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## **Consumer Involvement: A New Perspective**

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## **Consumer Involvement: A New Perspective**

### **Abstract**

Involvement's importance in marketing and consumer research is well established for twenty years. The concept has been linked to various consumer behavior and marketing constructs and has been used to classify products and advertising messages according to the level of involvement they arouse. Apart from its academic and research value, involvement has implications for practitioners. Thus involvement can be used to segment consumers into low, moderate and high involvement groups which can then be targeted with different promotional strategies. There is a plethora of views on involvement which need to be integrated in order to provide a thorough account which will facilitate researchers. This paper provides a coherent and summarizing synthesis of the extant literature on involvement and presents a new perspective of involvement by linking purchase involvement to channel choice.

Keywords: Involvement, Purchase Decision Involvement, Channel Choice

## **Introduction**

Involvement is an individual difference variable found to influence consumers' decision making and communication behaviors. It has been associated with numerous other marketing concepts such as perceived risk, information search, brand commitment, brand loyalty, brand similarity, opinion leadership, brand switching, advertising, diffusion process and segmentation (Chaudhuri, 2000; Coulter, et al., 2003; Dholakia, 1997, 2001; Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984; Kinley et al., 1999; Lockshin et al., 1997; Muncy, 1990; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Quester and Lim, 2003; Venkatraman, 1988; Worrington and Shim, 2000; Zaichkowsky, 1994; Vaughn, 1986). The concept of involvement was linked to marketing following Krugman's (1967) measurement of involvement with advertising. Since then, and especially in the 1980's, intensive attention from consumer researchers has generated a bulk of literature which has conceptualized and measured involvement in multiple contexts including involvement with: a product class (e.g. Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a; Kapferer and Laurent, 1993; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Rahtz and Moore, 1989; Zaichkowsky, 1985; 1994) a purchase decision (e.g. Mittal, 1989; Slama and Tashchian, 1985; Smith and Bristor, 1994), a task or activity or event (e.g. Flynn and Goldsmith, 1993; Goldsmith and Emmert, 1991; Mittal and Lee, 1987, 1989; Neelamegham and Jain, 1999; Speed and Thompson, 2000; Tyebjee, 1979), a service (e.g. Keaveney and Parthasarathy, 2001) advertising or message processing (e.g. Andrews, et al., 1990; Laczniak and Muehling, 1989; Mitchell, 1981; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Vaughn, 1986; Zaichkowsky, 1994; Greenwald and Leavitt, 1984). This process has generated contradictory findings relating to involvement in consumer behavior with no unified definition of the construct being agreed. However, involvement has been shown to explain and moderate various facets of consumer behavior (Dholakia, 2001), providing the impetus for further research on the construct. In addition, concerns have been raised regarding the issue of dimensionality of involvement for which many contradicting views have previously been

proposed. Different researchers have measured involvement using either unidimensional or multidimensional approaches (e.g. Park and Moon, 2003; Quester and Lim, 2003) highlighting the lack of agreement on operationalizing the construct in consumer marketing. Given the plethora of views on involvement some of which appear conflicting, this paper contributes to knowledge by providing a coherent and summarizing synthesis of the extant literature on involvement. The paper also adds to current knowledge by proposing a new perspective of involvement which necessitates research attention. In this paper, involvement is linked to channel choice in an attempt to highlight the potential influence on involvement with the choice of a shopping channel for the purchase of particular products.

### **Involvement: Origins in Social Psychology**

Involvement originates from social psychology and specifically from the persuasive communication literature, where the social judgement-involvement approach has been used to explain attitude and attitude change (Sherif and Sargent, 1947; Sherif, et al., 1965; Sherif and Sherif, 1967). Social judgement theory, which considers how individuals judge received messages, is based on three attitude scales: the latitude of acceptance, the latitude of rejection and the latitude of non-commitment (Sherif, et al., 1965). For an individual to accept a position and change their attitude there must be a discrepancy between the message and that person's own position. The notion of 'ego-involvement', which refers to the relationship between an individual and a social issue, has been argued to systematically affect the structure of the three judgmental latitudes (Sherif, et al., 1965). For example, highly involved individuals with wider latitudes of rejection (and smaller acceptance and non-commitment latitudes), are not susceptible to persuasive communication. The opposite is true for individuals with low involvement, who have wider latitudes of acceptance and are therefore highly receptive.

In social psychology, 'ego involvement' refers to the centrality or importance of a social issue in a person's life. It is defined as "*arousal singularly on, in combination of the individuals' commitment or stands in the context of appropriate situations*" (Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall, 1965) p176). Thus a person is said to be 'ego involved' when their position on an issue is intrinsically significant or central to their self-identify or when a person is strongly committed to a position (Freedman, 1964; Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall, 1965; O'Keefe, 1990). In this respect, ego involvement entails the elements of centrality, importance and commitment. According to this conceptualization, ego involvement is seen as synonymous with commitment and related to extremity, although the preferred position is that the three are distinct concepts (Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall, 1965; Laaksonen, 1994). For example, an individual may be committed to a position on a social issue, or even take an extreme stand without necessarily being highly ego-involved. However, social judgement theory proposes that position extremity is positively correlated with ego involvement in that extreme positions tend to be ego involving.

This conceptualization of involvement has been the basis for applying and treating involvement in marketing, particularly in the consumer behavior domain. As involvement is viewed as a hypothetical or speculative concept, its conceptualization comes from social psychology theory, in which it is grounded. However, the variation in nature, content, definitions and nomology of involvement in social psychology, has complicated the construct's application in marketing and particularly consumer behavior. As a consequence, the problems and confusion surrounding involvement in social psychology have been transferred to the marketing domain.

Social psychologists have examined involvement in the context of persuasive communication addressing its 'attitude object', as a social issue (e.g. involvement with health and safety) (Sherif and Sherif, 1967; Laaksonen, 1994). However, its application in consumer behavior focuses on examining involvement in a broader context to include different aspects of behavior and various

attitude objects. For example, product involvement (Bloch, 1981; Brisoux and Chéron, 1990; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006), personal involvement (Zaichowsky, 1985), purchasing involvement (Slama and Tashchian, 1985), purchasing-decision involvement (Mittal, 1989), brand involvement (Kirmani et al. 1999) task involvement (Tyebjee, 1979), issue involvement (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981), service involvement (Ganesh et al. 2000) and advertising involvement (Zaichowsky, 1985). This practice has resulted in a number of relatively 'new' definitions or conceptualizations and measurements which have aggravated the confusion in understanding involvement in the marketing context. Thus, involvement has been seen as overlapping with similar concepts such as commitment, importance, proneness and cognitive effort (e.g. Coulter et al. 2003; Beatty et al. 1988; Dholakia, 1997; Elen and Bone, 1998; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979; Lichtenstein et al. 1995; Robertson, 1976; Worrington and Shim, 2000). For example, Muncy and Hunt (1984) have identified five distinct yet related concepts, which have been studied under the general rubric of 'involvement'. These included ego-involvement, commitment, communication involvement, purchase importance and response involvement.

### **Involvement in Consumer Behavior: Conceptualization, Classifications and Types**

Three classifications have been proposed for categorizing and organizing the different conceptualizations, definitions, types or forms of involvement in consumer behavior. Laaksonen (1994) suggested three groups of definitions: cognitive based, individual state, and response-based (see Laaksonen, 1994). This classification embraces the first distinction of involvement proposed by Houston and Rothschild (1978) and Rothschild (1979) who suggested that involvement has three forms or types: enduring, situational, and response. This distinction is the benchmark against which other authors have based their work. Richins and Bloch (1986) have extended this distinction, using the notion of duration to highlight the differences between

'enduring' and 'situational' involvement types. These authors posit that enduring involvement represents the long-term attachment of an individual with a specific product class, which is likely to be manifested through extensive information search, brand knowledge and, eventually through brand commitment. Situational involvement, however, represents a short-term phenomenon where an individual becomes involved with a 'situation', usually a purchase decision (Mittal, 1989). Here the concern is with the purchase of a particular product, such as a refrigerator, rather than with the product per se. Once the purchase has been completed, the situational involvement subsides. A third form of involvement is response involvement, which takes a behavioral view reflecting the extent to which individuals are involved in a situation. Such attention may be manifested in paying attention, being price conscious, or being alert to brand differences (Kassarjian, 1981; Stone, 1984). The three forms of involvement are discussed in detail below.

*Enduring Involvement:* In conceptualizing enduring involvement, authors have adopted the social psychological perspective of 'ego involvement' which considers the perceived personal relevance of an object to an individual (e.g. Zaichkowsky, 1985; 1994). This approach treats involvement as the intensity of an attitude which is dependent on the importance of that attitude (Sherif and Sherif, 1967). Consequently involvement is viewed as a property of an attitude, which is enduring or stable over time. In the consumer behaviour domain, many researchers define involvement as the degree of psychological connection between an individual and a stimulus object, such as a product, brand, advertisement, task, or idea (Bloch, 1981; Celsi and Olson, 1988; Hupfer and Gardner, 1971; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979). Thus an individual forms a psychological attachment with an object reflecting the extent to which the object is perceived as self-related and relevant with their 'cognitive elements' (i.e. personal goals or values (Celsi and Olson, 1988). Definitions of enduring involvement, are categorised as



cognitive-based definitions (Laaksonen, 1994), adhere to this conceptualization, although they refer to *different* cognitive elements. For example, Celsi and Olson refer to ‘goals and values’, Zaichkowsky (1985) uses the terms ‘interests, needs or values’, Bloch (1981) refers to ‘needs and values’ while Tyebjee (1979) and Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) talk about ‘values’.

*Situational Involvement:* The basic property of this type of involvement is that it represents a ‘mental state’ in the form of a temporary concern with a stimulus object. Definitions view this form of involvement as a matter of intensity, referring to *the degree of, the amount of or the level of* interest, motivation, or arousal. Thus Rothschild (1984, p217) mentions “*a state of interest, motivation or arousal*”, while Mitchell (1979, p194) refers to “*...an individual’s level, internal state variable that indicates the amount of arousal, interest or drive*”. Unlike enduring involvement, *situational involvement* represents a ‘mind set’; a temporary concern with a stimulus object that is usually aroused by a particular cause such as perceived risk (Dholakia, 1997). To distinguish between the two types of involvement, Kapferer and Laurent (1985a) emphasise the ‘transitory’ nature of situational involvement, arguing that while enduring involvement can entail situational involvement, the opposite is not possible. Similarly, Richins and Bloch (1986) use the term ‘temporal duration’ to distinguish between the two types, stressing that situational involvement is a temporary state which is determined by the characteristics of an object or situation. Moreover, Houston and Rothschild (1978) argue that product characteristics such as price, time, elapse time of consumption and product complexity contribute directly to situational involvement. A similar view is held by Beatty and Smith (1983) who state that situational involvement, by definition, refers to the degree to which a particular situation engenders involvement. However, this interpretation implies that individual characteristics have no effect on involvement levels, adding weight to the low versus high involvement dichotomy. Antil (1984) contradicts this notion, suggesting that products are not

involving per se, but that involvement results from the personal meaning or importance attributed by an individual to the characteristics of a product.

*Between Enduring and Situational Forms of Involvement:* Park and Mittal (1985) present a different view of involvement, positing that involvement is a ‘goal-directed arousal capacity’ governed by two sets of motives: cognitive and affective. Cognitive motives encompass the cost-benefits or functional performance of a product or service while affective focus on the symbolic benefits derived from the use of the product (e.g. enhanced self esteem or self image). The implication is that although involvement represents an arousal (consistent with the situational involvement definitions of Rothschild [1984] and Mitchell [1979]), this arousal must be ‘goal-directed’ towards an object or a situation (Park and Mittal, 1985). This particular theme is generally ignored by other conceptualizations. Given that involvement reflects a relationship between an individual and an object, it seems reasonable to argue that direction is a key element of the construct. This view falls between the conceptualizations of enduring and situational involvement. Laaksonen (1994) refers to it as an ‘enduring-state’ that links the two forms of involvement. The argument is that involvement is situation-bound, describing a relationship between an individual, an object and a situation. This contrasts with the enduring approach ‘cognitive based’ view, where the focus is the *nature* of the relationship between the person and the object (Laaksonen, 1994). According to Park and Mittal (1985), this perspective highlights that individuals will either be interested in 1) the product attributes and their performance (cognitive) or 2) the product’s meaning in relation to the individual’s self-image (affective). Individuals who are attentive to 1) are likely to get involved with the task of purchasing the product while those concerned with 2) are said to be enduringly involved with the product itself. In the former case, individuals are likely to be attentive to brand attribute information while in

the latter, individuals will consider a wider range of information (Higie and Feick, 1989; Richins and Bloch, 1986).

*Response Involvement:* This form of involvement refers to a behavioral orientation which involves information acquisition and decision processes (Leavitt, et al., 1981). In this context, involvement is seen as behavior rather than as a mediator of behavior (Laaksonen, 1994). The extent of information search and product acquisition time have both been used to conceptualise and measure response involvement, although it is commonly accepted that they represent possible outcomes of involvement (such as extended problem solving) rather than involvement per se (Cohen, 1983; Dholakia, 1997; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985b; Kinley et al. 1999). Caution is needed in defining involvement as a behavioral process, since there are other variables that are likely to determine such processes (Antil, 1984; Mitchell, 1979; Tyebjee, 1979).

Response involvement is one of the two elements of the dichotomy proposed by Stone (1984), which represents the third distinction between forms of involvement. He suggested looking at involvement as both a 'mental state' and a 'behavioral' process. Stone's (1984) conceptualization of involvement as a 'mental state' differs from Rothschild's view of situational involvement in that he incorporates elements of both situational and enduring involvements. He advocates that this dichotomous view of involvement reflects how different types of involvement impact upon each other as well as with other marketing concepts, such as the adoption process and segmentation (Lockshin et al. 1997). In essence, this perspective posits that both elements are required to conceptualise and measure involvement in consumer research.

### **Involvement in Consumer Research: Dimensionality and Measurement**

Most research conceptualises and treats involvement as a multidimensional construct. The early exceptions are contributions by Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) and Traylor and Joseph (1984)

and the stream of subsequent research which builds on their involvement measures (e.g. Jain and Srinivasan, 1990). However, the predominating view in consumer behavior is that: “no single construct can individually [and] satisfactorily describe, explain or predict involvement” (Rothschild, 1979, p78). The question of whether involvement consists of more than one dimension is a critical one and a review of the extant literature reveals the confusion which exists on this issue. Empirical operationalizations of involvement range from a single dimension (e.g. Hupfer and Gardner, 1971; Traylor and Joseph, 1984; Vaughn, 1980; Zaichkowsky, 1985; Kirmani et al. 1999) to seven dimensions or factors (e.g. Bloch, 1981) (Table 1). Commonly reported dimensions include importance (e.g. Jensen, et al., 1989; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979), pleasure (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a), interest (Van Trijp, et al., 1996; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006), sign value or self expression (Higie and Feick, 1988; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985; Roger and Schneider, 1993), and perceived risk (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a).

Moreover, scales of involvement were originally developed to capture both enduring (e.g. Bloch, 1981; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985a; Ratchford, 1987; Tiger, et al., 1976; Zaichkowsky, 1985) and situational involvement forms (e.g. Mittal, 1989; Slama and Tashchian, 1985). Subsequent research, examining the dimensionality of involvement has focused on replicating and validating these existing scales (e.g. Celuch and Evans, 1989; Faihurst, et al., 1989; Jensen, et al., 1989; Jain and Srinivasan, 1990; Kapferer and Laurent, 1993; McQuarrie and Munson, 1990; Mittal, 1995; Pucely, et al., 1988; Shimp and Sharma, 1983; Zaichkowsky, 1994; etc.). Such practice has generated numerous versions of a relatively small number of original scales. The new versions of these scales include many items which are either similar to, or the same as, those in earlier works.

**TABLE 1 STUDIES OF INVOLVEMENT**

Empirical Studies	Type of Involvement Studied	Number of dimensions Identified
Tiger et al (1976)	Fashion involvement	5
Lastovicka and Gardner (1979)	Product involvement	3
Tyebjee (1979)	Product/Task involvement	3
Bloch (1981)	Product class involvement	6
Shimp and Sharma (1983)	Product involvement (based on Bloch 1981)	2
Traylor and Joseph (1984)	Product involvement	1
Zaichkowsky (1985)	Involvement with ad/product (PII <sup>†</sup> )	1
Kapferer and Laurent (1985a)	Product involvement (IP <sup>‡</sup> )	5
Slama and Tashchian (1985)	Purchase involvement	1
McQuarrie and Munson (1986)	Involvement (based on PII)	3
Bloch et al (1986)	Enduring involvement	3
Ratchford (1987)	Involvement	1
Venkatraman (1988)	Enduring/Instrumental involvement	2
Celsi and Olson (1988)	Felt involvement	2
Higie and Feick (1988/9)	Enduring involvement	2
Mittal (1989)	Purchase decision involvement	4
Mittal and Lee (1989)	Product/Brand Decision involvement	6
Jensen et al (1989)	Involvement (based on Lastovicka and Gardner 1979)	4
Jain and Srinivasan (1990)	Involvement (based on PII and IP)	5
McQuarrie and Munson (1991)	Involvement (based on RPII <sup>§</sup> )	2
Edgett and Cullen (1993)	Choice involvement	2
Knox et al (1994)	Enduring/Situational involvement	7
Zaichkowsky (1994)	Involvement with ad (based on PII)	2
Beharrel and Denison (1995)	Purchase involvement ( based on Mittal 1989)	7
Broderick et al (1995)	Involvement	4
Van Trijp et al (1996)	Product involvement	3
Houston and Walker (1996)	Situational involvement (originally based on PII, adapted to a situational context)	1
Kirmani et al. (1999)	Brand involvement	1
Neelamegham and Jain (1999)	Involvement with activity (Movie Watching)	1
Ganesh et al. (2000)	Service involvement	1
Speed and Thompson (2000)	Event involvement	1
Grayson and Shulman (2000)	Involvement with possession	1
Li et al. (2000)	Involvement with activity (study)	1
Keaveney and Parthasarathy (2001)	Service involvement	1 <sup>**</sup>
Baumgartner and Steenkamp (2001)	Product involvement	1
De Wulf et al. (2001)	Product class involvement	1
Cho et al. (2001)	Product involvement	unclear <sup>††</sup>
Kyle et al. (2004)	Enduring leisure involvement	5
Michaelidou and Dibb (2006)	Product involvement (apparel)	2

<sup>†</sup> Refers to Zaichkowsky's personal involvement inventory scale.

<sup>‡</sup> Refers to Kapferer and Laurents' involvement profile scale.

<sup>§</sup> Refers to the revised personal involvement inventory by McQuarrie and Munson (1991).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Further testing is required since the scale appears not to be unidimensional (Brunert et al. 2005).

<sup>††</sup> Bruner et al. (2005) suggest that the dimensionality of the scale is unclear; one of the items included is an indicator of intention.

Furthermore, most involvement research has measured involvement in relation to products, otherwise known as enduring involvement. Situational involvement, which relates to a purchase or decision, has received less attention, despite its value in explaining a range of non-product specific behavior, including searching, taking advantage of sales, browsing catalogs and reviewing direct mail (e.g. Lichtenstein et al. 1995) . Some authors have developed measures for involvement with a purchase decision. Slama and Tashchian (1985), who treat involvement as the relevance of a purchase activity to the individual, have investigated demographic variables which affect such purchase involvement. Mittal (1989) has a different view, considering involvement as the interest and concern that an individual brings to bear on a purchase decision task. Although both of these measures have been specifically developed to capture buying involvement, Slama and Tashchian adopt a non-product specific perspective, while Mittal's four-item scale operates at both the product and brand levels. Mittal's definition of involvement is analogous to Rothschild's (1984) description of situational involvement and also to Richins and Bloch's (1986) "temporal involvement". The notion of interest and concern contained within Mittal's definition involves: 1) the degree of caring about which types and brands of a product to buy, 2) the differences among the types and brands of the product, 3) the importance of the right choice of product and 4) the concern with the outcome of the choice. This operationalization uses four dimensions to measure an individual's situational involvement with the 'choice' of different products or brands rather than the individual's involvement with the product per se. These dimensions comprise degree of care, similarity, importance and risk. The following section discusses how the concept of situational involvement maybe extended.

### **Situational Involvement: Extending the concept of Purchase Decision Involvement**

According to Mittal (1989), purchase decision involvement represents a 'mindset' that allows researchers to capture situational variations in the purchase decision. An example would be an

emergency purchase versus a regular purchase of the same product. Unlike enduring involvement, purchase decision involvement is not always predictive<sup>1</sup> of information search. Thus a routine purchase decision such as the purchase of a chocolate bar is not necessarily described as low involvement, since the consumer may not be indifferent to the choice of brands (Mittal, 1989). Consumers may therefore be aware of differences between alternative brands (e.g. Brand decision involvement, Mittal and Lee, 1989) even for inexpensive products which marketing texts typically classify as low involvement. Consequently, Mittal (1989) suggests that consumers may base these brand decisions on the perceived level of similarity or difference between alternative offerings.

The essence of Mittal's conceptualization of purchase decision involvement is that consumers care about what they buy and are motivated to make the right choice. Purchase decision involvement seems to be affected by the purchase situation. Different purchase situations might include whether an item is being bought routinely, in an emergency, or for a gift. The purchase situation thus affects the extent to which the consumer is motivated to make the right choice. For example, a consumer who buys boxed chocolates as a gift may exhibit a high level of motivation to make the right choice. On the other hand, when the same consumer buys boxed chocolates for their own consumption, the level of motivation may not be so great. In the first situation, the individual may be more concerned and exhibit a higher degree of care over the brand choice. In the second instance, the individual may be relatively indifferent. This implies that the type of purchase may determine the level of motivation to make the right choice, and that this then determines the degree of care taken over the selection. Mittal (1989) tested this proposition using emergency and regular purchase scenarios for different products. The results indicated that individuals show less concern and care in an emergency purchase scenario than in a regular purchase scenario for the same products. Therefore, the purchase situation seems to determine the effort consumers are willing to put in a purchase as well as the types of

promotional references (appeals) what consumers are likely to be receptive to (Kinley et al., 1999; Lockshin et al., 1997).

The degree of interaction among the three factors (type of purchase/purchase situation, level of motivation and care in relation to brand choice) apparently determines the level of purchase involvement and captures any situational variations in behavior (e.g. routine, gift, regular or emergency purchase behavior) [Mittal, 1989]. Consideration of these issues is timely in view of the rising popularity of in-home shopping and the greater shopping channel choice now facing consumers. Given this context, it seems that consumers' brand choice is sometimes affected by the availability of brands within a specific channel, such as a retail store, catalog or the Internet. For example, consumers making online purchases tend to have access to a wider range of brands than those buying through other means. This implies that the shopping channel which consumers select is likely to shape or affect their eventual brand choice. Thus an individual electing to shop for a gift online may do so because this channel offers access to a larger number of alternative brands. This may even result in a brand being chosen which is only available via the Internet. Similarly, consumers may select a particular shopping channel because it enables them to engage in 'trade off' behavior between the range of available brands and convenience. For example, a time-poor individual using catalog or direct mail may do so because these channels enable more efficient shopping within the available time.

It is therefore argued that in particular purchasing situations, shopping channel selection can impact upon brand choice behavior. Specifically, it is suggested that the chosen shopping channel may moderate the level of purchase decision involvement. In other words, shopping channel choice can be considered to *aggravate* situational variations in behavior. Consider the following scenario: When the gift purchase of boxed chocolates via Internet is compared with a similar purchase from a retail store, the level of care and concern displayed by the purchasers may differ. This may reflect differences in involvement levels and in information search



behavior. The implication is that purchase decision involvement may not be bound solely by the situation, but also by the shopping channel which can become part of an individual's decision making process.

### **Figure 1**

The above model depicts the effect of the choice of a channel on the level of motivation and care individuals exercise in particular choice situations (routine, gift) and particular products. Previous research suggests that consumers often consciously identify their preferred shopping mode (or channel) before they decide which brand or product to purchase (Darden, 1980). This proposition, which has remained untested, highlights the potential effect of the channel's role in determining individual levels of decision involvement. Similarly, it highlights a gap in existing conceptualizations of situational involvement which fail to consider the impact of the shopping channel. Future research is needed to examine the concept and measurement of situational involvement, so that this notion of shopping channel can be addressed.

### **Summary**

The paper has presented a review of the extant literature on involvement highlighting major contributions on the field. Involvement represents a major marketing and consumer behavior construct which appears to mediate different behaviors and processes. Three classifications of involvement were presented (Houston and Rothschild, 1978; Laaskonen, 1994; Stone, 1984) which highlight enduring, situational and response types of involvement. Enduring involvement represents the individual's attachment to a product or advertisement while situational involvement focuses on the individual's concern with the purchase of a product. Response

involvement refers to a behavioral orientation which involves information acquisition and decision processes.

Involvement has been measured as a multidimensional construct. Some measures (e.g. Zaichkowsky, 1985) were developed to capture both situational and enduring types of involvement where others focus exclusively on either product (e.g. Bloch, 1981) or purchase situation (e.g. Mittal, 1989; Slama and Tashchian, 1985). Situational involvement has received less attention in consumer research despite its value in explaining non-product specific behavior (e.g. searching and taking advantage of sales, browsing catalogs or direct mail). The concept refers to an individual's temporary concern with the purchase of a particular product determined by 1) the type of purchase (e.g. gift or regular), 2) level of motivation and 3) degree of care as to the choice of brand. The interaction among the three factors determines the level of purchase involvement.

The paper suggests that the choice of the shopping channel may moderate the level of purchase involvement. In other words, shopping channel choice can be considered to aggravate situational variations in behavior thus influencing the level of motivation and degree of care as to the choice of brand (figure 1). However, additional research is required to address the role and moderating effect of the channel on situational involvement.

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<sup>1</sup> Mittal (1989) tested purchase decision involvement for criterion validity. Results showed a relationship between purchase decision involvement and information search.

Figure 1 Channel Choice as a Moderator of Purchase Decision Involvement and Brand Choice

