

A Study on Consumer's Decision Making Process in Online Shopping Under High And Low Involvement Situations

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Abstract: Consumer is now online, searching, comparing and buying. There are many elements that can influence a customer's journey online and consumer's Behaviour is influenced by each of these elements differently. In traditional customer purchase behaviour or decision making process there are times when the selection is easier and takes less time of the consumer and sometimes the decision making requires lot of effort and research before the actual purchase. Similarly a customer's journey online, which can be tracked using digital tools like Smaply, Canvanizer, Touchpoints etc. shows the difference of journey path online in some product from another, to say, some product online has shorter purchase path than others. Companies may take advantage by understanding online consumer behavior, their involvement in different situations and can satisfy their needs better. This research paper focus on online consumer's buying decision making process under high and low involvement situations.

Keywords: Online Consumer Journey, Product Involvement, Enduring Involvement, Online Purchase Decision, Online Buying Process

1. Introduction:

An individual customer in a day does not make lot of purchase online as compared to offline purchase. Evidence from online sales continues to show low conversion ratios, from enquiry to sale, in many online buying situations (Grant et al. 2010). The purchases online are either the daily routine purchases like booking an Ola cab everyday while returning home from office or purchasing a mobile phone through e-market after extensive thoughts and research. Customer like traditional purchase behavior in a retail store goes through lots of decision making process and is either highly involved or the involvement is moderate to less during the purchase. In an offline purchase, the level of personal involvement with the purchase of a product is based on the importance of that product to the consumer and reflects the level of perceived risk for a given consumer (Laurent and Kapferer 1985). Where the risk could be Financial risk or Emotional risk. The general view of involvement has been one of "personal relevance" (Zaichkowsky 1985, p.342). Although there may be other ways in which a product may be relevant to a consumer, two aspects have been clearly identified and agreed upon in the involvement literature - the "importance" aspect and the "hedonic" aspect (Laurent and Kapferer 1985; McQuarrie and Munson 1987; Zaichkowsky 1985; 1987;1994). For a traditional market place and for a product offered on a retail space for sale, the literature suggests that a person can be involved with advertisements (Krugman 1962, 1965, 1967,1977), with products (Howard and Sheth 1969; Hupfer and Gardner 1971), or with purchase decisions (Clarke and Belk 1978). Involvement with these different objects leads to different responses. Thus, the purpose of this study is to present a review framework that provides an understanding of the involvement concepts, types and extent to which the current marketing and consumer behavior body of literature contributes to an understanding of online consumer behavior and decision making process for Low and High Involvement situations

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The concept of Involvement

In this section, researcher tries to focus on the different facet or types of involvement across several literatures for both offline and online marketing. The product customer purchase online or offline can have high, moderate or low involvement. Involvement with products has been hypothesized to lead to greater perception of attribute differences, perception of greater product importance, and greater commitment to brand choice (Howard and Sheth 1969). Involvement is a motivational state influenced by perceptions of the object's relevance based on inherent needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky 1985). According to Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter (2015) involvement is an individual, internal state of arousal with intensity, direction, and persistence properties. Its main antecedents are the characteristics of the person, the stimulus/object, and the situation (Zaichkowsky 1985). The focus of involvement is on the individual consumer. That is, it is the individual consumer who is involved, not products, or advertising content, media, objects, or situations. The consumer's internal state of arousal determines how he/she responds to stimuli, such as advertisements or products (Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter 2015). Duration of involvement intensity refers to *Involvement Persistence*.

2.2 High Involvement & Low Involvement Concept

In 1968, marketers Engel, Blackwell and Kollat outlined the customer purchase decision process in five steps.

1. Need recognition / Problem recognition
2. Information Search
3. Alternative Evaluation
4. Purchase Decision
5. Post Purchase Behaviour

Even now the five-step explanation to the customer purchase decision question is still the most persuasive marketing model around. Consumer may or may not go through all the steps of buying process but it's important to understand when the customer skips the step (*Low Involvement*) and when the customer goes through the entire process (*High Involvement*)

Automatic purchase decisions based on limited information is associated with low Involvement product and customer is engaged in routine response behavior. For example ordering a cup of tea from your regular office canteen is a kind of regular routine behavior by you and you may not even think about other drink options at morning because your routine is to order a tea, and you simply do it.

On the other hand, products which carry high risk to buyers fall under the category of high-involvement product. High Involvement products are not purchased often, thus instead of routine response behaviour the customer engages in extended problem solving. For example, buying a house or buying a holiday package for your honeymoon. here the customer spends lot of time in searching for alternative, comparing product features, price, schemes and so forth.

According to (Rothschild 1979) in marketing, price is probably the most commonly used indicator of involvement. Because the risks of a mispurchase are high when price is high, consumers are likely to be involved. Durable goods also have been used to create conditions of high involvement because, in case of mispurchase, one is stuck with a poor product for a long time.

Customer journey online is affected by various factors, which is not in the scope of study but these factors definitely affects the customer's involvement level. In online consumer Behaviour searching task is close to high-involvement action, while the browsing task is related to low-involvement action as stated by Park et.al (2007)

2.3 Enduring Involvement v/s Situational Involvement

A consumer online can get involved either because of product attribute or because of website feature. Product involvement is enduring involvement and website involvement is situational involvement. *Enduring involvement* is an individual difference variable representing an arousal potential of a product or activity that causes personal relevance. Enduring involvement is intrinsically motivated by the degree to which the product or activity is related to the individual's self-image or the pleasure received from thoughts about or the use of product or engaging in an activity (Higie & Feick, 1989). The research work of Higie & Feick(1989) mentioned that because of the increased information search and provision, it is likely that these individuals are knowledgeable of the product category/activity and influential in others' opinions and purchases in the product category or related to the activity. Hence, individuals with an enduring involvement are likely to be opinion leaders in the product category or activity. *Situational involvement* provides a link between a product or a situation and outcomes or consequences of that situation. It leads to an increase in both attention and information processing because of the belief that these efforts will produce favorable outcomes (Schmidt and Spreng 1996). Website is thus stimulating situational involvement. A consumer goes online, may be to purchase or to search for the best product out in the market. More explicitly, there are motivations that are both goal-directed (i.e., to obtain information) and experiential (i.e., to be entertained). Goal-directed use of the Internet suggests that surfers use it in an intentional selective manner, reflecting a deliberate exposure to specific content. When users log on, they have a specific objective in mind (Laroche & Richard, 2014). In contrast, when people use the Internet for diversion, escape, and/or relaxation (i.e., experiential use), there is no specific outcome-oriented goal. The focus is more directed on the medium than on special content and focuses on the satisfactions offered by the medium itself (Perse and Greenberg-Dunn 1998). Enduring involvement works well when the motivation to be online is goal directed and situational involvement works well when the motivation of coming online is diversion or relaxation. Highly involved individuals are more likely to access a product-specific site, explore product-specific information, and generate thoughts about products on this site. If these product-related arguments are strong, involved shoppers are more likely to form positive attitudes toward the products offered and the site itself. Conversely, lowly involved surfers are less likely to look for product-related information and more likely attend to peripheral content (Laroche & Richard, 2014). For example if a customer stumble upon an automobile campaign on Facebook while scrolling newsfeed may click the ad and visit the website or may be the customer simply scrolls up ignoring the same. Entertainment elements are more peripheral than central, and entertainment should be more important for low involved surfers. Entertainment is also significant in explaining attitude toward a website, especially for low involved surfers (Elliott and Speck 2005). The differences between low and high involved surfers may reflect a difference between peripheral and central processing. Peripheral processors (low) are less purposeful, more easily attracted to extraneous design elements, and more satisfied by them. Enduring involvement derives from the perception that the product is related to centrally held values (Arora 1982), those defining one's singularity and identity, one's ego (Ostrom and Brock 1968; Rokeach 1968). Situational involvement is heightened when the consumer perceives risk in a specific situation (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). Beatty and Smith (1987) found that search effort is positively related with purchase involvement.

3.0 Research Methodology:

The research paper is based on secondary data collected from different journals, articles and research papers. Following Table 1.0 shows the number of journals searched and the number of papers taken for study from them.

Table 1.0 List of Journals

S.No	Journals/Books/Articles Studied	No of Articles
1	<i>Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice</i>	1
2	<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	2
3	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	1
4	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	1
5	<i>Psychology & Marketing, Wiley</i>	1
6	<i>International Journal of Research & Analytical Review</i>	1
7	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management</i>	1
8	<i>Journal of Advertising</i>	1
9	<i>Handbook of Strategic e-Business Management</i>	1
10	<i>International Journal of Electronic Commerce</i>	1
11	<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	1
12	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	1
13	<i>Asia Pacific Management Review</i>	1
14	<i>International Journal of Advertising</i>	1
	<i>Total</i>	15

Table 1.0 List of Consumer Behavior and Decision Making Processes Studies Published in Marketing and Consumer Behavior Journals

4.0 Findings:

The following findings from various literatures have been found out after the extensive literature review on online consumer behavior and involvement situations;

1. Consumer involvement is an important strategic factor. Both low-involvement consumers and high-involvement consumers are important to marketers making a strategic plan
2. The main purpose of the digital media in business context is to engage people. Engagement is the level of involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence customers have with a brand over time (Kujur & Singh,2017)
3. Entertainment elements are more peripheral than central, and entertainment should be more important for low involved surfers (Elliott and Speck 2005)
4. Involvement has been associated with customer engagement in online environment in many literature (e.g., Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Zaichkowsky, 1994))
5. Novak et al. (2000) found a positive influence of Web site characteristics on the cognitive (i.e., involvement) and emotional states of the consumer while shopping online.

6. In another study, Griffith et al. (2001) reported that the interface design of an online retailer's Web site, which created a vivid experience (i.e. sensory and behavioral experience similar to that with the actual product), affected consumer involvement with the online shopping
7. More recent Internet atmospherics research showed that surfers who had high involvement with the Web site had high purchase intentions on that site (Richard, 2005)
8. Perception of an online store environment (e.g., color, layout) had a strong direct effect on shopping enjoyment, shopping involvement, and desire to stay and strong indirect effect on patronage intention towards an online store (Kim, Fiore & Lee, 2007)
9. The study by H.C. Wang et al. revealed that consumers' cognitive style and involvement level lead to distinct loyalty transformation model between the four consumer segments, i.e. less-involved adapters, less-involved innovators, more-involved adapters and more-involved innovators, which can further by different Internet marketing strategies can enhance website loyalty.
10. The entertaining content in the brand post creates online consumer involvement with the brand and also buzz among consumers which in turn helps in seeking brand awareness, image building and leverage. Moreover the entertaining value was found to be among the main motivations for online engagement over brand related content in the form of consumption, contribution and creation (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011)
11. The manner in which consumers interact and use a new technology is a serious factor affecting search behaviour based on cognitive, personal skill, personality and personal involvement factors of each individual consumer (Grant, Clarke and Kyriazis, 2010)

5.0 Discussion & Conclusion:

The study revealed that literature exploring online consumer search behaviour is still in its early stages of development. The researcher has missed out many points of customer's online journey and how search may be multi-modal in nature, which in turn gives rise to future scope of study. It also depends on how a customer uses and interacts with a new technology, which affects their search behaviour, level of involvement and cognitive personal skill. So lastly we can say that more socio-cultural, psychological and technical aspect of Internet has to be incorporated to understand the level of involvement in online customer journey and quote difference, if any, from offline customer journey

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