

BUYING BEHAVIOR AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

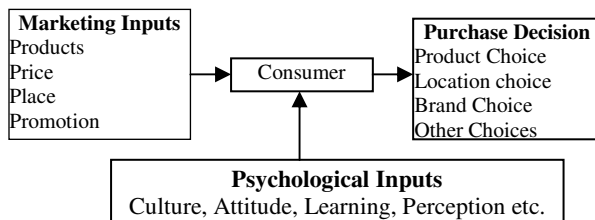
Consumer Behavior is a research area which had attracted the attention of many research scholars. The building complexity in the buying and consumption pattern has made it even more interesting. Studying the buying and consumption pattern of male and female buyers has been the main purpose of conducting this particular study. The study further investigates the factors and the facilities sought by both the sexes before going out for a purchase. The use of a structured questionnaire has been done to generate responses from the respondents who belonged to different parts of the country. The use of the statistical tools used such as density analysis and chi-square test has been used to test the variations between both the genders and their shopping habits.

Keywords: *Buying Behavior, Sex-Role identity, Gender identity.*

Introduction:

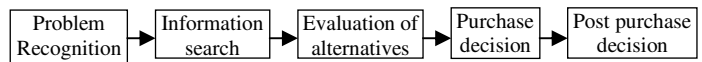
We all are buyers and all of us shop to settle our intentions and needs. Buying behavior is a process which deals with decision making abilities of consumers which the buyers display while selecting goods for them. Buying behavior is not only restricted to acquiring the products but it comes a long way; starting from acquiring the goods till disposing them after their consumption. It's been more than 50 years since marketers and researchers are trying to explore the area of Consumer Behavior. It is important to understand the buyer behavior for the marketers to position their products and services in a better way. Buyer Behavior is focused on the needs of individuals, groups and organizations.

Understanding Consumer Buying Behavior implies understanding how a person interacts within the marketing mix. As determined by Cohen (1991), the marketing mix inputs are adapted and focused upon the consumer.



The psychology of each individual considers the products or services in relation of their own culture, attitude, purchase, the brand that he or she prefers, and other choices.

There are 6 stages of consumer buying decision process (for complex decisions):



It is also a fact that all the decision processes does not lead to a purchase, and all the consumers does not undergo all the six stages before making a purchase decision. Post-purchase evaluation provides satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the terms of its outcome.

Types of Consumer buying behavior are determined by the level of consumer involvement. Researchers acknowledge the existence of different types of involvement (Houston and Rothschild, undated; Lastovicka & Gardner, 1979; Mitchel, 1980; Rothschild , 1979). Usually five types of involvement are talked about.

- Ego involvement
- Commitment
- Communication involvement
- Purchase importance
- Response involvement

Taking two sides of consumer involvement as a basis, it has been noticed that some purchases require a lot of time and evaluation (high involvement purchases); whereas there are certain buying decisions which can be made without taking time and consulting others (low involvement buying). In this way, consumer buying behavior can be broadly divided into four categories, on the basis of the extent of buyer involvement:

- **Complex Buying Behavior:** when consumers are highly involved in the purchase and they are buying a product which is very risky, expensive and is purchased infrequently. In order to make a final decision, the

consumer tries to learn more about the product and seeks information through various sources.

- **Dissonance Reducing Buying Behavior:** Consumers undertake dissonance reducing buying behavior when they are highly involved in a purchase and want to eliminate any possibilities of a wrong purchase decision. But finds an insignificant differences in the brands. It means that the consumer can purchase the product from anywhere without considering the Brands.
- **Habitual Buying Behavior:** Consumer involvement is very low and they perceive very few differences among the brands. Such types of buying behavior usually happens when the consumer buy low cost but frequently purchased products such as bread, milk, salt etc.
- **Variety Seeking Buying Behavior:** It occurs in a situation of low consumer involvement but significant brand differences. Customers try to use different brands of such products as they want to check different variety of products offered by the marketers. This is the reason that most of the consumers do a lot of brand switching is case of variety seeking buying behavior.

In addition to above classified buying behaviors, there are two or more classifications which are attracting the attention of market researchers:

- **Impulse Buying Behavior:** A buying situation where a buyer gets trapped is a propagated situation which is created by the marketers by offering excessive discounts and other offers to the consumers. Here the consumer makes the purchase with little or no planning. Such buying usually happens with low priced items.
- **Compulsive buying Behavior:** it is a chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to the negative events or feelings. When buying becomes compulsive, the goal shifts from obtaining utility from the purchased items to achieving gratification from process itself. It is very undesirable because of its severe results and harmful consequences.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study buying behavior among men and women.
2. To find out the factors that affects both the genders in different buying situations.
3. The study also further seeks to compare the buying habits and priorities of both the sexes.

Literature Review:

Consumer Behavior focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources on consumption related items (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000, p.5). A study by Packard (1981 et al Wilmshurst 1995, p.11) showed that there are many reasons related to consumer behavior and why do people buy or do not buy a product, for ex: quality of product, brand loyalty etc. Consumer buying behavior is a complex mix of emotional reasons for buying, psychological and social inputs.

Black Box Model shows the interaction of stimuli, consumer characteristics, decision process and consumer responses. It contains buyer characteristics, decision process and consumer responses.

But Black Box Model considers the buyers responses as a result of a conscious, rational decision making process, in which it is assumed that the buyer has recognized the problems; whereas in reality many decision are not made in awareness of a determined problem by the consumer.

Consumers Researchers are examining the impact of gender identity. The process of consumption has long been associated with gender, thus it comes as no surprise that consumer researchers often examine the effects of these variables on consumer buying behavior. The studies relating to gender identity started since 1963. Sex-role Identity (Kahle and Homer 1985), Sex- role orientation (Gentry and Doering 1979) and sex role self concept (Stern 1988) are all terms referring to measuring of personality traits in men and women that have been used in consumer researches. The extent to which an individual identifies or thinks of himself or herself as masculine or feminine is what is referred as gender identity (Fisher and Arnold, 1994)

Gender Role refers to the culturally derived behaviors and activities associated with masculinity or femininity that an individual choose to adopt. Gender Role Attitude refers to an individual's belief about the roles, rights and responsibilities of men & women (Deaux 1985; Fisher & Arnold 1994). Masculine & feminine personality traits are associated with instrumental and expressive tendencies (Parsons and Shils 1952). Instrumental tendencies are mainly concerned with attainment of goals external to interaction process (Gill et al. 1987, p.379). Personality traits such as independence, assertiveness, reason, rationality, competitiveness and focus on individual goals are the hallmark of masculinity (Cross and Markus 1993; Easlea 1986; Keller 1983; Meyer- Levy 1988; Weinreich-Haste 1986). Whereas expressive tendencies primarily facilitate interaction process itself (Gill et al. 1987, pg. 380). Personality Traits such as understanding, caring, nurturance, responsibility, considerateness, sensitivity, intuition, passion and focus on communal goals are the traits associated with femininity (Cross & Markus 1993; Easlea 1988; Keller 1983; Meyers-Levy 1988; Weinreich-Haste 1988).

The theories such as Gender Schema Theory and Multi-factorial Gender Identity Theory have dominated the researches concerned with consumer studies. Both these theories are considered to be of great significance in consumer behavior studies and its conceptualization.

Schema Theory was propounded by Ben (1981). He suggested that individuals acquired and display traits, attitudes and behaviors consistent with their gender identity. Moreover, gender identity serves as an organizing principal through which individuals process information about themselves and the world around them, although the ability of gender identity to have such an effect varies depending on whether or not an individual is sex-typed.

Multi-factorial identity Theory assumes that gender identity is a combination of gender-related phenomena, associated in varying degrees with each other, such as gender related attitudes, interests and role behaviors, and gender personality traits. Not only in gender personality multi-factorial, but each gender differentiating factor has a different developmental history that varies across individuals because the factors are impacted by multiple variables that are not necessary gender-related (Spence 1993), Consequently, gender quality which are displayed by different can be quite variable within each sex (Spence 1993), although men and women do develop gender identities and a sense of belongingness to their sex that is maintained throughout the lifespan (Green 19754).

Both the theories have their own relevance in the field of Consumer Research Studies. According to Wharton Marketing Professor Stephen J. Hoch, shopping behavior mirrors gender differences throughout many aspects of life. Women think shopping to be an inter-personal, human fashion whereas for men it is instrumental. It is more a job which has they need to finish.

In a study titled, "Men Buy, Women Shop", researchers at Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retail initiatives and Verde Group, a Toronto Consulting Firm, found out following stated things about the shopping behavior of man and women:

1. Women are happy to meander through sprawling clothing and accessory collections or detour to the shoe department.
2. Men usually have a target and like to flee as soon as possible.
3. Women are more likely to experience problems than men while shopping. According to the studies done by Chief Marketing Officer at CVS Care mart, "Women tend to be more invested in shopping experience on many dimensions, whereas men buy specific tools and get out".
4. Male and Female shoppers also have different reactions to sales associates. Men feel that associates are there to help them find important things on their shopping list whereas women shopper's value sales associates who make them feel important.

According to Wharton Marketing Professor Stephen J. Hoch, "Shopping behavior mirror gender differences throughout many aspects of life, women think of shopping in an interpersonal, human fashion whereas men treat it to be more instrumental. For them, it's a job which needs to be done."

Research Methodology:

The consumers who shop in both organized and unorganized retail outlets in different places of the country like Delhi, Raipur, Chennai, Bangalore, Solan, Chandigarh were taken as population samples. A convenient sample of 150 buyers was served with the questionnaire, out of which 105 responses could be obtained out of which 50 were males and 55 were females. The responses so collected proved to be a significant database for the

purpose of primary data. The secondary data has been acquired from Retail journals, business magazines, marketing survey reports, internet and books. The data so collected has contributed a lot in the Literature Review. The study focuses on the buying behavior of both these sexes and the priorities that both these genders have while they make a purchase decision.

Stratified Random sampling has been used to generate responses for the purpose of the study. Chi-square test and density analysis has been used to find out the different behavioral patterns of both the sexes.

Hypothesis:

1. Frequency of shopping is independent of sex.
2. All the facilities have got an equal impact on the frequency of shopping for both the genders.
3. All the factors have got an equal importance for buying decisions made by both the genders.

Findings:

The basic aim of the study was to compare the shopping patterns of male and female buyers. The data through questionnaires was tested with respect to ascertaining the dependence of the shopping frequency amongst men and women. Chi-square test at 5% confidence level shows that the frequency of shopping is independent of sexes. The study further focuses on the facilities that male and female buyers seek before they finally reach on to a purchase decision. Chi-square test proves that the facilities offered by the marketers have got an equal impact on the shopping frequency of male and female buyers. Parking facilities, owner's acquaintance does matter more for male buyers rather than female buyers; whereas female buyers prefers to shop more where they can find everything under one roof. But the interesting fact is that both the sexes do prefer to visit such market places where can get more variety. The ambiance of the store attracts more of female shoppers than the male buyers. The home delivery facility is preferred by both the genders. The trend of Multi-brand stores is welcomed by both the sexes in equal proportions, whereas only few males agreed that they like single-brand stores as their shopping destinations.

The factors which attract the attention of male and female shoppers are also more and less same. The chi-square test proves that the factors such as low price of the product, easy availability, display of the store, mass advertisement about a product, new product which has come in the market and has not been tried earlier have got an equal importance for the male and female buyers. Male and Female respondents equally acknowledged that they do go for shopping when they need a change from their daily routines. Even appearance of the product, word of mouth, ease of storage and children's provocation seem to be equally important for both these genders.

Out of the male respondents, 40% like to go out with friends; whereas 60% of them prefer to shop with family, no male respondent likes to go alone for shopping. It is

interesting to know that 13% of female population taken as respondents would like to shop alone whereas 43% would like to go out for shopping with friends and 43% with family.

Table 1: Findings of the Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Results Obtained	Findings
Frequency of shopping is independent of sex.	$X^2_{cal} = 7.2784$ $X^2_{Tab} = 7.815$ (at 3 degree of freedom) $X^2_{cal} < X^2_{tab}$ Hence, Hypothesis is accepted	Both the genders prefer shopping in their own distinct patterns.
All the facilities have got an equal impact on the frequency of shopping for both the genders.	$X^2_{cal} = 22.218$ $X^2_{Tab} = 15.507$ (at 8 d.f) $X^2_{cal} > X^2_{tab}$ Hence, Hypothesis is rejected	Male and female buyers have got different set of views as far as facilities and store choice is concerned.
All the factors have got equal importance for the buying decisions made by both the genders.	$X^2_{cal} = 14.90$ $X^2_{Tab} = 15.507$ (at 8 d.f) $X^2_{cal} < X^2_{tab}$ Hence, Hypothesis is accepted	All the factors are preferred equally by both the sexes.

Conclusion:

Buying behavior and purchasing pattern is much studied topic by our consumer behavior researches. But still there is much more to know as our consumers and their decision making process is getting complex. Due to the growing competition in the markets and varied products provided by the marketers, there is further need to study this topic from different viewpoints. Earlier only women used to go for shopping and men used to provide them with the finance, but these days, equations have changed a lot. Now a days, there is variety of products for the male buyers as well as our female buyers. Even women have changed their old style of consumption. Both the genders have started to analyze their buying objectives wisely and rationally. Even the male buyers have also become variety seekers. As women these days have started working, they are sharing equal preferences with that of male buyers. The phenomena of women buyers going alone for shopping can be viewed as the part of their lifestyle, as working women try to minimize the time for shopping for the products such as daily needs and prefer to buy them alone without consuming much of their time.

There is not much difference in the factors which attract the attention of our female and male buyers. This proves that a rationale buyer always try to maximize the utility and minimize the cost of such utility.

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