

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

THE CONTROLLABLES & UNCONTROLLABLES

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behaviour has been always of great interest to marketers. The knowledge of consumer behaviour helps the marketer to understand how consumers think, feel and select from alternatives like products, brands and the like and how the consumers are influenced by their environment, the reference groups, family, and salespersons and so on. A consumer's buying behaviour is influenced by demographic, economic, cultural, social, geographical, and psychological factors. Most of these factors are uncontrollable and beyond the hands of marketers, but they have to be considered while trying to understand the complex behaviour of the consumers. This study discussed about various uncontrollable and controllable factors influencing buying behaviour.

Key words: Consumer behaviour, buying behaviour, Controllable factors, Uncontrollable factors

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer behaviour “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” (Solomon, 1995, p. 5). Typically evaluating consumer behaviour goes beyond advertising and marketing approaches to connect the consumer and understand their behaviours, motivations, and deepest desires. Consumer behaviour is influenced by an individual’s physical and social environment, the individual’s motivation to consume, his or her perception of the product, brand, service, or company, and the goals or needs that he or she may obtain through consumption.

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Acc to Henry Assael there are four types of consumer buying behaviour, based on the degree of involvement and among brand differences. The steps involved in Complex buying behaviour are explained below. In the first stage the buyer develops the beliefs about the product, buyer develops attitudes about the product in the second stage and in the third he or she makes thoughtful choice. Consumers involved in complex buying behaviour involved highly in purchase and aware of significant differences among brands. These kind of products the consumers will buy infrequently, expensive risky and highly self-expressive.

FACTORS CONSIDERED IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

There are two factors influencing the consumer for decision making. (Controllable & uncontrollable factors)

CONTROLLABLE FACTORS

The controllable factors like product, price, place and promotion are influencing the consumer for buying.

1) Product

Product characteristics like attribute, taste, colour, packaging, quality, product knowledge, innovation, ingredients, and brand image.

Attributes

Attributes are important to consumers because these characteristics deliver the benefits that consumers are seeking from the products (Loudon and Della Bitta, 1993). Benefits are the outcomes that the attributes may provide (Mowen and Minor, 1998). To analyze the consumers' perceptions on food labeling, factor analysis has been carried out to identify the underlying dimensions among a set of food labeling attributes using the principal component analysis (Ali & Kapoor, 2009). Based on factor analysis, four sets of components/factors have emerged, that is, (i) serving method; (ii) quality and nutrition; (iii) production and storage; and (iv) product identification, which explain 66.271% of the variance. Regression analysis indicates that among the socio-demographic indicators, the estimated coefficients for gender, education, income and location of residence are statistically significant. Similarly, information on quality and nutrition, production and storage processes, and basic information of the product is found to be significant, implying that these factors are more likely to influence the use of food labels in making informed purchase decisions by the consumers (Ali & Kapoor, 2009). One benefit of packaged food, for instance, is that it can be stored and will be available when the respondent needs it. Based on past literatures, it was found that brand name; cultural and country of origin affect the brand purchase decisions:

Taste

Taste is influencing the consumer for selecting a brand. This is explained with the following study. In 2006, Howard Angela performed a taste test using cereal to test whether or not the brand had any influence on the taste. The two cereals used were the manufacturer brand, Kellogg's Frosted Flakes, and the store label, Always Save Sugar Frosted Flakes. The participants were to taste each product then take a survey that had a picture of either product on the top of the paper. Angela hypothesized that students would have a more favourable taste perception while viewing the manufacturer brand product. Angela (2006) used different aspects of the brand to aid in the experiment. Those aspects consisted of brand preference, brand recognition, brand image, and brand loyalty (Angela, 2006).

The results showed no significant difference in brand preference from the manufacturer brand and the store brand. Angela (2006) concluded that these results could have arisen from the sample size being too small.

Colour

Acc to Franken(1928) ,colours ,similar to words, have been viewed by conveying ideas and arousing feelings. They have been seen as symbols which express definite meanings. The meaning of a particular color may depend largely on the culture of individuals or their economic social status. Results of cross-cultural studies have found both similarity and dissimilarity in colour preferences and colour meaning associations.

Packaging

Packages are found to attract attention (Underwood et al., 2001; Garber et al., 2000; Goldberg et al., 1999; Schoormans & Robben, 1997). In fact, Goldberg et al. (1999) found that by dismissing such non-verbal signs as colours, the attention to verbal signs can be increased. Pictures on packages are emphasized to attract attention, particularly when consumers are not very familiar with the brands (Underwood et al., 2001).

Quality

Product quality was an important factor that motivated a customer to make a purchase. However, product quality was not solely related to the product itself. The major reason for this was that customers also judge the degree of quality based in part on the period of time of the products usage. Curry(1985) suggested that the consumers perception of a quality was a strong influence on consumer decision-making. All other factors influenced the customer's perception of quality regarding this particular product.

Product knowledge

Alpa & Hutchinson(1987) proposed a multi-dimensional conceptualization of consumer knowledge that proved to be a major theoretical advance. This conceptualisation clarified the meaning of “knowledge” and “expertise” and spawned numerous studies.(e.g., Mitchell & Dacin 1996; Park, Mothers baugh, and Feick 1994) Acc to these authors consumer knowledge

has two major components-familiarity, defined as the number of product related experiences that have been accumulated by the consumer ,and expertise ,defined as the ability to perform product related tasks successfully. In general, increased product familiarity results in increased consumer expertise.

Product innovation

Steenkamp, Hofstede, and Wedel (1999, p. 56) define consumer innovativeness as “the predisposition to buy new and different products and brands rather than remain with previous choices and consumption patterns.” Because independent consumers are not constrained by normative influences (i.e., perceived social risk is not a factor in the adoption of a new product), consumer independence should have a positive effect on consumer innovativeness. Shopping innovativeness refers to a tendency to try new stores, restaurants, products and brands (Darden & Perreault, 1976; Hawes & Lumpkin, 1984;Raju, 1980; Wells & Tigert, 1971). Again, owing to the lack of normative constraints, consumer

Ingredients

G.vani,Ganesh ,Dr.N.Panchanatham(2011) discussed the toothpaste buying model. In this article they discussed ingredients used in toothpaste -Generally consumer analyzes the benefit for buying oral care products. In toothpaste the main benefit derived is anti cavity platforms, contains fluorides. Excessive usage of fluoride can cause a disease called fluorescence, to which children are particularly vulnerable. In India, there is a strong aversion to fluoride toothpaste. Another one important factor coming under benefit segmentation is cosmetic propositions. About 35% of toothpaste is sold on cosmetic proposition. Proposition for fresh breath, white teeth and therapeutic benefits stands up to 5% of the total market.

Product class

Product class knowledge is a measure of consumers perceptions of how much they know about a specific class of products (eg.,cars)This type of measure is consistent with what Brucks(1985) called subjective knowledge, that is, consumers self-perceptions of knowledge levels. This is often contrasted with objective knowledge, which is what consumers actually know. Park and Lessing (1981) proposed that subjective knowledge provides a better understanding of consumers decision making processes because consumers level of

confidence in their search and decision making behavior, independent of their objective knowledge

Product bundle

Consumer preference for product bundles: The role reduced search costs-Judy Harris, Edward A. Blaiv-The aim of this study was to analyse the factors that might drive consumer preference for bundles versus individual items. The other factor discussed was the potential to reduce search and assembly costs. In this article the researchers used exploratory interviews and two laboratory experiments. The researchers used exploratory research with three different focus groups. Members of church group (aged 55 to 70 years), evening MBA students at urban university (aged 26 to 52 years, 68% male), and undergraduate computer students at an urban university (aged 21 to 33 years, 61% female). Finally they concluded that bundle choice will reduce search effort than when it will not, particularly among consumers who are less motivated to process information.

Brand image

Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1985) suggested that the brand image was an extrinsic attribute of the product. He believed that the brand image has less impact compared to intrinsic attributes. Jacoby (1978) suggested that the brand image served as a channel for providing certain information to the customer. Roselily (1971) noted that the brand image was considered to be a consistently favourable factor as a risk reliever. Zinkhan & Martin (1978) found that the consumer has a more positive attitude toward the product with a brand image than toward the product with no brand image.

Company image

Several studies demonstrate that corporate image affects consumer product judgements and responses in a positive manner (Belch & Belch 1987; Carlson 1963; Cohen 1963; Keller & Aaker 1994; Wansink 1989). Similarly, others demonstrate this effect for related constructs, such as advertiser reputation (Goldberg and Hartwick 1990) and corporate credibility (Keller

& Aaker 1992) .Conversely ,Hardy(1970) reports a negative relationship between company image and product preferences.Others,such as Shimp& Bearden(1982),find that the reputation of the company offering a product is not a powerful influence on consumer responses(e.g.,lowering the perceived risk associated with innovative products).

Price

In today's market, price is often a dominant factor guiding choice (Smith and Carsky, 1996).Understanding the role of price in general and determining its effect on consumer brand choice has been the cornerstone of brand choice research (Guadagni and Little, 1983). Assuncao and Meyer (1990) assumed that when faced with a buying decision in a product category, consumers observe a price, take into account their current inventory position in the category, and make the brand/quantity decision that maximizes immediate utility. McConnell (1968: p. 442) explains that: "Price, in the absence of other cues, was a powerful factor in determining how the brands were perceived". Consumers face brands with varying prices and perceived quality levels, and make a choice consistent with the relative importance attached to both attributes (Campo, Gijsbrechts and Nisol, 2000). When evaluating a brand, consumers who have a stronger price-reliance schema, compared to those who have a weaker schema, will rely more heavily on price cue (Cordell, 1993).

3. Place

Availability

The customer will come to expect the availability of the product at the time and place where he wants and not when and where the supplier wants to deliver. In other words just in time delivery will be a basic factor, and hence will not create any sustainable edge for any organization. Suppliers will have to link their manufacturing plans to the customer demand. This could create uncertainty in production planning of some marketers, but winners know that it is their capacity is to meet demand in different customer segments that will set them apart from others.

4.Promotion

Advertising

Adeolu B. Ayanwale, Taiwo Alimi & Mathew A. Ayanbimipe (2005) conducted a study on the influence of advertising on consumer brand preference. The main intention of this study was to analyse the advertisement impact on Bournvita brand. It also examined the influence of advertising on age, sex factors and consumer buying behaviour, and make recommendation for further improvement in advertising. The survey conducted in Lagos, Ibadan and Ile-ife, cities of south western Nigeria. The result found that gender and different age groups were equally influenced by advertising in their brand preference. 38.73% of the consumers showed preference for Bournvita out of the various brands of the food drink studied. The major reasons are its captivating advertising (42.62%) and rich quality (40.16%). TV advertising (71.43%) was most preferred by the respondents of all the media used in advertising Bournvita.

Direct marketing-Internet

G.vani, Ganesh, Dr.N.Panchanatham (2011) discussed the toothpaste buying model. In this article they discussed about Internet marketing. Consumers at present are widely targeted with this new but rapidly expanding strategy with range of internet-based marketing techniques. The ideal target group under this strategy is mainly young people, as they tend to browse the net for longer durations. The strategies used are interactive games and activities, competitions, attractive sites with flashy graphics, chat and email facilities. Keeping the children and teenagers in mind, the website is made more interactive, providing free downloadable games & general information. Subsequently, personal data of the visitors are collected for future promotions and sales of database.

Sales promotion

According to Shimp (2003), sales promotion refers to any incentive used by a manufacturer to induce the trade (wholesalers, retailers, or other channel members) and/or consumers to buy a brand and to encourage the sales force to aggressively sell it. Retailers also use promotional incentives to encourage desired behaviors' from consumers. Sales promotion is more short-term oriented and capable of influencing behavior.

Public relation

G.vani,Ganesh ,Dr.N.Panchanatham(2010)-Oralcare industry-Colgate smiley promos ,in this article researchers discussed about different contest used by Colgate Palmolive company.Colgate learn and earn offer-For developing the oral hygiene education in the country Colgate Palmolive (INDIA) Ltd introduced Learn and Earn offer. The main motive of this study is to educate the children in oral care habits and also to support them in their educational endeavor through scholarship.In this campaign consumer learn the 5 simple oral care tips and earn scholarships worth Rs.10, 000.

Oral care tips which are available on 200gm and 100 gm packs of Colgate Dental Cream and company website which the consumer has to carefully learn and send SMS to company number provided company in the back of the pack. The consumers have to respond to one Oral care question. The company offered for 150 consumers to earn Rs.10000 worth of Scholarship. This offer was introduced by the company at the time of July 1, 2009. This is one of the promotional activities to educate the oral care habit to child, to create the good image, to increase the market share.

UNCONTROLLABLE FACTORS

Uncontrollable factors like demographic, socio economic, cultural, geographical and psychological factors.

1) Demographic factors

2) Socio economic factors

3) Cultural factors

4) Geographical factors

5) Psychological factors

Cognition

Cummings and Venkatesan (1976) noted that very few of the dissonance related studies exploited its strength in explaining consumer behavior. Oliver (1997) lamented that research by consumer researchers in the area of cognitive dissonance, undeservedly, had moved past its heydays. Again, the present study, takes a lead from here by exploring some of its linkages neglected so far. We believe that one essential way of enriching a construct is by identifying its relationships with other constructs in its homological network. Involvement, another concept of interest to the present study, refers to the study of how much time, thought, energy and other work by Festinger (1957) and proposed more sophisticated dissonance models: self-consistency model (Aronson, 1992), self-affirmation model (Steele, 1988), and, the new look perspective (Cooper and Fazio, 1984) are some of them. While these models agree with each other in most parts, the major agreement is on how self knowledge mediates dissonance (Stone and Cooper, 2003). Although cognitive dissonance has had a long tradition in marketing theory, interest dedicated to empirical research involving cognitive dissonance has been fluctuating, notes Koller and Salzberger (2007).

Self-concept

Self concept affecting choice behaviour. Sirgy (1982) ascertained that consumers' self-confidence is one of the key antecedents of brand choice behaviour and customisation. He postulates the congruence between the consumers' self-concept image and brand image is a determinant of various outcomes including product modification and customer satisfaction. Ekinci and Riley (2003) asserts aligning consumers' self concept with their concept of the product, may be part of the process of the consumer making an efficient purchase transaction.

Personality

Consumer researchers have emphasized the importance of personality research in consumer behavior (Baumgartner, 2002; Foxall & Goldsmith, 1988; Haugvedt, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1992; Horton, 1979; Lastovicka & Joachimsthaler, 1988; Villani & Wind, 1975). The vast body of experimental research on social influence and, more specifically, conformity leaves little doubt that situational factors have a considerable impact on whether an individual conforms or does not conform to prescribed social norms. Indeed, advocates of behaviorism would suggest that all conformity could be understood without looking to trait theory (Mischel, 1968; Skinner, 1938, 1953).

Psychological reactance

The theory of psychological reactance concerns freedom of choice (Brehm 1966). Reactance itself is defined as “the motivational state that is hypothesized to occur when a freedom is eliminated or threatened with elimination” (Brehm and Brehm 1981 p. 37). In other words, the theory contends that when an existing freedom is threatened, people are motivated to restore the freedom. Restoration of freedom may take a variety of forms. For instance, people may exhibit reactance by acting in opposition to persuasion attempts (Brehm and Sensenig 1966) or disparaging the source of a perceived threat (Worchel 1974). Importantly, reactance may arise even when the threat to freedom aligns directly with individual preferences, leading people to reverse their own preferences to reassert their freedom (Brehm 1966; Fitzsimons and Lehmann 2004; Wicklund 1970).

CONCLUSION

Understanding buying behaviour is a difficult task for the companies to target the market. This study provided some few factors related to buying behaviour. It is helpful for the researchers and companies to analyse the consumer buying behaviour in different perspective. This study only discussed about factors influencing buying behaviour based on various literature support.

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