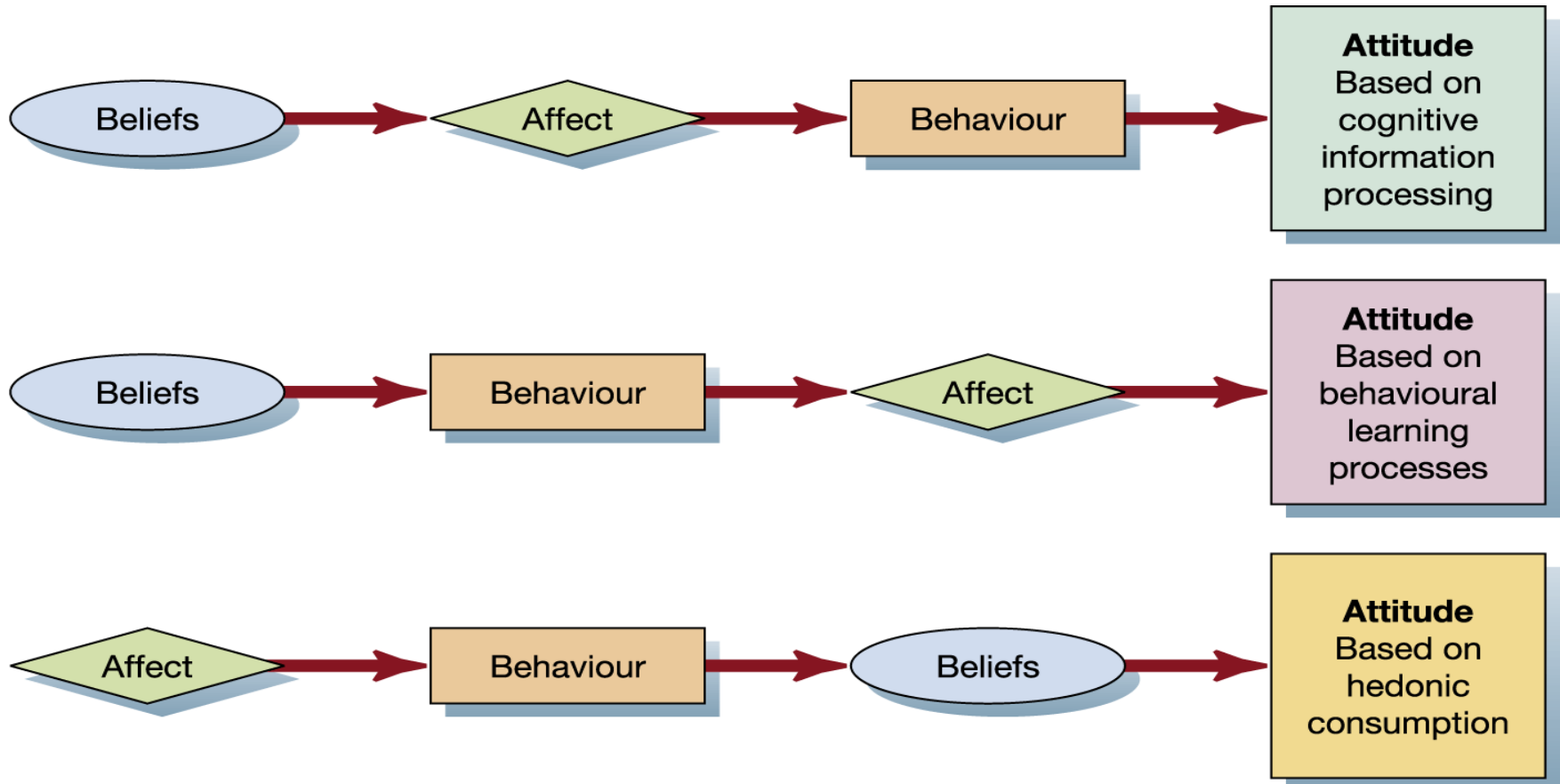


Figure 5.1

## Forming attitudes

Attitudes can form in different ways, depending on the particular hierarchy of effects in operation.

They can occur via:

- classical conditioning.
- instrumental conditioning.
- or via a complex cognitive process.

## Levels of commitment to an attitude

- Lowest level: compliance. This attitude is formed as it helps in gaining rewards or avoiding punishments.
- Identification – formation of attitudes in order for the consumer to be similar to another person.
- Highest level: internalisation – deep seated attitudes, which become part of a consumer's value system.

## Cognitive consistency and dissonance

*Cognitive consistency* – where consumers value harmony among their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and are motivated to maintain uniformity among these.

*Cognitive dissonance* – where consumers are confronted with situations where there is some conflict between their attitudes and behaviours. Dissonance reduction occurs by eliminating, adding, or changing elements.



## Other theories (1 of 2)

*Self perception theory* – assumes that consumers use observations of their own behaviour to determine what their attitudes are, in the same way as we know the attitudes of others by watching what they do.

*Social judgement theory* – assumes that people assimilate new information about attitude objects in the light of what they already know or feel. The initial attitude acts as a frame of reference, and new information is categorised in terms of this standard.

## Other theories (2 of 2)

*Balance theory* – considers relations among elements a consumer might perceive as belonging together. This perspective involves relations among three elements (the triad):

- a person and his/her perceptions.
- an attitude object.
- some other person or object.

The theory specifies that consumers desire relations among elements in the triad to be harmonious or balanced.

## Multi-attribute models

These are needed as a simple response does not always provide all the information we need to know about why a consumer has certain feelings towards a product or about what marketers can do to change consumers' attitudes.

## Elements of multi-attribute models

- *Attributes* – characteristics that consumers consider when evaluating the attitude object.
- *Beliefs* – cognitions about the specific attitude object.
- *Importance weights* – these reflect the relative priority of an attribute to the consumer.

## Reasoned action

- Intentions versus behaviour – the theory of reasoned action aims to measure behavioural intentions, recognising that certain uncontrollable factors inhibit prediction of actual behaviour.
- Social pressure – the power of other people in influencing behaviour.
- Attitude towards buying – focusing on the perceived consequences of a purchase.

## Some obstacles to predicting behaviour

- Outcomes beyond consumers' control.
- Behaviour is not always intentional.
- Measures of attitude often do not really correspond to the behaviour they are supposed to predict.

## Tracking attitudes

- Attitude surveys provide a snapshot at a given time.
- Attitude tracking provides inferences about progress over time.
- Attitude tracking involves administering an attitude survey at regular intervals.
- Attitude tracking is valuable for strategic decision making.
- Dimensions used in attitude tracking include changes in different age groups, scenarios about the future, and identifying change agents.