

GENDER IDENTITY ROLES IN TOURISM AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIORS

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Abstract

Gender identity concept represents “masculine, feminine, androgynous and undifferentiated” personality characteristics in psychology. According to the term, while a male might exhibit feminine attitudes in psychological gender aspect, a female might possess masculine features. Dimensions and inventories of gender identity roles and their impacts on consumer behaviors have been studied constantly in marketing and psychology literature. Some of the research findings support that consumer behaviors might as well be affected by psychology-based gender roles. In this study, respondents were included in four groups by using Bem’s Sex Role Inventory and then, they were asked to evaluate two different visual and verbal advertising materials (Feminine & Masculine). Consequently, the structural relationship between respondents’ perception and purchase intention toward both ads according to the general average of the gender identity roles was tried to be given.

Keywords : *Gender Identity Roles, Tourism, Consumer Behavior*

JEL Code: *M30*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender identity, also called as psychological gender/sex, is personal experience of individuals by masculine and feminine personality features (Bem, 1981). In other words, it can be described as perceptions of individuals as male or female and their behavior based on their perception of roles (Sherif, 1982). Bringing forth the gender roles in a prominent and functional manner within a society is likely to form a categorization of gender identity roles. Further, social gender discriminations cause individuals to form sex-related schemes or relational - mental associations in male or woman behaviors. In this cycle, while a male might exhibit feminine attitudes in psychological gender aspect, a female might possess masculine features (Bem, 1981). Gender identity roles might spontaneously or psychologically exist in individuals, while it might also be formed or differentiated with the effects of various variables, such as appearance, experience and affectation (Ely, 1995). For example, when female employees feel the male privileges in male dominant business environment, they can adopt “being like a man”, “work like a man” behavior, and adopt contrary gender roles to their biological sexes.

Gender identity roles have some specific characteristics, affecting the reactions of gender dimensions to visual and verbal stimulants, in order to classify people by their “presented” psychological gender features (Spence, 1984). Gender identity can only be estimated in cases where there are these characteristics available. Accordingly, a masculine person likes simple and a single theme objects, and a feminine person likes visually or orally rich, complex and very informative objects (Putrevu, 2004). Additionally, a masculine is also more affected through objects, underlying competition and showing dominancy, and a feminine is more affected by communications, caring others as much as herself (Prakash, 1992).

According to Bem and Lewis (1975), gender identity roles do not consist solely of masculinity and femininity. There are also “androgynous” and “undifferentiated” groups and so, gender identity comprises of four different roles. An androgynous person has either masculine or feminine tendency in their evaluation. In other words, masculinity and femininity level of androgynous people are equally high and therefore, they are sensitive to reacting against conditions. On the other hand, people with equally low masculinity and femininity values are referred to as undifferentiated.

In the literature, gender identity concept is considered in addition to the biological gender within various areas, such as psychology, marketing and educational

sciences (Gill et al., 1987; Catina et al., 1996; Vigorito and Curry, 1998; Kulik, 1998; Wright and Holttum, 2012) and most of the researchers agree that there is a certain degree gender identity features within the individuals. In some studies, while only gender identity concept, dimensions and inventories are evaluated in different aspects (Moreland et al., 1978; Dökmen, 1999; Hoffman and Borders, 2001; Choi and Fuqua, 2003), some of them examine impacts of gender identity roles on consumer behaviors specifically (Palan, 2001; Yağcı and İlarslan, 2010, Nunkoo and Gürsoy, 2012). When the extant literature is considered, it is seen that the variables under consideration has differentiating impacts in some cases. Research results of the Vitz and Johnston (1965) show that there is a significant relationship between femininity and their attitudes against cigarettes with feminine image as well as masculinity and their attitudes against cigarettes with masculine image. Besides, Fischer and Arnold (1994) find that gender identity roles of people, irrespective of biological gender, have a differentiating impact on participation of people in Christmas gift shopping activities.

In this respect; according to gender identity roles; determining whether there is a significant relationship between consumer perceptions related with advertisements, designed by hotels, and their intentions to purchase products is forming the main target of the study. On the other hand, although the impact of gender identity roles in different areas has been studied, the related literature in tourism is meager and hence, this study is thought to contribute to the literature gap in tourism field. Research hypothesis developed for these research purposes were given below:

- H₁:** Gender identity roles have an impact on the perception related with “Feminine” (F) advertisement.
- H₂:** Perception related with “F” advertisement has an impact on purchase intention toward “F” product.
- H₃:** Gender identity roles have an impact on the perception related with “Masculine” (M) advertisement.
- H₄:** Perception related with “M” advertisement has an impact on purchase intention toward “M” product.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

In order to determine gender role orientations, Bem Sex-Role Inventory-BSRI (1974) was used. BSRI is a 7 degree self-evaluation scale and composed of 40 statements (20 feminine and 20 masculine qualities). Two different scores can be obtained from the Femininity and Masculinity Scales. According to the averages of these scores, personal psychological sex role is determined. Accordingly, if masculinity score of the individual is above the average score of the group, and femininity score is below the average femininity score, individuals are deemed to be masculine; and the vice versa. If both masculinity and femininity scores are above both masculinity and femininity means of the group, individuals are deemed as androgynous; and if both masculinity and femininity points are below both masculinity and femininity averages of the group, individuals is deemed as undifferentiated.

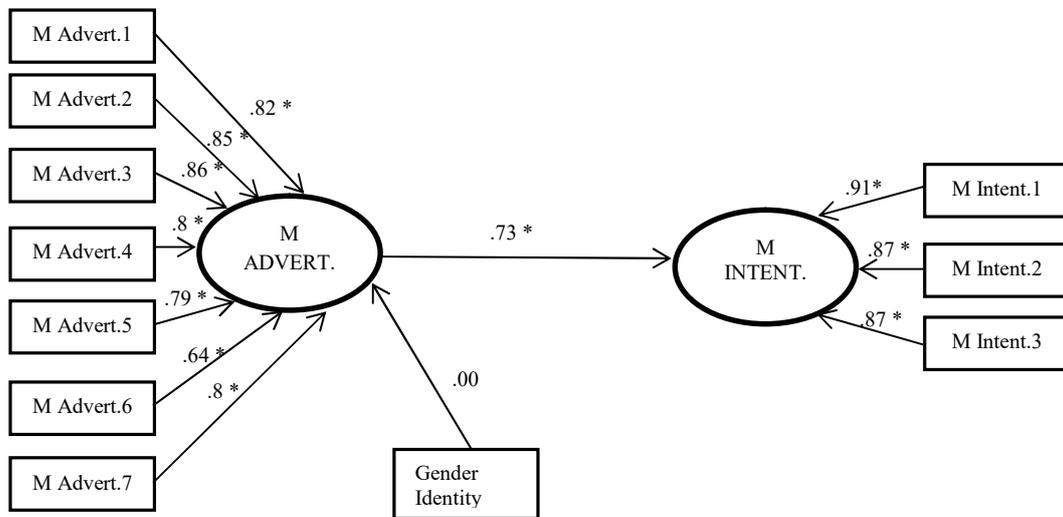
In this study, respondents are presented with two advertising elements, composed of a *feminine ads*, rich in visual stimulants, complex and informative, and a *masculine ads*, simple and with a focus on a single theme as well as emphasizing certain features of the product (Appendix 1). These visual and verbal elements were selected considering extant literature defining effeminacy and masculinity features (Prakash, 1992; Putrevu, 2004). Relationship between respondents' perceptions related with these ads and their intentions to purchase mentioned product was measured in terms of their gender identity roles. In order to measure purchase intentions and perceptions, a questionnaire form was employed as data collection instrument. This form belongs to the study implemented by Yağcı and İlaraslan (2010). Data were collected via 408 surveys in 2013 in Ankara, capital of Turkey. From these, missing or invalid data were eliminated, leaving a total of 380 observations for analyses.

2.2. Data Analysis and Findings

Research hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM is useful in testing relationships involving multiple equations (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2010). Structural relationship between respondents' perceptions related with ads and their intention to purchase was examined via 2 different models. Additionally; consistency between biological and psychological sexes was given in the Cross Table.

When Figure 2 is considered, it is seen that the SEM fit indices are acceptable ($\chi^2 = 129.516$ $df = 43$ $\chi^2 / df = 3.01$, RMSEA = .0105, CFI = .959) (Marsh and Hocevar, 1985; Marsh and Hocevar, 1988; Mulaik et. al., 1989). It was found that there is no significant impact of gender identity roles on perceptions of respondents related with M advertisement ($\beta = .00$, $p > .05$) and H₃ was not supported. On the other hand; it was found there is a significant and positive impact of perception related with M advertisement on purchase intention toward the same type of advertisement ($\beta = .73$, $p < .01$) According to the results; H₄ was supported.

Figure-2: The Structural Relationship Between Perception and Purchase Intention Toward “M” Advertisement According to the General Average of the Gender Identity Roles in SEM



*p < .01
 $\chi^2 = 129.516$ $df = 43$ $\chi^2 / df = 3.01$, RMSEA = .0105, CFI = .959

3. CONCLUSIONS

The current study was performed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between consumers’ perceptions related with hotel ads and their intentions to purchase related business products according to the gender identity roles in general. According to the results of SEM; gender identity roles have no total direct impact on perceptions related with Feminine and Masculine

advertisements contrary to the results obtained from the studies in the exist literature (Yağcı and İlarıslan, 2010, Nunkoo and Gürsoy, 2012). On the other hand; a significant positive impact of perceptions on purchase intentions toward both of the ads was observed.

Cross table, used to determine consistency between biological and psychological sexes, is showing that considerable number of respondents have fully or partially opposite gender identity roles to their biological sexes (Table 1). According to the table; presence of respondents within androgynous and undifferentiated groups are also considerable. According to the extant literature, masculine or feminine type advertising materials have an important place on purchasing behaviors of people (Vitz and Johnston, 1965; Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Fischer and Arnold, 1994; Palan, 2001; Yağcı and İlarıslan, 2010). However; it can be thought that businesses, which are also considering “androgynous and undifferentiated groups” and their expectations during the design process of ads, might positively affect the level of demand for product.

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APPENDIX 1

Feminine Hotel



The place where your dreams come true. The place where the most beautiful shades of green cuddle up with the unique turquoise water of the Mediterranean and the place where you can see dance of the dizzying colors.

Masculine Hotel



Imagine a world in the middle of the magical beauties. Everything was prepared specially for you. You can find everything you need ready for your comfort at any time you wish. It is impossible to encounter with lack of anything you want here.