

Chapter 4

Analysis & Review of Variables Being Modeled with Consumer Involvement: Establishing the Nomological Net

to make clear what something is means to set forth the laws in which it occurs. . . . A necessary condition for a construct to be scientifically admissible is that it occur in a nomological net, . . . (Cronbach & Meehl 1955 p.290).

and therefore, . . . more work could be directed toward building nomological networks . . . to understand involvement in relation to other concepts (Day, Stafford & Camacho 1995 p.73).

4. Introduction

Chapter 3 presented a review and analysis of the literature with respect to involvement in consumer behaviour. Issues related to the theoretical development of the construct were analysed and categorisation of the extent literature into meaningful groups was performed. Chapter 3 also provided the theoretical direction and propositions that underpin the use of involvement in this study. This chapter will present a review of the variables used to establish the nomological network for involvement. Theoretical developments related to values, product knowledge and expertise, consumer confidence, consumption consequences and self-image product-image congruency will be reviewed. This chapter will build the foundation for the nomological net and underlying rationale for using nomological validity to assess the conceptualisation of involvement.

4.1 Introduction to consumer values

Personal values research in consumer behaviour is experiencing somewhat of a slow, but modest growth in interest. Since the mid 1980's there has been increased attention given to the study of values and their relationship to various other marketing variables, consumer characteristics and issues such as product and brand choice, gift-giving, charitable donations, and media usage (Homer & Kahle 1988) and value trend and baby boomers (Muller, Kahle & Chéron 1992). The view that values play an important role in human behaviour has been widely accepted for some time now (Kahle 1983 and Rokeach 1973). However, compared to sociology, psychology and organisational behaviour, the study of values in consumer behaviour has been slower to develop.

In this study values will be conceived and discussed from a broad, global perspective such as adopted Rokeach (1968), Kahle (1983), Schwartz (1992) and Schwartz and Bilsky (1987), and an intermediate, more focused perspective such as that of materialistic values as proposed by Richins and Dawson (1992) and Belk (1985) to a specific perspective regarding consumption values as theorised by Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977), Scott and Lamont (1973) and Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991). That is, values will be discussed in the context of a hierarchical system possessing three levels of abstraction and focus.

4.1.1 Global values

A cursory review of the literature on values across a range of disciplines yields a large number of conceptualisations and a smaller number of measures (e.g., Alport 1961; Kahle 1983; Levy and Guttman 1974; Maslow 1959 and Rokeach 1973) with some common features. Rokeach (1973) made a distinction between instrumental and terminal values and stated that values were:

... enduring beliefs that specific modes of conduct (instrumental values) or endstates of existence (terminal values) are personally or socially preferable to opposite or converse modes of conduct or end-states of existence (p.5).

Values are argued to be fundamental concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviours that transcend specific situations, guide selection and evaluation of behaviour

and events and are ordered by their relative importance. Rokeach (1973) believed that the consequences of values would be manifested in nearly all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and want to understand. According to Rokeach (1973), values guide actions, attitudes and judgments. Clawson and Vinson (1978) further elaborated on the propositions of Rokeach (1973) and suggested that:

values may prove to be one of the most powerful explanations of, and influences on, consumer behaviour. They can perhaps equal or surpass the contributions of other major constructs including attitudes, product attributes, degrees of deliberation, product classifications, and life styles (p.396).

In terms of social adaptation theory, which regards values as commonly held beliefs along which individuals orient themselves and organise their attitudes and social interaction, values are argued to be the most abstract concept underlying behaviour (Kahle 1983). Values are seen as a type of social cognition that enables individuals to adapt to their environment (Homer & Kahle, 1988). This underlying nature provides values with an important role in consumer behaviour. It is the situation-transcending nature of global values which give them importance in the study of consumer behaviour and therefore theoretically link values and their fulfilment through the use of products.

What is interesting then, given the significance of such views on the critical nature of values in influencing consumer behaviour research, is that compared with other concepts or domains of research in consumer behaviour, values research is quite sparse (Beatty, Kahle, Homer & Misra 1985) in both number of studies conducted and breadth of application of values research. This is particularly so with respect to the relationship between values and involvement. Whilst continually proposed or theorised to exist (e.g., Bloch 1981; Engel & Light 1968; Houston & Rothschild 1979; Peter & Olson 1987; Tybjee 1979 and Zaichkowsky 1984), the empirical testing of the relationship between values and involvement is virtually nonexistent.

Values are seen to develop from life experiences and consumers obtain experiences by interacting with their environments in an attempt to develop satisfactory interactions with their environments (Kahle 1996). Values do affect the perceived attractiveness or aversiveness of available alternatives in the marketplace and they therefore affect the

choices consumers make. These choices can and do include what products (objects) to become involved in or not involved in.

4.1.2 Values orientations

Given that values represent such an important influence on behaviour, it is important to explore consumers possible values orientations. While the concepts of instrumentality and expressiveness have long been established, their corresponding psychological meaning and application has been dealt with somewhat marginally in consumer behaviour (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman 1959; Maddox 1981 and Yi 1990). For example, there is argued to be a psychological correspondence between possessions, attitudes and values (Prentice 1987 and Richins & Dawson, 1992). Research by Prentice (1987) distinguished between expressive and instrumental types of values and possessions, indicating two distinct groups of people. One group consisted of those people who favoured self-expressive possessions and tended to be more favourable towards symbolic appeals and values and less favourable towards instrumental appeals and values. The other group tended towards owning and favouring instrumental possessions and values were less favourable towards expressive and symbolic appeals and values.

According to Prentice (1987) material possessions have self-expressive value fulfilment for their owners, where the possession of a certain object (e.g., stereos, jewellery, cars) allows the owner to benefit from its sheer existence because the object has been endowed with a value by its owner and thus represents that value. Consumers with such a values are expected to be more involved in these types of products. While these propositions appear to be supported by the theoretical work of Feather (1985) and by Kelley's (1967) theory of attribution, Prentice (1987) appears to focus more on an individual's outer-directed values and materialistic inclinations and less on the characteristics and function of the self and inner-directed values. Inner-directed values seem to be confined in part by use of the term of 'self-expressiveness' in Prentice's (1987) work.

Separate from Rokeach's distinction which relates values to their goals, Kahle's List of Values (LOV) terminology also refers to the locus of control. The group of external values

consists of 'security', 'being well respected' and 'sense of belonging' while all others (self-fulfilment, excitement, sense of accomplishment, self-respect, fun and enjoyment and warm relationships) belong to the group of internal values. Internal and external values are here used synonymously with the terms inner-directed and outer-directed. Riesman (1966) maintains that there are three types of directedness: inner-directedness, other-directedness and tradition-directedness. According to Riesman, the former two types prevail in today's society and, therefore, they are relevant to this study. The orientation expressed in the term 'directedness' refers to the force that guides individuals and their behaviour. Inner-directed individuals are guided by internal forces which are instilled through early parental/family influences; other-directed people are guided by the social environment and are often forced to change or modify their behaviour. This is similar to the conception of self-monitoring, where individual's are said to be either directed by their inner self or directed by their external world (Lennox and Wolfe 1984 and Snyder 1974). Externally directed people are said to be high self-monitors and inner directed people are said to be low self-monitors.

Kahle (1983) clarifies the internal values dimension he described as being directed towards the self (inner-directed), whereas external values come from the self and are directed outward. For inner-directed values, the dominant characteristic is seen to be that individual turns upon them self, whereas for the outer-directed values, they refer to an (outside) object. For example, while Kahle uses the value of "self-fulfilment", which is directed towards the self and is inner-directed, he uses the value of "sense of belonging" as being outer-directed because it requires certain situational contexts for its fulfilment.

The dominant characteristic of terminal values is that they aspire a state of 'being' or 'consciousness' and they are ends in themselves and can only be perceived by the self. All inner-directed expressive values depend on a consumer's subjective perceptions, while outer-directed values depend on an object being endowed with symbolic meaning by a consumer (Prentice 1987). The nature of inner-directed values is different because they require no outside object or stimulus for their fulfilment. Fundamentally, all inner-directed values are seen to refer back to emotional states of the self and generated by the self and are directed back towards the self (Bloch 1935).

The role of outer-directed values is to target specific objects and short-term satisfaction for consumers, however, inner-directed values, encompassing emotions such as anxiety, fear, hope and joy (Bloch 1985). For example, the expression of the feeling-state of awareness, is one that a consumer might experience in the presence of a painting or sculpture or even a prestige car (Bloch 1985). Such symbolic, experiential products or objects such as art, jewellery or even prestige cars represents an experience of the object's qualities by the consumer for its own sake, resulting in self-fulfilment. Such feelings are forward-directed and refer to the self and self-realisation and are labelled as the "not-yet-conscious" by Bloch (1985 p.45).

The non-utilitarian characteristic of inner-directed, anticipative values is also seen in a consumer's activities that constitute fun and enjoyment (Murray 1938). The fulfilment of inner-directed values, however, does not depend on the object itself, instead they relate to a class of objects and activities that an individual has learnt to associate with a certain value or self-directed satisfaction. Similarly, the satisfaction of the value of achievement, depends on a person's interaction with an object. While an individual has positive valences with regard to such objects they want to consume, such objects are substitutable, since the goal is an outcome, not a process.

Arousal that is hedonic and experiential are processes captured by the values of 'excitement' and 'fun and enjoyment' (Howard & Woodside 1984; Kahle 1983 and Homer & Kahle 1988). Excitement is aroused by associations or images of satisfaction related to a product class and inherently contains an inner-directed nature. The hedonic oriented value of 'fun and enjoyment' relates to a flow of feeling (Csikszentmihalyi 1975), and is more outer-directed because it relates to a process, strongly implying the semantics of activity, preference and choice on the part of the consumer. However, excitement contains more of an anticipatory nature that is aroused within a consumer by an object but is directed towards the self, through its anticipatory nature.

A consumer's preferences are instrumental to their hedonic values and are essentially outer-directed. It is because preferences contain emotional value components that, in a marketing context, objects (e.g., cars, clothing, housing or art) are imbued by consumers with a certain symbolism (e.g., Bell, Holbrook & Sclomon 1991 and Zajonc & Markus 1982) that

originates from the self but is directly linked with the physical qualities and characteristics of products.

The elaboration of the inner-outer directedness of values discussed above extends Kahle's explanations of their internal or external character. The discussion attempts to probe not only the direction of the value, but also their locus of control. Such a discussion helps understand the role specific objects hold with regards to the fulfilment or satisfaction of respective values.

Despite the importance of such values orientations and their significance for consumer research, values have not been widely applied to direct examination of consumer involvement. To correct this weakness there is a need to both theoretically and empirically examine values in a consumer behaviour context. There have been a number of measures developed for measurement of global values (Beatty, Kahle, Homer & Misra 1985; Kahle 1983, 1986; Mitchell 1983; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz & Bilsky 1987 and Schwartz 1992;). One of the key values measures, developed in consumer behaviour, is the LOV (Beatty, Kahle, Homer & Misra 1985 and Kahle 1983, 1986). This measure of values will be discussed next.

4.1.3 List of values theory and measure

Kahle (1983) offers a list of nine expressive values termed the List of Values (LOV) as outlined in Table 4.1 below. The scale is a list of nine values modified from the Rokeach value survey (RVS) list of terminal values. The names of these values constitute semantic dimensions and are derived from interpretations of factor analysed data gathered in a replicated study on how Americans view their mental health by Veroff, Douvan and Kulka (1981).

Table 4.1 Kahle's List of Values (LOV)

Self-fulfilment
Excitement
Sense of accomplishment
Self-respect
Sense of belonging
Being well respected
Security
Fun and enjoyment
Warm relationships

(Source: Developed from Kahle 1983)

According to Kahle (1986), the LOV relates “more closely to life’s major roles” (p.406) than Rokeach’s (1973) set of instrumental and terminal values. Kahle names domains such as marriage, parenting, work, leisure, and daily consumption as examples of life’s major roles (e.g., Kahle 1983, 1989). Therefore, Kahle’s list of values can be argued to represent more closely the values associated with consumer behaviour than Rokeach’s values approach or Schwartz’s values approach (per comm, Professor Lynn Kahle, 3-10-1997). Kahle (1983) states that the LOV scale is based upon values research by Feather (1975), Maslow (1954), and Rokeach (1973), however, the theoretical relationships to these works are not explicitly detailed in the work of Kahle..

Whereas, Rokeach required all values to be ranked, Kahle stated that either rating or ranking may be used in the LOV. In his empirical work, the LOV has been presented as either a nine-point scale (Kahle 1996), ten point scale (Homer & Kahle 1988), eleven point scale or even a seven-point Likert-type (Kahle, Lui & Watkins 1992) which rates values from very unimportant to very important (Kahle & Kennedy 1988), important to very important (Beatty, Kahle, Homer & Misra 1985; Homer and Kahle 1988; Kahle 1983; Kahle, Beatty & Homer 1986 and Kahle & Kennedy 1988) or important to me - most important to me (Kahle 1996).

Kahle’s approach of rating also allows two values to be equal in importance, resulting in value clusters that are argued to create a meaningful values typology, a possibility denied by

a strict ranking procedure as advocated by Rokeach. Clearly, if subjects can successfully rate values, then the LOV scale becomes compatible with more powerful analytical techniques such as factor analysis and structural equation modeling (Kahle 1989).

Because the theoretical derivation of the LOV is dependent upon the theoretical work of Rokeach, Feather (1975) and Maslow (1954), it represents a synthesis by Kahle of previous values work into the LOV. However, since it does not include all of the values listed in the RVS list of terminal values group (and none of the instrumental values), it can be argued that it is less complete and less likely to capture the full spectrum of values consumers may hold. On the other hand, Kahle (1983) argues that the LOV scale is a more suitable measure because it is shorter and easier to follow, and because it allows subjects to effectively evaluate all values against one another, since there are only nine rather than 36 values (18 terminal and 18 instrumental) with the RVS and 56 (30 terminal and 26 instrumental) with the Schwartz values approach. Supporting such a proposition Crosby, Bitner, and Gill (1990) argued that not all of the RVS terminal values are independent of one another as Rokeach believed. Gibbons and Walker (1993) concluded (of the RVS) that individual's evaluation of the world may be based upon more fundamental values. This suggests that a more parsimonious representation such as the LOV is possible and appropriate. The views of Crosby, Bitner and Gill (1990) and Gibbons and Walker (1993) support Kahle's position that a shorter scale of more fundamental values is possible and ultimately desirable in consumer behaviour research. There is considerable support found in the literature to view Kahle's LOV as a good foundation in values theory and measurement in consumer behaviour.

4.1.4 Concluding remarks on global values

Values represent enduring attitudes and needs and as such they influence the normative standards that people set or hold regarding various systems. Rokeach (1973) proposed that values can also influence satisfaction with oneself as well as help to shape attitudes toward various objects (e.g., products, ads and situations). For consumer behaviour researchers, this implies that values represent schemata for purchase and consumption decisions. Within this context, values represent the goals or end-states and products and their consumption

represent one method of achieving such goals (Guttman 1982 and Howard 1977). Values then would help determine the level of involvement with products that have potential to fulfill values (Smith & Beatty 1984). Apart from global life values, there are also argued to exist more consumption focused values within the consumers values systems such as materialistic values.

4.2 Materialistic values

Given that values represent an important influence on behaviour, it is important for this study to explore values that characterise consumption. A value that is becoming more prevalent in Australia is materialism. Materialism has been identified as a potentially important dimension to further the understanding of consumer behaviour (Belk 1984, 1985; Richins 1987 and Richins & Dawson 1992). Materialism is used here to refer to the importance people attach to owning worldly possessions (Solomon 1996). Australia is increasingly becoming a materialistic society where one's value or worth is measured by material possessions. We see this trend increasingly in popular consumption values of "shop till you drop" and "he who dies with the most toys, wins" and rising credit card usage and debts. Such approaches to life are the basis of materialism. However, this does not imply that everyone is materialistic or stresses the attainment of possessions as similarly important. Consumers do vary in their level or possession of materialistic values (Richins 1987).

The attachment to material possessions seems to have been a part of human culture for sometime. For example, James (1890) proposed that we are the sum total of all our possessions. Belk (1988) even went so far as to argue that "what we possess is, in a very real way, part of ourselves" (p.52). The literature on materialism identifies four types of possessions that are attributable to developing a sense of the self. These are body parts, objects, places and time periods, and persons and pets. Importantly objects (such as houses, cars, stereos, jewelry and clothing) are said to be the most important possessions of individuals (Mowen 1995), and their sense of self (Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry, Holbrook & Roberts 1987).

If, as theory suggests, some consumers do emphasize image and material signs of it, one might ask what relationship involvement has to consumer values and particularly to materialistic values (materialism). Materialism can be thought of as values focusing on possessions and guiding the selection of possessions and consumption related situations. The more highly materialistic a consumer is, the more likely they are to be prone to be acquisitive, to have positive attitudes related to acquisition and to place a high priority on material possessions. Highly materialistic consumers find possessions to be involving and tend to devote more time and energy to product-related activities. Having more materialistic values has been associated with using possessions for portraying and managing impressions, self-indulgent purchasing activity and keeping possessions rather than disposing of them (Belk 1985). Materialistic values have also been linked with giving possessions a central place in life and believing them to be a sign of success and satisfaction in life (Fournier & Richins 1991 and Richins & Dawson 1992).

Materialistic individuals are believed to value items that are consumed publicly and possess public meaning, rather than private, personal or subjective meaning. The important aspects of possessions for materialists are utility, appearance, financial worth and ability to convey status, success and prestige. This suggests that consumers with stronger materialistic values use possessions for impression management and those with weaker materialistic values use possessions for their private meaning and associations with important others and inner private reward (Richins 1994). Essentially, greater levels of materialism seem to be associated with an understanding by individuals that possessions serve as part of a communication or signal to others informing them of who the individual is and what they are (Douglas & Isherwood 1979). Materialism may, therefore, represent a key variable in the development of a consumer's attachment to and involvement with specific stimuli that allow the fulfilment of such values.

4.2.1 Materialistic values measurement and scales

Clearly, the value placed on materialism may vary across consumers, thus, the measurement of materialistic values becomes important for marketers. There are a limited number of materialism scales that have been developed and tested in the consumer behaviour area.

Such scales include: the measure of materialistic attitudes (MMA, Moschis & Churchill 1978); Materialism-Post materialism scale (Inglehart 1981); Belief in material growth scale (BIMG, Tashchian, Slama & Tashchian 1984); Belk's Materialism scales (Belk 1984, 1985); Richins' Materialism Measure (Richins 1987); Possession satisfaction index (PSI, Scott & Lundstrom 1990); Material values (Richins & Dawson 1992).

Empirical research on materialism has been scant until quite recently (Belk 1984, 1985; Richins 1987; Heslin, Johnson & Blake 1989 and Richins & Dawson 1992). Richins and Dawson (1992) have provided a valuable assessment of materialism, highlighting some of the major problems and weaknesses in current instruments such as Belk's (1984) scale and Burdsal's (1975) use of inference from other measures not tapping materialism itself. Richins and Dawson (1992) argued, that with few exceptions, (e.g., Belk 1984 and Richins & Dawson 1992) much of the materialism work seems devoid of rigorous and commonly accepted standards for scale development. As practiced in much prior research, methods can be grouped into two distinct approaches: those that indirectly infer materialism from measures of related constructs and those that measure materialism more directly through items tapping the central dimensions of materialism itself.

Richins and Dawson (1992) measure of material values is based on the view of materialism as a consumer value that involves beliefs and attitudes so centrally held that they guide the behaviour of the consumer. Based on a review of the materialism literature in a variety of disciplines and on popular notions of materialism, three key themes concerning materialism were identified (Fournier & Richins 1991). The key materialist factors according to this view are:

Possessions as defining success- which is the extent to which a consumer uses possessions as indicators of success and achievement in life, both to judge others and themselves;

Acquisition centrality- which is the extent to which one places possession acquisition at the center of one's life; and

Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness- which is the belief that possessions are essential to one's satisfaction and well-being in life.

These three factors reflect the values consumers place on material goods and the roles these goods play in their lives. The measure developed by Richins and Dawson (1992) consists of 18 items comprising the 3 factors of success, centrality and happiness.

Theoretical propositions (Belk 1984, 1985; Browne & Kaldenberg 1997; Richins 1987 and Richins & Dawson 1992) would seem to indicate that materialism is associated with higher consumer involvement in products, that can be used to convey impressions and image to others. This is because such products (e.g., clothing, cars, jewelry and houses) have high potentially symbolic meaning. The extent to which different consumer behaviours result from different levels of involvement is potentially affected by consumer characteristics such as values and personality traits. In this regard, involvement has been linked to, and argued to precipitate, key consumer behaviours. For consumers the extent that they undertake prolonged search, process information extensively and focus on attributes such as product appearance, quality, functionality and product image are overarching considerations is potentially a function of the strength of their materialistic values. Importantly, materialists, because of their use of products and emphasis on possessions (products), have the potential of making certain products and their purchase more involving.

Although it is useful to treat materialism as a cultural or structural variable for purposes of comparing cultures or examining institutions within cultures, much can be gained by examining individual differences in materialism to understand involvement. For example, research that seeks to identify factors (such as values) contributing to individual consumer's involvement may provide insights into the determinants of involvement. Examining materialism at the individual level will permit the study of interaction between materialism and involvement.

4.3 Specific consumption values

The literature (Scott, Vinson & Lamont 1973 and Sheth, Newman and Gross 1991) has alluded to a third focal level of values in a values system hierarchy, that of specific consumption values. Scott and Lamont (1973) introduced the concept of domain specific values in order to bridge the gap between global life values and the criteria consumers use

to evaluate products. Under the conception of Scott and Lamont (1973), consumption specific values can be seen to mediate the effects between global values and the consequences associated with a specific type of product. While global values such as those in the RVS or the LOV are more abstract and generalisable across a consumer's life, the domain-specific values are related only to specific purchase and consumption aspect of a consumer's life.

The values engaged by purchase and consumption of specific products is an underdeveloped area of consumer behaviour. Few researchers have attempted to detail and empirically investigate values at a specific consumption level (Scott & Lamont 1973; Sheth, Newman & Gross 1991 and Vinson, Scott & Lamont 1977). There are few efforts in consumer behaviour research that investigate this valuable area of specific consumption values engaged by purchasing and consuming decisions for specific product classes. For example, Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) proposed five basic consumption values: functional value, conditional value, social value, emotional value and epistemic value. According to Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) these five basic consumption values explain why consumers choose to purchase a specific product.

One difficulty with this theory however, is the issue of the extent, that the five values are specific consumption values or they are the benefits/utility derived out of consuming a specific product (consequences). As yet the Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) theory has not detailed if the value engaged is perceived in the general sense as a value directing specific modes of behaviour to do with a specific product or as the generalised benefit or utility derived from its consumption (pers comm, Associate Professor Bruce Newman, 11-11-1996).

The proposition is raised here that global values are more abstract and generalisable across all of life's activities and are only indirectly related to the evaluation of products. To bring values more sufficiently into the domain of purchase and consumption behaviour, a level of values that is less abstract than global values and more purchase and consumption-oriented (Munson & McQuarrie 1988) is needed.

Consumption specific values on the other hand, reflect the view that individuals acquire values through consumption experiences and that involvement be understood except in the context of a specific environment. Values in this context represent a relationship a consumer and an object and such values emerge, rather from interaction or commerce between the consumer and their psychological ecology (Schiebe 1970 and Scott & Lamont 1973). This issue of level at which values should be treated has been identified by Sherrell, Hair and Bush (1984) as follows:

A value of central importance or with many connecting linkages to an individual's knowledge base is likely to be definable only in very broad, global terms. Consequently, measurement of such a variable and its influences is likely to be difficult to operationalize for a study in a specific situation. The level of specificity designed into a value measurement instrument is a critical component (p.171).

As suggested by Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977) the global values and the consumption-specific values can be seen to form a hierarchical structure that is interconnected. This conceptualisation sees consumption values at a lower level of abstraction than global values and argues that their influence on consumer behaviour particularly involvement as more dominant than global values. However, the presentation of values by Munson and McQuarrie (1988) sees some of the global values themselves being related to specific consumption issues.

As yet little research has been undertaken to understand what values are engaged by the purchase and consumption of specific products or product classes using this less abstract values representation. Largely, much of the discussion surrounding the marketing related consequences of values has taken place at a conceptual rather than empirical level (Howard 1977 and Prakash & Munson 1985). However, there are a few studies that have taken the perspective of viewing product preferences as the consequences of antecedent values such as that of Jackson (1973) who examined values, work and leisure preferences, Becker and Conner (1981) examining values and newspaper, magazine and television usage and Beatty, Yoon, Grunert and Helgeson (1996) examining gift-giving behaviours. However, these and other studies (Henry 1976; Homer & Kahle 1988; Manzur & Miller 1978 and Stone 1954)

investigating values and consumer behaviour relationships essentially looked at the relationship of global life values and purchase and consumption behaviour of consumers.

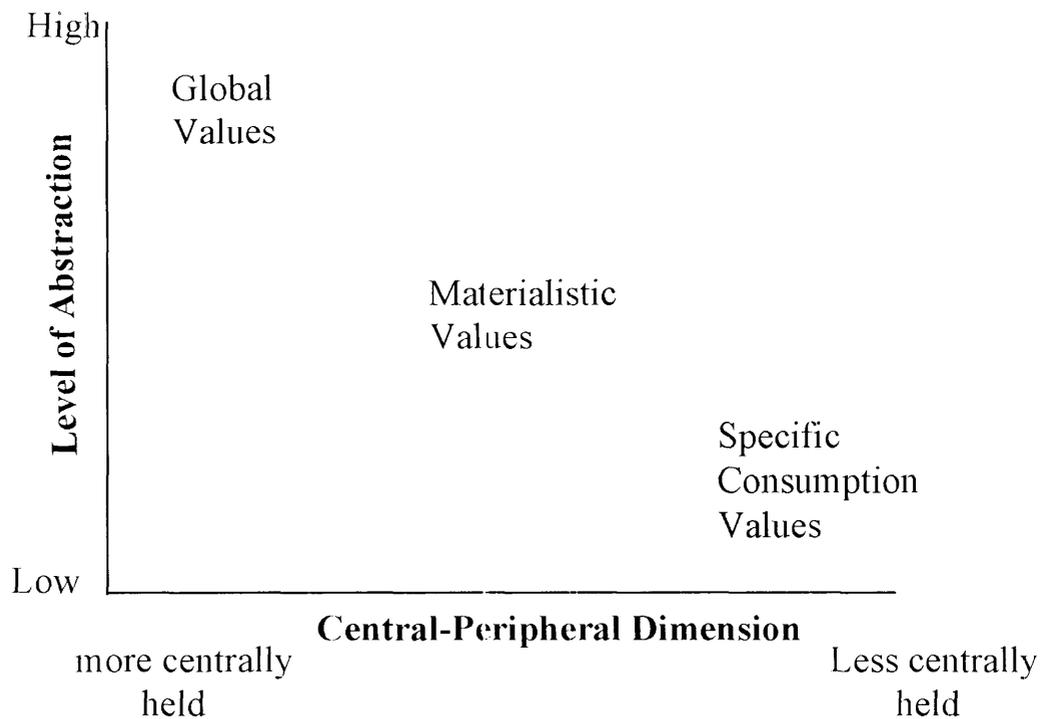
There is a need to determine if specific consumption values have a stronger relationship with involvement than global values. The dimensions that are used to tap values through the LOV may prove valuable in this regard for exploring the potential of specific consumption values. The proposition raised here is that a better understanding of consumer purchasing and consumption behaviour can be obtained through understanding consumers' values, but this understanding is further enhanced by exploring values targeted or engaged by a specific product's purchase and consumption.

4.4 Synthesising values: The values system approach

While it seems that values have important implications for marketing theory and practice, values and the ways in which they influence the behaviour of consumers in deciding, purchasing and consuming products, specific brands and attributes are not completely clear. Utilising similar theoretical propositions to that of Allport, Vernon and Lindzey (1960), Scott and Lamont (1973) and Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977), it is argued that values can be arranged in a system (network) of three mutually dependent and somewhat internally consistent domains: 1) global or general life values; 2) generalised consumer values (materialism) and 3) specific purchase and consumption values.

This hierarchy represents what is termed here a 'consumer values system'. This hierarchical values system is depicted below in Figure 4.1. The hierarchy represents a network of values at various levels of abstraction. The hierarchy is not seen as a system of one set of values having a causal influence on another, although this possibility could exist.

Figure 4.1 Values System Hierarchy



(Source: Adapted from Vincent, Scott & Lamont 1973)

Figure 4.1 identifies values in a hierarchical system according to level of abstraction and input (or focus) on life events. The diagram indicates that global values are treated at a high level of abstraction and have an influence across all life events (Kahle 1983, Scott & Lamont 1973 and Sherrell, Hair & Bush 1984), materialistic values are less abstract than global values and influence general possession and consumption events related to objects (Belk 1984 and Richins 1987) and specific consumption values are the least abstract and drive the specific values engaged by the purchase and consumption of specific products (Scott & Lamont 1973; Sherrel, Hair & Bush 1984 and Vinson, Scott & Lamont 1977). That is, materialistic values and consumption specific values are seen to influence involvement as well as general behaviour, whereas global values are seen to influence general behavioural patterns.

Figure 4.1 indicates the focusing of values from the specific consumption values which are the least abstract in that they affect specific product purchases and consumption. The second level of values are the intermediate generalised consumption values of materialistic values which affect possessions in general. The third level are the broader global life values which the most abstract representation of a consumer's values. Values within a consumer's

values system will vary in terms of their specificity and impact on behaviour, as depicted in Figure 4.1 global values reside at the broadest level, materialistic values of generalised consumption at the intermediate level and specific product consumption values at the most specific, domain level.

The models discussed here describe the pivotal role of values system in the consumer involvement process as well as the different levels of abstraction at which values may induce involvement and influence consumer behaviour. It has been suggested here that values are formed by learned beliefs and are functionally connected to consumer involvement in objects. The three levels of values were introduced to bridge the gap between the traditional conception of values found in the literature.

While there have been some studies in Australia investigating the values of Australians (Feather 1975, 1980, 1986, 1994 and Schwartz 1992), there are few published studies which have investigated the values of Australians from a consumer behaviour perspective and their corresponding levels of involvement. Even fewer have sought to separate out global (general) values, materialistic values and specific consumption values engaged by the purchase and consumption of a specific product. This study attempts to understand consumer values at a general or global level and also in the form of values driving the specific involvement (purchase and consumption) with the focal product. Through viewing global values, materialistic values and consumption values as being arranged in a hierarchical values system, important insights should be gained into the development of involvement. While it is important to distinguish key values for a better understanding of consumer behaviour, it is even more important to differentiate specific values at a consumption and purchase level to enhance our understanding of consumer involvement.

Essentially, the basis for arguing that values systems will be important in assisting our understanding of consumer behaviour and involvement is the proposition that values affect a buyer's recognition of a problem that potentially may be solved or remedied by being involved in a focal object. Global values, materialistic values and consumption specific values are characteristics common to all personalities, that either consciously or unconsciously, provide a standard or criterion for guiding behaviour.

A growing body of literature is attempting to explain the process by which values influence consumers behaviour, however, very little research has examined the influence of values on involvement. Carman (1978) suggests that values are directly linked to an individual's lifestyle. Lifestyle is generally seen to be composed of activities, interests, opinions and roles. This collection of factors, in turn, direct all consumption-related behaviour. Thus in Carman's formulation, values form a stable platform from which to direct the energy and activities of an individual's lifestyle and consequently their consumption behaviour. Howard and Sheth (1969) also suggest that the values in a culture affect consumption motives which, in turn, partially set the choice criteria used by consumers. Thus, by extending this proposition we should see a distinct relationship between values system and the degree of involvement in purchasing and consumption behaviours. Sherrell, Hair and Bush (1984) and Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977), expanding on the earlier work of Scott and Lamont (1973) gave values a more active role in the consumer behaviour decision process. Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977) suggested that both global values and those values that are specific to the behavioural domain of interest combine to influence the type and nature of evaluative beliefs formed by consumers.

One of the key features of personal values as a construct is that they are defined in a highly abstract manner and research has demonstrated their influence in various situations and on various behaviours. Conceptually, involvement shares a common base with values. Perhaps one of the difficulties with coming to terms with involvement is the requirement of separating involvement from values whilst understanding its relationship to values.

Understanding the relationship between values and involvement is a critical component in developing a deeper understanding of involvement itself. Ostrum and Brock (1968), for example, devised a cognitive model of involvement energised by the degree to which values engaged in the product are central to the individual. Much of the literature on involvement theoretically links the construct of values, largely at a conceptual level (see the cognitive definition of involvement in chapter 3). Thus, we see the activation of involvement being accomplished by the connection of the stimulus object to the individual's value system. Houston and Walker (1996) point out that our most abstract goals such as our instrumental and terminal values are elements of the core self. Happiness, excitement and warm relationships with others are examples of the basic goals in life that consumers may possess.

As elements of the core self, these meanings give a person a sense of unity and identity and influence behaviour across a wide variety of situations. Such abstract elements as values systems are of particular interest here, because they appear to be the key for unlocking the meaning of involvement. A common implication of the theoretical frameworks discussed thus far is the proposition that those values which are more centrally held (that is more important) or those values which possess more linkages with an individual's knowledge base, will exert more influence on purchase and consumption-related behaviours.

4.4.1 Acquiring values and expectations

Values contain characteristics of expectations and, in the context of consumer behaviour, consumers evaluate objects according to their instrumentality to satisfy and/or solve problems or relieve tensions. For example, a product is provided with a valence by the consumer for its power to satisfy a need or want because it creates an expectation as to its consequences for values fulfilment. A value becomes operative in a specific situation and the valence expresses the relative utility of the object to satisfy that specific need and fulfil the value (Wilkie 1994). Again, we see the linkage between values system and involvement with objects to satisfy dominant values.

The acquisition of values is tied to a learning process and therefore to one's social environment. It is through experiences in one's environment that values development occurs (Izard, 1984). This development can occur cognitively, that is, through insights of (logical) relationships (Katona 1940; Koffka 1935 and Lewin 1942), or through learning, by imitation (Bandura 1962), as well as through association as conditioned responses (Pavlov 1927 and Skinner 1957).

The assumption is made here that values function like needs to influence goal-directed behaviour. The strength and form of a consumer's value system may affect what products they become involved in, or do not become involved in, and what degree of involvement they have toward products, purchase decision, consumption and communication that engage the values system.

The above provides a rationale for the view taken here that values will represent a key method of understanding why people become involved or not involved in particular objects. For example, Rokeach proposed that values represent enduring attitudes and needs and that they influence the 'normative standards' that people set or hold. Fundamentally, values influence satisfaction with and mold attitudes toward various objects such as products. This implies that values represent drivers for purchase and consumption decisions. Within this context, values represent the goals or desirable end states and product purchase and consumption and involvement with such products represent the means for achieving such desirable end states or goals. Values will influence the level of involvement a consumer has toward a focal object (Smith & Beatty 1984).

Because of their characteristics and differential impact on consumer behaviour it must be remembered that such broad based conceptualisations of values such as those measured using the LOV are potentially more likely to affect general purchasing patterns than to differentiate among involvement with specific products or consumption of specific products (focal objects) or brands within a product category. For this reason, it is important to make distinctions among such broad-based cultural values as expressed in the LOV and consumption-specific values (McCarthy & Shrum 1993 and Vinson, Scott and Lawrence 1977) and materialistic values (Belk 1984 and Richins & Dawson 1992). Such values drive much of consumer behaviour and fundamentally, nearly all consumer research could be said to be related to values.

4.5 Self-image product-image congruency

Self-concept has been used to examine a wide variety of marketing related issues such as product perception and product choice (Belch & Landon 1977; French & Glascher 1971; Hamm & Cundiff 1969 and Landon 1974), implicit behaviour patterns (Greeno, Sommers & Kernan 1973), specific overt behaviour (Guttman 1973), brand choice (Dolich 1969; Grubb & Hupp 1968 and Ross 1969) and advertising appeals (Jaworski & Macinnis 1986; Park, Johar & Sirgy 1991 and Snyder & deBono 1985). The vast majority of research using self-concept has focused on brand/product preferences, purchase intention or usage at the level

of congruency between the brand image and the individual's image (Dolich 1969 and Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar & Berkman 1997).

The product-person congruency emphasis is maintained in this study with the focus on the congruency between product-image and person-image and the relationship that congruency has to consumer involvement. The central element here is not the actual self-concept dimensions, but the perceived congruence between self-image and product-image. This study does not seek to examine the dimensions of the self-concept, however, it is still important to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the self-concept theory.

Even though there are a wide range of views presented in the literature on self-concept and various propositions concerning its precise conceptualisation, a basic definition suitable for this study can be proposed here. The definition proposed is that self-concept refers to "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg 1979 p.7). Self-concept does not refer to the real or existential self, it refers to the individual's subjective thoughts toward themselves (Zinkhan & Hong 1991). Recent propositions have considered self-concept as a set of self-schemata, which are organised cognitive structures in pertinent domains of the individual's self (Markus, Smith & Moreland 1985). These cognitive structures are activated when an individual encounters a self-relevant situation. Self-concept is composed of interrelated multidimensional characteristics (Cooley 1902 and Gergen 1971).

Self-concept was defined previously as being, the way people look at or perceive themselves. This view focuses on the how the individual actually perceives themselves, that is their 'actual self-concept'. However, individuals are not only cognizant of what they are, but also what they wish to be (the ideal self) and how others see them (social self). The ideal self or how the individual would like to be is termed the ideal self-concept and is distinguished from the actual self-concept in that the actual self-concept is based on the perceptual reality of one's self and the ideal self-concept is based on the perception of how one would ideally like to be. The social self is, however, based on the perception of how the individual perceives others to see them.

Dolich (1969) and Hamm and Cundiff (1969) distinguished between the actual self and the ideal self. Actual self refers to the individual's perception of what they are like, while the ideal self refers to the way the individual would like to be. Others have distinguished not only between the actual and ideal, but also the social self (Malhotra 1988 and Rosenberg 1979). Self-image congruence models are based on the notion of cognitive matching between a product and a consumer's self-concept. The commonly used self-image congruence models include the actual self-congruity model (Birdwell 1968; Dolich 1969; Ericksen & Sirgy 1989; Grubb & Stern 1971; Malhotra 1981, 1988 and Sirgy 1985), the ideal self-congruity model (Delozier & Tillman 1972; Dolich 1969; Lamone 1966; Eriksen & Sirgy 1989 and Sirgy 1985), the social self-congruity model (Maheshwari 1974; Malhotra 1981, 1988; Sirgy 1985 and Sirgy & Samli 1985), the ideal social self-congruity model (Sirgy 1985; Sirgy & Samli 1985) and the affective self-(social)congruity models (Sirgy 1986, 1990). These models use the various selves in their attempts to understand why consumers choose various products and brands over others.

Researchers have operationalised the impact that self-concept has upon product (and brand) choice by developing measures of the consumers / product (brand) congruency. The fundamental proposition is that consumers will be more involved with products that are closer to their own self-image. Theoretical issues and problems are evident in the literature on image congruency research concerning appropriate definitions at a theoretical and operational level of self and its multifaceted base. Although considered an important issue, it will not be pursued extensively here (for extensive reviews on this issue the reader is referred to Claiborne & Sirgy 1990 and Sirgy 1982, 1985). It is relevant, however, to distinguish between the various selves that have been identified in the literature.

Self-image congruence is defined as the match between consumer-image and product-image. Fundamentally, the effect of self-image congruence on selected aspects of consumer behaviour has been explained by self-congruity theory (Sirgy 1986). This theory proposes that consumer behaviour is determined, in part, by the congruence resulting from a psychological comparison involving the product user image and the consumer's self-concept in terms of actual self-image, ideal self-image or social self-image. It is this psychological comparison which can be categorised as high or low self-congruity. High self-congruity is experienced when the consumer perceives the product-user image to match their own self-

image. Low self-congruity is when the product-user image and the consumer's self-image are not congruent, and perceived not to match (Sirgy 1986).

Theoretically, this perception of congruity between product-image and self-image appears to have as its underlying trigger or mechanism consumer involvement. That is, the more involved a consumer is with a focal object the more or stronger will be their perception or realisation of congruity between their self-image (self-concept) and the product-image. Consumer self-concept researchers have theorised that a product-user's image interacts with the consumer's self-concept generating a subjective experience referred to as "self-image/product-image congruity" or "self-image congruence" or "self-congruity". Self-concept and product congruence has been used in marketing to explain and predict different facets of consumer behaviour in relation to product use, brand attitude, purchase motivation, purchase intention, brand choice, store preference, store loyalty, but not consumer involvement.

While much effort has been put into understanding the dimension or types of self-concept (actual, ideal and social), and facets of the self-concept such as modest, traditional, strong, contemporary (Malhotra 1981), there is a movement away from attempting to determine the individual elements of the self-concept to a global view of the self-concept. The traditional method of determining one's self-concept and product-concept congruence is derived by tapping the subject's perception of the product-user image and the subject's perception of their self-image along predetermined image attributes and adding the self-congruity scores across all dimensions specific to the product being investigated (Sirgy 1985; Sirgy and Samli 1985; Ericksen and Sirgy 1989, 1992) or using a standard set of nonproduct specific dimensions (Birdwell 1968; Dolich 1969; Malhotra 1981, 1987, 1988; Martin & Bellizzi 1982 and Ross 1971).

There are, however, a number of problems with this approach to self-concept. In regard to problems with measurement of self-concept, Sirgy, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar and Berkman (1997) have identified three important problems. They identified, firstly, the use of discrepancy scores; secondly, the possible use and presentation of irrelevant image dimensions by researchers to respondents and thirdly, the use of compensatory decision rule criteria. A new approach currently being investigated is based

on tapping the psychological experience of self-image congruence directly and globally by asking respondents to agree or disagree to a set of statements describing their subjective experience of self-image congruence in a global approach (Sirgy et al 1997). This approach requires respondents to directly compare their subjective perception of the product's image and the typical user of the focal product with their own self-image or self-concept.

Essentially, this method captures self-congruity through images that are conjured up by the respondent at the moment of response and not through predetermined images that may be irrelevant to subjects and that force them to respond to such irrelevant images. Sirgy et al's (1997) approach to self-congruity appears to be a valid and worthwhile basis for understanding self-image product-image congruency.

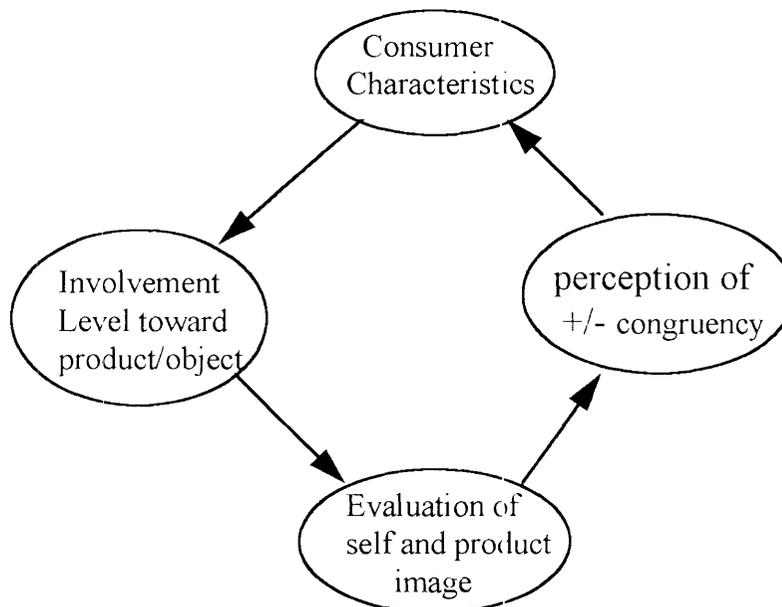
Malhotra (1988) argued that studies utilising self-concept should focus on actual, ideal and social self in the study of the key phenomenon. Because consumers have a need to behave consistently with their self-concept, this perception of themselves forms part of the basis for the personality. Such self-consistent behaviour helps a consumer maintain their self-esteem and gives the consumer predictability in interactions with their environment. Belk (1988) has suggested that possessions play a major role in establishing a person's identity and that possessions become part of one's-self to form an 'extended' self.

It is proposed that involvement inherently drives the perceived match or congruency between the self and the product. This is not to argue against involvement being driven by the self-concept, but this study is not actually examining self-concept dimensions or characteristics, it is examining only the congruence dimension.

The underlying notion of self-concept and involvement is that consumers buy and prefer those products that have high symbolic elements that possess images or portray images most similar to their own images or the images they wish to portray. That is, they become involved in those products that have symbolic elements or meaning that match their self-concept. This proposition while logically sound, has not yet been tested in a rigorous manner. So, while it is argued that consumers will prefer products that match their self-concept, because such purchases provide a vehicle for self-expression (Belk 1988), little work supports this proposition in the context of self-concept and involvement (Bloch 1981).

Figure 4.2 details the proposed relationship between self-image product-image congruency perception and involvement.

Figure 4.2 Self-image/product-image congruency framework



(Source: Developed for this study)

Figure 4.2 indicates that consumer characteristics determine the level of involvement in the focal object. Involvement then influences the evaluation of the self and product image and the perception of congruency between the self and the product. Similarly, Dolich (1969) has suggested that involvement exists when an object is related to the self-concept. Engel and Light (1968) determined involvement as referring to the extent that a product is related to the self-concept, important values or motives. However, while researchers such as Dolich (1969) and Engel and Light (1968) proposed such a relationship between self-concept and involvement, they did not empirically determine the extent of such a relationship nor its direction. Generally, little empirical data exists to support this proposition.

There is some research to support the idea of congruence between product usage and self-image (Birdwell 1964; Dolich 1969; Dornoff & Tatham 1972 and Grubb & Hupp 1986), and while these findings make intuitive sense, we cannot blithely assume that consumers will always buy or become involved with products whose characteristics match their own. Therefore, continued efforts to understand this activity is important.

This study will go some way to furthering our understanding of relationship between self-image and product-image congruence and consumers involvement levels. The view taken here is that the level of involvement determines the perception of congruency between the product-image and person-image.

4.6 Product knowledge and expertise

Consumers vary greatly in their knowledge about a product or offering. Knowledge can come from product experiences, such as ad exposure, interactions with salespeople, information from friends or the media, previous decision making or previous consumption or usage or memory. Familiarity, product familiarity or product knowledge has been viewed as knowledge of brands in a product class (Johnson & Russo 1981, 1984) and in terms of product-use contexts and product attributes (Raju & Reilly 1979). There are studies that have examined familiarity or product knowledge in relation to such constructs as information processing (Beattie 1982), learning of product attributes and brands (Johnson & Russo 1981, 1984), attitude development (Marks & Olson 1981), product knowledge and familiarity (Russo & Johnson 1980), choice of decision rules (Park 1976; Payne 1976 Tan & Dolich 1981), and product satisfaction (Anderson, Engledow & Becker 1979).

There are numerous propositions in the literature regarding the nature of the relationship between familiarity and involvement. For example, there are views that consumers more familiar with a product (or focal object) will be more involved in or with it (Gardial & Zinkhan 1984) or vice versa. However, few studies except for Gill, Grossbart and Laczniak (1988), Paraswaran and Spinelli (1984), Phelps and Thorson (1991), Zaichkowsky (1985), Zinkhan and Muderrisoglu (1985) and Sujjan (1983) have empirically examined the relationship between involvement and familiarity. Park and Lessig (1981) examined the relationship between familiarity and confidence. They viewed familiarity as having a monotonic relationship with confidence. They also alluded to the possibility of a relationship between involvement and familiarity although they did not empirically test this proposition. The extant studies that have investigated the involvement-familiarity issue are characterised by taking diverging theoretical and empirical approaches. As was indicated in

chapter 3 the issue of involvement and familiarity and their relationship are still unresolved (e.g., Bloch 1981b, Mittal 1982 and Zaichkowsky 1984).

Product knowledge and involvement can be viewed as distinct constructs, however, there is some debate as to their precise relationship. There are those who have suggested that familiarity should be viewed as an antecedent for involvement (Zinkhan & Muderrisoglu 1985), or as a component of it (Lastovicka & Gardner 1979) or even as a consequence of it (Mittal & Lee 1989). The relationship between involvement and knowledge has also been suggested as an interactive (reciprocal) one (Gardial & Zinkhan 1984). Interestingly, Zaichkowsky (1985) has examined the relationship between involvement and expertise and argued that involvement was unrelated to expertise. However, contrary to the view of Zaichkowsky (1984) and Sujana (1983), involvement is not a motivational construct. If it is cognitive in nature as argued in chapter 3, then there should be a significant relationship between involvement and a consumer's subjective product knowledge or expertise in the product. The theoretical position taken here is that product knowledge or expertise is seen as a consequence of involvement not an antecedent to it. Because of the lack of clarity in the current literature further research is warranted on this topic and this study seeks to explore the relationship between involvement and product knowledge/expertise as part of the nomological network of constructs.

There are fundamentally two key methods for operationalising and measuring product knowledge. One is to measure product knowledge in terms of how much a consumer actually knows about the product. The other is to measure knowledge in terms of how much a consumer thinks or perceives they know about the product. The first approach is related to the objective knowledge structure of an individual held in long-term memory, while the second approach is based on and related to an individual's subjective self-report on how much they think they know about the product.

A fundamental question that arises in attempting to understand consumers is what do consumers know and what characteristics cause some consumers to be more knowledgeable than others about a focal object. Apart from examining central issues, such as memory, one can also look at the impact of constructs such as involvement on the development of product knowledge or expertise in consumers. Product knowledge is developed when

consumers combine separate meaning concepts into larger, more abstract categories of knowledge (Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson and Boyes-Braem 1976). The characteristics of involvement discussed in chapter 3, sees the theory proposed here that a consumer's product knowledge development is driven by their degree of involvement in the focal object. This product knowledge development process is therefore tied to the consumer degree of involvement.

4.7 Consumer confidence

Howard and Sheth (1969) provided some initial insights in the construct of confidence in consumer behaviour and Howard (1989) recently proposed that the construct of confidence was:

the buyer's degree of certainty that his or her evaluative judgment of a brand, whether favorable or unfavorable, is correct (p.40).

Importantly, not all attitudes, product knowledge or ability are held by consumers with the same degree of confidence. Depending on the circumstances, the degree of confidence could reflect either certainty or uncertainty as to which judgment is correct or the best or ambiguity as to the meaning of an attitude object (Day 1970 and Zajonc & Morrisette 1960). Confidence represents a consumer's belief that their attitude, knowledge or ability is sufficient or correct regarding the product (or object). The degree of confidence a consumer has regarding their views or abilities to do with a product is important because it can affect the strength of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour and it can also influence the consumer's susceptibility to attitude change. The degree of confidence can also possibly affect the presentation of the offering and promotional content that the marketer targets consumers with.

The relationship between involvement and confidence has been studied rarely in the consumer behaviour domain. Day (1970) proposed that a consumer who lacks interest in a stimulus object will not likely have the information or experience necessary to make a confident judgment. Most research on confidence has been related to the stability of preference (Day 1970 and Harrell 1979) or the effect that confidence has on attitudes.

Little research has focused on the degree of involvement and its effect on a consumer's confidence related to a focal object or in their ability to make purchase decisions. The few studies that have investigated the confidence involvement relationship such as those of Parameswaran and Spinelli (1984) and Burton and Netemeyer (1992) have to a large extent investigated this relationship in the context of voting behaviour. However, as indicated in chapter 1 and chapter 3 such a social psychological context for involvement is troubling because of the level of abstraction for such social issues as voting (Bloch 1981). Another study to investigate the confidence involvement relationship was that of Harrell (1979) where he used an industrial product and related the study largely to attitude-intent relationships. Chebat and Picard (1985) in a study of the effects of price and message-sidedness on confidence and involvement showed that involvement had a direct effect on confidence in both product and message. Their study showed that the more involved the consumer was, the more confident they were.

A further link between involvement and confidence can be seen in the work of Mizerski (1978) on causal complexity and Park and Lessig (1981) on confidence and familiarity. Following similar arguments to Mizerski (1978) consumers are likely to be more confident when they are more highly involved in a product for example. Thus the extant literature on confidence and involvement suggests that one of the key outcomes of being involved in a product is perhaps that one would tend to be more confident in decisions or purchases related to that product or product class. Confidence in the sense used here deals with a consumer's overall confidence in the chosen product, not in their certainty that reliance on a particular product dimension will enhance overall satisfaction. Similar distinctions have been made in previous research on confidence by Bennett and Harrell (1975), Park and Lessig (1981) and Chebat and Picard (1985).

Given the limited studies undertaken on this important issue, there is a need to extend the existing, although limited knowledge by empirically examining the relationship between involvement and confidence.

4.8 Consumption consequences

It has been recognised in the literature that consumers often think about products and/or brands in terms of their consequences, not their attributes (Levitt 1960 and Peter & Olson 1996). Consequences are outcomes that happen to a consumer when the product is purchased, used or consumed. Fundamentally, consumers can possess knowledge and have expectations on two types of consumption consequences (functional and psychosocial). Functional consequences are tangible outcomes associated with the product's use or consumption that a consumer experiences directly. Psychosocial consequences are the psychological and social outcomes of a product's purchase, use or consumption. Psychosocial consequences of product purchase or use are internal, personal outcomes such as feelings. Consumers also think both in terms of positive consequences and/or negative consequences for purchasing, using or consuming products.

There is a very a limited literature that discusses the involvement consumption consequences relationship. The consequences generally discussed in involvement studies are those related for example more to attitude strength or decision making. No studies have taken the perspective of consumption consequences as presented here. However, the extant literature can be used to formulate the view that a relationship between involvement and consequences should exist. This relationship is seen through the proposition, that the more involved a consumer is with the focal object, the more consequences they can associate with its purchase or consumption (Antil 1984; Bloch & Bruce 1981 and Zimbardo 1960).

The connections between values, consequences and involvement appears to be a fertile method of actually improving our understanding of involvement. The fertility of such an approach was indicated by Antil (1984) when he argued that involvement is a function of the benefits resulting from the interaction between a person and a stimulus object. Bloch and Bruce (1984) also suggested that involvement is a function of the rewards resulting from the use of the product. Support for such propositions can be found also in the work of T aylor (1981). Such a model proposing a relationship between values, consequences and involvement depends largely on the assumption that the consequences of purchasing, using or consuming a specific product form the basis for evaluating the product. It follows that

the product-related knowledge structure is also organised on the basis of the consequences associated with purchasing and using a product. The link between values and consequences and, potentially, involvement is also alluded to in the work of Gutman (1982) who stated that:

values provide consequences with positive or negative valences. Therefore the values-consequences linkage is one of the critical linkages in the model. To the extent that values are ordered in importance (Rokeach 1973), they also give consequences importance, in that consequences leading to important values should be more important to a person than those leading to less important values (p.61).

From the arguments of Gutman (1982) and others, the proposition is raised here that consumers who are more highly involved should associate more consequences with purchasing and/or consuming the product. Consequences of involvement are, in effect the actualised interaction with the stimulus object and the response that must occur subsequent to the development of involvement.

This proposition of involvement-consequences is similar to Krugman's (1965) conscious bridging connections. Although the view taken here is that involvement is not synonymous with the number of conscious bridging connections or consumption consequences as expressed by Krugman (1965). The position taken here is that the degree of involvement causally influences the type and number of consumption consequences a consumer associates with an object.

The number and type of consequences (connections) a consumer associates with an object is not involvement as proposed by Krugman, but are an effect of a consumer being involved. The study of consumption consequences is seen to occur at the level of both type and number dimension of consumption consequences in the literature.

4.9 Concluding statements on the elaboration of the nomological network

A major challenge facing involvement researchers lies not only in understanding involvement itself, but also understanding the role involvement plays together with other variables in guiding the formation of purchase and consumption patterns of consumers. This suggests a need to conduct research investigating not just involvement per se, but involvement within a broader frame of purchase and consumption-related involvement than that which has been the focus of much research on involvement in the past (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter 1990; Bhatla 1993; Flynn & Goldsmith 1993; Muehling, Laczniak & Andrews 1993 and Muncy 1990). Investigation of both antecedent and consequences of involvement is necessary to develop a greater understanding of involvement in consumer behaviour.

Particularly relevant to this study are the views of Munson (1984) who argued there is a need for research to address how values may be linked to product evaluations, preferences and behaviours. This study seeks to understand the relationship between values system and a consumer's involvement with a focal object, to determine if there is consistency between value systems of consumers and their level of involvement.

Thus, one of the goals of this study is to ascertain the relationship between variables rather than generalisations of values held across a broader community or population. By investigating the value system that accompanies consumers' involvement, one moves beyond measuring the level of involvement by providing insights into why a product is involving and what effects this involvement has.

The constructs discussed in this chapter appear to be the variables that will assist in going some way to unlocking the nature of involvement and the purchase and consumption patterns associated with involvement through differences in these variables. Examining these constructs and their association with involvement using structural equation modeling may be an appropriate technique to understand the person-stimulus object linkages.

At this stage of knowledge development structural equation models have not been developed to identify how these key individual difference variables relate to involvement.

This study seeks to examine these constructs (values system, self-image/product-image congruence, knowledge/expertise, confidence and consumption consequences) at a higher level of analysis as it relates to a consumer product and associated levels of involvement.

As indicated in chapter 2 empirical work in consumer research can be classified into identification, association and/or application modes. In the identification mode, interest lies in identifying the empirical existence, structure and the constituting components of involvement which are relevant to the study of consumer behaviour. In the association mode, interest lies in establishing and testing the relationships among involvement, values system, self, consequences, knowledge and confidence and other key concepts in order to enhance understanding of models which inform consumer behaviour. In the application mode, interest lies in understanding how well a particular technique, intervention or strategy developed in the identification and association modes works in a given situation or context. Given the discussion in chapter 3 and in this chapter regarding the state of knowledge on involvement there appears to be a need at this stage in the development of involvement to conduct research in both the identification and association modes.

The issue discussed in this chapter and chapter 3 are important because as Dacin and Mitchell (1986) pointed out, the meaning of a concept is determined by its relationships to other constructs or concepts. A direct examination of values systems and the effect of involvement on other variables enriches our understanding of the meanings that consumers place on products.

Having in the preceding pages discussed the constructs that will be examined for their relationship with involvement, it seems appropriate to reiterate the quote at the beginning of this chapter that provided the driving force behind much of this study and provides the rationale for this chapter and the criteria for assessing the success or failure of the research objectives.

more work could be directed toward building nomological networks . . . to understand involvement in relation to other concepts (Day, Stafford & Camacho 1995 p.73). because . . . Semantic confusion about the concept of “involvement” and involvement-related concepts has been going on in the consumer behavior literature for some time now. . . . While a great deal of

interest exists, there is not a methodological consensus to study involvement. A number of different definitions and conceptualizations as well as distinct methodological approaches have been used. But these have led to further semantic confusion instead of contributing to a clear understanding of what involvement is, what it is not, what its causes and effects are. There are basically two reasons for this semantic confusion. First, the construct of involvement is extremely difficult to define and subsequently operationalize. This is especially so in light of the second reason which is the lack of a nomological network of relationships that help explain the construct of involvement. . . Thus, the purpose of this paper is to make an attempt to start building a nomological network of involvement (Zinkhan & Muderrisoglu 1985 p.356).

Chapter 5

Research Objectives & Hypothesised Models

To understand the relationship between involvement and other hypothetical constructs. . . ,we need clearer conceptualizations of involvement and the constructs related to it (Zinkhan & Muderrisoglu 1985 p.356). . . Regardless of how sophisticated the operationalization, before a phenomenon can be measured one must clearly define what it is and what it is not. According to the logic of modern science (Bridgman 1927), such conceptual definitions ought to precede and determine one's operationalization rather than vice versa (Jacoby & Kyner 1973 p.1)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 presented a review and analysis of the consumer behaviour and marketing literature with respect to involvement in consumer behaviour. Issues related to the theoretical development of the construct were analysed and categorisation of the extent literature into meaningful groups was performed. Chapter 3 also provided the theoretical direction and propositions that underpin the use of involvement in this study. Chapter 4 presented a review of the constructs used to examine involvement's nomological network. Theoretical developments related to values, product knowledge and expertise, consumer confidence, consumption consequences and self-image product-image congruency were developed to provide a meaningful network of related variables within which to examine involvement.

This chapter discusses the research objectives and hypothesised models that detail the proposed relationships between involvement, values system, consumers product knowledge/expertise, consumer confidence, consequences and self-image/product-image congruency. The research objectives and models are derived from the literature discussion presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

5.2 Research objectives

As discussed in chapter 3, a major conclusion drawn from the literature is that the culmination of knowledge with respect to involvement is hampered by the lack of conceptual clarity and rigor. The overlap with its antecedents and consequences creates further problems in that involvement has a lack of clear boundaries as a construct, and do not allow a description of its scope. Also, the criticism raised against the lack of valid measures (McQuarrie & Munson 1987; Mittal 1989 and Ohanian 1989) only adds to the many problems when investigating this construct. To any casual observer the scope of involvement may appear limitless and they would be forgiven for believing that, for all intents and purposes, involvement has no boundaries. The content of involvement varies significantly in the different contexts of the studies found in the literature. As a consequence of its elusiveness, the concept has been defined and operationalised in a wide variety of ways and there is no comprehensive, validated theoretical framework for organising diverse findings on involvement. Further, no attempt has been made to examine the possible relationships of involvement within a broader nomological network.

The theoretical and empirical weaknesses in involvement discussed in chapter 3 highlighted the need for further research into this construct. The arguments presented in chapters 3 and 4 highlighted the need for research using a broader nomological network of constructs.

The major conclusion derived out of the literature analysis conducted in chapter 3 is that at present, the theoretical treatments of involvement seem to be somewhat shallow, relative to the construct's touted explanatory potential. It appears that consumer behaviour researchers have ignored some of the construct's richer aspects. In particular, consumer researchers have neglected the following: 1) the nature of individual differences in different forms of involvement a consumer has with a particular product class, 2) the existence of very high levels of involvement beyond what has traditionally been termed 'high' involvement, and 3) the influence of the enduring nature of involvement upon consumption rather than purchase decision and the relationship between the various objects of involvement in a marketing context.

Such a view is also supported by Bloch and Bruce (1984) when they stated that:

If the field of consumer behavior is to further progress in its understanding and application of the involvement construct, increased analysis of consumer's non-purchase or enduring involvement with products will be needed (p.197)

Smith and Beatty (1984) also came to a similar conclusion following their study, in which they measured different aspects of involvement based on distinct definitions, when they stated:

the components of enduring involvement, including value centrality and shopping attitudes, explain the majority of the variance. This would suggest that the concept of enduring involvement be the focal point of future research efforts (p.231)

Although several investigators (Bowen & Chaffee 1974; Houston & Rothschild 1978 and Robertson 1976) have mentioned the individual differences dimension of involvement, and others (Jacoby 1971; Roberts 1975 and Tigert, Ring, and King 1976) have undertaken empirical work in this area, little is known about why individuals become involved with a given product, purchase decision for a product, communication to do with a product or consumption of a product. Further, formal description in the involvement literature of what, if any, relationship exists within the same consumer regarding different types of involvement toward a given object (e.g. a product, purchase decision, advertisement or consumption) are virtually non-existent. This is a complex question that will require a different focus in theoretical and empirical effort than has been used in the past.

As indicated in chapter 3, there is also a need to consider in empirical work the suggestion by Andrews (1988) that indicators tapping involvement should be used as measures of involvement. Essentially, this proposes that we focus on conceptualisations and operationalisations that tap involvement itself, not its antecedents or consequences which has been the focus of authors such as Laurent and Kapferer (1985), Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and Cohen (1983). This is important because there is a tendency in much of the research to infer involvement from its proposed antecedents or consequences with no direct measure of involvement itself. However, this is not to argue against measures of antecedents or consequences, they are important. But they should be related to measures of

involvement itself if we are to truly understand involvement and develop relevant and valuable theories of involvement in the consumer behaviour domain.

While there are some who argue that we should stop attempting to define involvement (Rothschild 1984) and others that it is now a cold research area (Zaichkowsky 1990) it is clear from the analysis in chapter 3 and the views of Muncy (1990) and Muehling, Laczniak and Andrews (1993) and many others that the concept of involvement lacks clarity and existing measures have many problems and more research is warranted.

Out of the potentially extensive territory for research on involvement indicated in chapters 3 and 4, the following research objectives were established for this study. The focal research objective in this study is to determine how the construct of involvement should be conceptualised and operationalised.

This broad research objective is further refined into the following sub-objectives.

- 1) To develop a conceptualisation and operational measure for consumer involvement that is selective enough to differentiate the level of involvement across consumers for the same object.
- 2) To determine what the most appropriate scope of involvement in consumer behaviour should be.
- 3) To develop a definition of involvement which encompasses different focal objects of involvement.
- 4) To develop a profile approach to consumer involvement through separate assessments of product involvement, purchase decision involvement, communications involvement and consumption involvement.

- 5) To determine what, if any, relationship exists between involvement and self-image product-image congruency, materialism, values, product knowledge/expertise, consumer confidence and consumption consequences.
- 6) To determine an appropriate and defensible definition and operationalisation of involvement in the domain of consumer behaviour.

These objectives are important because they can help broaden our understanding of consumer involvement and because no attempt has been made to examine the possible relationship of involvement to these constructs in an extensive manner. This dissertation investigates the proposition that by identifying the conceptual properties of involvement one can more adequately operationalise involvement and determine causes and effects of involvement.

This study sets out to reconceptualise and reconstruct involvement and operationalise it in a more coherent and consistent manner and place involvement within a broader nomological net of theoretically related constructs. These issues are chosen for the reason that they appear to be the most critical issues in need of examination after consideration of the prior work that has been carried out in the domain of involvement.

5.3 Hypothesised models

After developing and detailing the research objectives, it is now possible to translate these into testable path or structural equation models. The present study proposes and tests competing structural models. The method of proposing competing models is advocated by Hoyle and Danter (1995 cited in Hoyle 1995) and a number of other analysts (Blattberg & Sen 1973; Lee and Hershberger 1990 and MacCallum, Wegener, Uchino & Fabrigar 1993) who view this as a more appropriate procedure than proposing and testing a single model.

All such models must be based on sound theoretical arguments and based on grounded theory (Bagozzi 1980; Jöreskog & Sörbom 1988 and Manaresi & Uncles 1996). Each such model will express a major hypothesis for this research. The path models presented below have been constructed on their ability to meet 3 criteria: 1) the variables referenced in a model should all have empirical referents; 2) a model (hypothesis) should provide a solution to research objectives or problems raised in the literature analysis; and 3) a model should not only explain the currently determined facts of this investigation but should predict future facts.

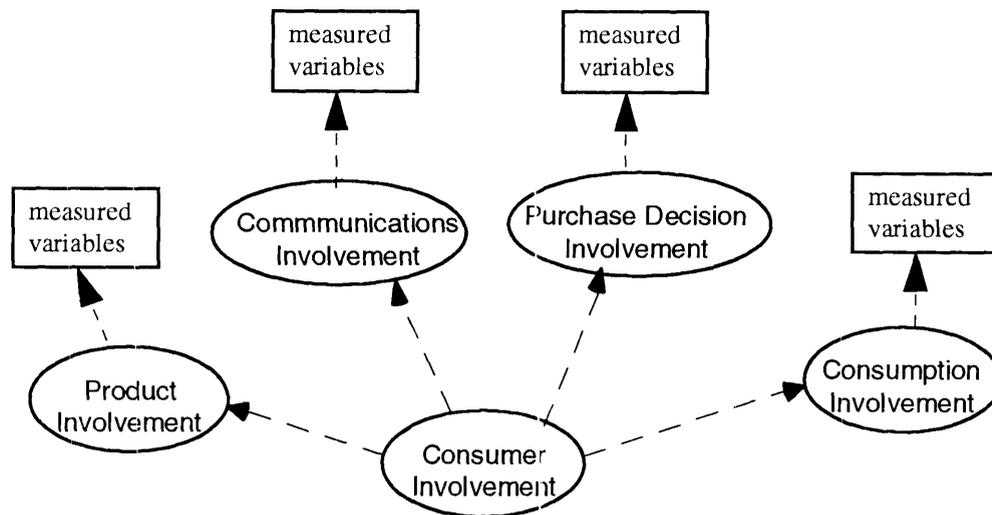
Given the literature review presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4, it follows that the whole meaning of the hypothetical construct of involvement cannot be revealed by merely analysing the descriptions of its properties without taking into account the theoretical context within which it is embedded.

Additionally, the relationships between involvement and the other constructs within a theoretical system have to be specified in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the conceptual and operational nature of involvement. Here, involvement is positioned in relation to not only its antecedents and consequences, it is also positioned with respect to differentiating between the four focal types of involvement in an overall profile of consumer involvement as discussed in chapter 3. This implies a need to connect both the forms of involvement and involvement's observables as well as other constructs in a nomological network. The following hypothesised models have been developed in order to achieve the research objectives and close some of the existing gaps in the literature on involvement.

5.3.1 Hypothesised intermediate and full model descriptions

The following sections detail the specific hypothesised models tested in the present study. The hypothesised paths and relationships being tested are indicated in each model by dashed lines.

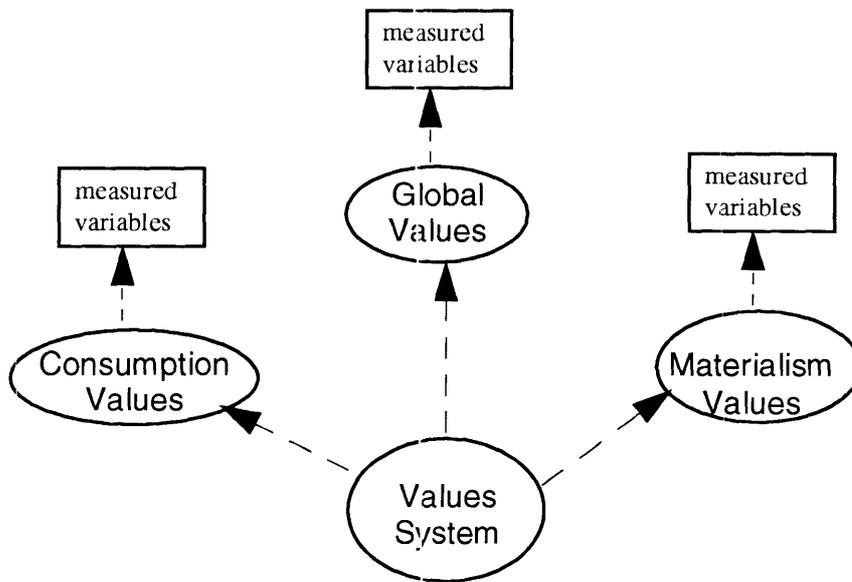
Figure 5.1 Hypothesised Structure for the Construct of Involvement



H1. The general construct of consumer involvement significantly underpins the more specific types of involvement, which target the product, the communications to do with the product, the purchase decisions to do with the product and consumption of the product as depicted in Figure 5.1 by the dashed lines.

Four key focal types of involvement are proposed as depicted in Figure 5.1: product involvement, communications involvement, purchase decision involvement and consumption involvement. The general conceptualisation that underpins these four forms is the same. The model itself is a hierarchical factor model. The hypothesised model in Figure 5.1 reflects a movement away from the divergent definitions to a single definition applicable to differing forms of involvement. The purpose of the four forms is to represent the key types of involvement relevant for a complex consumer environment and maintain involvement as an enduring relationship between a consumer and an object, not a temporary one. The hypothesised model also identifies the higher order, second order construct of consumer involvement, which underpins the first order constructs of product involvement, purchase decision involvement, communications involvement and consumption involvement. These constructs, in turn, underpin specific indicator variables for each first order construct.

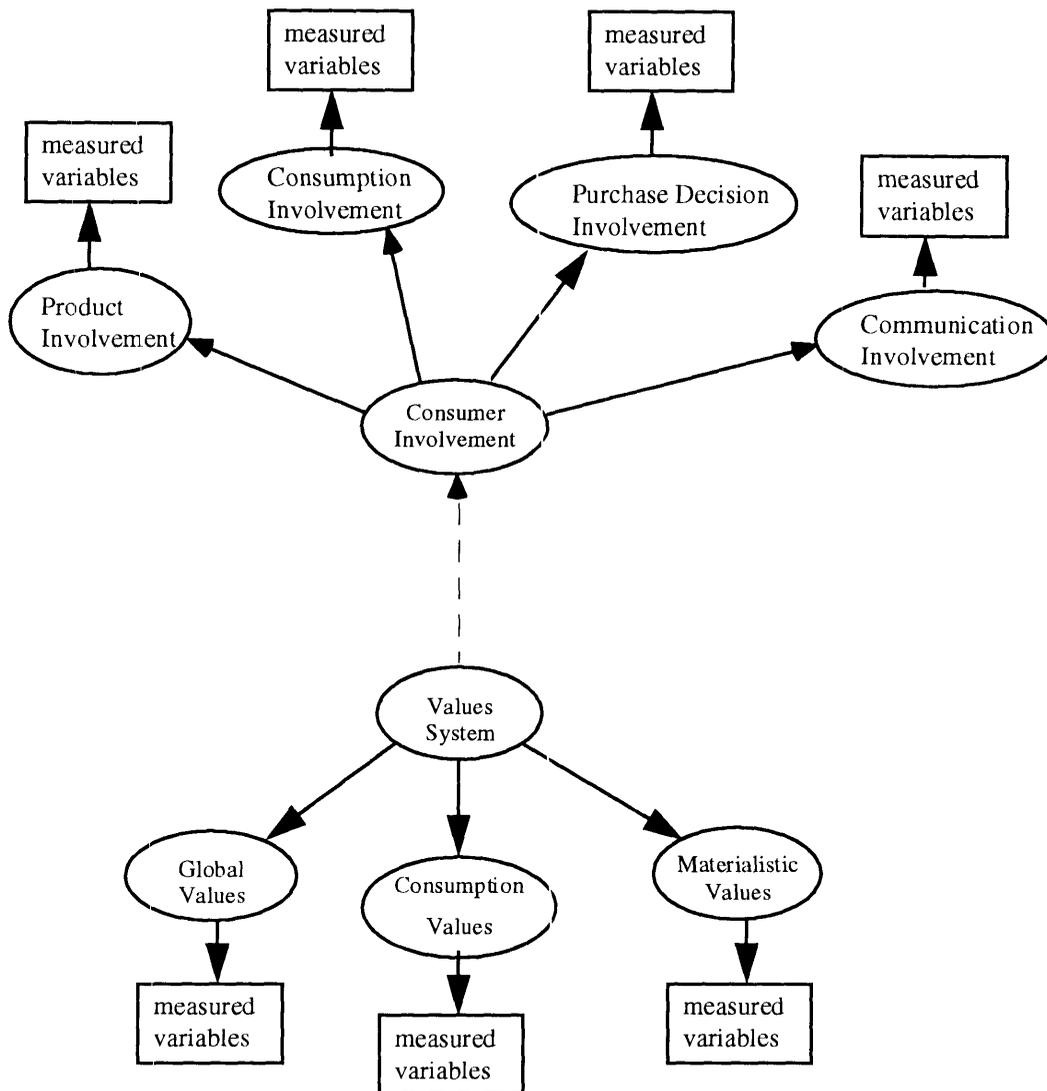
Figure 5.2 Hypothesised Values System Model



H2. Consumers values system underpins their consumption specific values, materialistic values and global value to a significant extent as depicted in Figure 5.2.

It was argued in chapter 4 (Figure 4.1) that values can be arranged as a hierarchical system. The values system is a second order construct which underpins the first order constructs of consumption values, materialistic values and global values. The system of values ranging from very abstract global life values to the moderately abstract materialistic values to the very basic consumption (domain) specific values is depicted in a second order model in Figure 5.2. The first order constructs in turn underpin the specific indicator variables. The conceptualisation of values system sees the various values operating in each domain impacting differentially on the behaviour of consumers.

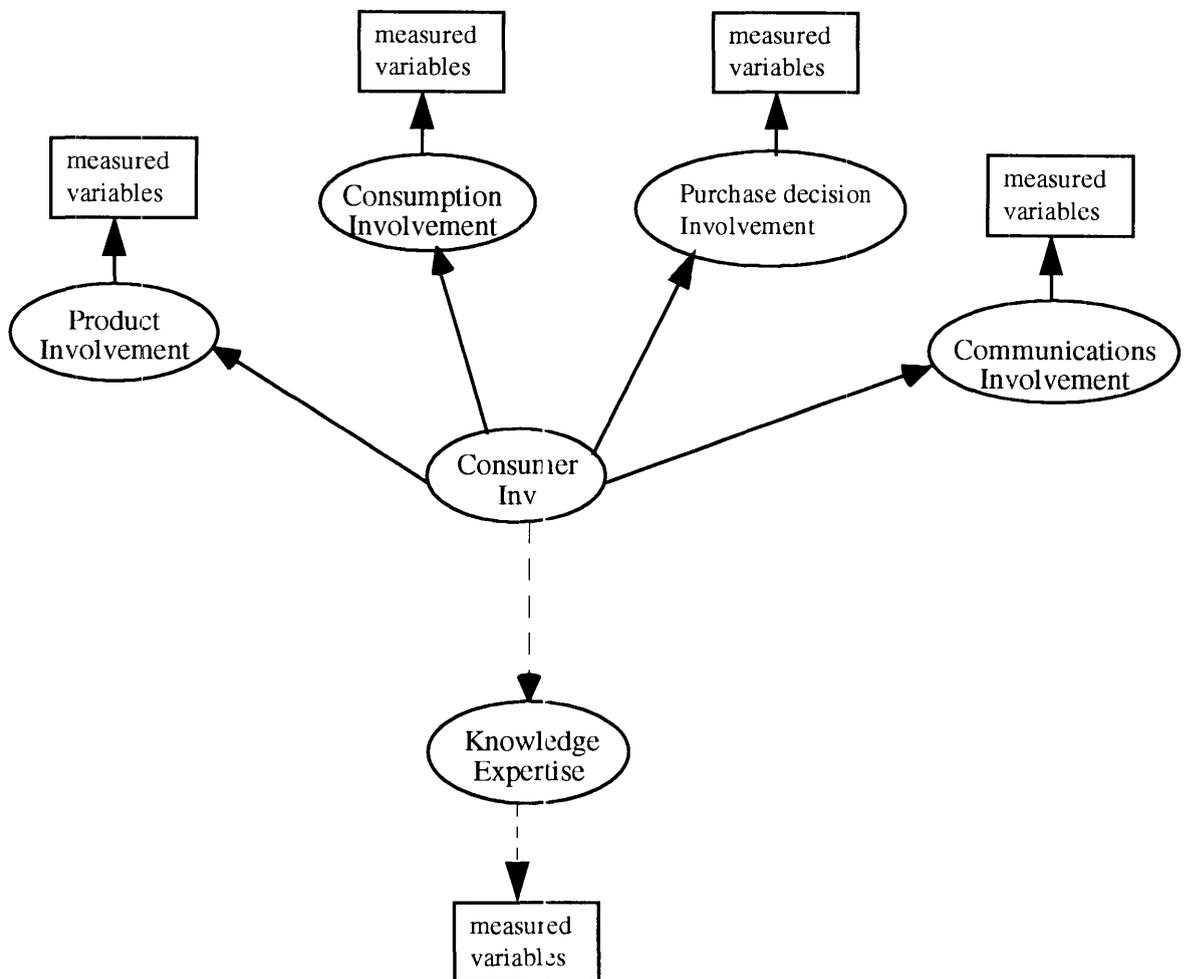
Figure 5.3 Hypothesised Relationship Between Involvement and Values System Models



H3. There will be a significant causal link from values system to the consumer involvement construct as depicted in Figure 5.3.

The construct of values system is theorised to causally influence a consumer's involvement with a focal object. This is indicated in the theoretical discussion in chapter 3 and 4 and in discussions by Engel and Light (1968) and Lastovicka and Gardner (1979).

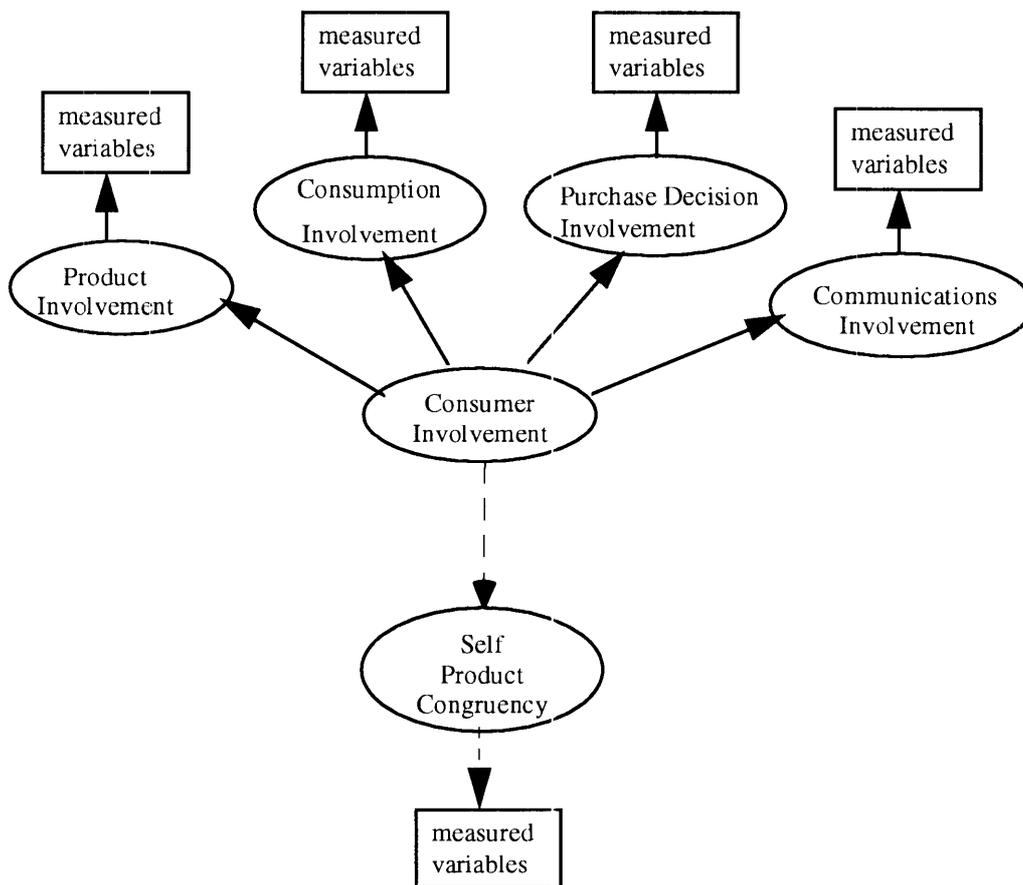
Figure 5.4 Hypothesised Relationship Between Involvement and Product Knowledge/expertise Model



H 4. There will be a significant causal link from consumer involvement to consumer’s Knowledge/Expertise as depicted in Figure 5.4.

Based on the conceptualisation of involvement presented in chapter 3 and the product knowledge/expertise discussion presented in chapter 4, involvement is hypothesised to causally influence the subjective state of product knowledge and expertise. That is, product knowledge and expertise is a consequence of involvement.

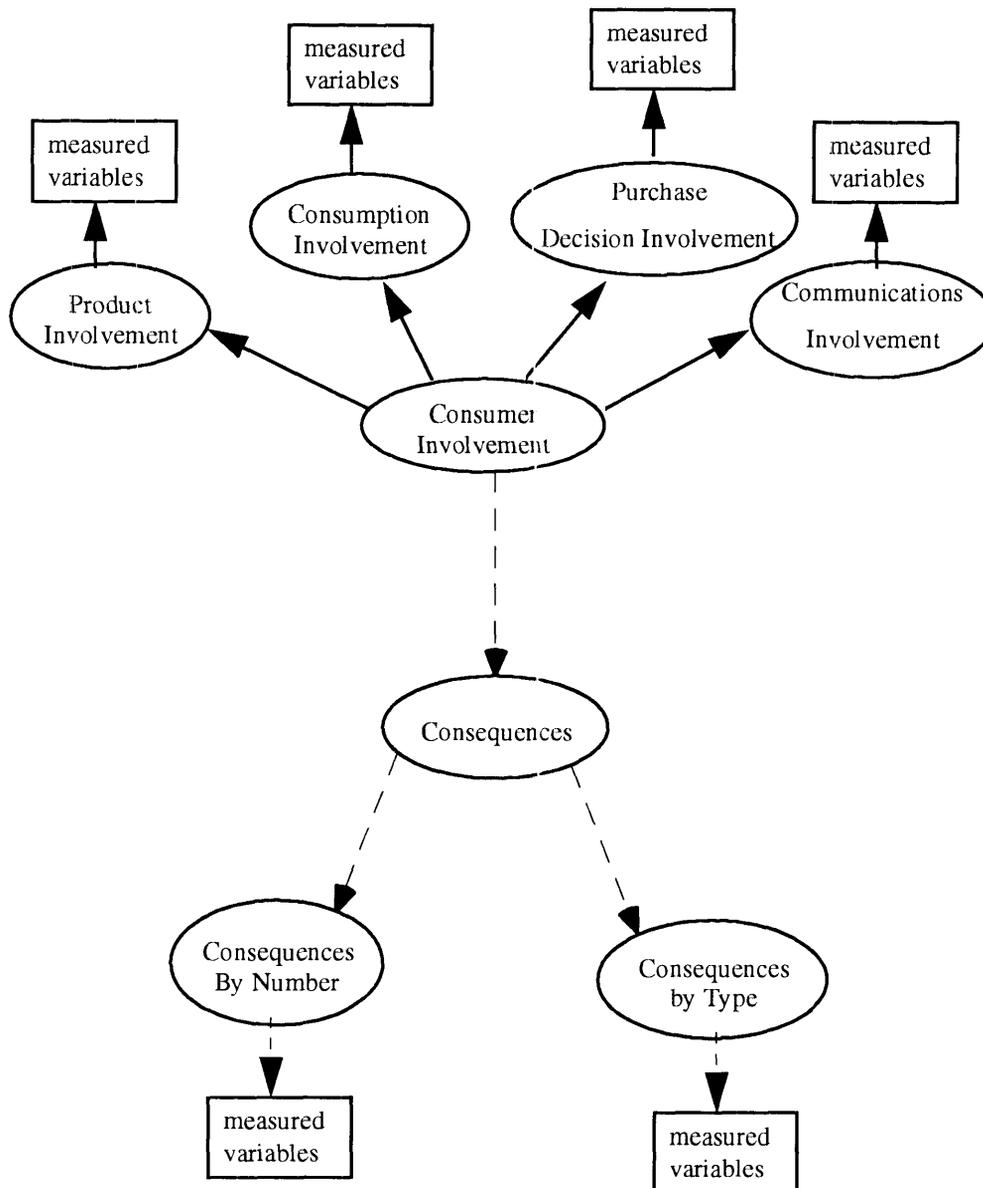
Figure 5.5 Hypothesised Relationship Between Involvement and Self-image Product-image Congruency



H 5. There will be a significant causal link from consumer involvement to Self-image/Product-image congruency as depicted in Figure 5.5.

This model (Figure 5.5) proposes that there will be a strong link between degree of congruency between product-image and self-image and level of involvement. The model depicts the direction of causation from involvement to self-image product-image congruency because it is believed that the perception of congruency is a consequence of being involved.

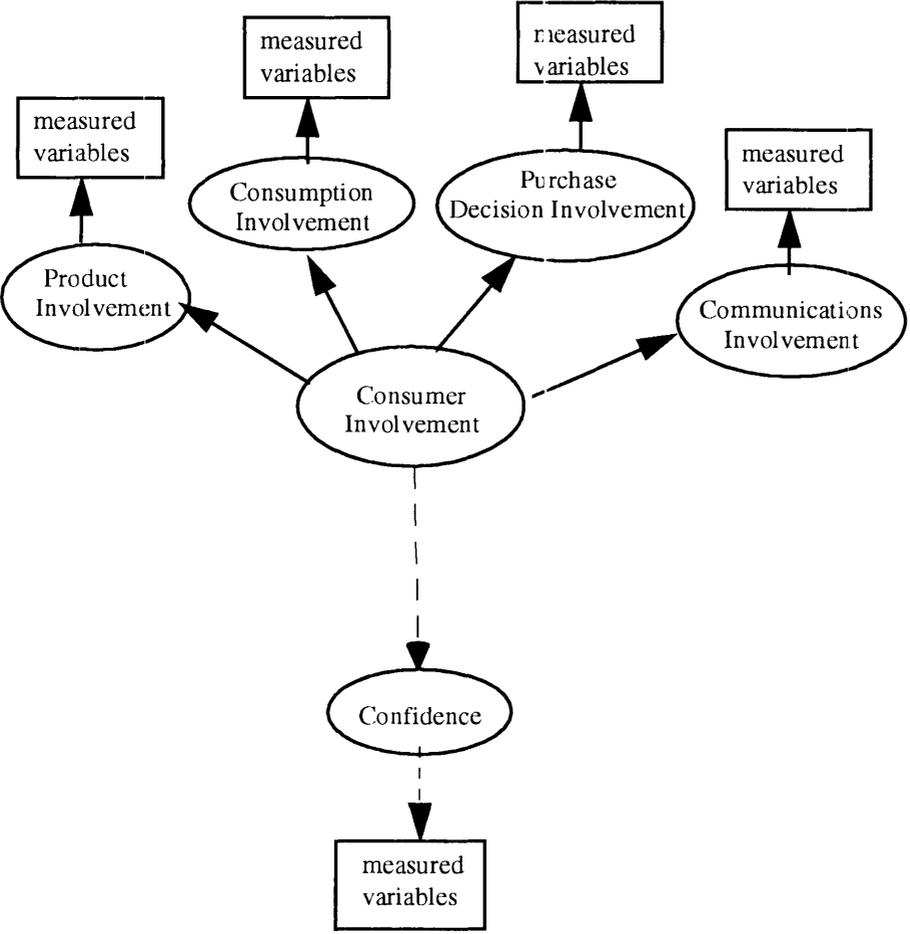
Figure 5.6 Hypothesised Relationship Between Involvement and Consumption Consequences



H 6. There will be a significant causal link from consumer involvement to consumption consequences and these general consequences give rise to both numbers and types of specific consequences as depicted in Figure 5.6.

The model in Figure 5.6 hypothesises that the more involved a consumer is with a focal object, the greater the consequences they perceive to be associated with the purchasing and consuming the focal object. Further, these consequences underpin the more specific consequences aspects of number and type consequences.

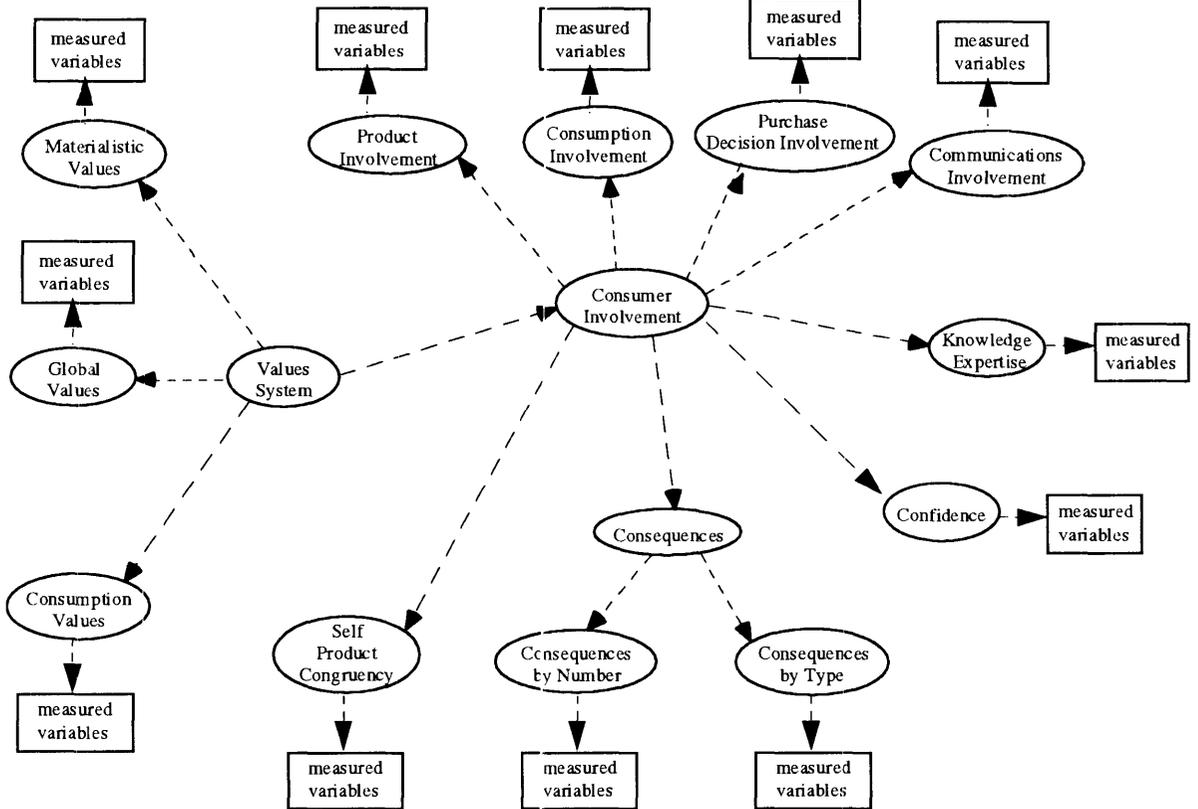
Figure 5.7 Hypothesised Relationship Between Involvement and Consumer Confidence



H 7. There will be a significant causal link from consumer involvement to confidence as depicted in Figure 5.7.

The model hypothesises that the more involved a consumer is, the more confident they will be in their ability to make a purchase decision and select the product. This well-developed cognitive structure related to the focal object will assist in the development of confidence in the consumer's ability to make decisions.

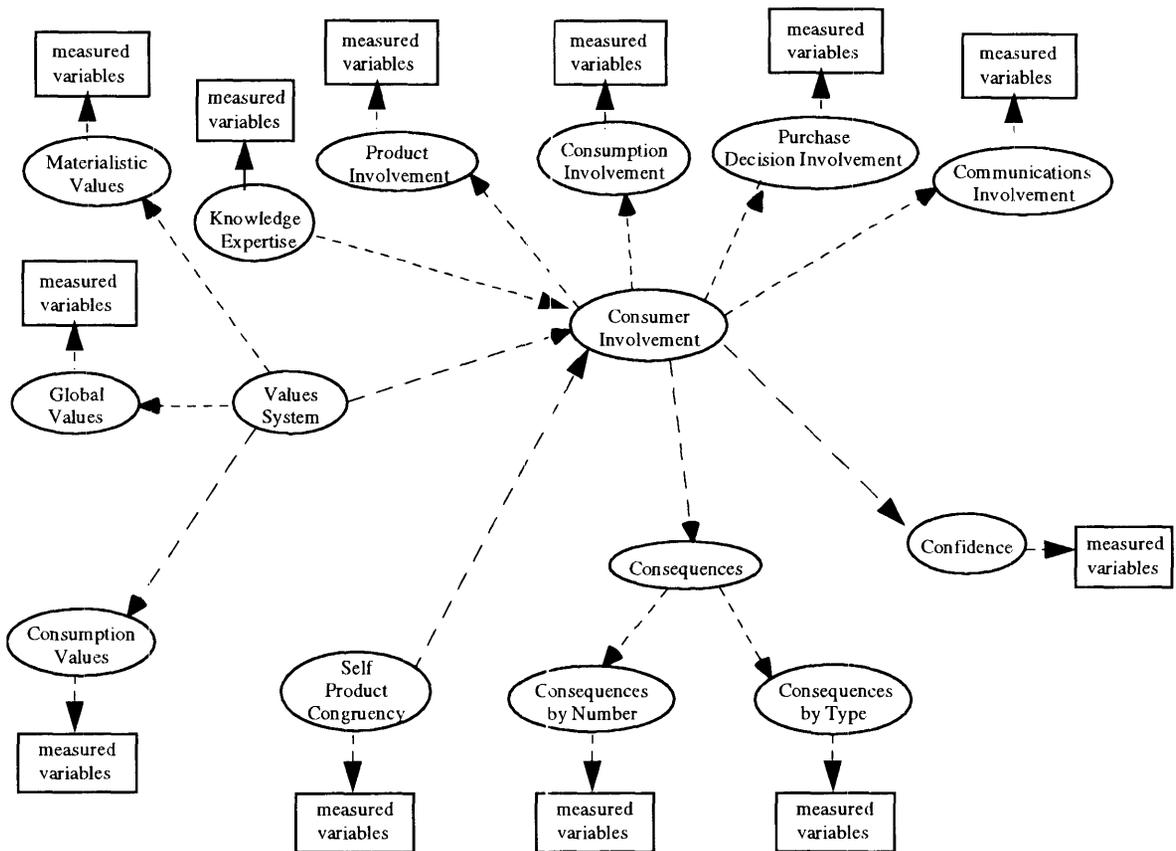
Figure 5.8 Hypothesised Complete Model: Nomological Network



H8. Figure 5.8 shows the full hypothesised model which depicts the relationships among all the specific constructs. H8: The complete hypothesised model (Figure 5.8) will fit the data better than the alternate model depicted in Figure 5.9 or an independence model where no relationships between constructs are hypothesised.

As indicated in the beginning of the chapter, many researchers propose the testing of competing models. Figure 5.8 is the hypothesised best fitting model and Figure 5.9 below is the hypothesised competing model. Figure 5.9 details changes in the direction of causality in the constructs of self-image product-image congruent and knowledge/expertise. If, as the literature proposes, self-concept drives involvement then it may be theoretically feasible to depict the relationship as, self-image product-image congruency causally influencing involvement and knowledge/expertise causally influencing involvement, as represented by the directional arrows in model 5.8 below.

Figure 5.9 Proposed Alternative Competing Model



5.4 Summary

In much of the extant work on involvement there has been a failure to maintain a conceptual distinction between involvement, its antecedents and its consequences or effects. This distinction needs to be made, both for conceptual clarity and for empirical progress to be made on the construct of involvement. Enough exploratory studies and theoretical suggestions are currently available that it is now time to review and utilise these toward the development of a more precise and comprehensive specification of the construct of involvement and show how the proposed specification would further our understanding of variations in consumer behaviour. After reviewing the literature, presenting the theoretical propositions and hypothesised models it is now appropriate to fulfill the words of Rothschild and *Lets go collect data on interesting aspects of involvement (Rothschild 1984 p.217)*.

The research objectives and the hypothesised models have been discussed, the data gathering methods will be presented next in chapter 6 followed by the structural equation modeling procedures, analysis rationale and background in chapter 7.