

The Role of Communication in Consumer Attitude and Decision Behaviour. A Conceptual Review of the Literature

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ABSTRACT

Evolution of digital technology is changing consumer behaviour by translating in-store experience to online environment with ease. Advancements in information technology have enabled consumers to evaluate their choices and create an interactive consumer decision behaviour. The objective of this short research paper is to gain insights about the changes in consumer preferences that are being impacted by the ongoing digital revolution.

KEYWORDS: Communication, Consumers attitude, Decision Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explain how marketing communications can be used to change customers' attitudes and influence customers' behaviour. Marketing communications play a significant role in changing customers' attitudes because customers have different attitudes and it could be positive or negative attitudes. Attitudes are erudite from past experiences which may relate to the product itself, brand and purchasing decision.

Information and Communication Technology can simply be defined in its simplest form as an electronic medium for creating, storing, manipulating receiving and sending information from one place to another. It makes message delivery faster, more convenient, easy to access, understand and interpret. It uses gadgets such as cell phones, the Internet, wireless network, computer, radio, television, Satellites, base stations etc. These resources are used to create, store, communicate, transmit and manage information.

According to Hughes and Fill (2007) "attitudes are defined as the expression of an individual's feeling towards a product, service or organisation". Customers' attitudes could not be observed directly but it can be detected by using market research methods. There are three main components

of attitudes which are cognitive (learn) that is; what target audience know about the product or service, affective (feel) is what they feel about the product or service and conative (do) is about the action taken based on their knowledge and feelings. This essay will cover information processing models, attitudes formation and change, and customers' response behaviour.

As we all know, nowadays, consumer behaviour is prejudiced by various aspects. With technological advancements, the market has seen a tremendous shift in consumer behaviour. As a result of the technological impact influencing consumer behaviour, most company leaderships face an unending challenge to meet consumer expectations. Because of the advent of information technology, consumer behaviour seems to be more influenced by internet-enabled smart phones and tablets. Technology has literally placed the power in the consumer's hands.

Today, a typical customer expects a prompt response and fast service from any business. To keep up with consumer expectations, all businesses are facing huge challenges. How and why has technology changed the way consumers behave? Here are a few things that you need to keep in mind as you reinvent your strategies to keep up with the consumers.

Nearly everyone is living two lives, an energetic online life, and an exhausting disconnected one. We are altogether associated at some stage through our system of companions. We likewise claim in excess of one gadget that keeps us refreshed. This implies we blossom with being dynamic and educated on the web, and Exact Target Marketing content confirmed this from a research they did, whereby 91% of purchasers demonstrated that access to content across all gadgets was imperative.

Data innovation progressions fuel the network that unites the world as one major network, from the advanced mobile phones to super-quick information. This pattern isn't going to change since presently kids as youthful as 5 years know how to work a smart phone. LinkedIn even brought down its age breaking point to 13 years to gain on the technology adoption rate.

Organizations need to meet consumers where they are and fulfil their refined needs. On the off chance that your target market invests more energy in Instagram or Facebook or Twitter, be available and react to them on the same platform. Are you doing what's necessary to use innovation and handle the educated customer?

Before, as an organization, you set the times that you were open for business, and customers needed to endure it or remain without that specific product. Technology has completely changed that, with the introduction of online business and smart phones, customers can get to products whenever they want. They have raised desires on what is satisfactory consumer behaviour and what isn't. As a business, you need to stay aware of the changed buyer conduct or be bankrupt.

Previously, an organization gave customer service through emails – that did not get immediate reactions – and telephone calls. These two specialized devices had their own particular difficulties and favoured the organization more; it was at their circumspection what data to give out.

This age nonetheless, is extremely revived. Social networking sites and live

chat puts you directly before your customer; you can't forfeit your customer to keep up your brand position. As a matter of fact, when you don't react to a question, you harm your brand reputation since that data is available to a great many people.

Conceptualization of communication

ICT encompasses both the internet-enabled sphere as well as the mobile one powered by wireless networks. It also includes antiquated technologies, such as landline telephones, radio and television broadcast -- all of which are still widely used today alongside cutting-edge ICT pieces such as artificial intelligence and robotics.

ICT is sometimes used synonymously with IT (for information technology); however, ICT is generally used to represent a broader, more comprehensive list of all components related to computer and digital technologies than IT.

The list of ICT components is exhaustive, and it continues to grow. Some components, such as computers and telephones, have existed for decades. Others, such as smart phones, digital TVs and robots, are more recent entries.

ICT commonly means more than its list of components, though. It also encompasses the application of all those various components. It's here that the real potential, power and danger of ICT can be found.

ICT is leveraged for economic, societal and interpersonal transactions and interactions. ICT has drastically changed how people work, communicate, learn and live. Moreover, ICT continues to revolutionize all parts of the human experience as first computers and now robots do many of the tasks once handled by humans. For example, computers once answered phones and directed calls to the appropriate individuals to respond; now robots not only can answer the calls, but they can often more quickly and efficiently handle callers' requests for services.

ICT's importance to economic development and business growth has been so monumental, in fact, that it's credited with ushering in what many have labelled the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

ICT also underpins broad shifts in society, as individuals en masse are moving from personal, face-to-face interactions to ones in the digital space. This new era is frequently termed the Digital Age.

For businesses, advances within ICT have brought a slew of cost savings, opportunities and conveniences. They range from highly automated businesses processes that have cut costs, to the big data revolution where organizations are turning the vast trove of data generated by ICT into insights that drive new products and services, to ICT-enabled transactions such as internet shopping and telemedicine and social media that give customers more choices in how they shop, communicate and interact.

But ICT has also created problems and challenges to organizations and individuals alike -- as well as to society as a whole. The digitization of data, the expanding use of high-speed internet and the growing global network together have led to new levels of crime, where so-called bad actors can hatch electronically enabled schemes or illegally gain access to systems to steal money, intellectual property or private information or to disrupt systems that control critical infrastructure. ICT has also brought automation and robots that displace workers who are unable to transfer their skills to new positions. And ICT has allowed more and more people to limit their interactions with others, creating what some people fear is a population that could lose some of what makes it human.

Conceptualization of Consumer Attitude

Consumer attitude may be defined as a feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness that an individual has towards an object. As we, all know that an individual with a positive attitude is more

likely to buy a product and this results in the possibility of liking or disliking a product.

Consumer attitude basically comprises of beliefs towards, feelings towards and behavioural intentions towards some objects.

Belief plays a vital role for consumers because, it can be either positive or negative towards an object. For example, some may say tea is good and relieves tension, others may say too much of tea is not good for health. Human beliefs are not accurate and can change according to situations.

Consumers have certain specific feelings towards some products or brands. Sometimes these feelings are based on certain beliefs and sometimes they are not. For example, an individual feels uneasy when he thinks about cheese burst pizza, because of the tremendous amount of cheese or fat it has.

Behavioural intentions show the plans of consumers with respect to the products. This is sometimes a logical result of beliefs or feelings, but not always. For example, an individual personally might not like a restaurant, but may visit it because it is the hangout place for his friends.

Functions of Attitudes

The following are the functions of attitudes

- **Adjustment Function** – Attitudes helps people to adjust to different situations and circumstances.
- **Ego Defensive Function** – Attitudes are formed to protect the ego. We all are bothered about our self-esteem and image so the product boosting our ego is the target of such a kind of attitude.
- **Value Expression Function** – Attitudes usually represent the values the individual possesses. We gain values, through our upbringing and training. Our value system encourages or discourages us to buy certain products. For example, our value system allows or disallows us

to purchase products such as cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, etc.

- **Knowledge Function** – Individuals' continuously seeks knowledge and information. When an individual gets information about a particular product, he creates and modifies his attitude towards that product.

Models of Attitude

The following are the models of attitude

- **Tri-component Model** – According to tri-component model, attitude consists of the following three components.
- **Cognitive Component** – The first component is cognitive component. It consists of an individual's knowledge or perception towards few products or services through personal experience or related information from various sources. This knowledge, usually results in beliefs, which a consumer has, and specific behaviour.
- **Affective Component** – The second part is the affective component. This consists of a person's feelings, sentiments, and emotions for a particular brand or product. They treat them as the primary criteria for the purpose of evaluation. The state of mind also plays a major role, like the sadness, happiness, anger, or stress, which also affects the attitude of a consumer.
- **Conative Component** – The last component is conative component, which consists of a person's intention or likelihood towards a particular product. It usually means the actual behaviour of the person or his intention.

Conceptualization of Decision Behaviour

Consumer decision making process involves the consumers to identify their needs, gather information, evaluate

alternatives and then make their buying decision. The consumer behaviour may be determined by economic and psychological factors and are influenced by environmental factors like social and cultural values.

The consumer decision making behaviour is a complex procedure and involves everything starting from problem recognition to post-purchase activities. Every consumer has different needs in their daily lives and these are those needs which make than to make different decisions.

Decisions can be complex, comparing, evaluating, selecting as well as purchasing from a variety of products depending upon the opinion of a consumer over a particular product. This renders understanding and realizing the basic problem of the consumer decision making process for marketers to make their products and services different from others in the marketplace.

The buying behaviour model is one method used by marketers for identifying and tracing the decision making process of a customer from the start to the end. The process is categorized into 5 different stages which are explained as follows:

Need Recognition

Need recognition occurs when a consumer exactly determines their needs. Consumers may feel like they are missing out something and needs to address this issue so as to fill in the gap.

Information Search

The information search stage in the buyer decision process tends to change continually as consumers require obtaining more and more information about products which can satisfy their needs. Information can also be obtained through recommendations from people having previous experiences with products.

Evaluation of Alternatives

This step involves evaluating different alternatives that are available in the market along with the product lifecycle.

Purchase Decision

When all the above stages have been passed, the customer has now finally decided to make a purchasing decision. At this stage, the consumer has evaluated all facts and has arrived at a logical conclusion which is either based upon the influence from marketing campaigns or upon emotional connections or personal experiences or a combination of both.

Post Purchase Behaviour

Purchase of the product is followed by post-purchase evaluation which refers to analyzing as to whether the product was useful for the consumer or not. If the product has matched the expectations of the customer, they will serve as a brand ambassador who can influence other potential consumers which will increase the customer base of that particular brand. The same is true for negative experiences; however, it can halt the journey of potential customers towards the product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Literature regarding how Communication influences a consumer's attitude and decision behaviour. Will be discussed and reviewed below.

Communication (ICT) and consumer attitude regarding the purchase decision behaviour

Through the use of ICT, clients have more access to information than before. They look through the web for information of products and services they need to satisfy their needs. This client sophistication forces managers to innovate more precisely and faster on the solutions their companies offer. Fortunately, the information captured through ICT can help managers in the process of understanding the behaviour of consumers and the solutions available in the market.

Understanding consumer behaviour and communicating with them requires research and effort; however, with the proliferation

of Internet, it is now possible to do it faster, cheaper and more accurately. Information of the profiles of the people searching the web, on what they are looking for, the channels used and the type of device used to do the queries, is offered by companies such as Google and Facebook. Google works to give information on what the user is looking for, and helps organizations to be visible to actual and potential clients. In particular, Google Analytics offers solutions to understand the interaction of customers with different online marketing channels. For example, it has specialized tools that provide useful information to recognize how customers are using mobile technologies and to measure the success of social networks campaigns with clients. One more service which provides data and offers tools to analyze what people is searching on the web; develop market research projects and understand industry trends is Google Insights.

Another organization, Facebook, the company that created one of the most used social networks in the world offers marketing services for companies of all sizes. Through the analysis of the enormous amount of data of its users, this company is capable of designing campaigns for specific sets of potential clients achieving high advertising impact. The quality of the information they manage allows them to locate clients geographically, and to offer a comprehensive interpretation of customers' needs and interests. Google and Facebook both use the information generated through the use of ICT, to help managers and their teams to make more accurate decisions. Yet, companies can use the information registered in their daily contact with actual and potential clients, to make more reliable analyses and consequently make more rational decisions. Because comprehension of consumer behaviour and communication is more efficient and complete thanks to ICT, the choices regarding product development are more accurate.

Besides doing more effective advertising and consumer behaviour

analysis, ICT can also help managers understand the competitor's strategies of the firms they lead. After exploring the web and other telecommunication technologies, managers can easily identify existing and new competitors in diverse geographical areas. By analyzing competitor marketing strategies, new products and services can quickly be identified and examined. Yet, it is also possible to get information of market prices, by studying the online platforms of several retailers that are engaged with e-commerce. This is relevant because managers need to make decisions on product development that must take in to account the features, prices, and delivery options offered by competitors.

The process of creating and developing products and services can be fuelled by understanding consumers and competitors. This can be done speaking directly to consumers and analyzing competitor's strategies openly in the field.

Consumer's motives determine or activate behaviour resulting in purchases. Also consumer's behaviour cannot be predicted simply from motivations. Other intervening individual factors come into play.

These factors tend to influence the consumer's perception of various products and brands of products that may be utilized to satisfy his/her needs.

Some of the important individual intervening variables are consumer's attitudes, self-image, and habits. You know that the purchase decision process starts with the identification of a need that is unmet.

Once the desire for a need satisfaction arises, the next step that the consumer passes in the purchase decision-making process is evaluating different products or services as ways of satisfying the unmet need.

Evaluation helps the consumer decide the brand to be purchased or the seller to satisfy his need.

His attitudes play an important role in the process of evaluating alternatives and selecting a particular brand of a product or so that the consumer can satisfy his need.

Attitudes thus play a direct and influential role in consumer behaviour.

By this time, it should be clear to you that consumers' attitudes toward a company's products significantly influence the success or failure of its marketing strategy.

Attitude study is important for the marketers because it affects consumers' selective processes, learning, and ultimately the buying decision making.

As consumers' attitudes influence their intention to buy, knowledge of different aspects of consumer attitudes may help marketers make a sales forecast of their products.

Measuring consumer attitudes may help a marketing executive get a better picture of both present and potential markets.

As attitudes often affect the consumer's decision-making process, marketers must understand attitude formation and change if they expect direct marketing activities to influence consumers.

Awareness of consumer attitudes is such a central concern of both product and service marketers that it is difficult to imagine any consumer research project that does not include the measurement of some aspect of consumer attitudes.

An outgrowth of this widespread interest in consumer attitudes is a consistent stream of attitude research reported in the consumer behaviour literature.

It is well understood that attitude has been one of the most important topics of study in the consumer behaviour field.

Attitude study may contribute to decisions regarding new product development, repositioning existing products, creating advertising campaigns, and understanding the general pattern of consumer purchase behaviour.

Thus, an understanding of what an attitude is, how it is organized, what functions it performs, how it can be measured, and how a marketer can change an existing attitude is very important for a marketer to combat competition successfully.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In Summary, the review shows that communication and change in consumers attitude positively affects consumers decision behaviour. This is an indication that a consumer when he is positively motivated through the use of ICT and when his behaviour is affected by the use of this ICT gadgets. It is also good to note that when there is no ITX motivated attitude that the consumer is more likely to disregard the product. And be less motivated to take any decision behaviour. The review revealed that ICT gadgets such as, computer, smart phone, Television have significant positive relationship with consumer decision behaviour. Based on the above literature review on communication, consumer attitude and decision Behaviour. The following conclusions have been arrived at: First the literature highlighted the significance of communication in the marketplace or online purchase behaviour. Hence business owners needs to properly access this process, understand there relevance so as to use it effectively while doing their marketing so as to woe enough consumers and maximise profits.

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