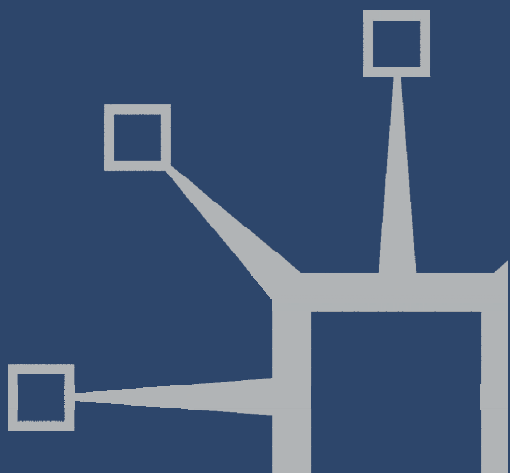


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Ernest Dichter and Motivation Research

New Perspectives on the Making of
Post-War Consumer Culture

Edited by
Stefan Schwarzkopf
Rainer Gries



Ernest Dichter and Motivation Research

Also by Stefan Schwarzkopf

DIE ANATOMIE DES MACHTWECHSELS: DIE SOZIALDEMOKRATISCHEN
REGIERUNGSÜBERNAHMEN VON 1969 UND 1998

Also by Rainer Gries

PROPAGANDA IN DEUTSCHLAND

PRODUKTE ALS MEDIEN

UNSERE FEINDE: KONSTRUKTIONEN DES ANDEREN IM SOZIALISMUS

KULTUR DER PROPAGANDA

PRODUKTE UND POLITIK: ZUR KULTUR- UND POLITIKGESCHICHTE DER
PRODUKTKOMMUNIKATION

ERNEST DICHTER: DOYEN DER VERFÜHRER (with Stefan Schwarzkopf)

PRODUKTKOMMUNIKATION: GESCHICHTE UND THEORIE

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Stefan Schwarzkopf

*Associate Professor in Business History and Marketing,
Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*

Rainer Gries

Professor of Communications, University of Vienna, Austria

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book emanated from the papers and discussions at the first international conference on Ernest Dichter and Motivation Research, organised by the editors at the University of Vienna in December 2005. After a preliminary publication of some of the conference papers with a Viennese publisher, news was received in 2008 that Ernest Dichter's complete papers had been deposited at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware. In order to celebrate the life and work of Ernest Dichter and accession of the Dichter archive at Hagley Museum and Library, the museum has held a further workshop, 'Understanding Markets', in October 2009.

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Part I

Introduction

1

Ernest Dichter, Motivation Research and the 'Century of the Consumer'

Stefan Schwarzkopf and Rainer Gries

1.1 Motivation Research as a political project

The autumn of 1938 was stormy and violent. All over the world, there was an air of anticipation, an atmosphere also filled with anxiety and uncertainty. Commentators in East and West divined change, disruption and upheaval. In Europe, many people desperately clung on to the hope of 'peace in our time' as Nazi Germany had enforced a political union with Austria (Anschluss) and now threatened to invade Czechoslovakia. In November, hundreds of synagogues and the shops and homes of thousands of Jewish people in Germany were burnt to the ground in murderous riots orchestrated by the Nazi regime. In the same year, the concentration camps Mauthausen and Neuengamme were opened. In late September, the notorious 'Long Island Express' hurricane struck Connecticut, New York, Long Island and Massachusetts. It damaged or destroyed 57,000 homes and buildings, knocked down 3 billion trees and left a path of devastation in which nearly 700 people lost their lives.

While Europe was in the midst of the preparations for a major war, the American people were more inclined to stay out of the troubled waters of world politics and instead rebuild consumer and investor confidence in a country shattered by the impact of the Great Depression. The DuPont company presented the synthetic fibre 'Nylon' to the world, in *Action Comics*, 'Superman' made his first appearance and Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny had their screen debut. Yet underneath the apparent calm of a revived commercial culture, anxiety was rife. In October, Orson Welles's radio adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* was broadcast on CBS, which caused many thousands of frightened New Yorkers to

believe in a Martian invasion of planet Earth. Although ensuing newspaper reports of a mass panic were later found to be wildly exaggerated, a young breed of psychologists and experts on 'crowd delusions' took the public reaction to the broadcast as a proof that even civilised, enlightened human beings of the Western world could still develop irrational fears from one moment to another. How could it be explained that the fantasy of Martian spaceships landing in the Bronx motivated people to call the police and leave their houses with shotguns to investigate the scenes of the 'landings' (Cantril et al. 1940).

In the midst of this tumultuous autumn, in September 1938, a young Austrian émigré descended from the jetty of an ocean liner that had brought him and his wife from Europe to New York. Clad in a simple suit, the young psychology graduate entered a new world that transformed him as much as he was about to transform his new home – America. Within the next two years, the young researcher worked on a number of marketing cases that today are part of the mythologies that modern consumer culture has created around itself. This young émigré was Ernest Dichter, an Austro-American psychologist and consumer researcher who pioneered the application of Freudian psychoanalysis and depth interviewing to marketing problems. Dichter's research techniques became part of what during the 1940s and 1950s was known as Motivation Research (MR). These techniques and their findings revolutionised mid-twentieth-century marketing and advertising practice in North America and in Europe as they directly aimed at finding out 'why' people were attracted to certain products and lifestyle choices.

Erroneously called the 'Father of Motivation Research', Dichter was hailed by many as the Sigmund Freud of the supermarket age. He famously advised Procter & Gamble that soap was used by consumers symbolically as a tool to rid themselves of sins and undesired character traits. What mattered for consumers was the symbolic ability of a soap to bring about a new start and prepare them for the daily challenges and excitements of urban life. He told Chrysler that male consumers understood cars in terms of relationships and that they formed quasi-personal bonds with specific brands and car makes, which they subconsciously likened to their sexual relationships with women. Thus, a cabriolet turned into a man's mistress and a sedan car into his more secure wife. Dichter is perhaps best remembered for his ability to see why women did not want to buy 'total product solutions' and food products with 'high usability' value, as in the case of the Betty Crocker Cake Mix brand. In a dawning age of technicised kitchens and ready-made meals,

female consumers wanted to retain a sense of direct experience, a sense of influence and individual skill, when preparing family food. Dichter therefore advised General Mills to allow housewives to add an egg – of course seen by Dichter as a symbol of a housewife's ability to be sexually active and to give birth to new life (Dichter 1960a: 157). While these cases are now part of twentieth-century urban mythology and consumer capitalism's self-spun branding lore, Ernest Dichter's development over three decades as one of America's foremost marketing experts is a pivotal milestone in the emergence of interpretative consumer research and of modern consumer culture in a wider sense.

Dichter's research activities were first brought to the attention of a mass audience by the critical American journalist Vance Packard, whose bestseller *The Hidden Persuaders* chastised Dichter and other motivation researchers for their attempts at manipulating consumers and citizens (Packard 1957). Since Packard's epochal investigation into the working practices and social visions of the (M)ad Men who inhabited the marketing world of the late 1950s, the power fantasies of advertising men and the links between psychoanalysis and consumer behaviour have fascinated historians, social scientists and cultural critics on both sides of the Atlantic (Curtis 2002; Kirby 2008). Popular representations of the psychologist-cum-salesman have both attracted vocal support as well as increasing scepticism from different sections of the social science and humanities community. Yet these representations merely reflect a continuing debate as to the influence of persuasive communication on consumers, the meaning of 'motivation' and the role of the unconscious in the decision-making processes of consumers (Bowlby 1993; Dawson 2003; Ewen 1976; Frank 1998; Haineault and Jean-Yves Roy 1993; Schudson 1986; Twitchell 2000).

In the case of the motivation researcher Ernest Dichter, the fascination with the idea of marketers using psychoanalytic tools to make consumers happy meets the timeless fascination with people who transgressed social, cultural and national boundaries and whose actions forged a transatlantic, global culture. The Austrian-born Ernest Dichter, who like no other shaped American marketing and consumer research in the post-war era, joins the long line of Europeans who transformed the culture of the American market. From the German John Jacob Astor, America's first multimillionaire, James Gordon Bennett, the Scotsman who founded the *New York Herald* and helped popularise the idea of journalism for the 'penny' masses, to the Austrian architect Victor Gruen, the inventor of the American shopping mall, European immigrants have welded America as a consumer society and reminded us of the

essentially European roots of the so-called American dream (Gruen 1960; Hardwick 2000; 2005; Mott 1941: 229–238; Rodgers 1998).

Ernest Dichter was born in Vienna on 14 August 1907, as the eldest of three sons. He grew up in an impoverished Jewish family of Polish and Sudeten-German immigrants. Studying psychology at the Sorbonne in Paris and with Charlotte Bühler at Vienna University in the early 1930s, Dichter met some of the last protagonists of Europe's cultural zenith of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After completing his university studies, Dichter underwent brief psychoanalytical training with a former pupil of Freud, Wilhelm Stekel. Stekel's interpretation of psychoanalysis, dominated by a quasi psycho-ethnological focus on the role of symbols and images, became an intellectual challenge for the young Dichter (Boos and Groenendijk 2007; Dichter 1979: 11–12). Increasingly pressurised by the police of the 'Austro-Fascist' state, he and his wife Hedy Dichter decided to emigrate to the United States in 1937. In New York, he was initially supported by another Austrian émigré working at Columbia University, the sociologist and market researcher Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld had already introduced Dichter to the fundamentals of quantitative and qualitative social research back in Vienna at his Institute of Economic Psychology (Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle). Beginning in the late 1920s, Lazarsfeld had done pioneering market research that focused on understanding the hidden dimensions of motivation and decision making. In an attempt to unite qualitative and quantitative approaches, Lazarsfeld called for research that relied on statistical information and direct observation, numbers as well as insight. Working on different research projects in New York in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Lazarsfeld revolutionised the understanding of the role of human motives in the market place (Fleck and Stehr 2007; Horowitz 1998; Kassarian 1994; Lazarsfeld 1935; 1937; Levy 2003; 2005; Oberschall 1978).

Unlike Lazarsfeld, however, who stressed the statistical validity of his research results to such an extent that Dichter saw fit to dismiss him as a 'nose counter', Dichter created a far more colourful melange of theoretically less reflected research methods. While Lazarsfeld was no stranger to psychoanalytic ideas – his mother was a psychoanalyst – Dichter based his entire market and consumer research methodology on the basis of Freudian psychoanalysis. For Dichter this meant a discovery on two levels. On the one hand, he began to conceptualise the consumer soul as a hidden realm of desires, full of taboos, repression and secrets. On the other hand, Dichter discovered the 'soul of the products', which was also structured as a space of complexes and taboos

(Dichter 1960a: 96–98). Dichter realised that there was an enormous interest among American managers in interpretative, qualitative and explorative approaches to the dynamics of the consumption process and the communication between products and consumers.

Partially drawing on his own knowledge of Freudian psychoanalysis, partially copying Lazarsfeld's research practices, Dichter began to offer a unique form of marketing and consumer research. By 1939, he worked for *Esquire* magazine and the Chrysler Motor Corporation. In March 1940, *Time* magazine featured an interview with Dichter that presented him to a large audience of readers as the new star on the business horizon. Soon, the magazine prophesied, the American consumer would be directed in their choices by 'completely Dichterized advertisements' (*Time* 1940). At the same time, Dichter underwent language training in order to get rid of his Austrian accent. Before the end of the Second World War, Dichter had reinvented himself as the embodiment of the American Dream and as a revolutionary, who for the first time understood that consumers were driven by largely subconscious desires, fears and complexes. By the late 1950s, his global business reached an annual turnover of \$1 million and magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Business Week* frequently presented him as the man who could get 'inside the consumer' and who was able to predict large-scale social changes. In June 1962, *Playboy* invited Dichter to discuss 'the Womanization of America' (*Playboy* 1962) and Vance Packard's bestseller immortalised him as the 'super-advertising-scientist'. In other words, Dichter advanced to become a symbolic figure of his time, who served as a projection screen for public criticism of marketing and post-war consumer culture (Bartos 1977; Bennett 2005; Dichter 1960a; 1964; 1977; 1979; Fullerton 2007; Fullerton and Stern 1990; Kreuzer et al. 2007; Stern 2004).

Ernest Dichter's role and that of Motivation Research in general in the making of twentieth-century consumer culture cannot be overestimated. Dichter arrived in the United States at a crucial moment during the late 1930s when Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld at Columbia University's Rockefeller-sponsored Radio Project (later the Bureau for Social Research) developed the method of 'focus group' interviews; that is, qualitative consumer investigations with groups of people that were allowed to elaborate on their ideas and experiences, rather than just ticking boxes on research questionnaires (Lazarsfeld 1969; Lunt and Livingstone 1993; Merton et al. 1956; Morrison 1998; Platt 1996; Schramm 1997; Zeisel 1979). Once again supported by Lazarsfeld and working in the vicinity of the innovative social research group that

emerged around Lazarsfeld during the late 1930s and early 1940s at Columbia University, Dichter developed a take on consumer research that stressed consumers' interaction with products and the importance of (brand) images and symbols in advertising communication.

In his first research project, the 32-year-old Dichter investigated people's uses of soap bars for Procter & Gamble's Ivory Soap. Based on his research, a new brand image and a new advertising slogan was developed which reflected consumers' recorded feelings that soap could wash away their old selves and prepare them for a new challenge: 'Be smart, and get a fresh start with Ivory soap.' In several dozens of open-ended research interviews with young men and women Dichter found that the ritualistic, anthropological significance of bathing as a symbol for getting rid of one's bad feelings, sins and immorality (baptism) broke through when consumers talked about their attitudes and cleaning habits. Showering and lathering also had a peculiar undertone of undressing and of erotic pleasure. Dichter realised that applying rich lather in the bath was one of the few occasions when the puritanical American was allowed to caress himself or herself (Dichter 1960a: 33–34; 1979: 35). In 1998, Hedy Dichter summarised her husband's approach to marketing research for Ivory Soap in the following way: 'My husband went to Y.M.C.A.'s and actually interviewed people about why they take baths and why they use soap. Lots of women told him that the Saturday night bath was very special: they said you never know what can happen, you have to be ready. That was the sort of thing he was interested in – the psychological, the sexual innuendos. So he saw that soap was more than soap, and a bath was more than a bath. He realised that it was a sort of cleansing ritual for many people, and he wrote a slogan keying into those feelings' (Ames 1998).

It has since been questioned whether the new advertising slogan was of any use to Procter & Gamble, the producers of Ivory Soap. Soon after its introduction, the slogan actually disappeared again from Ivory brand communication and the then research director of Procter & Gamble's advertising agency Compton, Dr Paul Smelser, is said to have found Dichter's research results rather useless (Battey 1981). But in these early research projects, a new type of understanding of consumer behaviour, one that focused not on statistically recording but on interpreting consumers' psycho-social involvement with the world of things around them, had been inaugurated. Likening himself to the famous TV detective, Ernest Dichter later wrote about his approach: 'Maybe I am a psychological Peter Falk. I observe the hidden clues; I listen with the third ear; I interpret. I see where others are too blind because they

are too close to the trees. I find the solution and produce the sales increases. I have acted as a discoverer, as a general on the battlefield of free enterprise' (Dichter 1979: 147).

In his key work *The Strategy of Desire*, written as a rejoinder to claims that Motivation Research and modern marketing constituted 'hidden persuasion' and manipulation, Dichter attempted to convince his readers that products were marketed merely in order to allow people 'creative fulfilment' and that buying was in reality an 'expression of creativeness' (Dichter 1960a: 16, 170). As consumers expressed their personality through the product choices they made, brands merely became a part of the general strife of modern man for individuality (Dichter 1960a: 231). This creativity of consumers, according to Dichter, resided in their ability to merge the disparate pieces of information sent out by products, retail outlets, advertisements and other consumers into a consistent whole. Rather than assessing the various aspects of a product separately – that is, price, packaging, brand name, quality associations, smell and so on – consumers view products and brands holistically, as a totality ('Gestalt'). As a result, market researchers had to try and study how and why consumers perceived certain symbolic meaning in a brand and a product. In other words, in order to understand consumer behaviour, market researchers had to search for 'the soul, the meaning of objects' (Dichter 1958b; 1960a: 34, 95, 147) (see Figure 1.1).

Viewing products in terms of the holistic image they formed in the mind of consumers was a direct application of Wolfgang Köhler's and Karl and Charlotte Bühler's Gestalt-psychological theories. Dichter had been a student of the Böhlers at Vienna University and wrote his PhD dissertation with Charlotte Bühler in 1934 on people's ability for self-evaluating their own abilities and performance (Dichter 1934; 1960a: 85–98, 144–148). Having worked at Lazarsfeld's market research institute on patterns of milk consumption among the Viennese population, Dichter now merged the tools of consumer research with the idea that products were perceived by consumers in such a way that a subconscious dialogue emerged between consumer and product. Through this dialogue, consumers 'animated' products and brands and turned them into objects with a soul (lat. *anima*).

These insights ensured that Dichter became one of the most outstanding market and consumer researchers of his generation. Yet, unlike other, today largely forgotten, motivation researchers of his time, Dichter linked his research agenda specifically to the greater ideological battles of the day. By courtesy of Ernest Dichter, Motivation Research became above all a political project. In the wake of the Sputnik crisis,

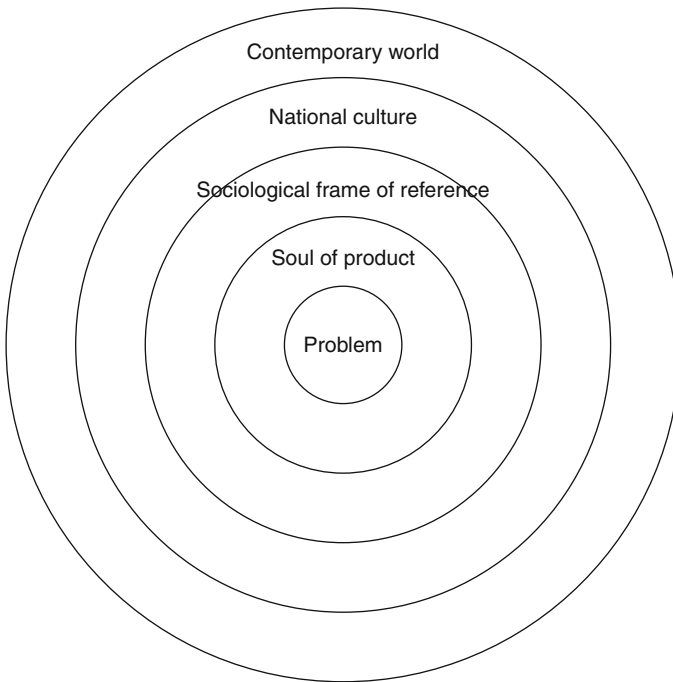


Figure 1.1 Dichter's Holistic View of the Product and of the Market Research Process (adapted from *The Strategy of Desire*, p. 145).

Dichter offered Motivation Research as a technique of social engineering to drag the American people out of their self-imposed standstill. In his key work *The Strategy of Desire*, published a year after the notorious 'Kitchen Debate' between Nixon and Khrushchev, as well as in numerous speeches and newspaper articles, Dichter claimed that the average American had become more complacent, fearful and fatalistic since the end of the Second World War. In Dichter's opinion, the Soviet Union launched one propaganda coup after the other; it embraced material wealth as sign of 'socialist progress'; Soviet citizens were less worried about consumption and material objects; and, above all, they had a collective plan, a vision for their national future. In all their prosperity, Americans seemed to lack these attitudes. He reminded his readers that they were in the middle of a 'silent war... on the outside with Russia and on the inside with our old concepts of thinking'. From the psychological point of view, he argued, 'the basic conflict we face is one between wanting to hold on to the status quo, wanting to return to the

womb, to hide, to be fatalistic, or to face the world by accepting change as challenge' (Dichter 1958a; 1960a: 18, 21; 1970).

Dichter also enlisted his European audiences in this global struggle against complacency and inhibiting puritanism. In 1966, he told a group of supporters of European economic integration: 'Westerners berate themselves for their material goals and for leading a life of product acquisition. We feel that when we manufacture a new consumer product, it is somehow immoral. When the Russians do it, they consider it progress and morality. All over the world – in Russia with its sophisticated form of Communism and in Samoa with its primitive form of Communism, as well as in other countries – people are clamouring for more, not fewer consumer products... We have to learn to reject the now so prevalent misconception: that Communism and Russia are more attractive to the uncommitted countries than capitalism and Western Democracy. Instead, wherever I went I found that it is the Western way of life which is held up as the desirable goal to be reached. Capitalist products are considered the desirable products to own and to use' (Dichter 1966: 12–13).

This fight that America and Western Europe led on the outside world against the totalitarian enemy of Soviet Russia had to be won at home, in the kitchen and at the supermarket, by helping, for example, suburban housewives overcome their fear of new ways of cooking and of new products: 'After an initial hesitation, [the housewife] has accepted canned food, instant coffee, frozen foods, etc., and she saves herself from guilt feelings' (Dichter 1960a: 184). By connecting Motivation Research to the political drama of the Cold War, Dichter took on his critics with canny fervour. While Vance Packard, John Kenneth Galbraith and William Whyte, author of the seminal study *Organization Man* (1956), claimed that modern industries, enlarged bureaucracies and sophisticated marketing had turned Americans into spineless and irresponsible comfort-seekers, Dichter hit back by arguing that Americans did not yet feel comfortable enough with their wealth and prosperity. Dichter attributed the fatalism, lack of initiative and sheer boredom exhibited by most Americans to their hidden, 'puritanical inhibitions', which prevented them from enjoying consumer capitalism to the full: 'Free enterprise and indeed our whole concept of modern economic life cannot survive unless we abandon the idea that a comfortable life is automatically an immoral one' (Dichter 1960a: 184, 227, 263; 1960b: 66).

For Dichter, Americans had to be instilled with the will to enjoyment through consumption if the nation was to have any chance as a future world power. The great aim of motivation researchers like Dichter was

thus to implant consumption and the consumer brand more deeply in the collective project of an American future. The idea that there were secret communication channels between brands and consumers and that these communication channels could be strategically altered to serve societal needs became a mighty political weapon within the arsenal of post-war American marketing. It is not surprising, therefore, that Dichter finished his anti-Packardian and anti-Galbraithian opus magnum, *The Strategy of Desire*, with a kind of marketing communications plan that aimed at changing people's attitude towards 'Brand America'. The motivation-researcher-turned-cold-warrior proposed that if people were to understand the United States better the country had to act with more humility on the diplomatic stage and reawaken people's frustrated love for America. Further, he advised to showcase America's capacity for greatness by creating personal heroes and collective symbols to which people inside and outside the country could aspire. These heroes and symbols could also help remove fears of America's individualism and vitality which he believed had taken hold of foreign public opinion (Dichter 1960a: 272–282).

Another of Dichter's socio-political works, *Motivating Human Behavior* (1971) struck a similar chord. In the second half of this book, he proposed the potential application of motivation techniques to intervene in a wide range of social problems ranging from individual happiness to bringing about world peace. Openly labelling his practice as 'social engineering', Dichter admitted that motivational techniques could be used to manipulate consumers but he argued that what mattered was the use to which these techniques were put. Motivational techniques, according to Dichter, offered a set of devices through which individuals could overcome the gap between their natural inclinations (fear, laziness, nostalgia or prejudices) and their potential to self-actualise and become enlightened global citizens. Dichter suggested that there was a fear of using these techniques because of suspicions they could be turned into extreme forms of social control which then limited the rights of individuals. At the most unlikely of all times, in the 'critical' late 1960s and early 1970s, Dichter refused to accept these fears and instead proposed an optimistic view of global, American capitalism (Dichter 1971: 119–121, 230–242; 1987).

1.2 Motivation Research: its sources, its transfer and global export

Today, it has become accepted wisdom that products are created around people's character traits and are therefore seen as expressions of their

personalities. It is for that reason that products seem to bear so much promise – of individual change and aspiration, of youth and freedom. It has become accepted knowledge that Coca Cola does not sell fizzy drinks but the *idea* of youth and refreshment and that Nike does not sell shoes but exhaustion, achievement and success. Cultural anthropologists of the Western world find more and more evidence of very intimate relationships between products and their owners (Hirschman 2007; McCracken 1988). While these relationships now feature heavily on the research agenda in social theory, consumer research and cultural anthropology, their discovery ultimately dates back to the mid-twentieth century and the work of a whole group of motivation researchers of whom Ernest Dichter was certainly one of the most innovative. Not without a sense of nostalgia, some within the advertising community today look back to the decades between the 1930s and the 1960s as an era of ‘great personalities’, of ‘movers and shakers’ in the world of marketing; as an era when ‘advertising blockbusters’ were still written (Fletcher 2006; Nelson 2008). In this book, we attempt to situate Ernest Dichter broadly within the wider culture of consumer research and consumer expertise that emerged during those years. We argue that Dichter’s version of Motivation Research provides a unique vantage point from which to study the emergence during the twentieth century of a transatlantic research dialogue, the emergence and transfer of consumer cultures, and finally the making of ‘us’ as members of brand-driven market places that we cannot seem to escape (Fleck 2007).

These and other questions also kept Ernest Dichter awake at night. The young émigré, who was lucky to have escaped the anti-Semitic hell of Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, began his new career at an amazing speed. After having advised Procter & Gamble, the *Esquire* magazine, and, most famously, Chrysler during the late 1930s, Dichter attracted more and more high-profile clients. Among them were CBS, General Mills, DuPont and Exxon. Although he did not coin the famous ‘Tiger’ slogan, Dichter’s work on consumer attitudes towards petrol brands led the oil giant Exxon to adopt the symbol of a tiger for the Esso brand. ‘Put a tiger in your tank’ symbolised to consumers the sheer power of Esso petrol (Dichter 1964: 274–277; 1979: 80, 93). The avalanche of research requests spurred Dichter to move out of the salaried project-researcher positions he held for years and to set up his own Institute for Motivational Research in 1946, first housed in Manhattan and later in a respectable mansion in Croton-on-Hudson near New York (Figure 1.2).

Only ten years later, in 1956, he founded Ernest Dichter Associates International, which allowed him to turn his research expertise into a global business. At that time, ironically, Vance Packard’s exposure of the



Figure 1.2 The Ernest Dichter Institute for Motivational Research in Croton-on-Hudson, c.1955.

'hidden persuaders' helped him to gain further clients both in North America and in Europe. From the late 1950s, Dichter set up subsidiary companies and partner companies in Vienna, Munich, Frankfurt/Main, Zurich, Paris, Tokyo, London, Barcelona, Panama and Miami. Dichter inspired similar motivational research institutes in all parts of Europe, notably in Italy, and he became research active as far away as in South Africa, Japan and Australia, where he subcontracted work to other Motivation Research institutes (Dichter 1989; McLeod 2009). Among the global and international corporations which Dichter advised during the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were major American car companies (Chrysler, Ford), energy companies (Amoco, Shell, Exxon, Mobil Oil), branded food producers (General Mills, Cadbury's, Nestlé), household and consumer goods producers (DuPont) and travel companies (Air France, Japan Airlines, American Airlines). In addition, he was commissioned to conduct research for major advertising agencies, among them J. Walter Thompson, Young & Rubicam, McCann Erickson and N. W. Ayer, which they in turn used to counsel their own clients.

During the 1960s, Dichter also diversified into the market for political consulting and political advertising. Even before Dichter ventured into this field, an independent motivational research institute founded in Bremen in 1956 had conducted research into the 'motivational

structure' of German voters in order to find the 'typical' conservative voter and advise the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) on its image (Kruke 2007: 77, 122–123, 133). Dichter saw opportunities in this area of consultancy and, among others, advised the American Democrat presidential candidate Hubert H. Humphrey during the election year 1968 (Dichter 1979: 97–101). Humphrey, the former vice president, needed a clearly positioned image to help him move out of the overbearing shadow of Lyndon B. Johnson, with whom the public was very familiar. Dichter advised Humphrey to focus public perception during the campaign on his ability to bring about social and political change ('Some talk change, others cause it'). Realising that Humphrey trailed in the polls heavily behind his opponent Richard Nixon, Dichter advised him to depict his Republican opponent as an embittered and miserable scaremonger and to instead promise a 'politics of joy'. In the midst of the culture wars of the 1960s and the riots that marred the campaign months, Nixon promised to restore 'law and order' and finally won the election by a small margin.

While the Humphrey 'brand' did not quite win the day, the successful Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky called on Dichter's services in order to sell his image to the collective psyche of the Austrian population as a trustworthy, forward-looking moderniser and champion of the European human rights agenda. Kreisky, a social-democrat, served for 13 years in office. In Italy, Dichter worked for the Christian Democrats who wanted to change their image and attract new voters. Dichter advised the party to present itself as youthful and open for change in order to take voters away from the socialist and communist parties, which at that time attracted a lot more younger supporters. Following Dichter, the Christian Democrats put a picture of a beautiful young woman on election posters under the slogan 'The Christian Democratic Party is only 20 years old', by that connecting the age of the Christian Democratic Party itself to the idea of youth, joy and future (Dichter 1979: 98–99).

There is a theme that emerges in all of Dichter's commercial and political recommendations, in his analyses and writings: the acceptance of change as a challenge and the full embrace of joyful, uninhibited optimism. Being a self-marketer of the highest order, Dichter connected this mindset to the idea of America and of modernity. Early on, he took language classes in New York in order to acquire an 'all-American accent' and he changed his name from 'Ernst' to 'Ernest'. In interviews, on his travels and research visits, in his publications and during his many speeches at conferences Dichter styled himself as a keystone in the structure of an 'American century' in the making. By the 1960s,

'Ernest Dichter' and 'motivation research' had become global brands which extended the reach of America's 'soft Empire' further into the social and cultural spaces of European marketing (Clarke 2008; de Grazia 2005; Mennell 2007). Although equipped with a keen eye for the differences in national cultures, Dichter was nevertheless very clear about the fact that he contributed to wide-ranging changes which restructured European societies along the lines of American-style consumer culture. In a sense, he extended the normal scope of marketing consultancy when he advised average citizens, housewives, voters, students and parents not to resist these changes but to embrace them.

Like many American marketing specialists before him, he targeted especially the French, whom he suspected to be mainly responsible for European cultural resistance towards Americanised mass culture, mass marketing and mass retailing. In 1974, Dichter wrote a series of children's books directed at French families. Originally intended for his own grandson Sasha, the four books introduced a little boy who discovered his emotions, his fears, the nature of social conflict and his own cognitive development. In *Sasha a tous les pouvoirs* ('Sasha has all powers'), he advised his French readers how responsible parenting could create more optimistic and open-minded children of the next generation, a generation that was better able to deal with the challenges and technological-material opportunities that the future was bound to offer (Dichter 1979: 188–189).

Wrapping the person Ernest Dichter into the narrative of American cultural imperialism and depicting him as an 'Americaniser', however, would not do justice to the story of a man and his research methods which were essentially about contradiction, conflict and the unseen, 'hidden', baggage of the past. The methods usually summarised under the term 'Motivation Research' are in themselves of profoundly European origins. They blend the holistic philosophy of Bühler's Gestalt psychology, which assumes that human beings perceive objects and events in images, as an amalgamated whole (Gestalt), with Freudian psychoanalysis and Lazarsfeld's social and market research methodology. In other words, the fascinating landscape of consumer, market and Motivation Research which emerged in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s would have been very bleak without the arrival of European immigrants (many of them of Jewish origin) like Paul Lazarsfeld, Ernest Dichter, Alfred Politz, Herta Herzog, Hans Zeisel, Leo Bogart and George Katona (Dichter 1979: 32; Heilbron et al. 2008; Schumann et al. 2008).

The essentially European origin of Dichter's Motivation Research puts a question mark behind the all-pervasive Americanisation narrative

so often told (Schröter 2005: 111–120). Equally, Dichter's ascent in American society after 1938 and his global fame in the post-war era should not be mistaken as an all-out 'from cleaner to Millionaire' success story. His career was characterised by public objection, by attacks made on him in the press, by professional jealousies and personal rivalries that often hurt and demotivated the great motivator. Partly, of course, Dichter had to blame himself and his relentless self-marketing for being singled out as 'Mr. Mass Motivation himself' (Packard 1957: 32). As mentioned earlier, Dichter's research into the 'hidden' or subconscious communication between products and consumers was first exposed to a mass audience by a no-less-intriguing American: the journalist Vance Packard and his international bestseller *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). Translated into all major European languages, Packard's polemic book branded Dichter as a dangerous marketing guru, whose skills in tapping the unsuspecting depths of consumer psyches could turn people into sexualised, aboulitic marionettes of unscrupulous advertisers.

So powerful was the image of the marketer as 'hidden persuader' that Dichter had to continually defend himself. When the American media began to discuss James Vicary's experiments with subliminal advertising and Dichter's Motivation Research in one breath, Dichter issued public statements denouncing Vicary as a scandalous hypnotist. The bad image of Motivation Research, which gripped public perception in the wake of Vicary's faked experiments and Packard's blockbuster publication, affected the marketing profession as a whole. The German advertising manager Harry Damrow, for example, felt the need to entitle his memoirs *I have Not Been a Hidden Persuader* (Damrow 1981; Dichter 1979: 82–84; Rogers 1992). Contemporary market researchers therefore took on Dichter for what they perceived as his indefensible lack of interest in statistical, 'hard' data. Some found Dichter's interpretative openness difficult to accept (Alderson 1958; Levitt 1960; Paradise and Blankenship 1950: 286; Peterman 1956; Politz 1956–1957; Stryker 1956; Williams 1957; Woolf 1958), while others, like the British market researcher Mark Abrams, rubbished his *Strategy of Desire* for making generalised statements that 'reflect a totally insensitive approach to civilised culture' and for passing off commonplace observations as a 'substitute for careful statistical procedure' (Abrams 1960). The American researcher Edward Scriven warned by the mid-1950s that some marketing executives had begun to feel that 'the whole business of motivation analysis is simply a hodgepodge of jabberwocky, or the line of a glib psycho-salesman bent on selling fifty "depth" interviews for \$50,000' (Scriven 1958: 65).

Attacks on Dichter shaped American and European public discourse throughout much of the post-war period. Betty Friedan, whose 1963 *The Feminine Mystique* became a key text for the second feminist movement, described Dichter as 'a man who is paid approximately a million dollars a year for his professional services in manipulating the emotions of American women to serve the needs of business' (Friedan 1963: 208). John Kenneth Galbraith and Martin Mayer, whose analyses of the causes and consequences of ubiquitous consumer marketing were widely read, provided powerful ammunition to those who believed that motivation researchers like Dichter were indeed to blame for the downfall of public-spiritedness and self-control in American life (Brown 1963: 176–193; Galbraith 1958; Mayer 1958). Much of today's research into the social evils of a fully fledged and 'uninhibited' consumer society still feeds from this anger and fear first unleashed by those who sought critical encounters with the original motivator in Croton-on-Hudson (Schor 2007).

Ernest Dichter's competitors and fellow consumer researchers were also far from welcoming. When Dichter returned to Europe during the late 1950s to seek new clients and publicise his research, leading figures in the European market research industries saw him as an intruder and branded him as a charlatan. At home, Paul Lazarsfeld remained friendly but increasingly sought to distance himself from the sexual connotations of the research interpretations produced by Dichter. Louis Cheskin, director of the Chicago-based Color Research Institute and one of Dichter's fiercest rival, triumphantly reported to Vance Packard that his adversary's 'almost complete preoccupation with Freudian symbolism and libidinous connotations' at times led him astray (Cheskin 1960: 155; Packard 1957: 35). In Britain and in Germany, the doyens of market and opinion research Harry Henry, Mark Abrams and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann openly ridiculed Dichter's Freudian approach and gave him to understand in no uncertain terms that he was an embarrassment for the market research community (Henry 1958: 27; Noelle-Neumann 1963: 271; Schwarzkopf 2007). In Germany and in Austria in particular, old and very nasty animosities opened up once again between Dichter and those advertising and market researchers who had stayed in the German Reich during the war and who had often personally benefited from the expulsion and murder of Jewish advertising men.

One of them, Hanns F. J. Kropff, had co-organised the elimination of Jewish advertising and market research businesses in Vienna during the 1930s. Being favoured by the Nazis, Kropff advanced to become a major figure in the *Advertising Council of the German Industry* (Werberat der