International Journal of Trade & Commerce-IIARTC
January-June 2017, Volume 6, No. 1 pp. 301-306
ISSN-2277-5811 (Print), 2278-9065 (Online)

UGC Approved Journal in Social Science Category; Journal No. 48636
COSMOS (Germany) JIF: 4.242; ISRA JIF: 3.957; NAAS Rating 3.55; ISI JIF: 3.721

Post Purchase Dissonance: A Focus on Consumers

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Abstract

According to post purchase behaviour theory, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions (i.e., beliefs, opinions). When an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviours (dissonance) occurs, some change must be made in order to eliminate this behaviour. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behavior.

Past research on consumers' post-purchase behavior has focused on understanding satisfaction. However, the consumer-product relationship is much broader. This paper aims to deal with another aspect of post-purchase behavior: the emotional bond consumers experience with their durables during ownership.

Keywords: *Behavior, Bonding, Consumers, cognitive, post purchase, consumer behavior*

PAPER/ARTICLE INFO
RECEIVED ON: 18/04/2017
ACCEPTED ON: 23/06/2017

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Princi Gupta, Padma Misra (2017), "Post Purchase Dissonance: A Focus on Consumers", *Int. J. of Trade and Commerce-IIARTC*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 301-306

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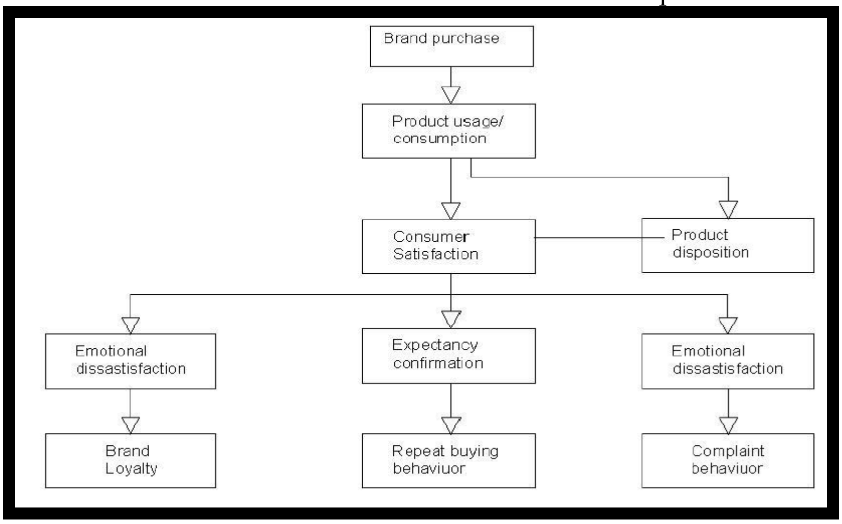
1. POST PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

According to Strydom et al. (2000: 79), after purchasing the product, the buyer will experience some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The marketer's job does not end when the product is bought but continues into the post purchase period. Marketers must monitor post purchase satisfaction, post purchase actions and cognitive dissonance. The buyer's satisfaction or dissatisfaction will influence future behavior. A satisfied buyer will purchase the product again and recommend it to others. Dissatisfied buyers will respond differently. They may stop using the product, return it, or take some form of public action.

In support, Lamb et al. (2004: 77) state that when buying products, consumers expect certain outcomes or benefits to accrue from the purchase. How well these expectations are met determines whether the consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied with the purchase.



1.1 Post-Purchase Dissonance

This is a common consumer reaction after making a difficult, relatively permanent decision. Doubt or Anxiety – referred as - post-purchase dissonance. The probability of a consumer experiencing post-purchase dissonance, as well as the magnitude of such dissonance, is a function of:

- Degree of commitment/irrevocability of the decision.
- Importance of decision to customer.
- Difficulty of choosing among the alternatives.
- Individual's tendency to experience anxiety.

Post-Purchase Satisfaction: Satisfaction is a function of the closeness between expectations and the product's perceived performance. - If performance falls short of expectations the consumer is disappointed. - If the performance meets expectations the consumer is satisfied. - If the performance exceeds expectations the consumer is delighted.-Consumer form their expectations on the basis of messages received from sellers, friends, and other information sources. -The importance of post-purchase satisfaction suggests that a product claim must truthfully represent the product's likely performance.

2. WHAT IS COGNITIVE DISSONANCE?

People tend to seek consistency in their beliefs and perceptions. So what happens when one of our beliefs conflicts with another previously held belief? The term cognitive dissonance is used to describe the feeling of discomfort that results from holding two conflicting beliefs. When there is a discrepancy between beliefs and behaviours, something must change in order to eliminate or reduce the dissonance.

2.1 Why is Cognitive Dissonance Important?

Cognitive dissonance plays a role in many value judgments, decisions and evaluations. Becoming aware of how conflicting beliefs impact the decision-making process is a great way to improve your ability to make faster and more accurate choices.

2.2 Examples of Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance can occur in many areas of life, but it is particularly evident in situations where an individual's behaviour conflicts with beliefs that are integral to his or her self-identity. For example, consider a situation in which a man who places a value on being environmentally responsible just purchased a new car that he later discovers does not get great gas mileage.

2.3 The Conflict

- It is important for the man to take care of the environment.
- He is driving a car that is not environmentally-friendly.

In order to reduce this dissonance between belief and behaviour, he has a few difference choices. He can sell the car and purchase another one that gets better gas mileage or he can reduce his emphasis on environmental-responsibility. In the case of the second option, his dissonance could be further minimized by engaging in actions that reduce the impact of driving a gas-guzzling vehicle, such as utilizing public transportation more frequently or riding his bike to work on occasion.

A more common example of cognitive dissonance occurs in the purchasing decisions we make on a regular basis. Most people want to hold the belief that they make good choices. When a product or item we purchase turns out badly, it conflicts with our previously existing belief about our decision-making abilities.

2.4 Causes of Cognitive Dissonance

Strydom et al. (2000: 79) furthermore state that some of the alternatives not chosen may have attractive features, so that the correctness of the choice is not obvious. Cognitive dissonance is most likely to occur for major purchases that are difficult to select and undo.

According to Singh (2003: 13), it appears that dissonance is likely to occur under the following conditions.

- A minimum threshold of dissonance tolerance is passed. That is, consumers may tolerate a certain level of inconsistency in their lives until this point is reached.
- The action is irrevocable. For instance, when a consumer purchases a new car, there is little likelihood of reversing this decision and getting the money back.

- There are several desirable alternatives. Today's car buyer, for example, has an abundance of choices among similar attractive models. In fact, research indicates that those consumers who experience greater difficulty in making purchase decisions, or who consider a wider range of store and brand options, are more likely to experience greater magnitudes of post purchase dissonance.
- Available alternatives are quite dissimilar in their qualities (there is little „cognitive overlap"). For instance, there are many automobile models, each one may have some unique characteristics.

3. TYPES OF CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Types of consumer buying behavior are determined by:

- Level of Involvement in purchase decision. Importance and intensity of interest in a product in a particular situation.
- Buyer's level of involvement determines why he/she is motivated to seek information about a certain products and brands but virtually ignores others.

High involvement purchases--Honda Motorbike, high priced goods, products visible to others, and the higher the risk the higher the involvement. Types of risk are as follows:

- Personal risk
- Social risk
- Economic risk

The four type of consumer buying behaviour are:

- *Routine Response/Programmed Behavior*-buying low involvement frequently purchased low cost items; need very little search and decision effort; purchased almost automatically. Examples include soft drinks, snack foods, milk etc.
- *Limited Decision Making--buying product occasionally.* When you need to obtain information about unfamiliar brand in a familiar product category, perhaps. Requires a moderate amount of time for information gathering. Examples include Clothes--know product class but not the brand.
- *Extensive Decision Making/Complex high involvement, unfamiliar, expensive and/or infrequently bought products.* High degree of economic/performance/psychological risk. Examples include cars, homes, computers, education. Spend alot of time seeking information and deciding. Information from the companies MM; friends and relatives, store personnel etc. Go through all six stages of the buying process.
- *Impulse buying, no conscious planning.*

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In support, Lamb et al. (2004: 77) state that when buying products, consumers expect certain outcomes or benefits to accrue from the purchase. How well these expectations are met determines whether the consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied with the purchase. Hasty and Reardon (1997: 154) believe that when people recognize inconsistency between their values or opinions and their behaviour, they tend to feel an inner tension or anxiety called cognitive dissonance (postpurchase doubt). Weitz et al. (2001: 363) point out that customers like to believe they have chosen intelligently when they make a decision. After important decisions, they may feel a little insecure about whether the sacrifice is worth it. Such feelings are called buyer's remorse or post-purchase dissonance. Etzel et al. (2001: 100) state that cognitive dissonance is a state of anxiety brought on by the difficulty of choosing from among alternatives. Unfortunately for marketers, dissonance is quite common, and if the anxiety is not relieved, the consumer may be unhappy with the chosen product even if it performs as expected. Post purchase cognitive dissonance occurs when each of the alternatives seriously considered by the consumer has both attractive and unattractive features.

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the causes of post purchase dissonance.
2. To study post purchase behaviour of consumers.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design specifies the methods and procedures for collection of requisite information and its measurements and analysis to arrive at certain meaningful conclusion at the end of the proposed study.

I conducted this research with the help of secondary data in order to analyze the post purchase dissonance: a focus on consumers

The present study examines after purchasing the product, the buyer will experience some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For this purpose, mainly secondary data has been gathered.

The methodological tools used in the paper are statistical tools like underage.

6.1 Secondary Data

Paper was made with the help of secondary research, which included Internet database, Books, Research of articles from: Business journals, Magazines, Internet blogs

7. ANALYSIS OF DATA

People tend to seek steadiness in their beliefs and perceptions. The term cognitive dissonance is used to describe the feeling of discomfort that results from holding two conflicting beliefs. When there is a incongruity between beliefs and behaviors, something must change in order to eliminate or reduce the dissonance. Several factors are responsible for creating cognitive dissonance. Some of these are like values, belief, attitudes, customs, political philosophy, religious value, emotional reaction, norms, culture, social status, peer group influence etc. People living in a particular culture may hold a strong belief that he or she should purchase that product that must be accepted by that particular culture. In purchasing products conflict may arise regarding whether to purchase or not. Will it be accepted by my society? This situation creates cognitive dissonance. Besides people may have different values, belief, customs which might create dissonance in case of purchasing products. A religious value is one of the most important factors which are responsible for generating cognitive dissonance. People of different religion purchase items based on their religious belief. Some items are strongly prohibited by some religion and when people purchasing those, it creates dissonance. In addition to this political value, emotional reactions, social status also affect purchase decision and thus creating cognitive dissonance.

8. CONCLUSION

Based on literature review, Dissonance and consonance are relations among cognitions, that is, among options, beliefs, knowledge of the environment, and knowledge of one's own actions and feelings. Two opinions, or beliefs, or items of knowledge are dissonant with each other if they do

not fit together; that is, if they are inconsistent, or if, considering only the particular two items, one does not follow from the other (Jones and Ince, 2001: 10).
After a consumer makes an important choice decision, he or she experiences an intense need to confirm the wisdom of that decision. The flip side is that he or she wants to avoid the disconfirmation. One of the processes that occur at this stage is cognitive dissonance: a post-purchase doubts the buyer experiences about the wisdom of the choice. Methods of reducing dissonance and confirming the soundness of one's decision are seeking further positive information about the chosen alternative and avoiding negative information about the chosen alternative (Phipps and Simmons, 2000: 152).

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