

Urziceanu, Ramona Mihaela; Paşcalău, Simona-Valentina

Article

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The purchase behavior of the consumer

Urziceanu Ramona-Mihaela¹, Pașcalău Valentina-Simona²

Abstract

The paper describes the types of purchase behavior of consumers and the stages of decision made by the purchasing of the consumer, the approach in which the personal factors can affect the decision made by the purchasing of the consumer, the psychological factors which can affect the decision made by the purchasing of the consumer, the examination of the social factors that influence the decision made by the purchasing of the consumer and why is it so important that marketing has to understand consumer purchasing behavior.

Keywords: behavior, consumer, purchase, marketing, factors, decision

Introduction

Marketing is defined in many ways, in the academic research or in the applied business purposes; marketing is the process of planning and executing of the conception, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services, to conduct exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals.

Marketing is one of the most essential tools for business success through business orientation towards the market, in other words, customer orientation.

The study of consumer behavior became a concern for marketers, as they can learn how buyers choose their goods and services to satisfy the many needs that are stimuli, factors that influence their choice.

The consumer purchasing behavior, as recent research field of marketing, refers to the behavior of final consumers who purchase goods and services for personal consumption - individuals and households - by fulfilling the current requirements or indicate their role in society.

Marketing deals with the concept of consumer behavior both narrowly and broadly.

The American Marketing Association defines consumer behavior as "an interaction on impression and perception, behavior and common natural events that human beings direct their changes in their lives."

The consumer behavior is defined as "all acts of individuals directly related to the purchase of goods and services, which includes the whole decision-making process that precedes and determines these acts".³

There are three essential elements that define human behavior: stimulus that is cause; need is a desire that can be achieved; the objective of which is its purpose.

As the needs multiply exponentially due to technical and scientific progress, leads to the invention of others and the need of satisfy leads to others, obviously the individual behavior changes, too.

It is also important to remember some key points for defining consumer behavior:

- The consumer behavior is dynamic, both because of the time evolution of generation of consumers faced with the changes which they produce and due to the emergence of new factors directly influencing their behavior. The overtime change, determine the leading producers to monitor the safety of customers to have a real perception, fairly;
- The consumer behavior is the individual's reaction to various endogenous and exogenous variables.
- The consumer behavior, involves the successive or simultaneous actions for selecting an alternative, resulting in decisions⁴. The consumer behavior is a complex system of events, attitudes, motivations, decisions;

¹ Agora University of Oradea, Romania, e-mail: ganearamona2002@yahoo.com

² Agora University of Oradea, Romania, e-mail: simonavali@yahoo.com

³O.C..Ferrel, William M.Pride, *Marketing*. Houghton Mifflin Company Publishing House, Boston ,1991, p.140.

⁴P. Mălcomete (coord.), *Lexicon de marketing*, Junimea Publishing House, Iași, 1994, p.67.

- The development of human individuality both naturally and through education is reflected in his behavior through preferences, dislikes, beliefs, attitudes and values, in the position occupied in society, in the attended entourage, etc. Thus by combining individual circumstances and psychology will influence the purchasing decisions of each individual;
- The consumer behavior determines interactions and therefore it is important to know "what consumers think (perception), feel (impression) and what do they do (behavior), what are the things and places that influence"⁵
- The consumer behavior determines changes between people and therefore "if the relationship between the consumer who demands and the producer, who offers on the market, mutual understanding is essential in the purchase process and in the production of goods and services"⁶.
- The scope of consumer behavior widens, especially due to the development and diversification of the services sector in the no labor sphere. As a result "within the current social marketing meaning, the consumer behavior requires such a comprehensive approach to express the position of the people to all tangible and intangible assets arisen in the final consumption"⁷

The stages of decision made by the purchasing of the consumer

In the literature we find five stages (phases, stages, and moments) to adopt a complex decision: identify the problem, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, the choice, post-purchase evaluation.⁸

The involvement of the consumer in every stage of the decisional process is reflected in the cognitive behavior (the utility and affective motivations are focused on the functional characteristics of the product),⁹ and the intensity has its roots in the importance of the product or service for the consumer and the risk that it involves his purchase.

"As a result, it can delineate the low, medium or highly involvement, as shown in the following table.

Therefore, the concept of the involvement of different types presents:

- 1 - The poor involvement decisions, which does not mean a proper decision, because the experience provides a unique solution preferred, the product being purchased. So, the decisions are taken on the basis of routine, an important role being played by fidelity, like learning. It results from the repeated purchases.
- 2 - The decisions with strong involvement are usually complex decisions that go through all the decision making stages

If we consider how the purchase decisions are done, we can classify them in:

- 1 - Scheduled decision – characterized by repetition and similarity in the way of adoption. They are routine decisions for the purchase of most products and services with high frequency and high fidelity;
- 2 - Unscheduled decision – it refers to new situations, restructured and they have strong financial and psychological implications, because there is no precedent that involves greater risk and have a more complicated structure.

If you take into account the level of effort expended for the decision, going through the phases determined by the rate decision-making process, the nature of the products and the importance given decision, it defines five distinct shopping categories:

- 1 - Impulse shopping - made unplanned due to a motivation instant, sudden, driven mainly by visual stimulus, asks minimal effort;
- 2 - Routine shopping - which are regularly planned without great expense of time and effort;
- 3 - Family shopping - commonly consumed product, but the consumer is willing to extra effort for another version of the product. In this situation the advertising plays an important role;
- 4 - Unfamiliar shopping - involve a great effort, the decision process is lengthy because it uses different criteria for purchase;

⁵J. Blythe , *Comportamentul consumatorului*, Teora Publishing House,1998, p.11.

⁶I. Mihuț, M. Pop, *Consumatorul și managementul ofertei* , DaciaPublishing House, Cluj – Napoca 1996, p.14

⁷P. Mălcomete ,*Marketing* , AcademicăPublishing House – Gh. Zane, Iași 1993, p.51.

⁸ O.C.Ferrel, William M.Pride, *Marketing*, Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1991, p.142.

⁹ C.W. Park, S.M. Young – “Consumer Response to Television Commercials, the Impact of Involvement and Background, Music on Brand Attitude Formation” – Journal of Marketing Research, 1986, 23,1 p.11-21.

5 - Critical shopping - involving high risk and therefore a special effort to get information and compare options.”¹⁰

Table1 The involvement of the buyer in the stages of decision

CHARACTERISTICS	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
TYPE	Routine	Partial solution of the choice	Complete resolution of the problem of choice
PROBLEM RELATED	Selective	Generic	Generic
INFORMATION REUEST	Limited	Intern external limitation	Intern Extern
THE ALTERNATIVE RATING	Intern	few attributes Simple Decision Rules few alternatives	many attributes Complex Decision many alternatives
PURCHASE	Purchase	Purchase	Purchase
POST PURCHASE BEHAVIOR	Without dissonance Limited Rating	Without dissonance Limited Rating	dissonance, Rating Complex Rating

Source: Sica Stanciu, ” Bazele generale ale marketingului”, <http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/StiinteADM/sica/5.htm>

Factors determining consumer behavior

Dubois and Jolibert group the factors that influence consumer behavior¹¹ in:

- individual factors, which include: personality, cognitive style, lifestyle and perceived risk;
- Environmental factors, which include: socio-demographic factors (curve family life, social classes), reference groups, family, economic environment.

In the extensive analysis that makes of consumer behavior, Ph. Kotler starts from analyzing the factors which influence¹², in groups:

- cultural factors - represented by: culture, subculture and social class;
- social factors - which include reference groups, family, roles and statuses;
- personal factors - relating to: the age and stage of life cycle, occupation, lifestyle, economic circumstances, personality and opinion of oneself;
- psychological factors - nominated by: motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes.

Conclusion

Knowing all these types, shapes, situations has a great practical importance, as the purchaser acts as an active partner and imperative in the economic transaction and the seller must be equally active and conscious, using marketing tools, to help the potential buyer.

Currently, all marketers agree that "the buying process begins and ends long before the actual purchase"¹³

Customer orientation does not mean that we must do everything the customer claims, but to recognize his needs and to offer services and products that bring real use. In doing so, we can transform the client in collaborator and, in turn, he will recommend us to others.

Increasing the level of knowledge held by consumers, the availability of information and instant communication are factors that determine the almost total transparency for companies globally.

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