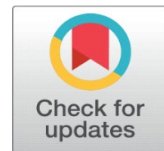


A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in order to provide theoretical general information about the social factors affecting consumer behavior. The study includes theoretical approaches related to social classes, characteristics of social classes, social classes by income, consumption inequalities, effects of family on consumption, effects of culture and reference groups on consumption behaviors. It has been dec that consumption may vary not only dec families belonging to the same social class, but also between families belonging to different social classes. The main social factors affecting consumer behavior are family, roles and status. Social factors have a direct impact on the consumption and purchasing behavior of people. Consumer behavior is an action that affects not only individuals and societies, but also countries and national economies. Due to these characteristics, it is highly important to raise public awareness of the issue and conduct research on it.

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1. INTRODUCTION

All members of society are influenced by social factors. Social factors cause various effects on society and individuals. Social factors also have effects on consumer behavior Arslan (2003). Social classes between individuals continue with a complex interaction Arslan (2003). dec. Man is at the center of class structures from the past to the present. It creates new models related to the future with preferences that change according to time with their accumulation from the past Cakir et al. (2010). With the change of conditions over time and the acceleration of communication, it has led to a change in general legal opinion and consumer behavior. Consumption is influenced by social factors such as social class, family and income Cakir et al. (2010).

2. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

A consumer is a person who buys and uses goods and services on the condition of paying a price Arslan (2003). Consumption should not be considered only as material things. The consumer is the one who buys in order to meet his own wishes or the wishes of his family and social environment Yücel (2018). Consumers' purchasing behavior is influenced by multiple variables. When individuals decide to buy, they go through successive process steps. Although the concept of consumption is very wide-ranging, there are also consumer items such as culture and entertainment Yücel (2018).



Consumer behavior can be defined as a human action consisting of multiple dynamics, which is in the process of constant interaction. In order to determine the factors affecting consumers' purchasing behavior decisions, it is necessary to determine their wants and needs first [Yücel \(2018\)](#). Consumer behavior is the mental and physical activities undertaken to consume the necessary products in order to meet the wants and needs ([Yağcı et al., 2010:142](#)). Consumer behavior occurs in a motivated manner and is a dynamic process. Consumer behavior is influenced by many factors, as there are actions that span wide time periods ([Yağcı et al., 2010:143](#)). In particular, economic, social, cultural, biological, environmental, organizational and other needs are emerging that are constantly changing [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). As a result of this change, the factors affecting consumer behavior are constantly changing. Consumer behavior is a subdivision of human behavior [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). The concept of consumer behavior is related to how individuals decide when spending their resources, such as money, time and energy. Consumer behavior is not always clearly explained [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). In some cases, consumers cannot express clear thoughts about why they decided to buy. The concept of consumer behavior is of a complex nature [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). In recent years, global developments have also changed consumer profiles greatly. Along with the changing profile, purchasing behaviors and consumer behaviors have also changed [Yücel \(2018\)](#).

Consumer goods are divided into durable and non-durable. Durable consumer goods are products that can be used for a long time, the benefits of which are not exhausted at one time ([Uygun et al., 2011:1320](#)). An example is a car, a computer and electronic goods. Durable consumer goods, on the other hand, are products whose benefit can be provided for a short time [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). As an example, products such as bread, gasoline and milk can be given. Some consumption is mandatory for people to continue their lives. Some consumption, on the other hand, is carried out only in order to satisfy desires. People's consumption is carried out in a social, commercial and economic framework, unlike that of other living things. Consumers individually manage their own lives with the decisions they make, while they also affect economic life in matters such as production and distribution.

3. SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

3.1. FAMILY

The family is at the center of social classes and consumer societies. It is a social structure consisting of socio-economic formations that are also included among the reference groups ([Uygun et dec., 2011:1322](#)). Family union occurs through blood or marriage. The family has an effect on the consumption expenditures of individuals and other families due to the fact that it is a social group. Consumption is also increasing as the income imbalance between families' decays. In cases of balanced distribution, the opposite is true [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#).

With such considerations as the presence of children in the family, income level, quality nutrition, people go beyond the mandatory consumption of goods and turn to luxury goods groups [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). Changes in the family and home give direction to consumption. The consumption patterns of consumers with a similar family structure are also similar to each other. Individual and familial characteristics and situation-changing characteristics are directly effective in the consumption decision-making process [Özsungur and Trust \(2017\)](#).

The family is in a life cycle, the beginning of which is based on marriage and continues until all family members lose their lives [Chetin \(2016\)](#). Families are also

entering into different consumption trends in terms of their life cycles. Premarital expenses are generally entertainment, art, clothing, social and personal, but this process is changing with marriage [Chetin \(2016\)](#).

In terms of families, social class is classified according to income. The interests of individuals in the family also affect consumption decisions. Consumption can sometimes also be shaped according to the situation. Time and risk directly affect family consumption. It is believed that the tendency to choose things that have no alternative in conflict situations is higher [Montenegro \(2011\)](#).

Consumption is a process for the family. Before making a decision on consumption in the family, he determines the need and conducts the necessary research. After determining and evaluating the necessary products and alternatives for the need, the final consumption decision is made [Arslan \(2003\)](#) Individuals are the trigger in making the consumption decision and the purchase process. The evaluation of alternatives and the final decision process are transitional. At this decision stage, it may be the same person who influences and decides. It has been determined that women are responsible for almost all domestic consumption. People who exchange in the daily needs of families are usually women [Arslan \(2003\)](#)

Income, consumption and purchasing are among the most important factors affecting the decision. Income distribution plays an important role in the consumption of the family. Low-income families also make the decision to consume and buy according to the availability of affordable and substitute products ([Güleraraslan, 2011:133](#)). On the other hand, families at a high-income level make consumption and purchase decisions according to situations such as quality, aesthetics and trust. Changes in consumer behavior according to the income level of families occur with learning. Family members also apply this attitude that they have learned in the family in their social lives and shape their future decisions accordingly ([Güleraraslan, 2011:133](#)).

In families with children, consumption varies significantly according to their parental roles. Due to the knowledge of the impact of children on family consumption, children are seen as a Sunday ([Yağcı, et al., 2010:142](#)). Accordingly, marketing and sales policies for children are being developed. Only products aimed at children are produced, and children are selected as the target audience. In today's family structure, children have a great influence and responsibility on their purchasing decisions ([Yağcı, et al., 2010:142](#)). Factors such as technological advances and the faster transition of children to adolescence are causing them to take on greater responsibilities in decision-making. With this change, children are becoming the target audience of large companies, especially ([Yağcı, et al., 2010:143](#)). The concept of children's sundays continues to increase dec importance among enterprises day by day. Children, the fact that they are seen as the biggest consumers of the coming times also creates an important potential for businesses [Cakir et al. \(2010\)](#). In other words, if there are children in the family, the decision to buy is made in such a way as to provide the maximum benefit to the child. Emotions such as protection, responsibility and love embody consumption. Children allow families to act with a sense of protection, love and responsibility. He directs family members to consumption in accordance with these feelings and parental roles [Cakir et al. \(2010\)](#).

Nowadays, working families receive outside services such as food, cleaning and ironing due to a lack of time. However, it is suggested that the use of outsourced services causes class and gender inequality. This proves that the differences between social classes continue in the dec [Chetin \(2016\)](#).

The concept of gender also has an impact on consumption and purchasing decisions. The differences dec the needs of men and women directly or indirectly affect their consumption behavior. These behaviors occur in a complex form. When

social class differences are added to this situation, it becomes more complicated. Social classes lead consumption behaviors to resemble each other according to income [Chetin \(2016\)](#).

3.2. ROLES AND STATUSES

Each individual has his own natural, legal or subsequently determined roles. Natural roles are roles acquired by status depending on gender, sibling and kinship relationship. Their roles are assignments and obligations assigned to individuals according to status [Özşungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). For example, the influence of women on household expenses is great. This proves that domestic consumption is shaped according to the roles of individuals. At the same time, having children affects consumption decisions. Especially the publication of advertisements that will attract the attention of children on television tends to be consumed by families in order to meet the wishes of their children [Özşungur and Trust \(2017\)](#). The fact that some families have children in difficult circumstances due to health problems or reasons of their own volition also affects the decision to buy. This situation shows that each family exhibits behaviors according to its own position depending on the roles and status between families in consumer behavior [Özşungur and Trust \(2017\)](#).

The roles of culture and gender in the composition also affect consumer behavior. The fact that the needs of men and women are different, the importance of gender roles in traditional family structures make family consumption different from each other [Chetin \(2016\)](#). The cultural characteristics of the society in which it is located, the value given to the family, the acceptance of the mother or father as the head of the family allows the family to acquire a unique consumption habit [Chetin \(2016\)](#). For example, in families where the father plays the role of the head of the family, consumption decisions are made in the direction of the man's tendencies. In families where the income level is high or low, it is more common that the consumption decision depends on the man or woman [Chetin \(2016\)](#). In middle-income families, it is more common for men and women to make joint decisions and perform consumption behaviors. The concept of gender directly and clearly divides society into two parts [Chetin \(2016\)](#). With this feature, the probability of decategorization and the probability of its change over time is very low. Gender factors affecting consumer behavior outstrip factors such as personality, lifestyle and family compared to other social factors (Durmaz, et al., 2011:118). The gender factor is also very important from the point of view of social sciences. The reason is that there is a gender-related differentiation in all social arrangements. It differs from the behavior of individuals in society by the gender they expect. These differences reveal gender norms and gender segregation. In gender segregation, individuals are assigned roles in certain patterns (Durmaz, et al., 2011:118). At the same time, the responsibilities of men and women in society are also becoming different. Gender roles are acquired from early childhood and may be different from biological sex (Durmaz, et al., 2011:63). Men's consumption decisions are more rational, while women's decisions are more emotional. Women are able to adapt to new situations much easier than men. For this reason, it is easier for women to change their decisions and attitudes than men (Durmaz, et al., 2011:62). Women are more aware of the differences in proportions to men and consider shopping as a means of socialization. Men, on the other hand, tend to make their purchasing decisions faster and perceive shopping as a necessity (Durmaz, et al., 2011:63).

The inter-role age factor also has an impact on consumption and purchasing decisions. The ages of the family members guide the decision of consumption and purchase. There are different needs for each age (Güleraraslan, 2011:130). Needs

that differ according to age groups, such as toys, education at adolescent group ages, electronic games, home, car and work clothes for adults, arise in individuals at very young ages. Consumption and purchasing behavior are also shaped in accordance with needs that vary according to age (Güleraraslan, 2011:130). For example, the rate of purchasing life insurance in older couples is higher than in younger couples. This proves that the age factor has an effect on the consumption and purchase decision (Güleraraslan, 2011:130).

Among the social factors affecting consumer behavior, education occupies an important place. Education continues throughout life, starting from birth (Montenegro (2011)). Due to the fact that education affects the consumer behavior of individuals, raising awareness of individuals about this issue and including it in educational programs has become mandatory in today's conditions (Montenegro (2011)). The inclusion of issues such as social responsibility, consumer behavior, social classes and consumer functions in educational programs is important for raising awareness. Individual awareness raising can be provided through channels such as television, social media, print publications, visual press and public spots (Montenegro, 2011:80). The fact that consumption and consumption behaviors affect the country's economy makes awareness-raising trainings on the subject mandatory. Meetings, seminars and panels can also be organized to support these trainings (Uygun et al., 2011:1332).

4. RESULT

The consumption of families can be divided into three groups. These:

- Individual Needs
- Family Needs
- Gifts

These types of consumption vary depending on the characteristics of the group in which they meet the needs. These changes reveal the importance of the family in the consumption decision. Consumption, which is formed according to income, also has an impact on the country's economy. The consumption dec of families through reference groups shows intergroup interaction. This situation also creates differences in consumption between social classes dec Consumption dec dec vary between families in the same social class, as well as between families in a separate social class. The factors affecting consumer behavior are as follows:

- Consumer Characteristics
- Cultural Factors
- Psychological Factors
- Marketing Factors
- Social Factors
- Situational Factors

Consumer behavior should be considered in a holistic manner in accordance with all these factors. Although the factors are not completely independent of each other, there are also situations where they affect each other. In particular, psychological factors vary a lot among the factors affecting consumer behavior. Businesses that want to create innovation should thoroughly study consumer behavior and determine strategies in this direction. Today, consumer profiles also continue to change at a great pace. Correctly assessing this change is important for the continuity of enterprises. Realizing strategies by not considering the factors

affecting consumer behavior separately from each other will give businesses great advantages.

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