

# GENDER DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN STORY AND REALITY - A MARKETING APPROACH

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## Abstract:

*In history, we find constant preoccupations which highlight the woman, who has been, is and will be for a long time to come, far from being called equal to the man. We do not intend to follow this subject meticulously, but to come quickly to this day and age, in an attempt to prove that, although a miracle in its own way, women are currently discriminated, not only because they do not have the necessary weapons to defend themselves, but also because the woman allows herself to be discriminated against. It's like she's resigned herself!*

*That is why large companies have adapted their information programs. The advertising style, messages and media transmission, product design, store architecture, sales training and customer support policy are created to be specifically addressed to both sexes.*

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## 1. Introduction

Man or woman, the eternal question! Beings whose main characteristic is intelligence, are so similar and, at the same time, so different and opposite in order to exist through mutual attraction! Kant's words: "*However, only together they form the complete human being!*".

In 1991, the author John Gray concluded in his book "*Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*" what has always been known: the two sexes differ in perspective, motives, rationality and actions. The reasons for these differences continue to be sought and debated, and studies reflect similar results.

In the so-called emancipated part of the world, in developed countries or among people with enough financial resources to live at least decently, the woman is seen at a higher level than her ancestral role of midwife and as someone who was responsible for the household.

Although constantly discriminated, the Creator's plan seems different, with women outnumbering men. Going by the idea that one is given as much as he or she can take, we come to the conclusion that He is the one who made the woman both vulnerable and strong at the same time!

We are suggesting you a brief look at the evolved, civilized world! Here the woman and her behavior are the subject of constant debate. We chose some quotes that would take us to the economic and financial area, to money and their spending, to marketing, which has the female client in the center of attention.

Even as a pharaoh, Akhenaten observed with respect, "*When the radiance of a beautiful woman is stronger than that of the stars in the heavens, you cannot resist the influence of a woman!*" Coco Chanel also said: "*Where there is a dress, there is also a woman. If there is no woman, there is no dress!*". The following words are equally as true: "*Women are passionate about mathematics. They split their age in two, double the price of their clothes and always add five years to the age of their best friend.*" (Marcel Achard), "*When a woman has money she becomes independent of a man, but if a man has money, he becomes dependent on women.*" (Tiberiu Petre), "*The myth that a woman needs money is an invention of men without money!*" (Faina Ranevskaya).

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Today the woman is looking for a visible place and strives to change everything she thinks is wrong once she finds it! But even today, the conclusions are not encouraging at all: no woman is the president of the United States; In the view of religious extremists, the woman risks returning to the dark times of the past; The head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, failed to win in an attempt to impose parity between women and men in the positions of the executive Community, etc. In most parliaments in the world, women continue to be a minority, although this contradicts the idea that the parliament is the mirror of society. Women in leading political positions remain a rarity. That is why the double success of Sanna Marin, the head of the Finnish government, who achieved a performance not only as a woman, but also as a very young one (the youngest head of government in the world) is so resounding<sup>1</sup>.

Precisely through her ability to resist and sacrifice herself, the modern woman is a hope for the creation of a new political order. She is becoming a role model for young women around the world. UNESCO also notes some positive developments: in Asia, the Arab countries and in Latin America, women are the winners of the education system. Where they are allowed access to education, women have, on average, better qualifications, are more motivated and have greater social competence than men. These women want to get involved socially and politically. And where they benefit from equal rights to men, women take care that these rights do not remain a mere waste.

Even deeply macho politicians have understood that without women's votes they cannot win any elections. Women must be won over - with political ideas and candidates. Because women choose women, if they have a choice. In marketing, however, it is another story which is similar, if it is confirmed that the woman pays more.

## **2. Gender discrimination today. Shopping included**

According to the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD), the following forms of discrimination<sup>2</sup> are:

**Direct discrimination** - when a person receives less favorable treatment than another person who has been, is or could be in a comparable situation, on the basis of any discrimination criteria provided by the legislation in force.

**Indirect discrimination** - when a person or a group of persons are treated differently, in an equal situation, on the basis of two or more criteria of cumulative discrimination.

**Harassment** - any behavior that leads to the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment, based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, membership in a disadvantaged category, age, disability, refugee or asylum status or any other criteria.

**Victimization** - any adverse treatment, in response to a complaint or action in court or the competent institutions, regarding the violation of the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination.

**Disposition to discriminate (order to discriminate)** – it is also considered to be a form of discrimination and is an order sent by a person or a group of persons to another person or group of persons in order to discriminate.

Important information is found in specialized studies, and we keep in mind the following<sup>3</sup>:

- with age, the income gap between men and women increases;
- women may be discriminated because of pregnancy or maternity leave. Although it is a misdemeanor and it is sanctioned by labor inspectors, it is a reality that some candidates for

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<sup>1</sup> [www.dw.com/ro/comentariu-femeile-trebuie-să-fie-conștiente-de-puterea-lor/a-52675626](http://www.dw.com/ro/comentariu-femeile-trebuie-să-fie-conștiente-de-puterea-lor/a-52675626)

<sup>2</sup> <https://cncd.ro/formele-discriminarii>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hipo.ro/locuri-de-munca/vizualizareArticol/709/Discriminarea-de-gen-o-problema-actuala>

employment are required to present a pregnancy test or sign a commitment that they will not become pregnant or that they will not give birth during the validity of the individual work contract;

- the attitude of "blaming the harassed person" is found in 2/3 of Romanians. The case of the re-elected mayor is notorious, although he has a conviction for raping a minor. The inhabitants of the area blame the victim anyway, she is just a girl without "power";

- the majority of harassment victims (sexual or otherwise) are women. Most are young women, of whom a tiny percentage report the situation;

- in families with 3 or more children, the employment rate of women in the labor market decreases more than that of men.

**Gender discrimination is one of the forms of discrimination.** Along with age, political beliefs, race or religion, this is a globally recognized issue. The prevailing mentality is that the woman has the role of mother and housewife, and involvement in professional activities should be secondary.

Men and women have become a favorite target of marketing. Marketers know very well their buying and consuming behaviors and apply all the methods and techniques they have to sell something to them. Willingly or not even resorting to gender discrimination! It all starts with **the basic objectives of any merchant**: to attract buyers, to make them stay longer in the store, to influence their purchasing decisions and to turn them into returning customers<sup>1</sup>. But as customers are of different sexes, so are the approaches! Some scientists are concerned that discrimination and differential treatment have occurred. Although there are scientific demonstrations that show small physical differences between women's and men's brains and the way information is perceived, the researchers point out that they do not reflect the superiority of one of the genders<sup>2</sup>. Women are generally better at identifying and controlling emotions, and men are more task-oriented. Moreover, there is a multitude of similar gender-specific characteristics, despite the differences.

Traders make differences that are important as long as their products are created to be predominantly attractive or intended for one of the genres. The marketing messages, the advertising, the product features, the architecture of the store and all its arrangement, the prices charged ... these are all intended for the desired customer. Which can turn into the discriminated buyer.

The subconscious often makes decisions, because once the habit is installed, it is difficult to change. Human nature is built to withstand change. Traders know that many purchasing decisions are based on habit and therefore focus their efforts on:

- Initial stimulation of the need through promotional sales, coupons, discounts. On this logic significant sums are spent annually in an attempt to motivate buyers to purchase a pledge. People become vulnerable to marketing interventions, a fact recorded since 1980 by Professor Alan Andreasen. We understand better the concept of permission marketing developed by Seth Godin.

- The influence of third parties, as an approval from friends, colleagues or other consumers. Professor Jonah Berger has published a book called *"Contagious: Why Some Things are Catchy ..."* from which we note *"People often think that contagious products are just lucky. But it is not luck and it is not random. It's science."* And if people rely on someone's *"trustworthy"* recommendation, then marketers have turned to celebrities as credible spokespersons who can help them sell better.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://axi-card.ro/blog/card-de-credit/barbati-vs-femei-diferente-in-obiceiuri-si-decizii-de-shopping>

<sup>2</sup> Women have a denser corpus collosum, the portion of nerve tissue that connects the left side of the right side of the brain, so women use both sides of the brain to solve problems. Men use the left side of the brain more for this purpose. Men have a brain about 10% larger in size, but women have many more nerve endings and connections (white matter). Each uses different areas of the brain to perform tasks. Women use the larger and more organized part of the cerebral cortex while men rely on the larger portion of the gray matter in the left hemisphere of the brain.

The choice must be reliable, it is essential. If, for example, the image of the hair dyes from L'Oreal is the actress Eva Longoria, it's as if you think she uses the product and you buy it too, but it's hard to believe that she dyes her hair herself, at home. It seems unbelievable, however, that Andra, the Romanian singer, uses Garnier. The price is ... too low.

- Personal evaluation, which puts pressure on the individual's decision to choose one product over another. Sometimes, beyond the price being a determining factor, the person chooses the packaging or the method of payment.

### 3. Stereotypes

In developed countries, the role of women is more than 50% of both the total volume of purchases and the influence on the purchased goods. Studies published since 2017 by Bloomberg show that in the US these percentages had reached 85 and 95%, respectively. We find that, although numerically speaking women exceed the 50% threshold by only a few percent, they, by being willing to devote more time and much more attention to detail, dictate with authority what and how much is bought on the consumer goods market. A man quickly ends the buying process by choosing only the usable object that interests him, and the woman will choose only when she considers that she has chosen the perfect product, no matter how long it takes to find it.

Many studies have compared the behavior of a man and a woman in shopping. Their results, intensely exploited by marketers, show that women have a decisive role. It is distinguished by a different way of thinking from that of men, which she establishes from the moment she can make her own purchasing decisions and almost never changes it. The woman going shopping thinks the same at any age, it is a thought for life.

So, **the woman** and her way of behaving have become a favorite topic of research, revealing that she can be:

- **influencer** - plans, organizes, reveals her activities to everybody, considers herself an expert in the circle of friends;

- **natural hybrid** - more balanced, she is divided between spending and saving. She tends to opt for the purchase of classic products, which do not keep up with fashion, but are not old-fashioned either, but are more practical and safe. As a curiosity, she sometimes chooses to do strange shopping, inappropriate to her nature;

- **lover of essence** - for this woman shopping is a duty, a mission she has in the family, dictated by her social status;

- **cultural artist** - respectively the perfect shopper, invests time and energy to search, compare, solve situations until the perfect purchase; agile and always open to the new, she is involved and emotional;

- **visionary**, anticipator of future needs - buys food for the next week, makes plans about what she will cook, buys a dress for a possible future event or even ornaments for the upcoming Christmas because they are on sale.

The woman has the ability to prioritize shopping, to resort less often to the online shopping option and the misfortune of not resisting impulse shopping.

As a good manager of her own available time, on the one hand she throws away money, on the other hand she also finds solutions to save them, she establishes hierarchies and organizations regarding the necessity of products. Because she prefers to "see with her own eyes, to feel the products with her senses, to try on" she is not convinced that shopping on the internet is a good solution. Therefore, there have been applications on the smartphone to "help" her in this regard, where she is overtaken by men. In the end, she is a sure victim of the emotional impulse, giving in to an inviting showcase, price reductions or promotions.

By comparison, **the man going shopping** has a completely different behavior. They are much more pragmatic, simplistic and in a hurry to tick this activity off as well. When they buy

something for themselves they do it quickly, and when it is for the family (eg food) they look like lost dogs in a field looking for a way home. More likely they will also spend money on things with a shelf life or even expired, provided they resolve faster. They are not careful and they let themselves be guided by the sellers, whom they later blame, if necessary. Even if the bread is steaming and browned, as long as the list reads that you only need one, most men will not take the initiative to buy a second loaf.

Men pay no matter how much, they don't make comparisons (maybe only with tools and other technical things), they don't burden their minds with prices, they don't care about color, they don't take promotions into account, they don't hunt for discounts. For a man, success is about buying, not leaving the store empty-handed. They don't even like the company, they are much better off alone. Some studies show that they prefer to buy online.

Modern society is based on consumption as the engine of development. Studies clearly show who supports consumption and who "*falls victim*" faster. This way we can easily understand why a woman becomes a target for marketers, taking full advantage of her strengths and weaknesses. And not out of respect, but out of pure interest!

As an example of situational awareness, we choose the LinkedIn platform<sup>1</sup>: „*At LinkedIn, we prohibit any discrimination on our platform. Our advertising policies clearly state what we do "... and that is not to permit ads that promote or contain discriminatory employment practices or denial of education, housing, or economic opportunity based on age, sex, religion, ethnicity, race, or sexual preference."* Ads which promote the refusal or restriction of fair and equal access to education, housing, credit or career opportunities shall be prohibited. "If an ad is marked as discriminatory, we will withdraw it immediately".

The European Parliament proposed in 2008 a Resolution on the influence of marketing and advertising on equality between men and women<sup>2</sup>. The proposal was based on 19 reasons. We present them grouped around three ideas: society, stereotypes, marketing.

#### **Society, because:**

- socialization (in school, family, socio-cultural environment) is a process that forms the identity, values, beliefs and attitudes that give the person a place and a role in the society in which they develop. Identification is a fundamental concept for understanding the way this process takes place;

- more efforts should be made to promote the reasonable and responsible use of new technologies at school and in families from an early age;

- society as a whole must strive to avoid the reproduction of gender stereotypes; whereas the responsibility for these efforts must lie with all parties;

- obstacles which stay in the way of transmitting a positive image of men and women in all social situations must be removed;

- children are a very vulnerable group, they trust not only in authority, but also in the characters from myths, TV shows, illustrated books, including teaching materials, video games, toy commercials, etc .; whereas children learn by imitation and repetition of recent experiences;

#### **Gender stereotypes, because:**

- they can contribute to the development of behaviors that are also vectors of identification;

- those in advertising influence individual development and emphasize that a person's gender dictates what is possible and what is not; these stereotypes limit women, men, girls and boys to a highly simplified image, reducing people to predetermined and artificial roles, often degrading, humiliating and schematic for both genders; thus they reflect the unequal

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/help/lms/answer/97383/discriminarea-la-directionarea-reclamelor?lang=ro>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2008-0199+0+DOC+XML+V0//RO>

distribution of power between the sexes; not only do they reduce people to different predetermined roles, but they also exclude those who do not correspond to the norm;

- they must be fought against at all levels of society, in order to encourage equality and cooperation between women and men in both the private and public spheres;

- from the earliest years of children's socialization, their spread can contribute to gender discrimination, which has a major effect on continuing inequalities between women and men throughout life, as well as the emergence of gender clichés;

- they are counterproductive and contribute to a division of occupations in the labor market according to gender criteria, a labor market in which women generally earn less;

#### **Marketing and advertising, because:**

- advertising that transmits discriminatory and / or degrading messages from a gender perspective, as well as all kinds of gender stereotypes, is an obstacle to the realization of a modern and egalitarian society;

- the nature of advertising accentuates this negative impact, the message being constantly repeated and reproduced;

- they create - and not just reflect – culture. Moreover, our gender concepts are social constructions, influenced by advertising messages;

- advertising is a component of the market economy and, due to its ubiquity, it has a considerable impact on public behavior and the formation of public opinion;

- advertising often presents a caricature of the lives of men and women;

- gender discrimination in the media is still widespread; whereas gender stereotypes disseminated through advertising and the media can be considered part of this discrimination;

- advertising through different types of media is ubiquitous in everyday life; whereas, regardless of age or gender, we are exposed to commercial breaks in everyday TV programs as well as other types of advertising; whereas it is extremely important that media advertising comply with a number of mandatory ethical and / or legal rules that prevent the communication of gender stereotypes and discrimination based on sex, as well as incitement to violence and sexism; whereas the legislation in many Member States is inadequate and the codes of ethics applicable to advertising are not respected or sometimes do not exist;

- Responsible advertising can positively influence society's perceptions of 'body image', 'gender roles' and 'normality', as advertising can be a powerful tool for changing and combating stereotypes.

#### **4. „The Pink Tax”**

In terms of consumption, women are a distinct segment, more active and more frequent. Thus, for them there is a wider variety of products, models and shapes, which leads to the idea that in marketing, in setting the price, in advertising, genres are treated differently. Sometimes, differences also appear because women's products would be a little more expensive, starting from a higher consumption, but the logic is based on stereotypes about both women and men.

"The Pink Tax", the addition to the price for products for women, is no longer a novelty, and the name comes from the color in which, traditionally, manufacturers color or package women's products. All over the world, women end up spending more money than men on personal care products, lingerie, clothes, as well as services such as haircuts and dry cleaning.

Many marketers believe that women tend to be more willing to pay more than men, supporting the idea that they accept higher prices, are more "price elastic" when they appreciate the quality, style, durability of a product, etc. On the other hand, critics of the "pink tax" believe that it induces gender-based economic discrimination, that it marginalizes and degrades women, assuming that they are so easily influenced that they will buy products at higher prices than identical ones, marketed for men.

Constantly concerned about the market, the Americans are the ones who noticed the price differences between the products intended for the two genres. Comparing prices for 800 different products, New York authorities found that in 42% of cases, women paid more than men for the same product or service. Then it was noticed that the prices were even 50% higher for the female version of the same product. Meaning that women pay more even though they have lower wages than men. Also, women pay more throughout their lives, because toys for girls cost more, just as products for older women are more expensive than for older men.

For companies, women and men are diametrically opposed consumers, with certain products (eg shower gel shampoo) being very common in men's product portfolios, but lacking in those for women. In the latter case, there are shampoos for volume, color, shine, thick hair, thin hair, degraded hair, blond hair - each requires different recipes, product research and development, other production processes, other packaging designs, other marketing efforts, another advertisement and it all costs money. Moreover, women are usually looking for newer and better versions of the products.

Another reason for higher prices for women arises from the difference in expectations, such as looking younger, which supports the creation of products that meet this need, to the detriment of a higher price.

While individual price differences are rarely more than a few cents, the cumulative effect of the pink tax can cost women thousands of dollars over their lifetime.

## 5. Conclusions

The general perspective suggests that gender discrimination exists in general and especially in marketing. Its authors are aware of their actions. Although various steps have been taken to combat it, the results are far from satisfactory. We are witnessing a segregation both horizontally and vertically. Awareness of this situation is an emergency because humanity is based on women.

The woman is the creator, but the action of modeling has always been in the hands of men!

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