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**Course Code: BUS 208**

**Course Title: Consumer Behaviour**

**Question: What is the role of Consumers in Marketing?**

**Who is a consumer?**

People sometimes use the two terms interchangeably, but the term “consumer” has a more distinct definition compared to “customer.” A customer is simply a buyer, while a consumer is the individual who both buys and uses the product or service. A consumer is a customer, but a customer isn’t always a consumer in a business transaction. A consumer also is called the end user. Consumers play a major role in marketing research before a product or service is released to the public. Once you identify your target consumers, you can invite these people to participate in focus groups or send them surveys to quiz them on key elements of your marketing plan. Questioning them about the right price to charge and what marketing message appeals to them as a consumer can help guide your entire plan, particularly when releasing a new product or service.

Consumer Behaviour refers to the study of buying tendencies of consumers. An individual who goes for shopping does not necessarily end up buying products. There are several stages a consumer goes through before he finally picks up things available in the market. Various factors, be it cultural, social, personal or psychological influence the buying decision of individuals. It is important for marketers to understand the buying behaviour of consumers in order for their products to sell well. It is really important for marketers to understand what motivated of prompts consumers to buy a certain product.

Consumer behaviour also involves the study of how people--either individually or in groups--acquire, use, experience, discard, and make decisions about goods, services, or even lifestyle practices such as socially responsible and healthy eating. As an evolving phenomenon, one should not be overly dogmatic about this definition. Numerous alternatives, each taking a slightly different angle and emphasizing different aspects.

However, the havior occurs either for the individual, or in the context of a group (e.g., friends influence what kinds of clothes a person wears, or family tradition influences which brand of laundry detergent is bought). Consumer behaviour involves the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased. Product use is often of great interest to the marketer, because this may influence how a product is best positioned or how we can encourage increased consumption. Since many environmental problems result from product disposal (e.g., motor oil being sent into sewage systems to save the recycling fee, or garbage piling up at landfills) this is also an area of interest.Marketers need to understand the psychology of a consumer, what exactly they feel about a product before they buy it. There are two ways the enables marketers to understand their consumers.

Primary Research, which refers to a research methodology where marketers interact with consumers directly and gather as much information as they can. Information is generally collected through surveys, questionnaires, feedback forms, interviews etc.

Secondary Research, which often refers to relying on information which has been collected by others at some point of time.

**Marketers must also take into account:**

* Age group of consumers
* Geographical location
* Lifestyle of consumers
* Social Status of consumers

**Role of the Consumer in Marketing**

The company is the main catalyst in the marketing of its own products and services, consumers also play a role in the marketing process. When developing your plan, it is important to remember that the customer is the central element of all decisions related to marketing. Understanding the roles consumers play in marketing is very important and they include:

**Marketing Research**

Consumers play a major role in marketing research before a product or service is released to the public. Once you identify your target consumers, you can invite these people to participate in focus groups or send them surveys to quiz them on key elements of your marketing plan. Questioning them about the right price to charge and what marketing message appeals to them as a consumer can help guide your entire plan, particularly when releasing a new product or service.

**Product Feedback**

The consumer also plays a role in the feedback-gathering process after a company’s offering hits the market. After implementing your marketing plan and releasing the product or service, you need to track results and continually monitor consumer needs so you can improve on the offering in the future. For instance, software developers seek feedback from consumers regularly to help them develop new and improved versions of programs.

**Bring in New Consumers**

Consumers also can act as agents to further the effects of your marketing plan. With word of mouth marketing consumers who have used your product review it both offline and online and can refer other consumers to the product. This marketing is free and very effective, as individuals tend to trust the word of people they know when it comes to trying new products and services.

The above points are the roles in which consumers play in marketing.