



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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NAME OF FACULTY: Dr. Sadhna Trivedi

Lecture-24



Individual Determinants of Consumer Behavior

Consumer Attitudes – Formation

Attitude formation is of prime importance to a marketer. This is because he needs to develop positive attitudes for his product and service offering, as also his brand. Attitudes comprises three components, knowledge, feeling and behavior; while we can just observe behavior, the knowledge and feeling component remain hidden. Thus, we can infer that an attitude, (whether positive or negative) is formed based on the observation of one's behavior. That is why learning is defined as a change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience. Once attitudes are formed (as a result of learning), it is very difficult to change them. This section deals with the formation and change of attitudes.

a) Attitude Formation:

Attitudes are formed as a result of the learning process. The formation of attitudes can be explained through behavioral theories (classical conditioning, operant conditioning), cognitive learning and social learning.

i) Classical Conditioning: The principles of stimulus generalization, stimulus discrimination and repetition help formation of attitudes.

People prefer buying products that are associated with familiar brand names. Line extensions and brand extensions lead to favorable attitude formation. The favorable attitude is the result of repeated satisfaction with successful brands owned by a company; consumers associate the image and favorable attitude associated with the parent brand to the newly introduced brands from the same source. Also, by using successful celebrities as brand endorsers, companies try to form a positive association between the celebrity, and the "neutral" new product.

Consumers also have a positive attitude towards successful brands. The successful brand name is the unconditioned stimulus that, through repetition and positive reinforcement, results in an favorable attitude (the unconditioned response).

ii) Instrumental Conditioning: Generally, while making purchases, a consumer passes through cognition, attitude and behavior, in that order. However, in certain kinds of purchases, like low-involvement purchases, impulse goods, trials or situational factors, the sequence lies as cognition, behavior and attitude. Thus, attitudes develop following the act of purchase and consumption of the product.

In such cases, consumers tend to form attitudes based on the reinforcement that they receive. If the acts of purchase and consumption are followed by a rewarding experience in terms of consumer satisfaction, they develop a positive attitude towards the product or service offering and/or the brand. Else they are indifferent or may even develop a negative attitude towards the brand.

iii) Cognitive Learning Theory: Attitudes are also formed on the basis of information that a person collects about a product or service offering and/or a brand, from his environment. Such information could be specific to the product or service, or may be incidental, that gets stored in his memory. The consumer forms positive or negative attitudes based on information gathering, storage and retention, and on the basis of knowledge and beliefs. Marketers should be careful in providing knowledge about their product and service offerings, either in print, audio-visual media or even through their salespersons and dealers. However, they should focus on a few relevant features rather than providing excessive information; too much of cluttering leads to perceptual blocking.