

## TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY? – ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOR ACROSS DIFFERENT PRODUCTS IN RELATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

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### ABSTRACT

As the world evolves, marketing is gaining ground and its role in our lives is becoming more and more crucial. The result is a set of influences on our consumer behaviour, which can change our attitudes and buying habits. In most cases, companies are able to achieve this without our knowledge, with the aim of increasing their purchasing power.

In our research, we wanted to achieve our goal by using a quantitative method, i.e. we wanted to get to know the habits of the participating consumers and to obtain information about the behaviour of the respondents. We have used an online questionnaire (by 322 answerers) to investigate the psychological and environmental factors that influence our decisions. The aim of manufacturers is to use promotional tools to manipulate our emotions to create a request in consumers, which creates a demand, and thus a product that is not very useful.

In our research we investigated how much the mood of shoppers influences their choices and decisions. We found that even conscious shoppers often make purchases according to their mood, sometimes even for unnecessary products.

Our main achievements:

- Conscious consumers buy far fewer products they do not need than non-conscious consumers
- Using as many emotions as possible in the design of advertising can lead companies to success, because those who can be influenced often rely on their emotions to make decisions.
- The mood of the supermarkets today plays a crucial role in influencing consumers.

Keywords: customer behaviour, psychology, online marketing survey

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the defining phenomena of the 21st century is the existence of the consumer society, which simultaneously poses a serious problem. It brings with it overconsumption and unnecessary purchases that negatively affect our environment. As a result, companies must produce more and more products, which in turn may accelerate another global issue—climate change. It is crucial to analyze these problems on a systemic level and to develop strategies for the entire process by identifying the underlying causes.

In our research, we aimed to achieve our goals through a quantitative method, focusing on understanding the habits of participating consumers and gathering insights into the unique behaviors of different generations. To this end, we first formulated hypotheses, which we then verified or refuted in order to draw our final conclusions.

Our preliminary assumptions were as follows:

1. Significant differences can be observed among different age groups in terms of how they evaluate the importance of a product's popularity.
2. Differences exist between conscious and non-conscious consumers in the frequency of purchasing products that are not essential for daily life, yet are perceived as necessary by the buyer.
3. There is a correlation between the frequency of emotion-driven purchases and the degree to which advertisements influence consumers.
4. There is a relationship between store appearance, applied color schemes, and design influences, and the purchase of products whose usefulness or necessity consumers themselves cannot clearly explain.

## 1.1. Consumer Behaviour, Purchase Types

According to Bauer and Berács (2017), the purpose of consumption is not the satisfaction of individual needs, but rather the emphasis that a product can influence consumers to such an extent that it may determine their position in society, even shaping their place in the social hierarchy [1].

Kiss (2016) defines consumer behavior as encompassing all the emotions, impulses, and activities that surround the buyer during the purchasing process. For example, simply entering a shopping mall or supermarket sets the tone for the entire shopping experience through its environment, decoration, and atmosphere, which will influence store selection during the next purchase. Many consumers are not even aware of these effects, yet they function as factors influencing the human mind [2].

Rekettye, Töröcsik, and Hetesi (2022) highlight framework factors that influence consumers, including nationality and cultural belonging, with all their implications. For instance, everyday and festive traditions tied to culture or religion provide a framework for food purchasing behavior. Social and economic characteristics can also be considered external guiding factors [3].

Hofmeister-Tóth (2017) emphasizes that consumer behavior is shaped by various factors, of which she identifies the following as particularly significant [4]:

- economic,
- social,
- cultural,
- psychological .

According to Töröcsik (2016), consumption also reflects a person’s social status and group affiliation [5]. She also compares the duality of consumption and purchasing, as summarized in Table 1. [6].

*Table 1. Consumption versus purchasing*

characteristics	consumption	purchase
time horizon	long-term	instant
defining framework	conditions	impulses, situational effects
-	need	action
starting point	plans	facts
response to trends	trends, counter-trends, megatrends	immediate trends

Although it is difficult to separate the two areas, since in many cases the time and place of purchase and consumption are the same, the categories often diverge. Consumption is more of a personal “manifestation,” while purchasing is primarily the act itself of the same phenomenon. Purchases are activities that serve as the basis for consumption, while consumption carries a broader meaning.

In the case of purchasing, we can identify several types:

- Extensive – the consumer actively participates in both the search and the evaluation process.
- Limited – some effort appears in the decision-making process.
- Routine – products are taken from the shelf almost automatically [7].

In addition, it is worth mentioning Töröcsik’s (2016) classification based on the degree of involvement, according to which purchases may be [5]:

- personal,
- dependent on the attractiveness of the product,
- situational,
- influenced by media.

Of course, beyond the above, other classification and grouping methods also exist.

## 1.2 Generations, Differences

The concept of a generation has been defined in many different ways. Schewe and Noble (2000) describe it as a cohort bound together by shared experiences [8]. Another approach views generations as groups of people born around the same time, sharing common historical and social backgrounds [9]. Others emphasize that members of a generation possess common markers or identifiers that connect them [10].

The number of generational divisions varies by theory and is typically determined by the characteristics under study—whether they are key life goals, personality traits, or even the frequency of internet use. In the Yankelovich Report (2006), the initial classification distinguished between young, middle-aged, and older generations, which later evolved as follows [11]:

- Boomer Imitators (1979–1991)
- Generation X (1965–1985)
- Baby Boomers (1946–1964)
- The Mature Generation (born until 1945)

These concepts were first clearly defined by William Strauss and Neil Howe in their book *Generations* (1991). In this work, they described four main generational cohorts [12]:

- Those born during the Baby Boom (1940s–1950s)
- Generation X (1960s–1970s)
- Generation Y (1980s–1990s)
- Generation Z (2000s)

Later refinements adjusted the starting point of Generation Y to 1985, and Generation Z to 1995. Other studies also discuss the children of the late 20th century—Generation Z—often labeled with different names: Generation D, referring to the use of digital technology in today’s globalized world, and Generation C, highlighting “connection” as a defining characteristic [13].

Today, the most frequently discussed cohorts are Generation Y, Generation Z, Generation Alpha, and, starting from 2025, Generation Beta (β). Numerous studies have examined the consumption habits of these groups. One key finding is that members of Generation Z spend an above-average amount on non-essential goods, while allocating relatively little to health and education-related expenses. In contrast, older generations dedicate a significant proportion of their spending to healthcare. Children’s age can be seen as a variable that continuously reshapes household spending patterns, bringing different items into focus over time.

Based on these observations, it can be concluded that generations differ in purchasing power and behavior, while the composition of expenditures fluctuates depending on the number and age of children and the presence of social interaction [14].

The birth years of each generation are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. *Generations*

Generations	Baby boomer	x	y	z	α	β
year of birth	1946-1964	1965-1979	1980-1995	1996-2009	2010-2024	2025-2039

Source: [15], [16], own editing

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To conduct our research, we developed a questionnaire consisting of five main sections, which was first pilot-tested. The survey was created using Google Forms and shared on the social networking platform Facebook among our acquaintances between July 23 and October 6, 2023. Not only we ourselves, but also

our family members shared the questionnaire on the platform, in an effort to reach a wider variety of age groups through random sampling.

Since we were unable to reach the older age group (65+ years) this way, we approached them at the end of September with a more traditional paper-based questionnaire, from which we ultimately collected 20 responses. The total number of questionnaires gathered amounted to 322, although the sample is not representative.

The main sections of the questionnaire were as follows:

- purchasing habits,
- emotional influences,
- environmental factors,
- brands and marketing communication,
- demographic questions.

We first analysed the responses considering the full sample, followed by an examination of generational differences. These analyses were performed using Excel spreadsheet software. Our survey concluded with hypothesis testing, for which we used the Jamovi statistical program.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final number of accepted, reviewed, and properly completed questionnaires was 322. Among the respondents, 37.89% were male and 62.11% were female. This distribution can be explained by the fact that women tend to be more affected by shopping-related topics and feel more comfortable engaging with them. In terms of age, nearly half of the responses (43.48%) came from the 18–25 age group, who are the most easily reached via social media and are more open to participation. The 26–40 age group participated at a nearly equal rate as the 41–65 group, representing 21.12% and 25.47% of responses, respectively. The 65+ group, despite the paper-based survey, accounted for only 9.94% of respondents. To effectively reach this target audience, more direct and simplified methods are necessary.

From an educational perspective, 59.63% of the respondents had completed higher education, while 39.13% held a secondary-level qualification.

For the first question, respondents were asked to decide whether they considered themselves conscious shoppers or not. A total of 86.34% believed themselves to be conscious, although this does not necessarily mean their actions reflect such behavior, as later findings reveal.

The second question was a Likert-scale type item, where participants rated from 1 to 5 how much they enjoy shopping. A score of 1 indicated “*I do not enjoy it at all*”, while a score of 5 meant “*I enjoy it very much*.” Most respondents selected 3, which on a five-point scale is considered neutral, accounting for 35.40% of the sample. This choice can be seen partly as the most convenient option, but it may also reflect the dual nature of shopping: sometimes perceived as enjoyable, other times as a burden. Approximately 20% of respondents indicated that they rather dislike shopping, while about 45% reported finding it a more or less pleasant activity. Gender differences also emerged in how this activity was judged. The mean score was 3.33, while both the median and mode were 3.

An association task was also included, asking respondents to write down the first word that came to mind when hearing the word *marketing*. The results are illustrated in Figure 1, where the size of each word corresponds to its frequency. As we can see, most respondents associated the word with *advertising*, and the *market* and *sales* were the main things that came to mind. Fortunately, *deception* ranked last among the options presented.



Figure 1. Associations with marketing, N=322  
Source: own editing

### 3.1. Purchasing habits

Next, we asked about shopping locations, distinguishing between two categories: food products and durable, non-food items. The responses are summarized in Table 3. Clear differences can be seen between the two product groups, and the results, in our view, are not surprising.

For non-food products, the proportion of online purchases and specialty stores is particularly noteworthy. It should be mentioned here that although we did not explicitly define which items fall into the category of non-food products, examples from everyday life suggest that this category may include both lower-priced goods (e.g., books, clothing) and higher-value items (e.g., furniture, jewellery, cars). In such cases, consumers are more likely to purchase them from specialty stores rather than supermarkets.

Table 3. Shopping places, for different product categories, %, N=322

Place of purchase	Food products	Durable non-food products
Supermarket	60,7	32,9
Specialty store	-	36,6
Convenience store	26,1	-
Online	5,6	30,5
Other	7,6	-

Source: own editing

At different locations, consumers obtain information in different ways. While in specialty stores, non-food products are chosen primarily based on online reviews (46%), in shopping centers, a significant proportion of respondents (33%) place food products in their carts based on the information provided on the packaging. In this case, advertisements also play a role, with 1 in 10 shoppers making decisions on that basis, and online reviews are again influential (22%). The assistance of sales staff is sought by 13% of respondents in shopping centers, compared to 16% in specialty stores.

Following this, respondents were asked to rank the motivations and influencing factors behind their product purchases. The statistical indicators of the seven categories we provided are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Statistical indicators of product characteristics, N=322

Indicators	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.
Price–value ratio	4.62	5.00	5.00	0.81
Usefulness <sup>1</sup>	4.34	5.00	5.00	0.83
Durability <sup>2</sup>	4.27	5.00	5.00	0.94
Joy/Happiness evoked	3.89	4.00	5.00	1.10
Satisfaction of sense of lack	2.93	3.00	3.00	1.16
Identification with brand	2.74	3.00	3.00	1.18
Popularity	2.53	3.00	3.00	1.11

Source: own editing

None of the factors can be said to be completely insignificant to consumers; however, popularity proved to be the least important. This highlights that multiple factors shape the decision-making process, meaning that it is not sufficient for companies to focus on fulfilling only a single attribute at a high level.

Further examining the factors influencing purchasing decisions, we drew the following conclusions: the location and environment of the store exert the greatest attraction for respondents. This is hardly surprising, as shopping centers often enrich the shopping experience with programs, playhouses, or mini-exhibitions, while cafés, pastry shops, and fast-food outlets offer weary shoppers opportunities to recharge. For this factor, the median score was 4, while the mode was 5.

At the same time, the mood and overall well-being of the individual were also clearly important, although this factor only reached scores of 3 and 4. The least important influences were advertising materials, posters, and signs, with a median of 2.0 and a mode of 1.0.

Although no statistically significant relationships were found among the background variables, it can be noted that for the 41–65 age group, the most important factors were price–value ratio, usefulness, and durability.

### 3.2. Emotional influence

In the responses to the final question, it became clear that the emotional state of the individual is an important factor in purchasing behavior. We further explored this topic in the second section of the questionnaire. Altogether, 358 responses were collected to the question of whether emotional states influence shopping behavior. Two emotional states (happiness, sadness) and three possible outcomes (buy more, buy less, or no influence) were listed, and respondents could select multiple options.

Nearly half of the participants (48.04%) stated that happiness or sadness does not influence whether they buy more or less. In our view, this reveals a contradiction: earlier, about 86% of respondents had identified themselves as conscious consumers. Despite this, more than half admitted that their mood does affect their purchasing frequency—something that, in our opinion, suggests non-conscious shopping behavior. This may stem from a lack of self-awareness or from self-justification, convincing themselves that everything they buy is necessary.

A total of 21.79% believed that a feeling of happiness increased both the frequency of shopping and the amount spent. In such cases, people are generally more receptive, hesitate less, and approach the purchasing process more positively. Conversely, 17.32% reported the opposite effect: for them, sadness triggers the urge to shop as a way of alleviating negative emotions. Here, the happiness-inducing property of making a

<sup>1</sup> In the case of food products, items such as sweets, chips, soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages are considered less useful.

<sup>2</sup> Consideration of the appropriate shelf life in the case of food products

purchase comes to the forefront. For these consumers, the mean score for the importance of joy and happiness evoked by products was 4.19, higher than the overall sample mean of 3.89, showing that such purchases clearly contribute to a better emotional state.

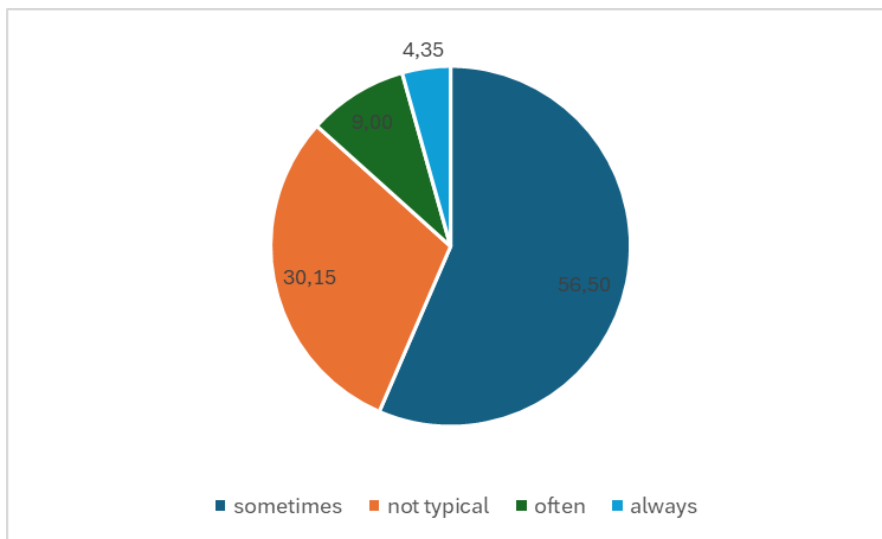
By contrast, among those who claimed that happiness and sadness had no effect on their shopping and that they purchase only what they truly need, the mean score for the importance of product-induced happiness was 3.72, below the overall average.

Additionally, 6.70% of respondents indicated that happiness had a spending-reducing effect for them, as in such moments they felt less need for the positive emotional impact of consumption. Meanwhile, 6.15% stated that sadness acted as an inhibiting factor, holding them back from making purchases.

No statistically significant relationships were found.

This led to the next question: do respondents purchase so-called unnecessary or non-essential products, possibly due to an elevated mood? The results are summarized in Figure 2. A total of 66.5% reported engaging in such behavior, with the majority (56.5%) doing so only occasionally, while approximately one in ten admitted to doing so frequently.

Even in the case of these products, price remains an important factor. When evaluating responses to the follow-up question, we found that if a product initially appeared expensive, 30.15% of respondents considered the price–value ratio and the usefulness of the product before making a decision. Only 4.35% stated that they were not concerned with the price and would purchase the desired item regardless (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Frequency of buying unnecessary products %, N=322**  
 Source: own editing

Naturally, the purchase of a long-desired product can also contribute to the enhancement of positive emotions—and indeed, 95% of respondents reported experiencing this effect at varying frequencies.

Next, using a Likert scale, we asked: *To what extent does purchasing an important product contribute to your self-esteem/self-evaluation?* Respondents rated this, on average, at a level of 3 (on a scale of 1–5) for the acquisition of a long-desired product.

However, when compared with answers to an earlier question concerning emotional balance, differences emerged between groups at the 1–2 level and the 4–5 level of balance. Although these differences were not statistically significant, the averages were 3.25 and 2.98, respectively. This suggests that for those with higher emotional balance, the purchase of a long-desired product contributes less to the enhancement of self-esteem.

We were also curious to see how the averages varied across groups with different levels of mental balance, and whether mental well-being influences the extent to which a product can contribute to self-confidence. The calculated data indicate that product purchases contribute more strongly to self-esteem among those who feel less mentally balanced (3.25 at the 1–2 confidence level) than the overall sample average, whereas the opposite was observed among those who felt stable (2.98 at the 4–5 confidence level), with the effect being weaker than the overall mean (3.12). Unfortunately, no statistically significant relationships were found between these values.

We also examined whether respondents had ever experienced buying a product only to later realize that they did not know what to do with it. The frequency of this occurrence was compared to the statement that the usefulness of a product is important to them. The results are summarized in Table 5.

*Table 5. Determination of the importance of utility, N=322*

Groups	Sample proportion (%)	Importance of usefulness
Occurrence (Yes, occasionally: 45.96% Yes, frequently: 8.07%)	54,03	4,28
Does not occur (Rarely: 30.43% Never: 15.53%)	45,96	4,41
Entire sample	100	4,34

*Source: own editing*

The values support each other, meaning that respondents who consider product usefulness more important almost never purchase unnecessary items. Unfortunately, a statistically significant correlation could not be measured in this case either.

### 3.3. Environmental factors

We measured the frequency of cases where consumers plan to purchase a product, but some external factor prevents the transaction, and the process ultimately does not result in a purchase.

Among the respondents, 46.58% reported that this happens to them multiple times, 34.78% said it happens occasionally, 14.29% indicated it occurs frequently, while 4.35% stated that they have never experienced such a problem.

The atmosphere of the store also consciously or unconsciously influences the purchasing process.

This is supported by the following results: more than three-quarters of respondents (75.8%) reported experiencing a change in their mood upon entering a store; for 64%, the change was both positive and negative depending on the situation, 6.21% reported only a negative change, while 5.59% experienced only a positive change. Meanwhile, 24.22% stated that they had never noticed such an effect.

Within this topic, we devoted a separate question to music, as in larger stores there is always some form of background sound.

According to the survey, 36.02% of respondents always notice the music regardless of whether they like it or not, 33.54% notice it only when they find it pleasant and enjoyable, while 14.29% notice it when it bothers them or evokes disapproval. Finally, 16.15% of the sample reported that they never pay attention to the music at all.

### 3.4. Brands and promotion

In the questions and tasks related to brands, we first listed a number of product attributes and asked respondents to indicate which product groups or brands they would associate with these attributes. In this way, we essentially expected a form of reverse positioning from the participants.

For the word *safety*, 30.43% associated it with cars, most frequently mentioning *Volvo* (22.36%). For the terms *calmness* and *harmony*, 24.84% associated these with brands offering products in the fields of personal hygiene and body care. Brands linked to *relaxation of the soul* accounted for 13.04%, with bedding and herbal products mentioned most often. In this case, *Baba* was the most frequently cited brand (24.22%), while in bedding *Billerbeck* was named (6.83%).

For the *premium* or *luxury* category, nearly 150 participants selected at least one brand name. We assessed to what extent these brands' logos featured gold or shimmering elements (present in 52% of cases) and the elegance-inducing combination of black and white (54.67%).

Regarding the meanings associated with the color *blue*—such as determination, fairness, and confidence—77.02% of respondents associated at least one brand whose logo includes blue, to a greater or lesser degree. A further 14.91% listed brands not associated with the color blue. At the same time, 8.08% of respondents could not name any brand at all in this context. These latter results may be explained by lower levels of brand awareness.

As a final playful task, we asked participants to name the first advertisement that came to their mind. The most frequently recalled was the *Coca-Cola Christmas commercial* (9.94%), a widely recognized campaign that evokes a warm and festive atmosphere. *Alza* and *Fluimucil* followed (6.21% each), remembered mainly due to their frequent broadcasting and unusual sound effects. Beyond these, the phrase "*But why?*" became unforgettable, along with the peculiar little green creature that stuck in many respondents' memories.

The lack of greater consensus in responses may be explained by the fact that different generations filled out the survey, each following different platforms that expose them to varying advertisements. This assumption is further supported by our 3<sup>rd</sup> figure.

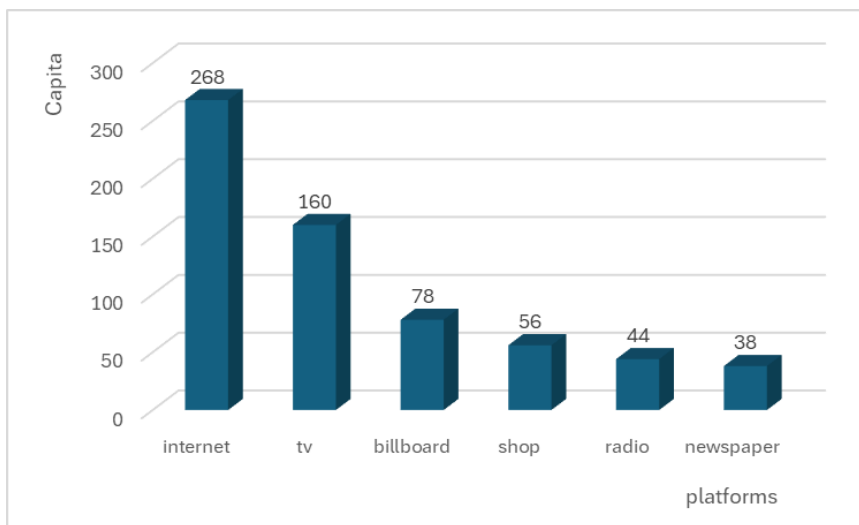


Figure 3. Advertising channels used by respondents, capita, N=322  
Source: own editing

In the final question, respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 the extent to which they felt advertisements were able to influence them.

Consistent with the previous answers, no one selected the value of 5, which would indicate an extremely strong influence. The most common response was the neutral value of 3, chosen by 43.48% of participants, followed by values of 2 (23.60%) and 1 (22.36%). The strongest value chosen was 4, marked by 10.56% of respondents.

Consequently, the overall average points toward a low level of influence, with a mean value of 2.42, while both the median and the mode were 3.

### 3.5. Generational differences

In this chapter, we compare consumers of different age groups using descriptive statistical methods, primarily examining the averages of their responses and analyzing the differences between them. We present only those questions and answers where differences could be observed. Three groups of respondents were analyzed, as the number of responses from those over 65 years old was insufficient to adequately represent their opinions. While the differences are clearly visible in the results, statistical significance was not observed.

The role of staff in store selection was assessed with the following average values by age group: the 18–25 age group scored 3.29, the 26–40 group 3.65, and the 41–65 group 3.95. This indicates that as age increases, the quality of store staff becomes a more decisive factor in store choice. We believe that older consumers rely more frequently on staff assistance during information gathering, making service quality more important to them. It is also common for older consumers in smaller grocery stores to engage in personal conversations with staff, sometimes as their only opportunity for social interaction during the day.

The extent to which consumers are influenced by the number of other shoppers present, or by crowding, also differed among generations.

For some, it can have a positive effect, as they are carried along by the energy and buzz, while for others it evokes negative feelings. Averaging the responses (on a 1–5 scale), the overall sample showed a mean of 3.32. Compared to this, the youngest group scored an average of 3.11, the oldest group 3.54, while the middle-aged group fell in between with 3.47.

Emotional influence also varied when purchasing a long-desired product. Within the 18–25 group, every respondent reported having experienced excitement when acquiring a certain product at least once in their life. Among those aged 26–40, 41.18% indicated that they had experienced this multiple times, while the largest proportion of the 41–65 group reported experiencing it only occasionally. Thus, with increasing age, acquiring a desired product is less likely to cause a sense of “euphoria.”

Finally, we found differences between age groups regarding brand loyalty. In early adulthood, brand loyalty is more pronounced compared to the 26–40 group. The latter are at a life stage of starting families and becoming independent from their parental home, which may reduce available financial resources. As a result, their purchasing decisions are more likely to be based on price than on brand attachment. By contrast, the 41–65 age group have established careers and are often at the stage where their children are becoming independent, allowing the preference for more expensive branded products to re-emerge, resulting in an increase in brand loyalty once again.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Further analysis of the responses was carried out using mathematical statistical tests, for which the Jamovi software was applied.

### 4.1. Test of the first hypothesis

$H_{1a}$ : We hypothesized that significant differences could be observed between age groups in their evaluation of the importance of product popularity.

$H_{10}$ : There is no significant difference among age groups in their evaluation of the importance of product popularity.

Since I examined the differences between three groups (independent variables) based on a single dependent factor, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was selected. The goal was to determine whether generational differences in thinking could be detected and whether these could be supported by the measured data.

To determine the appropriate type of variance analysis, I tested the data for normality and homogeneity. Normality was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test with a 95% confidence interval. The result ( $p < 0.001$ ) indicated that the sample was not normally distributed. In this case, a homogeneity test was not performed, because if the assumption of normality is violated, regardless of homogeneity, the Kruskal–Wallis analysis of variance must be applied to examine group differences.

The test, following APA standards, yielded the result:  $H(2) = 2.25, p = 0.324$ . At the 95% confidence interval, results can only be considered significant if  $p < 0.05$ ; therefore, in this case, the result is not significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, as there is insufficient evidence to reject it. This means that within this sample, no significant differences were observed among age groups regarding their evaluation of the importance of product popularity.

The age groups were also compared pairwise using the software, and in no case did the p-value indicate significance. Thus, it can be concluded that regardless of age group, the perceived strength of product popularity exerts a similar effect. Another possible explanation for the outcome is that the insufficient sample size may have caused distortions in consumers' opinions. Therefore, with a larger sample size, the results of the analysis could potentially differ.

## 4.2. Test of the second hypothesis

$H_{2a}$ : We hypothesize that there is a difference in the purchase frequency of products that could be considered non-essential but are nevertheless perceived as necessary by consumers, between those who identify themselves as conscious shoppers and those who identify themselves as non-conscious shoppers.  $H_{20}$ : There is no significant difference between conscious and non-conscious consumers in the frequency of purchasing non-essential products.

In this analysis, the entire sample was taken into account ( $N = 322$ ). Two groups formed the independent variable: conscious and non-conscious consumers. The dependent variable was the frequency of purchasing non-essential products, with the response options: *often*, *occasionally*, *rarely*, and *never*.

The purpose of this investigation was to examine whether those who self-identify as conscious consumers actually demonstrate this goal-oriented behavior in their actions, and whether they clearly differ from other consumers. In other words, are they honest with themselves to the extent that their past behaviors align with their self-perception?

The choice of test type in this case was determined by the dependent variable, which was measured on an ordinal scale. Therefore, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied in all cases, regardless of normality. The test, reported in APA format, produced the following result at the 95% confidence interval:  $U = 1048, p = 0.008$ . Since  $p < 0.05$ , the result indicates that the difference between the groups is significant. Thus, sufficient evidence exists to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

As the analysis was set in the software to assume no equality between the two groups, the hypothesis was also examined using a graphical representation. On the y-axis, the frequency of purchasing non-essential yet perceived-as-necessary products is displayed, where higher values indicate more frequent purchases, while the x-axis represents the two groups (see Figure 4).

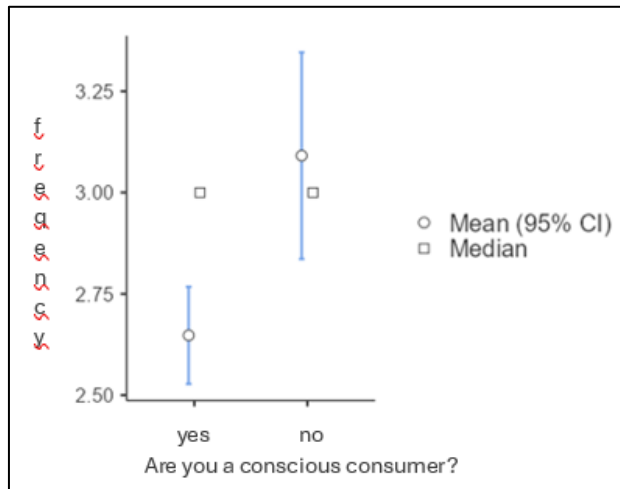


Figure 4. Statistical test of awareness and the frequency of purchase of a dispensable product N=322  
Source: own editing

The figure clearly demonstrates that conscious consumers purchase such products far less frequently than non-conscious consumers.

Based on the analysis of the figure, it can be stated that the two groups in the study differ not only in their consumption of non-essential items, but also that conscious consumers are characterized by a lower level of consumption.

### 4.3. Test of the third hypothesis

H<sub>3a</sub>: We hypothesize that there is a relationship between the frequency of emotion-based purchasing and the extent to which consumers are influenced by advertisements. H<sub>30</sub>: No significant relationship was initially assumed between the frequency of emotion-based purchasing and the degree to which consumers are influenced by advertisements.

Respondents evaluated the influence of advertisements on a 1–5 scale, while the frequency of emotion-based purchases was indicated by the categories *often*, *occasionally*, *almost never*, and *never*. For this hypothesis, the entire sample of 161 responses was analyzed. Since the data were ordinal, Spearman’s correlation test was applied.

According to APA reporting standards, the test produced the following result:  $R_s(159) = 0.206, p = 0.009$ . At a 95% confidence interval, the p-value is significant; therefore, a correlation between the two factors was confirmed. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, and the null hypothesis was rejected.

Further examination of the correlation type revealed that the data were positively correlated ( $p = 0.004$ ). This indicates that the relationship between the two factors is positive: as one variable increases, the other also tends to increase. In practice, this means that more frequent emotional purchasing corresponds with a higher level of susceptibility to advertising influence, and vice versa.

Based on these statistical results, we conclude that advertisements have a significant impact on consumer emotions. The more emotions advertisements convey to consumers, the more effectively they can enhance purchasing power and influence decision-making. Those whose decisions are often dominated by emotions are more receptive to the manipulative effects of advertising, making them the primary target group of promotional videos. In their case, advertising can guide behavior in both positive and negative directions, thereby shaping future purchasing patterns.

Thus, the strategic application of emotional content in advertising can lead companies toward greater success, as emotionally susceptible consumers tend to rely heavily on their feelings when making purchasing decisions.

#### 4.4. Test of the fourth hypothesis

H<sub>4a</sub>: We hypothesize that there is a relationship between the store's appearance—including its applied color scheme and design influence—and the purchase frequency of products for which consumers themselves cannot provide a tangible explanation regarding usefulness or necessity. H<sub>40</sub>: The store's appearance, applied color scheme, and design influence were initially assumed not to be significantly related to the consumption frequency of products purchased without a tangible explanation of their usefulness.

In the Jamovi program, both variables were set as ordinal scales. Since the aim was to examine the relationship between two factors, correlation analysis was applied—specifically, Spearman's rank correlation test, due to the type of measurement scale.

According to APA reporting standards, the result was:  $R_s(159) = 0.176$ ,  $p = 0.026$ . Conducted at the 95% confidence interval, the p-value is significant, as  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. Based on this, it can be concluded that a correlational relationship exists between the two variables examined.

Consequently, it can be stated that store atmosphere plays a decisive role in influencing consumers. Those who rated the impact of store appearance more highly were also more likely to experience situations in which they purchased products whose usefulness even they could not clearly justify.

Based on the above, we propose the following recommendations:

- Companies should carefully consider their applied sales promotion tools. They should not be guided solely by profit maximization, as excessive attempts may evoke a repelling effect among consumers. A carefully prepared, representative research-supported marketing strategy should aim to avoid generating negative emotions in consumers.
- Since store atmosphere can influence consumers' moods, it is necessary to design the space in a way that evokes the most positive feelings possible through its colors and furnishings.
- For stores targeting the needs of older age groups, it is recommended to carefully select staff members, as with increasing age the quality of staff becomes an ever more important factor for consumers.
- In-store sales promotion elements should be applied in both appropriate quality and quantity. These elements should direct attention without becoming excessive, as overuse may distract from the product and ultimately prevent purchase. It is advisable to periodically select specific products for focused promotion, as results have shown that such targeted efforts can even persuade consumers to purchase items they initially deemed unnecessary.
- From the consumer perspective: individuals should not allow their thinking to be overtaken or manipulated. It is essential that they understand their own behavior and attitudes so they become aware of their true needs and are less susceptible to emotional influence from brands. Developing consumer awareness is important, enabling them to evaluate which products truly belong to the category of indispensable goods.
- Since most consumers purchase everyday products in shopping centers, smaller stores are advised to narrow their product range and concentrate on specific product families with greater depth—that is, offering more product types within fewer categories. This would allow them to provide a wider selection within those particular product lines.

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