

ABSTRACT

Marketing services requires identification of consumer's perceptions of salient attributes for positioning. Personal constructs (Kelly 1963) are at the core of consumers' determination of the degree to which attributes exist within phenomenon. Using Kelly's notion of personal constructs, this paper proposes a conceptual framework from which intangible attributes can be "tagged" to tangible signs.

Personal Constructs: Their Use in the Marketing of Intangible Services

Robert C. Lewis
David M. Klein

INTRODUCTION

The conceptual literature on services marketing is consistent in at least one respect: services are intangibles. In fact, "The idea of intangibility is one of the few fairly stable generalizations that can be made with respect to services" (Liechty & Churchill, 1979, p. 509). From Shostack (1977) to Booms and Bitner (1982), the notion that intangible services mandate tangible evidence in market

positioning has been often quoted, cited, and reiterated. The literature, however, does not so far contain a conceptual foundation for that premise. The purpose of this paper is to place the marketing of intangible services in a conceptual framework that mandates tangible evidence in positioning and has implications for services marketing strategies and segmentation.

STRATEGIES FOR INTANGIBLE SERVICES

Consensus on tangible/intangible aspects of goods and services has not led to consensus on the need for different marketing strategies for each of these categories. Some contend that, while intangibility may be characteristic of services, it is not unique to services, cannot be generalized to all services, and in marketing terms does not differentiate services from manufactured goods (Wyckham *et al.* 1975). Others argue that buyers

purchase neither tangible objects nor intangible features; rather, they purchase a bundle of benefits—a product; . . . strategy formulation for a product does not depend solely upon the relative proportion of tangible and intangible elements in the product bundle. The call for unique services marketing strategies is logically inconsistent with . . . defining the product as a bundle of benefits (Enis and Roering 1981, pg. 1).

There is a body of literature, however, that suggests services marketing differs from goods marketing and involves different strategy implications. Shostack (1981) states that, while services and goods are symbiotically linked, they are different and the difference is more than semantic. Booms and Bitner (1981) argue that marketing strategies for services are more complex than those for goods because the intangible nature of services defies definition. Zeithaml (1981) proposes alternative marketing strategies based on consumers' different evaluation processes in selecting intangible services. Dubinsky and Levy (1981) present empirical findings that consumer search behavior varies because of services' intangibility. Finally, Booms and Bitner (1982) recommend environmental strategies to provide tangible clues to sell services.

All products (goods and services) are positioned somewhere on a tangible/intangible continuum (Shostack 1977). The implications for marketing intangibles, *regardless* on the commonalities between the marketing of intangible products and product intangibles, says Levitt (1981), derive from asking consumers to buy intangible promises. The greater the degree of intangibility in the product and the less the ability of the consumer to test or experience the product in advance, the bigger the promise. "Promises, being intangible, have to be 'tangibilized' in their presentation . . . Metaphors and similes become surrogates for the tangibility that cannot be provided or experienced in advance" (p. 39).

In a practical application of these arguments, Lewis (1981) postulated three essential elements in suggesting a strategy for positioning hotels: (1) marketers

need to communicate a unique benefit image; (2) this image needs to be supported by tangible clues; and (3) information needs to be directed at a well defined target group.

Inherent in Lewis' proposal as well as those of Levitt, Shostack, Dubinsky, and Booms and Bitner are two implicit assumptions: first, that the intangible benefits a consumer construes can be discerned by the marketer; and secondly, that once benefits have been determined, they can be "tagged" to appropriate tangible signs manifest in the phenomenon.

RATIONALE

Within the last few decades, students of consumer behavior have witnessed a host of underlying "theories" that serve as the primary focus for research. Included in these have been proponents (in historical force) of rational economic models of consumptive behavior, irrational ($\text{Attitude} = f(\text{Behavior})$) motivational models, and most recently the information-processing approach, which attempts a type of fusion of the rational-irrational paradox in a decisionmaking model.

Consistently across these periods, however, have been a number of approaches which seek to explain phenomenon not readily included in the traditional paradigms. Most recently, Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) description of the experiential aspects of consumption or Dhir and Chandrasekar's (1984) study of consumer subjectivity and judgement address issues which have not been developed in any explanatory sense in the prevailing paradigm.

Specifically, the above-mentioned research focuses on the relationship between the consumer and phenomenon (e.g., an ad, a service) and the emergent qualities of interpretation. According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), consumers imbue a product with a subjective meaning that supplements the concrete attributes it possesses. The greater the degree of subjectivity involved in the interpretation of phenomena (e.g., in services, the greater the valence of intangibility), the greater the potential for more idiosyncratic processing.

Logically then, a research paradigm needs to be advanced which will capture the elegance of idiosyncratic processing while affording the researcher a degree of commonality from which clusters or segments may be derived.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a conceptual framework from which intangible attributes can be "tagged" to tangible signs. Phenomenology will serve as the meta- and personal construct theory (Kelley, 1963), the theoretical springboard for this thesis.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kelley (1963) defines personal constructs as transparent templates which humans create, synthesize, and then attempt to fit over certain realities which they face. Personal constructs are devices which individuals use to interpret or make

sense out of that which they confront and, vis-à-vis information processing, to relate those images to other images which are stored in their active memory. It is through the use of personal constructs that a person seeks to make his or her world manageable, predictable, and orderly. Thus, marketing researchers' attempts to identify the various characteristics, qualities, and attributes that underlie people's "attitudes," for instance, find meaning when they are interpreted through the perceived realities determined by personal constructs.

The constructs themselves are developed through a phenomenologically based system of correlating and differentiating signs. This system, which is fundamental to most developmental psycholinguistic information-processing theories, demands three elements for any construct to exist; two which are similar, and a third which is differentiated. As an example, if we take an attribute such as personal service, an individual may perceive two companies as being "too large" to supply personal service, while the third is "right-sized." In this instance, we would know that, in the selection of a particular hospitality service, the consumer's selection on the attribute "service" was determined in part by the construct "large-small."

Since this is the construct used to aid in the perception of reality (indeed to test it) consumers will validate their construct systems by interpreting the hotel's performance based upon the same continuum. Here, Kelly likens personal constructs to templates which an individual imposes over phenomenon. It is imperative that the reader understands that, regardless of what might exist in the "reality" of the phenomenon (that hotel #1 may be large and *still* render better service), it is the consumer's construct system which ultimately defines the reality (refer to Figure 1).

Constructs are used to validate the perceived reality. If one is *unable* to validate his/her perceptions, or if the outcome is negative, constructs are revised. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptualization of personal constructs acting as filters for perceptions and as templates for perceived reality. Note that perception is a function of personal constructs. In the case of intangible services, perceptions are dependent upon tangible clues which are filtered through the personal constructs.

The implications of personal constructs for marketing strategy are particularly instructive for the marketing of service intangibles. Constructs of tangible goods are relatively easy to determine. It is possible to determine consumers' constructs for a car and how the car should perform. It is even possible to determine constructs for why people don't buy certain cars. Such constructs lend themselves to marketing and segmentation strategies for automobile manufacturers and the use of intangible concepts to market tangible dominant entities as Shostack (1977) has pointed out. But it is far more difficult to determine consumers' constructs for the intangibility of a waiter's service, the "color" of a restaurant's atmosphere, or how fast a dinner should be served. Again, as Figure 2 suggests, tangible clues that are reflected in consumers' perceptions of reality through their personal constructs are needed to market intangible services.

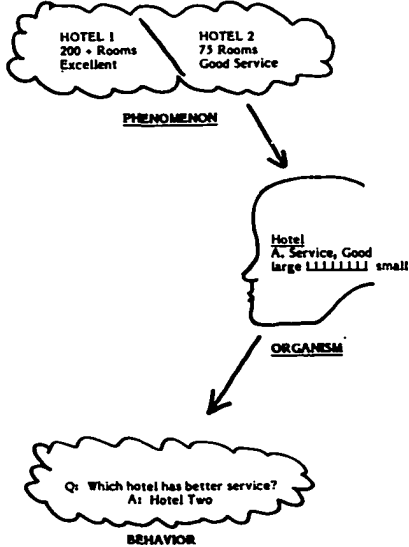
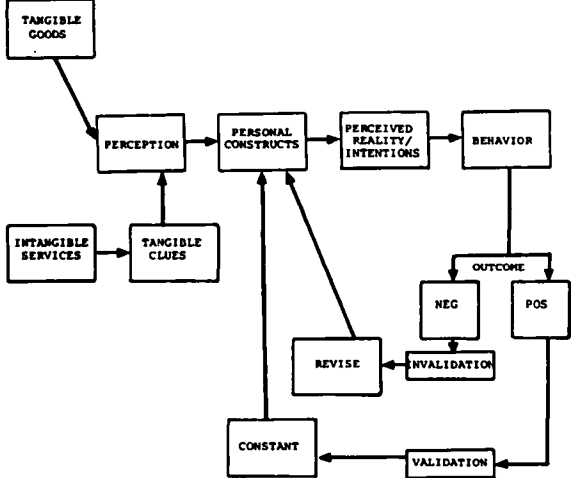


Figure 1.
Model of Phenomenon-Organism-Behavior Relationship in Perception.

Consider some examples of positioning intangible services with metaphorical substitutes as surrogates to influence reality perception. Merrill Lynch has tangibilized investment services with a bull walking gingerly through a china shop. Prudential Insurance promises solidarity and endurance with the Rock of Gibraltar. Marriott Hotels promise convenience with a hotel "right in the middle of things." Stanford Court Hotel promises the "subtle differences" with patisserie, a Rolls Royce, or an antique clock. And Hertz promises quick, dependable service with O.J. Simpson. These surrogates become the tangible or metaphorical clues that consumers process through personal constructs to determine perceived realities.

With constructs fitted, the consumer predicts a strong but cautious hand on investments at Merrill Lynch. The rock of Gibraltar is translated into care for a family after death. The risk of paying \$140 to spend a night at the Stanford Court is assessed against finding the atmosphere and attention for which one is paying. When reality equals expectation, the constructs are validated as shown in Figure 2. But if the Marriott Hotel turns out to be a \$10.00 taxi ride from where one has



Note: Arrows indicate direction of interpretation

Figure 2.

Personal Constructs as Filters and Templates Leading to Behavior.

Note: Arrows indicate direction of interpretation.

to do business, the attribute of convenience would not be validated. The construct is revised or replaced with a new one which determines that Marriott does not fall under the positive end of the attribute convenience, the underlying construct being close-far.

The trick to marketing intangibles then is to find the reality perceived by the consumer which is determined by the construct that is fashioned from his or her needs and wants and interpreted through the perceptions of tangible evidence. It is important to note that the relation of a construct over its reality perception is deterministic (See Figure 2). The perceived reality does not determine the construct; the construct determines the perceived reality, i.e., we need to understand the use of constructs in order to position the "reality," or phenomenon.

Theorists of consumer behavior agree that consumer choice is a process (Bettman, 1980). The process operates as a means to an end in a way a person chooses to anticipate what will happen. When choosing to purchase an intangible service, this process involves determining an anticipated reality from tangible clues through an intangible attribute.

If a tangible clue is not available, the consumer is faced with a dilemma—an attempt to construe one's own tangible metaphor, simile, or analog or, failing this, the consumer may abandon the process and/or search for a substitute. Or, one may simply abandon the process in the first place. Most important for marketers is the essentiality of tangible clues so that the individual has a means of interpretation and prediction.

Consider a simple hypothetical example: "The Friendly Bank" is the sole (positioning) statement for a bank. Without prior knowledge or experience with that bank, the intangible attribute "good service" is the only thing available to the prospective customer. There is no tangible clue that can be used to predict an anticipated reality of friendliness from the bank. The bank has promised a benefit, but failed to furnish any tangible evidence that creates an image and differentiates the bank from the product class of ubiquitous "friendly banks."

Suppose that the bank charges its copy to "We Provide Service with a Smile." A smile is a tangible clue which is interpreted by the construct friendly—unfriendly. A predictable, promised, intangible benefit emerges into a perceived reality. An image is created and differentiation occurs from other "friendly" banks. The reality of an intangible benefit, *friendliness*, is predicted from the construct interpretation of a tangible clue, *smile*. Instead of compounding an abstraction, the new phrase predicts a perceived reality determined by a personal construct which subsumes *smile* as a reality of *friendly*.

The choice process for an intangible service involves three steps: first, search for the attribute that is meaningful and predictive for that service "good service"; secondly, search for the appropriate constructs underlying "good service" (e.g., friendly—unfriendly); and finally, search for tangible clues (smile) which are filtered by the construct to determine perceived reality. The implications for services marketing are clear. Marketing strategy must encompass tangible clues of meaningful constructs for the consumer choice process.

Construct Organization

Different constructs may lead to contradictory predictions, translations, interpretations, or assessments. The consumer attempts to minimize these conflicts by organizing his or her set of constructs in a hierarchical order of importance. The applicable construct that is most important to the individual will be the one used to filter the tangible perception and to designate the perceived reality in the choice process.

The purpose of the consumer's construct organization is to minimize incompatibilities and inconsistencies and to avoid making contradictory predictions. The organization process is not unlike that in theories of consumer choice heuristics. Construct organization is a risk reduction method where one construct subsumes another. Thus, if one uses a social acceptance system as most important in choosing a bank, a lawyer, a hotel, or a restaurant then the intangible construct of high esteem-detrimental might be one that determines the perceived reality. The tangible reality may come from knowledge or search for it, of who uses that bank, lawyer, hotel, or restaurant who is already socially acceptable. Advertising testimonials would serve as tangible surrogates and the ad focuses on the tangible rather than the characteristics, attributes, or quality of the product. Marketing research can determine hierarchical orders of construct importance and thus utilize the appropriate tangible clues for different market segments.

McDonald's is an example in the case of services. The hierarchical order of the initial target market (families with young children) was headed by the attribute convenience and this attribute subsumed all other elements. Happy children greedily eating and running in and out are tangible clues of the perceived reality determined by the appropriate construct fast-slow. (In fact, McDonald's large plate-glass windows in their early days were an attempt to show just that!) Recognizing the highest order construct determines the appropriate marketing segments and strategy.

Construct Permeability

A consumer's constructs vary but only within the limits of the permeability of his or her construct system. A person creates new constructs when seeking better predictions for anticipating events using empiricism or rationalism. Thus, the consumer does not merely respond to stimuli; rather, he or she construes reality through a cognitive process using a construct filter that admits perception in terms of tangible clues.

Consumer behavior is caused and explainable within this self-denied construct framework and the extent to which the framework can be permeated by new elements yet to be construed. This is analogous to Sherif and Hovland's (1961) social judgment theory on latitude of acceptance and latitude of rejection. The implication for services marketing of the permeable construct notion can be found both in initial positioning and repositioning strategies.

Take the example of A&P food stores. The consensus reality of A&P's positioning on image, benefits, and differentiation may have been determined by consumer perceptions of poor management, dark aisles, surly clerks, and so forth, i.e., filtered through a construct of pleasant versus unpleasant services. Consumer dissatisfaction with A&P was based on intangible services, not tangible goods. A&P tried to reposition with its campaign of "Price and Pride" but the construct pleasant versus unpleasant was not sufficiently permeable to accept this shift without more tangible evidence. The company position failed to provide tangible sur-

rogates to influence a new perceived reality. Instead, it compounded the abstraction with the intangible "pride."

On the positive side, consider the positioning of Hyatt Hotels to the targeted upper 5% of the business market. Creative architecture, atriums, glass elevators, and other innovations present tangible surrogates for service, care, efficiency, cleanliness, etc., that establish perceived realities determined by a number of permeable consumer constructs. Positioning, and especially repositioning, marketing strategies require the use of tangible surrogates determined through research that will permeate intangible constructs.

Construct Dichotomies

People hold a finite number of constructs that are dichotomous, such as good versus bad. A consumer chooses that alternative through which he predicts his anticipations. Simply put, consumers process by elimination on dichotomous constructs based on more and more specific criteria from a limited amount of information. Duck (1973) expanded on this notion. He hypothesized that people process alternatives through layers of filters against a distinct, and sequentially ordered, set of criteria.

Persons differ from each other in their construction of events; opposite poles of constructs are not the same for all people. Two persons may construe alike, for example, the first end of the construct convenience versus inconvenience as "saves time." The other end of the construct may, however, be entirely different for each. That end for one person may be "difficulty" in getting to the service; for another person, the opposite end may be "having to wait" for the service once one has arrived at the place where it is offered. Thus, the meaning of each pole is defined by its "opposite" for each individual.

Suppose a consumer wishes to choose a restaurant determined by his construct romantic-unromantic. Six restaurants are recalled as ones possessing romantic attributes. (McDonald's is not considered because it is unlike all the six and not like any of them on any aspect of romantic, i.e., it has only contrasting aspects and thus is not within the construct.) An aspect of all six, say lighting, is considered. Four have dim lighting (thus are similar) and two have bright lighting (thus contrast on the same aspect). The consumer applies the dichotomous construct romantic-unromantic and can eliminate the two bright-light restaurants based on his prediction of anticipated events from a perceived reality filtered by the construct romantic on the perception of the tangible clue, dim lights. To choose from the four restaurants remaining, other tangible clues are evoked, in turn, drawn from the consumer's perception and filtered through the dichotomous construct romantic-unromantic (e.g., candles, flowers, soft music, or the wine list). Note that, for another person, however, loud music rather than bright lighting may be an earlier filter of the construct. Regardless, it is the tangible clues perceived and filtered through the construct that are used to determine the perceived realities.

Service marketers should be especially aware of the dichotomous construct concept. In the example given, as in numerous others, the risk may be high for

the consumer and clear distinctions among competitive offerings may be minimal. The problem for marketing strategy is one of determining the effective differentiation niche and giving it perceived reality through tangible clues determined by research to be consistent with a market segment's constructs. Few things are more intangible than romance; a surrogate metaphor may be candlelight and flowers.

Prior experience

Constructs shift and vary as the consumer construes the replications of previous events measured by a yardstick of predictive efficiency, i.e., as has been mentioned, constructs are used to validate the reality that is perceived. If constructs cannot be validated (reality does not meet expectations) they are revised or replaced. Reconstrual derives from experience and construct usage is a continuous and evolutionary process of prediction and validation.

The implications are particularly profound for the marketing of services. Constructs of intangible elements are more prone to vary interpersonally in cognitions regarding products than those of tangible attributes where there is more basis for common perceptions. Intangible relationships are drawn from the consumer's references, unlike tangible ones which emanate from the product itself (e.g., the service was excellent versus the steak was tough). In evaluating services, the consumer is more likely to construe replications and validate constructs only from personal experience with the service. If reality does not meet expectations, the tangible clue that is determined by the construct is also invalidated and will no longer represent reality. Thus, candlelight in noisy, crowded restaurants ceases to meaningfully tangibilize the construct romantic. The nature of a person's impression is a function of the complexity, content, and implicit rules of use which characterize his or her personal construct system.

The positioning implications of consumer experience with intangibles and the construal of replications to revise constructs are these: If the constructs are positive, maintain them with recognized tangible clues; if the constructs are negative, try to change them with new tangible clues determined by the new or revised constructs.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Research needs to be directed at the tangible clues which serve as the surrogates for intangible services and are filtered through the constructs to determine perceived reality. For instance, to use the previous example, we need to ask what tangible surrogates are perceived (by consumers' constructs) to determine a perceived reality of "romantic." The marketing researcher's task is to define dimensions of commonality that provide nomothetic categories grounded in individuals' constructions of tangible surrogates. Such findings have two important implications for services marketing strategy: the use of the appropriate tangible clues that create image, offer benefits, and differentiate the offering for the con-

consumer; and the development of segmentation strategies based on personal constructs which, by their deterministic nature, may tend to be more consistent than other segmentation strategies.

The acceptance of construct construal, considered alongside services marketing heavily laden with intangibles (all needing concrete referents for more exact identification and positioning) leads to the following research questions: (1) What are the salient attributes associated with a specific service market; (2) What are the constructs that determine perception of those attributes; (3) What are the tangible clues that a consumer uses in the determination of construct validation; and finally, given both the relevant attributes and the proper personal constructs, (4) What is the decision process that directs the consumer to select, for instance, one service supplier over another within the same product class?

Initial Determination of Salient Attributes

Initial identification of consumer attributes may be elicited through a group interview technique known as focus groups. Focus group interviews are generally comprised of 8–12 people meeting together under the direction of a trained moderator. This moderator serves to probe the panel for their feelings and thoughts with regard to a product, service, or idea. Prior to the focus group, careful consumer, competitive, and environmental analyses are done to develop a quasi-agenda for the moderator. Depending upon the concept under analysis, the group “mix” and the nature of the group, the leader will serve with varying degrees of control.

Generally, the subjects for a focus group are selected from the target market(s) of the product under consideration. For very general products or aggregate segmenting, the recruiting may be done through the use of newspaper advertisements. Most recently, however, hospitality marketing has demanded a much more specialized target, and as such subjects have been recruited from mailing lists derived from the industry. In these instances, recruitment is generally done via telephone, with trained “interviewers” presenting a predetermined appeal.

A small agency might want to develop its own list from local trade associations or horizontal publications. As an example, a company interested in the development of a new conference/convention center might develop their list from either a listing of the local corporate headquarters, the chamber of commerce, or a regional Meeting Planners of America group. What is critical is that each group clearly reflect the characteristics of the particular target market. (It must be remembered that qualitative research does not allow for the more exacting representation found when proper random sampling infers the normal distribution of responses.)

In the development of the focus group, Hagler (1977) suggests that the moderator develop three clear stages during the process of a 2–3-hour focus group interview: (1) establish rapport with the group, generate the group rules, and explain the objectives of the meeting; (2) provoke intense discussion in critical areas,

while making certain that there is a sensitivity for deviation for innovative concepts; and (3) summarize the groups' responses to cement understanding as well as to determine the extent of overall agreement. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the focus group is the moderators task of exploring different content areas without biasing the content itself. This type of analysis allows for a full range of emotions and logic to be displayed by the participants. Many criticisms, personal experiences, and attributes emerge during focus group interviews that were either not clearly defined, initially overlooked, or, in many cases, not even recognized by the market researcher or client. In addition, the importance and interaction *between* the attributes often become defined (Klein, 1963).

It is in understanding the relationship between the patron and his/her perception of the product attributes that the researcher is afforded a careful view of the subjects interpretation of the phenomenon. As discussed earlier, it is the consumers' interpretation of the phenomenon (e.g., service) that is the critical determinant of whether and to what extent the phenomenon exists; and ultimately, whether the individual would subscribe to a particular service.

The development of a series of attributes derived from the focus group direct the researcher to the second stage in the marketing of an intangible service; delineation of the personal constructs that underlie and determine whether the consumer will "perceive" the attribute to exist within the phenomenon, and the degree to which the attribute has been realized.

Determination of Personal Constructs and Tangible Clues for Attribute Verification

In order to shed light on the constructs that individuals use in testing the world, Kelly (1963) developed the repertory test. The repertory test doesn't seek to measure variables previously conceptualized by the author; it seeks rather to elicit from the respondent the major templates that the individual uses to impose over reality. In order to do so, the repertory test attempts to discern the ways in which an individual compares and contrasts people, places, or things in their efforts to organize behavior and predict outcomes.

In the test, representative stimuli in the form of cards are developed and presented to the subjects. The cards contain pictures of products, room designs and motifs, drawings, names, or any stimuli relevant to the researchers needs. In the instance of hospitality marketing, the cards would be representations of the attributes generated from the focus group. The number of stimuli presented typically ranges from 8 to 30.

Pretesting determines the nature of familiarity the subject has with each of the "products" on the cards so that problems of bias may be considered—this is particularly useful if a subject has had a particularly bad experience with any particular product—and the stimuli are presented to the subject in prearranged groups of three, with care being given to assure that none of the triads are repeated at any other time. In keeping with the nature of personal construct theory, respondents

are asked to tell in what way two of the stimuli are alike, and in which way they are different from the third. This process is generally continued until all valid permutations have been run. To continue with one of the examples from above, a hotel might determine that "service" was one of the three most critical attributes in hotel selection. In that instance, cards would be presented which show photographs of "service" being rendered, logos of three competitive hotels, or drawings of hotel lobbies. Subjects are told to consider his/her notion of service. They are then asked to tell how two of the cards (photographs/logos) are similar, and how the two similar cards are different from the third. The responses to the specific combinations are then recorded. The subject is then shown the next triad and the process continues.

Using the procedure described above, a series of scales will be developed which show the underlying constructs used to determine a specified attribute. This information will be based upon a comparative evaluation of competitive products by specific attributes. The notion of service, for instance, might elicit constructs such as fast-slow, friendly-unfriendly, and personal-impersonal. Card sorts will be continued until all of the underlying constructs for each specific attribute across competitors have been exhausted.

Once the repertory test has been finished, subjects are again shown the cards in the original ordering, and asked to specifically state the cues, actions, and processes that were used to determine the correlations and differentiated nature of the triads. In this manner, subjects inform the researcher of the cues existing in the phenomenon that the subject has used a referent for construct verification. Again, the experimenter lists these cues.

Determination of Decision Processes

At this stage in the analysis, the market researcher is interested in whether or not the subjects perceive the constructs to be relevant on a specified attribute across situational variables. As the experimenter seeks to determine the ways in which the constructs become applied under situational demands, the protocols of the subjects become imperative. As such, the repertory test's constructs may be developed into a matrix format in what is known as the "repertory grid."

The repertory grid is set up with the personal constructs along one axis of the grid, and the various hospitality services products or properties along the other axis. The grid then, is composed of C constructs and P properties, and $C \times P$ intersects (See Figure 3).

At the point of the intersect, the subject is asked to rate the particular P on construct C , with a check mark going on that pole of the construct pair most accurately reflecting the subjects judgments. This process is continued until each of the cells is filled in. After all of the ratings have been completed, a proper protocol analysis may be run on the repertory grid.

In the procuring of protocol data, the subject is instructed to "think-out-loud" as they are considering the selection of a particular product or service for a

| ATTRIBUTE | SERVICE | | ATMOSPHERE | | |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | FAST/ SLOW | COURTEOUS/ RUDE | PERSONAL/ IMPERSONAL | MODERN/ OLD-WORLD | WARM/ COLD |
| PRODUCT/ SERVICE | | | | | |
| X | | | | | |
| Y | | | | | |
| Z | | | | | |

Figure 3.
Repertory Grid.

specified event. For example, the patron is asked to look at the repertory grid board, and, based on the $P \times C$ intersects, select a hotel for a stay with his wife and family for vacation. The subjects then go about using the information on the Rep grid, verbalizing his/her thoughts as they sort out information in the course of their decision making. In this manner, the researcher has the opportunity to observe the details of the heuristics.

This procedure may be continued across representatives from various segments, responding to queries regarding specified contexts, until a "profile" is developed that suggests to the experimenter the processes individuals use in their selection of a particular hotel. Of particular interest is the potentiality that new, more refined segments might emerge that hold construct contrual as the segmenting variable.

CONCLUSION

Cognitive constructs are the underlying dimensions that dictate whether a consumer will positively identify and interpret product or service attributes within phenomenon. In the process of attribute determination, consumers need to utilize concrete referents in "tagging" tangible qualities to more intangible constructs.

This paradigm assumes a more rational interpretive relationship between the consumer and phenomenon. Consequently, meaning exists within the organism, *not* within the phenomenon.

The use of more phenomenologically derived methods for determining product attributes, cognitive constructs, and the information processing of choice heuristics has been suggested. More research is required to discern the validity and reliability of the interaction of these types of methods as major determinants of promotional strategy. Practitioners in services marketing may consider these methods as an alternative to the more structural techniques now employed in the early phases of product development, segmentation strategies, and positioning.

REFERENCES

- Booms, B. H., and M. J. Bitner (1981), "Marketing Strategies and Organizational Structures for Service Firms," in *Marketing of Services*, J. H. Donnelly and W. R. George, eds., Chicago: American Marketing Association, 47-51.
- Booms, B. H., and M. J. Bitner (1982), "Marketing Services by Managing The Environment," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 23, (May), 35-39.
- Dhir, Krishna S., and Chandrasekar, V. (1984), "A Study of Consumer Subjectivity in Selection and Assessment of Restaurants," in *The Practice of Hospitality Management-II: Profitability in a Changing Environment*. R. Lewis, et al, eds. to be published.
- Dubinsky, A. J. and M. Levy (1981), "A Study of Selected Behaviors in the Purchasing of Consumer Services: Implications for Marketers," in *1981, Educators' Proceedings*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, 58-61.
- Duck, S. W. (1973), *Personal Relationships and Personal Constructs: A Study of Friendship Formation*. London: Wiley.
- Enis, B. M., and Kenneth J. Roering (1981), "Services Marketing: Different Products, Similar Strategy," in *Marketing of Services*, J. H. Donnelly and W. R. George, eds., Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1-4.
- Hagler, S. H. (1977), "Group Interview Not Hard, But Good One Is Difficult," *Marketing News*, July 8.
- Holbrook, M. B., and Hirschman, E. C. (1980), "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9, Sept. 1982.
- Kelly, G. A. (1963), *A Theory of Personality*, paperback edition, New York: W. W. Norton.
- Kelly, G. A. (1970), "A Brief Introduction to Personal Construct Theory," in *Perspectives on Personal Construct Theory*, D. Bannister, ed., New York: Academic Press.
- Klein, D. M. (1983), Unpublished Report to Sausman Hotel Group, Boca Raton, Fl.
- Lewis, R. C. (1981), "The Positioning Statement for Hotels," *The Cornell H.R.A. Quarterly*, 19, May, pp. 51-61.
- Levitt, T. (1981), "Marketing Intangible Products and Product Intangibles," *Harvard Business Review*, 58 (May-June), 94-102.
- Liechty, M. G., and G. A. Churchill, Jr. (1979), "Conceptual Insights into Consumer Satisfaction With Services," in *1979 Educator's Proceedings*, Neil Beckwith, Michael Houston et al., eds. Chicago: American Marketing Association, 509-515.
- Sampson, P. (1972), "Using the Repertory Grid Test," *Journal of Marketing Research*, IX, February, 78-81.
- Sherif, M., and C. I. Hovland (1961), *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shostack, G. L. (1977), "Breaking Free From Product Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 41 (April), 73-80.
- Shostack, G. L. (1981), "How to Design a Service," in *Marketing of Services*, J. H. Donnelly and W. R. George, eds., Chicago: American Marketing Association, 221-229.

Wyckham, R. G., P. T. Fitzroy and G. D. Mandry (1975), "The Marketing of Services," *European Journal of Marketing*, 9, 59-68.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1981), "How Consumer Evaluation Processes Differ Between Goods and Services," in *Marketing of Services*, J. H. Donnelly and W. R. George, eds., Chicago: American Marketing Association, 186-190.

Robert C. Lewis is a professor of Marketing in the Department of Hotel, Restaurant, and Travel Administration at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

David M. Klein is a professor of marketing in the Department of Marketing at Florida Atlantic University.

Address all reprint requests to: Robert C. Lewis, Ph.D. University of Massachusetts, Hotel, Restaurant, and Travel Administration Amherst, MA 01003

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.