

THE IMPACT OF TATTOOS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND PURCHASING DECISIONS: AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

DÖVMELERİN TÜKETİCİ DAVRANIŞLARI VE SATIN ALMA KARARLARI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ ÜZERİNE DENEYSSEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the effects of tattoos, which have become increasingly widespread and undergone changes in meaning, on potential consumers through various variables (whether the researcher has a tattoo, the region where they live, whether the participant has a tattoo) and to provide brand managers with enlightening information, particularly when making decisions related to employees. The researchers conducted live applications with one tattooed and one non-tattooed researcher. They conducted interviews with 260 participants in two different locations. They tested the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects of tattoos on participants through both a marketing research approach and a product (book) shopping scenario. The findings indicate that tattoos have become socially internalized and widespread. Additionally, while the researchers' possession of a tattoo slightly affects participants' thoughts, it may lead to an average of 43% lower offers from buyers. Tattoo ownership triggers qualitative concepts such as transaction quality rather than quantitative ones like price. Tattooed participants promised to donate 49% more to a charity. On the other hand, the nature of the product in purchases can alter the effects of tattoos. Marketing strategists should consider these differences, particularly when determining employees who will communicate with customers.

Keywords: Tattoo, Consumer Behavior, Price Offer, Sales Personnel, Marketing Research

JEL Classification: M31

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Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı günümüzde giderek yaygınlaşan ve anlam değişimine uğrayan dövmelemin potansiyel tüketiciler üzerindeki etkilerini farklı değişkenler (araştırmacının dövmesinin olup olmaması, yaşanılan bölge, katılımcının dövmesinin olup olmaması) üzerinden anlamak ve marka yöneticilerine özellikle çalışanlarla ilgili kararlar alırken aydınlatıcı bilgiler sunabilmektir. Araştırmacılar bir dövmele bir de dövmesiz olarak canlı bir şekilde uygulama yapmıştır. Araştırmacılar iki ayrı lokasyonda 260 katılımcıyla görüşmeler yapmış, dövmelemin katılımcıların üzerindeki düşünsel, duygusal ve davranışsal düzeyde etkilerini hem bir pazarlama araştırması hem de ürün (kitap) alışveriş senaryosu üzerinden sınımıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre dövmelemin toplumsal olarak içselleşip yaygınlaştığı anlaşılmıştır. Bununla birlikte araştırmacıların dövmele sahip olması katılımcıların düşünceleri üzerinde az da olsa bir etkiye sahip gözükmekte, alıcıların ortalama olarak %43 daha düşük teklifler vermelerine de neden olabilmektedir. Dövme sahipliği fiyat gibi niceliksel kavramlardan daha çok işlem kalitesi gibi niteliksel kavramları tetiklemektedir. Dövmeleli katılımcılar bir hayır kurumuna daha yüksek (%49) bağışlar yapmayı vaad etmişlerdir. Diğer yandan alışverişlerdeki ürünün niteliği dövmelemin etkilerini değiştirebilmektedir. Bu farklılıkların pazarlama stratejistleri tarafından dikkate alınması, özellikle müşterilerle iletişime geçecek çalışanların belirlenmesinde yararlar sağlayabilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dövme, Tüketici Davranışları, Fiyat Teklifi, Satış Personeli, Pazarlama Araştırması
JEL Sınıflandırması: M31

1.Introduction

Recently, the number of people getting tattoos has significantly increased, and societal perceptions of tattoos have changed. For marketers who closely monitor societal perceptions and values, understanding the shifts and dynamics in the phenomenon of tattoos is crucial. However, the research literature on tattoos and stigma is limited, with only a few studies attempting to understand attitudes toward tattoos and their origins (Burgess & Clark, 2010). This research aims to address this gap.

In recent years, tattoos have rapidly evolved from their historical religious and malevolent connotations to becoming a fashion object. Due to this rapid transformation, studies on tattoos need to be updated quickly. Moreover, most existing research is conducted among a small, specific sample group, such as students, and often uses visual objects (photos). Additionally, these studies typically ask about perceptions or rely on predicting the feelings and thoughts of others (customers). No experimental research on this topic has been found. Despite these significant limitations, there is a need for different and new research. Therefore, this study examines various variables tested individually in other studies within the literature but together in a relatively large and randomly selected sample group. Examining whether the researcher has a tattoo is one of the most unique aspects of this research. When the researcher is considered a representative of the company (such as a market researcher, salesperson, customer representative, etc.), the presence of a tattoo can significantly inform marketing strategies by revealing its impact on participants (customers).

The study uses two charities and three types of books (economics, nutrition, comedy) to test whether the content relates to tattoos. Thus, the topic examined in one or two previous studies is tested using different tools. Considering whether participants (buyers/customers) have tattoos in conjunction with other variables allows a broad examination of perceptions surrounding tattoos. None of the studies mentioned in the literature review considered this variable. Additionally, this research

was conducted with live and real researchers/surveyors rather than visual objects, with the same researcher conducting both tattooed and non-tattooed measurements, ensuring “*ceteris paribus*.” This approach is believed to increase the accuracy of the study. Considering that the areas where people live reflect their income levels and lifestyles, conducting the study in two different districts by the same researchers is another distinguishing feature of the research. Kadıköy is considered wealthier and more liberal, while Ümraniye is considered lower-income and conservative. Therefore, it is possible to assume that these two districts collectively provide insights into Istanbul, and Istanbul, in turn, offers a reflection of Turkey as a whole.

In summary, this study uniquely addresses the increasingly popular topic of tattoos in society, providing insights marketers should consider. It also allows for some inferences about the relationship between the physical characteristics of researchers or buyers and consumer behavior.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition Of Tattoos and Reasons for Their Use

A tattoo can be defined as designs and shapes created by injecting pigments obtained naturally or artificially into the skin (Çoruhlu, 2015, p. 40). However, the meaning of tattoos is not limited to merely inscribing a simple image on the body. Initially, tattoos were predominantly symbols of allegiance and belonging to a belief or group. Today, they are more commonly used to concretize personal experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires (Yücel & Çevik, 2015, p. 17). Indeed, with globalization threatening collective structures such as ethnic and national identities, the motivations for getting tattoos have also begun to change. A study conducted by Forbes (2001) with university students found that aesthetic and personal reasons were more influential than social ones in the motivation to get tattoos and piercings (Yücel & Çevik, 2015, p. 24).

The reasons why an individual might get a tattoo include psychological factors such as aesthetic concerns, the desire to be different, demonstrating strength or protest, pleasure, culture, identity, belonging, and status, as well as purposes like symbolizing rebirth or keeping the memory of a lost person alive through an object (tattoo) (Demirbaş & Bulut, 2018, p. 38). Sociologically, according to Levi-Strauss (1963: 257; 2012: 368), tattoos also engrave a group’s traditions and philosophies (society) into the mind. On the other hand, in today’s culture that exalts individuality, tattoos have integrated into consumer society, expressing both differences and similarities, deviations and mainstream discourses, and offering individuals the opportunity to (re)present themselves (Patterson, 2018: 6). Tattoos can be considered reflections of the answers to questions like “Who am I, and who will I be according to myself and others?” They also help maintain the sense of internal consistency and historical continuity that Erikson (1968) describes, allowing a person to accept their identity, experiences, and the emotions attached to those experiences (Yücel & Çevik, 2015, p. 18). This also means that tattooed individuals may be judged based on their personalities, character flaws, behaviors, and intelligence, implying that getting a tattoo can affect social status and alter role expectations (Hilliker, 2012, p. 62).

“In today’s industrialized and capitalist consumer culture, ‘tattooing’ and ‘tattoo artistry’ have become tools that provoke many psychopathological ‘paraphilia’ behaviors such as ‘exhibitionism,’ ‘voyeurism,’ ‘fetishism,’ and particularly ‘body fetishism.’ A ‘tattooed female foot’ wearing a product in a shoe advertisement, a ‘tattooed female shoulder’ in a clothing advertisement, or a ‘tattooed female waist’ in a swimwear advertisement, as well as the use of a ‘muscular male body’ covered in tattoos in various other product advertisements, regardless of their relevance to the product, provoke body fetishism in people. This provocation of ‘body fetishism’ dialectically leads to the increasing prevalence of tattooing behavior” (Çerikan & Alanko, 2016, p. 190).

Examining the historical development and significance of tattoos can help us understand how the meanings associated with them have developed today.

2.2. Historical Development of Tattoos

“Tattoos,” with a history as old as humanity itself, have existed for thousands of years in various forms across almost every geography and culture in the world, including Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Northern and Central Europe, Anatolia, Asia, Oceania, Japan, and America, among others (Çerikan & Alanko, 2016, p. 166). According to Ülken (1969, p. 71), tattoos developed in primitive societies to engrave totem images onto various parts of the face and body, linked to religious beliefs. Throughout history, tattoos have been perceived in numerous ways: as a “totem” of a particular tribe, as a “talisman” to protect individuals from evil, as a “mark of shame” on the foreheads of criminals, as a “certificate of ownership” indicating the purchase of enslaved people, as a “mark of nobility” for the upper classes, as a “badge of heroism” for valiant warriors, as a “symbol of oddity” for circus clowns, as “decoration” for flirtatious sailors, or as a “sub-identity symbol” for youth movements. In modern industrial society, tattoos predominantly serve the function of “body decoration,” sustaining their presence as part of the fashion and beauty industry (Çerikan & Alanko, 2016, p. 166).

The mummy named Ötzi, found in the Alps and estimated to have lived around 3250 BC, had a total of 61 tattoos in various locations, mainly around joints and acupuncture points, indicating that tattoos might have been used for therapeutic purposes (Fahlander, 2015, p. 53). In Mesopotamia, iron stamps dating back to 3000 BC suggest that tattoos were primarily used in Assyria and Babylon to mark the ownership of enslaved people, animals, and temple offerings or as a sign of punishment (Frahm, 2010, pp. 130-132). The Egyptians, who used tattoos for purposes such as distinguishing enslaved people and criminals, religious mysticism, magic, therapy, and decoration, expanded the boundaries of tattooing significantly, especially starting from the III and IV dynasties. Tattoos spread to China, Scotland, Japan, Kamchatka, and Northern Siberia through Crete and Greece, facilitated by the Egyptians (Çoruhlu, 2015, p. 51).

According to Çerikan and Alanko (2016: 176), the historian Herodotus (484-425 BCE) stated that in the ancient Greek world, tattooing, much like in Egypt and Mesopotamia, was primarily used as a mark of humiliation and punishment for enslaved people, criminals, and prisoners of war (Herodotus, 2011, p. 169). In his work “Laws,” Plato bears witness to the tradition of tattooing enslaved people

and criminals in the Greek world with the statement, “If anyone is caught showing disrespect to the sacred if they are a slave or a foreigner, their crime shall be written on their hands and faces” (quoted in Çerikan and Alanko, 2016: 178 from (Jones, 1987, p. 148). On the other hand, Herodotus mentioned that the Thracians admired tattoos and considered them a mark of nobility (Herodotus, 2011, p. 383). Tattooing was explicitly prohibited in Judaism and banned in Christianity after the Middle Ages, and while not explicitly forbidden in Islam, it has generally been disapproved based on interpretations (Çerikan & Alanko, 2016, p. 184). Tattooing nearly disappeared in the West until the 19th century, especially after the Normans invaded Britain in the 11th century and humiliated tattooed individuals (DeMello, 2000). The forgotten art of tattooing began to resurface in the West with James Cook, who brought two tattooed natives from Tahiti to England after discovering Tahiti at the end of the 1700s. The word “tattoo” also originates from Tahiti. Generally considered a practice of the lower classes, tattooing became more prevalent among soldiers during World War II. During that period, tattoos were believed to carry diseases and were banned in some countries (Perzanowski, 2013, p. 521). In the 1960s, tattoos began to acquire new meanings, first through artistic movements and later through social movements in the 1970s (cited by Çerikan and Alanko, 2016: 187 from (Perzanowski, 2013, p. 522). Research on the changing role of tattoos in life and their impact on the workplace is discussed below.

2.3. Research on Tattoos

In a quantitative study conducted among university students, Hilliker (2012) found no significant differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals’ perceptions of intelligence, rebelliousness, or creativity. Resenhoef et al. (2008) found that non-tattooed individuals were perceived as more fashionable, honest, and understanding but less creative. According to studies by Heywood et al. (2012) and Manuel and Retzlaff (2002), tattooed individuals were more likely to consume alcohol, serve time in prison, and face problems in school. Similarly, many studies, such as those by Forbes (2001), Carroll et al. (2002), Roberts and Ryan (2002), Brooks et al. (2003), Laumann and Derick (2006), and Heywood et al. (2012), have yielded results that justify negative perceptions of tattoos. However, most of these studies face significant limitations, such as the conflation of tattoos with piercings, a disregard for the location and amount of tattoos, or the selection of particular sample groups (Yücel, 2015, p. 2). Historical differences between studies might also be considered influential. Indeed, as tattoos have become more popular, especially among young people in recent years (Laumann & Derick, 2006), perceptions of tattoos have changed, transforming tattoos into a fashion phenomenon (Totten et al., 2009). According to Arndt and Glassman (2016, p. 50), tattooed individuals in the United States rose from 1% in the 1970s to 24% in the early 2000s. As of 2021, according to the Statista Research Department, the percentage of people with tattoos in the United States was 26%, with 17% having more than one tattoo (Statista, 2021). As older people see tattoos more frequently on their children, grandchildren, and others around them, they are likely to reduce their adverse reactions to tattoos (Arndt & Glassman, 2012, p. 67). Indeed, a detailed study by Coleman et al. (2017) revealed that most tattooed individuals reported not experiencing prejudice

or discrimination due to their tattoos. According to the authors, tattoos are becoming more socially accepted, even in traditionally conservative professions.

In a study using visual models, Swami and Furnham (2007) found that tattooed women were perceived more negatively; if a woman has a tattoo, she is seen as less attractive and believed to behave more liberally in terms of morality. Similar results were found by Hawkes et al. (2004). In another study, Burgess and Clark (2010) investigated the perception of two different types of tattoos—one that could be described as “cute” (colorful designs, cute animals, etc.) and another that was darker and more intense. They found that “cute” design tattoos were perceived as more friendly, while the others were seen as more aggressive (Burgess & Clark, 2010). In a relatively old study conducted among university students, men and women exhibited more negative attitudes toward a woman with a visible tattoo than other women (Hawkes et al., 2004). Martin and Dula (2010) developed a scale called the Martin Stigma Against Tattoos Scale (MSATS) to measure the impact of tattoos on stigmatization and, contrary to previous research, found no difference in the perceptions of tattooed and non-tattooed students among university students.

Yücel (2015) found that those with tattoos had higher averages in self-management and cooperation scale surveys. In the same study, the author found no significant differences in temperament and character inventory scores according to the number of tattoos, the number of body areas tattooed, the likelihood of tattoos being visible while clothed, the presence of tattoos in sexual body areas, or the size of the largest tattoo. Much research on tattoos in the workplace has been conducted under two separate categories: employees and customers.

2.3.1. Research on Employees

According to French et al. (2019), at least five different previous studies have shown that tattooed candidates face significant challenges during the hiring process. However, the authors found no negative impact on tattooed employees’ employment or salary levels. In a study conducted in the restaurant industry, Brallier et al. (2011) found that managers preferred non-tattooed candidates. Similarly, Swanger (2006) reported that 81% of human resources managers in the hospitality industry had negative perceptions of tattoos. In a scenario study, Miller et al. (2009) described a highly educated but tattooed and pierced employee and asked university students whether they would work with this person. The results showed that even tattooed individuals preferred to work with non-tattooed people in jobs involving customer interaction and shared commissions.

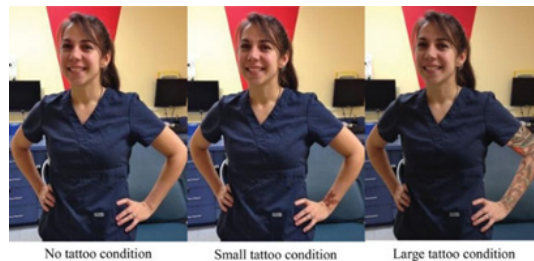
Timming (2017) designed a hypothetical job interview for the restaurant and nightclub industries, asking participants to evaluate candidates with tattoos based on photographs. The results indicated that having a tattoo positively influenced hiring for a nightclub but negatively for a restaurant. However, the negative effect for the bar was more substantial than the negative effect for the restaurant. The study did not assess the location and nature of the tattoos. In the second part of the study, 30-minute qualitative interviews were conducted with 16 individuals, yielding findings that supported the results of the first part of the study. This indicates that the impact of tattoos varies depending on the

brand, job, and context. Another finding was that the quality of the tattoo is significant. Larsen et al. (2014) conducted in-depth interviews with ten individuals, three of whom had tattoos, to analyze the changing perceptions and stigmatization of tattoos using qualitative research techniques. According to their findings, understanding the stigmatizing effects of tattoos, which were previously associated more with crime, requires a more subjective and context-dependent evaluation (such as considering the person and environment). The authors argue that tattoos, once carrying a stigma of deviance, have now transformed into a commodity stigma. The differences between deviance stigma and commodity stigma are as follows:

Deviance stigma was outside fashion and current trends, whereas commodity stigma is entirely fashionable and fits the consumption practice. Commodity stigma is impersonal, superficial, and tied to similar things, whereas deviance stigma is personal.

Arndt and Glassman (2016, p. 49) note, based on several studies (Laumann & Derick, 2006; Koch et al., 2005; Koch et al., 2010), that tattooed individuals are generally perceived as non-conformist and risk-takers, leading many managers to avoid hiring tattooed salespeople. Arndt et al. (2017) surveyed dentists in the United States to evaluate hiring decisions by showing them three photos of a candidate: one without tattoos, one with a small tattoo, and another with a vast tattoo (as seen in Figure 1). The results indicated that dentists were less likely to hire candidates with tattoos. However, this was not because they perceived the tattooed individual as irresponsible but because they believed their patients would not like the tattooed person, which could harm the brand image.

Figure 1. Sample survey photos



Source: Arndt, A. D., McCombs, G., Tolle, S. L., & Cox, C. (2017). Why are healthcare managers biased against hiring service providers with tattoos? *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 38(2), p.101.

According to the findings of Timming (2015), who conducted 25 in-depth interviews, hiring managers generally believe tattoos negatively impact recruitment. The degree of this bias can vary depending on the location of the tattoo on the body, the type of organization or industry, the proximity of the role to customers, and the type of tattoo. Additionally, the primary trigger for this bias is the perception of consumer expectations regarding tattoos. In other words, managers prefer not to hire tattooed individuals based on the assumption that consumers will be uncomfortable with tattoos.

In a study conducted in the United States, French et al. (2019) did not find any experimental evidence that tattooed individuals faced discrimination in hiring, wages, or earnings, regardless of the size

of their tattoos. This result was unexpected, given the findings of many previous studies. However, as the authors note, many social science researchers have demonstrated that inflated beliefs do not always align with reality in various social situations. These findings reflect this reality, suggesting that people may give exaggerated and inaccurate answers about their views on tattoos. According to the authors, another explanation for the inconsistency could be that tattoo discrimination is masked within the data or limited to specific workplace sectors and types (French et al., 2019, p. 19).

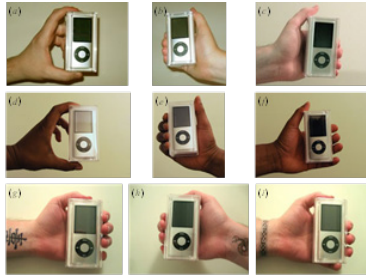
In a survey study conducted by Flanagan and Lewis (2019) with 446 participants across different sectors, their findings suggest that visible tattoos are becoming increasingly common in workplaces. Although there is still a perception gap between tattooed and non-tattooed employees, attitudes are changing, and negative judgments toward tattooed employees are decreasing (Flanagan & Lewis, 2019). Supporting this data, Tews and Stafford (2019) did not find any inappropriate behavior related to tattooed employees in the workplace. However, they did note that as the number and intensity of tattoos increased, instances of inappropriate behavior also increased. Ruggs and Hebl (2022) also observed complex dynamics related to tattooed employees in the workplace. On the other hand, it is also helpful to consider research that examines how customers perceive tattoos.

2.3.2. Research on Customer Perceptions of Tattoos

Employees' appearance is significant in terms of customer satisfaction or, in other words, meeting customer expectations. Indeed, Parasuraman et al. (1991, p. 448), who developed the Servqual scale, one of the most widely used scales for measuring service quality worldwide, included this concept in their scale as they consider it highly significant. This concept is generally accepted in interactions with employees, but employees' appearance is significant for potential customers without prior interaction experience (Dean, 2010, p. 296). For example, Shaoa et al. (2004) found that appropriate attire for employees, particularly women, in the banking sector increased customers' perceptions of service quality and their intention to repurchase. Luoh and Tsaur (2009) also found in their study with 480 participants in the restaurant industry that the physical attractiveness of waitstaff increased customers' perceptions of service quality and their feelings of trust. Dean (2010), in a survey study with 299 participants, revealed a significant difference in negative attitudes toward tattooed individuals in white-collar and blue-collar professions. Judgment-based stigmatization is much more common in white-collar jobs. This is because blue-collar jobs are generally less professional and more rigid. Customers in these jobs tend to accept employees as they are. Therefore, tattoos are more restricted in white-collar jobs. Another finding of the study was that older customers have more negative views about tattoos in the workplace. Older people tend to perceive tattooed individuals as less intelligent and responsible. On the other hand, the research results indicate that judgments against tattooed employees are unrelated to whether the person making the judgment (the customer) has a tattoo. Doleac and Stein (2013), in their study in the United States, compared the interest received by black, white, and tattooed sellers in online electronics ads through nine different ad visuals (a hand holding

a device), as shown in Figure 2. They found that black sellers received 18% and tattooed sellers 16% fewer offers. Additionally, the amounts offered were significantly lower.

Figure 2. Types of Advertisement Visuals



Source: Doleac, J. L., & Stein, L. C. (2013). The visible hand: Race and online market outcomes. *The Economic Journal*, 123(572), p. 474.

Arndt and Glassman (2016) conducted a study with 257 university students. In this study, participants were asked to imagine a sales representative for either real estate or automobiles. Different versions of this imagined representative were tested, including male-female, tattooed-non-tattooed, and masculine/feminine-tattooed versions. Participants were asked to imagine the tattoos on the sales representative's wrist. Some findings from this research are as follows (Arndt & Glassman, 2012, p. 65):

Tattooed individuals express more trust in tattooed salespeople and are more likely to express a willingness to cooperate with them. For sales representatives, visible tattoos do not pose a barrier in market segments where they are not negatively perceived and can even provide an advantage in building trust.

Customers may view feminine tattoos more positively. However, the appropriateness of a visible feminine tattoo depends on the industry context. For instance, in the real estate sector, salespeople with feminine tattoos may be trusted more than those with masculine tattoos.

The alignment between the meaning of the tattoo (feminine or masculine) and the gender of the person with the tattoo is important for customers; mismatches can obscure each other's effects. Therefore, it is crucial for salespeople to understand how their tattoos affect customer perceptions and to act accordingly.

Many people are uncomfortable working with salespeople who embody gendered concepts. Consequently, a highly feminine visible tattoo may be a high-risk strategy for a man due to gender-related issues. Karl et al. (2016) found in surveys conducted with 154 people in Mexico and 141 people in Turkey that uniforms worn by employees in the service sector positively affect customers. However, seven different unconventional appearances (facial piercings, tattoos, different hair colors, different hairstyles, sweatpants, torn or ripped clothing, and clothing that exposes the abdomen,

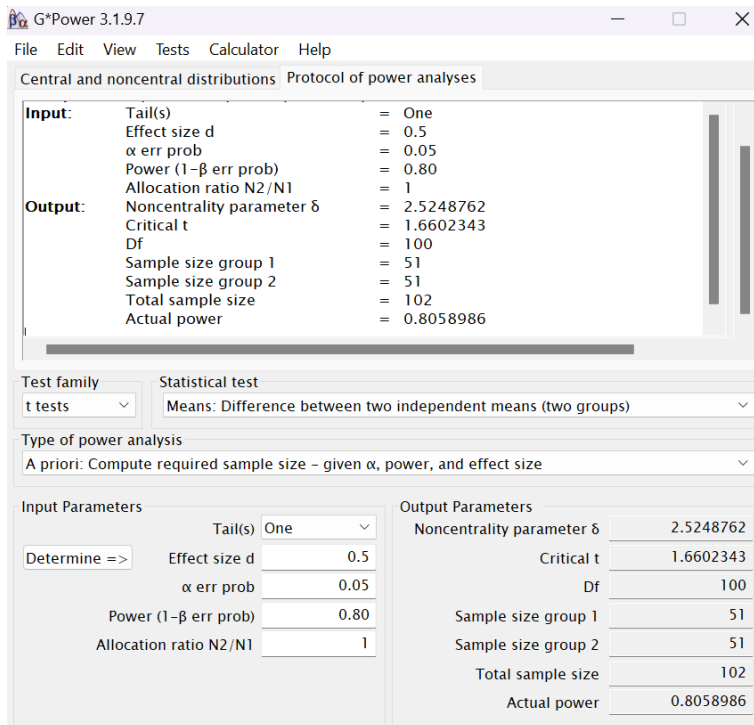
belly, or cleavage) were perceived negatively by customers. Bauman et al. (2016) investigated the effects of tattoos on customers across two professions (surgeon and auto mechanic) and gender. They conducted a survey with 354 participants by showing two versions of similar photos (one male and one female) with and without tattoos. Their findings indicate that tattooed employees were less preferred in both professions and gender groups. The gender of the customers did not affect these preferences.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample Size and Power of the Study

The sample size was calculated using Cohen’s (1998) approach and the G*Power program. The calculation table is provided in Figure 3. Accordingly, working with 51 people in each tattooed and non-tattooed group (102 people) would be sufficient.

Figure 3. G*Power Program sample size calculation










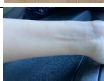

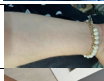
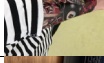







Additionally, if the study’s power and effect range are to be increased. The study conducted 260 interviews. Therefore, it was assumed that there were two groups of 130 participants each for comparison purposes. In this case, the sample power of the study exceeded 0.95 according to the G-Power analysis.

3.2. Research Method




Unlike previous research in the literature, an experimental application was conducted using real individuals, and the obtained results were analyzed statistically. For this purpose, a total of 9 researchers, consisting of 7 women and 2 men with existing tattoos, conducted the research with a total of 260 participants under three different scenarios: two separate conditions (one with visible tattoos and one with hidden tattoos) and two separate locations (120 participants in Ümraniye and 140 participants in Kadıköy). The researchers were students from the Departments of Health Management and Health Institution Management at the University of Health Sciences. They were provided detailed information about the research, and trial and test applications were conducted. Except for two, the researchers used temporary tattoos. The tattooed and non-tattooed images of the researchers are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Tattooed and non-tattooed images of the researchers

Researcher No	Tattooed	Non-tattooed
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		

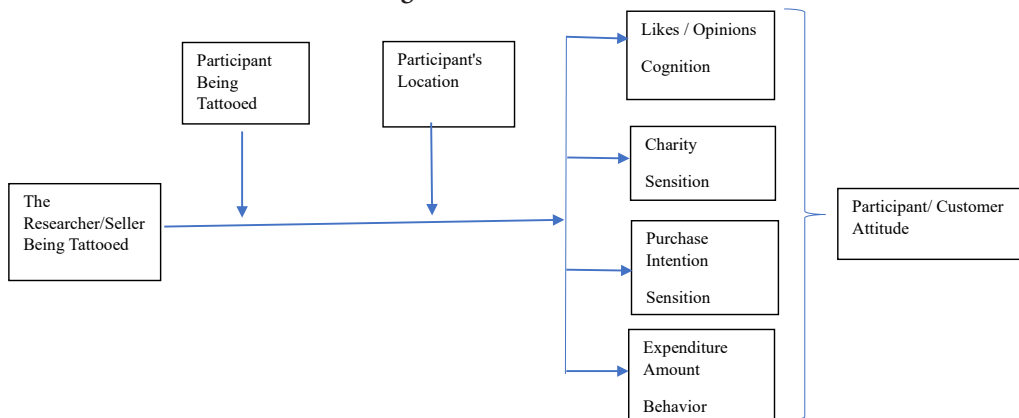
Different versions of the scenarios are available to examine the effects of tattoos in more detail according to the content of the study. The researchers approached randomly encountered individuals (participants) on the street. They asked if they would like to participate in a survey for an academic study on the topics mentioned in the versions below. No financial transactions were conducted as part of the research. After obtaining the participants' consent, the researchers processed the collected data into result tables. The questions posed to participants and the scenarios used are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Questions and Visuals Used in the Study

No	Statement	A	B	C	D	E
1A	What is your favorite movie genre/ preference?	Adventure	Comedy	Drama	Historical	Documentary
1B	Why does a customer or patient leave a hospital or doctor they are currently visiting and go to another hospital or doctor?	Lack of attention and courtesy	Quality of the service provided	High cost	Long appointment waiting times	Transportation issues
2	If you had the opportunity, would you consider donating to the following charities? If yes, how much would you consider donating?	Turkish Aeronautical Association (THK)	Street Animals Association (SHD)			
3	If I were to sell the second-hand book you see in my hand (the researcher shows three different books to the participants individually), would you buy it from me? If you are considering buying it, how much will you pay?					
3a	M.Genç's Econ./Hist.Book(MG) 	Yes How Much?:	No			
3b	C.Karatay's Diet Book(CK) 	Yes How Much?:	No			
3c	S.Erdem's Cartoon Book (SE) 	Yes How Much?:	No			

3.3. The Research Model

Figure 5. Research model



3.4. Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses related to the variables used in the study are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypotheses of the Study

NO	Hypothesis
<i>Hypotheses Related to the Researcher's Tattoo</i>	
H1A	There is a statistically significant relationship between the researcher's (or seller's) tattoo and the participants' preferences for movie genres.
H1B	A statistically significant relationship exists between the researcher's tattoo and the participants' judgments about leaving a hospital or doctor.
H2A	A statistically significant relationship exists between the researcher's tattoo status and the participants' preferred charity organizations.
H3A	There is a statistically significant relationship between the researcher's tattoo and the participants' willingness to purchase the MG book.
H3B	There is a statistically significant relationship between the researcher's tattoo and the participants' willingness to purchase the CK book.
H3C	There is a statistically significant relationship between the researcher's tattoo and the participants' willingness to purchase the SE cartoon book.
H92A	There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts of participants willing to donate to the THK charity when responding to a tattooed researcher versus a non-tattooed researcher.
H92B	There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts of participants willing to donate to the SHD charity when responding to a tattooed researcher versus a non-tattooed researcher.
H93A	There is a statistically significant difference between the offer amounts from participants willing to buy the MG book when responding to a tattooed researcher versus a non-tattooed researcher.
H93B	There is a statistically significant difference between the offer amounts from participants willing to buy the CK book when responding to a tattooed researcher versus a non-tattooed researcher.
H93C	There is a statistically significant difference between the offer amounts from participants willing to buy the SE cartoon book when responding to a tattooed researcher versus a non-tattooed researcher.
<i>Hypotheses Related to the Participant's Tattoo</i>	
H11A	There is a statistically significant relationship between the participant's tattoos and the participants' preferences for movie genres.
H11B	A statistically significant relationship exists between the participants' tattoos and their judgments about leaving a hospital or doctor.
H12A	A statistically significant relationship exists between the participant's tattoo status and the participants' preferred charity organizations.
H13A	A statistically significant relationship exists between the participants' tattoos and their willingness to purchase the MG book.
H13B	A statistically significant relationship exists between the participants' tattoos and their willingness to purchase the CK book.
H13C	A statistically significant relationship exists between the participants' tattoos and their willingness to purchase the SE cartoon book.
H82A	There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts of participants willing to donate to the THK charity when they have a tattoo and when they do not.
H82B	There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts of participants willing to donate to the SHD charity when they have a tattoo and when they do not.

H83A	There is a statistically significant difference between the offer amounts from participants willing to buy the MG book when they have a tattoo versus when they do not.
H83B	There is a statistically significant difference between the offer amounts from participants willing to buy the CK book when they have a tattoo versus when they do not.
H83C	There is a statistically significant difference between the offer amounts from participants willing to buy the SE cartoon book when they have a tattoo versus when they do not.
<i>Hypotheses Related to the Participant's Location</i>	
H41A	There is a statistically significant relationship between the participant's location and the participants' preferences for movie genres.
H41B	There is a statistically significant relationship between the participant's location and the participants' judgments about leaving a hospital/doctor.
H42A	A statistically significant relationship exists between the participant's neighbourhood and the participants' preferred charity organizations.
H43A	There is a statistically significant relationship between the participant's location and the participant's willingness to purchase the MG book.
H43B	There is a statistically significant relationship between the participant's location and the participant's willingness to purchase the CK book.
H43C	There is a statistically significant relationship between the participant's location and the participant's willingness to purchase the SE cartoon book.
H62A	There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts participants in Kadıköy and Ümraniye are willing to donate to the THK charity.
H62B	There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts participants in Kadıköy and Ümraniye are willing to donate to the SHD charity.
H63A	A statistically significant difference exists between the offer amounts from participants in Kadıköy and Ümraniye willing to buy the MG book.
H63B	A statistically significant difference exists between the offer amounts from participants in Kadıköy and Ümraniye willing to buy the CK book.
H63C	A statistically significant difference exists between the offer amounts from participants in Kadıköy and Ümraniye willing to buy the SE cartoon book.

4. Results And Discussions

Since no scales or tests were used in the study, statistical analyses could not assess its validity and reliability. Additionally, the study was not purely qualitative but examined differences between groups. Therefore, sample validity is essential for the study's validity and reliability. Detailed information on sample validity has been provided above. The study's hypotheses were tested individually. Chi-square or independent samples t-tests were used depending on the status of the hypothesis variables. M represents the mean, and SD represents the standard deviation in the analyses. The hypothesis was accepted if the p-value was less than 0.05; otherwise, it was Rejected.

Results Related to the Researcher's Tattoo

H1A. Rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between the researcher's tattoo status and participants' movie preferences, $\chi^2 (4, N = 260) = 6.987, p = 0.137$.

H1B. Accepted. A statistically significant relationship was found between the researcher's tattoo status and patients' views on reasons for leaving a hospital/doctor, $\chi^2(4, N = 260) = 12.880, p = 0.012$.

H2A. Rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between the interviewer's tattoo status and the participants' preferred charity organizations, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.006, p = 0.940$.

H3A. Rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between the interviewer's tattoo status and participants' willingness to purchase the MG Economics/History book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.679, p = 0.410$.

H3B. Rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between the researcher's tattoo status and participants' willingness to purchase the CK Diet book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.030, p = 0.864$.

H3C. Rejected. No statistically significant relationship was found between the researcher's tattoo status and participants' willingness to purchase the SE cartoon book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.208, p = 0.649$.

H92A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts that participants with tattoos and those without tattoos plan to donate to the charity (THK). Among the participants who indicated they would donate, those who spoke with a tattooed researcher ($n = 45, M = 3797, SD = 7939$) did not differ significantly from those who spoke with a non-tattooed researcher ($n = 47, M = 6739, SD = 10920$) in the amount they intended to offer, $t(90) = -1.473, p = 0.142$. However, the amount intended for donation decreased from 6739 TL to 3797 TL when the researcher had a tattoo. Participants pledged a higher amount when the researcher did not have a tattoo, with a significant change of 44%.

H92B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts that participants with tattoos and those without tattoos plan to donate to the charity (SHD). Among the participants who indicated they would donate, those who spoke with a tattooed interviewer ($n = 80, M = 4911, SD = 10775$) did not differ significantly from those who spoke with a non-tattooed interviewer ($n = 82, M = 8432, SD = 20547$) in the amount they intended to offer, $t(160) = -1.361, p = 0.175$. However, the intended donation amount decreased from 8432 TL to 4911 TL when the interviewer had a tattoo, with a significant change of 42%.

H93A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts participants offer for purchasing the MG book when dealing with a tattooed researcher and a non-tattooed researcher. Among those who indicated they would make an offer, participants who spoke with a tattooed researcher ($n = 46, M = 154, SD = 141$) did not differ significantly from those who spoke with a non-tattooed researcher ($n = 54, M = 173, SD = 152$) in the amount they intended to offer, $t(98) = -0.623, p = 0.535$. The amount offered was 11% higher for participants who interacted with a non-tattooed researcher.

H93B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts participants offer for purchasing the CK book when dealing with a tattooed researcher and a non-tattooed researcher. Among those who indicated they would make an offer, participants who spoke with a tattooed researcher ($n = 27, M = 93, SD = 58$) did not differ significantly from those who spoke with a non-tattooed researcher ($n = 29, M = 89, SD = 64$) in the amount they intended to offer, $t(54) = -0.228, p = 0.821$. The amount offered was 5% higher for participants who interacted with a tattooed researcher.

H93C: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts participants offer for purchasing the SE book when dealing with a tattooed researcher and a non-tattooed researcher. Among those who indicated they would make an offer, participants who spoke with a tattooed researcher ($n = 46$, $M = 94$, $SD = 70$) did not differ significantly from those who spoke with a non-tattooed researcher ($n = 52$, $M = 75$, $SD = 63$) in the amount they intended to offer, $t(96) = -1.423$, $p = 0.155$. The amount offered was 21% higher for participants who interacted with a tattooed researcher.

The presence of a tattoo on the researcher resulted in higher offers in two cases (%5 and %21) but led to lower offers in one case. The nature of the book topics might be related to this. There could be a perceived affinity between the researcher's tattoo and practical topics like cartoons or diet. Conversely, the presence of a tattoo might be perceived as a disadvantage for theoretical subjects like economics or history, resulting in a lower offer (11%).

Results Related to Participants' Tattoos

H11A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' tattoos and their preferences for movie genres, $\chi^2(4, N = 260) = 2.442$, $p = 0.655$.

H11B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' tattoos and their judgments about the reasons for leaving a hospital/doctor. $\chi^2(4, N = 260) = 8.293$, $p = 0.081$.

H12A: Rejected. No statistically significant relationship exists between participants' tattoos and their preferred charitable organization, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 1.449$, $p = 0.229$.

H13A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' tattoos and their willingness to purchase the MG book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.228$, $p = 0.633$.

H13B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' tattoos and their willingness to purchase the CK book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.152$, $p = 0.697$.

H13C: Rejected. No statistically significant relationship exists between having a tattoo and the willingness to purchase the SE cartoon book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.595$, $p = 0.441$.

H82A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts of participants with tattoos and those without tattoos who wish to donate to the THK charity. There is no statistically significant relationship between the donation offers of the 16 participants with tattoos who stated they would donate to the charity (THK) ($M = 7891$, $SD = 13587$) and the 76 participants without tattoos ($M = 4744$, $SD = 8610$), $t(90) = 1.185$, $p = 0.239$. However, participants with tattoos are willing to donate 66% more to THK than those without tattoos.

H82B: Accepted. There is a statistically significant difference between the amounts that participants with tattoos and those without tattoos wish to donate to the SHD charity. There is a statistically significant relationship between the donation offers of the 36 participants with tattoos who stated they would donate to SHD ($M = 122261$, $SD = 25837$) and the 126 participants without tattoos ($M =$

5112, $SD = 12358$), $t(160) = 2.311$, $p = 0.022$. In other words, participants with tattoos expressed that they would donate significantly more (140%) to the SHD charity than those without tattoos.

H83A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the bids of participants with tattoos and those without tattoos to purchase the MG book. There is no statistically significant relationship between the bids of the 20 participants with tattoos ($M = 158$, $SD = 116$) and the 80 participants without tattoos ($M = 166$, $SD = 154$) to purchase the economics book, $t(98) = -0.205$, $p = 0.838$.

H83B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the bids of participants with tattoos and those without tattoos to purchase the CK book. There is no statistically significant relationship between the bids of the 11 participants with tattoos ($M = 79$, $SD = 39$) and the 45 participants without tattoos ($M = 94$, $SD = 65$) to purchase the CK book, $t(54) = -0.738$, $p = 0.464$.

H83C: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the bids of participants with tattoos and those without tattoos to purchase the SE cartoon book. There is no statistically significant relationship between the bids of the 19 participants with tattoos ($M = 80$, $SD = 72$) and the 79 participants without tattoos ($M = 85$, $SD = 66$) to purchase the SE cartoon book, $t(96) = -0.270$, $p = 0.788$.

Having tattoos statistically significantly affects the amount of donations participants promise to the SHD charity, not the THK. The amount participants with tattoos promised to the SHD charity is more than double that of participants without tattoos. On the other hand, although not statistically significant, participants without tattoos have offered, on average, 8.6% (5%, 15%, 6%) more for purchasing books than those with tattoos.

Results Related to the Participant's Location

41A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' location and their movie genre preferences, $\chi^2(4, N = 260) = 1.178$, $p = 0.882$.

H41B: Rejected. No statistically significant relationship exists between participants' location and their judgments regarding hospital/doctor abandonment behavior, $\chi^2(4, N = 260) = 5.311$, $p = 0.257$.

H42A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' neighborhood and their preferred charity, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.848$, $p = 0.357$.

H43A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' location and willingness to purchase the MG book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 1.128$, $p = 0.288$.

H43B: Accepted. A statistically significant relationship exists between participants' location and willingness to purchase the CK book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 5.638$, $p = 0.018$.

H43C: Rejected. There is no statistically significant relationship between participants' location and willingness to purchase the SE cartoon book, $\chi^2(1, N = 260) = 0.310$, $p = 0.579$.

H62A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts participants from Kadıköy and Ümraniye wish to donate to the THK charity. There is no statistically significant relationship between the donation offers of the 46 participants from Kadıköy ($M = 4162$, $SD = 6820$) and the 46 participants from Ümraniye ($M = 6438$, $SD = 11782$) who stated they would donate to THK, $t(90) = -1.134$, $p = 0.261$. Nonetheless, participants from Ümraniye are observed to have pledged 36% more in donations to THK.

H62B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the amounts participants from Kadıköy and Ümraniye wish to donate to the SHD charity. There is no statistically significant relationship between the donation offers of the 93 participants from Kadıköy ($M = 5309$, $SD = 13676$) and the 69 participants from Ümraniye ($M = 8559$, $SD = 19646$) who stated they would donate to SHD, $t(160) = -1.241$, $p = 0.216$. Nonetheless, participants from Ümraniye are observed to have pledged 38% more in donations to SHD.

H63A: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the bids of participants from Kadıköy and Ümraniye to purchase the MG book. There is no statistically significant relationship between the bids of the 58 participants from Kadıköy ($M = 171$, $SD = 165$) and the 42 participants from Ümraniye ($M = 155$, $SD = 118$) who stated they would bid for the economics book, $t(98) = 0.537$, $p = 0.592$.

H63B: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the bids of participants from Kadıköy and Ümraniye to purchase the CK book. There is no statistically significant relationship between the bids of the 38 participants from Kadıköy ($M = 100$, $SD = 60$) and the 18 participants from Ümraniye ($M = 72$, $SD = 59$) who stated they would bid for the diet book, $t(54) = 1.663$, $p = 0.102$.

H63C: Rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the bids of participants from Kadıköy and Ümraniye to purchase the SE cartoon book. There is no statistically significant relationship between the bids of the 51 participants from Kadıköy ($M = 87$, $SD = 67$) and the 47 participants from Ümraniye ($M = 81$, $SD = 66$) who stated they would bid for the cartoon book, $t(96) = 0.454$, $p = 0.651$.

Based on the above data, the findings related to monetary offers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Monetary Offers by Variables

Variable / Received-Given Offer		THK	SHD	MG	CK	SE
Researcher's Tattoo	Yes	3797	4911	154	93	94
	No	6739	8432	173	89	75
	Difference	%44	%42	%11	-%5	-%21
Participant's Tattoo	Yes	7891	12261	158	79	80
	No	4744	5112	166	94	85
	Difference	-%40	-%59	%5	%16	%6
Participant's Location	Kadıkoy	4162	5309	171	100	87
	Umraniye	6438	8559	155	72	81
	Difference	%36	%38	-%9	-%28	-%7

Although not statistically significant, participants promised fewer donations when the researcher had a tattoo. Additionally, particularly for SHD, the amount promised by tattooed participants is more than double that promised by non-tattooed participants. On the other hand, non-tattooed participants offered, on average, 8.6% more (5%, 15%, 6%) for book purchases compared to tattooed participants, although this difference is not statistically significant. The content of the books might contribute to this differentiation. The same variability is observed between whether participants have tattoos and the charity type.

An unexpected result emerged regarding participants' locations. Participants from Ümraniye, expected to have a relatively lower income, made higher offers for THK (36%) and SHD (38%) than those from Kadıköy.

5. Conclusion

In this study, treating researchers as both “researchers” and “sellers” and participants as “customers” has allowed for the derivation of some practical results for marketers. Additionally, selecting two locations with different characteristics to represent the community average and testing three books have realistically examined customer differences and product differences within the research scope. Conducting the research with the researcher being tattooed or not has enhanced the representativeness of the study.

As presented in the literature section, there are varied perceptions regarding tattoos. Perceptions can differ based on the person with the tattoo, the nature and amount of the tattoo, and the industry. It is essential to consider these differences in marketing understanding and strategies. The findings from this study corroborate the diversity and historical change outlined in the literature. Although many hypotheses based on the assumption that the presence of tattoos on the researcher or participant would affect the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the other party were Rejected, the acceptance of two particular hypotheses is significant. Additionally, although statistically Rejected, trial groups have substantial differences in monetary offers. Based on these differences, some results (and recommendations) for marketers and academics are developed below.

The first notable result is that the perceptual differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals (researchers or participants) differ from what is expected and presumed. Similar situations are observed in numerous studies highlighted in the literature, such as those by Arndt & Glassman (2012), Coleman et al. (2017), and Martin & Dula (2010). Indeed, out of the 33 hypotheses tested through 3 variables in the study, only two were confirmed. This suggests that tattoos have become socially widespread and normalized. Among the 260 randomly selected participants in the study, 56, or 22%, had tattoos. This proportion is close to the Statista Research Department's 2021 data in the literature section. The fact that this proportion has increased from 1% in the 1970s in the US to 22% in this 2024 study in Turkey demonstrates a societal shift in favour of tattoos.

In the first accepted hypothesis, the conceptual thoughts of participants varied depending on whether the researcher had a tattoo. In other words, when the researcher had a tattoo, participants preferred

to consider more qualitative factors, such as the quality of the process, rather than quantitative and procedural reasons like price. This result is interesting, as it suggests that having a tattoo on the researcher, symbolically the seller, may influence participants' thoughts, i.e., the customers. Thus, tattoos may trigger customers' concerns about process quality and characteristics. On the other hand, another important finding for this question is that, whether the researcher had a tattoo or not, the biggest conceptual factor expressed by participants regarding customer loyalty was "indifference." These findings provide predictable but significant information for marketers.

As shown in Table 18, the presence of a tattoo on the researcher resulted in an average disadvantage of about 43% for potential donations. Although variability depended on the book's content in book sales, having a tattooed salesperson generally led to statistically insignificant but still noteworthy differences. This result aligns with Doleac & Stein's (2013) study, which found that tattooed sellers received lower offers.

The second accepted hypothesis revealed that tattooed individuals are more generous in donating to the SHD charity. Additionally, despite not being statistically significant, the differences in monetary offers across all hypotheses indicate that tattooed individuals are more "generous" or "empathetic" in monetary matters. This result is consistent with Yücel's (2015) findings. However, this claim varies depending on the subject of the purchase. A non-tattooed seller might exhibit higher monetary performance for institutional or societal issues such as donations or economics/history.

In contrast, a tattooed seller might provide an advantage when the product is more subjective, such as a diet or cartoon book. A supporting finding is the difference in donations between tattooed and non-tattooed participants to THK and SHD. The difference is 40% for THK and 51% for SHD. In other words, when the charity's activities are institutional or societal, the advantage for tattooed sellers increases by 40%. In contrast, the difference increases to 51% when the charity's activities are informal, variable, and emotional, like street animals. The rejection of hypothesis H82A, which examined THK, and the acceptance of the hypothesis for SHD highlight this significant difference. This finding supports the earlier results of Arndt et al. (2017: 99).

The presence or absence of tattoos among participants also has a similar effect. Tattooed participants are more inclined to donate (40% for THK, 59% for SHD), and this inclination increases when the charity is more oriented towards life practices like SHD rather than a more formal institution like THK. However, regarding book purchases, tattooed participants surprisingly offered less money. Although these differences are not statistically significant, they are relatively small (5%, 16%, and 6%).

All hypotheses related to participants' locations were Rejected. Therefore, there is no significant correlation between location and tattoos. Nevertheless, average values between the two groups differed. Participants from Ümraniye, considered more conservative, community-oriented, and lower-income, stated they would donate about 37% more to charities than the more individualistic and wealthier participants from Kadıköy. However, they offered about 15% (9%, 27%, 7%) less for

books. While not the direct subject of this research, it can be noted that the outlook on life in different locations affects economic behaviour.

In conclusion, perceptions of tattoos have undergone significant changes over time. It is tough to reach general societal judgments. However, a practical result of the research can be expressed as follows: Sales and marketing representatives having tattoos can influence customers' perceptions and thoughts during interactions. Having a tattoo can trigger customers' concerns about the quality of products or services, potentially leading to negative outcomes for the company, especially in sales transactions.

6. Limitations of the Study and Future Research

Although this study's sample size is relatively large compared to similar studies, researching larger samples in different regions may yield statistically significant results for the hypotheses. Variables related to tattoos, such as the location or content of the tattoo, were excluded from this study. Future research should include these variables to explore the concept in greater depth and from all its dimensions.

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