



4

WHAT THE CONSUMER WILL NOT LEARN

Learners—that is us. We are constantly learning something. Without learning, our progress as people would stop. Can you visualize your life if today you knew only as much as you had known, say, 10 years ago? Learning empowers you, in life and in the marketplace.

Fortunately, much of that learning comes naturally—without any effort, just by being exposed to stimuli in our world as we go about living everyday life.

All learning is, in essence, the learning of associations. Association between two stimuli (classical conditioning), between an act and a reward (instrumental conditioning), between an act and what that act will make us (role modeling), and between an object and a property or consequence (e.g., a brand claim—also cognitive learning).

These associations occur in our physical and

social worlds, some created by nature, some by society at large, and not an insignificant number of them by marketers.

As marketers, we pair our brand with a celebrity; pair it with certain lifestyle depictions; pair it with a trendy store; pair it with product benefits; with certain emotions; with certain consumer values and aspirations.

But we can't "manufacture" these associations in our image, in isolation from the pairings (i.e., associations) consumers have learned in their world-at-large. We can't put together a pairing of just any two entities we desire to be associated in the consumer mind, and say "Viola! The consumer will have learned (i.e., accepted) that association."

Consumers will accept only those pairings (associations) they find intuitively sensible. As marketers, WE need to LEARN THAT!

