

BUYING DECISION-MAKING OF FEMALE CONSUMERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper makes an attempt to understand the buying decision-making of females. It entails a review of past researches that have been undertaken over so many years in this area. It provides an answer that female shoppers are more involved in shopping, experimental, look for more information and exhibit the decision-making styles of high quality consciousness, brand consciousness, novelty-fashion consciousness, price and value for money consciousness, brand loyalty, impulsiveness and recreational hedonism. This study is an important piece of information for retailers who face dilemma about the choice of strategy to be adopted while targeting female shoppers in the complex retailing scenario.

KEYWORDS: *Females, Products, Buying decision-making styles*

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INTRODUCTION

Buying decision-making is a process by which consumers identify their shopping needs, collect the requisite information, evaluate from the wide array of available alternatives, and make the purchase decision. These actions are influenced by psychological factors, economic factors, demographic factors, personal factors and environmental factors such as cultural, group, and social values. Decision-making styles are crucial for understanding consumer shopping behavior and for formulating successful marketing strategies. To understand the consumer decision-making style, Sproles and Kendall (1986) proposed that consumers' decision-making style refers to a consumer's mental orientation towards shopping a product or selecting a store. They further posit that consumer may espouse composition of more than one style while arriving to a buying decision. Based on wide-ranging studies, Sproles and Kendall (1986) developed a Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) entailing eight dimensions of decision-making that were used as thumb rules for making buying decisions by consumers. These were Perfectionism, Brand-consciousness, Novelty and fashion consciousness, Recreational-hedonistic consciousness, Price and value-for-money consciousness, Impulsiveness, Confused by overchoice and Habitual and brand-loyal orientation.

Perfectionist consumers possess greater expectations and seek for the best overall quality and functionality of the products and services. Brand-conscious consumers tend to purchase the reputed and well-known brands and perceive that high priced products are better in quality. They prefer to buy products and services at specialty stores. Novelty and fashion conscious consumers seek for excitement and pleasure in new and innovative items; these consumers update themselves with the latest styles, fads, and trends. Recreational, hedonistic consumers find shopping a pleasure, fun-filled and

enjoyable activity. Price-conscious or value-for-money seeking consumers often compare products and look for discounts, price offs and consider the lowest-priced products. Impulsive consumers go for shopping trips casually, and are least concerned about the price and quality, but they often regret the purchases they have made. Confused by over choices consumers find difficulty in making decisions because of multiple options and information overload. Habitual and brand-loyal consumers are those who are loyal and stick on with their favourite brands and shops. Thus, consumers approach the marketplace with a specific attitude for buying the products or services.

Solomon et al.(2010) posit that products can acquire masculine or feminine characteristics. As males and females differ in terms of traits, information processing, decision-making and purchasing patterns, the gender roles and responsibilities change (Hoyer, 1984).The manners in which males and femalesthink about procuring products are also different (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004).Social role theory proposes that gender-based categorization of work leads to creating of gender role expectations, Females tend to comply with the traditional roles expected of them(Eagly 1987). Shopping is traditionally regarded as the responsibility of females(Buttle 1992), they are likely to view it as an as an important task and have more involvement in the entire process (Fischer and Arnold 1994; Kempf et al. 1997).The primary responsibility of shopping largely rests with females even they join the workplace (Anne et al. 2014; Dholakia1999).Gender schema theory connotes that females are more expressive and are likely to enjoy browsing and exploring the store to find products not just to meet their personal needs as well as for others (Bem 1981). Females love shopping and tend to buy symbolic and self-expressive goods and want best products for best buys/deals (Vijaya Lakshmi et al.,2017).The combination of decisions making styles and gender provides marketers to profile, focus and to design marketing strategies for their identified target market segments (Hiu et al., 2001; Potgieter, Wiese, &Strasheim, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Females are supposed to be gentle and caringin masculine cultures (Hofstede 1980).A review of parents' socialization divulges that females are typically socialized towards developing and maintaining close personal ties (Buhrmester 1996; Maccoby 1990). Such gendered socialization is likely to result in females being relatively more collectivists(Mehta,2020). Females were found to project themselves more through what they possessed or the way they dressed (Dittmar 1989; Gould and Stern 1989; Kaiser et al. 1991). Females are socialized to pay attention to their looks (Burton et al. 1994). Females are likely to derive more value from novelty, trendy and fashionable products (Mehta,2020). Thus, novel products have been found to stimulate females (Tang and Chin 2007). Highly arousing environment appeals to recreationally oriented female customers and warm coloured interiors and lights and fast music tempo stimulate their arousal (Kaltcheva and Weitz 2006; van Rompay et al. 2012). Females are more price oriented (Seock and Bailey, 2008; Mehta et al. ,2014). Females tend to utilize coupons more as compared to men which indicates that they are more price conscious (Mazumdar and Papatla ,1995; Harman and Hill ,2003).Females show preponderance in checking for price tags in shopping malls (Underhill 2005).This is because they being consumers seek a good buy at a low price (Baker et al. 2002, Zeithaml 1988) and this money saving attitude represents smart shopping (Atkins and Kim 2012). Thus, it is plausible that getting the product or service at a good price would make females feel themselves efficient and smart(Mehta,2020). Study on Indian hypermarket shoppers alluded that females constitute a major proportion of utilitarian shopper segment (Mehta et al. 2014). Female consumers have also been shown to desire high-priced brand because theytend to believe price and brand the major indicators of quality (Stijn, Osselaer, & Alba,2000).Females are likely to be conditioned more towards developing and maintaining long-lasting bonds with others in their social context. Females were found to be more loyal to brands, products

and stores (Mehta, 2020). A study revealed that Indian females were more collectivistic (Arora et al. 2011). Collectivists have been found to be more brand loyal (Yoo 2009). A probable reason for females' loyalty could be the increasing availability of a variety of brands in the females's product line with the growing number of working females in India (Wilkinson- Weber 2005). Females perceive shopping as enjoyable relating to satisfying wants and desires. (Barbara, Laroche, Sadd, Cleveland, & Browne, 2000). Female consumers make greater efforts in attempting to comprehensively analyze products and information, (McDonald, 1993; Zeithaml, 1985). Majority of female consumers focus on family products, such as clothing and groceries. (Wilson, 1992). Females spend more time studying both general and specific informational searches (Fischer & Arnold, 1990). Femalesex hibited novelty-fashion consciousness, high quality consciousness, recreational shopping (Wesley et al., 2006) as well as time energy conserving and variety seeking (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004). Females were found to be more fashion conscious and price conscious (Makgosa & Mfosi, 2006; Mokhlis & Salleh, 2009). Females were likely to exhibit recreational quality seeking, recreational discount seeking, lack of interest on shopping and fashion, and loyalty on trend setting (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). Females appear to view shopping as a recreational activity and love to spend more time in shopping (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980; Seock and Bailey 2008; Solka et al. 2011). Females spend more time to be involved in information gathering (Cleveland et al., 2003) and participate in a greater amount of impulsive purchasing (Fischer & Arnold, 1990). Female consumers are willing to spend more time to shop at the stores, they may need assistance with product purchases because they may spend a lot of time finding specific items as a research indicated that different brands, size, and colors make female consumers feel confused (Foxman, Muehling, & Berger, 1990). Females tend to evaluate more cues to make judgement about products (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal, 1991). Female shoppers preferred departmental stores and national clothing chains (Burt and Gabbott, 1995). Females are more fashion oriented (Browne and Kaldenberg, 1997). For domestic items, females seem to be less confused while they are more confused in buying car accessories (Turnbull, Leek, & Ying, 2000). Older females were found to be more price-conscious, deal-prone and more shopping enjoyment seeking (Sherman et al., 2001). A study used the CSI to categorize Generation Y Females in UK into the following five discrete decision-making factions: recreational quality seekers, recreational discount seekers, trend setting loyal, shopping and fashion uninterested, and confused time/money conserving. Generation Y females were more inclined towards leisure and enjoyment shopping (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). Female consumers are more quality-conscious (Mitchell and Walsh, 2004; Wiedmann, Walsh and Mitchell, 2001); Yasin, 2009). Females are more novelty and fashion conscious (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004; Yasin, 2009). Female shoppers were found to be more novelty-fashion conscious, recreational, quality-conscious, time-energy conserving and variety-seeking (Mitchell and Walsh, 2004). Research investigated the fundamental motivations and shopping preferences relevant to Chinese working females in Shanghai and Hong Kong and identified the traits of Price and value consciousness, Fashion enthusiasm, Brand consciousness, Quality consciousness, Personal style consciousness, Environmental and health consciousness, Convenience and time consciousness, brand and store loyalty, Shopping influences, Reliance on mass media (Tai, 2005). A study identified 3 new female factors such as Bargain seeking, Imperfectionists and Store loyals (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2006). Females were more recreation-conscious, fashion-conscious and perfectionists towards shopping mall behavior (Wesley, LeHew and Woodside, 2006). Females are more quality conscious and novelty-fashion conscious in on-line purchase (Yang and Wu, 2006). Females tend to be less confused by over-choice as females are more experienced with different product information (Kwan et al. 2008; Mitchell et al., 2004). Females seem to enjoy the process of buying (Seock and Bailey, 2008; Kruger and Byker, 2009). Older female shoppers (more than 65 years) were highly fashion-oriented and looked for variety of apparels (Boyd Thomas and Lee Okleshen Peters, 2009). Older females evaluated new services significantly and more favourably (Schmidt et al., 2012)

A study underpins that females tended to seek for novelty and variety, are more quality conscious and brand/company loyal (Unal and Ercis, 2008). Gen Y females in Iran exhibited Fashion consciousness, Brand consciousness, Confused and careless by over choice, Quality and value consciousness, Recreational-hedonistic, perfectionists, Low-price seeking, Time-energy conserving, Brand loyals, variety-seekers and bought novel items for excitement(Hanzaee and Aghasibeig,2008). A study identified that adult female consumers of Cypriot were high quality seeking consumer, confused by over choice ,brand conscious, time-energy conserving, impulsive , careful, value for money oriented and Brand-store loyals (Yesilada,F. and Kavas A. (2008).A study on Malaysian females connoted the female traits - recreational, shopping avoidance and price consciousness (Mokhlis & Salleh, 2009).A study on young Iranian female consumers found that they were more quality conscious, fashion-oriented and hedonistic(Seyyed Ali Moosavi Kavkani et al.2011). Females are more socially influenced, fashion, recreational and confused over-choice (Azam R., Danish M. and Akbar S.S ,2012).Females in Bosnia and Herzegovina are more hedonistic (Anic et al.,2012) Females were found to be more novelty-fashion conscious, brand conscious, perfectionists, impulsive-careless(Madahi et al.,2012).Female shoppers of Tshwane, South Africa tend to exhibit more recreational, novelty/fashion-conscious, price-conscious, confused by over-choice (Potgieter et al.,2013).Females were found to prefer catalog and in-store shopping (Workman and Cho 2013; Alreck and Settle,2002).Pakistani females were more hedonistic, impulsive, price-conscious, fashion-conscious(Shabbir J. and SafwanN. ,2014).High quality consciousness was common among young, more educated and married female shoppers in Botswana and older and married female shoppers were more likely to be fashion-hedonistic conscious(Makgosa,2014).Females were more fashion conscious (Koca, E., &Koc, F.,2016).The traits of Quality Consciousness, Brand consciousness, Brand Loyalty, Variety seeking, Recreational & Hedonistic Consumers, Price Consciousness Novelty & fashion consciousness, Store loyalty and store image consciousness and Impulsive, careless consumers were confirmed for female shoppers in Tamilnadu, India(Jaidev, U. P. and Amarnath, D. D., 2018). Young working Females in Chennai, India were found to be recreational, quality conscious and brand-conscious for apparels. This recreational consciousness might be to break away from their busy work- life schedule that they go shopping for relaxation. Single females were found to be more fashion-conscious and impulsive, careless than married Females. Working females were aware of best-selling brands and preferred big stores offering specialty brands .They were not brand loyals as they looked for variety in apparel products (Sasirekha,2020).A recent research confirmed that women appear to view shopping as a recreational activity and love to spend more time in shopping. The study also revealed women to be more novelty/fashion-oriented and price-conscious(Mehta,2020).

CONCLUSION

This study unfurls various pages of research history in the field of female consumers' buying decision-making. Decision-making is a complex area in the context of consumer behavior as behaviors are uncertain to predict and analyze. Behaviors change from place to place and over a period of time. This is what underlies the reason of such a vast and inconsistent research in this area. The above study has tried to untangle various interlinked threads. It has tried to bring various concepts together to present a systematic view.

From the aforesaid studies, it can be concluded that females appear to view shopping as a recreational activity and love to spend more time in shopping.Females seek for more information about products which possibly keeps their confusion at bay while purchasing.Femalestend to be more quality conscious, price oriented,novelty/fashion-oriented, brand experimenting , impulsive and brand loyals.So, it is important for marketers who primarily target females to go on

inventorying trendsetting items, preferably at reasonable prices but superior quality. Marketers can increase the brand awareness by offering up-to-date products with focus on social media advertising. Retail outlets that target females shoppers should pay more attention towards designing the store in a way that it provides entertainment and facilitates browsing. The store personnel should be knowledgeable and competent to handle the queries of female consumers and ensure that their shopping spree should be a pleasant one. Females portray higher propensity for maximization of utility out of the shopping process that entails reducing the costs and accentuates the benefits. Thus, female-oriented stores should devise a pricing and promotion strategy that imparts a feeling of prudent saving to the female customers. Retail stores should emphasize on the elements of visual merchandising such as warm coloured interiors accompanied with bright lights, attractive displays and fast music tempo to stimulate arousal. Several loyalty programmes can be designed to fillip the affinity of female consumers towards preferred brands. An apparent understanding of the buying decision-making of female consumers can help the marketers in designing appropriate strategies to gain competitive advantage and cater to the needs of the niche more promptly and effectively.

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