

## **Module - 6**

# **CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

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## LESSON – 16

### CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

#### Instructional Objectives:

After completion of this lesson, the student shall know about:

**6.1.7 Meaning, Nature and Types of Consumer Involvement**

**6.1.8 Mechanism underlying the Consumer Involvement Process**

#### **6.1.7 MEANING, NATURE AND TYPES OF CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT:**

Another component that closely relates to motivation is involvement. Involvement is defined as a psychological state that motivates people to be more aware and careful about persons/objects/situations. It also indicates a level of personal importance that the person attaches to such persons/objects/situations. Thus, there are (a) high and low-involvement consumers; (b) high and low-involvement purchases.

## Meaning of Consumer Involvement:

Consumer involvement is defined as a state of mind that motivates consumers to identify with product/service offerings, their consumption patterns and consumption behavior. Involvement creates within consumers an urge to look for and think about the product/service category and the varying options before making decisions on brand preferences and the final act of purchase. It is the amount of physical and mental effort that a consumer puts into a purchase decision. It creates within a person a level of relevance or personal importance to the product/service offering and this leads to an urge within the former to collect and interpret information for present/future decision making and use. Involvement affects the consumer decision process and the sub processes of information search, information processing, and information transmission. As Schiffman has put it “Involvement is a heightened state of awareness that motivates consumers to seek out, attend to, and think about product information prior to purchase”. It is the perceived interest and importance that a consumer attaches to the acquisition and consumption of a product/service offering.

Herbert Krugman, a researcher is credited with his contribution to the concept of consumer involvement. According to him, consumers approach the marketplace and the corresponding product/service offerings with varying levels and intensity of interest and personal importance. This is referred to as consumer involvement.

Involvement of consumers while makes purchase decisions varies across persons, across product/service offerings in question as well as purchase situations and time at hand. Some consumers are more involved in purchase processes than others. For example, a person who has a high level of interest in a product category would expend a lot of time making a decision with regard to the product and the brand. He would compare brands across features, prices etc. Another example is a person who is risk averse; he would also take a longer time making a decision. Involvement also varies across product/service offerings. Some products are high involvement products; these are products that are high in value and expensive, possess sufficient amount of risk, are purchased infrequently, and once purchased, the action is irrevocable, i.e. they cannot be returned and/or exchanged. On the other hand, there are low involvement products, which are moderately expensive or generally inexpensive, possess little risk and are

purchased regularly on a routine basis. Further, such consumer involvement based on their personal traits or on the nature of product/service offering are also impacted by the buying situation and time in hand for making purchase decisions. Very often, due to time constraints or emergency situations, a consumer may expend very little time on the purchase decision and buying activity in spite of the fact that the consumer is highly involved or risk averse or the product is a high involvement one.

### **Nature of Consumer Involvement:**

1. It is an inner urge that creates within an individual an interest/desire to hold certain product/service offerings in greater relevance/importance.

2. Involvement possesses certain properties:

a) It has a level of strength and intensity that determines the degree of involvement that a consumer possesses. This could be high or low. A highly involved consumer would actively search for information and collect facts, compare the various brands against each other on the basis of the information, assess differences and similarities between the various alternatives and finally make a choice. In other words, they collect, process and integrate information very intensely, and finally arrive at a decision regarding the brand choice. On the other hand, a consumer low on involvement would not make so much of effort in collecting and processing information about varying alternative brands and taking a decision.

b) The length of time that the consumer remains in this heightened state determines the level of persistence. It could be short term and situational interest in the product/service category; or it could be long term and enduring.

c) It is directed towards any or all of the elements of the marketing mix. A person may show involvement towards the product (its features/attributes and benefits), the price, the store or the dealer or even the promotional effort (advertisement/sales promotion etc).

3. A mechanism underlies the very process of involvement. As a process, involvement is impacted by certain “antecedents” that get restrained by “moderating factors,” and finally affect its degree of intensity and level of persistence.

**Antecedent factors:** There are certain factors that precede and lead to involvement; these are referred to as ‘antecedents’; Antecedents to consumer involvement include the following:

a) The person himself and the individual determinants like motives/needs; learning/experiences; interests; attitudes; personality; lifestyle/social class/interests/values; etc, have a bearing upon consumer involvement. Products which relate to self image and personality lead to high involvements. Similar are products that have a bearing on social class and lifestyle.

b) The object, stimuli or the product/service offering also affects involvement. The greater the product differentiation, the greater would be the level of involvement. Varying yet comparable brand alternatives also impact the level of involvement. Involvement would also be impacted by features, benefits and associated value of various brand offerings; brand image and equity; and very importantly the associated risk levels. Products which possess high levels of risk increase the level of consumer involvement.

c) The situation: The occasion/situation/reason of purchase also have a bearing on the level of consumer involvement; for example, while gifting to a person special to oneself, we are careful about the product or the brand. Also, for gifting to self or to near and dear ones on special occasions, we are extremely conscious of the kinds of products and the brands we buy, as opposed to routinized regular purchases. Further, social pressure (shopping alone versus shopping with friends), also impacts the level of involvement. When alone we may eat at any place or shop at any outlet, but when we are with peers and friends, we are more conscious of the brands we buy and the places we shop in. Social visibility also impacts the level of involvement; the level of consumer involvement increases in case of social visibility of both the product category as well as the purchase activity. Finally, the time commitment to purchase (leisure versus time constraint), also affects our level of involvement. Irrespective of the fact that the product is of a high involvement type or that the person bears personality traits making him a high involving consumer, he may not be able to expend much time on a purchase activity, due to time constraints and need to make quick decisions. This is referred to as decision imminence.

**Moderating factors:** The factors that can restrain the impact of antecedents so as to impact the level of involvement include a) the opportunity available to the person to collect and collate facts and information; b) his cognitive ability to process information and draw conclusions; c) time available in hand.

4. The antecedents, moderators and the properties of involvement finally converge to a response in terms of information search, information processing, information transmission, the purchase decision and post purchase behavior. Consumer involvement affects the ways in which consumers seek, process, and transmit information, make purchase decisions and make post purchase evaluation.

**a) Information search:** Highly involved consumers or consumers involved with a product category would actively search for information about the product category and the various alternatives, in contrast to consumers who are low on involvement. While the former, would be active seekers of information, the latter would be passive recipients. Active seekers would look out to various sources of information and would put in deliberate efforts towards information gathering.

**b) Information processing:** The information processing activity would vary across high involvement consumers viz a viz low involvement customers. Highly involved consumers would process product information with greater depth; they would make conclusions about brand preferences based on arguments and counterarguments; they would tend to get emotional charged either favorably because of likeability of the brand or unfavorably because of dislikeability of the brand. They would also evaluate more alternatives.

**c) Information transmission:** Highly involved consumers talk about the product/service category and the various brands available with great ease and level of interest, as compared to consumers who are low on involvement in the product category. Information transmission takes place via word-of-mouth, positive when the brand seems favorable, and negative, when it seems unfavorable.

**d) The purchase decision:** The purchase decision, i.e. to buy or not to buy, or to buy brand X over Y, is complex for a high involvement consumer than for one on low involvement.

**e) Post purchase behavior:** Consumers who are high on involvement make post-purchase evaluations about product usage more critically than those on low involvement. It is noteworthy that high involvement consumers are more difficult to please and satisfy; and the marketers need to put in a lot of effort to satisfy them. This is because they not only have a bearing on their future purchase, but also on purchase of others who are opinion seekers.

Table 1 illustrates a comparison between High and Low Involvement Products with reference to the decision making process.

**Table 1: High and Low Involvement Products vis a viz Consumer Decision Making**

	High Involvement ↔ Low Involvement		
	EPS	LPS	RPS
<b>1. Problem recognition</b>	Actual state type to Desired State	Actual state type to Desired State	Actual state type
<b>2. Information search</b>	Extensive  Internal and external sources	Limited  Mostly internal sources	Minimum Restricted to internal sources only.
<b>a) Number of brands considered</b>	Many	Several	One
<b>b) Number of sellers considered</b>	Many	Several	One/Few
<b>3. Evaluation of alternatives</b>	Complex	Moderate	Simple (if at all)
<b>Number of product/service attributes evaluated</b>	Many	Moderate	One/None
<b>4. Purchase</b>	Gradual after a cognitive process	Not so gradual	Immediate
<b>5. Post purchase processes</b>	Cognitive dissonance is high. Brand loyalty if satisfied	Cognitive dissonance would be rare	Brand loyalty. Repeat purchase.
<b>6. Time spent in purchase</b>	Large	Moderate/Little	Small/Minimal
<b>7. Types of goods</b>	Specialty goods	Mixed	Convenience



Noteworthy here is the fact that depending on the level of involvement, high or low, the process varies in terms of the sequence of how the three components of cognition, attitude and behavior are arranged (Hierarchies of effects for low and high involvement decisions, Assael, 1992).

- a) Cognition: this refers to the knowledge, information and resulting beliefs about brands.
- b) Attitude: this is the positive/negative feeling about the brands desirability/undesirability that results from evaluation of beliefs.
- c) Behavior: this is the overt reaction in terms of purchasing or not purchasing, or purchasing brand X over Y as it seems more desirable.

In terms of high involvement, there is cognition (knowledge component: information gathering and processing), followed by attitude (feeling component: like or dislike), followed by behavior (conative component: buy or not to buy); Cognition→ Attitude→ Behavior. For example, while purchasing a refrigerator, a consumer would first collect information about the various brands and evaluate them, he would then prioritize his preferences and finally go in for purchase of brand X over Y.

On the other hand, in terms of low involvement, there is cognition (knowledge component: information gathering and processing), followed by behavior (conative component: buy or not to buy), finally followed by attitude (feeling component: like or dislike); Cognition→ Behavior→ Attitude. For example, while trying out a new flavor of potato wafers, the consumer may first collect information on the brand, purchase it and consume it, and finally form an attitude of like or dislike. This would have a bearing on his purchase of wafers in future, whether he continues with this brand X or goes for a change to Y.

## Types of Consumer Involvement:

Depending on whether the involvement is short term or long term, consumer involvement could be of two types, viz., situational and enduring.

**1. Situational involvement:** This is a state of arousal directed towards attaching relevance to a person/object/situation for a short term. As an affective state, it creates a level of involvement when a person thinks about a particular person/object/situation. It is specific to a situation and is thus temporary in nature. It could vary from low to high, depending upon the situational factors.

For example, a middle aged lady suddenly decides to gift a laptop to her son on his birthday. She is not techno savvy and has little interest with the product category. She goes to the electronics mall and visits the various stores that sell computers and laptops. She collects information on the product features, prices, etc and finally takes the help of her middle aged neighbor to reach a final decision. Her involvement with the purchase activity would be regarded as a situational involvement.

**2. Enduring involvement:** When the level of involvement towards the product/service category extends over a period of time across situations, it is referred to as enduring involvement. The person shows a high-level of interest in the product category and spends time collecting and processing information and integrating it within his memory.

For example, a person desires to buy a laptop for his son to be gifted to him when he goes to college, which would be three years later. The father plans well in advance, tries to collect information through advertisements, brochures, trade journals, visits to dealers, and word of mouth from peers and colleagues. Within this period he gets involved with the product category and after three years is in a position to take a decision based on the facts that he has collected. This is referred to as enduring involvement.

Enduring involvement with a product category often gives birth to an opinion leader. An opinion leader is a person who holds interest in a particular product/service category, and becomes a specialist; he makes efforts to gather all information about the category, the brand offering etc.; he talks about and spreads the information and the knowledge that he possesses. When a person wants to make a purchase, he seeks the

advice and guidance of such an opinion leader who helps him make a decision. Opinion leaders are product specific. In the example above, if the lady approaches her neighbour and takes his advice/guidance because the neighbour is young, techno savvy and knows a lot about electronics and in particular laptops, she would actually be taking help of what is known as an “opinion leader”.

## REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING:

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4. Peter, P.J. and Olson, J.C., Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategy, Seventh Edition, 2005, McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
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6. Wells W.D. and Prensky, D., Consumer Behavior, 1996, John Wiley & sons, Inc.

## **FAQS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS):**

**Ques 1      Define consumer involvement. Discuss the nature of Consumer Involvement.**

**Ans 1**      Consumer involvement is defined as a state of mind that motivates consumers to identify with product/service offerings, their consumption patterns and consumption behavior. Involvement creates within consumers an urge to look for and think about the product/service category and the varying options before making decisions on brand preferences and the final act of purchase. It creates within a person a level of relevance to the product/service offering and this leads to an urge within the former to collect and interpret information for present/future decision making and use. Involvement affects the consumer decision process and the sub processes of information search, information processing, and information transmission. As Schiffman has put it “Involvement is a heightened state of awareness that motivates consumers to seek out, attend to, and think about product information prior to purchase”.

Herbert Krugman, a researcher is credited with his contribution to the concept of consumer involvement. According to him, consumers approach the marketplace and the corresponding product/service offerings with varying levels and intensity of interest. This is referred to as consumer involvement.

## **Nature of Consumer Involvement:**

1. It is an inner urge that creates within an individual an interest/desire to hold certain product/service offerings in greater relevance/importance.

2. Involvement possesses certain properties:

d) It has a level of strength and intensity that determines the degree of involvement that a consumer possesses. This could be high or low.

e) The length of time that the consumer remains in this heightened state determines the level of persistence. It could be short term and situational interest in the product/service category; or it could be long term and enduring.

f) It is directed towards any or all of the elements of the marketing mix. A person may show involvement towards the product (its features/attributes and benefits), the price, the store or the dealer or even the promotional effort (advertisement/sales promotion etc).

3. A mechanism underlies the very process of involvement. As a process, involvement is impacted by certain “antecedents” that get restrained by “moderating factors,” and finally affect its degree of intensity and level of persistence.

Antecedent factors are certain factors that precede and lead to involvement; these include the person himself and the individual determinants; the object, stimuli or the product/service offering; and, the purchase situation.

Moderating factors are factors that can restrain the impact of antecedents so as to impact the level of involvement include the opportunity available to the person to collect and collate facts and information, the cognitive ability to process information and draw conclusions, and the time available in hand.

4. The antecedents, moderators and the properties of involvement finally converge to a response in terms of information search, information processing, information transmission, the purchase decision and post purchase behavior. Consumer involvement affects the ways in which consumers seek, process, and transmit information, make purchase decisions and make post purchase evaluation.

**Ques 2      What are the two types of consumer involvement? Discuss with an example.**

**Ans 2**                      Depending on whether the involvement is short term or long term, consumer involvement could be of two types, viz., situational and enduring.

**1. Situational involvement:** This is a state of arousal directed towards attaching relevance to a person/object/situation for a short term. As an affective state, it creates a level of involvement when a person thinks about a particular person/object/situation. It is specific to a situation and is thus temporary in nature.

For example, a middle aged lady suddenly decides to gift a laptop to her son on his birthday. She is not techno savvy and has little interest with the product category. She goes to the electronics mall and visits the various stores that sell computers and laptops. She collects information on the product features, prices, etc and finally takes the help of her middle aged neighbor to reach a final decision. Her involvement with the purchase activity would be regarded as a situational involvement.

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## SELF EVALUATION TESTS/QUIZZES:

### Section A True/false:

1. Consumers approach the marketplace and the corresponding product/service offerings with varying levels and intensity of interest.
2. High involvement consumers are more difficult to please and satisfy.
3. In terms of low involvement purchases, there is cognition followed by attitude followed by behavior; Cognition→ Attitude→ Behavior.

### Section B Fill up the blanks:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is defined as a psychological state that motivates people to be more aware and careful about persons/objects/situations.
2. The length of time that the consumer remains in this heightened state determines the level of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In terms of high involvement purchases, the sequence across the three components is as follows? Cognition→ \_\_\_\_\_ → \_\_\_\_\_.

### Section C Multiple choice questions:

1. The antecedents, moderators and the properties of involvement finally converge to a response in terms of:  
a) information search b) information transmission c) Only “a” d) Both “a” and “b”
2. The properties of involvement include all but one of the following. Identify.  
a) Intensity b) Direction c) Unipolar d) Persistence

### Section D Short answers:

1. Define the term Consumer Involvement.
2. What is situational involvement?
3. What do you mean by “antecedent factors” and “moderating factors” in involvement?

## KEY

### Section A True/false:

1. True
2. True
3. False

### Section B Fill up the blanks:

1. Involvement
2. Persistence
3. Attitude, Behavior

### Section C Multiple choice questions:

1. d
2. c

### Section D Short Answers:

1. Consumer involvement is defined as a state of mind that motivates consumers to identify with product/service offerings, their consumption patterns and consumption behavior. As Schiffman has put it “Involvement is a heightened state of awareness that motivates consumers to seek out, attend to, and think about product information prior to purchase”. Herbert Krugman, a researcher is credited with his contribution to the concept of consumer involvement. According to him, consumers approach the marketplace and the corresponding product/service offerings with varying levels and intensity of interest. This is referred to as consumer involvement.

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