

The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Consumer Buying Behaviors Examined through An Impirical Study

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Abstract

This study investigates how cultural factors affect consumer behaviors in Turkey with the participation of 1286 people in the provinces through interviews. The obtained data are interpreted quantitatively.

Keywords: Consumers, Culture, Sub Culture, Social Class

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici, Kültür, Alt kültür, Sosyal Sınıf

1. Introduction

The process of the human consumption which has been presented from the beginning, was initially an activity that must be fulfilled for the rest of life whereas today it has been the goal of life. Today, the consumption is no more a process due to the need of consumers but, in accordance with the wishes of consumers has become an evolving process. The concept of "customer focus", "customer loyalty" in modern marketing requires the audience and the audience recognition of the section. Therefore in terms of marketing, consumer behavior in order to define their influence has become necessary to examine the factors that remain. In study, concepts such as culture, sub-cultures and social classes, how to influence consumers' buying behavior has been investigated.

2. Consumer and the Importance of Consumer Behavior in Marketing

Consumer is a person who desires, needs and requires marketing components in their capacity as buyer¹. Typically marketers are defined to have the ability to control the behaviours of customers, but actually they have neither power nor information fort hat.. Marketer may influence their buying behavior but not control. Because several individale and not individuale affect consumer behaviours. Motives, perceptions, attitudes, experiences, self concept, values can be considered as individuale factors. And not individual factors can be expressed as, culture, profession, family, reference groups.

3. Cultural Factors that Effect Consumer Behavior

3.1. Culture

Culture is the complex of beliefs of human societies, their roles, their behavior, their values, traditions, customs and traditions. Culture is an extremely important concept to understand consumer behavior and that needs to be examined. Culture is the sum of a shared purpose among members of society, customs, norms and traditions². The basic reason of person's desire or determination is culture³.

3.1.1. Culture Features

Man should know the characteristics of culture to identify how culture affects consumer behavior. Although in the literature many aspects of culture mentioned, in this study the consumption of culture-related features will be discussed. The consumption of culture-related features can be listed as follows⁴.

¹ Ahmet Hamdi İSLAMOĞLU, **Pazarlama Yönetimi**, Beta Basım Yayım A.Ş., İstanbul, 2006, s. 125.

² Michael SALOMON ve diğerleri, **Consumer Behavior**, Prentice Hall, 2006, s. 498.

³ Philip KOTLER, **Pazarlama Yönetimi**, Çeviren: Nejat Muallimoğlu, Beta Basım, İstanbul, 2000, s. 161.

⁴ Yavuz ODABAŞI ve Gülfidan BARIŞ, **Tüketici Davranışı**, MadiaCat Akademi, İstanbul, 2003, s. 314-315.

- Culture is a collection of learned behavior
- Culture is the traditional
- Culture is created
- Culture can be changed
- Culture includes differences as similarities
- Culture is organization and convergence
- Culture is shared by the members of the community
- Culture determines needs

Cultural differences among consumers in the country, compared with consumers outside the country is usually less. Cultural differences about consumer behaviour between countries are quite big⁵.

3.1.2. Effect of culture to consumer behavior

International marketers believe that consumers would increasingly resemble each other and that they will eat the same food, wear same clothes, watch the same television programs to an increasing proportion. But the reality is very different⁶. Therefore, to trade in international markets, man must overcome the large cultural and economic boundaries. Not only improve the worldwide competition in the market also different traditional beliefs, preferences, habits, customs are needed to be understood⁷. Culture involves society's thoughts, words, their traditions, language, materials, attitudes and feelings⁸. One of the elements that makes culture is beliefs. Beliefs of the people in a community can show similarities. For example, four, and four times in Japan are seen as unluck, because of that most products are sold in groups of five leads.⁹ Another element of culture, tradition, is related with non-verbal behaviour of individuals. In France the men use more cosmetic products than the women, which shows the self-conscious tradition of the french men.¹⁰

As a result, learning of cultural properties in the analysis of consumer behavior has been an important variable in marketing, especially in market segmentation, target market and product positioning.

1.2 Subculture

The other important concept should be examined in terms of marketing management is subculture. Courses on culture and behavior of individuals with similar values formed smaller groups are called sub-culture¹¹.

3.2.1. Effect of sub-culture of the Consumer Behavior

Geographical regions and religions are essential in the formation of sub-culture. The preference of individuals who live very close to each other can be different. Individuals belonging to different have different sub-culture values, attitudes and social structures of the members of other sub-culture. These differences, sub-cultural segmentation of the market activity has made an important variable¹². It is important to know the characteristics of the sub-culture in creating the marketing mix price, brand name identification, promotional activities and product positioning¹³.

3.3. Social Class

Social groups, although they don't shown in a formal process of similar lifestyle shows are groups formed by individuals¹⁴. There are several features of social class. First, the behavior of members of the social class structure, education levels, attitudes, values and communication styles are similar, and these characteristics are different from other social class members¹⁵.

⁵ Kazım KİRTİŞ, **Pazarlama İlkeleri Global Yönetimsel Yaklaşım**, Evin Ofset, Malatya, 2001, s. 160.

⁶ Marieke DE MOOIJ, **Converge and Divergence in Consumer Behavior: Implicants for Global Advertising**, International Journal of Advertising, 2003, s. 184.

⁷ Ken WAİNWRİGHT, **Principles of Marketing**, Blackwell Business, 1994, s. 152.

⁸ Michael R. CZİNKOTA, **Global Business**, Harcourt, Inc., 3. Edition, Orlando, s. 32.

⁹ Maryann KELLER, **Collosion: GM, Toyota, Volkswagen and The Race to Own the 21st century**, 1993.

¹⁰ Eric. N. BERKOWİTZ ve diğerleri, **Marketing**, Irwin Series, 4. Edition, 1993, s. 378.

¹¹ Tomasz LENARTOWİCZ ve Kendal ROTH, **Does Subculture Within a Country Matter? A Cross-Cultural Study of Motivational Domains and Business Performance in Brazil**, Journal of International Business Studies, 2001, Vol. 32, s. 305-325.

¹² Andrew LINDRIDGE, Sally DİBB, Is 'Culture' a Justifiable Variable for Market Segmentation? A Cross-Cultural Example, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 2003, Vol:2, s. 282.

¹³ Tao SUN, Guohua WU, **Consumption Patterns of Chinese Urban and Rural Consumers**, Journal of Consumer Marketing, 2004, Vol:21, s. 251.

¹⁴ Wayne D. HOYER, Deborah J. MACLİNNİS, **Consumer Behavior**, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1997, s. 325.

¹⁵ Terrel G. WILLIAMS, **Social Class Influences on Purchase Evaluation Criteria**, Journal of Consumer Marketing, 2002, Vol:19, s. 250.

Second, individuals status is determined according to their societies.¹⁶ Third, social classes are determined not by according only one variable, also by such variables like education, income, living area, activities and values¹⁷.

1.2.1 Effect of social class in Consumer Behavior

Social classes are groups who share similar values, interests and behaviors, that they are relatively homogeneous and continuous¹⁸. Social classes pronounce preferences in clothing, fig, home furnishing, entertainment and gaming activities, such as automobiles and certain product and brand. Some marketers are focusing their efforts on only one social class. Social classes are also different in their choice of media. Upper-class consumers prefer books and magazines while sub-class consumers television. As TV prorammes the upper class consumers prefer news and dramas, but low-class cconsumers films and sport prammes. There are also language differences between social classes. Advertisers should be prepared with the language which is spoken in the social class¹⁹. Therefore, marketers should appeal communication channels and communication styles by determining by social class.

4. Application

4.1. Purpose and Scope of research

The purpose of this study is by shedding light to the managers of founded and will be set up business and especially to the marketing department, which provides to development of country and which leads that the consumers are better known by them and better quality goods, services and ideas will be presented. In the 1950s, "contemporary (modern) marketing concept" expresses the consumer-oriented businesses. What, when, where and at what price and why wants consumers, these questions were asked firstly about forty years ago. In other words, get to know people has become more important.

4.2. Methods and Sample

In this study as data collection method questionnaire was preffered to obtain objective data and to interpret the first order, that person is the source or first hand. Questionnaire has been prepared according to the 'funnel' technique, that means from general to special. . Assumption of this technique, wenn the special questions are asked at first place to the surveys, they will be probably avoided. Research data, by sampling the group of Gaziantep, Samsun, Sinop, Konya, Manisa, and Adiyaman provinces, consist of multiple choice questions for the questionnaire.

4.3. Limiting of investigation

In the survey, although mainly seven (7) regions in our country and each region sampling several cities by selecting the survey to be made target designation, the financial problems and the main mass of the width of the study limitations constituted.

4.4. Results Analysis and Interpretation

The data obtained were analyzed through computer program package "frequency" and the results were inerpreted according to this method.

1) Do you generally like shopping?

Genelde alış-veriş yapmaktan hoşlanır mısınız?

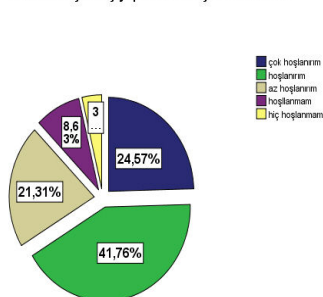


Figure 1: Distribution of consumer shopping satisfaction Breakdown

	Responder	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Too much	316	24,6	24,6
much	537	41,8	66,3
less	274	21,3	87,6
not	111	8,6	96,3
never	48	3,7	100,0
summation	1286	100,0	

Table 1: Distribution of consumer shopping satisfaction Breakdown

¹⁶ Paul C. HENRY, *Social Class, Market Situation and Consumer' Metaphors of Empowerment*, Journal of Consumer Research, 2005, Vol:31, s. 766.

¹⁷ Douglas ALLEN, *Toward a Theory of Consumer Choice as Sociohistorically Shaped Practical Experience: The-Fits-Like-a-Glove Framework*, Journal of Consumer Research, 2002, Vol:28, s. 515.

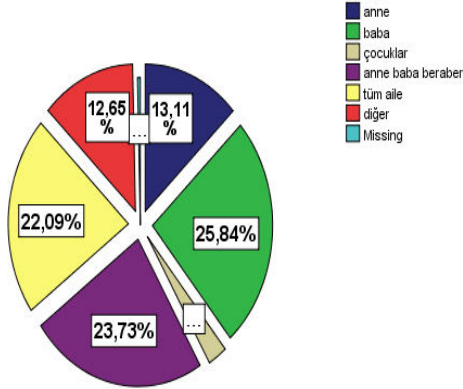
¹⁸ Ömer Baybars TEK, *a.g.e.*, s. 200.

¹⁹ Philip KOTLER, *a.g.e.*, s. 162.

With this question is intended to detect the like degree of consumer shopping . As shown in Table 1 and figure, 1286 people responded to this question, 537 persons (41.8%) had enjoyed shopping too much, 316 persons (24.6%) much, 274 persons (21.3%) is less like While, 111 persons (8.6%) did not like, and 48 persons (3.7%) stated they did not like at all.According to these data, it could be said that the vast majority of those who surveyed enjoy shopping.

2. Who generally does your shopping?

Genel olarak alış –verişlerinizi kim yapar?

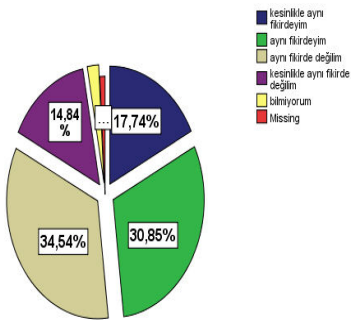


	Responders	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Mother	168	13,1	13,1
Father	331	25,8	39,0
Children	33	2,6	41,5
Parents together	304	23,7	65,3
All family together	283	22,1	87,4
other	162	12,6	100,0
summation	1281	100,0	
Unanswered	5		
Overall	1286		

We aimed to investigate with this question in general who does shopping. The number of surveys who answered as the father of the number is 331 (% 25.8) individuals, all families in those 283 (22.1), parents with the score of 304 (23.7), the mother 168 (13.1) in those 33 children (2.6), and who said others consist of 162 (12.6) people.According to these results, it seems to take the first place that the fathers do the shoppingexchange of Fathers in Adiyaman so like in east region.

3. Approval of my environment or friend is the most important thing for me on the goods and sevicees that I will take.

Alacağım mal ve hizmetlerde; benim için en önemli olan çevremim veya arkadaşlarımmın beğenmesidir.



	Responders	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
I certainly agree	226	17,7	17,7
I agree	393	30,8	48,6
I dont agree	440	34,5	83,1
I certinly dont agree	189	14,8	98,0
No idea	26	2,0	100,0
Summation	1274	100,0	
Unanswered	12		
Overall	1286		

Figure 3: According to the importance of the environment Consumer Rating Distribution

Table 3: According to the importance of the environment Consumer Rating Distribution

The purpose of these question is to learn how important the enviroment and friends in buying goods and services of the survey participants. As shown in table and figure 3, for 440 people (% 34,5) enviroment and their friends is the most important criteria in buying goods and services, 393 people (% 30,8) seem to enjoy that, 226 persons (17.7%) seem not to enjoy that and that 189 people (% 14.8) never enjoy that. According to these results, it can be said that the majority didn't believe that the most important factor in buying goods and services are enviroment and friends. It must be accepted that the consumption process is becoming increasingly appealing to individual requests, and that increasingly smaller market segments are becoming as an indicator.

Suitability to my culture, belief, tradition and custom is the most important factor on the goods and services that I will take.

4. Suitability to my culture, belief, tradition and custom is the most important factor on the goods and services that I will take.

Alacağım mal ve hizmetlerde; benim için en önemli olan kendi kültürüm, inanışım, gelenek ve göreneğime uygun olmasıdır.

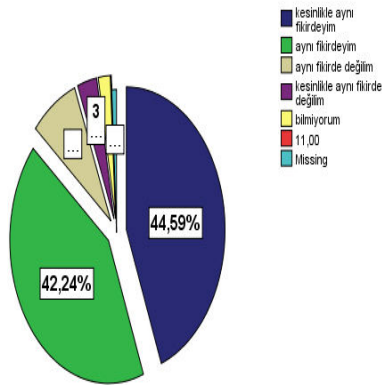


Figure 4: According to tradition, and cultural relevance of the Important Consumer Distribution

	Respon- ders	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
I certainly agree	569	44,6	44,6
I agree	539	42,2	86,8
I dont agree	101	7,9	94,7
Icertainly dont agree	41	3,2	98,0
No idea	25	2,0	100,0
Summation	1276	100,0	
Unanswered	10		
Overall	1286		

Table 4: According to tradition, and cultural relevance of the Important Consumer Distribution

The purpose of this question is to learn if culture, beliefs and traditions are the most important criteria of the survey participants in buying goods and services. As in table and figure 4 shown, for 569 people (% 44.6) faith, culture and tradition are certainly the most important criteria in buying goods and services. That for 539 people (% 42.2) is the most important criteria when you say, for 101 people (7.9%) not, 41 persons (3.2%) had mentioned certainly not. According to these results it can be said that for the majority of survey respondents (approximately 86%), belief, culture and tradition are the most important factor.

5. Conclusion

In the space of competitive and globalized world the importance of consumer who is recognized as the focal point of modern marketing, is increasing day to day. In this study a questionnaire has been prepared and the results were interpreted according to the "Funnel" technique, from general to special. Participating in the survey of 1286 people (about 86.1%) generally reported that they enjoyed shopping. Businesses can take them to their side by increasing the degree of satisfaction of consumers. It can be possible by knowing them, their wants and their desires good. Those who answered the poll of 434 say that they do shopping from supermarkets (33), which takes the first place. Some of the reasons why a lot choose supermarkets are:

- 1) Prices are much cheap
- 2) They are cool in summer, warm in winter.
- 3) There is credit- opportunity (compared to Grocery)
- 4) They include car parking spaces and play areas for children
- 5) There is the presence of many types.
- 6) They give attention to expiration dates and freshness of products.

This shows that today's consumer prefers the places which satisfy them with every aspects. As in the east, in the cities we obtained in the study, the fathers seem to be more effective by taking the first place in shopping (25.8%) We see that this situation changes westward. In west cities generally with the family purchased, which is located here in second place. But it is possible that this changes from day to day. Respondents said that they compare more expensive (like must) goods (82% of them) (like must) goods when buying. It demonstrates the development of conscious in terms of consumption, which makes man happy. We observed that they can not buy the products which dont appear in their homes due to the lack of income, because Products that are in their homes due to lack of income because the large majority (82%) gets under 1000 TL as monthly income. Those who participated in the survey of cultural factors that affect the purchase in order to learn the answers to the questions asked to a larger percentage was determined as follows. By buying goods and services, culture, beliefs and traditions take an important position (% 86.8 'i), while the environment, friends and social groups stated 48.6%. In this case the impact of cultural factors means a lot.

Most of the responders were (51.3% CPC) were graduated from High school, young people (18-25 years), married people (58.6% CPC) and the gentlemen (69%). If businesses attach importance to the customers and consumers, fulfill their desires, it can be said that it decreases that they go to their competitors and neighboring cities.

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