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**ANALYSIS & DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE CONSUMER BUYING DECISION PROCESS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Consumer is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. In the marketing context, the term 'consumer' refers not only to the act of purchase itself, but also to patterns of aggregate buying which include pre-purchase and post-purchase activities. Engel, et al. (2006) define consumer behaviour as "those acts of individuals directly involved in obtaining, using, and disposing of economic goods and services, including the decision processes that precede and determine these acts". Simple observation provides limited insight into the complex nature of consumer choice and researchers have increasingly sought the more sophisticated concepts and methods of investigation provided by behavioural sciences in order to understand, predict, and possibly control consumer behaviour more effectively.

**Key words :** Consumer, effectively

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**INTRODUCTION**

Consumers, in general, are influenced by characteristics of the situation, circumstances surrounding their shopping trip. Major situational influences include the physical surroundings, social surroundings, time, task, monetary conditions, and momentary moods. The physical surroundings that influence buying behaviour are observable features that include location of the store, merchandise display, store interior/exterior design, and noise level of the store. The social surroundings of a situation are other people, their characteristics and roles, and the way they interact. The moods and condition as well as the time, task, and monetary condition of a consumer at the time of purchase influence their buying decision. Although useful in explaining planned purchase situations, Churchill's and Peter's model does not lend itself to explaining the process of impulse buying. In this process, consumers are influenced by internal states and external factors that trigger their impulse purchase behaviour. Since impulse buyers do not set out with a specific goal to buy a certain product or visit a certain store, while browsing and being exposed to the stimuli, impulse buyers feel the desire for the products by being aware of the products, and this desire can be created by internal statement/mood or/and external stimuli. The awareness of the products, which can satisfy the desire, can be achieved by attractive visual presentation of merchandise that provides information regarding new products, fashion trends, or coordination tips. Efficacy, manifestation, financial worth and the ability to convey status, success and prestige are other aspects to finalize the product and brand purchase. It can be satisfied through the purchase of high profile branded & high priced apparel. Pricing of a brand also matters as, high priced apparel is a product that has a high potential for symbolic meaning. However, attitudes are evolving as advertising helps in improving living standards foster greater brand consciousness and fidelity. There is no shortage of opportunities for companies that take the time to understand this complex game in the market.

There are numerous studies on the links between consumer's personality traits and their perceptions for over 40 years. Gender issue also an upgrading aspect of such kind of research recently, as males and females are having their own perceptions and attitudes towards each aspect of life and is inadequately research area. Branding was introduced to differentiate homogenous products such as clothing. Brand

names or branding create trust, identify products and services, and are more of a psychological assurance than a tangible item. It builds an image of the product which is a sort of message devoted to potential customer. Consumers seem to be associated with a products, promises and brands through their own perception about their needs, aspiration and self. Hence, a marketer has to correctly read the buyer's perceptions to a particular response (ICMR, 2003). Every person has his/her separate standards of judgments which reflect in decisions. This study has considered the personal factors, like age, income, education, occupation, lifestyle, personality and self concept, influencing the buying decision of consumers with respect of gender discrimination.

## **Stages of the Consumer Buying Process:-**

Six Stages to the Consumer Buying Decision Process (For complex decisions). Actual purchasing is only one stage of the process. Not all decision processes lead to a purchase. All consumer decisions do not always include all 6 stages, determined by the degree of complexity.

**Problem Recognition:** Awareness of need difference between the desired state and the actual condition. Deficit in assortment of products. Hunger--Food. Hunger stimulates your need to eat. Can be stimulated by the marketer through product information--did not know you were deficient? I.E., see a commercial for a new pair of shoes, stimulates your recognition that you need a new pair of shoes.

**Information Search:** Internal search, memory. External search if you need more information. Friends and relatives (word of mouth). Marketer dominated sources; comparison shopping; public sources etc. A successful information search leaves a buyer with possible alternatives, the evoked set.

**Evaluation of Alternatives:** need to establish criteria for evaluation, features the buyer wants or does not want. Rank/weight alternatives or resume search. May decide that you want to eat something spicy, Indian gets highest rank etc. If not satisfied with your choice then returns to the search phase. Can you think of another restaurant? Look in the yellow pages etc. Information from different sources may be treated differently. Marketers try to influence by "framing" alternatives.

**Purchase Decision:** Choose buying alternative, includes product, package, store, method of purchase etc.

**Purchase:** May differ from decision, time lapse between 4 & 5, product availability.

## **Post-Purchase Evaluation**

**Outcome:** Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction. Cognitive Dissonance, have you made the right decision. This can be reduced by warranties, after sales communication etc. Consumer behaviour reflects the totality of consumer's decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods, services, activities and ideas by human decision making units. (Hoyer, Macinnis and Pinaki Das Gupta, 2008). Consumer behaviour means more than just how a person buys tangible products such as bath soap, digital music players and automobiles. It also includes consumer's use of services, activities and ideas such as going to the doctor, visiting a theme park, etc

The paper of consumers helps firms and organizations improve their marketing strategies by understanding issues such as how The psychology of how consumers think, feel, reason, and select between different alternatives (e.g., brands, products, and retailers); The psychology of how the consumer is influenced by his or her environment (e.g., culture, family, signs, media); The behaviour of consumers while shopping or making other marketing decisions; Limitations in consumer knowledge or information processing abilities influence decisions and marketing outcome; How

consumer motivation and decision strategies differ between products that differ in their level of importance or interest that they entail for the consumer; and How marketers can adapt and improve their marketing campaigns and marketing strategies to more effectively reach the consumer.

### **Consumer Preference**

The study of consumer preference constitutes an interesting issue in marketing. It has been evident that satisfaction and dissatisfaction judgment play a vital role in brand loyalty. India is one of the fastest growing economies with second largest population in the world. So, it's a greater opportunity for every industry in India to exploit this opportunity. Consumer preferences are the subjective tastes, as measured by utility of various bundles of goods. They permit the consumer to rank these bundles of goods according to the levels of utility they give the consumer. The individual consumer has their own set of preferences and determination of these is based upon culture, education, and individual tastes, among a plethora of other factors. Difference in customer's preference, their cognitive structures and their motives cause them to behave differently when buying. Although an individual doesn't act the same way in all situations, people tend to act consistently?

Consumer preferences are defined as the subjective (individual) tastes, as measured by utility, of various bundles of goods. They permit the consumer to rank these bundles of goods according to the levels of utility they give the consumer. Note that preferences are independent of income and prices. Ability to purchase goods does not determine a consumer's likes or dislikes. Consumer preference for a product can make or break a company. If consumers generally like a product, it can stay around for years and sell millions of copies. However, if consumers do not like the product, it could disappear very quickly if the company cannot figure out how to fix the problem.

Consumers are evolving entities. Their aspirations & expectations are continuously changing. Today's shoppers are more intelligent, discerning & tuned to their individual preference. They are increasingly fashion and brand conscious and select labels which define who they are or who they want to be. The biggest challenge for all the brands is to create loyal consumer who love them." India represents an economic opportunity on a massive scale, both as a global base and as a domestic market. Indian consumer markets are changing fast, with rapid growth in disposable incomes, the development of modern urban lifestyles, and the emergence of the kind of trend-conscious consumers that India has not seen in the past. Apparel and fashion industry in India is in its growth stage. Using consumer sales promotion to differentiate one's offer has become an order of the day in matured urban markets. More and more budget is allocated to these activities in order to lure the consumers. In such a scenario, it is very essential to study how consumers make their choices in Apparel & Fashion category where there are several brands in the consideration set of a consumer. The financial risk being high consumers do switch from one brand to another due to sales promotion offers and personal comfort zone. Hence, it would be of interest to a marketer to learn about the consumer preferences with respect to sales promotion offer; what schemes do consumers prefer for what kind of brands, which media do they prefer to know about the brand, product, and related schemes, who prefers the branded apparel and fashion products, the price range of the fashion products. These are the questions which consumers consider while choosing a brand. Similarly even a manager has to consider while introducing a product or brand. Brands build customer loyalty by delivering excellent value no matter the price point-high, low, or medium. Value includes styling, durability, quality fabrics, and consistent fit. To the consumer, a brand name represents familiarity, consistency, and confidence in performance.

Recently, a marketing strategy is changing to one-to-one marketing era from mass marketing era. Many retail stores are collecting preferences of customers from buying histories using a system of

customer relationship management (CRM), such as POS (Point of Sales) or reward card. However, in customer preference, there is a preference not to be saved in purchase log data. As an example of the preferences, there is a window-shopping. Consumers look or touch a product when they have interest in the product. Their behaviors show their preferences but it does not appear in a buying history of the store. Therefore, in order to grasp their preference concerning products, we should assemble not only the preferences like a purchase log but also the preferences like a window- shopping. In the field of marketing, a salesman walks beside a consumer to observe a behavior of the consumer towards a product to collect the both preference. And then the salesman investigates behaviors before consumer purchases a product. Otherwise, the salesman may ask consumers a reason why they select the product, in a store. These ways force consumers to feel a psychological burden. Moreover, this cannot collect many data in short term Brand names when linked with lifestyle, self-expression, and aspirations epitomize intangibles that are desirable to the consumer. Consumers consider fashion as part of an overall budgetary spend, so apparel purchases now compete directly with other choices from the technology, entertainment, beauty and general lifestyle categories for the discretionary rupee.

Blumer (2009) notes that consumer preference is a very adept mechanism for enabling people to adjust in an orderly and unified way to a moving and changing world which is potentially full of anarchic possibilities and Kimmel (2005) notes that fashion is a language, with its own grammar and syntax; to decipher its changing code, to "read" its fluctuating styles, is to uncover a crucial form of interpersonal communication and cultural statement. According to Schrank and Gilmore (2003), the role fashion plays in the diffusion of ideas, practices, or products reflects changing relationships between human beings and between man and his material culture. Fashion and clothing are so intimately linked that we must consider them as twins joined at the hip (Coates 2005). Therefore, clothing is the most suitable ground on which fashions can be examined.

Many research studies have focused on several related cognitive traits that may influence the decision-making processes among fashion consumer groups of emerging adults, specifically, the need for uniqueness, need for variety. Optimum stimulation level, sensation seeking, expressing individuality, and susceptibility to boredom (Workman and Studak, 2006). Yet, much of the research efforts have been expended on scrutinizing fashion in a sociological perspective.

Some authors explain that fashion is not about protection, but rather about displaying socioeconomic status. And also state that fashions of the upper social classes are diffused to lower classes through imitation. Further, reveal that preference for fashion as the outcome of a process of collective selection among fashion alternatives that are presented by elite of fashion creators conversely, in the modern consumer. Culture it is noticeable that preference is not solely limited to one factor, and the beliefs formed by many symbolic forces push consumers towards fashion. The media, particularly films and TV, have continually shaped clothing fashions (Coates 2005). Further, Workman and Studak (2006) explain that being exposed to advertisements of the latest fashions can trigger recognition of a problem because of a change in a consumer's desired state that is. What a consumer wishes a situation to be like. As a result the factors affecting the fashion are less apparent and rather difficult to determine.

Comparing and contrasting consumers perceptions of aspirational lifestyles with the actual market behavior of those who currently occupy these lifestyle profiles Developing predictive models that relate consumers' preference to their current and future behavior in the marketplace; and Creating a visual on- line database containing actual and perceived consumption images associated with these lifestyle profiles. The continued viability of the American textile industry hinges on the ability of manufacturers, advertisers, and retailers to predict, develop, and communicate styles of apparel and

other textile products that resonate with the desires of the consuming public. We are constructing an on-line visual database to allow us to explore the role played by the perceived "fit" between a product and a valued lifestyle in shaping the wants and needs of customers for textile and apparel products. Our conceptual framework emphasizes the role of consumer aspirations in shaping behavior, as well as the crucial role played by the media in determining the lifestyle connotations of specific products. And, while most research on apparel choices tends to be confined to a specific product category, we instead emphasize how textile and apparel products are evaluated in the context of other products with which they are jointly consumed to make a lifestyle statement. Selection of respondents and analysis of results will be facilitated by the cooperation we have secured from the Stanford Research Institute to integrate its' widely-used VALS (Values and Lifestyles) consumer typology with our program of research.

Multinational brand research which focuses on demographic and socio- economic characteristics of consumers has to date not provided a clear indication of consumers' purchase behavior regarding multinational brands. Demographics may give an indication of who purchases a product, while psychographics reveals why consumers purchase a product (Solomon, 2011). Ailawadi et al. (2001) find that multinational and national brands attract consumers with distinctly different psychographic characteristics. Psychographics uses psychological, subjective variables to categorize consumers in addition to demographics (Solomon, 2011). It explores the thoughts, feelings, lifestyles, values and belief systems of people within the context of a particular consumer behavior decision-making process (Knipe, 2013). Furthermore, psychographic research refers to detailed information regarding consumers' activities, interests and perceptions towards brands (Solomon, 2011) and attempts to differentiate consumers in terms of their brand or product preferences (Solomon, 2011). Psychographic categorization is suggested in literature since demographic categorizing alone has not been able to significantly determine characteristics of the private brand food purchaser to date (Whelan & Davies, 2006). Therefore, psychographics was expected to be able to distinguish between consumers' preferences for multinational and national brand apparel products. For the purpose of this investigation, a combination of selective psychographic and demographic variables was used to determine the relationship between consumers' psychographics, demographics and their preferences for multinational and national brand apparel products.

Consumers' perception and preferences for multinational brand products vary with different product categories and retail environments and previous studies limited their investigations to only one or two product categories, which cannot be generalized to all food categories (Hansen et al., 2016; Herstein & Jaffe, 2017). In addition, extant research indicates that the more familiar consumers are with multinational brand products, the less they differ in terms of perceived risk between purchasing national and multinational brands, irrespective of the product category (Mieres et al., 2016).

**Colour Scheme:** According to Hughes (2019) retailers have to predict and fulfil the shopping requirements of different consumer groups and they have to cater for customers who display different buying habits depending on the day of the week. Research conducted by researchers showed in his study that a product's colour plays an important role in a consumer's purchase decision. The authors stated that associative learning conditioning can help to explain consumers' colour choices. Knowledge of consumers' colour choices are important because it helps retailers to recognize which colours in their line sell the best and which colours to use for a store's interior.

According to the authors a study of colour preference in products suggests that consumers often conform to norms in their colour choices for certain product categories, particular high-risk purchases. Consumers learn colour preferences for particular products based on associations they have formulated



through their experiences. A favourable experience with a colour leads to a preference for the colour. In others instances, consumers develop preferred colours for particular products because they learn through association that certain colours are appropriate for certain products.

**Price Fairness:** Consumers are motivated by a variety of factors when contemplating a purchase decision. While there are consumers that might simply view price as the most important factor to consider when choosing between competing products or services, there are also consumers that view factors other than those related to pricing as being crucial to the purchase decision Kotler (2018). Consumers generally prefer to choose a product that can offer value-added benefits and are often willing to pay a 58 premium for these types of products. Some companies might choose to differentiate their products through innovation, superior quality and quick turnaround time (Doyle 2016).

**Perrouty *et al.* (2006)** found that novice consumers give value to the region of origin independently of the type of brand and the price level. Conversely, experts find that the brand is a perfect moderator of the region-of-origin equity. Moreover, these researchers showed that as consumer's expertise increases, people tend to give greater importance to a combination of product attributes, instead of evaluating them alone. Orth *et al.* (2005) showed that wine region equity originates from the evaluation of six consumer motivational factors: price, quality of the wine, social acceptance, emotional, environmental and human values.

**Quality:** Product quality is an important determinant for the customers for choosing a brand that helps in the development of brand reputation. Quality belongs to the product perspective of a brand's identity whereas perceived quality is how a brand's quality is seen by the consumers. It is one of the key dimensions in Aaker's brand equity model. A higher price is a sign of high quality to the consumers. Perceived quality is a source of consumer satisfaction it makes them to repurchase the product, which leads to loyalty. (Uggla 2001). Consumers' perception of the relationship between price and quality is the main factor which influences the brand choice decision between private labels and national brands. Kotler (2000) defined quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs".

According to Steenkamp (2009), quality is distinguished into two forms: objective (actual quality of the product) and subjective (consumer's perception of quality). Researches made in the 90's have shown that consumers perceive private labeled products to have lower quality than the national brands. Previous findings affirmed that consumers evaluate national brands higher than private labels on such features as quality, reliability and prestige.

Perceived quality is defined as the consumers' judgment about an entity's (service's) overall excellence or superiority. Research also indicates that consumers value global brands especially for their assumed high quality and prestigious image (e.g., Nguyen, Barrett and Miller 2005; Steenkamp, Batra and Alden 2003). An internationally well-established brand name can act as a "halo" constructs that effects quality beliefs (Han 1989).

## **CONCLUSION:**

Focuses on the consumers preferences through various factors such as ethnocentricity, quality price, colour scheme, country of origin which are helpful in selecting the brands and easy to differentiate between Indian Brands and Multinational Brands. In the developing countries like India, Multinational brands are not only preferred because of the quality but are preferred because of status enhancing reasons. Indian consumers give preference to the Multinational brands because of a high quality and

durability in contrast of the Indian brands, but there is a difference across the product classes and degree of suitability of sourcing.

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