

When Toasters Meet Televisions: A Conceptual Study on Patterns in Durable Goods Consumption

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Abstract: The consumption of durable goods has always been a symbol of aspirations of the people, lifestyles and economic growth. This is a conceptual paper, When Toasters Meet Televisions: A Conceptual Study on Patterns in Durable Goods Consumption, which attempts to examine the changing patterns and symbolic meaning of consumer durable goods. Durable goods, including the small appliances used in the kitchen (a toaster) and larger household purchases (a television), unlike the perishable or highly replaceable goods, act as indicators of the changing socio-economic status, levels of technology adoption, and culture. The focus of the research is on the interaction of need-based buying and aspiration consumption and also the effect of the technological convergence, brand loyalty, and consumer psychology in the ownership of the durable goods. By synthesizing the existing body of work, the paper conceptualizes the consumption trends in the categories, determines how digitalization and product innovation may be used to transform the demand, and outlines some new trends in consumer behavior. This work through its connection between the micro-utility approach to households and macroeconomic and sociocultural frameworks offers a background on which additional empirical research on the dynamics of durable goods consumption can be conducted.

Keywords: Durable goods, Consumer behavior, Consumption patterns, Household economics, Technological adoption, Consumer psychology, Aspirational consumption

1.Introduction

The consumption of durable goods has been an important constituent of consumer behavior because it provides the understanding of the connection between the economic capabilities, social expectation, and technological change. A durable item is not designed to meet short-term wants such as fast organized consumer products, but instead to be long-lasting, which designation of condition and social status such as in the instance of appliances in a kitchen, or entertainment-oriented purchases such as a television. Scholars have been debating the issue over the decades based on which consumption of durable goods may be perceived as not only utility-motivated, but also aspirational, in which the households can be changing their choices depending on the dynamically evolving cultural and technological landscape. The existing body of literature has defined the impact of the measures of affordability, credit availability, product innovation, and symbolic meaning of possession of the product on consumer needs of the durable goods (Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat, 1978; Kotler and Keller, 2016). The shift in necessity driven shopping onto aspirational shopping trends is another signifier of the importance of shopping durable goods as a symbol of household progress. One such example is that although purchasing a toaster may be required to fulfill a functional need, purchasing a high-definition television may be more of a lifestyle, entertainment, and a social status. Technological advancement has also redefined market-place on durables. Literature is interested in the point of digitalization and product innovation to generate demand because modern customers are becoming more knowledgeable about the smart technology, connectedness, brand differentiation (Ratchford, 2020). In addition, the propensity toward consuming durable goods is closely related to the consumer psychology due to the fact that the decision is often predetermined by the images of prestige and symbolism

meaning and emotional satisfaction rather than the cost and benefit analysis used. It is this necessity and want that places durable goods in the quagmires of economic rationalization and symbolism. It is on this background that the present conceptual study, *When Toasters Meet Televisions: A Conceptual Study on Patterns in Durable Goods Consumption*, aims at synthesizing the extant existing scholarship on the subject and provide a model that could be used to understand the shifting trends in the consumption of durable goods products. Future empirical research in consumer behavior and household economics can be given a theoretical foundation by the study as the interrelationship between the dynamics of the micro level of household decision making and the macro-level forecasts of the social-economic change.

2.Review of Literature

Theories of classical consumer behaviour have been utilized in research on consumption of durable goods since buying a durable good is considered a high-involvement purchase that entails a series of steps comprising problem recognition, information search and evaluation prior to making the purchase (Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat, 1978). It is this protracted process that separates durable goods, as opposed to fast-moving consumer goods, and places them in the larger socio-economic and cultural contexts. Another classic idea of conspicuous consumption introduced by Veblen (1899) goes even further and outlines the way in which the possession of durable items including high-quality televisions or hi-tech kitchen appliances goes far beyond usefulness and it may instead be seen as his or her social standing. Next, on the basis of this, Rogers (2003) theory of diffusion of innovations describes the processes of diffusion of technological durables, i.e., smart TV, IoT-enabled appliances, across the population, where the characteristics of the product, including relative advantage, compatibility, and observability, determine the time when people will adopt them. Economically, the consumption of durable goods is affected by the transaction costs such as replacement, maintenance, and resale among others, which are different in the case of short-lived appliances such as toasters as compared to long lived electronics such as televisions (Martin, 2003). Household-based research also indicates that demographic characteristics like income, family size, and education interplay with preferences which cannot be observed to influence durable goods purchase and replacement decision (Fernandez et al., 2001). In line with this, theorists of aspirational consumption posit that the purchase of durable goods is not only need-based but also identity-building and futuristic aspirational, especially in relation to consumers who are at the lower end of the pyramid (Srivastava, 2020). The symbolic value of the durable goods is also strengthened through the findings of the brand equity research that demonstrated that brand reputation and perceived quality had significant influence on willingness to pay household big-ticket durables (Author, Year). On a macroeconomic scale, consumer sentiment and credit availability become the significant predictors of the expenditure on durable goods, the connection between the micro-level (buying behavior) purchasing and a macro-level (economic cycles) (Baghestani, 2021). Recent reports also point to the impact of technological convergence, in the form of smart appliances and connected devices, changing the criteria of consumer evaluation, with the aspect of interoperability and obsolescence risk determining how households make decisions (IFA Berlin, 2025; Shahi, 2022). The third dimension is sustainability research, which focuses on how environmentally friendly durable products represent the conspicuous and conscientious consumption as consumers strive to reconcile the need to look good with social responsibility (Folwarczny, 2024; One Planet Network, n.d.). In both country-level discussions, it is stressed that where the emerging markets have a growth in demand driven by the increasing disposable incomes, the mature markets are defined by replacement cycles and premiumization (Times of India, 2025). In line with this, researchers claim that the access-based models of consumption and sharing disrupt the longstanding proprietorship-based model of durable goods, particularly to the high-cost electronics (Kerschbaumer, 2024). The category-level research illustrates that small-appliances may be considered on price-value trade-offs and functionality but entertainment electronics are measured based on feature-richness, content-ecosystems, and network effects (Author, Year). Mixed methods methods involving panel data on replacement

cycles and ethnography on symbolic meanings are suggested to be favored in terms of methodology to understand the intricate sources of durable goods consumption (Martin, 2003; Fernandez et al, 2001). Lastly, the recent market research emphasizes that the demand of durable goods is fragile to supply-side shocks like chip shortages, and regulatory measures like energy-efficiency standards, meaning the need to incorporate contextual constraints in the conceptual frameworks (Investopedia, 2024; IFA Berlin, 2025). On the whole, the literature confirms the presence of a nexus of economic, technological, psychological and cultural factors which influence consumption of durable goods. This review will offer a theoretical basis to the changing trends of consumer behaviour in the purchase of durable goods and will form the conceptual analysis of the changing trends of furniture technology consumption by taking into account both classical perspectives of consumer behaviour and the modern understanding of aspirational consumption, smart technology acceptance, and sustainability in the purchase of electrical devices as a foundation to be used in the conceptual study of the changing patterns of furniture technology consumption under the title When Toasters Meet Televisions.

3.Objective

To conceptually analyse the evolving patterns of durable goods consumption by integrating economic, technological, and psychological dimensions, with a focus on how necessity-driven purchases and aspirational investments shape household decision-making.

4.Statement of Problem

Durable goods consumption has emerged as a key measure of household aspirations, life-style patterns as well as economic development. As opposed to fast-moving consumer goods which are bought regularly, durable goods including but not limited to low-end, practical goods (such as toasters) and high-end, aspirational goods (such as televisions) are long-term investments and they indicate the need and the social status. Although the role of durable goods in consumer behaviour and the indicators of economic welfare has become increasingly prominent, there have been no combined conceptual frameworks of durability good consumption that can sufficiently describe the various types of consumer behaviour in the consumption of durable goods. The literature on durable goods has typically adopted a less unified approach, looking at it either through the economic conditions of income and credit accessibility, or through the psychological impulse to, for instance, signal one's status through buying a product or seek an aspirational fulfillment through a purchase. Nevertheless, the convergence of these dimensions, coupled with the accelerated technology such as smart appliances and digital connectivity has produced novel forces in consumer decisions. The difficulty is in comprehending how practical needs and aspirational wants collide at the domestic level, how symbolically significant meanings of a lasting commodity define consumption, and the importance of social-economic and cultural environments in defining ownership and replacement tendencies. In the absence of a holistic conceptual knowledge, businesses, policy makers, and researchers find it difficult to predict the changes in consumer demand, develop effective marketing policies, and develop policies that tackle sustainable and inclusive consumption. Hence, this paper aims to fill these gaps by constructing an intellectual perception on the trends in consumption of durable goods, with a combination of economic, psychological, and technological aspects.

5.Research Gap

Although a lot of research has been done on durable goods, majority of the research is conducted individually on the economic, technological or psychological aspects. Conceptual integration is limited in describing how the necessity purchases and aspirational purchasing can co-exist, how symbolic meaning affects the consumer

behavior, and how technological changes can alter the pattern of ownership, providing a vacuum of a holistic framework concerning the consumption of durable goods.

6. Conceptual Framework

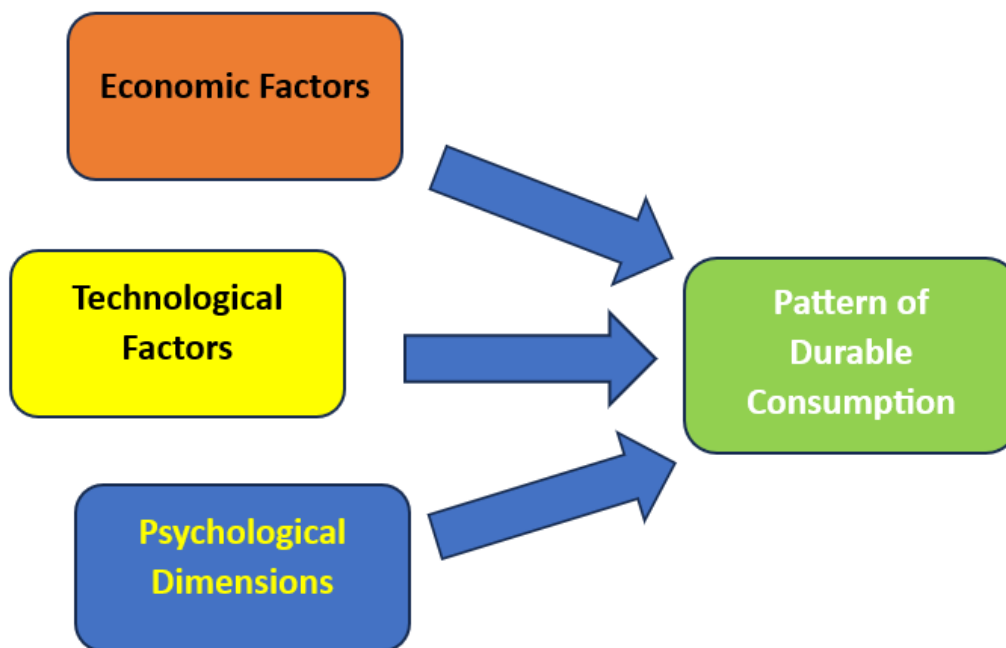


Fig 1 – Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework applied in this research brings together economic, technological, and psychological factors to account for durable goods consumption patterns. Economic ones, like household income, disposable income, availability of credit, and price sensitivity, determine the capability and willingness of consumers to buy both necessity-based products (e.g., toasters) and desired products (e.g., TVs). Technological ones, such as product innovation, smart capabilities, and risk of perceived obsolescence, affect consumer assessment and acceptance of durable goods. Psychological and symbolic variables, including status signalling, identity expression, and aspirational motivations, also influence the decision-making process. They interact with intervening variables such as consumer perception—brand image, perceived quality, and perceived value—and the societal and cultural environment, such as social norms, peer pressure, and household composition. All these dimensions combine to shape durable goods purchase patterns, expressed in terms of the form of purchase, when, how often they get replaced, and ownership behavior. This model offers an overarching conceptual perspective with which to comprehend how functional requirements, desired wishes, and technological developments all contribute to driving consumer behavior within durable goods markets.

7. Research Discussion on Objective

Durable goods consumption is a fascinating mix of what we need and what we aspire to have, and it varies quite a bit depending on the product and the household. Research shows that when it comes to necessity-driven

purchases—think toasters, fans, or basic kitchen gadgets—people are mostly influenced by how useful, affordable, and necessary these items are (Engel, Blackwell, & Kollat, 1978; Martin, 2003). These kinds of purchases usually follow predictable patterns, often dictated by when things need replacing, how quickly technology becomes outdated, and how immediately useful the item is. On the flip side, aspirational durable goods, like fancy televisions, smart home gadgets, and high-end appliances, are heavily influenced by psychological and symbolic factors. These include things like wanting to show off status, express identity, and fulfil lifestyle dreams (Veblen, 1899; Srivastava, 2020). Studies suggest that when it comes to aspirational purchases, people tend to engage more deeply, take longer to decide, and are more sensitive to brand image and the latest tech trends (Rogers, 2003; IFA Berlin, 2025). Plus, as technology and design continue to evolve, the lines are getting blurred; even smaller appliances are now coming with smart features that turn them from just functional tools into aspirational items (Shahi, 2022). Cultural and social factors also play a big role in shaping these trends, as what our peers think and what our households expect can influence how we see the line between necessity and aspiration (Folwaczny, 2024; One Planet Network, n.d.). This distinction helps researchers understand durable goods consumption better, showing how our practical needs and our dreams can coexist and affect when, how often, and what we choose to buy across different product categories.

8.Future Scope of the Study

This conceptual study sets the stage for a variety of future research avenues. To start, we can conduct empirical studies to test the proposed framework by looking at real household purchasing behaviors and how economic, technological, and psychological factors interact across different types of durable goods. Additionally, comparative research across various regions, cultures, and income levels can shed light on how contextual differences shape necessity-driven versus aspirational consumption patterns. Lastly, we can expand the framework to investigate how emerging trends—like smart home technology, sustainability-focused products, and access-based consumption models—affect the adoption and replacement of durable goods. This could provide valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and scholars studying consumer behavior.

9.Limitations of the Study

This research is a conceptual study that mainly uses existing literature, theoretical models, and secondary sources to look at patterns in the consumption of durable goods. This means that it can't give real-world examples or numbers to show how economic, technological, and psychological factors are related. Furthermore, the study fails to consider contextual variations across diverse regions, cultures, or market segments, which may differentially impact consumption patterns. Consequently, although the conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of necessity-driven and aspirational purchases, its applicability to specific populations or real-world contexts is limited, underscoring the necessity for future empirical validation.

10.Conclusion

This conceptual study shows that the consumption of durable goods is affected by a combination of economic, technological, and psychological factors. Functional needs, affordability, and replacement cycles mostly guide necessity-driven purchases, like small kitchen appliances. On the other hand, symbolic meanings, lifestyle aspirations, and status signalling mostly shape aspirational investments, like TVs and smart devices. Technological progress and new product ideas change how people see things, and sometimes they even turn useful products into things people want. Social and cultural contexts, encompassing household norms and peer influence, modulate these consumption patterns, illustrating the intricacy of decision-making within households. By

combining these aspects, the study creates a complete framework for understanding changing consumption habits. This can be used as a basis for future research, marketing plans, and policies about durable goods. In general, this work stresses that buying durable goods is not just an economic activity; it is a complex phenomenon where utility, aspiration, and technological innovation come together.

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13.Conflicts of Interest

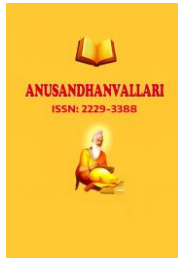
The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study.

14.Ethical Considerations

This study is a conceptual research endeavour grounded in a review of extant literature and secondary sources. No primary data collection involving human or animal subjects was undertaken. Consequently, there are no ethical concerns regarding participant consent, privacy, or data confidentiality. The study follows the rules of academic and research ethics when it comes to gathering, analysing, and showing information.

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