An Investigation of Post-Purchase Cognitive Dissonance and Its Determinants in Online Shopping

Çevrimiçi Alışverişte Satın Alma Sonrası Bilişsel Uyumsuzluk ve Buna Etki Eden Faktörlerin İncelenmesi

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Abstract: In our globalized world, it can be observed that consumers often do their online shopping due to reference group effects and/or their hedonic consumption tendencies. Cognitive dissonance experienced occasionally right after an online shopping experience and the factors leading to cognitive dissonance have been investigated in this study by means of a face to face survey applied to 358 online shopper participants in the city of İstanbul between 5-28 June 2019. Frequency, factor, reliability and correlation analyses have been carried out on SPSS program. LISREL structural equation modelling has been utilized in order to test the significance and reliability of the model. Goodness of Fit index, t-values and standardized solution values have been analysed and it has been revealed that the reference group effect and hedonic consumption tendencies variables actually have a significant effect upon the variables Impulse Buying and Cognitive Dissonance. The fact that the research participants consist only of İstanbul residents is a basic limitation of the research. It is assumed that this research will contribute to the e-commerce companies and their customers.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing
JEL Classification: M30, M31, M39

Öz: Küreselleşen dünyamızda tüketicilerin çevrimiçi alışverişlerini sıklıkla Referans Grupları ve Hedonik Tüketim Eğilimlerinin etkisiyle yapmakta oldukları görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada, çevrimiçi alışveriş yapan tüketicilerin yaptıkları alışveriş sonrasında zaman zaman yaşadıkları bilişsel uyumsuzluk ve buna etki eden faktörlerin incelenmesi amacıyla 5-28 Haziran 2019 tarihleri arasında, İstanbul ilinde yaşayan ve çevrimiçi alışveriş yapan 358 katılımcıya yönelik yüz yüze anket uygulanmıştır. SPSS programı ile Frekans Analizi, Faktör Analizi, Güvenilirlik Analizi ve Korelasyon Analizi yapılmıştır. Modelin anlamlılık ve güvenilirliğini test etmek için ise LISREL yapısal eşitlik modeli kullanılmış, analiz sonucunda uyum iyiliği indeksleri, t değerleri ve standardize edilmiş çözüm değerleri incelenmiş ve Referans Grup Etkisi ve Hedonik Tüketim Eğilimi bağımsız değişkenlerinin Dürtüsel Satın Alma ve Bilişsel Uyumsuzluk bağımlı değişkenleri üzerinde anlamlı etkisi olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmanın yalnızca İstanbul ilinde yaşayan kişiler ile gerçekleştirilmiş olması kısıtını oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın e-ticaret sitelerinden hizmet sunan işletmelere ve alışveriş yapan tüketicilere katkı sağlayacağı değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pazarlama İletişimi, Tüketici Davranışları, Dijital Pazarlama
JEL Sınıflandırması: M30, M31, M39

1.Introduction

Online shopping has become a common practice in our contemporary societies due to technological advances and widespread Internet usage. In spite of the fact that online shopping is preferred by many for the advantages it providesin terms of customer convenience, it is also a fact that customers may have negative feelings about their shopping processes or purchases for various reasons. Hesitation and regret are among these negative feelings. Consumers' worries about or hesitation ontheir own purchase decisions are referred to as 'cognitive dissonance' (Aydın & Yilmaz, 2018), and cognitive dissonance in online shopping may be affected by many factors such as the trustwortiness and esthetics of the web page etc. (Eskiler & Altunişik, 2012 in Aydın & Yilmaz, 2018). Consumers claim that mostly hedonicpursuits such ashaving delight and being happy, and impulsive behaviours direct them to online shopping (Saleem et al., 2012) and so hedonic and impulsive tendencies are two basic factors motivating consumers to shop online. In this research, how the dependent variables 'impulse buying' and 'cognitive dissonance' are effected by the independent variables 'reference group effect' and 'hedonic consumption tendencies' is the object of investigation.

Consumers with less cognitive dissonance are more satisfied and they also have higher behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Sharifi and Esfidani, 2014). Many of the studies have explained the effect of 'impulse buying' on 'cognitive dissonance' before. None of the studies has mentioned a relationship between 'reference group effect' and 'hedonic consumption tendencies' with 'impulse buying' and 'cognitive dissonance' in study. This study contributes in knowing how 'reference group effect' and 'hedonic consumption tendencies' variables affect the 'impulse buying' and 'cognitive dissonence' dependent variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reference Group Effect

Reference groups are defined as social groups that are important to a consumer and against which he or she compares himself or herself (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Consumer behaviour literature is full of evidence concerning consumers being motivated or demotivated by their reference groups into buying or not buying products and services. Trying to gain approval and avoid rejectance is a key determinant of consumer behaviour.

Previous research has identified three major types of reference group influences: informational influence, utilitarian influence and value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977; Bearden & Etzel, 1982). In this piece of research, only utilitarian influence will be taken into consideration.This influence can be explained by the so-called 'compliance process' in which an individual is willing to satisfy a certain group's expectation in order to obtain the praise or to avoid the punishment from the group (Kelman, 1961 in Yang et al., 2007). A best demonstration for the utilitarian influence may be the famous Asch Experiment in which participants were found to willingly conform to the group answers, even changing their original right answers (Rock, 1990 in Yang et al., 2007).The desire to satisfy the expectations that others have of him or her has an impact on individual's brand choice (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2006).

The utilitarian influence basicly differs frominformational and value-expressive influence in that informational influence is based on the desire to make informed decisions and optimise the choice according to potentially useful information taken from their reference groups while value-expressive influence is about the 'identification process' in which people are willing to better express themselves to the society by making themselves similar to the group that they want to belong to, under the influence of which one may actively follow the groups' beliefs and rules neglecting the praises or punishments, and deciding to completely accept and internalise the value of that reference group (Kelman, 1961 in Yang et al., 2007).

2.2. Hedonic Consumption Tendencies

Hedonism is a philosophy acknowledging pleasure in the content and meaning of life. Hedonism is an ethical theory ascribing something giving joy or saving from pain as "good", and something giving pain as "bad" (Hopkinson & Pujari, 1999; Babacan, 2001; Altunışık & Çallı, 2004). Hedonism or pleasure seeking has been referred to as one of the main drivers of postmodern consumer behaviour.

The concept of 'consumption' has both concrete and abstract dimensions to it, both of which can be related with pleasure seeking. According to Baudrillard (2004), hedonic consumption is "consumption in order to take pleasure, not to exist or satisfy the needs". Experiential aspects of consumption have been explored in the literature taking the concept of consumption beyond the confines of cognitive psychology and utilitarian economics (Hirschman & Stern, 1999). These experiences may vary from extraordinary experiences such as river rafting (Arnould & Price, 1993) and augmented reality experiences (eg. Coca Cola) to the experiential view of shopping taken from a holistic approach, right from involvement to post-purchase usage, incorporating the hedonistic perspective into the existing, primarily cognitive-rational information processing view of consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982a).

Hedonic aspects of shopping have gained more attention in the last decades and many researchers have started focusing their attention on this phenomenon. Hedonic consumption is defined as consumer behaviours which are very sensuous and related to emotional and fanciful aspects (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). The signs of hedonic consumption are desires, extended involvements, fantasies, and avoiding from the unpleasantness of reality (Onurlubaş, 2015).

2.3. Impulse Buying

Impulse buying can be described as having a strong and sudden desire to buy a product which one did not intend to purchase, and doing so without much contemplation (Rook & Fisher, 1995; Rook, 1987). Impulse buying is related to hedonic consumption (Rook & Hoch, 1985). It was identified that impulse buying could be realized for hedonic or emotional reasons (Rook & Fischer, 1995; Piron, 1991; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982; Rook, 1987 in Çağlıyan et al., 2018).

Nowadays, impulse buying is exercised commonly mainly due to the strong influence of the media and the Internet beside other factors. Some consumers are more prone to impulsive buying than others due to factors such as cultural differences (Kacen & Lee, 2002), change in mood and emotions (Rock & Gardener, 1993), demographic characteristics like age, gender, income etc. (Mai, Jung, Lantz & Loeb, 2003) and its relationship with self identity (Dittmar, Beattie & Friese, 1995), time spent at store, displays and packaging, promotional activities, size and quality of product, features of items, customer's self interest and advertising etc. (Inman, Winter & Ferrero, 2009),being fashionable and status conscious (Han, Morgan, Kotsiopulos & Kang, 1991) etc. (Rasheed et al., 2017). Mostly consumers do impulse buying as it gives pleasure and reduces burden of choosing from a bundle of products (Hauseman, 2000), it reduces stress and tension in shopping (Wasaya et al., 2016).A consumer's behaviour with regards to impulse buying is also affected by the people around him/her. In the presence of mom and dad the impulse buying decreases but shopping with friends

increases impulse buying (Luo, 2005 in Rasheed et al., 2017).

2.4. Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance theory developed by Festinger (1957) states that people experience conflict when deciding between alternatives. They seek to reduce dissonance by increasing the perceived attractiveness of the chosen alternative and devaluing the nonchosen item, seeking out information to confirm the decision, or changing attitudes to conform to the decision (Tanford & Montgomery, 2014). The theory's main context is individual and social psychology. Management and marketing scientists have adopted the theory as well (Telci et al., 2011). The main area of research in marketing has been post-purchase dissonance and its relationship with people's perception of advertisements after purchase, attitude change, service quality perceptions, and brand loyalty (Ehrlich et al. 1957, Engel, 1963 and O'Neill & Palmer, 2004 in Telci et al., 2011). However dissonance may also be developed in the pre-decisional phase in the consumer's decision making process due to the various forgone competitor's product features against the purchased ones (Koller & Salzberger, 2007). Obviously there are many in store factors asl well, influencing the decision making process of customers in the pre-purchase stage of decision making. The consumer experiences cognitive dissonance not only in the case of products and services but also when (s)he has to decide between buying a product/service online or offline (from a store) (Aydın & Yılmaz, 2018). In fact, whenever we make a decision, we often have some degree of cognitive dissonance (Gautam, 2015). If the buying decision is critical for the consumer, if the costs to bear for that product or service are too high, if that product or service is a must-have or there is no alternative and the product/service doesn't perform at the expected level, then cognitive dissonance gets higher (Korgaonkar & Moschis, 1982, Mowen, 1995, Ranjbarian et al., 2014 in Aydın & Yılmaz, 2018).The most important reasons for individuals to fall into cognitive dissonance can turn out to be their attitudes, values, perceptions and tendencies. Some perceptions may be stronger or weaker than others. When stronger perceptions run counter to the others, the decision made can create more dissonance. Therefore research carried out regarding the effects of perceptions (perceived value, trust and risk) and tendencies (hedonic consumption and impulsive buying) are ultimately crutial (Aydın & Yılmaz, 2018).

3. Research Methodology

The aim of this research is the investigation of post-purchase cognitive dissonance experienced occasionally in online shopping, and the factors affecting it. Within this framework, the interaction among the variables 'reference group effect', 'hedonic consumption', 'impulse buying' and 'cognitive dissonance' in the online shopping context has been the object of investigation.

Table 1. Research Model
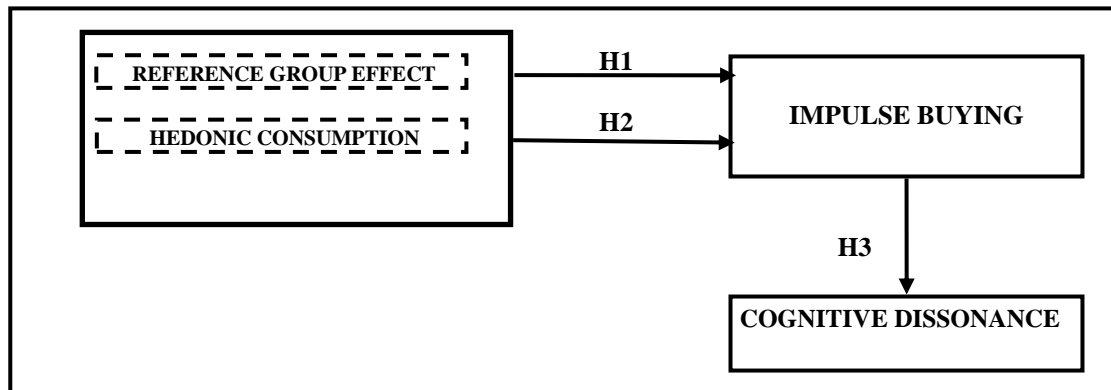
Source: Developed by researchers

In this research, a new research model has been developed based on the scales and variables in Shaouf vd. (2016: 628) and Mikalef et al. (2012: 33-34)'s work. The hypothesis of the research are as follows:

H1: The variable "Reference Group Effect" is statistically significant in explaining Impulse Buying.

H2: The variable "Hedonic Consumption" is statistically significant in explaining Impulse Buying.

H3:The variable "Impulse Buying" is statistically significant in explaining Cognitive Dissonance.

A face to face questionnaire has been applied between 5-28 June 2019 to a research sample consisting of 358 Istanbul residents, who engage in online shopping. The questionnaire form is made up of 3 parts. The first part consists of demographic questions, the second part of nine 5-point Likert scale statements (1= Totally agree, 5= Totally disagree) related to the 'Reference Group Effect' and 'Hedonic Consumption' variables. The last part is dedicated to eight 5-point Likert scale statements intended to measure the 'Impulse Buying' and 'Cognitive Dissonance' variables. Data have been analised by means of frequency, factor and reliability analises using the SPSS and LISREL programs. The fact that the research sample consists only of İstanbul residents is the biggest limitation of this research.

3.1. Analysis

The basic demographic profile of the population studied is outlined in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Woman	180	50,3
Man	178	49,7
Total	358	100
Marital Status		
Married	184	51,4
Single	165	46,1
Divorced	9	2,5
Total	358	100
Age		
18-29	112	31,3
30-39	154	43,0
40-49	68	19,0
50 and above	24	6,7
Total	358	100
Education		
Elementary/Middle school	7	2
High school	63	17,6
Associate degree	103	28,8
Bachelor's degree	139	38,8
Master's/Doctoral degree	46	12,8
Total	358	100
Income		
1500 TL and below	6	1,7
1501-3000 TL	114	31,8
3001-5500 TL	134	37,4
5501 and above TL	104	29,1
Total	358	100

The gender, marital status, age, education and income breakdowns of the population consisting of 358 participants are: 50,3% female, 49,7% male; 51,4% married, 46,1% single, 2,5% divorced; 31,3% in the 18-29 age category, 43% in the 30-39 age category, 19,0% in the 40-49 age category and 6,7%in the 50 and above age category. 38,8% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, which is the biggest percentage in the education category. The monthly income interval of 37,4% of the participants is 3001-5500TL, which is the biggest percentage among all income levels.

In the result of the analysis run for testing the eligibility of the scales for a factor analysis, the KMO rate was 0,907. This result showed that the data are perfectly eligible for a factor analysis. Additionally, because the p-value of the Bartlett test was significant (Durmuş et al., 2011), the data set can be said to be eligible for a factor analysis (KMO=0,907, χ^2Barlett Test (36) = 5822,597, p=0,000). The Cronbach's Alfa coefficient was used for testing the internal validity of the scales used for the study. Accordingly, it has been detected that the scales utilized are reliable, as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Scale	Number of Questions	Cronbach's Alpha
Reference Group Effect (RGE), Hedonic Consumption (HEC)	9	0,915
Impulse Buying (IBU)	4	0,999
Cognitive Dissonance (COG)	4	0,997

The resulting factors of the factor analysis were named "Reference Group Effect" and "Hedonic Consumption", which is consistent with the existant literature. The reliability analysis run for these 2 factors showed that these factors are highly reliable. The factor loadings, the factor scores and the Cronbach's Alpha values are outlined in Table 4 below. When the Cronbach Alpha reliability values are observed, it can be seen that the scales utilized are reliable due to the fact that each value is above 0,70.

Table 4. Factor Analysis Results

Factor	Question Statements	Factor Loadings	Factos Scores (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Reference Group Effect (RGE)	My friends' evaluations and preferences affect my shopping choices.	0,940	40,313	0,963
	Other people's recommendations may affect my final decision while shopping.	0,958		
	My family members' preferences may affect my shopping preferences.	0,925		
	My shopping preferences get affected by the preferences of my collage mates or colleagues in order to satisfy their expectations.	0,938		
Hedonic Consumption (HEC)	Shopping has always been attractive for me.	0,972	53,465	0,991
	Shopping cheers me up a lot.	0,968		
	Shopping makes me feel good every time I feel down.	0,975		
	I think that shopping is the best way to reduce stress.	0,979		
	I forget about all of my problems when I go shopping.	0,977		

Table 5. Reference Group Effect, Hedonic Consumption, Impulse Buying and Cognitive Dissonance Correlation Analysis Results

	Mean	St. Dev.	AVE	RGE	HEC	DSA	COG
RGE	2,3296	0,91476	0,8842	1 (0,9403)	-	-	-
HEC	1,7933	0,87988	0,9490	0,269**	1 (0,9742)	-	-
IBU	2,5140	0,79398	0,9990	0,292**	0,305**	1 (0,9995)	-
COG	1,5964	0,83314	0,9930	0,026	-0,009	0,200**	1 (0,9965)

** Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level. (2-tailed)

When the correlation analysis results for the variables Reference Group Effect, Hedonic Consumption, Impulse Buying and Cognitive Dissonance in Table 5 are analysed, the fact that the AVE values are above 0.5 and all of the factor loadings outlined in Table 4 are above 0.5 shows that these variables have convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). The fact that the square roots of the AVE values of each variable (the square root values are shown in brackets) is higher than the correlations of other variables show that discriminant validity condition is also met (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). After the factor, validity and correlation analyses have been carried out, the model of the research and the proposed hypotheses have been tested via the LISREL structural equation modelling.

3.2. Testing the Developed Model with Structural Equation Modelling

As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis carried out with LISREL structural equation modelling program for testing our developed research model, the goodness of fit values were as follows; Chi square (x^2) value 274.01, p=0; Degrees of freedom= 115; χ^2/sd= 2,33; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation-RMSEA= 0.062; Goodness of Fit Index-GFI = 0.92;Comparative Fit Index-CFI = 0.98;Normed Fit Index-NFI = 0.97;Root Mean Square Residual-RMR =

0.019 and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual-SRMR= 0.025. Accordingly, our research model, results and acceptance criteria (Çokluk et al., 2012) are depicted in Figure 1, Table 6 and Table 7 below:
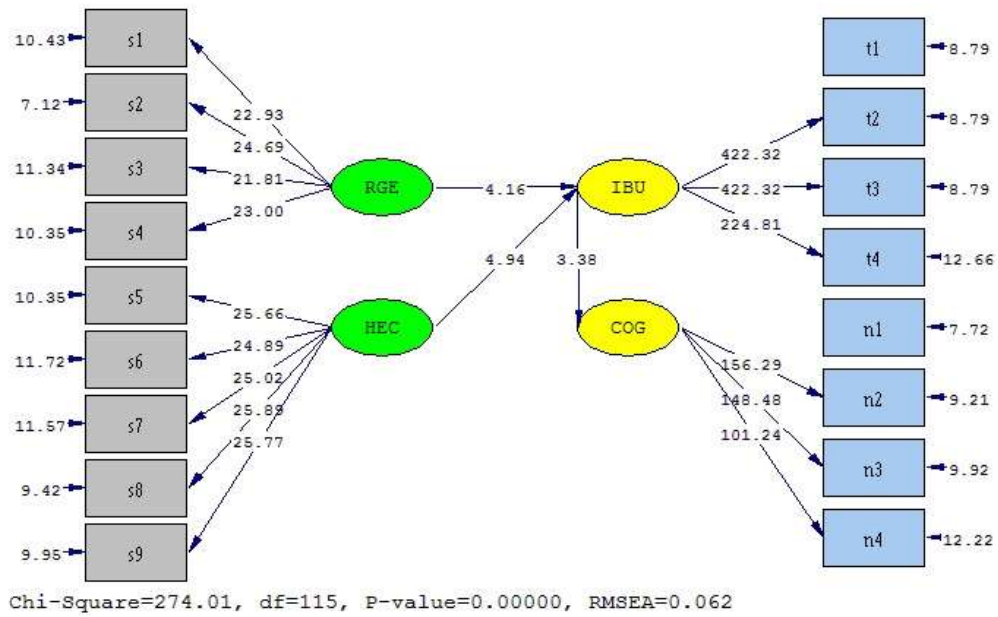

Figure 1. t-values of the Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 6. Structural Equation Modelling Results and Acceptance Criteria

Goodness of Fit	Value	Acceptance Criteria
Chi square (χ²)/ sd	2,38	≤ 3 perfect fit
GFI	0,92	≥ 0,90 good fit
RMSEA	0,062	≤ 0,07good fit
RMR	0,019	≤ 0,05 perfect fit
SRMR	0,025	≤ 0,05 perfect fit
CFI	0,98	≥ 0,95 perfect fit
NFI	0,97	≥ 0,95 perfect fit

Table 7. Structural Equation Analysis Results

		Standardized Solutions Values	t-values
Reference Group Effect (RGE)	Impulse Buying (IBU)	0,22	4,16
Hedonic Consumption (HEC)	Impulse Buying (IBU)	0,26	4,94
Impulse Buying (IBU)	Cognitive Dissonance (COG)	0,18	3,38

By means of the analysis run via structural equation modelling, the goodness of fit indexes, t-values and standardized solution values have been detected. The goodness of fit values and the path diagram found out as a result of the structural lequation modelling were significant on the 0,01 significance level, which means that the proposed research model is significant, reliable and acceptable. The results have indicated that "Hedonic Consumption" is the most effective independent variable on "Impulse Buying" and "Cognitive Dissonance" dependent variables. However, the results have also indicated that the other independent variable "Reference Group Effect" has a significant effect on the "Impulse Buying" and "Cognitive Dissonance" variables too.

4. Analysis

In this study, "cognitive dissonance" and the factors affecting cognitive dissonance in the online shopping context have been the object of investigation. Within this framework, the nature of online shopping has been tried to be revealed in terms of its relationship with the dimensions of Reference Group Effect, Hedonic Consumption, Impulse Buying and Cognitive Dissonance. The model on Table 1 has been developed based on existant research in the literature. The scale and variables utilized for this model have been developed by the researchers based on Shaouf vd. (2016: 628) ve

Mikalef vd. (2012: 33-34)' scientific articlesto be found in the literature. This model consists of 2 independent variables and 2 dependent variables, which are effected by these 2 independent variables.

5. Discussion

During the research process, a face to face survey has been applied to a sample of 358 online shoppers residing in Istanbul between 5-28 June 2019. The SPSS statistical program for social sciences has been utilized for the analysis and interpretation of the received data. The statistical analyses run include frequency, factor, reliability and correlation analyses. The gender, marital status, age, education and income breakdowns of the population consisting of 358 participants are: 50,3% female, 49,7% male; 51,4% married, 46,1% single, 2,5% divorced; 31,3% in the 18-29 age category, 43% in the 30-39 age category, 19,0% in the 40-49 age category and 6,7% in the 50 and above age category. 38,8% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, which is the biggest percentage in the education category. The monthly income interval of 37,4% of the participants is 3001-5500TL, which is the biggest percentage among all income levels. The analysis run for testing the eligibility of the scales for factor analysis has shown that the scales are perfectly eligible for factor analysis. A reliability analysis has been run for the 2 factors that came out of the factor analyses and these two factors were found to be highly reliable. Accordingly, the fact that each of the Cronbach Alpha reliability values are above 0.70 shows that the scales utilized are reliable. The correlation analysis results with AVE values above 0.5 and all factor loadings also above 0.5 show that the variables have convergent reliability. Together with that, the fact that the square roots of the AVE values of each variable are higher than the correlations among other variables shows that the variables also have discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981: 41).

6. Conclusion

By means of the structural equation modelling conducted, goodness of fit tests, t-values and standardized solution values were analysed. Structural equation modelling results have revealed that the goodness of fit tests and path diagram results were reliable at the 0,01 significance level and that the proposed research model is in fact significant, reliable and acceptable. The results indicate that "Hedonic Consumption" is the independent variable that effects the "Impulse Buying" and "Cognitive Dissonance" variables the most. However, the other independent variable "Reference Group Effect" has a significant effect on "Impulse Buying" and "Cognitive Dissonance" variables too.

This study is intended to provide an impact on companies serving on e-commerce websites as well as consumers, who are engaged in online shopping.

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