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Impact of gender on consumer buying behavior

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the gender effect on consumer buying behavior. The objective is to study gender is a essential factor influencing consumer buying behavior. The empirical analysis of this study relies upon data from 60 Wenzhou-Kean University students questionnaire response. The empirical results reveal that female and male consumers have immediate needs for daily products. And they have different search frequencies about products. Men are more brand-conscious than women.

Further, for women, the affective components of service quality more influence customer behavioral intentions than is cognition. Women spend more time on returning goods. This study uses factor analysis. The result may provide some information to marketing managers to develop more detailed marketing strategies that are suitable for male and female consumers.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Genders, Information search, Product needs, Brand

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The Problem Identification

1.1 Introduction

Consumer behavior refers to the action of consumers in the process of seeking, purchasing and evaluating the products or services they expect to meet their needs. And it's influenced by various factors like the individual, environmental, and decision making (Barmola and Srivastava, 2010). Gender is a factor that affects buying behavior and has a certain tendency. Men tend to follow the quick and easy process of utilitarianism, making decisions based on data and facts. In contrast, women tend to be hedonistic and prefer emotionally determined hunting. Men and women will make different choices when facing the same product. These phenomena show that genders may influence consumer behavior.

This research builds on the understanding of the influence of gender for consumer behavior. Consumer buying behavior is the sum of consumers' attitudes, preferences, intentions and decisions towards consumer behavior in the market when they purchase products or services. It's the process of selection, purchase and consumption of goods or services for the satisfaction of wants. We can describe the relationship between gender and consumer behavior through these five parts---product needs, information search, brand features, service quality and returns (Vijayalakshmi and Mahalakshmi, 2013). Consumer buying behavior have five steps that were Problem or Need Recognition; Information Seeking; Evaluation of Alternatives; Purchase Decision; and Post-Purchase Evaluation (Sheth *et al.*, 1999). In this study, five parts show these five steps and explain how gender influence decisions making step by step.

1.2 Problem Statement

In this study, we use the concept of consumer behavior to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between gender and consumer buying behavior.

1.3 Research Objectives

To gain more insight and get more data to find the relationship, the following questions have to be addressed:

1. To examine what determines customer behavior;
2. To analyze what are the attributes that influence consumer making decision;
3. To find out the relationships among gender and trend in spending;
4. To compare difference consumer behavior from five parts of consumer behavior

1.4 Design/Methodology/Approach:

Gender can be a single point. We can get kinds of consumer behavior for male and female through a questionnaire for a shorter time. Thus, the cross-sectional study design was used to design this research. Online questionnaire was applied to this study research and four -point attitudinal Likert scale was applied to describe respondents' attitude. This study aimed to all undergraduates in Wenzhou-Kean University in Zhejiang Province. Z-test is a type of inferential statistics that assess whether there are any statistically significant differences among sets of means of observed variables.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is the study that contains all activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and service, all consumers and consumer buying behavior. And consumer behavior is formed by many marketing factors that are very important for any marketing-management team in any business or any organization which deals in direct to consumers (Barmola and Srivastava, 2010) and many personal factors, such as psychology, society, culture, and economic development (Gajjar, 2013). Men and women depict different types of behavior at various situations due to their different upbringing and socialization along with various other social, biological and psychological factors (Bakshi, 2012). The consumer is playing three distinct roles of user, payer and buyer in consumer behavior study, which is based on consumer buying behavior (Jayaraj, 2017). Based on these three roles, consumer makes different purchase decisions. The marketers try to understand the actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the underlying motives, and they want to know what makes customer make buying decision and what difference of consumer behavior between genders.

2.2. Consumer Buying Behavior

Consumer buying behavior refers to consumers' attitude, preference, intention and choice when purchasing products or services. These behaviors are related to consumers' behavior in the market. The purchase decision is influenced by many factors including personal, psychological and social factors (Suroto *et al.*, 2013). Personal factors are susceptible to demographic factors such as gender, profession and culture. Psychological factors refer to the perception and attitude of customers. Customer behavior is explained from a personal perspective. Social psychologists have identified the need to belong as one of the basic human needs (Bhattacharya and Glynn, 1995), so customers are easy to be influenced by surrounding people and social trend as they want to be consistent with the others to get a sense of belonging. Social factors depend on income, social class and education level. "Consumer buying behavior is the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services for the satisfaction of their wants" (Ramya and Mohamed, 2016). There are different processes involved in consumer behavior. And man and woman have different upbringing and socialization along with various other social, biological and psychological factors (Bakshi, 2012). Initially, the consumer tries to find their needs and make information search about products. Then they choose products due to their brands and the service provides for the satisfaction of their wants. Lastly, the consumer analyzes his decision about the commodities he consumes and decides whether returning the commodities (Rani, 2014). Marketers can gain more knowledge about their consumer by understanding consumer buying behavior. Based on more knowledge, marketers create more suitable marketing strategies for their target consumers (Bakshi, 2012). In today's increasingly competitive world, where many brands sell the same products, consumers have a wide range of choices and many different factors influence their buying behavior (Kumar and Babu, 2014). Gender is a very significant point influence their buying behavior.

2.2.1. Product Needs

Some external stimuli can make consumer realizes that there are some differences between their actual state and ideal or desired state (Jisana, 2014). During this step, consumers realize they have unfulfilled needs or wants. These needs can be divided into two kinds---immediate need and existing long-term consideration. The problem identification framework suggests that new or routine product purchases through existing dissatisfaction (with the current product) or potential satisfaction (with the new product) can result in a difference between the expected and actual state (Punj and Srinivasan, 1992). The dissatisfactions for current products result in immediate need and exiting long-term consideration. Men tend to purchase the product when they need this product. It's a stronger factor for woman's purchasing decision to think about whether the purchase can be used again and again over time. They think about the product although they don't need it, so their needs often come from long-term considerations (Bakshi, 2012). Women feel proud of themselves on getting the best products at the best prices. Marketers have greatly understood this feeling by making selective deals that provide a sense of accomplishment to a woman's shopping experience. Men buy products just for immediate need, not for the best sales. They only buy what they need, despite the deals offered.

H1. Males have more immediate needs for daily goods than females.

2.2.2. Information search

Consumers search for more knowledge form their environment to solve the recognized problem (Solomon *et al.*, 2010). The study said there are no sex differences in search frequency for either self-relevant or other-relevant information (Hupfer and Detlor, 2006). People have the option to search by image content, keyword, or group and the numbers of searches about a product they do are the same. During the typical information search, the consumer determines the alternatives and then, ascertains the characteristics of each alternative. The reader can see a problem here about products. The extent to which a consumer searches for information is the same. However, in life, female makes a more detailed search for product information than male in generally. Men will tend to go to the most salient cue while women will tend to comprehend all information available. However, they have the same patience in information search for some products. (Meyers and Maheswaran, 1991).

H2. Male and Female have the same search frequency about daily goods.

2.2.3. Brand Feature

After the information is gathered, it is evaluated against a consumer's needs, wants, preferences, and financial resources available for purchase. Consumers evaluate their available alternatives, and they will create their own evoke set including brands which are already in their minds. Men emphasize instrumental aspects, such as functional and socially conspicuous utilities when forming a single brand preference, but women like purchasing low-involvement-level products (Friedmann and Lowengart, 2019). In other words, males like purchasing brand products can present their social statue, such as suits, watches and phones. Females make a lot of routine purchase decisions that refer to buy routine products with low-involvement-level.

Therefore, men chose brand very carefully and prefer to purchase name brands. Companies often introduce new product features to differentiate their brands and gain a competitive advantage. They may use a new brand name to appeal to higher classes, which is a good strategy to meet men's needs.

H3. Men more emphasize products' socially conspicuous utilities

2.2.4. Service quality

There are more and more exciting gender differences that have been found to exist (Claes, 1999; Fisk and Stevens, 1993; Feingold, 1994). A study suggests that the affective components of service quality are a more valid predictor of customer behavioral intentions than is cognition in females. So, to raise female customers' behavioral intentions, marketers should focus more on improving their affective component of service quality than the cognition. Female customers have a higher relationship between the affective component of service quality and behavioral intentions than in male customers which reveals that "the affective components of service quality may be a more valid predictor of customer behavioral intentions in females than is in males" (Chiu and Wu, 2002). Females are easy to have emotional connection with people. When salesman provides good service that can make consumers feel happy, females may be more willing to purchase goods.

H4. The relationship between the affective component of service quality and behavioral intentions in female customers is higher than in males.

2.2.5. Returns

Consumer need to evaluate their decisions because they need to make sure their choices solve their problems and are not wrong. If returns become a hassle for the customer, the longevity or quality of the customer relationship may be impacted. Men take less time to return products instead of women spend much time on returning if they are dissatisfied for products or service. A man usually takes about 21 days to return an item on an average, but a woman takes an average of a month to return the item she had purchased. Research suggests that females not only wait longer to return a purchase but also return or replace half of the items bought (Bakshi, 2012). Females spend more time evaluating products and making decisions, so they have longer return time.

H5. Female consumers will spend more time on returning goods than male consumers.

2.3. Gender difference in consumer behavior

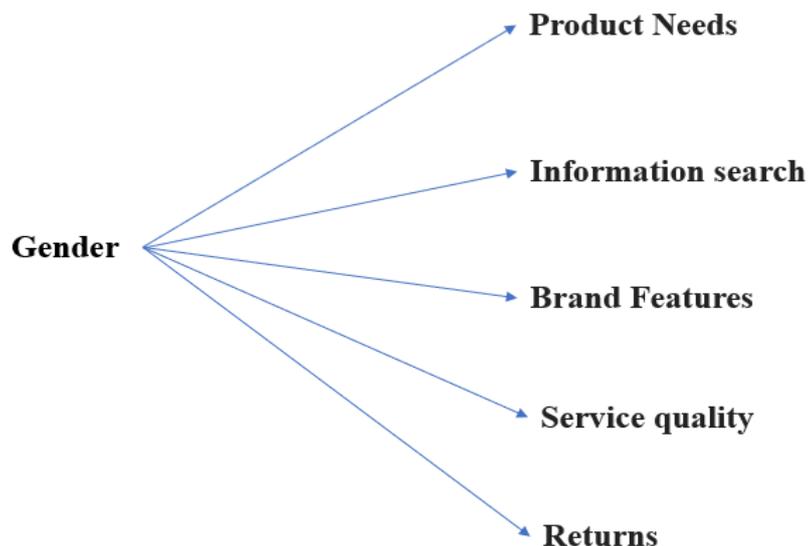
Gender is a factor impact buying behavior and has certain tendency. Men tend to follow a quick and easy process and develop stronger utilitarianism. They will make their decision based on data and facts. By contrast, women tend to hedonism, prefer to have the emotional decision of hunting. Men are more loyal to the brand. They tend to shop on mobile devices. Women focus on service quality. They want to feel important and think that online shopping is risky. Female consumers like shopping on Taobao at lunchtime. What's more, marketers need to invest in paid advertising because men prefer to buy products that appear in their searches.

Gender has been and continues to be one of the most common forms of segmentation used

by marketers in general and advertisers in particular. To successfully implement such a segmentation strategy marketers and advertisers need to understand how men and women process marketing information, judge products, and behave in the marketplace (Putrevu, 2001). From the research “Girrrl power and boyyyy nature: the past, present, and paradisaal future of consumer gender identity” written by (Kacen, 2000), we can know consumption has always been gendered.

Based on the above description, in every stage of the consumer purchase decision, the behavior depicted by men and women is different. Therefore, in order to gain competitive advantage, marketers have to look and capture this difference in the best possible manner. These differences exist in five parts---product needs, information search, brand features, service quality and returns. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model.

Figure 1. The conceptual model of the Impact of Gender on Consumer Buying Behavior



Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

Answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis is the central purpose of all research (Dulock, 1993). The questionnaire technique spent a short time on reaching the target respondents that is cost-efficient and a right way (Ong, 2012). In this study, quantitative research was applied. In quantitative research, the descriptive design tries to describe what is (Levith, 2011). Therefore, from the perspective of objectives, the questionnaire adopts a descriptive research design, converts concepts into indicators and interprets them with variables. In this study, data were collected by simple random sampling. Each respondent was chosen at random. They may be from different majors or years. As a result, every respondent

had the same probability of participating or not when using simple random sampling. The questionnaire contained two parts--- demographic profile about respondents' personal information and consumer behaviors including problem recognition, information search, brand features, service quality and returns. This study aimed to all undergraduates at Wenzhou-Kean University in Zhejiang Province. Gender can be a single point. We can get kinds of consumer behavior for male and female through a questionnaire for a shorter time. The Z-test is a type of inferential statistics that assess whether there are any statistically significant differences among sets of means of observed variables when the variances are known, and the sample size is large.

There were 60 respondents filled out this questionnaire. Table 2 shows the demographic information of the respondents. Except for gender and age, to know about consumer behavior, the research consisted of the respondents' living expense per month (purchasing power), products purchased and purchasing decision power. Most of respondents have 1000-3000 RMB living expense per month and spend the cost on food and costume. Self-demand, good service, moderate price and sales promotion have similar levels of impact on purchasing decisions. The second part adopts the seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) that showed the sensitivity of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Demographic information of the respondents (%)

Items	Characteristics in %
Gender	Male: 30% Female: 70%
Age	Below 20: 20% 21-25: 75% 26-30: 5% Over 30: 0%
Living expense per month	Below 1000 RMB: 5% 1000-2000 RMB: 40% 2001-3000 RMB: 40% Over 3000 RMB: 15%
Products purchased	Course Material: 14.56% Food: 44.66% Costume or make-up: 34.95% Computer games: 5.83%
Purchasing decision power	Self-demand: 34.5% Good service: 15.5% Moderate price: 29.58% Sales promotion: 20.42%

3.2 Reliability Test

For the questionnaire to be a good measuring instrument, efforts were taken to ensure that reliability was considered and reflected in the final version of the questionnaire. The test-retest reliability tests results showed the questionnaire had good stability. This interpretation of reliability is the correlation of test with itself. The number of test items, item inter-relatedness and dimensionality affects the value of alpha. The acceptable values of alpha are from 0.70 to 0.95. A low value of alpha could be due to a small number of questions, poor inter-relatedness between items or heterogeneous constructs (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Table 3 shows that values of information search, brand features, service quality and returns are acceptable. The value of alpha about product needs is a little lower than 0.70 that may be due to the description of problems about product needs is not accurate enough.

Table 2. Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Product Needs	0.692	5
Information Search	0.884	5
Brand Features	0.857	5
Service Quality	0.816	5
Returns	0.896	5

3.3 Correlation Test

The value of the Person correlation coefficient is between +1 and -1. The larger the absolute value of the coefficient, the stronger the relationship between the variables, where 1 is a total positive linear correlation, 0 is no linear correlation, and -1 is a total negative linear correlation. Then through comparing the p-value to the significance level, the correlation between variables can be measured as significant or not. Usually, a significance level (denoted as α or alpha) of 0.05 works well. When P-value less than or equal to α , the correlation is statistically significant. An α of 0.05 indicates that the risk of concluding that a correlation exists and doesn't mean correlation is 5%. The p-value tells you whether the correlation coefficient is significantly different from 0. A coefficient of 0 indicates that there is no linear relationship (Hemphill, 2003).

The strength of correlating of these five variables are weak. The correlations of five variables are not significant as they are above 0.05 level. This means these five variables don't influence each other. Every variable is independent step that can't be impacted by the previous step. This research doesn't investigate the relationships of these variables.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

	PN	IS	BF	SQ	R
Product Needs (PN)	1				
Information Search (IS)	0.117995	1			
Brand Features (BF)	0.200719	0.172114	1		
Service Quality (SQ)	-0.50756	-0.37272	-0.49249	1	
Returns (R)	-0.47743	-0.25772	-0.36718	0.611016	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results

Table 4. Structural model results

	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5
Z	1.959964	2.468234	3.380496	-6.105128	-4.33695
Mean Male	4.117647	4.188889	4.677778	3.055555556	3.022222
Female	3.861905	3.282051	3.780952	4.736585	4.57
P (Z<=z)	0.301021	0.013578	0.000724	1.03E-09	1.44E-05

$|z| > 1.96, p < 0.05$

$P \leq 0.05$, the possibility of the relationship is significant, $P > 0.05$, the possibility of the relationship is not significant

Table 5. Summary of hypotheses testing results

No	Hypothesis	Results
1	Male have more immediate needs about daily goods than female	<i>Not Supported</i>
2	Male and Female consumers have the same search frequency about daily goods.	<i>Not Supported</i>
3	Brands show products' instrumental aspects are more popular for male	<i>Supported</i>
4	The relationship between the affective component of service quality and behavioral intentions in female customers is higher than in males.	<i>Supported</i>
5	Female will spend more time on returning goods than male.	<i>Supported</i>

4. Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 describes the relations among each construct. It shows that there is no significant difference between male and female consumer's ($p > 0.05$). Thus, gender doesn't affect products need. H1 is not accepted. The result shows the search frequency of male and female is different, so H2 is rejected ($p < 0.05$). The mean value of male respondents is larger than the female mean value. Gender has a significant effect on the brand features. Thus, Male pay more attention to the brand than female and H3 is supported ($p < 0.05$, Male mean > female mean). In addition, there are more women think that the affective components of service quality more influences customer behavioral intentions than is cognition, so H4 is supported ($p < 0.05$, Male mean < female mean). Further, more female consumers think they spend much time on returning goods ($p < 0.05$, male mean < female mean), so H5 is supported.

Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Discussions

Men and women really do have a fundamentally different set of characteristics that are firmly entrenched. Women show more sensitivity, warmth and apprehension than men in their lives, but it varies from location and context and is influenced by various social and cultural factors. In contrast, men are more likely to be emotional stability, dominant and conscious. Men and women approach problems with similar goals but different perspectives. Women care about how a problem is solved- they share and discuss the problem. For men, solving a problem shows that they are capable (Bakshi, 2012).

It becomes a tendency for modern human beings to gratify their immediate needs in spite of the future consequences of immediate consumption (Bos and Ridder, 2006). It is a widespread phenomenon for both women and men to focus on immediate needs. Thus, the first hypothesis is not supported.

Women are gatherers and men are hunters. Women want more interaction during the process of shopping, while men want quick answers. Therefore, male and female consumers have different search frequencies. (Atkin *et al.*, 2007). Further, the extent a consumer searches for information depends on that individual's perception of the risk attached to the purchase. Individuals have different risks by the situation (Berman and Evans, 1998). Women generally have a greater sense of risk for a product because they spend more time and energy on the purchasing decision. Thus, female consumers have more search frequencies about a product than male consumers. The second hypothesis is not supported.

For women, the desired product is one that shows beauty and youth. The product needs to have beautiful color and unique design to appeal to women. For men, they tend to buy symbolic and self-expressive products. The result of this study shows that men emphasize products' socially conspicuous utilities such as social status when forming a single brand preference. Men pay more attention to the brand than women, so the third hypothesis is supported.

Marketers put more emphasis on improving the affective component of service quality in the services directed at people and providing intangible actions. And the result also shows that the affective components of service quality more influences customer behavioral intentions than is cognition for females. Women are more emotional and moved by good service, so the fourth hypothesis is supported.

According to Rappaport *et al.* (1993), the importance that men and women place on pleasure, health and convenience is different. Women are more likely to gain happiness from products, so they are willing to spend more time on returns when products are not suitable for them. They want to have satisfactory products rather than tolerating bad products.

5.2 Managerial Implications

This study compared consumer behavior between genders. The study of customer behavior shows that college students take a very important role (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997). It is a good-sized target with growing speed for marketers. The results of this research are indicative of college students' needs, attitudes, and perceptions and provide more direct and precise data about young consumers. This research may be replicated, improved or revised to make marketers know about consumer behavior to provide better goods and service.

According to different consumer behavior between genders, marketers and businesses can make appropriate marketing strategies with enough details. When marketers realize the trend of young consumers, they can adjust their marketing segmentation and strategy accordingly. Many consumer-related issues need to be dealt by the company, but the company's time is very valuable. The company investigate its important markets so that it can make enough profit to accomplish its goals. The gender has been a critical variable for marketing analysis along several dimensions (McMahan *et al.*, 2009). When marketers know about male often have immediate needs, they can develop a strategy for this phenomenon instead of promoting their products blindly. Advertising is very important for a product. Consumers' search frequency provides data on how to target advertising. Brand features and service quality are also key factors for a company to be successful.

We can draw inferences from the above discussion that gender is a very important factor among all the factors; it plays a very crucial role in purchase decisions. Women are more

internally focused, whereas men ought to be externally focused. Gender shapes different characteristics of female and male shopper. It has been suggested that male and female consumers demonstrate considerably different approaches in their decision making and purchasing behavior when shopping.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

There are three perspectives that show the limitations of this study. The first limitation is using a convenience sample of university students as respondents. This study has discussed the impact of gender on consumer behavior. China has a huge market and billions of consumers. The respondents of the survey contain Wenzhou-Kean University students. It reduces problems of heterogeneity. Further research may consider collecting data from more consumers from different classes and different age groups.

Second, there are still other consumer purchasing behaviors that are affected by genders, such as preference, online purchase and impulse purchase. Further research can have additional exploration and consider these variables to enhance and enrich the study.

Third, the generalizations of the findings might not work properly in the real market. Some cultural and political factors may affect the result. Further research can consider more consumers from different cultures to prove the research.

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Appendixes

Part 1: Profile

1. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
2. Grade
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
3. Which range does your living expense per month belong
 - Below 1000
 - 1000-2000
 - 2001-3000
 - 3001 and above
4. What are kinds of goods that students spend the most on:
 - Food
 - Course materials
 - Clothes
 - Games
 - Other choices
5. How many times do you return products per month
 - Zero
 - 1~2 times
 - ≥ 3 times
6. How many times do you purchase goods in Taobao
 - Zero
 - 1~2 times
 - 3~5 times
 - > 5 times

Part 2:

A. Problem recognition	Rating from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest)						
I have more immediate needs about daily products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I tend to make their purchasing decisions based on immediate needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Long-term considerations seem to play little part for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Long-term consideration is a stronger factor for my purchasing decision than instant satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Immediate needs are a common style in my purchasing decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B. Information Search							
There are no sex differences in search frequency for either self-relevant or other-relevant information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Male and female have the same search frequency before purchasing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Male search relevant information about products as many times as female do at a certain time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The search frequencies of Male and Female are the same	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Male and Female seek information about daily products using same search frequency	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C. Brand Features							
The brand name is an important point for me when making decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I pay attention to the brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I emphasize products' socially conspicuous utilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I emphasize the products' brand name when purchasing goods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The brand name is significant for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D. Service Quality							
The relationship between the affective component of service quality and behavioral intentions is higher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The affective components of service quality are a more valid predictor of customer behavioral intentions than is cognition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The affective components of service quality are more likely to impact customer behavioral intentions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The affective components of service quality more influences customer behavioral intentions than is cognition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is a high relationship between the affective component of service quality and behavioral intentions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E. Returns							
I will spend much time on returning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I take much time to return products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I devote much time to returning products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I prefer to take much time to return products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Time used to return products is long for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7