

A STUDY ON COGNITIVE DISSONANCE REDUCTION STRATEGIES BY CONSUMERS OF ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

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Abstract: The term ‘Cognitive dissonance’ was first coined by Leon Festinger in 1957 in his book ‘The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance’. Leon Festinger (1957) defines cognitive dissonance as the feeling of discomfort when simultaneously holding two or more conflicting cognitions: ideas, beliefs, values or emotional reactions. In a state of dissonance, people may sometimes feel "disequilibrium": frustration, hunger, dread, guilt, anger, embarrassment, anxiety, etc. The theory of cognitive dissonance in social psychology proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by altering existing cognitions, adding new ones to create a consistent belief system, or alternatively by reducing the importance of any one of the dissonant elements. The theory has much wider implication in consumer decision making, especially in consumer behaviour; both in pre-purchase as well as post-purchase situations. Authors have asked to 785 respondents from selected cities of Gujarat State city who are possessors of electronic products using non-probability convenience sampling method. On the basis of past literature, authors have asked questions related to how consumers try to reduce dissonance. In this paper authors have tried to identify what are the factors which affect dissonance reduction and whether there exists any relationship between post purchase cognitive dissonance and dissonance reduction efforts?

Keywords: Cognitive Dissonance, Dissonance Reduction.

Introduction:

Cognitive Dissonance:

Cognitive Dissonance, though a terminology from psychology, but has a great relevance with marketing and that too specifically with consumer behaviour. The term ‘Cognitive dissonance’ was first coined by Leon Festinger in 1957 in his book ‘The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance’. The theory has much wider implication in consumer decision making both in pre-purchase as well as post-purchase situations.

Philip Kotler (1998) describes in his book of Marketing Management that when the customer is highly involved in purchasing a product and sees very few differences between brands at that time a mental imbalance arises, called as Cognitive Dissonance. Involvement becomes high because of so many factors like product is costly and such that is not purchased frequently but purchased after very long-time interval, product may be risky etc. In such situation after taking a decision or before taking a decision customer will try to reduce this dissonance.

In marketing, when the customers are buying the products, after a very complicated buying process they come with a conclusion to purchase a particular product. But as we know that buying process involves elimination of several alternatives as against selected alternative. Now the more attractive the rejected decision is, the more dissonant a customer would be.

Review of Literature:

D Ehrlichet *al.*, (1957) found in their research that recent automobile buyers read car advertisements that supported their choices and avoided reading those that contradicted their decisions significantly more often than non-purchasers. They concluded that automobile purchasers who have recently bought new cars experienced cognitive dissonance and attempted to reduce the resultant anxiety by selectively exposing themselves to supporting advertisements.

Robert J. Holloway (1967) gave some interesting findings through his research as follows:

1. Consumers who buy when they have strong inducement should experience less dissonance than those who buy without inducement.
2. Consumers who obtain adequate information probably will have less dissonance than those who buy without sufficient information.
3. Product alternatives with very similar attributes may cause greater consumer dissonance than dissimilar alternatives.
4. Interaction effects occur when various dissonance-arousing factors are combined in one buying situation.

Sadaomi Oshikawa (October 1969) has related the cognitive dissonance theory with consumer behaviour by describing that dissonance can be aroused in 3 different ways. (1) After making an important and difficult purchasing decision. (2) By Forced Compliance i.e. purchasing the inferior product even after having knowledge of he/she is rejecting superior product because of forced volition to buy that product. (3) After being exposed to discrepant information i.e. when an individual is buying a product after carefully analysing the all the features associated with it, and after purchasing if he/she comes to know that the choice which he has made is not proper after getting new information after the purchase.

Shelby D. Hunt (1970) compared with the control group; the subjects who received the post-transaction letter experienced less dissonance, had more favourable attitudes toward the store, and had higher intentions of future purchases. It would appear that at least some types of post-transaction reassurance would be effective.

Unfortunately, when compared with the control group, the subjects who received the post-transaction telephone call experienced more dissonance, had less favourable attitudes toward the store, and had lower intentions of future purchases. This post-transaction message appeared to be not only ineffective, but also actually counter-productive. The message actually aggravated the situation. Neither theory nor the other findings of the study explain why the results of the telephone

group were contrary to expectations. The author offers the following possibilities contributing to this finding.

- ✓ The subjects who received the telephone call may have suspected some ulterior motive for its purpose.
- ✓ The telephone call may have interrupted some of the subjects at inopportune times.

Some of the subjects may have been annoyed by firms that sell over the telephone, and therefore interpreted the telephone call as a sales device.

Sadaomi Oshikawa (1972) critically evaluated the study of Bell. He points out that Bell has not measured the reported dissonance but rather he has measured Chronic Anxiety, because the questions which were asked in Bell's study do not measure cognitive dissonance but they measure anxiety. Oshikawa tried to measure the cognitive dissonance by asking the questions in 5 different categories and he tried to identify the relationship among them. 5 categories in Oshikawa's studies were; Correctness of Decisions, Reported Dissonance, Lack of persuasibility, Quality of Service and Self Confidence. He finds that, persuasibility has no relationship with dissonance. He further finds that customers, who are highly dissonant, are less satisfied with the quality of the service. Those customers who are low on dissonant are very satisfied with the purchase decision they made.

Del I. Hawkins's (1972) findings says that people who say they generally worry after making a decision tend to score higher on a measure of chronic or trait anxiety than do individuals who report a lower degree of worrying, suggests that dissonance may be a specific form of anxiety. Furthermore, it suggests that people will vary in the frequency with which they will experience dissonance after decision making. However, it must be pointed out that felt anxiety, and presumably dissonance, is a situational phenomenon. Thus, while some may be more prone to experience dissonance than others, whether or not an individual will experience dissonance in a given situation depends upon the interaction between that individual and a specific situation. There is an obvious need for additional research into the relationship between anxiety and dissonance. Specifically, is dissonance a specific form of state (temporary) anxiety? Do individuals vary in their tendency to experience dissonance?

Research Objectives:

- To identify factors affecting dissonance reduction strategies among the consumers of electronic products.
- To find out relationship between cognitive dissonance experienced and efforts to reduce dissonance by the consumers of electronic products.

Research Methodology:

➤ **Research Design**

Descriptive – Cross Sectional Research Design was used to describe the responses of the respondents after framing the instruments.

➤ **Data Collection**

Primary Data was collected by directly interviewing the consumers of electronic products and asked them the statements regarding the dissonance reduction strategy. Secondary Data was collected by reviewing various research papers and articles.

➤ **Sampling Unit**

➤ Sampling Elements for my survey were Buyers of Electronic Products viz. Mobile Phone, Refrigerator, LCD/LED, Digital Camera, Laptop, Air-Conditioner and Microwave. All these products are high end electronic products.

➤ **Sample Size**

➤ 785 consumers of various Electronic Products

➤ **Sampling Method**

➤ Non-Probabilistic Convenience Method

➤ **Sampling Site**

➤ Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Navsari, Anand, Gandhidham

Data Analysis:

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	402	51.2
Female	383	48.8
Total	785	100.0

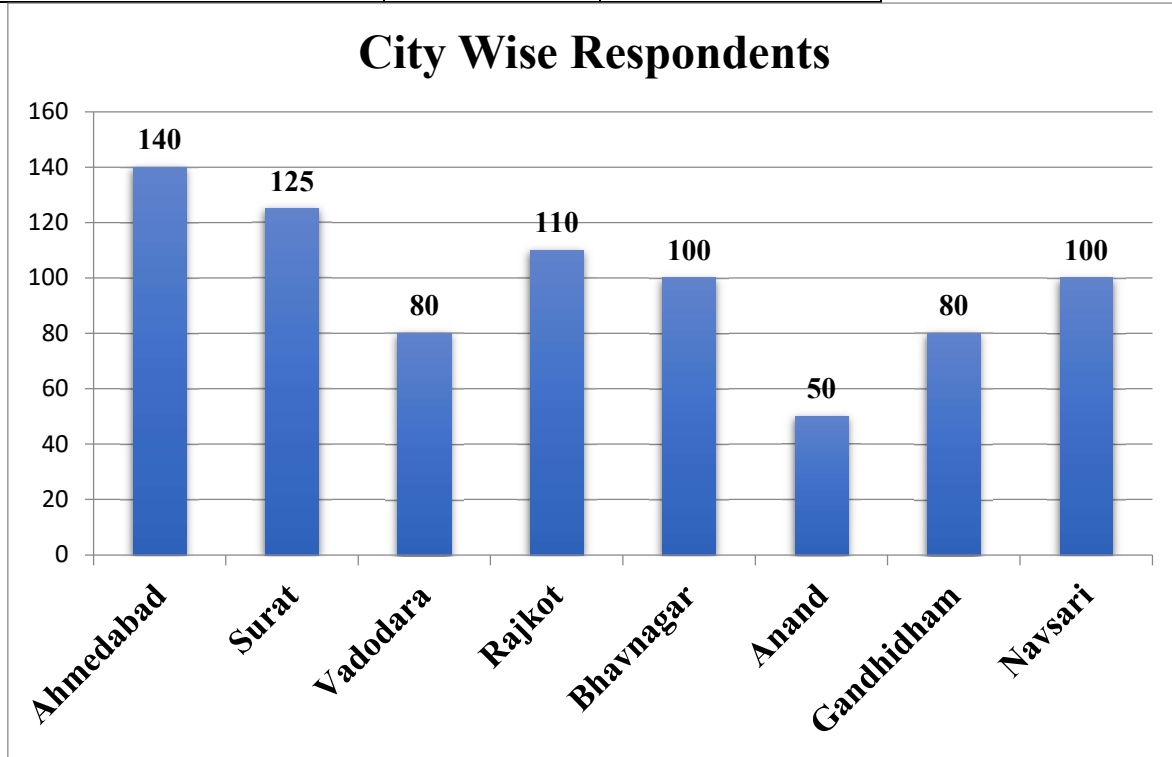
From the above table it can be inferred that out of total 785 consumers of electronic products, maximum 51.2% respondents were male and 48.8% respondents were female. Majority male consumers of electronic products were surveyed.

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
15-20	38	4.84
21-25	96	12.23
26-30	225	28.66
31-35	100	12.74
36-40	93	11.85
41-45	77	9.81
46-50	98	12.48
51-55	28	3.57
56-60	27	3.44
More than 60	3	0.38
	785	100.00

From the above table it can be inferred that out of total 785 consumers of electronic products, maximum 28.66% respondents belonged to the age group of 26-30 years, 12.74% respondents belonged to the age group of 31-35 years. Majority consumers of electronic products range between 26 to 35 years of age in my sample.

City Wise Respondents:

City	Frequency	Percent
Ahmedabad	140	17.8
Surat	125	15.9
Vadodara	80	10.2
Rajkot	110	14.0
Bhavnagar	100	12.7
Anand	50	6.4
Gandhidham	80	10.2
Navsari	100	12.7
Total	785	100.0



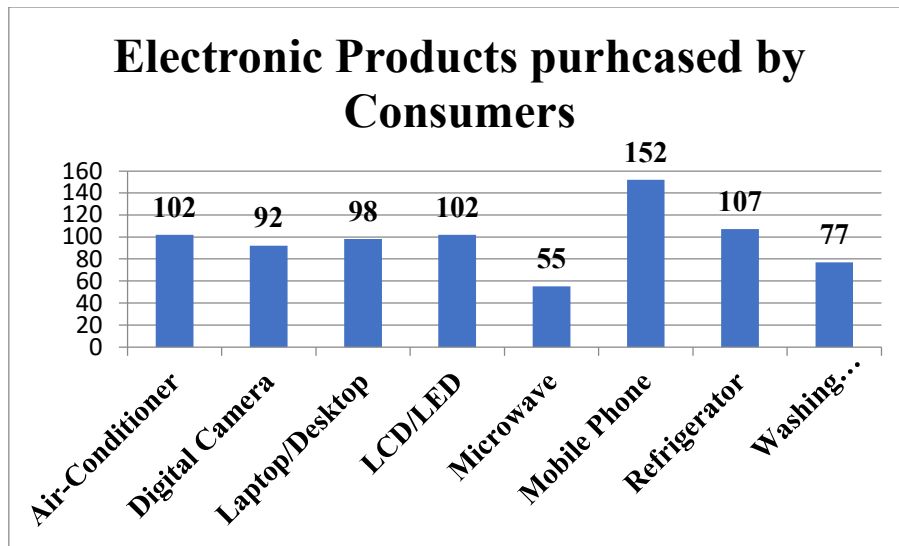
From the above table & chart it is shown that maximum 140 (17.8%) respondents are from Ahmedabad City, 125 (15.9%) respondents are from Surat City, 110 (14%) respondents are from Rajkot City, 100 (12.7%) respondents are from Bhavnagar & Navsari each, 80 (10.2%) respondents are from Vadodara City & Gandhidham City each and 50 (6.4%) respondents are from Anand City. This means maximum 290 (36.94%) respondents are from Saurashtra & Kutch Zone,

270 (34.39%) respondents are from Ahmedabad & Madhya Gujarat zone and 225 (28.66%) respondents are from South Gujarat Zone.

Electronic Product Wise Analysis:

Electronic Products	Frequency	Percent
Air-Conditioner	102	13.0
Digital Camera	92	11.7
Laptop/Desktop	98	12.5
LCD/LED	102	13.0
Microwave	55	7.0
Mobile Phone	152	19.4
Refrigerator	107	13.6
Washing Machine	77	9.8
Total	785	100.0

Table 4.1.7 Electronic Product Wise



From the above table & figure I can show that in my sample there are maximum 152 (19.4%) consumers of Mobile Phone, 107 (13.6%) customers are of Refrigerator, 102 (13%) customers of Air-Conditioner, & LCD/LED each, 98 (12.5%) customers are of Laptop/Desktop, 92 (11.7%) customers are of Digital Camera, 77 (9.8%) customers are of Washing Machine & the least 55 (7%) customers are of Microwave.

Dissonance Reduction Efforts

I would see advertisement of my selected brand and will try to see positive features about my product	377
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I may take information from the person who is having same brand and will try to get assurance from him / her	371
I will compare core benefits and supplementary benefits of my selected brand and my rejected brand	342
I will try to think positive about my product	321
I would replace the product (if possible)	293

Majority respondents shall try to reduce their dissonance by seeing advertisements of their selected brand, Will try to take conformance from the person who is having same brand.

Dissonance Reduction Strategies	Respondents Experienced Dissonance
I will inform others regarding negative aspects of my product and will make them aware about not to purchase that brand	103
I would replace the product (if possible)	102
I will compare core benefits and supplementary benefits of my selected brand and my rejected brand	101
I may take information from the person who is having same brand and will try to get assurance from him / her	91
I will try to think positive about my product	58

Out of total respondents, 103 respondents who experienced high amount of dissonance, shall try to spread negative word of mouth related to their selected brand, 102 respondents said they will replace the product, if possible, 101 respondents said that they will compare core and supplementary benefits of their selected and rejected brand.

Results from Factor Analysis:

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.391	30.823	30.823	3.391	30.823	30.823	2.154	19.579	19.579

2	1.517	13.795	44.619	1.517	13.795	44.619	2.068	18.797	38.376
3	1.205	10.959	55.578	1.205	10.959	55.578	1.892	17.202	55.578
4	0.999	9.08	64.657						
5	0.892	8.11	72.767						
6	0.709	6.445	79.213						
7	0.656	5.962	85.175						
8	0.526	4.78	89.955						
9	0.466	4.238	94.193						
10	0.331	3.012	97.204						
11	0.308	2.796	100						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Dissonance Reduction Strategies	Component		
	1	2	3
I would see advertisement of my selected brand and will try to see positive features about my product	0.657		
I may take information from the person who is having same brand and will try to get assurance from him / her	0.755		
I will go again to the sales-person or dealer to ask about my product in details	0.749		
I will compare core benefits and supplementary benefits of my selected brand and my rejected brand			0.385
I will explain others good features about my product		0.726	
I will find out negative features about my rejected brand	0.456		
I will try to think positive about my product		0.724	
I will purchase new product within shorter period of time			0.778
I will do nothing and will continue with current brand		0.703	
I will inform others regarding negative aspects of my product and will make them aware about not to purchase that brand			0.736
I would replace the product (if possible)			0.536

Self-Explanatory Consonance (Factor 1)	I will explain others good features about my product
	I will try to think positive about my product
	I will do nothing and will continue with current brand
Action Based Consonance (Factor 2)	I would see advertisement of my selected brand and will try to see positive features about my product
	I may take information from the person who is having

	same brand and will try to get assurance from him / her
	I will go again to the sales-person or dealer to ask
	about my product in details
	I will find out negative features about my rejected brand
Negative WOM & Product Switching (Factor 3)	I will inform others regarding negative aspects of my product
	and will make them aware about not to purchase that brand
	I would replace the product (if possible)
	I will purchase new product within shorter period of time

Correlation between Dissonance Experienced and Efforts for Dissonance Reduction:

		Mean of Dissonance Reduction Strategies	Mean of Dissonance
Mean of Dissonance Reduction Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	-.117**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	785	785
Mean of Dissonance	Pearson Correlation	-.117**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	785	785

Findings

- 51.20% male respondents and 48.8% female out of total 785 respondents
- Maximum 28.66% respondents belong to the age group 26-30, 12.74% respondents belong to the age group of 31-35
- Majority respondents shall try to reduce their dissonance by seeing advertisements of their selected brand, Will try to take conformance from the person who is having same brand.
- Out of total respondents, 103 respondents who experienced high amount of dissonance, shall try to spread negative word of mouth related to their selected brand, 102 respondents said they will replace the product if possible, 101 respondents said that they will compare core and supplementary benefits of their selected and rejected brand.
- Factors that affect dissonance reduction strategies.
 - Self-Explanatory Consonance
 - Action Based Consonance
 - Negative word of mouth & product/brand switching
- There exists negative correlation between dissonance experienced by the consumers of electronic products and dissonance reducing efforts. There exists negative but low correlation between the two.

Conclusion

Surprising and contradicting to literature review result found was there existed low and negative correlation between dissonance experienced and dissonance reduction efforts. People used to reduce dissonance by self-explanatory dissonance, action-based dissonance and by spreading negative WOM and brand switching behaviour. Consumers used to take support from advertisements and from other consumers who are having the same brand or product to bring consonance.

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