

Consumer Buying Behaviour: Changing Shopping Patterns

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Abstract: *The development of logical thinking among the consumers is one of the important parts of human behavior. This framework embedded paper describes alternatives for the manufacturers and marketers to meet the emergent consumer demands. An attempt has been made to examine the five factors namely family needs, fuel efficiency, price of the car, better safety on road and status symbol which affect the automobile buying behavior of the consumer. A systematic random sampling from five residential areas of urban Jaipur was done to select 50 car consumers. An investigator-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data on these factors. The data analysis using chi-square test was done to describe the nature of the sample and test the null hypothesis that the choices for purchase of car is equally distributed on five factors. It is found that factors have major implication on purchasing decision. Marketers can use the combination of relevant factors as an effective tool for selling their products*

Keywords: *Consumer buying behavior, alternatives, factors, marketers*

INTRODUCTION:

In the fight for profitable survival, the manufacturer is obliged to look outwards at his consumer rather than inwards at his production plant. What becomes important is not what can be made but what people want—and why? However, in studying consumer, one must take into account, not only the demographic characters and the economic circumstances of the individual, but also the more powerful influences of prejudices, feelings, attitudes, opinions and beliefs. This research paper sets out something of the progress made in consumers' research in studying such psychological influences, from the qualitative approach of motivation research, through to the quantitative measurement of significant attitudes of consumer groups and the application of such studies to the mass marketing problem of today.

Viewing consumer buying behavior in such a broad context suggests it is actually subset of human behavior. That is, several internal and external factors affecting individuals in their daily lives also influence their purchase activities. In fact, it is often difficult to draw a distinct line between consumer related behavior and other aspects of human behavior. Consumer buying behavior includes both mental and physical activities of a consumer. It covers both visible and invisible activities of a consumer and also very complex and dynamic in nature.

In many cases, it is the sum total of the behavior of a number of persons. It is influenced by number of market stimuli offered by the marketer as it involves both psychological and social process. Further, consumers act differently at different times and often respond differently to the same stimulus at different times. Most of the times, they learn and thereby change their attitudes and behavior. So, it can be said that consumers are heterogeneous in nature and they are all different from each other in certain respects. They often act emotionally rather than rationally. Therefore, by understanding not only how the consumer behaves but the way he behaves as he does, the marketer makes decisions that will tie in more closely with consumer needs and desires.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

According to Myron S. Heidingsfield, A. B. Blankenship (1974), Consumerism is the philosophy and program representing the consumer generally and specifically in his relationship to the market place and to the quality of life. The major areas of concern to the consumers are product, packaging and labeling, pricing, advertising, promotion and personal selling, and services. Attitudes have a very important role in the field of marketing, and

especially in relation to the communication mix. Likewise, Simon Majaro (1982) considers man as a complex creature and his behavior is stimulated and motivated by a host of cultural, sociological, economic and psychological factors. Human beings differ considerably one from another. However, it is useful to realize that they can be slotted into different typologies. The aim of satisfying every customer regardless of size, wealth, location, habits, tastes and attitudes is a gargantuan task. People have a requirement to satisfy various needs but the level of intensity changes with age and one also life to climb up the material ladder. In the same context, D. Amarchand, B.Vardharajan (1979) discuss that marketing success depends upon the company's ability to find customer and to satisfy him. Basically there are three approaches to understand consumer. These are Psychological, Sociological and Economic approaches to understand consumer. The whole argument boils down to one central point i.e., the importance of consumer. Moving ahead, Johan Arndit (1993) studied that the consumer behavior field, during the last two decades, has become multinational and multidisciplinary. Due to the increase in literacy rates and the penetration of conventional media, the perception and attitude of the consumer is changing, moving towards proper consumerism. Not only this, attitude and consumption habits of consumers are also changing and becoming more modern in an urban sense. In contrast, Rish Bijoor (2001) states, in the study of consumer behavior, it has become tacitly acknowledged that people are either unwillingly or unable to reveal their true motives for the particular buying behavior. Most of the clinical studies and treatment was based on Freudian theories relating to the influence of the unconscious mind on the behavior. The individual, it was argued, is often unaware of the influences which lead him to select certain products. Only by means of unstructured and indirect interviewing procedures could personality characteristics, attitude, prejudices, feelings and the likes be uncovered which would give the psychologist an insight into personal and social influences which determined buying behavior. Culture, subculture, and social class are particularly important influences on consumer buying behavior. Culture is the fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behavior. The growing child acquires a set of values, perceptions, preferences and behaviors through his or her family and other key institutions. In addition to cultural factors, social factors such as reference groups, family, social roles and statuses affect consumer's buying behavior. A buyer's decisions are also influenced by personal characteristics. These include the buyer's age and stage in the life cycle; occupation and economic circumstances; personality and self concept; and lifestyle and values. Because many of these have a very direct impact on consumer buying behavior, it is important for marketers to follow them closely.

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY:

The consumption pattern of Indian consumers has been undergoing a significant transformation over the years. Several factors drive these changes. Improvements in economic conditions are one of the factors. Exposure to international media, foreign travel, degree of urbanization, education levels, emergence of job opportunities in service sectors such as information technology, call centers, and retailing, which influence the lifestyle are some of the changes in consumption pattern.

Singhal (2005) observed that the changes in lifestyle and the resultant demand for products can be observed in the decline in demand for scooters in India, particularly in urban areas. The scooter used to be the quintessential family transportation vehicle for a middle-class Indian household. However, this robust demand has declined over the years. Maruti 800, the car that generates maximum sales volume in India has gradually acquired the role of a family transportation vehicle for the middle-class. On the other hand, demands for motorcycles that offer lifestyle connotations are on upswing, as the younger generation shows a distinct preference for zippy vehicle.

Taking the instances, A case of Maruti 800 campaign in which the kids who is playing with a toy Maruti 800 exclaims to his dad (when asked how long will he keep on running the car), "papa ki Kara, petrol khatam hi nahin Hunda." The ad cleverly conveys that the car just keeps going on and on. It ends with the voiceover telling us that Maruti Suzuki is most fuel-efficient car.

Likewise, the Chevrolet Optra ad (which depicts a young husband driving his wife to see the moon on the occasion of Karvachauth) shows an Optra consumer as someone who believes in family values and indulging loves ones.

Further, take the case of Hyundai Santro, the advertising of which has evolved over the years from initially conveying mainly the functional benefits of the model to the consumer on an emotional level now. After few years of launching Santro, they started with the positioning if the car being a complete family car which was completely rational positioning. But then two things happened- the product found acceptance in the market and the competition came up with similar product in the market.

In certain markets, research undoubtedly provided certain insights which were of value to marketing management. Everyone will doubtlessly agree that such a complicated and important decision as buying a new car will involve far more than technical considerations of power, breaking ability and so on. The decision

will involve price of course, but even more important is the extent to which the model chosen projects the self-image of the buyers to others. There must be significant psychological factors at work which drive the wealthy businessman in Delhi or Bombay to buy a large white Mercedes car, capable of cruising at 140 kms per hour, when it can be only driven at 60 kms per hour at maximum.

The consumption pattern of Indian buyer could be undergoing a significant transformation in automobile industry due to factors like family needs, fuel efficiency, price of the car, better safety on roads and status symbol.

METHODOLOGY:

The present research utilizes the survey research methodology to find out the factors which affect the car buying behavior of a consumer. The research is of ex-post facto type. The objectives of the study were: (i) To construct and validate a questionnaire covering five factors namely family needs, fuel efficiency, price of the car, better safety on roads and status symbol. (ii) To test the null hypothesis that the choices for purchase of car is equally distributed on five factors.

A questionnaire had two sections. Section A consisted of demographic questions and section B included the question regarding the factors affecting car purchasing behavior of a consumer of urban Jaipur. The sample for the present research consisted of 50 car consumers. A systematic random sampling was done to select 50 car consumers from five residential areas of Jaipur namely Malviya Nagar, Bajaj Nagar, Bapu Nagar, Barkat Nagar and Gandhi Nagar i.e., ten car consumers from each area.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The data collected was subjected to data analysis using non parametric chi-square test as the sample is small and it fulfills the requirement of the study. It was hypothesized that the choices for purchase of car is equally distributed on five factors namely family needs, fuel efficiency, price of the car, better safety on roads and status symbol.

So, the probability of obtaining any one factor over five factors is $1/5$ and as such the expected frequency of any one factor coming upward is $50/5 = 10$. By using observed frequency along with expected frequencies, the value of chi-square (X^2) was worked out.

TABLE-1 The summary of chi-square test analysis (N=50; df=4)

FACTORS	OBSERVED FREQUENCY(O)	EXPECTED FREQUENCY(E)	X^2 VALUE
Family needs	18	10	
Fuel efficiency	14	10	
Price of the car	6	10	16.00**
Better safety on roads	10	10	
Status symbol	2	10	

** significant at 0.01 level

FINDINGS:

Based on the analysis, following results emerged:

- The null hypothesis was rejected as there has been significant difference obtained and expected X^2 values at 0.01 level.
- There has been significant difference in two factors i.e., family needs and status symbol. Therefore, the car purchasing decision is most affected by family needs and least affected by status symbol.
- There is a significant positive relationship between all the considered factors and consumers' car purchasing behaviour

CONCLUSION:

Uncovering why people buy is an extremely difficult task. The buyer's psyche is a black box whose working can only be partially deduced. The buyer is subject to many influences which trace a complex course through his psyche and lead eventually to overt purchasing responses. The findings of the study clearly show that the various factors in or another way influence the purchasing decision of a consumer. It has also been spotlighted that Indian consumers are emotional as family needs come before fuel efficiency or price of the car. It can be concluded that consumers car purchasing is the function of their behavior.

IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Indian Automobile manufacturers should use the combination of relevant factors as an effective tool for selling cars. Marketing strategists should recognize the potential interpretative contributions of different partial models and the various factors for explaining buyer behavior. The implications of the study are that car dealers must concentrate more on the small family cars and manufacturers must work on reduction on the car manufacturing costs. Moreover, the further research work is needed to use features, provisions and facilities in the car to work out their optimum level while special features be provided in modular form.

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