

# Consumers' Approach towards High Involvement Products and Low Involvement Products: A Study of Buying Behaviour in Vadodara

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## **Abstract**

A research was conducted in Vadodara, Gujarat, India to study the psychology of people while purchasing cheap products as compared to costly products. As a result, two representative products were selected and buying behavior of respondents was studied towards these two products. It was found that the mental process for both the products is quite different.

## **Keywords:**

High involvement, Low involvement, Payment mode, Shopping mode, Affective link, Search & information processing, Social interaction, social relevance.

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## **Introduction**

The risk of purchasing a costly product in terms of monetary cost and mental cost is higher as compared to a cheaper product. A person is more cautious when purchasing a costly and non-routine product. This is because if the product does not perform on the expected lines; the consumer is dissatisfied in terms of monetary loss as well as the mental inconvenience. His risk taking appetite is less as compared to a product he purchases and uses on a daily basis and such product is less costly. Thus, it is seen that a consumer's approach towards purchasing a product having high involvement compared to a product with low involvement is different.

In this research, an attempt has been made to study how the buying behavior of a consumer is different for two different categories of products he uses. For this purpose, product involvement for two categories of products was studied and analyzed.

Involvement can be defined as perceived relevance of the object on the basis of needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). It is to be understood that involvement is of the consumer and not the product even though, it may be called product involvement. It is recognized as interaction between product and the individual.

## **Literature Review**

Sherif and Cantril introduced the concept of involvement in the year

1947 in the area of psychology. If involvement can be defined based on stimulus, products can be categorized by marketers into different product involvement categories and markets can be segmented on the basis of product involvement (Grunig, 1989; Taylor & Joseph, 1984). One of the ways of identifying whether product involvement is high or low is to find out the perceived risk and return from the purchase. In case of high involvement products, consumer perceives high risk and also high levels of satisfactions are achieved if the purchase is as per his

perceived benefits. On the other hand if a wrong purchasing decision is made, it involves huge amount of risks in terms of costs, time and satisfaction. Hence, for high involvement products, consumer spends lot of time gathering information about the product. He inquires about its price and compares it with its features in detail. He also asks for feedback and experiences of others who have used the same or a similar kind of product.

Every researcher has tried to introduce their own definition of the term. Accordingly, the term has evolved over time.

**Table 1: Summary of Research in the area of Involvement**

Sr.	Year	Author/ Researcher	Title	Contribution
1	1947	Sherif and Cantril ; Sherif & Hovland; Sherif et.al	The psychology of ego-involvement	Involvement as a major component in attitudes and attitude change
2	1964	Freedman	Involvement, Discrepancy and Change	Proposed two definitions of involvement. General and particular interest in an issue
3	1965	Herbert E. Krugman	The Impact of Television Advertising: Learning without Involvement	TV advertising results in low involvement conditions while print results in high involvement conditions
4	1979	Andrew Mitchell	Involvement: A Potentially Important Mediator Of Consumer Behavior	What is involvement? How do we measure it? How do we manipulate involvement in the laboratory? Until we can answer these questions, the quantity and quality of empirical research on the subject will remain limited
5	1979	John L. Lastovicka	questioning the concept of involvement defined product classes	The degree to which different levels of involvement are related to levels of acquisition behavior is examined.
6	1981	Harold H. Kassarian	Low Involvement: A Second Look	Six-fold classification of involvement including both high and low product involvement and also high and low involved personality types
7	1982	Peter H Bloch	Involvement Beyond The Purchase Process: Conceptual Issues And Empirical Investigation	An empirical study which explores self-concept expression as a possible motivator of enduring involvement was put forward
8	1982	Sherrell and Shimp	Consumer Involvement in a laboratory setting	In an effort to bring more empirical research to involvement, these authors suggested studying cognitive activity and three indicators were developed to accomplish this. These indicators were: "subjective state," "self insight accuracy," and, the amount of time that subjects required to complete a decision task
9	1983	Rajeev Batra, Michael L. Ray	Operationalizing Involvement As Depth And Quality Of Cognitive Response	Message response involvement as situational states characterized by the depth and quality of the cognitive responses evoked by the message
10	1984	James A. Muncy, Shelby D. Hunt	Consumer Involvement: Definitional Issues and Research Directions	Paper identifies and discusses five distinct concepts which have all been labeled "involvement". The concepts of ego involvement, commitment, communication involvement, purchase importance, and response involvement are discussed as they relate to this evolving body of knowledge
11	1984	Robert N. Stone	The Marketing Characteristics Of Involvement	How both behavioral involvement and ego-involvement may be used to understand marketing phenomena
12	1984	Mark B. Traylor	EGO Involvement and Brand Commitment: Not Necessarily the Same	Involvement with a product can be high while commitment to brands is low, or product involvement can be low when commitment to a brand is high
13	1984	Michael L. Rothschild	Perspectives on Involvement: Current Problems and Future Directives	literature has become replete with papers that are overly concerned with defining this hypothetical construct, organizing concepts and reviewing past work. This paper discusses problems related to an abundance of such work and suggests some other directions for researchers to take
14	1984	John H Antil	Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Involvement	While there appears to be general agreement that involvement varies by individuals and circumstances and that it is somehow related to "importance" or "interest", there is by no means any agreement exactly what involvement is, its bounds, and in general a thorough conceptualization of the concept

15	1985	George M. Zinkhan, Aydin Muderrisoglu	Involvement, Familiarity, Cognitive Differentiation, And Advertising Recall: A Test Of Convergent And Discriminant Validity	Involvement, familiarity, and cognitive differentiation are three measures of individual difference which were hypothesized to be related to consumers' ability to recall advertising messages
16	1985	Gilles Laurent and Jean-Noël Kapferer	Measuring Consumer Involvement Profiles	There is more than one kind of consumer involvement. Depending on the antecedents of involvement consequences on consumer behavior differ. The authors therefore recommend measuring an involvement profile, rather than a single involvement level
17	1985	Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky	Measuring the Involvement Construct	21 item bipolar adjective scale framed, the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII), was developed to capture the concept of involvement for products.
18	1989	Banwari Mittal	A Theoretical Analysis Of Two Recent Measures Of Involvement	A unidimensional conception of involvement is utilized to develop a general model of involvement. The two scales are reconciled with this model, and subscales are identified in each which would measure involvement as a unified construct.
19	1994	Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky	The Personal Involvement Inventory: Reduction, Revision, and Application to Advertising	The conceptualization of the Personal Involvement Inventory was a context-free measure applicable to involvement with products, with advertisements, and with purchase situations. The empirical work to develop this measure was mainly validated with respect to product categories. PII was reduced to 10 items.
20	1994	Richard L. Divine, Thomas J. Page, Jr	The Effect of Enduring Involvement on Evoked Set Size	Enduring involvement may actually have a positive effect on evoked set size. Studies the conceptual reasoning underlying the hypothesized relationships between enduring involvement, shopping enthusiasm and evoked set size, and then present the results of a study that directly tests these hypothesized relationships.
21	1996	Carmen Garcia, Julio Olea, Vicente Ponsoda y Derek Scott	Measuring Involvement: From Its Consequences	A 21-item Likert-type 'Consequences of Involvement' questionnaire (CIQ) was developed to measure the level of involvement with products. Unlike other scales, the CIQ attempts to measure involvement from its consequences, rather than requesting the subject to directly rate his or her state of involvement
22	1996	Kenneth C. Schneider and William C. Rodgers	An Importance Subscale for the Consumer Involvement Profile (CIP)	Proposed and provided initial support for a new subscale for the CIP; one designed to measure Importance, a construct not now encompassed by that scale. The relationship between Importance and the remaining CIP subscales designed to measure various involvement antecedents (i.e., Interest-Pleasure, Sign, Risk Probability and Risk Importance) is then discussed.
23	1997	Gil McWilliam	Low Involvement Brands: is the Brand Manager to Blame?	Poor brand management has been held responsible for brands with which consumers have low levels of involvement, that is, consumers do not consider them important in decision-making terms, and in consequence appear unthinking and even uncaring about their choices.
24	1997	Utpal M. Dholakia	An Investigation Of The Relationship Between Perceived Risk And Product Involvement	The constructs of perceived risk and product involvement have been noted to share several similarities in the consumer behavior literature but diversity in the conceptualization and operationalization of these constructs has led to conflicting and confusing findings. Using consistent definitions of the two constructs, this article investigates the relationship between their components
25	2001	Pascale G. Quester, Amal Karunaratna and Ai Lin Lim	The Product Involvement/Brand Loyalty Link: An Empirical Examination	Several studies have examined the relationship between PI and BL but few empirical investigations have been conducted to validate the notion emerging from the literature that PI precedes BL. In this empirical study, two products associated with either low or high involvement are used to examine this issue
26	2003	Natalie Lennox and Nicholas McClaren	Measuring Consumer Involvement: A Test of the Automobile Involvement Scale	Empirically investigated consumer involvement with a product class.

27	2003	Michel Laroche, Jasmin Bergeron, Christine Goutaland	How intangibility affects perceived risk; the moderating role of knowledge and involvement	product intangibility is positively associated with perceived risk and the intangibility construct encompasses three dimensions: physical intangibility, mental intangibility, and generality. The purpose of this research is to test which dimension of the intangibility construct is the most correlated with perceived risk
28	2007	G Sridhar	Consumer Involvement in Product Choice – A Demographic Analysis	There is a need for studies on consumer involvement spanning over varied cultures and contexts. Further, exclusive studies examining the relationship between demographics and consumer involvement are very few. Study was conducted to examine the relationship between consumer involvement and five key demographics family life cycle, age, sex, income and occupation
29	2007	Ming-Chuan Pan	The Effects of Payment Mechanism and Shopping Situation on Purchasing Intention - the Moderating Effect of Product Involvement	Study of effect of payment mechanism and shopping situation on purchasing intention is moderated by the product involvement
30	2008	Fei Xue	The moderating effects of product involvement on situational brand choice	Investigate the moderating role of product involvement in predicting the effects of self-concept and consumption situation on consumers' situational decision making.
31	2009	Mansour Samadi and Ali Yaghoo b-Nejadi	A survey of the effect of consumers' perceived risk on purchasing intention in E-shopping	Compare the perceived risk level between Internet and store shopping, and revisit the relationships among past positive experience, perceived risk level, and future purchase intention within the Internet shopping environment
32	2010	Jacob Hornik, Tali Te'eni -Harari	Factors influencing product involvement among young consumers	examine which variables influence product involvement among young people. This paper aims to explore five variables: age, subjective product knowledge, influence of parents, influence of peers, and product category
33	2011	Plavini Punyatoya	How Brand Personality affects Products with different Involvement Levels	Brief literature review of the concept of brand personality and its relationship to consumer brand preference and purchase intention. The study also emphasized effect of brand personality on high and low involvement products preference and purchase. The paper also talks about how famous endorsers and strong brand argument can improve brand personality of low and high involvement products respectively.

## Purchasing Intention

Purchasing intention is a psychological process of decision making. (Engel,1990). Consumers are motivated by the fulfillment of demands to search relevant information according to personal experience and external environment. A consumer, before purchasing a product, starts to collect information about the product. This information is evaluated and comparisons are made. Based on the comparisons, the final buying decision is arrived at. This process is called the consumer decision process. "Purchasing intention is the probability of customer's willingness to purchase." (Dodds.,1991). Higher the perceived value more will be the purchasing intention. Purchasing intention can be studied through the various shopping situations a consumer prefers for different products and also the payment mechanisms he likes for products with different involvement levels.

## Research Objectives

- To study the buying behavior of consumers towards different categories of products by studying product involvement.
- To analyse the factors that affect product involvement of respondents in Vadodara.

- To study purchase intention in terms of shopping preference for high involvement and low involvement products.
- To study preferred payment method for high and low involvement products in Vadodara.

## Research Methodology

This study was conducted by collecting and analyzing primary data from 300 respondents in Vadodara, Gujarat. Stratified sampling method was used to select respondents. The population was divided into three strata; service persons, business persons and professionals. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data and test hypothesis. Equal number of respondents was selected from each stratum.

A pilot study was conducted to identify products with high involvement and low involvement. This was done through a small questionnaire with ten products. 60 Respondents were asked to show their product involvement for each product through ranking. They were asked to give 1 as the highest rank and 5 as lowest rank, with respect to the statements provided to them. Based on the responses, car was selected as high involvement product (Mean=2.13) and noodles as low involvement product (Mean=4.34).



A descriptive research design was followed to study consumer behavior for high and low involvement products. Data was collected in the form of structured questionnaire with 30 questions on Likert Scale from 300 respondents in Vadodara city. Sample units comprised respondents belonging to service, businessmen and professionals in equal proportion. The questions were framed to test various factors that affect product involvement. Respondents were asked to give their agreement on different statements regarding the respective product on a scale of 1 to 7. “1” was taken as “very strongly disagree”, while “7” was taken as “very strongly agree”. Based on the data obtained, mean values and significance was calculated to find out the reliability. The data was collected in April 2011 and later on analysed.

### Hypothesis

H1: Product involvement for all types of products is same.

H2: There is no preference for a specific shopping mode for high and low involvement products.

H3: There is no preference for a specific payment mode for high and low involvement products.

### Data Analysis

The primary data collected for the purpose of this research revealed the following attributes of the respondents in terms of their demographic features as well as their purchasing intention for the two products selected.

Samples were selected on the basis of their occupation. 33% of the samples belonged to service class, while 33% samples were businessmen and remaining were professionals. Similarly, 36% samples were of the age group between 20 years and 30 years while 3.5% samples were of the age above 60 years. In terms of education, 37.5% samples were postgraduates, 28.5% samples were graduates, and 27.5% were professionals like doctors, and lawyers, etc. The samples selected belonged to different income classes. Out of the respondents surveyed, 24% were in the income class of Rs.2 Lacs to Rs.3 Lacs, 19.5% were having annual income of Rs.5 Lacs or more, 19% respondents earned between Rs.4 Lacs and Rs.5 Lacs. As far as the gender of the respondents is concerned, 56% were males and remaining 44% were females.

### H1 : Product involvement for all types of products is same

The first step in this research was to establish that product involvement is not the same for every type of product in Vadodara. This was done using a model tested in Spain and England by Carmen Garcia, Julio Olea, Vincente Ponsoda, y Derek Scott in their article titled “Measuring Involvement

from its Consequences” in the year 1996. In this research, Zaichkowsky's PII (Personal Involvement Inventory) was modified from a simple 9 item Likert Scale which used only two factors, into a Spanish version having five factors. The Spanish modification of Zaichkowsky's RPII (Revised Personal Involvement Inventory) was named as CIQ (Consequences of Involvement). As per the modified version, there are five factors which are-

- **Affective Link (AL).** High involvement with a product implies some identification with it; some sort of affective link. The product is considered to be important in the subject's daily life and he/she shows a special interest in it (Krugman, 1965; Park and Mittal, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1987).
- **Search and Information Processing (SIP).** High involvement also implies an active search of additional information on the product and a deeper processing of this information. As a result, a change in the quantity and the quality of the knowledge on the product would be expected (Howard and Jagdish, 1969; Macquarrie and Munson, 1992).
- **Purchase Purpose (PP).** High involvement is also related to purchase purpose, as people prefer to buy those products which they have high involvement with (Clarke and Belk, 1978; Zaichkowsky, 1985)
- **Social Interaction (SI).** A high involvement also implies greater related social interaction, with the person trying to meet other people to talk about the product (Macquarrie and Munson, 1992).
- **Social Relevance (SR).** People having high involvement with a product try to extrapolate their own personal interest and view the product as also important for others.

To test consumer involvement, a series of statements were put to respondents and they were asked to convey their agreement on each statement. To check the internal consistency of the data, Cronbach Alpha was found out. In this, research, we got Cronbach Alpha of 0.87 for Car and 0.82 for Noodles.

**Table 2 : Table Showing Product Involvement for Car & Noodles in Vadodara**

Factor	Product	Vadodara			
		Mean	S.D.	t- Value	Sig.
Affective Link	Car	2.27	0.93	27.78	0.012
	Noodles	5.15	0.8		
Search & Information Processing	Car	2.38	1.04	32.17	0.002
	Noodles	5.13	0.78		
Social Interaction	Car	2.12	1.27	25.63	0.014
	Noodles	5.78	1.09		
Social Relevance	Car	1.95	1.15	29.45	0.000
	Noodles	5.43	0.94		
Purchase Purpose	Car	2.49	1.69	33.72	0.003
	Noodles	4.57	0.96		
Overall	Car	2.24	1.02	37.71	0.001
	Noodles	5.21	0.87		

(S.D. = standard deviation, Sig. = Significance)

Based on the results of pilot study, a structured questionnaire was developed to use the model described earlier. The results showed that mean values for car were found to be distinctly higher as compared to the ones for noodles for all the factors. Highest involvement for car was found in the case of the factor “Social Interaction”. Involvement for noodles was found to be lowest for the same factor “Social Interaction”. Table No.2 suggests that product involvement for car was significantly higher than noodles. The overall mean for all factors taken together was 2.24 for car and 5.21

for noodles once again hinted that product involvement was not same for car and noodles. To further test the hypothesis, t-test was conducted and as can be seen from the results in Table No.2, the values were highly significant for all the factors. Hence, based on the data collected and analysis, the hypothesis that product involvement for all types of product is same is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

**H2:** There is no preference for a specific shopping mode for high and low involvement products.

**Table 3. Table Showing Mean Rank for Shopping Mode for High Involvement & Low Involvement Products in Vadodara**

Shopping Mode	Product	Preference		Mean	S.D.	t- Value	Sig.
		N	N%				
Physical Outlet	Car	242	80.67	1.18	0.45	18.796	0.000
	Noodles	230	76.67	1.08	0.39	15.623	0.000
Internet (Online Shopping Outlet)	Car	44	14.67	2.2	0.63	7.721	0.034
	Noodles	28	9.33	2.51	0.51	11.82	0.000
TV Shopping (Tele Shopping)	Car	14	4.67	2.61	0.36	5.232	0.041
	Noodles	42	14	2.41	0.57	0.814	0.532

(S.D. = standard deviation, significance at 5%)

Based on the findings of the research and hypothesis 1, it was established that car was high involvement and noodles was low involvement product. It was further found out whether shopping modes for both the product categories were same or different. It can be seen from Table No.3 that shopping mode for both the products were found to be similar. For both products, physical outlet was found to be

the most preferred. In case of high involvement product (Car), 80.67% respondents preferred physical outlet, while in case of low involvement product (Noodles) 76.67% respondents preferred physical outlet. However, there was a difference in terms of second choice; the opinion was different for both the products. For high involvement product, internet was found to be second preferred shopping

mode (14.67%), while for low involvement product, TV Shopping was the second preferred shopping mode (14%). The reason for similarity in preference of shopping mode was found to be the absence of or lesser prominence of other shopping modes in India. The data was found to be significant except for low involvement product in terms of TV shopping (t-value 0.813,  $p=0.532$ ). Thus, based on the data collected and results obtained, it can be said that

physical outlet is the most preferred mode for purchasing both categories of products. Hence, the hypothesis that there is no preference for a specific shopping mode for high and low involvement products is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

**H3 :** There is no preference for a specific payment mode for high and low involvement products.

**Table 4. Table Showing Mean Rank for Payment Mechanisms for High Involvement & Low Involvement Products in Vadodara**

Payment Mode	Product	Preference		Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Sig.
		N	N%				
Cash/Cheque	Car	54	18.00	1.48	0.38	17.376	0.000
	Noodles	226	75.33	1.16	0.47	15.238	0.000
Credit Card/ Debit Card	Car	52	17.33	2.14	0.65	11.252	0.000
	Noodles	74	24.67	1.22	0.59	12.432	0.000
Installment System	Car	194	64.67	1.12	0.43	22.492	0.000
	Noodles	0	0	0	0	0	0

(S.D. = standard deviation)

It is clear from Table No.4 that respondents had different preferences for payment modes when it came to purchase of a high involvement product like car and a low involvement product like noodles. In case of car, 64.67% respondents preferred installment system while purchasing (Mean = 1.12) while only 17.33% respondents preferred credit card or debit for making payment for purchasing a car. 18% respondents preferred to pay for car by cash or cheque. It is to be noted that those people who preferred to purchase car by installment system had to pay partly by cash/cheque as down payment. Hence, 18% respondents who preferred to purchase car by cash/cheque said they made entire payment through this mode. In case of a low involvement product like noodles, the preference was different with none of the respondents opting for installment which is understandable. 75.33% respondents preferred to pay cash for purchasing noodles while remaining 24.67% preferred credit/debit card. The data was further tested and as can be seen from the above Table No.4, the results were highly significant. Thus, it can be said that preference for payment mode does not remain same for all types of products. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

### Findings & Conclusion

It was found that car was a high involvement product and a noodle was low involvement product. In case of all the five factors, product involvement for car was found to be high as compared to noodles. Even though product involvement was found to be different for car and noodles, there was similarity in preference for shopping for both the products.

Physical outlet was found to be the most preferred shopping mode. However, for high involvement product like car respondents found internet to be second most preferred mode. In case of noodles, TV shopping was rated as second most preferred. Thus, there was a difference in the opinion as far as the second most preferred shopping mode was concerned. The reasons for preference of physical outlet was across the counter delivery in case of noodles and also the waiting time for the product which is more in other cases like internet or TV shopping. In case of high involvement product like car also, the reason was the across the counter availability of the product and also live demo of the product like test drive. One more factor for preference of physical outlet was the fact that bargaining for discounts and other non-cash rewards was possible in physical store. When it came to payment mode, installment was the most preferred form for car because of its high price as also because of taxation benefit to businessmen and professionals. Those respondents who preferred cash to purchase car preferred this mode because of excess cash available to businessmen. In case of noodles, cash was the most preferred form because of low price as well as habit. Credit/debit cards were preferred because of rewards and also convenience in carrying them.

Thus, it can be concluded from the statistical results and the data analysis that buying behavior of consumers towards high involvement products is different from low involvement products. The preference for shopping mode is same, however, the reasons were found to be different. Whereas, the payment mode was found to be significantly different for both the categories of products.

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