Decisions, decisions, decisions...

Being a consumer is tough these days.

At the same time, without decisions to make, being a consumer would be easier but much less interesting.

Stores are full of attractive products.

Advertisements cover cars and buildings, TV commercials shout slogans, and pop-up promotions on the Internet can be annoying.

Since we can't have everything we want, we have to make the resources that we have go as far as possible.

Imagine that you go to a shopping mall to buy a pair of jeans.

Let's take a look at some of the things that may affect your decisions while you are there.

"Hey, these jeans are on sale!"

Have you ever wondered why retail stores put items on sale?

Sales reduce inventory size, making room for the store to buy more stuff to sell, and they attract customers.

If the jeans were originally $100 but are now on sale for $80, the lower price would lead more customers to consider buying the jeans and spending another $20 on a T-shirt, too.

The bottom line is that sales attract customers that might not have made purchases at the regular price, and they motivate customers to spend because their money can now buy more.
"Become the person you've always wanted to be."

Jeans are jeans, right? Well, no!

There are ordinary jeans and there are designer jeans.

As the TV ads prove, beautiful people wear Brand X, don't they?

And you feel you'll be more beautiful if you wear it, too.

This is the power of association.

When advertisers associate appealing images with certain products, consumers may buy the products to associate themselves with those images.

You're still the same you, but you feel better about yourself because you are wearing Brand X's new jeans.

Is this worth paying 25%, 50%, or even 100% more?

Well, that's up to each individual to decide on his or her own.

"How do you like these sneakers to go with those jeans?"

Have you ever been offered to buy something that you had not planned on buying?

A sales clerk may make suggestions to you about what else to buy in addition to your originally planned purchase.

This is called up-selling and it's designed to be not only helpful for you, but also for the store's bottom line.

Have you also noticed that shoes, hats, and socks are displayed together next to one another?

They are mostly inexpensive items strategically placed there.

Since you've already decided to buy a pair of jeans, why not buy a pair of sneakers too?
No one can tell you that you shouldn’t buy something that really suits you, but remember that the arrangement of items in a store is not random.

Product placement seems to have been designed to give subtle suggestions to consumers while they shop.

**What Most People Do**

Why are you influenced by these marketing strategies?

What’s going on in your head?

Well, when your brain is loaded with too many decisions to make, it may go on "autopilot."

Instead of deliberating, you choose the easy way and make your decisions automatically.

For example, many people may simply assume that buying an item on sale will save them money, or that something with a higher price tag is better in quality.

Furthermore, if a cashier recommends something, you may feel as if you "needed" it all along.

**Notice What's Out There!**

If there are so many choices and marketing strategies out there, how can you become a smart consumer?

There isn’t a "right" answer for everyone because we have different tastes and different values, but the first step is to be aware of your "autopilot" mode.

To prevent this, ask yourself these questions before you make any purchase: Do I really need the product or do I simply want it?

Would my money be better spent on something else?
Lesson 6. Decide

In the jungle of information, you may feel overwhelmed.

Don't worry though: being a smart consumer is not something that comes naturally.

Once you start noticing what's out there, your experience and wisdom will guide you to smart consuming.