

## IMPACT OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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### ABSTRACT

The present marketing climate has made the research of customer behaviour crucial. Without consumers, no business can make a profit. Every business action revolves around satisfying customers. In the study of consumer purchasing behaviour, the customer plays all three roles: user, payer, and buyer. Considering customer spending habits is now standard practise in strategic market planning. "Cognitive dissonance" is a key idea in consumer behaviour, and marketers pay close attention to post-purchase actions. The purpose of this study is to identify the elements that influence urban consumer goods shoppers to experience cognitive dissonance when making purchases. Cognitive dissonance affects many parts of consumer buying behavior, which is covered in the article.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Consumer Behavior, And Cognitive Dissonance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### OVERVIEW

Consumer behaviour has long piqued marketers' curiosity. Knowing how customers are influenced by their environment, social circles, family, culture, society, psychological factors, salespeople, and other elements helps marketers better understand how consumers think, feel, and choose brands and products.

Cognitive Dissonance is one of the most studied subjects in the history of psychology. When a person's views, attitudes, and behaviours are at odds with one another, it is referred to as cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1957). According to the cognitive dissonance theory, Dissonance —a lack of harmony or inconsistency— arises when an individual holds conflicting beliefs or attitudes about an object. Cognitive distress following a purchase is referred to as post-buy Dissonance. Because buying decisions always require some compromise, post-purchase Dissonance is very prevalent. Consumers might seek marketing support for their choice, defend the purchase as wise, or seek assurance from knowledgeable content owners (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008).

This study will help identify how consumers' cognitive Dissonance influences their purchasing decisions and how marketers might counteract this effect.

## 2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to uncover the factors that induce cognitive Dissonance in consumer decision-making, specifically in consumer product decisions.

Buyer in the urban vicinity. Examples include familial position, religious values, practices, and beliefs. The report also elucidates the issues and identifies potential solutions to address these challenges.

## 3. HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH

What elements affect customer buying decisions?

The marketing concept emphasizes that a corporation must develop a Marketing Mix that fulfils client needs, which necessitates an analysis of the what, where, when, and how of consumer purchasing behaviour.

What motivates consumers to make their purchasing decisions?

Marketers can more accurately anticipate consumer reactions to marketing strategies.

Examine the various causes that induce cognitive Dissonance in consumers.

## 4. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

A consumer is an individual or entity that utilizes economic goods or services.

Consumer Behaviour: "The actions exhibited by consumers in the processes of seeking, acquiring, utilizing, assessing, and discarding products and services anticipated to fulfil their needs." - Schiffman and Kanuk ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

Purchasing behaviour Conduct:

Acquisition Behaviour encompasses the decision-making processes and actions of individuals involved in purchasing and using goods. [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Cognitive Dissonance refers to the psychological tension or discomfort an individual experiences when holding conflicting views, thoughts, or ideals.

## 5. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer Behaviour examines people, groups, or organizations and the methodologies they employ to select, acquire, utilize, and discard items, services, experiences, or ideas to fulfil requirements, as well as the effects of these processes on both the consumer and society. It integrates components from psychology, sociology, social anthropology, marketing, and economics. It seeks to understand consumers' decision-making processes, both individually and collectively, including the influence of emotions on purchasing behaviour. It examines the traits of individual consumers, including demographics and behavioural data, to comprehend their desires. It also seeks to evaluate the impact of many groups on the customer, including family, friends, sports, reference groups, and society at large.

### 5.1 Types of consumer behavior

Level of Significance Between Brands High Involvement Low Involvement Significant Complex Buying Behavior Variety-seeking Buying Behavior Few Dissonance reducing Buying Behavior Habitual Buying Behavior

**5.1.1 Complex Buying Behavior:** Consumers exhibit complex buying behaviour when they are deeply engaged in a purchase and recognize substantial distinctions across brands. Consumers exhibit significant involvement when the product is costly, purchased infrequently, entails risk, and serves as a strong form of self-expression. The consumer generally has limited knowledge of the product category and much to learn.

Illustration. An individual purchasing a personal computer may be unaware of which attributes to consider. Numerous product specifications, such as "16K memory," "disc storage," and "screen resolution," hold no significance for him or her.

The marketer of a high-involvement product must comprehend the information-seeking and assessment behaviours of high-involvement consumers.

### 5.1.2 Dissonance-Reducing Purchasing Behaviour

Occasionally, the buyer is significantly engaged in a purchase yet perceives minimal distinction among the brands. The elevated engagement is attributable to the buy being costly, rare, and perilous. The buyer will compare options to ascertain availability, but will make a prompt purchase due to minimal brand differentiation. The purchaser may react mostly to an advantageous price or to the ease of acquisition.

Post-purchase, the consumer may encounter Dissonance from observing unsettling product attributes or from receiving commendatory information about alternative brands. The customer will be vigilant regarding information that may validate his or her selection. The consumer will initially act, subsequently develop new beliefs, and ultimately form a set of attitudes.

**5.1.3 Habitual Purchasing Behaviour:** Numerous products are acquired in scenarios characterized by minimal customer engagement and a lack of substantial brand differentiation. Contemplate the acquisition of salt. Consumers exhibit minimal engagement in this product category. They proceed to the store and select the brand. If consumers consistently choose the same brand, it is due to habit rather than genuine brand loyalty.

Marketers of low-involvement items with minimal brand differentiation find it helpful to utilize price and sales incentives to encourage product trial, as consumers exhibit low commitment to any one brand. When promoting a low-involvement product, several factors must be considered. The advertisement should emphasize only a few crucial elements. Visual symbols and imagery are significant because they facilitate easy recall and association with the brand.

**5.1.4 Variety-Seeking Purchasing Behaviour:** Certain purchasing scenarios exhibit minimal consumer engagement yet notable brand distinctions. Consumers frequently exhibit significant brand switching behaviour.

An instance arises in the acquisition of cookies. The consumer holds certain beliefs, selects a brand of cookies with minimal assessment, and appraises it throughout consumption. However, next time, the consumer may reach for another brand out of boredom or a wish for a different taste. Brand flipping transpires for the sake of diversity rather than discontent.

### 5.2 Factors of consumer behavior

The various factors that influence consumer behaviour are as follows:

**5.3. The Purchase Procedure for the Consumer** For complicated decisions, there are six steps to the consumer decision-making process. There is more than just the act of buying itself. Decisions do not necessarily result in

purchases. The degree of complexity determines whether all six stages are involved in a consumer decision, as described later.

#### **Every step consists of:**

The first step is to identify the issue or the need by comparing the current situation with the ideal one. Inadequate product variety. Food and Hunger. When you're hungry, you feel the urge to eat. I had no idea you were lacking in this area; the marketer can stimulate you with product knowledge. If you need new shoes and see an ad for them, consider buying them.

#### **1. Finding what you need**— • Looking within, recalling past information.

Use an external search engine to get additional results. Referrals from close friends and family members... Marketers' sources, public sources, comparison shopping, etc. The evoked set is the collection of alternatives that a buyer is left with after a successful information search.

Evoked set includes: • Chinese food • Indian food • Burger King, etc., and the desire to dine out.

**2. Alternatives Evaluation**—the first step is to determine what the buyer needs and wants and to set up criteria for evaluating each option. Alternatives or resume search might be ranked or weighted. You might opt for a spicy dish, which is considered the best in Indian cuisine, etc. The search process begins again if you are unhappy with your selection. Would you happen to know of any additional eateries? Refer to the yellow pages, etc. There might be differences in how data from various sources is handled. Marketers attempt to sway consumers by "framing" available options.

#### **3. Buying choice** – Take your pick from available options for product, packaging, retailer, payment method, etc.

1. Buying—which might change from deciding, the interval between steps 4 and 5, and the product's availability.

2. Post-Purchase Review—Result: Contentment or Discontentment. Dealing with Cognitive Dissonance: Is your decision correct? Product guarantees, follow-up correspondence, etc., can mitigate this.

### **6. MENTAL DISSONANCE**

The psychological phenomenon known as "cognitive dissonance" occurs when previously held beliefs and knowledge are at odds with newly acquired knowledge. It shows up whenever we have to accept new ideas, and being receptive to them could be vital. He demonstrates how to create an intellectual chasm between students' assumptions and "reality," elevating the practice of proper dissonance generation to a fundamental feature of education.

Festinger (1957) and associates were the first to study cognitive dissonance. The study drew on a participant-observation study of a cult that prophesied a flood would destroy the earth and on how its adherents, especially the devoted ones who had given up their lives for the cause, reacted when the flood never came.

Cognitive dissonance, according to Festinger (1957), is a psychological phenomenon that occurs when an individual's beliefs are at odds with circumstances that contradict those beliefs. Festinger first described cognitive dissonance as a condition characterized by psychological distress arising from the encounter of two competing or contradictory thoughts or beliefs. Cognitive dissonance occurs when a person holds both viewpoints as valid. To alleviate the mental strain caused by the ensuing dissonance, the person must bring harmony to seemingly incompatible parts of themselves.

#### **Contemplative Dissonance and Purchase Behaviour**

Marketers in today's fast-paced business world work tirelessly to attract new customers and retain the ones they already have by satisfying their needs and exceeding their expectations in the exchange process. Customers are more likely to remain loyal when they are satisfied with the service they receive, which, in turn, affects the company's bottom line, EPS, and stock price (Williams & Naumann, 2011).

An in-depth assessment of customer behaviour is crucial to organizational success because it lies at the heart of all marketing efforts. Cognitive dissonance and its effects on consumer behaviour have thus been central to a great deal of significant study. Among the most influential theories in social psychology, according to one writer (Aronson, 1969). As the name suggests, Sweeney, Hausknecht, and Soutar (2000) found that dissonance covers both aspects of cognition.

Even Festinger's original statement (among many others) implies that "cognitive dissonance" includes an emotional component.

As a result, the individual experiences Dissonance, which helps them reconcile competing parts and alleviate psychological strain. The most common three forms of dissonance are as follows: first, dissonance can be induced by any logical discrepancy. When a person's attitude and behaviour, or even two different behaviours, are at odds with

one another, they may experience cognitive dissonance. Thirdly, as Loudon and Della Bitta (2002) point out, dissonance can occur when deeply held expectations are violated. Once a decision is taken, there is no longer any room for flexibility in attitude or action, which leads to dissonance. On the other hand, when a buyer and consumer commit to a decision, they limit their ability to change and are obligated to stick to it.

## 7. FACTORS CAUSING REFLEXIVITY

The pursuit of consistency in one's beliefs and understandings is common among individuals. Cognitive dissonance is the unease one feels when holding two competing worldviews. A shift is required to reduce or eliminate discordance when attitudes and actions misalign. Cognitive dissonance can arise for many different reasons. A few examples include emotional reactions, standards, culture, social status, beliefs, conventions, politics, religion, and peer-group influence.

People in a particular culture might think you must buy things approved by that community. Disputes could arise when deciding which products to buy. Is it something that my community will be open to? This situation triggers cognitive dissonance. Also, people's values, beliefs, and practices may differ, leading to cognitive dissonance when shopping. Cognitive dissonance often arises when a person's religious beliefs conflict. People of different faiths purchase products according to their religious beliefs. Some faiths outright forbid some goods, and when people buy them, it causes cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when factors such as social status, emotional responses, and political values all influence consumers' decision-making processes (Bhasin, 2010).

### 7.1 How to Reduce Cognitive Dissonance

There are three key strategies to reduce or minimize cognitive Dissonance:

Focus on more supportive beliefs that override the dissonant belief or behaviour.

Reduce the importance of the conflicting belief.

Change the conflicting belief so that it aligns with other beliefs or behaviours.

**7.2 Theories of Dissonance and Their Foundations Cognitive dissonance theory is quite straightforward:** It posits that when two thoughts are at odds with each other, it causes an unpleasant condition similar to being hungry or thirsty, which in turn pushes one to bring the two thoughts into harmony. Claims made by humans regarding their actions, beliefs, and surroundings are known as cognitions, according to Leon Festinger (1957). This means that thoughts might be complementary, discordant, or completely unconnected to one another. When one thought follows directly after the other, we say that the two thoughts are discordant. A person's drive to lessen cognitive dissonance grows in direct correlation with the degree to which their contradictory beliefs matter to them, and in reverse proportion to the degree to which their consistent beliefs matter to them. Changing one of the cognitions or adding additional cognitions will usually alleviate this tension until mental "consonance" is reached. One of the strongest, most consequential, and contentious theories in social psychology's annals was Festinger's initial formulation. Despite several criticisms and proposed changes, the fundamental observation of conduct is still unchallenged and keeps inspiring new studies.

Numerous unexpected and counterintuitive forecasts have resulted from the use of this theory. As an example, whereas common sense dictates that actions stem from beliefs, dissonance theory pinpoints situations in which this is not necessarily the case. A powerful and somewhat paradoxical experiment from the early days of the theory is shown here. Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) established what is now called the induced compliance effect by having subjects endure a 30 minute task that was extremely boring before they were instructed to convince a waiting subject that the task was actually highly engaging. Most people had cognitive dissonance because they thought the activity was boring but then, for some reason, they ended up arguing that it was actually quite interesting.

According to Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, when one's beliefs and actions are at odds with one another, it leads to a negative motivational state similar to being hungry or thirsty. Usually, to alleviate this tension, you can either replace one of the discordant parts or add more of them until your mind finds harmony. Three significant improvements have been made that are pertinent to the current understanding of dissonant phenomena. An individual experiences dissonance when their actions contradict their self-perception as a moral and reasonable being, according to Aronson's (1968) self-consistency paradigm. According to Steele's self-affirmation theory (1988), the global self-concept must be restored in order to reduce dissonance, which arises when the overarching self-system is threatened. Rather than requiring cognitive inconsistency, the 'New Look' model put out by Cooper and Fazio (1984) stated that dissonance stemmed from producing undesirable, unpleasant outcomes. Dissonance arises when the result of an action's comparison to a standard does not match up, according to a recent synthesis by Cooper (1999) and Stone

(1999). This self-standards model states that the comparison standard is determined by contextual variables. The dissonance process that is most likely to be operational is then determined by these variables.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study has also proposed strategies that service organizations might employ to mitigate cognitive Dissonance. Currently, the swift expansion of the service industry presents significant obstacles for marketers across various service organizations in fulfilling client expectations. Consequently, the service organization needs to address the Dissonance associated with purchasing to maintain competitiveness in both local and global markets. Following the evaluation of the survey results, the study has proposed ways to mitigate cognitive Dissonance effectively. These include:

1. Concentrate on fostering more affirmative beliefs that counteract the dissonant thought or behaviour.
2. Minimize the significance of the conflicting belief.
3. Modify the contradictory belief to ensure alignment with other beliefs or behaviours.
4. Seeking a reliable source that the target consumers trust. Simultaneously, word-of-mouth communications must be amplified.
5. Prioritize the selection of a reputable source.

Identifying sources that align with the customer's prior beliefs.

Unexpected sources can occasionally exert a greater influence on consumer views.

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