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The Effect of Label English and Persian Language on Persian Males and Females' Buying Behavior by Somayeh Jalali and Mahdi Modrek

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# Females' Buying Behavior

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#### **Abstract**

The buying behavior of consumer is one of the important aspects in merchandising. The analysis of consumer behavior is based upon buying behavior of consumer. Its aim is to improve business performance by understanding customer's preferences and desires. Today, there are numerous labels selling the same products, so consumers have abundant choices and a variety of factors influence their buying behavior. In such a condition, this analysis can help in structuring and formulating different strategies for increasing benefit. This study made an attempt to examine the effect of the label English and Persian language on 44 male and female Persian speakers' buying behavior with the focus on some products in ten categories. The data were obtained from a questionnaire which was designed in form of the software. The results revealed that neither English nor Persian language of the product label had any significant effects on the Persian speakers' buying behavior. Further, no significant differences were observed between Persian males and females in terms of the impact of the product label English and Persian language on their purchasing behavior. The present study can be useful to the Iranian marketers in order to make a variety of marketing programs accepted by the Iranian consumers. It can also improve their marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Label language, Consumer buying behavior



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# **Background**

Researchers have long studied the specific purchasing behavior of consumers. The investigation of consumer buying behavior is one of the very important fields of study in marketing. Today, many of the companies become successful by designing the strategies of the whole organization to give service to consumer through manufacturing products and goods that fulfill their needs and wants and gain the loyalty and retention of customer by satisfying their dynamic needs and wants. Thus, marketers make a great effort to create products and services so that they enhance value satisfaction for the customers. The behavior of consumer has been legitimized in marketing because it can provide the conceptual framework and strategic thinking which are fundamental for performing successful segmentation of markets (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000).

A variety of market researchers have defined consumer buying behavior in various ways. Kurtz & Boone (cited in Bhadu & Harsha, 2010) have defined it as follows: "consumer behavior consists of the acts individuals obtaining and using goods and service, including the decision processes that proceed and determine these acts". As defined by American Association of Marketing, "consumer buying behavior is the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives. In other words it involves the thoughts and feelings people experience and the actions they perform in consumption process". It also includes all the things in the environment that influence these thoughts, feelings and actions, that includes observations from other consumers, advertisements, price information, packaging, product appearance, and many others (Bennett, 1995). Other factors which have been investigated and influence the buyer behavior are cultural factors such as sub culture and classes, psychological factors such as motivation, perception, learning, belief, and attitude, social factors such as reference group, family, aspirational group, roles, and statutes, personal factors such as occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept (Bhadu & Harsha, 2010).



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One of the communicative approaches that deals with market forces and can be promising is the use of labels on products. Labeling is a subset of packaging. Firms and producers require Labeling their products and goods. The Label may be a simple tag which is attached to the product or the good or a graphic which is elaborately designed and is a part of the package. A Label might include only the brand name or some pieces of information (Kotler, 2001). The label language of the products may be effective on customers' decision. To shed more light on this issue this study used a questionnaire in the form of software in order to measure the effect of the Label written language of the products on the Persian speaking buying behavior.

In compliance with one of the most famous quotations in which Whorf (1940) laid out his view on the relationship between language and thought:

...the background linguistic system (in other words the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade (cited in Hudson, 1996). (p. 96)

The process of consumer decision-making is salient in specifying purchase behavior. Identifying consumer segments and taking into consideration the benefits sought by the consumer are of importance to offer an influential service. Consumers seek benefits or solutions, not products (Rowley, 1997). When they purchase a product, a good or a service they buy a group of product features, but they may want only one or two of these features. Searching for consumer information has been the concentration of many articles studying the behavior of consumer during the last 30 years (Bettman, 1979).

Some research studies have investigated the factors which might influence consumers in shopping. Tang, Fryxell, & Chow (2004) investigated the influence of visual and verbal communication in eco-label designs on the purchasing behavior of consumers. It was found that both the visual and verbal communication had significant effects (individual and additive) on the purchase of the designated products. In another study, Sansigry & Cady (1997) investigated the



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design of labels for OTC (over-the-counter) medication. They indicated that picture and verbal information, if congruent and juxtaposed, were additive in increasing buying behavior of product. Szolnoki, Herrmann, & Hoffmann (2010) investigated the influence of the identification and the packaging of bottled wines on the consumer decision. The results showed that the packaging of wine had a significant impact on the buying decision.

There are some other studies examining factors which might influence customers' purchasing decision. For example, Nugroho & Wihandoyo (2009) concentrated on understanding store brand buyer behavior and showed that perceived value of consumers contributed positively to their understanding of store brands and the better knowledge about store brand products in respect of their past experience in purchasing the items resulted in positive perceptions which finally could lead to good possibility for them in re-purchasing products of store brands in the future. Levy et al. (1996) examined seven nutrition label formats to specify consumer comprehension and acceptance of displayed information. The results showed that the type of information and the way information was communicated on a nutrition label had significant effects on comprehension and preference.

Some other studies have also stated that environment of a store significantly influences sales (Milliman, 1982, 1986, Smith & Curnow, 1966, and Stanley & Sewall, 1976), product evaluation (Bitner, 1986, Rappoport, 1982), and satisfaction of customer (Bitner 1990, Harrell, Hutt, & Anderson, 1980). In recent years, some researchers have tried to study the psycho-physiological aspects of consumer shopping behavior such as examining the influence of customer involvement, moods, and quality of store experience on purchasing decisions. For example, Swinyard (1993) proposed that mood, involvement level, and the quality of the shopping experience of a consumer have significant effects on shopping intentions.

Dumoluhle (2011) investigated the consumer perceptions of private label brands among the Eastern Cape university students. The study also aimed to discover whether generation Y consumers were aware of the existence of private labels or not, whether or not variables such as



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price, quality, advertising, packaging, reference groups, and demographic variables had influence on generation Y purchasing behavior of private label brands. The results indicated that Generation Y consumers agreed, to a higher degree, that they bought groceries based on price and quality, meaning that price and quality were very influential while purchasing groceries. Also the results showed that the packaging of all private label brands was not attractive. It came to a conclusion that packaging of private labeled products did not have effect on Generation Y's buying behavior of private labels.

Ghani & Ali Jan (2010) attempted to investigate the relationship between demographic factors such as age, gender, and income and impulse buying tendency of consumers in the urban areas of Pakistan as a developing country. Results of the study indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between age and the impulse buying tendency of customers, whereas gender and income were not significantly related to the impulse buying tendency of customers. Further, the study showed that demographic variables only had an indirect effect on the impulse buying tendency of consumers.

Ergin (2010) focused on compulsive buying as a dysfunctional behavior of consumer. Compulsive buying is an inability to control the urge to buy products and services. The goals of the study were to disclose whether or not gender was a significant predictor of compulsive buying behavior and to specify the influence of two special predispositional factors such as anxiety and depression on compulsive buying. The primary data for this study was obtained from a questionnaire. The empirical findings showed that there were noticeable differences in compulsive buying tendencies of Turkish women and men, further, factors such as age and anxiety were related, to a higher degree, to compulsive buying behavior.

Prathiraja & Ariyawardana (2003) conducted a study in order to identify the market for nutritional labeling and the factors that affect the consumer willingness to pay for nutritional labeling. Analysis of the study showed that variables such as gender, education level, and the status of special dietary had a significant positive effect and the size of household had a



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significant negative effect on the willingness to pay for nutrition information. Accordingly, it could be suggested that existence of a nutritional panel in the package would increase the demand for food products and it would be an appropriate strategic task for the processors of local food.

Azevedo et. al. (2008) aimed to study the gender differences in purchasing behavior of Portuguese consumers while buying clothes products. The findings of the study confirmed the differences between women and men particularly in terms of what, where, when, and how they buy.

There are several studies which examined the role of gender in impulse buying behavior and most of them have found that there is a relationship between gender and impulse buying but the results are not in consistency (Dittmar et al., 1995; Kollat & Willett, 1967; Lin & Lin, 2005; Mai et. al., 2003). For example, Lin & Lin (2005) conducted a study on the impulsive purchasing behavior of adolescents in Taiwan and discovered that the female adolescents were more willing to buy impulsively than the male adolescents. Some other studies like Dittmar et al., 1995, Kollat & Willett, 1967, and Wood (1998) revealed such a similar relationship. Whereas Mai et. al. (2003) and Cobb & Hoyer (1986) showed the opposite relationship. They found that men had a higher tendency to make impulse purchases than female.

Kumar & Ali (2011) used the data obtained from a questionnaire survey which was administered across three major cities in India and assessed the level of awareness about five categories of information which were generally displayed on food labels. The study also examined the usability of such information in buying behavior and purchase decisions of the participants. The researchers compared the level of awareness and the buying behavior across different socioeconomic groups. They came to a conclusion that although the usability of label information is related to the income levels, education, and occupation of the consumers, it was not generally sensitive to variables such as gender and age of the customers.



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Several studies have made attempts to determine socially responsible or ethical consumers in terms of their demographic characteristics. For example, Dickson (2001) found that age, income, and the status of employment of customers do not anticipate socially conscious consumers, who give weight to *No Sweat*, a well-known ethical logo, on clothes. Dickson discovered that *No Sweat* consumers are more often female, but some other studies (Tsalikis & Ortiz-Buonafina, 1990, Sikula & Costa, 1994, MORI, 2000) have concluded that ethical purchasing behavior is not affected by gender.

Although there are some studies on considering consumers' buying behavior in marketing and the factors which might be effective on the purchase decisions and product use (Milliman, 1982), there is not a sufficient body of literature, to the knowledge of the present researchers, on examining the written language on the various product labels and its impact on the customers' buying behavior. It seems reasonable to conduct a study to shed more light on this issue in order to discover more factors which have influence on buying behavior of the customers.

### **Significance of the Study**

Usually corporations and producers utilize a variety of methods to compete with other producers. Thus product labels, names, and messages communicated on the goods play a crucial role in marketing and shopping. Thus, Iranian marketers need to understand what products and brands mean to consumers, what consumers must do to purchase and use them, and what influences them in shopping, purchasing, and consumption pattern. The proposed research may contribute to decision makers in Iran and give them suggestions for choosing criteria for supplying products which bring them profit.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

To communicate with customers some Iranian producers and corporations use English language on product label and some Persian language. This study aimed at examining the influence of written language on different product labels upon student-consumer buying behavior in Iran and



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determining which language (English or Persian) attracts the Persian speakers' attention in shopping and has influence on their purchasing decision more. Whether gender has an effect on Persian consumer buying behavior or not was investigated as well.

### **Research Questions**

- 1. Is there a significant impact of the product label English and Persian language on the Persian speakers' buying behavior?
- 2. Is the impact of the product label English and Persian language on the Persian males and females' buying behavior the same?

# **Research Hypothesis**

- H01. There are no significant impacts of the product label English and Persian language on the Persian speakers' buying behavior.
- H02. There are no significant differences between Persian males and females in respect of the impact of the product label English and Persian language on their buying behavior.

# **Participants**

The participants of the present study were 44 Iranian male and female students studying at Islamic Azad University, Najafabad Branch in different majors comprising..., among which 22 were male and 22 female. All of the participants spoke Persian as their L1 and voluntarily took part in the study. Their ages ranged from 19 to 24. Use of only student- consumers was for the purpose of enhancing homogeneity among sample to strengthen internal validity.

#### **Materials**

A questionnaire of 10 stages/items was designed in the form of software by Iranlx studio. Making use of Photoshop, multimedia builder and sound forge programs, the software, MarketLX, was produced. Each stage contained two similar images of two different types of the same products, produced by different companies. The names of the products were phonetically similar and written in English on one of the products and in Persian on the other one. The design of the labels of two products of each category was similar. Altogether, there were10 product categories, as follows: pencil, macaroni, color, puree, gum, refrigerator, fuel enhancer, rice, dental floss, and TV. The participants opted for just one of the two products of each category based upon the label by clicking the software button provided for this purpose. Having finished

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all 10 stages, the responses were automatically saved on a USB drive by the software. In addition, the demographic information of the participants (writing name was optional, whereas information about age, sex, and education background was compulsory) included in the questionnaire.

#### **Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis**

The participants were asked to sit at a computer, type their demographic information, read the instructions, and click the "start" button to go to the first stage of the questionnaire. They must have been supposing to do some shopping while being in a hurry. They had to choose one of the two products in different categories offered by the shopkeeper. The participants were neither aware of the quality of the products nor they had been told to select the product based upon the language. To identify if there was a significant impact of label English and Persian language on the Persian Speakers' buying behavior and whether the impact of label English and Persian language on the Persian males and females' buying behavior was the same or not chi-square test was run.

## **Results and Discussion**

The simplest way to examine the general phenomena of the customers buying behavior can be done through understanding the frequency distribution of selecting each of the items set in the questionnaire.

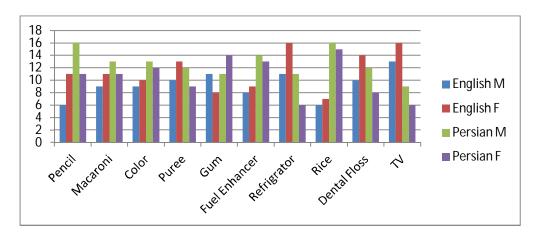


Figure 1. Frequency Distribution of Selecting Products Regarding Gender and Preferred Language

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Generally, the number of the customers who prefer the products with the label Persian language to the English language is greater (208, 232 respectively). The Persian customers prefer products such as *rice*, *pencil*, *fuel enhancer*, *gum*, *color*, and *macaroni* with the label Persian language. On the other hand, *TV*, *refrigerator*, *dental floss*, and *puree* are preferred with the label English language by the Persian customers. The interesting point is that chi-square test does not show any significant impacts of the product label English and Persian language on the Persian speakers' buying behavior (p = .99). In other words, neither English nor Persian language of the product label had any significant effects on the Persian speakers' buying behavior. Consequently, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

Among those who selected the products with the label English language the number of females (115) is more than the number of males (103). Whereas among those who selected the products with the label Persian language the number of males (127) is more than the number of females (105). Again the interesting point is that chi-square test does not reveal any significant differences between Persian males and females in respect of the impact of the product label English and Persian language on their buying behavior (p = .57). As a result, the second hypothesis is confirmed, too.

The present study, in which no significant differences were observed between Persian males and females in terms of the impact of the product label English and Persian language on their buying behavior, can be in line with Ogilvy & Mather Direct (cited in Cleaver, 1998) who have recently showed that variables such as income, age, lifestyle, and family status of the consumers are of more importance than gender alone. Further, the findings might be in line with Dumoluhle's (2011) study, which showed that packaging of private labeled products did not have any effects on Generation Y's buying behavior of private labels.

The results of the present study are in consistency with Ghani & Ali Jan's (2010) research in which gender and income were not significantly related to the impulse buying behavior of



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customers. Kumar & Ali (2011) showed that label information was not generally sensitive to variables such as gender and age of the customers. This can be in consistency with the present research. Other studies such as Tsalikis & Ortiz-Buonafina, 1990, Sikula & Costa, 1994, and MORI, 2000 are consistent with the results of this study, since they have concluded that ethical purchasing behavior is not affected by gender.

The results of the study are contrast to Tang, Fryxell, & Chow (2004) whose study showed that visual and verbal communication in the design of eco-label had significant effects on buying behavior, where as the present study revealed no significant effects of the label english and Persian language on the Persian speakers' buying behavior. The results are not consistent with Sansigry & Cady (1997), whose study showed verbal information communicated through the labels was influential on purchasing behavior. Further, the findings are not in line with Levy et al. (1996), who discovered that type of information and the way information was communicated on a nutrition label had significant effects on consumer behavior. In addition, the findings are not in consistency with Kongsompong's (n. d.) study in which the researcher found that there were differences between Asian men and women buying behavior. Ergin's (2010) research, which revealed the existence of noticeable differences in compulsive buying tendencies of Turkish women and men, is not consistent with the results of the present study. Some other researches (Prathiraja & Ariyawardana, 2003, Azevedo et. al., 2008) are contrast to the present work, too. The former showed that gender had a significant positive effect on the consumers' willingness to pay for nutrition information and the latter confirmed the differences between women and men buying behavior.

#### **Conclusion**

The research of consumer behavior is the scientific study of the processes used by consumers in order to select, secure, use, and dispose of goods, products, and services that meet their needs. Knowledge of consumer behavior directly influences the strategy of marketing (Anderson et al, 2005). This is because of the concept of marketing, for example, the idea that firms and corporations exist to meet customer needs (Winer, 2000). Firms can satisfy and meet the needs of customers just to the extent that they understand their customers. That's why; the strategies of



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marketing must incorporate knowledge of consumer behavior into every aspect of a strategic marketing plan (Solomon, 2002). Consumers play a crucial role in contributing towards the success through buying products or services from firms and corporations. A marketer can take marketing decisions which are congruent with its consumer needs by understanding the behavior of consumer. Marketers need to know the reasons for which consumers make the purchases and the factors upon which consumer purchases are based. A careful analysis of the factors which might have an impact on consumer behavior must be studied by marketers before designing a marketing plan. The main objective of the present research was to examine the effect of the product label written language, both English and Persian, and gender on the Persian speakers' buying behavior. The study revealed no significant impact of the label English and Persian language on the Persian Speakers' buying behavior and no significant differences between Persian males and females' buying behavior in terms of the impact of the label English and Persian language as well.

# **Implications**

The findings of the study can be used by Iranian marketers to apply innovative marketing strategies in planning the policies of marketing for the Iranian consumers of their products. Also, decision makers in Iran can utilize the findings and decide on criteria for the management of characteristics to supply the products with social features often accepted by people.

## **Suggestions for Further Research**

Some other areas for further research can be suggested. First, further research could determine if the findings of this research are consistent across different universities in Iran. Second, there is the need to duplicate the research in other parts of Iran to confirm if the results of this research can be generalized across the whole country and age group. Third, this study can also be carried out in other parts of Iran for comparison purposes.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This research might have some limitations in respect of sampling or/and generalization of the findings. The sample drawn for the study may not be enough to generalize the results of the study. The findings are limited to Iranians consumers, who agreed to participate voluntarily in this study, and to the reliability and validity of the instruments use.

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