



Analysis Of The Role Of Cultural Factors, Subculture, And Social Class In Consumer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Article History :

Received

9 May 2026

Accepted

20 May 2026

Published

28 May 2026

Understanding why people buy certain products is a key challenge for any business in today's fast paced market. This study explores how a person's background specifically their culture, subculture, and social class shapes their shopping habits and choices. While many see buying as a simple transaction, it is actually a complex journey that starts long before a customer reaches the checkout counter. This research aims to explain the deep connection between these social factors and the way individuals evaluate and purchase goods or services. To achieve this, the study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. The author gathers and analyzes information from various academic journals, books, and recent reports to build a clear picture of modern consumer trends. By synthesizing existing theories, the research provides a comprehensive look at the social forces behind every purchase without needing direct field interviews. The results show that culture acts as the primary foundation for a person's values and desires. Within that, subcultures provide more specific identities that lead to unique consumption patterns among certain groups. Additionally, social class plays a major role in determining what people can afford and what they prioritize such as luxury versus functionality. In conclusion, businesses that take the time to understand these three social layers can create much better marketing plans and products that truly connect with their customers. This insight is essential for staying competitive and keeping shoppers happy in the long run.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Culture, Subculture, Literature Study, Social Class.



INTRODUCTION

The term "consumer behavior" is not a new phenomenon in the world of economics; rather, it has been an inseparable part of the history of how humans fulfill their needs since ancient times. Initially, consumption was seen as a simple effort to survive through the exchange of goods or bartering. However, as human civilization evolved, the act of purchasing is no longer just about basic survival or physical functions. In the modern era, consumption has transformed into a lifestyle statement and a symbol of identity, where the items purchased reflect the owner's personality and their position in the eyes of the broader community (Sugiharto dkk., 2023).

In today's digital contemporary era, understanding why someone chooses one product over another has become extremely crucial due to high market dynamics. Consumer behavior is now the result of complex social interactions, where a person's decision is often not born purely from personal desire but is heavily influenced by their surrounding environment. The emergence of new trends on social media seems to accelerate changes in public preferences, requiring businesses to always be alert in reading their customers' mindsets (Ngadimen & Widyastuti, 2021). Although each individual is unique, collectively, their actions still follow certain patterns influenced by the cultural roots they have learned since childhood.

Despite the basic understanding of shopping being widely known, many business actors and academics still often overlook the deep role of external factors such as culture, subculture, and social class. This creates its own challenges, considering that different cultural backgrounds or social positions often create different standards of satisfaction. There is a concern that an inability to understand these differences could lead to marketing strategies that are off-target or irrelevant to community needs (Sudaryanto dkk., 2021). Therefore, a clearer review is needed to dissect how these social variables work behind the scenes of consumer decisions, ensuring that the chosen business strategies remain effective and capable of touching the customers' emotional side.

To bridge the need for such understanding, this research is conducted using a literature study method that synthesizes various scientific articles, books, and the latest theoretical data. The main focus of this study is to map the strategic roles of cultural factors, subcultures, and social classes in shaping consumer behavior without direct field observations, but rather through an in-depth analysis of existing literature. Based on this background, the research is titled *"Analysis of the Role of Cultural Factors, Subculture, and Social Class in Consumer Behavior."* This study is expected to provide light yet insightful education for readers, small business owners, and students in understanding that behind every transaction, there are always social factors at play.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding market dynamics requires a broad perspective on how individuals interact with products or services in their environment. Consumer behavior is not merely a

transactional activity at the point of sale; instead, it is a manifestation of complex psychological and sociological processes. In this review, we will systematically discuss the main pillars that shape consumer decisions, starting from the basic theoretical foundations of behavior to the profound influence of the surrounding social structures.

Basic Concepts of Consumer Behavior Analysis

Consumer behavior is essentially the study of the decision making processes individuals go through when managing their available resources such as time, money, and effort to obtain products or services. In the view of experts, this behavior is a long journey that begins with the emergence of a need and ends with the evaluation after the product is used. Understanding consumer behavior means trying to delve into the human mind, which is heavily influenced by perceptions, motivations, and past experiences regarding a particular brand or item (Mauludin dkk., 2022).

The Nature of Culture as a Foundation of Behavior

One of the most powerful foundations in shaping a consumer's mindset is culture. Culture can be defined as the complexity of values, beliefs, and habits learned by an individual as a member of society, which are then passed down from generation to generation. Culture acts as software in the human mind that provides direction on what is considered normal or special within that environment. For example, in a society that highly values family togetherness, consumers tend to be more interested in products that promote bonding rather than products that are individualistic in nature (Muhrayanti & Sutarna, 2024).

The Influence of Subculture on Group Identity

Within a broad cultural environment, smaller and more specific groups often emerge, known as subcultures. These subcultures can be formed based on shared backgrounds in religion, race, age, or specific hobbies that provide a unique identity for their members. This subcultural identity creates a strong sense of belonging, which then directly impacts similarities in lifestyle and consumption preferences within that group. Subcultural groups usually have certain symbols or communication styles that serve as a clear distinction between them and the general public (Hidayat dkk., 2024).

Social Class Stratification and Dynamics

In addition to group identity, the structure of society is also divided hierarchically into various social classes that affect access to resources. Social class is not just about how much money a person has; it also includes education levels, types of occupation, and the social prestige attached to an individual. This class division automatically creates different market segments, where each level has different standards and expectations regarding the quality, price, and packaging of the products offered (Chrysilla dkk., 2023).

Culture and Global Product Acceptance

The link between culture and purchasing decisions is often seen in how a product is accepted or rejected by a social group. A product that achieves great success in one country may not receive the same response in another if its characteristics do not align with local cultural values. Therefore, modern global marketing strategies always require a process of

adaptation or localization so that the message delivered can touch the consumer's emotional side without violating the unwritten rules of their culture (Muhrayanti & Sutama, 2024).

Status Symbolism in Social Class

Furthermore, the role of social class is clearly visible in how consumers view a brand as a symbol of status or personal achievement. For people in certain social classes, owning a branded item is not just for its technical function, but to demonstrate their position and image within their social circle. Conversely, for social classes that prioritize functional value, factors such as price efficiency and product durability become primary considerations that are much more crucial than just a big name or the prestige of a product (Rauf, 2022).

Synthesis of Social Factor Interactions

In closing this review, it is important to see that the factors of culture, subculture, and social class do not stand alone but interact dynamically within every consumer. A person may be born into a certain culture, but their subcultural affiliation and position within the social class structure will provide a more specific color to how they make economic decisions. Understanding these three variables as a whole provides a clearer view for business actors in mapping market mechanisms comprehensively through an in depth literature study lens (Rahajeng Cahyaning Putri Cipto., Se., M.Ek, 2022).

METHOD

In this research, the author uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach through a library research design to analyze in depth the roles of culture, subculture, and social class in influencing consumer behavior. This approach is chosen because it is highly effective for exploring concepts, theories, and findings from various experts without having to conduct direct field research (Moleong, 2017). The main focus of this study is not on testing statistical data, but rather on synthesizing a comprehensive understanding of various scientific literatures to obtain a complete picture of the social dynamics that trigger an individual's purchasing decisions.

The data sources in this study are entirely derived from secondary data collected through documentation techniques. The author conducts a search for various credible references relevant to the topic of consumer behavior, including textbooks, national and international scientific journals, and previous research articles indexed in academic databases (Sari dkk., 2026). Data collection is carried out within a systematic timeframe by selecting literature sources published within the last ten years to ensure that the analysis remains relevant to current market conditions and consumer trends.

The selection of literature in this study is determined through a purposive technique, where the author intentionally selects sources that are closely related to the three main variables, namely cultural factors, subcultural identity, and social class stratification. The author sorts through arguments from various economic and sociological experts to be compared with one another (Linda Puspita Sari dkk., 2025). The collected data is then

carefully recorded, ranging from basic concepts to examples of consumer behavior phenomena in various regions, to strengthen the basis of analysis in the discussion chapter.

To maintain the validity or authenticity of the research results, the author applies a data source triangulation technique. The author compares theories from one book with findings from other research journals, then matches them with the reality of market behavior occurring today (Linda Puspita Sari & Mei Santi, 2025). The data analysis process is carried out systematically following the content analysis model. The author begins the analysis with data reduction, which involves sorting the most crucial core discussions, then presenting them in the form of a flowing descriptive narrative. Finally, the author draws conclusions to provide valid answers regarding the extent of the influence of the social environment on individual consumption patterns.

DISCUSSION

Understanding Consumer Behavior Analysis

In the midst of increasingly diverse economic developments and society lifestyles, understanding consumer behavior has become an essential matter to consider. Consumer behavior can be understood as a series of individual activities in searching for, purchasing, evaluating, using, and disposing of products or services believed to satisfy their needs. This process does not only cover purchase transactions, but also involves the exchange of goods and services, experiences, ideas, and the related processes of consumption and production (Mauludin dkk., 2022).

A deep understanding of consumer behavior is very important for business actors. Through this knowledge, they can design the right strategies, meet customer needs, and improve consumer satisfaction. By knowing purchasing patterns and habits, marketers can understand what customers truly need and expect, which ultimately enables them to create a satisfying experience while achieving business goals (Zanubiya dkk., 2023). Additionally, this insight also helps companies adapt to changing market trends, face increasingly tight competition, and develop product or service innovations that are more in line with public tastes.

Consumer behavior can be understood as a series of processes closely related to purchasing activities. In this process, consumers usually go through several important stages, starting from searching for information, conducting research and comparisons, evaluating various available options, and finally deciding on the product or service to be purchased (S. Balaji dkk., 2025). It does not stop at the purchase stage; consumer behavior also includes post-purchase actions such as usage, re-evaluation, and the disposal of the product or service. In other words, consumer behavior covers every activity related to obtaining, using, and ending the consumption of a product or service, including the decision making process that occurs before and after the transaction (Hanifah & Rahadi, 2020).

An example can be seen when someone wants to buy a new mobile phone. Before purchasing, they will search for information on the internet, look at reviews, compare prices

in online and offline stores, and consider features that suit their needs. After deciding to buy, they use the phone according to their needs, such as for work, study, or entertainment, and then evaluate its performance to see if it meets expectations. If satisfied, they might recommend the phone to friends or buy a similar product in the future, whereas if unsatisfied, they could file a complaint or switch to another brand.

Another example is a family planning to buy a holiday package. They will research destinations, compare ticket prices, adjust schedules, book hotels, and after the trip is over, re-evaluate their experience, provide reviews, or decide whether to use the service again. These patterns show that consumer behavior is not just about the purchase, but covers the entire consumer journey from before to after the transaction.

Consumer behavior is not merely a buying activity, but covers the entire process starting from information searching and product selection to usage and post-purchase evaluation. A deep understanding of these stages allows business actors to recognize consumer patterns and needs more accurately (University of Merdeka Malang, Indonesia & Nirwana, 2023). By doing so, they can develop relevant marketing strategies, provide better services, and create products or services that meet customer expectations. Furthermore, understanding consumer behavior also plays an important role in helping companies face increasingly dynamic market competition (Puspitasari dkk., 2023). This knowledge not only encourages the creation of customer satisfaction but also enhances the company's ability to innovate and adapt to changes in trends and public tastes. In other words, consumer behavior becomes an important foundation for business actors in building long term relationships that benefit both parties.

The Role of Cultural Factors

Cultural factors can be understood as habits or life patterns that develop within a community and influence how they perceive and respond to something considered valuable (Zhang dkk., 2024). This factor includes how an individual receives information, places themselves in a social position, and forms knowledge and attitudes toward their surroundings. Culture acts as a primary determinant of a person's desires and behavior, formed through family, social environment, and various other institutions. Because of its broad and deep scope, the cultural factor becomes one of the most influential elements in shaping mindsets, preferences, and consumer purchasing decisions (Muhrayanti & Sutarna, 2024). This is evident in the community's habit of frequently choosing products or services that align with the values, norms, and traditions they follow, so that each cultural group has a unique and distinct consumption pattern.

In understanding culture and its influence on consumer behavior, culture can be seen as a collection of values, beliefs, and habits learned and passed down by a social group (Gelbrich dkk., 2023). These values and habits serve as important guidelines that shape consumers' daily perspectives and behaviors. Culture is one of the most fundamental factors determining a person's desires, preferences, and patterns of action in making purchasing decisions. The cultural norms and traditions followed by society, which are rooted in their

values and attitudes, play a major role in influencing purchasing behavior. For example, consumers who have a high concern for health will tend to choose food products that are safer and do not contain harmful ingredients (Muhrayanti & Sutama, 2024).

The cultural factor plays an important role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Consumer culture can be defined as the attitudes, values, and habits reflected in the various activities they perform daily. The higher the level of an individual's culture, the greater its influence on how they evaluate, choose, and determine the products to be purchased (Ayu, 2023). Culture shapes consumer mindsets and preferences, thereby guiding them in making purchasing decisions that align with their values and lifestyle.

For example, this can be seen in Indonesian society which upholds the culture of mutual cooperation and family values, leading to a higher demand for products or services that support social activities or togetherness. This includes choosing traditional floor seating restaurants for large family gatherings, ordering food in large quantities during celebrations, or using local products that are considered more supportive of the local economy. Another example is that communities with strong religious traditions tend to choose halal products, more modest clothing, or prioritize products with certain ethical values. Similarly, in urban communities with modern cultures and high mobility, there is a greater interest in practical services such as online transportation, instant food, or online shopping applications because they are considered suitable for a fast paced lifestyle. These things show that culture does not only affect preferences but also guides consumption patterns in daily life.

Culture has a wide and deep influence on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Culture includes not only daily habits but also the values, beliefs, and traditions passed down in society that form the way someone perceives, evaluates, and responds to a product (Adinugraha dkk., 2021). Through family, the social environment, and other institutions, culture becomes the foundation that shapes mindsets, preferences, and consumption habits that ultimately guide consumers in making purchasing decisions. Additionally, an individual's cultural level plays a major role in determining how they choose and use products or services. The higher the cultural level of a person, the stronger its influence on their considerations, selections, and consumption behavior. By understanding the role of culture comprehensively, business actors can design more targeted strategies, develop products that match societal values, and create sustainable customer satisfaction.

The Role of Subculture Factors

Subculture can be defined as a group of people who possess specific values, lifestyles, or preferences that distinguish them from the broader community. These characteristics can emerge due to age, interests, profession, or attachment to a particular community. Subcultures often become the foundation for unique lifestyles and distinct consumption trends, such as in gaming communities, religious groups, or fashion enthusiasts. Members of a subculture tend to follow the norms and habits of their group, allowing producers and marketers to target them through more focused campaigns. Recent studies in Indonesia also

highlight the emergence of digital subcultures, such as gamers and content creators, who trigger new consumption patterns with more specific characteristics (Hidayat dkk., 2024).

Every culture generally contains smaller subcultures, which are groups of people sharing relatively similar value systems, experiences, and life situations. An example can be seen in national groups living in a specific area who have distinctive ethnic tastes, traditions, and interests. The same applies to religious groups or communities living in certain geographical regions, where each forms a unique identity and set of habits. The existence of these various subcultures becomes an important market segment for marketers because it demonstrates a diversity of needs and preferences (Rahajeng Cahyaning Putri Cipto., Se., M.Ek, 2022). Consequently, marketers often design products or services tailored to the specific characteristics and needs of each subculture to reach the market more effectively.

Subculture is a part of culture that emerges within social groups based on horizontal factors. These factors may include nationality, religion, race, specific social groups, or the geographical area where they reside. In other words, subcultures are formed due to differences in identity and background that distinguish one group from another within a larger culture. The presence of subcultures makes society more diverse in terms of mindset, lifestyle, and consumption preferences (Sugiharto dkk., 2023). For marketers, understanding subcultures is vital as it helps them adjust products, services, and communication strategies to align with the values and needs of each group. Furthermore, subcultures often serve as a source of new trends that influence the wider market.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that subculture is a significant part of culture within social groups that shapes the identity, values, and lifestyle of a specific group. Every culture generally has smaller subcultures consisting of people sharing similar values and life experiences. The presence of subcultures makes community consumption patterns more varied because each group has its own unique preferences, habits, and trends. A good understanding of subcultures allows marketers to design products, services, and marketing strategies that are more on target according to the needs and characteristics of each group. Therefore, subculture is not only a social phenomenon but also a strategic opportunity for business actors to develop innovation and create broader consumer satisfaction.

In essence, subculture factors are the smaller components of culture. Cultural factors themselves are the larger elements that shape the general way of life in society. Culture encompasses values, norms, traditions, and habits passed down from generation to generation. This factor influences the mindset and behavior of many people in daily life, including the decision to purchase products (Meena, 2023).

The Role of Social Class Factors

Social class can be understood as the division of society based on economic and social conditions, such as income level, education, and type of occupation. This factor influences the extent to which an individual can access resources, determines their lifestyle, and shapes their purchasing patterns. Social class also affects the ability and tendency of a person to choose specific products or services. For instance, upper class groups generally prefer premium goods

or services, while middle or lower classes usually consider the price factor more carefully before making a purchase(Chrysilla dkk., 2023).

The relationship between social class and purchasing decisions is visible in various sectors, ranging from housing and consumer goods to services(Najib dkk., 2022). The higher an individual's social class, the greater their opportunity to choose products that align with their lifestyle and capabilities. Meanwhile, the lower social classes tend to look for products with more affordable prices that can still fulfill their basic needs.

From a consumer behavior perspective, the existence of social classes in society is undeniable because every individual lives within a certain social layer that indirectly shapes their perspective, determines their priorities, and influences their choices in making buying decisions. Although basic needs may be the same, the way they are fulfilled can differ between people from higher and lower social classes. Those from lower social classes tend to choose products with specific prices or qualities according to their means, while the higher social classes may choose products with more premium standards(Rauf, 2022). Social class plays a vital role in forming a person's consumption patterns and purchasing behavior.

Social factors encompass lifestyle and social class. Social class, also known as social position or social standing, is an individual's relative position compared to others based on one or several aspects considered important or valuable by society. This position indicates the level of appreciation or assessment society gives to a person, which ultimately affects behavioral patterns, including lifestyle and purchasing decisions. Social class is usually determined by a combination of factors such as income, education, occupation, and family status, all of which influence a person's access to resources and opportunities. The higher a person's social class, the more likely they are to have a broader and more diverse lifestyle, as well as a tendency to choose higher quality products or services. Conversely, those in lower social classes tend to be more selective and consider price heavily before purchasing a product(Asmaida, 2022). By understanding the influence of these social factors, marketers can more easily develop appropriate strategies to reach each segment of society.

Overall, social class is one of the important factors influencing consumer behavior as it relates to income, education, occupation, and lifestyle. Social class shapes viewpoints, priorities, and purchasing habits, so that even when the needs are identical, the way each social layer fulfills them can differ(Meilatinova, 2021). For example, upper class groups tend to choose premium products such as luxury cars or overseas vacations, while middle or lower classes prefer products with affordable prices that fit their capabilities, such as two wheeled vehicles or domestic vacations. This understanding is crucial for marketers to develop suitable strategies, ensuring that the products or services offered can reach the needs and preferences of each social class with better accuracy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the analysis of consumer behavior does not only involve the act of buying, but also the entire series of processes starting from

information searching and product selection to usage and post purchase evaluation. A deep understanding of these stages helps business actors recognize consumer patterns, needs, and preferences more accurately. Consequently, they can develop relevant marketing strategies, improve services, and create products or services that meet customer expectations to successfully face dynamic market competition.

Cultural factors have a broad and deep influence on consumer behavior because they encompass values, traditions, beliefs, and habits passed down within society. These factors shape individuals' perspectives, preferences, and consumption habits, thereby guiding consumers in making purchasing decisions. The higher the cultural level of an individual, the stronger its influence on their considerations, choices, and consumption behavior. A good understanding of cultural factors allows business actors to design more targeted strategies, develop products that align with societal values, and create sustainable customer satisfaction.

Subculture is a smaller part of culture that forms the identity, values, and lifestyle of specific groups within society. Every culture generally has smaller subcultures, which are groups of people who share relatively similar value systems, experiences, and life situations. The existence of subcultures makes community consumption patterns more diverse because each group has unique preferences, habits, and trends. A proper understanding of subcultures helps marketers design products, services, and marketing strategies that are more effective according to the needs and characteristics of each group. Thus, subculture is not only a social phenomenon but also a strategic opportunity for business actors to develop innovations and create broader consumer satisfaction.

Social class is an important factor influencing consumer behavior as it relates to an individual's income, education, occupation, and lifestyle. Social class shapes viewpoints, priorities, and purchasing habits, meaning that even when needs are the same, the way each social layer fulfills them can differ. For example, upper class groups tend to choose premium products such as luxury cars or overseas vacations, while middle or lower classes prefer products with affordable prices that fit their capabilities, such as two wheeled vehicles or domestic vacations. This understanding is essential for marketers to develop appropriate strategies so that the products or services offered can reach the needs and preferences of each social class with better precision.

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