

IMPACT OF GENDER ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Poonam Shekhawat
Dr. Monty Kanodia

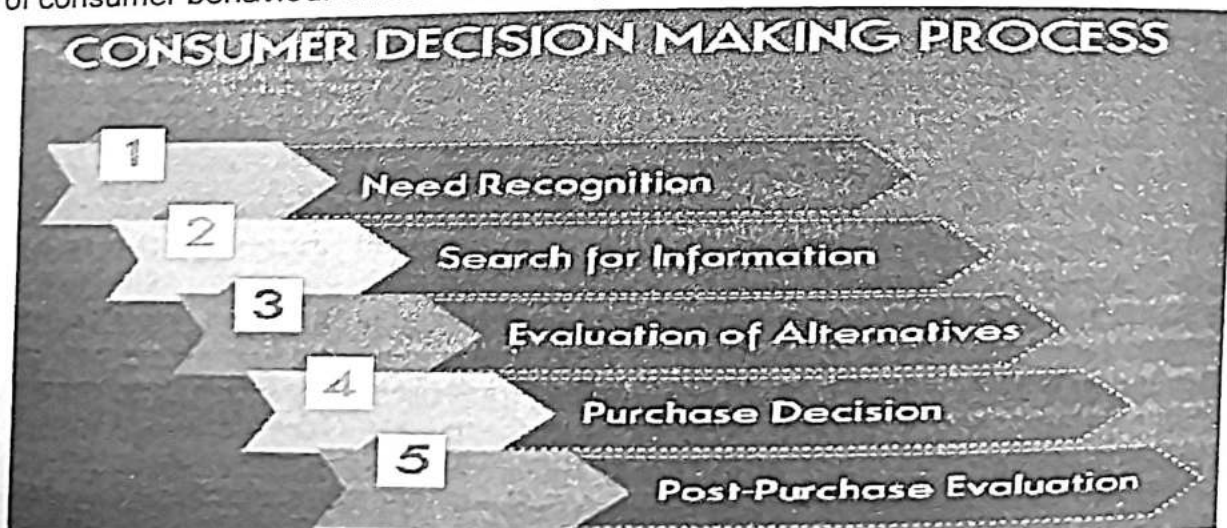
ABSTRACT

As the years passed we all have seen many changes in the differences and roles of the male and female in our society. In the past women stays at home and help in the house core activities like upbringing of child, cleaning of house etc. but as the time changes the women has become more independent and strong. The changes between the genders are there because of their upbringing and socialization with some other factors like social, biological and psychological which depicts different behaviour in different situations. Situation may be shopping, eating, party, personal life professional life or anything. Starting from the pre-purchase selection to the computation of alternatives than to the post purchase behaviour where gender work differently with different types of catalyst and different framework of evaluations. In this paper a pursuit is made to review these differences at various levels of purchase decision.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Behaviour, Gender Difference, Buying Decision, Post Purchase Behaviour.

Introduction

Consumer behaviour is an understanding of how a person take decisions about their spending for the available resources they have i.e. time, Money, effort on consumption related items. It includes the assessment of what they buy, why they buy, when they buy, where they buy, how often they buy and how often they use it. Consumer behaviour research is the scientific understanding of the processes consumers use to select, secure, use and dispose of products and services that satisfy their needs. Knowledge of consumer behaviour affects marketing strategy (Anderson et al, 2005).



Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

There are many elements that affect the way people act in a particular manner. Consumers fluctuate tremendously in income, age tastes, education, and other factors. The consumer behaviour is mainly influenced by these characteristics. Consumer characteristics include mainly four factors and these factors are majorly important for the distinctive types of behaviors depicted by the consumers. Nevertheless it does not mean that people of same, age or gender or social background are similar, because there is a lot of impact of the psychological factors that differ from individual to individual

Following Factors can Influence the Purchase Decision of the Consumer

- **Cultural:** Cultural factors comprise of fixed set of values and theory of a specific community or group of individuals. The culture of a person decides the way he/she behaves. In normal words, it is nothing but values of an individual person. What an individual grab from his family and friends as a child becomes his culture.
- **Social:** The Social Factors are the factors that are common in the society where a consumer lives in. The society is made of several individuals that have distinct desires and behaviors. These contrasting behaviors influence the personal choices of the other set of individuals as they lean to perform those actions which are common to the society.
- **Personal:** The Personal Factors are the individual aspect to the consumers that actively affects their buying behaviors. These factors differ from person to person those conclude in a different set of attitudes, perceptions and behavior against some specific goods and services. Personal characteristics include gender, age, stage in lifecycle, occupation, income, lifestyle etc.
- **Psychological:** The Psychological Factors are those components that tell us about the psychology of an individual person that ride his behaviour to seek satisfaction. Psychological factors include beliefs, perception of an individual, motivation & attitudes of consumers.

Process of Purchase Decision

- Understanding consumers' purchase or buying decision-making process allows operators to gain more understanding about their customers. Further, it can be a base for them to create more suitable marketing design for their target consumers. If marketers understand this segment of their consumers, they will easily understand how their consumers explore for information before buying, which benchmark can encourage them to invest, and what factors influence their purchase decision making. (Solomon et al., 2010)
- In many consumer behaviour functions the simple view of consumer behaviour base is the five stage of decision-making model, which is placed on the idea that acknowledges consumers as an information-processing machine. The simple five phase of consumer decision-making process include 1. Problem recognition, 2 Information search, 3 Alternatives evaluation, 4 Product choices, and 5 Post-purchase evaluation. (Solomon et al., 2010)

Problem Recognition

Problem recognition is the first phase of consumer decision-making process. It arises when consumer feels that there are some differences between their actual case and desired state.

Information Search

- Information search is the step where buyers are finding for more knowledge in a manner to solve the recognized issue. To help them to make a right decision, consumers will look for information from their surroundings. (Solomon et al., 2010)
- Information exploration process can be distinguished into two types. First, the pre-purchase finding is the process where buyer explores for the information to delight their needs or solve their issues, which start after consumers understand their needs or problems. Second, a continuing search is a process when consumers pursue the information for their comfort and to keep them updated with new products or ongoing position of the products' market. (Bloch et al., 1986)

Alternative Evaluation

In this step, consumers have to find their available alternatives that they have taken from the previous step naming, information search. (Solomon et al., 2010) Since there are enormous number of brands in the market, consumers will make their own arouse set which consists of brands which are previously in their minds. (Jobber, 2007) The brands that are confined in the consumers' arouse sets will have more chance to be chosen by the consumers.

Product Choice

Consumers have to select one brand among after figuring out their brand choices from the previous step. Selecting product choice can be either a easy and quick or a typical stage. (Solomon et al., 2010) Consumers' product preferences can be affected by different source of information during the process of decision-making.

Post Purchase Behaviour and Disposal

Even though the buying decision had completed, consumers sometime still assess their decisions. This is because they want to feel convince about their selection and to confirm that the product can solve their issues or can satisfy their needs. Jobber (2007) explained in his study that the product and service is the main conclusion in post-purchase findings.

Gender Difference

As studied many factors above out of all the factors that influence consumer decision making behaviour, one of the main factor is the gender. It refers to the social relationship/ roles and responsibilities of male and female, the expectations about their desires held about the aspects, aptitudes and similar behaviors of both male and female (femininity and masculinity) that are learned change over time and vary within and between cultures.

- According to Mitchell and Walsh (2004), male and female approach for different products and they are likely to have different ways of liking and obtaining these. Gender has important role in consumer behavior as the differences between men and women about their expectation, want, need, life-style etc. reflect to their consumption behaviors (Akturan, 2009:66).
- Solomon et al (2010) give suggestions that, products are a kind of sex-typed or unisexual. Unisexual defines a product that takes on male or female characteristics. In simpler sense, Barbie's for girls and hot wheels for boys. As per the socialization or upbringing of women and men, women are more likely to be internally focused and mostly talk as a way to connect and relate to others, while men are likely to be externally focused and mostly view situations as problems to be resolved. They talk to brief others. This perception is just an observation and may have a lot of expulsions but expulsions do not abolish observations.
- 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 towards women than men and also give more preference women than men. (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989)
- This modern prototype of the differences between women and men are passively acknowledged by marketing specialists around the universe. Undoubtedly sex differences do exist not just because of genetic reasons as men and women has, but are truly often due to cultural fluctuations (Teather 1995).

Now onwards every trader has realized this fact and so gender has become one of the major factor and basis of separating a market place and targeting the consumers or buyers.

Differences in Problem Solving between Men and Women

In a normal life everybody approaches the problem with similar goals but with different ideas of resolving it. Same is with men and women occur as they approach with same intention but with different ideas of considerations. While women and men can solve problems equally well, but their approach and the process of resolving it is often quite different. For most women, discussing and sharing a problem presents a space to explore, strengthen or deepen the relationship with the person they are talking with. Women are usually more worried about how problems are resolved than merely resolving the problem itself. On the other hand most of the men are less worried and do not feel the same as women while solving a problem. Mostly men approach the problems in a very distinct manner than women do. For most men, solving a problem gives an opportunity to prove their strength, their competence of resolve, and their commitment to a relationship. For most of the people how the problem is going to resolve is not nearly as important as solving it effectively and efficiently in the best possible manner. Men have a tendency to dominate and to assume everything as their authority in a problem solving process.

Gender Difference and Purchase Decision-Making Process

As per "Gender power and boyyy nature: the past, present, and paradisaal future of consumer gender identity" by (Kacon, 2000), consumption or utilization has always been gendered. These days, the products which are being manufactured are mostly specific gender type, some have feminine features and some have masculine features in them. The Products are specifically made with the intention of differentiation which are created and sustained by marketers for example; princess phones, Barbie dolls, cute frocks. Research recommends that shopping is a more astonishing activity for women with respect to men. Female consumers feel more independent while they do shopping in accordance with men. Another important point that women and men show differentiation is women consider shopping is a social need to show off in the society whereas male buyers pay importance to main function of a product irrespective of secondary function. Gender has an important role in consumer behaviour. As, the contradiction between men and women about expectation, want, need, life-style etc. reflect to their consumption behaviour (Akturan, 2009:66).

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

According to the French study with more than 700 adults (Helga, Karen, & Rosie, 2004) women are much more stronger in purchasing involvement in comparison to men, particularly in respect of emotional involvement whereas men were high on efficiency and quality. Block and Morwitz (1999, pp. 361-2) initiate that the probability of a purchased product 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 or of their need.

One distinct aspect of gender difference in purchasing decision is the factor of time. Men usually tend to make their purchasing decisions based on their immediate needs and how well the product or service will satisfy needs in the present and into the immediate future. Long-term applications seem to play little part for men. For women, however, this trend is almost reversed. Frequently the long-term applications, and whether the purchase can be used again and again over many times, may even be a stronger factor in the woman's purchasing decision than immediate satisfaction. When the time comes to actually making the decision of purchasing, women usually make purchase decisions on a more emotion level, while men go more with the facts and data. In a study named, "Men Buy, Women Shop," researchers at Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retail Initiative and the Verde Group, found that women react much more strongly than men to personal interaction with sales representatives in respect of knowing about the product and services. Men are more likely to respond to more functional aspects of the experience – such as the availability of parking slots, whether the item they came to purchase is in stock, and the length of the queue for checkout line.

Moreover, previous researches have shown that though gender plays a vital role there is differential gender roles across products. Davis and Rigaux (1997) had done research on the study of family decision-making roles. They found that there are three steps of decision making viz problem recognition; search for information; and final decision. They got to know that the roles and relative influence of wives and husband differently based on decision-making stage and product type (Wilkes, 1997; Moore-Shay and Wilkie, 1998; Yavas et al., 1998).

Further, as far as Post purchase behaviour research done on women and men shopping behaviour founds that men take less time if they want to return any product or item they bought. On an average a man usually takes about 21 days to return an item if they need to and whereas, to this a woman takes an average of 30 days to return the item she had purchased. Research also 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 only.

Conclusion

After the thorough literature review, it has been acclaimed that gender is not only a biological concept of being a female or male, but beyond than this. Looking at gender differentiation with different dimensions, gender is not just a market segmentation variable, it is a variable that has a strong impact on the decisions of consuming products and services. Everyone including the marketers needs to understand gender based choices in order to better satisfy the customers. There is a huge differences in the thoughtful and behavioral aspects of men and women due to physiological and psychological differences. A both female and male consumer shows completely different behaviors as far as in buying the various goods and services are concerned. Where men are more externally focused in all aspects whether it is future aspects or financial aspects whereas women tend to be internally focused like socializing where people tend to talk in order to connect with each other unlike men who talk to others more often than not in order to inform. Women are more subjective and intuitive while men tend to be more logical and analytical who frame their opinion based on other peoples purchase choice rather than trying it themselves. Men tend to value quality and efficiency the most while women value emotional connect and social relations. Moreover, where men initiate to make purchases based on the present needs while woman tends to purchase as a long term decision for future needs. Based on the above literature review we can depict the differences in women and men, Also we can clearly see that every stage of consumer purchase decision, the behaviour depicted by men and women is completely different and 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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