Study on Buying Behavior of Men and Women

Waqaruddin Siddiqui
MBA, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India.

Abstract: Males and females want different products due to their different upbringing and socialization along with various other factors like social, psychological etc. And they are likely to have different ways of thinking about obtaining these. We can see in our daily life that both genders are completely different in decision making whether it is a personal life, professional life and even if it is eating or shopping decisions both the genders differ completely in every stages of decision making. Females seem to have pleasure while they shop whereas most of the men appear to be more disdain towards it. John Gray’s 1992 book “Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus” confirmed what men and women have always known: The two sexes differ in their perspectives, motives, rationales, and actions. In this paper, an attempt is made to understand these differences at every stages of purchasing decision.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, buying decision, gender difference, shopping behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The field of consumer behavior tells us that how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. Understanding consumer behavior is never simple, because customers may say one thing but do another. They change their minds at the last minute.

Companies can use it as a strategic tool for making profit by understanding that how and why consumers buy.

Why and how consumers buy can be understood using Stimulus-Response Model shown below:

(Kotler Philip, Keller Kevin, Koshy, Jha, Marketing Management, 12th Edition)

Decision
- Product Choice.
- Brand Choice.
- Dealer Choice.
- Purchase Timing.
- Purchase Amount.

Marketing Structure
- Product.
- Price.
- Place.
- Promotion.

Buyer’s Character
- Social.
- Cultural.
- Personal.
- Psychological.

Buyer’s Decision Process
- Problem recognition.
- Information search.
- Evaluation.
- Decision.
- Post-Purchase behavior.
As this model is indicating that both the Marketing and environmental Stimuli enters the buyers consciousness. In turn the consumer makes some buying decisions.

Main task for any marketer is to understand that what happens in between these two stages. This model tells us that consumer’s buying behavior is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors.

Factors affecting consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is influenced by many factors. Consumers vary in terms of age, income, education etc., these characteristics influence the buying behavior of consumer. Consumer behavior is influenced mainly by four factors. But it does not mean that all the consumers are similar because the psychological factors play major role and this varies from person to person.

Following are the main factors that influence the consumer behavior:

Cultural: Cultural factors are coming from the different components related to culture or cultural environment from which the consumer belongs.

Social: Reference Groups, family, social Role and status

Personal: Gender, age, stage in lifecycle, occupation, income, and lifestyle.

Psychological: Psychological factors like motivation, perception, beliefs & attitudes of consumers also have a deep impact on the buyer decision.

Consumer buying decision process

Consumer behavior is very complex and may vary greatly across different products and consumers. Therefore it is very important for marketers to understand the consumer behavior so that they can formulate the better strategies for the target consumers. If marketers understand this process of their consumers, they will know how their consumers search for information before buying, which criteria can encourage them to buy, and what factors influence their purchase decision-making. (Solomon et al., 2010). Scholars have developed a “stages model” of buying decision process.

The five stages of this model are:

1. Problem Recognition
2. Information Search
3. Evaluation of Alternatives
4. Purchase Decision
5. Post purchase Behavior

Problem recognition: Process starts when consumer recognizes the need. Marketers have to understand the spark or stimuli which generate the needs in consumers so that they marketers can formulate strategies accordingly to generate the needs.

Information search: when the need or problem is identified then this aroused consumer will search for more information to solve this recognized problem. There are various sources through which consumer gathers information and each source plays a different role in influencing buying decision. Consumers learn about the features of different competing products.

Evaluation of Alternatives: At this stage, consumer will evaluate all the available alternatives and there are several decision evaluation processes, the most current models of which see the process as cognitively oriented. Consumers vary as to which product attributes they see as most relevant and the importance they attach to each attributes. They will pay the most attention to attributes that deliver the sought benefits.

Purchase Decision: At this stage, the consumer will choose one brand from all available brands after evaluation. The consumer may also form an intension to buy the most preferred brand. Attitude of others and unanticipated situational factors can intervene between the purchase intension and the purchase decision.

Post purchase Behavior: After purchasing the product, the consumer may experience some level of satisfaction or will feel some dissatisfaction. So the job of marketers is not over after consumer buys the
product. Marketers must monitor the post purchase action, behavior and post purchase use of product.

Gender difference
Gender is the most important factor among all the factors that influence the consumers buying decision. Various studies proved significant differences regarding purchase behavior and gender differences. The differences are based mainly on sociological and biological particularities.

According to Mitchell and Walsh (2004), males and females want different products and they are likely to have different ways of liking and obtaining these. Gender has an important role in consumer behaviors. Because, the differences between men and women about expectation, want, need, life-style etc. reflect to their consumption behaviors (Akturan, 2009:66).

Solomon et al (2010) suggests that, products are sex-typed or androgynous. Sex-typed defines a product that takes on masculine or feminine characteristics. Put simply, Barbies for girls and hot wheels for boys.

If we talk about socialization of men and women, men mostly considered to be focused externally and they see situation as issues that might be resolved and women are considered as internally focused and most of the time they connect and relate to others. Gender differences can be seen in every kind of purchases like purchase of consumer goods, purchase of fashionable goods, and purchase of FMCG goods etc. 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 toward women than men and, also, prefer to like women to men. (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). This fashionable paradigm of the differences between men and women are passively accepted by marketing practitioners around the world. Obvious sex differences exist not just because of genetic reasons, but are quite often due to cultural variations (Teather 1995).

In today’s scenario most of the marketers are following these facts and hence gender became the one of the most important factor considered for segmentation and targeting consumers.

Men and Women differ in problem solving
Men and women approach problems with similar goals but with different considerations. While men and women can solve problems equally well, their approach and their process are often quite different. For most women, sharing and discussing a problem presents an opportunity to explore, deepen or strengthen the relationship with the person they are talking with. Women are usually more concerned about how problems are solved than merely solving the problem itself. Most men on the other hand are less concerned and do not feel the same as women when solving a problem. Men approach problems in a very different manner than women. For most men, solving a problem presents an opportunity to demonstrate their competence, their strength of resolve, and their commitment to a relationship. How the problem is solved is not nearly as important as solving it effectively and in the best possible manner. Men have a tendency to dominate and to assume authority in a problem solving process.

Consumer buying decision process and gender differences
As we have discussed earlier also that males and females differ in their buying decision process right from the problem recognition stage to post purchase behaviour. Many renowned personalities have done researches on these differences.

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

According to the French study with more than 700 adults (Helga, Karen, & Rosie ,2004) women are much stronger buying involvement than did men, particularly in terms of emotional involvement whereas men were high on quality and efficiency. Further, Belch and Willis (2002) found that purchasing decisions related to household items such as automobiles, televisions, and financial planning are moving from being primarily male dominated to joint decisions. This may be due to the rising education level and increasing in the number of working women. Studies show that household decision-making areas that were once dominated by one gender were also becoming more influenced by the opposite gender. Like, a research by Zinn found
that of 80 percent of men purchased 25 percent of household groceries, while women were taking a larger part in the purchase of insurance, automobiles, and financial services.

Previous researches have shown that though gender plays a vital role there is differential gender roles across products. Davis and Rigaux (1997) did research on the study of family decision-making roles. They identified that there are three phases of decision making viz problem recognition; search for information; and final decision. They found that the roles and relative influence of husbands and wives differed based on decision-making stage and product type (Wilkes, 1997; Moore-Shay and Wilkie, 1998; Yavas et al., 1998).

When it comes to actually making the decision, women generally make purchase decisions on a more emotive level, whereas men go more with the facts and data. In a study titled, "Men Buy, Women Shop," researchers at Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retail Initiative and the Verde Group, found that women react more strongly than men to personal interaction with sales associates. Men are more likely to respond to more utilitarian aspects of the experience -- such as the availability of parking, whether the item they came for is in stock, and the length of the checkout line.

The selectivity model by Joan Meyers-Levy suggests that men and women should exhibit different searching patterns. Men will tend to go to the most salient cue while women will tend to comprehend all information available. Haas 1979, Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran 1991), females are more subjective, intuitive, comprehensive, and relational processing while men are more logical, analytical, selective and item-specific processing. Males’ selectivity and item-specificity predict that they may search less comprehensively than females and focus on certain information sources and topics. When it comes to decision making women use other people’s opinions to help make their own decision while men use other people’s decisions to help them form their own opinion.

**Conclusion**

After the extensive discussion we can draw inferences that gender is a very important factor among all the factors, it plays a very crucial role in purchase decisions. Males are more externally focused while females tends to be more internally focused. There are many differences between males and females if we see in terms of psychological and physiological terms. Females and males both shows totally different behavior when they purchase any goods or services. Where women are more subjective and intuitive men tend to be more analytical and logical who make their opinion based on other peoples purchase rather than trying it themselves. Further, where men tend to make purchases based on the immediate needs women look at purchase as a long term decision. Marketers have to understand and use this segmentation factor wisely in order to satisfy needs more accurately and effectively.

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