

Influence Of Gender On Buying Behaviour Towards Product Preference – An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behaviour is the study of when, why, how, and where Individual consumers do or do not buy a product. Male and Female consumers have different thinking and different buying preference while making a purchase decision due to their different upbringing and socialisations along with various factors such as social, biological and psychological. Both genders differ in their behaviour at every stages of buying starting from problem recognition through the evaluation of various alternatives to the post purchase behaviour. They are influenced by different stimuli and different parameters of evaluation. This article presents an attempt to understand these differences at various levels of purchase decision.

Key words: consumer behaviour, buying decision, gender differences.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the process applied by consumer to select, secure, use and dispose of products and services to satisfy their needs and wants is called consumer behaviour. It is important to study the behaviour of the consumer starting from acquiring the goods till disposing them after their consumption. Marketers and researchers are trying to explore the area of Consumer Behaviour for more than 50 years. Marketers must understand the behaviour of the customers to position their products and services in a better way. Consumer Behaviour is focused on the needs of individuals, groups and organizations.

Understanding Consumer Buying Behaviour implies understanding how a person interacts within the marketing mix. As determined by Cohen (1991), the marketing mix inputs are adapted and focused upon the consumer. The purchase decision of both male and female are influenced by their own culture, attitude, learning and perception in relation to product or brand.

Kotler (1984) mentioned that the characteristics that affect the purchasing behaviour are cultural, social, psychological and personal. The above characteristics help researchers to create a behavioural pattern of the buying procedure (Kotler, 1984). Exadaktilos (2008), based on Kotler's studies, created a three stage model, describing consumer behavior. The first stage consists of the marketing mix (product, price, position and promotion), in relation with the sociocultural, technological and economic consumers' stimuli. The second stage of the model is the "black box", which includes the characteristics of the buyers and the process

of the purchasing decision. The third stage consists of the customers' response to products and services provided. For example, the brands and retailer preference (Exadaktilos, 2008).

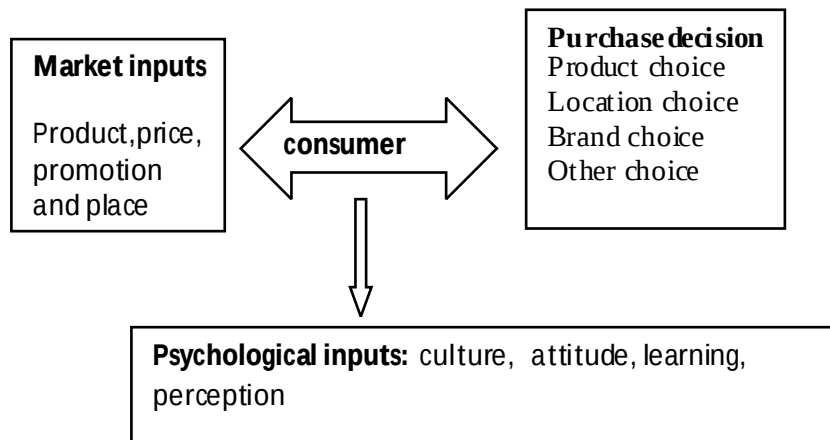


Figure:1 Influence of consumer behaviour

The behaviour of men and women depends on their culture, attitude and economic and social background.

CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION PROCESS:

The consumer's purchase decision process passes through the following five stages,

- a) **Activation** - The consumer understand that there's a need to be met.
- b) **Nomination** – Finding out various alternative to evaluate of various choices to evaluate.
- c) **Investigation and Decision** – Studying about various alternatives and evaluating the choices before actually buying.
- d) **Retention** -Consuming the product/service and deciding upon repeat purchases.
- e) **Recommendation** - Referring (or warning against) the product/service.

It is also a fact that all the decision processes does not lead to a purchase, and all the consumers does not undergo all the five stages before making a purchase decision. Post-purchase evaluation provides satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the terms of its outcome.

Types of Consumer buying behaviour are determined by the level of consumer involvement. Researchers acknowledge the existence of different types of involvement (Houston and Rothschild, undated; Lastovicka& Gardner, 1979; Mitchel, 1980; Rothschild , 1979). Usually five types of involvement are talked about.

- Ego involvement
- Commitment
- Communication involvement
- Purchase importance
- Response involvement

Taking two sides of consumer involvement as a basis, it has been noticed that some purchases require a lot of time and evaluation (high involvement purchases); whereas there are certain buying decisions which can be made without taking time and consulting others (low involvement buying). In this way, consumer buying behavior can be broadly divided into four categories,

ON THE BASIS OF THE EXTENT OF BUYER INVOLVEMENT

- **Complex Buying Behaviour:** when consumers are highly involved in the purchase and they are buying a product which is very risky, expensive and is purchased infrequently. In order to make a final decision, the consumer tries to learn more about the product and seeks information through various sources.
- **Dissonance Reducing Buying Behaviour:** Consumers undertake dissonance reducing buying behaviour when they are highly involved in a purchase and want to eliminate any possibilities of a wrong purchase decision. But finds insignificant differences in the brands. It means that the consumer can purchase the product from anywhere without considering the Brands.
- **Habitual Buying Behaviour:** Consumer involvement is very low and they perceive very few differences among the brands. Such types of buying behaviour usually happens when the consumer buy low cost but frequently purchased products such as bread, milk, salt etc.
- **Variety Seeking Buying Behaviour:** It occurs in a situation of low consumer involvement but significant brand differences. Customers try to use different brands of such products as they want to check different variety of products offered by the marketers. This is the reason that most of the consumers do a lot of brand switching is case of variety seeking buying behaviour. In addition to above classified buying behaviours, there are two or more classifications which are attracting the attention of market researches.
- **Impulse Buying Behaviour:** A buying situation where a buyer gets trapped is a propagated situation which is created by the marketers by offering excessive discounts and other offers to the consumers. Here the consumer makes the purchase with little or no planning. Such buying usually happens with low priced items.
- **Compulsive buying Behaviour:** it is a chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to the negative events or feelings. When buying becomes compulsive, the goal shifts from obtaining utility from the purchased items to achieving gratification from process itself. It is very undesirable because of its severe results and harmful consequences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper presents the review of literature in relation to the impact of gender differences on consumer buying behaviour. The first part discusses about gender difference, the second part of the study describe the difference between men and women in finding solution relating purchase decision. The final part of the study difference in buying decision process of both men and women.

GENDER DIFFERENCE

One of the major factors that influence consumer buying behaviour is gender. It means the social relationship or roles and responsibilities of men and women, the expectations held about their characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviour of both women and men that are learned change over time and vary within and between cultures.

As per Mitchell and Walsh (2004), males and females prefer different products due to the difference in their expectations, want, need, life-style etc.

Solomon et al (2010) believe that, products are sex-typed or androgynous. Sex-typed defines a product that takes on masculine or feminine characteristics. For example Hotwheels for boys and Barbies for girls.

As per the socialization of men and women, women are perceived to be internally focused and often talk as a way to connect and relate to others, whereas men are perceived to be externally focused and often view situations as issues to be resolved. They talk to inform others. This perception though is generalized and may have lot of exceptions but exceptions do not invalidate generalizations.

Women are considered as being warm, expressive, compassionate, and understanding (Broverman et al, 1972; Martin, 1987; Ruble, 1983; Williams& Best, 1990). People feel more positive toward women than men and also, prefer to like women to men. (Eagly&MLadinic, 1989)

This fashionable paradigm of the differences between men and women are passively accepted by marketing practitioners around the world. Obvious sex differences exist not just because of genetic reasons, but are quite due to cultural variations (Teather 1995).

Every marketer today has realized this fact and hence gender has become one of the major factors and basis of segmenting a market and targeting the customers.

According to Belch and Willis (2002) purchasing decisions related to household items such as automobiles, televisions, and financial planning are moving from being primarily male dominated to joint decisions. This may be due to the rising education level and increasing in the number of working women. Studies show that household decision-making areas that were once dominated by one gender were also becoming more influenced by the opposite gender.

PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACHES OF MEN AND WOMEN

Problem solving approaches of both the gender are different because they approach the problem with similar goals with different consideration. Women share and discuss the problem with others and they are more concerned with how problems are solved than merely solving the problem itself. But men approach problems as an opportunity to demonstrate their competence, their strength of resolve, and their commitment to a relationship. They are concerned with how to solve the problem effectively and in the best possible manner. They have a tendency to dominate and to assume authority in a problem solving process.

GENDER DIFFERENCE AND PURCHASE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The consumer behavior influences in 3 aspects, they are acquiring, using and disposing. The acquiring means that how the consumer spends money on the products, such as leasing, trading and borrowing. Using means some of the consumers use the high price products and some of the consumer sees the quality. Disposing is nothing but distribution, order or places a particular product (Hoyer, Deborah, 2001).

By understanding consumer behavior deeply, different authors have given different information about the consumer behavior, how consumer buys the products, it involves four steps they are: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase behavior, the marketer can pick up many clues as and how to meet the buyer need and develop an effective program to support an attractive offer to the target market (Kanuk, 1990).

Another area of knowledge that has been used to a better understanding of consumer behaviour is the physio-psychological one. Physiological psychology is the study of the interaction of the body with the mind. It is the study of the extent to which behaviour is caused by physical and chemical phenomena in the body (Morris 1996). Kroeber-Riel (1980) pointed out that cognitive and psychological processes originate from physiological ones. This field holds many promises for explaining consumer behaviour. For instance, the hypothalamus is that center of the brain which mainly controls consumption (Zimbardo and Gerrig 1996). The chemical changes due to the use/eat of the first product results in a blood borne input to the brain to activate further consumption. Thus, the individual would order one more product to use/eat. Such a behaviour is explained based on the research findings on the functions of the hypothalamus and other related areas of the brain (Valenstein, et al., 1970;

Zhang et al. 1994). Physio-psychology provides fascinating ways to help understand consumer behaviour without looking into the consumer's "black box" for hypothetically based variable explanations

To explain consumer behaviour further, new frontiers in science were introduced such as genetics and anthropology (Demirdjian, and Senguder, 2004). According to genetics approach our genes direct our consumption behaviour. Perhaps humans are all programmed to act in certain ways in their consumptive and consumer-related behaviour. Is the presence of certain genes that compel us to consume certain kind of products. Genetic science may very well come up with definite findings to explain consumer behaviour and thus we may strike a vein of truth in finding explanations and laws of consumer behaviour (Feder, 1977). Business anthropology and its implementation in consumer behaviour studies have demonstrated to the business world that anthropological approach as new perspective will bring a new era for the consumer science. The applied anthropologists will become the hottest candidates for business related research jobs given the fact that anthropological methods are becoming more widely acceptable in the business world in general and in consumer studies particular (Demirdjian and Senguder, 2004).

Most of the products made these days have a specific gender type, some have masculine features and some have feminine features to them. Products' gender are created and sustained by marketers for example; princess phones, Barbie dolls. Research suggests that shopping is a more exciting activity for women with respect to men. Female consumers feel more independent when they do shopping in accordance with men. Another point that men and women present differentiation is women consider shopping is a social need whereas male consumers pay importance to main function of a product instead of secondary function.

Gender has an important role in consumer behaviour. Because, the differences between men and women about expectation, want, need, life-style etc. reflect to their consumption behaviour (Akturan, 2009:66).

As per a research by Davis and Rigaux (1974) wives were found to be dominant during the problem recognition and information search stage for "traditional" female products like home furnishing, appliances, cereals etc. whereas husbands were found to be more dominant in the information search stage for male dominated products like automobiles, television sets, razors, etc. Gender has been identified as a factor influencing information search and other meaningful consumer behaviour constructs (Putrevu 2001). Men and women consumers evaluate messages in advertisements differently.

The selectivity model by Joan Meyers-Levy suggests that men and women should exhibit different searching patterns. Men will tend to go to the most salient cue while women will tend to comprehend all information available. Haas 1979, Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran 1991), females are more subjective, intuitive, comprehensive, and relational processing while men are more logical, analytical, selective and item-specific processing. Males' selectivity and item-specificity predict that they may search less comprehensively than females and focus on certain information sources and topics. When it comes to decision making, women

use other people's opinions to help make their own decision while men use other people's decisions to help them form their own opinion.

According to the French study with more than 700 adults (Helga, Karen, & Rosie, 2004) women are much stronger buying involvement than did men, particularly in terms of emotional involvement whereas men were high on quality and efficiency. Block and Morwitz (1999, pp. 361-2) found that the probability that a purchased product was on a planned list was higher for females than for males. Women listed more object of sentimental values, while men chose more items relating to leisure and finances.

One specific aspect of gender difference in purchase decision is the factor of time. Men tend to make their purchasing decisions based on immediate needs and how well the product or service will satisfy needs now and into the immediate future. Long-term considerations seem to play little part for men. For women, however, this trend is almost reversed. Frequently the long-term considerations, and whether the purchase can be used again and again over time, may even be a stronger factor in the woman's purchasing decision than instant satisfaction.

When it comes to actually making the decision, women generally make purchase decisions on a more emotive level, whereas men go more with the facts and data. In a study titled, "Men Buy, Women Shop," researchers at Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retail Initiative and the Verde Group, found that women react more strongly than men to personal interaction with sales associates. Men are more likely to respond to more utilitarian aspects of the experience - such as the availability of parking, whether the item they came for is in stock, and the length of the checkout line. Additionally, previous researches have shown that though gender plays a vital role there is differential gender roles across products. Davis and Rigaux (1997) did research on the study of family decision-making roles. They identified that there are three phases of decisionmaking, such as problem recognition; search for information; and final decision. They found that the roles and relative influence of husbands and wives differed based on decision-making stage and product type (Wilkes, 1997; Moore-Shay and Wilkie, 1998; Yavas et al., 1998). Further, Belch and Willis (2002) found that purchasing decisions related to household items such as automobiles, televisions, and financial planning are moving from being primarily male dominated to joint decisions. This may be due to the rising education level and increasing in the number of working women. Studies show that household decision-making areas that were once dominated by one gender were also becoming more influenced by the opposite gender. like, a research by Zinn found that of 80 percent of men purchased 25 percent of household groceries, while women were taking a larger part in the purchase of insurance, automobiles, and financial services. As far as Post purchase behaviour goes a research done on men and women shopping behaviour suggests that men take less time if they want to return anything. On an average a man usually takes about 21 days to return an item if the need be and in contrast to this, a woman takes an average of a month to return the item she had purchased. Research suggests that not only do

females wait longer to return a purchase; almost half of the items bought get returned or replaced by the women.

FINDINGS

After the through literature review, it has been noted that gender is not only a biological concept as being a male or female, but beyond. Looking at gender with different dimensions, gender is not only a market segmentation variable, it is a variable that has a strong impact on the decisions. Marketers need to understand gender based tendencies in order to better satisfy the customers. Huge differences lie in the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of men and women due to psychological and physiological differences. Both male and female consumers depict completely different behaviours as far as purchasing various goods and services are concerned. Where men are more externally focused women tend to be internally focused people who tend to talk in order to connect with others unlike men who talk to others more often than not in order to inform. Men tend to gather information through heuristic men as and gather salient cues in comparison to women who believe in depth information search. Where women are more subjective and intuitive men tend to be more analytical and logical who make their opinion based on other peoples purchase rather than trying it themselves. Men tend to value quality and efficiency the most while women value emotional connect and relations. Further, where men tend to make purchases based on the immediate needs women look at purchase as a long term decision.

Based on the above findings we can depict the differences in men and women in form of a pictorial model as under

Basis	Men	Women
Problem recognition	Completion of product and immediate need	Dissatisfaction from existing long term consideration
Information search	Heuristic search	In depth and elaborate search
Evaluation of alternatives	Focus on product quality, easy availability, efficiency,	Based on low price, sales person, opinion, elaborative.
Purchase decision	Influenced by fact and data availability, accessibility	Influenced by emotions, return policy and person
Post purchase	Moderate Dissonance	High dissonance
Perception	Men don't wait for best deals	Feel pride and satisfied with best deal
Shopping experience	Less time ,buy and leave	Love shopping and spend time

Fig.2. Gender Difference in Consumer Behaviour

Thus, we clearly see that every stage of consumer purchase decision, the behaviour depicted by men and women is completely opposite and in order to gain competitive advantage marketers have to look and capture this difference in the best possible manner.

CONCLUSION

We can draw inferences from the above discussion that gender is a very important factor among all the factors; it plays a very crucial role in purchase decisions. Women are more internally focused whereas men ought to be externally focused. Gender shapes different characteristics of female and male shopper. It has been suggested that male and female consumers demonstrate considerably different approaches in their decisionmaking and purchasing behaviour when shopping.

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