

## CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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**Abstract.** To edge the objectives related to maximise the profit, the growth of the selling volume, the occupation of advantageous position in relation with competitors, the company must place the consumer on the 1st plan to elaborate marketing strategies in behavioral studies. In that case the consumer represents the central element for sellers actions. It begins form studying needs, necessities, wishes, preferences, motivation and consumator expectations.

**Keywords:** *consumer, consumer behavior, motivation, buyers' preferences, attitude, product.*

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Living in a contemporary society, where the technical and scientific progress tends to replace the human workforce by machines in many areas, it becomes very important and significant to study consumer behaviour.

Moreover, the rare resources having alternative uses, available for the human society, require the manufacturing of products and services, which covers the needs in strictly necessary quantities.

That is why, the knowledge and explanation of consumption and purchase behaviour has become a pressing necessity, and its ignorance can lead to sizable inequalities [3].

The modern concept of marketing starts from the premise that any economic activity must be directed towards satisfying the actual and potential requirements of the consumers with maximum efficiency.

An economic unit, incorporating marketing into its structures, needs to focus on learning and anticipating the market requirements to adapt its activities for meeting the current and future consumer needs by producing, promoting and effective and rational distributing the goods and services they need [2, p. 13].

Marketers approach to the consumers' behaviour by studying the areas of priority concern and thereby understand the way consumers make their choice of goods and services, learn the intensity of stimulus sway, the multiplicity of influence factors on purchasing and consumption.

The diversity of supply gives consumers a multiple choice. The high level of education and culture offers the buyer the opportunity to meet his needs at a higher quality level. The above-mentioned aspects are recommended to be investigated by the manufacturer / seller in order to provide products and services responsive to the consumer's expectations, needs and requirements.

From economic point of view, the rational consumer is one who tends to maximize the product utility. The consumer uses all the available information to make the best and most informed decision. The major drawback of this theory is that it ignores the role of emotions and subjective factors involved in the decision-making process.

An individual will not buy a product just because he needs it but will choose one that has specific features to satisfy many other desires [4].

As an essential component of human behaviour, the consumer behaviour calls for an interdisciplinary approach to its investigation due to the fundamentally different nature of the actions and the decision-making processes that makes it up [2, p. 14].

The science of psychology in this regard contributes to this subject with its theory of social identity which states that an individual acts in accordance with his self-image. Through the purchasing and consumption process the consumer asserts himself and creates a favorable attitude about certain brands associating them with certain values.

In marketing, the concept of consumer behaviour is considered in both narrow and broad sense. In a narrow sense, the consumer behaviour is people's behaviour when purchasing or consuming products and services; In broad sense it includes the entire behaviour of the final consumer of products and services.

The authors J. F. Engel, R. D. Blackwell and D.T. Miniard define the consumer behaviour as "Those actions directly involved in obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services including the decision processes that precede and follow these actions" [6, p. 35].

*American Marketing Association* representatives define consumer behaviour as follows: "the dynamic interaction of effect and cognition, behaviour and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives".

Matin Khan describes the consumer behaviour like a "*decision-making process and physical activity involved in acquiring, evaluating, using and disposing of goods and services*".

Philip Kotler translates consumer behaviour issues into cyber language.

According to the author, the consumer behaviour is an amount of "output variables", being the result of "input variables" which were received, evaluated and processed by the human being. Psychological processes that occur between inputs and outputs characterize the consumer exactly and take place into a so-called "black box" (figure nr.1).

Inputs may take the form of an economic status, price, quality, utility, etc., received via a variety of channels (advertising, knowledge, personal observation, etc.).

Of these elements, inputs, channels and outputs can be controlled to a lesser or greater extent, where outputs reflect the organization's desired interaction with products, services, ideas, etc. that come up on the market.

This in turn depends on the processes that occur at the level of the black box. Problems of consumer research, from this theory perspective, are to determine as accurately as possible the shape of the outputs through a deeper knowledge of the processes that occur at the level of the black box.

Input		"The black box"		Output
<i>Marketing stimuli</i>	<i>Other stimuli</i>	<i>Buyer's characteristics</i>	<i>Buyer's decision process</i>	<i>Buyer's decisions</i>
Product	Economic	Cultural	Problem recognition	Product choice
Price	Technological	Social	Evaluation of alternatives	Brand choice
Place	Political	Personal	Purchase decision	Dealer choice
Promotion	Cultural	Psychological	Post purchase behaviour	Purchase timing
				Purchase frequency
				Purchase amount

**Figure 1.** Consumer behaviour by Philip Kotler [5, p. 236]

Consumer behaviour in a specific approach can be defined as a concept of multidimensional excellence resultant from a dynamic relationships system between the processes of perception, information, attitude, motivation and actual manifestation (actual behaviour) which characterizes the integration of an individual or a group of people in an expanse consisting of common consumption goods and services existing in society at a given moment through individual or group decision-making acts [2, p. 21].

Investigating consumer behaviour requires an adequate knowledge of the dimensions that contribute to the manifestation of a certain behaviour of the consumer. The most important of them are: purchase / non-purchase reasons, consumption patterns, purchasing habits, buyers' preferences, purchase intentions, attitudes, image.

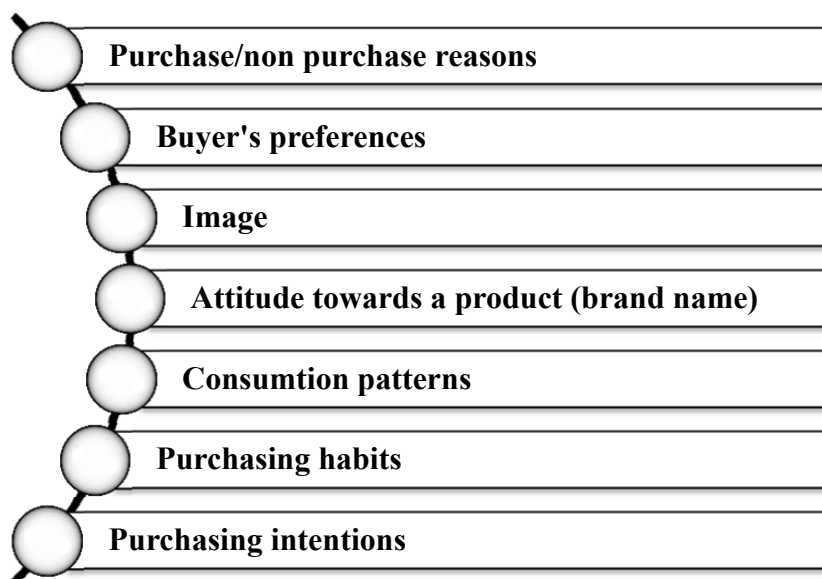
*The reasons for buying or non-buying the product / service* are all internal motives. The reasons underlying the purchase or not-purchase of a product / service may be generically structured into: primary or secondary, rational or emotional reasons. Research instrumentation of buying or non-buying reasons is very diversified but most frequently used instrument is opinion polls based on a questionnaire by using closed questions and open questions.

*Consumption patterns* is the constant activity of customers on products, services or brands and has a strong connection with the purchasing habits of the buyer.

A special research has highlighted that, compared to purchasing habits, consumption patterns have a greater stability over the time. That is why manufacturers need to put more educational and promotional effort into influencing consumer habits.

*Purchasing habits* are forms of manifestation of the consumer's purchasing behaviour of the product / service that have acquired repeatability. They are the result of past

consumer experiences acquired through the learning process. Purchasing habits have a three directional structure:



**Figura 2.** Dimensions of consumer behavior [2, p. 20]

- a) Temporary habits suppose seasonal, daily, hourly purchase making.
- b) Geospatial and territorially based purchasing habits is the average distance travelled by consumers to buy goods and services and includes preferred store types.
- c) Mode habits include buyer's preferred points of sale.

A positive motivation is represented by buyer preferences expressed through the affective compatibility with a product, service, or form of commercialisation. It suggests not of an internal function of the human body, but of a quality of the items that satisfies the needs, and the gained quality within the connection established between the human being and the goods that fit his needs.

*Purchasing intentions* are probabilistic estimates of future behaviour. Intention is a developed motivation outlining itself into a trend. Knowing it, is of a particular importance on the eve of launching a new product, especially when dealing with rare and high value goods. Determining buying intentions raises two methodological issues: ensuring the representativeness of the information regarding the buying intentions and the statistical guarantee of the results [2, p. 23].

The concept of buying intentions is closely related to the notion of attitude, the latter being considered as the concrete form of manifestation of needs and necessities. Thus, K. Lewin argues that "purchasing intentions are characterized as pseudo needs and, nevertheless, as an action-causing dimension".

Since buying intentions are the result of a complex system of mutual influences between variables it becomes necessary to systematise them with the aim to explain the purchasing decisions as clearly as possible.

Thereof, the needs, motives, opinions, proposals, aspirations, feelings, expectations, etc., become in concrete terms a system of preferences and attitudes. Regardless of the used terminology, they can be interpreted "as immediate manifestations of needs, desires, tastes, or internal motivating impulses that are characteristic of every individual."

*Attitudes* bring together the influences of habits, customs and reasons into a single behavioural component with a prominent stability over time. Some researchers define attitude as a latent dimension of behaviour [2, p. 24].

*The Image* as a behavioural dimension is the result of how the products, services, firms or brands are perceived by potential consumers. It is interesting to note the definition of the method of image formation and its evolutions among consumers. It highlights the contribution of every quality, corporal or corporate component to the image outline.

Although the study of consumer's behaviour has accumulated multiple observations and methodical researches, there is no comprehensive explanation of consumer purchasing behaviour and consumption so far.

Thus, the study of consumer behaviour cannot be reduced only to determine the factors affecting the purchase of products and services, but it is advisable to identify the nature of the reasons and the desire to buy. The results of these investigations can answer the question "Why the consumer buys a brand, product or service?" Marketers have the possibility to determine how the consumers turn their intent into action and what emotions do they feel after a product or service purchase, as well as giving up the idea that consumers make purely rational decisions.

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