

THEORETICAL CONCEPT OF HEDONIC CONSUMPTION

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Abstract:

Traditional marketing perception and consumption habits have changed radically due to some improvement that industrial societies took place of the agricultural societies with the Industrial Revolution, then global influences increased, distance lost its significance, intermediaries decreased and information became the intellectual capital. The hedonic consumption, which can be expressed as a reflection of modern consumption, expresses a concept based on the fact that in the consumption actions today's customers do not move with only physical satisfaction feeling while buying products or getting services, and psychologically they make buying decisions with pleasure motive. In this study, subheadings such as hedonic consumer behaviors, motivations of hedonic consumption and factors affecting hedonic consumption are examined from a theoretical point of view under the heading of hedonism and hedonic consumption concepts and it is aimed to contribute to the literature.

Keyword: *Consumption, hedonism, hedonic consumption.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The consumption habits of the human being, who is the only living thing in nature fulfilling the behavior of consumption consciously, have changed over time. That is to say, the traditional consumer acting only with the purpose of meeting his/her needs gave its place to modern consumer acting with the motives of taking the advantage of the consumption action and enjoying the consumption action. It has become essential for producers and marketers to observe their existing strategies due to some reasons such as the homogenization of products and services by resembling each other as well as the shortening of the product life cycles, the large number of competitors in the market, the consciousness of the consumer. With the development of information technology, today's consumer has been able to shop 7/24 without space and time limits using computers, tablets or even mobile phones. Since the consumers are not only dependent on the stores that exist in physical sense, the consumption habits have changed radically and the customers have turned to hedonic approach. In its simplest form, hedonist

consumption is a marketing concept which refers to the act of consuming performed not only with the intention of meeting the need but with the intention of liking, enjoying and being happy with it. In other words, today's hedonist consumer is no longer interested in just the physical characteristics of the product while buying a product, but also what those characteristics of the product represent.

In the current era, the new consumer who is sometimes self-indulgent and in the search of simplicity wants to experience different experiences even in buying standard products or getting standard services and in consumption, and often wants to participate in the production process of services in order to get a product suitable for himself/herself. However, today's consumer engages in a very different meaning transfer under the interaction of global and local cultures, and the targets of consumption actions can be changed in this process, and even in the consumption activities in everyday life, the behaviors of being conspicuous, spending extravagantly and taking pleasure have become prominent (Torlak et al., 2006: 13). During shopping, consumers can choose a product which they do not need because of its attractive and flashy presentation and they can perform buying behavior. Traditionally, many values that determine consumer attitudes and behaviors are said to be radically changing within today's modern marketing conception. In other words, the traditional definition such as "consumption is a planned behavior" has left its place to the definition that "consumption is an action that can be done to be happy except being a necessity".

2.HEDONISM AND HEDONIC CONSUMPTION FROM A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of hedonism which extends to Ancient Greece, which is derived from the word "hedone" in Greek and known to have developed in the 4th century is a way of thinking which argues that pleasure feeling is a good thing in the strict sense, people behaviors should be planned in a way that they are pleasing and turning to the pleasing behavior is the right way of behaviour. It is known that hedonism has two different aspects as philosophical hedonism and psychological hedonism. While the philosophical aspect which argues that hedonism is a system of philosophy of choosing the pleasure emphasizes that the aim of the individual is to achieve pleasure at the highest level, the psychological hedonism can be expressed more clearly with motivation. That is to say, human being is motivated to achieve the things that he enjoys or take pleasure by his nature (Odabaşı, 1999: 78-79; Ünal and Ceylan, 2008: 266; Özdemir and Yaman, 2007: 82).

According to another point of view, hedonism can be examined in two different types such as modern hedonism and traditional hedonism. The pleasure which can be explained by basic and clear pleasure search and which is achieved by senses such as seeing, smelling, hearing, touching, tasting, etc. is expressed as traditional hedonism. On the other hand, the achievement of the pleasure by emotions instead of senses regardless of the physical satisfaction can be explained as modern hedonism. That is, while the pleasures of abundance and enthusiasm achieved by senses are important in traditional hedonism, the emotions accompanying them are at the forefront in modern hedonism (Yanıklar, 2006 ve Campbell, 1995). According to Penpece (2006), the only difference between modern hedonism and traditional hedonism is that consumers act more according to their enthusiasm in modern hedonism.

The hedonism concept is also an important study field for marketers aside from its philosophical point of view. Various researches have been carried out on the concept of hedonic consumption, which have taken the attention of marketing researchers from past to present. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982; 93), who used the concept for consumption for the first time, expressed consumers' buying experiences with respect to products or services from an emotional point of view and pointed out that consumers are no longer intend to benefit only perceptibly from products or services that they consider to buy. Today's consumers regard buying behavior as a means of pleasure and enjoyment as well as providing concrete benefits from it, and they also perform shopping activities to satisfy and enjoy this pleasure. In this sense, hedonic consumption makes it possible to define the product as subjective symbols that make the image carried and created by the product focus rather than being considered as an objective entity that expresses the truth (Baş and Samsunlu, 2015: 18). Hedonic consumption based on the idea that the emotions can determine behaviors and preferences and act on other emotions represents an approach related to the fulfillment of some needs associated with the person, such as entertainment, pleasure, happiness, rather than the fulfillment of the need for a certain product or service. That is, it can be said that in hedonic consumption there are situations where priority is given to entertainment and pleasure expectancy (Park et al., 2006: 443; Akturan, 2010: 109, Ünal and Ceylan, 2008: 266). Hedonic consumption defined as performing buying behaviour with the aim of meeting the needs emotionally as well as taking pleasure from consumption act apart from only meeting the needs physically can be associated with consumer fantasies, dreams and imaginary worlds. In hedonic consumption, for example, smokers may be delighted to imagine themselves as "Marlboro Man", or the perfume smell can lead a person to a past moment or a sensation they feel and thus he/she can gain an emotional dimension in relation to perfume (Bilge, 2014: 18). In hedonic consumption which is mixed with desires and fantasies, is semi-imagination and in which desire is continuous and satisfaction is not possible, buying behaviour is carried out with emotions rather than senses. That is to say, the main idea behind hedonic consumption is that there is a cycle in which consumers take pleasure when they cannot reach a product or service and when they achieve the desired product or service, they are in search of new pleasure (Özcan, 2007: 48; Yanıklar, 2006: 33). Since in hedonic consumption what the product is more important than what the product represents and the image it creates, hedonic consumption depends on what the consumer wants the truth to be rather than what the consumer actually knows (Odabaşı, 2006: 116; Okutan, et al., 2013: 121).

3.HEDONIC CONSUMPTION MOTIVATIONS

Consumers perform shopping behavior with various motivations that differ from person to person. Researches show that hedonic shopping is performed by starting with different expectations and individuals lead hedonic shopping for a variety of reasons, not just for taking pleasure.

Tauber (1972) studied hedonic consumption motivation in two groups as personal and social reasons. While personal reasons include physical activities, entertainment activities, desire to have a cheaper product or service, role playing, distraction, taking pleasure, taking personal pleasure desire, and sensory stimuli; social reasons include gaining social experience, communicating with others, being affected from notable people in the society, reference groups and interviews, social experiences, friendship activities, status and authority, etc. (Antonides and

Raaij: 1998, 420; Baş and Samsunlu, 2015: 18). One of the most comprehensive researches on the subject is the study of "Scale towards Causes of Hedonic Consumption" conducted by Arnold and Reynolds (2003). According to this study emphasizing that consumers do shopping with intense emotions and because of different reasons, the motivations that motivate people for hedonic shopping can be summarized in the following subheadings (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003: 74-75; Babin et al., 1994; Bilge, 2014: 28-32):

Adventurous shopping; adventure shopping which express excitement, adventure and feeling of being in a different word is expressed as an entrance to a word where there are enthusiastic and exciting images, fears and sounds. Adventure shopping motivation done with the aim of exploring and taking pleasure is also associated with feelings such as the perceived freedom and moving away from ordinariness.

Shopping for relaxing; it is a motivation type which can be explained by avoiding from stress and bad mood. Today's consumers can lead to activities which are delighting and elating by escaping from stressful environment, problems and negativities.

Shopping with social aim; shopping with social aim which expresses some reasons such as taking pleasure from the shopping done with friends and family, socializing during shopping, interacting with other people is a type of motivation in which consumers act with the socialization motive. Nowadays, when modern marketing age takes place, the shopping centers are the places which bring people together, where people walk around freely and people can communicate with each other easily. People turn to hedonic consumption more because of this situation.

Shopping for having an idea; shopping for having an idea which means following trends and fashion, being informed about new products and developments expresses the shopping motivation performed only with the aim of obtaining information regardless of any buying need or decision. In this motivation type people do shopping with the aim of valuing their free time.

Shopping to make others happy; in shopping to make others happy motivation which includes the pleasure and positive thoughts that people experience while they do shopping for others, consumers are delighted to buy gifts for the people they love and experience positive emotions and thus feel better.

Shopping for opportunities; in shopping for opportunities which is performed with the aim of waiting for cheaper periods and following discounts, consumers take pleasure from waiting cheaper periods and following discounts and promotions. In this motivation type, not only consumers take pleasure because of possessing the products they like at cheaper prices, but also they feel happy since they are proud of themselves by sharing the discount and opportunity information with the people near them.

Kim (2006), another researcher who has studies on hedonic consumption motivations, emphasizes in his study that consumers living in the city have more motivation for hedonic consumption than those living outside the city. Hausman (2000) emphasizes that consumers do shopping with the motivation of having products which are not possessed by others and some consumers show a tendency to consume for therapy. Westbrook and Black (1985) have stated that consumers often engage in hedonic consumption with the motivation to escape from reality and move away from the routine of life.

4.FACTORS AFFECTING THE HEDONIC CONSUMPTIONS

The hedonic behaviors of consumers are influenced by a number of factors. In their study, Arnold and Reynolds (2003) have addressed the relationship between a number of consumer characteristics and shopping factors and shopping motivations. In this study, factors affecting the hedonic consumption can be summarized as flow, store atmosphere, product innovation and fashion, consumer characteristics, country culture and economic situation (Bilge, 2014: 35-36).

Table 1. The Factors Affecting the Hedonic Consumption and the Relationship Between Hedonic Consumption and its Motivations

Flow	There is a very strong relationship between adventurous shopping motivation and the sense of flow that consumers have during shopping since shopping involves experiential and imaginary aspects.
Store Atmosphere	The factors such as the physical surroundings, personnel, interior decoration, music system, lighting, selection of colors, presentation of products in store, behavior of sales personnel, etc. affect the pleasure consumers take from shopping. In this sense, the store atmosphere is influential on all hedonic motivations.
Product Innovation and Fashion	There is a positive relationship between the desire to buy new products and the motivation to have opinion without taking into account the information and references that consumers get from outside. Nevertheless, the fashion element, which is directly influential on the buying decision of young people, is highly influential on hedonic motivation.
Consumer Characteristics	The demographic features of the consumers such as age, gender, income-especially the age factor-directly affect the hedonic consumption motivation.
Country Culture and Economic Situation	Culture and economic situation of a country are very influential on hedonic consumption. That is to say, while hedonic consumption tendency is observed more in the developed economies, in underdeveloped economies this situation is less effective.

5.STUDIES ON HEDONIC CONSUMPTION

There are many studies on hedonic consumption. Some of the related studies can be summarized as follows: Rook (1987) emphasized in his study on unplanned buying behaviour that the unplanned buying behavior has the opportunity for the individuals to get intense pleasure and it has hedonic elements since it gives happiness to the person. Babin, Dardin and Griffin

(1994) addressed consumption in terms of both hedonic and utilitarian perspectives and presented that consumers take both of them into consideration. In their study Dhar and Wartenbroch (1999) examined the consumer preferences among hedonic and utilitarian products and they found out that the products bought arbitrarily have effects on hedonic consumption at different levels compared to the products bought with functional purposes; that is the consumers are not very reluctant for leaving the arbitrarily bought products. In his study Hausman (2000) tried to discover how hedonic motivation affects unplanned buying behaviour and argued that consumers shop to meet their needs which are not about the usefulness of the products. Park, Kim and Forney (2006) concluded in their study that hedonic consumption is related to unplanned buying behaviour only by means of positive emotions. Kim (2006) found two important motivational tools as efficiency towards utilitarian consumption tendency and success. Özdemir and Yaman (2007) conducted a study to find whether hedonic consumption differentiates in terms of gender and obtained the results that hedonic consumption behavior is more dominant in female consumers than in male consumers (Yaşar, 2017: 47-48).

In addition, Çelik (2013) examined the demographic characteristics of the reasons for hedonic consumption, and found that married participants were more influenced by the factor of making others happy than single participants. Yaşar (2017) found in his study on determining the tendency of young people towards hedonic consumption that unplanned buying behaviour and hedonic consumption trends were higher in women than men while men were more likely to be more prone than women in trends of conspicuous consumption and utilitarian consumption. Ünal and Ceylan (2008) examined the reasons why consumers turn to hedonic consumption and evaluated the participants who live in Erzurum and Istanbul. They found out in their study that the consumers who live in Erzurum turn to hedonic consumption to catch the shopping opportunities, make others happy, for social purpose and relief while the participants who live in İstanbul perform hedonic consumption to obtain ideas and follow the latest fashion. Ozdemir and Yaman (2007: 87) found that female consumers regard shopping as a social need compared to male consumers and that shopping is a hedonic behavior since it makes people happy and this makes women happier than men. Altunışık and Çallı (2004) obtained that consumers who have a tendency to hedonic consumption are more interested in the visual and message dimensions of buying decisions than price and cost factors, and they are particularly affected by image and emotional factors. Aytekin and Ay (2015) also examined the relationship between hedonic consumption and instant buying behaviour and found that there is a positive relationship between these factors even it is at weak level, and hedonic reasons except the reasons such as the mood of the people, advertisements, the presentation and the price can affect the instant buying behaviour.

6.RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The tendency to take pleasure, which is in the nature of people, has begun to become very influential on the buying decision of today's consumers. The concept of consumption has now become a cultural phenomenon in which individuals can express themselves except just meeting needs. It can be said that consumers, who tend to hedonic consumption rather than the benefits of products or services, are in search of happiness with the products they buy. In hedonic consumption, which can be defined as taking pleasure from consumption or enjoying the consumption apart from the purpose of meeting the needs concretely, people act with the motivation of having a good time and feeling better rather than meeting their needs.

In addition, the symbolic meaning of products and brands in hedonic consumption brings the result that consumers often carry out the buying action in order to obtain these meanings. With this situation which takes its effect with people with a high level of income, it can be said easily that the consumers decide to conduct buying behaviour with the sense of image offered to them rather than the brands' meeting their needs.

It is crucial for marketers to meet the needs of people who regard the shopping as an adventure, do shopping to relax, turn to hedonic consumption for social purposes, shop to obtain ideas and turn to hedonic consumption to make the others happy and catch the opportunities. In their marketing strategies which will be formed in the light of the evaluations carried out in this study, businesses need to lead approaches which will make the consumers happy, which will make the consumers enjoy shopping, which strengthen the product or brand image by the help of the correct messages and which will increase the hedonic buying behaviour motivation.

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