Proceso de comportamiento del consumidor

Consumer behavior process

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RESUMEN

Los consumidores suelen ser los decisores para aceptar o no los productos que ofertan las empresas. Así, la supervivencia misma de los negocios podría depender de ellos. En consecuencia, si los ejecutivos desarrollan estrategias de marketing sin considerar al consumidor, arriesgan todo lo que han invertido. Por tanto, el objetivo de este artículo es describir los elementos del proceso de comportamiento del consumidor. La metodología utilizada fue la revisión teórica. En la sección de desarrollo de este artículo se presenta las influencias externas (factores de marketing y socioculturales), factores psicológicos, reconocimiento de una necesidad, búsqueda previa a la compra, evaluación de alternativas, comportamiento posterior a la decisión y evaluación posterior a la compra. La principal conclusión que se extrae de esta investigación es la necesidad de que las empresas conozcan las necesidades de comportamiento del consumidor, para lograr este objetivo es necesario aproximarse desde diferentes puntos de vista y áreas de estudio, como el económico, el psicológico, el sociológico y el antropológico.

Palabras clave: comportamiento de decisión; consumidor; marketing; precompra; poscompra

ABSTRACT

Consumers are usually the decision-makers to accept or not what businesses offer. In this way, the survival of a company could depend on them. If companies develop marketing strategies without considering the consumer, they risk all their investment. Therefore, the objective of this article is to describe the elements of the consumer behavior process. The theoretical review was the methodology used. The development section of this article includes external influences (marketing and sociocultural factors), psychological factors, recognition of a need, pre-purchase search, evaluation of alternatives, post-decision behavior, and post-purchase evaluation. The main conclusion extracted from this research is the need for companies to know consumer behavior needs, to achieve this goal, it is necessary to approximate from different points of view and areas of study, such as economic, psychological, sociological, and anthropological.

Key words: consumer; decision-behavior; marketing; pre-purchase; post-purchase

Introduction

Since the twentieth century, it was already affirmed that consumers determine the success or failure of a business (Drucker, 1973). For the 21st century, new research affirmed that companies to have a higher income should have a long-term relationship with their consumers and learn as much as they can from their behavior (Ferrell & Hartline, 2017).

For this reason, successful businesses are using these new forms of modern marketing to generate value for their consumers and profitability in their finances, in environments of continuous change (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Consequently, a business that intends to last in the long term should be learning from the behavior of its consumers.

Thus, the question to be answered by those responsible for each company is: Who are the consumers? According to Schiffman et al. (2010) they are all people who regularly use or consume services or products such as clothing, food, transportation, education, vacations, ideas, and others.

Consequently, consumers are usually the decision-makers to accept or not what businesses offer. In this way, the survival of a company could depend on these people. However, individuals are not the only ones who purchase products or services, it is also common for companies to buy inputs provided by other companies, such as supplies for their operations.

However, businesses in comparison with people tend to have standards, more defined, and objective measurements to make a purchase and its subsequent use (Lilien, 2016). This clarification serves for this article because in this work it will only focus on the behavior of people, as end-users.

In such circumstances, Solomon (2008) states that the influences of a consumer's behavior must be related to the entire process involved in a purchase. In the same context, he clarifies that the purchase process generally begins before the

same acquisition.

Likewise, Alonso Rivas & Grande Esteban (2013) warn that, if companies develop marketing strategies without considering the consumer, they risk their investment. Therefore, the objective of this article is to describe the elements of the consumer behavior process.

The theoretical review was the methodology used, specifically with the main contributions of specialists on this subject reflected in their books, but also obtained from articles of journals indexed in the Scopus database.

Development

External influences (marketing)

Marketing will be the starting point for the review of external influences in consumer decision making. This area related to sales is channeled into the marketing mix, which is made up of the original 4 Ps (product, price, place, promotion).

Regarding the P for the product, Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik (2018) reveal that it not only refers to tangible services and products but the concept was also extended to organizations, people, places, and ideas. Additionally, companies are interested in selling a positive image, not only with quality products but as true collaborators in social, cultural, ecological, etc.

Next is the price, this is the only one of the four Ps that generates income for a company, all the others create costs, although all necessary to generate value and profit. In addition, this P is considered to have the most direct relationship with consumer demand, since if the price increases it could limit its purchase, and if it decreases it could encourage it (Ferrell & Hartline, 2017).

The price also depends on the chosen distribution channel, which formerly had the name of "place", which corresponds to the third P of the mix. These channels are conceived to facilitate the journey that a product or service must take from the producer to the consumer, essentially considering advantages in time and money

(Velazquez, 2012).

To know the value of time in a client, one could analyze the hours that would be lost if this person were to look for fruits and vegetables in the same field where they are grown. In the case of money, it would be necessary to analyze how many dollars are saved if these fruits and vegetables are transported in a single trip by truck or train, compared to if they were transported in more than twenty dispatches.

Therefore, optimizing distribution in terms of time and money is of the utmost importance to generate customer value. However, to choose an adequate marketing channel, the type of product to be marketed must be identified (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

Even a business could set more convenient prices in the indirect channel than a company with direct sales could provide, thanks to economies of scale and optimization of logistics (Velazquez, 2012).

Finally, the P for promotion, that was initially conceived with three elements. The first is advertising, which is known for its paid advertisements displayed on mass media such as television, radio, and billboards. The second is sales promotion, whose activities are aimed at encouraging consumer purchases, whether with gifts, contests, refunds, samples, offers, sales, etc. The third is personal selling, which includes practices used by sellers, generally professionals, whose objective is to achieve an effective sale through knowledge of the needs of their customers and consumers. (Clow & Baack, 2010).

External influences (sociocultural)

For the 21st century, marketing has renewed approaches, such as adopting a holistic vision, which focuses on obtaining a 360-degree perspective of consumers and thus understanding what is happening in their lives. To achieve this approach, it is essential to know how the consumer is influenced by external factors, especially cultural and social ones (Kotler & Lane Keller, 2012).

Cultural factors

Jamal & Sharifuddin (2015) describe culture as a broad-spectrum word, which encompasses a group of people with certain shared knowledge and values, usually residing in the same geographic region. Also, traditionally, culture has been attributed to its own characteristics that distinguish it from the rest, such as language or language, symbolism, religion, cuisine, art, among other peculiarities.

Kotler, Armstrong, & Opresnik (2018) consider that the culture where an individual grows and develops is a factor of great influence on human behavior, this includes their purchasing practices and their way of consuming in general. For example, a person from the United States will have other interests, desires, motivations, and perceptions than that of a native of Latin America.

This is because the American cultural environment is characterized by individualism, achievement, and success. The opposite is the case of the Latin American, who develops in a more collectivist context, which has a greater concern for what happens to others.

Although there are samples that at some point a single global behavior could be adopted, there is clear evidence that although people have the same mobile or computer, the reason for the purchase and the use differs notably between the different groups of users. (De Mooij, 2011).

Clevelan, Laroche & Hallab (2013) also state that various empirical studies show that people still maintain their local identities. Therefore, they retain certain particular buying behaviors. Even Shavitt, Lee & Johnson (2008) mention that for some researchers, culture remains the focus center for examining the consumer.

Finally, a study on culture would be incomplete if Hofstede (1980) is not mentioned, who in his first work introduced four dimensions to differentiate the various cultures. To get to these four aspects, this researcher studied several subsidiaries of a large multinational located in several countries.

The results of their research largely explain why the same effects of the strategy of that corporation were not had in each country, despite the use of the same organizational systems and policies. Concluding that cultural differences were mostly responsible.

Subculture

Despite Hofstede's invaluable contribution to understanding the influence of culture. Sivakumar & Nakata (2001) criticize it for not considering the existence of subcultures in each country, which are partly guided by their own customs.

Fisher & Espejo (2011) indicate that subcultures are integral parts of cultures. Both manage to have a symbiotic coexistence since they are nourished by the exchanges of habits and customs that are generated by this interrelation.

For example, Hispanic and Asian groups in the United States are easily identifiable. However, despite the fact that they maintain certain habits and traditions of their nation of origin, it is well known that they have already adopted forms of consumption from their host country. Therefore, there are already some differences between those who are still in their home towns or cities (Fisher & Espejo, 2011).

However, in the same case, these subcultures have not only been nourished by the American culture, but they have also contributed something to modify it. A clear example is the introduction of indigenous products from abroad, many of which have been successful. The acceptance of foreign cuisine is one of those, among the main ones: Mexican, Chinese, Arabic (Fisher & Espejo, 2011).

Not only do cities reflect this vast number of subcultures, but there are also countries, such as India, which has more than 15 official languages and each of these was the result of separate cultural processes. The difference is not only found in the language, there are clearly different symbols and unique characteristics (Robertson & Suárez Guerrero, 2009).

Social factors

Reference groups. Those people that an individual takes as a reference to make an acquisition is called a reference group. Years ago, these groups consisted almost exclusively of family, friends, and co-workers (Corona Vázquez, 2012).

However, lately, there are also indirect influences, people with whom you do not have physical contact and are essentially celebrities, but they have great power to direct consumption towards any product. This is how you have personalities from cinema, television, royalty, athletes, and in recent years those who have been successful in social networks (Corona Vázquez, 2012) Palacio

Family. Harcar, Spillan & Kucukemiroglu (2005) consider this group as the first and most basic unit to influence a consumer. For this reason, studying the structure of roles in the family is essential for marketers.

Nowadays, not all families have children, but those that do have children are influenced by them. Especially because nowadays children have access to a vast amount of information, thanks to new communication technologies (Broniarczyk & Griffin, 2014).

Eloisa Bertol, Liebesny Broilo & Balestrin Espartel (2017) found that this influence of the little ones in the family tends to be strong and accepted by their parents. However, this influence exerted by the children in family decisions has a collaborative nature for the parents, without there being conflicts in this regard.

Social class and economic position. The roles that are adopted from social classes usually have patterns that are visible when consuming. In the United States, these differences between classes are notorious, due to the very marked distinction that exists in this society. With the advance of time, the contrasts between the behaviors of each group have been more profound and evident (Shavitt, Jiang, & Cho, 2016).

This dissimilarity among ages is partly explained by the work of Coleman (1983), who mentioned that not all researchers handled the aspects related

to social class with precision when conducting studies on it. Furthermore, the American citizen was not very comfortable categorizing him into these types. However, both Shavitt, Jiang & Cho (2016) and Coleman (1983) validate the study of social classes on consumer behavior.

Furthermore, Piff et al. (2012) studied the impact on preferences and habits when consuming from the perspective of belonging to one or another social class and they found, it is not enough to just consider people that due to their monetary resources they must be placed in a certain social class. It is also important to incorporate people who are perceived to be immersed in a certain class.

Concerning class categorizations, the one recommended by Coleman (1983) is still acceptable in the 21st century (Peter & Olson, 2006). The four groups mentioned are lower class (seeks immediate satisfaction); worker class (has the family as the most important reference group); middle class (they follow fashion and trends for their purchases) and; upper class (prestigious brands, exclusive places, and payment for amenities).

Psychological factors

Motivation. Schiffman et al. (2010) adapt the motivation process to the decision-making process carried out by a consumer. Initially, it starts with an unfulfilled desire or needs that spurs a person to action. The momentum that comes from the generated tension ends until that need is met or that goal is completed. This last phase is determined by the individual values and behaviors that each person has when consuming.

However, Peter and Olson (2006) clarify that the consumer behavior process does not end with the acquisition of a product such as the motivation model, but ends with the post-decision. They also state that the purchase of a product does not necessarily have to go through a long period of time to be able to acquire it.

This is due to the existence of so-called impulse purchases, which are spontaneous but influenced by external and internal factors. In the case of external ones, this happens especially when a person finds something new or some interesting promotion. Aspects that in many cases are triggers to buy or act immediately, in the generality of consumers (Fischer & Espejo, 2004).

With the appearance of new technologies, the motivation related to online shopping deserves special attention to understand it, due to the increase in the use of the internet. Likewise, the studies carried out on this phenomenon have been increasing in the same way. However, these show that this issue is still in its infancy in some developing countries (Ur Rahman et al., 2018).

Perception. Once a person is motivated, they will be ready to take action. From this phase on, this person will take into account their perceptions, the same ones that come from the information received from the environment, and that were incorporated by one or more of their five senses. Consequently, perception can be defined as the process by which individuals choose, order, and decipher received information to build a representative idea of the external reality (Kotler et al., 2018).

This adopted interpretation differs from person to person, sometimes significantly. Despite the avalanche of advertising that certain companies exert on individuals to fix certain ideas about their brands in people's minds. The reason for these observed differences among consumers is because consumers tend to store information that is most supportive of their own attitudes and beliefs. Also, people tend to forget much of what they have assimilated and pay more attention to the messages of their favorite brands (Kotler et al., 2018).

However, people are not always loyal to a single brand, so the competition makes significant efforts to value the new benefits of their products. For this reason, in the eyes of consumers, some products are becoming more similar in their performance every day. Consequently, sensory experiences are more appreciated by those who consume them, then the aesthetics of a product becomes a fundamental factor in the purchase.

These actions are the basis for hedonistic consumption, in which company-consumer interactions are more emotional (Solomon, 2012).

Thus, all these images that are formed in each individual about brands and companies made great marketing researches, such as Al Ries and Jack Trout, show the community that the real war is in the mind of the consumer. Thus, marketing efforts should be aimed at creating a brand image that contains attributes with high added value for consumers (Ries & Trout, 2002).

Learning. The events transmitted from the external environment also influence the learning that each individual has. This appears as a result of the process of the information received and the storage management that each person has in his mind. Due to this circumstance, the learning of a consumer is formed by previous personal experiences and the current knowledge acquired, which is forged each time a product is used. This process will be vital for the future behavior of the consumer with the different brands in the market (Fall Diallo & Ribamar Siqueira Jr, 2015).

But people do not always have the time and money to use all the products on the market. In this sense, in the case of not having previous experience with a brand, the behavior towards it will be dictated by the information collected from its environment, but especially, by those appreciations of other people who have used it. In any case, companies should insist on testing their products to increase cognitive learning about them (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

However, to achieve this cognitive learning, which is nothing more than going from the communication received to have a true knowledge of a brand, the company should not faint in its communications repeatedly for a long time (Alfonso Rivas & Grande Esteban, 2017).

Usually, the company that made all these efforts will achieve wide notoriety and strong positioning for its brand. This repetition must be carried out due to the oversaturation of the sending of advertising and the fact that people

do not retain most of the information received (Alfonso Rivas & Grande Esteban, 2017).

Personality. Without a doubt, personality marks and distinguishes a person from the rest. It is also one of the most important promoters for your behavior as a consumer. This has not changed over time, even though individuals interact much of their time to shop in virtual space. For this reason, the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of each person when they use the internet will also differ according to their personality (Kim & Jeong, 2015).

Jani & Han (2014) point to five models (the so-called five great traits of human personality) to value personality and its relationship with consumption, which are:

• Being open to new experiences, such as accepting innovative products.

• Being conscientious and judicious, such as being careful, responsible, and organized in your purchases.

• Being outgoing, tending to be sociable, and interactive with other consumers and people around them.

• Being kind and warm, such as being cooperative with others.

• Having neuroticism, such as a tendency to depression and worry.

Attitudes. According to Alonso Rivas and Grande Esteban (2013), attitudes refer to what a person feels or believes, such a mental state induces a reaction of liking or not, about an individual, object, or scenario. They can also differ in intensity, so that a brand can like too much, moderately, something or nothing. This linking can be by those characteristics and/or attributes present in the brand, such as that feeling when experiencing it, its customer or after-sales service, its reliability and duration, its ease of use and practicality, etc.

Likewise, Alonso Rivas & Grande Esteban (2013) indicate that knowing attitudes can be used as

marketing strategies. On the one hand, to predict the response of consumers when commercial actions are carried out. For example, given the lack of time to dedicate to housework, spending a long time at home cleaning or cooking has generated negative attitudes towards them. So, the new fast-acting cleaners or microwave ovens are the heroes of the family. On the other hand, although more difficult than the previous one, is to change attitudes.

Recognition of a need

According to the researchers on consumer behavior reviewed in this work, they agree that both external factors and those of the psychological field have a great influence on the consumer's decision. Once these factors were reviewed, the next phases referred by Schiffman et al. (2010) are the recognition of a need, search for pre-purchase, and evaluation of alternatives.

This recognition occurs when a person considers solving the deficiency they have on a product, even many times not having it has become a problem. Thus, these absences become needs and they seek to resolve them. An example is the basic needs, inherent in human beings from birth, such as food and water, without them, it would not be possible to survive (Corona Vázquez, 2012).

However, not all are physiological, there is a great variety of needs in which many reflect the culture and social environment that people find themselves (Solomon, 2012). To explain this expression, we can return to the example of that American consumer, who needs certain products that allow them to show off their individuality.

Solomon (2012) also mentions other types, such as the utilitarian need that enhances the attributes of the product in terms of durability, resistance, saving money, etc. Or like the hedonistic one, in which the consumer will seek to meet those leisure needs or to strengthen their inner self.

Pre-purchase search

Once a need is recognized and there is a perception that it can be resolved, the person will collect internal information. The information collected will serve to reduce the uncertainty that a consumer has about purchasing a product. This perceived risk will affect the final decision because no one wants to make a mistake when buying or even have unpleasant consequences when using it (Dowling & Staelin, 1994).

Although, people who frequently consume innovative products do not need extensive information to get what they want. Likewise, in today's technological society, the emotional risk is diminished by the transmission of information through social networks, especially that of their friends (Zhang & Hou, 2017).

The influence of social networks in this phase is profound and significant because consumers spend more time on the Internet, which is why many of their new friends are made through these means. Consequently, a virtual collective mindset has almost formed to create and organize content. At the same time, they exchange information, experiences, and expressions, hence their power is great to influence their members and benefit or harm loyalty to certain brands (Song & Yoo, 2016).

In general, these networks are the dominant digital communication channels, in which they accommodate the bidirectionality of information, not only between companies and clients but also among consumers. Companies have no other way out than to enter them with marketing strategies to take advantage of the word of mouth that can be generated (Heinrichs, Lim, & Lim, 2011).

Evaluation of alternatives

Once this preliminary information was collected, Schiffman et al. (2010) mention that consumers when analyzing the options available to them usually use two kinds of information. The first part is the enumeration of those brands on which the person thinks to make his choice. The second uses the criteria to analyze each brand. Pre-choosing some brands from those available in the market is common among consumers because it helps to facilitate the process to make a decision.

The basis for choosing one or another option has several nuances, but undoubtedly trust is an important one, besides this factor has a significant effect on loyalty (Amin et al., 2013). In the field of electronic commerce, credibility through references is an essential element. However, anonymous online reviews do not always generate trust, some can even generate suspicion (Matute et al., 2016).

Solomon (2012) indicates that the name given to the purchase options that the consumer has in mind refers to the 'set evoked', but those that are actually taken into account are considered as 'set of consideration'. All these alternatives are placed in a certain category that shares certain characteristics such as fattening desserts and non-fattening desserts. Therefore, how consumers classify one or another product is strategic for companies. In each class, there will be leading brands that will define the criteria of evaluation for the entire group considered.

Solomon (2012) also mentions that the criteria to evaluate are not carried out in the same way, some will be expedited and others with a higher level of processing. The decision on which particularities to use is the result of several cognitive steps derived from learning in the individual. Likewise, both external and internal consumer influences will play an important role in the purchase decision.

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Post-decision behavior

Purchase. The last phase mentioned by Schiffman et al. (2010) on consumer behavior corresponds to the purchase itself and the post-purchase analysis. For the first, the three types of purchases are trial, repeat, and long-term link. When it comes to testing, the quantity purchased is usually less than what would be done on a daily basis. However, this trial situation could not occur when purchasing high-value goods, such as houses, cars, and appliances.

In any case, the consumer will evaluate the products when he has them. Among other things, he will analyze those characteristics that they promise to fulfill. Thus, if a detergent removed stains as offered, it will meet the user's expectations. Now, if it also has other features not mentioned by the company, such as maintaining the color of clothing, then it has exceeded expectations. Another analysis is the comparison with the competition, and if it is more satisfactory than those, the buyer will be more likely to repeat the purchase of the tested product (Corona Vázquez, 2012).

Consequently, these tests on various products in a certain category succeed in establishing criteria for evaluating the brands in the set under consideration. These tests also allow the consumer to gain experience and, in the future, not need to search for information about them, saving time and effort. The buyer will go directly to find the product that pleased him the most, managing to establish repetitive purchases and reaching a routine purchasing behavior (Corona Vázquez, 2012).

Post-purchase evaluation

Schiffman et al. (2010) establish that these assessments after the purchase are important. Based on these, the consumer will receive feedback for future purchasing behaviors and preferences. Like the rest of the evaluations carried out in this process, not all the analyzes will have the same depth, these will be influenced by the importance of the product for the consumer and that acquired experience.

In Creatibo (2020), they complement that in this subsequent analysis, consumers try to be sure that their chosen product was the most suitable, that is, they try to minimize 'cognitive dissonance'. To achieve such confirmation, users use the following measures, among others: find out if there are other satisfied consumers, rationalize the purchase made as sensible, convince known people to purchase the same product.

Conclusions

However, knowing the consumer is not an easy task, this due to the diversity of ways of thinking

found in human beings. Thus, in the world, you can find a wide variety of behaviors and opinions about the same product or service.

It is worth mentioning that these behaviors do not only refer to tangible products, there are also some variations in this regard, such as services. Thus, regardless of the subject or object that is marketed, consumers will not behave the same, because they will be influenced by multiple factors, which start from individuality, but also the environment.

These influences are not only personal by family and friends but can be found in the comments posted on the internet about the experiences of certain products.

Due to this ease of the internet to bring consumers closer together, some of them have not only agreed to send their individual experiences through this system but have even formed virtual consumer communities. In these sites, their participants intervene with their points of view, influencing behavior with great force, both for the purchase and for the positioning of the brands.

The phases related to this process are not simple actions, but rather, these are a sum of complex actions. The reason why an error could be made if the process of making a purchase is understood as a single succession of cognitive manifestations.

Among the main reasons for not accepting the proposal of a single sequence in the acquisition of a product, it is because the consumer usually mixes several factors. Also, we must add the influence exerted by the marketing and sales actions of companies, whether through the telephone, personal sales, internet, catalogs, among many others.

Consequently, as there is a great variety of factors that persuade consumer behavior, it will not be an easy path for companies to understand it. Additionally, companies may be more limited in truly understanding this behavior. Especially because people do not always tell the truth or because when they are consulted, they mix reason with passion.

To conclude, if companies do marketing strategies without understanding the consumer, they could fall into serious risks for their businesses. For this reason, knowing consumer behavior needs to be a priority, and to reach this goal, it is necessary to approximate from different points of view and areas of study, such as economic, psychological, sociological, and anthropological.

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