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CHAPTER 4

SIX MARKETING TYPOLOGIES IN SEARCH OF A CUSTOMER (WITH APOLOGIES TO LUIGI PIRANDELLO)

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Concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system" The "most precise characteristic" of these concepts "is in being what the others are not" (F. de Saussere, 1993 p.117) "Signs function, then, not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position" (F. de Saussere, 1993 p.118)

Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*

Typology: a system used for putting things into groups according to how they are similar: the study of how things can be divided into different types.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

INTRODUCTION

Studying consumer lifestyles and ethnocentrism is a unique way of finding out buyer behavior and market segmentation. This chapter discusses two of the most popular marketing typologies, The Values, Attitudes and Lifestyles (VALS) 1 and 2 typology and the Claritas typology. The methodological issues include measure equivalence and sample equivalence of the segmentation(Lim, Yoo, & Park, 2018; Maciejewski, Mokrysz, & Wróblewski, 2019) basis, segmentation methods employed, and whether national sample sizes should be proportional to population sises (Steenkamp & Ter Hofstede, 2002). It argues that these typologies have certain deficiencies and suggests a different typology, the Grid-Group typology which suggests there are four lifestyles (consumer cultures) that are all in opposition to one another but which shape consumer preferences for members of each culture.

If you think about it, marketers aren't terribly interested in individuals but have preferences are for groups of people who share certain characteristics and who can be targeted by advertising. This The written focuses on how to segment customers' lifestyles based on their consumption data and provides suggestions on which lifestyle groups can be good candidates for certain programs based on the segmentation result (Kwac, Flora, & Rajagopal, 2018). This leads to marketers developing typologies to classify potential customers into different groups. In this essay I will deal with two well-known and influential typologies, The VALS typology (of historic interest), the Claritas typology (still being used), and a third typology with which many marketers may not be familiar, the Grid-Group typology. I will begin with the VALS typology: VALS stands for Values and Life Styles according to the literature strongly approached by authors such as. de acuerdo a la literatura fuertemente abordados s por autores como (Barber & Taylor, 2011; Bruwer, Li, & Reid, 2002; Kesić & Piri-Rajh, 2003; Kesić, Rajh, & Kesić, 2008; Kucukusta & Denizci Guillet, 2016; Pandey, Chawla, & Venkatesh, 2015; Srihadi, Hartoyo, Sukandar, & Soehadi, 2016; Vyncke, 2002; Wicker, Hallmann, Prinz, & Weimar, 2012). In

the markets studied here, these lifestyle segmentations clearly surpass the classic demographic segmentations in terms of obtaining significant differences in terms of evaluation of product attributes or benefits, and therefore the use of tools is indispensable for the achievement of the desired objective (Swenson, Bastian, & Nembhard, 2018).

In previous publications I have already analyzed how consumer cultures place advertising in the communication process and consider the use of sexuality in advertising (Berger, 2011, 2016), political advertising and marketing theory. The marketing discussion deals with the Typology of Values and Lifestyle (VALS) and the typology of Claritas but on this occasion it deals with the following topics(Kahle, Beatty, Homer, Beatty, & Homer, 2019).

Finally, it is important that marketing efforts focus on improving consumer knowledge, as well as ensuring adequate availability (Buitrago-Vera, Escribá-Pérez, Baviera-Puig, & Montero-Vicente, 2016; Choi & Hong, 2017; Hrubá, 2018; Van Huy, Chi, Lobo, Nguyen, & Long, 2019) of inputs for decision making by marketing managers.

The vals (values and life styles) typology

One of the most interesting and influential typologies, developed more than thirty years ago, was the Values and Life Styles Typology, created by SRI International (Levinson & Barron, 2018), a think tank in Menlo Park, California. This typology focuses on values and lifestyles of consumers and argues that there are nine different and distinctive kinds or types of consumers in the United States. Knowing about each of these lifestyles enables advertisers to understand what motivates people and target their appeals to the values and lifestyles of members of each lifestyle/kind of consumer. On this type of interest analysis are referenced in the literature in (Bruwer & Li, 2017; Choi & Hong, 2017; Díaz, Gómez, Molina, & Santos, 2018; Van Huy et al., 2019; Zwolinsky et al., 2016) .

In (1983), Arnold Mitchell, director of the Stanford Research Institute's **Values and Lifestyles (VALS)** program, published *The Nine American Lifestyles: Who We Are & Where We Are Going* (Simpson, Bretherton, & Vere, 2012)*.* In his preface, he makes some interesting points (Kwac et al., 2018):

People's values and lifestyles say a good deal about where we are going, and they help explain such practical, diverse questions as (Bruwer, Roediger, & Herbst, 2017; Ripoll, Alberti, & Panea, 2015; Srihadi et al., 2016): why we support some issues and oppose others; why some people are strong leaders and others weak; why some people are economically brilliant and others gifted artistically—and a few are both; why we trust some people and are suspicious of others; why some products attract us and others don't; why revolutions occur (Jayasankaraprasad & Kathyayani, 2014).

Other studies investigate the psychographic segmentation of urban consumers (Kumar & Sarkar, 2008), based on VALS, using cluster analysis to segment metropolitan consumers in India into six categories of behaviour, namely: Well Established, Fighting, Enjoying, Conservative, Self-Concerned and Realistic. The segments have been profiled in terms of product ownership, activities and interests, financial investment channels and media habits. Implications for marketing.

By the term "values" we mean the entire constellation of a person's attitudes, beliefs, opinions, hopes, fears, prejudices, needs, desires, and aspirations that, taken together, govern how one behaves. We now have powerful evidence that the classification of an individual based on a few dozen attitudes and demographics tells us a good deal about what to expect of that person in hundreds of other domains. Further, the approach often enables us to identify the decisive quality-of-life factor or factors in a person's life (Díaz et al., 2018; Iversen, Hem, & Mehmetoglu, 2016; Jordan, 2006; Vyncke, 2002).

Mitchell (1983) developed what became known as the VALS typology based on a survey that he and his colleagues conducted in 1980. The typology argues that members of each lifestyle share similar values that shape their behaviour, especially as consumers (Abedniya & Zaeim, 2011; Akgün & Yalım, 2015; Verhoeven, Pieterse, & Pruyn, 2006). The advertising industry was extremely interested in the VALS typology (Chang, 2011, 2013; Kumar & Sarkar, 2008; Simpson et al., 2012) because advertisers thought it would help them be more successful in targeting groups of interest to them. It assumes people's values and beliefs shape their purchasing of goods and services.

The nine categories of consumers in the VALS 1 typology are as follows:

- **Survivors:** old, poor, and out of the cultural mainstream.
- **Sustainers:** young, crafty, and on the edge of poverty, want to get ahead in the world.
- **Belongers:** conservative and conventional in their tastes, sentimental, not experimental.
- **Emulators:** upwardly mobile, status conscious, competitive, and distrustful of the establishment. They want to make it big.
- **Achievers**: leaders of society, who have been successful in the professions, in business, and in the government. They have status, comfort, fame, and materialistic values.
- **I-Am-Me's**: young, narcissistic, exhibitionist, inventive, impulsive, and individualistic.
- **Experientials**: an older version of the I-Am-Me's and is concerned with inner growth.
- **Societally Conscious Individuals:** believe in simple living and smallness of scale, and support causes such as environmentalism, consumerism and conservation. This group made up around 28 percent of the adult population in the United States in 1990 and has, perhaps, grown considerably since then.
- **Integrateds**: characterized by psychological maturity, tolerance, assuredness, and a self-actualizing philosophy. Integrateds tend to ignore advertising, and relatively

few advertisements are made to appeal to them. Integrateds make up only around 2 percent of the adult American population, but they are very influential and are disproportionately found among corporate and national leaders. While Integrateds may not be as susceptible to advertising as other groups, their taste in lifestyle products may be highly influential and they may function as what might be described as "taste" leaders.

An example of how VALS was used is a campaign by Merrill Lynch, which had a slogan, "Bullish on America," that showed a herd of bulls and was directed towards Belongers. Merrill Lynch switched its ads and slogan to "A Breed Apart," which showed a lone bull and was directed towards Achievers, who preferred the ad to the "Bullish on America" ones because Achievers see themselves as independent and leaders. In addition, Achievers have much more money to invest than Belongers (Simpson, Bretherton, & De Vere, 2005; Simpson et al., 2012).

The problem with the VALS typology is that it assumes consumer rationality and that people will always purchase products that fit with their values and lifestyles and financial status, but we know that is not always the case. Sustainers may purchase products that one would expect Emulators to buy and Experientials may purchase things that Belongers buy (Tan, Chai, & Min, 2017). That is, poor people sometimes "buy rich" and rich people sometimes "buy poor".

The VALS typologies were based on a survey that SRI conducted in 1980. As Mitchell explains:

The Values and Lifestyle (VALS) typology rests upon data obtained in a major mail survey conducted by VALS in 1980. The survey asked over 800 specific questions on a great range of topics. Sample size exceeded 1600. Respondents constituted a national probability sample of Americans aged eighteen or over living in the forty-eight contiguous states. Statistical analysis of survey results quantified and enriched the basic concepts of the VALS typology and enabled us to provide detailed quantitative and human portraits of the VALS types, together with their activities and consumption patterns (Berger, 2000; Novak, 2015).

It is people's consumption patterns and product preferences that are of most interest to marketers and advertisers but do people's values always, or even often, shape their decisions as consumers? It is doubtful that this is the case (Dees, 1998). Because of problems with the first VALS typology, SRI had to come up with a second VALS typology, but it had its problems as well (Douglas, 1997).

THE CLARITAS TYPOLOGY

These sixty-six categories and their subcategories are shown below:

Y1 Midlife Success
03 Movers & Shakers
08 Executive Suites
11 God's Country
12 Brite Lites, Li'l City
19 Home Sweet Home
25 Country Casuals
30 Suburban Sprawl
37 Mayberry-ville

Y2 Young Achievers
04 Young Digerati
16 Bohemian Mix
22 Young Influentials
23 Greenbelt Sports
24 Up-and-Comers
31 Urban Achievers
35 Boomtown Singles

Y3 Striving Singles
42 Red, White & Blues
44 New Beginnings
45 Blue Highways
47 City Startups
48 Young & Rustic
53 Mobility Blues
56 Crossroads Villagers Family Life

M1 Affluent Empty Nests
01 Upper Crust
07 Money & Brains
09 Big Fish, Small Pond
10 Second City Elite

M2 Conservative Classics
14 New Empty Nests
15 Pools & Patios
21 Gray Power
26 The Cosmopolitans
27 Middleburg Managers
28 Traditional Times

F1 Accumulated Wealth
02 Blue Blood Estates
05 Country Squires
06 Winner's Circle

F2 Young Accumulators
13 Upward Bound
17 Beltway Boomers
18 Kids & Cul-de-Sacs
20 Fast-Track Families
29 American Dreams

F3 Mainstream Families
32 New Homesteaders
33 Big Sky Families
34 White Picket Fences
36 Blue-Chip Blues
50 Kid Country, USA
51 Shotguns & Pickups
52 Suburban Pioneers
54 Multi-Culti Mosaic

F4 Sustaining Families
63 Family Thrifts
64 Bedrock America
65 Big City Blues
66 Low-Rise Living Years

M3 Cautious Couples
38 Simple Pleasures
39 Domestic Duos
40 Close-In Couples
41 Sunset City Blues
43 Heartlanders
46 Old Glories
49 American Classics

M4 Sustaining Seniors
55 Golden Ponds
57 Old Milltowns
58 Back Country Folks
59 Urban Elders
60 Park Bench Seniors
61 City Roots
62 Home

Several years later, a new typology, the Claritas (formerly the Nielsen/Claritas) typology was developed which argues that there are not nine or eight different kinds of consumers in the United States but as many as sixty-six kinds of consumers. Claritas suggests that "birds of a feather flock together" which means that people with the same socio-economic (Chang, 2013; Rhyne, 2011, 2013; Shavitt, Jiang, & Cho, 2016) status and taste level tend to live in areas with the same zip codes. Other categories of consumers may also be found in those zip codes, so a zip code isn't always an indication of a person's socio-economic status but it generally accurate. Claritas uses Zip codes in its research (Berger, 2011).

For example, I live in a zip code with the wealthiest category, the "upper crust," but I am not, by any means, a member of that category.

It is possible for people in the United States to look up their Zip Codes on the Claritas "My Best Segments" web site. The segments for my zip code, 94941, are:

1. Upper Crust
2. Networked Neighbors
3. 03: Movers and Shakers
4. Winner's Circle
5. Gray Power

The Claritas typology gives its sixty-six categories of consumers jazzy names and asserts that knowing about each of the different categories enables marketers and advertisers to target them better. Claritas has a considerable amount of data on members of each group, such as the brand of car they drive, the kind of food they eat, the magazines they read, and so on. In recent years Claritas added group categories, such as YI Midlife Success and F3 Mainstream Families, to the list of categories.

There are problems that arise with all typologies. How do we know whether someone fits in one category rather than another? Is an Urban Elder different from a member of Golden Ponds and does it make that much difference to marketers and advertisers? Claritas argues that it does.

We might ask ourselves, why did Claritas stop at sixty-six kinds of consumers? Where does the ability to categorize Americans into clusters, groupings or categories to generate interesting typologies end? There is an element of invention and imagination (and sometimes a touch of humor) involved in developing typologies and their classification systems and categories; they are intriguing but are they useful? We must remember that the two different VALS typologies came from information provided by one SRI survey.

An study titled Domain-specific market segmentation: a wine-related lifestyle (WRL) approach (Bruwer et al., 2017) demonstrated that market segmentation based on psychographic (lifestyle) behaviour is strengthened when supported by two additional segmentation methods, namely, socio-demographics and product involvement (purchasing and consumption).

The next typology we will consider, Grid-Group theory, argues that its typology is based on social dimensions that generate categories, not imagination and invention, and thus is more useful (Barber & Taylor, 2011; Kucukemiroglu, Harcar, & Spillan, 2006; Spillan, Kucukemiroglu, & de Mayolo, 2007).

GRID-GROUP THEORY

In their book *Cultural Theory,* Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky help us understand what Grid-Group means. They write (Thompson, M., Ellis, R. & Wildavsky, 1990):

Our theory has a specific point of departure: the grid-group typology proposed by Mary Douglas (Douglas, 1997). She argues that the variability of an individual's involvement in social life can be adequately captured by two dimensions of sociality: group and grid. *Group* refers to the extent to which an individual is incorporated into bounded units (Ozanne & Brucoli, 2015). The greater the incorporation, the more individual choice is subject to group determination. *Grid* denotes the degree to which an individual's life is circumscribed by externally imposed prescriptions. The more binding and extensive the scope of the prescriptions, the less of life that open to individual negotiation (Kwac et al., 2018).

The authors also deal with the way typologies and classification systems work and the problems that typologies face. They write (Thompson, M., Ellis, R. & Wildavsky, 1990 p.261):

Any system will organize data—will order terms in classes—but only some classifications will be scientifically useful. That is why we must insist that typologies be based on dimensions that form categories, not on categories themselves. The disadvantage of categories as designations rather than as compounds of at least two dimensions is a loss of explanatory power.

Grid-group theorists argue that unless there is some way to control classifying and category making, it can spin out of control and the categories won't be terribly valuable. And the way to control category-making, they suggest, is to base them on social dimensions which are behind grid-group theory (Li, Zhang, Xiao, & Chen, 2015).

Douglas's theory argues that human beings face two major problems: the first is *identity* and involves an answer to the question "who am I?" and the second involves *behavior* and involves an answer to the question "what should I do?"

- **Identity:** Who am I? Grid Group Boundaries
- **Behavior:** What should I do? Group, Rules and Prescriptions

Let me summarize where we are: We solve the first problem, involving our identities, by belonging to a group that has either weak or strong boundaries and we solve the second problem, involving our behavior, by belonging to a group that has either few or many prescriptions or rules. Douglas calls these groups "lifestyles" and Aaron Wildavsky (Thompson, M., Ellis, R. & Wildavsky, 1990), a political scientist, called them "political cultures." The two dimensions yield four (and only four) categories based on weak or strong boundaries and few or many prescriptions in groups.

Lifestyle	Group Boundares	Many or Few Prescriptions
Elitists	Strong	Numerous and varied
Egalitarians	Strong	Few
Individualists	Weak	Few
Fatalists	Weak	Numerous and varied

Different Grid-Group theorists use different names for the four lifestyles, such as "hierarchical elitists" or "competitive individualists," but the names for the four groups shown above are representative (Hoffmann, Fischer, Schwarz, & Mai, 2013; Khare, 2014; Sarma, 2017; Wei, McIntyre, & Taplade, 2013).

In their book *Culture Theory,* explain how the four lifestyles come about (Thompson, M., Ellis, R. & Wildavsky, 1990 p.6-7): Strong group boundaries coupled with minimal prescriptions produce social relations that are egalitarian. When an individual's social environment is characterized by strong group boundaries and binding prescriptions, the resulting social relations are hierarchical [sometimes known as elitist]. Individuals who are bounded by neither group incorporation nor prescribed roles inhabit an individualistic social context. In such an environment all boundaries are provisional and subject to negotiation. . . . People who find themselves subject to binding prescriptions and are excluded from group membership exemplify the fatalistic way of life. Fatalists are controlled from without.

Individualists and Elitists form the establishment and are the most dominant lifestyles in all modern societies. Egalitarians are essentially critics of the status quo. They stress the fact that everyone has certain needs and try to elevate Fatalists, who generally find themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder. What we must

understand is that our membership in one of these lifestyles plays an all-important role in our lives as consumers. These four lifestyles can be seen as four different consumer cultures operating in the same society and always antagonistic toward one another.

IN DEFENCE OF SHOPPING

Douglas wrote a seminal article, "In Defence of Shopping," in which she argues that (Douglas, 1997 p.23) "cultural alignment is the strongest predictor of preferences in a wide variety of fields." It is membership in one of the four lifestyles, or our cultural alignment, not personal taste or "individual choice" that determines what we consume. The advertisements that lead us to buy certain goods and services must resonate, then, with our lifestyles. She explains how this works. Consumption is not based on personal taste but on our group affiliations. She writes (Douglas, 1997):

We have to make a radical shift away from thinking about consumption as a manifestation of individual choices. Culture itself is the result of myriad choices, not primarily between commodities but between kinds of relationships. The basic choice that a rational individual has to make is the choice of what kind of society to live in. According to that choice, the rest follows. Artefacts are selected to demonstrate that choice. Food is eaten, clothes are worn, cinema, books, music, holidays, all the rest are choices that conform with the initial choice for a form of society (Mccracken, 1986).

By "society" Douglas means lifestyle and once that decision is made, "the rest follows." (Douglas, 1997)

Using the Grid-Group organizing principle, Douglas argues that in every advanced country there are four distinct and mutually antagonistic lifestyles or consumer cultures, even though people who are members of each of the lifestyles may not be aware they belong to one of them. What they are aware of is that they don't like the foods, clothes, films, books, and so on of people from other lifestyles.

This would mean that it wouldn't be demographic/socioeconomic class and discretionary income that is basic in consumption decisions, but lifestyles or membership in one of the four mutually antagonistic consumer cultures. This suggests, then, that there are four publics for marketers to focus their attention on because the consumption decisions that members of a lifestyle make are not based on individual taste but on the hidden imperatives stemming from one's lifestyle.

In principle, every one of the nine or eight VALS groups or sixty-six groups on which Claritas has information will fit into one of the four lifestyles. Shopping, Douglas says is a struggle to *define not what one is but what one is not.* She argues that we know who we are by knowing who we are not. This reminds us of Ferdinand de Saussure's dictum that concepts are differential whose most precise characteristic is in being what others are not. Saussure was one of the founding fathers of semiotics, the science of signs. Advertisements, then, must be designed to appeal to the taste cultures of the members of the different lifestyles and what people in one lifestyle purchase involves the implicit rejection of the tastes of the three other lifestyles. What Mary Douglas reminds us is that, as consumers, we find out who we are by discovering who we aren't and whose taste we don't like(Harvey, Stensaker, Harvey, & Stensaker, 2019).

What this means is that marketers must figure out ways to determine which members of each lifestyle might be most interested in a product they are selling and which ones wouldn't. There are, then, four target audiences/lifestyles/kinds of customers and advertisements must appeal primarily to one of them. The four lifestyles typology is powerful because it rests of the two dimensions that form groups: weak or strong *boundaries* (think, here, of the difference between reform rabbis and Roman Catholic priests) and few or many *rules and prescriptions* (think, here, of Unitarians and Muslims or Orthodox Jews). Grid-group's four lifestyles are based on the two essential dimensions of social life and not the creative imagination of marketers and people from advertising agencies, who can spin jazzy names for groups endlessly but whose efforts may not, in the final analysis, be very helpful to marketers (Darroch, 2014; Tan et al., 2017; Verma, 2017).

Consumers seek to avoid dissonance (making choices that are not congruent with their lifestyle imperatives) and seek reinforcement (making choices that are affirmed by their lifestyles) and Grid-Group theory explains why this is the case and asserts that it is cultural alignments, as she puts it, that determines our preferences as consumers, not individual taste (Lamont, Lareau, Theory, & Autumn, 1988). This theory may have the benefit of being scientifically valid, but whether it solves the problem of determining why people buy the things they buy better than other typologies is open to question (Kumar & Sarkar, 2008). A friend of mine who works in marketing told me that all typologies are a waste of time and companies that want to sell things to people would do better to consult a semiotician, who can tell them how people find meaning in signs and symbols and create a campaign that will work. He is, I should add, a semiotician (Thompson, M., Ellis, R. & Wildavsky, 1990).

It may be that nobody knows why people act the way they do, and that marketers and advertisers have to live with the fact that as one famous advertiser put it, "fifty percent of money spent on advertising is wasted, but we don't know which fifty percent is the money that is wasted."

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