



Consumerism: A Cultural Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

Consumerism is a movement of advocating greater protection of the interest of consumers. The movement seeks to protect and inform consumers by requiring such practices as honest packaging and advertising, product guarantees, and improved safety standards. Meaning of Consumerism Consumer: One who consumes or uses goods and services, Social Meaning: principles and doctrines. Ideology of consumption or possession of goods and services in greater quantities for and satisfaction of emotional fulfillment and to build some status. Economic Meaning: Doctrine that ever pursuit increasing consumption of goods and services forms the basis of a sound economy. Ethical Meaning: Protecting the rights and interests of consumers. Combined Meaning: the term 'Consumerism' refers to consumption of goods at a higher rate along for and improving the economy with protection or promotion of consumer's interests.

Keyword- Consumerism, Satisfaction, Buyer, Seller, Business

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumerism is a social and economic doctrine and it very much highlights the purchase and consumption of goods and services. Consumerism encourages people to buy more and consume more. In the modern times, consumerism can be explained as the energy source that works as the driving force behind the market, where people constantly seek out new products and services to meet their needs and wants. The ideology of consumerism is based on providing value for money for everyone. The roots of consumerism in Indian culture started spreading post-independence. The growth in the stability of Indian economy and rising incomes resulted into increase in consumer's buying capacity, which brought about a change in consumer's buying behavior. Consumerism became deeply ingrained in culture through so many means including – media, advertising, social norms, festivals and traditions. One example of consumerism in ethical clothing is mentioned below-

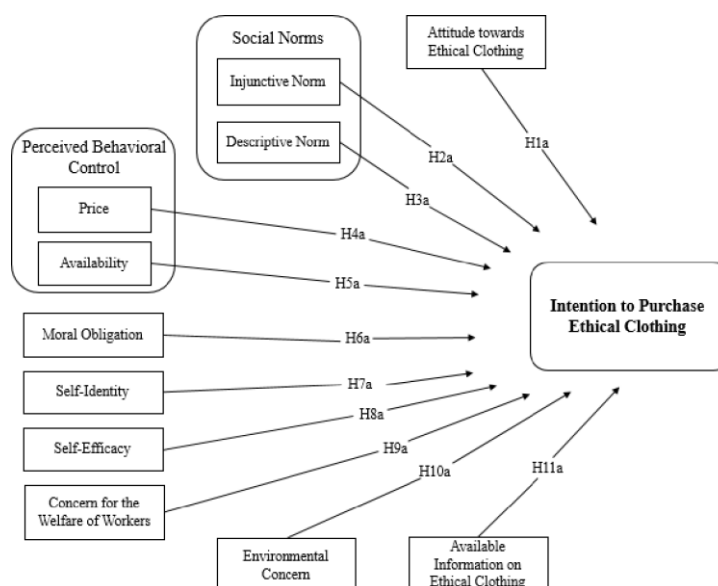


Figure- Ethical consumerism in India: factors influencing Indian consumer's intention to purchase and continue the purchase of ethical clothing

2. TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCE ON CONSUMERISM

The technological advancement has resulted in an increase in advancement of products and services quite efficiently. For example –

- ‘Automation’, which led to faster production with adoption of machines and reduced labor cost. Increase in production of goods made the products cheaper and affordable to a higher no of population. It resulted into an increase in consumption too.
- ‘E-commerce’ or online shopping has disrupted the old model of face-to-face shopping. The rise in e-commerce has led the retail business economy in decline. But we cannot also decline that online shopping has promoted the consumerism by a higher scale. Now that people have shops in their phones at their hand, they can buy products and even book for services like hotels, flight tickets, movies etc. Not only online shopping but online payment has also given a boost to consumerism. Nowadays customers can pay with cards or just their phones anytime or anywhere, payment without cash from direct bank transfer or credits influences not only consumers buying habits but also their expenses.
- Monopoly of big brands in market which gives people more option to choose from according to their needs and wants. The rise in online business industry is a boon to small start-ups and cottage or small industries. With the help of internet or social media platforms, small or new business can reach to a larger no of audience. This also creates competition in market and demotes
- Overall, the growth of technology has opened up new gates for businesses to grow and also resulted in the change in purchasing behaviour of public. Leading to a change in the ways businesses operate, compete, and interact with customers.

3. THE CONSUMERISM IMPACT ON THE BUSINESSES

The old school strategies of businesses were limited to just producing products and providing services, which are needed in market by customers. The focus used to be on coping up with the demand in market and supplying the products to customers with the end goal of increasing their profits. But with escalation of consumerism, the market faced a complete overhaul. Rather than just providing the customers with the products to fulfil the demand in market, businesses began increasing their production and introducing new products in market. They worked on creating the demand of their products or services by repetitive and convincing marketing. These manipulative marketing is usually done by targeting the consumers insecurities, and desires. Mass production makes the products cheaper and results into mass consumption. Hence the consumerism led to increase in consumers buying habits and spending followed by businesses earning more and more profit. Consumerism big impact on businesses led to an increase in economic growth of nations.

4. THE CONSUMERISM IMPACT ON BUYER

The buyer’s taste and preferences are ever-changing. The buyer is always in search of products that can meet his\her needs and wants in the best way and also sync well with his \her budget. Before the rise of consumerism, there used to be very less options in market to choose and compare a product from. Most of the spending’s done by a customer also used to be on purchasing day to day necessary products like toothpaste, edibles, grocery etc. But the rise in consumerism paved the way for new businesses to flourish. This led to diversity in market and demotivated the monopoly of brands. The use of manipulative marketing also influenced the buying behaviour of public and the market saw an increase in spending’s of not only rich, but also upper middle class and middle-class people. Nowadays with the help of online shopping applications and social media platforms, anyone can order whatever product they wish to buy with just a click, order food, book reservations and tickets from anywhere around the world.

5. THE CONSUMERISM IMPACT ON SELLER

The consumerism creates an environment of competition in the market. Unlike old times, the buyer of modern times has a lot of options to choose a product from depending upon the likes, preferences, paying capacity for that particular commodity \ service or the availability of products on platforms where he\she can easily buy the product from. This competition puts the sellers in constant pressure to keep on improving and come up with innovative and new products to compete with the other products on market. The seller also has to worry about improving the quality of product at competitive pricings as well as investing in good branding and marketing strategies. This is because in today’s world, the image of any product or service is responsible for that product’s success. And the best way to make a positive image in industry is by quality branding, advertising and customer service programs. From designing the business strategies of the products and marketing plans to requiring the brands to keep of innovating and improving, the impact of consumerism on a seller is very prominent.

6. EXPLORING CONSUMERISM ACROSS CONTEXTS

- The expenses of the wealthy class are based on possession of precious and valuable assets and goods. The influence of consumerism in rich and high income customers makes them the target of high quality brands and of businesses with very expensive products or services. Like how companies of super cars like rolls Royce and Mercedes only target rich people , who can afford them.

- During the time of festivals or any cultural occasion, people with any income class irrespective of their social standings spend money. For example – during Diwali or Holi, all the Hindu families make expenses on either clothes, sweets gifts etc. The effect of consumerism on the expenses done in festivals like these have become a part of cultural and tradition.
- People also spend money in getting influenced by marketing schemes and attractive advertisements. Participating in sales and discounts schemes even if the product is not needed just by seeing cheaper goods is also a context of consumerism.
- Purchase of expensive gadgets and constantly keep on upgrading to latest brands just for show off. For example- buying latest smart phones, watches, sunglasses etc.
- Online shopping is like fuel of the fast-growing economy. The customers can purchase products from anywhere around the world at anytime and get it delivered to their doorsteps. E-commerce has changed the dynamics of buying and selling, because of which the consumption of products has also increased.
- Brand loyalty is yet another factor affected by consumerism. Due to good marketing and providing better quality service by some brands, the customers are willing to buy the products at higher expenses and even pay premium or subscription fees.
- Dining at expensive cafes and hotels because of quality service, taste preferences and ambiance.
- Buying expensive jewellery and other fashion accessories as for following of beauty trends and showing status symbol.
- Spending on purchases during marriage of a relative or family member are also highly affected by consumerism. As even the poor goes out of his ways and even take loans to cope up with their son/daughter's marriage expenses. The heavy expenses done in an Indian wedding are considered culturally influenced expenses.
- Consumer rights or consumer protection laws ensures that the customer is informed about the product they are spending money to buy and have rights to return or ask for refund if found any defects in the product. Consumerism has acted as a blessing for the market and economy but it has also resulted in sometimes customers getting fraud. For example- selling of fake good on real prices, online shopping scams etc.

The consumer rights and consumer court is for people to file their complaints if they are scammed by someone or became a victim of any fraud.

7. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS OF CONSUMERISM

Consumerism demarcates the process of buying and consuming goods and services. There could be several negative or positive future implications of consumerism, such as;

- **Tech advancement**

The increase in demand promotes technological innovation and development of both products and services which may improve people's livelihood and make their life easier. But it may also result to a huge no of unemployment as machines take the human place in industry. For example, right now a factory that needs 100 employees to function properly in 5-10 years may only need 50 -60 of them to do the same amount of work or more with highly advances machinery.

- **Fast fashion**

The fast-changing fashion industry is growing very rapidly. Most of the world is nowadays getting influenced by the fashion trends, which may in future lead to a very huge climatic issue. The landfills where the clothes or other things that are not reused or recycled due to various reasons are dumped are growing in heights day by day due to consumerism. And if the situation remains the same, it may cause a big climatic issue in future which can't be reversed.

- **Economic growth**

Consumerism leads to increase in production, consumption and employment. Consumerism is like a spark that gives rise to the fire of economic growth. The economy of many countries like India started stabilizing only after the industrialisation and is growing more and more. it may also keep growing in the future but there could also be some issues such as division in society or inequality.

8. CONCLUSION

The future implications of consumerism are complex. They could have positive impact on the businesses and people but could also be affected by negative situations. If we take India as an example, then the future implication of consumerism in the next 5-10 years are predicted to be positive for the nation's economy. But also dependent on factors such as the nation's policies for future, technological advancement and social values.

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