

# How Are the Decisions of Female Consumers Affected?

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## Abstract

In this article, we are going to discuss what factors are likely affecting the decisions of female consumers in order to aim better at female consumers in market and applying more specific strategies on female consumers. The factors listed included the hierarchy of female needs, personal traits, social identity, cultural influence, and cognitive bias, as listed above.

## Keywords

Female Consumer, Marketing Strategy, Advertising, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Personal Traits, Social Identity, Cultural Influence, Cognitive Bias

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the world has witnessed a rise in female power. The rise is reflected in almost every single aspect, ranging from more misrepresentations in politics to getting more educated, having better job opportunities, and earning more money. On January 20, 2021, the global share of women in national parliaments was 25.5 percent, a slight increase from 24.9 percent the year before and up from 11 percent in 1995, while 26 women served as heads of state and/or government in 24 countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). In education, the average expected years of schooling for females reached 12.3 years in 2019 around the world, according to the World Bank (The World Bank, 2004). This is 0.725% more than in the previous year and 13.1% more than 10 years ago (Helgi Library, 2022). On top of that, the global labor force participation rate for women is over 50%, compared to 80% for men (The World Bank, 2022). The purchasing power of women in the U.S. ranges from \$5 trillion to \$15 trillion annually (Girl Power Marketing, n.d.). Talking about online shopping in particular, 58% of all online shopping is done by women, and 56% of women use social

networking sites (DMS, n.d.).

While women have already become a major force as consumers, media focus on the “rise of women” has marketers salivating over the profit potential of targeting women. In order to help the market better target female consumers, this article is going to discuss factors that influence the decisions of female consumers.

The factors listed below include the hierarchy of female needs, personal traits, social identity, cultural influence and cognitive bias. These are the most common and well-known factors. In marketing, these factors are easy to implement and easy to be accepted by the public. Based on the above considerations, we select these factors for discussion.

## **2. The Hierarchy of Female Needs**

According to Maslow’s theory, people have an inborn desire to become all they can be. To achieve this ultimate goal, however, a number of more basic needs must be met. This includes the need for food, safety, love, and self-esteem. In other words, physiological needs, security and safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Physiological needs are those that are essential for survival, such as food and water. At the second level of Maslow’s hierarchy, the need for safety and security is paramount. People want control and order in their lives. The third level of Maslow’s hierarchy is “love, acceptance, and belonging.” At this level, human behavior is driven by the need for emotional relationships. The fourth level in Maslow’s hierarchy is the need for appreciation and respect. Once the needs of the bottom three levels are satisfied, the need for respect begins to play a more prominent role in motivating behavior. Gaining the respect and admiration of others is becoming more and more important. At the very top of Maslow’s hierarchy is the need for self-actualization. Self-actualized people are self-aware, care about personal growth, don’t care much about the opinions of others, and are interested in realizing their potential.

When applying this hierarchy to female consumers, the basic physiological need includes the demand for the basic function of the object. On the next level, security and safety requirements, people desired qualified and safe items. There should be no safety concern. On the third level, people start to expect the product to be fashionable and loved by others. Furthermore, people want to build their own unique image and show their aesthetic taste to others by purchasing a product. At the very top of the hierarchy, consumers expect the product to show its true self.

## **3. Personality Traits of Women**

Personality traits are another factor that draws a lot of attention. One of the most influential personality theories is the Big Five, which can be used to analyze female consumption behavior. The Big Five personality traits are extroversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Each trait represents

a continuum. Individuals can fall anywhere on the continuum for each trait. Many modern psychologists utilize the Big Five model because it can be applied universally and provide a measurable means of understanding consumer personality (Copy How Stuff Works.com Contributors, 2011).

The Big Five personality model helps us understand consumer personality traits. Specific to the female fashion industry, understanding consumer personality traits can help identify and draw conclusions about consumer behavior, including preferences, habits, and motivations. Individuals who have the need for uniqueness tend to be unique. Those who have high needs for uniqueness tend to seek individuality and are constantly finding ways to stand out among the crowd. These individuals are unconcerned about criticism for their choices, as they do not need to fulfill others' expectations or tankards, either in appearance or possessions. Women's clothing styles can help them identify their individuality. Clothes are being used in terms of their functionality, design, and fashion. These help them express their unique personalities and selves.

Similarly, individuals may tend to be more agreeable to interpersonal influence. Individuals expect others to evaluate their choices, which might lead them to make different choices than they would have made in the absence of public observation. A model set by the public may influence their own attitudes and behaviors, including their willingness to comply with the expectations of others and gather information by observing others. Individuals who have the quality of agreeableness are those who desire to be loved and wanted and, thus, move towards others. Detached individuals move away from others as they desire independence and self-efficiency.

#### 4. Social Identity

People are highly social animals, belonging to many social groups, each with a distinct identity. Social identity relates to how we identify ourselves in relation to others according to what we have in common. We can, for example, identify ourselves based on our religion or origin (Asian American, Chinese, Latin), our political affiliation (Environmentalist), our profession (doctor, lawyer), or our relationship (mother, father, child). In addition, many social identities can be multiple. Together, the different roles a person plays can help him realize his overall identity (Keener, 2022).

And how can this social identity affect consumer behavior?

When a consumer makes a purchase decision to join or avoid a group, they may classify the decision as a need or a want. But it's not all black and white. Social identity comes into play when a purchase is both a need and a want. Needs and desires are not always mutually exclusive. Even if the consumer needs something, at some point the consumer will be looking at different brands and evaluating different options, and that's where social identity may come into play. For example, when someone needs to buy clothes, when he starts thinking about what brand of clothes to buy, his social identity may affect how he evaluates his

choice. Will these clothes contradict his identity as an environmentalist? Will these clothes help his role as a doctor?

In addition, consumers take pride in the things they are associated with. Because relationships are a form of social identity formation, it is important to look at social relations when talking about consumer behavior. How much consumers like a brand depends in part on how much they identify with it. Leveraging social identity is often achieved through strategies that allow consumers to see more of themselves in communication channels. This could be the language, the advertising, or the strategy, such as personalized messaging or brand humanization. “When we see people like us in advertising and marketing communications, we automatically tend to be more positive about those things because of the biases that are inherent in our psyche,” Dormer said (Cherry, 2022).

## 5. Cultural Influence

Culture is the set of common characteristics that a group of people share. It can be defined as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. [9]Culture is an important force that profoundly affects many things in people’s lives. Numerous studies have shown a strong relationship between culture and consumer behavior.

One thing culture can bring to consumer behavior is individualism or collectivism. Collectivism emphasizes the importance of the collective, while individualism focuses on the rights and concerns of each individual (Vinney, 2018). Consumers from individualist and collectivist backgrounds develop different types of needs, which are reflected in the way they prioritize the product attributes that influence their buying behavior. According to Nayeem’s experiment on the differences between individualism and collectivism and consumer behavior in relation

For automobile purchases, there is a significant relationship between cultural background and the number of family members and friends involved in the automobile purchasing decision. Collectivist consumers involve more family members and friends than individualist consumers, while individualist consumers rely on the internet as the most important source of information (Wellness Living, 2021).

Another way culture can affect consumer behavior is through traditional festivals. Traditions are central to the ways that culture influences people. For example, in mainstream Chinese culture, sweet dumplings are a traditional food for the Spring Festival. This culturally specific behavior allows companies that produce glutinous rice, along with the retailers who sell it, to prepare for increases in demand near the Spring Festival, but only in China. Other countries have traditions that put special demands on the suppliers and retailers that serve those markets, like turkey on American Thanksgiving Day.

## 6. Cognitive Bias

A cognitive bias is a systematic error in thinking that occurs when people are

processing and interpreting information in the world around them and affects the decisions and judgments that they make (Komal, 2021).

Cognitive bias can affect what products consumers choose, from what they place in their basket to which brand they choose and even how they shop. Essentially, consumer bias is caused by shortcuts in our thinking that we may not even be aware of. For example, if a person has distorted or biased memories of past events, this may influence their future thoughts and decisions. Similarly, limited attention spans or the selectivity of what people choose to focus on are likely to affect how they see the world, their priorities, and how they spend their time.

There are many types of cognitive biases that can govern consumer behavior and decisions.

One example is the “mere exposure effect”, which describes the general tendency of people to like something simply because they have been exposed to it repeatedly. This strategy has been applied to the market so often that it now becomes essential for a brand to do advertising since consumers might buy a particular brand simply because they’ve seen that brand’s ads many times. A related concept is authority bias: people place more trust in the opinions or suggestions of people in authority. This is the approach taken by many brands. They tell the consumers that their product is recommended by some kind of expert in the field. There is also a link between authority bias and influencer marketing. Partnering with an influencer who earns the respect and admiration of your audience can make a big difference in how your brand is perceived and how customers are willing to buy. Anchoring bias is also important: people value the first message they receive more than any subsequent message. Applied to product pricing, this principle states that the first price customers see for a particular item determines their future expectations. Likewise, the first review a potential buyer reads about your product is critical to shaping their perception of your brand and product.

## 7. Conclusion

When females are making purchase decisions, they tend to be effected by many factors, including the hierarchy of female needs, personal traits, social identity, cultural influence, and cognitive bias, as listed above. Of course, there are many other factors that play an important role in decision-making, like past experience and so on. These factors can be extremely beneficial when advertising or developing new products for female consumers.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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