Pre-tutorial reading:


Carefully read pp.24-5, summarising the main arguments in point form. Bring your notes to class.

Car ownership is a central aspect of contemporary Australia. According to *The Age* (http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/11/19/1037697663263.html), this country now has one car for every two people living here.

Not surprisingly, buying your first car is also a significant 'rite of passage'.* In today’s exercises, we will explore two aspects of this experience:

a) information seeking behaviour:

It is likely that you, or someone you know, have bought a car sometime in the past two years. How is information to purchase a car obtained?

b) how user needs are addressed:

Do the information needs of users vary? Do the retail car web sites examined in the lab meet such needs?

**Lab component**

*Seeking Information*

Working in pairs,

1. Find two web sites advertising cars available for sale in Australia, making a note of the search terms you have chosen.

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* For those unfamiliar with this term, the *Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence* offers the following definition: ‘A ceremony or event marking the passage from one social status or developmental state to another’ (http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/g2602/0004/2602000456/p1/article.jhtml, accessed 17 June 2003).
a. What pertinent information do they provide?

b. What other information do they provide?

c. What pertinent information is **missing** from their sites?

d. What guarantees does a potential customer need as to the veracity of information on these sites?

**User Needs**

Still working in pairs,

2. List the user needs that arise when seeking to buy a car (eg passenger capacity).

3. Do all users face the same information needs when purchasing a car? If so, why? If not, think of some examples of differing needs amongst users (eg provision for securing baby capsules).

4. Go back to the car sale web sites you identified earlier.

   a. In what ways do they meet the user needs set out in your checklist?

   b. In what ways do they fail to meet the user needs set out in your tutorial list?

   c. What aspects of user needs do they address that you might need to add to your list?

**Tutorial component:**

**Seeking Information**

In groups of four or five,

1. List all the sources you can think of that may provide information about cars available for sale (eg a daily newspaper, but also … ?).

2. List some of the other forms of information required by someone seeking to buy a car (eg warranty).

Report back to the tutorial group, comparing your list with other students’ findings.

**User Needs**

In groups of four or five,

a. What findings are reported?

b. In what ways might the user needs issues raised be addressed?

c. How might you modify your checklist of user needs in the light of this report?

6. Identify three other goods or services that are used today in Australian society (eg the goods provided by eating establishment, or the services provided by the post office). For each of these, identify two different groups of users, and discuss the similarities and variations in their needs when making use of these goods and services. In what ways do their related needs for information vary?

Report back to the tutorial group, comparing your list with other students’ findings.