

## Choice systems

### It is vital to understand the mechanics of shopper choice.

Our highest status decisions – those that are really important to us, like our choice of car – are made consciously. Such decisions have deep personal significance: they often sustain our perceived status and involve purchases of high financial value or visibility. These choices are likely to be based on a certain amount of rational research but when they are finally made, emotion has a strong role to play, for example in our choice of marque or brand. While advertising, above-the-line and in-store, is a peripheral influencer and plays an awareness role, we look to our peers or trusted editorial for endorsement.

Secondary status decisions, which we would describe as 'fairly important' to ourselves or our loved ones, involve much less research. The items involved, such as breakfast cereals or coffee, are functionally important but have relatively little impact on our status. These are often commodities that we purchase on a regular basis and therefore our 'choice' is habituated: we don't have the level of concern to make continuous, performance related decisions so we make do with broadly acceptable options. When we shop for these items we are less considered in our sources of influence and allow advertising to play a stronger role, although ultimately any conscious decision is more likely to involve rational parameters such as a price / perceived value trade-off.

At the tertiary level are items that are not very important to us or to our families. When purchasing these we are not really making choices so much as 'discovering' options that appear roughly in line with performance expectations. We are very unlikely to research, relying on a retailer to have pre-selected a range of simple options. We generally use very simple tools such as price to confirm our choice.