

**MODULE 7.4: SOCIAL CLASS AND MOBILITY, LIFESTYLE
ANALYSIS**

- 7.4.1 Meaning of a Social Class**
- 7.4.2 Social Class and Social Status**
- 7.4.3 Social Class Categories and Lifestyle Categories**
- 7.4.4 Social Class Mobility**
- 7.4.5 Lifestyle Analysis**
- 7.4.6 The Measurement of Social Class**
- 7.4.7 Relevance of Social Class for a Marketer**

LESSON – 34 SOCIAL CLASS AND MOBILITY, LIFESTYLE ANALYSIS

Instructional Objectives:

After completion of this lesson, the student shall know about:

- 7.4.1 Meaning of a Social Class**
- 7.4.2 Social Class and Social Status**
- 7.4.3 Social Class Categories and Lifestyle Categories**
- 7.4.4 Social Class Mobility**
- 7.4.5 Lifestyle Analysis**
- 7.4.6 The Measurement of Social Class**
- 7.4.7 Relevance of Social Class for a Marketer**

7.4.1 MEANING OF A SOCIAL CLASS:

People may be placed on different positions on a continuum or a range; the continuum, in fact is divided into specific social classes, or *strata*. Thus, people in a society may be placed in different strata based on their status; each of these strata may be referred to as social class.

Schiffman defines social class as “*the division of /members of a society into a hierarchy of distinct status classes, so that members of each class have relatively the same status and members of all other classes have either more or less status*”.

7.4.2 SOCIAL CLASS AND SOCIAL STATUS:

Social class is measured in terms of *status*; a person belonging to a particular class is said to hold status similar to members of that class. So social class is defined in terms of the amount of status the members of a particular class relatively have, in comparison with members of other social classes. Broadly speaking, the stratification into varied social classes, is done on the bases on three factors, viz., wealth (economic assets) power (ability to exert influence over others) and prestige (recognition received). However, marketing academicians and researchers, as well as consumer researchers, define status in terms of demographical variables like *income*, *occupation* and *education*; in fact, the three are interrelated and thus, used in conjunction to each other. While understanding buying patterns and consumption behavior, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of social class. These are discussed as follows:

i) Hierarchical structure: Social class is hierarchical in nature. The social-class categories are ranked in a hierarchy that ranges from low to high. Based on education, occupation and income, the society is divided into various ranks, such that people in a particular rank are similar to others in the same rank and different across various ranks. So members of a particular social class view themselves as a) having a status similar to others in their own class; and b) having a status high or low than members of the higher or lower class. Based on the social class, they view themselves *equal* to other (in the same social class), *inferior* to others (from higher social class), and *superior* to others (from lower social class). The hierarchical structure holds relevance for a marketer.

- First, marketers can use this as a basis to segment the market; the various strata provide a basis for market segmentation.

- Two, when people are “other-directed” or susceptible to social influence, they would buy such products and services and/or brands that people from their respective social classes purchase. This is because they look for social approval. So they would purchase certain products and service offerings and/or brands because they are used and favored by members of their own class.

- Third, people are class conscious and relate brands to their social class; thus, they would buy brands which they feel relate to their “class”, and would avoid brands that they relate to “lower-class” products. There are social-class influences on the actual consumption of products.

-Fourth, the higher social class or the upper social class also acts as reference groups, for people in the lower class. The latter aspire to emulate the former and desire buying products and brands which the former buy.

ii) Similarity of people within a social class: People within a social class are similar to each other. This similarity is not only witnessed in terms of their education, occupation and income, but also their thinking, values, norms, attitudes, lifestyle and behavioral patterns. There is similarity among members *within* each social class and dissimilarity with *between* social classes.

7.4.3 SOCIAL CLASS CATEGORIES AND LIFESTYLE PROFILES:

Various classifications of social class have been proposed. Sociologists have divided the society into distinct class divisions that number two, three, four, five, six and even nine class social structures. Which of the classifications is most useful, depends upon the purpose of the researcher, and also on the amount of detail that the research/study requires. Consumer researchers are interested in the social-class structures primarily for the purpose of viewing them as potential markets for their products and service offerings. For reasons of uniformity, researchers prefer to adopt a three class structure, and thereby divide social classes into upper, middle and lower classes.

Each social class is characterized by certain lifestyle factors, in terms of shared beliefs, norms, attitudes, activities, interests and behavior. These are similar within people of each class and different across social classes. In fact, they tend to distinguish the members of a social class from the members of other social classes. However, it may be noted here that people from the middle class may serve as aspirational groups or have a reference group appeal for the lower; similarly people of the upper class may serve the same for people in the middle class. With this impact, people in a class may possess beliefs, norms, attitudes, activities, interests and behavior that are a hybrid of two or more classes.

7.4.4 SOCIAL CLASS MOBILITY:

People in community can move from one strata to another. They can move either up or down the social class; this mobility gets exhibited in two forms. One, individuals can move either up or down in social-class standing across generations, i.e. while their parents may have belonged to one strata, they begin to belong to another, either upper or lower. Two, such a transition may also be seen through one's life, i.e. as a person becomes independent and starts earning, he may belong to one class and as he progresses in life, he may begin to belong to another. Upward mobility is more common and is generally the trend these days.

As mentioned above, the higher social classes often become aspirational and reference groups for people of lower social status. Marketers realize this and use symbols of higher-class status into their products, as also the advertisement, both in terms of content and context. It has also been seen that that products and services that were traditionally within the realm of one social class, are now getting into the realm of lower social classes. The influence of upper classes on lower, has also benefited the "me-too" marketers, who come up with counterfeiters

and cloners, to satisfy the lower classes; thus we have “me-too” products for various products and/or brands.

7.4.5 LIFESTYLE ANALYSIS:

Consumer behaviorists and researchers have studied lifestyles of the community and made generalizations. Lifestyles have been assessed in terms of activities, interests and opinions (AIOs). They have been measured as a general measure as well as a specific measure. In terms of marketing, the general measure relates to the use of product and service offerings by people belonging to a social class. As a specific measure they relate to brands, whether economy, middle-range or premium. Thus, lifestyle analysis may be used as a general measure or as a specific measure.

Marketers make use of general lifestyles while making product decisions, whether related to the product itself, or price, place and promotion. This would include assessment of new product opportunities, the segmentation, targeting and positioning and all other decisions related to the marketing strategy. On the other hand, marketers make use of specific lifestyles while making decisions related to a brand, be it its positioning, pricing and any other decision related to brand management. A few of the commonly used Lifestyle Analysis tools are illustrated in the table below. The more popular VALS and VALS 2 are explained.

Table 1: Frameworks for Lifestyle Analysis

S.No.	Lifestyle framework	Description
1.	Values and Lifestyle VALS	<p>Goal: To segment the consumers</p> <p>Segments consumers into eight consumer segments, viz., innovators, thinkers, believers, achievers, strivers, experiencers, makers and survivors.</p> <p>Based on two dimensions, primary motivation and resources.</p>
2.	VALS 2	<p>Goal: To segment the consumers, and measure consumer buying patterns</p> <p>Segments consumers into eight consumer segments, viz., actualizers, fulfillers, believers, achievers, strivers, experiencers, makers, and strugglers.</p> <p>Based on two dimensions, self-orientation and resources.</p>

3.	List of Values	<p>Goal: To assess the dominant values of a consumer</p> <p>The scale is based on the premise that personal values are linked to consumption; Personal values are regarded as measurable sets of variables that are more closely related to motivations than demographic and psychographic measures.</p> <p>Measures nine values, viz., Sense of belonging, being well-respected, security, fun and enjoyment, warm relationships with others, self-fulfillment, excitement, sense of accomplishment, and self-respect.</p>
4.	Geo-Demographic Analysis (PRIZM)	<p>Goal: To analyzes geographic regions and relate them to consumption behavior.</p> <p>It is based on the premise that lifestyle, and thus consumption, is largely driven by demographic factors</p> <p>Identifies a total of 62 lifestyle clusters.</p>
5.	Yankelovich's MONITOR MindBase	<p>Goal: To consider the individual's position on a set of core values with his or her life cycle stage.</p> <p>The values identified include materialism, technology orientation, family values, conservatism, cynicism versus optimism, social Interaction, and activity level.</p> <p>People are grouped into 8 high-level segments.</p>

1. VALS (Values and Lifestyle):

The VALS framework was developed over the 1970s by the California based consulting firm, SRI International. It was in the year 1978 that it was finally proposed by Arnold Mitchell. Derived from the theoretical base in the works of Maslow, the framework has been modified and reworked for greater reliability and validity of findings. While the original psychographic inventory was known as VALS, the modified version of the 1990s was called VALS 2. While VALS spoke of the various types of consumer segments, the VALS 2 was specific to measurement of consumer buying patterns.

According to the proponents, consumers could be of three kinds, viz., *need-directed* (these are consumers who make purchases based solely on their needs and wants), *outer-directed* (these are consumers who make purchases based on their perceptions of the manner in which others view them), and *inner-directed* (these are consumers who make purchases out of an

inner need or inner beliefs). The framework provides valuable inputs to marketers especially in areas of promotion strategy, viz., message content and context, as well as choice of media.

The VALS framework illustrates a system for grouping of US adult consumers into various categories according to psychological and sociological criterion so as to understand and predict their behavior in the purchase decision making process. Based on the responses of the population to a questionnaire that has been referred to as the VALS questionnaire (comprising 42 statements of agreement), the framework classifies consumers into eight distinct types or segments or mindsets, using a specific set of psychological traits and key demographics that drive consumer behavior. The framework essentially provides for psychographic segmentation, and is illustrative of distinct consumer profiles or personas. It also helps design distinctive communication styles for each of the targets.

The VALS classifies individuals using two dimensions. There are two main dimensions and based on these dimensions, the groups of people are arranged in a rectangle. The two dimensions are primary motivation (the horizontal dimension) and resources (the vertical dimension). The combination of these dimensions determines how a person will express himself or herself in the marketplace as a consumer.

i) The *horizontal dimension* is symbolic of the primary motivation in terms of self-orientation; it explains consumer attitudes and anticipates behavior. It includes three primary motivations, and accordingly classifies the consumer population into three distinct types.

- Consumers are motivated by *ideals*; such people are actually driven by [knowledge](#), beliefs and [principles](#), rather than by feelings, emotions or desire to conform or seek approval of others. The principle oriented includes groups that are called Thinkers and Believers.

-Consumers are also motivated by *achievement*; such people are driven by demonstrating success to others, and include groups that are called Achievers and Strivers.

-There are consumers that are driven by *self-expression*; such people have a desire for [social](#) or [physical activity](#), variety, and risk taking, and include groups known as Experiences and Makers.

There are two other types of groups, one at the top of the rectangle, and another at the bottom of the rectangle. At the top of the rectangle exist what we refer to as [Innovators](#), who have such high resources that they can have any of the three primary motivations. At the bottom of the rectangle are those who are referred to as the Survivors, who live self-satisfied and contented, well within their means without a strong primary motivation of the three types listed above.

The *vertical dimension* classifies the population on the basis of the extent or degree to which they are [innovative](#) and have resources like [income](#), [education](#), [self-confidence](#), [intelligence](#), leadership skills, and energy. Apart from demographics like age, income, and education, consumer behavior is also impacted by psychological traits. Psychological traits like energy, self-confidence, intellectualism, novelty seeking, innovativeness, impulsiveness, leadership, and vanity also play an important role in consumption behavior. Thus, demographic traits as well as psychological traits determine an individual's resources. The various levels of resources would enhance or constrain a person's expression of his or her primary motivation. Thus, the vertical dimension reflects the ability of individuals to pursue their dominant self-orientation.

Individuals are placed in any one of eight psychographic segments, viz., innovators, thinkers, believers, achievers, strivers, experiencers, makers and survivors. The VALS Framework may be elaborated upon to explain each of the eight groups.

a) *Innovators*: Innovators are those consumers that are highest on resources and innovation. Because of this they can exhibit all three primary motivations in varying degrees. Located at the top of the rectangle, the innovators have the highest incomes, as also high self-esteem and creativity and can thus choose out of any one or all of the self-orientations. They are successful and sophisticated. Image is important to them as reflection of their taste, [independence](#), personality and [character](#). They are active consumers, who often form a niche as their choices are aimed towards the tastes for upscale "finer things in life."

b) *Thinkers*: Thinkers are those consumer groups that constitute a high-resource group that is motivated by ideals. They are principle oriented, mature and responsible, well informed professionals who are open to new ideas and [change](#). They value order, knowledge, and responsibility, and actively seek out information in the decision-making process. They are consumers who have high incomes, and are practical and rational when it comes to purchase and consumption decision making. They look for functionality and value in the products that they buy.

c) *Believers*: Believers comprise those consumers who are also motivated by ideals but are low on resources. They are traditional, conservative and conventional people, who prefer not to experiment with anything. They have modest incomes and so prefer not to experiment with their

money and consumption patterns. As consumers they are generally brand loyal and go in for purchases of established brands.

d) *Achievers*: Achievers are those consumers who are a high resource group that is driven by achievement. They are successful work oriented people, with goal oriented lifestyles, who also like to exhibit and show-off their achievement to others. They remain committed to both work and home. Achievers are conservative by nature; yet they are active in the marketplace. Image is important to them and they prefer established prestige brands, and/or products and services. They make much purchases and also show-off their purchases of prestige brands to people around them.

e) *Strivers*: Strivers are also driven by achievement but they are a low-resource group. While they have values similar to achievers, they have fewer resources in terms of economic, social, and psychological resources. While they have less money, they give a lot of emphasis to it. Style is very important to them, and they prefer stylish products. They try to emulate the purchases of people with greater resources and material wealth as they strive to emulate people whom they admire. They are also concerned about the opinions and approvals of others. They are active consumers, and view shopping as an opportunity to show to others their ability to buy. Strivers are also fun loving and lack skills and focus on moving ahead in job and career.

f) *Experiencers*: Experiencers are a high resource consumer group who are motivated by self expression. Age-wise, they are regarded as the youngest of all the consumer segments, who are energetic, enthusiastic and impulsive, something that rightly gets reflected in their activities, which range from physical exercise to social activities. Being high on resources they spend heavily on shopping of clothes, fast-foods, entertainment and hobbies. They like taking risks and quickly become excited about the purchase of new products and services.

g) *Makers*: These are consumer groups that are driven by self expression, but are low on resources. They remain confined to work and family, and have little interest outside. They value self-sufficiency and possess the skill and energy to work successfully. As consumers they are not impressed by articles of material possession. They are practical by nature and appreciate products that have practical or functional purpose. They are also skeptical of new products and services.

h) *Survivors*: Located at the bottom of the rectangle, survivors are consumer groups that fall lowest in terms of resources. They have too few resources to be included in any of the consumer self-orientations and they are thus located below the rectangle. Age-wise they are oldest of all the segments. They believe that the world would change too rapidly, and thus they are highly conservative and narrow in focus. As they are low on resources, they are very cautious as consumers; they are comfortable with the familiar and prefer to remain brand-loyal.

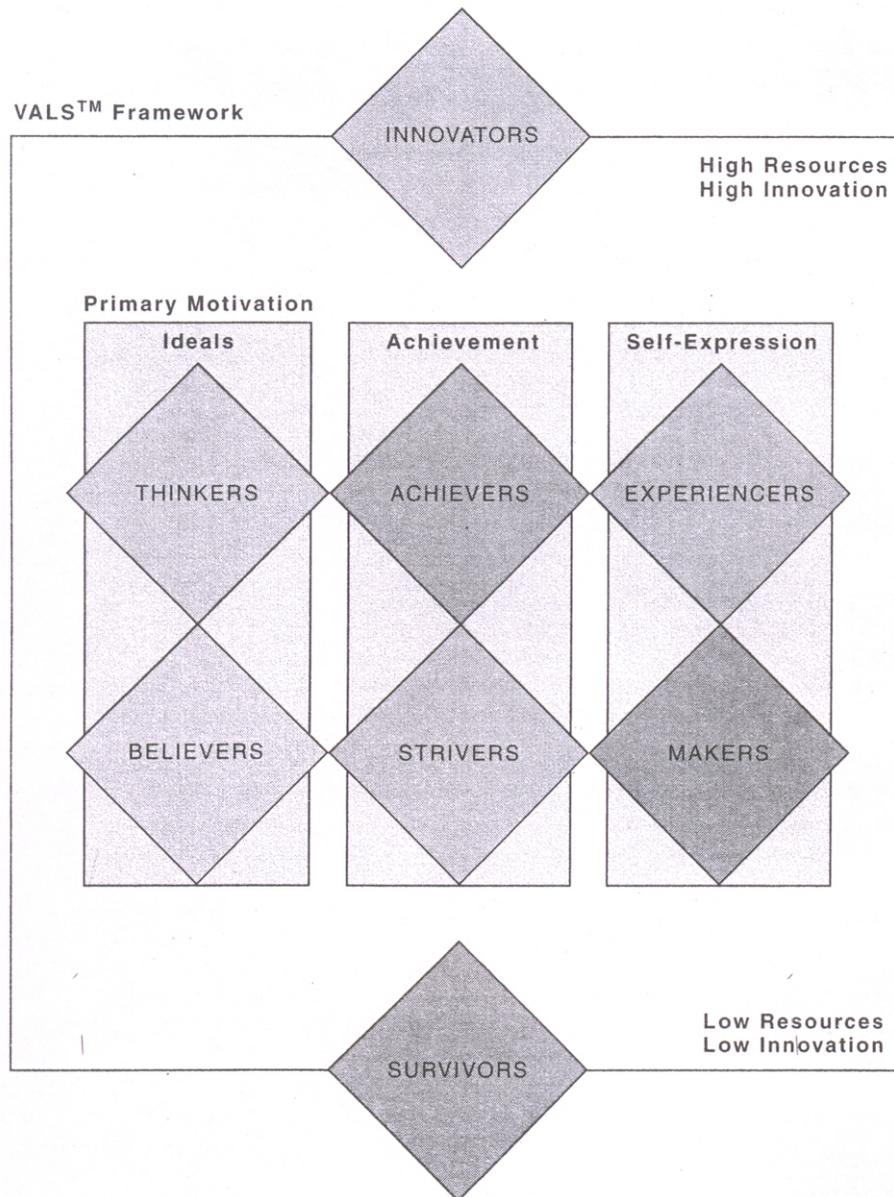


Figure1: Diagram of SRI VALS

Source: Schiffman, L.G. and Kanuk, L.L., Consumer Behavior, 9th Edition, Pearson, Prentice Hall.

The VALS was modified by the Stanford Research Institute in the 1980's, and proposed as VALS 2 in the 1990's. The basic objective of the VALS 2 was to identify specific relationships between consumer attitudes and purchase behavior, and thereby measure consumer buying patterns. VALS 2 is being successfully used by companies to understand the consumer lifestyles

and interests, which in turn is useful for developing marketing strategies, primarily promotional strategies.

VALS 2 attempts to profile consumers by grouping them into three orientation categories: *principle oriented, status oriented, and action oriented*. Like the previous version, each of these groups is based on *two dimensions: self-orientation and resources*. Self-orientation refers to the attitudes that affect consumer buying approaches and resources including income level, education, self-confidence, eagerness to purchase and energy levels. Resources refer to financial, psychological and material resources. Based on the self orientation and the amount of resources available with them, consumers could be classified into any of the three kinds. These three categories are further split on the basis of resources that the people have with them.

Similar to VALS, the newer version also classifies the US market segments on the basis of demographic and lifestyle factors into eight segments, viz., actualizers, fulfillers, believers, achievers, strivers, experiencers, makers, and strugglers. VALS 2 has proved itself as an extremely useful classification system for segmenting consumers.

7.4.6 THE MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL CLASS:

The measurement of social class as also the techniques to be used, have been a subject of debate. Researchers have not been able to agree on the methodology that needs to be used for measuring social class. This is because i) varied classifications in form and number have been proposed; ii) there is lack of clarity with respect to the underlying dynamics and dimensions of social class. A wide variety of tools and techniques have been used to measure social class. Broadly speaking, the various techniques that are used are subjective measures, reputational measures, and objective measures of social class.

- **Subjective Measures:**

The subjective approach to measure social class requires a self-assessment on the part of the individual who is asked to specify the class to which he belongs. In other words, the individual self-perceives his social class in response to a question like, "*Which one of the following best describes your social class: the lower class, the middle class, or the upper class?*" Thus, the person is asked to estimate and specify his own social-class position. The person answers on the basis of his feeling of belongingness and identification with others, as well as class consciousness. However, the problem with this approach is that it leads to a lot of responses that fall in the mid-range (or the middle class). People are often conscious or shy or may even

refrain from giving the true response and have a safe say by opting for the *middle class*, when they should have been correctly classified as belonging to either the *lower* or *upper class*.

- ***Reputational Measures:***

The reputational measure to measure social class, requires independent informants from the society, to identify and make comments related to the social class membership of people in the community. Sociological researchers as also market researchers select informants within the community, and ask them to assess and make judgment about the class membership of other people in the community. Much remains to the discretion of the researcher who is left with the final task of assigning people in the community to the various class categories based on his knowledge, expertise and experience. The methods lacks reliability and has proved to be impractical, primarily in studies related to marketing and consumer behavior. Unlike, sociology, the consumption pattern and resultant behavior may not always be assessed correctly by observers.

- ***Objective Measures:***

Objective measures make use of demographic and particularly socioeconomic variables for assessing the social class of individuals. The researchers use questionnaires that are administered to people in the community. Such questionnaires directly or indirectly help in determining their social class. Questions relate to their address (so as to determine place of residence), and particularly to the more important variables like occupation, income and education. Such demographic and socioeconomic indicators help determine the social-class membership. The objective measures of social class may be divided into two categories, viz., *single variable indexes* and *composite-variable indexes*.

a) *Single-Variable Indexes:* As the term denotes, single variable indexes, are those that use one socioeconomic variable to assess social-class membership of a person. For consumer behavior, the commonly used indexes are i) education; ii) occupation; and iii) income. Certain types of products and their usage is related to occupation and marketers define the target market on the basis of occupation, for example, for publishers, professors and teachers via missionary selling act as viable targets. Education and occupation also determine the income level of a person. In fact, all these three indexes are used to determine the social class standing of a person. Another variable that indirectly determines the social class membership is the address of residence and the neighbourhood that one is a part of.

b) *Composite-Variable Indexes*: The composite-variable indexes use a combination of demographic and socioeconomic factors to assess and measure the social class of an individual. As indexes, they are more reliable for consumer researchers as they better reflect and assess the dynamics and complexity of social class than single-variable indexes. For example, education, occupation and income are taken together to have reliable and valid findings with respect to the social class that one belongs to. The three variables have an impact on the lifestyle of individuals, and thus when put together, are useful in assessment of social class.

7.4.1 RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL CLASS FOR A MARKETER:

The demographic and psychographic traits that have a bearing on lifestyle, and/or social class hold great relevance for a marketer. The analysis of the social class helps profile consumers into segments that a marketer could take advantage off through formulation of an appropriate marketing strategy. While a marketer needs to cater to each of the segments in a different manner, he could design his 4Ps in a manner that leads to maximum benefit for himself as well as for the consumer. It is noteworthy that each of these segments would have a different set of attitudes, values, likes/dislikes and consumption patterns. They would even vary in terms of their priorities when it comes to purchase of products and services, pursuance of hobbies and interests and broader lifestyles.

While people like to conform to others' in their social class, they also like to emulate those in the higher class. They aspire to move up the social ladder; in fact, social mobility is a common phenomenon these days. The following section discusses real life applications of social class, when it comes to products and services, hobbies and interests and general spending and saving patterns.

a) Products and services: The choice of products and services and/or brands depends hugely upon the lifestyle and social class. Members belonging to a social class would go in for such products and services and/or brands which are used by others in that class. This is due to the fact that they seek social approval and want to purchase what others purchase and use what other use. Upper class consumers favor fashion and sophistication, and this reflects itself in their purchase of luxurious and prestige goods and branded products. On the other hand the middle class takes into account value for money and looks for benefits that can be derived from a purchase; they go for good, moderately priced goods and are less conscious of branded goods. The lower class goes for goods of necessity. It is also true that people in a social class

also desire to behave like people in the upper class. Members of the upper class act as an aspirational reference group, whom those in the lower class like to emulate. This creates a segment for “me-too” products, and gives opportunity to the market followers, i.e. the counterfeiters, cloners, imitators and adapters. Self-image also has a role to play for certain kinds of products and services. People buy clothes, dresses and accessories based on their actual self image and often on the desired self image. Self-images reflect perceptions of one’s own social-class membership.

Social class impacts not only what the consumers buy, but also from where they buy. They visit shops, markets and malls which are frequented by members of their social class. They avoid stores that have an image very different from their own or their social class. Thus, shops, markets and malls are located and designed keeping in view the segment that frequents them. Decisions on the merchandise and brand assortment, pricing and discounts and special offers, store design layout, ambience as well as the POP stimuli are all taken after taking into consideration the target segment and the social class. With the new generation aspiring quicker social mobility, marketers need to be very careful.

A difference is also seen in terms of receptivity of the segments with respect to marketing communication and promotion; this difference pertains to the message design but primarily on the channel or media used for communication. The upper classes are receptive to messages flashed on i) select news channels and newspapers that are primarily contain less political and more financial news; ii) special interest magazines like business, fashion, interior design etc.

b) Hobbies and Interest: Social class also has a bearing on the kinds of hobbies and interest as well as recreational activities that a person pursues. As mentioned above, the upper class consumers have greater resources at hand; they favor fashion, style and sophistication. They go to clubs and play indoor games like bridge and roulette, and outdoor games like golf, tennis and squash. They read books, watch theater, go to concerts, and visit museums and art exhibitions. On the other hand, middle and lower class consumers, watch television serials; they also like to watch sports on TV. The middle class women pursue hobbies like needlecraft and they also have social (kitty) parties. Their primary activities include cooking and looking after the home. Men involve themselves more into earning money.

c) Orientation towards saving and spending patterns: Social class membership also affects the consumers' attitudes towards saving and spending patterns. With the upper class consumers better off in terms of finances than the middle and lower class consumers, their saving and spending patterns are futuristic in approach. They invest in stocks and real estate, as well as luxurious and prestige goods. While making purchases, they pay through the credit cards instead of the usual cash, purely for reasons of a convenient substitute of cash. Middle class consumers are interested in making rational functional approaches. They enter into purchase activity only when they have enough money to buy what they desire. They are generally conservative by nature and prefer paying in cash. However, today things are changing and we do find an increasing trend towards purchases made on credit and payments made on monthly installments. Lastly, lower class consumers have meager resources and buy when necessary; if they save, they do so for the rainy day. While the upper classes use the credit card out of convenience, the middle class use it out of necessity; while the former clear their credit card bills every month, the middle class look for installments.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING:

1. Loudon, D.L. and Bitta A.J. Della, Consumer Behavior, Fourth Edition, 2002, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi.
2. Peter, P.J. and Olson, J.C., Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategy, Seventh Edition, 2005, McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
3. Schiffman, L.G. and Kanuk, L.L., Consumer Behavior, Eight Edition, 2004, Prentice Hall, India.
4. Wells W.D. and Prensky, D., Consumer Behavior, 1996, John Wiley & sons, Inc.

FAQS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS):

Ques 1 What do you mean by the term "social class"? Discuss the dynamics of social class?

Ans 1 People in a society are placed in different strata based on their status; each of these strata may be referred to as social class. Schiffman defines social class as "*the division of /members of a society into a hierarchy of distinct status classes, so that members of each class have relatively the same status and members of all other classes have either more or less status*".

Social class is defined in terms of the amount of status the members of a particular class relatively have, in comparison with members of other social classes. Broadly speaking, the stratification into varied social classes, is done on the bases on three factors, viz., wealth (economic

assets) power (ability to exert influence over others) and prestige (recognition received). However, marketing academicians and researchers, as well as consumer researchers, define status in terms of demographical variables like *income*, *occupation* and *education*; in fact, the three are interrelated and thus, used in conjunction to each other. While understanding buying patterns and consumption behavior, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of social class. These are discussed as follows:

- i) **Hierarchical structure:** Social class is hierarchical in nature. The social-class categories are ranked in a hierarchy that ranges from low to high. Based on education, occupation and income, the society is divided into various ranks, such that people in a particular rank are similar to others in the same rank and different across various ranks. So members of a particular social class view themselves as a) having a status similar to others in their own class; and b) having a status high or low than members of the higher or lower class. Based on the social class, they view themselves *equal* to other (in the same social class), *inferior* to others (from higher social class), and *superior* to others (from lower social class). The hierarchical structure holds relevance for a marketer.
- ii) **Similarity of people within a social class:** People within a social class are similar to each other. This similarity is not only witnessed in terms of their education, occupation and income, but also their thinking, values, norms, attitudes, lifestyle and behavioral patterns. There is similarity among members *within* each social class and dissimilarity with *between* social classes.

SELF EVALUATION TESTS/QUIZZES:

Section A True/false:

1. In terms of marketing, the general measures of lifestyle relate to the use of product and service offerings by people belonging to a social class.
2. The VALS classifies consumers into three segments.
3. The VALS framework essentially provides for demographic segmentation.

Section B Fill up the blanks:

1. Social class is measured in terms of _____
2. Lifestyles have been assessed in terms of activities, _____ and _____.
3. According to VALS, consumers could be of three kinds, viz., _____, outer-directed and inner-directed.
4. VALS 2 attempts to profile consumers by grouping them into three orientation categories, viz., principle oriented, status oriented, and _____ oriented.

Section C Multiple choice questions:

1. Which of the following statements about the List of Values scale is false?
 - a) The goal of the scale is to assess the dominant values of a consumer.
 - b) It measures a total of nine values.
 - c) It is based on the premise that personal values are linked to consumption.
 - d) None of the above.

2. The VALS is based on two dimensions, viz.,
 - a) Primary motivation and secondary motivations.
 - b) Primary motivation and resources.
 - c) Self-orientation and resources.
 - d) None of the above.

Section D Short answers:

1. Write short notes on :
 - a) Social class mobility
 - b) Lifestyle analysis
2. Consumer researchers define status in terms of three demographical variables. Name them.
3. Discuss the relevance of the “hierarchical structure” in social class for a marketer?
4. Mention a few commonly used Lifestyle Analysis tools?
5. The VALS includes three primary motivations, and accordingly classifies the consumer population into three distinct types. Name the motivations.
6. Name a few measures used to measure social class.
7. The objective measures of social class may be divided into two categories. Name them.

KEY**Section A True/false:**

1. True
2. False
3. False

Section B Fill up the blanks:

1. Status
2. Interests, Opinions
3. Need-directed
4. Action

Section C Multiple choice questions:

1. d
2. b

Section D Short answers:

1 a) People in community can move from one strata to another. They can move either up or down the social class; this mobility gets exhibited in two forms. One, individuals can move either up or down in social-class standing across generations, i.e. while their parents may have belonged to one strata, they begin to belong to another, either upper or lower. Two, such a transition may also be seen through one's life, i.e. as a person becomes independent and starts earning, he may belong to one class and as he progresses in life, he may begin to belong to another. Upward mobility is more common and is generally the trend these days.

1b) Consumer behaviorists and researchers have studied lifestyles of the community and made generalizations. Lifestyles have been assessed in terms of activities, interests and opinions (AIOs). They have been measured as a general measure as well as a specific measure. In terms of marketing, the general measure relates to the use of product and service offerings by people belonging to a social class. As a specific measure they relate to brands, whether economy, middle-range or premium. Thus, lifestyle analysis may be used as a general measure or as a specific measure.

Marketers make use of general lifestyles while making product decisions, whether related to the product itself, or price, place and promotion. This would include assessment of new product opportunities, the segmentation, targeting and positioning and all other decisions related to the marketing strategy. On the other hand, marketers make use of specific lifestyles while making decisions related to a brand, be it its positioning, pricing and any other decision related to brand management.

2. Income, Occupation and Education

3. The hierarchical structure holds relevance for a marketer in the following ways.

- First, marketers can use this as a basis to segment the market; the various strata provide a basis for market segmentation.

- Two, when people are "other-directed" or susceptible to social influence, they would buy such products and services and/or brands that people from their respective social classes purchase. This is because they look for social approval. So they would purchase certain products and service offerings and/or brands because they are used and favored by members of their own class.

- Third, people are class conscious and relate brands to their social class; thus, they would buy brands which they feel relate to their "class", and would avoid brands that they relate to "lower-class" products. There are social-class influences on the actual consumption of products.

-Fourth, the higher social class or the upper social class also acts as reference groups, for people in the lower class. The latter aspire to emulate the former and desire buying products and brands which the former buy.

4. VALS, VALS 2, List of Values, Geo-Demographic Analysis (PRIZM), Yankelovich's MONITOR MindBase.

5. Ideals, Achievement and Self-expression.

6. Subjective measures, Reputational measures and Objective measures.

7. Single variable indexes, Composite-variable indexes.