

IMPACT OF GENDER ON CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Men and women due to their different upbringing and socialization along with various other social, biological and psychological factors depict different types of behaviour at various situations. Whether it is decision making in personal life or professional life, whether it is about shopping or eating, both the genders are completely different at every stage of decision making. Right from need recognition through the evaluation of alternatives to the post purchase behaviour, men and women work differently with different types of stimuli and different parameters of evaluations. Women seem to have satisfaction and find pleasure while they shop whereas men appear to be more disdain towards shopping. In this paper an attempt is made to study these differences at various levels of purchase decision.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, gender difference, buying decision, shopping behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behavior is the study of when, why, how, and where people do or do not buy a product. It attempts to understand the buyer decision making process and studies characteristics of individual consumers as well as groups in an attempt to understand people's wants and needs.

Consumer behaviour research is the scientific study of the processes consumers use to select, secure, use and dispose of products and services that satisfy their needs. Knowledge of consumer behaviour directly affects marketing strategy (Anderson et al, 2005).

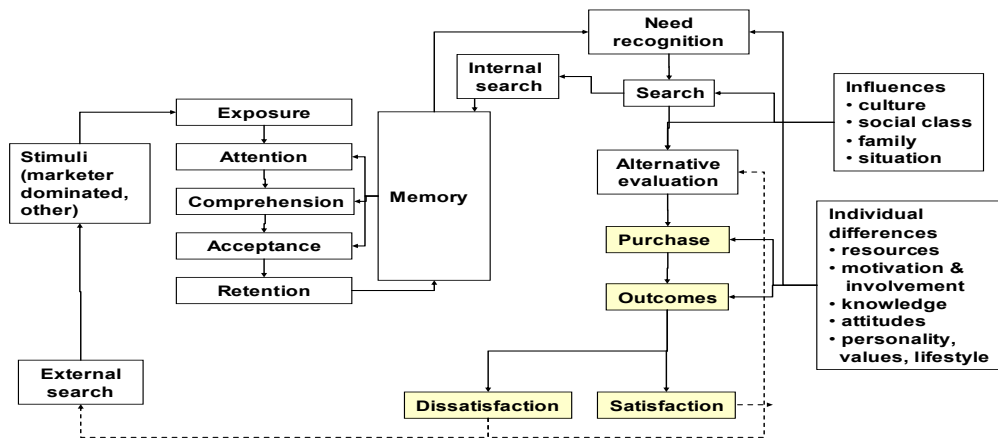


Fig. 1. Consumer Behaviour Process

Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

There are various factors that influence the way people behave in a particular situation. Consumers vary tremendously in age, income, education, tastes, and other factors. The behaviour of consumer while engaging in a purchase decision is influenced by these characteristics.

Consumer characteristics include four major factors and these factors are majorly responsible for the different types of behaviors depicted by the consumers. Though it does not mean that people of same, age or gender or social background are similar, because there is a lot of influence of the psychological factors that vary from individual to individual.

Following factors can influence the Buying decision of the buyer:

- Cultural: Culture is the fundamental determinant of a person’s wants and behaviors acquired through socialization processes with family and other key institutions.
- Social : Consumer Behaviour is also influenced by social factors like reference Groups, family, social Role and status
- Personal: A buyer’s decisions are majorly influenced by personal characteristics like gender, age, stage in lifecycle, occupation, income, and lifestyle.
- Psychological: Psychological factors like motivation, perception, beliefs & attitudes of consumers also have a deep impact on the buyer decision.

Process of Purchase Decision

Understanding consumers’ purchase decision-making process allows marketers to gain more knowledge about their consumers. Moreover, it can be a foundation for them to create more suitable marketing strategies for their target consumers. If marketers understand this process

of their consumers, they will know how their consumers search for information before buying, which criteria can encourage them to buy, and what factors influence their purchase decision-making. (Solomon et al., 2010)

In many consumer behaviour studies, the classic view of consumer behaviour principle is the five stage of decision-making model, which is based on the idea that considers consumers as an information-processing machine. The classical five stages of consumer decision-making process are (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) alternatives evaluation, (4) product choice, and (5) post-purchase evaluation. (Solomon et al., 2010)

Problem Recognition

Problem recognition is the first stage of consumer decision-making process. It happens when consumer realizes that there are some differences between their actual state and ideal or desired state.

Information Search

Information search is the stage when consumers are searching for more knowledge in order to solve the recognized problem. To help themselves to make a decision, consumers will look for information from their environment. (Solomon et al., 2010) Information search process can be classified into two types. Firstly, the pre-purchase search process is the process when consumers seek for the information to satisfy their needs or solve their problems, which begin after consumers realize their needs or problems. Secondly, an ongoing search is the process when consumers browse the information for their pleasure and to keep them up-to-date with new products or current situations of the products' market. (Bloch et al., 1986)

Alternative Evaluation

In this stage, consumers have to evaluate their available alternatives that they have received from the previous stage, information search. (Solomon et al., 2010) Since there are a great number of brands in the marketplace, consumers will create their own evoke set which consists of brands which are already in their minds. (Jobber, 2007) The brands that are included in the consumers' evoke sets will have more opportunities to be selected by the consumers.

Product Choice

Consumers have to choose one brand among after evaluating their brand choices from the previous stage. Choosing product choice can be either a simply and quick or a complex stage. (Solomon et al., 2010) Consumers' product choices can be affected by various source of information during the process of decision-making.

Post Purchase behaviour and disposal

Even though the buying decision has finished, consumers often still evaluate their decisions. This is because they want to feel confident about their choices and to ensure that the product can solve their problems or satisfy their needs. Jobber (2007) stated in his study that the quality of product and service is a main determinant in post-purchase evaluation.

Gender Difference

Out of all the factors that influence customers decision making behaviour, one of the major factor is the gender. It refers to the social relationship/ roles and responsibilities of men and women, the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men (femininity and masculinity) that are learned change over time and vary within and between cultures.

According to Mitchell and Walsh (2004), males and females want different products and they are likely to have different ways of liking and obtaining these. Gender has an important role in consumer behaviours. Because, the differences between men and women about expectation, want, need, life-style etc. reflect to their consumption behaviours (Akturan, 2009:66).

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

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. For example, there are many women who are taller than the average man, and there are many men who are shorter than the average woman. But the generalization "Men are on average taller than women" is still valid. Similarly, not all men have a strong male brain, and not all women have a strong female brain, but there are average differences between men and women, and men are far more likely to have the male brain and women are far more likely to have the female brain.

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 often 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.

Differences in problem solving between men and women

Men and women approach problems with similar goals but with different considerations. While men and women can solve problems equally well, their approach and their process are often quit different. For most women, sharing and discussing a problem presents an opportunity to explore, deepen or strengthen the relationship with the person they are talking with. Women are usually more concerned about how problems are solved than merely solving the problem itself. Most men on the other hand are less concerned and do not feel the

same as women when solving a problem. Men approach problems in a very different manner than women. For most men, solving a problem presents an opportunity to demonstrate their competence, their strength of resolve, and their commitment to a relationship. How the problem is solved is not nearly as important as solving it effectively and in the best possible manner. Men have a tendency to dominate and to assume authority in a problem solving process.

Gender difference and Purchase decision-making process

According to “Girrrl power and boyyy nature: the past, present, and paradisal future of consumer gender identity” by (Kacen, 2000), consumption has always been gendered.

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.

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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 behavior 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 objects of sentimental value, 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 decision-making viz 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.

CONCLUSION

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 behavioral aspects of men and women due to psychological and physiological differences. Both male and female consumers depict completely different behaviors 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 conclusion we can depict the differences in men and women in form of a pictorial model as under:

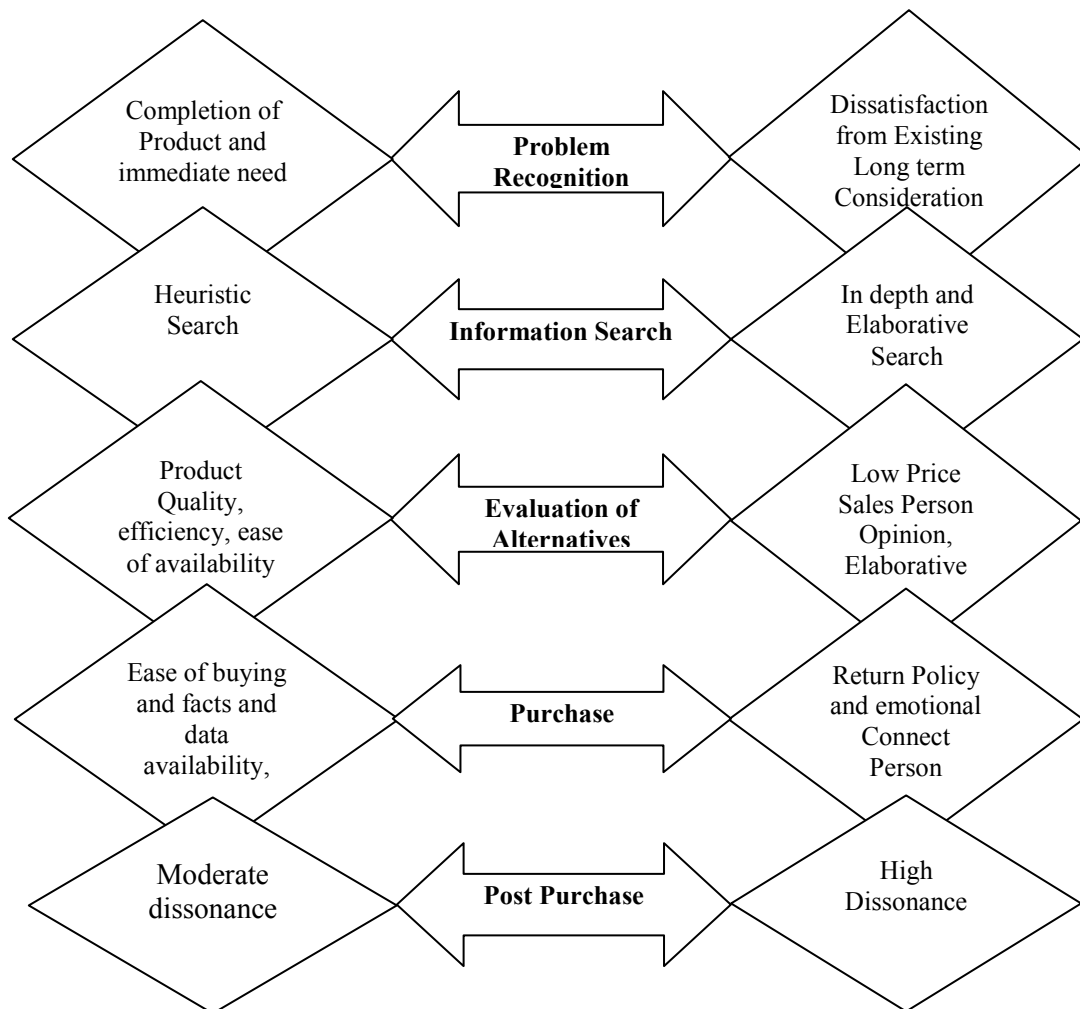


Fig. 2. Gender Difference in Consumer Behaviour

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.

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