

Consumer Buying Behaviour – A Literature Review

A. Abdul Brosekhan M.B.A.¹, (Ph.D.), Dr. C. Muthu Velayutham,
M.B.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Mohamed Sathak Engineering College, Kilakarai,
Ramanathapuram - 623 806.

²Associate Professor, Director DODE, Anna University Coimbatore, Coimbatore - 641 047.

Abstract: In Present Marketing Scenario, the Study of Consumer Behavior has become essential. Consumers are the kings of markets. Without consumers no business organization can run. All the activities of the business concerns end with consumers and consumer satisfaction. Customer behavior study is based on consumer buying behavior, with the customer playing the three distinct roles of user, payer and buyer. Consumer buying behaviour has become an integral part of strategic market planning. In order to develop a framework for the study consumer behaviour it is helpful to begin by considering the evolution of the field of consumer research and the different paradigms of thought that have influenced the discipline. As described in this article, a set of dimensions can be identified in the literature, which can be used to characterize and differentiate, the various perspectives on consumer research. It is argued that consumer behaviour itself emerged as a distinct field of study during the 1960s; and is characterized by two broad paradigms, the positivist and the non-positivist. The positivist paradigm encompasses the economic, behavioural, cognitive, motivational / trait / attitudinal, and situational perspectives; these perspectives are referred to as the traditional perspectives as they pre-date the development of the non-positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm, which is still the dominant paradigm, emphasizes the supremacy of human reason and that there is a single, objective truth that can be discovered by science. The opposing, non-positivist paradigm, envelops the interpretive and postmodern perspectives, which have emerged more recently during the period post-1980 to date. The rational view and the ideology of a homogenous social culture and thereby deny the complex social and cultural world in which consumers live. The traditional, positivist perspective takes a very utilitarian approach to the benefits from consumption. While the non-positivist perspectives place much greater emphasis on the symbolic dimensions of choice. The objective of non-positivist research endeavour is to achieve a better understanding of consumer behaviour with no specific intent to influence consumer processes. This article aims to identify different streams of thought that could guide future consumer research.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Behaviour, Traditional Perspectives, Rational Perspectives, Cognitive, Traits, Conventional, Attitudinal, Situational, Positivist Paradigm, Non-Positivist Paradigm.

I. INTRODUCTION TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer behaviour has been always of great interest to marketers. The knowledge of consumer behavior helps the marketer to understand how consumers think, feel and select from alternatives like products, brands and the like and how the consumers are influenced by their environment, the reference groups, family, and salespersons and so on. A consumer's buying behavior is influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Most of these factors are uncontrollable and beyond the hands of marketers but they have to be considered while trying to understand the complex behavior of the consumers. Consumer is the study "of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (Solomon 1995, 7). In the marketing context, the term 'consumer' refers not only to the act of purchase itself, but also to patterns of aggregate buying which include pre-purchase and post-purchase activities. Pre-purchase activity might consist of the growing awareness of a need or want, and a search for and evaluation of information about the products and brands that might satisfy it. Post-purchase activities include the evaluation of the purchased item in use and the reduction of any anxiety which accompanies the purchase of expensive and infrequently-bought items. Each of these has implications for purchase and repurchase and they are amenable in differing degrees to marketer influence (Foxall 1987). Engel, et al. (1986, 5) define consumer behaviour as "those acts of individuals directly involved in obtaining, using, and disposing of economic goods and services, including the decision processes that precede and determine these acts". Simple observation provides limited insight into the complex nature of consumer choice and researchers have increasingly sought the more sophisticated concepts and methods of investigation provided by behavioural sciences in order to understand, predict, and possibly control consumer behaviour more effectively.

Psychology, social psychology, and sociology are the disciplines most widely employed in this endeavour which has become a substantial academic industry in its own right.

This article presents a review of the literature, in the field of consumer buying behaviour. The first section, describes, the importance of various factors including lifestyle and its impact on the consumer buying behavior. The second section describes the dominant, positivistic consumer perspectives. The third section, presents a methodological and analytical overview of the traditional perspectives. The remainder of this section is devoted to presenting the highlights of the debate between the recent non-positivist perspectives and the traditional positivist-based approaches. This discussion surrounds the issues of fundamental assumptions and techniques of analysis of various alternative modes of enquiry. The main purpose of this article is to identify different streams of thought that could help and guide for future consumer researchers.

CONSUMER PERSONALITY FACTORS

There are two factors mainly influencing the consumers for decision making: Risk aversion and innovativeness. Risk aversion is a measure of how much consumers need to be certain and sure of what they are purchasing (Donthu and Gilliland, 1996). Highly risk adverse consumers need to be very certain about what they are buying. Whereas less risk adverse consumers can tolerate some risk and uncertainty in their purchases. The second variable, innovativeness, is a global measure which captures the degree to which consumers are willing to take chances and experiment with new ways of doing things (Donthu and Gilliland, 1996). The shopping motivation literature is abound with various measures of individual characteristics (e.g., innovative, venturesome, cosmopolitan, variety seeking), therefore, innovativeness and risk aversion were included in this study to capture several of these traits. Measures by Donthu and Gilliland (1996) were used to measure innovativeness and risk aversion.

CONSUMER PERCEPTION FACTORS

Perception is a mental process, whereby an individual selects data or information from the environment, organizes it and then draws significance or meaning from it.

PERCEIVED FIT

Perceived fit is an attitudinal measure of how appropriate a certain channel of distribution is for a specific product .Morrison and Roberts (1998) found that consumer's perception of the fit between a service/product and a channel is very influential in determining whether they will consider using that channel for a specific service. In fact, perceived fit was found to be more important than consumer's preferences for the distribution method or service.

QUALITY

It is our aim to provide the best product for the consumer and we believe that if the products have quality the consumer will pay the price, says Amal Pramanic, regional business director. Oral-B

PACKAGING

Packaging establishes a direct link with the consumers at the point of purchase as it can very well change the perceptions they have for a particular brand. A product has to draw the attention of the consumers through an outstanding packaging design. Earlier packaging was considered only a container to put a product in, but today, research in to the right packaging is beginning at the product development stage itself. Packaging innovation has been at the heart of Dabur's attempt to rap with the urban consumers. It spends large sums annually on packaging research. -“We have been laying emphasis on aesthetics, shelf appeal and convenience for consumer”” says Deepak Manchandra, manager packaging development.

II. PROMOTION

The greatest challenge faced by companies today is holding and increasing their market share and value. This is always a strenuous exercise and one of the tools for the same is marketing. There is no specific game rule available for using these marketing tools .The reason is: each promotional tool has its own characteristics.

FAMILIARITY WITH A CHANNEL

Consumer's familiarity with a channel is a measure of the general experience they have with purchasing products through specific channels (i.e.. catalog, internet, and bricks-and-mortar retailer). Through frequent use consumers should become accustomed to using the channel which reduces their apprehension and anxiety in purchasing products through the channel.

BRAND AWARENESS

According to Rossiter and Prey (1987), brand awareness precedes all other steps in the buying process. A brand attitude cannot be performed, unless a consumer is aware of the brand. In memory theory, brand awareness is positioned as a vital first step in building the bundle of associations which are attached to the brand in memory (Stokes, 1985).

FAMILY INFLUENCE

A family exerts a complex influence on the behaviors of its members. Prior family influence research has focused on intergenerational rather than intergenerational influence in consumer generationalisation. As has been compellingly demonstrated, parents influence children. Yet, consumption domains clearly exist where sibling efforts may also be exerted.

SHOPPING MOTIVES

Shopping motives are defined as consumer's wants and needs as they relate to outlets at which to shop. Two groups of motives, functional and nonfunctional, have been proposed by Sheth (1983). Functional motives are associated with time, place, and possession needs and refer to rational aspects of channel choice. Whereas non-functional motives related to social and emotional reasons for patronage. The functional motives included: convenience, price comparison, merchandise assortment. The nonfunctional motives entail: recreation.

III. THE TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONSUMER RESEARCH

This section outlines the perspectives that emerged during the traditional-positivist era in consumer research. Thus, a brief discussion on the early models of buyer behaviour, proposed by economists is presented, followed by a discussion on each of the traditional perspectives in consumer research that emerged thereafter. These are the behavioural, cognitive, trait, motivational, attitudinal, and situational viewpoints. Overall, the objective of this section is to outline the features and the central arguments of each of these perspectives. While a detailed analytical review of the paradigms is presented in section two, at this stage it is worth noting, that the traditional perspectives while diverse with respect to the many aspects of consumer behaviour they investigate, are fundamentally similar in terms of their philosophical and methodological bases for undertaking the examination of consumer issues. That is, they are built on the common foundations of "rationalism" and share allegiance to the principles of a single traditional, positivist-based approach to consumer research.

IV. THE RATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The economists were the first to dominate model building, in the area of buying behaviour. The early economic view considered consumer behavior in terms of a single act of purchase itself, and post-purchase reactions. Economic theory holds that purchasing decisions are the result of largely "rational" and conscious economic calculations. Thus, the individual buyer seeks to spend his income on those goods that will deliver the most utility (satisfaction) according to his tastes and relative prices. The antecedents of this view can be traced back to Adam Smith (1776). Alfred Marshall (1890) consolidated the classical and neoclassical traditions in economics, into a refined theoretical framework which came to be known as the theory of marginal utility. His theoretical work aimed to simplify assumptions and thereby examine the effects of changes in single variables (e.g., price) holding all other variables constant. While economic models such as the Marshallian theory of "marginal-utility" are useful to the extent that they provide behavioural hypotheses (e.g., the lower the price of a product the higher the sales), the validity of these hypotheses does not rest on whether all individuals act as calculating machines in making their purchasing decisions. For example, Eva Muller (1954) reported a study where only one-fourth of the consumers in her sample bought with any substantial degree of deliberation. The Marshallian model ignores the fundamental question of how product and brand preferences are formed. Several studies have identified the impacts of price differentials on consumers' brand preferences; changes in product cues on demand variations; changes in price on demand sensitivity; and scarcity on consumer choice behaviour amongst many others (Lewis et al. 1995).

V. THE BEHAVIOURAL PERSPECTIVE

As mentioned above, in contrast to the economic view which underscores the importance of internal mental processes in consumer decision making, the behavioural perspective emphasizes the role of external environmental factors in the process of learning, which it is argued causes behaviour. Thus, the behaviourists approach the consumer, as a "black box" and thereby assume that consumer behaviour is a conditioned response to external events. The behavioural perspective therefore focuses on external environmental cues (such as advertising) that stimulate consumer response through learning. The strategic emphasis, of the behavioural modification theories, for example, are to devise a set of expanded behaviour modification techniques (e.g.,

respondent conditioning; operant conditioning; vicarious learning etc.) that can be used to influence, modify, and control consumer behaviour (Peter and Nord 1982). While a number of researchers have proposed models to study learning principles e.g., Thorndike (1911); Watson and Rayner (1920), this view is represented by two major approaches to learning: classical conditioning and instrumental learning. Classical conditioning occurs when a stimulus that elicits a response is paired with another stimulus that initially does not elicit a response on its own. Over time, this second stimulus causes a similar response because it is associated with the first stimulus. The theory of classical conditioning is rooted in Pavlov's research on digestion in animals. Pavlov induced classically conditioned learning by pairing a neutral stimulus (a bell) with a stimulus known to cause a salivation response in dogs (dried meat powder). The powder was an unconditioned stimulus (UCS) because it was naturally capable of causing the response. Over time, the bell became a conditioned stimulus (CS) resulting in a conditioned response (CR). Thus, conditioned effects are more likely to occur after the conditioned and unconditioned stimuli have been paired a number of times. The basic form of classical conditioning demonstrated by Pavlov primarily applies to responses controlled by the autonomic (e.g., salivation) and nervous (e.g., eyeblink) systems. That is, it focuses on visual and olfactory cues that induce hunger or thirst. When these cues are consistently paired with conditioned stimuli, such as brand names, consumers may learn to be hungry or thirsty, when later exposed to brand cues. Classical conditioning can have similar effects for more complex reactions. Even a credit card becomes a conditioned cue that triggers greater spending, especially since it is a stimulus that is presented only in situations where consumers are spending money. People learn that they can make larger purchases when using credit cards, and they also have been found to leave larger tips than they do when using cash (Feinberg 1986).

VI. THE COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

In contrast to behavioural theories of learning, the cognitive perspective stresses the role of information processing in consumer decision making. This perspective views people as problem solvers who actively use information from the world around them to master their environment. However, much debate surrounds the issue of whether or when people are actually aware of these learning processes. On the one hand, there is some evidence for the existence of unconscious procedural knowledge. That is, people apparently do process at least some information in an automatic, passive way, which is a condition that has been termed mindlessness (Langer 1983). Nonetheless, many modern theorists are beginning to regard some instances of conditioning as cognitive processes, especially where expectations are formed about the linkages between stimuli and responses. Studies using masking effects, wherein it is difficult for subjects to learn CS/UCS associations, show substantial reductions in conditioning (Allen and Madden 1985). The information processing theory (or cognitive theory) is central to the variety of hierarchy of effect models which, as Barry and Howard (1990, 121) explain, posit that consumers go through a "variety of stages, namely cognitive, affective, and conative, in responding to advertising, and other marketing messages". Accordingly, "the dominant pattern of relationship between the three stages is that cognition (thought) precedes both affect (feeling) and conation (behaviour)" (Marsden and Littler 1998, 7). The most widely accepted position that opposes behaviourism is that thought and feeling can produce change in action directly. This is cognitivism; in its strongest form it suggests that attitudes control behaviour, and reinforcement only acts by changing attitudes. Overall, the implication for marketing strategy is that - "Consumers must be exposed to information [e.g., advertising] if it is to influence their behaviour" (Sternthal and Craig 1982, 314). In addition, the cognitive theories have been criticized for assuming that individuals are complex information processing entities. Nevertheless, the problem solving perspective has tended to dominate the field of consumer research. And as discussed next, decision making models that have governed consumer theory, are in fact based on the fundamentals of the cognitive principle.

VII. CONSUMER DECISION MAKING MODELS

The three major 'comprehensive' models for consumer decision making were proposed by Nicosia 1966; Engel et al. 1968; and Howard and Sheth 1969. These attempt to trace the psychological state of individual consumers from the point at which they become aware of the possibility of satisfying a material need by purchasing and consuming a product to their final evaluation of the consequences of having done so. Engel et al., (1986) suggest that high involvement with a product results in an extended problem solving process which starts with problem recognition, followed by an information search, alternative evaluation, purchase, and post purchase activities. This process is aided by an active information processing sequence involving exposure, attention, comprehension, yielding/acceptance, and retention. The choice determined by the outcome of the information process-aided decision sequence may have satisfying or dissonant outcomes: Festinger (1957) first introduced the theory of cognitive dissonance for the consumer, which influence future purchasing. Engel and Blackwell (1982) also point out that environmental influences may affect the decision sequence acting on the

consumer's motivation and intention, and that unpredictable factors (such as non-availability of the desired brand or insufficient funds) may result in modification of the actual choice made by a consumer. This model assumes that observed consumer behaviour is preceded by intrapersonal psychological states and events (attitude-intention-purchase sequence). Moreover, the model depicts these psychological events as outputs of the processing of information, taking for granted that consumers seek and use information as part of their rational problem solving and decision making processes.

VIII. THE PERSONALITY PERSPECTIVE

As noted above, some purchases have more personal relevance than others. While this partly reflects on factors such as price, it also bears on the way in which some products enhance the consumer's self concept i.e., possessions are considered to reflect on a consumer's image of him or herself. Mead (1934) used the role concept in his explanation of the social and individual nature of persons. The dramaturgical perspective on consumer behaviour views people much like actors who play different roles (Goffman 1959). Goffman (1959) introduced the concept a 'managed situation', the idea that people manage the impression that others have of them by the way they present themselves. In the presence of others, the actor is seen to organize his activity in order to express an impression that he wishes to convey. The object of the study of role theory is to increase understanding of role enactment of individuals in social settings, so as to understand and predict behaviour. Marketing's interest in the study of personality derives from the possibility that, in spite their uniqueness as individuals, members of groups and aggregates may possess a given trait or type in common with each other e.g., extraversion (Eysenck and Eysenck 1975); such groupings (typologies) might then become the basis of separate market segments and justify special marketing action.

Personality in general is understood as a concept which accounts for the apparent consistencies and regularities of behaviour over time and across a variety of situations (Pervin 1984). As such, personality constructs explain those aspects of behaviour which are relatively stable across situations and, as a result, are predictive of future behaviour. Personality has also been understood as the 'unique way in which traits, attitudes, aptitudes, etc. are organized in an individual' (Marx and Hillix 1979) and this draws attention to the ways in which individuals differ from one another through the peculiar configuration of traits and other characteristics each possesses. While individuals might not always be uniform and predictable in their patterns of choice in different situations, it might be possible to make sense of and to forecast the general reactions of broadly-defined groups and classes of purchasers. As discussed next, it is this concept of consumer general behavioural response patterns that forms the basis for marketing's personality based segmentation strategies.

IX. THE MOTIVATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND PSYCHOGRAPHICS

The possibility of using measures of personality to guide marketing action, for example in segmenting markets psychographically, tailoring new brands to the susceptibilities of innovative consumers, and repositioning mature brands, has encouraged a large volume of research. Few significant relationships, which would be of interest to marketing managers resulted from the research which concentrated upon the search for links between aspects of consumer choice (such as brand selection) and highly specific personality traits (such as sociability). However, the investigation of personality types, broad bundles of complementary traits which describe an individual's general pattern of behavioural response has shown more promise in the quest to describe and predict consumer behaviour. Thus, the success of personality research is also partly attributed to the simultaneous widespread dissatisfaction with psychoanalytical techniques of motivational research.

The first attempts to apply Freudian and neo-Freudian (e.g., Horney and Adler) concepts, were made in the 1950s, when a perspective known as motivational research was developed. Ernest Ditcher advocated the use of psychoanalytical techniques to uncover hidden motivations (e.g., to understand the deeper meanings of products and advertisements). He strongly argued that people could not be asked why they did what they did directly, because most of the time they did not know. Ditcher's ideology of "truth-is-in-the-subconscious", behind his in-depth interviews was much criticized by traditional statistical researchers who called such motivational research a "pseudo science" (e.g., Politz) (Piirto 1991). Perhaps the most persistent problem with motivational research was that it failed one of the cardinal rules of scientific methods - replicability. Two researchers could draw two totally different conclusions from the same interview, because motivational research was so dependent upon individual interpretation. Thus, the widespread dissatisfaction with simple demographics and disenchantment with motivational research, coupled with the increasing accessibility of computers gave many researchers the raw material needed to measure the quantitative elements of personality traits, motivations, and psychological attributes (e.g., Yankelovich 1958). As consumer researchers were increasingly influenced by psychology (e.g., ego concepts such as self-esteem) and sociology (e.g., social status and social character, for example the Riesman model), in their attempts to understand the changing nature of consumer values (which offered potential benefits to market segmentation); simultaneously, a wider emphasis on

typologies also emerged such as benefit segmentation (Haley 1972), lifestyle or Activities, Interests, and Opinions, or AIOs (Wells and Tigert 1971), and psychographics e.g., VALs.

X. THE ATTITUDINAL PERSPECTIVE

Attitudes are predispositions felt by buyers before they enter the buying process. The buying process itself is a learning experience and can lead to a change in attitudes (Politz 1958). Thus, attitudes do not automatically guarantee all types of behaviour. They are really the product of social forces interacting with the individual's unique temperament and abilities. Thus, as discussed above, social influences determine some but not all of the behavioural variations in people. Two individuals subject to the same influences are not likely to have identical attitudes, although these attitudes will probably converge at more points than those of two strangers selected at random. Most researchers agree that an attitude has three components: affect, behaviour, and cognition. Affect refers to the way a consumer feels about an attitude object, behaviour involves the person's intentions to do something with regard to an attitude object, and finally, cognition refers to the beliefs a consumer has about an attitude object. While all three components of an attitude are important, their relative importance will vary depending upon the consumer's level of motivation with regard to the attitude object. Attitude researchers have developed the concept of a hierarchy of effects to explain the relative impact of the three components. Each hierarchy specifies that a fixed sequence of steps occur en route to an attitude.

According to the theory of cognitive information processing, attitudes are formed in the order of beliefs, affect, and behaviour. Attitudes based on behavioural learning follow the beliefs, behaviour, and affect sequence. And finally, attitudes formed based on the experiential hierarchy follow the affect, behaviour, and beliefs route. A consumer who is highly involved with a product category and who perceives a high level of product differentiation between alternatives will follow the cognitive hierarchy (beliefs-affect-behaviour). From the marketers perspective the sequence of attitude formation is pertinent from a communications point of view. Accordingly, here, a marketer will first attempt to create Attention, then Interest and Desire, and finally Action (AIDA). Thus, from a strategic point of view, Multi-attribute attitude models, such as the Fishbein (1983) model, have proved useful in specifying the different elements that work together to influence people's evaluations of attitude objects and ultimately predict consumer attitudes; products or services may be composed of many attributes, or qualities, some of which may be more important than others to particular people. Also a person's decision to act on his or her attitude is affected by other factors, such as whether it is felt that buying a product would be met with approval by friends and family. The complexity of attitudes is underscored by multi-attribute attitude models, in which sets of beliefs and evaluations are identified and combined to predict an overall attitude.

XI. THE SITUATIONAL INFLUENCE PERSPECTIVE

A situation is defined by factors over and above the characteristics of a person and product. For example, as explained below, situational effects may be behavioural (e.g., entertaining friends), experiential, or perceptual (e.g., being depressed or being pressed for time) (Kakkar and Lutz 1981). According to the behavioural influence perspective of low involvement decision situations, consumer decision making is a learned response to environmental cues, as when a person decides to buy something on impulse that is prompted as a "surprise special" in a store. According to this approach, then marketers must concentrate on assessing the characteristics of the environment, such as the physical surroundings and product placement, that influence members of that target market. For example, pointof- purchase stimuli (such as product samples) are particularly useful in inducing impulse purchases.

The experiential perspective stresses the gestalt, or totality, of the product or service. The principles based on the work of Gestalt psychology (Koffka 1935) maintain that people derive meaning from the totality of a set of stimuli, rather than from any individual stimulus. Here consumers may be highly involved in a decision, but may not lend themselves to the rational approach. Marketers focus on measuring consumers' affective responses to products or services and develop offerings that elicit appropriate subjective reactions and employ effective symbolism. Situational effects can also be perceptual i.e., there could be a number of ways in which mood can influence purchase decisions. For example, stress can impair information processing and problem solving abilities. In addition, time poverty can impact buying decisions. An individual's priorities determine his or her timestyle (Feldman and Hornik 1981).

XII. THE POSITIVIST PERSPECTIVE

The traditional positivist approach is established on the premise that consumers are largely rational, stable, and knowable entities. The positivist philosophical stance is characterized by an emphasis on scientific observation and testing. The objective of this type of research is therefore, to observe empirical facts and to establish generalizable laws that can be used to predict and control behaviour. The outcome of the positivist pursuit

is directed toward advancing the overall goals of marketing practice. The positivist perspective therefore assumes that a single reality exists; events in the world can be objectively measured; and the causes of behaviour can be identified, manipulated, and predicted. Thus, the basis of the traditional perspectives is that consumer behavior is controlled by forces which operate largely beyond the control of consumers themselves (Anderson 1983). Accordingly, change is not something which consumers do for themselves, rather it is a result of something that is done to them by some internal (e.g., trait) or external (environmental) force over which they have little or no control (O'Shaughnessy 1985). For example, the behavioural perspective suggests that consumer behaviour is largely determined, or conditioned, by external environmental stimuli (Bagozzi 1980). This static nature of consumer behaviour, is further reinforced by the assumption that consumers are "motivated primarily or exclusively to reduce tensions and maintain an internal state of equilibrium" (Hjelle and Ziegler 1992, 19). It is assumed therefore, that consumers strive to maintain stability. As Firat et al. (1995, 43-44) observe - "Consumer behavior theories believe in consistency and orderliness of consumer behaviour... Thus, the general assumption has been that if and when informed about such characteristics of the consumer [cognitive responses, conditioned responses, personality traits etc.], some meaningful prediction of their actions can be achieved". The traditional perspectives therefore, assume a highly "reactive" or passive consumer. For instance, the behavioural perspective assumes that consumers lack a conscious self reflective ability and as a result can be totally controlled and manipulated by marketers through environmental engineering (Foxall 1997; Hudson and Murray 1986; Rose et al. 1990). Finally, the adoption of the traditional-positivist approach, the dominant paradigm in consumer research, has proved quintessential to the creation of applied consumer knowledge and accordingly the evolution of marketing practice. The more recent non-positivist perspectives, however, aim to redress some of the criticisms of the traditional approaches, as discussed next.

XIII. THE NON-POSITIVIST PERSPECTIVES

In contrast to the traditional perspectives, the interpretive and postmodern perspectives of consumer behaviour attribute consumers with the capacity to "proactively" assign meaning to and represent their environments rather than just passively respond to them (Hirschman 1986; Calder and Tybout 1987). The interpretive perspective for example suggests, that behaviour is channeled by the content and structure of consumers' subjective meaning systems (Holbrook 1995). As O'Shaughnessy and Holbrook (1988, 206) explain - "From an interpretivist point of view, actions like buying are not simply matters of rational calculation with consumers computing up the pros and cons of objective facts, but rather are matters involving felt expectations as to how the consumption episode will be personally experienced." Thus consumers behave and make decisions by reference to the internal (psycho) logic of their subjective meaning systems. The focus of inquiry of the interpretive and postmodern perspectives therefore becomes, consumers' "subjective" meanings and language or discourses (Buttle 1989; Firat 1992; Hirschman 1985). Brown (1995b, 295), asserts however, that the interpretive perspective is different from the postmodern perspective in marketing because the former 'presupposes an autonomous human subject, the free-thinking, self conscious individual.' For example, humanistic and phenomenological perspectives conceive the individual consumer as 'a unified, coherent and *rational* agent who is the author of his or her own experience and meaning; therefore, analogous to the traditional conjecture, the interpretive paradigm also assumes that there is some pre-given natural essence of consumers (Slife and Williams 1995). In addition, whilst the interpretive paradigm stresses the experiential side of consumer behaviour such as "fantasies, feelings and fun" (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), it suggests that consumers construct coherent and consistent representations, or subjective maps, of the world in order to make it more meaningful and predictable (Burrell and Morgan 1979). Moreover, these subjective maps are assumed to be intersubjective, which means that they are shared and understood by most people in society (Buttle 1990). In contrast, the postmodern perspective argues that there is no fixed or pre-given essences residing inside consumers that make them behave the way they do (Brown 1995a; Firat et al. 1994). Rather, self-identity and subjectivity are assumed to be constituted by particular forms of language, or discourses, which in turn are mediated by the consumer's social interactions (Foster 1983). Thus, identity is said to be constantly in flux and "changing" depending upon with whom the consumer is consuming, in what circumstances they are consuming, and for what purposes (Burr 1995). The postmodern perspective of consumer behaviour firmly points to the fragmentary and fluid nature of consumers' self-identity. Firat et al. (1995, 44) contend, that consumers 'frequently change their self-concepts, character, values' and often subscribe to 'multiple and often highly contradictory value systems, lifestyles, etc., without feeling inconsistent or improper'. Thus, the postmodern perspective places great emphasis on the creativity, autonomy, and power of consumers to define and change themselves and the world in which they live through different patterns of consumption and lifestyles (Brown 1995).

The non-positivistic perspectives (particularly postmodernism) question and criticize modernism's claims on philosophical, cultural, and empirical grounds. Firat and Venkatesh (1995, 240) argue that,

“modernism reduces the world into simple dichotomous categories of consumer/producer, male/female and so on. Postmodernism (as does interpretivism) regards these dichotomies as unsuccessful historical attempts to legitimize partial truths.” In sum, it can be argued that the new perspectives may legitimately be classified as part of the non-positivist movement, which acknowledge the social, complex, and often irrational and unpredictable nature of consumer behaviour. This view focuses on not just the process of buying, but gives equal significance to the experiential and meaningful aspects, which underpin consumption.

XIV. CONCLUSION

Conditions of competition are changing rapidly today and companies that strategize and react to these changes promptly and quickly are the most successful. Due to technological developments, physical differences of products have decreased. Differentiation should be made on the meanings products bear instead of on their physical features. A successful brand differentiation can be possible by building personality. Thanks to brand personality, consumer sees brand as friend since it provides him with emotional benefits.

Overall, it is argued that the study of consumer behaviour is rapidly evolving as researchers recognize and implement new techniques and transdisciplinary perspectives to understand the nature of purchase and consumption behaviour. This wider view attempts to study consumer behaviour in the light of rapidly evolving lifestyles, values, priorities, and social contexts. Various theories on consumer research were not tested empirically until the middle twentieth century. The distinctly practical emphasis awaited development of the field of marketing in the business curriculum. In particular the buying process of consumer behaviour is of more importance to marketing practitioners than the consumption process. From a practitioner's perspective consumer research is pertinent so as to enable him to understand changing consumer needs, wants, and motivations and thereby devise the most appropriate mix for his market. Then, to the marketer the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour implies rapid product development, changing communications, and distribution strategies in order to be more effective. It is this (marketing) concept, as articulated by several marketing scholars (e.g., Alderson 1965; Bagozzi 1975; Kotler 1972; Kotler and Levy 1969) that captures many of the more essential characteristics of modern marketing which has tended to dominate thinking in the field. Those whose research motivation is consumer influence largely embrace the research paradigm of positivism in which rigorous empirical techniques are used to discover generalizable explanations and laws. Consumer decision making processes and behavioural outcomes are studied to bring about prediction and change (Ozanne and Hudson 1989).

However, the arena of consumer research goes far beyond the managerial perspective, when primary focus is placed on consumption. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), among others, strongly advocate that the purchase decision is only a small component in the constellation of events involved in the consumption experience. Holbrook (1987) suggests that consumer researchers must expand their view to examine “all facets of the value potentially provided when some living organism acquires, uses, or disposes of any product that might achieve a goal, fulfill a need, or satisfy a want.” The decision process then assumes secondary importance as compared with consumption. This broadened perspective has been recently reflected in the literature, as published research focuses on the subjective aspects of the consumption experience, such as hedonic consumption. Research methodology moves beyond positivism to naturalism (ethnography, semiotics, literary criticism, and historicism) in order to achieve a broader understanding of the impact of consumption on the consumer without any particular intent to change or influence the process. While some outcomes may be significant to marketing practice the overall goal of such research endeavour is to achieve better understanding of consumer behaviour.

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