CHAPTER II

RATIONALE BEHIND STUDYING
PERCEPTION OF BUYERS

This chapter makes an attempt of examining the rationale behind studying the perception of buyers as the perception plays an important role in making buying decisions certain terms used in this chapter are explained below.

2.1 PERCEPTION

Perception is defined as the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. It can be described as "how we see the world around us". Two individuals may be exposed to the same stimuli under the same apparent conditions, but how each person recognizes selects, organizes and interprets these stimuli is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, and expectations. The influence that each of these variables has on the perceptual process and its relevance to marketing will be explored

2.2 SENSATION

Sensation is the immediate and direct response of the sensory organs to stimuli. A stimulus is any unit of input to any of the senses. Examples of stimuli (i.e., sensory input) include products, packages, brand names, advertisements, and commercials. Sensory receptors are the human organs

(the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin) that receive sensory inputs. Their sensory functions are to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. All of these functions are called into play, either singly or in combination, in the evaluation and use of most consumer products. Human sensitivity refers to the experience of sensation. Sensitivity to stimuli varies with the quality of an individual's sensory receptors (e.g., eyesight or hearing) and the amount (or intensity) of the stimuli to which he or she is exposed. For example, a blind person may have a more highly developed sense of hearing than the average sighted person and may be able to hear sounds that the average person cannot.

Sensation itself depends on energy change within the environment where the perception occurs (i.e., on differentiation of input). A perfectly bland or unchanging environment, regardless of the strength of the sensory input, provides little or no sensation at all.

As sensory input decreases, however, our ability to detect changes in input or intensity increases, to the point that we attain maximum sensitivity under conditions of minimal stimulation. This accounts for the statement, It was so quiet I could hear a pin drop. The ability of the human organism to accommodate itself to varying levels of sensitivity as external conditions vary not only provides more sensitivity when it is needed but also serves to protect us from damaging, disruptive, or irrelevant bombardment when the input level is high.

2.3 The Absolute Threshold

The lowest level at which an individual can experience a sensation is called the absolute threshold. The point at which a person can detect a difference between something and nothing is that person's absolute threshold for that stimulus. To illustrate, the distance at which a driver can note a specific billboard on a highway is that individual's absolute threshold. Two people riding together may first spot the billboard at different times (i.e., at different distances); thus, they appear to have different absolute thresholds. Under conditions of constant stimulation, such as driving through a corridor of billboards, the absolute threshold increases (i.e., the senses tend to become increasingly dulled). After an hour of driving through billboards, it is doubtful that anyone billboard will make an impression. Hence, we often speak of getting used to a hot bath, a cold shower, or the bright sun. As our exposure to the stimulus increases, we notice it less. In the field of perception, the term adaptation refers specifically to getting used to certain sensations; that is, becoming accommodated to a certain level of stimulation.

Sensory adaptation is a problem that concerns many national advertisers, which is why they try to change their advertising campaigns regularly. They are concerned that consumers will get so used to their current print advertisement and TV commercials that they will no longer "see" them: that is, the advertisement will no longer provide sufficient sensory input to be noted.

In an effort to cut through the advertising clutter and ensure that consumers note their advertisement, some marketers try to increase sensory input. For example, Apple Computer once bought all the advertising space in an issue of Newsweek magazine to ensure that readers would note its ads. From time to time, various advertisers have taken all of the bus cards on certain bus routes to advertise their products; ensuring that wherever a rider sits, he or she will be exposed to the advertisement. Other advertisers try to attract attention by decreasing sensory input. For example, some print advertisement include a lot of empty space in order to accentuate the brand name or product; illustration, and some TV advertisement use silence, the absence of audio sound, to generate' attention. Depicts the use of increased sensory input to support the product's advertising claim.

Some marketers seek unusual or technological media in which to place their advertisements in an effort to gain attention. Examples of such media include small monitors attached to shopping carts that feature actual brands in TV shows and in movies, individual TV .screens (placed in the back of the seat ahead) on airplanes, and monitors integrated into the above-the-door floor indicators on 'elevators. Fragrance marketers often include fragrance samples in their direct-mail and magazine advertisements through sealed perfume inserts. Researchers have reported that the use of an ambient

scent in a retail environment enhances the shopping experience for consumers and makes the time they spend examining merchandise, waiting in line, and waiting for help seem shorter than it actually is[1]. Some marketers have invested in the development of specially engineered scents to enhance their products and entice consumers to buy, Package designers try to determine consumers' absolute thresholds to make sure that their new-product designs will stand out from competitors' packages on retailers' shelves.

2.4 The Differential Threshold

The minimal difference that can be detected between two similar stimuli is called the differential threshold, or the just noticeable difference (the j.n.d.). A nineteenth-century German scientist named Ernst Weber discovered that the j.n.d. between two stimuli was not an absolute amount, but an amount relative to the intensity of the first stimulus. Weber's law, as it has come to be known, states that the stronger the initial stimulus, the greater the additional intensity needed for the second stimulus to be perceived as different.

According to Weber's law, an additional level of stimulus equivalent to the j.n.d. must be added for the majority of people to perceive a difference between the resulting stimulus and the initial stimulus.

2.5 Marketing Applications of the Just Noticeable Difference

Weber's law has important applications in marketing. Manufacturers and marketers endeavor to determine the relevant j.n.d. for their products for two very different reasons: (1) so that negative changes (e.g., reductions in product size or quality, or increases in product price) are not readily discernible to the public (they remain below the j.n.d.) and (2) so that product improvements (such as improved or updated packaging, larger size, or lower price) are very apparent to consumers with-out being wastefully extravagant (i.e., they are at or just above the j.n.d.).

When it comes to product improvements, marketers very much want to meet or exceed the consumer's differential threshold; that is, they want consumers to readily perceive any improvements made in the original product. Marketers use the j.n.d. to determine the amount of improvement they should make in their products. LeM than the j.n.d. is wasted effort because the improvement will not be perceived; more than the j.n.d. is wasteful because it reduces the level of repeat sales. On the other hand, when it comes to price increases, less than the j.n.d. is desirable because consumers are unlikely to notice it. Since many routinely purchased consumer goods are rather inexpensive, companies are reluctant to raise prices when their profit margins on these items are declining. Instead, many marketers decrease the product quantity included in the packages, while leaving the prices unchanged -thus, in effect, increasing the per unit price.

Marketers often want to update their existing package designs without losing the ready recognition of consumers who have been exposed to years of cumulative advertising impact. In such cases, they usually make a number of small changes, each carefully designed to fall below the j.n.d so that consumers will perceive minimal difference between succeeding versions. For example, Betty Crocker, the General Mills symbol, has been updated seven times from 1936 to 1996.

2.6 Subliminal Perception

One can perceive stimuli without being consciously aware that they are doing so. Stimuli that are too weak or too brief to be consciously seen or heard may never the less be strong enough to be perceived by one or more receptor cells. This process is called subliminal perception because the stimulus is beneath the threshold, or "limen," of conscious awareness, though obviously not beneath the absolute threshold of the receptors involved. Perception of stimuli that are above the level of conscious awareness technically is called supraliminal perception, though it is usually referred to simply as perception. Since the 1950s, there have been sporadic reports of marketers using subliminal messages in their efforts to influence consumption behavior. At times, it has been difficult to separate truth from fiction regarding such alleged manipulations. When some of the subliminal methods were tested methodically using scientific research procedures, the research results did not support the notion that subliminal messages can persuade consumers to act in a given manner.

2.7 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Subliminal Persuasion

Despite the many studies undertaken by academicians and researchers since the 1950s, there is no evidence that subliminal advertising persuades people to buy goods or services. A review of the literature indicates that subliminal perception research has been based on two theoretical approaches. According to the first theory, constant repetition of very weak (i.e., sub threshold) stimuli has an incremental effect that enables such stimuli to build response strength over many presentations. This would be the operative theory when weak stimuli are flashed repeatedly on a movie screen or played on a soundtrack or audiocassette. The second approach is based on the theory that subliminal sexual stimuli arouse unconscious sexual motivations. This is the theory behind the use of sexual embeds in print advertising. But no studies have yet indicated that either of these theoretical approaches has been effectively used by advertisers to increase sales. However, there is some indication that subliminal advertising may provide new opportunities for modifying antisocial behavior through public awareness campaigns that call for individuals to make generalized responses to suggestions that enhance their personal performance or improve their attitudes[2]. There is also some (though not definitive) evidence that subliminal methods can indirectly influence attitudes and feelings toward brands[3].

In summary, although there is some evidence that subliminal stimuli may influence affective reactions, there is no evidence that subliminal stimulation can influence consumption motives or actions. There continues to be a big gap between perception and persuasion. A recent review of the evidence on subliminal persuasion indicates that the only way for subliminal techniques to have a significant persuasive effect would be through long-term repeated exposure under a limited set of circumstances, which would not be economically feasible or practical within an advertising context[4].

Several studies concerned with public beliefs about subliminal advertising found that a large percentage of Americans know what subliminal advertising is, they believe it is used by advertisers, and that it is effective in persuading consumers to buy[5]. To correct any misperceptions among the public that subliminal advertising does, in fact, exist, the advertising community occasionally sponsors advertisement.

2.8 External Factors in perceptual Selectivity

The external factors consist of environmental influences and are in the form of the characteristics of perceptual inputs or stimuli. These characteristics may distinguish a particular stimulus from other stimulus of the same group. Such characteristics may be in the form of size. intensity, repetition, novelty and familiarity contrast and motion. Their impact on the perceptual selectivity is as follows:

2.8. a . Size

Size is a characteristic which may affect the perceptual selectivity by affecting the attraction of the perceiver. Generally, bigger is the size of perceived stimulus higher is the probability that it attracts the attention of the perceiver and he may select it for perception. Usually, letter of higher sizes in newspapers or books are first selected for reading.

2.8.b. Intensity

The intensity principle of attention states that the more intense the external stimulus is, the more likely it is to be perceived. A loud sound. strong odour, or bright light is noticed more as compared to a soft sound. weak odour, or dim light. For example, based on the intensity principle, commercials on televisions are slightly louder that the regular programmes.

2.8.c. Repetition

The repetition principle states that a repeated external stimulus is more attention-getting than a single one. Repetition increases people's sensitivity or alertness to the stimulus. Advertisers use this principle by repeated advertisement of the same product to attract people's attention. In the organisational context repeated; instruction, even for the routine work, is based on this principle. .

2.8.d. Novelty and Familiarity

Novelty and familiarity principle states that either a novel or a familiar external situation can serve as attention getter. New objects or events in a familiar setting, or familiar objects, events in new setting draw better attention.

For example. in job rotation when workers jobs are changed from time, they become more attentive to their new jobs as compared to the previous ones. Similarly, communication in familiar jorgans attracts more attention.

2.8.e. Contrast

The contrast principle states that external stimuli which stand against the background or which are not what people are expecting receive more attention. Letters of bold types. persons dressed differently than others, buildings of different colours in the same locality, etc. get more attention. Contrast is a kind of uniqueness which can be used for attention getting.

2.8.f. Motion

Motion principle states that a moving object draws more attention as compared to a stationary object. For example workers may pay more attention to the materials-moving by them on a conveyor belt as compared to the maintenance needs of a machine lying next to them. Advertisers use this principle in their advertising by designing signs which incorporate moving parts, for example, commercials on televisions (moving ones) get more attention than print media.

All these factors are related to stimuli. While these factors affect perceptual selectivity their uses can be made properly, otherwise, negative consequences may emerge. For example, the principle that the louder sound attracts more attention may make a supervisor in a factory to believe that if he speaks loudly to his workers, they will pay more attention. However, by speaking loudly the supervisor may actually be turning the workers off instead of getting their attention. This phenomenon may be true in the case of other factors too.

2.9 Internal Factors in Perceptual Selectivity

While external factors are related to environmental stimuli. internal factors are related to the individual's complex psychological makeup. People generally select those stimuli and situations from the environment that appeal to or compatible to their personality, motivation and other personal factors. There are a number of such factors-self-concept, beliefs, expectations, inner needs, response disposition, response salience and perceptual defence-which filter the stimuli which do not suit the people. A brief description of their impact on perceptual selectivity is given below.

2.9.a. Self-Concept

The way a person views the world depends a great deal on the concept or image he has about himself. The concept plays an internal role in perceptual selectivity. It can be thought of as an internal form of attention

getting and is largely based on the individual's complex psychological makeup. Knowing oneself makes it easier to see others accurately. People's own characteristics affect the characteristics which they are likely to see in others. They select only that aspects which they find match with their characteristics.

2.9.b. Beliefs

A person's beliefs have profound influence on his perception. Thus a fact is conceived not on what it is but what a person believes it to be the individual normally censors stimulus inputs to avoid disturbance of his existing beliefs. This is referred to as 'maintenance of cognitive consistency. Katz argues that (i) an individual self-censors his intake of communications so as to shield his beliefs and practices from attack; (ii) an individual seeks out communications which support his beliefs and practices; and (iii) the latter is particularly true when the beliefs and practices in question have undergone attack or the individual has otherwise been made of them.[6]

2.9.c. Expectations

Expectations affect what a person perceives. Expectations are related with the state of anticipation of a particular behaviour from a person. Even in the organisational setting, expectations affect people's perception. Thus a technical manager may expect ignorance about the technical features of a product from non-technical people, or union officials use rough language.

Such expectations may affect their perception. Though such expectations may change because of direct contact and expectations may fall near actual a mental set about beliefs, expectations, and values filters perception and may be lasting and difficult to change.

2.9.d. Inner Needs .

People's perception is determined by their inner needs. The need is a feeling of tension or discomfort when one thinks he is missing something or when he feels he has not quite closed a gap in his knowledge, People with different needs usually experience different stimuli. Similarly, people with different needs select different items to remember or respond to. When people are not able to satisfy their needs; they are engaged in wishful thinking which is a way to satisfy the needs not in real world but in imaginary world, the day dreaming. According to Freud, Wishful thinking is the means by which the Id, a part of personality, attempts to achieve tension' reduction. In Such cases, people will perceive only those items which are in consistence with their wishful thinking.

2.9.e Response Disposition

Response disposition refers to a person's tendency to perceive familiar stimuli rather than unfamiliar ones. Thus, a person will perceive the things with which he is familiar for example, persons having a particular value take less longer time in recognising the words having implications in

the area of that value, but take longer time in recognising the words not associated with value. In an experiment, persons having dominant religious value took lesser time in recognizing such related words as priest, or minister whereas they took longer time in recognising words related with economic value such as cost or price.

2.9.f. Response Salience

Response salience is the set of dispositions which are determined not by the familiarity of the stimulus situations, but by the person's own cognitive predispositions. Thus, a particular problem in an organisation may be viewed as a marketing problem by marketing personnel, a control problem by accounting people, and human relations problem by personnel people. It indicates that type of response salience people have affects their perception. The reason for this phenomenon lies in the background of the people for which they are trained. They are trained to look all the situation from one point of view only, not from other points of view.

2.9.g Perceptual Defence

Perceptual defence refers to the screening of those elements which create conflict and threatening situation in people. They may even perceive other factors to be present that are not a part of the stimulus situation. Perceptual defence is performed by

1. denying the existence or importance of conflicting information,

2. distorting the new information to match the old one, or

3. acknowledging the new information but treating it as a non-representative exception.

There are empirical evidences that suggest the existence of perceptual defence mechanism. On the basis of these empirical evidences, Lawless has derived following conclusions:

1. Emotionally distt.1rbing information has a higher threshold for recognition than neutral or non-disturbing information.

2. Disturbing information is likely to bring about substitute perceptions which are distorted to prevent recognition of disturbing elements.

3. Emotionally arousing information actually does arouse emotion even though the emotion is distorted and directed elsewhere[7].

2.10 Factors in Perceiver

There may be several factors in the perceiver which may influence the perceptual mechanism-selectivity, organisation and interpretation-in the context of the person being perceived. The more important factors are perceiver's personality, his mental set attribution, first impression effect, halo effect, stereotyping.

2.10.a.Personality

Personality of the perceiver greatly influences the perception of other persons. Personality influences perception because of two reasons. First, the perceiver tries to project his personality attributes in others, known as projection. Second the perceiver tries to fit his attitudes, beliefs, expectations to reality, known as the process of self -fulfilling prophecies. Based on the review of several studies on relationship between personality and perception, Hamcheck has arrived at the following conclusions.

1. Secure people perceive others as warm individuals, rather as cold and indifferent people.
2. Thoughtful individuals do not perceive situation in terms of black and white but understand that there can be different shades of gray. Hence, they do not make judgements based on single piece of evidence.
3. Self-accepting people perceive others as liking and accepting them. Those who are not self-accepting tend to distrust others.
4. People tend to perceive others more accurately when they are more like the ones that they are perceiving than if they are different from those who are being perceived.

These imply that insecure, thoughtless, or non-self-accepting persons are less likely to perceive themselves and those around them accurately. They will, in all likelihood, distrust, misrepresent, or in other ways defensively perceive situations. This will influence the resultant behaviour of the person concerned.

2.10.b Mental Set

Mental set is the tendency one has to react in a certain way to a given situation. This has been illustrated by Massie and Douglas as such: 'Suppose you are a contestant in a track meet and are positioning yourself in your starting blocks as you hear the preparatory commands, Get rady, Get Set. When you hear the command[8]. Go, you take off at once since you are already set and ready to this command. It is a very simple example of mental set. In organisational setting, people have tendency to, perceive about others on the basis of this mental set which causes misperception.

The perceiver has an inherent tendency to respond either favorably or unfavourably (hard or soft) in appraising others. Depending on his assumptions about human nature, the perceiver's response set determines whether he looks for socially desirable or undesirable traits in other people and whether his judgements are lenient or harsh.

2.10.c Attribution

Attribution is the process by which individuals interpret events as being caused by particular aspects in the setting around them. Individuals perceive the information around them and learn behave accordingly and think of their behaviour and that of others as caused by some factors in the environment. It has been observed that different persons have different

views about why they behave in a particular way. Some persons assign the reasons for an event lying internally in them known as internal locus of control while others may assign the reasons lying outside, known as external locus of control. Findings of research studies suggest that the internals :

1. are more curious about the situation and events in which they find themselves;

2. use more information for decision making and are more aware (perceptive) of information; and

3. adopt a more alert, calculative attitude with respect to their situations[9]

As against internals, externals:

1. are less curious about their situation;

2. use less information in decision making and are less aware (perceptive) of information; and

3. adopt passive, less calculative attitudes with respect to their situation.

4. Attribution of causes for events influences perception. For example, if the failure of subordinate is perceived to be caused by external factors on which the subordinate does not have any control, the manager may treat him as capable and trustworthy as against the reason of failure is attributed to the subordinate. In the latter case, the subordinate may be treated as ineffective and irresponsible. Similarly, persons may

attribute the reasons of their failure to external factors to defend their ego. For example, if a person is bypassed in promotion, he may attribute the reason of his bypassing in terms that others have been promoted not because of their ability but because of their being close with high-ups.

2.10.d. First Impression

It is very common that people evaluate others on the basis of first impression. The evaluation based on first impression may be correct if it is based on adequate and significant evidence. However, since first impression evaluation is not based on adequate information. it may not be true reflection of people being perceived. Even in such cases, people continue to evaluate on the basis of first impression, though incorrect. This can be corrected by more frequent interaction, though erasing of first impression evaluation is not that easy:

2.10.e. Halo Effect

The term halo effect was first used in 1920 to describe a process in which a general impression which is favourable or unfavourable is used by judges to evaluate several specific traits. The halo in such a case serves as a screen, keeping the perceiver away from actually seeing the trait he is judging. The halo error is very similar to stereotyping except that in

stereotyping the person is perceived according to a single category, wheras under the halo effect, the person is perceived on the basis of one trait or event. Halo effect is more reflected in performance appraisal where the distortion exists because the rater is influenced by rate's one or outstandingly good (or bad) performances and he evaluates the entire performance accordingly. Bruner and Tagiuri note three conditions where the halo effect is more marked:

1. when the traits to be perceived are unclear in behavioural expressions;

2. when the traits are not frequently used by the perceiver; and

3. when the traits have moral implications[10]

2.10.f. Stereotyping

Stereotyping occurs when the perceiver judges or perceives a person on the basis of characteristics of the group to which he belongs to. The person is not perceived as an individual with specific set of his characteristics but on the basis of his group characteristics. We have seen earlier that the perceiver groups the stimuli on the basis of similarity and proximity to draw inferences. These similar stimuli are, then, perceived as having some common characteristics though many of them might have different characteristics. Similarity of stimuli helps in perception but it also leads to distortion in perception. For example, there is certain stereotyping at

the international level like the Italians are quick-tempered, Chinese are inscrutable, Japanese are industrious, Americans are materialistic and ambitious, blacks are musical and athletes, fat men are jolly etc. However, all individuals of a particular group may not necessarily possess those characteristics for which they are stereotyped. Based on the prejudices, the perceiver may attach positive and negative attributes in greater degree. For example, Secord and Backman observe that sterotyping is not simply the assignment of favourable or unfavourable traits to a class of persons as a function of whether the observer has a positive or negative attitude towards the person's category. Most stereotypes have both favourable and unfavourable traits, and more prejudiced individual assigns both in greater degree[11].

Stereotyping greatly influences perception in organisational context. In an organisational setting, there may be different classes like managers, supervisors, workers, union leaders, and so on. Individuals belonging to a particular class are likely to be perceived on the basis of the characteristics of the class to which they belong. The fundamental problem with stereotyping is that it may not contain a shred of truths and give rise to distortion because sometimes perception, derived on the basis of a false premise about a particular group, may be inaccurate.

2.11 Factors in Person Perceived

Besides the factors associated with the perceiver, there are certain factors associated with the person perceived which also cause distortion in perception. Two such factors are more common: status of the person and visibility of his traits.

2.11.a. Status

Status is a relative ranking of a person vis-a-vis others. The ranking may be based on one or more of these characteristics: social or organisational position, intelligence and knowledge, amount of wealth, and so on. The target person may be perceived on the basis of his status and not on the basis of his actual characteristics. Thus, a person having high status may be perceived to have many desirable qualities as compared to a person having low status. However, this may not be true.

2.11.b Visibility of Traits

Visibility of traits also influences perception of the perceiver. There are many traits which are not visible on surface, such as. honestly, loyalty, etc. In such cases, evaluation is to be made on the basis of one's own experience which may not be correct. The closeness among people provides opportunities to perceive the traits correctly which. however, are not always available.

2.12 Situational factors

Situational factors also affect the perception. There may be structural characteristics of the place indicating the characteristics of person occupying it. Thus a person is likely to be perceived by a place. For example, a person is perceived differently if he meets with other in a five-star hotel as compared to an ordinary place. This may be the main reason for having lavishly furnished offices or showrooms. In many cases, these may not reflect the true value but may only distort people's perception who might be dealing with them.

2.13 MANAGERIAL APPLICATIONS OF PERCEPTION

A manager is primarily concerned with the achievement of organisational objectives through specified behaviour of its members. Perception affects the outcome of behaviour. This is so because people act on the basis of what they see. Hence. in understanding behaviour, the managers must recognise that facts people do not perceive as meaningful usually will not influence their behaviour, whereas the things they believe to be real even though factually incorrect or non-existence, will influence it, Thus, the understanding of human perception, particularly in the organisational setting is important in understanding and controlling the behaviour. In an organisational setting, perception is important in various activities. However, there are three major areas which require special attention so far as the perceptual accuracy is concerned. These are: interpersonal working relationship, selection of new employees, and performance appraisal.

2.13.a. Interpersonal Working Relationship.

Organisations are intended to bring about integrated behaviour. Therefore, managers in the organisation need to know whether or not members share similar or at least compatible perceptions. If they do not, the problems of the organisation are greater and will require efforts to make perceptions more compatible. Misperceptions usually lead to strained relations and may even result in open conflict among people.

2.13.b. Selection of Employees

Organistions typically select new employees on the basis of selection tests, interviews and reviews of the applicants backgrounds. In many instances, much of the information is vague, and managers are subject to many of the perceptual problems when they make the selection decisions. The major areas of problems in this case are that (i) the managers emotional state may vary from day to day causing unfair perceptions of the same applicants; and (ii) there may be strong tendencies towards logical error and stereotyping specially during initial interviews.

2.13.c. Performance Appraisal

The appraisal of a subordinate's performance is highly affected by the accuracy of a manager's perceptions. The major areas of concern in this contact are: (i) managers may have tendencies to positively evaluate some employees because they are better liked, or are on favoured tasks, or are particularly noticeable; and (ii) because of halo effects performance evaluation will be affected adversely.

2.14 Developing Perceptual Skill

Looking into the need for correct perception, it is imperative that people in the organisation develop skills to perceive correctly. For this purpose, various attempts can be made. Though it cannot be said with certainty that these measures will bring perfectly correct perceptions because these may have their limitations, these can help in increasing the degree of correct perception. Following attempts can be made to have better perception.

2.14.a. Perceiving Oneself Accurately

One of the major reasons why people misperceive others is that they fail to perceive themselves accurately. Therefore, the important thing which a person must do is that he should understand himself more accurately. The more accurately he understands himself, the more accurate he can perceive others. The concept of Johri Window as discussed in Chapter II must be applied by people and attempts must be made to increase awareness about self. Some common practices that can be adopted in this context are mutual trust, better interpersonal interaction open communication with others, etc.

2.14.b. Enhancing Self concept

Self-concept is normally a function of how successfully people accomplish the things they attempt to do. When people handle roles where

they can exhibit and enhance their competence and be successful they will develop a basic sense of self-esteem and have positive self-regard. When self-concept is developed and people have acquired a positive self-regard, they are apt to respect others more and perceive them more accurately. Maslow contends that self-actualising individuals have more accurate perceptions about themselves than those who are not self- actualising. This correct perception about oneself will tend to perceive others more correctly as discussed above.

2.14.c. Having Positive Attitudes.

Attitudes also affect perception. Unless managers can take positive attitude to whatever situation they find themselves in and see the things from a positive angle their perceptions are likely to be distorted. Therefore, managers must be aware of their personal biases, make concerted efforts to be as unbiased as possible make conscious efforts to get rid of any negative feelings they may have of others. All these will put managers in their proper perspective and thus enhance their perceptual skills.

2.14.d. Being Empathic

Empathy means being able to see a situation as it is experienced by others. This is putting your feet in another's shoes. A person can understand the problem in true perspective when he looks at it from others' point of

view also. This may help the person to understand other side of the problem and hence more clear perception of the problem. This may occur only when the people can be sensitive to the needs of others and perceive situations from their point of view as well before making final decisions.

2.14.e. Communicating More Openly.

Lot of misperception arises in the organisation because of lack of adequate communication. undue reliance on one-way communication. Therefore, managers should take steps for making communication effective so as to ensure that right message reaches at the right place and at right time. This may help not only the managers to understand the organisational situations in much better perspective but employees can also look at the situations in much better way and any misperceptions may be dispelled.

2.14.f. Avoiding Common Perceptual Distortions

As discussed earlier, there are some factors which affect perception adversely like halo effect, stereotyping. attribution, first impression etc. In order to have better perception of the situation, people in the organisation should guard themselves specially against these common biases. This may be possible if they put continuous and make the decisions only after careful analysis of the situation.

2.15. CONCLUSION

Perception is a process by which an individual selects, agenizes and interprets stimuli into a meaningful picture of the world. Sensation is the immediate response of the sensory organs to stimuli. The lowest level at which an individual can experience a sensation is called the absolute threshold. Just noticeable difference is the differential threshold. Marketers use the just noticeable difference to determine the amount of improvement they should make in their products. The stimuli that are too weak to be perceived by one or more reception cells are called subliminal perception. Constant repetition of very weak stimuli has an incremental effect that enables such stimuli to build response strength over many presentations. The external factors in perceptional selectivity are size, intensity, repetition, novelty and familiarity contrast and notion. The internal factors in perceptual selectivity are self concept, beliefs, expectations, inner needs, response disposition, response salience and perceptual defence. The perceptual mechanism of the perceiver is influenced by his/her personality, mental set, attribution first impression, halo effect and stereo tying. However, there are certain factors associated with person perceived which also cause distortion in perception and the factors are status of the person and visibility of his/her traits. Understanding human perception is important in understanding and controlling human behaviour. In order to have better perception of the situation people in the organization should guard themselves specially against the common bias.