# Consumer Behaviour and Consumer’s Consumption

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## Introduction

Consumer behaviour theory is based on how the consumer behaves while buying a product or services. There are many stages that the consumers have to go through before final buying. A consumer will not reach to the stage of buying directly rather they find out their need first and then seek the information about the product, thirdly search for any other alternatives, in the fourth stage they finally go for purchase but this is not the last step. After purchasing the consumer draws a conclusion whether to buy the product or services again or it is the last time. If the customer is not satisfied then he or she will definitely not go for the same purchase again. The study revolves around the consumer behaviour while booking a flight ticket. In this field, the same process has been followed by customers. As it a travelling service so every customer is very particular about safety and types of services they expect while flying. The behaviour of a consumer while buying also differs on the basis of brand. So brand positioning is crucial for a company. To attract more customers a company must give emphasis on the positioning of the brand. Brand image is the perception in the mind of the customer about the brand. It is an aggregate feeling like beliefs, impressions and ideas that customer perceives in his mind. Every customer does not have the same perception about a particular brand, so it is risky as well as a hard task to build up an image of the brand in the market. Self-theory of consumer behaviour is also mentioned in the study.

## Discussion

### Critical engagement with disciplinary perspectives and concepts in literature and scholarship

It is not always necessary that consumer behaviour need to relate to the consumption idea every time, whether it is of buying a packet of biscuit or booking an Airbus ticket. Sometimes a consumer may have different needs but they are buying or consuming different thing. So it can be assumed that the concept regarding consumption is different as it does not always depend on the idea of consumer behaviour. According to Gabriel (2015, pp. 26-27), consumption has a deeper meaning; it is a way that a person sees his inner as well as outer selves regarding the way the person is negotiating, expressing his/her personality and presenting their image through their choices of consumption(Gabriel, 2015). As per Venkatesh, Thong and Xu (2012, pp.157-178) concept regarding one’s self-image and esteem can be drawn from various theoretical disciplines, such as psychological, anthropological, psychoanalytical, sociological and cultural. The above-mentioned concept helps to understand a person’s behaviour regarding his/her consumption and how a person continuously struggle to negotiate with his/her perception in relation to their personality (Venkatesh, Thong and Xu, 2012). Every individual has their own psychology or personality traits. Psychology can be best explained by the person’s perception of anything that has a direct impact on the person’s behaviour centric a specific thing. As stated by Sparks, Perkins and Buckley (2013, pp.1-9), the characteristic of a person which shows his or her uniqueness is the personality or psychology of that person. Consumer behaviour regarding consumption greatly depends on Freud’s theory of psychoanalytic which states that a person’s personality or behaviour totally depends on the three constituents of the human mind which are the person’s identity, ego and superego (Sparks, Perkins and Buckley, 2013). According to Lin and Huang (2012, pp.11-18), the theory states that a human personality or rather a behaviour starts developing from his/her childhood and the mind starts getting its shape with the conflict it sees between the social expectation and the biological upbringing (Lin and Huang, 2012). Freud’s explain briefly the three components of the mind in his theory: Identity; which refer to the need and motive of the person, Superego; it is the person’s own moral and Ego; it is the balancing component between superego and identity. Even when a person is booking a flight ticket, his/her identity which is determining the need of the person or his/her urge is also stated in the Freud’s theory. As per Yang (2012, pp.484-491) it can be concluded that consumer behaviour is highly dependent on the Freud’s psychoanalytical theory. Studying the various human aspects from the present as well as past societies is termed as anthropology. Consumer behaviour regarding consumption greatly depends on the anthropological theory (Yang, 2012). Buying a small pen or booking flights ticket is related to the anthropological theory of human behaviour. According to Joy and Li (2012, pp.141-173) in simpler terms, anthropology can be explained as the societal status a person carries to stay in a society. So when a person is going to book his/her flight tickets, the status factor will unconsciously remain in the mind of the person (Joy and Li, 2012). A person belonging to a high-class society will surely purchase a business class ticket and that of a person belonging to a middle-class family will opt for an economy class ticket. So it is relevant that anthropological factor greatly affects the consumer behaviour regarding consumption. As stated by Karasek and Bryant (2012, p. 91) consumer behaviour is highly dependent on the society where the consumer lives. The sociological factor is a vital factor that engages with the consuming or buying the power of a consumer (Karasek and Bryant, 2012). Social factors that influence the behaviour of the consumer when making a buying decision are reference groups which the consumer rely on, consumer’s first family members, the society in which the consumer lives in and the consumer’s social role and status. As per San and Herrero (2012, pp.341-350) reference group which comprises of relatives, family members and co-workers influence the consumer buying decision by sharing their knowledge about the product or service or brand. The family also plays an important role in influencing the buying decision of the consumer. A consumer who is the guardian of his/her family, his buying decision will differ from the consumer who is in his bachelorhood. On the other hand, if a consumer belongs to a high-class society or upper middle segment of the society, the person will surely go for a luxury item and if the person is from a lower middle class he will concentrate more on the basic needs rather than luxury (San and Herrero, 2012). According to Thompson, Arnould and Giesler (2013, pp.149-174), it can be said that sociological factor is also a big factor that affects the consumer behavioural trends. Culture and ideologies of a person greatly affect the behaviour of a consumer regarding his buying decision (Thompson, Arnould and Giesler, 2013). The culture of a person drives the consumer’s perception of consuming items or purchasing a product. According to Cova and Cova (2012, pp.149-168), the cultural factor is correlated with the sociological factor. Consumer belonging to different society has different cultural beliefs. A product or a service which has a high demand in one place may have no demand in some other region (Cova and Cova, 2012). Even culture of a person is highly determined by the religion or community the person belongs from. Consumer behaviour also depends greatly on gender factor. Some products are only meant for female which a male consumer will not prefer to buy and vice-versa. So it can be assumed that consumption factor is not always dependent on the consumer behaviour due to many psychological factors.

### Critical analysis and evaluation of theoretical perspectives

My personal experience was centred towards purchasing a flight ticket for the first time. In the overall context, my experience was highly distinct. Precisely, my experience revealed a combination of mixed feelings. For instance, there was indeed a lot of peer influence in purchasing flight tickets. I had to consider the experience of my friends and peer group, prior to deciding whether I should opt for an online platform or traditional mode of buying flight tickets. I was initially not aware which of the flights offer exceptional service at a cost-effective price. Hence, the first experience of mine was accessing information from customer service department. I certainly do not wish to name the company, but its customer service people were not able to provide me with relevant information. I was even misleading with ticket price details which created a negative perception of the brand in my mind. To be more specific, I personally feel that in case of selling service one must lay emphasis on building a quality team. However, I felt excited to travel via flight for the first time though it was a short journey. While booking a flight ticket, the first thing which attracted me the most was the product bundling option on the online booking site. The entire booking process practically symbolises that airline companies often target those customers who are not only focused on travelling but also give importance to additional benefits received. My perception did change towards the process of buying flight tickets when I was offered amenities at a lowest possible price. I applied for buying flight tickets at budget airline site by being influenced by my friends. My experience after purchasing the flight ticket was supposedly not bad because the inside flight service not only comprised of basic facilities but also the flight attendants did went ahead offering additional service, such as complimentary drinks, food, etc. Consumer approaches are divided into three categories such as psychodynamic, behaviourist and cognitive. The psychodynamic approach focuses on the psychological theories of a human being. Consumer buying behaviour depends on the psychological nature of an individual. I believe that an individual’s perception, choice, likings, disliking, choosing criteria are driven by the psychology (Moshrefjavadi, 2012). When a person is going for booking the flight tickets, he will definitely go through their list of criteria. If their criteria fulfil then only they will book the ticket of the respective flight. I noticed that criteria of every individual are different from another and here comes the psychodynamic approach. Freud’s psychoanalysis theory is influenced by psychodynamic theory where he stated that past experiences had a powerful impact on the human behaviour. It is the unconscious mind who plays the role in the buying process such as need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase behaviour. These are explained as further. Need recognition means when a person is searching for what he needs, here it is about the destination flights (Solomon, Russell-Bennett and Previte, 2012). Then comes the information search where the person searches information about flights according to his criteria list, for example firstly he will search flights on the basis of date, secondly look for the availability of a required number of seats, then filter the list according to his psychological choice and this may also include price factor. Next are the evaluation alternatives where the psychological factors have a vital role, people search for alternatives because of many reasons. Past experiences are one of the main reasons for searching alternatives; an individual’s subconscious mind is highly affected by his or her past memories. If the past memory of travelling in a particular airline is good then the person will definitely choose to buy the ticket of that flight and if he or she had a bad experience then the person will avoid booking tickets of that flight. There are many more categories on the basis of which the individual search for alternatives as such seat preference, no stoppage or lesser stoppage in between destination, services provided by flights, luggage carrying capacity, etc. The fourth process is the purchase decision which is the most crucial part of the buying process. Here the consumer view feedback of airlines, brand name or brand image of the airline and past experiences if any. Lastly, it is the post-purchase behaviour where the individual takes the decision whether he will further travel on that flight on the basis of his current experience (Mai, 2016). I personally go through all the process before booking the ticket. I would also mention that every time the purpose of travelling may not be the same so psychological preference may differ according to the situation. Behaviourist approach is influenced by the external events of a consumer (Oliver, 2014). A consumer develops his behaviour by seeing his surroundings or how he is brought up. Behaviour is also somehow related to the psychology of a person. Routine purchases of an individual are considered as a behavioural process, for example, if a person is a high brand loyal of a particular airline then at any situation, he will search for the availability of that airline; this shows his behavioural approach while buying tickets of flights. The psychological reason behind the brand loyalty might be for avoiding risk. The last approach is cognitive which means the response of an individual after having the social and environmental experience (Gunter and Furnham, 2014). As for example when I personally book a ticket, I go through the series of all my past experiences and decide whether opt for traveling on the same flight or not. The study of self-concept and brand image explains the consumer preference for some brand and purchase intention or brand loyalty (Hosany and Martin, 2012). When it comes to brand image, I personally believe that a person chooses a flight for traveling on the basis of the image the company positioned itself. Brand personality is something through which a consumer can connect according to their choice of purchase (Malik, ed., 2013). For example, when I want to have a luxurious service while flying to a destination then I book a ticket of Emirates because they position their brand as a premium and costly, they provide services on a luxurious level. On the contrary when there is some urgent need to fly within a given period of time then I definitely go for Southwest Airlines, they have different positioning of their brand. Southwest shows they are budget airlines who provide a minimum service but has a record of landing on time (Hosany and Martin, 2012). They also avoid stoppage as much as possible. According to my opinion other individuals are also having the same perception on flights. If a person is seeking for the flight which is less costly or he has minimum budget then he will search for such flights that provide services on a minimum range (Sirgy, 2015). Reaching to the destination safely is the main aim of such consumers then Southwest or some budgeted airlines will meet his requirement. On the other side if an individual wants to enjoy a luxurious service and he is capable to afford it then Emirates or some premium brands will be his choice to fly. Also some people have a habit of impulsive buying, which means they do not have a pre-plan of buying the products or services. In such cases the brand image of a company plays a vital role. According to the choice of the impulsive customer, the first brand that pop-up in his mind will be the winner in this competitive market (MacInnis, Park and Priester, 2014). So, creating a brand image in the market is the toughest job. A company should go through in detail before setting a position in the market.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that consumer’s consumption is not fully dependent on the customer behaviour. The concept of self is responsible for this variance in the consumption process of a consumer. So the success for an Airline company lies in promoting the brand in such a way that it can reach to the targeted customer and change the prospective customer to a real-time consumer. It is important for the Airline Company to be very particular about their offering and according to that, they should do their brand positioning. As the two brands of the Airline company which are taken, Emirates and Southwest, belongs from different segments which are well reflected in their offerings. The firms offer different promotional methods to do their brand positioning. As the targeted customer belongs from a different segment of society, perception is also different so their brand preference is also different. It is also discussed how a consumer chooses the stages before buying. The whole process of buying behaviour has been explained step-by-step. While booking a flight a consumer has many criteria in his mind according to which he reacts. The following criteria have also been mentioned in the above research. On the contrary, the paper has an analysis on the self-brand image of a company and how they impact consumer minds.

## Recommendations

According to my opinion, an airline company can increase its sale or can attract customers to buy their tickets if they start promoting their brand by giving extra facility within the same cost that other airlines are giving in much higher cost. The airline brand should be known to the targeted customer section and for the meeting, this purpose focus should be on launching a suitable advertisement campaign. Complimentary food in flights can be helpful for the airline company to increase their promotion. In my opinion, for obtaining a good profit, the airline company should offer better and cost-effective services. According to my view, the guiding principle of an airline company is rational fare, clarity along with good services. Airline Company should introduce a less penalty fare on ticket cancellation so that consumer can do before booking by relying on that they will not run in much loss if they cancel the ticket. I personally feel that the websites of the airline company should be more informative and user-friendly, that will add special essence to the promotion of the airline brand. Promotion can also be done through online mode by uploading video in YouTube channels. This can also help in increasing the rank of the company’s official website in Google. In my opinion, implementing the above-mentioned point will help the airlines to serve in a better way.

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