

**Impact of Gender on Consumer Buying Behaviour for Apparels:  
A Literature review**

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### ABSTARCT

Consumer market for apparel has become more diverse by increasing number of designer and store brands, personalisation in advertisement, media habits in the global market today. A clear consideration of preferences of consumers will be certainly help the marketer to catch the attention of and uphold their target consumer group.

Elayne Boosler said, *'When women are depressed, they either eat or go shopping. Men invade another country.'* further it is said that "Men are from Mars and women are from Venus." These two quotes are rightly described men and women. They have a different way of processing information, dealing with problems, and spending free time. Men and women due to their different upbringing and socialization along with various other social, biological and psychological factors depict different types of behaviour at various situations.

This paper examines relevant literature to understand the impact of gender on buying behaviour. The paper is a divided in two parts: The consumer behaviour and consumer decision making process through EKB Model and impact of gender on consumer buying behaviour. Gender impact on apparels also described in brief with consideration of various factors like demo geographical profile, time perspective, brand awareness and preferences.

**Key words:** *Gender, consumer behaviour, apparels*

### Introduction:

In common parlance, it is a study of the consumers' decisions and responses to the products and services. Consumer behaviour studies the actions of consumer be it individual, group or an organization in the market place and the underlying motives for selecting, buying, using and disposing the goods, services and an idea to satisfy their needs and wants. It is answering following- what to buy, when to buy, where to buy, why to buy or why not to buy and how to buy. The clue to understand it lies at the intersection of psychology, sociology, social anthropology and economics.

### I - Consumer behaviour-review of literature

The concept of Consumer Behaviour is understood differently by various experts in the field of marketing.

Consumer behaviour is the study of the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon et al, 2006). Consumer behaviour research is a systematic study of the practices consumers use to select, protect, practice and dispose of products and services that satisfy their needs. The Knowledge of consumer behaviour directly affects marketing strategy

(Anderson et al, 2005). Understanding consumer behaviour has significant attitude on marketing decisions. The concept reviews a number of issues related to consumer behaviour and provides hints for refining or introducing products or services, setting prices, developing channels, creating messages, and developing other marketing activities (Kotler, et al., 2008). It emphasises the mental, emotional, and physical processes and needs and wants, as well as the influence of perceived risk. (Arens, 1999)

Every consumer is unique with different needs, wants, buying choices and habits and that are in turn tempered by psychological and social drivers that affect purchase decision processes. (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). Though all are consumers but what differentiate them is, their needs.

The consumer behaviour and research methodology have been majorly affected by the changing traditions in marketing discipline. The journey of marketing concepts started from the classical school based on economic anthropology, to the managerial school borrowed the social science concepts for consumers understanding; and till the behavioural school shifted the research to individual consumers, the branches of psychology which is more relevant for market understanding (Sheth Jagdish, 1985).

In a connection with this journey of consumer behaviour, there are four different views related to consumer decision making process and their behaviour.

The first view is '*Economic view*' in which consumers are expected to compare and rationalize the assumptions they have made and the available alternatives. They are going to rank and prioritize their identified alternatives.

Second view - '*Passive View*' is absolutely opposite to economic view whereas; consumers are being impulsive and irrational in their choices. They easily get influenced by the marketing tools.

The third view is '*Emotional View*' which is related to perceive consumer's decision making based on their emotional association or feeling about some products and services.

And the last view is '*Cognitive View*' where consumers are considered as "thinking problem solver". Consumers apply logics to the alternatives available and actively searching for the products and services that can fill their need. Consumer's behaviour under this view is based on information seeking and processing attributes usually directed by a goal.

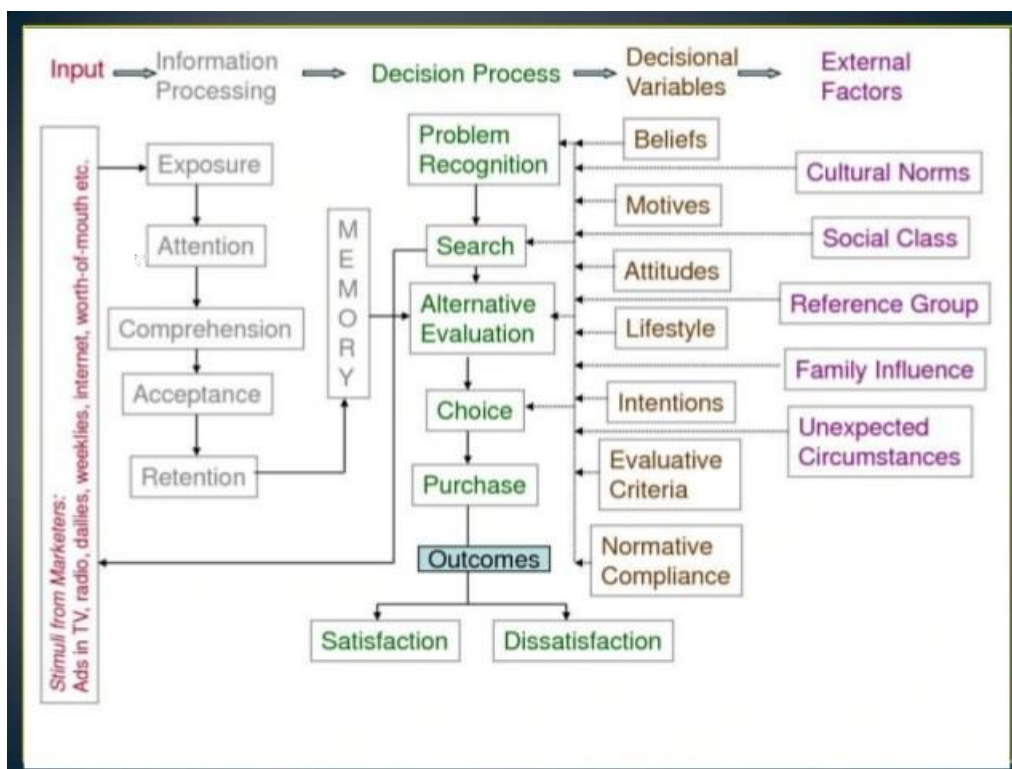
Despite critiques for each viewpoint, it can be considered a valid argument, that all four types of decision making behaviour exist and provide marketer guidelines to analyze consumer accordingly. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004)

## **Consumer Behaviour Decision Making Model: Engel Kollat Blackwell Model of Consumer Behaviour (EKB model)**

There are number of models of consumer behaviour decision- making prevalent namely: **1.**Economic Model **2.**Psychological Model **3.** Pavlovian Model **4.** Input, Process Output Model—Gandhi: Philip Kotler **5.** Sociological Model **6.** Howarth Sheth Model **7.** Engel-Blackwell-Kollat Model **8.** Model of Family Decision-making **9.** Nicosia Model **10.** A Model of Industrial Buying Behaviour.

The **Engel Kollat Blackwell Model of Consumer Behaviour** (EKB model) is considered one of the most important works in the field of consumer behaviour (Schiffman and Kanuk 2008). It describes the increasing, fast-growing knowledge regarding consumer behaviour, the process of consumers’ decision and how to make decisions by choosing the appropriate one among the list of alternatives available.

Howarth Sheth Model (1963), Nicosia Model (1976) and **Engel Kollat Blackwell Model of Consumer Behaviour** (1978) are all based on consumer psychology theories. However, the environmental factors are the additional variables included in EKB model to construct consumer behaviour.



Source:The eagle-kollat0blackwel model (EKBmodel-1978)

The Engel et.al argue that the consumers receive inputs/information from the marketing and non-marketing stimuli like advertisement from various medias, to identify their needs/ the recognition of their problems at **Information Input Stage**. But, if the consumer is still unable to recognize his problem/ need, or in some cases if the consumer experience dissonance

because the selected alternative is less satisfactory than expected, the search for external information is activated to arrive at a choice.

Information received from marketing and non-marketing stimuli feeds in to the **information processing** which then goes into the memory. In this stage the information passes through exposure, attention, comprehension acceptance and retention. What is stored in the memory/ effectiveness of the information will depend on the consumer's exposure to the communication tools and messages, the attention s/he pays, how s/he perceives, accepts, and how long s/he can retains (by transporting the information to long-term memory).

The information is stored in the memory, acts as an initial influence on need recognition. If initial information is inadequate there is a search for additional information.

The main part of the model is, **Decision Process Stage**, Which comprises of five stages viz Problem recognition, Search for alternatives, alternate evaluation, purchase, and outcomes (post purchase evaluation and behaviour) which leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

All the five stages of the decision process are impacted directly and indirectly by an **individual influence**; demography, belief, motive, attitude, personality, values, lifestyle, normative compliances etc. And the **external factors** viz. Cultural norms, social class, reference groups, unexpected circumstances etc.

The problem recognition is followed by the search of the information which may initially be based on the memory. The consumer evaluates the various alternatives; while evaluation, the belief leads to formation of attitude, which in turn affects the purchase intention. The choice and the purchase are impacted by individual differences like lifestyle and the normative compliances. Finally, there is an outcome in the form of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This outcome acts as an input and impacts the cycle again. It is not needed for every consumer to pass through all these stages; it depends on whether it is a high involvement situation or a routine problem with low involvement.

**Consumer decision making Process:**

The marketers consistently strive to understand and identify the major factors which motivate or demotivate the consumers to behave in a certain way. There are number of factors which affect consumers, but major are Psychological, Social, Cultural, Personal and Economical factors, which includes other factors as classified below. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001)

Psychological	Motivation
	Perception
	Learning
	Attitude and belief
	Family

Social	Reference group
	Role and Social Status
Cultural	Culture
	Subculture
Personal	Age
	Gender
	Income
	Occupation
	Lifestyle

The understanding of the consumer decision making process is crucial to identify challenges and opportunities for marketers and it will help them to know the sources from where the consumer gathered the information. This in turn will help them identify what they should press for to encourage the consumers to buy and ultimately make their purchase decision-making. (Solomon et al., 2010). There will be mainly five stages for Traditional theoretical consumer purchase decision model (Zhang, 2007).

**Need Recognition** occurs when a consumer is faced with a “problem” which drives to the need recognition. There are two types of need recognition. The ‘*Actual state*’ types of consumers who perceive that they have a problem which is failed in performing satisfactorily by a product and the other is a ‘*Desired state*’ type which triggers the desire for new products or services.

Next consumers will go for **Information search** and survey the environment for appropriate data to make a reasonable decision. As a general rule, more efforts required when the purchase is important, and less efforts when it’s easy to obtain the relevant information. Information search process can be classified into two types. Firstly, the pre-purchase search process is the process when consumers seek for the information to satisfy their needs or solve their problems, which begin after consumers realize their needs or problems. Secondly, an ongoing search is the process when consumers browse the information for their pleasure and to keep them up-to-date with new products or current situations of the products’ market. (Bloch et al., 1986)

**Evaluation of Alternatives** done by consumers of the information gathered from the search, as a market is a clutter of various brands and alternative solutions. Consumers will create their own *evoke set* (consideration set), *Inept set* (excluded set) and *Inert set* (indifferent set).

Consumer will decide at **Product choice** that what to buy from the evaluation conclusion done in last stage. Though the decision has been made then also **post-purchase evaluation** occurs and in this context of their expectations either consumer feel neutral, positive or negative about the decision made. Even at this stage Cognitive dissonance occurs when consumers try to reassure about the decision made by them.

**II - Gender and their buying behaviour**

Markets and the customers who make up the markets are not homogeneous (Claycamp and Massy, 1968; Smith, 1956) and a marketer cannot always serve to heterogeneous customers. The seller must try to understand the target market's needs, wants, and demands. The needs become wants when they are engaged to specific objects that might satisfy the need. Wants are formed by one's society (Kotler, 2000). Cartwright (2002) was of the opinion that need is something that people cannot do without; a want is the method by which people would like the need to be satisfied. Demands are wants for specific products backed by an ability to pay (Kotler, 2000).

Concentration of marketing energy is the essence of all marketing strategies and market segmentation is the theoretical tool to help in achieving this focal point. In the middle of 1950s; Wendell.R.Smith, an American professor of marketing introduced market segmentation for the first time. He suggested that segmentation is the division of a market into groups of customers who share certain characteristics or inclination toward a product or service, that might be an effectual way for a business to manage diversity within a market ; Phillip Kotler, (2000) held the same view. Segmentation concentrates the marketing power and force on dividing to gain a competitive advantage within the division (S.Goyat-2011). It creates a unique 4Ps for individual target market segment, and hence it becomes easy for the marketer to differentiate the market. (RafiqElmansy2017).

An affluent literature has developed suggesting the techniques and bases for a single domestic market might be effectively divided into actionable customer segments. Thomas (1980) argued that any projected segmentation should get ahead of four tests, namely measurability, accessibility, stability and substantiality. Baker (1996) includes uniqueness as an extra condition defining a "viable market". Kotler et al (1998) skipped stability and uniqueness but includes actionability. In 1964, "New criteria for market segmentation", declared by Daniel Yenkelovich that was: Traditional demographic traits such as gender, age, education and income, are no longer serving as a source of market segmentation on the other hand, Non-demographic traits such as values, tastes, and preferences were influencing more to influence consumers' purchasing. In spite, gender continues to be one of the most common forms of segmentation used by marketers. Gender has been recognized as one of a small number of demographic variables that meets the basic requirements for successful implementation of segmentation strategies (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991)

Gender segmentation helps marketers to cater their products for male-female, boy-girl. Certain products are created just to satisfy the needs of specific gender only. After the gender segmentation any marketers can easily target the small specific group of consumers in much more comprehensive and concentrated manner. Men and women have different attentiveness in terms of shopping for various products like apparel, cosmetics, perfumes, shoes food habits etc. To overcome this encounter, a marketer should have different marketing strategy for both men and women. (ET Online 2019).

The gender has an important role in specification of purchase motives. (Alena Kusa et al.,2014) In the research of the effect of 4Ps on gender based segmentation it has been found that there is a significant relation in terms of promotion and place where it is concluded that

there is no relationship of price and product between gender and consumer behaviour (Marzieh Ronaghi et al, 2013). Sadiq (2014) in his survey suggested that there are gender differences in mall patronage.

Numerous studies verified that there is a significant relationship between purchase behaviour and gender differences. The differences are based mainly on sociological and biological particularities (Darely,1995, Backwell at al.,2003, Mortimer at al., 2011). There are evidences that information processing of men and women are significantly different. (J. Mayers –Laevy, 1989) & (Mayers and Mahdevan ,1991). Women are more likely to yield to emotional factors while selecting a shop or a brand (Granot, 2010), compare to men. Further the research study made by Granot. Green and Brashear points to a stronger emotional relationship of female consumers towards brand on the basis of a complete set of interactive in store elements. There is a direct association between pleasure-seeking products and satisfaction with the purchase was discovered among women (Change at al., 2006). Compare to men, women are more prone for pleasant environment and good shopping experience. (Carpenter & Moore.2009). This means that the impact of visual communication, graphics, lighting, music or scent is more significant for women and their perception of physical environment (Grewal at al.,2009). In addition to it the significant differences were discovered in the sensitivity of unimportant esthetical elements in stores serving for entertainment or decoration. These elements have a fundamental reference and personalizing meaning for women, while the women perceive it in a complex manner: in contrast men perceive these stimuli selectively with a low reference meaning (Mayers–Levy and D. Maheswaran).

Women invest more time while shopping in order to reach greatest benefits (Joh at al.,2006). There have been different approaches to waiting in a shop. Women do not perceive waiting that negatively: in a measurement of time estimation spent waiting the data was often undervalued and women were markedly inaccurate while men have a more negative attitude to waiting and it impacts evaluation of the overall atmosphere of a retail location significantly. From the perspective of psychographic factors, women have a stronger attitude to fashion and are more likely to yield to impulsive shopping (Pentecost and Andrews 2010).

There is a positive influence on the consumer buying behaviour in result of the gender-based consumer targeting (Arslan Ayub, 2013). Males are externally focused while females are more internally focused, women are more subjective and intuitive so they are emotionally and relationship driven, men tend to be more analytical and logical. Male are more of buying on the basis of immediate need and females are long term planners. (Greeshma A ,2016)

## **Gender difference in Apparels:**

The factors influencing a consumer's clothing purchase behaviour can be put into the groups of personal, psychological and cultural (Kotler 2001). The personal factors, which are among the most important factors determining consumers' clothing purchase behaviour, are age, gender, profession, level of education, level of income and marital status (Muter, 2002)

The gender embedded in the fashion industry where the majority of customer service is feminized. The products itself are inherently gender. Clothes represent gender, class and

status. This makes up the gender consumption environment in both shopper, physical spaces of shop and consumer. (Pettinger 2005)

The male and female consumers do have different perceptions and preferences for their clothing with respect to fashion and brand awareness. It has been observed that women are more influenced by fashion whereas men are more influenced by brand name (Emin Koca and Fatema Koca, 2016). Women buy more than men (Goldsmith, 2002) and also females are more concerned about clothes than males (Peter, 1989). In spite of differences in perceptions and preferences, both the middle aged male and female are equally quality conscious and put extra efforts to get the quality, plan carefully, compare price, read label, and acquire information before buying clothes. However both are impulsive buyer also with regards to price and fashion. (Madhavi Gupta, 2016). Female college-aged consumers are more pretentious by recreation, confusion, and impulse consciousness than male college-aged consumers (Sungwon Bae and John Miller, 2009).

The preference of consumers for readymade outfits for branded apparels is fast changing due to personality, status, quality and comfort provided by them. Due to the increased awareness and consciousness, both male and female are ready to spend any price for comfort and quality which in turn influences their purchase decision. It is also observed that males and females are not having any significant differences in their brand awareness, shopping frequency and shopping expenditure for readymade outfits. (Namita Rajput et al., 2012, Javeria Shabbir and Dr. Nadeem Safwan, 2014)

The survey made on Swedish clothing stores to know the difference in fashion consumption on gender basis reveals that the female were *gather shoppers* who preferred shopping for reasons of enjoyment and relaxation. They like spending time searching, comparing price, products, and quality. On the other hand, men were *hunter shoppers* whose shopping is need-driven. Thus they prefer shop where they can search for their required clothes easily. (PiseyChea, 2011). The gender difference in consumer buying behaviour of a Portuguese population for apparel products and the result confirmed the differences between women and men especially in terms of What, Where, When, and How they buy.

Both men and women preferred clothes that highlight their physical attribute but women appreciate satisfaction and then comfort, in men it is reversed. Women are more of impulse, appealing by pleasant atmosphere, along with a company opposite to men. Low price, quality and variety are highlighted both by men and women. (Azevedo et.al 2008)

## Conclusion:

Out of the numerous aspects that can persuade a customer's decision making behaviour, one of the major and important factors is a gender. Not only biological difference but in execution of brain is different too. In the context of shopping, this diverged brain formation guides to

men tending to be mission- and task-oriented buyers while women are more likely to be discovery-oriented buyers and so only males are more utilitarian where females are having Hedonic approach. Females are making decision on the basis of emotional level than males are more cognitive in decision making. Though women are too brand loyal as men are but women are loyal to the good services provided by those brands. Above all these obvious factors will be age, cultural difference and social differences too. And those marketers who successfully segment the market and flexible to adapt gender based needs stand to gain in terms of higher profit margins and lower competitive stress.

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