

Introduction

Consumer behavior is a complex process of identifying the need or desire for a particular product or service and subsequently deciding to purchase it (Solomon, Russell-Bennett and Previtte, 2012). As a consumer, I implemented the 5- Step Consumer Decision Making Process on November, 2020 to purchase a smartphone from my local shopping mall in order to fulfil my personal and academic needs that require an immense amount of technological support, especially during this pandemic when education and work has become remote all around the world. Before the purchase, I conducted a personal survey through telephone conversations on ten of my friends and relatives who use the same smartphone that I was planning to buy.

Consumer Decision-Making Process

Figure 1 represents an overview of the five conventional stages of the consumer decision-making process. This analysis will address in detail how each of the five stages have allowed me to make the decision of purchasing a smartphone.

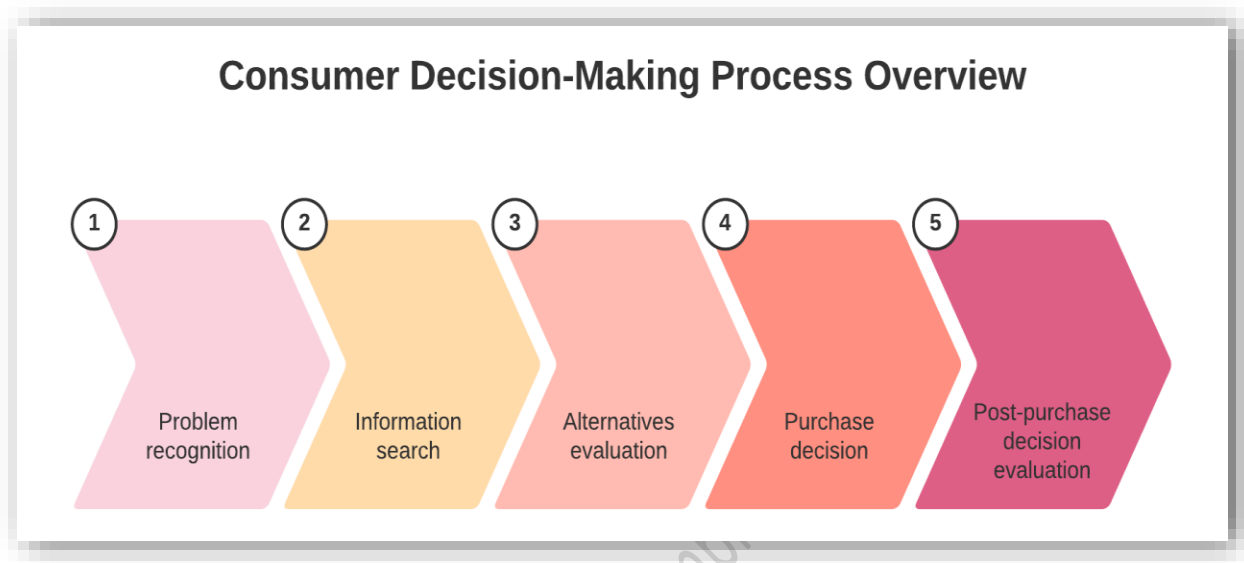


Figure 1 5-Step Consumer Decision Making Process.

2.1 Problem recognition

The purchase of a product begins with recognizing the need for it (Achrol and Kotler, 2012). In my case, I was lacking a smartphone that was equipped with the latest technological facilities at the tip of my fingers. The mobile device that I had in my possession was capable of only phone calls, playing music or the radio, taking poor-quality pictures and making very rudimentary internet searches with an outdated browser or interface. As the pandemic hit globally at the beginning of this year, students like me were shifting to online classrooms and assignments. The entire education system was swiftly transferred and coordinated with the help of smartphone applications. I was required to download applications in a portable device where I can attend lectures, submit assignments, keep track of my deadlines, have interactions with my classmates and teachers, and stay up-to-date about my new online education world. Since my mobile device had none of the above mentioned tools, and not even an email facility, I would miss important

notifications regarding my course when I did not have access to my laptop. This caused me some serious academic blunders and made me consider buying a smartphone.

2.2 Information Search

According to Achrol and Kotler (2012), once a consumer has decided that they need to purchase a product or service then they will begin to search for information surrounding the product. I took the help of both internal and external sources of information. I visited the website of the smartphone company to scan through the product reviews, as well as to reach out to the company's customer service. Through the customer service, I had access to useful first-hand information such as product recommendations according to my needs and want, technical data, and practical data such as the availability and price of the various models of smartphone. This helped me to draw a comparison of the different kinds of smartphones. I then verified the information with external sources such as my classmates and relatives over phone conversations to see if the attributes of the smartphone marketed by the company was indeed useful to fulfill my academic work.

2.3 Evaluation of Alternatives

In this step, based on my personal interpretation, I analyzed the alternatives of the brand of smartphone that I was aiming to purchase. This led me to generate an evoked set of smartphone brands. An evoked set is the number of alternatives that a consumer considers and compares during decision-making (Peter, Olson and Grunert, 1999). My evoked set of smartphone brands was based on various factors such as the brand value, price, memory capacity, speed of service, and appearance (colour and size) of the smartphones. My criteria of an ideal smartphone would be one that has a reasonable price and warranty period, is available in the shopping mall nearest to me, and has the maximum memory capacity and speed, while at the same time has a tasteful appearance. In terms of additional benefits, I was willing to purchase a smartphone from the brand that offers a warranty period of more than one year.

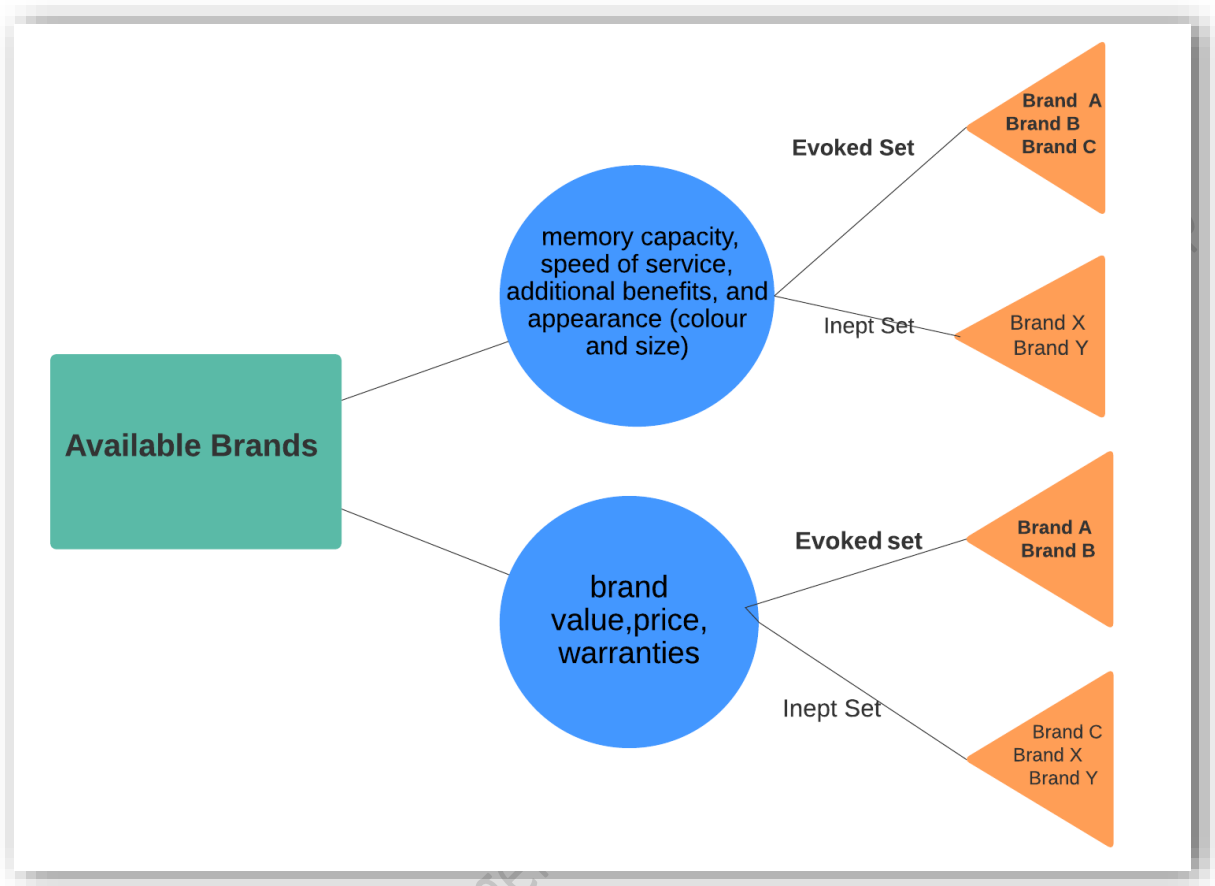


Figure 2 Decision Tree for the Evoked Set of Smartphone brands

2.4 Purchase Decision

After evaluating the alternative options, I came to the decision that Brand A of smartphone has all the attributes that I required to perform my needful academic work and communication. Subsequently, I selected the nearby shopping mall as my preferred outlet for purchasing the smartphone. According to Philip Kotler, Keller, Koshy and Jha (2009), the final purchase decision, can be disrupted by factors such as negative feedback about the desired product or an unexpected limitation. In my case, the shopping mall that I was considering to buy the smartphone from closed down until further notice due to the country-wide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, I had to search for another outlet that was also nearby and was selling Brand A of smartphone. I contacted the customer service of the smartphone company

who resolved my problem by providing the locations of all the other outlets near me where I can purchase from instead.

2.5 Purchase Evaluation

At this final stage, after the purchase, I retrospectively evaluated my purchase decision against my purchase criteria in order to identify how the smartphone has met my expectations (Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel, 2004). I realized that I was indeed able to establish effective communication with my classmates and teachers, as well as to stay updated in my assignments with the help of the smartphone application. I was able to conduct internet searches and access my emails effectively at any time. The memory capacity was adequate as promised to store important files and images, and download the necessary applications for the smooth running of my education and personal social media accounts.

The 5-Step Consumer Decision Making Process is a valuable knowledge and skill for both end-users and marketers to establish effective communications and purchase according to the demand and supply of a product or service.

References

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