

ATTITUDE: DEFINITION

Do you have it?

Do you have an attitude? Toward *Barbie* (the movie) and *Oppenheimer*? Toward Los Angeles Dodgers baseball player Shohei Ohtani for his alleged involvement in gambling that came to light in 2024? In Super Bowl LVIII, played on February 11, 2024, the Kansas City Chiefs defeated the San Francisco 49ers, but which is your favorite team? And which college courses did you like the most? The least? Which is your favorite drink—Coke, Pepsi, or the Dew? All of these questions are designed to elicit your attitudes. So, just what is an attitude?

In common parlance, when we refer to attitude as a concept, we simply refer to a person's "like" or "dislike" of something, his or her opinion about something. If you like something, then your attitude toward it is positive; if you dislike it, then your attitude is negative. However, to fully understand the nature of attitudes, we need to examine a classic definition of attitudes, offered by psychologist Gordon Allport: **Attitudes** are learned predispositions to respond to an object in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way.¹

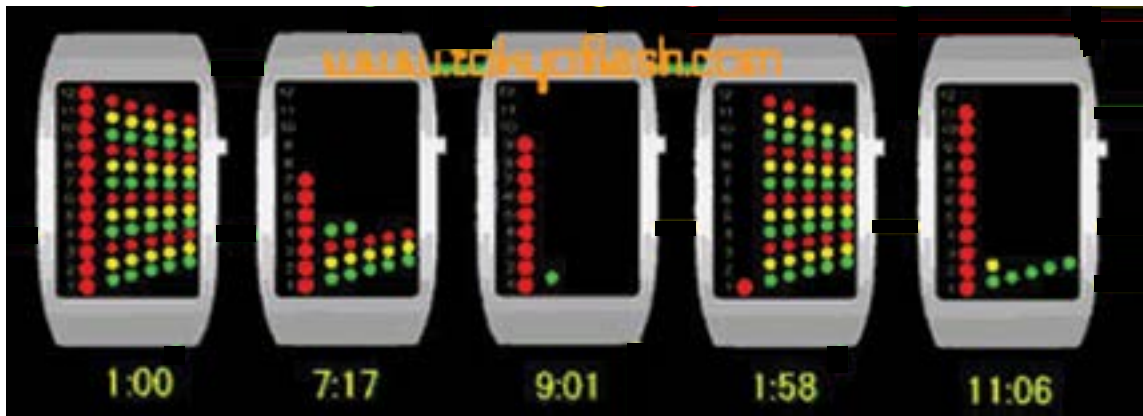
This definition has several elements:

- **Attitudes are learned.** Attitudes are learned. That is, no one is born with them. We were not born with an attitude toward *Barbie* (the movie) or *Oppenheimer*, toward the Super Bowl LVIII winner or loser team, toward football for that matter, or toward Coke and Pepsi, for example; instead, we have acquired (i.e., "learned") our attitudes during our time here on earth. How did we learn them? Based on some experience with or information about these things or persons.
- **They are targeted toward an object or a class of objects.** If we were to ask you what your attitude is or what your opinion is, you would ask, "Opinion about what?" or "Attitude toward what?" That "what" is the "object" in our definition—attitude toward an object. And that object can be anything—a brand, a product, a company, a class, a movie, a presidential candidate, and even an idea (e.g., the idea of 'freedom of speech'). Thus, we hold different attitudes toward different objects.
- **Attitudes cause responses.** That is, they are the reason we respond, or act, in a certain way toward these objects. Thus, we drink Coke and avoid Pepsi (or the other way around) because of our attitudes toward Coke and Pepsi. And our attitude toward Adele and Billie Eilish and their music makes us buy or not buy their albums.
- **The response that an attitude causes is consistent.** Thus, we don't buy Adele music today and avoid it tomorrow. And we don't willingly eat sushi today and avoid it tomorrow. Instead, we act toward a given object the same way over a period of time; i.e., consistently.
- **Attitude is a predisposition.** By predisposition, we mean it is our "inclination." Thus, it resides in our minds. We are predisposed to doing (or not doing) something (not by birth; but by learning about an object). For example, we become predisposed (or inclined) to buy Apple Watch, and we become predisposed to eat Reese's Pieces.

Predisposition

Pregnant with meaning

This word, *predisposition*, is a wonderful word, pregnant with rich meaning. It is the key to the concept of attitude and to understanding the true nature of this concept. No other term can cut it as well. We could say, for example, that an attitude is our opinion about something, and broadly speaking we would be right, but opinion is what we think of something. That is all. It is not quite the same thing as predisposition. We could say attitude is our general evaluation of something—whether we view it as a good thing or a bad thing—and we would be approximately right. But the word *evaluation* does not quite capture it either. *Predisposition*—it means we have something in our minds—a thought, an opinion, an evaluation, a view, even a feeling—and that we are going to do something about it. We are going to act toward the object of our attitude. Predisposition makes us



If you have never seen this Japanese watch before, then you can't possibly have an attitude toward it. Because no one is born with attitudes.

Now, look at it, grasp how time is read on this watch, and then decide if you like or dislike it.

You now have an attitude, and we mean attitude *toward the watch*. You just *learned* it. And now you want to get one—that is your *response*. You want it today, and you would want it tomorrow (*consistency*), unless, of course, you change your attitude itself (toward the watch). You will buy it as soon as the opportunity arises (*predisposition*). You can buy it from www.tokyoflash.com.

YOUR ATTITUDE IS WAITING FOR ACTION!!!

inclined to act. Thus, an attitude is our mental code to release some action toward something. It is an *action in waiting*.

Action in Waiting

This idea of attitude as a predisposition and predisposition as *action in waiting* is very useful to marketers. Marketers are interested in predicting consumers' future actions or future behaviors. A behavior is something we *do*; an attitude (predisposition) is something we have in our minds. So, marketers use consumer attitudes to predict consumer behaviors. Thus, for example, if marketers knew that you had a positive attitude toward, say, *Helldivers 2* but a negative attitude toward *Rise of the Ronin* ((two of the many video games released in March 2024), then they could predict that you would be likely to buy *Helldivers 2* but not buy *Rise of the Ronin*. Marketers want to predict consumers' behaviors—specifically whether consumers will or will not buy a product, *before* marketers invest the money to make and market that product.

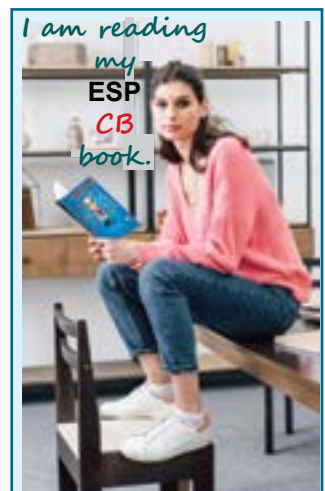
Here, again, are the key elements in the definition of attitude:

(1) learned (2) predisposition, (3) toward an object, (4) to respond or act (toward that object and in a favorable or unfavorable way); (5) consistently.

MEASURING CONSUMER ATTITUDES

As marketers, we are interested in finding out what consumers' attitudes are toward our brand. Suppose we wanted to find out consumers' attitudes toward Dua Lipa's new album *Radical Optimism* (released May 3, 2024). Before its mass production, we could play a sample of the tracks to consumers and ask them some questions that could reveal their predispositions. Something very simple like, "What do you think of this music?" However, to assess their attitudes on a numerical scale (so we can compare consumer attitudes across several brands and also across consumers), marketers use scales (a set of measurement questions like this are called *scales*). One such scale is shown below.²

We can average the three items to arrive at the attitude score. Suppose this score comes to -1.67 for consumer Leo Woodall, -1.33 for consumer Ambika Mod, and +1.33 for consumer Amber Grappy; then, Grappy's attitude toward Dua Lipa's 2024 music album would be favorable, Mod's attitude unfavorable, and Woodall's attitude even more unfavorable. We can use this measurement method for any product, new or old.



"Pregnant with meaning," "action in waiting" — so happy to read a textbook with such poetic prose. Naturally, my attitude toward this book is highly positive. And now I know how I could measure my friends' attitude toward my wardrobe; my bindi; or toward me, for that matter!