Howard Sheth Model

The Howard Sheth theory of buyer behaviour is a sophisticated integration of the various social, psychological and marketing influences on consumer .

- The model claims that a person's purchase decision is *often influenced by more than one individuals.*

- A family buying decision *involves multiple influences from its members*.

- This theory shows the concept of role structure, that is individuals members of the family takes on roles such as collecting information, deciding on the information budget, etc.

- The theory also states that retailers /businesses are not only dealing with a homogeneous unit but a collection of individuals with different goals, needs, motives and interests.

He was the first to introduce the difference between problem solving behaviour, limited problem solving and automatic response behaviour.

The model attempts to depict rational brand choice behavior by buyers under conditions of incomplete information and limited abilities. **It distinguishes three levels of decision making:**

1. **Extensive problem solving –** early stages of decision making in which the buyer has little information about brands and has not yet developed, well defined and structured criteria by which to choose among products (choice criteria).
2. **Limited problem solving –** in this more advanced stage choice criteria are well defined but the buyer is still undecided about which set of brands will best serve him. Thus, the consumer still experiences uncertainty about which brand is best.
3. **Routinized responses behavior –** buyers have well defined choice criteria and also have strong predispositions towards the brand. Little confusion exists in the consumer's mind and he is ready to purchase a particular brand with little evaluation of alternatives

The model borrows from learning concepts to explain brand choice behavior over time as learning takes place and the buyer moves from exclusive to routinized problem solving behavior.

Four major components are involved

(1) input variables, (2) output variables (3) hypothetical constructs and (4) exogenous variables.

1. **Input variables:** Input variables are depicted in the left portion of the model as stimuli in the environment. Significance stimuli are actual elements of brands that the buyer confronts while symbolic form, such as in advertisements. Social stimuli are generated by the social environment including family and groups.
2. **Output variables:** The five output variables in the right hand portion of the model are buyers' observable responses to stimulus inputs. They are arranged in order from attention to actual purchase and are defined as follows:
   i. **Attention** – the magnitude of the buyer's information intake.
   ii. **Comprehension** – the buyer's store of information about a brand.
   iii. **Attitude** – the buyer's evaluation of a particular brand's potential to satisfy his of her motives.
   iv. **Intention** – the buyers forecast of which brand he or she will buy.
   v. **Purchase behavior** – the actual purchase act, which reflects the buyer's predisposition to buy as modified by any inhibitors
3. **Hypothetical constructs:**

A number of intervening variables are proposed, represented by hypothetical constructs in the large rectangular, central black box shown. They are **categorized into two major groups:** (1) perceptual constructs dealing with information processing and (2) learning constructs dealing with the buyer's formation of concepts

The **three perceptual constructs of the model can be described as follows:**

a. **Sensitivity to information** – the degree to which the buyer regulates the stimulus information flow.
b. **Perceptual bias** — distorting or altering information.
c. **Search for information** — active seeking of information about brands or their characteristics

The **buyer's six learning constructs** are defined as:

a. **Motive** – general or specific goals impelling action.
b. **Brand potential of the evoked set** – the buyer's perception of the ability of brands in his or her evoked set (those that are actively considered) to satisfy his or her goals.

c. **Decision mediators** – the buyer's mental rules for matching and ranking purchase alternatives according to his or her motives.
d. **Predisposition** – a preference towards brands in the evoked set expressed as an attitude towards them.
e. **Inhibitors** –environmental forces such as price and time pressure which restrain purchase of a preferred brand.
f. **Satisfaction –** the degree to which consequences of a purchase measure up to the buyer's expectations for it.

Engel, Blackwell and Kollat's Model: Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model of Consumer Behavior:

The Engel, Kollat and Blackwell Model, also referred to as the EKB model was proposed to organize and describe the growing body of knowledge/research concerning consumer behavior. A comprehensive model, it shows the various components of consumer decision making and the relationships/interactions among them. The model went through many revisions and modifications, with attempts to elaborate upon the interrelationship between the various components and sub-components; and, finally another model was proposed in the 1990s which came to be known as the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard

Model (EBM).

The model consists of five parts, viz. information input, information processing, decision process stage, decision process variables, and external influences.

1. **Information input:** The information input includes all kinds of stimuli that a consumer is exposed to and triggers a kind of behavior. The consumer is exposed to a large number of stimuli both marketing (advertising, publicity, personal selling, demonstrations, store display, point of purchase stimuli) as well as non-marketing sources (family, friends, peers); thus the various stimuli compete for consumer's attention. These stimuli provide information to the consumer and trigger off the decision making process.
2. **Information processing:** Stimuli received in the first stage provide information; the information is processed into meaningful information. The stage comprises consumer's exposure, attention, perception/comprehension, acceptance, and retention of information. The consumer is exposed to stimuli (and the accompanying information); attention determines which of the stimuli he will

focus upon; thereafter he would interpret and comprehend it, accepts it in his short term memory and retains it by transferring the input to long-term memory.

3. **Decision-process stage:** At any time during the information processing, the consumer could enter into this stage. The model focuses on the five basic decisionprocess stages, viz., problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, choice, and outcomes (post-purchase evaluation and behavior). There is problem recognition; this is followed by a search for information, which may be internal based on memory. The search of information is also impacted by environmental influences. Thereafter, the consumer evaluates the various alternatives; while evaluation, belief lead to the formation of attitudes, which in turn affect the purchase intention. The next stage is the choice and purchase, which gets impacted by individual differences. Finally there is an outcome, in the form of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This outcome acts as a feedback on the input and impacts the cycle again. Environmental influences, individual differences and social influences, directly and indirectly influence each of the stages of the decision process. However, EKB proposed that it is not necessary for every consumer to go through all the five stages; it would depend on whether the problem is an extensive or a routine problem-solving behavior.
4. **Decision process variables:** The model proposes individual influences that affect the various stages of the decision making process. Individual characteristics include constructs like demographics, motives, beliefs, attitude, personality, values, lifestyle, normative compliance, etc.
5. **External influences:** The model also proposes certain environmental and situational influences that affect the decision making process. The environmental influences include "Circles of Social Influence," like culture, sub-culture, social class, reference groups, family and other normative influences; situational influences include consumer's financial condition.

The decision process comprises five stages from need recognition to outcome. The outcome in the form of satisfaction/dissatisfaction acts as the input in then next cycle of a similar purchase. Each of the components is directly or indirectly impacted by environmental influences, individual differences and social influences.

An Assessment of the Model:

The model incorporates many constructs that impact consumer decision making. It tries to explain clearly the interrelationships between stages in the decision process and the various variables. They attempted to relate belief-attitude-intention. An attempt was made to define the variables and specify functional relationships between the various constructs. However, the model fails to adequately explain as to how each of these influences consumer decision making. Critics argue that there are too many variables; these have not been defined; the model is vague and complex; and the validity of the model has been questionable. The model was revised in the 1990s and proposed again as the Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (EBM) model.