# Chapter 2

## Review of Literature

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2.1 Introduction

Consumer behavior is "The study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society." Although it is not necessary to memorize this definition, it brings up some useful points:

- Behaviour occurs either for the individual, or in the context of a group (e.g., friend’s influence what kinds of clothes a person wears) or an organization (people on the job make decisions as to which products the firm should use).
- Consumer behaviour involves the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased. Product use is often of great interest to the marketer, because this may influence how a product is best positioned or how we can encourage increased consumption. Since many environmental problems result from product disposal (e.g., motor oil being sent into sewage systems to save the recycling fee, or garbage piling up at landfills) this is also an area of interest.
- Consumer behaviour involves services and ideas as well as tangible products.
- The impact of consumer behaviour on society is also of relevance. For example, aggressive marketing of high fat foods, or aggressive marketing of easy credit, may have serious repercussions for the national health and economy.
The study of consumers helps firms and organizations improve their marketing strategies by understanding issues such as how

- The psychology of how consumers think, feel, reason, and select between different alternatives (e.g., brands, products);
- The psychology of how the consumer is influenced by his or her environment (e.g., culture, family, signs, media);
- The behaviour of consumers while shopping or making other marketing decisions;
- Limitations in consumer knowledge or information processing abilities influence decisions and marketing outcome;
- How consumer motivation and decision strategies differ between products that differ in their level of importance or interest that they entail for the consumer; and
- How marketers can adapt and improve their marketing campaigns and marketing strategies to more effectively reach the consumer.

There are four main applications of consumer behaviour:

- The most obvious is for marketing strategy—i.e., for making better marketing campaigns. For example, by understanding that consumers are more receptive to food advertising when they are hungry, we learn to schedule snack advertisements late in the afternoon. By understanding that new products are usually initially adopted by a few consumers and only spread later, and then only gradually, to the rest of the population, we learn that (1) companies that introduce new products must be well financed so that they can stay afloat until their products become a commercial success and (2) it is important to please initial customers, since they will in turn influence many subsequent customers’ brand choices.
• A second application is public policy. In the 1980s, Accutane, a near miracle cure for acne, was introduced. Unfortunately, Accutane resulted in severe birth defects if taken by pregnant women. Although physicians were instructed to warn their female patients of this, a number still became pregnant while taking the drug. To get consumers’ attention, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) took the step of requiring that very graphic pictures of deformed babies be shown on the medicine containers.

• Social marketing involves getting ideas across to consumers rather than selling something. Marty Fishbein, a marketing professor, went on sabbatical to work for the Centers for Disease Control trying to reduce the incidence of transmission of diseases through illegal drug use. The best solution, obviously, would be if we could get illegal drug users to stop. This, however, was deemed to be infeasible. It was also determined that the practice of sharing needles was too ingrained in the drug culture to be stopped. As a result, using knowledge of consumer attitudes, Dr. Fishbein created a campaign that encouraged the cleaning of needles in bleach before sharing them, a goal that was believed to be more realistic.

• As a final benefit, studying consumer behaviour should make us better consumers. Common sense suggests, for example, that if you buy a 64 liquid ounce bottle of laundry detergent, you should pay less per ounce than if you bought two 32 ounce bottles. In practice, however, you often pay a size premium by buying the larger quantity. In other words, in this case, knowing this fact will sensitize you to the need to check the unit cost labels to determine if you are really getting a bargain.
There are several themes in the market that can be analysed. The main thrust in this research work is the consumer.

The need to understand consumer-buying behaviour was identified in the marketing literature over fifty years ago (Clover 1950, Subadra et al., 2010). Ever since, many researchers from different areas of research, such as economics, marketing, and psychology, have shown interest in studying this interesting and complex behaviour in a traditional commerce context. These researchers have made significant contributions to our understanding of consumer behaviour. A review of this body of knowledge indicates that research on consumer behaviour in a traditional setting can be categorized in three general trends: definition, explanation, and extension. At first, researchers were primarily interested in defining the phenomenon. Second, various models were proposed to explain the consumer buying phenomenon. Finally, the focus has been to extend consumer buying behaviour research by identifying the various factors that increase or decrease consumer buying. Belch and Belch defined consumer behaviour as “the process and activities people engage in when searching for, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy their needs and desires”. Belch and Belch (2007) explained that the consumers undertake both internal (memory) and an external search.
2.2 Decision Making Theory

Data is data, but information is power. When data can be transformed into information, the user is equipped with better decision making tools. Different data can become information to different people, all based on its relevancy to the user in achieving the desired goal of making an informed decision. The stages a consumer experiences in working through this process are similar, and a certain sense of consistency has emerged as a result of continuous research around decision making.

2.2.1 Decision Making Theory and Information Acquisition

In order for a decision to be made, an individual must first identify a perceived need that must to be met. As mentioned, for this discussion, the individual will be identified as a consumer with the need for a product or service. Then the process begins. Within the normative model of decision making, the consumer collects information about alternatives, evaluates them based on their relevancy and makes a decision that will maximize the value of that decision (Lau, 1995; Abelson & Levi, 1985). Otherwise known as the value-maximization theory, the normative model has been criticized as too broad, ignoring human limitations (Moorthy, Ratchford & Talukdar, 1997; Thaler, 1985), and an evolutionary, bounded rationality model emerged to enhance it. Here consumers were assumed to have limited processing capability, selectively search alternatives and terminate the search when a suitable solution has been found (Simon, 1985). Further criticism emerged from this model as well. By selective selection, the consumer is compromising the random nature of the information search and may compromise the decision choice. How a consumer collects his information affects the choice strategy he uses. For example, decision makers choose a certain strategy depending on the complexity of the task.
The more complex the decision task, the more likely people employ strategies to simplify that task (Johnson & Payne, 1985; Thorngate, 1980). While several theories exist, the value maximization/normative model have remained relatively intact and enhanced with the limitation of human processing capacity.

2.2.2 Rationality: Substantive versus Procedural

The first stage of defining relevancy as it relates to the consumer decision process within Abelson and Levi’s (1985) framework is grounded in the notion that consumers are rational and have the ability to apply a certain sense of logic to the determination and definition of relevant information to aid them in the decision making process. Consumers are considered rational decision-makers in the traditional economic theory of consumer behaviour. They implement choice strategies that are the most advantageous to their outcome, based on their perception of the decision environment. The use of cost/benefit analysis demonstrates optimal nature of the consumer’s strategy (Moorthy, Ratchford & Talukdar, 1997; Payne, 1982).

In addition Simon (1985) suggests that every consumer, when making a decision, has and uses a “utility function” that generates a ranking within the alternatives and enables the selection of the product with the highest utility. This process assumes a substantively rational solution. Procedural rationality as defined by Simon (1985) is the flexible nature of human behaviour that adapts and adjusts to the external factors facing and internal factors constraining the consumer. Because it was developed within psychology and the primary focus is on the process, procedural rationality concentrates on the process that generates a particular behaviour rather than the outcome. The intent is to observe the individual and the process through which they work that will generate the rational thinking behind the decision.
2.2.3 *Compensatory Versus Non-compensatory Choice Rules*

The two major rules guiding choice strategies discussed in the literature are compensatory and non-compensatory. They are differentiated based on three characteristics: the level of attractiveness, commensurability across attributes and form of processing (intra dimensional versus inter dimensional). The former describes a complex and sophisticated method for Abelson and Levi’s (1985) third element of decision making, information integration, while the latter equally descriptive to information integration deploys a simplistic approach.

Each of these rules is also used in the second stage of information collection. Compensatory choice rules require commensurability, enabling trade-off of attribute value of one over another. For example, when purchasing a home, the total square footage may be sacrificed for an ocean view. The level of and attractiveness of each of these attributes could be high but trade-offs on initial ranking could occur. Generally compensatory choice mandates an inter dimensional form of processing, where the consumer assigns an overall rating to each attribute in the choice set (Abelson & Levi, 1985)\(^{10}\).

Non compensatory choice rules differ. Commensurability is not required, and attribute trade-offs are not allowed. Within this category of rules, there exist conjunctive and disjunctive rules. Both require a set of cut-offs on the choice dimensions. The conjunctive rule assumes minimum set and product rejection when it does not exceed all of them. The form of processing is inter-dimensional. Using the home search example above, the consumer using a conjunctive, non-compensatory rule would consider each home separately and reject either if it did not meet both the square footage and view requirements. A caveat to this rule is that if more than one product exceeds all of the requirements, the model will yield an equal number of acceptable alternatives. At this point, the consumer would either develop
more stringent cut-offs or use a different choice rule that would yield only one solution.

Disjunctive rules also require those cut-offs, although the filter is different. “An alternative would be considered acceptable if it has at least one value greater than the corresponding cut-off” (Abelson & Levi, 1985). With the home example, the homes to be considered acceptable would have at least the desired square footage or view. Both are not necessary. The caveat to this rule is that a different set of cut-offs would generate a different set of alternatives, allowing for multiple choices. The same issue applies to the conjunctive rules.

2.2.4 Information Search Strategies

Once the relevancy is determined the surgical approach in searching for information can begin. The strategies are learned and deployed cumulatively as the consumer steers his way through the process. The search strategies enable the integration of the information and the eventual selection of the product, exploring all three stages of Abelson and Levi’s (1985) model: relevance, assembly and integration. First the idea of rationality enables the definition of relevance. That breaks through to pave the way for assembling information which in turn enables the integration.

An emergent belief exists among decision science researchers that consumer preferences are often times developed during the decision process rather than being pre-existing (Tversky, Sattath & Slovic, 1988; Bettman, 1979). “People often do not have well-defined preferences; instead, they may construct them on the spot when needed, such as when they must make a choice” (Bettman, Luce & Payne, 1988, p. 188). The concept of constructive preference enhances the ideas of Simon’s (1985) bounded rationality and limited processing capacity. It introduces the dynamic of human learning and adaptability, further refining the concepts to explain the
intricate actions of consumer behaviour and decision making. “One important property of this constructive viewpoint is that preference will often be highly context dependent. This implies that processing approaches may change as consumers learn more about problem structure during the course of making a decision” (Bettman, Luce & Payne, 1988, p. 188)\textsuperscript{16}. Agility connotes a level of intelligence and rationality, bound together by reason and logic.

Three search strategy models exist defined by the underlying choice rules (compensatory versus non-compensatory and inter-dimensional versus intra-dimensional): linear, additive difference, conjunctive and elimination-by-aspects (Payne, 1976)\textsuperscript{17}. The additive model represents the consumer choosing between multi-attribute products by evaluating each product separately in a pre-determined choice set, an inter-dimensional form of processing. Each product attribute is first analysed and then combined with other attributes that are perceived by the consumer to deliver the most value thereby creating the choice set (Lau, 1995)\textsuperscript{18}.

In contrast, an intra-dimensional rule is employed within the additive difference model. Products are compared at the individual attribute level, differentiation is identified and the sum of the results is used to identify the best product. With both the linear and additive difference models, the strategies use a compensatory strategy (Lau, 1995)\textsuperscript{19}.

A non-compensatory strategy is used for the elimination-by-aspects (EBA) model. In opposition to the linear and additive difference models, EBA does not support commensurability (i.e. value trade-offs). Product attributes are weighted based on perceived importance of the consumer. The attribute is then selected with probability proportional to its weight. Those products that do not meet the proportional values for the selected attributes are eliminated.
The consumer considers only one product attribute at a time, an intradimensional form of processing (Tversky, 1972).²⁰

### 2.2.5 Information Processing Theory of Consumer Choice

The theoretical framework of Bettman’s (1979)²¹ Information Processing Theory of Consumer Choice (IPTCC) consists of six key elements that represent the hypothetical value chain, each chronologically and cumulatively dependent on the other, with four key summary points: (a) the choice process is iterative and goal-directed, (b) rather than strictly sequential, the process is cyclical, (c) in certain circumstances consumers abandon the conscious decision process in placement of “learned rules and procedures,” and (d) selection or what is termed “choice decisions” can be made at several different levels within the process. Considerable research has proven that individuals possess a limited capacity to process information, and when required to consider multiple attributes simultaneously the ability decreases, further limiting the processing capability (Bettman, 1979; Dawes, 1976; Lindsay & Norman, 1972; Norman & Bobrow, 1975; Simon, 1969)²². The first of six elements, processing capacity, contributes to the theory that with limited capability, the use of heuristics (simple decision strategies) and previous experience plays a significant role in decision making. Braunstein (1976)²³ defines heuristics as uncomplicated problem-solving methods that generate acceptable results to often complicated problems. The outcome is achieved by limiting the search to only possible solutions. Lau and Rediawsk (2001)²⁴ define them as “problem-solving strategies (often employed automatically or unconsciously) which serve to keep the information processing demands of the task within bounds” (p.252). There is no argument that heuristics are used in place of capacity and processing capability. Primitive in nature, they compensate for these gaps and enable more accurate choices with minimal cognitive effort (Abelson & Levi, 1985).²⁵
Internal motivation dictates the amount of the limited processing capacity that is dedicated to a particular decision making activity. It also affects the choice of one behaviour rather than a different one, as it prescribes a certain action that drives the consumer to a particular outcome (Bettman, 1979)\textsuperscript{26}. A caveat to be considered regarding motivation is the control issue that motivational or emotional forces present. They tend to produce a sense of irrationality that may lead to judgmental biases (Abelson & Levi, 1985)\textsuperscript{27}. Internal motivation is personal and drives unique behaviours in each consumer, yet the end result is the same. A purchase decision has been made. The drivers that triggered the process are likely different as is the path taken.

The third element, attention and perceptual coding, breaks attention into two different categories: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary attention occurs when a consumer consciously allocates his processing capacity toward an intended action while pursuing a pre-determined goal. Involuntary attention on the other hand occurs as “an allocation of effort to stimuli based more upon automatic mechanisms than upon current goals” (Bettman, 1979, p. 25)\textsuperscript{28}.

As Bettman (1979) and Abelson and Levi (1985) posit, consumers acquire information they deem relevant to aid in achieving the goal of making decision. In addition the information must be evaluated for relevancy. Information acquisition and evaluation, the fourth element of the IPTCC, suggests that a conscious information processing effort is present only in a complex choice scenario. Consumers tend not to seek out new information when making a habitual choice.
For situations where information is sought, two sources exist: internal memory and external. Information from one’s memory is what Bettman (1979) refers to as strongly associated, proposing that little processing effort is necessary. For example, when a consumer frequently purchases their favorite brand of toothpaste, any type of information processing is absent. The decision is made without thought. Information stored in memory, prior knowledge, does affect the information processing model and has been studied extensively (Brucks, 1985; Johnson & Russo, 1984; Bettman & Park, 1980)\textsuperscript{29}. Different measures within the prior knowledge concept have been studied including frequency of purchase (Bettman & Park, 1980),\textsuperscript{30} formal training (Sujan, 1985; Hutchinson, 1983)\textsuperscript{31} and self-reporting (Johnson & Russo, 1984; Alba, 1983)\textsuperscript{32}. For situations when the information in memory is either non-existent or insufficient, it will be sought externally from a variety of resources. Bettman and Kakkar (1977)\textsuperscript{33} support the series of studies that have been conducted to show that how a consumer collects information is heavily dependent on the format in which that information is presented (Capon & Burke, 1977; Payne 1976; Tversky, 1969)\textsuperscript{34}. The search patterns differ as the display format does. The strategies employed by a consumer in selecting a particular product over another have been boiled down to two emerging patterns: Choice by Processing Brands (CPB) and Choice by Processing Attributes (CPA). Information is gathered on several attributes of one brand first and then collected on a second, a third, and the process continues with CPB. CPA strategy is used by consumers who first look at one attribute across several brands and then proceed to the second attribute. These could be referred to as vertical (CPB) versus horizontal (CPA) approaches to brand products. The use of these strategies by consumers to assemble relevant information to enable their decision is strongly affected by the structure of that information being presented.
The consumer’s use of cost/benefit analysis demonstrating rationality was discussed earlier as it related to the determination of relevancy. This is also applicable to discuss as it relates to the information search of that relevant content. Within the context of information search, the same principles apply. A consumer’s search is optimized when the perceived benefit and cost of that search are considered. Experience increases expertise and drives the demand for more information, while product knowledge decreases the demand (Moorthy, Ratchford & Talukdar, 1997). The degree of pre-existing knowledge versus the perceived cost of acquiring new knowledge in an effort to decide which product is the best fit for the need is weighed. When a consumer searches on a brand and retrieves all the attribute information desired, “the uncertainty of that brand is removed, and its true utility revealed “(p.265), thus producing a high benefit relative to a lower perceived cost of information acquisition. If the consumer brings existing brand knowledge, the perceived cost is even lower. Moorthy, Ratchford and Talukdar’s (1997) study was able to show that these factors affect the search behaviour of the consumer and highlight the effect prior brand knowledge has on the search process.

Svenson (1979) summarized several studies in this area, documenting that an increase in the number of product attributes to be considered had a greater effect on the information search than a comparable increase in products. The limited processing capacity of consumers is clearly demonstrated here. An interesting point to consider is the difference in effect of information collection between the changes of product attributes versus number of products. The more attributes, the less information consumers sought. Multi-attribute products, while warranting more information yet resulting in the collection and assembly of less, would lead one to conclude that these types of products and the choices presented to the consumer yield less than desirable results for both the consumer and product vendor.
Vendors should integrate these learnings into the development of their products and corresponding attributes.

In referring back to the third stage of Abelson and Levi’s (1985) decision making theory, integrating information to make decisions, Bettman’s (1979) concept of perceptual coding supports it. Perceptual coding describes the process through which a consumer navigates by interpreting the meaning of information to which he has directed attention. Several theories propose that the interpretation of that information is developed by using both “information from memory” and “the perceptual input itself” (Bettman, 1979, p.25; Lindsay & Norman, 1972).

In addition to perceptual coding, the amount of information the consumer collects in the assembly stage can contribute to the success of a quality decision or the failure of a low quality decision.

Bettman, Luce, and Payne (1998) found the following:
Decisions become more difficult as the amount of information increases, as the time resources available for processing the information decrease, as the degree of conflict among attributes increases, as the amount of missing information increases, as the information display format becomes less organized or more complex. (p. 199)

Information load can be defined as the independent number of informational items. When asked to choose between two products, consumers search equally on both alternatives demonstrating the use of a compensatory decision rule. When asked to review and choose between several products with more attributes to consider, the search concentrates on only a few attributes within the choice set, utilizing a non-compensatory strategy. When faced with too many options, consumers reduce the amount of information
collected by artificially reducing the number of alternative product combinations to achieve the objective of choosing one product (Payne, 1976)\textsuperscript{41}. Less information is sought and non-compensatory strategies used to simplify the task. While time pressure may contribute (Wallsten, 1980; Wright, 1974)\textsuperscript{42}, findings of these studies conclude that the use of simpler, less optimal rules enable the otherwise complex task to be completed (Abelson & Levi, 1985)\textsuperscript{43}.

Information load and decision quality are inversely related. High levels of information can considerably reduce decision quality. In research conducted by Malhotra (1982)\textsuperscript{44}, the effects of a wide range of content and information on decision quality was studied with a varied set of measures including self-determination of overload. The results of the study support the theory and existence of relationship between the amount of information a consumer sees and the quality of the decision made in support of that information. Consumers who are faced with too many attributes are cognitively unable to make the number of necessary comparisons to thoroughly rank them. As a result, they resort to simple choice rules and heuristics to achieve the objective.

Further studies by Scammom (1977)\textsuperscript{45} suggest that when confronted with increasing amounts of information, consumers will likely split their time between all of the informational objects causing a dilution of the content consumption and eventual overload, causing low decision quality and dissatisfaction among the consumer over their product choice.

The final element of the Process, consumption and learning, refers to the consumer’s progression through the stages to arrive at a final purchase decision and ultimately consume the product. The experience as a result of
the purchase and consumption can be recycled and used as information for future purchase decisions.

In a world of endless data, the skill to convert it into useful information to enable an educated, high quality decision is greatly coveted. The three stages of relevancy, assembly and integration are equally important and equally deserving of further observation as they relate to consumer decision making. The more data, the less likely the consumer is able to wade through it and result in a quality decision. A paradox exists. Consumers crave data. They covet information. Yet when presented with a limitless supply, they are overloaded and forced to ignore the abundance. The human condition creates an environment that sustains the individual and supports them in their decision making process. With too much, we get less. With too little, we get less. The careful, delicate balance between starvation and overload is the utopia vendors need to obtain to better enable more satisfied, higher quality decisions consumers can enjoy.
2.3 Consumer Choice through Decision Making

This section will introduce to the reader the models that support the underlying drivers to consumer choice and the attributes that act as influencers to enable purchase decisions. It will answer the questions: what drives consumer choice and what attributes from those drivers influence purchase? The reader will understand how the consumer approaches the concept of making a decision and the internal, processes and tools he uses to arrive at that decision. For the purposes of this discussion, the scope of attributes influencing purchase as they relate to consumer choice will be bound to the area of technology adoption. The concepts of consumer choice and decision making are described in the general context.

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, a consumer buying behaviour is very much influenced by the stimulus to purchase. A stimulus is “something that rouses or incites to activity” or “an agent (as an environmental change) that directly influences the activity of a living organism or one of its parts” (Merriam-Webster Online). Thus, the stimulus can be considered as the catalyst, which makes the consumer be impulsive. The stimuli can be a piece of clothing, jewellery, or candy. Store atmospherics, which can be considered as an important factor in predicting consumer-buying behaviour, allows the marketer to position products in an enticing way to increase sales (Dholakia 2000). Finally, the consumer experiences emotional and/or cognitive reactions, which can include guilt or disregard for future consequences. Weinberg and Gottwald (1982) have combined various characteristics into three important determinants of the consumer buying process, which include the reactive component, the affective component, and cognitive component. One of the characteristics of the consumer buying process is the exposure to the stimulus. Therefore, buying is a reactive behaviour, in that the consumer shows certain responses
when exposed to the stimulus in the purchase situation. Another important characteristic is the immediate nature of the behaviour. When exposed to the stimulus, the consumer feels an irresistible urge to buy the product of interest (Rook 1987).\textsuperscript{48}

At this point, emotional forces drive him or her, such that the impulsive behaviour is considered as being highly affective. Finally, because this behaviour is reactive and highly affective, the consumer has very low intellectual control over the buying decision. The consumer does not act consciously, but rather reacts to the presence of the stimulus, such that cognitive processes are kept to a minimum. Dittmer and colleagues (1995)\textsuperscript{49} proposed a model of consumer buying behaviour to address the limitation of the previous model. Drawing from the social constructionist perspective and the psychology of material possessions the main assumption of this model is that consumers no longer buy products only for their functional benefits, but also for their symbolic meanings. Products are consumed for their symbolic meaning in that they give an indication of the social standing, wealth, and social status of an individual.

Puri (1996)\textsuperscript{50} proposed a two-factor cost-benefit accessibility framework, which addresses the limitations of previous models. The model draws from research on impulsiveness, self-control, and time-inconsistent preferences and builds on a hedonic framework, according to which an individual feels an irresistible urge to buy a product when he or she is exposed to it. According to the concept of time-inconsistent preferences, when the consumer is exposed to the stimulus, the benefits of immediate gratification outweigh any future considerations, such as monetary issues. The basic premise of this model is that impulsivity depends on the degree to which the situation emphasizes the negative costs of impulsiveness, the benefits of acquiring the product or both, and the propensity of an individual to be impulsive. In situations in which the benefits outweigh the costs, the
temptation to succumb to the felt urge is high and is the compelling force of impulsiveness. In contrast, when the costs of impulsiveness are more salient than the benefits, the individual resists the urge, which decreases the likelihood of any impulsive behaviour. Building on the findings in the previous study, Koufaris (2002) proposed a theoretical model of consumer behaviour, which draws from research in information systems, marketing, and psychology. The dependent variables studied were unplanned purchases and intention to return. The independent variables were product involvement, value-added search mechanisms, and challenges. The author also studied the effect of different mediating variables, namely perceived control, shopping enjoyment, and concentration. He tested the relationship between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use and the intention to return but the author did not find support for all the hypotheses. Product involvement was found to have an effect on both shopping enjoyment and concentration. Both perceived web skills and challenges were found to influence shopping enjoyment and concentration, but both did not affect perceived control. Value-added search mechanism used was found to only influence shopping enjoyment. Adelaar et al. (2003) used the environmental psychology approach to study the effects of three different media formats of web pages on consumer buying intentions for music CDs. Three distinct media formats were studied, namely the text of the song lyrics, still images from the song’s music video, and the music video itself, while simultaneously playing the soundtrack. The emotional responses studied included pleasure, arousal and dominance. The authors use an experiment to test this model and three distinct web pages were created based on the dependent variables. The authors found support for few of their hypotheses. Media format was found to have an influence on consumer buying intentions. More specifically, the media format that generated the highest buying intention was the lyrics of the song text in combination with playing the song. The display of a video was not found to generate positive
feeling. A subject’s emotional responses were found to have a significant effect on his or her buying intention. These responses were also found to have a mediating effect on the relationship between media format and the consumer’s buying intentions. This study has serious implications for marketers, since the most simple media format led to more buying, which means that textual format should be used instead of the more sophisticated options. The EKB model was further developed by Rice (1993) which suggested there should be a feedback loop, Fox all (2005) further suggests the importance of the post purchase evaluation and that the post purchase evaluation is key due to its influences on the future purchase patterns.

The strategies individuals use when making decisions has long been studied by economists, marketers and psychologists, but there is still disagreement about consumer decision-making behaviours. A number of possible consumer strategies have been proposed (Bettman et al., 1998, Subadra et al, 2010), and some support for the actual use of the strategies has been found (Bauer et al., 2006; Leong, 1993; Scheibehenne et al., 2007, Subadra et al, 2010). The strategies that consumers use can influence their final choices (Earl, 1986; McFadden, 2001): so understanding their decision processes is important for marketing strategies. (Earl and Potts, 2004; Hollywood et al., 2007). The type of decision strategy appears to be affected by the type of product (Leong, 1993) as well as by the respondent’s involvement with the product category (Bauer et al., 2006). If one looks specifically at the survey technique choice modeling (Bateman et al., 2002; Hensher et al., 2005) the literature has assessed the final choices consumers make from different choice sets but has not tended to examine decision strategies (Hensher and Rose, 2005).
2.4 The theory of five stage of consumer’s purchasing decision process

Philip Kotler (1994) indicate that in the buying decision process, the consumer passes through five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behaviour (p.158).

2.4.1 Need recognition & Problem awareness

The buying process starts when the consumer recognizes a problem or a need. He or she senses a difference between his or her actual state and desire state. The need can be aroused by internal stimuli (include any sensation/feeling/thought that your body or brain perceives) or external stimuli (include anything in the environment that the senses can perceive example; advertising or the sight of a product). For an automobile, need recognition could occur perhaps because the existing car has been written off, or too expensive to repair, or perhaps a consumer has seen an advertisement of a new car, or perhaps a friend has recommended their model of car.

2.4.2 Information search

When the consumer’s need has been recognized, he or she comes into the second stage: information search. At this stage, a consumer will be inclined to search for more information on the various ways where his or her need will be satisfied. Buying an automobile requires careful consideration on many fronts, such as cost, financing and insurance. A consumer needs to find lots of information on deciding, selecting a specific automobile, negotiating the best price, and deciding whether to purchase or lease.
2.4.3 Evaluation of alternative

After the information has been searched and analysed in the second stage, the consumer can now identify the potential goods satisfying his or her need completely. He or she has now entered the third stage: evaluation of alternatives. In this stage, the consumer will use both existing and new information kept in his or her memory to evaluate the possibilities (products or brands) and this consumer will select any products, services, brands and stores that would satisfy his or her need. Most current models of consumer evaluation process are based on each one’s beliefs about the products and the products’ features or characteristics which will form the basic criteria for the consumer’s attitudes and affect his or her intentions to purchase such products. For automobile consumer, the Internet is revolutionizing automobile shopping. It can help the consumers find what they are looking for more easily. They do not need to visit a dealership until they have compared manufacturers, models, even specific trim lines (specific variations available on each model) on their computer. Most auto makers’ websites let them look at car interiors, review detailed specifications, and compare their products’ features with those on competitors’ models. Moreover, there is another evaluation process: car rankings. It is another useful way to assess the market. Many independent organizations review, rate, and compare cars in online buyers’ guides. Many car magazines also publish car reviews and rankings.

2.4.4 Purchase decision

In the evaluation stage, the consumers formed preferences among the brands in choice set. The consumer may also form a purchase intention to buy the most preferred brand. However, his or her decisions can be affected by two factors: the attitudes of others (attitudes of colleagues and family) and unanticipated situation factors (unforeseen events). The two mentioned factors can come between the purchase intention and the purchase decision.
Attitudes of others may decrease the consumers’ preferred choices of certain products while the unanticipated situational factors may erupt to change the purchase intention.

2.4.5 Post-purchase behaviour

After purchasing the product, the consumer experiences some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The consumer will also engage in the last stage of consumer decision making: post-purchase behaviour. The marketer’s job does not end when the product is bought but continues into post purchase period. After purchasing a product, a consumer may detect a flaw. Some buyers will not want the flawed product, others will be indifferent to the flaw, and some may even see the flaw as enhancing the value of the product. Moreover, the consumer’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product will influence subsequent behaviour. If the customer feels satisfied, he or she will show a higher probability of repurchasing the product. On the other hand, if the products do not meet his or her needs, he or she may look other brands in the next purchase.
2.5 The concept of marketing mix

Product, price, place and promotion are widely known as “Marketing Mix”, one of the major concepts in modern marketing. Setting the right strategy for each “P” and blending them together would lead a business to reach its goals. Marketing mix is a set of controllable, tactical marketing tools that the company blends to produce the response it wants in the target market. The marketing mix consists of everything the company can do to influence the demand for its product. The many possibilities can be collected into four groups of variables known as the “Four Ps”: product, price, place and promotion (Kotler, 2003)\textsuperscript{64}.

Marketing mix is defined as the set of controllable and tactical marketing tool (Kotler, 2004)\textsuperscript{65}. Many organizations can adapt these marketing mix variables to meet the needs of their target market. The marketing mix consists of strategies that the organizations can create to increase the demand for their product.

Product means the combination of the goods and services that the organizations offer to their target market. Zikmund and d’Amico (2002)\textsuperscript{66} add that product is a commodity, a service, or an idea that provides both tangible and intangible attributes to satisfy the consumer’s needs. The product that the consumers receive in the exchange process is the result of a number of product strategy decisions. As a result, when developing and planning product, the manufacturers should study the features that consumer wants. How to select a brand name, design package, develop appropriate warranties and service plans, as well as how to determine other product decisions are also a part of developing the right product.
Price refers to the amount of money the customer needs to pay in order to acquire the product. Zikmund and d’Amico (2002)\(^67\) also suggest that marketers should determine the best appropriate price for their products to ascertain a product’s value.

Once the value of the product is established, the marketers should know what price to charge. Pricing strategy is a crucial factor for every manufacturer in order to show his or her consumers what it is worth to them. However, as the consumer’s evaluations of a product’s worth change over time, a price tends to change rapidly as well.

Place of buying includes any company activities that make the product available to the target consumers. Place is defined as an element of the marketing mix combining all aspects of getting products to the consumers in the right location at the right time (Zikmund and d’Amico, 2002)\(^68\). Place also includes the source of distribution. For instance, transportation, storage, and material handling are the physical distribution. A channel of distribution is the complete sequence of marketing organizations involved in bringing a product from the producer to consumer. A basic channel of distribution is composed of the manufacturer, the wholesaler, the retailer, and the ultimate consumer.

Promotion means any activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade target consumer to buying. Promotion may convey a message about the organization, a product, or some other elements of the marketing mix (Zigmund and d’Amico, 2002)\(^69\). For instance, the manufacturer should know how to lower the price of their products being offered during a sale period. The form of promotion consists of advertising, personal selling, publicity and sales promotion. Each sort of promotion offers its unique benefit, but such promotion communicates to consumers for different
purposes: informing, reminding, or persuading. To communicate with their potential customers effectively as a way to reach the goal of the firm, two major promotional mixes are applied, advertising, sales promotion and personal selling.

Among various forms of promotional tools, advertising is considered marketing’s most visible form of communication. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines advertising as “any paid forms of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services, by an identified sponsor.” In other words, advertising is a paid form of non-personal communication about an organization and its product through mass-media such as television, radio, outdoor displays, magazines, newspaper and direct mail. The aim of advertising is to promote the use of the products or services (Dibb, Simkin, Pride, and, Ferrell, 1997).

Sales promotion is defined by an American Marketing Association (AMA) as “those activities, other than personal selling, advertising and publicity that stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness.” In other words, sales promotion consists of all marketing activities that attempt to stimulate the interest in product and purchase among customers. There are a number of different sales promotion tools used in consumer promotion: “Premiums and Gifts” which are items offered for free or at the bargain price to encourage instant response from customer, “Coupons” distributed through some medium such as newspaper, magazines, on packages, or in store displays which are certificates with a stated value for a price reduction on a specific item, “Price reductions” that come in many forms including a features price that is lower than regular price and free goods (Buy one, get one (others) free), “Sweepstakes” which offer prizes based on a random drawing of entrant’s names to pick up the lucky person are used to increase sale promotion and induce customer to purchase products, and “Exhibitions”
which are currently popular among sellers and buyers as buyer can meet various sellers at the same place and time.

Personal Selling is a person to person communication in which a seller attempts to persuade prospective buyer to purchase the company’s products or services. It is a technique where an organization employs sales representatives to deliver the message of its products and services. This is different from other marketing communications in which it allows an immediate feedback. It is also considered the best way of building up buyer’s preferences and actions as well as good relationship with customers.

In the retail environment, the salesperson is a strong factor of influence on consumer because the store image and the ability to build loyalty can heavily depend on the salesperson’s performance and characteristics such as his or her attentiveness, expertise, friendliness and appearance (Engel, Blackwell, and, Miniard, 1993). The salesperson represents retailers to customers and works as the transaction or exchange function between retailers and consumer (Willkie, 1994). The salesperson informs the customers of the products and service available to them and help them decide which products and services are the best suited to satisfy their needs and wants. Many companies consider the salesperson’s function to be five times more important than advertising. The reason why a salesperson has a strong influence on consumer purchase decision is, that he/she can strongly influence on the consumer-purchase decision, since the salesperson is generally has more product knowledge and more experience in sales interaction.

Weitz (1981) also states that the salesperson’s effectiveness in sales interaction affects the consumer purchase decision. The salesperson’s effectiveness is influenced by both selling behaviour and salesperson’s
resources. Selling behaviour includes adapting their style to consumers, establishing influence bases, using effective techniques and controlling the sales interaction. The salesperson’s resources include product and consumer knowledge, analytical and interpersonal skills, and the availability of service alternatives.

During marketing communication process, each organization must select a channel of communication to deliver its message to the potential customers. Kotler (2004) states that there are two broad categories of communication channels: personal and non-personal communication channels. The personal communication channels refer to two or more people communicating directly to each other either through mail, face to face interaction, over the telephone or through chatting on the internet. Some types of media such as salesperson are directly controlled by the organization; others may pass on to customers directly by way of neighbours, friend, family members who have direct contact with target customers. This channel is known as word-of-mouth communication and usually has a great impact on customer’s purchasing decision of products. Many studies prove that peer groups are much more likely to affect attitudes and purchasing behaviours than advertising.

On the other hand, the non-personal communication channels are media that carried messages without any personal contact with customers. These types of media consist of major media channels such as printed media (newspaper, magazines, direct mail), broadcast media (radio, television), display media (billboards, signs, posters), and online media (online services, website). Non-personal communication channels affect buyers directly. Message from television, magazines and other mass media usually go to opinion leaders before transmitting them to the potential customers. Thus, the opinion
leaders also have a great influence on consumers’ purchasing decision of any products and services.

From the source of the message, the effect of the message on the customer depends on how the customers view the communicators. Highly knowledgeable, courteous, friendly and understanding salespeople with smart communicative skills are selected by many firms to deliver the firm’s message to target customers regarding products. Such sales representatives can help create highly reliable information and good images of products for customers. Different types of messages require different types of media. As a result, in order to select the right media to reach the target customers effectively, the company must consider the impact of each of the major media types.
2.6 Internet Marketing and Consumer Decision Process

There are reasons to believe that there are five stages in a customer buying process as stated in last part. Customers go through want/need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and make the purchase finally. As Internet is expanding rapidly, more customers use Internet for part or even all the buying process, marketers have to learn how to use emarketing strategies to move customers from need/want recognition to make the final deal. In our current study, Internet is the second most popular way for consumers to get car information. Because many consumers go through a similar buying process, marketers can use the five stages to plan and align marketing activities, thereby improving the customer’s experience. Online channel usage, as part or all the buying process, continues to grow, making e-marketing activity a strong influencer of purchasing decisions.

Most marketers are familiar with the five stages of the customers' buying process, around which marketing activities can be planned and implemented. Within each stage, marketers have the opportunity to improve the customer experience and influence the customer through all stages toward a purchase. However, the mass adoption of the Web channel among customers has shifted the stages of the customer buying process from a mostly offline activity to an increasingly online activity. Many customers now go through the entire buying process online, or use the online channel though multiple steps of the process. For instance, a two wheeler buyer maybe recognize his/her wants for a two wheeler after watching an online advertising, collect data about the car online, look for references and recommendations about the car by posting a topic on an online forum or by chatting with somebody online and then make the purchase decision of the car at a nearby dealer shop. So, marketers must respond with specific e-marketing techniques that
address each stage of the process. By 2008, more than 40% of business-to-consumer (B2C) commerce (online and off) will be influenced by addressable branding and advertising, contextual marketing, community marketing and transactional marketing (0.8 probability). In each stage of the consumer buying process, e-marketing technologies can be best placed to help or lead customers toward a purchase (see Figure 2.1).

![Figure 2.1: Consumer Buying Process (E-Marketing)](image)

Source: Gartner (February, 2007)

In the needs/wants recognition phase, the consumer sees a big difference of his/her current state and ideal state. The consumer realizes there is a problem which needs to be solved. This is the start of the customer buying process that deals with awareness. Here, e-marketing opportunities, such as addressable branding and advertising functionality, can help establish awareness and wants. Banner advertising, sponsorships, interstitials and others are e-marketing activities that can expose customers to products and services. Data collections tools, such as Web analytics and online surveys, can start to quantify different needs and wants. In our case, car makers could get consumers input from such e-marketing activities. Since these activities
are addressable, so customers can reply and communicate with a brand (click on a banner advertising, search for more information or request information) in real time.

After a problem is recognized, the consumer enters into the information search phase. Customers want to find out information about that product or brand. Contextual e-marketing techniques (providing information from explicit searches or questions) are becoming extremely useful as a mechanism to find information and have become a routine step in the customer-buying process. The success of Google, Yahoo and Baidu (in China) and their contextual search functionality show the power of providing tools for the customers to search related information and answer consumers’ questions that help them during their buying process. Contextual marketing, such as search marketing (organic or paid), location based search (matching the user's location to proximity of product/service), customer preference management tools and available RSS feeds, is a natural fit to align explicit information gathering with relevant answers. For example, a lot of two wheeler websites provide online queries which could answer consumers’ questions and provide useful information for consumers’ decision making.

The third stage is the evaluation of alternatives stage. Consumers are faced with different options and they have to narrow down different options and choose one of the options as the final one. After-sale service, product options, price, availability and convenience, are all part of the evaluation process. Getting recommendations and references from close friends, family members to get answers play an important role on evaluation phase. Community e-marketing functions, such as community marketing, customer feedback, message boards, customer reviews and blogs, will also provide the
tools to help customers though the evaluation process toward their purchasing goal.

The fourth stage is purchase stage, which also has e-marketing opportunity. Transactional e-marketing activities, such as gift registries, e-mail marketing and online dialogue functionality, help consumers to final purchase or even additional purchases. For example, in our case, a customer has searched for a two wheeler on the company's site and read other people’s comments, then the customers is exposed by an online dialogue that displays available specification for his/her selection. Once the bike is chosen, the customer is presented with matching bike information before checking-out. There is one example about Indian two wheeler makers, Bajaj. Bajaj usually displays specification-adjusted price (price in equal equipment level) on their websites.

Customers who are willing to purchase Bajaj can compare the prices of models which are in the same level with Bajaj, for example, when a customer’s wants to purchase a Bajaj Pulsar 150cc. He/she could get information about the other 150 cc models offered by competitors with the same equipment level. This can result in a relevant cross-checking, providing a positive experience for the customer and an incremental sale for the company.

The last phase is outcome and post-purchase behaviour. Internet has a big impact on this part too. For example, we could see a lot of positive or negative comments and feedbacks posted on some websites’ forums by some users regarding some products or service. If the products or service are good enough, the Internet really has a good impact for the future selling. In addition, two wheeler makers may set up a follow-up session on the company’s website, from there, auto makers could know consumers’ suggestions and feedbacks and improve themselves from each aspect.
Lack of E-Marketing could damage the customer experience. E-marketing technology, when properly placed along the customer buying process, helps provide a seamless link from want/need to actual purchase. In fact, many times, a poor customer experience is the direct result of not having e-marketing tools in place. For example, a consumer may visit an auto maker's website to learn about a bike which he is interested in. When the customer enters into the evaluation phase, this website doesn't give him/her any appropriate information with he needs, for example, no specification-adjusted price mechanisms or feedback or comments from other users about this bike. As a result, the customer might go elsewhere for the evaluation, providing an opportunity for the competition to help the customer complete his/her buying process with potentially different results.
2.7 Relevant Consumer Behaviour Models

This section discusses the relevant models of consumer behaviour.

2.7.1 Howard-Sheth Model

Howard and Sheth (1969)\textsuperscript{75} concentrated on the individual buyer’s problem solving processes which includes psychological and environmental factors. This model outlined four distinct sets of factors in the buying process: (1) stimulus variables, inputs, (2) response variables, outputs (3) hypothetical constructs, and (4) exogenous variables. Howard and Sheth identified various steps of consumer decision making in different buying situations and provide the causality between the variables (Pellemans, 1971)\textsuperscript{76}. The model is useful framework for understanding the complexities of consumer behavior. Figure 2.2 represents the theory of buyer behavior.

![Figure 2.2: The Howard-Sheth Model](image)

Source: (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p.92), Solid lines indicate flow of information; dashed lines, feedback effects.
Input variables in the model are the stimuli and the communication of information that the buyer’s social environment provides regarding a purchase decision, significant or symbolic. The inputs are called significative, symbolic stimuli and social stimuli. They refer to the information that the buyer’s social environment provides regarding a purchase decision.

The five output variables are:

1. Attention,
2. Brand comprehension,
3. Attitude,
4. Intention, and
5. Purchase.

Hypothetical constructs deal with perception (information processing) and learning (concept formation).

The learning constructs are:

1. Motives,
2. Brand comprehension,
3. Choice criteria,
4. Attitude (toward the brand),
5. Intention (to buy the brand),
6. Confidence (in judging brands), and
7. Satisfaction (with purchase of brand).

Perceptual constructs are:

1. Attention,
2. Stimulus ambiguity,
3. Perceptual bias, and
Exogenous variables are outside the system of hypothetical constructs. “They exert their effects indirectly on the output variables since they operate by way of the hypothetical constructs” (Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 58). Exogenous variables that make up the theory are: importance of purchase, personality traits, time pressure, financial status, social and organizational setting, social class, and culture.

Howard and Sheth (1969) describe culture as a pattern of behavior which is transmitted from member to member by symbols and constituting distinctive achievement of human groups. According to Pellemans (1971) in the Howard and Sheth model, three different buying situations depending upon the information needed by the buyer to make his final buying decision are:

(a) Routinized response behavior
This deals with when a buyer is familiar with the brand and needs less information.
Routinized response behavior occurs in frequently purchased items when the time period between the awareness and purchase is short enough to avoid the loss of memory about the product.

(b) Limited problem solving
When a buyer is confronted with a totally new brand but the buyer is in need of an item in that familiar product class. In this case, the buyer needs more information than in routinized response behavior, there will be perceptual effects as buyer seeks more information which is often ambiguous and needs more comprehension.
(c) Extensive problem solving

This happens “when the buyer is confronted with a new brand that represents unfamiliar product class” (Pellemans, 1971, p.18). The buyer evaluates the choice criteria and is in a state of complete disequilibrium.

Howard and Sheth (1969) argue that perceptions can be influenced. Brand comprehension simply defined is a consumer’s overall perception of a product. Targeted messaging, previous experience with the brand and external recommendations from trusted sources are three primary factors that influence and drive product choice over another. Brand comprehension, Howard and Sheth (1969) argue, has an equally powerful capability of influencing consumer attitudes toward particular products (Warner, 1997). The work and navigation through a series of stages up to this point all contributes to the level of confidence the consumer experiences toward the capability of a particular product to satisfy his initial, perceived need. Confidence determines the next step. Does the consumer feel confident that he is on the right path, that enough information has been collected and properly filtered to aid in his decision? Does he feel as though he has missed something, or has the work up to this point secured his position allowing him to develop an attitude about his selection? Attitude and confidence drive the intention to purchase, which leads to the actual purchase or output. Attitude is developed as a result of the confidence created by consumer while forming his opinion through collecting information by way of inputs, developing perceptions as a result of learning from those perceptions. The output is the purchase.
2.7.2 McNeals’ Basic Model of Consumer Behavior

According to Mc Neal’s (1973)\textsuperscript{78} generalized model of consumer behaviour, activities of consumer behaviour are subject to environmental influences (Figure 2.3). One’s environment influences all the stages of consumer behaviour. The social influence which comes under environmental influences is subtle and can be subconscious, obtaining approval of others before buying products. The social influence may be elicited by the consumer such as asking a friend or family member what he/she recommends while making purchase decisions. “This influence of others is direct like mother’s saying her daughter “no” to a request for a miniskirt” (Mc Neal, 1973, p.117). Influence of others may be subtle or subconscious; people buy certain brands to obtain approval of others.

Figure 2.3: Basic model of consumer behavior

![Diagram of McNeals' Basic Model of Consumer Behavior]

Source: (Mc Neal, 1973, p.15)
The social environment has influence on consumers. This happens through the learning process, taking directions and seeking guidance of others. These influences may be direct, such as of a parent or a friend, or indirect, such as a movie star. The social environment acts as a source through which a human being obtain their values i.e., preference of one object or idea rather than the other. Social environment can influence one’s cognitive factors and degree of satisfaction obtained from consumption. Needs arise from the consumer’s environment. These needs create a tension state which is uncomfortable, the consumer starts thinking of ways to remove it. In this cognitive stage he thinks of possible solutions, evaluates them and selects the best. This action will produce either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

2.7.3 The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model

Consumer behavior is about people’s decision making about purchases and the influences on those decisions. The model of this decision making process which is most commonly cited is the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB)\textsuperscript{79} model, which was first outlined in 1960. It is a relatively simple model and runs through five major steps:

(1) need recognition,
(2) search,
(3) alternative evaluation,
(4) purchase,
(5) outcomes (Figure 4).

Need recognition occurs when a consumer perceives difference between an ideal state of affairs and actual state. There are two basic sources of need recognition: 1) external stimuli and (2) motive activation.

New information or experience triggers the problem recognition. The model also shows that dissatisfaction also triggers need recognition. After need
recognition the consumers search for information which may be internal (what a person remembers) and external (information from friends, family, internet, brochures etc.). Alternative evaluation is choosing between different products which might meet the demand. Purchase is actual exchange of money for goods. After using the product/service the user is in stage of evaluating the product and decides whether it was correct or not.

Figure 2.4: The EKB model of consumer behavior

The EKB model has four stages:
(1) Information input,
(2) Information processing,
(3) Decision process, and
(4) Variables influencing decision process (Figure 4).
According to the EKB model factors affecting consumer decision making are: (1) environmental influences and (2) individual differences (Figure 4); environmental factors affect the intentions along with attitude of an individual. These environmental influences such as cultural, economic, and demographic realities shape the nature of a person in ways that it influences the decisions of an individual. Individual influences according to EKB model are consumer resources, motivation, involvement, knowledge, attitudes, personality, values and lifestyle.

2.7.4 Nicosia Model

This model focuses on the relationship between the firm and its potential consumers. The firm communicates with consumers through its marketing messages (advertising), and the consumers react to these messages by purchasing response. Looking to the model we will find that the firm and the consumer are connected with each other, the firm tries to influence the consumer and the consumer is influencing the firm by his decision.
The Nicosia model is divided into four major fields:

Field 1: The consumer attitude based on the firms’ messages.

The first field is divided into two subfields.

The first subfield deals with the firm’s marketing environment and communication efforts that affect consumer attitudes, the competitive environment, and characteristics of target market. Subfield two specifies the consumer characteristics e.g., experience, personality, and how he perceives the promotional idea toward the product in this stage the consumer forms his attitude toward the firm’s product based on his interpretation of the message.
Field 2: search and evaluation

The consumer will start to search for other firm’s brand and evaluate the firm’s brand in comparison with alternate brands. In this case the firm motivates the consumer to purchase its brands.

Field 3: The act of the purchase

The result of motivation will arise by convincing the consumer to purchase the firm products from a specific retailer.

Field 4: Feedback

This model analyses the feedback of both the firm and the consumer after purchasing the product. The firm will benefit from its sales data as a feedback, and the consumer will use his experience with the product affects the individual’s attitude and predisposition’s concerning future messages from the firm.

The Nicosia model offers no detail explanation of the internal factors, which may affect the personality of the consumer, and how the consumer develops his attitude toward the product. For example, the consumer may find the firm’s message very interesting, but virtually he cannot buy the firm’s brand because it contains something prohibited according to his beliefs. Apparently it is very essential to include such factors in the model, which give more interpretation about the attributes affecting the decision process.
2.7.5 Solomon Model of comparison process

Figure 2.6: Model of comparison process

Figure 2.6 explains some of the issues that are addressed during each stage of the consumption process. The ‘exchange’, in which two or more organizations or people give and receive something of value, is an integral part of marketing. He also suggested that consumer behavior involves many different actors. The purchaser and user of a product might not be the same person. People may also act as influences on the buying processes.
Organizations can also be involved in the buying process. Much of marketing activity, they suggest, concentrates on adapting product offerings to particular circumstances of target segment needs and wants. It is also common to stimulate an already existing want through advertising and sales promotion, rather than creating wants. The definitions and models, which have been presented so far, have been from general marketing theory. Tourism is, by its very nature, a service rather than a product, which may have a considerable effect on consumer behavior.

2.7.6 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was formulated in 1975 by Fishbein and Ajzen\textsuperscript{82} has been used extensively in marketing research. \textit{Figure 2.7 presents} a diagrammatic model of the theory. TRA has been applied to explain the behaviour beyond the acceptance of technology and includes four general concepts: \textit{behavioural attitudes, subjective norms, intention to use and actual use}. It argues that individuals evaluate the consequences of a particular behaviour and create intentions to act that are consistent with their evaluations. More specifically, TRA states that individuals' behaviour can be predicted from their intentions, which can be predicted from their attitudes and subjective norms. Following the chain of prediction further back, attitudes can be predicted from an individual's beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour. Subjective norms can be predicted by knowing how significant other individuals think the behaviour should or should not be done. A particularly helpful aspect of TRA from a technology perspective is its assertion that any other factors that influence behaviour do so only indirectly by influencing attitude and subjective norms. Such variables would include, amongst others things, the system design characteristics, user characteristics (including cognitive styles and other personality variables) and task characteristics. Hence, TRA is quite appropriate in the context of predicting the behaviour of using multimedia.
technology. Although TRA, is a very general theory and as such does not specify what specific beliefs would be pertinent in particular situations. Nevertheless, the inclusion of subjective norm represents an important variable, which is not even included in more popular models such as Technology Adoption Model (TAM).

**Figure 2.7: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)**

![Figure 2.7: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)](image)


**2.7.7 The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

In exploring consumer's usage behaviour, researchers adopt behaviour theories from psychology and marketing. It is in this context that the TPB was constructed. The TPB was proposed as an extension to the TRA mentioned earlier, by Ajzen in 1991. The TPB sought to account for conditions where individuals do not have a complete control over their behaviour. When applied to the acceptance of information technology systems or services, the model contains five concepts. As in TRA, it includes behavioural attitudes, subjective norms, intention to use and actual
use. However, this theory interprets \textit{behavioural control as a perceived construct}. Perceived behavioural control covers both the intention to use and the actual usage. Actual usage is in turn a weighted function of intention to use and perceived behavioural control. Under this arrangement control aspects of the observation is introduced into the model. This makes the TPB more functional in its application. Researchers have used the TPB widely to model the acceptance of a variety of new information technologies in businesses as well as to predict levels of usage...

The TPB is diagrammatically presented in Figure 2.7 for greater clarity.

\textbf{Figure 2.8: The TPB}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure2_7.png}
\end{center}

\textit{Source: www.sciencedirect.com}
2.7.8 Technology Adoption Model (TAM)

The Technology Adoption Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989; David, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989) examines the adoption of technology based on the perceived usefulness and ease of use of the technology by the consumer. TAM theory applies its fundamentals to the adoptions of technology, introducing variables like perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use and removing subjective norms. The objective of TAM is to provide an “explanation of the determinants of computer acceptance that is general, capable of explaining usage behaviour across a broad range of systems or end-user computing technologies and user populations, while at the same time being both parsimonious and theoretically justified” (David, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989, p. 985). Through TAM, Davis (1989) posits that an individual’s behavioural intention to adopt and use a particular technology is determined by the individual’s attitude toward it. Two factors contribute to the development of the attitude: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

Figure 2.9: The Technology Adoption Model

Source: David, Bagozzi & Warshaw (1989)

Will this technology enhance the individual’s performance professionally or socially? Will the use of this technology be effortless? Each of these
questions is a descriptor for the factors. The two perceptions around usefulness (utility) and use are cognitions around the innovation of technology. Usefulness is the cognitive evaluation of the individual regarding the utility provided by the innovation. Use is an indicator of the cognitive effort necessary to properly deploy the technology. The usefulness variable is heavily influenced by the ease of use.

All other variables being equal, the easier the technology is perceived to be to use, the useful it is perceived to be. A key strength of TAM is its predictive power. It has been empirically verified as a tool for predicting technology use (Szajna, 1996) and emerged as the dominant model in the literature (Venkatesh, 2000; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; Szajna, 1994; Davis, 1989). Its capability has been demonstrated to explain between 17% to 33% of the variance in attitude and usage intentions (Thompson, Higgins & Howell, 1991; Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989). The variables introduced in this model, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, continue to collect empirical support and momentum in predicted technology acceptance behaviour (Venkatesh, 2000; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996). As its popularity is growing, TAM is being used outside of the IS research within the marketing discipline within consumer research around online retail shopping (O’Cass & French, 2003; Childers, Christopher, Peck & Carson, 2001), buying intentions on the web (Gentry & Calantone, 2002) and understanding technology-based self-service usage (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002).
2.8 Brand’s Role in Influencing Purchase

The fundamental concept of brand is fairly simple as defined by Kotler (1991): “A brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol or combination of them which is intended to identify goods and services of one seller to differentiate them from those of competitors” (p. 442). In even simpler terms a brand is a distinguishing characteristic that sets its product or service apart from the competition. The value, or equity associated with a brand is more complex. Brand equity also includes the perceptions and expectations of consumers in addition to their loyalty and awareness (Keller, 1993, Asker, 1991). It is highly individualized and largely exists within the consumers’ minds and is difficult to quantify yet can be measured in terms of consumer perception, intent to purchase and willingness to pay (Harrison & Dwight, 2006).

The dynamic nature of the high tech industry including creeping R&D costs and the commoditization of technology has placed pressure in the system for manufacturers to embrace the power of brand equity, understand it and how it can deliver incremental value back to the bottom line by means of higher product sales. Given the high degree of similarity within the definitions no one stood out as the most appropriate; Simon and Sullivan’s (1993) financial, product-centric perspective was the least effective in identifying what brand equity is in the high tech arena. Consumers in the market for technology products are driven by a perceived need.

Teas and Grapentine (1996) offer a framework that examines the role brand plays in affecting consumer choice and the degree to which it provides equity or value to the consumer. Table 2.1 represents their assessment. During several of the stages within the buying process the brand of a
company provides a certain sense of value to consumers by: simplifying the purchase decision task, reducing their perceived risk, and providing direct value to the consumer, acting as an evaluative attribute.

**Table 2.1: Brand’s Role in Consumer Choice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Effects Issues</th>
<th>Information Search</th>
<th>Consideration and Preference</th>
<th>Purchase</th>
<th>Evaluation Post-purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search Attributes</td>
<td>Reduce acquisition</td>
<td>Included as evaluative criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk mitigation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility Attribute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk mitigation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Loyalty/ Switching Costs</td>
<td>Reduce acquisition effort</td>
<td>Simplifies decision</td>
<td>Decision simplification/risk mitigation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand as a Valued Attribute</td>
<td>Included as evaluative criteria</td>
<td>Decision Criteria</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Teas and Grapentine (1993)*

With select stages of the purchasing decision cycle defining the columns and a collection of brand equity effects that influence that purchase decision along the rows within Teas and Grapentine’s (1993) conceptual framework, it is apparent the amount of influence brand equity can have on consumer choice is considerable and complicated.

Looking at the brand effects issues in more detail will enable researched to better understand the role brand might be expected to play throughout the consumer’s purchase decision cycle. A search attribute is “a characteristic of a product that can be evaluated by acquiring information during the pre-purchase decision process” (Teas & Grapentine, 1993, p. 26). For example,
consumers typically have a choice set loosely defined as they begin this process. If a consumer were looking to purchase a two wheeler, he probably has a list of attributes, like the type (geared versus non geared), size of engine cc and price. When considering the purchase of a wedding gown, color, fabric, cut and design would be search attributes. The role brand plays in this scenario as an indicator of search attributes in relation to the information search is around the amount of information the consumer feels compelled to collect. Teas and Grapentine (1993)\(^{96}\) posit that a brand produces enough utility for the consumer to feel comfortable with simplifying their decision process, limiting their information search and including the brand as evaluative criteria on which to base the purchase decision.

While search attributes can be evaluated before the purchase of a product, use attributes are those product characteristics that can only be evaluated after. Examples of use attributes would include whether or not a consumer would find the taste of a particular food product appealing or if a snow blower really performed as well as it claimed, or if an investment would actually yield the rate of return it was boasting. None of these attributes can be evaluated until after the product has been purchased and used/consumed. Enter brand equity. When a consumer uses brand as an indicator of a use attribute, he is basing the estimated or forecasted performance of the product on the brand alone, assuming that product brand will have a perceived advantage over other alternatives. The importance brand plays here is that if the perceived equity from the consumer is significant enough, chances are that he will include the product in the consideration phase among other products that have been previously used. The brand enables consideration without prior experience (Teas & Grapentine, 1993)\(^{97}\).
A credibility attribute is a characteristic of product that the consumer can never completely evaluate, like knowing what the long term health risks are of food using Nutra-sweet or if adequate maintenance procedures are properly being implemented by airlines. While brands cannot eliminate the inability of a consumer to fully evaluate these attributes, it can provide a better sense of perception around the concerns. For example, organic brands of food might be associated with less risk than others, because no chemicals or preservatives are used. Within this context brand serves to reduce a certain degree of risk that the consumer perceives around these “unknowns”. Brand can also act as a risk reducer after the purchase of a product that has been consumed several times, instilling a sense of confidence of its safety. So while the consumer may never completely know or evaluate the credence attributes, brand can alleviate a portion of the anxiety as a result of the limitation (Teas & Grapentine, 1993).98

Brand in one instance can carry a product to consideration even if it is substandard to the other products within the set. In the other instance, it can generate a sense of loyalty that diminishes the likelihood of other alternatives being considered, establishing a perceived switching cost to the consumer. In other words, a customer believes that the opportunity cost to switch from one brand to another is too high to contemplate. When consumers demonstrate brand loyalty, they typically reduce their information search substantially, often times completely eliminating it and do not evaluate other brands, resulting in a simplification of the decision (Teas & Grapentine, 1993).99

A certain prestige or perceived status is attached to specific brands such as owning a Rolls Royce or Astin Martin compared to a Chevy Malibu. In addition to prestige, a sense of quality, safety or other intrinsic value to the consumer is also inherent within a brand. Within this context, brand also
serves to enable a particular product to be included within the consideration set. Some consumers might consider nothing other than brand name alternatives compared to generic because of the prestige or status they believe it projects on them as individuals (Teas & Grapentine, 1993).\(^{100}\)

Brand and the equity it delivers to a particular product influences consumer purchase, beginning as early in the decision process of selecting evaluative attributes through to the end where the choice is finally made. It can be the primary reason a product is purchased or the determining factor to consider purchase despite its other values being known. The power is recognized and the factors that portray, nurture and build these perceptions within the customer base is a hot research area (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000; Park & Srinivasan, 1994; Keller, 1993).\(^{101}\)

**2.8.1 Aaker Model (1991)**

In his conceptual framework of brand equity, Aaker (1991)\(^{102}\) suggests three things: (a) both the customer and the firm benefit from brand equity, (b) the value for the customer enhances the firm’s value, and (c) brand equity is made up of several dimensions. His claims of mutual benefit to firm and consumer around brand equity have been supported. Mahajan, Rao and Srivastava (1994)\(^{103}\) proved brand equity affects merger and acquisition decisions. The strength or potential of a brand, as measured by consumer perception can significantly contribute to a merger or acquisition, adding leverage to the discussion of price. With a strong brand, or one that is believed to be emerging with potential, the merger or acquisition in heavily weighed as the candidate is measured on potential contribution to the purchasing firm’s brand and bottom line.

Brand equity affects stock market reactions (Lane & Jacobsen, 1995; Simon & Sullivan, 1993)\(^{104}\) and it can determine the feasibility of extending a brand
As shown in Teas and Grapentine’s (1993) framework, brand equity increases the chance of product selection. It also increases the tolerance for price premiums (Barwise, 1993; Keller, 1993; Simon & Sullivan, 1993). Within the stock market, highly recognized brands may enjoy more leniency or endure more scrutiny as a result. IBM in recent years, despite underperforming against expectations saw little change in their stock price, while Andersen consulting, known for its auditing expertise was virtually decimated in the market because of its failure to deliver on its core competency and being partially blamed for the Enron scandal. An excellent example demonstrating brand equity as it relates to premium pricing is generic versus brand name pain relievers. When looking at the ingredients of a generic acetaminophen versus a brand name like Tylenol, they are identical. Despite that fact, consumers continue to purchase the Tylenol brand over the drugstore’s generic version that is priced lower.


“The equity of a brand hinges on the number of people who purchase it regularly” (Zinkhan, 1992, p.125). A significant installed base of highly satisfied customers is the ultimate goal. Loyalty is a result of the product being experienced and a high level of satisfaction after its consumption. The operative word is experience. The term experience is further enhanced with the descriptor “perceived experience”. Each consumer’s experience is
unique, yet the collective results need to be positive enough to generate a sense of loyalty to the brand (Aaker, 1991).

Brand awareness is related to the position the brand holds in the consumer’s memory and the ease in which it is recalled when prompted. Brand recognition is a component of brand awareness and is related to the consumer’s ability to recognize previous exposure to it. Brand awareness plays an important role in decision making in two ways: (a) better brand awareness increases the likelihood that it will be part of the consideration set, and (b) the level of brand awareness can affect further decisions about those brands within the consideration set (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991).

Both Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) cite the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) as suggesting that choice may be based on brand awareness when the decision has low involvement as a result of little motivation. Both Teas and Grapentine’s (1996) and Aaker’s (1991) conceptual frameworks identify the fundamental building blocks to brand, brand equity and the intrinsic power. The preceding pages have provided a justification and mostly theoretical context in preparation for the discussion of what brand equity really is, as posited by several experts in the marketing field and which definition would be the most applicable to the high tech industry.

2.8.2 Brand Equity Definitions

The initial academic definitions of brand equity presented to the marketing world during the “brand boom” have been difficult to use and apply, but since then several have developed into useful descriptions. While many variations exist many authors are consistent with Farquhar’s (1989) definition of brand equity as the value added by the brand to the product (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991; Leuthesser, 1988). While several “one-offs” exist, they can be grouped based on similarity in
tone and intent. In line with Farquhar (1989), one of the most widely recognized and accepted firm-based definitions of brand equity include Rangaswamy, Burke and Oliva’s (1993) 118:

Brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand – for example, when certain outcomes result from the marketing of a product or service because of its brand name that would not occur if the same product or service did not have that name.

Keller (1993) 119 chooses to define brand equity from the customer’s perspective, referring to it as “customer-based” brand equity, describing it as the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (p.1).

Aaker (1991) 120 also defines brand equity from the outside-in approach, describing it as a consumer’s perception around “the value added to the functional product or service by associating it with the brand name” (p.4). He also defines brand equity from a product-centric viewpoint, as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or detract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers (p.15).

Simon and Sullivan (1993) 121 provide yet another firm-based definition of brand equity, as an asset to the firm, increasing cash flow to the business. They further attempt to quantify brand equity as being estimated by subtracting the utility of physical product attributes from the total utility of the brand.
2.8.3 Compare and Contrast

The universal component of every brand equity definition includes the notion of value add. Whether it is customer-oriented or firm-based, every definition, regardless of perspective, identifies the fundamental purpose of brand equity as adding incremental value. The most significant similarity among all five definitions revolves around this thought. Word choice is varied but intent is similar. Whether it is Aaker (1991)\textsuperscript{122} or Farquhar’s (1989)\textsuperscript{123} term “value added” or “uniquely attributable” description by Rangaswamy, Burke and Oliva (1993)\textsuperscript{124}, each author is attempting to articulate the difference that brand contributes to the overall worth of a product.

Keller’s (1993)\textsuperscript{125} choices of the word “differentiated” aligns with the other definitions. The strongest difference exists between the author’s perspective from which the definition originated, firm-based, customer-based or product-centric. Keller’s (1993) view is customer-oriented; defining equity in terms of the difference in effect the brand has on the customer’s knowledge of that brand. Aaker (1991) also chooses to adopt this approach and focus his definition around the consumer’s perception of the incremental value of the product as a result of the brand. In other words, did the consumer’s perception of the brand help better position it in his mind for consideration versus one whose brand perception was not as prominent? He uses a similar definition to provide a product-centric angle, choosing to highlight only the product’s position in terms of value, without discussing customer perception.
2.8.4 Application to Technology products

Of the five definitions identified and discussed, only one seems the least optimal. Simon and Sullivan’s (1993)\textsuperscript{126} definition of brand equity as being an asset increasing cash flow to the business, while not inaccurate, is too limited and does not capture the dynamic nature of the high tech market. Because of the striking similarity with the other four, a fair determination could not be made, as most of the differentiation between them was a simple matter of word choice. The perspective from which they were written, while a distinguishable characteristic, was not strong enough to support the selection of one definition over the other. That said this writer is of the opinion that any definition that articulates the incremental value achieved by either the product as a result of a consumer perception or the value perceived from the consumer perspective is valid and effective within the high-tech industry. Whether the value is bolted on the product or ties to the consumer is of little significance. The most important factor is the benefit realized as a result of strong brand equity; higher revenue with a more loyal installed customer base.
2.9 Summary

The fundamental concept of brand is fairly simple as defined by Kotler (1991): “A brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol or combination of them which is intended to identify goods and services of one seller to differentiate them from those of competitors” (p. 442). In even simpler terms a brand is a distinguishing characteristic that sets its product or service apart from the competition. The value, or equity associated with a brand is more complex. Brand equity also includes the perceptions and expectations of consumers in addition to their loyalty and awareness (Keller, 1993, Aaker, 1991). It is highly individualized and largely exists within the consumers’ minds and is difficult to quantify yet can be measured in terms of consumer perception, intent to purchase and willingness to pay (Harrison & Dwight, 2006).

The dynamic nature of the high tech industry including creeping R&D costs and the commoditization of technology has placed pressure in the system for manufacturers to embrace the power of brand equity, understand it and how it can deliver incremental value back to the bottom line by means of higher product sales. Given the high degree of similarity within the definitions no one stood out as the most appropriate; Simon and Sullivan’s (1993) financial, product-centric perspective was the least effective in identifying what brand equity is in the high tech arena. Consumers in the market for technology products are driven by a perceived need. Continuing with the two wheeler example, a majority of the product features within the brands are similar thereby creating a virtually level playing field. All product-based attributes equal, the importance of brand and brand equity are magnified, and the more the manufacturers can associate that equity to the overall product, the easier it is for them to qualify the investment in marketing versus R&D. The intangible nature brand equity and the
inconsistency in its measurement that deliver back to the business are challenges and ones that will continue to plague organizations. What will not change is the benefit realized from strong brand equity.

The present study is based on the conceptual model as proposed by Howard-Sheth (1969) and Engel (1983)\textsuperscript{131}. They developed models that can explain and predict human behaviour and how it related to decision making, focusing on the process, learning and perceptions and attitudes. But did a key set of attributes exist that could influence that decision one way or the other? Specifically as it related to technology, the Technology Adoption Model (TAM) proposed five attributes as discussed above viz., (a) perceived usefulness, (b) perceived ease of use, (c) relative advantage, (d) technology attitude, and (e) brand (Taylor & Todd, 1995)\textsuperscript{132}.

The first of several variables analysed in this study was the brand of two wheelers selected in the purchase decision. Additional variables included both tangible, product-related factors like price and features as well as intangible, brand-related attributes like brand image and outside recommendations. The demographic variables were age, education, gender and level of technical competency. What was tested is the existence of a relationship between these variables and the brand purchased. For example, whether or not the competency level of the consumer influenced the purchasing decision was studied. It is often conjectured that those consumers with a high level of technical competency may have a tendency to align more with the physical attributes versus with lower levels that choose to align emotionally. The age of the consumer is another indicator, as it is often speculated whether younger consumers make buying decisions based on intangible attributes such as brand image while older consumers depend more heavily on the more tangible attributes like reliability.
Chapter 2: References

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2.8 Brand’s Role in Influencing Purchase


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2.9 Summary


