



# Consumer Behavior: Psychological Factors

WEEK 4 | CHB1203 PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING

"To create effective products and communications, you must understand why consumers buy."

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# Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

## **Explain**

The four psychological factors that influence consumer behavior

## **Apply**

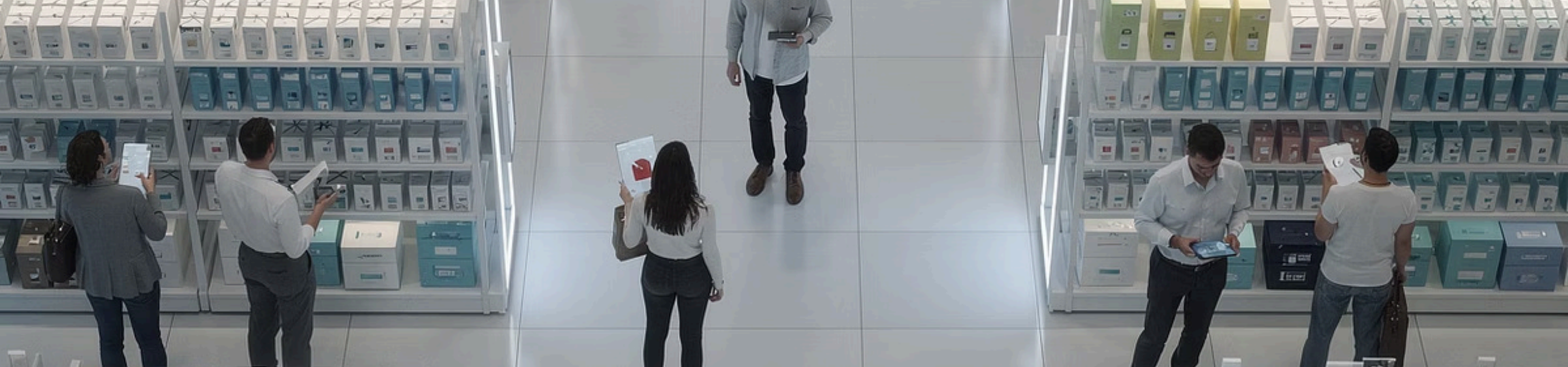
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to real marketing situations

## **Analyze**

How perception, learning, and attitudes shape buying decisions

## **Connect**

Psychological concepts to real brands in Asia and globally



# Quick Recap: What Influences Consumers?

Before we dive in, let's revisit the **four major categories** that shape every purchase decision. Today we zoom into the most intimate layer—what happens *inside* the buyer's mind.

## Cultural

Culture, Subculture, Social Class



## Social

Reference Groups, Family, Roles


## Personal

Age, Occupation, Lifestyle, Personality



## Psychological

Motivation, Perception, Learning, Beliefs & Attitudes

 **Focus today:** The psychological layer—what happens *inside the buyer's mind*, invisible to marketers yet extraordinarily powerful.



# The Four Psychological Factors

These four forces operate inside the consumer's mind — the so-called "**Black Box**" — shaping every purchase decision in ways that are often invisible to marketers but deeply predictable.

1

## Motivation

What drives the need?

2

## Perception

How do they interpret information?

3

## Learning

How does experience change behavior?

4

## Beliefs & Attitudes

What do they think and feel about the product?

Together, these factors determine **what** consumers buy, **when** they buy, and **why** they remain loyal — or switch to a competitor.



## What is motivation?

A need that is *sufficiently pressing* to direct a person to seek satisfaction. Motivation is the engine behind every purchase—but the real reason is often hidden beneath the surface.



**Marketers must uncover the deeper motivation, not just the stated reason.**

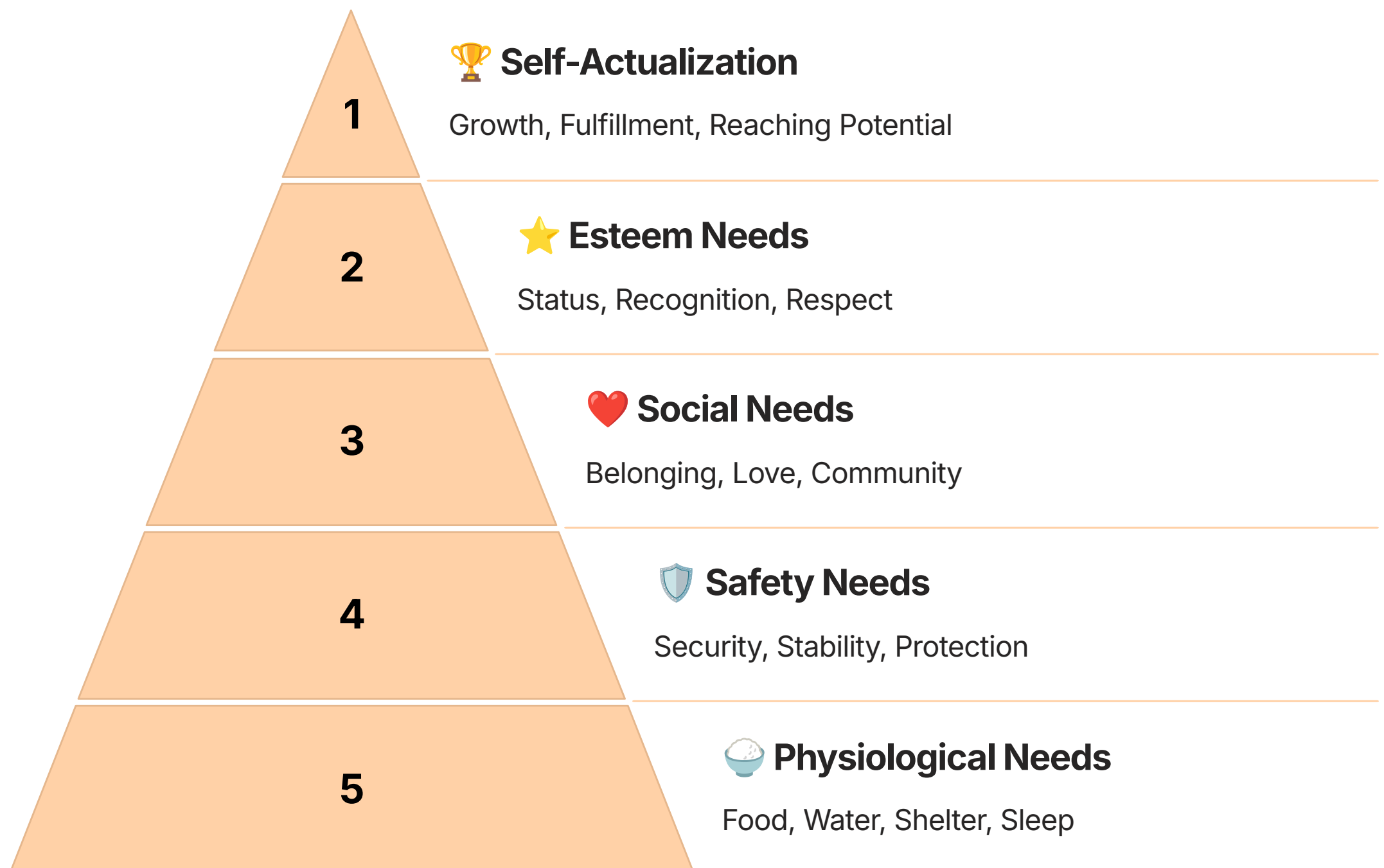
## Surface vs. Deep Motivation

What Consumers Say	What They Really Mean
"I like the feel of wind in my hair."	"I want to feel young and free again."
"I need a functional laptop."	"I want to signal I'm a professional."
"I'm buying running shoes."	"I want to be seen as athletic and healthy."



# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy—people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to higher-order ones. Marketers use this framework to understand **what level of need** their product addresses, such as whether it fulfills basic physiological needs, safety needs, social belonging, esteem, or self-actualization.










**Marketing insight:** Products satisfy needs at every level — from instant noodles (physiological) to luxury bags (esteem). The key is knowing *which level* your brand speaks to.



# Maslow in Action: Thai & Global Brands

Every product on the shelf targets a specific level of the hierarchy. Here's how well-known brands in Thailand and globally map to Maslow's framework:

Need Level	Product Example	Marketing Message
 Physiological	Mama Instant Noodles	Quick, affordable nourishment
 Safety	AIA Life Insurance	"Protect what matters most"
 Social	LINE Messaging App	Stay connected with everyone
 Esteem	Louis Vuitton	Signals status and achievement
 Self-Actualization	Duolingo / MasterClass	"Become the best version of you"

  **Think:** Which level of Maslow's hierarchy does *your* favorite brand target? Is the messaging aligned with that need level?



# Perception: Seeing is Not Always Believing

**Definition:** The process by which people **select, organize, and interpret** information to form a meaningful picture of the world. Two people can see the same ad and take away completely different messages.

## 1. Selective Attention

Consumers are overrun with thousands of stimuli daily—they filter out most of it. Your ad must *stand out* immediately, or it will be ignored entirely.

## 2. Selective Distortion

People interpret information to fit their existing beliefs. A loyal customer will defend their brand even when presented with contradictory evidence—brand *reputation shapes perception*.

## 3. Selective Retention

People remember messages that support what they already believe. Consistent brand communication reinforces memory and long-term recall—consistency *is key*.



# Perception in Real Life

## Premium vs. Economy Water

Evian vs. local bottled water—same product category, vastly different perception. Price point, premium packaging, and celebrity endorsements shift the consumer's perception of **quality and lifestyle**, even when the core product is functionally identical.

## Smartphone Unboxing

Apple's minimalist white packaging creates a perception of **premium quality** and craftsmanship before the consumer even touches the device. The unboxing *is* part of the product experience.

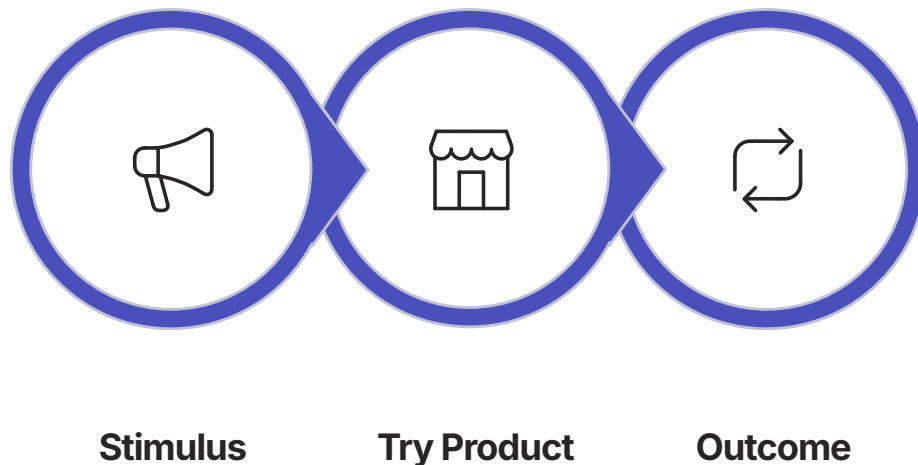
## For Marketers: Shape Perception Intentionally

- Use **color, design, and messaging** to signal the right brand values
- First impressions create **lasting mental images**—get the details right
- Price itself is a perception cue—higher price often implies higher quality
- Consistency across all touchpoints reinforces brand trust



# Learning: Experience Shapes Behavior

**Definition:** Changes in an individual's behavior arising from **experience**. Every time a consumer interacts with your brand, they are learning—and that learning shapes whether they return.



## Marketing Implications

- **Sampling campaigns** create direct positive experiences that build first-time trials.
- **Loyalty programs** reinforce learned behavior—buy more, earn rewards, keep returning
- **Reviews and ratings** allow consumers to "learn" vicariously from others' experiences



**Example:** Shopee and Lazada review systems leverage *social learning*—millions of consumers rely on peer reviews before purchasing.



# Beliefs and Attitudes

## What is a Belief?

A **descriptive thought** a person holds about something — based on knowledge, opinion, or faith. It may or may not carry an emotional charge.

"Brand X uses high-quality ingredients."

## What is an Attitude?


A person's consistently **favorable or unfavorable evaluations**, feelings, and tendencies toward an object or idea. Attitudes are emotionally charged and deeply ingrained.

"I love Brand X — it's the only one I trust."

## Why This Matters for Marketers

- Attitudes are **hard to change** — smart marketers work *with* them, not against them
- Building **positive associations early** leads to long-term brand loyalty
- Cultural attitudes shape entire product categories and purchasing norms

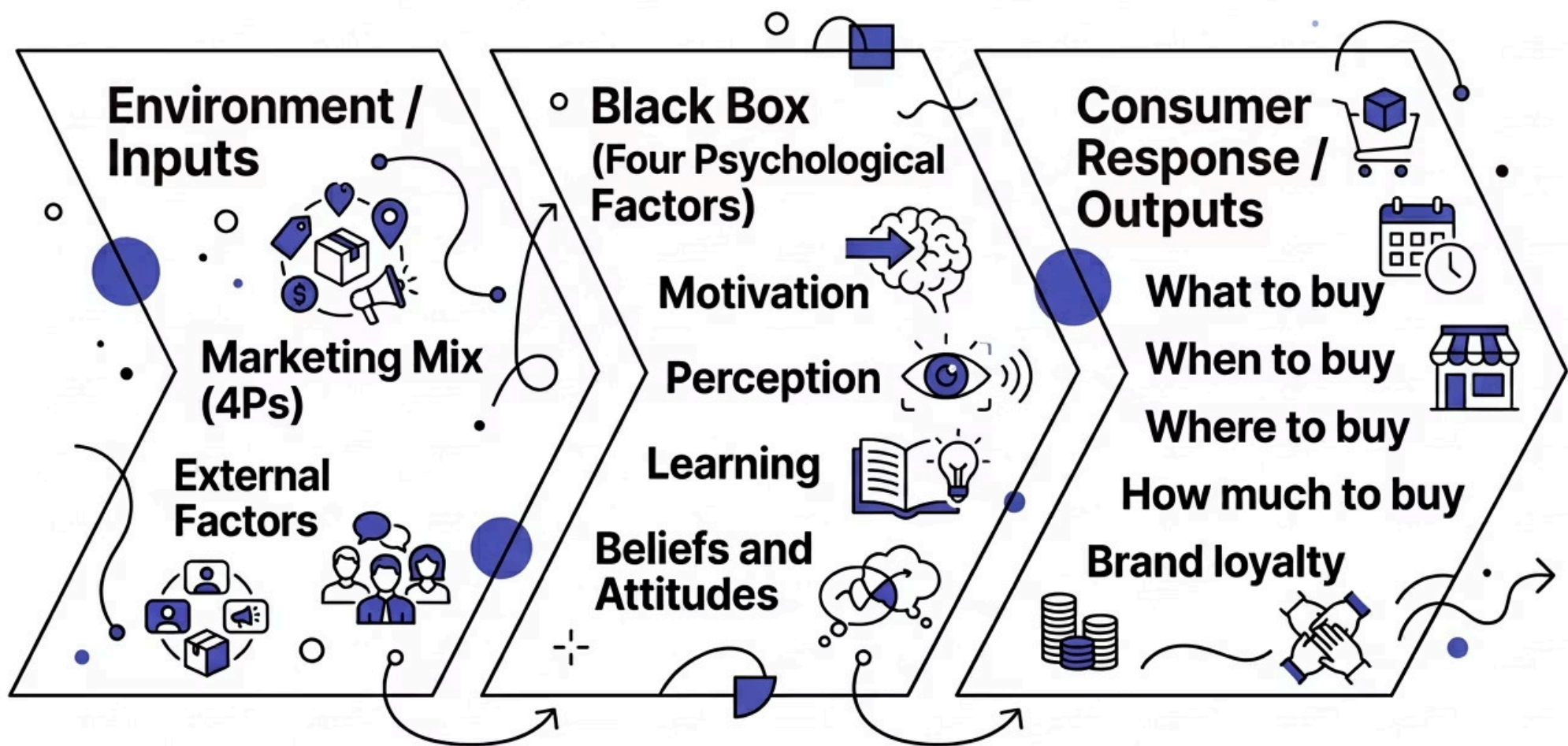


 **Asian Context:** Growing health-consciousness has driven functional beverage brands like **Yakult, Pocari Sweat**, and vitamin-enriched waters to massive success across Southeast Asia.



# The Full Picture: The Black Box Model

Kotler's "**Black Box**" model illustrates how marketing inputs and external factors enter the consumer's mind and produce observable outputs — but the internal process remains hidden from marketers.









❏ **Key insight:** Marketers can influence the *inputs*—but the psychological factors inside the black box ultimately determine the *output*. Understanding psychology is how you predict behavior.



# Real-World Connection: Why Do People Buy Starbucks?

Starbucks is one of the world's most psychologically sophisticated brands. Let's apply all four factors to understand why millions of people pay a premium for a cup of coffee they could make at home.

Factor	Starbucks Example	Strategic Implication
 Motivation	—social	Sell the experience, not the product
 Perception	Green logo, warm interior, barista writing your name = quality & personal	Every touchpoint shapes perception
 Learning	Rewards programs encourage return visits; seasonal drinks build anticipation	Reinforce behavior with rewards
 Beliefs & Attitudes	"Starbucks = premium experience"—a strongly held, widely shared belief	Build belief early; defend it consistently

  **Bottom line:** Starbucks doesn't sell coffee—it sells a *psychological experience* carefully engineered across all four factors.



# Group Discussion: 5 Minutes

THINK — PAIR — SHARE

**Choose a brand you use regularly** (food, app, clothing, beverage, etc.) and answer these questions with a partner. Be ready to share with the class!



## Motivation

What need does this brand fulfill for you? Is there a *deeper* motivation beneath the surface?



## Perception

What does the brand's design, packaging, or ads make you *feel*? What associations come to mind?



## Learning

Did a past experience — good or bad — shape how you feel about or use this brand today?



## Attitude

How would you describe your overall attitude toward this brand in just one sentence?





# Key Takeaways

Here's what every marketer — and every student in this room — should walk away understanding today:

→  **Motivation**

Drives all purchasing behavior. Surface reasons often mask deeper psychological needs. Use Maslow's hierarchy to identify which level your product addresses.

→  **Perception**



Shaped by selective attention, distortion, and retention. Design, price, and consistency all send powerful perceptual signals to consumers.

→  **Learning**

Every brand interaction is a learning opportunity. Positive experiences build loyalty; negative ones drive consumers away — sometimes permanently.

→  **Beliefs & Attitudes**

Powerful and difficult to change. Smart marketers align their messaging with existing consumer attitudes rather than fighting against them.

  **Core Insight:** Consumers don't always *know* why they buy — but marketers who understand psychology can predict and influence behavior with remarkable precision.



# References & Further Learning

## Core Textbook

Kotler & Armstrong — *Principles of Marketing*

Chapter: **Consumer Markets and Consumer Buyer Behavior** — your primary reference for exam preparation and case study work.

## Recommended Viewing

- TED Talk: "*The puzzle of motivation*" — Dan Pink
- YouTube: Search "*Maslow's Hierarchy explained*" for visual summaries and animated breakdowns

## Thai & ASEAN Context

Observe how leading regional brands apply psychological insights in their campaigns and customer experience design:

### Grab

Loyalty & convenience

### Central Group

Esteem & lifestyle

### SCG & CP Group

Trust & safety

"The consumer is not a moron; she is your wife." — **David Ogilvy**



# Activity 2: Consumer Psychology

## Interview

Apply today's concepts to a real brand scenario. You'll work in pairs to analyze consumer motivation, perception, learning, and attitudes in action.

- Select any shop located in our university
- Go to that shop and interview 1 customer about his/her motivation, perception, learning and attitudes toward your selected brand
- Summarize the facts you found and identify which level of Maslow's hierarchy that customer is
- Write what you've found on Padlet by 12.00 (12 March 2026)

Padlet

### Activity 2: Consumer Psychology Interview

Padlet

#### Activity 2: Consumer Psychology Interview

Interview a customer about his or her motivations, perceptions, learning, and attitudes toward your selected...

The screenshot shows a Padlet board with a light green background. At the top left, the word 'Padlet' is written in red. Below it, the title 'Activity 2: Consumer Psychology Interview' is displayed in black. The board contains several colorful illustrations: a tree and a treehouse, a landscape with mountains and a river, and a small house. At the bottom left, there is a Padlet logo and the text 'Activity 2: Consumer Psychology Interview' followed by a description: 'Interview a customer about his or her motivations, perceptions, learning, and attitudes toward your selected...'. A share icon is visible on the right side of the board.

