

Modeling consumer behavior – Psychological paradigm

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Abstract

Modeling consumer behavior can be explained in the context of specific paradigms: sociological, psychological, cultural, neurocognitive, anthropological, and economic. With the discoveries in the field of neuroscience, the perspective of over-explaining consumer behavior is heading more toward cognitive neuroscience. The research in neurophysiology has succeeded in explaining the interpsychic processes and in the creation of multiple theories which are trying to determine the cause of human organism reaction to different external stimuli. The current scientific challenges can be found especially around neuropsychology which is attempting to explain how the human brain works and which are the sections that influence the behavior. The research from neurobiology mentions the fact that at the core of buying purchases is a neurophysiological layer.

Keywords: consumer behavior, paradigms, neuroscience, purchase

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Introduction

Cognitive neuroscience represents with certainty the biggest challenge to understanding the neuronal mechanisms which are responsible for the higher levels of brain activity like self-knowledge, imagination, and communication. (Bear, Connors, & Paradiso, 2016). The psychological paradigm values the implication of elements like perception, convictions, learning, stimuli, attitudes, and behaviors. We can consider that modeling the consumer behavior of buying results from the actions of active internal selection, which is aware of external factors that influence the satisfaction of a person regarding a product or even life itself and influences the decision regarding a purchase. The purchase behavior of the consumer is explained in the context of attitude and behavior consideration of individuals regarding a specific product under special conditions conducted by its internal or external environment. Individuals can have positive, negative, or neutral attitudes regarding a product or a specific commercial context which can influence directly the behavior. There are a few questions that are often asked: can the attitude of a person or group of people regarding a specific product determine their purchase behavior? Can behavior influence adopting a specific attitude regarding the purchase decision? What stays at the base of modeling voluntary behaviors of purchase?

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Theoretical aspect

Research in the marketing field borrows, in the context of a scientific explanation of consumer behavior, a series of definitions that integrate elements that explain the mechanism of how behavior is created. Various publications from the social-psychological field explain consumer behavior as actions of social actors through which the maximization of utility satisfaction is desired. (Chelcea & Iluț, 2003). According to the author of the theory of utility (Stigler, G. 1950), consumer behavior is “influenced by consumer preferences, their intensity, pricing level, dimension of merit and other factors” (idem).

Gordon Allport (1897-1965) is the researcher who proposes the next definition of attitude “a mental and neuronal state, organized by experience which exercises an influence over people’s answers to all objects and situations which they find themselves in contact with”. (Chelcea & Iluț, 2003). Based on this definition, it is to be considered that attitudes are at the core of human behavior. In the structure of attitude, we can find three components: cognitive, volatile, and conative, all of them contributing to explaining the mechanisms of creating attitudes. As has been explained above, the attitudes of individuals can be defined by the context of interdependence between emotions, feelings, and physiological reactions of the human organism as a response to different stimuli. All of these can contribute to

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realizing evaluative judgments and can manifest through the intention they have regarding an object or a stimulus.

Reviewing the literature on specialty

Psychological research in the buying behavior of consumers is exposed to a series of critics launched especially by the benefactors of research results.

Withing a specific article (Pham, 2013), the author presents the reader with a series of perception cases over research results. In this framework, he identifies seven fundamental problems of psychological research of the consumer buying behavior and names them as “sins” with the following projections: narrow research field, few psychological explicative theories, narrow epistemology around a concept, emphasizing the definition by adding value to the phycological processes (sensations, perception, attention, will, memory, imagination, creativity, learning, representation), overgeneralizing empiric data, simple research methodology, a generalized confusion between theories of studies and studying theories.

From a psychological perspective, the buying purchase behavior is explained in the context of consideration of the process steps of purchasing. According to (Pham, 2013), we identify the following framework:

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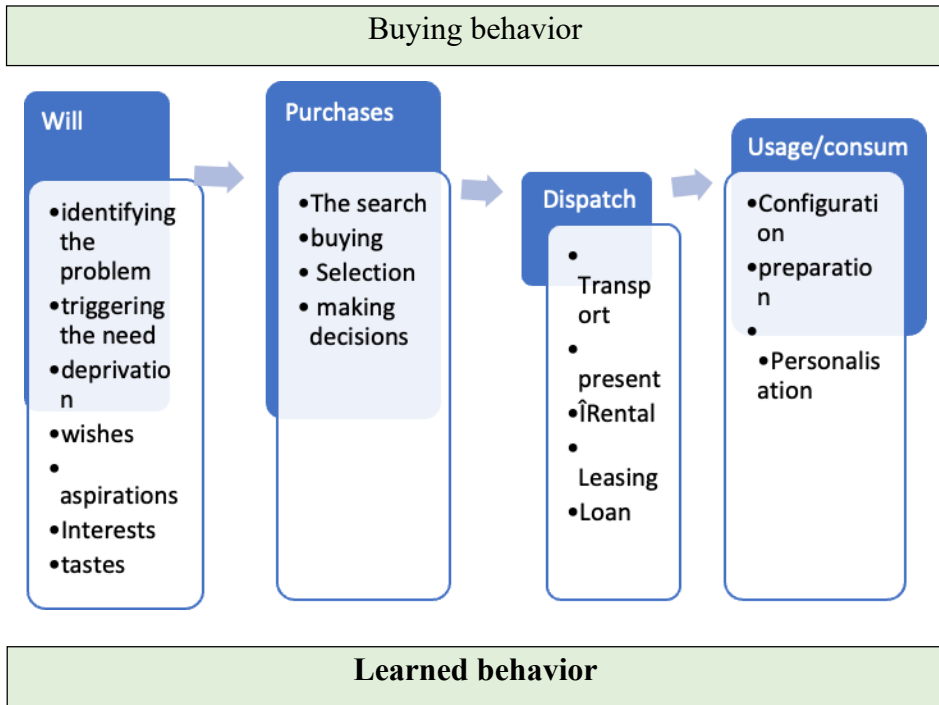


Fig. Nr. 1 Mechanism of buying behavior (after Pham, 2013), p. 414

We can interpret the fact the modeling process of buying behavior is tightly connected to the process of balancing wishes, the satisfaction of needs and interests, obtaining pleasure, and resolving specific issues. In the context of the psychological paradigm, in the category of psychological factors that contribute to modeling consumer behaviors we integrate processes of perception, motivation, and attitude learning. The psychological literature expresses the fact that understanding and explaining psychological activities and mechanisms are respecting the principle of informational modeling (Golu, 2009). In this framework, the brain is addicted to the stimuli

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sources and the external information, which once processed, create other imagistic informational models like isomorphic, based on neuronal structure. Mihai Golu considers the fact that every perceived object generates in memory a specific informational neuronal model.

Sensations and perceptions hold an important spot in explaining the neurophysiology of human behaviors. The sensation is explained in the context of considering sensorial receptors which are specific to the human senses. By its configuration, it is a biological process, a reaction of stimuli receptors that came from the external environment. Perception can be understood by interpreting/decoding the stimuli, but this will also imply human personality features. The mechanism of perception is explained by considering direct relationships from a particular framework and previous personal and social experiences. Perception represents the process of reception, selection, and organization of information that comes from the external environment at the neuronal level. According to (Hawkins, 1998), the mechanisms of perception can be explained by using the following aspects:

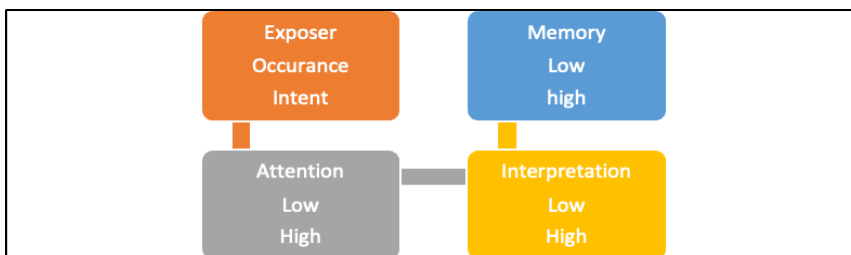


Fig. Nr. 2 The process of consumer decision making (adapted after (Hawkins, 1998)

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A series of authors offer great importance in explaining the purchase behavior of consumers and the decision process by considering the dimension of effects (Zajonc, 1980). Regarding these effects, there are studies regarding post-cognitive psychology, which stipulate those affective judgments can be independent of the type of perceptive and cognitive operations regularly. Affective reactions to stimuli are often the first reactions of the human body which, in some cases can be dominant, can appear without perceptive or cognitive coding, and are expressed with far higher trust than cognitive judgments. In modeling consumer behavior, the effect and knowledge are under the control of some separate systems and partially independent which can influence themselves in a variety of modes, and both form independent sources of effects in information processing.

Conclusion

From a behavioral perspective, the research of neuronal systems makes creating integrated behaviors possible. For example, multiple theories of existence believe many memory types were created. Therefore, it can be concluded that neuronal systems have different types of memories which leads to the possibility of altering and changing the personality or behavior of an individual.

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