Adam Richard
Simmons Market Research Bureau
New York, USA

7.8 VALS (values and lifestyles segmentation)

Lifestyle segmentation is certainly not a new concept. But its impending widespread use in syndicated audience research and ultimately in media purchasing decisions is. This paper gives a précis of the VALS lifestyle segmentation system developed by SRI International which looks like it is going to be responsible for this transition. VALS was incorporated into the Simmons Study in co-operation with SRI International two years ago.

The need for an actionable lifestyle segmentation system in the United States is felt first at the advertising agency side of the media business. Many products today attempt to achieve distinction in the market place through advertising rather than through product differences. The cigarette industry in the United States carries this to an extreme, sometimes. But even under circumstances which clearly call for a lifestyle campaign, most product managers do not know how to buy media or advertising to appeal to a particular lifestyle target. So, if an agency is recommending a lifestyle advertising campaign, it has to be able to justify such a campaign to a product manager. Otherwise when a product manager is confronted with lifestyle advertising, the likelihood is that the copy will be rejected. It is a dilemma — there is a clear desire for lifestyle advertising, but an inability to justify it.

This is really where VALS comes in. VALS is an acronym for Values and Lifestyles. According to the SRI people who developed the system, there is nothing new about the classification structure. It is made up of a series of sociological and psychological constructs that have been around for a long time. The difference is that SRI has organized these constructs to describe everyone in the adult population; they have surveyed the population to determine how many people were in each of their segments; and they have provided information on particular themes, topics, symbols, and so on which appeal to each segment.

Figure 1 depicts the entire VALS segmentation scheme. At the base of the figure are two groups: the Sustainers and the Survivors. These are the two Need-Driven segments. Further up are the Outer-Directed people, who are sub-classified into three groups: the Belongers, the Emulators, and then the Achievers. The Inner-Directeds are shown on the right side and are sub-classified into the I-Am-Me's, the Experientials, and the Societally Conscious. At the top of the heap are the

Integrateds, who are only about 1% of the population and are so perfect that you would not want to meet one of them.

The Need-Drivens, who are named the Sustainers and the Survivors, determine their purchasing mainly by need, rather than by wish or desire. The Survivors are, for the most part, older people with meagre resources. The Sustainers are young people, inner-city folks, mainly unskilled workers, predominantly Black and Hispanic, and very low in income. They are different from the Survivors because most of them hope or expect that some day their lives will be better. Both of these groups are small in size: Survivors are about 4% of the population; Sustainers are 7%. Because they are small in size, and by and large, do not have any resources, you might think they could be ignored. They cannot be, however, because they are nearly exclusive purchasers of nationally advertised brands, rarely using generics or store brands and rarely using coupons. So for nationally advertised brands, they represent more than their share of the total purchasing.

The next group is the Outer-Directeds. These are people whose purchasing is determined by how they expect others to perceive them.

The largest single group is the Belongers. These people are pretty much middle-class America. They are 35 years of age or older and are really the mainstay of American society. They respond well to peer-oriented appeals. In other words, the belongers are always "Keeping up with the Joneses". Ronald Reagan got a lot of support from this predominantly conservative group. They are also nostalgic, and like to think things were better when their role model John Wayne was young. They are also traditional in the products they purchase: these are not the people who try new products when they first come out.

The next group in the Outer-Directed group is the Achievers. Most of the people at this symposium would fall into this group. They are hard driving, successful, materialistic and respond to advertising themes that have to do with efficiency, their status and their comfort. They are successful, and they like to wear the kind of clothing, drive the kind of cars, take the kind of vacations, and drink the kind of alcoholic beverages that tell everyone else they have made it.

The final Outer-Directed group is the Emulators. These are by and large the younger children of the

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FIGURE 1
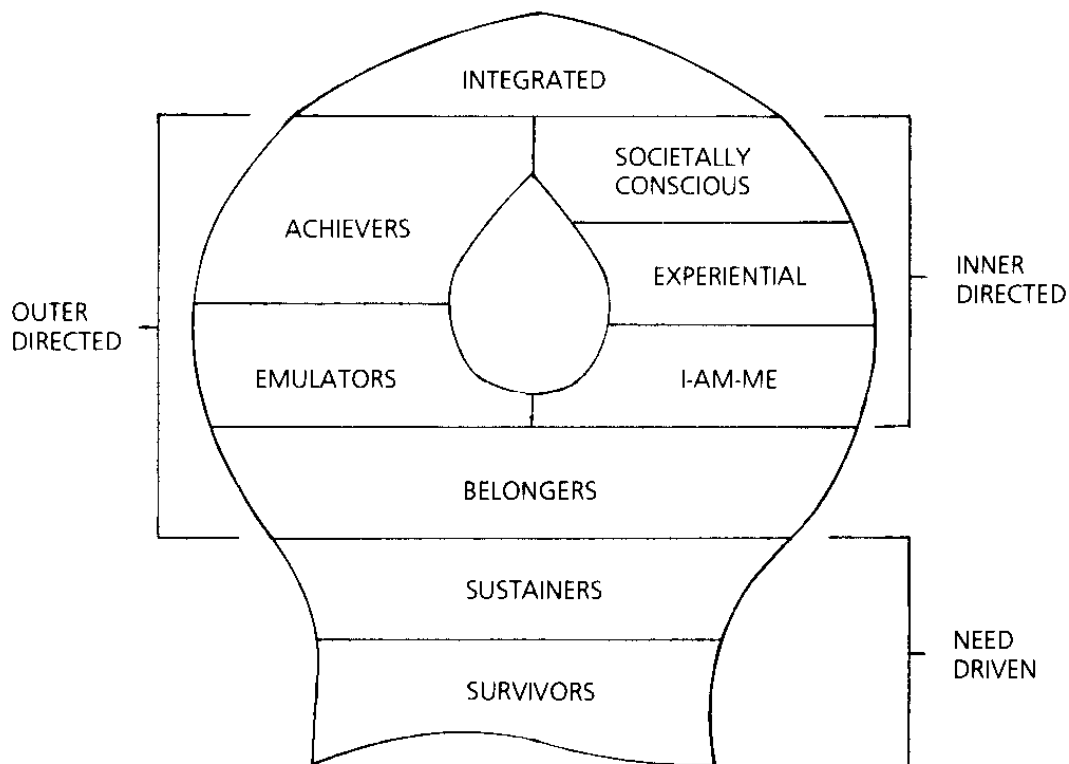
Belongers. Mainly under 30 years of age, they are people who are ambitious, young, very status conscious, very macho and competitive. But they are not confident about their own tastes and preferences, so they emulate those whom they perceive to be pace setters. They want to know what is going on in society and conform to it.

The Outer-Directeds as a whole comprise the largest segment in the U.S. Belongers are 39% of the total adult population. The Achievers are 21% and the Emulators 8%.

The Inner-Directeds, by contrast, purchase based on their desire to satisfy their own priorities and their own feelings. These people really march to the beat of their own drummer.

One sub-category within this group is the I-Am-Me's. They are mainly under 25 and many are still in college. They are not seeking their identity; they already know what it is and spend a good deal of time and energy proving that to others. I-Am-Me's can be counted on to be individualistic, impulsive, exhibitionistic, narcissistic, and quite inventive. Many are children of Achievers and can afford to indulge this individualism.

The next Inner-Directed group is the Experientials.

They are 25 to 35 years of age and are deeply into everything that is exciting about life. They are also curious and are quite caught up with mechanical things. They like intellectual challenges.These are the people who are the first to get into home computers, video tape recorders and the like.

Finally, there is the group known as Societally Conscious. These are the alter egos of the Achievers, just as affluent as the Achievers, with many of the same kinds of career paths — and lifestyles that are similar in many respects. But these people are concerned about the society in which they live — with social and ecological issues. Their philosophy is adequacy versus abundance. They like small-scale rather than large-scale enterprises and are into the wellness phenomenon that has been swelling in this country.

In size, the I-Am-Me's make up 3% of the population; the Experientials, 6%; and the Societally Conscious, 12%. Their members, however, belie their importance because significant trends in our society very often begin with this group.

That in brief is the way the VALS segmentation system is structured. Now let us look at the way these

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TABLE 1
Variations above norms

CBS EVENING NEWS— above male norm	Survivor Sustainer Belonger	74% 15% 34%
DALLAS— above female norm	Survivor Sustainer Belonger	59% 100% 9%
FASHION/BEAUTY MAGAZINES— above female norm	Emulators Achievers I-Am-Me Experientials Societally Conscious	22% 31% 119% 46% 90%
AUTOMOTIVE MAGAZINES— above male norm	I-Am-Me Experientials	124% 132%
BUSINESS AND FINANCE MAGAZINES— above adult norm	Achievers Experientials Societally Conscious	86% 23% 79%

VALS segments use media (see **Table 1**). In the Simmons study, we have the VALS segmentation for magazines, television, newspapers, outdoor, radio and even for yellow pages. Television appeals to the Sustainers, the Survivors and the Belongers. Looking just at the evening news, Survivors are shown as being 74% above norm in terms of viewing. The same thing tends to hold true with some of the top-rated prime time shows, with *Dallas* gaining more of its viewing from Survivors, Sustainers and the Belongers.

When it comes to magazines, we find that the skew is more toward the Inner-Directeds than is the case for TV. The beauty and fashion magazines tend to do very poorly among Belongers, Survivors and Sustainers, but pick up among the Achievers and all of the Inner-Directeds. We think that one consequence of looking at magazines through this VALS segmentation system is the possibility of breaking up traditional categories, such as 'beauty and fashion', into separate categories

because, as an example, the I-Am-Me's are much more into magazines dealing with cosmetics and avant garde fashions. The Societally Conscious women are much more into those aspects of fashion and beauty magazines that have to do with good health and self-development.

We also find a lot of special interest magazines that do incredibly well among some of these VALS segments. As an example, the automotive books garner readership among the I-Am-Me's and the Experientials. This is more than 100% above average. In terms of business and finance magazines, people in the Societally Conscious and Achiever groups are the heavy readers. Demographically these groups are similar, but differ in their psychological and sociological orientations.

I hope this brief exposition of the VALS segmentation system has given some idea of how it can be used in both copy/campaign development and media planning.