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Circumstances, contexts, or situations are often cited but rarely examined as explanations for unpredicted behaviors. This article reports an exploration of the amounts and patterns of variance in selected purchase decisions as a function of consumption and purchase contexts. Results for the two product categories studied reveal sizable situational effects.

## An Exploratory Assessment of Situational Effects in Buyer Behavior

### INTRODUCTION

The proviso that "it depends upon the situation" is a general acknowledgement of the expected consonance of behavior and the settings in which it takes place. The consumer making this qualification may expect both purchase and consumption situations to exert an influence on his decision making. While he may anticipate or select certain situational characteristics prior to purchase, many situations arise at the time of purchase which could not be anticipated or predicted in advance.

Marketers have long recognized the potential influence of buying situations, but in researching the buyer such factors have either been treated as an unfortunate source of noise or they have been investigated as isolated cases which preclude assessment of the full impact of all but a few extreme situations. Within the past ten years a call for research which explicitly considers consumption and purchase situations has been sounded in marketing studies of personality [9], attitudes [18], brand preference [22], perception [13], cognition [15], and market segmentation [11]. The argument underlying these mandates is a compelling one: investigations of buyer behavior which ignore situational effects are likely to result in good predictions only when the characteristics of buyers or choice alternatives are intense enough to be influential across all relevant situations. Despite the apparent strength of this argument, there are several substantial obstacles to the development of situation-specific predictions of consumer behavior:

1. "Situation" and "relevant situation" are concepts of enormous breadth and vagueness.
2. Systematic investigations to determine the salient components of purchase and consumption situations have not been undertaken.
3. The strategic implications of a knowledge of situations have not been entirely evident.
4. Methods for assessing the importance and nature of situational effects have not been realized.

This article is primarily concerned with the problem of methodology, but necessarily considers the first three problems as well. A conceptual definition of situation is first developed to refine the scope of inquiry. Within the framework of this definition, behavioral differential inventories are suggested as a viable approach to the study of situational effects in buyer behavior. Buyer choice among alternatives is examined across varied descriptions of consumption and purchase contexts in two product categories for which inventories were developed. Then structural and pattern analyses of situational effects are utilized to demonstrate applications of the approach.

### *A General Definition of Situation*

When the consumer prefaces a prediction of his behavior with the statement that "it depends upon the situation," he may mean anything from whether one brand on the grocer's shelves has a three cent special to whether the nation's economy will improve. Consumer researchers' use of the term "situation" may be more precise, but it is seldom more consistent [10, 14, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24]. This study adopts a general view of situation as something outside the basic tendencies and characteristics of the individual, but beyond the characteristics of the stimulus object to

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be acted upon. Characteristics of the individual include any traits or response patterns that a person may be presumed to possess for a reasonable period of time before and after a particular instance of observation. This would include any of the factors which Thorndike [26] has called lasting and general characteristics of the individual, such as personality, general skills, and intellect. As a source of decision influence, these characteristics are attributable to the individual and are therefore not considered to be a part of situation. Characteristics of the stimulus object refer, in buyer behavior, to attributes of a particular product or brand to which the consumer may respond. These characteristics are relatively constant and need not be construed as a part of situation either.

With these exclusions, situation may then be defined as all those factors particular to a time and place of observation which do not follow from a knowledge of personal (intra-individual) and stimulus (choice alternative) attributes, and which have a demonstrable and systematic effect on current behavior. It should be noted that this definition describes situation in terms of observable aggregate effects rather than in terms of similarities in individual *perceptions* of situations. This is an important distinction which allows the external specification of situations in research. It is also important to note that this definition does not include a host of broad environmental factors which are not specific to a time or place of observation. These environmental influences include variables such as fashions, product innovation, general interest rates, degree of product acceptance or adoption, level of word-of-mouth activity, and cultural or group values and norms. What remains is a more manageable number of choice-specific factors which may be objectively defined and are partially controllable.

## METHOD

### *The Behavioral Differential Inventory*

In order to deal with situations found in buyer behavior, the technique chosen in this application is a modification of the behavioral differential approach developed by Triandis [27]. The behavioral differential is a questionnaire on which respondents indicate the likelihood that they would make each of a number of responses to a stimulus configuration. While Triandis used persons as the stimulus configurations, the approach has been adapted by others [1, 8, 22] to utilize descriptions of situations as the stimuli. The following example, abridged from one inventory employed in this study, shows the general format of the instrument:

CIRCUMSTANCES: You are at the store to pick up some things for a picnic you are planning with friends and are trying to decide what kind of snack to buy.

Place an "X" in the appropriate position on each of the following scales to indicate how likely you would

be to choose each snack in these circumstances.

#### 1. POTATO CHIPS

Extremely / / / / / Not at all  
likely 1 2 3 4 5 likely

#### 2. POPCORN

Extremely / / / / / Not at all  
likely 1 2 3 4 5 likely

#### 3. COOKIES

Extremely / / / / / Not at all  
likely 1 2 3 4 5 likely

#### 10. CRACKERS

Extremely / / / / / Not at all  
likely 1 2 3 4 5 likely

The same choices and scales are presented under varied descriptions of situation to all subjects. The result is a treatments (situations) by treatments (products) by subjects experimental design which allows estimations of each effect and their two-way interactions [2, 31].

Wicker [28, 29, 30] has conducted research suggesting that responses to such an instrument involving hypothetical situations are "consistently better predictors of actual behaviors than are traditional measures of attitude" [30, p. 269]. In efforts to measure the importance of situational variance in behavior, studies using behavioral differential inventories have been carried out with respect to anxiety responses [4, 6, 8], hostility responses [7], leisure activity preferences [1], and drink consumption preferences [22]. Although results differ by application, these studies have consistently found small contributions to variance from the main effects of both subjects and situations, with the majority of variance accounted for by the choice alternative and interaction terms. This suggests that research employing only individual differences or only situations as independent variables may expect only marginal predictive success, and that a fuller simultaneous approach to studying behavior may be most fruitful.

### *Instrument Construction*

Inventories of product alternatives and situations were sought for consumer product categories in which situational effects were neither blatant nor impossible to imagine. The two categories selected are snacks and meats. Instrument construction began with data collected from 50 housewives and 50 students who were asked to list all situations that came to mind when they thought of buying, consuming, and serving a product from each of several food product categories. These situations were categorized and summary descriptions, along with lists of representative food products, were tested with additional groups for familiarity and usage. The most common situations and

products were then chosen for inclusion in inventories containing approximately 100 stimulus-response pairs.

### Procedure

Subjects were 100 adults selected from 5 business, social, and church groups in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Inasmuch as variance attributable to individual differences was to be compared with other sources of variance, subject homogeneity was not sought beyond age limits of 18 to 60 years of age. Materials filled out by all subjects included the snack product inventory consisting of 10 situations and 10 products, the meat product inventory consisting of 9 situations and 11 products, and items designed to measure product usage, situation familiarity, and selected demographic and personality characteristics. Subjects met in groups of 20 for initial briefing sessions and were allowed 2 days to complete and return questionnaires.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Sources of Behavioral Variance

The general model employed for assessing the relative importance of consumer choice influences is a three-way mixed effects analysis of variance model, where persons are considered a random factor with situations and products taken to be fixed effects. Unlike typical applications of analysis of variance in which the end result is *F*-ratios or contrasts to assess the significance of effects, the intent in this application was to construct estimates of the relative contribution of sources in the model to variance in the dependent measure. The technique for estimating these relative contributions is derived from expected mean square formulas specified by the model employed [3, 12]. The expected mean squares and solutions for estimates of components are shown in Table 1 for a three-way mixed effects model with one observation per cell.

**Table 1**  
VARIANCE COMPONENTS IN MIXED EFFECTS MODEL  
THREE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Expected mean square	Estimate of variance component
$E(MS_p) = \sigma_e^2 + km\sigma_p^2$	$\sigma_p^2 = (MS_p - MS_R)/km$
$E(MS_S) = \sigma_e^2 + nm\theta_S^2 + m\sigma_{PS}^2$	$\theta_S^2 = (MS_S - MS_{PS})/nm$
$E(MS_R) = \sigma_e^2 + nk\theta_R^2 + k\sigma_{PR}^2$	$\theta_R^2 = (MS_R - MS_{PR})/nk$
$E(MS_{SR}) = \sigma_e^2 + \sigma_{PSR}^2 + n\sigma_{SR}^2$	$\sigma_{SR}^2 = (MS_{SR} - MS_r)/n$
$E(MS_{PS}) = \sigma_e^2 + m\sigma_{PS}^2$	$\sigma_{PS}^2 = (MS_{PS} - MS_r)/m$
$E(MS_{PR}) = \sigma_e^2 + k\sigma_{PR}^2$	$\sigma_{PR}^2 = (MS_{PR} - MS_r)/k$
$E(MS_r) = \sigma_e^2 + \sigma_{PSR}^2$	$\sigma_e^2 = MS_r$

where:  $\sigma$  = random component variance (*P* random; *S* and *R* fixed),  $\theta$  = fixed component variance, *P* = persons, *S* = situations, *R* = responses (products), *e* = error, *n* = number of persons, *k* = number of situations, *m* = number of products, *r* = residual.

In the absence of repeated measures, no independent estimate of  $\sigma_{PSR}^2$  is available. In order to estimate component contributions to variance, it is necessary to assume that either error variance or the three-way interaction term is not present [5, 25]. Repeated measures on a separate group of 100 subjects for the snack product inventory showed a residual contribution of 36% with the three-way interaction term accounting for less than 4% of the variance. Based upon this observation, results are presented under the assumption of no three-way interaction.

The results in Table 2 confirm the dominance of interactions over primary source effects in contributions to variance. For snack products, the persons by product interaction is the most important component. This is interpreted to mean that individual reaction to alternative products is the major determinant of product preferences. And since the main effect of products accounts for less than 9% of the variance, it appears that individual reactions to the snacks find little agreement among different consumers. The effect commonly implied when referring to situational influence is reflected in the products by situations interaction term. This is the second most important effect in the snack product results, and demonstrates that choice among snack products is dependent upon the consumption and purchase situations examined.

In the case of the meat product inventory, this situational effect is the most important determinant of choice, and contributes approximately one quarter of the total variance in preferences. The products term shows almost double the influence found with snack products, suggesting greater consumer agreement as to which meat products are most desirable. The individual meat preferences reflected in the persons by products interaction drops to a poor third, yielding less than a 10% contribution to variance. As a whole, the meat product inventory shows a large role for situational effects on product preferences, a smaller role for the general attractiveness of each meat, and a small but still important role for individual differences in response preferences.

### Patterns of Variance

Levin [19, 20] has demonstrated the particular applicability of multimode factor analysis to the behavioral differential inventory in his analysis of the Anxiety Inventory of Endler et al. [8]. In the current application, persons, situations, and products may be thought of as the separate modes for which responses were obtained. Three-mode factor analysis of this data has the unique advantage of simultaneously extracting factors in each of these modes and then deriving the interrelationships across modes by means of a "core" matrix. The three-mode factor analytic model allows decomposition of data from the behavioral differential in the manner shown in the figure. Each two-dimensional matrix on the right side of the equation may

**Table 2**  
RELATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO VARIANCE IN PRODUCT PREFERENCES

Source	Snack products			Meat products		
	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	Percent contribution <sup>a</sup>	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	Percent contribution <sup>a</sup>
Persons	99	15.40	5.43%	99	13.16	4.58%
Situations	9	31.19	1.12%	8	154.01	5.19%
Products	9	228.87	8.65%	10	362.47	14.99%
Products × situations	81	42.66	15.82%	80	71.21	26.20%
Persons × situations	891	1.90	2.79%	792	1.83	2.90%
Persons × products	891	6.89	21.82%	990	3.32	9.73%
Residual (Error + $P \times S \times R$ )	8019	1.16	44.37%	7920	0.98	36.41%
Total	9999		100.0 %	9899		100.0 %

<sup>a</sup>Mixed effects model (subjects random) assuming residual composed entirely of error variance.

be interpreted as a traditional factor loading matrix, with the three-dimensional core matrix thought of as factor scores for idealized persons on pairs of factors representing the combination of a type of product in a type of situation. That is, by examining the scores in the core matrix it is possible to render an interpretation of the types of products preferred by certain types of buyers in the various types of situations.

For large numbers of subjects and variables, an exact solution to the model quickly exceeds computer storage capacity. In the following results the technique used is an approximation employed by Levin [20]. First, because of possible differences in anchorages across subjects on the dependent scales, item scores are standardized by subtraction of the mean for each situation-product combination and division by the standard deviation for that item pair. Then a correlation matrix is constructed by "stringing-out" each situation and product combination. For an inventory with 10 situations and 10 products, this is a matrix of the order 100. Additional matrices are then developed for the average situation intercorrelations and the average product intercorrelations. All three correlation matrices are then separately factor analyzed, and nonsignificant factors are deleted from each resulting factor loading matrix. Next the factor loading matrix derived

from the strung-out correlations is rearranged as a three-dimensional matrix of situations by products by factors. While the format is similar, this is not yet the core matrix. It is instead an intermediate approximation which may be regarded as the loadings of idealized subjects on each product-situation pair. The factor loading vectors for situations and products are then used as linear operators on this matrix to compute the core matrix. The detailed procedures used to derive this inner core of the equation and to perform rotations is described by Levin [19].

#### Snack Product Inventory

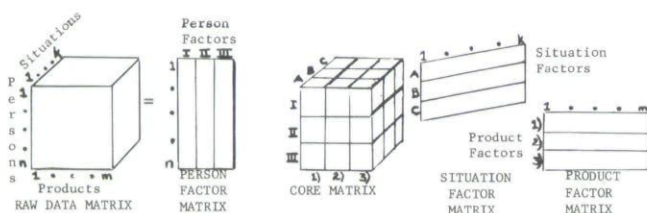
Based upon the size and amount of decrease in latent roots, three snack product factors were retained with the loadings shown in Table 3. Although labeling is tenuous, illustrative factor names will provide greater interpretability in the core matrix and better suggest applications of three-mode analysis. The first product factor is comprised of products which seem best described as filling or substantial. The second factor, on the other hand, seems to represent products which are light and salty. Finally, the third factor

**Table 3**  
SNACK PRODUCT INVENTORY  
FACTOR LOADINGS FOR PRODUCTS

Product	Factor		
	(Varimax rotation)		
	I	II	III
1. Potato chips	.17	.51 <sup>a</sup>	.06
2. Popcorn	.04	.52 <sup>a</sup>	.02
3. Cookies	.13	-.01	.65 <sup>a</sup>
4. Fresh fruit	.15	-.46 <sup>a</sup>	.14
5. Sandwiches	.36 <sup>a</sup>	.03	.18
6. Pastries	.03	-.11	.63 <sup>a</sup>
7. Ice cream	.03	-.28	.05
8. Cheese	.54 <sup>a</sup>	-.24	-.10
9. Assorted nuts	.34 <sup>a</sup>	.20	.02
10. Crackers	.59 <sup>a</sup>	-.03	.10

<sup>a</sup>Salient loadings used in interpretation.

#### SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE THREE-MODE FACTOR ANALYTICAL MODEL<sup>a,b</sup>



<sup>a</sup>Adapted from Levin [19, p. 12].

<sup>b</sup>Assuming three factors per mode.

**Table 4**  
SNACK PRODUCT INVENTORY  
FACTOR LOADINGS FOR SITUATIONS

Situation	Factor			
	(Varimax rotation)			
	I	II	III	IV
1. You are shopping for a snack that you or your family can eat while watching television in the evenings.	-.16	.05	.30 <sup>a</sup>	-.58 <sup>a</sup>
2. You are planning a party for a few close friends and are wondering what to have around to snack on.	.18	-.03	-.07	-.71 <sup>a</sup>
3. Snacks at your house have become a little dull lately and you are wondering what you might pick up that would be better.	.24	-.14	.57 <sup>a</sup>	-.09
4. You are going on a long automobile trip and are thinking that you should bring along some snack to eat on the way.	.18	.48 <sup>a</sup>	-.21	-.25
5. You suddenly realize that you have invited a couple of friends over for the evening and you have nothing for them to snack on.	.79 <sup>a</sup>	-.02	.07	.05
6. You are at the grocery store when you get an urge for a between meal snack.	-.08	.22	.63 <sup>a</sup>	-.03
7. You are at the supermarket and notice the many available snack products; you wonder if you should pick something up in case friends drop by.	.39 <sup>a</sup>	.22	.32 <sup>a</sup>	-.01
8. You are thinking about what type of snack to buy to keep around the house this weekend.	.41 <sup>a</sup>	.25	-.02	-.25
9. You are at the store to pick up some things for a picnic you are planning with friends and are trying to decide what kind of snack to buy.	.12	.49 <sup>a</sup>	.15	-.06
10. You are thinking about a snack to have with lunch at noon.	-.03	.68 <sup>a</sup>	.06	.12

<sup>a</sup>Salient loadings used in interpretation.

is clearly a sweetness dimension, with high positive loadings for cookies and pastries.

Four situation factors derived for the snack products are shown in the factor loading matrix in Table 4. The first factor represents stimuli which may be characterized as informal serving situations. These are situations in which the snack is to be made available to visitors with no great flourish or emphasis. The second factor is labeled nutritive, since the high positive loadings occur on situations in which the snack is intended to sustain the individual either as part of a meal or as an intentional meal substitute. The third factor may best be described as situations where snack consumption is impulsive or unplanned. In this type of situation, snacks are purchased either to have on hand (as in situations 1, 3, and 7), or to be consumed at the point of purchase (as in situation 6). The fourth

factor appears somewhat similar to the third, but deals with unplanned purchase situations rather than unplanned consumption situations. The high negative loadings for occasions being shopped for or planned for in situations 1 and 2 support this interpretation, but this factor is not as clear as the first three.

The final core matrix, adjusted to reflect rotations, is shown in Table 5. Since the person factor matrix is not derived by the method employed, labeling of person factors proceeds directly from the factor scores in the core matrix rather than from comparisons of factor loadings to individual characteristics. The Type I person seems to prefer to serve and eat substantial snacks such as sandwiches, cheese, and nuts. For unplanned purchases he shies away from all snacks but the light and salty type, and especially avoids the substantial snacks he normally prefers. The Type II consumer shows a tendency to serve light and salty snacks, but to avoid them in all other types of situations. He shows only a slight tendency to prefer more substantial snacks for personal consumption. The third type of individual strongly prefers sweet snacks for nourishment and on impulse, and displays an avoidance of these snacks in other situations. Although labeling is again tenuous, a Type I individual might be called a "heavy snacker," Type II an "entertainer," and Type III a "sweet tooth."

#### Meat Product Inventory

Since the meat product inventory was applied to the same subject group as the snack product inventory, a comparison of factors and three-mode relationships is possible for the two foods. The situation factor loadings for this inventory are shown in Table 6. Despite the use of situations similar to those of the

**Table 5**  
SNACK PRODUCT INVENTORY  
CORE MATRIX (VARIMAX ROTATIONS)

Person and product factors	Situation factors			
	Informal serving situations	Nutritive situations	Impulsive consumption situations	Unplanned purchase situations
Person type I				
Substantial snacks	1.19	2.19	1.51	-.87
Light/salty snacks	-.22	-.22	-.26	.37
Sweet snacks	.26	.27	.19	-.09
Person type II				
Substantial snacks	.28	.25	.41	-.20
Light/salty snacks	.97	-1.71	-1.37	-1.17
Sweet snacks	-.17	-.36	-.03	.05
Person type III				
Substantial snacks	.08	-.46	-.14	.19
Light/salty snacks	.08	.04	.07	.11
Sweet snacks	-.82	1.64	1.83	.73

**Table 6**  
MEAT PRODUCT INVENTORY FACTOR LOADINGS FOR SITUATIONS

Situations	Factors			
	(Varimax rotation)			
	I	II	III	IV
1. You are planning a party for a few friends and are wondering what to serve at dinner.	.05	.63 <sup>a</sup>	.01	-.13
2. You are at home on a weekday evening wondering what would be good for dinner.	.09	.64 <sup>a</sup>	-.08	.04
3. You are at the store to pick up some meat for a picnic and are trying to decide what to buy.	.04	.07	.96 <sup>a</sup>	-.03
4. You are about to order dinner at a fairly nice restaurant where you have gone with friends.	-.50 <sup>a</sup>	.04	.13	.56 <sup>a</sup>
5. About 9:00 o'clock in the evening you get hungry, even though you had dinner a few hours earlier.	.64 <sup>a</sup>	-.01	.10	.29
6. After inviting some guests for dinner tonight you realize that there is nothing thawed to serve them; so you run to the supermarket to pick up some meat.	.62 <sup>a</sup>	.11	-.03	-.11
7. You thought you would stop by a fast food take-out restaurant to have a quick meal.	.55 <sup>a</sup>	.08	.01	-.16
8. No one around the house has been very pleased with dinners lately and you are discussing what you might all try for dinner this weekend.	.42 <sup>a</sup>	.06	.14	-.69 <sup>a</sup>
9. You are at the supermarket in front of the meat counter and are wondering what to buy in case friends or relatives drop by this weekend.	.05	.62 <sup>a</sup>	.25	.08

<sup>a</sup>Salient loadings used in interpretation.

snack product inventory, the four types of situations derived for meats have no counterparts in the snack product situation factors. The first factor for meats loads highly on five stimulus sentences which seem best described as "impromptu situations." These are occasions where there has been no long preparation for meals and the choice of meats must be a nearly instantaneous decision. The second factor is perhaps best described as "dinners at home." The salient loadings for this factor all concern choices of meats for evening meals served in the respondent's home. The third factor has only one loading above .30, but based on this and other high loadings it appears to describe "weekend situations." The final situation factor derived for meats is termed "relaxed situations," and involves occasions in which there is little hurry in selecting, preparing, or consuming the meats involved. None of these factors suggests a shared set of relevant purchase and consumption situations between snacks and meats for this group of subjects.

The product factors obtained from the meat inven-

tory appear in Table 7. The three significant factors retained also show no correspondence to the snack product factors. The first factor is interpreted as "fancy cuts," and is distinguished less by its salient positive loadings (steak) than by its salient negative loadings (e.g., bologna, luncheon meat, and hamburger dish). The second product factor for meats has high positive loadings not only for steak but also for beef roast, pork chops, fish, and chicken. This factor is labeled "main course meats." The third factor has salient loadings only for hot dogs and hamburgers and, for lack of a better term, retains these titles.

For meats, three idealized person factors were retained. Combining these factors with those of the first two modes yields the core matrix shown in Table 8. The first person factor in this matrix depicts a consumer who generally prefers hot dogs and hamburgers in impromptu decisions and relaxed consumption situations. For impromptu decision situations there is a lesser tendency for him also to prefer main course meats. The Type II individual tends to prefer hot dogs and hamburgers only for impromptu decision situations and prefers main course meats on relaxed occasions. Both types of meats are avoided by this person for dinners at home and on weekends. The third type of person depicted prefers fancy cuts of meat in impromptu decision situations but selects hot dogs and hamburgers for dinners at home. The first type of consumer might be thought of as convenience-oriented in his choice of meats. The second idealized person seems to satisfice with convenient meats in hurried decisions, but prefers the more substantial full course meats when the situation is relaxed. The third type likes steak in a quick decision situation, but generally prefers less expensive meats for dinners at home.

## DISCUSSION

The most significant finding of this study concerns the amount of situational influence apparent in con-

**Table 7**  
MEAT PRODUCT INVENTORY FACTOR LOADINGS FOR PRODUCTS

Products	Factors		
	(Varimax rotation)		
	I	II	III
1. Hot dogs	-.34 <sup>a</sup>	-.15	.61 <sup>a</sup>
2. Steak	.35 <sup>a</sup>	.39 <sup>a</sup>	.24
3. Chicken	-.14	.44	-.05
4. Hamburgers	-.23	.01	.71 <sup>a</sup>
5. Hamburger dish/casserole	-.51 <sup>a</sup>	.04	.28
6. Bologna	-.72	-.05	.20
7. Fish	-.12	.52 <sup>a</sup>	.02
8. Pork chops	-.05	.60 <sup>a</sup>	-.03
9. Beef roast	.03	.61 <sup>a</sup>	-.07
10. Luncheon meat	-.62 <sup>a</sup>	-.25	.19
11. Bacon	-.42 <sup>a</sup>	.15	.06

<sup>a</sup>Salient loadings used in interpretation.

**Table 8**  
MEAT PRODUCT INVENTORY CORE MATRIX  
(VARIMAX ROTATIONS)

Person and product factors	Situation factors			
	Impromptu situations	Dinners at home	Weekend situations	Relaxed situations
Person type I				
Fancy cuts	-2.83	.41	.46	-1.48
Main course meats	1.45	-.06	-1.12	.07
Hot dogs/hamburgers	2.08	-.36	-.26	1.13
Person type II				
Fancy cuts	-.38	-.06	.34	.22
Main course meats	.13	-1.93	-.76	.74
Hot dogs/hamburgers	.97	-.78	-.73	-.33
Person type III				
Fancy cuts	.46	-1.25	-.45	-.36
Main course meats	-.38	-.41	.07	.18
Hot dogs/hamburgers	-.08	1.05	.34	-.19

sumer food preferences. The fact that situational main effects and interactions provided nearly half of the explained variance in meat and snack preferences strongly suggests that consumer research has much to gain by the explicit recognition of purchase and consumption situations. Theoretical problems concerning the relationships of attitudes, personality, and brand loyalty to consumer behavior seem especially likely to benefit from situational research. Subsequent studies in these areas may gain some insights from the methodology employed here, but will also need to seek more detailed operational definitions of situations and more elaborate plans for specifying and sampling situations and response alternatives.

The behavioral differential inventory seems both a useful and a concise approach to studying situational influence. The ultimate test of the appropriateness of this format, as opposed to simple response preferences, involves field tests to substantiate that the differences obtained reflect real differences in buyer behavior patterns. From initial item retest reliabilities and product usage correlations obtained by the author, such a conclusion seems promising. Tentative comparisons also indicate that the results of the inventories are fairly robust across subject groups and inventory sizes. Moreover, the analyses of variances and factor analyses of these inventories suggest important effects which could not otherwise have been recognized.

Although the dependent measure employed in this study is within-situation product preferences, the behavioral differential approach is capable of enriching other dependent measures which are currently assessed without consideration of situation. A broader investigation of sources of buyer behavioral variance might include additional aspects of the decision, pur-

chase, and consumption processes, such as information seeking, decision postponement, and risk transference. A more detailed study of product preferences within situations might substitute preferences among brand attributes as the dependent measure. Studies concerning the attitudes of marketers toward social issues in business or attitudes of consumers toward ecological issues and products might also benefit from the behavioral differential approach using as a dependent measure the endorsement of attitudinal statements in particular situations.

From the viewpoint of the marketing manager, speculation that consumers may position some products vis-a-vis situations is enticing. While the marketer may have little direct control over the aspects of situation considered here, he is in a position to utilize a knowledge of situational effects in several ways. It would be of initial importance just to learn which products and persons are susceptible to situational influence. Subsequent examination could suggest market segmentation by situational or combined individual and situational variables, and marketing strategies might then be keyed to certain aspects of purchase and consumption situations. Products might be designed for the segments thus defined. Advertising might provide consumption suggestions using relevant appeals, while point-of-purchase displays and packaging might help to create an appropriate mood. Promotional tie-ins or product line expansion might even allow building a group of related offerings to service the situationally-defined market segment.

In terms of immediate implications, it is primarily hoped this study demonstrates that the unknown realm of situational effects is penetrable. It is also felt that this research has made some progress toward establishing a standard conception of situation and has provided some insight into the nature of situational effects. In order to understand more fully consumer behavior, it now seems feasible as well as necessary to consider more explicitly the situations in which this behavior occurs.

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