
Decision Making Styles of Working Women in Buying Apparel: An Empirical Study

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Number of working women is increasing in India. It is important to study the buying behavior of working women. This study is an attempt to investigate the consumer decision making styles of working women. The consumer decision-making process is a complex phenomenon. The purchase of goods or services includes a number of factors that could affect each decision. Decision making is more complex and even more important for consumers today than in the past.

The sample included 86 working women. The Consumers decision making styles were identified by a structure questionnaire and captured in nine styles by conducting factor analysis. These styles were shopping enjoyment, habitual buying, fashion consciousness, perfectionist, quality consciousness, brand consciousness, confused by over choice, impulse buying and store loyalty.

Keywords Working Women, Consumer Decision Making Styles, Factor Analysis.

The movement of women from the home into the office is one of the most important social trends of Indian population today. Number of working women is increasing in India. As per one estimate, percent of working women in Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata is 14.7, 13.8, 11.2, 10.9, 10.9 and 10.6 respectively¹. Examination of the impact of this trend in buying behavior has recently aroused considerable interest among academicians and researchers. This study is an attempt to investigate the decision making styles of working women in purchasing apparel.

This research paper is divided into three major sections. First, the theoretical background and previous research that has been conducted in this area is discussed. Although there has been a dearth of such type of studies in the Indian Context, theoretical exploration can be based on international studies carried out in other countries. Second, the research methodology adopted to investigate consumer decision making style of working women is presented. Finally, a general discussion of the findings, as well as limitations of the study and directions for future research is provided.

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Literature review

The consumer decision-making process is a complex phenomenon. The purchase of goods or services includes a number of factors that could affect each decision. The advent of global markets has resulted in a plethora of product choice, retail channels (e.g.,

¹ Indian Retail: On The Fast Track, Time for Bridging Capacity Gap, report published by FCCI, 2005

mail catalogues, television, Internet, and stores) and promotional activity, which make consumers' decision making increasingly complex.

Sproles (1985) defines consumer decision-making styles as "a patterned, mental, cognitive orientation towards shopping and purchasing, which constantly dominates the consumer's choices resulting in a relatively-enduring consumer personality". Later, Sproles and Kendall (1986) define a consumer decision making (CDM) style as "a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choices." Sproles (1985) and Sproles and Kendall (1986) provide the Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI), which is an

“Consumer Decision Making (CDM) style is a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choices”

early attempt to systematically measure consumer decision making styles of young consumers in United States. This instrument measures eight mental characteristics of consumer's decision making: Perfectionism, Brand Consciousness, Novelty-Fashion Consciousness, Recreational, Price-Value Consciousness, Impulsiveness, Confused by Overchoice, and Brand-Loyal/Habitual.

The literature review regarding the consumer decision making styles reveals that the CSI has been applied in various countries: the U.S., Korea, New Zealand, Greece, India, the United Kingdom, and China. These studies are briefly described in the following sections.

Durvasula et al. (1993) administered the CSI on 210 undergraduate business students at a large university in New Zealand. They found eight consumer decision making styles. These styles are perfectionist, brand conscious, novelty-fashion conscious, recreational shopping conscious, price-value conscious, impulsive, confused by over-choice, and habitual/ brand-loyal.

Hafstrom, Chae and Chung (1992) using the 44 items questionnaire similar to CSI, collected data of 310 randomly selected college students at four universities in Taegu, Korea. Using the same eight-factor conceptual framework and analytical methods as those of Sproles and Kendall (1986), Hafstrom et al. (1992) confirmed seven of eight factors representing dimensions of consumer decision making. The only factor that was not confirmed was "novelty-fashion consciousness." On the other hand, an additional factor of "time-energy conserving" was identified for the Korean sample.

Hiu et al. (2001) administered the CSI to 387 adult consumers in China. Their findings indicate that five decision-making styles are valid and reliable in Chinese culture. These styles were perfectionist, novelty-fashion conscious, recreational, price conscious, and confused by over choice. In another study in Chinese culture, Fan and Xiao (1998) identified five dimensions of consumer decision making styles: brand consciousness; time consciousness; price consciousness; quality consciousness; and information utilization.

Walsh et al. (2001) confirmed seven factors of consumer decision-making styles for German consumers. These factors were brand consciousness, perfectionism, recreational/hedonism, confused by overchoice, impulsiveness, novelty-fashion consciousness and variety seeking.

Mitchell and Wayne (2001) conducted survey of 455 shoppers in Germany and found seven dimensions of consumer decision making styles: these were brand consciousness, perfectionism, recreations/hedonism, confused by overchoice, impulsiveness, novelty-fashion conscious and variety seeking.

“Study on 128 mall shoppers found six decision making styles: price consciousness, quality consciousness, recreational, confused by overchoice, novelty conscious and variety seeking”

In India, Canabal, M.E. (2002) investigated the decision making styles of South Indian Consumers among the sample of 173 students and identified five decision making styles, Brand Conscious Style, High Quality Conscious / Perfectionist Style, Confused by Overchoice Style, Impulsive / Brand Indifferent Style, and Recreational Shopper Style. In another study, Patel (2008) conducted survey of 128 mall shoppers and found six decision making styles: price consciousness, quality consciousness, recreational, confused by overchoice, novelty conscious and variety seeking.

Unfortunately, one major issue with Sproles and Kendall's CSI (1986) relates to its generalizability. The original authors acknowledged that their results could not be generalized to all consumers, as student samples are not representatives of the general population. Most of the study conducted in this area used students as their target populations. Therefore, this study is an attempt to study the consumer decision making styles of Indian Working Women.

Research Methodology

Data were collected using the Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) developed by Sproles & Kendall (1986). There were 39 statements in the structure questionnaire. All of these statements were scored on five point Likert-type scales ranging from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1). The questionnaire also contained questions to solicit demographic information of the respondents such as age, education, household income and marital status. The target population for this study was working women. Respondents (working women) were selected by cross reference with the help of students in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat. Interviewers gave instructions for completing the questionnaire and waited while respondent independently filled out questionnaire.

Data Analysis

A total of 86 respondents (i.e., working women) participated in the survey. Around 41 percentage women were in the age bracket of 20 to 30 years old, followed by 40-50

(around 19 percentages). Around 63 percentage working women in the sample have job experience of more than six years. Around 76 percentage respondents reported that their monthly family income is more than Rs. 30,000.

Working women decision making styles were capture using exploratory factor analysis using SPSS software version 16. Factor analysis was run using the Principal Component Approach with a varimax rotation. Initially, measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) of all the 39 items were checked. Total eight items got deleted because of their low value of MSA. In this study, the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity (0.00) and KMO (0.656) indicates that the data are appropriate for factor analysis.

In this study, factor analysis was carried out in two stages. In stage one, known as the factor extraction process, objective was to identify how many factors to be extracted from the data. Using principal component analysis, twenty five items were extracted by nine factors. Only the factors having latent roots or eigenvalue greater than one were considered significant; all factors having eigenvalue less than one were considered insignificant and were discarded. All the nine factors together accounted for 71.8 percent of the total variance. In the second stage, all the factors were interpreted and labeled. Items having factor loading more than 0.6 were included in the interpretation. Table 1 summarizes all the nine deciding making styles of working women.

Table 1: Results of Factor Analysis

Decision making styles of Working Women	Factor Loading	Communalities	Cronbach’s Alpha
Shopping Enjoyment			0.787
Shopping is a pleasant activity to me.	0.605	0.635	
Going shopping is one of the enjoyable activities of my life	0.765	0.609	
I enjoy shopping just for fun of it	0.810	0.765	
I make shopping trips fast.	0.875	0.804	

Habitual Buying			0.798
I have favorite brands I buy over and over.	0.761	0.708	
I go to the same stores each time I shop.	0.816	0.811	
Once I find a product or brand I like, I stick with it.	0.818	0.719	
Fashion Consciousness			0.874
I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style	0.927	0.901	
I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashion	0.896	0.875	
Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me.	0.811	0.702	
Perfectionist			0.846
When it comes to purchasing products, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.	0.717	0.772	
I give my purchases much thought or care.	0.798	0.775	
To get variety, I shop different stores and choose different brands.	0.909	0.850	
Quality Conscious			0.801
Getting very good quality is very important to me.	0.846	0.754	
In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality.	0.845	0.793	
My standard and expectation, for the products I buy, are very high.	0.762	0.730	
Brand Consciousness			0.763
The well known national brands are for me.	0.752	0.642	
I prefer buying the best selling brands.	0.862	0.793	
The most advertised brands are usually very good choices.	0.752	0.682	
Confused by Overchoice			0.842
There are so many brands to choose from that I often confused.	0.887	0.810	

The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best.	0.891	0.813	
All the information I get on different products confuses me.	0.798	0.710	
Impulsive Buying			0.767
Often I make careless purchases I later wish I had not.	0.765	0.691	
I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do.	0.826	0.788	
I take time to shop carefully for the best	0.813	0.739	
Store loyalty			0.536
Nice department and specialty stores offer me the best products	0.755	0.647	
I go to the same stores each time I shop.	0.668	0.575	

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to investigate the decision making styles of working women. Total nine decision making styles of working women were indentified in this study. These styles were shopping enjoyment, habitual buying, fashion consciousnesses, perfectionist, quality consciousness, brand consciousness, confused by ovechoice, impulse buying and store loyalty.

As number of working women is increasing in India, an understanding of consumer behavior of this segment, with particular reference to their decision-making styles, is crucial. This Information on consumers' decision-making style will be useful for retailers targeting Indian working women. Profiling working women by their decision-making styles provide more meaningful ways to identify and understand this segment and to target each segment with more focused marketing strategies.

There are several limitations that warrant future research. The study has been conducted in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat, India. The results of the same, if conducted in other part

of the county may vary. The sample consisted of 86 working women. The small sample size is also error-prone. The decision making styles identified in this study is for apparel purchasing. Results may vary if purchasing decision making styles were investigated for other product category.

Further research may address the following important questions:

1. Do the working women at different level of the organization have different decision making styles in purchasing?
2. Does the nature of the job of working women (i.e., software engineer, consultants, sales women, teacher etc.) influence the consumers' decision making styles?
3. Do the working women from different geographical areas of Indian differ in their decision making styles in purchasing?

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