

DECISION-MAKING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ELECTRONIC GOODS: A STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE CONSUMERS IN CHENNAI CITY

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Abstract

This study presents consumer's decision-making styles towards purchase of electronic goods namely, Mobile phones, Laptops etc. in Chennai city. The Consumer Style Inventory (CSI), developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986) for investigating different consumer decision-making styles, was adopted in this study. A pre-tested questionnaire was employed as the tool to collect primary data and the primary data was collected from 427 consumers in Chennai city. This paper especially presents the difference between male and female consumers' decision-making styles. The result shows that there is no significant difference between male and female consumers.

Key words: *Decision-making styles, Electronic Goods.*

Introduction

Since the implementation of Globalization in India has become one of the competitive markets especially in electronics sector. The Electronic goods market grows to be one with good potential and a profitable to the business world. In view of the above competition in the electronics market, having a better understanding of now-a-days novelty consumer buying behaviour, especially decision-making styles, this study may help market entrepreneurs to compete in this field. Earlier studies on consumer decision-making problems were focused on the decision-making process. Although, studies argue that consumers may sometimes typically rely on simple strategies, rather than going through a series of steps or processes rationally when they made purchase decisions. In this perspective, Sproles and Kendall (1986) contributed to examine consumer decision-making process by exploring consumers into various decision-making styles. The styles are found to be the highly focussed with certain consumer product characteristics. Since electronic good market characteristics could be determined its definitive purchase behaviour by consumers. Although, this study considers into the certain criteria in relation with consumer decision-making styles in electronic goods in Chennai city experience problems. Hence, the researcher is intended to contribute the marketers for better understanding the behaviour of Chennai city towards electronic goods.

Consumer decision making styles and buying behavior gains much importance in the area of marketing. Consumer decision-making is defined as the behavioural patterns of consumers that proceed, determine and follow the decision making process for the acquisition of need satisfying products, ideas or services (Zeithaml, 1988; Levy, 1999). Based on individual mental orientations, each consumer develops and practices this decision-making process in different ways which have been characterized as decision making styles (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). It is becoming so important for marketers all over the world to know how consumers decide which particular product, brand or service to purchase. Buying behavior is the decision processes and acts of people involved in buying and using product. Many previous studies focused mainly on the decision making process, but (Sproles, 1979) argues that consumers may sometimes typically rely on simple strategies, rather than going through a series of steps or processes rationally when they made purchase decisions. This is why (Sproles and Kendall 1986) pioneered to research on consumer decision-making processes by classifying consumers into different decision-making styles. To develop an effective marketing strategy companies must pay more attention to consumers and study their decision-making process. Understanding buying-related decision-making styles of consumers is important for companies' strategic marketing activities, and effective communication with the

targeted segment can be helped by understanding the psychological processes that affect their behaviour. However, in the rapidly changing competitive environment with over choice due to increase in the number and variety of goods and retail outlets, excessive marketing communications that provide an abundance of information, much of it with mixed messages, sophisticated and complex products, decreasing inter-brand differences, and increasing counterfeiting and look alike products, some consumers feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to decide (Hafstrom, Chae and Chae,1992; Walsh, Mitchell and Henning-Thurau, 2001a).

In the above perspective consumer behaviour literature, most studies assume that all consumers approach shopping with certain decision-making traits that combine to form a consumer's decision-making style (Walsh, Mitchell and Henning-Thurau, 2001). Sproles and Kendall (1986) developed the Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) to determine the basic characteristics of consumer decision-making styles. The CSI has eight dimensions namely, (1) *Perfectionist, high-quality conscious consumer* – a characteristic measuring the degree to which a consumer searches carefully and systematically for the best quality in products; (2) *Brand conscious, "price equals quality" consumer* – measuring a consumer's orientation to buying the more expensive, well-known brands; (3) *Novelty-fashion conscious consumer* – a characteristic identifying consumers who appear to like new and innovative products and gain excitement from seeking out new things; (4) *Recreational, hedonistic consumer* – a characteristic measuring the degree to which a consumer finds shopping a pleasant activity and shops just for the fun of it; (5) *Price conscious, "value-for-money" consumer* – a characteristic identifying those with particularly high consciousness of sale prices and lower prices in general; (6) *Impulsive, careless consumer* – identifying those who tend to buy on the spur of the moment and appear unconcerned how much they spend or getting "best buys"; (7) *Confused by over choice consumer* – a characteristic identifying those consumers who perceive too many brands and stores from which to choose, experiencing information overload in the market and (8) *Habitual, brand-loyal consumer* – a characteristic indicating consumers who have favorite brands and stores, who have formed habits in choosing these repetitively.

Hence, this study has aimed to explore the male and female consumer decision-making styles of Mobile Phones and Laptop Computers. In order to achieve the research objective, the researcher has distributed 520 questionnaires and effectively returned 427 questionnaires were used for this study. The questionnaire has 39 statements concerning Consumer Decision-Making Inventory consists of eight styles according to Sproles and Kendall (1986) by adopting Likert's five-point scale (Strongly Agree – 5, Agree – 4, Neutral – 3, Disagree – 2 and Strongly Disagree – 1) was used to measure the responses. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) and Inferential Statistics (Multivariate analysis of variance) are adopted.

Results

Distribution of respondents in this study shows that 69.32 per cent (n = 296) of them are male and 30.68 per cent (n = 131) of them are female. As for distribution of consumer decision-making style of electronic goods purchase (Table – 1), the items of "I make special efforts to choose the very best quality product", "When it comes to purchase, I try to get the very best or perfect choice", "Getting very good quality is very important to me", "In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality", "I take the time to shop carefully for getting the best products", "Nice department and specially stores offer me the best brand" (3.62); "The well-known international/ national brand is best for me" (3.59), "I carefully watch how much I spend for buying for electronic goods" (3.59), "I prefer buying the best-selling brand" (3.59), "I prefer buying the best selling brand" (3.59), "The high price, the better its quality" (3.54) got the highest mean values; and "I often make careless purchase of electronic goods and I wish I had not" (2.72) and "Shopping is not a pleasant activity for me" (2.69) got the lowest mean scores.

Table – 1. Consumer Decision-Making Styles in Purchase of Electronic Goods

S. No.	Item	Mean	S.D.	Rank
	Perfectionistic	3.56	0.913	1
1.	Getting very good quality is very important to me	4.03	.959	1
2.	When it comes to purchase, I try to get the very best or perfect choice	3.79	.978	3
3.	I make special effort to choose the very best quality product	4.05	.724	2
4.	My standards and expectations that I buy are very high	3.46	.913	13
5.	In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality	3.77	.842	4
6.	A product does not have to be perfect or the best to satisfy me	2.87	.978	30
7.	I shop quickly, buying the first product or brand that seems good enough	2.95	.999	27
	Brand Consciousness	3.39	0.90	2
8.	The well-known international/ national brand is best for me	3.59	.880	7
9.	The more expensive brand is usually my choices	3.05	.957	24
10.	The high price, the better its quality	3.54	.996	10
11.	Nice department and specialty stores offer me the best brand	3.62	.877	6
12.	I prefer buying the best-selling brand	3.59	.880	9
13.	The most advertised brand is usually very good choice for me	2.97	.843	26
	Fashion consciousness	2.84	0.88	8
14.	I usually have one or more product of the very newest style	2.74	.966	37
15.	I keep my products upto date with the changing technology	2.92	.870	29
16.	Attractive design is very important for me	2.79	1.031	35
17.	To get variety, I shop different stores and choose different brand	2.77	.667	36
18.	It is fun to buy new and exciting	2.95	.887	28
	Price Consciousness	3.24	0.744	5
19.	I buy as much as possible at discount prices	3.49	.683	11
20.	The lower prices are usually my choice	2.79	.801	34
21.	I look carefully to find the best value for the money	3.44	.680	14
22.	Commonly I choose with special offers in shopping	3.26	.818	16
	Impulsive	3.33	0.894	3
23.	I should plan my shopping for more carefully than I do	3.49	.823	12
24.	I am impulsive when purchasing	3.23	.986	19
25.	I often make careless purchases of and I wish I had not	2.72	.972	38
26.	I take the time to shop carefully for getting the best	3.64	.843	5
27.	I carefully watch how much I spend for buying	3.59	.850	8
	Confused	3.00	0.967	6
28.	There are so many brands and I often feel confused	2.87	1.005	31
29.	Sometimes it is hard to choose which stores to shop	3.15	.933	22
30.	The more I learn about the electronic goods, the harder it seems to choose the best.	3.15	.933	21
31.	All the information I get on different Confuses me	2.82	.997	33
	Brand Loyal	3.29	0.84	4
32.	I have favourite brand of that I buy over and over	3.21	.864	20
33.	Once I find suitable brand of that I like, I stick with it.	3.41	.637	15
34.	I go to the same stores each time I shop.	3.26	1.019	17

	Recreational	2.99	0.861	7
35.	Going shopping is one of the enjoyable activities of my life	2.87	.906	32
36.	Shopping the stores wastes my time	3.15	.904	23
37.	I enjoy shopping just for the fun of it	3.00	.918	25
38.	Shopping is not a pleasant activity for me	2.69	.731	39
39.	I make shopping trips fast	3.26	.850	18

Comparison of Consumer Decision-Making Styles between Male and Female Consumers

In order to compare the mean scores on consumer decision-making style for male and female consumers, One-way Multivariate analysis was adopted; at first, the study used Box's M to check the variants. The obtained Box's M value of decision-making styles of male and female consumers is 78.901 with the 'p' 0.026. It means there is significant difference among the consumers in their purchase decision-making. Further the overall result shows Wilk's Λ value is 1.646 with the 'p' 0.153, which did not show any significance, so the variance of decision-making style of consumers with respect to their gender. The Levene's test of equality of error variances shows that the consumers have somewhat variation on 'brand conscious', 'impulsive', and 'confused'.

Conclusion

In this study, comparison on Consumer Decision-making styles of male and female consumers in Chennai city on purchase of electronic good differ somewhat on 'brand conscious', 'impulsive' and 'confused'. The highest styles on decision-making are found to be "perfectionist", 'brand conscious' 'impulsive' and 'brand loyal', respectively. The respondents are likely to purchase a very good quality with higher standards and well-known international / national brand. The results show that there is no significant relationship between male and female consumers. Hence, it is suggested that marketing managers should notice these characteristics of electronic good purchase behavior of consumers, so that their marketing strategies can clearly target these characteristics.

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