**Evaluation**

**What strategies do marketers utilise that target human psychological cognition in order to change consumer behaviour and should these techniques be considered as manipulative?**

**Summary**

My strong passion for studying psychology motivated me to investigate the ways in which marketers manipulate human psychological cognition to change consumer behaviour. Interviews with marketing and psychology professionals and academic papers and texts provided integral information on the ethical debate concerning manipulative marketing and the ways in which each marketing strategy operates and has influence on consumer behaviour. Through extensive research I concluded that marketers create strategies which target programmed responses learnt from childhood and the way the human brain functions and processed information to change consumer behaviour. I chose to present my Outcome in an psychology magazine article format as it appealed to my target audience of the public who are somewhat educated in psychology. The format permitted me to discuss individual marketing strategies, whilst still being able to connect and involve my readers which was fundamental to me as my purpose was to inform others so that they could avoid future manipulation and deception caused by the marketing industry. (**150 words**)

**Evaluation of the Research Processes Used**

I obtained relevant and reliable information on my chosen topic through a variety of research processes. Books, interviews and blogs were pivotal research processes as they possessed content concerning psychologically manipulative marketing strategies and the ethical debate on manipulative marketing which was integral to effectively answer my question.

Blogs written by *Ginney Mineo,* *William Klemm* and *Preston Ni* were essential starting points in my research journey. [[1]](#footnote-1) [[2]](#footnote-2) [[3]](#footnote-3) Although providing basic information, the blogs were highly relevant, significantly developing my knowledge in identifying the signs of manipulation and the basic marketing principals used in the marketing industry. Information obtained from these blogs focused my attention to manipulative marketing strategies which specifically targeted psychological cognition. Blogs were beneficial in gaining a broad understanding of my topic, as they were easily accessible online, easy to comprehend and were plentiful, however also provided an insight to how professionals and the public feel towards these techniques. Blogs were significant in the refinement of my question, as they helped to pin-point my interests and narrow my research to more specific content. This lead me to form my current question. Disappointingly all blogs possessed an unbalanced opinion toward the utilisation of specific marketing techniques and all conveyed a negative tone. This was an issue, as I desired to create a relatively objective Outcome, however was unable to find blogs and other sources supporting psychologically manipulative marketing. Due to the subjectivity of blogs, information within the blogs could be somewhat unreliable, especially if not corroborated. Fortunately, much of the content within the blogs could be corroborated and cross-referenced with other sources I obtained, such as books, educational websites and interviews. Most authors proved to be qualified professionals in the fields of psychology and marketing, therefore improving the reliability of the information within the blogs. After obtaining elementary information from online blogs, I furthered my research by reading books written by marketing and psychology professionals. This is because I lacked information regarding the mechanics of each marketing strategy.

I consulted with books due to their reasonably objective and sophisticated content which explained in detail how each technique operates, something which was not present within the blogs I had previously assessed. *The Advertising Effect* was integral to my key findings, possessing high reliability and relevance to my topic.[[4]](#footnote-4) The book contributed to and created the key findings of specific marketing techniques and how they affect consumers and why they are considered as manipulative. The book was written by consumer psychologist, Adam Ferris founder of Naked Communications, Australia’s most successful marketing agency. Due to his qualifications, the information presented in his book, was reliable for me to draw upon in my Outcome. The source educated me in the marketing strategies which utilise psychology to influence consumer behaviour including: modelling, evocation, collectivism, reframing and commitment. These findings were imperative to my research, as allowed me to answer the question, *‘which marketing strategies target psychological cognition to change consumer behaviour?’* with comprehensive evidence. Despite the source’s usefulness, the opinion expressed within the book towards the ethicalness of these strategies was significantly biased, as Ferrier presented a one-sided view on the issue. I countered this with the opposing opinions of marketer, Drew Whitman, who deemed the same strategies as not being manipulative.[[5]](#footnote-5) Conversely, textbooks were reasonably objective, stating facts rather than expressing opinion, which aided my final decision as to whether psychologically driven marketing was manipulative or not. Although the textbooks were relevant, they somewhat lacked in validity. This is due to overly broad content which mostly did not relate to the strategies discussed in the books by Ferrier and Whitman. However, they allowed me to understand psychological and marketing terminology which was essential to understand more sophisticated sources. The information obtained from the textbooks and books significantly prepared me for interviews with marketing and psychology professionals and navigated the questions discussed within the interviews. This is because the knowledge I possessed before reading the texts was not sufficient enough to conduct interviews with professionals. Only through the knowledge attained from the books was I able to truly understand my topic and prepare for more sophisticated content discussed within interviews.

I conducted five interviews with marketing and psychology professionals as I had not yet collected primary sources which is an integral part in effectively answering any research question. These interviews provided me with subjective opinions which contributed to my understanding of whether marketing strategies can be manipulative. Prior to these interviews I did not have an adequate amount of evidence to conclude whether certain marketing strategies were manipulative. Interviews with Craig Chidgey, Claire Codrington and Carolyn Macleod were significant in providing information towards my key findings of the use of emotion, modelling and central and peripheral routes of persuasion in marketing. [[6]](#footnote-6) [[7]](#footnote-7) [[8]](#footnote-8) Interviews with marketers Linda Parbs and Reed Brown were not relevant and did not provide integral information as I changed my research focus after conducting these interviews. [[9]](#footnote-9) [[10]](#footnote-10) To adhere ethical considerations when conducting interviews, I created and distributed consent forms to all interviewees, asking for their permission to use their name and information discussed within the interview within my Outcome. Overall, the interviews were extremely valid as they allowed me to discuss and confirm information concerning the psychology behind specific techniques, how they operate and are used, and whether professionals within the industry had an opinion on the ethics of manipulative marketing.

**Evaluate decisions made in response to challenges and/or opportunities**

A significant challenge I faced was trying to obtain the most relevant and useful information from lengthy books within a limited time-period. *The Advertising Effect* and *Cashvertsing* possessed information which was directly related to my topic, therefore obtaining information from these sources was very important to my research journey. [[11]](#footnote-11) [[12]](#footnote-12) The books challenged me to draw back upon my new knowledge on marketing and psychology, in order to truly comprehend what was discussed within the books. To overcome the challenge of collecting large quantities of information from these sources within the time frame, I first skimmed over the books and took note of relevant subheadings. I then browsed over the appropriate headings and only stated key findings from each point in my Findings Chart. By locating and taking notes on the most relevant sections of the books, I was able to reduce the time taken to complete the source and was able to move on to corroborating information within the books with other research processes. Without utilising this strategy, it would have taken me over a week to read each book, which was unrealistic in terms of my deadline. Another time related challenge I encountered was trying to schedule interviews within times that suited both the interviewee and myself. Professionals were often busy which was difficult to arrange an interview time into my year 12 schedule. To overcome the conflicting timetables, I remained flexible, and arranged interviews during Research Project lessons and studies and after school, to avoid clashing with other year 12 subjects. This process worked quite well and allowed me to obtain imperative information and contacts. I was given the opportunity to contact Reed Brown, through Carolyn Macleod who had connections to his company, KWP Advertising. It was an unexpected but exciting opportunity which I decided to pursue. The interview gave me the opportunity to learn about his industry and receive the contact details of one of his colleges also at KWP. Regretfully, I did not take this opportunity or other opportunities to meet with potential interviewees due to the conflict in schedules and looming deadline. This was unfortunate as these interviews may have improved my research in identifying the most successfully used marketing strategies and understanding the positive and negative uses of manipulative marketing.

**Evaluate the quality of the research outcome**

I believe that my Outcome has achieved the intended purpose to educated and protect the public from the manipulative strategies used by the marketing industry. The purpose was achieved through an informative and inclusive psychology magazine article which connected to the target audience and expressed complex marking strategies with simple terminology and relatable exemplars. Despite my Outcome’s ability to fulfil its purpose, in terms of the psychology and marketing fields of extensive knowledge, my Outcome was unable to contribute any new findings to the industry. This is because I discussed principles already prominent in marketing, however are unrecognised by the public. The evidence used within my Outcome was derived primarily from subjective primary and secondary sources. Due to the subjectivity of the sources collected, I was required to ensure that cross-referencing was achieved. The nature of my question gave rise to a significant amount of subjective information as there is an ethical association with manipulative marketing. Thus, I was unable to present a reasonably objective representation of the topic, which limited the balanced view presented to my audience. Overall, I was able to answer my question to the best of my abilities through a diverse range of primary and secondary comprehensive research. If I had attained interviews with professionals who specifically use the techniques mentioned in my Outcome and collected sources with a positive opinion towards manipulative marketing, I could have more effectively answered my question.

**Word Count: 1500**

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