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An Investigation Of The Effect Of Gift Satisfaction And Causality Perceptions On The Customer Intention To Prefer The Business: A Research In Kırıkkale

Hediye Memnuniyeti Ve Nedensellik Algılamalarının Müşterinin İşletmeyi Tercih Niyetine Etkisinin İncelenmesi: Kırıkkale’de Bir Araştırma

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ABSTRACT

Gift giving is common in business life and businesses invest in gifts for customers. The issue of what the effectiveness of giving gifts to the customer depends on has attracted the attention of marketing researchers. Because, determining what the role of gifts in reaching goals depends on, will contribute to businesses to perform these activities more effectively. This study was conducted to examine the effect of customer satisfaction with the gifts given to the customer and the attributions toward the reason for the gift, on the intention to choose the business. In this way, the possible role of causality perceptions in understanding the effects of gift giving in this context is questioned. Within the scope of the research, a survey was conducted in Kırıkkale province and the primary data obtained were analyzed with statistical package program. As a result of the analysis, it has been determined that the altruistic attributions toward gift giving and the satisfaction of the gift affect the intention to choose the business. Finally, the research findings were interpreted and suggestions were made to researchers and businesses.

Keywords: Gift, Gifting, Customer Gifts, Causality Perceptions, Consumer Preference Intention

ÖZET

Ticari yaşamda hediyeleşmelerle yaygınlıkla karşılaşmakta ve işletmeler müşterilere hediyeler için yatırımlar yapmaktadır. Müşteriye hediye vermenin etkinliğinin nelere bağlı olduğu, pazarlama araştırmacılarının dikkatini çeken bir konu olmuştur. Zira hediyelerin amaçlara ulaşmadaki rolünün nelere bağlı olduğunun belirlenmesi; işletmelerin bu faaliyetleri daha etkin şekilde gerçekleştirmesine katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu çalışma; müşteriye verilen hediyelerden müşterinin duyduğu memnuniyetin ve hediyeinin nedenine yönelik algılamaların, işletmeyi tercih niyetine etkisini incelemek üzere gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu şekilde, hediyeleşmenin bu bağlamdaki etkilerini anlamada özellikle nedensellik algılamalarının olası rolü sorgulanmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında, Kırıkkale ilinde anket çalışması gerçekleştirilmiş ve elde edilen birincil veriler istatistiksel paket programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Analizler neticesinde, hediye verilme nedeninin özgeci olarak algılanmasının ve hediye memnuniyetinin, işletmeyi tercih etme niyetini etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Son olarak araştırma bulguları yorumlanmış, araştırmacı ve işletmelere önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hediye, Hediyeleşme, Müşteri Hediyeleri, Nedensellik Algılamaları, Tüketici Tercih Niyeti

INTRODUCTION

The fact that people live together with others, the relationships they establish affect happiness, and efforts to get more benefits from their interactions with others cause some of the resources to be spent on gifts for others. Similarly businesses as a type of organizations can give gifts to customers in order to develop more profitable and long-term relationships with customers. At this point, it is known that gifts can positively affect the feelings, thoughts and tendencies of the gift recipient about the gift giver.

For example, non-profit organizations can collect more donations when they give gifts. In one example, the subject who bought a coke for himself and gifted a coke to the person next to him was able to sell more lottery tickets to the person he did the favor at the end of the experiment. In another example, when people were asked to fill out a mailed questionnaire, the response rate was much higher when a \$5 gift (which could provide more returns than a \$50 gift) was placed in the envelope (Cialdini, 2001: 48-53). Businesses that want to benefit from the power of the gift also give gifts to customers. However, when the marketing literature is examined, it is seen that this method, which has a potential to positively affect marketing performance, and its effects have not been adequately studied. Investigating the effects of gifts given to customers by businesses will facilitate more effective business decisions in this regard.

GIFTING AND GIFTING IN COMMERCIAL LIFE

The "gift exchange theory" developed by Mauss (1924) is widely used in examining gift-related issues. Accordingly, gift giving consists of the components of giving, receiving and giving back, and always something is expected in return for the gift. At this point, especially feeling of indebtedness towards the gift givers can affect the behaviors. Although gift giving person does not expect an explicit response from recipient, at least a "thank you" response may be expected, as well as a different gift, privilege or invitation



(Katz et al., 2020). On the other hand, it has been argued that gift giving, which is also expressed as a special type of socially responsible consumption (Green et al., 2016), has recently been realized free of charge. In this respect, gift giving behavior can also be carried out to meet the need of gift giving and to obtain intangible benefits (De Peyrelongue et al., 2017).

Gifts are very diverse and can be classified according to criteria such as hedonistic/utilitarian, appropriate/emotionally valuable, material/experiential, desired/undesirable, instant/delayed, full/partial etc. (Givi & Galak, 2017; Kuppor et al., 2017). At this point, the preferred gifts are closely related to the culture. For example; while cigarettes are generally given as gifts in China (Huang et al., 2012), it is stated that white and red colors should be avoided in gift-giving behaviors in this region, since these symbolize death. Cultural and faith-related features should be considered in order to prevent communication conflicts in gift giving. For example yellow flower is associated with betrayal in France and death in Mexico, purple and black symbolizing the sacred in Latin America, and alcohol is negatively viewed in Muslim countries (Paris, 2015). : 49-50).

Gift giving behaviors are among the important behaviors carried out among the parties such as institutions, employees, managers and customers in the business world. For example, in the United Kingdom, where gifts are not welcome; a business can give a gift such as porcelain or silver in an appropriate way; to thank the client for the opportunity, provided it is not expensive enough to cause embarrassment. Moreover; gifts like pens, books or flowers can be given in this country. Alcoholic beverages, on the other hand, are an individual choice and are not welcomed as gifts in this country. In the U.S., giving a business gift is a good gesture, although not necessary. Gifts given after a deal may be office-appropriate items. Perfumes or clothing items are inappropriate for women and are perceived as overly personal. If the gift giver is from a different country, it is more meaningful to bring a gift from the country of origin. Gift giving is not part of business etiquette in Australia. However, in dinner invitations; flowers, chocolate, an art product or a book introducing the country can be given as a gift (Paris, 2015: 48-49).

In the literature on gift giving, the reasons for this behavior is evaluated under the titles of; influencing others, strengthening relationships, helping others, creating indicators about relationships, explaining identity, feelings and thoughts, obtaining psychological benefits and making concessions (Joy, 2001; Dauncey, 2003; Ruth et al., 2004; Ward & Broniarczyk, 2011; Segev et al., 2012; Ward & Broniarczyk, 2016; Hyun et al., 2016; Graycar & Jancsics, 2017; Givi & Galak, 2017 etc.). On the other hand, it is seen that gift behavior has many effects such as strengthening of relationships, positive feelings (gratitude, etc.) and thoughts (the thought of being valued, etc.) towards the gift giver and an increase in positive attitudes and behaviors (Roster, 2006; Miller, 2014; Anton et al., 2014; De Hooze, 2017). Moreover, gift giving has also effects on final customers like decreasing in price elasticity etc. (Wang & Van der Lans, 2018).

Some of the research on gift giving is about what the positive effects of gift giving depend on. At this point, it is understood that the effects of the gift are especially related to the suitability of the gift. The suitability of the gift depends on whether the gift is important or appropriate for the wishes of the recipient and context of the relationship (Zhang & Epley, 2011). For example, in terms of the context of the gift, a birthday gift is expected to be fun, while a wedding gift is expected to be useful and performing (DeVere et al., 1983).

GIFTING BETWEEN BUSINESSES AND CUSTOMERS

Gift giving, which is commonly encountered in social relations, is also taken place in relations between businesses and customers. Gift giving in these relationships, which are more artificial and fragile due to their commercial nature rather than social, can be effective in the continuation of exchanges. In Darr's (2017) qualitative research conducted with the interview method, the gifts that businesses give to customers are classified under three headings; contract (giving gift cards, prizes), closing (bag for carrying the computer, gifting a mouse next to the computer, etc.) and after-sales (gifting a mouse when the computer arrives late, helping to set up the computer, etc.).

Gifts given to customers in business life may also differ according to culture. In this regard, Paris (2015) covers the basic rules of gift giving in English-speaking countries; personalize the gift if possible (employees prefer more cash), plan a budget for gifts (overexpenditure is wrong, some suppliers limit gift giving), consider religious beliefs (not everyone may celebrate Christmas), give the gift carefully, and view each person as important (never no one should be forgotten). In the related study, it is stated that small gifts can be sent at least once a year that make the customer feel important. For example, if the client is playing golf, it might make sense to buy a ticket from their favorite course instead of a drink. If this is too costly, a handwritten card is more authentic than tools like a cheap pen or notepad.

Gift giving between businesses and customers can be expected to have positive effects on customers. In Marchand et al.'s (2017) study with 1950 airline customers, it was determined that the combination of economically relevant and socially irrelevant gifts affected customer perceptions the most. In addition, it has been understood that customer perceptions and repurchase intentions are fully mediated in the effect of gifts on customer spending, and economic gifts cause the most profit. In the related study gifts are exemplified by: economic and relevant gift; airplane coupon, economical and irrelevant gift; free magazine coupon; social and relevant gift; internet chat with the CEO, social and irrelevant gift; unbranded heart chocolate.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND BUSINESS GIFTS

Attribution is a cognitive process of predicting the cause of an encountered behavior or result (Calder & Burnkrant, 1977). By realizing this mental process, people try to make sense of the events, to predict and control what will happen, and to develop and maintain their self-esteem. In this context, attributions are made to a person's intention or reason for behavior, assuming that human behavior is for a specific purpose (Spilka et al., 1985). Although the attributions can be biased or erroneous, such as attributing success-related states to personal superior characteristics such as skill or effort (Thibaut & Riecken, 1955; Heider, 1958), attribution is a perceptual reality that can affect human perception, attitude, intention, or behavior. According to attribution theory, causal attributions affect behaviors, emotions and expectations such as trusting, believing and being persuaded (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner, 2010).

Attribution theory is also used to understand consumer behavior or attitudes where social influence is evident. For example, attribution theory can be used in explaining issues like the tendency of consumers to believe in advertising messages (Sparkman & Locander, 1980), and commercial rumors (Yagci & Cabuk, 2018), perceptions of honesty or generosity towards other consumers due to the products they buy (Calder & Burnkrant, 1977) etc. In addition, in Mick & Faure's (1998) study, it was concluded that self-gifting as a type of gift behavior also causes attribution processes and that consumers' self-gift behavior occurs especially after success, but this occurs when the person bases success on internal premises.

It is seen that the effects of the seemingly altruistic activities of the businesses towards consumers are also tried to be interpreted based on the attribution theory. Although the direct effects of the activities of businesses for the society on consumer attitudes attract more attention, it is possible that this is related to perceived business motivation (Vlachos et al., 2009). At this point, Rifon et al. (2007) concluded that, in particular, the coherence between the business and the solution efforts of a sponsored social problem causes the consumer to attribute altruism to the business and this affects consumer attitudes. Moreover, Du et al. (2010) argue that one of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of the social responsibility activities of the businesses may be the negative attributions of the consumer, and therefore, the communication of these activities should be done effectively. Similarly, Walker et al. (2010) also showed that the positive effects of social responsibility activities on consumers depend on the perception that these activities are carried out with the aim of providing value to people.

These studies and explanations show that the effectiveness of the gifts given to the customers by the enterprises can be affected by perceptions of the intention for the gift in addition to other known variable like gift satisfaction, characteristics or suitability. Indeed, one of the methods followed by the businesses in creating the perception that they are altruistic or not just for commercial gain is to give gifts to the consumer. At this point, it is possible for consumers to perceive the reason for giving gifts to be truly beneficial to the customer, as well as to perceive that they are given to achieve commercial purposes such as generating more income. In short, one of the theories that can be used to understand the effects of business gifts is the Attribution Theory.

AN APPLICATION

Research Goal and Method

The goal of this research is to examine the possible effects of the causality perceptions and gift satisfaction of consumers regarding the gifts given on the purchase intention. Thus, the possible importance of creating the perception that gifts are given to consumers with altruistic purpose or without commercial concerns is highlighted, and it is hoped to contribute to making these activities of businesses more effective.

Within the scope of the research, primary data were collected between 20.04.2021 and 25.05.2021 with the descriptive face-to-face survey method in Kırıkkale province with convenience sampling method. To measure perceived causal antecedents for gift giving by the business, the studies in the related literature is benefited by adaptation. (De Wulf et al., 2001; Steffel & Le Boeuf, 2013; Hyun et al., 2016; Marchand et al., 2017; De Hooze, 2017). Accordingly, it is possible for consumers to attribute gift giving to manipulative causal

premises such as retaining customers and generating more income, as well as to sincere or altruistic causal premises such as truly pleasing themselves and showing that they are cared for. In order to measure the perceived gift satisfaction, which is the other variable of the research, Keh & Yih (2006) and Anton et al. (2014), De Hogge (2017), Polman & Maglio's (2017) researches are benefited. Finally, a translation was made from the research of Oliver & Swan (1989) in order to measure the customer's intention to choose the business from which they receive gifts.

General Characteristics Of The Participants And Gifts Received

In the study, primary data were collected from 254 people in Kırıkkale province of Turkey by convenience sampling method. 46.7% (115 people) of the participants are women, 53.3% (131 people) are men. In terms of age, 38.5% (97 people) of the participants are between the ages of 20-27, and 28.6% (72 people) are between the ages of 36-43. In terms of education, 69% of the participants (174 people) have a high school or lower education level. In terms of income, 63.5% (155 people) of the participants are 3000 TL and below, 31.1% (76 people) are in the 3001-4600 income group. In the study, primary data were collected from 254 people in Kırıkkale province by convenience sampling method. 46.7% (115 people) of the participants are women, 53.3% (131 people) are men. In terms of age, 38.5% (97 people) of the participants are between the ages of 20-27, and 28.6% (72 people) are between the ages of 36-43. In terms of education, 69% of the participants (174 people) have a high school or lower education level. In terms of income, 63.5% (155 people) of the participants are 3000 TL and below, 31.1% (76 people) are in the 3001-4600 TL income group. It is seen that the stated gifts by the participants are very diverse like wallet, shirt, cufflinks, scarf, phone case, mascara, organizer, lighter, unbreakable glass, headphones, mouse, perfume, shoe shine, calendar etc. In addition, it is seen that the most answers to this question were keyboard (9.4%; 24 people), tie/cravat (3.1%; 8 people) and discount voucher (3.1%; 8 people).

Analysis Of Fit To Normal Distribution

First of all, kurtosis and skewness values were examined in order to evaluate the suitability of the research data to the normal distribution. Accordingly, the kurtosis values are; between -0.778 and 1.66. And the skewness values vary between -1,256 and -0.464. Accordingly, it was accepted that the data were in accordance with the normal distribution and this condition was met in the performance of parametric tests.

Factor And Reliability Analyses

According to the factor analysis performed for the item group prepared to measure the perceived reason for the gift, 5 items were gathered under two factors that explained 78.741% of the total variance. In the analysis in which the KMO coefficient was found to be 0.709 and the Bartlett value to be significant, the perceived antecedents were grouped under two headings as altruistic and utilitarian/commercial. It is seen that the alpha values of the factors and the scale are within sufficient limits.

Table 1. Factor Analysis toward Causality Perceptions

Items (Why do you think the business gave a gift...)	Factor Loadings
1. Factor: Altruistic causality perception	
Because firm love the customer	0,921
Because firm want to win the customer's heart	0,830
To show that they care about the customer	0,745
<i>Eigenvalue: 2,999, Explained Variance: 59,972, Alpha: 0.861</i>	
2. Factor: Utilitarian/commercial causality perception	
To retain permanent customers	-0,948
To earn more income	-0,908
<i>Eigenvalue: 0,938, Explained Variance: 18,768, Total Explained Variance: 78,741, Cronbach Alpha: 0,799</i>	
General Alpha: 0.827	

According to the results of the factor analysis for the items prepared to measure the variable of satisfaction with the gift received from the business, the KMO coefficient was determined as 0.737. The items included in the variable were grouped under a single factor that explained 72.8% of the total variance. Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was also found to be high.

Table2. Factor Analysis on Gift Satisfaction

Items (The gift given by business is...)	Factor Loadings
1. Factor: Gift satisfaction	
Positive	0,900
Satisfactory	0,865
Meets my expectations	0,849
Pleasant	0,796
<i>Eigenvalue: 2,212, Explained Variance: 72,807, Cronbach Alpha: 0,872</i>	

Finally, according to the factor analysis carried out for the items prepared to determine the tendency to prefer the business; the KMO coefficient was determined as 0.764. The three items created were grouped under a single factor that explained 87,913% of the total variance. The reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.927.

Table 3. Factor Analysis Regarding Intention to Prefer the Business

Items (The business I bought the gift...)	Factor Loadings
1. Factor: Intention to prefer the business	
It is possible that I would prefer regularly	0,944
I would probably prefer longer	0,940
I would prefer more in the future	0,929
<i>Eigenvalue: 2,637, Explained Variance: 87,913, Cronbach Alpha: 0,927</i>	

Regression Analysis

According to the multiple regression analysis carried out to examine the effect of satisfaction with the gift given by the business and the causality perceptions toward the gift on the intention to purchase from the business, it is seen that the model is significant and the independent variables explain 11% of the variability in the dependent variable ($F= 10,569$, $p=0,000$, $R^2=0.113$, Durbin-Watson=1.452).

Table 4. Regression Analysis

	Beta	S. Error	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Altruistic causality perception	,278	,093	0,003	,186	,179
Utilitarian/commercial causality perception	,075	,078	0,334	,061	,058
Gift satisfaction	,106	,092	0,249	,073	,069
Dependent variable: Preference Intention					

In the model examined, it is seen that the perception of the gift given for altruistic reasons is only meaningful variable for the purchase intention (B coefficients: 0.278, 0.106, respectively). On the other hand, it is seen that variable of the gift satisfaction and utilitarian/commercial perception has no effect on the purchase intention from the gift giving business. Therefore, it is understood that the consumer evaluations that the business gifts are altruistic or genuinely given for the benefit of the customer are important. At this point; although the studies are not related to gift giving behavior, these findings it is shown that the altruistic perception of businesses' sponsorship activities causes positive consumer attitudes (Rifon et al., 2007) and that positive causality perceptions of businesses towards social responsibility activities affect consumer reactions positively (Du et al., 2010; Walker et al. , 2010) are similar to research results. In fact, the fact that perceptions of altruism towards gifts are higher than gift satisfaction gives an idea that Attribution Theory will gain an important perspective in understanding the effects of business gifts.

CONCLUSION

In this research, which was carried out to examine the effect of the gifts given to the customers by the businesses on the intention of choosing the business, which can be expressed as responding to the gift, it was concluded that the perception of giving gifts for altruistic reasons is important in preference intention. Therefore, it is understood that it is important to create the perception that the gifts given by the enterprises to the customers are really given for the benefit of the customer. In this respect, it is possible to benefit from the messages of the businesses regarding the gifts, which are not just for commercial purposes, are gratuitous, are given because the customer is valued or primarily to make the customer happy. However, in examining the effects of business gifts, it can be expected that research to be carried out on subjects such as which variables (the characteristics of the gift, the way the gift is given, etc.) will form the perception of altruism will increase our knowledge on the subject. In short, it is understood that causality perception is a variable that should be considered in research and models to be developed to understand the effects of business gifts.

However, the fact that this study was conducted on a limited number of participants in a narrow geographical area is an obstacle to the generalization of the results. In addition, depending on the fact that the research was carried out with the descriptive survey method; there are also limitations such as accepting that the participants gave sincere answers, not revealing cause-effect relationships and not guaranteeing absolute knowledge. On the other hand, it can be expected to contribute to marketing literature and business activities by providing important information about the relationships between research variables.

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