

FACTORS AFFECTING THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOURS OF AZERBAIJANI STUDENTS

Rasim Abutalibov¹, Seymur M. Guliyev²

¹Qafqaz University, Azerbaijan

²State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic – SOCAR, Azerbaijan

INTRODUCTION

We have frequently encountered some of the below questions in different marketing seminars, panels, and conferences:

- Who is the buyer?
- What kinds of factors have an influence on consumer behaviour?
- What types of consumer behaviour exist?

One also encounters marketing axioms and catchphrases such as “the consumer is a king”, “the consumer is always right”, or “customer trust” in today’s global world. Companies do not compete with their rivals only to protect their existence and market share; they also compete to gain customer loyalty, producing the goods and services that satisfy consumer needs and wants, and create new demand in the market. To accomplish all of that, companies must evaluate consumer purchasing behaviours and the factors that affect those behaviours.

Consumer behaviour refers to the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services for the satisfaction of consumer wants.

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

There are different processes involved in consumer behaviour. Some factors such as cultural and social ones (Reference Groups, Family, Roles and Status), one’s economic situation, and lifestyle factors influence each individual’s purchasing behaviours. Beliefs and attitudes, personal and psychological factors may also be added to the list. In the sections that follow, we analyse and elaborate on these different factors.

CULTURAL FACTORS

Culture is the complex of beliefs of human societies, their roles, their behaviour, their values, traditions, and customs. To understand consumer behaviour, it is essential to examine the culture in which it is occurring. Culture is the sum of a shared purpose among members of society, customs, norms and traditions. The basic reason for a person's desire or determination is culture. The other important concept that should be examined in terms of marketing management is subculture. Individuals who have similar values and have formed smaller groups often make up groups that may qualify as subcultures.

RELIGION

Religion is one of the leading factors affecting consumer behaviours. Each company has to know the religious factors of the country it operates in and has to create its strategy by analysing these factors. Failing to do so may render it incapable of selling its products. In fact, conflicts may even arise. These factors are quite important, especially among a sensitive public. For instance, once upon a time, a confectionery company launched its products with white packaging in India, but the company could not sell them, though the products were of high quality. The company did some market research that revealed to them that white is the symbol of death in India.

Here in Azerbaijan, sales volume of some soft drink companies, such as Coca Cola and Pepsi, decrease in some months, including during the religious month in Islam called Muharram. Because of their religious beliefs, people do not organise any wedding ceremonies or festivals during Muharram, which of course affects the companies' sales volumes.

A Hindu bride wears red, maroon or a bright coloured lehanga or saree, whereas a Christian bride dons a white gown on her wedding day. It is against Hindu culture to wear white on important festive occasions. Muslims, on the other hand, prefer to wear green on important occasions. For Hindus, eating beef is considered a sin, whereas Muslims and Christians are free to absolutely relish the same. Islam forbids the eating of pork, while some Hindus do not mind eating it. One cannot know who minds eating pork and who does not. It is often the case that older individuals prefer things that are sophisticated and simple to things that are too bright and colourful. Teenagers, however, often go in for funky dresses and loud colours. In India widows are expected to wear white, as those who wear bright colours are treated with suspicion.

FAMILY FACTORS

In Azerbaijan, consumer behaviour is strongly influenced by the members of one's family. Marketers therefore try to determine the roles and influence of the parents, husband or wife and children. Culture is very important in the average Azerbaijani family, and so family has an influence on young people's purchasing behaviours. If the product is for all members of the family, this factor is quite important; on the other hand, if the

family member wants to buy a specific product, they are free to make a decision on the product. In Azerbaijan, fathers influence young boys, while mothers young girls. This division can be attributed to the country's prevailing mentality, culture and subcultures.

REFERENCE GROUPS

Reference groups serve as direct (face-to-face) or indirect points of comparison or reference in forming a person's attitudes or behavior. Reference groups to which an individual does not belong often influence him or her. They often also expose people to new behaviors and lifestyles, influence their attitudes and self-concept, and create pressures to conform that may affect individual product and brand choices. Marketers try to identify the reference groups of their target markets.

The importance of group influence varies across products and brands. It tends to be the strongest when the product is visible to those the buyer respects. Manufacturers of products and brands subject to strong group influence must figure out how to reach opinion leaders – people within a reference group who, because of special skills, knowledge, personality, or other characteristics, influence others.

Many marketers try to identify opinion leaders for their products and direct their marketing efforts at them. In other cases, advertisements can stimulate opinion leadership, thereby reducing the need for consumers to seek advice from others.

PERSONAL FACTORS

Personal factors may include such variables as age and stage of lifecycle, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle (activities, interests, opinions and demographics), personality and self-concept. These may explain why our preferences often change as our "situation" changes. Decisions and buying behavior are obviously also influenced by the characteristics of each consumer.

SOCIAL ROLES AND STATUS IN SOCIETY

The position of an individual within his family, his work, his country club and his group of friends, to name a few, are also important factors. All this can be defined in terms of role and social status. A social role is a set of attitudes and activities that an individual is supposed to have and do according to his or her profession or position at work, position in the family, gender, etc. and the expectations of the people around him.

RESEARCH METHOD AND RESULTS

We conducted a survey on the purchasing behaviours of 81 students aged 18–22, who attend Qafqaz University in Azerbaijan. As many as 25 respondents (30.9%) were female whereas 56 (69.1%) were male.

Figure 1 presents the age distribution of the student respondents. The highest percent of students – 45.7% – was aged 19, while the lowest percent, at 3.7%, was below the age of 18.

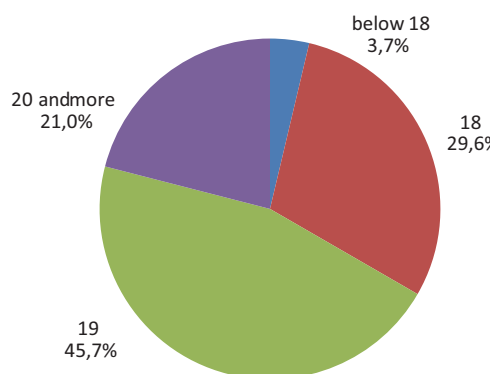


FIG. 1. Age distribution of the respondents

Source: the authors.

Table 1 shows that, among men, 27% rent a flat and live with other students, while 68% live with their family. At the same time, 20% of female students rent and live together with other students, whereas 80% live with their families. Meanwhile, no female students rent and live alone as opposed to 3% of the overall student population who do so.

TABLE 1. Lodging arrangements of respondents (% of answers)

Lodging	Gender		Total
	female	male	
I rent and live with other students	20	27	19
I live with my family	80	68	79
I rent and live on my own	0	5	3

Source: the authors.

About 53% of male students consider brand name when buying technology products, while approximately 60% of female students do so (Table 2). The new brand category has no effect on female students when they are buying technology – only 9% of male students use this criterion into the decision to purchase a product. Male students use their classmates opinion while buying technology more often than female (18% in comparison to 13%). Friends advice is popular with 6% respondents.

Table 3 considers the influence of family on youths' purchasing behaviours. About 32% of male students say that their families have a moderate, and 52% declares high and very high influence of families on their purchasing behaviours. About 28% of female students are very highly affected by their families, and next 32% of them declares high impact of families. A much as 32% of female students say that their family has a moderate on their decision-making process. No female students said that their family had no effect on their purchasing behaviour.

TABLE 2. Decive factors of decision-making while purchasing technology (% of answers)

Buying technology	Gender		Total
	female	male	
Brand	60	53	55
Classmates use	13	18	16
Friend's advice	7	6	6
Always new brand	0	9	6
Internet	20	15	16

Source: the authors.

TABLE 3. Family influence on purchasing behaviours (% of answers)

Family effects	Gender		Total
	female	male	
Family's impact			
doesn't affect	0	5	4
low	12	11	11
moderate	28	32	31
high	32	32	32
very high	28	20	22

Source: the authors.

Mothers have a great influence on students' decisions to buy some home appliances. Table 4 shows that the percentage of students who consider their mother's opinion when buying home appliances was 73%, more often female students than male (84% in comparison to 68%). Fathers, on the other hand, influenced 22% of respondents – 27% of male and only 12% of female. About 2% of respondents follow the advice of neighbours (only male).

According to Table 5, 44% of the total respondents indicated that their mothers exert an influence over their purchasing furniture. At 40%, fewer said the same of their fathers. Again, more female base on their mothers opinion (56%), whereas male more often remain under their fathers influence (43%). The students also indicated that close relatives (5%) and others (2%) also affect their furniture purchasing behaviours. Twice more male than female use only their own opinion while buying furniture.

TABLE 4. Person advising a purchase of home appliances (% of answers)

Advisor	Gender		Total
	female	male	
Mother	84	68	73
Father	12	27	22
Neighbour	0	4	2
Nobody	4	2	2

Source: the authors.

TABLE 5. Person advising a purchase of furniture (% of answers)

Advisor	Gender		Total
	female	male	
Father	36	43	41
Mother	56	39	44
Close relative	4	5	5
By myself	4	9	7
Other	0	4	2

Source: the authors.

Finally, Table 6 compares factors that influence students buying a car. About 51% say that when they want to buy a car, the buyers make the decision by themselves, more often male (55%) than female (40%). Next 36% of students say that they agree with their fathers' advice (40% of female compared to 34% of male). For female respondents it is also important what young generation drives (16%). Friends advices is a decisive factor for 7% of male and for only 4% of female.

TABLE 6. Buying a car (% of answers)

Decisive factor	Gender		Total
	female	male	
Father's advice	40	34	36
Friends' advice	4	7	6
What young generation drives	16	4	7
By myself	40	55	51

Source: the authors.

CONCLUSION

There are a lot of factors affecting consumer behaviours. This is related to globalization, specificity of the country and the level of needs satisfaction. Taking everything into account, it can be concluded that although Azerbaijani youth are free to make decisions on buying some types of goods, their families also have some influence on their purchasing behaviours. This may be attributed to the culture, subculture, religion, and families to which the students belong.

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Summary. Changes in consumer purchasing behaviours have become important, especially to companies operating on a global scale, which must understand the unique cultural qualities of each country and influencing factors of work. Every human being has different physiological, and biological needs. Although social factors have more influence on consumer needs in some countries, there are others in which religious, cultural and economic factors influence consumer needs as well. Hence, if companies wish to succeed, they have to evaluate consumer behaviours effectively and efficiently. There are a number of factors – globalization, national, religious, and family relations, to name a few – working to influence modern youths in the Republic of Azerbaijan. For this paper, we conducted a survey among 81 students at Qafqaz University, a prominent Azerbaijani private university, in order to identify their purchasing power and the factors that influence their decision-making.

Key words: customer, consumer behaviour, youth, organization, needs, Qafqaz University

Corresponding author: Rasim Abutalibov, Qafqaz University, Business Administration Department, e-mail: rabutalibov@qu.edu.az; Seymur M. Guliyev, State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), Marketing and Operations Division, Crude Oil and Oil Products Export Operations Department, e-mail: seymurquliyev@yahoo.com, seymur.guliyev@socar.az

