

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour refers to the study of how **individual consumers, groups, or organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods and services** to satisfy their needs and wants. It includes the psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors that influence consumer decisions before, during, and after the purchase. Understanding consumer behaviour helps marketers design better products, set appropriate prices, choose effective promotional strategies, and improve customer satisfaction.

Consumer Purchase Decision Process

The **consumer purchase decision process** describes the various stages a consumer goes through while making a buying decision. This process generally consists of **five main stages**:

1. Problem or Need Recognition

The buying process begins when a consumer recognizes a **need or problem**. This occurs when there is a difference between the consumer's current state and desired state. Needs may arise due to internal factors (hunger, thirst, desire for comfort) or external factors (advertisements, peer influence, new products).

Example: A person realizes that their old mobile phone is slow and decides to buy a new one.

2. Information Search

After recognizing the need, the consumer searches for information about possible solutions. The search may be **internal** (past experiences, memory) or **external** (friends, family, advertisements, websites, reviews, salespeople).

The extent of information search depends on factors such as:

- Importance of the product
 - Cost of the product
 - Consumer's experience and involvement
-

3. Evaluation of Alternatives

In this stage, the consumer compares different brands and products based on various attributes such as price, quality, features, brand reputation, and after-sales service. Consumers may use **different evaluation criteria** depending on their preferences and priorities.

Example: Comparing different mobile phone brands based on camera quality, battery life, price, and warranty.

4. Purchase Decision

After evaluating alternatives, the consumer decides **which product or brand to buy**. However, the final purchase decision may be influenced by factors such as:

- Attitudes of others (friends, family)
- Unexpected situational factors (discounts, stock availability, income changes)

At this stage, the consumer also decides where, when, and how to purchase the product.

5. Post-Purchase Behaviour

After purchasing and using the product, the consumer evaluates whether the product meets expectations. Satisfaction leads to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth, while dissatisfaction may result in complaints or product returns. This stage is important for building **brand loyalty** and long-term customer relationships.

Conclusion

Consumer behaviour explains why consumers make certain purchasing decisions. The consumer purchase decision process shows that buying is not a single act but a series of steps influenced by many factors. By understanding this process, marketers can better meet consumer needs, influence purchase decisions, and ensure customer satisfaction.