

Involvement Measurement Models- A Retro Analysis

Implications to Academia & Industry

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ABSTRACT

Involvement has been studied as a social, psychological, and marketing variable for over 30 years. This variable has been found to be an internal constraint, which requires commitment, on concern by an individual and which can be defined in terms of direction (e.g., oriented towards a product or service) and level of involvement has been accepted as being oriented toward decision making, advertising, and products. This article endeavors to examine the framework and related issues of different involvement instruments developed over time and reexamine the literature in respect of involvement applicable to various industries and presents comprehensive tables indicating the critical dimensions been used in involvement instruments and conceptualized in different global contexts. Also unravels the invaluable contributions made to the involvement literature in the 21st century and clearly outlines the implications of these standardized models to academia and industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite a growing volume of research on consumers and financial services, our understanding of the factors that affect both evaluations of different financial services and the final purchase decisions is of importance to both marketing scientists and practitioners. One factor which is thought to be of particular significance is the level of consumer involvement (Foxall and pallister, 1998). The concept of involvement was originally investigated in the field of social psychology by Sherrif and Cantril (1947) who viewed it as the relation between ego and object. Later Sherrif et. al. (1965) referred to it as the centrality of beliefs involved with an individual. The concept of involvement was first employed in studies of attitude change, and used in social judgement theory which postulates that an audience's responses to a persuasive message is determined by two factors acting together: one is prior attitude toward the topic: and the second is involvement (Sherrif

and Hovland, 1961; Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1983).

2. INVOLVEMENT CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

Predicting the human behavior is very difficult or Herculean task because of its dynamic nature. Researchers of consumer behavior have historically developed a number of complex theories in the attempt to explain and predict the behaviour of the consumer (e.g., Bettman 1979; Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell 1978; Howard and Sheth 1969). These theories propose that consumers actively search for and use information to make informed choices. This implies that the consumer is an intelligent, rational, thinking and problem solving organism, who stores evaluates sensory inputs to make a reasoned decision (Markin and Narayana 1975).

However, a great deal of consumer behaviour does not involve extensive search for information or a comprehensive evaluation

of the choice alternatives, even for the major items (Olshavsky and Granbois 1979).

However, a great deal of consumer behaviour does not involve extensive search for information or a comprehensive evaluation of the choice alternatives, even for the purchase of major items (Olshavsky and Grandois 1979). The average consumer makes dozens of mundane decisions each day, few of which may be of importance. For such decisions, it may be inappropriate to assume an active information processor (Kassarjian 1978, 1981). This idea has led theorists to view consumer behavior in terms of two-fold dichotomy: low involvement consumer behaviour and high involvement consumer behavior (Engel and Blackwell 1982). From a consumer behavior perspective, involvement has been defined as motivational state of mind (arousal) that is goal directed (Zaltman and Wallendorf 1983, P. 550). This indicate that there is a link between the level of a person's motivation towards a particular goal and the level of involvement of that person.

With services, consumers are involved with a specific activity. While buyers are also involved with specific product, the nature of involvement between the consumer and a service is distinctively difference. Involvement has been studied as a social, psychological, and marketing variable for over 30 years. This variable has been found to be an internal constraint, which requires commitment, importance, or concern by an individual and which can be defined in terms of direction (e.g., oriented towards a product or service) and level of involvement has been accepted as being oriented toward decision making, advertising, and products. The lack of applicaiton of these ideas to services indicates an opportunity to use involvement in a very practical situation. If one perceives involvement in a logical fashion, there must

be a level of participation by an individual. A specific definaion which is operational to services from the marketer's perspective is as follows: Involvement is the amount of participation perceived by the consumer to be required to engage in particular activity or service. All services have varying degrees of involvement, as well as types of involvement.

Houston and Rothschild (1978) realized the potential of involvement as a multidisciplinary construct, and suggested that there are different types of involvement and different ways to study it. They placed emphasis in involvement as it relates to cognitive responses to persuasive messages. They introduced three types of involvement which they call: one is situational involvement, second is enduring involvement and the third one is response involvement (Houston and Rothschild, 1978, p. 184). These types of involvement aod conceptualized as follows: One is external (S) to the individual, another is internal (O), and together S and O elicit a third type of involvement which is response oriented (R). Thus the involvement paradigm is similar to the S-O-R paradigm in learning theory where SOR represent stimulus, organism, and response, respectively. Houston and Rothschild (1978) and Rothschild (1984) offer one definition of involvement: "involvement is an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest". The reasons for the diverse definitions and measures of involvement are perhaps to the different application of the term "involvement". The literature suggests that a person can be involved with advertisements (Krugman 1962, 1965, 1967, and 1977). The literature suggests that a person can be involved with products (Howard and Sheth 1969; Hupfer and Gardner 1971). The literature suggests that a person can be involved with purchase decisions (Clarke and Bell 1978).

Researchers generally use the resulting behaviours as indicators of the level of involvement. The measure of involvement is sensitive to the proposed areas that affect a person's involvement level. These areas may be classified into three categories (Bloch and Richins 1983; Houston and Rothschild 1978). Personal -inherent interests, values, or needs that motivate one toward the object. Physical - characteristics of the object that cause differentiation and increase interest. Situational - something that temporarily increases relevance or interest toward the object. In Houston and Rothschild's (1978) framework, different situations and different people are two factors that lead to various level of Involvement.

3. INVOLVEMENT MODELS FRAMEWORK - REEXAMINATION

In the tough competitive milieu,

measurement of involvement has increasingly created an interest among the manufactures and the scholars alike in as much the linkages of involvement aspect with other service/manufacturing firm's evaluation parameters have not been well established yet. The imperative involvement models in chronological order are as follows:

1. Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1985).
2. Consumer Involvement Profiles (Laurent and Kapferer 1985).
3. The Emotional Aspect of Product Involvement (Zaichkowsky, et al. 1987).
4. The Role of Involvement in Attention and comprehension Processes (Celsi and Olsen, 1988).
5. Purchase Decision Involvement (Mittal, 1989).
6. Utilizing Consumer Involvement to Market Services (Good, 1990).
7. Consumer Involvement in Service Decisions (Arora, 1993)

Table 1 : Dimensions of Involvement Measurement Model

S.No.	Dimension	Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1985)	Consumer Involvement Profiles (Laurent and Kapferer 1985)	The Emotional Aspect of Product Involvement Profiles (Zaichkowsky, et. al., 1987)	The Role of Involvement in Attention and Comprehension Processes (Celsi and Olsen, 1988)	Purchase Decision Involvement (Mittal, 1989)	Utilizing Consumer Involvement to Market Services (Good, 1990)	Consumer Involvement in Service Decision (Arora, 1993)
1.	Interest	○	✓			❖		□
2.	Pleasure	○	✓					□
3.	Sign Value		✓					
4.	Importance	○	✓			❖		□
5.	Risk	○	✓					□
6.	Probability		✓		⊗			
7.	Emotion							
8.	Situation					❖		
9.	Participation						➤	
10.	Relationships						➤	
	Felt Involvement (Experience)				*			

A comprehensive table (Table 1) is presented for easy understanding of various dimensions used by different authors in their attempt to deposit a involvement model. Early contributions towards the literature of involvement model have been developed by Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky (Dec 1985), who was one among the pioneer propounded an instrument to measure the involvement construct called as personal Involvement Inventory. She said that the involvement can be classified into three Domains of Involvement they are as follows- Product Involvement, Advertising Involvement and Purchase Involvement. Definition for Product Involvement; “A person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and needs”.

The Zaichkowsky’s personal Involvement Inventory was widely critiqued for its unidimensional in nature rather than multidimensional. Rothschild (1984) argued that a consensus had formed around a definition of involvement as “a state of arousal, interest or motivation, “and that the new priority should be data collection and not further conceptualization. The personal involvement inventory (PII) of Zaichkowsky treats involvement as a unidimensional construct. To overcome the drawbacks of personal involvement inventory (PII) the consumer involvement profiles was developed by Laurent and Kapferer it treats involvement as a multidimensional construct.

So the primary goal is to modify and extend the PII into an multidimensional construct so as to produce a measure that will incorporate risk and sign-value components, as well as perceived importance pleasure. Laurent and Kapferer (Feb 1985) who was one among the pioneer propounded an instrument to measure the involvement construct called as Consumer Involvement Profiles. Their research study indicates five antecedents or

facets of involvement. The perceived importance of the product (its personal meaning). The perceived risk associated with the product purchase, which in turn has two facets (Bauer 1967). The perceived importance of negative consequences in case of poor choice and the perceived probability of making such a mistake. The symbolic or sign value attributed by the consumer to the product, its purchase or its consumption. The differentiates functional risk from psychological risk (Bauer 1967). The hedonic value of the product, its emotional appeal, its ability to provide pleasure and affect. Importance, Risk importance Risk Probability and Pleasure Sign.

The Emotional Aspect of Product Involvement was developed by Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky and Simon Fraser in 1987 (a). They have told that some products have varying degrees of emotion in product involvement. Some differences in product perception were found between males and females. Some current work on involvement manipulates the construct in terms of a cognitive/rational thought or in terms of emotional or affective reaction to the stimulus in question (e.g., park and young, 1983, 1986).

The purpose of this paper is to provide discussion and present some exploratory empirical work on measuring the emotional component of involvement perceived in product categories. For e.g., for certain products, several of the 20 items correlated and loaded more heavily on the residual factor that accounted for a minor percent of the variation. These items were boring-interesting, unexciting-exiting, mundane-fascinating and appealing-unappealing and on a face a validity judgement seemed to represent the emotional or arousing side of involvement. Keeping with our theory of an emotional

side to involvement, the reduced PII should have a consistently identifiable emotion component.

The Role of Involvement in Attention and Comprehension Processes was propounded by Celsi and Olson in (1988). They have said that, the personal relevance of a product is represented by the perceived linkage between an individual's needs, goals and values (self-knowledge) and their product knowledge (attributes and benefits). To the extent that product characteristics are associated with personal goals and values, the consumer will experience strong feelings of personal relevance or involvement with the product. The concept of felt involvement refers to a consumer's overall subjective feeling of personal relevance. We use the term felt involvement to emphasize the experiential phenomenological nature of involvement. Sources of felt involvement are situational sources of personal relevance and intrinsic sources of personal involvement.

Mittal (1989) has developed an instrument to measure the involvement construct called as Purchase Decision Involvement. He defines purchase decision involvement as "the extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear on a purchase decision task". He clarified the above definition by indicating the purchase decision Involvement was similar to situational involvement as discussed by Houston and Rothschild (1977). He argues that, like other purchase-related mindsets (e.g., brand attitudes and purchase intentions), purchase decision involvement should be measured as close to the time of purchase as possible. David J. Good (1990) has propounded new ways to Market Services by Utilizing Consumer Involvement. He said that Involvement is the amount of participation perceived by the consumer to be required to engage in a particular activity or service. All services

have varying degrees of involvement, as well as types of involvement. The two major functions which the above definition suggests, first there is a resident requirement of consumer participation, which, as a result, indicates that a special relationship exists between the user and the service. The level of the relationship may vary from high to low, that is, participation with a service ranging from watching it being performed the service (high involvement). Second, involvement with services would also indicate that the degree of participation is situational, that is, a number of other variables would impact on the degree to which an individual is actually involved in particular service.

Arora (1993) has propounded a scale to measure consumer involvement in services. The concept of involvement was originally investigated in the field of social psychology by Sheriff and Cantril (1947), who viewed it as the relation between ego and object. Later sheriff et al. (1965) referred to it as the centrality beliefs involved with an individual. Early contributions towards the literature of involvement model have been developed by JUDITH Lynne Zaichkowsky (Dec 1985) who was one among the pioneer propounded an instrument to measure the involvement construct called as Personal Involvement Inventory. Definition for product Involvement; "A person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and needs". To overcome the drawbacks of personal involvement inventory (PII) the consumer involvement profiles was developed by Laurent and Kapferer it treats involvement as a multidimensional construct. He borrowed two dimensions from personal involvement inventory and two dimensions from consumer involvement profiles and measured the service involvement in retail banking services.

4. IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS DEPLOYED IN INVOLVEMENT MODELS

A comprehensive table (Table 1) is presented for easy understanding of various dimensions used by different authors in their attempt to posit an Involvement model. This table lucidly brings out ten important dimensions that have been predominantly used in assessing involvement in respect of purchase decision making of services or products, namely, interest, pleasure, sign values, important risk, risk probability, emotion, situation, participation, relationship and experience.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The consolidation of the different models on involvement, investigating the impact of involvement in the purchase behavior of customers, should advance our understanding fo involvement aspect and help us in establishing its linkages with quality, satisfaction and loyalty measurement in the broader context.

The assessment of the involvement instruments framework suggests that involvement is positively associated with the purchased decision of the customers while buying products and services. And also it extends itself to the relationship between service quality and performance of the company and the consequent loyalty that could be developed out of the quality deliverance is quite strong at the interpersonal level. An explanation for this might be that coustomers' involvement is the basic ingredient for satisfiction and the positive feelings toward the organization; this in turn spurs the performance output of the firm. Such underlying aspect has been reinforced by this conceptual sutdy as it reexamined the various instruments developed by different authors using

umpteen numbers of dimensions each contributing to the involvement of the consumer and performance of compaines.

Given the influence of involvement on various performance dimension of the organization, it is important that the managers are concerned with whether or not customers develop positive feelings towards the quality of product or service delivered based on the involvement level and accordingly develop suitable marketing strategies to attract develop and sustain relationship with customers. However, this conceptual framework honestly acknowledges the limitations of the effort as it is only a revisit of the existing literature in involvement instruments and no specific efforts is made to check the applicability of any of these models in different industry settings. Therefore the authors urge the researchers to take up this mantle finding out the applicability and thereby developing and industry specific as well as economy specific involvement instrument suiting the current requirements of the organizations.

6. CONCLUSION

The issues addressed in this study suggest that the involvement instrument evolution can be conceptualized and understood further through comprehensive involvement model. In this way, service marketers armed with a more complete and holistic view of involvement will be better able to focus and develop pertinent strategies. Conclusively, the learning's can be, perhaps consumers do no buy the highest quality service not overlooking (Cronin & Taylor, 1994); convenience, price and availability may enhance satisfaction, the fact that the involvement level of consuming the services is ultimate. It is quintessentially true in a multi-service organization like retail banks, when each service, say purchasing of DD to availing a housing loan, the involvement level varies

vastly. Hence it is the earnest exhortation of the authors of this article to develop a comprehensive instrument so as to capture the involvement level of customers and consequently categorization of services and the accompanying promotion strategies. Nevertheless, none of the involvement model dealt with in this article is an all encompassing one as many authors suggest. Alternatively, further research exploration in industry specific involvement framework is clearly necessary for better consummaion and appropriation.

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