**Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour:**

Consumer behaviour is affected by a number of factors. They can be classified into cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors.

**I.****Cultural Factors:**

**1.Culture:**

Cultural factors have a deep influence on buyer behaviour. Culture is the basic determinant of a person’s wants. It refers to a set of learned beliefs, values, attitudes, morals, customs, habits and forms of behaviour that are shared by a society. These are transmitted from generation to generation.

Culture is always alive, moving, and ever-changing. Culture shapes the pattern of consumption and pattern of decision-making. Food habits, religious practices, the way we dress are all influenced by culture.

**Examples:**

(a) Toothpowder usage is in line with traditional mouth-washing habits. The person applies toothpowder to his index finger and rubs it on the teeth. Hence, the reason for the popularity of the toothpowder.

(b) Many companies have come out with religious calendars with illustrations of their products and such calendars are preserved for a long time.

**2. Sub-Culture:**

Each culture consists of smaller sub-cultures that provide more specific identification and socialisation for its members.

**There are four types of subcultures:**

(a) Nationality groups such as Chinese, Irish, Polish, etc.,

(b) Racial groups such as Blacks, Whites, etc.,

(c) Geographical groups such as North Indian, South Indian, etc.,

(d) Religious groups such as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, etc. – While Brahmins prefer to go for higher education and take up employment, Vaishyas are engaged in trading activities. Caste decides a person’s status and power in society. During elections, the candidates depend upon the people belonging to the same caste.

**3. Social Classes:**

These are divisions in the society which are hierarchically ordered and whose members share similar values, interests, and behaviour. There are three distinct social classes- upper, middle and lower classes. Lower classes show limited sense of choice making. Each class differs in their patronisation, the reading habits, clothing habits, etc. Upper class consumers want products and brands that depict their social status. Middle-class consumers shop carefully, read advertisements and compare prices before they buy.

For Example, a family from a higher class may wish to eat in a five-star hotel. A middle- class family may opt for a cost-effective restaurant.

**II.****Social Factors:**

**1. Reference Groups:**

Reference groups are the social, economic, or professional groups that have a direct or indirect influence on the person’s attitudes or behaviours. Consumers accept information provided by their peer groups on the quality, performances, style, etc. These groups influence the person’s attitudes; expose them to new behaviours and lifestyles; create pressures on the individual.

**2. Family:**

Family constitutes the most influential group on one’s attitudes. Personal values, attitudes, and buying habits have been shaped by family influences. The members of the family play different role such as influencer, decider, purchaser, and user in the buying process.

A person acquires an orientation towards religion, politics, and economics and a sense of personal ambition, does not interact with the parents, still their influence in the unconscious behaviour can be significant. A person’s behaviour is also influenced by his/her spouse and children.

With a great exposure to more information through various media of communication, teenagers are occupying a major role in decision-making. In Indian urban families, wife is the purchasing agent. In case of expensive products, there is a joint decision-making. For example,

**3. Roles and Status:**

Roles and Status are factors which also influence decision making. Roles are the activities of the person in a group. A woman plays the role of wife, mother and sister in a family. She plays the role of an employee in an organisation. She may also play the role of a secretary of an association.

Each role carries a status. People will choose products that will communicate their status to the society. Example- An executive working in a multinational bank may prefer branded shirts/trousers, expensive watches, perfumes and drive a car to reach office.

**III.****Personal Factors:**

A buyer’s decisions are also influenced by personal characteristics, notably the buyer’s age and life-cycle stage, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, and personality and self- concept.

**1. Lifecycle:**

People buy different goods and services over their lifetime. The life-cycle of a person begins with child birth, shifts to dependent infancy, adolescence, teenage, adulthood, middle-age, old age and then ends with death. Under each stage people’s buying behaviour is different. Under the first three stages, decisions are not made by the consumer.

They are totally dependent on others. In the next stage, buyers not only make their decisions but also influence others’ buying decisions. In the later stages of life-cycle, they are back to the early stages. Example- With exposure to TV, school-going children have started influencing buying decisions with regard to biscuits, chocolates, soft drinks, toys and marketers are targeting this segment.

**2. Occupation:**

A person’s behaviour depends upon his occupation. A company’s Managing Director will prefer expensive suits, air travel, separate cottage, etc. A worker would prefer economic dresses, bus travel, etc. The occupation of a person decides his ability to buy. Hence, his need-satisfaction depends on his occupation, which provides him the means.

**3. Economic Circumstances:**

Occupation gives rise to the economic circumstances. A person may have high desire to buy so many things. All his needs do not become wants. This is the result of his purchasing power. People’s economic circumstances refer to their spendable income, savings, assets, borrowing power and attitude towards spending versus saving.

Example- the Indian middle- class has grown in prosperity and consumption of items such as kitchen appliances, TV, refrigerators, washing machines, ready-made garments, jewellery is growing.

**4. Lifestyle:**

Lifestyle may be defined as the pattern or way of living of a person which will be indicated through the person’s activities, interests, and opinions. A person may reside in an HIC flat. He may have costly furniture. He shall buy his clothing’s only from Raymond’s. He may have his dinner only in five-star hotels. His hobby may be playing billiards. With the above activities, we can understand the lifestyle of a person. Hence, he will choose according to his lifestyle.

**5. Personality:**

Personality is defined as the person’s distinguishing psychological characteristics that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to his or her environment. Personality is described in terms of such traits as self-confidence, dominance, autonomy, deference, sociability, defensiveness and adaptability. A person to maintain his personality will decide his purchase accordingly. He buys products and services that reflect his image.

endence, etc., can indicate how people behave.

**IV.** **Psychological Factors:**

**1. Motivation:**

Motivation is the driving force which makes the person act. Motivation is the drive to act, to move, to obtain a goal or an objective. A human being is motivated by needs. When these needs are backed by purchasing power it becomes a want. Buyer behaviour, hence, is stimulated by motivation.

**2. Perception:**

A motivated person is ready to act. How the motivated person actually acts is influenced by his or her perception of the situation. To perceive is to see, to hear, to touch, to smell, and to sense something an event or relation and to organise, interpret and find meaning in the experience.

Our senses perceive the colour, shape, sound, smell, taste, etc., of this stimulus. Our behaviour is governed by these physical perceptions. Perception has been obtained by social psychologists as the ‘complex process’ by which people select, organise and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world.

People can emerge with different perceptions of the same object because of three perceptual processes-

**(3) Learning:**

Learning describes changes in an individual’s behaviour arising from experience. Learning refers to changes in behaviour brought about by practice or experience. Almost everything one does or thinks is learned. Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge about products, their benefits and methods of usage and also disposal of product after use. Example- Product demonstration is a very effective method to convince the consumer. Products like paints, pressure cookers, fertilisers are promoted through demonstration.

**(4) Belief:**

A belief is a descriptive thought that a person holds about something. These beliefs may be based on knowledge, opinion, or faith. They may or may not carry emotional change. An attitude describes a person’s enduring favourable or unfavourable cognitive evaluations, emotional feelings, and action tendencies towards some object or idea.

In simple words, attitude is an emotionalised pre-disposition or inclination to respond positively or negatively in a consistent way towards similar objects. For example, once a consumer has developed a brand loyalty, it is hard to change his attitudes and beliefs towards the brand.

Attitudes are the result of experiences. Attitudes interact with perception, thinking, feeling, and reasoning.