



A CRITICAL STUDY: HOW GENDER DETERMINES CONSUMER PREFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

The present study sought to identify the influence of price, discount and brands on consumer behavior. According to the existing literature, price, discounts and brands have long been associated with consumer behavior. However, there is a gap in the literature about the effect of the three aforementioned variables on consumer behavior. The goal of the study is to examine the effect of each of the three variables on consumer behavior in a Greek sample, separately for the two genders. The consumer behavior has been defined as the total score of the self-constructed questionnaire. All the appropriate procedures, have been conducted in order to construct a valid and reliable questionnaire. Consequently, the 13-item self-constructed questionnaire was administered to 100 participants, from October to November 2012. The participants have been informed orally and by the consent form about the aim of the study. The results showed a statistically significant relationship between the gender of the participants and their consumer preferences.

Keywords: consumer behavior, purchasing decision, gender, brands, discounts, marketing research

JEL Classification : N30, N34, P46

Introduction

Consumer behavior is the science, that studies why, when, where and how individual customers, buy, select and use goods or services to satisfy their needs. Back in 1967, Myers and Reynolds, pinpointed the need to study consumer

behavior separately from the science of Marketing (Myers & Reynolds, 1967). Nowadays, consumer behavior is regarded as a separate science. The impact assessment of consumer behavior is necessary for the Marketing professionals to predict consumers' behaviors more accurately.

The initial motivation of studying consumer's behavior, was offered from Marketing professionals, who examined, how social science could contribute and assist in finding specific causes of consumer's actions and purchasing decisions. Consumer behavior assists Marketing professionals to evaluate new opportunities in the market and to choose a segment of the market to launch their products. According to Siomkos (2002), the procedure of making a purchasing decision consists of five (5) stages:

- i. Identification of a need
- ii. Searching and elaborating information
- iii. Evaluation of the alternative brands
- iv. Choice and buy of the product
- v. After-buy behavior, Siomkos (2002).

Kotler (1984) mentioned that the characteristics that affect the purchasing behavior are cultural, social, psychological and personal. The above characteristics help researchers to create a behavioral pattern of the buying procedure (Kotler, 1984). Exadaktilos (2008), based on Kotler's studies, created a three stage model, describing consumer behavior. The first stage consists of the marketing mix (product, price, position and promotion), in relation with the sociocultural, technological and economic consumers' stimuli. The second stage of the model is the "black box", which includes the characteristics of the buyers and the process of the purchasing decision. The third stage consists of the customers' response to products and services provided. For example, the brands and retailer preference (Exadaktilos, 2008).

According to Roberts other factors that affect consumer's behavior are economy, technology, globalization, government, environment, demographics, "the soul of the consumer", wellness and retail (Roberts, 1998).

Greek studies that examine the association between gender and purchasing decisions are quite limited. Specifically, on the one hand research community recognize the link between gender and consumer preferences, but on the other hand the studies mainly focus on the effect of marketing actions on consumer behavior. Specifically, the present paper will be an effort to present the reasons of purchasing and consumer behavior on discount policies, for the two genders, separately.

At the present study, "consumer behavior" will be studied through the lens of Marketing and Psychology. The study will allocate valuable information in the Marketing professionals. Psychology's main field is to define, explain and interpret

human behaviors, and this is the reason why Psychology is needed to assist current study's goals.

The aim of the present study is to fill the gap in the existing literature regarding the possible relationship between gender and consumer preferences in a Greek sample. Specifically, this work will examine the link between gender and brands, price, discount on consuming goods.

Methodology

A total of 100 adults were included in the present study (n=100). The data gathered through an anonymous survey that took place in Attica, Greece. The sample comprised 100 individuals, 50 men (50%) and 50 women (50%). The current study used a self-constructed 13-item questionnaire. Also, the current study used a convenient sample. The participants were recruited through the Internet (email) and with the use of face to face data collection in various areas. All participants were informed about study's goals and were asked to sign an informed consent form. After they provided consent for participation in the study, the questionnaires were administered. The survey remained available for a couple of months until a sufficient size recruited.

A data screening process was administered to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality, homogeneity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity and linearity. The Levene's test was used to determine that variances among different groups were equal. Homogeneity was present in all continuous variables included in the study for the groups of both genders. Subsequently, the gathered data recorded in Microsoft Excel and the statistical analysis was processed with the program "SPSS".

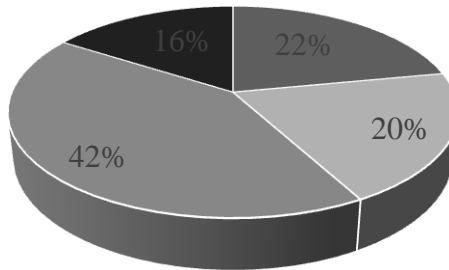
Results

In this section of the paper, the results of the statistical correlations will be presented.

Table 1: Men's purchasing preferences

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
price	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
brand	10	20.0	20.0	42.0
Valid quality	21	42.0	42.0	84.0
other	8	16.0	16.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Men's Purchasing preferences



■ Price ■ Brand ■ Quality ■ Other

Chart 1: Men's purchasing preferences

Table 2: Women’s purchasing preferences

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
price	17	34.0	34.0	34.0
brand	2	4.0	4.0	38.0
Valid quality	26	52.0	52.0	90.0
other	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Women's Purchasing preferences

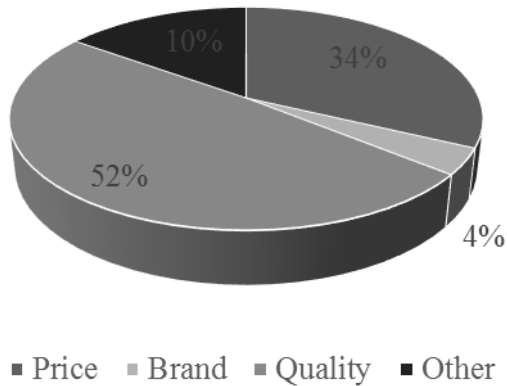
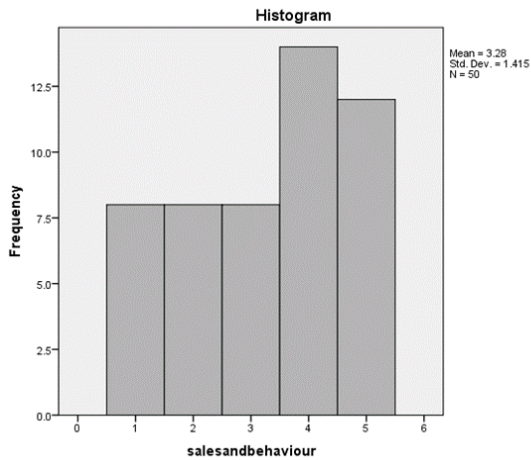


Chart 2: Women’s purchasing preferences

The following tables and charts presenting the influence of the discount policies on consuming goods.

Table 3: The impact of discount policies for men

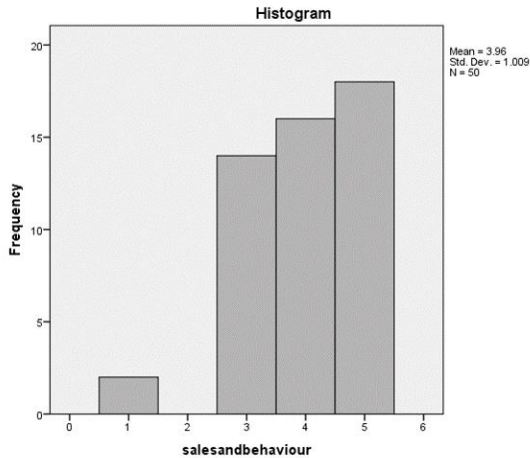
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid not at all	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
a little	8	16.0	16.0	32.0
enough	8	16.0	16.0	48.0
a lot	14	28.0	28.0	76.0
very much	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	



Bar Graph 1: The impact of discount policies for men

Table 4: The impact of discount policies for women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
not at all	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
enough	14	28.0	28.0	32.0
Valid a lot	16	32.0	32.0	64.0
very much	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	



Bar Graph 2: The impact of discount policies for women

Discussion

While living in a country with ingrained the aspect for gender equality, the goal of the study was to examine the association between gender and the effect of branding and discount policies on consuming goods. Gender differentiation arising from biological, social, economic and cultural background. For example, in the Middle East is not common (and sometimes forbidden) for a woman to drive a car, but in western countries almost all women are having car license. Psychologists who study consumer behavior, through the lens of gender can be attributed to the

Selective theory. Basic principle of this theory is that women are revealing to have lower threshold, in the analytical procedure, than men. Which means that women are involved with different strategies in the information procedure, under certain circumstances. (Moschis & Mathur, 2006).

At the present study, 50% of the sample was men and 50% was women. At first glance, on tables 1 & 2, seems that most men (42%) are influenced from the quality of the purchasing product. In the same theoretical framework, can be mentioned that women's percentage for the quality of the product is 52%. There is a 10% difference in their results. The data that was thought to be unexpected were that men were influenced by product's price in 22%. For women the second higher percentage was also price, in 34%. Only, the 4% of the women examined purchase a product according to its brand, while 20% of the men are choosing a product by its brand. In the field "other", for women 10% and for men 16%, seem to agree. Two of the most repetitive answers, was the "need" and the "usefulness" of the product. Concluding, it can be easily noticed that men are more affected by the brand name of a product than women. While price affects both genders similarly. In the end, it could be assumed, that the gender has unbreakable bond with the purchasing decision, thus it must be studied separately for every product on every company.

On bar graphs 1 & 2, could be seen the difference of the behavior between men and women. Specifically, most of men are influenced "a lot" (28%) from the discount on products. While, most women are affected "very much" (36%), from discount policies. Also, striking is the fact that not even one woman is affected "a little" from the discount on products. More than 50% of men are affected a lot or more, from the discounted goods. It has been noticed that men's result is widely dispersed. So women tend to affect more from discounts, than men. Furthermore, the fact that women have low percentages at the choice "a little, can be interpreted as not being enough, to purchase the discounted good.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to provide insights into the effect of gender, in the consumer behavior. In this frame of reference, a research was conducted in order to examine the effects of price, brand and discount of a product on their consumer behavior. The data analysis was based on 100 valid questionnaires.

From the research results, multiple conclusions were derived. Also, it was demonstrated that men are more interested about brand than women. Furthermore, the discount in consuming goods, affects women more than men.

To conclude, it is quite clear that companies must split their target market, with an extra segment, the one of gender. In other words, for better coverage of the market, the marketing plan, is suggested to be different. Also, concluded that discounts

attribute a lot in both genders, but from the market scope that discounts, are suggested to focus on women consumer-candidates.

A limitation of the present study that concerns, both researchers and Marketing professionals, is that these results represent consumers' preferences, of a region of Greece, Attica. The conclusions cannot be representative for the general population. A future suggestion for present study is to replicated study's procedures in a larger national scale.

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