**4. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

**Case Study**

To prepare for her upcoming interview with the Google team responsible for marketing the new Pixel smartphone, MBA graduate Maria is looking at some of the advertising materials that were created and circulated on social media when the product launched. Many of the advertisements on YouTube hint at the importance of culture, subculture, groups, and families, and their potential inﬂuence on consumer behavior. All of the advertisements begin with Google’s iconic search bar and end with the images morphing into the Pixel screen:

• “Together by you, Phone by Google” is an overhead shot of a colorful ensemble of stylish young people looking up at the camera and singing a cappella in a choreographed sequence. The participants are dressed bright colors and appear to be from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

• “Life by you, Phone by Google” is a video montage of different activities and occasions, such as a young woman stargazing, an African man doing the limbo at a party, Asian businessmen celebrating, young women jumping rope with glow-in-the-dark ropes, and a family gathered around a child’s cot, all partially covered by the Google search bar. The hidden parts are revealed at the end of the video.

• “Memories by you, Phone by Google” is a photo montage of a young Indian girl smiling toward the camera as she journeys down a street in different outﬁts, suggesting that the photos are taken on different days across the seasons.

While these advertisements highlight the features of the Pixel product, Maria concludes that they focus more on social and cultural experiences, appealing to potential consumers by drawing attention to shared interests; hinting at a sense of belonging; and associating the Pixel with creating memories, celebrating, and capturing important occasions. The advertisements are emotive, highlighting relationships between family members; friendship groups; and people with shared interests, such as the a cappella group.

In this unit, we explore how these types of images can inﬂuence consumers because of the role that culture, subculture, groups, and families have on people’s consumption-related decision-making.

**4.1 Culture**

According to anthropologist Edward Tylor (1871), culture is “that complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, morals, customs, and any other capabilities acquired by humans as members of society” (Mothersbaugh & Hawkins, 2016, p. 40). Simply put, culture is a society’s personality. Things that we learn and do as members of a society can be considered cultural. Culture varies from society to society since each society has a different way of doing things, i.e., different learned behaviors that are explicitly and implicitly shared and adopted by members of that society. Individual idiosyncratic behavior does not constitute culture. Similarly, behavior of a biological nature, such as hunger, yawning, and wearing clothes to protect oneself from the cold, is not a cultural practice. However, how people speciﬁcally do these things can be considered cultural; using a fork or chopsticks to eat, covering one’s mouth when yawning, and wearing a hijab or burqa are practices speciﬁc to particular societies.