

**THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL FACTORS ON THE CONSUMER
BUYING BEHAVIOURS EXAMINED THROUGH
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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Abstract:

The study of consumer behaviour is very important in the marketing field as it forms the basis of marketing strategies. Culture is one of the most important dimensions of consumer behavior. Culture refers to the social heritage of the society. It encompasses the social values, attitudes towards work, social intercourse, language, belief, art, morals, law, customs, traditions and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society. The marketers need to understand the roles played by the buyer's culture, sub-culture and the social class. The aim of marketing is to meet and satisfy target customers' needs and wants. The field of consumer behaviour studies how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. This study investigates how cultural factors affect consumer behaviors in South Kashmir with the participation of people in the various districts through Random Sampling method. The obtained data are interpreted quantitatively.

Key Words: Consumers, Culture, Sub Culture, Social Class & Consumer behavior

1. Introduction:

Cultural Factors exert the broadest and deepest influence on buyer behavior. The process of the human consumption which has been presented from the beginning, was initially an activity that must be fulfilled for the rest of life whereas today it has been the goal of life. Today, the consumption is no more a process due to the need of consumers but, in accordance with the wishes of consumers has become an evolving process. The concept of "customer focus", "customer loyalty" in modern marketing requires the audience and the audience recognition of the section. Therefore in terms of marketing, consumer behavior in order to define their influence has become necessary to examine the factors that remain. Consumer behaviour is largely dependent on cultural factors consisting of mutually shared operating procedures, unstated assumptions, norms, and values, standards for perceiving, evaluating, and communicating. In this study, concepts such as culture, sub-cultures and social classes, how to influence consumers' buying behavior has been investigated.

2. Consumer and the Importance of Consumer Behavior in Marketing:

Consumer is a person who desires, needs and requires marketing components in their capacity as buyer. Typically marketers are defined to have the ability to control the behaviours of customers, but actually they have neither power nor information for that. Marketer may influence their buying behavior but not control. Motives, perceptions, attitudes, experiences, self-concept, values can be considered as individual factors.

3. Cultural Factors that Effect Consumer Behavior:

3.1 Culture: Culture is the fundamental determinant of a person's wants and behavior. Culture is "that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morale, law customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society. Culture is an extremely important concept to understand consumer behavior and that needs to be examined. Culture is the sum of a shared purpose among members of society, customs, norms and traditions. The basic reason of person's desire or determination is culture.

3.1.1 Culture Features: Man should know the characteristics of culture to identify how culture affects consumer behavior. Although in the literature many aspects of culture mentioned, in this study the consumption of culture-related features will be discussed. The consumption of culture-related features can be listed as follows.

- ✓ Culture is a socially acquired.
- ✓ Culture is shared and learned by interacting with other members of a particular group.
- ✓ Culture is transferred from one generation to another.
- ✓ Culture is dynamic.
- ✓ Culture is organized and integrated.
- ✓ Culture is always cumulative.

3.1.2 Effect of Culture to Consumer Behavior: Consumer behavior is very much influenced by different variables like values, demography and languages. Culture has an effect on why and how people buy and consume products and services. International marketers believe that consumers would increasingly resemble each other and that they will eat the same food, wear same clothes and watch the same television programs to an increasing proportion. But the reality is very different. Therefore, to trade in international markets, man must overcome the large cultural and economic boundaries. Not only improve the worldwide competition in the market also different traditional beliefs, preferences, habits, customs are needed to be understood. Culture involves society's thoughts, their traditions, language, materials, attitudes and feelings. One of the elements that makes culture is beliefs. Beliefs of the people in a community can show similarities. For example, four, and four times in Japan are seen as unlucky, because of that most products are sold in groups of five leads. Another element of culture, tradition, is related with non-verbal behaviour of individuals. In France the men use more cosmetic products than the women, which shows the self-conscious tradition of the French men. As a result, learning of cultural properties in the analysis of consumer behavior has been an important variable in marketing, especially in market segmentation, target market and product positioning.

1.2 Subculture: The other important concept should be examined in terms of marketing management is sub-culture. Each culture consists of smaller subcultures that provides more specific identification and socialization for their members. Subculture include nationalities, religions, racial groups, and geographic regions.

3.2.1 Effect of Sub-Culture of the Consumer Behavior: Geographical regions and religions are essential in the formation of sub-culture. The preference of individuals who live very close to each other can be different. Individuals belonging to different have different sub- culture values, attitudes and social structures of the members of other sub-culture These differences, sub-cultural segmentation of the market activity has made an important variable. It is important to know the characteristics of the sub-culture in creating the marketing mix price, brand name identification, promotional activities and product positioning. Subculture also plays an important role in deciding the culture dimensions of customer/buyer.

3.3 Social Class: Development of social class is a common thing in any society. Social class is the diversion of members of a society into hierarchy of distinct status classes, so that members of each class have relatively the same status and members of all other classes have either more or less status. Social groups, although they don't shown in a formal process of similar lifestyle shows are groups formed by individuals. There are several features of social class. First, the behavior of members of the social class structure, education levels, attitudes, values and communication styles are similar, and these characteristics are different from other social class members. Second, individual's status is determined according to their societies.. Third, social classes are determined not by according only one variable, also by such variables like education, income, living area, activities and values.

1.2.1 Effect of social class in Consumer Behavior: Social classes are groups who share similar values, interests and behaviors, that they are relatively homogeneous and continuous. Social classes reflect not only income, but other indicators such as occupation, education and area of residence. Social classes pronounce preferences in clothing, fashion, home furnishing, entertainment and certain product and brands. Some marketers are focusing their efforts on only one social class. Social classes are also different in their choice of media. Upper-class consumers prefer books and magazines while sub-class consumer's television. As TV programmes the upper class consumers prefer news and dramas, but low-class consumer's films and sport programmes. There are also language differences between social classes. Advertisers should be prepared with the language which is spoken in the social class. Therefore, marketers should appeal communication channels and communication styles by determining by social class.

4. Application:

4.1 Purpose and Scope of Research: The purpose of this study is to assist the managers and will be set up business and especially to the marketing department, which provides to development of country and which leads that the consumers are better known by them and better quality goods, services and ideas will be presented. In the 1950s, "contemporary (modern) marketing concept" expresses the consumer-oriented businesses. What, when, where and at what price these questions were asked firstly about forty years ago.

4.2 Methods and Sample: In this study as data collection method questionnaire was preferred to obtain objective data and to interpret the first order, that person is the source or first hand. Questionnaire has been prepared according to the "funnel" technique that means from general to special. Assumption of this technique, when the special questions are asked at first place to the surveys, they will be probably avoided. Research data, by sampling the group of various districts of South Kashmir, consist of multiple choice questions for the questionnaire.

4.3 Limiting of Investigation: In the survey, although mainly Four (4) districts in our Kashmir province are selected and in each district Random sampling method are used. Limited time and the financial problems are the main limitations of this survey.

4.4 Results Analysis and Interpretation: The data obtained were analyzed through computer program package "frequency" and the results were interpreted according to this method.

1. Do you generally like shopping?

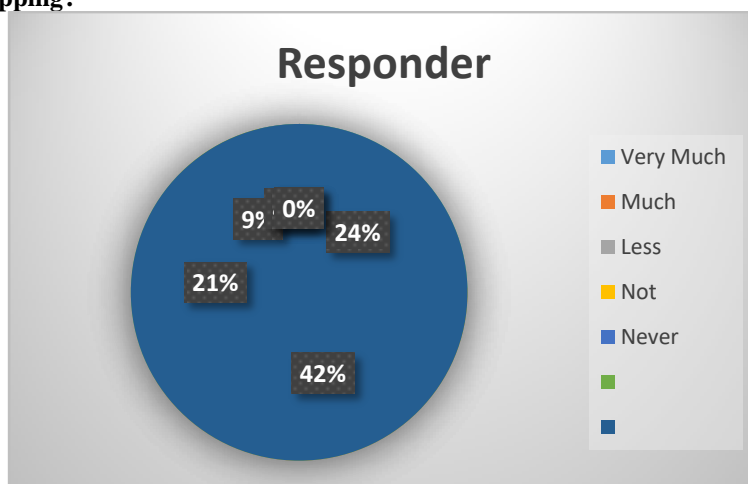


Figure 1: Distribution of Consumer

	Responder	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very Much	158	24.57232	24.57232
Much	268	41.67963	66.25
Less	137	21.30638	87.56

Not	56	8.709176	96.25
Never	24	3.732504	100
Total	643	100	

Table: 1

Shopping Satisfaction Breakdown:

With this question it is intended to detect the like degree of consumer shopping. As shown in Table 1 and figure, 643 people responded to this question, 158 persons (24%) had enjoyed shopping Very much, 268 persons (41.6%) much, 137 persons (21.3%) is less like while, 56 persons (8.7%) did not like, and 24 persons (3.7%) stated they did not like at all. According to this data, it could be analyzed that the vast majority of those who surveyed enjoy shopping.

2. Approval of my environment or friend is the most important thing for me on the goods and services that I will take:

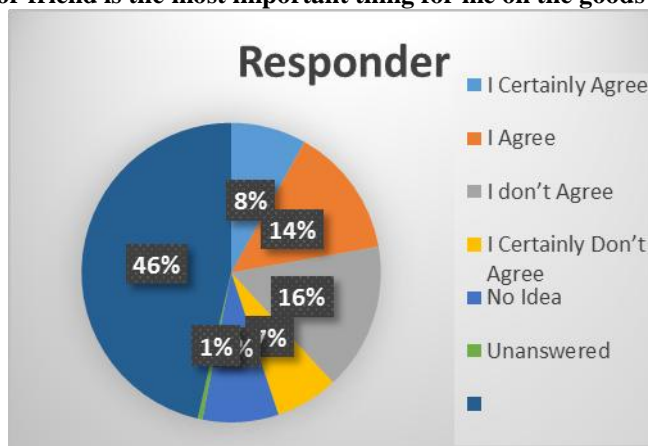


Figure 2: According to the importance of environment Consumer Rating Distribution

Responders	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage	
I certainly agree	113	17.7	17.7
I agree	195	30.8	48.6
I don't agree	220	34.5	83.1
I certainly don't agree	94	14.8	98.0
No idea	14	2.0	100.0
		100.0	
Unanswered	07		
Overall	643		

Table 2

The purpose of these question is to learn how important the environment and friends in buying goods and services of the survey participants. As shown in table and figure 2, for 220 people (% 34.5) environment and their friends is the most important criteria in buying goods and services, 195 people (% 30.8) seem to enjoy that, 113 persons (% 17.7) seem not to enjoy that and that 94 people (% 14.8) never enjoy that. According to these results, it can be said that the majority didn't believe that the most important factor in buying goods and services are environment and friends. It must be accepted that the consumption process is becoming increasingly appealing to individual requests, and that increasingly smaller market segments are becoming as an indicator.

3. Suitability to my culture, belief, tradition and custom is the most important factor on the goods and services that I will take:

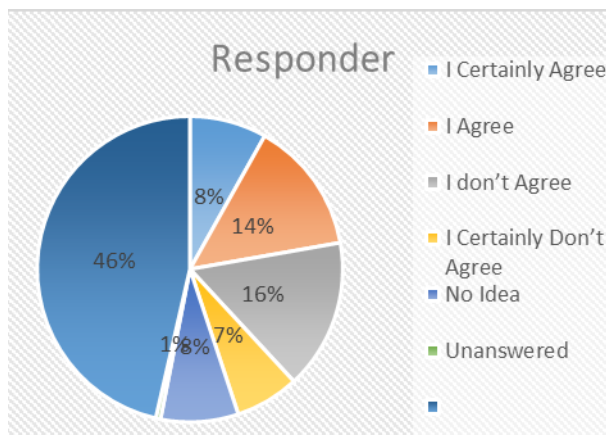


Figure: According to tradition, and cultural relevance of the Important Consumer Distribution

	Responders	Valid %age	Cumulative Percentage
I Certainly Agree	285	44.6	44.6
I Agree	270	42.2	86.8
I Dont Agree	50	7.9	94.7
Icertainly Dont Agree	20	3.2	98.0
No Idea	13	2.0	100.0
		100.0	
Unanswered	05		
Overall	643		

Table 3

The purpose of this question is to learn if culture, beliefs and traditions are the most important criteria of the survey participants in buying goods and services. As in table and figure 3 shown, for 285 people (% 44.6) faith, culture and tradition are certainly the most important criteria in buying goods and services. That for 270 people (% 42.2) is the most important criteria when you say, for 50 people (7.9%) not, 20 persons (3.2%) had mentioned certainly not. According to these results chart can be said that for the majority of survey respondents (approximately 86%), said belief, culture and tradition are the most important factor.

5. Conclusion:

Culture has a profound effect on why and how people buy and consume products and services. It affects the specific products people buy, consumption level, decision making of the buyer, etc. People from different culture have different expectations about the function and form of a product. The influence of sub-culture should be paid special attention by marketers as they target and serve consumers and is the central issue in order to understand consumer behaviour. Social class also

In the space of competitive and globalized world the importance of consumers who is recognized as the focal point of modern marketing, is increasing day to day. In this study questionnaire has been prepared and the results were interpreted according to the "Funnel" technique, from general to special. Participating in the survey of 643 people (about 86%) generally reported that they enjoyed shopping. It can be possible by knowing, their wants and their desires good. As in the South Kashmir, in the cities we obtained in the study, the fathers seem to be more effective by taking the first place in shopping (25.8%) we see that this situation changes. Those who participated in the survey of cultural factors that affect the purchase in order to learn the answers to the questions asked to a larger percentage was determined as follows. By buying goods and services, beliefs and traditions take an important position (% 86.8), while the environment, friends and social groups stated 48.6%. In this case the impact of cultural factors means a lot. Companies must understand these differences, especially when they sell products and services. If they understand them and learn how consumers think according to their cultures, they will be able to produce good ways of communication and sell their products properly. Most of the responders were (51.3% CPC) were graduated from colleges, young people (18-25 years), married people (58.6% CPC) and the gentlemen (69%). Consumer is the focus of marketing efforts. Take care of customer, customer will take care of everything else. While designing the Marketing Mix it is but essential to determine the broad cultural values that are relevant to the product as the most effective means of conveying these values. Marketing managers must understand both the existing cultural values and the emerging cultural values of the societies they serve. They must always try to spot cultural shifts in order to imagine new products that might be wanted.

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