

A study on consumer behavior-decision making under high and low involvement situations

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ABSTRACT: *There are enormous elements that can influence consumer behavior while purchasing a product. Many times it may be easier to decide which product to buy, but at other times, the process may be time consuming and may need a lot of preliminary research before the purchase. Some consumers make quick and easy decisions based on their knowledge and experience regarding a product while some may have to conduct more research before purchasing. The level of involvement is an important factor deciding how important a product is for consumer and how much information he needs to have before making a purchase decision. Companies may take advantage by understanding consumer behavior in different situations and can satisfy their needs better. This research paper focuses on consumers decision making for a buying process under high and low involvement situations*

Key Words: *Consumer, Purchase Decision, Research, Buying Process*

Introduction:

In daily lives consumers make several purchases that hardly require a lot of research, thought or selection. If someone is used to having a can of Diet Coke with lunch, it will not require him any thought or research every time before he buys the soda drink. It is a routine decision where one decides quickly based on their knowledge and experience. Consumers make decisions ranging from fairly routine to those requiring extensive thought and research. This can be understood as a range at whose one extreme lie the low involvement decisions and at the other are the high involvement decisions. The decisions that fall in the middle are called limited problem solving. Mostly the decisions fluctuate by consumers and not by products. However, some products can be high involvement for most consumers. A consumer that is newly buying a product will show higher involvement compared to the other who is just replacing it.

The involvement theory is based on the concept that there are low and high involvement consumers and there are high and low involvement purchases. According to this theory consumer involvement depends on the degree of relevance of purchase to a consumer. If for instance, a consumer wants to buy a packet of tea or food or bread or butter he does not feel very much involved. It is because the life of these products is very short and once consumed they exhaust. If the experience with the product is not good, next time some other brand can be purchased.

However, this is not true in case of consumer durables and certain services. If one buys an automobile, refrigerator, air conditioner, furniture, or a house he is forced to use it for a long period and cannot change early and if he decides to dispose of it there is a big loss. Hence in these products there is a high degree of involvement, therefore, a consumer takes a decision after a lot of deliberations. In case of insurance policy once taken one has to live with it.

Literature review

1) Alowaidi Mahmoud Ghazi A, Wang Hu (International Journal of Innovation and Economic Development Volume 1, Issue 2, June 2015, Pages 36-42) The impact of marketing information systems on decision quality and decision speed is very consistent and important. It shortens the time frame for making decisions, creating a correlation between speed and accuracy (correctness) of a decision and also indicates a lack of efficient or inefficient marketing information system processes. The four decision-making styles must show consistency and order in that ambiguity is minimized in the process of structuring information.

2) Alina Stankevich (Journal of International Business Research and Marketing Volume 2, Issue 6, September 2017, Pages 7-14) Research focus in the field of consumer decision-making process was presented, and the papers were discussed for a deeper understanding of state of the art. For a long time, it was a "black box" for marketer what was happening in a stage between information search and postpurchase behaviour in buying process. Till now there is no one right answer, but it is possible to follow

the tendencies and shed light on some processes. Current trends in the field of consumer behaviour were investigated and presented in the introduction part for catching the flow of the future changes and challenges.

Research Methodology

The research paper is based on secondary data collected from different journals, articles and research papers.

Level of Involvement in Consumer Behavior

Consumer involvement is considered as an important variable that can help explain how consumers process the information and how this information might influence their purchase or consumption related behavior. However, there is wide agreement that the degree of involvement has a very significant effect on consumer behavior.

involvement variables are believed to precede involvement and influence its nature and extent. These variables are believed to be the sources that interact with each other to precipitate the level of consumers involvement at any particular time and situation. The extent of risk perception the consumer has with purchase decision can also influence the level of involvement. The perceived risk is the outcome of consumer's perception of the chances of potential degree of resulting unfavorable consequences from making a purchase decision, such as financial loss, or physical or psychological harm. Researchers have suggested that the level of involvement may also be influenced by promotional messages and the media used..

Purchasing Decision

When a purchasing decision involves a low-cost item that is frequently bought—such as bread or toothpaste—the buying process is typically quick and routinized. Buying a new car is quite different. The extent to which a decision is considered complex or simple depends on the following:

- Whether the decision is novel or routine
- The extent of the customers' involvement with the decision

Low involvement Buying

Some time consumer see a magazine with Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt on the front and buy on the spot just because he wish it. Buying a product with no planning or forethought is termed 'impulse buying.'

Impulse shopping brings up an idea known as level of involvement—that is, how vital or interested you're in buying a product. As an example, one would possibly see a roll of tape at a check-out stand and think you need one or probably see a dairy milk chocolate and feel like eating. These products are low-involvement products. Low-involvement products aren't essentially purchased on impulse, though they can be. Low-involvement products are often cheap and of low risk to the customer if he or she makes an error by buying them.

Low-involvement decisions

.There are products that we buy regularly and do not even think twice before buying them. When consumers have run out of grocery or milk, there is no need to conduct a lot of research. Anyone buys these products as soon as he has recognized the need and without doing any research or evaluation. It is because we buy these things on a regular basis and do not need to think over which brands of milk or bread to buy. There are two important characteristics of low involvement products:

- They are relatively inexpensive
- They are low risk products.

Low involvement decisions involve products that do not typically cost much and are bought regularly. A packet of bread, a can of milk or diet coke; these products are not so expensive for an average buyer. The risk of making wrong decisions is also very low in case of low involvement decisions. Such products do not pose a major risk if you have made a wrong choice by mistake. If someone has bought Diet Pepsi instead of Diet Coke, the risk of financial or any other kind of loss is negligibly small because apart from very slight variation taste and the brand, the products are nearly similar. Same is the case with milk, bread, magazines and newspapers. People consume such products on a regular basis and do not put much thought before final action of buying. Companies selling low involvement products use advertising and sales promotion to push the sales higher and to reach more consumers. They also sell from a higher number of stores to cover a larger consumer base. Such products can be seen regularly in TV ads, print ads or outdoor and instore advertising. Promotional activities like the use of 'coupons and discounts' are also common among the companies making low involvement products.

Impulse buying

Sometimes consumers may feel inclined to engage in impulse buying. Impulse buying means buying without much planning and thought and only because you felt like buying the product. A packet of chips on the stall makes one feel hungry and he may purchase it without any thought. A magazine has a hot celebrity on its cover and any one can just purchase it without any consideration. Low involvement products are not necessarily impulse purchases but many times we buy them just out of impulse. However, several times high involvement products too can be bought at impulse only because we were unable to resist their appeal. In case of impulse buying it is mostly the appeal of the product that makes us buy it. For example, a new model of handbag on a shop's shelf is absolutely irresistible for a lady crossing by the store. She enters the store, inquires for the price and brand and without much considerations and checking the product just superficially, buys it.

Low involvement decisions are more straightforward, require little risk, are repetitive, and often lead to a habit. In effect, these purchases are not very important to the consumer. Financial, social, and psychological risks are not nearly as great. In these cases, it may not be worth the consumer's time and effort to search for exhaustive information about different brands or to consider a wide range of alternatives. A low-involvement purchase usually involves an abridged decision-making process. In these situations, the buyer typically does little if any information gathering, and any evaluation of alternatives is relatively simple and straightforward. Consumers are diligent enough to get a product they want, but they generally spend no more time or effort than is needed.

High Involvement Buying

By distinction, high-involvement products carry a high risk to consumers if they fail, or have high-value tags. A house, car or a policy could be the best example of this. These things aren't purchased often. Consumers don't have interaction in routine response behavior once buying high-involvement merchandise. Instead, buyers get engaged in what's known as extended problem solving, where they pay plenty of time comparing the options of the merchandise, prices, and warranties, so forth.

High-involvement merchandise will cause consumers a big deal of post-purchase dissonance if they're unsure concerning their purchases. Firms that sell high-involvement merchandise are aware of the post-purchase dissonance problem. Frequently, they strive to provide buyers plenty of knowledge concerning their purchase of the product, as well as why they're superior to competitive brands and the way they won't let the patron down. Sales people generally try to do a plenty of client "hand-holding."

High-involvement decisions

The high involvement decisions are made after careful consideration and lots of thought. There are three important characteristics of high involvement buying decisions.

- They are risky
- They are complex
- They are expensive.

The risk of failure is always high in the case of high involvement decisions. Such decisions are also more complex than the low involvement decisions. You need to consider several factors before you buy insurance or a new car. They are more expensive. Buying a new house is generally a high involvement decision for most people. These are not routine purchases but still important and highly relevant in people's lives. So, routine response behavior cannot be expected in the case of high involvement decisions. Consumers would do their research and evaluation before they make the final purchase. Quality becomes a very important factor in case of the high involvement decisions. Before you buy your new car, you consider several factors, like fuel efficiency, passenger security, interiors, design, and technology and so on. Even if you zero in on a few brands, you would do a lot of evaluation and comparison of features and prices before you buy.

If a high involvement purchase fails, it can give birth to a lot of anxiety. Suppose one bought a new car and later realized that the other option had a few features that were more suitable to your lifestyle and you feel frustrated over your decision. Buying a new house also requires similar evaluation and analysis. The anxiety felt because of making a wrong purchase decision is called **post purchase dissonance**. Since it can be a problem, companies selling high involvement products provide a lot of information to their consumers regarding their products' features and combine it with customer service for the customer's satisfaction. They also use their sales people to convince their customers about the superiority of their product's features. Many people make such purchases just once or twice in their life time and therefore do it after proper consideration involving extended research, also called **extended problem solving**. Personal selling becomes an important method of customer engagement and persuasion in case of the high involvement

products. Brand name and brand image also become important in case of high involvement products. People may like several products but would buy only from the brands they consider most reliable

These decisions are those that are important to the buyer. These decisions are closely tied to the consumer's ego and self-image. They also involve some risk to the consumer. This may include financial risk (highly priced items), social risk (products that are important to the peer group), or psychological risk (the wrong decision may cause the consumer some concern and anxiety). In making these decisions, consumers generally feel it is worth the time and energy needed to do research and consider solution alternatives carefully. The full, six-stage, complex process of consumer decision making is more likely to happen with high-involvement product purchases. In these cases, a buyer gathers extensive information from multiple sources, evaluates many alternatives, and invests substantial effort in making the best decision.

Limited problem solving

It falls in the middle between low and high involvement decision making. There are several products that we do not buy on a regular basis, are not very high involvement and still require some research and evaluation before finalizing the purchase. For example one have to buy a new vacuum cleaner. They can have some basic information in this regard and are familiar with cleaners and their features. They may like to do some research and comparison before buying a new one because they do not want that it fails after a few months or is not very convenient to use. So, one could do some online research or consult a friend . they could also go to favorite store and consider one from the available models. There are many factors that limit the research and decision making process before the purchase. Such products are not bought on impulse or with minimum consideration but do not require extensive research or thought either.

Purchase involvement

It is the level of concern for, or interest in, the purchase process stimulated by the need to consider a certain purchase. It is important to realize that consumer involvement can take many forms and a broad distinction is that it can be cognitive, such as a consumer may be motivated to learn about the latest specifications of the new iMac; or emotional, when a consumer is considering the purchase of a gift for his wife on their first marriage anniversary. There are several broad types of involvement related to the product, the message, or the perceiver.

1)Product involvement It states to a consumer's level of interest in a certain product. Marketers communicate many sales promotions to increase consumer involvement in a product. Tata Indica V2 sponsored a contest in which participants were to submit five words that describe the car starting with the letter "V."

2)Advertising involvementIt states to the consumer's interest in processing the ad messages. Television is said to be low-involvement medium and consumers process information in a passive manner. But print is a high-involvement medium as the readers actively process information.

3)Purchase situationinvolvement may occur while buying the same item in different contexts. For example, when a consumer wants to impress someone, she/he may buy a different brand that reflects elegance and taste in a better way than the usual one that she/he buys.

There are various types of consumer-decision processes. It is useful to view purchase decision involvement as a continuum and as the consumer moves from a low level of involvement with the purchase situation to a high level of involvement, purchase decision-making becomes increasingly complex. Based on the amount of effort that goes into decision-making, consumer researchers have found it convenient to think that on one end is the habitual purchase decision-making or nominal decision-making and at the other extreme is extended decision-making. Many decisions fall somewhere in the middle and are characterized by limited decision-making. It should be kept in mind that the types of decision processes are not distinct but rather blend into each other.

What Marketers should do

Marketer should recognize high-involvement versus low-involvement consumers of their products and strategize accordingly. It is entirely possible for their target segments to include a mix of both. They should recognize the differences in how the customers make decisions, and then can create a marketing mix designed to impact each type of consumer. For the customer who wants little involvement, your marketing mix can simplify their buying process. For the consumer who is highly involved, they should provide the information and validation they seek.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be inferred that the consumer decision making process differs from consumer to consumer. Consumers not necessarily undergo all the shopping stages once they're considering buying a product. One may easily buy a pair of jeans from his favorite brand while the other would search and evaluate several

before deciding which one to buy. High involvement products are expensive, and risky so require lots of evaluation before buying. The buying decision process behind the high involvement products is also complex. On the other hand, in case of the low involvement products, the decision making process is simpler and one do not give a second thought to which bread one have to buy. There are general patterns about what constitutes a high-involvement decision (buying cars, homes, engagement rings, pets, computers, etc.) versus a low-involvement decision (buying bread, chewing gum, toothpaste, dishwasher detergent, trash bags, etc.). However, the real determinant is the individual consumer and how involved they choose to be in solving the problem or need they have identified. Consumer decision making process is a complex but interesting process and understanding it helps companies understand how they can market certain products and maximize customer satisfaction.

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