

# Consumer Behavior with Special Reference to Women and Young Consumers



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### Abstract

In the study of Marketing Management, the “Consumers” or the “Customers” play a very critical role as these are the people who finally buy the goods & services of the organization. The firms are always on the move to make them buy so as to earn revenue and remain in the market in this era of cut throat competition. The study of consumer behavior is very important to the marketers because it enables them to understand and predict buying behavior of consumers in the market place. It is concerned not only with what consumers buy, but also with why they buy it, when and where and how they buy it, and how often they buy it, and also how they consume the product and dispose it off. Customers today are in a tough spot. Today, in the highly developed & technologically advanced society, the customers have a great deal of choices & options to decide on. Consumer behaviour has become an integral part of market planning that calls on marketers to fulfill the needs of their target markets in ways that improve society as a whole. The present study is an attempt to analyze the consumer behaviour and finding out the factors that influence the consumer decision making process with special reference to Indian youth and women.

**Keywords:** Users, Buyers, Satisfaction, Loyalty, Marketing, Purchase Decision, Behaviour.

### Introduction

#### Consumer Behaviour

As soon as one becomes serious about consumer orientations one understands that he does not have a market, but number of market segments, each with its own set of needs. As a result, one learns that one does not have a market plan, but separate marketing plans for the various segments to understand the consumer, it is necessary to study the behaviour exhibited by individuals in their role as a consumer. The behavioral sciences that have made significant contributions to the study of consumer behaviour are economics, sociology, psychology and to some extent political science and cultural anthropology. Of these economics has been most directly concerned with consumer behaviour per-se, while political science and cultural anthropology require considerable interpretation by the student of consumer behaviour. Sociology might be said to be concerned with the individuals themselves and social psychology and political science deals with the behaviour of individuals within groups or within group settings.

The term consumer behaviour is defined as the behavior that consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. Consumer behaviour focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption related items. This includes what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, from where they buy it, how often they buy it, how often they use it, how they evaluate it after the purchase, the impact of such evaluation on their future behaviour, and how they dispose it off.

In other words, consumer behavior can be defined as the behaviour of individuals with regard to acquiring, using, and disposing off products, services, ideas or experiences. Consumer behaviour also includes the acquisition and use of information. Thus, communication with consumers and receiving feedback from them is a crucial part of consumer behaviour which is of great interest to marketers.

**Types of Consumers**

The term consumer behavior describes two different kinds of consuming entities: the personal consumer and the organizational consumer.

The personal consumer buys goods and services for his or her own use, for the use of the household, or as a gift for a friend. In each of these contexts, the products are bought for final use by individuals, who are referred to as end users or ultimate consumers.

The organizational consumer includes profit and not-for-profit businesses, government agencies (local, state, and federal), and institutions (such as schools, hospitals, and prisons), all of which buy products, equipment, and services in order to run their organizations.

**Why Study Consumer Behaviour**

The understanding of the reason why we study consumer behaviour cannot be under emphasized. Study of consumer behaviour is important because of the following reasons:

Firstly, Consumer behaviour is significant in our daily lives. The most important reason for studying consumer behaviour from a general sense is the role it plays in our lives. Much of our time is spent directly in the market place and shopping amongst others.

Secondly, consumer behaviour is indispensable in decision making. Consumers are often studied because certain decisions are significantly affected by their behaviour or expected actions.

**Consumer Behavior in the Present Perspective**

It is very important that the knowledge of "what makes the consumer think" and what consequently would contribute to his satisfaction, is at the disposal of marketers. The fast changing business environment has provided many inputs in terms of both the product packages and emotional images built into them, that influence buyers' behaviour and keeps consumer preferences in a constant state of flux. The information revolution and intensifying competition places a large amount of solicited information at the consumers' disposal before buying the product. In the marketing context, the term consumer behaviour refers not only to the act of purchase itself but also includes any pre-purchase and post-purchase activities, which are of the interest to the marketing manager. Pre-purchase activities might consist of growing awareness of a need or want, and the search for the evaluation of information about the product and brand that might satisfy it. The post purchase activities include the evaluation of information about the purchase, brand in use and the reduction of any anxiety which accompanies the purchase of expensive and infrequently bought items like consumer durables.

Engel, Kallat and Black have defined consumer behaviour as "the act of individual directly involved in obtaining and using economic goods and services, including the decision process that precede and determines that acts." They add further that though the word behaviour is used to include only the overt or observable actions it is increasingly being recognized that the overt purchasing act is only one portion of the decision process. It involves the study not only of what people consume but also when, how

often and under what condition goods and services are consumed.

**Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour**

Consumer has been termed as "Black box", a mysterious one that can never be looked into and we can only broadly understand the behaviour of consumer by grasping the outputs that come out as a result of many marketing stimuli along with the influence of certain exogenous variables. These variables can be classified as individual, social, cultural and economic. To explore further insight into the process of consumer behaviour, it is necessary to analyze the factors influencing it. To have better understanding of the consumer behaviour, it is necessary to consider such influencing factors as a whole, rather than separate parts. The rationale behind this approach is that individual, group and cultural influences represent psychology, sociology and anthropology disciplines which together form a composite form of behavioral science. Generally, consumer behaviour is affected by a host of variables ranging from personal, motivational, needs, attitudes, values, personality characteristics, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, age, and sex, professional status to social influences of various kinds exerted by family, friends, colleagues and society as a whole. The combination of these various factors produce a different impact on each one of us as is manifested in our different behaviours as consumers. Some of the characteristics affecting consumer behaviour are as follows:

**Perceived Needs**

One area that impacts consumer behavior in the decision to purchase an item or not is related to the individual's personal needs and perceived needs. For example, during winter months many people tend to stockpile goods for fear that bad weather will keep them homebound for periods of time.

**Psychological Factors**

Consumers purchase goods and services not only from necessity, but also out of desire and psychological need. The desire to have what others have is a psychological factor that dictates how, when and where shoppers purchase items. This is illustrated by data showing how people purchase items they consider trendy, in-style or hot products to own, even though they may never have considered owning the product prior to seeing media coverage or hearing about friends and associates owning these items.

**Social Standing and Appearances**

Along with psychological factors, social standing and appearance play a role in consumer behavior patterns. For example, among teenagers, wearing certain brand name items is a social standing factor that is equated to being part of the popular crowd. Adults also have a tendency to purchase items that are similar to, or of better quality than, those of their peers.

**Past Behavior**

Past personal behavior, such as being an impulse buyer or a heavy shopper during the holiday season, also helps determine how much and what a person will purchase. For example, parents who routinely purchase all items noted on a child's gift wish list every year will have a greater tendency to

shop in the same manner every year. One additional example involves back-to-school shopping, where consumers purchase clothing for children in large quantities for both fall and winter weather. Shoppers with such distinct characteristics in spending patterns will most likely continue shopping every year in the same manner.

#### **Behavioural Pattern of Women Consumer**

Values of women depend upon her background, her education and her lifestyle. In a male dominated society certain goods and services are decided or actually purchased largely by women. These are mainly food items, jewellery, kitchen appliances and general household needs. Now marketers have been segmenting women customers and targeting them for many of the products and services. Martha Barlette who is the CEO of Trendsight Group, a marketing consultancy firm, suggests in her study, "Marketing to Women", that compared to the men it is ideal to target the women as it helps to enhance the returns due to the loyalty and referral power of women in the long run. Further she opines that the natural behaviour of the women to talk and share experiences adds fill up to the marketing process by the multiplier effect of word of mouth.

Women from middle and richer class have the least decision-making power, which suggests involving them in education and decent employment to lessen their dependency on the family members and husband/partner. In the household, husband-wife relations are central to women's autonomy in decision making, and improved communication between them can deserve sustained support. Women are excluded from decision-making by more than just lack of education. Employment and education have always empowered women and brought a positive impact on decision making, including reducing the inequalities among men and women. Women's employment shows a significant relationship with all four outcome measures. Women who work for cash are more likely to participate in health care decision making, making major household purchases, daily household purchases and visits to her family or friends than those who are not employed and those who do not work for cash. Women's increased number of living children has a strong positive association with all the outcome measures in decision making. Women's residence has also a strong association with all four outcome measures in decision making. Many factors affect the ability of women to take part in the decision-making process in the household. Some of these factors relate to the type of decision that is taken and some to the background of the women. In the household, husband-wife relations are central to women's autonomy in decision making, and improved communication between them can deserve sustained support. Women are excluded from decision-making by more than just lack of education. Employment and education have always empowered women and brought a positive impact on decision making, including reducing the inequalities among men and women. One effective method to do so is to incorporate the notion of empowerment in school curricula. Attention should also be given to those

women who do not attend school, through non-formal education

#### **Youth as a Potential Consumer**

The youth is becoming consumer at younger and younger ages, and a variety of influences and experiences shape their consumer habits. Marketers across the world and in India are targeting the youth for marketing of their products. Youngsters represent an important demographic to marketers because they have their own purchasing power, they influence their parents' buying decisions and they're the adult consumers of the future. Parents today are willing to buy more for their kids because trends such as smaller family size, dual incomes and postponing children until later in life mean that families have more disposable income. As well, guilt can play a role in spending decisions as time-stressed parents substitute material goods for time spent with their kids. Commercialism acts as the vehicle of communication that creates consumer awareness and induces the desire for specific products; its goal is to increase consumer demand and commercial profit.<sup>1</sup> Commercial pressures on teenage youth may encourage continual consumption and acquisition at the expense of informed consumer decision making and environmental sensitivity<sup>2</sup>

Today's youth have more autonomy and power in decision-making within the family and are vocal about what they want their parents to buy. "Pester power" refers to children's ability to nag their parents into purchasing items they may not otherwise buy. Marketing to youth is all about creating pester power, because advertisers know what a powerful force it can be.

Recent studies have shown that the influence youngsters exert on the purchasing decisions in

Households is extensive and on the increase. Some of the factors cited are as follows:

1. Parents are having fewer children and thus spending more on each child;
2. Parents are having children later, at a time when they are beyond the struggle phase in their career;
3. Young professionals purchase presents for children to compensate for the lack of time they are able to spend with them;

#### **Conclusion**

"Behaviour is a mirror in which everyone displays his own image." Going by the current scenario the economic future will be very different from the one we see today; it would be significantly wealthier.

The economic centre of gravity would shift to Asia which today accounts for 21% of the global activity. Three giant economies China, India and Japan would lead Asia's resurgence. The youth is much committed today. They are much more open to jumps between different choices and styles. Youth are practicing more and more selective exposure and perceptual defense. Youth does not end the purchase process after they acquire the product but they voice their opinion online through various forums. They are selectively exposing themselves to advertisements that reassure them of the wisdom of their purchase decision and pamper their maturity.

The long term brand loyalty is the story of the past. The family and parents are becoming more dependent on the younger members of the family to take the purchase decision if the product is related to lifestyle and fashion. As far as the woman consumer is concerned, she has much greater financial power. She has a greater discretionary income and utilizes it to satisfy her wants. Hence it is high time for marketers and manufacturers to realize that woman is a lucrative customer and they should start developing concepts to create products that are women centric. The marketing concept was born out of awareness that marketing starts with the determination of consumer wants and ends with the satisfaction of those wants. The concept puts the consumer both in the beginning and at the end of the business cycle. It proclaims that the entire business has to be seen from the point of view of the consumer. The company has to think consumer and act consumer. Thus the study of consumer has become imperative to any marketer. To understand the consumer and to create a customer through this understanding is the main purpose of consumer behaviour studies. However it is not easy to solve the puzzle of consumer behaviour. The behaviour depends upon the buyer's needs which keep on changing. A marketer treads to different grounds when tries to uncover the complex set of needs of his customers-existing and prospective. But in spite of these difficulties the job continues to be undertaken by the marketers, researchers and behavioral scientists.

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