

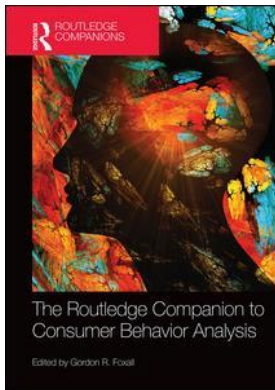
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The Routledge Companion to Consumer Behavior Analysis

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Consumer confusion

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Consumer confusion

A Behavioral Perspective Model perspective

Ioanna Anninou, Gordon R. Foxall, and John G. Pallister

Introduction

The purpose of the Behavioral Perspective Model (BPM) of purchase and consumption has been to explore the possibility of a behavior analytical approach to consumer behavior and to ascertain the nature and status of the account it provides (Foxall, 1990; Foxall, 1993). The model offers an alternative, behavioral approach to the prevalent cognitive examination of consumer behavior and it remains a valid interpretive account and most importantly one which is strongly supported by relevant empirical evidence (e.g. Foxall, 1997b; Foxall & Greenley, 1999, 2000; Foxall & Soriano, 2005). Notwithstanding these empirical findings, the problematic areas of the specific model and behaviorism at large have also been identified. These areas mainly concentrate on hindering the explanation of some aspects of behavior. Specifically, aspects like the continuity of behavior, the personal level of explanation and the delimitation of behavioral explanation (Foxall, 2004; Foxall, 2007a, b) seem to require an alternative non-behavioral treatment and elucidation.

The main proposal for resolving these issues involves the addition of other kinds of psychological concepts, found in ordinary language, that have been avoided by behavioristic approaches. For example, it has been suggested that the model should consider intentional/dispositional concepts in general, which include, in addition to propositional attitudes, abilities, propensities, and personal emotions, or even personality traits (Foxall, 2007b). Considering that dispositional concepts and intentional idioms in general describe, imprecisely, what individuals have done and predict what they are likely to do under certain situations and conditions, they are good candidates to be included in the description of consumers' learning history (Oliveira-Castro, 2013). This is the reason that Foxall (2007a, p. 43) argues that intentional ascription can be perceived as the result of the intersection of the individual and the experiences in the specific situation.

This chapter will then act as an attempt to illustrate the way that the BPM can be expanded to include intentional idioms. In this attempt consumer confusion, a construct which has been treated very much in cognitive terms until recently, can now be extended to an interpretive account which allows its description based on both intentional and behavioral terms. It can then form part and be examined in terms of the BPM. The chapter will start by exploring the existing literature on confusion and the BPM, and will then describe the two different approaches to consumer behavior, the extensional and intentional framework, reaching the point where a novel suggestion for both confusion and the BPM will be examined.

Consumer confusion

In an attempt to summarize existing literature on consumer confusion, it is evident that a consensus on the state of confusion has not been reached; however, most psychology and consumer behavior researchers agree that confusion as a state can be meaningfully characterized by the following qualities (Ellsworth, 2003; Hess, 2003; Keltner & Shiota, 2003; Rozin & Cohen, 2003a and b; Schweizer, 2004; Walsh et al., 2007; Walsh & Mitchell, 2010):

- a state of not knowing/understanding;
- a sense of goal obstruction which in consumer behavior might equal either an inability to choose the preferred/best product or the impediment of an enjoyable shopping trip;
- perceived higher levels of effort, higher attention needed and possibly a sense of lack of control;
- intense uncertainty and/or impressions of overload, similarity, novelty etc., especially operationalized as such in consumer research and proposing the intense relationship between the state as an interaction between an individual and environmental conditions.

These characteristics are depicted in Table 24.1.

Based on the literature, the theoretical opportunities offered through the study of states like confusion have been established (Rozin & Cohen, 2003a). Confusion has been described as a state that holds both “affective and informational value.” These entities have resulted in intense theoretical debates and for many years have been placed in the affect, the cognition or a mixed group of states. The requirement to further elucidate and understand such terms, to reveal their multiple characters and to discuss their role in theoretical and empirical undertakings has been stressed by previous researchers (Rozin & Cohen, 2003a, b).

The Behavioral Perspective Model

The fundamental proposition of the BPM is the “contextual stance” (Foxall, 1998), where consumer behavior is located at the intersection between the consumers’ learning history and the behavioral setting. The analysis prompted by the BPM (Foxall, 1990) systematically relates known patterns of purchase and consumption to the situations in which they occur. The conceptual basis of the model is neo-Skinnerian (i.e., it is based on Skinner’s operant conditioning principles). Further to that, the basic suggestion and a distinct concept of the BPM is a bifurcation of reinforcement, which is composed of utilitarian and informational reinforcement that are determined by consumers’ learning history and previous experiences. As a result, the BPM proposes three formative components of consumer situations, which are: utilitarian reinforcement, informational reinforcement, and behavior-setting scope.

Table 24.1 A depiction of the main characteristics (or “qualia”) of the state of confusion

A state of not knowing/lacking understanding

Sense of goal obstruction	Inability to choose/ enjoy the shopping experience	Ambiguity/Similarity/Overload Variety/Novelty/Complexity/Conflict/Comfort/Reliability
Higher levels of perceived effort and attention necessary		

Source: Anninou, 2013 (based on the characteristics attributed to confusion in previous theoretical and empirical papers)

According to the BPM, which is depicted in Figure 24.1, aspects of consumer behavior are then predictable from two dimensions of situational influence: (1) the consumer behavior setting; and (2) the utilitarian and informational reinforcement signaled by the setting as informed by the consumer's learning history.

The consequences of consumer behavior that stem from a consumer situation are of three kinds: utilitarian, informational and aversive consequences, which reduce the probability of future repetition (costs or utilitarian and informational punishment). Utilitarian reinforcement is defined as the functional benefits of consumption, while informational reinforcement includes the symbolic benefits like social status, self-esteem, pride and honor. Informational reinforcement can also be described as feedback on the level of performance of the consumer (Foxall, 1996; Foxall & Soriano, 2005). Thus, utilitarian reinforcements are the direct, functional benefits of being in a situation per se but they can also derive from owning and using products and services, while informational reinforcement is an outcome of socially and physically constructed aspects of the environment. According to the BPM, informational reinforcement does not derive from the typical explanation of the word "information," but it refers to the feedback-information an individual receives on the level of its performance (Foxall, 2010). The root of informational reinforcement lies in the notion of secondary reinforcement through status (see Foxall, 2007c for further details on reinforcements). Physical stimuli that can excite the senses like exciting packaging or colors, or situations that can enhance self-esteem like driving or owning an expensive car, are perceived as typical examples of informational reinforcement. Based on these general principles, the model identifies three interactive levels of interpretive analysis, namely the operant class, the contingency category and the consumer situation (Foxall, 2010).

The examination of the BPM until now has used "within-the-skin events" (Skinner, 1974) like emotions and approach-avoidance behavior and argues for the empirical interest of such terms. In this case, emotional and behavioral variables have represented the emphasis of radical behaviorism on the use of language as an indication of verbal behavior. This language, no matter if it is overt and public (as in conversations) or covert and private (as in thinking), can be representative of behavior (Foxall, 1990; Foxall, 1998). Thus verbal behavior in the way that has been used to explore the BPM until recently should be understood as a plain statement of the facts and a description of its functional relationships with environmental events, and particularly the relationship with its contingencies and consequences. Specifically, the dimensions of the BPM have been consistently found to be explained on the basis of the variables of the MR model

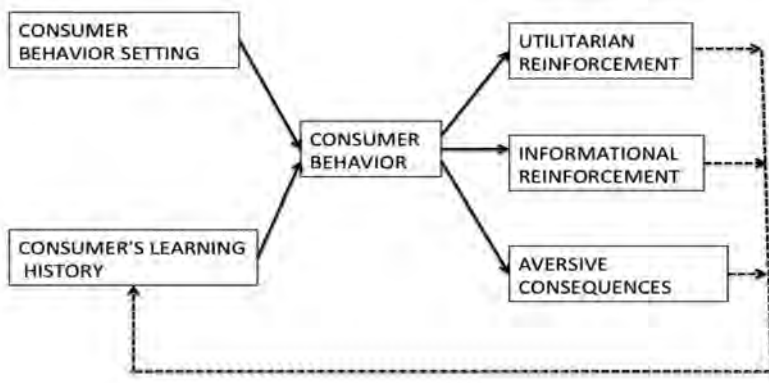


Figure 24.1 Summative Behavioral Perspective Model of consumer choice

Source: Foxall, 1996, p. 26

(Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), when applied in different situations. Specifically, *pleasure* has been described as an index of the utilitarian reinforcement signaled by the situations or by the usage of products and services implicated. This is so because utilitarian reinforcement consists of the benefits and satisfaction contingent in a situation. *Arousal* is a measure of the informational reinforcement which indicates the feedback on consumer performance, and finally *dominance* is predicted to increase with the degree of openness of the behavioral setting. Thus consumers are expected to feel more controlling, influential and important in an open rather than a closed setting (Foxall & Soriano, 2005). Regarding the behavioral measures, *approach behavior* is expected to increase with the total quantity and quality of reinforcement (utilitarian or informational) while *avoidance* is the expected outcome of lower levels of reinforcement.

The languages of explanation

Having illustrated the BPM as a model based on the principles of operant conditioning and behaviorism, the next section will move on to the determination of the two different languages that can be used to explain consumer behavior in general. The way these can find application in the determination of the BPM will be explored subsequently. As the aim of this chapter at large concerns the ways that the principles of both behaviorism and intentionality can be applied to the exploration of consumer choice when the main device of exploration is the BPM, part of this endeavor will be understanding the different languages that can be used to explore this model.

Lay people very often use language which attributes actions and intentions to other individuals' desires and beliefs, and researchers widely use this approach to understand and often predict human behavior. Behavioral science, on the other hand, deals with such an approach with circumspection due to the ease with which explanations of any behavior can be adduced by assuming that goals and dispositions from the behavior they are said to explain are used to explain that same behavior (Foxall, 2013). This has resulted in reaching a state resembling the chicken and the egg situation. On these grounds, the preferred approach for the investigation of the BPM until recently has been the use of an extensional language (in terms of simple verbal behavior), the avoidance of intentional or cognitive terms and at the same time the determination of the explanations that the extensional language can provide by observing the inadequacies of the intentional stance.

More specifically, the most important characteristic of extensional language is simply that it avoids intentional terms. In this kind of reasoning "a stimulus is a part of the environment which is consistently followed by a response" (Foxall, 2013, p. 108), and the idea that an organism expects, believes or desires something does not have a role in this explanation. At the other end, the intentional explanation exists exactly at the level of personal beliefs and desires and embodies terms that refer to or represent something other than themselves.

To properly mark the difference between the two languages, the defining characteristics that distinguish between the two can be exemplified as follows:

1. The extensional language is characterized by referential transparency while intentional idioms are referentially opaque. Referential transparency means that in any extensional sentence synonymous terms can be used to substitute one another without changing the value or meaning of the sentence. This is not valid in intentional idioms. One example used to indicate this property (Foxall, 2007a, b; Foxall, 2013) is the sentence, "That planet is Mars." In this extensional use of the language, "Mars" can be easily substituted by "the fourth planet from the sun." However, when saying "John *believes* that this planet is Mars," Mars cannot be substituted by "the fourth planet from the sun" simply because John might

- not know or believe that Mars is the fourth planet from the sun and thus by substitution the meaning of the sentence might completely change and lose its original denotation.
2. Intentional language is characterized by intensional inexistence (while extensional language by physical existence). It means that an intentional sentence does not imply its true existence or non-existence. When an extensional sentence states that “John bought a BMW,” this implies that both John and a car brand named a BMW exist. However, an intentional explanation which argues that “George thinks that John bought a BMW” does not imply the existence of either the action or the brand itself. This belief is inside the individual and it is not necessarily positioned in the actual world.
 3. Finally, according to Brentano (1874/1973 as in Foxall, 2013) and based on both the above characteristics, it is difficult to translate intentional into extensional sentences. However, according to Searle items and constructs can be identified and described in the extensional – the physical level – but also in accordance to human intentionality. According to Foxall, 2013 (p. 118), rule-governed behaviors (in the form of tracks, plans and augments; Zettle & Hayes, 1982) are behaviors that carry this property. Rule-governed behavior (directed by self or other rules) can be explained both as responses to social and physical stimuli and as ideas expressed in accordance with human intentionality.

On these grounds and the overall understanding of the two accounts, it is safe to argue that intentionality does not provide the same kind of description as an extensional explanation, but it can be used to explain behavior whenever an extensional language no longer suffices (Foxall, 2007a and b, 2013). This is usual when the continuity or discontinuity of behavior, the personal level of explanation and the delimitation of behavioral interpretation is sought (Foxall, 2004). The consequences of this dichotomy are twofold: 1) a new philosophical framework, intentional behaviorism, has been proposed which can accommodate both approaches, and 2) two distinct models have been proposed to accommodate these explanations, the extensional (BPM-E) and the intentional (BPM-I) model (as in Foxall, 2013).

Intentional behaviorism

Following the above overview of the approaches to the languages of consumer behavior, it is essential to describe the way that the two main philosophical streams for explaining learning and behavior have been explored and used by consumer behavior researchers: radical behaviorism with its emphasis on operant conditioning and intentionality, an account that seeks to understand the internal thought processes and to explore their effect on behavior. Intentionality has been described as the power of the mind to be about, to represent something else (Crane, 2007); following this, logic systems are ascribed thoughts directed at something other than them – which is often referred to as the intentional stance. At the other end, the main characteristic of radical behaviorism and operant conditioning is its avoidance of intentional explanation and the use of a behavioral language which is based on situational/environmental influences – the contextual stance (Foxall, 2007a). These have until recently been presented as incommensurable theories of behavior.

Foxall, although an advocate of behavior analysis and the proponent of radical behaviorism in consumer behavior (Foxall, 1990), argues that the explanations provided by this stream of research are sufficient to predict behavior in experimental settings but when applied to real situations, they ultimately fail to give a complete explanation of behavior (Foxall, 2008). Several aspects of human behavior like the personal level of explanation, the continuity/discontinuity of behavior and the delimitation of human behavior can be better explained by adopting intentional terms, which can help to provide a more complete and accurate explanation of behavior.

Consequently, the imperatives of intentionality (what the use of intentional terms adds to behavior analysis) according to Foxall (2007a, b) are:

- The personal level of explanation – the distinct way each situation is experienced based on sensations and impressions.
- The continuity of behavior – an explanation of why a behavior which is followed by a particular reinforcing stimulus in a setting is re-enacted when encountering a similar setting.
- The delimitation of behavioral interpretation – the examination of open systems rather than focusing on closed/experimental settings only.

As a result, *intentional behaviorism* has been proposed (Foxall, 2004, 2007a and b) as a way to accommodate both ways of thinking, a novel way to conduct research and ultimately to facilitate the explanation of behavior. Based on behavior analysis and an a-ontological conception of intentional states grounded on Dennett's intentional stance (Dennett, 1987, 2007), new ways of conceiving and researching aspects of behavior can be crafted which can compensate for the shortcomings of the two aforementioned philosophical stances. The integration of the intentional and behavioral explanations compensates for the shortcoming of the cognitive/intentional explanation which taken alone results in the de-contextualization of human behavior. It can also help to overcome the shortcomings of behavioral analysis which, due to the lack of intentional explanation, when applied leads to the three aforementioned issues: a lack of the personal level of explanation, the continuity of behavior and the delimitation of behavioral interpretation.

Intentional behaviorism thus draws attention to the necessity of employing intentional mental language of beliefs and desires, intentions and propositional attitudes to account for what is happening at the personal level of explanation, and hence invokes an intentional explanation thereof. It can be used to explain operant behavior in experimental but more importantly in real settings where intentional explanation is imperative.

To support and extend the interpretation of intentional behaviorism, two issues related to the nature of intentionality and its role in the explanation of behavior should be clarified further. These two issues as deployed below are interrelated. The use of intentional language as described by Foxall (2007a, b) should be perceived as a linguistic convention that carries with it no ontological implications regarding its nature (Foxall, 2007a, 2008). Intentional objects hold then an a-ontological, linguistic nature. Subjects are attributed the formation of verbal rules which are manifest when the expected influence of contingencies is lost or altered (Foxall, 2008). However, this relationship is not enough to attribute causality to intentionality. It is merely to say that when an individual's actual rule-formulation coincides with the intentions we attribute to them, their behavior will be predictable in terms of behavior analysis. The causes of the behavior are still to be found in the contingencies, though the following questions remain to be answered: (1) whether the contingencies can consequently be modified by the person's rule-making, (2) just how initiating causes of overt and covert behavior private stimuli are, and (3) which are the areas that the contextual and the intentional stance are both found to hold (Foxall, 2000, 2008). The explanation for such behavior and the answer to these questions involve the ascription of intentionality and multiple theoretical and empirical endeavors (Foxall, 2007b).

Rule-governed behavior

In an attempt to specify the theoretical and empirical ways that intentionality should be related to behaviorism, the use of rule-governed behavior and especially rules has been proposed as a viable theoretical construct.

The interest in the distinction between contingency and rule-governed behavior can be traced to Skinner (1966) who argued that in humans, who are verbal creatures, reinforcement and consequently behavior could arise: 1) from the direct contact with environmental contingencies (contingency-shaped), or 2) from verbal descriptions of these contingencies provided by the individual or others, which he termed rules.

Verbal rules, which result in rule-governed or instructed behavior (RGB) (Skinner, 1969; Catania et al., 1990; Törneke et al., 2008), have been introduced, beyond their reinforcing power, in an attempt to explain complex human behavior which does not always follow the three-term contingencies. Rules can act as instructions and are effective as long as they are either specified in rules (in essence social rules or norms), or result from the verbal activity of a speaker or from rules or self-rules to which an organism has adhered throughout its history.

To date there is a debate over the actual role of those rules in behavior analysis because such rules may enter any kind of behavioral relationship (Cerutti, 1989). The most prominent functions suggested for the rules in question are those of reinforcers (Foxall, 1997a), those of verbal discriminative stimuli that can take the place of the contingencies themselves and strengthen or weaken behavior (Skinner, 1969; Baum, 1995; Okouchi, 1999), or those of function-altering contingency-specifying stimuli, which alter the function of other stimuli in a manner analogous to operant conditioning (Blakely & Schlinger, 1987; Schlinger & Blakely, 1987; Schlinger, 1993). This multi-functional nature explains why several authors have proposed that the terminology used to describe rules should always reflect the specificity of the phenomenon which is of interest each time (Brownstein & Shull, 1985; Michael, 1986). In a similar vein, Catania (1986) proposes that a rule should be judged and better defined based on the level of effect it has on behavior rather than on any other basis.

Functional units of rules and self-rules

Another central point in the debate of rule-governed behavior is the development of different functional units of rules for the speaker, the listener and also the formulation of self-based rules (Zettle & Hayes, 1982). Although speaker units of rule-governed behavior in the form of mands and tacts have been proposed by Skinner (1957), Foxall (2010, p. 82) describes how consumer behavior researchers should be mainly concerned with the verbal behavior of the listener (Zettle & Hayes, 1982; Schlinger, 2008), including cases where the listener is the same as the speaker. In this second instance, the rules are actually self-based (Barnes-Holmes et al., 2001) and have been described as being of importance (Foxall, 1997a; Kunkel, 1997; Foxall, 2010) because such self-rules can be formulated to guide habitual, everyday behavior.

On these grounds, three categories of listener rule-based behavior have been proposed and analyzed by the literature (Zettle & Hayes, 1982; Poppen, 1989). This account of listener-based units of rule-governed behavior is composed of pliance, tracking and augmenting.

Rule-following that is socially mediated is known as pliance. In this case, the listener's behavior is mediated by the rules of another individual, the speaker, who has the power to reward or punish subsequent behavior based on conformity or disobedience to the rule (Zettle & Hayes, 1982; Foxall, 2010). Foxall (2010) argues that a great deal of consumer behavior is actually pliance. Pliance can be found in cases when someone is doing what somebody else is saying to either comply with this person's rules as in a thief saying, "Your wallet or your life" (Zettle & Hayes, 1982), or to obtain another person's favor by following his rules (Törneke et al., 2008), or to comply with a rule that clearly states the reinforcing consequences of doing so (Foxall, 2010). A child conforms to spending his/her pocket money as instructed by a parent, following the rule "spending wisely, you can save more at the end of the week." Such rules are known as plys.

Another common category is the rule-governed behavior which arises from rules specified by another person, who is not in a position to reinforce or punish others' behavior (Foxall, 2010). This time the behavior is known as tracking, the rules are known as tracks and it is usually the physical environment that mediates the following of such rules. For example, when a passerby instructs a person the way to a store, the speaker is in no position to supply reinforcement or punishment for getting there or not. Success or failure to find the store depends upon progress in getting there and reinforcement is provided by finding the store, while punishment is failing to find the store (Foxall, 2010). According to Glenn (1987), tracks can function as antecedents to behavior and are expected to have a behavioral effect (Catania, 1989).

The third unit of rule-governed behavior is termed augmenting (Zettle & Hayes, 1982). This is rule-governed behavior which does not specify contingencies or consequences but rather states emphatically the reinforcing or punishing value of the consequences specified in the rule (Törneke et al., 2008). The rule itself has been termed an augmental. It is possibly the most difficult and advanced type of rule-governed behavior and is usually found in mixed form with either pliance or tracking (Zettle & Hayes, 1982). The results of augmentals are mainly evident when interacting with pliance or tracking and people act on an augmental usually where the consequences might be obvious at a subsequent time.

In addition to the rules which might govern listeners' behavior and are introduced by others, self-instructions or self-rules appear as a special kind of rule-governed behavior (Zettle & Hayes, 1982; Zettle, 1990; Kunkel, 1997). In this instance the speaker and the listener are the same individual. The main reason for the development of such self-rules has been described as "being personal" in the sense that an individual can react more effectively now or on a future occasion than when based on the contingencies alone (Zettle & Hayes, 1982). Such learned behavior may evoke appropriate actions in the future faster than the actual contingencies it describes (Vaughan, 1985). The rules the person formulates act then as a learning history (history of reinforcement or punishment) which the individual can rely on.

An interesting characteristic of self-rules is that due to the unclear distinction between the rule giver and follower, it is harder to distinguish among different kinds of functional units. Self-pliance and self-tracking range along a continuum rather than being two distinct categories (Zettle & Hayes, 1982). In analogy to listeners' units of rule-based behavior, self-tracking occurs when the rule is to be followed because this is a description of the state of affairs and self-pliance occurs when the rule is to be followed simply because it was formulated (Zettle & Hayes, 1982, p. 90).

A novel suggestion on the nature of confusion

The concept and especially the importance of rule-governed behavior (other or self-instructed) for the study of behavior have already been described. Rules are usually defined by social norms; however, self-rules are dictated when the speaker and the listener are the same, thus are dictated by the self. Self-rules act as instructions and are effective as long as they adhere to norms to which an organism has followed throughout its history (Foxall, 1997a). Based on the categories of rules developed by Zettle and Hayes (1982), especially the case of tracking is concerned with corresponding to a description of the state of affairs (Zettle & Hayes, 1982, pp. 79–92) or according to Foxall (2013, p. 118) it is a case of "responding to brute facts" like the arrangement of the physical environment. The arrangement of the physical environment indicates the state of affairs as the consumer is usually powerless to change it and needs to adhere to it. Tracking can be viewed as predominantly a contingency-shaped behavior and although most theorists (Zettle & Hayes, 1982; Foxall, 1997b; Törneke et al., 2008; Foxall, 2013) argue that it is a challenging task

to clearly define and understand the different cases of rule-based behavior and discern among plays, tracks and augments, confusion can be understood as a case of a self-based tracking due to its special relationship with environmental conditions.

Confusion as “anomy”

In an attempt to further this understanding, the concept of anomy (or “anomie”) will be brought to the fore. In its true meaning anomy comes from the Greek language and means the absence of law. The concept of anomy was initially introduced by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim and subsequently deeply analyzed by Merton (as in McClosky & Schaar, 1965). In sociology Durkheim used the term to describe a state of normlessness, deregulation and loss of social control usually produced by too sudden social change. Merton extended the concept to indicate (Merton, 1938; also Merton, 1957 as analyzed in Lowe & Damankos, 1968) that this deregulation is the result of the Western (USA) society’s increasing emphasis on accumulation of wealth which is not accompanied by the relevant emphasis on the means to obtain these monetary goals. This is causing strain to the relevant social groups that do not have the means to attain the goals, leading to their isolation. In sociology, anomy is then a characteristic of social groups whose access to goals is blocked by social-structural barriers. Merton’s approach to anomy is acknowledged as the pre-eminent sociological theory of deviant behavior.

In psychological research anomy has been portrayed as a state of mind rather than a state of the society or social groups (McClosky & Schaar, 1965). It has mainly been described in terms of the alienation and dis-institutionalization of the individual from others, the society or the goals that the social system approves, and it is usually measured by a relevant scale and conceptualization developed by J. L. Srole (Taylor, 1968). According to a more general definition and approach which is focused on an even less sociological and increasingly psychological perspective (as in McClosky & Schaar, 1965, p. 19):

anomy is a state of mind . . . it is the feeling that the world and oneself are adrift, wandering, lacking in clear rules and stable moorings . . . for him (for the individual) the norms governing behavior are weak, ambiguous and remote.

Anomy, simply defined, is a rule for the lack of rules; it is a state where norms or rules are confused, unclear (complexity/ambiguity confusion) or absent (similarity confusion), and learning the norms is severely impeded due to all of these reasons (McClosky & Schaar, 1965). The case of confusion seems to correspond to this kind of reasoning. Different kinds of confusion can be characterized by the lack of market rules and norms which interfere with learning and impede behavior. Confusion can be characterized intensely by the sense of market anomy, this sense of disorientation, which can be defined as a rule characterizing the lack of other relevant rules.

Confusion as a self-based rule (or “a rule for the lack of rules”)

Confusion can then be perceived as a case of self-tracking (self-based rule) and more specifically a “rule” suitable to describe the lack of other relevant rules. The role of self-rules as summarized by Zettle and Hayes (1982) has been “being personal” in the sense that a person can react more effectively now or on a future occasion than when based on the contingencies alone.

Extending further this theoretical reasoning, a fundamental faculty of rule-governed behavior according to Foxall (2013) is the capacity of being treated and expressed in both extensional

and intentional terms. This logic follows Searle (as in Foxall, 2013) who concludes that items can be perceived in both an extensional account of “brute facts” and an intentional account based on “human intentionality”. The meaning and application of this principle in the case of confusion will be described in the following sections. This study will then extend the understanding of confusion by placing it within the framework of extensional and intentional BPM and thus a novel understanding of the construct and application of the BPM will be offered.

Based on the underpinnings of the above theoretical understanding, the main proposition suggested by this chapter is: Confusion is a self-based rule (based on the propositions of rule-governed behavior). It is, more specifically, a rule for the lack of other rules (a case of market anomaly). Due to its relationship with the state of affairs (environmental situations), it can be characterized as a self-based track and as such can be treated at two levels.

At the *extensional level*, it can be treated as a response to specific (discriminative) stimuli and can act along with verbal contingencies to predict behavior. In this case it represents verbal behavior; it is a plain statement of the facts.

At the *intentional level*, it is the result of the interplay between an individual and specific situations and in this case it can take the role of the consumer situation that signals consumer responses. By adopting this “less scientific” route, it can be assumed that confusion can have an impact on actual situational contingencies. Such an approach based on intentionality allows for the personal level of explanation to be examined.

In practical terms, when consumers enter retail/shopping environments they are faced at first instance with the surroundings. The formation of the environment (product assortment, for instance) is one of the factors that determines whether reinforcement or punishment will be received from the situation. In this context confusion can be described as a rule indicating the lack of environmental or market rules. Confusion further acts both as a punishment and as a learning history for future reference. In this context, confusion along with situational contingencies can ultimately act to determine consumer behavior. When market rules are unclear or too many, complexity confusion arises. When market rules are absent, this will result in what has been described as similarity confusion.

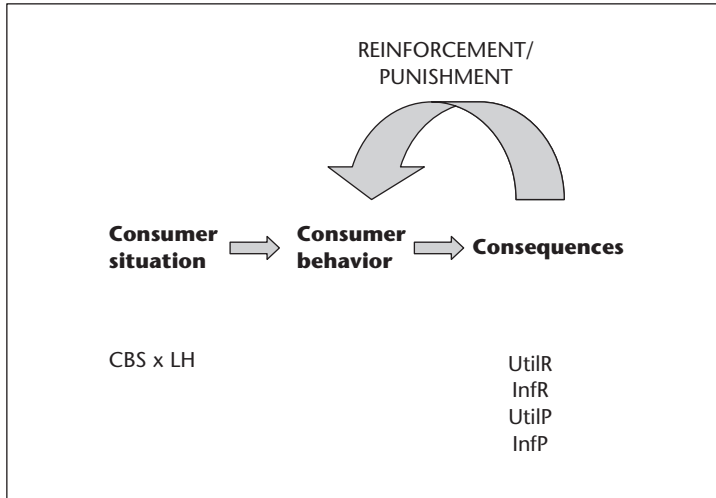
BPM-E and BPM-I

The extensional Behavioral Perspective Model (BPM-E)

The benefits of using the BPM have been described in previous research (Foxall, 1992 and all subsequent research). This model, which has until recently been depicted in the extensional language of stimuli, behavior and behavioral consequences (lacking reference to beliefs, desires or other intentional attitudes), has been introduced as an attempt to overcome the limitations of the cognitive portrayal of choice, especially the de-contextualization of theoretical models (Table 24.2). To start with, the model offers a relevant framework which accommodates the two main reinforcers innate in consumer situations, utilitarian and informational. It further

Table 24.2 The nature of confusion at the two levels (extensional and intentional) proposed by this chapter

BPM-E	Lack of (complex, weak or similar) market rules or norms that impede behavior; measured as plain facts and overall responses to consumer situations.
BPM-I	Individual perception of the lack of (complex, weak or similar) market rules or norms that impede behavior.



CBS = consumer behavior setting; LH = learning history; UtilR = utilitarian reinforcement; InfR = informational reinforcement; UtilP = utilitarian punishment; InfP = informational punishment

Figure 24.2 BPM-E

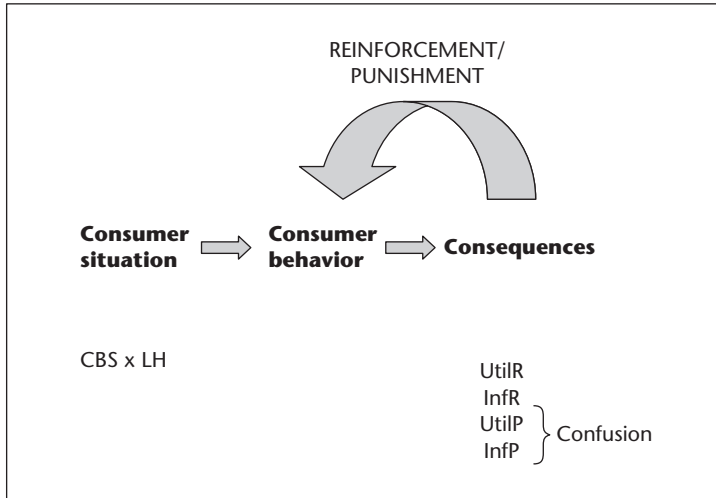
describes decision-making with respect to settings that range from the routine, habitual and everyday to the extreme. When using the model, several diverse situations have been described and categorized based on the reinforcers and behavioral setting. It places distinctive emphasis on the idea of *consumer situation*, which is the way that behavior is located in space and time by the extensional model.

Figure 24.2 depicts the model and explains its main constructs.

The variables are extensionally defined as responses to physical and social stimuli embedded in the consumer situation. The consumer situation (coterminous with the consumer behavior-setting scope) consists of the consumer behavior setting (discriminative stimulus, motivating operations and verbal rules) and the learning history. Reinforcement is composed of Utilitarian (UtilR) and Informational (InfR). Punishing or aversive consequences are also part of the possible consequences, conceptualized and examined in previous research mainly in terms of the cost of buying.

Following the extensive previous literature, these constructs have been conceptualized as the Pleasure (UtilR), Arousal (InfR), Dominance (consumer situation/behavior-setting scope) and the approach/avoidance behavior as the consumer behavior element. The way these have been used in the extensional construct has been in terms of *overall responses to stimuli*. These represent then *verbal behavior* (in accordance with Skinner, 1974) expressed with the help of an *extensional language* and should not be perceived as representing consumers' beliefs or attitudes. The language of radical behaviorism is very specific in this sense and very strict on the role of a discriminative stimulus. Thus a discriminative stimulus does not represent or signal utilitarian and informational reinforcers or punishers; it simply "sets the occasion" for them (Foxall, 2013, p. 111). It allows for neither personal nor group differences, disregarding in this manner the personal level of explanation.

In the boundaries of the BPM-E, confusion can then be defined as a rule-governed behavior (tracking) which is a "response to the physical and social environment". It is an



CBS = consumer behavior setting; LH = learning history; UtilR = utilitarian reinforcement; InfR = informational reinforcement; UtilP = utilitarian punishment; InfP = informational punishment

Figure 24.3 BPM-E

aversive, extensionally defined/objective consequence of environmental exposure to specific discriminative stimuli/markets. The role of the UtilR, InfR and confusion (which can have both UtilP and InfP implications) can facilitate the examination and establishment of overall differences in stimuli means (Figure 24.3).

It is also appropriate to argue that for the purposes of a relevant endeavor (which would deal with the nature, effect and addition of confusion in the BPM), the whole situational complexity of the BPM cannot find application. Consumers do not hold confusion for the range of operant classes (accomplishment, hedonism, accumulation and maintenance) and situations described by the model. Situations like being in a job-related seminar, driving an expensive car, being on a cruise or collecting loyalty card points (these are all situations used to describe the contingency categories of the BPM in previous research) are inappropriate for a relevant endeavor. Such situations have been specifically chosen and manipulated in previous research mainly to establish the measurement of the Mehrabian and Russell (1974) variables as good indicators for the aspects of the BPM.

To achieve the explanation of the contextual and intentional stance in the case of confusion, other specific choice/shopping-related situations need to be used. Thus the study of the integration of confusion should maintain the basic premises of the model on the importance of the reinforcers, the behavior-setting scope (proved to be conceptualized and measured in past research as the pleasure-arousal-dominance variables of the Mehrabian and Russell model) and approach/avoidance behavior and will extend the basic principles of the BPM beyond the original model in shopping situations where confusion is expected to pose an effect. In that sense a study based on these premises should allow for a free exploration of differing consumer situations by only hypothesizing the expected levels of the extensional value of the different variables.

A potential limitation of the BPM as presented above is that the model has been tested predominantly in terms of reinforcements – utilitarian (pleasure) and informational (arousal).

However, the effect of aversive consequences, although depicted in the original BPM (as a line connecting utilitarian and informational reinforcement with aversive consequences), has been examined mainly as the effect of monetary cost, which is indeed one of the main aversive consequences of consumer choices (Sigurdsson et al., 2010). Confusion can be described as a self-based rule, which in an extensional language is translated into “an aversive consequence/punishment of shopping” and the extent of its effect needs to be examined.

An additional major limitation of this “extensional” approach and conception of the BPM and specifically confusion is that it removes the personal level of explanation (the level of personal rules in the form of beliefs/propositional attitudes) from the understanding developed. To examine this personal level, behavior should be reconstructed and discussed in terms of an intentional account. This account takes into consideration not only the environmental effect but also the consumer’s perception of shopping, what the consumer has been led to believe in terms of their own experiences of other similar or dissimilar situations and what he/she actually desires. It is then possible that a consumer might find a complex environment more acceptable than another consumer who, based on a previous experience, was not able to buy the desired product based on unavailability. This consumer will act differently to the variety of products on offer than another consumer with different perceptions and experience. In this case of the personal level of explanation, we have no other resort than to turn to the language of intentionality, the language of beliefs and desires. By adopting the intentional language or stance we adopt a “less scientific” approach to the study of phenomena; but since the social world lacks the comfort of constant experimental conditions, where the complexity of the learning history of objects can be known, social scientists need to resort to such language to better explore phenomena (Foxall, 2013).

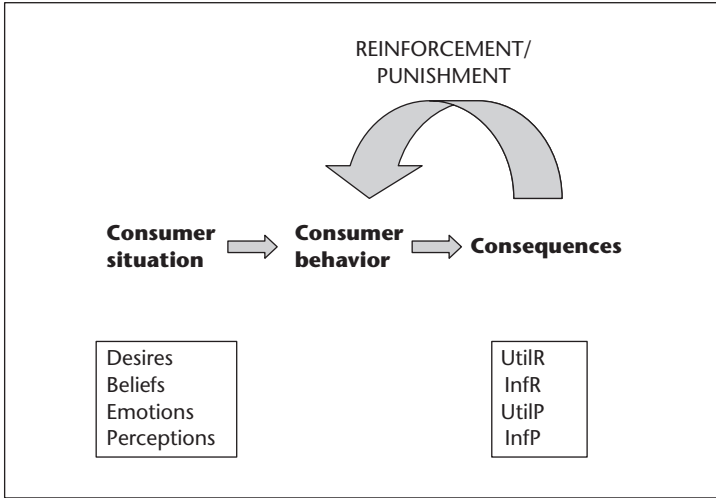
It is on these grounds that the inclusion of intentional terms and finally an intentional conception of the BPM (BPM-I) has been proposed (Foxall, 2004, 2007a and b, 2013). The flexibility that Searle offers on the multiple uses of terms allows us to employ the same constructs in both the extensional and intentional way and this rule will be followed here to indicate the ways that an intentional BPM can add to the understanding provided by the extensional BPM.

The intentional Behavioral Perspective Model (BPM-I)

To prove and describe the value of the intentional Behavioral Perspective Model (BPM-I), Foxall (2013) describes the importance of the concept of collective intentionality and explains the implications of this collective understanding for the model. The application of collective intentionality allows the application of one of the main principles of intentional behaviorism; through the use of intentionality, an individual’s actual rule-formulation coincides with the intentions we attribute to them and in this case their behavior will be predictable in terms of behavior analysis. The remainder of this chapter will examine confusion in the form of a tracking self-based rule (confusion) to incorporate the personal level of explanation into the model. Figure 24.4 depicts the intentional BPM.

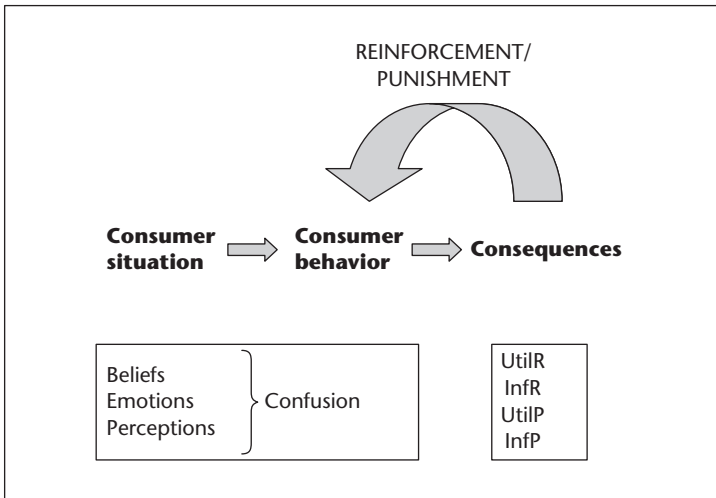
The intentional Behavioral Perspective Model. The central explanatory component of the BPM, the consumer situation, is redefined in this new understanding. Consumer situation in this intentional model can be found “in the complex of the representation and meaning which intentional construals” supply (Foxall, 2013, p. 107). Behavior is then transformed from reactions to presented stimuli into intentionality-directed behavior.

Rules and rule-governed behavior are capable of contributing to the two kinds of explanations as described above. These can be described in the extensional sense, as stimuli that come to have the same effect as non-verbal contingencies that can act to predict behavior. In addition, the alternative intentional explanation treats rules as representations of the three-term



UtilR = utilitarian reinforcement; InfR = informational reinforcement; UtilP = utilitarian punishment; InfP = informational punishment

Figure 24.4 BPM-I



UtilR = utilitarian reinforcement; InfR = informational reinforcement; UtilP = utilitarian punishment; InfP = informational punishment

Figure 24.5 BPM-I

contingencies that act at the personal level and can be described using the *language of beliefs, the intentional language*.

On these grounds and as one of the least considered ideas in the psychology and consumer behavior realm, confusion can also have the characteristics of an intentional state, meaning that it can act at the belief/propositional attitude level. At this level confusion can be described as: a

collective belief about something else – in the case of consumer research, a personal belief that a specific market is confusing.

Overall, the framework with confusion is depicted in Figure 24.5:

The intentional Behavioral Perspective Model is based on the understanding provided by rule-governed behavior. Behavior is transformed from reactions to presented stimuli into intentionality-directed behavior.

Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with an extension to the study of the Behavioral Perspective Model. More specifically, consumer confusion can be described in both behavioral and intentional terms and can be integrated into the two models suggested, the intentional (BPM-I) and the extensional (BPM-E). The addition and integration of confusion took the form of rule-governed behavior and more specifically the form of tracks (Foxall, 2013). The ideas expressed in this chapter lay the foundations for a bridging of diverse, incommensurable by some, paradigms of studying human psychology and behavior. By bringing together the behavioral and intentional understanding, this is not a way to advocate an “epistemological anarchism” (e.g., Feyerabend, 1993). Rules for the superior application of intentional behaviorism have been proposed in previous literature (e.g., Foxall, 2004, 2013). One of the central rules to be followed is that notwithstanding the use of intentional language, the focus and cause of behavioral control in both models is only to be found in the environment. Such rules will be better laid and understood in the future following the more extensive study of intentional behaviorism.

As a result of the application of these principles to other novel situations and constructs, a better understanding can be achieved. For all of these reasons, this chapter offers a theoretical framework that should be considered as a *starting point* for further theoretical endeavors.

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