
GENDER BASED MARKETING STRATEGIES: ITS RELEVANCE TO TODAY'S MARKETERS

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Abstract

The consumption and purchasing behaviour of the customers for few products is based on their gender which is of importance for the marketer to gain the market share by designing and promoting their products accordingly in a competitive marketing environment. The marketer designing their product and promotion strategies is to be considered as Gender Based Marketing. This paper is intended to throw light on gender based marketing strategies used by the marketers and its impact. A sizeable number of scholarly articles, and the current strategies used by the marketers covered in the news articles are referred to give an insight into the importance of gender of the customer/decision making team to the marketer. It has been observed that the understanding of the gender and its influence on consumer's purchasing and consumption patterns of products by the marketer has given an edge over competitors or be on par with the competitors.

Keywords: Gender Based Marketing, Gender based consumer decision making process

Introduction

Marketing is managing profitable customer relationships. The two basic goals of marketing are 1. Attract new customers by promising superior value 2. Keep and increase the existing customers by delivering satisfaction. As the saying goes "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus", the differences that exist between both the genders in purchasing and consumption are the challenges for marketers.

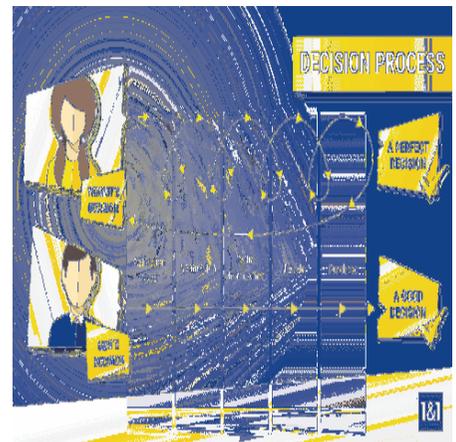
1. In addition to the gender based differences in buying behaviour and consumption, the culture also has an impact. In some cultures there are many differences in who takes the lead in deciding the products to buy. Leisure travel by air can be a women dominant decision in developed economies. One such that that has been observed by the Song Airlines which has designed whole product and marketing based on women who were dominant in deciding which was 80%. Many marketing strategies used by various marketers are based on the gender, tailoring

advertising content and marketing techniques in addition to the product design is based on the gender of the customer or the decision maker.

2. *Gender-specific differences in consumer behaviour* - From early childhood, it's possible to observe the two genders develop different preferences and behavioral patterns; with long-established patterns, such as girls are playing with Barbie dolls and boys choosing toy cars and building blocks. The toy manufacturing industry has been observing this trend for decades, deciding the toys accordingly and generating enormous profits by targeting girls and boys separately. In adulthood too, most people never fully abandon ingrained gender based behavior; for example, in personal grooming, it's still far more common to associate floral and sweet scents with women, while products aimed at men tend to be more smoky or woody. In India we have seen off late Fairness creams designed exclusively for men stating that their skin is different when compared to women. Even the hair remover which was considered as a women's product has now come out with exclusive hair remover for men. Let's look at the different way in which men and women go through the decision making process:

Women and men experience the purchasing process in very different ways

Men tend to take a rather more linear path to their product deciding process, only going through each phase one time. They generally concentrate on their current requirements and therefore go through each individual stage successively. The consensus when it comes to men's shopping habits, is that they search for a good solution to their 'problem', i.e. finding the appropriate product for their needs.



Women tend to go through a spiralling thought process while deciding the products to buy, goes through the phases of the decision making process several times as shown in the above diagram. We can call it as 'feminine' approach to find a perfect solution to their problem. A 'feminine' decision is usually determined by a detailed list of criteria, which can often change. A woman's decision-making process is usually more complex and lengthier than that of men. Ultimately, the women look for the product which satisfies their requirements in as many ways as possible. In addition to this the women still won't necessarily buy it straight away: approximately 61% of women visit several stores before making a final choice. They also prefer bargaining in the outlet whereas the men generally does not.

Gender based marketing encompasses every aspect of sales, incorporating the gender-specific demands of consumers in the production process, distribution, as well as the promotion related strategies. A successful marketing mix is required to see the

acceptance of the products which are designed based on the understanding of the customer expectations including the different likes and dislikes of both the genders. Product, place, promotion, and price are particularly interesting factors when it comes to goods marketing and the additional ingredients like people, process and physical evidence for marketing services. In the following, we explain how you can use gender marketing to advertise and sell your goods and services successfully.

Product

The entire process of designing a product is the heart of any organisation as it has to be matching with the customer expectations. Only when the product matches the customer expectations, the organisation can be assured of the repeat sales as well as referral market. This product should also be supported with the other suitably designed marketing mix ingredients.

At the outset, it is very important for the marketers to consider the target group they want to cater to. In case of any customised products, they also have to understand the individual members of the target group. There are several factors to consider while choosing the target group, eg., age group, social status, and lifestyle. It is during this stage that marketer should consider whether gender based marketing is an appropriate method for you. Is your customer base made up of mostly men, women, or both? Do all members of your target audience require your product in the same way, or do their needs depend on their gender?

Gender based marketing not only takes the physical uses of the product into account, but also the different associations that women and men have with regard to the product. Many (extremely successful) goods and service are marketed in completely different ways in order to appeal to men and women, although strictly speaking, both sexes could use them. Think of razors, for example; despite being essentially the same, they are designed and marketed differently for men and women. Gillette is a particularly good example of a successful gender marketing campaign, with its separate products and campaign strategies for women and men. Not only do women's razors differ to the men's in their design; the products are even marketed with different advertising campaigns and separate websites. In doing this, the company emphasizes the different advantages their razors have for their intended target groups. Men's razors are usually presented as sporty and dynamic, with a prominent sports star often appearing in commercials and advertising campaigns. Meanwhile, the advertisements for the feminine counterpart emphasize the razor's skin-enhancing properties, promoting shaving as part of a luxurious and indulgent skincare routine. The company has cleverly managed to create one product with two successful product lines, in which both the product design and marketing are adapted for the two sexes.

There are several other products that can be divided into gendered categories. Advertisers often develop entire product ranges separated into female and male interest areas. It's therefore possible for marketers to develop gender-specific sales strategies. Here are some examples:

Masculine product lines	Feminine product lines
Large or sporty cars with a focus on enjoyment	Smaller cars with a focus on functionality
Beer, spirits	Wine, champagne, low-calorie soft drinks
Electronics, technology	Consumer electronics
Men's fashion, suits, ties	Women's fashion, accessories
Shaving foam, aftershave	Cosmetics, perfume

Place

'Place' refers to the sales environment in which consumers go shopping. No matter whether they're physically entering a store or browsing online shops, the sales environment plays a decisive role in making a purchase. If you have a brick-and-mortar store, your need to consider factors such as light conditions, storage and presentation, cleanliness, etc., while website owners have to create an appealing virtual environment. For this, you have to keep in mind factors such as web design, presentation, and informative content, as well as website navigation. But if you want to offer gender-specific products, what should you look out for when creating the sales environment?

Women prefer a cozy sales environment

It may be a cliché, but it's certainly true in many cases: the large proportion of women enjoy shopping. The stereotype exists for a reason; sometimes women spend hours in a department store, completely forgetting why they originally went there. Even if they only wanted pantyhose, they might see a dress in the shop window they want to try on, and then start to look for a pair of shoes to match. Perhaps then, on the way to the checkout, they notice the perfume counter and make a short detour. But to encourage this kind of splurging, business owners have to curate a pleasant sales atmosphere. This involves ensuring cleanliness, products presented in logical order, colorful displays, warm lighting conditions, and if possible, suitable mood lighting and music. This logic behind it is pretty simple: if the customer feels comfortable, they want to stay.

The physical proximity of the products plays a large role in creating a comfortable sales atmosphere. Studies in the psychological responses to spaces have shown that, to encourage women's buying power, compatible or relevant products should be placed as closely together as possible.

Men just one want thing: to get what they need and get out of there!

In contrast to the feminine approach to shopping, the typically 'masculine' approach is far more utilitarian. The common conception is that men derive very little pleasure from shopping; they simply go to the store to get something they need. The desired product should be easily accessible and the way to the checkout should be as short and convenient as possible. A homey sales atmosphere is not necessary. This straightforward purchasing process is influenced by the shopping behavior associated with men, which is to buy the product and to leave the department store without any detours. For this reason, many hardware stores, for example, create a structured and simple sales environment without any frills.

Creating a gender-specific sales environment can drastically increase sales, and website operators have been quick to pick up on this trend. While of course, the sales techniques are different from traditional retail, the different needs of women and men are also important in the digital world. This applies not only to web design, which can be adapted to the genders, but also to the texts and product presentations. Research has shown that women tend to prefer static images, while men are able to better process videos about services or the product.

In accordance with their aim of making purchases quickly and efficiently, men prefer product descriptions that are brief and to the point, listing the product's most important properties and, where possible, giving specific numbers, data, and facts. Women, on the other hand, are generally willing to read longer, more descriptive texts, because they tend to want to be as informed as much as possible about the range of products on offer. These should clarify the possible applications and the benefits of the advertised product as precisely as possible.

Promotion

'Promotion' encompasses all internal and external communications methods used to advertise a product. These include, but are not limited to, television commercials, online communications carried out on social media platforms, and e-mail marketing, all of which, when correctly implemented, can potentially reach many new customers. One unique example of commercial e-mails is that, with sufficient user data, it's possible to personalize and tailor the e-mails to the receiver, making them an ideal resource for gender marketing.

Companies also use TV and radio commercials to address men and women in different ways. For example, car advertisements geared towards men often emphasize ideals which are considered typically masculine. The vehicle is portrayed to highlight its speed and the sporty design. Advertisements aimed at men also frequently suggest a sense of freedom. When aimed at women, however, cars are usually presented as compact and practical. In this case, the manufacturers generally choose to emphasize storage space, low energy consumption, or the automobile's usability.

Personnel

'Personnel' includes all individuals who provide services to (potential) customers on behalf of a company. This area covers those who are actively involved in executing the sales, as well as those providing a service, such as taking care of dispatching, giving advice, or receiving customer complaints. Having professional personnel in all areas contributes significantly to customer loyalty. And in the context of gender marketing, staff members should be trained to take into account men and women's different interests and requirements. This can lead to completely different sales pitches and drastically different exchanges between the salesperson and the consumer.

Women never just buy a dress

Among other traits, to be feminine is to be highly empathetic, meaning women have the ability to form emotional bonds with products, as well as with people. For women, the decision to purchase a product is influenced by many different criteria, not just the product itself. For this reason, it's common for women to ask sales representatives a lot of questions, expect comprehensive answers, and become interested in aspects of the product that go beyond its own physical qualities. For example, in accordance with the typically 'feminine' approach to shopping, when a woman goes to buy a jumper, she won't just be looking out for the quality of the fabric, but also whether the jumper will go with her other items of clothing. It's imperative for sales personnel to take these factors into account and provide their customers with a comprehensive knowledge of their product range.

Men prefer to make decisions quickly

On the other hand, the masculine approach to decision making is structural, and they can be convinced by functional arguments. Relevant facts and figures are often more important than communication on a personal level. To ascertain whether a product can meet their specific needs, men will tend to ask direct, goal-oriented questions, before weighing up the pros and cons and subsequently deciding whether the product is suitable. The salesperson should therefore be well acquainted with the products to be able to answer subject-related questions efficiently and confidently. If men feel that their assistant is not technically competent, they might well feel tempted to buy their products somewhere else.

Is gender marketing still useful today?

Our notions of gender are constantly evolving, and as such, gender marketing is not an ideal solution in every sector. The most effective use of gender marketing is when the product has different applications for men and women. The fashion industry is a perfect example of this; the distinction between men and women's clothing originally stems from the typical differences in size and height. But when it comes to aesthetic preferences, we again tend to see a striking disparity between the two sexes.

A gender-specific marketing strategy is therefore extremely useful in the fashion industry. But what's the deal in other areas – for example, in construction, and DIY, or the food industry?

The evolution of gender marketing: women drilling and men cooking

With our developing ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman, and with further progress between gender equality, we are seeing fewer and fewer people stick to traditional gender roles. Women are no longer restricted to striving for an existence as a housewife; they are increasingly prominent in the workplace and financially independent. Men's lifestyles are also changing: An ever-increasing number of people are now living alone, meaning that traditionally gendered household tasks such as DIY and cooking are now being taken on by both sexes – something that would have been practically unthinkable 50 years ago. Therefore, if you want to develop an effective gender marketing strategy, you need to visualize the current social situation and the contemporary needs of both sexes. Recycling tired ideals and obsolete gender roles is irrelevant and irritating for consumers.

The Bosch study on women and DIY

A 2010 study carried out by the global tech company Bosch analyzed trends with women and DIY. Throughout the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, 3000 women aged 20 and over were interviewed, with over 80% of the participants saying they do their own DIY, home improvement, and gardening – 35% regularly. The findings of this survey indicate that the home improvement and DIY industry can no longer be regarded as an exclusively masculine domain.

The study also reveals that women are far less concerned with the technical merits of a tool or appliance than they are about usability. For small projects like building furniture, for example, decoration, or hedge trimming, women just require a basic kind of implement that is effective while still being user-friendly. If the product also has an appealing design, this makes for an even more satisfying purchase. With these trends emerging, entrepreneurs in the construction and homeware sector are beginning to focus their products on the needs of their female customers.

Poor nutrition through effective gender marketing?

The fact that gender marketing can have a damaging effect on society is especially evident in the marketing of food. Although today the number of single people living alone has grown significantly, with women and men preparing their daily meals independently, advertising often promotes very backwards ideals. All too often advertising suggests that the role of the woman is to watch her weight or prepare healthy meals for the family, while the man is lazier, munching on unhealthy snacks and microwavable ready meals, or taking control of the barbecue. The stereotype that healthy eating is of no interest to men is frequently emphasized by advertising that

associates women with keeping their weight and health in check and men with junk food.

The food industry, in particular, is full of damaging, thinly-veiled stereotypes. Male celebrities are often used to promote alcoholic beverages and unhealthy soft drinks (such as the comically hyper-masculine Coors Light campaigns starring movie star Jean-Claude Van Damme). Meanwhile, diet soft drink commercials disproportionately feature female models. Men drink beer, women choose wine, men eat too much junk, women are told to watch their weight, the list could go on forever. The surprising and dangerous thing is that despite the negative impact, the gender marketing construction of the food industry is a complete success. Attractive models can also be used to glamorize products in a way that is detrimental to the consumer. A good example of this is Carl's Jr's 2015 advertising campaign featuring a group of scantily clad models. The over-sexualized commercial's objectifying portrayal of the women had a multi-faceted impact: the erotic aspect of the advertisement was supposed to attract men and women alike, on the basis that the models were either to be lusted after or admired. Using sex to sell products has an astounding impact – erotic images linger in the consumer's mind for a long time, and the product associated with them does too.

Despite its overwhelming success, this marketing strategy of course encounters criticism. Nutritionists often argue that, from a health perspective, it would be better to promote healthy living to men and women equally. This could ultimately put an end to promoting unhealthy lifestyles to men and dangerous dieting to women.

When gender marketing goes wrong: some bad examples

Despite the dubious social consequences that gender marketing campaigns often cause, companies that use this type of marketing often enjoy a great deal of commercial success. However, there are also many times when this approach has come across as sexist and caused more harm than good. One such example of gender marketing gone wrong is Protein World's now infamous 'beach body ready' campaign from 2015. Aimed primarily towards women, this campaign featured an attractive, toned model wearing a small bikini, alongside the caption, 'Are you beach body ready?' With the massive size of the billboards and the camera angle, the model looms over the viewer, dark shadows over her face making the already tall woman appear intimidating large.

With this campaign, the company, Protein World, has clearly attempted to target women. As many women are already conscious of nutrition (thanks, of course, to other gender marketing campaigns), the idea of marketing a protein powder range for women is not a bad idea, in principle. However, the heavy-handed use of such a body-shaming slogan, combined with the clearly sexist representation of the woman, (the model wears very little clothing and the camera focusses on her lower body,

rather than her face) caused an angry response from outraged consumers. Although of course, the choice to use gender marketing is useful for highlighting the different results for men and women, this advertising campaign failed to connect with its audience. Unsurprisingly, displaying an idealized, airbrushed, and unrealistic image of a woman's body alongside an insensitive and admonishing slogan sparked a nationwide backlash. This resulted in a PR nightmare for the company, with Protein World defending its advertisement on Twitter by insulting critics. Ultimately, the campaign was axed and the advert was banned in London. This gender marketing campaign proved that sex does not always sell.

Gender marketing in e-commerce

Gender marketing strategies have also been used successfully in e-commerce campaigns. Website owners often design their pages according to gender-specific criteria. Some companies – like Gillette, as previously mentioned – even promote their products on separate websites: one for men, and one for women.

Women shop online more often than men; reports have found that a significant proportion of women under 30 buy clothing online more than five times a year. This is partly because they are particularly suited to the typical buying behavior of women, in that it's particularly easy to compare different products online. Furthermore, with shipping and returns often free of charge, it's easy to order products to your home without obligation. Online shopping takes away the stress, crowds, and time needed to go to a physical shop, making it far more convenient for women to spend their cash. Online entrepreneurs have also recognized this development and are now increasingly starting to adapt their online platforms to cater to the needs of their female customers.

The dangers of gender marketing

What used to belong to the masculine domain is now becoming relevant to women too – this is especially true of DIY and technical activities. In contrast, an increasing number of men now take on work that is traditionally associated with women, such as cooking, maintaining a household, and staying at home to raise children. This social change has also led to a shift in gender-specific interests. Successful gender marketing campaigns take note of these patterns and recognize and respond to changes in attitudes to promote sales.

Of course, using a gender-oriented marketing strategy is not always an advantage. Advertising in this way is not useful or relevant for every product – especially if the product is so simple that a distinction between men's and women's versions is unnecessary (this concerns many basic food products such as fruit and vegetables, as well as functional, everyday products such as copying paper, printer cartridges, etc.). In cases such as these, targeting the product towards a particular audience carries a risk of a decrease in sales. If a product is marketed as typically female or typically male,

it can lose its appeal to the opposite sex. The use of too many gender stereotypes or a negative portrayal of these stereotypes can also lead to a backlash and potentially harm a company's reputation. If consumers perceive the presentation of the product as too overwhelming or even offensive, they will dissociate themselves from it. Many products geared towards women have failed because the company has overdone its 'girly' advertising, and many products aimed at men have failed to sell because the advertising was too sexist.

Gender marketing is an incredibly complex field. As such, those who fail to grasp the different interests and needs of men and women risk missing the mark with their campaigns, thereby remaining unsuccessful. Therefore, as an advertiser, you must precisely analyze your target audience to determine which marketing strategy makes sense for your product. The use of gender marketing is most appropriate when the requirements of male and female consumers are very different from each other. If you are able to respond to these specific needs fully, you can expand your customer base considerably.

Bristor and Fischer (1993) stated, "gender is a social concept referring to psychologically, sociologically, or culturally rooted traits, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural tendencies. Because gender is a pervasive filter through which individuals experience their social world, consumption activities are fundamentally gendered." When Gender Marketing was developed in the United States 15 years ago, it evolved out of the diversity approach. To realize that men's and women's needs are different and that products are not gender neutral was just a logical consequence out of the practice with differing consumer needs within different ethnical, religious or cultural groups (Flocke 2006).

The main goal of gender marketing is to implement differing needs of men and women into the development, distribution, price setting and communication of products and services. Maintainers of this approach consider it as important because of the emerging differences between men and women in their way to articulate consumption desires, making purchase intentions or evaluate products (Flocke 2006). According to Mitchell and Walsh (2004) "males and females want different products and they are likely to have different ways of thinking about obtaining these" (:331).

The aim of this paper is to find out how the commitment to a product is increasing by using gender specific advertisement compared to gender neutral advertisement. Therefore, after a short overview about stated gender differences in the scientific literature, it will discuss three different theoretical models in order to design a testing method: the CVPA (Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics) as an approach to identify customer concerns about visuals, the selectivity model to discover gender differences in information processing and finally the C-S- construct to detect affections to either connected or separated advertisement appeals.

After the evolvement of several hypotheses according to the used models the proposal provides a method for testing the stated presumptions and end up with managerial implications and suggestions for further research.

Gender differences

Gender is frequently used to implement segmentation strategies. As suggested by Darley and Smith (1995) there are three main reasons for that: (1) gender is easy to identify, (2) gender segments are accessible (most media provides information) and (3) gender segments are large and therefore profitable.

According to the literature in this field there are several significant gender differences across a huge variety of tasks and traits. Due to limitations of this paper it will provide a short overview about the most useful differences concerning to purchase intentions.

Mitchell and Walsh (2004) stated in their work a lot of particularities in male consumer behaviour:

Men demand for clear structures and symbols of status, while women are more likely to emphasize on interpersonal relationships. Therefore, men are more likely to support a product which is improving their status in society, while women want to intensify, improve or express relationships. Men are also less tended to engage in active information provision to other consumers. Moreover they are less likely to be impulsive as well as compulsive buyers and more likely to engage in variety-seeking purchasing. Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran (1991) stated that males “engage in less detailed elaboration of commercial messages than females and be less likely to engage in a detailed and thorough examination of commercial messages which involves extended decisions based on product attributes” (:64).

Males are compared to females usually more analytical and logical and also tend to prefer simplifying decision heuristics (Mitchell and Walsh 2004).

“In terms of personality traits, men are reported to be more independent, confident, competitive, externally motivated, more willing to take risks, especially with money and less prone to perceive product risk than females” (Darley and Smith 1995: 43).

About the used language Croft et al. (2007) stated “that the language women use is designed to make connections and to reinforce intimacy: men, by contrast, use words to establish status and to delimit their independence”(:716). They also found out that “males tended to speak more neutrally about specific topics, whereas women were more inclined to refer to subjects in either a positive or negative manner”(:718). All this leads to the notion that males and females will approach shopping differently. Men and women are looking for different kinds of product benefits and qualities. Focussing on these different needs of men and women in the development, marketing and communication of products, specific groups can be targeted more efficiently.

Identifying and understanding gender-specific preferences will lead to different kinds of marketing advantages in highly competitive environments (McIntosh 2007). An overview with advices how to reach different genders effectively is provided earlier in the paper.

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