

Role of consumer attitudes, beliefs and subjective norms as predictors of purchase behaviour: a study on personal care purchases

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Key Words

Cognition, Inertia, Intentions, Personality, Conation

Abstract

Consumer psychology is complex and uncertain. The uncertain state of mind and black box of consumers make it difficult for a marketer to predict the way a consumer will behave towards a product. In order to predict the behaviour of consumers, it is necessary to study their attitude and intention towards that product. Unlike other purchases the case of FMCG buying is different and needs attention as it holds the regular purchases in small quantities, the importance of such study increases manifold since the segment is having variety of products with heavy consumption as compared to durable products. Hence there is a repeat purchase by consumers and frequent moving of goods at a pace greater than other segments. The present study is an attempt to highlight the role of consumer attitudes, beliefs and subjective norms in purchases. The study is based on the attributes of TPB model to predict consumer purchases with respect to FMCG.

Introduction

An attitude is a pre attained disposition of favouring or unfavouring a person, place, situation or an object. Attitude is the result of evaluation of certain aspects in the mind of consumer which leads to a positive or negative image in consumer's black box. Consumer attitudes are sum of three main components which include (1) beliefs (2) feelings (3) and a behavioral intention towards a product or service which lies within the context of a variety of actions like a marketing programme initiated by a company or includes a brand or retail store. These three components are constitute the vital framework and collectively represent factors that affect consumer reaction towards some object. Beliefs of consumer can be sub divided into positive beliefs, negative beliefs and beliefs which are neither positive nor negative and hence can be regarded as Neutral beliefs. The behavioral intention defines the consumer future action related to the product, brand or a place. Intention to purchase a product reflects consumers' preference to purchase or reject the future purchase.

Conceptual Frame work

There are number of researches worldwide focussing on the field of consumer psychology. It was assumed after the emergence of concepts of consumer psychology that attitude was one of the chief contributors to understand consumer behaviour. So the studies were carried out by keeping in mind the key attributes of behaviour like perception, attitude and their impact on resultant behaviour of consumers. According to Wilkie, (1986) physical attitudes generally suggest the types of activity or action in which a person would engage. Allport (1935) defined attitude as "neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a

directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". Hawkins et al (2001) stated that an attitude is an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of our environment. It clearly implies that attitudes emerged from environmental stimuli, which includes product offerings to consumers and the way of communication with respect to offerings. Fishbein and Aizen (1975) defined attitude as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object. Krech et al (1962), explained the attitude as a person's favourable or unfavourable evaluations, toward some object or idea.

Kotler (2004) observed that people tend to have attitudes towards everything like politics, purchases, religion, food, music etc. Further, in his study he elaborated that it is the impact of attitudes that help people to put these things in a frame whether to like them or not. Boone and Kurtz (2004) described attitudes as a person's evaluations, whether favourable or unfavourable towards some object, data or person. Baron and Bryne (1987) described the attitude as a lasting, general evaluation of people, object, advertisement, or issues. In their study the conclusions were made that an attitude is lasting because it tends to endure overtime and can be regarded as general because it applies to more than a momentary event such as viewing an advertisement, though one might overtime develop a negative attitude toward all advertisements. Thus, Petty et al (1997) conclude that an attitude is the way we think, feel, and act toward some aspect of our environment such as a retail store, television program, or product. The tri component attitude model (Fig 1) was an attempt to highlight the main components of attitude to predict consumer behaviour. The distinguished factor of the model was its depiction of different perspectives of all components. The model divided the attitude into cognitive (knowledge) conative (tendency) and affective (feelings) component.

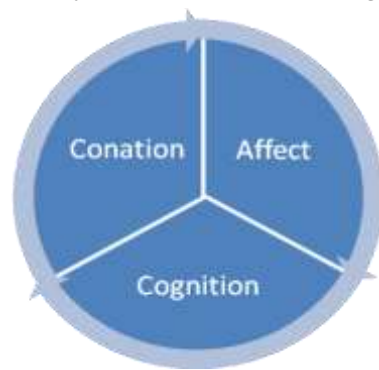


Figure 1: The Tricomponent Attitude Model

Adapted From: "Consumer Behaviour" Leon G. Schiffman and Leslie Lazar Kanuk, Ninth Edition, Pearson Education

Review of Literature

Attitudes develop a structure and always remain steady with time. Since the attitudes are learned, it can be said about attitudes that more the attitudes are possessed by an individual, more they will become strongly bonded with behaviour and hence more resistant to changes. There is a unique aspect of attitudes which associates it with consumer behaviour that consumer's attitude towards a particular product or object generalizes the entire group of those objects. Loudon and Della Bitta (1993) state that consumers are eager to evaluate generically as decision making process becomes simpler. Similarly, various conclusions came out as a result of

series of studies conducted in India and abroad which signify the role of attitudes in way or the other during consumer purchases.

Ikechukwu et.al (2012) in his study attempted to provide insights into the concept of consumer attitudes toward marketing efforts of firms. The study identified the trilogy of consumer attitude and the way the attitudes connect to the behaviour of consumers. The study recommended that the behaviour of consumers can be effectively changed to behaviour desired by firms by altering the tri-components of their target consumer attitudes. Muhammad (2010) examined the role of culture on the general attitude of people towards advertising. The study was aimed to analyze the cultural impact on attitude of people towards advertisements of brands according to product information, social integration and hedonism/pleasure, whereas power distance and masculinity as culture dimensions. The study was aimed to help companies to segment their customers according to their behaviour/attitude towards advertisement to help companies to gain competitive advantage and increase profitability.

Voss et.al (2003) in his study reported the development and validation of a generalised scale that measures the hedonic and utilitarian dimensions of consumer attitudes toward product categories and different brands within categories. The study suggested that the hedonic and utilitarian constructs are two distinct dimensions of brand attitude and are reliably and validly measured by the HED/UT scale. Haugtvedt (1992) conducted three studies to examine the role of need for cognition on attitudes formed as a result of exposure to advertisements. The study was based on prior research which mainly focused on need for cognition has used only long messages, counter attitudinal topics, or employed instructions that specifically told participants to evaluate products. Results of the study revealed that need for cognition also affects the processes of attitude change when no explicit evaluation instructions are provided and when exposures are to relatively short, unfamiliar advertising messages presented in either self-paced or externally controlled formats. Zimmerman (2012) explored that behaviour is often predicted with attitudes, but not all attitudes are created equally. According to study, explicit attitudes are more controlled and deliberative and are better at predicting behaviours sharing those qualities. The study went on to explain that Implicit attitudes however are less controlled and more emotional and are better at predicting behaviours sharing those qualities, like impulsive behaviours.

Loken et.al (2002) elaborated the role of exemplars in formation of attitudes toward a category. The study was intended to develop a better understanding of the relationship between category exemplars and overall attitudes toward the category and concluded that a composite index of attitudes toward category exemplars, weighted by exemplar typicality, is related to overall category attitudes, sometimes more strongly than a traditional multi-attribute index. Jianlin et.al (2010) focused on influence of consumer ethnocentrism and the preference for domestic goods among Chinese consumers. The study concluded with findings that there is a significant correlation between the consumers' purchase intention of domestic goods and consumer ethnocentrism and also revealed that consumer ethnocentrism has significant effect on consumers' purchase intentions of domestic products, while product attitude has mediator effect between them.

Research Model and Hypothesis

Theory of Planned Behaviour

Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1985) was an attempt to predict consumer behaviour by studying the impact of variables like Attitude, Beliefs, Subjective norms upon the formation of behavioural intentions which lead to behavior. The Theory is an extension of

Theory of Reasoned Actions Action TRA (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1970) to predict behaviour. The main distinguishing factor which sets both the theories apart is the addition of perceived behavioural control in TBP. Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) is the overall measure of Perceived Control over the behavior and is formed by the combination of control Belief and Perceived Power. The research model based on Theory of Planned Behaviour is an attempt to predict the purchase behavior of consumers using personal care products by studying attitudes and other variables like subjective norms and behavioural control. The Model was modified according to the research plan and the attributes were incorporated so as to fit the study objectives.

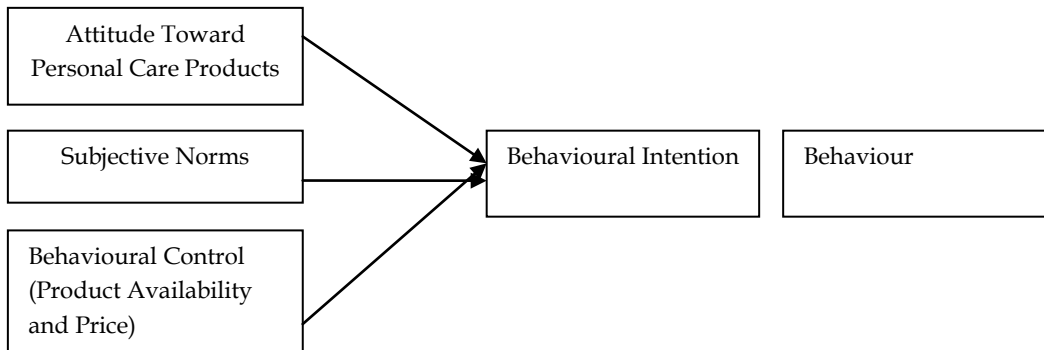


Figure 2: Modified Research Model for the study
Source: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991)

Methodology and Hypothesis

The present empirical survey data (n=207) was collected from the consumers using personal care products (soap only) from three major cities of Uttarakhand, India. The respondents were selected on the basis of their purchases from the retail points i.e. departmental stores and shopping marts located in the cities of Dehradun, Haridwar and Nainital with the help of cluster sampling method.

Hypothesis Statements

H1: An individual's belief towards a Personal care product has no significant relationship with its purchase behaviour.

H2: There is no significant relationship between an individual's attitude towards a Personal care and its intention to purchase the product.

H3: Subjective norm has no significant relationship with purchase intentions of personal care products.

Demographic Variables		Total (n=207)	(in%)
Gender	Male	131	63.28
	Female	76	36.71
Age	18-25	41	19.80
	25-35	52	25.12
	35-45	64	30.91
	45-55	31	14.97
	Above 55 years	19	9.17
Marital Status	Unmarried	124	59.90
	Married	83	40.09

Education Background	Intermediate	39	18.84
	Graduate	66	31.88
	Post Graduate	74	35.74
	Doctorate	17	8.21
	Others	11	5.31
Monthly income	Below Rs.10,000	49	23.67
	Rs.10,000-	58	28.00
	Rs.20,000	47	22.70
	Rs.20,000-	31	14.97
	Rs.30,000	22	10.62
	Rs.30,000 -		
	Rs.40,000		
	Above Rs.40,000		

Table 1 demographic variables

The demographic variables shown in the table 1 depicts the number of respondents against each demographic variable. Out of total respondents (n=207) number of females was 36.71% as compared to 63.28% male respondents. The study accessed respondents from different age groups. 19.80% of total respondents were from the age group of 18-25 years, 25.12% of the total respondents were from the age group between 25-35 years and similarly, 30.91%, 14.97% and 9.17% respondents were from the age groups 35-45 years, 45-55 years and above 55 years respectively.

The study incorporated the respondents both unmarried and married, the unmarried respondents contributed 59.90% and married respondents were 40.09% out of total respondents. The respondents also varied in terms of their educational background 18.84% were intermediate, 31.88% were graduate, 35.74 % were post graduate , 8.21% were doctorate and 5.31 were form other category of education background. The monthly income of respondents included five income groups. The first income group which was having an income range below Rs. 10,000 contributed 23.67% as respondents . 28% respondents were from the group having monthly income from Rs.10,000-20,000 and third income group was having 22.70% of total respondents from income group Rs. 20,000-30,000 .The fourth income group was having monthly income Rs. 30,000-40,000 contributed 14.97% respondents . fifth income group which was having monthly income more than 40,000 contributed only 10.62% to the total number of respondents.

Reliability of the Data

The reliability of the measurement instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Reliability analysis shows the value of Cronbach's alpha as .865, which lies between the accepted range of .05 to .09. The construct reliability tests reported scores above .05 which suggests that the constructs of the study are reliable enough to proceed for analysis.

Constructs	Cronbach α	No. of items
Attitudes	.865	13
Beliefs	.841	06
Subjective Norms	.735	04
Perceived Behavioural Control	.911	04

Table 2 Reliability of constructs

Hypothesis	df	Chi square value	p-value	Status
H ₀₁ :An individual's belief towards a personal care product has no significant relationship with its purchase behaviour.	16	42.191 ^a	.026	Rejected
H ₀₂ :There is no significant relationship between an individual's attitude towards a Personal care and its intention to purchase the product.	16	67.906 ^a	.000	Rejected
H ₀₃ :Subjective norm has no significant relationship with purchase intentions of personal care products.	16	58.423 ^a	.002	Rejected

Analysis of data by using chi square tests with the help of hypothesis led to form a strong evidence of role of attitudes, subjective norms and beliefs in FMCG purchases. First hypothesis which was rejected implied that there is strong and significant relationship between an individual's belief and purchases made by him. The more strong a belief towards a product, would lead to more purchases.

Second hypothesis which was also rejected proved that the more positive attitude towards a product would develop a more positive intention towards the product and hence will lead to purchase. Third hypothesis was also rejected and hence proved that the subjective norms are also directly associated with the purchases. More favourable norms will lead to development of a positive intention in the consumer mind to purchase the products.

Conclusion

The findings on product beliefs, attitudes and subjective norms reveal the three aspects lead the purchases. Belief which is held by consumer helps in purchase by developing positive notions in the mind related to product quality, its delivery, price, availability and thereby creates a favourable purchase intention about the personal care product which he intends to buy. Attitude being another factor for consumer purchases plays a vital role in transforming individuals into profitable and loyal consumers. It is the attitude of the consumer which helps in determining actual purchase of a personal care product brand. In case of personal care purchases, the attitude towards product characteristics, its branding, marketing and its pricing affects the purchase. The subjective norm is the factor, which is generally associated with the opinions and attitudes of friends, family and other influencers. The study favours the positive role of consumer beliefs, attitudes and the prevailing subjective norms as prime factors that lead consumers to purchases of personal care products.

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