

Influence of Product Categories on Consumer Decision Making Process

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Abstract

Today's consumers are empowered with information and make informed choices of goods and services. Therefore, more than ever, an understanding of consumers and their purchase decision behaviours has become essential for the marketers to succeed in the marketplace. Consumers proceed through different stages in making purchase decisions; this decision making process varies depending on the type of product. Furthermore, many factors affect the purchase decision. Although it has been widely accepted that the length of the decision making process varies depending on the type of product, this has not been tested for all localities; and how other factors affect the consumer decision making process.

A study was carried out in 9 Divisional Secretariat divisions in the Batticaloa district with the objectives of (1) studying the consumer decision making process with regards to different product categories and (2) finding out the influence of both internal and external factors on the consumer decision making process. The dependent variable was consumer decision making process and independent variables were marketing mix, individual influences, group influences, and situational influences. Three products, soap, mixer, and TV, were taken to represent convenience, shopping, and speciality goods respectively. Data was collected using questionnaires from 200 randomly selected samples allocated to each Divisional Secretariat divisions based on the population in the area and analysed using descriptive analysis techniques.

The findings show that, except for the post-purchase evaluation stage, the consumer decision making process is very short for convenience goods and except for purchase decision stage all the other stages are extensive for shopping goods. However, all the stages in the decision making process for speciality goods are extensive. The study also shows that of the marketing mix elements, except for place, all the others have an influence on the process. Furthermore, price and promotion activities have an influence on the purchase decision of convenience and speciality goods however, purchase decision of shopping goods is affected only by promotion activities. Individual factors influence only on the purchase decision of convenience goods however, group factors have an influence on all the product categories. Situational factors do not influence the purchase decision of any of the three product categories.

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Table of contents	ii
List of figure and tables	v
CHAPTER ONE	
1. Introduction	01
1.1 Overview	01
1.2 Significance of the study	02
1.3 Objectives of the study	03
CHAPTER TWO	
2. Literature review	04
2.1 Introduction	04
2.2 Consumer behaviour	04
2.3 Consumer decision making	05
2.3.1 Approaches to understanding consumer decision making	05
2.3.1.1 Utility theory	06
2.3.1.2 Risk reduction	06
2.3.1.3 Problem solving theory	06
2.3.2 Other approaches of consumer decision making	07
2.3.2.1 Subjective rationality	07
2.3.2.2 Incomplete information	07
2.3.2.3 Satisfying	07
2.3.3 Models of consumer decision making	07
2.3.3.1 Stages in decision making process	08
2.4 Buying situations	12
2.4.1 Routine problem solving	12
2.4.2 Limited problem solving	13
2.4.3 Extended problem solving	13
2.5 Buying decision behaviour	14
2.5.1 Complex buying behaviour	14
2.5.2 Dissonance-reducing buying behaviour	14

2.5.3	Habitual buying behaviour	14
2.5.4	Variety seeking buying behaviour	15
2.6	Product	15
2.6.1	Types of products	15
2.6.1.1	Durability and tangibility	15
2.6.1.2	Consumer and industrial goods	15
2.6.1.3	Consumer goods	15
2.7	Contributory factors of consumer purchase behaviour	17
2.7.1	The marketing mix	17
2.7.2	Individual/internal influences	19
2.7.3	Group influences	21
2.7.4	Situational influences	22

CHAPTER THREE

3.	Conceptualisation and methodology	24
3.1	Introduction	24
3.2	Conceptualisation	24
3.2.1	Dependant variable	25
3.2.2	Independent variables	25
3.3	Methodology	26
3.3.1	Sample	26
3.3.2	Data collection	27
3.3.4	Data analysis	28
3.3.5	Data evaluation	28

CHAPTER FOUR

4.	Data presentation and discussion	29
4.1	Introduction	29
4.2	Personal information	29
4.3	Market share	30
4.4	Decision rule	31
4.5	Consumer decision making process	32
4.5.1	Problem recognition	32
4.5.2	Information search	33

4.5.3 Evaluation of alternatives	35
4.5.4 Purchase decision	36
4.5.5 Post-purchase evaluation	37
4.5.6 Factors influencing consumer decision making process	39
4.5.6.1 Marketing elements: Price	39
4.5.6.2 Marketing elements: Product	41
4.5.6.3 Marketing elements: Place	42
4.5.6.4 Marketing elements: Promotion	43
4.5.6.5 Individual influences	44
4.5.6.6 Group influences	45
4.5.6.7 Situational influences	46

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusion	48
5.1 Introduction	48
5.2 Consumer decision making process	48
5.3 Factors affecting decision making process	49
References	52
Bibliography	53
Annexure I	54
Annexure II	61