

PSYCHOLOGY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT: *Consumer psychology debuted through a series of creative research, dealing with the links between firms producing and distribution, on the one hand, and people, as the public, products and services offered for sale. Consumer psychology interest shifted from the producer-consumer relationship towards the interests of consumer preferences, desires, and especially on efforts to design products in accordance with subjective phenomenology of the consumer.*

KEY WORDS: *behaviour, consumer, consumer-producer relationship, relationship selling-purchasing, marketing*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *D91.*

1. THE IMPERATIVE OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

With the increasing complexity of economic life becomes necessary to study the way in which man acts and manifests from economically, both from his perspective as a producer of goods and services, and as a consumer, the two situations being considered as intrinsic components of human behaviour.

Consumer behaviour as a distinct field of marketing becomes the object of study in the mid-1960s, the moment marked by the adoption of marketing option imposed by the need for understanding the complex mechanism of transformation of the need in the application of the goods and services.

With the passage of time this field is becoming more and more important, knowledge concerning the behaviour of the consumer by ensuring the foundation of marketing strategies: market segmentation, product positioning, launch new products, decisions by marketing-mix etc.

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Consumers are the ones that determine a company's sales and profits through their buying decisions, so that their motivations and actions actually calculated on the economic viability of a company. Therefore, assume that any activity of an economic firms must be directed and carried out taking into account the consumer as being the centre of attention. Basically, consumer behaviour is included in the economic behaviour of men who, in turn, represents a form of manifestation of human behaviour in general (Cătoiu and Teodorescu, 1997, p.13).

Marketing concept requires the managers to observe everything, i.e. their perception is carried out from the point of view of the consumer, to look at the company, its products and services through the consumer, taking into account its needs and aspirations. Research on consumer behaviour requires a multidisciplinary approach, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology being just some of the specialist that lie at the Foundation of the concepts found in this area.

Due to the emergence of new factors influencing consumer behaviour directly, but also on account of the changes coming even from them with the formation of new generations of consumers, you can highlight the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour, which imposes the producers monitored clients to have a true and fair view upon reality.

The consumer's buying behaviour refers to (Tecău, 2013, pp.16-17):

- behaviour of final consumers - they represent individuals who purchase goods and services for personal or family consumption in order to meet current desires or to define and highlight status in society;
- behaviour of organizational consumers – aimed at individuals or groups who purchase goods or services on behalf of the organization for which they work, for consumption or use, in order to produce other goods and services.

Consumer behaviour is considered a complex system of events, attitudes, motivations, decision.

Under the conditions of knowledge and the study of consumer behaviour, you have reviewed the main features of its:

(http://file.ucdc.ro/cursuri/T_2_n26_Comportamentul_consumatorului.pdf.pdf):

1. Regardless of education, age, gender, occupation, income, social affiliation, lifestyle, etc., consumer needs and goals are tracked individually with a devotion to their own specific interests;
2. There are affective and social cooperation manifested on the one hand between consumers, producers, and among consumers on the other hand, which means that the consumer's behaviour determines interactions that generally relies on law interest;
3. Consumer behaviour is dynamic; this statement finds its explanation in the fact that there are very few absolute rules of human behaviour so that ideas or new approaches are adapted constantly, so by default and approaches involving the study of consumer behaviour;
4. Consumer behaviour involves an exchange between human beings (direct from the seller and the buyer) which satisfy their mutual interests;

5. The context of hope to satisfy their own interests and needs optimum dimension of consumer behaviour and at the same time producers.

2. DEFINITION OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

In the literature, it is considered, rightly, that in a given moment of time, consumers are absolute masters-sovereign-allocate their income from which (by virtue of the consumer basket-and not only) parts needed to satisfy the needs of the individual and the group. It goes without saying that, on the one hand, economic and social conditions have a decisive role in the orientation behaviour in the process of purchasing goods and services (social stratification clearly differentiate revenue and lead to significant influence in the structure of consumption), and on the other hand, the consumer is determined and differentiation of component-personality belonging to each individual.

In this context, in the context of the definition of "consumer behaviour", are a few clarifications of terminology. One of these relates to the distinction which it operates "marketing" between the concepts of "consumer" and "buyer".

Thus, accurately observed by specialists in marketing, can take three types of situations covered in a measure of the distribution of buyers/consumers:

- an economic downturn can manifest itself in the market as a buyer without having to satisfy the consumer and of good quality;
- without being a good buyer, a firm or an individual can consume the good or service;
- dual situation when an economic operator is the buyer and consumer of the asset purchased.

From the above it follows "buying behaviour" and "consumer behaviour" between a person who is not informed would make a trivial distinction; the distinction, however, is extremely necessary because it involves many and varied consequences in practice marketing plan, among which one essential: between consumer behaviour and the relationships these concepts exist in part to the whole.

A first condensed definition as a result of the concerns of the various specialists in the field is as follows: "consumer behaviour can be defined as an overall approach as representing the totality of the acts of the decision-making at the individual or group, directly related to obtaining and use of goods and services to meet current and future needs, including decision-making processes that precede and lead to those acts" (Balaure, 2000, p.172).

Extremely relevant is the definition developed by Cătoiu and Teodorescu (1997, p.22), namely: "consumer behaviour can be defined as a multidimensional concept par excellence, as a result of a system of dynamic relationships between the processes of perception, information, attitude, motivation and effective manifestation, which characterizes the individual's or group's integration into the space open to all consumer goods and services existing in the society at a time legislative decision making individual or group concerning them."

3. FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR INDIVIDUALLY

The complexity of consumer behaviour is explained also by the myriad factors that influence directly or indirectly the ultimate decision-making process of purchase and consumption. All the specialists admit that, in fact, consumer behaviour cannot be explained only by knowing the system factors acting in close contact and mutual conditioning, but how you act and especially the place and the role they have in the system are viewed differently and therefore meet the literature various classifications of these factors.

In the ample analysis that makes consumer behaviour, Kotler et.al (1999, pp. 334-338) starts from the analysis of factors which affect it, grouped into:

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

Also highlight the classification proposed by the Boier (1994, pp. 30-51) by three groups:

1. *individual factors*, including consumer behaviour: needs and motivations, personality and self-image, lifestyle, attitudes and preferences;
2. *social factors*: family, represented by groups and opinion leaders, role and social status, social classes;
3. *cultural factors*.

Extremely interesting approach is by way of classifying Cătoiu and Teodorescu (1997, pp. 25-45), which considers it influenced the behaviour of buying two types of variables: directly observable and inferred by the interference type.

As a result, the factors of influence categorize consumer behaviour as follows:

1. the direct influence exercised:
 - a) demographic and economic factors;
 - b) specific marketing mix factors;
 - c) situational factors, such as time pressure, the importance of the occasion, with the execution of a purchase.
2. influence deduced that exercise:
 - a) psychological factors (endogenous) represented by perception; motivation; learning; personality; attitude.
 - b) sociological factors (exogenous) defined by family; membership groups; reference groups; social class; subculture; culture.

It is noted that, although each author trying a group of its own depending on his opinion regarding the concept of the consumer's behaviour or purchasing decision process and criteria which it sets forth, the essential factors influencing them in all this.

3.1. Psychological factors

Psychological factors of endogenous variables which constitute explains consumer behaviour through their multiple incidences on the individual, which in good measure may not be directly observable and therefore are usually deducted (Blythe, 1998, p. 34). Of the many psychological variables with major influence on consumer behaviour, such as: perception, motivation, learning and attitude.

- a) Perception is a process by which an individual receives, selects, organizes and interprets the stimuli from the environment, thus giving them a particular significance. It is a complex process that depends on the character of physical stimuli, but also the relationships between stimuli and conditions involving the individual.
- b) Motivation is variable which has polarized the interests of researchers, being for a long time considered to be the only one that intervenes between the stimuli and the reaction of the buyer, since it is easy to see that any act (cognitive, affective, behavioural) based on the last instance of a motif, the internal impetus resulting from the interplay of dialectical system of coordinates. The reasons are just causing the underlying consumer behaviour. (Mihuț and Pop, 1996, p. 113).
- c) Learning reflects an observable change in behaviour or too subtle an individual due to the accumulation of experience, which leads to an increase in the possibility that an act should be repeated. Experts consider that the greatest part of human behaviour is learned.

For an explanation of the learning process, there are already several techniques, which are also relevant for marketing: (Datculescu, 2006, p. 48):

- learning through classical conditioning technique of pavlovian-type;
- instrumental learning technique;
- cognitive learning technique.

d. The attitude reflects the learned predispositions to react with consistency against an object in a way favourable or adverse. It constitutes a bridge between perception and behaviour manifest himself in time and therefore is stable, which makes it possible to forecast them.

3.2. Sociological factors

In explaining consumer behaviour should be taken of social factors influence inferred, because they are an important component of macro marketing. Specialists consider that they play an important role: family, social groups, social classes and social status.

- a) Family is a variable which exercises the most powerful influence on consumer behaviour, because it influences the decisions of each member, and its influences are felt over a long period of time, generally on the entire life cycle of the individual. For the practice of marketing, all aspects of the role played by the family in making purchasing decisions have great importance as it provides interesting information for identifying segments of buyers.

- b) Social groups (referential) takes the form of a group of reference and membership. Group membership is the type of social structure in which individuals have the consciousness that belong to the common objectives, through the sense of unity and common rules, and reference groups are present or imaginary groups that influence the evaluation of the individual's behaviour, and aspiration, as it considers the group as a landmark, as standard in the process of forming of opinions, attitudes, norms.
- c) The role and social status define the position of the individual within each group it belongs to (family, club, organization). Role consists in a series of activities which are expected to be carried out by a person in relation to others and the status reflects the esteem accorded to him by general society. Consumer behaviour is reflected in both the role and his status, often people choose products by which to highlight the status. Therefore, the activity of marketing is interesting to know the product's potential to become a "status symbol", but the fact that this symbol varies within different groups, social classes, as well as under the geographic report, which should be reflected especially in promotional policy.
- d) Social classes understood as relatively homogeneous subdivisions and enduring in a society that is hierarchically ordered and whose members have the same values, interests and behaviours, constitute a major exogenous variable. Also called socio-economic groups, they are groups of individuals with the same economic and social circumstances are deemed to possess the same status in society.

3.3. Personal factors

Constitute important variables that define the behaviour of the individual purchase and consumption that give domestic deep explanation. In this group of factors include (Marder, 2002, p. 67):

- a) the age and stage of life cycle, changing drinking behaviour of people. Such as the elderly, individuals change the structure of products and services that they consume in relation to needs, but also with revenue;
- b) the occupation of a person always has the influence on the goods and services that they consume, reflecting both the level of education, but also the individual's hierarchical position;
- c) life style, which expresses "how human behaviour in society, the establishment of selection, the range of their needs in relation to their ideals" is different, even if people come from the same social class, subculture and even have the same occupation, due to the fact that they have many sources of income, a personality type, a strategy generated a model of life, determined by specific social conditions, realization of the different activities that make up life.

3.4. Cultural factors

Macro component marketing, cultural factors exert an extensive and profound influence on the behaviour of exogenous nature of purchase and consumption. In this set of rules, material and moral values, beliefs, attitudes and habits created in time by common members of society, culture has a strong impact on individual behavior, being an important factor in the socialization process.

The culture endorses a set of values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviours that are specific to the society in which he lives, but that changes continuously. Defining elements of culture are reinforced by educational and legal systems, but also for social institutions.

Marketing research should investigate the effects of numerous socio-cultural mutations that influence individuals' active behaviour.

3.5. Economic factors

Also, in the modern era economic factors were crucial because at the macroeconomic level they characterize the capacity available to purchase the company at one point, constituting the premise of consumer behaviour training. They directly affect the size and consumption trends.

Macroeconomic dynamics and the synthetic indicators of macroeconomic level (gross and net national product, gross domestic product and net national income etc.), the evolution of the main areas of activity, expressed through specific indicators of industrial and agricultural production, transport, telecommunications, construction, interior and exterior trade etc., changes in the population's real revenues, credit, inflation, unemployment etc., expressing the desire for buying factually.

At the microeconomic level, consumer's disposable income is an essential factor which, in size, shape, dynamics, distribution in time, destination, etc., constitute the premise of consumer behaviour and the main restriction requiring it. In the same category we also include economic factors such as: personal wealth expressed in particular by the degree of endowment with various goods, as well as the usability of consumer credit by the individual.

3.6. Demographic factors

Demographic factors are the reflection of the population structure and processes affecting it. At the macroeconomic level, the main variables: number of population and its geographical distribution, natural increase, by age group, occupation, educational level, number of families and households, a family's size and population, mobility management, habitat type (urban, rural).

At the demographic level, important variables are age, gender, marital status, race, ethnicity, etc. Thus, due to social norms, especially but not only women and men buy different products and use other criteria in their choice. On the basis of the identification of behavioural differences between the sexes, manufacturers can address the market segment-specific manner.

Also, the age is what differentiates the buying decisions, and once the age is producing changes that need to be taken into account, because they are changing consumer behaviour. Knowledge of these variables has great significance, since it gives the opportunity to the dire predictions of some consequences from the point of view of marketing, trends of demographic variables, which will change consumer behaviour.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Even though this article uses an economic approach in trying to understand consumer behaviour individually, a full analysis and complex term and should concentrate on the sociological approaches, psychological, anthropological, political or even genetic.

Starting from truth accepted by all specialists in marketing, i.e. "there is no business without a customer," key marketing issue will remain at the heart of consumer placement activities. As long as consumers live in an economy of abundance, given multiple choices at hand, consumer behaviour, the supreme importance for marketing specialist.

In a market economy the consumer becomes king. Companies that do not take care of their own, and those who believed that their task is only to the manufacture of a product at a price as small, will not survive into the 21st century.

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