

# INVESTIGATION OF SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEF BASED PURCHASING BEHAVIOR WITH THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR: A RESEARCH ON YOUNG CONSUMERS

Batıl İnanca Dayalı Satın Alma Davranışının Planlı Davranış Teorisine Dayalı Olarak İncelenmesi: Genç Tüketiciler Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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### ABSTRACT

There are only a few studies examining the factors affecting superstitious belief based consumer behaviours in marketing literature. In this research, consumer behaviors based on superstitious beliefs are examined primarily with the help of related literature. Then, factors affecting superstitious belief based purchasing behavior are examined with the help of primary data obtained from undergraduate students based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). As a result of the research, TPB has been found to be a theory that can be used in explaining superstitious belief based purchasing behavior. Accordingly, superstitious belief based purchasing intentions affect the superstitious belief based purchasing at a high level. Superstitious belief based purchasing intention is affected by perceived control and relative norm variables, particularly positive attitude towards superstitious belief based purchasing. Finally, research findings are discussed and recommendations are made for businesses.

**Key words:** Superstitious Belief, Culture, Consumer, Purchasing, the Theory of Planned Behavior

### ÖZET

Pazarlama literatüründe batıl inanışa dayalı tüketici davranışları etkileyen faktörleri inceleyen araştırmalar son derece azdır. Bu araştırmada, batıl inanışa dayalı tüketici davranışları öncelikle ilgili literatür yardımıyla incelenmektedir. Ardından batıl inanışa dayalı satın alma davranışını etkileyen faktörler, Planlı Davranış Teorisi'ne (PDT) dayalı olarak lisans öğrencilerinden elde edilen birincil veriler yardımıyla irdelenmektedir. Araştırma sonucunda PDT'nin batıl inanışa dayalı satın alma davranışını açıklamada kullanılabilecek bir teori olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Buna göre batıl inanışa dayalı satın alma niyeti, batıl inanışa dayalı satın alma niyetini etkilemektedir. Batıl inanışa dayalı satın alma niyeti ise, batıl inanışa dayalı satın almaya yönelik olumlu tutum başta olmak üzere algılanan kontrol ve göreceli norm değişkenlerinden etkilenmektedir. Son olarak araştırma bulguları tartışılmakta ve işletmelere önerilerde bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Batıl İnanış, Kültür, Satın Alma, Planlı Davranış Teorisi

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is inevitable for the cultural factors to affect consumers (Kacen & Lee, 2002). Understanding the effects of superstitions as a part of the culture would increase the ability of the marketers to create an attractive position for the target consumers (Sierra et.al., 2015). In marketing researches, which display the uses of superstitious beliefs by businesses, the use of lucky numbers in marketing communications was generally emphasized. For instance, the number 8 was used or tended to be used more than 4 by the businesses in Hong Kong and Taiwan (Simmons & Schindler, 2003; Simmons et.al, 2003). In addition to these, such superstitions could also be made use of in alphanumeric brand management (7-Up, A5 etc.). The characteristics of the alphanumeric brand names and the numbers used in these names could affect the perception and expectations of consumers regarding a product Particularly, it is possible that the perception of the number as lucky by the target audience could affect the decisions of the consumers (Pavia & Costa, 1993). Several researches show that superstitious beliefs affect consumer behaviors or purchasing behaviors, but there is not seen a research taking into consideration certain theoretical model (like Theory of

Planned Behavior) to understand the consumer purchasing behavior depending on superstitious beliefs.

## 2. SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

Superstition is expressed as irrational thought or belief that an object, behavior or situation is associated with certain consequences (Damisch et al., 2010). Many people often perform rituals before making certain decisions, hit the board, avoid going under the stairs, use their lucky pens to succeed in exams (Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2008), believe in astrology (Carlson et al., 2009) or attribute some special meanings to certain numbers. For example, while 8 means development or increase in the welfare in China, 4 means death (Simmons et al., 2003). In western culture, 13 is considered unlucky (Yang, 2011).

In researches about why people have superstitions, it was concluded such factors as external locus of control, high level of uncertainty, importance of the event, tense mood (Schippers & Van Lange, 2006; Case et al., 2004; Rudski & Edwards, 2007; Dudley, 2000), low learning need, fatalism (Mowen & Carlson, 2003), belief in influencing the future, desire for control, hope that is created by a positive result, anticipated frustration and desire for meeting functional, psychological and socio-cultural needs such as the pressure to comply with social norms, were effective (Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2008). In addition, superstitions could arise as a result of practices or experiences. For example, when a basketball team wins the game while the viewer is drinking a certain brand of soda during the game, s/he could associate this victory with the brand of the soda he drinks and continue this behavior to help his/her team in the future. This type of superstition, which occurs consciously, is called the “conditional superstition” (Hamerman & Johar, 2013). Conditional superstition, which is based on the operant conditioning theory, shows that it is possible to change various behaviors through reinforcement (Skinner, 1948).

In short, it is observed that superstitions emerge as a consequence of various causes such as individual, psychological, cultural and behavioral and they are factors that change from person to person in terms of performing certain behaviors. For instance, superstitious people have permanent tendencies towards gambling, they forward superstitious e-mails more and carry lucky objects more (Carlson vd., 2009). In short, it is inevitable for superstitions to affect consumer behaviors. However, it is observed that the factors affecting purchasing behaviors based on superstitions have not been examined sufficiently.

### 2.1. Superstitious Beliefs and Consumer Behaviors

Superstitions are important factors that affect consumer behaviors. Studies on superstitions in the field of marketing usually focus on the effects of such superstitions as certain lucky objects or colors or hitting the board on the consumer. In these studies, individuals were generally examined in terms of turning superstitions into behavior with the aim of feeling themselves secure and for controlling purposes (Damisch et al., 2010). The results of the research studies about the effects of superstitions or being superstitious on consumers are listed hereby below:

- ✓ Purchasing or attributing special meanings to products that contain specific or lucky colors (green, etc.) or numbers (Kramer & Block, 2007a; Block & Kramer, 2009; Hamerman & Johar, 2013) etc.
- ✓ Believing that doing important purchases at times considered lucky such as when there is a full moon or believing that the time of starting shopping affected the result (Balakrishnan, 2017).
- ✓ The tendency towards gambling (Wu et al., 2013).
- ✓ While playing the lottery, selecting the numbers out of interesting things like dreams or leaves of the tree, making vows to increase the chances of winning such as celebrating after winning, doing good work and realizing the wow (Pusaksrikit et al., 2018).

- ✓ Assuming that the chance of winning the lottery would increase, desiring for more participation in the lottery and investing more money based on the lucky numbers (Jiang et al., 2009).
- ✓ Change in the sensitivity towards the logo (believing in fate would decrease the sensitivity towards the logo, belief in the fortune teller, magician, talismans or imaginary figures would increase the sensitivity towards the logo ) (Wang et al., 2012).
- ✓ Change of consumer innovation (fatalism affects compatibility with innovations negatively, believing in superstitions and believing fortune tellers affects compliance with innovations positively) (Özgüven, 2013).
- ✓ Increasing or decreasing the search for originality (active superstitions such as carrying an evil eye could affect positively, passive superstitions such as fatalism affects negatively) (Hernandez et al., 2008).
- ✓ Change in purchasing or product satisfaction (Kramer & Block, 2007a; Kramer & Block, 2007b)
- ✓ Making unreasonable purchases, making less rational choices, increasing expectations, experiencing more dissatisfaction when problems occur (Block & Kramer, 2009),
- ✓ Paying more for market offerings regarding superstitions (8th floor apartments in China can be sold at higher prices) (Chau et al., 2001; Yang, 2011; Chau et al., 2001).

In this study, superstitious belief based purchasing behavior was analyzed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. The phenomenon of purchasing based on superstition, using the literature examined (Han et al., 2010; Sierra et al., 2015; Wiseman & Watt, 2004; Wang et al., 2012; Mowen & Carlson, 2003; Hernandez et al., 2008), was analyzed through variables such as purchasing products that the consumer considers to be lucky, purchasing the products in the way the consumer considers to be lucky, purchasing products at times when the consumer considers to be lucky, purchasing products when the consumer considers himself/herself as lucky, purchasing from stores that the consumer considers to be lucky.

## 2.2. Superstitious Belief Based Purchasing and the Theory of Planned Behavior

Assumptions of the TPB, which was developed by Ajzen (1985; 1987; 1991), has been supported in many studies empirically. According to the theory, behavioral beliefs cause positive or negative attitudes towards behaviors, normative beliefs cause social pressure or social norms, and control beliefs cause perceived behavioral control (ease or difficulty of behavior). Next, attitude towards behavior, relative norm and perceived behavioral control cause behavioral intention and the intention turns into the behavior when opportunity arises. This theory has overcome the failure of certain aggregated variables, such as general attitude, personality trait, or locus of control, in predicting behaviors. At this point, intentions are expressed as important motivation factors affecting behaviors (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen, 1991).

In the Theory of Planned Behavior, the main factor of behavior is assumed to be the intention of the individual. The intention is an indicator of how much the individual wants to strive for or how much effort s/he plans to make a behavior. The attitude that is assumed to determine intentions in this theory refers to positive or negative evaluations about a certain behavior. Relative norm is perceived social pressure related to displaying or not displaying behavior, and perceived behavioral control is perceived convenience, competence or controllability to display the behavior. Intention is the closest predecessor of behavior. However, behavioral control variable may not contribute to the model when the individual does not have any information about the behavior. In addition, in the theory, the antecedents of attitude, relative norm and the behavioral control are expressed to be the beliefs about them (Ajzen, 1989: 250-251).

Many studies have been conducted to understand consumer behavior by the Theory of Planned Behavioral and it has been concluded that the theory is useful in explaining certain consumer behaviors (coupon usage, green product preference, health care preference, unethical consumer behavior etc.) (Yağcı & Çabuk, 2018; Mathieson, 1991; Shimp & Kavas, 1984; Bagozzi et al.,

1992; Han et al., 2010; Bohon et al., 2016; Chang, 1998). On the other hand, there is no research on the effectiveness of TPB, which is seen as one of the important theories in explaining consciously controlled behaviors (Ajzen, 1991), in explaining the superstitious behaviors of the consumers.

### 3. FIELD RESEARCH

#### 3.1. The Purpose and Method of Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors affecting superstitious belief based purchasing behavior within the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior. Based on the fact that superstitions could affect consumer behavior significantly and purchasing behavior could be displayed based on superstitions, knowing the factors affecting these behaviors would contribute to developing of more effective marketing mixes. The model created within the scope of the research is as displayed in Figure 1:

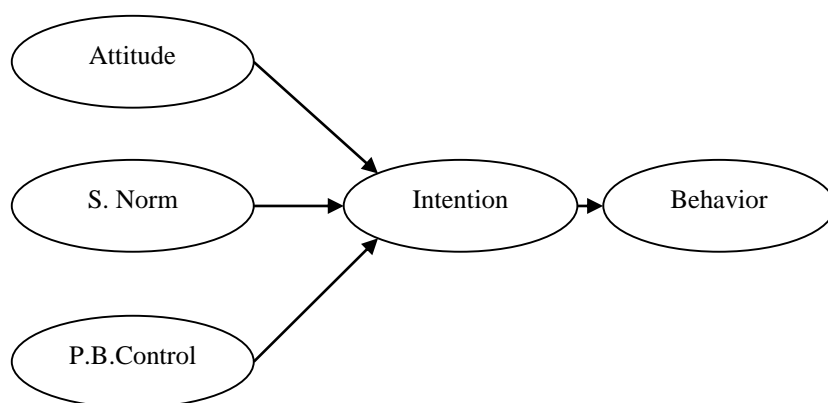


Figure 1. Research Model

In the research, a survey was conducted with the students of Kırıkkale University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences on December 2019. Primary data were collected by means of the questionnaire designed and convenience sampling method. Scientific research on the topic was used in the creation of the research questionnaire.

The research questionnaire was adapted in terms of behavior, intention, attitude, perceived behavioral control, and relative norm as the variables of Theory of Planned Behavior within the context of the superstitious belief based purchasing behavior. In 8 statements that were created to determine the superstitious belief based purchasing variable, the literature on the major superstitious belief based purchasing behaviors was utilized (Mowen & Carlson, 2003; Wiseman & Watt, 2004; Hernandez et al., 2008; Han et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2012; Sierra et al., 2015). These items consisted of components such as people purchasing products in the way that was in accordance with their superstition, purchasing products that were suitable for their superstition, purchasing products at a certain time that was appropriate to their superstition, purchasing products that matched their astrological signs and purchasing products that they believed to be charmed.

For the behavioral intention variable, statements regarding the desire, plan and effort for purchasing products in accordance with superstitions while purchasing the products were mentioned. The perceived control variable regarding the behavior of purchasing products based on superstitions was created to include statements indicating that the the behavior was under the control of the consumer, it was possible, it was easy and that the consumer had sufficient resources or opportunities. The social norm variable consisted of statements indicating that the individuals who were important to the person should purchase, is expected to purchase and it is important that they purchased products based on superstitions. Finally, in order to measure the attitude variable, statements, which indicated that superstitious belief based purchasing was good, nice, pleasant and useful, were prepared. In the preparation of these statements, the studies of those who developed the Theory of Planned Behavior and applied it in different contexts were used (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Chang,

1998; Han et al., 2010; Bohon et al., 2016). The final version of the measures are seen in Appendix A.

### 3.2. Analyses

A total of 389 young consumers participated in the study. It was determined that 61.4% of the participants were female and 85.2% were under the age of 22. In terms of the amount of money received per month by the participants who were students, it was observed that 70.8% of the participants belonged to the group of 750 TL and below. Table 1 displays the demographic features.

Table 1. Demographic Features of Participants

	Quantity	Valid Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	239	63,7
Male	136	36,3
<b>Age</b>		
17-19	110	28,6
20-22	218	56,6
23-25	38	9,9
26-27	4	1
28 and above	15	3,9
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
0-500 TL	192	50
501-750 TL	80	20,8
751-1000 TL	29	7,6
1001-1250 TL	29	7,6
1251 TL and above	54	14,1

In terms of the analysis of the research data, kurtosis and skewness values were calculated to examine whether the data obtained were normally distributed. Accordingly, the kurtosis values of the statements in the questionnaire form ranged from -1,544 to + 1,610. The skewness values ranged from -0,305 to 1,420. Accordingly, the data was assumed to be normally distributed and the analyzes were continued.

Reliability, which indicates the consistency of the measurement (Karakoç & Dönmez, 2014), the internal consistency reliability, indicates whether the statements affect each other causally, they share a common cause, they are attributed to a common resource (Devellis, 2012: 31-37) or whether they are homogeneous (Ozdamar, 2016: 113-114). Cronbach Alpha coefficient is widely used in assessing the reliability (Korkut, 1996; Yıldırım, 1997). Within the scope of the reliability analysis of the research questionnaire, the alpha coefficients of the item groups were calculated and it was determined that the variables had high or quite high levels of reliability. In addition, when the means of the variables were analyzed, it was understood that the average of superstition-bases purchasing behavior, intention, behavioral control, relative norm and attitude variables were low or at the level of “disagree”.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis and Averages

	Cronbach Alfa	Average
Superstition Based Purchasing	0,82	1,87
Superstition Based Purchasing Intention	0,93	1,90
Perceived Behavioral Control toward Superstition Based Purchasing	0,85	2,60
Subjective Norm toward Superstition Based Purchasing	0,93	1,75
Attitude toward Superstition Based Purchasing	0,94	2,01

Goodness of fit indexes are widely used to analyze the structural validity of the research (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Dabholkar et al., 1996; Kızılkaya & Askar, 2010). In order to analyze the structural validity of the research model, the goodness of fit values of the model developed based on the theory were calculated with the AMOS program. As a result of the analysis, 4 items with regression weights less than 0.5 (Question 1, with the standard regression weight of 0.5, Question 6, with the standard regression weight of 0.2, Question 7, with the standard regression weight of

0.2, Question 8, with the standard regression weight of 0.4) were removed from the superstitious belief based purchasing behavior variable; 1 statement was removed from the perceived behavioral control variable (Question 1, with the standard regression weight of 0.532). Goodness of fit values of the structural equation model realized was determined as CMIN/DF: 3.859, CFI: 0.942, RMSE: 0.082, IFI: 0.942, TLI: 0.928 and it was accepted that the research model was compatible with the data set. According to the results of the analysis, the standard beta coefficients among the research variables, as displayed in the table below, influenced the superstition-based purchasing. In addition, the attitude towards purchasing moderately affected the purchasing intention. Moreover, the relative norm and perceived control affected the purchasing intention at a low level.

Table 3. Standardized Beta Coefficients of Structural Equation Model

	Superstition Based Purchasing	P
Superstition Based Purchasing Intention	0,769	***
	Superstition Based Purchasing Intention	
Attitude toward Superstition Based Purchasing	0,583	***
Subjective Norm toward Superstition Based Purchasing	0,094	0,047
Perceived Behavioral Control toward Superstition Based Purchasing	0,213	***

The structural equation model showing the results of the analysis can be seen in Figure 2. Research results showed that the Theory of Planned Behavior could be used to explain superstitious belief based purchasing behavior.

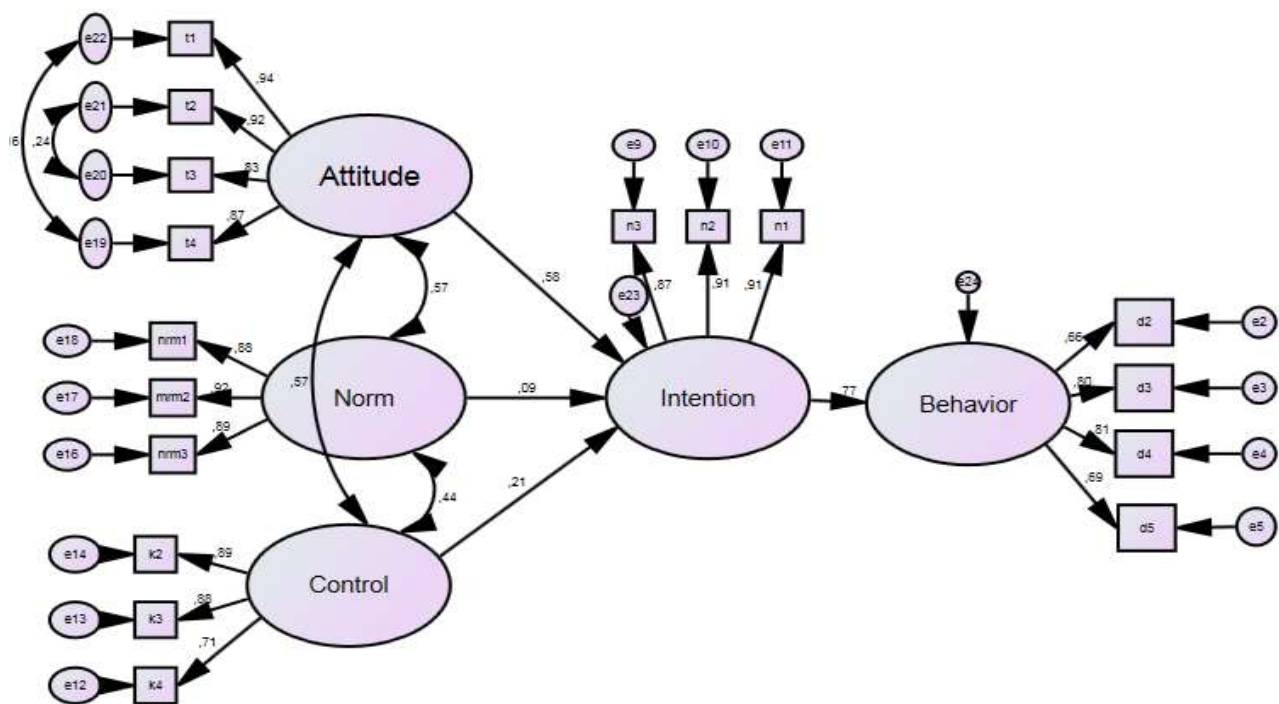


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model Results

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, which dealt with superstitious belief based purchasing behavior, it was seen that the variables of intention, attitude, perceived behavioral control and perceived relative norm affected the behavior. Therefore, it was understood that the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen, 1989; Ajzen, 1991), which assumes that attitude, relative norm, perceived control and intention were important factors in predicting behaviors, could be used to explain purchasing behavior based on superstition. The research is thought to be original in terms of trying to explain the superstitious belief based purchasing behavior from the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior.

According to the research findings, the behavioral intention variable had a high level of influence on the superstitious belief based purchasing behavior (standard  $\beta$  coefficient: 0.77). Therefore, it was found that when people are purchasing products, their purchasing behavior was affected by their desire, plan and strive to purchase products based on superstitions (purchasing the products that they considered to be lucky, purchasing the products at certain times when the consumer considered to be lucky, purchasing products from the shops that were considered to be lucky, purchasing products that matched their astrological signs).

In addition, the conclusion that the attitude variable affected the behavioral intention at a high level (standard  $\beta$  coefficient: 0, 58) indicated that it is important to evaluate superstitious belief based purchasing behavior as good, nice, useful or pleasant in predicting behavioral intention. On the other hand, it was understood that the relative norm and perceived control variables affected intention at a low and statistically significant level (standard  $\beta$  coefficients: 0.09; 0.21, respectively).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Culture and a part of culture superstitions affect consumption behavior and marketing activities. In this research, which was carried out with the idea that the factors affecting the superstitious belief based purchasing behavior of consumers were not examined sufficiently, a field study was conducted with undergraduate students by making use of the Theory of Planned Behavior. As a result of the research, it was determined that the superstitious belief based purchasing intention, similar to TPB, affected superstitious belief based purchasing behavior at a high level. In addition, it was understood that attitude towards superstitious belief based purchasing behavior, perceived behavioral control and relative norm variables affected behavioral intention respectively. At this point, it was seen that the attitude towards superstitious belief based purchasing behavior was an important factor.

It is possible for the research results to be useful for businesses. The research results are important in order to draw attention to the factors affecting the purchasing behaviors of consumers especially in the marketing of products with superstitious features. It is understood that it is necessary to promote the purchasing of the products, which are in colors or numbers, from the shops and at times that are considered to be lucky by the target audience, to increase the positive attitudes towards such behaviors in order to create intentions to display such behaviors.

Similar to other research studies, this research has some limitations. First of all, the realization of the research by means of the survey method requires that the research results be reached based on the opinions or evaluations of the participants at a certain time and does not guarantee the exact accuracy of the research results. In addition, the realization of the research with the data obtained from undergraduate students does not allow the generalization of the research results. However, utilizing a widely used theory in explaining behaviors that are under the control of the human beings in social sciences and making use of the relevant knowledge base with the aim of increasing the measurement validity of the research contribute to understanding the consumer behavior in terms of specific target audience.

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## APPENDIX A. MEASUREMENT

### *Superstitious belief based purchasing:*

Usually based on my superstitious beliefs...

- ✓ I buy the products that I think they are lucky (contains my lucky colour or number etc.)
- ✓ I buy the some products when I think they bring me luck (Friday, Weekend etc.)
- ✓ I buy products from stores that I think have brought luck
- ✓ I buy products that fit my horoscope

### *Superstitious belief based purchasing intention:*

While buying products.....to based on my superstitious beliefs (lucky products, numbers, colours, times, stores etc.)

- ✓ ... I would like
- ✓ ... I plan
- ✓ ... I make effort

### *Perceived behavioral control:*

Buying products based on my superstitions (lucky / lucky numbers, colorful, time, store, amulet etc.)...

- ✓ ... is under my control
- ✓ ... is possible
- ✓ ... it's easy for me
- ✓ ..... I have enough resources or opportunities for it

### *Perceived social norm:*

Most people who are important to me:....

- ✓ ... thinks I should buy products based on my superstitions
- ✓ ... wants me to buy products based on my superstitions
- ✓ ... thinks it's important to buy products based on my superstitions for me

### *Attitude toward superstitious belief based purchasing:*

Purchasing products in accordance with my superstitions is ...

- ✓ ... good
- ✓ ... nice
- ✓ ... enjoyable
- ✓ ... useful