

# The impact of emotions on consumer behaviour: Exploring gender differences

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## Abstract

Recent research has suggested that emotions play an important role in consumer behaviour. The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between emotions and consumer tendencies and gender differences within these relationships. Literature is abundant on gender differences and consumer behaviour. However, in the context of gender differences and the impact of emotions on consumer behaviour, the literature is still nascent. As a result, this study will significantly contribute to developing literature on the topic. The sample included 439 participants from the general population (47% female, 53% male), aged between 19 to 65 ( $M = 39.00$ ,  $SD = 10.14$ ). Data were collected by using several self-report questionnaires. Results showed that both positive and negative feelings significantly influenced consumer behaviour. These relationships were particularly pronounced in the exploratory acquisition of products. The results highlighted the importance of emotions in explaining consumer behaviour and showed that gender moderates the influences of positive feelings on the exploratory acquisition of products as well as the impacts of positive feelings on exploratory information seeking.

**Keywords:** Positive and negative feelings, Consumer behaviour, Gender differences

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## 1. Consumer Behaviour and Emotions

Generally, consumer behaviour refers to the actions and decisions of purchasing; within this context, many authors have attempted to define it. For example, Blackwell et al. (2006) defined *Consumer Behaviour* as the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services (p.4). “Consumer Behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires” (Solomon et al.2010, p.6). Consumers’ behaviour describes how they make purchase decisions and use and dispose of purchased goods and services (Lamb et al., 2012). Consumer behaviour is an essential and constant decision-making process of searching, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing products and services (Valaskova et al., 2015).

Understanding how consumers think, buy, and use products are very complex, as various factors may influence the consumer. It includes studying what consumers buy, why they buy it, how they buy it, and where they buy it. Factors influencing consumer behaviour include personal, psychological, social, and cultural factors. Personal factors include gender, age, education, occupation and income. Psychological factors include motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes. Social factors include reference groups, family, and social roles and status. Finally, cultural factors include culture, subculture, and social class.

*Solomon et al. (2010) point out that products are sex-typed or androgynous. Sex-typed defines a product that takes on masculine or feminine characteristics. For example, Barbies for girls, Hotwheels for boys, lipsticks for women, and aftershave lotions for men.*

*Marketers study consumer behaviour to understand their target market's needs better and want and develop effective marketing strategies. By understanding consumer behaviour, marketers can create more effective marketing campaigns, develop new products and services, and improve the customer experience.*

Consumer decision making refers to the actions and decisions individuals or households make when purchasing goods and services. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including identifying needs and wants, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, and making the final purchase decision. Since 1910, when John Dewey first introduced the five-stage consumer decision-making process, it has been a widely accepted concept. Still, it serves as the central pillar of a popular consumer behaviour model. A *rational decision-making process* can be defined as a five-stage process that helps to choose one particular option among several other options.

**Fig 01: The 5-Stage Decision Making Model**



Consumer decision-making process can be defined as the different stages that help to understand the consumers' needs and ultimately helps to purchase that specific product. Certain stages specify the reason for consumers purchasing any products. As mentioned by Pham et al. (2017), in the first step, it is vital to understand the needs of the consumers, and based on this, the consumers used to gather the required information. According to Parumasur and Roberts-Lombard (2012), the search for information can be defined as consumers' mental and physical engagement to ascertain relevant information. Once the consumer has acquired all the necessary information, the task now involves evaluating all the alternatives based on the characteristics and features unique to the product and, finally, justifying the purchase decision (Shank, 2009). In the last stage, the consumer decides about satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the purchase. In determining this, the consumer goes through post-purchase assessment, which involves evaluating the product's performance (Brijball and Roberts-Lombard, 2012). Marketers must ensure that the consumer's post-purchase evaluations are positive and that customers are satisfied with their purchase and consumption. Positive evaluations and satisfied customers become loyal (Mittal et al., 2008).

The involvement and emotions are crucial concepts of the research in consumer behaviour (Lin and Liang, 2011; Soscia, 2013; Santos et al., 2017, 2021; Chemli et al., 2020; Albattat et al., 2020; Toanoglou et al., 2021). The role of emotions in consumer behaviour has been the focus of considerable attention over the past seven decades (Dawson, 1990; Grande, 2005; Holbrock & Hirschman, 1982).

Bagozzi et al. (1999) define emotion as “a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically; and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and the

person having it” (p.184).

Emotions play a significant role in consumer behaviour. Consoli (2010) emphasised that choices and purchase decisions result from carefully analysing emotions.

Emotions are a person’s positive (pleased, relaxed) and negative (nervous, annoyed) feelings. People in positive emotional states have shorter decision times compared with the people in negative emotional states (Lee et al., 2009).

Emotions affect consumers’ purchase intentions (Murray, 2013; Verma and Verma, 2012). Marketers generally attempt to trigger four basic emotions – happiness, sadness, anxiety and anger – and the vigour of the emotions evoked vary according to the product categories, types and media. Consumers generally prefer pleasant experiences (Schmitt, 1999), and feelings of happiness and satisfaction, in particular, encourage customers to purchase products and brands (Pappas et al., 2013; Thompson, 2013). Shopping motivations affect consumers’ sensory and emotional experiences (Babin and Barreto, 2004) and, consequently, their consumer behaviour.

They can influence a person's decision to purchase a product or service and their perception of the product or brand. For example, positive emotions such as happiness, excitement, and pleasure can increase brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth advertising. Conversely, negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness can lead to negative perceptions of a brand and decreased likelihood of future purchases. Therefore, marketers often use emotional appeals in advertising to try to influence consumer behaviour.

Research suggests that there may be some differences in how men and women respond to emotional appeals in advertising. For example, studies have found that women tend to be more responsive to ads that elicit positive emotions, such as happiness and excitement. In contrast, men tend to be more responsive to ads that evoke feelings of power and achievement.

Additionally, women tend to be more motivated by relationships and personal connections, so they may be more likely to purchase a product associated with a sense of community or social responsibility. Conversely, men tend to be more motivated by status and achievement, so they may be more likely to purchase products that signal status or power.

It is important to note that these are general trends and are not valid for all individuals. Also, the context of the advertising message, the product and the market are essential factors that can moderate the effect of emotions on consumer behaviour.

Gender differences refer to the variations in behaviour, attitudes, and characteristics between males and females. Research suggests that there may be some differences in how men and women approach consumer behaviour. For example, studies have found that women tend to be more relationship-oriented and emphasise personal connections, emotions, and values when purchasing decisions. Conversely, men tend to be more achievement-oriented and may emphasise status, power, and logic when purchasing decisions.

Research suggests that men and women may also have different attitudes and behaviours towards specific products and services. For example, studies have found that women are more interested in health and beauty products, fashion, and home decor. In contrast, men are more interested in technology, automobiles, and sports-related products.

It is important to note that these are general trends and not valid for all individuals; also, the context of the purchasing decision and the product can moderate the effect of gender. Nevertheless, marketers and businesses should consider these differences when developing marketing strategies and targeting specific population segments.

According to Dittmar, Long and Meek (2004), males and females want different products and are likely to have different ways of liking and obtaining these. Gender has a vital role in consumer behaviours. Because the differences between men and women regarding expectations, wants, needs, lifestyle etc., reflect their consumption behaviours.

### *1.1 Female Consumer Behaviour*

Because historically, women have been the primary household buyers, there is a relative dearth of interest in men's shopping behaviour (De Grazia & Furlough, 1996). Female consumer behaviour refers to the actions and decisions made by women when purchasing goods and services. Research suggests that women tend to be more relationship-oriented and emphasise personal connections, emotions, and values when buying decisions. They may also be more likely to consider a product or brand's social and environmental impact before making a purchase.

Women tend to be more interested in health and beauty products, fashion, and home decor and may be more likely to engage in impulse buying and window shopping. They also tend to be more responsive to ads that elicit positive emotions and may be more likely to make purchasing decisions based on the emotional appeal of a product or brand.

Women also tend to be more influenced by word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, family, and social media influencers and may be more likely to conduct extensive research before making a purchase.

It's important to note that these are general trends and not valid for all women; also, the context of the purchasing decision and the product can moderate the effect of gender. Marketers and businesses should consider these characteristics when developing marketing strategies and targeting female segments of the population.

### *1.2 Male Consumer Behaviour*

Shopping is perceived as a feminine activity (Miller, 1998), and some men will go to great lengths to avoid it because they need to preserve their sense of 'masculinity.'

Male consumer behaviour refers to the actions and decisions made by men when purchasing goods and services. Research suggests that men are more achievement-oriented and may place more importance on status, power, and logic when purchasing decisions. They may also be more likely to make purchasing decisions based on a product's or brand's functional features and benefits.

Men tend to be more interested in technology, automobiles, and sports-related products and may be more likely to engage in rational decision-making and less likely to engage in impulse buying. They also tend to be less influenced by emotional appeals in advertising and may be more likely to make purchasing decisions based on the rational appeal of a product or brand.

Men also tend to be more influenced by expert opinions and product reviews and may be more likely to purchase based on the perceived value of a product or brand.

It is important to note that these are general trends and not true for all men; also, the context of the purchasing decision and the product can moderate the effect of gender. Nevertheless, marketers and businesses should consider these characteristics when developing marketing strategies and targeting male population segments.

According to a study with more than 700 adults (Dittmar, Long, & Meek, 2004), women are much more substantial buying involvement than men, particularly in emotional involvement, whereas men are high on quality and efficiency.

Emotional ability, the capability of reasoning about and using emotion to accomplish certain outcomes, is associated with the capacity to perceive emotion. This growth has been fueled by the realization that the study of traditional cognitive processes, by itself, has been inadequate for fully understanding many consumer behaviour trends including the decision-making process of customers. Numerous studies have shown that emotions and emotional responses play a significant role in consumer reactions, consumer decision-making processes and consumer behaviour in general (e.g., Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Hung & Mukhopadhyay, 2012; Johnson & Stewart, 2005; Martin et al., 2008; Penz & Hogg, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). Studies of consumer emotions (Laros & Steenkamp 2005; Bougie et al., 2003; Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003) suggest that basic emotions (e.g., anger, happiness, anxiety, interest, liking, love, panic, regret, hope, sadness, submission, and surprise) allow a good understanding of consumer behaviour.

Baumgartner & Steenkamp (1996) postulated that consumers with a pronounced tendency to buy unfamiliar products are willing to try new and innovative products, and strive to achieve stimulating consumption experiences.

These authors also assumed that consumers who seek cognitive stimulation is enjoyed by viewing advertisements and talking with other consumers about their purchases and consumption experiences.

### 1.3 Hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses were set as follows:

- H1 Positive feelings would be related to the exploratory acquisition of products.
- H2 Positive feelings would be related to the exploratory information seeking.
- H3 Negative feelings would be related to the exploratory acquisition of products.
- H4 Negative feelings would be unrelated to the exploratory information seeking.
- H5 Gender moderates the relationships between positive and negative feelings and both dimensions of exploratory buying behaviour tendencies.

### 1.4 Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between positive and negative feelings and consumer behaviour.
- To examine whether gender moderated the relationship between positive and negative feelings and consumer behaviour.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants and Procedure

The sample included 460 participants from the general population. Questionnaire data for 21 participants were excluded from analyses due to missing data, and thus the final sample comprised 439 participants. Data were collected online on a convenient sample during the spring and summer of 2022. Participants ranged from 19 to 65 years of age. A total of 53% of the sample were male ( $n = 233$ ) and 47% were female ( $n = 206$ ). Participation was on a voluntary basis. They were asked to complete a battery of self-report measures anonymously and received no compensation for their participation. The size of the sample is above the minimum of 250 recommended for correlational studies by Schönbrodt & Perugini (2013). Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the participants. The sample was slightly intended and dominated by male respondents (53%), middle-aged (36-45), with lower and upper secondary education and middle socioeconomic status.

**Table 01: Demographic profile of participants**

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	233	53
Female	206	47
Age (years)		
18-24	36	8
25-35	73	17
36-45	143	33
46-59	94	21
>60	93	21
Education level (ISCED)		
Primary education	5	1
Secondary education (lower and upper)	247	56
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	118	27
Tertiary education (first stage and second stage)	69	16
Socioeconomic status		
Low	19	4
Middle	298	68
High	122	28

ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education

## 2.2 Research variables and instruments

Positive and negative feelings were measured by the **Scale of Positive and Negative Experience** (SPANE; Diener et al., 2009) which assesses positive and negative experiences over the previous 4 weeks. This scale consists of 12 items and produces a score for positive feelings (summed positive score; SPANE-P) (6 items), and a score for negative feelings (summed negative score; SPANE-N) (6 items). These two scores can be combined by subtracting the negative score from the positive score, resulting in the balance (SPANE-B) score with a range from -24 to 24.

For both the positive and negative subscales, three of the items are positive and negative, and three of both subscale items are more specific (e.g., pleasant, afraid). In line with previous studies (Diener et al., 2010; Jovanović et al., 2019; Li et al., 2013; Martin-Krumm et al., 2017) the SPANE showed good psychometric properties, with Cronbach's .78 for SPANE-P, .76 for SPANE-N and .82 for SPANE B (see Table 2).

In an effort to measure consumer behaviour, we used the **Exploratory buying behaviour tendencies** scale (EBBT; Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996). The EBBT scale is a 20-item self-report measure on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. It consists of two dimensions each having ten items: Exploratory acquisition of products (EAP; *When I see a new brand on the shelf, I'm not afraid of giving it a try*), and Exploratory information seeking (EIS; e.g. *I like to go window shopping and find out about the latest styles*).

The EAP dimension reflects a tendency to seek sensory stimulation in product purchase through risky and novelty products and changing purchase and consumption experiences, and the EIS dimension reflects a tendency to acquire cognitive stimulation through consumption-relevant knowledge (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996). The scale showed good psychometric characteristics (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996; Roshni et al., 2020; Waheed & Jianhua 2018). In the current study, Chronbach's alpha of EAP and EIS were 0.78 and 0.80, respectively.

## 2.3 Statistical Analysis

In order to obtain the first impression about data, gender-specific descriptive statistics and Person product-moment correlation analysis was performed. To determine the relationship between positive and negative feelings and consumer behaviour zero-order correlations (the Pearson product-moment correlation) were calculated.

In order to explore the direct effects of positive and positive and negative feelings on consumer behaviour and interaction effects interaction effect between gender and positive and negative feelings, hierarchical linear regression models were computed with consumer behaviour as a criterion. In all models, gender and positive and negative feelings were entered as predictors in Step 1, and the two interactions between gender and positive and negative feelings were entered in Step 2. A significant increase in  $R^2$  in the second step would indicate an interaction effect between gender and feelings.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Descriptive statistics and alpha reliabilities

All scales demonstrated an adequate alpha coefficient of reliability (from 0.72 to 0.84).

Skewness and kurtosis for all scales were within the recommended values for normal distribution (between -2 to +2). Gender differences in the SPAN scores were found. The results provided that females reported higher levels of both positive and negative emotions than males which are in line with previous studies (Jovanović et al., 2019). The results are presented in Table 2.

Besides that, results showed that younger participants reported higher levels of positive emotions and lower levels of positive emotions.

**Table 02: Reliabilities and descriptive statistics for the SPANE and consumer behaviour**

	Gender				Range	Cronbach's alpha
	Male (n = 233)		Female (n = 206)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
SPANE-P	19.07	5.42	23.34	5.11	6 to 30	.78
SPANE-N	15.22	4.71	18.46	5.64	6 to 30	.76
EAP	30.05	6.53	31.13	7.21	10 to 50	.78
EIS	24.02	5.41	36.11	6.11	10 to 50	.81

Note. SD = standard deviation.  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . SPANE-P and SPANE-N subscale values range from 1 (very rarely or never) to 5 (very often or always). SPANE-M score can range from -24 (unhappiest possible) to 24 (highest affect balance possible). EAP and EIS are scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

\*  $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests).

### 3.2 Simple bivariate (zero-order) correlations

Bivariate correlations between emotionality and consumer behaviour partially supported the study hypothesis. Correlations between the emotionality dimensions were moderate to large, indicating partial overlap among them. Consistent with the prediction, the positive feelings showed moderate correlations with the exploratory acquisition of products in both males and females. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. According to Hypothesis 2, positive feelings are related to exploratory information seeking in both, males and females. As expected, negative feelings demonstrated a significant relationship with exploratory acquisition of products, but only in the female sample. In males, no relationship was shown between negative feelings and exploratory acquisition of products. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. As predicted negative feelings are unrelated to exploratory information seeking in males, but in females, negative feelings are positively related to exploratory information seeking. This result partially supported Hypothesis 4.

**Table 03: Relations of SPANE components with EAP dimensions: Zero-order Correlations in male (n = 233) and female (n = 206).**

	Positive and negative feelings			
	SPANE-P		SPANE-N	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Exploratory buying behaviour tendencies				
EAP	.24**	.36**	.15	.18*
EIS	.17* <sub>a</sub>	.41** <sub>a</sub>	.14	.24**

Note. *r* = Pearson's correlation. Subscript letters indicate significant differences across gender. \* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .

### 3.3 Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses: Prediction of consumer behaviour and gender differences based on emotionality

Participants' scores on consumer behaviour regressed on emotionality dimensions with gender and age included as control variables in each case at the 1st step (Table 4).

Positive feelings (SPANE-P) accounted for an additional 16% of the variance in the exploratory acquisition of products ( $\Delta F [4, 434] = 4.22, p < .01$ ), and 7% of the additional variance in exploratory information seeking ( $\Delta F [4, 434] = 5.33, p < .001$ ). Negative feelings (SPANE-N) accounted for an additional 14% of the additional variance in the exploratory acquisition of products ( $\Delta F [4, 434] = 16.08, p < .01$ ), and 5% of the additional variance in exploratory information seeking ( $\Delta F [4, 434] = 7.12, p < .01$ ).

**Table 04: Hierarchical regression analyses with positive and negative feelings as predictors of exploratory buying behaviour tendencies in males ( $n = 233$ ) and females ( $n = 206$ )**

Exploratory buying behaviour tendencies		
	Exploratory acquisition of products (EAP)	Exploratory information seeking (EIS)
	$\beta$	
<i>Step 1</i>		
Gender	.15*	.18*
SPANE-P	.22**	.34**
SPANE-N	.15*	.17*
$R^2$	.20**	.11**
<i>Step 2</i>		
Gender	.14*	.20**
SPANE-P	.20**	.31**
SPANE-N	.13	.12
SPANE-P x Gender	.17**	.22**
SPANE-N x Gender	.12	.09
$\Delta R^2$	.07**	.05**
$R^2$	.27**	.16**
Note. Age is included as a control. Standardized beta coefficients are shown. * $p < .01$ , ** $p < .001$		

As we can see in Table 4 gender showed a significant contribution to the prediction of exploratory buying behaviour tendencies. Gender moderated some emotions-consumer behaviour relationships. More specifically, gender moderates the influences of positive feelings on the exploratory acquisition of products as well as the impacts of positive feelings on exploratory information seeking. These results partially supported Hypothesis 5.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

Men and women are different in consumer behaviour, which has been extensively discussed in the literature, but gender and emotions have limited literature and still developing. For example, recent studies such as, "Negative emotions and consumer behavioural intention to adopt emerging e-banking technology (Abikari, Öhman & Yazdanfar, 2022), Consumer decision-making in a retail store: the role of mental imagery and gender difference (Kim et al., 2021) and Discrete emotions effects on electronic word-of-mouth helpfulness: The moderating role of reviewer gender and contextual emotional tone (Craciun, Zhou, Shan, 2020).

Drawing on the hypotheses, in this study, we have found that emotions impact consumer behaviour and differences in emotions by gender differences as well. Results showed that both positive and negative feelings significantly influenced consumer behaviour. These relationships were particularly pronounced in consumer decision-making.

Gender moderated some of the emotions-consumer behaviour relationships. The results highlighted the importance of emotions in explaining consumer behaviour and showed that emotions are differently associated with consumer behaviour in males and females.

In markets that are increasingly hypercompetitive, the future of personal selling and sales management will depend increasingly on our understanding of affective processes to achieve a competitive advantage.

#### 5. Limitations and directions for future research

One potential limitation of our research was using a convenient sampling with an insignificant sample size of 439, which restricts the generalisability of the results. To better generalise the findings, future research should consider a significant sample size not confined to one country but multiple countries from a continent such as Asia or Europe. In addition, the present study employed self-report measures, which could have affected socially preferable responsiveness to present themselves in a favourable light.



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