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Investigation of the effects of discount announcements on consumers' purchase decisions: a case study in supermarket

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Abstract

Supermarkets are the closest units to the customers so they have an active role in marketing and effective marketing information system. They can easily effect and dramatically direct the decisions of the customers. While succeeding this, the most used marketing tool is supermarket announces as it is so cost-effective. One of the major objectives, marketers facing is to manage to profit this capability. In this paper we studied the effect of supermarket announces on customer behaviours while shopping. Attention and reaction of customers is analyzed together with the shopping duration. Customers' comments about type and presentation way of supermarket announce is also considered. Type and amount of personal income is handled as different income groups may react in a different way to supermarket announces. In this study we focused on how prepared shopping list can be changed by the supermarket announcements.

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1. Introduction

Today, marketing is changing not day to day but moment by moment and consumer who have buying power use it in a best way, the expectations of intermediary institutions constantly increasing. Products and services now more similar and they are closer together as the price and have many varieties so the strategies which make difference and creative are becoming a dispensable element. Various applications are made to attract the customers and increase their commitment to products and brands. Activities and applications such as promotions, advertising, new product development, adding additional features to existing products and services, ease of price and payment terms, editing contests and sweepstakes with consumer, relationship marketing methods and sponsorship always serving the same purpose in order to increase the frequency of consumer purchasing.

The retail industry has taken a path constantly evolving and changing depending on the culture of society in which it operates. In our country today, with support of foreign capital this sector rose position in compete at the international level. Especially since mid 1980s, in the retail sector has experienced very important developments in parallel with observed socio-economic changes. We will so-called first league organizations such as Metro, Gima,

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Tansaş, Real and Carrefour with ownership of foreign capital, changed shopping habits of our country and they have contributed large extent of experience to domestic investors. These collaborative initiatives in order to provide a sustainable competitive advantage allow consumers to purchase more prosperous, more variety, cheaper and better quality products.

Retailers reduce the burden on the manufacturers as a result of functions they fulfill, at the same time they are the guarantor of products they sell. Retailers that are both representative of manufacturers and sellers of those products, get more market share and power by the courtesy of offering a clean and bright atmosphere, extensive shopping opportunities and credit and payment facilities. The discount announcements will be evaluated within the scope of marketing communications and other promotional and communicational elements will be considered together with the results and effects of consumer behavior. This matter will be referred to the earlier studies and conclusions. Besides, developmental stages of supermarkets, their methods are among the issues to be addressed.

2. The Concept of Retailing and Supermarket

Especially since mid 1980s, Retailing showed a big change axis of food and under the effect of European –based retailers (Küpoğlu, 2008:6). The First years of the Republic, the scarcity of relations with foreign economies, being centralized food distribution has caused to take part retail sector in extremes. The existing administrative with deadlock of central structure had to resort different methods. Consumers' cooperatives, which founded in Istanbul in 1913 but closed short time later, was the first step.

Encouragement of Foreign Capital Law was enacted in 1954. With this law, Migros was opened in Istanbul one hundred percent capital of Switzerland, Gima was opened in Ankara as governmental facility (Durmuşoğlu, 2006:43). A few major stores were opened such as IGS, Beymen, Vakko, 19 May stores in 1960. Until the 1960s, pharmaceutical, perfume and stationary products sold in grocery stores. There was a considerable increase in private sector investments in 1970. Migros and Gima were privatized with the privatization laws in 1987. Retailing has become an attractive investment for the all related businessmen with tax reduction, widening the scope of incentives and credit facilities.

There are numerous definitions in the literature on retailing. Everyone did different definition by drawing attention to different retail character.

According to Omer Baybars Tek, retailing is set of marketing, distribution and even other activities which substantial of the visible face in everyday life by customers (Tek and Özgül, 2010:577).

To Mucuk, retailing covers the whole activities on directly sale of goods and services to final consumers for personal use (Mucuk, 2009:285). Retailing defined as value added during operating activities for goods and services sold to consumers for personal and family use by Aydın (Aydın, 2010:8).

According to İslamoğlu, retailing is defined as conducting activities relating to sold directly goods and services to final consumers (İslamoğlu, 2008:368). Retailing is offering number of different goods and products in small quantities and related activities flowing from the production points to ultimate consumers (Altunışık et al, 2006:275).

Turkish Law on Income Tax is defining retailing as sale of the substances and materials after processing or in extensor to sales of those who sells to those outside. Within these views, retailing defined as the sector that provides necessary information exchange and determines all kinds of transport and pricing functions of goods between producers and consumers (Alkan, 1999:2). Today retailing is coming called with, department stores, hypermarkets, chain stores, supermarkets and shopping centers (Altunışık et al, 2006:278).

In this study, we focus on supermarkets which are the main subject of study rather than other retail establishments. Supermarkets which mean superior market etymologically is a type of traditional food trailer in terms of sales volume, sales area and regime (Tek and Özgül, 2010:585). Supermarket Institute defined supermarket as a food store which is completely departmentalized and engaged in selling at least 20.000 dollars a week or 1.000.000 dollars a year. A large part of the products sold in supermarkets (%70) consist of food products i.e. supermarkets call often as food stores (Timur, 1996:89).

Supermarkets, in fact, bring together higher income consumers with lower income consumers and create a niche market by performing a combination of high-priced brands with private-label brands. As a result, they have a chance to sell both low priced and high priced products by capturing consumers with different socio-economic structure in the same area (Harvey, 2000:17). First of all, the retailer makes the act of buying, sells the goods bought from wholesaler or manufacturer, stores and carries the goods purchased and thus creates the benefit of time and place (Cemalçılar, 1987:239). In short, the basic task of retailers is to hold right products, in right price, in right amount, at right place (Aydın, 2010:25). In addition, being concerned, geniality and customer cares are the most important issues to affect the sales done.

According to results of Pettigrew, Mizerski and Donovan's research, focus group people appreciate the kindness and attention of supermarket employees. Geniality and customer care is seen as the most important determinant – especially for older people- while supermarket shopping. They both exercise and relax while shopping (Pettigrew, Mizerski ve Donovan, 2005:307). Focus group participants stated that being sincere, courtesy and attention is in responsibility of management.

3. Consumer Behaviour and Its Causes

Human behavior can be defined as a process of interaction with one's environment and it is heart of the consumer behavior. Every thought, feeling or action is a part of human behavior. So it is needed to observe the consumer behavior related with market in human behavior (Odabaşı ve Barış, 2007:29). In this context, consumer behavior can be defined as decisions about purchasing economic products and services and utilizations of them. Psychological factors – needs, wants, motives, perceptions, attitudes, personality, learning process, lifestyle – and socio-cultural factors – family, culture, social class and reference groups determine the consumer behavior (Karafakioğlu, 2008:93-100).

The aim of marketing is to meet the needs of customers, selected as a target, and satisfy them (Kotler, 1997:171). Marketing people deal with how consumer preferences have been done. Because consumer preference is the most important determinant of the purchasing decision (Kılıç ve Göksel, 2004:2).

The most widely known consumer purchase decision in the literature consists of five stages: definition of problems, investigation of alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase and usage behaviors (Karafakioğlu, 2008:105). According to "Theory of Consumer Efficiency", consumers prefer to shop where it makes money, time and energy minimum and benefits maximum (Durmuşoğlu, 2006:68). It is important to analyze the consumers' purchase behavior (to know what consumers buy from where and when). Creating marketing mix value in the eyes of consumer is the basic criteria of success. Supermarkets, which are the closest institutions to customers, have a powerful marketing information system. Using the information arising from this position, they align their activities with the needs of consumers (Arıkbay, 1996:1).

4. Marketing Promotions and Communications

Contemporary marketing communications is not only developing and offering a good product with appropriate pricing policy, it also requires establishing an appropriate communication (Tek ve Özgül, 2010:633; Mucuk,

2009:176; İslamoğlu, 2008:419). Style of product, its price, packaging type, its material, its color, sales staff attitudes and clothing give message to buyers. Therefore, product, brand, price, size, and packaging and distribution elements should be considered with marketing communications in addition to elements of marketing communications.

Promotion is the set of communication activities carried out in order to convince others to accept products, ideas and concepts (Tek ve Özgül, 2010:634). In other words, promotion (or marketing communication) is a process of scheduled and coordinated activities in order to announce existence and advantages of goods and services, promote the sale by awakening the interest and desire (Tek and Özgül, 2010:634; Karafakioğlu, 2008:78; İslamoğlu, 2008:419; İslamoğlu et al, 2006:247; Mucuk, 2009:177; Tokol, 2001:131). There are four sub-component of promotion mix. They are advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling. Supermarkets and discount announcement are the main subject and purpose of this study, so we will focus on sales promotion and described in detail.

Sales promotion is a creative, original and ongoing sales offer which designed for marketing agents (retailer, wholesaler, broker) to accelerate their buying action (Mirze, 2010:346). According to Shimp (2003), sales promotion is defined as any incentives that apply the channel members (retailers, wholesalers) to purchase a brand and to encourage the sales force was to make more entrepreneurial sales. Sales promotion is short run and intended to influence behavior (Ndubisi and Moi, 2005:33).

According to Totten and Block, sales promotion consist of numerous sales incentive and tools that will create immediate sales in order to receive the expected response from consumers (Gilbert and Jackaria, 2002:315). Here only the consumer-oriented sales promotion tools will be discussed. We can sort sales promotion tools for consumers as follows: accessories, coupons, price reductions, term extensions, cash rebates, contests and sweepstakes, gift packs and product trials (Tek ve Özgül, 2010:730; Ndubisi and Moi, 2005:33).

Consumer promotions usually applied by manufacturers to increase the frequency and amount of purchase of end-users such as coupons, various gifts, price discounts, product trials, rebates, special events and contests (Gamliel and Herstein, 2011:152). Non-durable consumer promotions are an important part of marketing efforts for consumers products. Current research reported that packaged product producers allocate %24.7 of their average budgets for promotional efforts. Forbes Magazine report that packaged consumer goods manufacturers raised consumer and trade promotion expenditures in marketing budget from %50 to %75 (Mela, Gupta and Lehmann, 1997:248).

In response to the promotion, consumers either purchase larger amount or accelerates shopping time (Neslin, Henderson and Quelch, 1985:147). Similarly retailers devote large portion of their budget to sales promotion. Sales promotion both adds value to the product and makes it more attractive (Alvares and Casiellez, 2005:54). In this study, we will deal with retail promotions and price discounts and will be given previous findings. Temporary price reductions are widely applied by retailers to attract the customers to discount stores and not only discounted items but also other regular priced products. They have an in-store effect to motivate the customers to buy products unplanned. Almost %60 of home purchases is made as an unplanned in the supermarket (Dreze et al, 2004:59). Unplanned shopping meant that there is no list when you are going shopping and take the products you need as a random (Dreze et al, 2004:62).

For example Walter and Mc Kenzie indicate that price cuts have some effect to increase store traffic and store sales. Indeed, there are so many sales promotion alternatives; immediate price reductions are often most used. There are some reasons on this. One of them is that impress the customers. The second one is they do not want to lose their customers to other stores. It is also another reason that storing costs are higher than the discount costs. So they agree

to get less profit by selling action in exchange for storing costs taken up on by customers (Gamliel and Herstein, 2011:153).

Customers are informed about changes of products' prices in different ways. First one is supermarket announces method. A woman with a normal speaking way talks about prices to inform customers. Customers get information about Price discounts and fixing price for a limited time period by announces. Customers who are sensitive to these prices may cause increase in total shopping costs or choosing promotional products and purchasing different brands. Another way of informing customers about change of price is inserts. Insert is a efficient way of promotion and advertising material. It is a declaration which consists of information on which products and how long they will be in discount, details on certain campaigns and information about their company. Today inserts are used as an efficient way of branding. Insert is pressed on a paper which is cheaper and has a lower quality. Thin bright paper is used for insert and it may be folded or punched. Other types of this application are ads, catalogues and brochures. Miller and Strain (1970) showed that advertising is only effective with promotions. It is not considerable to take application of sale promotions apart from other communicational efforts (Fornell, Robinson and Wernerfelt, 1985:1084).

5. Method

Practice phase is planned to make a survey using a questionnaire so we met with supermarket managers in three different cities. Just one meeting which took place in Diyarbakir city ended positively so the case study hold in centre of that city. It is also told that no supermarket outside the city centre in Diyarbakir is using announces. Five supermarkets included in sampling plan. In this study, we planned to apply the practise on the most available sample range but it is told by the market managers who were attendants in the meeting that they can support the study for a 10 day period and up to 300 interviews. It is important about representing the actual relations in a complete time interval that the period is actually one week (5 weekdays and 2 for weekend).

We get the data about how many customers made shopping for the previously one week period on all five supermarkets and planed the number of sample units proportional to this information. We also planned the number of customers to make interview proportional to the number of customers visited that particular supermarket in the previously one week period. So we use a non-stochastic sampling method and we interviewed with customers who are volunteer for our survey. Interviewer asked customers to accept to answer the questionnaire while checkout. Sampling ratio is %1.27 of the population of 23 793 customer.

We planned to make a short survey and not to bother visitors. By the way we have taken into account several important points so included as questions. Questionnaire consists of 12 questions in 33 variables. First we use descriptive statistics to get an idea about data. Then we previewed the correlations on graphs. Afterwards we used the correlation tests to make an inference and it is used Chi-Square and ANOVA methods with SPSS (PASW18) software.

6. Findings

We investigated the length of shopping time and found that was between 4 minute and 1.5 hour. Average shopping time was 30 minute according to the data (*Table1*). We found that the number of the products that customers bought was in the interval of 1-70. We have not taken into account the visitors who purchased nothing. We have seen that number of products customers purchased has an average of 14. Average expenditure among the buyers (customers who purchased one or more products) was 55.75 TL (Turkish Liras).

Table 1. Average Results

Variable	Average	Unit
Shopping Time	30	Minute
Products purchased	14	Number
Expenditure	55.75	Turkish Liras (TL)

Later we analysed the data focusing on relation of announces heard by the customers and number of product purchased because of the related announces (Table2 column (a)). We found the Pearson as 0.72 which is significant ($P<0.000$). We repeated analyse on a subsample of customers who has income of 1500 TL and above. By cutting the sample in this way %30.4 of the cases has been lost. We found the Pearson as 0.75 which is higher than the one for whole sample. We again repeated analyse on a subsample of customers who has a income of 2 000 TL and above. By cutting out the sample in this way %68 of the cases has been lost while we found the Pearson as 0.81.

Table 2. Correlation (Announces and Number of the product purchased) (Pearson)

Sample/subsample	(a)	(b)
Whole sample	0.72	0.60
Income 1500+	0.75	0.74
Income 2000+	0.81	0.75

a. Correlation between number of announces heard and the number of products purchased by customers because of the related announces.

b. Correlation between the number of announces heard and the expenditure on products purchased by customers because of the related announces

As seen on Table 3 based on the ANOVA results we found that number of announces heard are correlated with the number of products purchased by customers because of the related announces ($F_1=17.806$)($P<0.000$). We got that Correlation (0.60) between the number of announces heard and the expenditure on products purchased by customers was significant ($P<0.000$). We also found the correlation on a subsample of 1500+Income was higher (0.74) ($P<0.000$). On a subsample of 2000+ Income, Pearson was 0.75 ($P<0.000$) (Table2 column (b)).

Table 3. ANOVA Results

Analyse	Tested Hypothesis	F_i	P_i
1	No difference between average costs of shopping across the categories of number of announces heard	17.806	0.000
2	No difference between average shopping time across the categories of number of announces heard	14.704	0.000

We asked the customers to order the types of promotions they use. According to the answers we have seen that the “Price Discount Announces” was the most used one. We also found that “One free with one” was second, “Discount by registered customer cards” was third, “coupons” was fourth and “extras (free gifts with the product)” was in the fifth order. “More contents for the same price” was the last preferred coupon type.



Figure 1. Promotion Types Ordered By Average Using Frequency.

Among the customers who answered as “price discount announces is first in my list” we analysed again the correlation between number of announces heard by the customers and number of products purchased because of the related announces. We found that the *Pearson* was 0.75 which is significant ($P < 0.000$) at 0.01 level. We then analysed the shopping duration and handled it with the number of announces heard by costumers. It could be expected that the more customers stay in supermarket the more announces may be heard by them. Actually according to the ANOVA results average shopping times were not same across categories of number of announces heard in the 0.01 level ($F_2 = 14.704$) ($P < 0.000$). So the results were in accordance with expectations.

While analysing data we have seen that customers should stay in supermarket for an average of 13 minutes to hear at least one announce. As we further analysed the data we found an interesting point. We expected customers to hear more announces as they spend more time in supermarket and we find that as this but, after an average of 48 minutes the trend differs. After the 48 minute point there were no monotonic increase in the number of announces heard by the customers. We interpreted that as customers get tired after they reached that 48 minute point of time in their time line and lose their attention.

We analysed a bit more detail if it is so or not. We found that after 48 minute point subjects of announces customers noticed differs and gets an interesting point. Customers most answered the question “which announces took your attention most?” as announces related to Foods (%64.86). In this sense by food we mean the frozen food, ready-made food, dry food, food for breakfast and so on. After 48 minute point least noticed announce subject customers noticed is cosmetics (%2.7).

In this study we also analysed whether the income types has a significant effect on making purchasing decision. We handled several categories but we could not find a significant difference across them. As we analysed data we have seen that customers who agreed in the idea of “when I hear a price discount announce I immediately buy that product” represents the 52.19 per cent of sample (%19.19 absolutely agree, %33 agree). This inference is in accord with the expression by Dreze et al as “Almost %60 of home purchases is made as an unplanned in the supermarket” (Dreze et al, 2004:59).

Among all the promotion types the most noticed is known as price drops (discount) and so it can be considered the most effective argument. Based on the analysing results we can say that %54.21 of the customers agreed that “at

least half of my expenditures is because of products with price drop”, %8.08 is “absolutely agreed”. In a subsample of the agreed (and absolutely agreed) customers we numerically (not categorically) analysed a further point and found that in this subsample approximately half of the shopping basket costs are related to the products with price drops really. We tested no difference with %50 and found actually %30.38 ($P=0.347$) in agreed ones and %37.92 ($P=0.405$) in absolutely agreed ones.

We asked customers how often they visit the supermarkets and categorized them in four groups. The group “occasionally” was the most chosen one (%37). We analysed whether there was any difference between number of announces heard across visiting frequency groups and found no difference ($ANOVA P>0.05$). According to the results we have seen that %86.2 of the customers think that products at discount effect positively the shopping budget. %65.2 of the customers expressed that they prefer the supermarkets which gives widely information on products at discount. %65.2 of the customers thinks that they allocate about half of the basket cost to the products at discount. We further analysed this %65.2 subsample and found that %44.86 of them is not regretful about the products at discount which they bought. %41.89 of the customers thinks that supermarkets which apply the price discount announces are customer-friendly ones.

%85 of the customers considers announces they hear in supermarkets while shopping as helpful. In this %85 subsample we found that %70.23 of them expressed that there should be announces in more numbers and on more products. %83.45 of the customers participated in the survey put their wishes into words that “announce should be made by a women without a disturbing voice.

We found that %52.86 of the customers stated that “they will choose a discounted alternative instead of the always one”. %52.68 of the customers believes that buying products at discount causes a psychological relaxation while shopping. %59.73 of the customers stated that they choose a discounted alternative between two products with same properties.

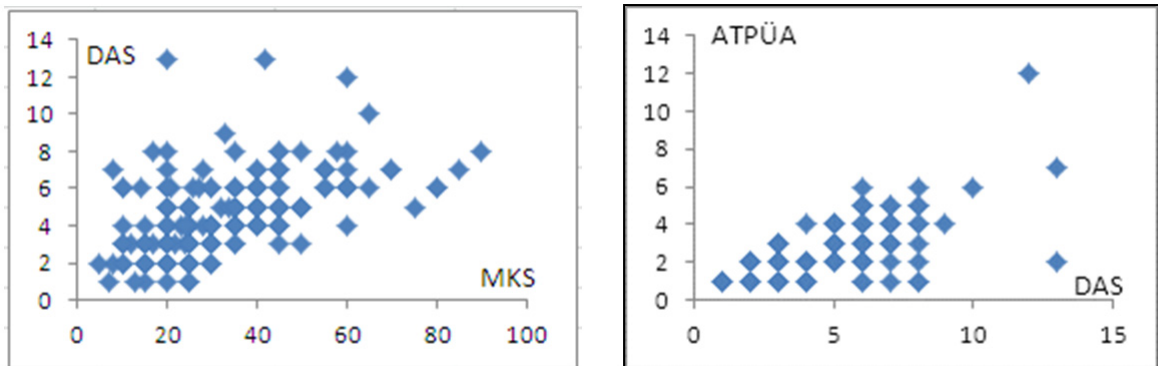


Figure 2. Shopping time (MKS), number of announces heard (DAS) and number of purchased products at discount (ATPÜA).

In the above figure it can be seen clearly that there is a positive correlation between “shopping time (MKS)” and “number of announces heard (DAS)” in figure (a). There is also an other clear correlation in figure (b) between “number of announces heard (DAS)” and “number of products bought at discount (ATPÜA)”. As seen on figure (a) after 48 minute point a change in correlation structure is apparent.

7. Conclusions

Supermarkets are the closest units to customers so their role in marketing could not be ignored. There are studies on customer decisions but most of them are based on ordinal scale data. Importing categorized data or using ordinal level data cause loss of some detailed information. In this study we used scale level data and tried to get more sensitive and accurate inference. This could be considered as the strongest side of this study.

We may also express some negative criticism about this study. Firstly this study is based on cross-sectional data like most of the studies in the literature. Actually we have looked for panel data but there were no records on announces. Indeed if we were to be able to find some records, no one expects them to be so detailed and representative about attitude and decision of customers. So we prepared a questionnaire and because it is hard to apply it on the same customers or even on same markets for a several years we applied it on a one week period in mid-2011.

It can be considered that announce is the most important argument to effect customer decisions while shopping. In this study we investigated weather announces can effect customer decisions in the supermarket. Reaction of customers to supermarket announces was handled with the shopping time. We analysed the data and found that correlation between number of announces heard by the customers and number of products bought because of the heard announces is 0.72 which was significant ($P < 0.000$). We also found that the Pearson Correlation coefficient between them differs across income groups. Actually in higher income groups, number of announces heard by the customers and number of products purchased because of the heard announces are higher correlated with each other.

We found the Pearson Correlation coefficient between number of announces heard by the customers and expenditures on products at discount because of this informative announces was 0.60. We also found that this correlation differs and were higher than less income categories.

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