

How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

R Manzano Antón, G Martínez Navarro, D Gavilán Bouzas (2018): “Gender Identity, Consumption and Price Discrimination”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 73, pp. 385 to 400.

<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/073paper/1261/20en.html>

DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2018-1261en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2018-1261en)

Gender Identity, Consumption and Price Discrimination

Roberto Manzano-Antón [[CV](#)] [ [ORCID](#)] [ [GGS](#)] Associate Professor of the Department of Commercialization and Market Research – Faculty of Information Sciences - Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), Spain - rmanzano@ccee.ucm.es

Gema Martínez-Navarro [[CV](#)] [ [ORCID](#)] [ [GGS](#)] Assistant Professor of the Department of Commercialization and Market Research – Faculty of Commerce and Tourism - Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), Spain - mgmart01@ucm.es

Diana Gavilán-Bouzas [[CV](#)] [ [ORCID](#)] [ [GGS](#)] Associate Professor of the Department of Commercialization and Market Research – Faculty of Information Sciences - Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), Spain - dgavilan@ucm.es

Abstract

[ES] Introducción: Esta investigación analiza el fenómeno de la discriminación de precios por género y su presencia en el ámbito de los productos de cuidado personal, poniendo en relación la construcción de la identidad de género en los medios de comunicación con la oferta de productos dirigidos a hombres y mujeres. **Metodología:** análisis comparativo de la oferta, productos y precios, de una muestra de 1.504 referencias de productos de la categoría de cuidado personal obtenidos en seis cadenas de supermercados. **Resultados y conclusiones:** los resultados apuntan a que si bien la discriminación a través del precio no queda probada en productos *cuasi* idénticos, existen diferencias de precio en productos similares y, sobre todo, existe una oferta más amplia y profunda de opciones dirigida hacia la mujer. En la discusión se plantean consideraciones éticas, comunicativas, sociales y empresariales respecto a la discriminación por género en productos de consumo.

[EN] Introduction: This research analyzes the phenomenon of price discrimination by gender and its presence in the field of personal care products, linking the construction of gender identity in the media with the supply of products aimed at men and women. **Methodology:** comparative analysis of the offer, products and prices of a sample of 1,504 products from the personal care category obtained in six supermarket chains. **Results and conclusions:** the results suggest that although price discrimination is not proven in *quasi* identical products, there are price differences in similar products. Above all, there is a wider and deeper range of options aimed at of women-related products compared

to the men-oriented ones. Ethical, communicational, social and entrepreneurial issues on gender consumption emerge in the discussion.

Keywords

[ES] Identidad de género; discriminación; consumo; precios; tasa rosa.

[EN] Gender identity; discrimination; consumption; pricing; pink tax.

Contents

[ES] 1. Introducción 2. Estado de la cuestión. 2.1. Medios de comunicación y construcción del género. 2.2. Identidad de género y consumo: señalar la identidad. 2.3. Estrategias de discriminación. 3. Metodología. 3.1. Recogida de datos. 3.2. Clasificación de productos. 3.3. Análisis de precios. 4. Resultados. 5. Discusión y conclusiones. 6. Referencias bibliográficas.

[EN] Introduction 2. State of the art. 2.1. Media and gender construction. 2.2. Gender identity and consumption: signaling identity. 2.3. Discrimination strategies. 3. Methodology. 3.1. Data collection. 3.2. Product classification. 3.3. Price analysis. 4. Results. 5. Discussion and conclusions. 6. References.

Translation of abstract by **M. Adelfio**
(Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden)
Translation of paper by **Yuhanny Henares**
(Academic translator, Universitat de Barcelona)

1. Introduction

Price discrimination by gender is popularized on media as pink tax, a wide expression that refers to the extra price of certain products targeted to women, which are identical or very similar to men-oriented ones (except color, which is pink sometimes). But also, media use the pink tax expression to complain about the cost of being a woman, referring to the price of products that are exclusively used by women without male equivalent.

Even though the development of product versions adapted for every gender – discrimination by gender or generalized offer- is a practice accepted and welcomed by consumers, the extra price on identical products seems unacceptable for consumers and social agents, and difficult to justify by manufacturers.

The possibility that this practice causes a prejudice on women has been a stimulus for the development of many regulations with the purpose of promoting gender equality (Elegido, 2011), a legislative objective that remits us to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by UNO (1948), the Constitutive Treaty of the European Union (1957), or the UNO Convention for the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women (1979). In the core of the EU, the Council's Directive 2004/113/CE develops the principles of equality among genders regarding access to goods and services. In Spain, the Constitution of 1978 includes the principle of gender equality in article 14, developed afterwards on the Organic Law for effective Equality of Men and Women (2007). At autonomic level, both Autonomy By-Laws as well as the posterior legislative developments include the equality principle.

These inspirational principles of the national and supranational legislation have a punctual translation in the effective regulations of territories, even though there are noticeable exceptions such as the State of California in 1995 which approved the first law that forbid price discrimination by gender in services such as hairdresser and laundromat or the interesting and quite welcomed Budget's Law of the Canary

Islands Government of 2018, that includes the elimination of the equivalent to VAT regarding some products aimed specifically for women (Canary Islands Government, 2018).

Parallel to the development of policies that promote equality, there is an increasing debate about taxing. On the World Economic Forum known as Davos Forum, held on January 2018, a study was presented that showed how the current tax design comes from a patriarchal conception of the society, as shown in the main fees, PIT and VAT, that emphasize the differences in favor of men. (*Público* Newspaper, January 2018).

Also in the field of associations, there is an increasing development of awareness initiatives targeted to citizens, such as the campaign *Por un consumo igualitario* [For an egalitarian consumption] launched by Consumer's Union and the Council of Equality and Inclusive Policies of the Government of Valencia on June 2017.

Media have echoed on the presence of the pink tax, contributing with noteworthy and significant data. In France, the feminist movement Georgette Sand performed on 2014 a price comparative with results described as spectacular in their report; *Forbes* magazine published that American women pay 1.300 dollars more per year than men for similar products; in the United Kingdom, and the newspaper *The Times* estimated that women pay 37% more in average than men. In Spain, according to the study of idealo.es “the pink tax represents between 7 and 24 %.”

The mediatic presence of contents regarding pink tax, even though it is a claim for audiences, it unleashes discomfort and mistrust among citizens. To warn can be a potential way of approaching the problem, but it is not exempt from risk since it evokes in the consumer an attitude of general rejection and mistrust towards brands. It is indispensable to clarify the reality behind the pink tax claim.

In the academic field there are few, otherwise null, references that talk about this phenomenon with strictness and deepness. The pink tax is a phenomenon that interest's consumers and society as a whole, it concerns public powers and warns companies. Thus, we refer to a practice where the academic perspective could, or should enlighten about the magnitude of the problem, its causes and its implications, for the sake of a possible improvement or solution.

This paper analyses the pink tax problem in the sense of extra cost and analyses the offer of personal care products targeted to men and women simultaneously. The theoretical framework offers a review of the role of media in the emergence of gender identity, its projection on consumption and strategies developed by companies to approach their customers with offers aimed to every gender.

We conclude three hypotheses from the theoretical review. For contrast purposes, we developed a comparative analysis with the data of a sample constituted by 1.504 references from the personal care category obtained in six distribution chains of Spain –*Dia, Mercadona, Carrefour, Supermercado El Corte Inglés, Ahorramás* and *Sánchez Romero*– which represent 43.5% of total sales in monetary value (Kantar Worldpanel, 2015). Data for price analysis were classified in 4 groups: (1) identical/ *quasi* identical products targeted to women and men in a differentiated manner; (2) similar products with nonfunctional differences, (3) similar products with functional differences, in both cases aimed specifically to women and men, and (4) products exclusive for a gender, either male or female.

Results of analysis performed show three facts: first, that the existence of the pink tax, understood as an extra price in identical/ *quasi* identical products is not significant; second, that price differences in similar products are supported by differences in product features and are potentially generators of value for consumers. And lastly, the enormous offer diversification targeted to women is demonstrated. A wide offer of personal care products is destined to them – without equivalent for men-, a consumption

that points at them and moves them closer to a social ideal of beauty linked to success (Carosio, 2008). Results nuance the reach of the pink tax and evidence that in the current circumstances perhaps a redefinition of the problem is needed, which evolves from the gender discrimination through prices, to the gender discrimination through the offer, with the implications for consumption thereof. In short, the transformation of the pink tax into the pink budget. The discussion suggests the phenomenon's ethical, communicative, social and business implications.

2. State of the art

Gender discrimination through prices has been object of study in researches promoted by public powers and associations, driven by the desire of protecting consumers.

The ambitious research developed by New York city (De Blasio and Menin, 2015) which result is summarized in an impactful headline: the additional annual cost, calculated in the United States, that this practice entails for women reaches \$1300. In this research, there is a comparison of more than 90 brands and 800 products in their versions for men and women belonging to 35 different categories and sold in more than 20 retail chains, both on physical stores as well as online. Results evidence there is a global extra price in women products of 7% compared to the men-oriented version, being the category of personal care, the one showing a greater price difference (13%).

Afterwards, a similar research was carried out in London among the most relevant retailers –Tesco, Boots and Amazon–, but differences shown as extra price paid by women for equivalent products reached 37% in this research (*The Times*, 2016). Despite the different impact attributed by each research, the trend that women pay a higher price in products targeted to them compared to the men-oriented version, seems a constant (Duesterhaus *et al.*, 2011).

The differentiated treatment of women and men in the consumption context, specifically of personal care products, lead us to analyze the construction processes of gender identity in our society, the role of media in this construction and strategies of companies as response to differentiated identities.

2.1. Media and gender construction

Media have an indisputable influence in the construction of the consumption society. They inspire lifestyles and ways of thinking and being, becoming efficacious tools for the ideological transmission with a relevant role in the creation of subjects' sociocultural identity (Walzer and Lomas, 2008). Particularly, the role they play in educational gender processes is outstanding (García and Martínez, 2009) turning into a proven source of information in the social construction of the female gender in the current century (Kite, Deaux and Haines, 2008; Almansa-Martínez and Gómez de Travesedo, 2017).

It is easy to recall studies where the fact that there are differences between men and women is demonstrated. For instance, aversion towards risk, which is presumably higher in women (Borghans *et al.*, 2009), or the way of processing information during decision making, where men tend to be more selective about the information they consider, while women pay more attention to the number of variables in order to assimilate the greatest amount of information possible (Meyers-Levy and Stemthal, 1991). However, today we assume that the difference between men and women does not come from biological but cultural issues instead (Del Moral, 2000). There are empirical evidences that both women and men show a great intragroup diversity and that they are similar in most psychological variables (Hyde, 2016). The belief that men and women are different (LaFrance and Vial, 2016) is what drives and gets feedback from the construction of gender stereotypes (Matud, Rodríguez-Wangüemert and Espinosa, 2017).

Gender is understood as a cultural construction of the identity of each sex that prescribes behaviors and expectations about what individuals should do or are expected to do depending on their gender (Gallegos, 2012); Thus, an interpretation of reality is projected from the values that have been historically associated to every gender. Gender identity introduces huge limitations to the possibilities of human development and forces individuals to adapt to patterns that not always correspond to their capacities and desires (Subirats, 1994).

In the construction of gender identity, it is indispensable to go to media, from which female identity traits are reproduced and perpetuated, based on the relevance of youth and beauty associated and identified with success and social recognition. The role of advertisement communication is worth mentioning, besides putting in contact the consumer with a product and brand, it assumes a relevant role as promotor of behaviors and attitudes that manifest the affiliation to a specific class or gender (Del Moral, 2000). Advertisement acts as a transmitter of the values socially assigned to every gender. A transmission that some studies qualify as intensifier because it places those social values in the center of its concerns and activities (Peña-Marín, 1992). This way, there is a possible bidirectional influence, that from communication would drive consumption patterns by gender and that, from this consumption, it could be reinforcing identities created (Shallat, 2003). A wide scope of consumption products of all kinds are presented as options with which women approach this ideal, at the same time that reinforce their female image (Carosio, 2008).

There are studies that consider that the strategies of aiming specific products by each gender contribute to the reproduction of these gender identities and stereotypes (Santamaría, 2001), standardizing a type of beauty and a stereotyped outlook that has ensured acceptance and social success for decades (Carosio, 2008). Already back in 1984, Brownmiller stated that the stereotype of women incorporates a greater concern for the physical appeal, emphasized by the existence of an ideal of woman she must look forward to: beauty, youth and thinness (Hsu, 1989), and that far from being stimulating, turns her into a victim (Nieto Morales, 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that women tend to have a worst consideration about their physical image compared to what men may have about themselves, because the ideal of female beauty is very specific and is very present in all communication, while the male beauty offers a wider scope of references (Fallon and Rozin, 1985).

2.2. Gender identity and consumption: signaling identity

The purchase of personal care products by women can be analyzed using the Signaling Theory (Connelly *et al.*, 2011). The fact of choosing these products is interpreted as a signal issued by the purchaser towards her environment. It is about a signal that attempts to modify the beliefs surrounding her, because with her choice, she reinforces her identity considering that physical outlook is a desirable and admirable feature (Picot-Lemasson *et al.*, 2002). The signaling capacity of personal care products lead many brands to emphasize on the gender specificity in their communication, aware that this results in a greater value for their products (Duesterhaus *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the gender perspective allows to analyze whether the consumption reinforces relationships and gender identities or not (Shallat, 2003).

Now, the benefit of a positive image and consistent with the identity the environment assigns, besides representing a means for a purpose, it can become a purpose in itself: self-fulfillment (Martín, 2002). In fact, there are studies that state that purchase and consumption of personal care products in women mainly originates from the need of satisfying their wellbeing aspirations. Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2011) shows how women purchase personal care products to feel better with themselves, turning these products into almost articles of authentic need (Peña-Marín, 1992).

In this line, there are the data of the observatory “Spanish woman scanner 12-13” performed by the *Heartzs Magazine* (2013). For the Spanish woman, it is important to feel attractive, a wide concept that combines being fit, health and consumption of personal care products. In this category products innovation, quality and specially composition are valued. It is significant that price doesn’t matter so much if a product is truly desirable, considering that the intangible benefits perceived and related to self-esteem and success both professionally and socially, are quite elevated (Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2011).

The aforesaid leads us to think that still today, the social imagery of success for women, reinforced by media and advertisement, includes the need to take care of oneself and feeling attractive, for which personal care products are indispensable since they convey confidence and suggest a guarantee of success.

2.3. Discrimination strategies

Since the 70, the management academic doctrine assumed that organizations should stand up for their clients, whose needs and desires must be heard and comprehended if they want to survive (Kotler, 1976).

Exchange of money for products is satisfactory only when the consumer feels he or she gets a value as remuneration for payment. The value expectation that some products evoke, such as those contributing to improve personal image, results in a predisposition for payment. Ferrel *et al.*, (2016) observe that predisposition for payment of hair dresser services is lower among men, considering that the value they grant to said service is inferior than the value granted by women.

However, other factors different from value also favor predisposition for payment, such as the case of the lack of information that predisposes for payment before the uncertainty about what will be acquired. Thus women, less informed than men regarding the costs of car repairing services, show more willing to pay more for said services (Busse, Israeli and Zettelmeyer, 2017) while men, less familiar with laundromat costs, are more willing to pay more for this service instead (Ferrel *et al.*, 2016).

The pink tax differentiates, in a discriminatory manner for women, the price of identical or almost identical products that signal women’s identity, sheltering in a greater predisposition for payment, due to the perceived value of these products as well as due to unawareness. Cases like the authorized car dealers that offered superior prices to women and individuals of black race (Ayre and Siegelman, 1995) evoke the rejection of both consumers and companies. From the consumer’s perspective, it is alarming to observe that two products that are identical –or apparently identical except color– have price differences.

Apart from business ethics considerations this may rise, putting customer satisfaction at risk represents a threat for the relationship of any organization with their purchasers. We shouldn’t forget that the feeling of injustice caused by pink tax generates different reactions in consumers: from a negative emotional state of variable intensity, including waiving purchase, up to negative advertisement for the brand (Xia, Monroe and Cox, 2004). A deeply interconnected society, with a consciously aware and empowered consumer by social media (Espiritusanto and Gonzalo, 2011) could be introducing correcting mechanisms of this practice.

The issue is even more complex when there are price differences on similar but not identical products, adapted to each gender, where the factor of the different product manufacture expenses emerges as a consequence of the specificity of the final product, with the subsequent repercussion in price.

Literature maintains that the understanding of price and costs that must be compensated is always a dark issue that is difficult to assimilate for the consumer, whose trend is to perceive prices as unfair (Bolton, Warlop and Alba, 2003). The reason comes from the extension of the cost concept, where the direct costs of production are included, but also other fix and less recognizable costs as well (Lott and Roberts, 1991). An exhaustive analysis of costs of equivalent products, but specific for each gender, would only be possible by having access to manufacturer's accounting. Liston-Heyes and Neokleous (2000) analyzed price discrimination in hair dresser services concluding that the price difference for men and women was a consequence of a real difference in the costs derived from service.

In the cases where price of a specific product for a gender is superior, but there are perceived differences providing a differential value, the consumer accepts that these are justified price differences (Bolton *et al.*, 2003; Stevens and Shanahan, 2017), moderating the possible injustice perceived (Xia *et al.*, 2004). For this reason, as differences between specific products for a gender become more significant, supporting for example in functional aspects of the product, we would be facing cases on the fringes of price discrimination strategies (Stigler, 1987).

However, gender discrimination instead of manifesting in price, it may be presented in the form of diversification. That is, the launching of a wide offer of specific products for a gender, women in this case, sheltered on their interest by personal care and the value attributed to this products' category. It is not about paying an extra price, but investing a greater budget to acquire more specific products, under the impulse of need and the desire to signal oneself before others and getting self-satisfaction.

The aforesaid leads us to formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Companies are not commercializing *quasi* identical personal care products in their versions for men and women with an extra price for women.

H2: On similar products with differences supported by superior benefits and that provide value, there might be price differences.

H3: There is a wider portfolio of personal care products specifically aimed for women as a response for the interest and relevance that taking care of the image has in female identity.

To verify these hypotheses, we carried out the following fieldwork.

3. Methodology

The process of contrasting hypothesis was performed following these stages:

3.1. Data collection

We selected a total of six supermarket chains –*Dia, Mercadona, Carrefour Express, El Corte Inglés Supermercado, Ahorramás* and *Sanchez Romero*– which represent 43.5% of total sales in monetary value (Kantar Worldpanel, 2015). This guarantees a relevant coverage of the market. This selection of chains covers the complete spectrum of mass consumption products and besides, represents a wide range of value proposals when it comes to purchasing, which range from the modality of an usual purchase of proximity up to a modality of convenience purchase.

Next, we selected four categories of heavy consumption personal care products among men and women: deodorants, shaving-depilation, gel and shampoo. These are categories with a high penetration and belonging to mature markets, so to make analysis easier in compliance with research objectives.

For each one of those categories we proceeded to take note of prices of each reference in every chain. Data collection was carried out on May on the week from 22 to 28, 2017 through pictures of shelves, identifying the brand, product, price and quantity. The total sample included 1.504 references.

3.2. Product classification

We started by sorting data into two groups: products with different versions for every gender (68.2%) and products where it was not possible to determine whether they were aimed to one of the two defined demographic segments, men or women (31.8%). As a result of the elimination of products in which it was not possible to determine the gender they were oriented to, the effective final data base for analysis included a total of 1.025 references.

Next, we established 4 groups of analysis:

1. *Quasi* identical products in functional benefits with versions aimed for men and women (5.3%).
2. Similar products with nonfunctional differences in benefits they offer with versions aimed for men and women (11.7%). These are products where the difference does not allow talking about different benefits, even when its use or consumption could be more satisfactory precisely due to differentiation.
3. Similar products with functional differences in benefits offered and with versions aimed for men and women (9.1%). These are products with *ad hoc* benefits for every gender.
4. Exclusive products for a gender, either men or women (73.9%).

Table I. Number of References* by Product Group

Product Group	Ref. Men	%	Ref. Women	%	Ref. Total
<i>Quasi</i> identical product (M-W)	27	50.0	27	50.0	54
Similar products with nonfunctional differences (M-W)	54	45.0	66	55.0	120
Similar products with functional differences (M-W)	30	33.3	62	66.7	93
Exclusive products M/W	220	29.0	539	71.0	759
Total references	331	32.3	694	67.7	1025

*Each one of the versions of a product.

For the assignment of every reference into one of the analysis groups we used three criteria of communicative nature. The first one of them comprises the inclusion, in the product's packaging, of a specific mention to the recipient they are targeted to, either men or women. In case this specific mention is missing, the second criterion to be considered was the use of colors or packaging design that condition its recipient, either if there is use of colors generally associated with female, such as pink or gold, the use of gender associated decorative elements, like flowers or the packaging's design, like the form (Heller, 2010). Finally, and, as additional criteria, there is use of communicated benefits,

such as mentions to fineness, care, sensitivity or beauty. We based on the association there is in the society between these expressions and identity of every gender.

Classification of references in the 4 groups stablished results as follows on Table 1.

3.3. Price analysis

Table 2 shows results of the calculations of average prices for each one of the group of products classified, both for men as well as women-oriented.

Table II. Average Price per Product Group

Product Group	Price Men (€)	Price Women (€)	Price difference %
<i>Quasi</i> identical product (M-W)	1.90	1.88	-0.9
Similar products with nonfunctional differences (M-W)	1.68	1.73	+3.1
Similar products with functional differences (M-W)	1.44	1.68	+16.4
Exclusive products M/W	NA*	NA*	NA*
Total references	1.67	1.76	+5.4

* The data corresponding to the group of products with only men-oriented or women-oriented versions were excluded from these averages, because they refer to products that do not have a gender correspondence for price comparison purposes.

4. Results

Group 1, comprised by *quasi* identical products in the benefits they offer and with versions for men and women, is characterized by two aspects. The first feature that is worth mentioning is the low number of references included therein (5.3% of total references), which indicates a strong preference of manufacturers towards unisex options or with a contribution of a differential value for a specific gender. Secondly, when comparing prices of men and women-oriented versions we observe that there is not a global average price superior for women's versions compared to those targeted to men. In fact, the difference points at the contrary, since prices of women-oriented products were 0.9% inferior than those applied to men-oriented ones. This low global difference in price is observed in all references included in the study, oscillating just 4 points between them (from a +1.0% up to -3.1%). We can conclude that the references globally follow an equal price policy for similar sizes in their men and women-oriented versions, because only 13% of references of equal size are sold at different prices.

Additionally, we observe that in this group of products the volume per packaging offered to men and women is sometimes different, because some products targeted to women are offered in larger size packagings, which contributes to a lower price per volume.

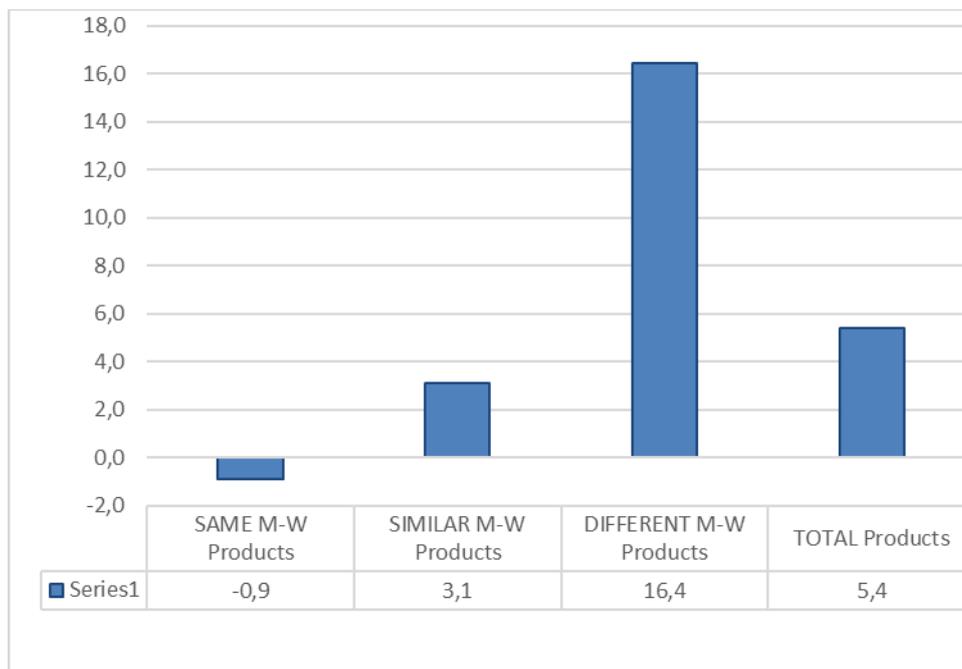
Based on the aforesaid, H1 is demonstrated.

Regarding Groups 2 and 3, price differences are grounded on amendments or adaptations made in products to facilitate a greater suitability to every gender. Gender adequation leads to price difference, with the particularity that women are the ones who globally receive a greater number of specific proposals. As a result of the aforesaid, we observe that Group 2 –similar products with nonfunctional differences in benefits and with men and women-oriented versions– shows a slight price difference in prejudice of women compared to men-oriented options (+3.1%), while in Group 3 –similar products with functional differences– these differences are substantially higher (+16.4%).

From a global perspective, considering the Groups of analysis created, women-oriented versions have a higher average price (+5.4%) than men-oriented alternatives (Graphic 1).

Considering the aforesaid, H2 is demonstrated.

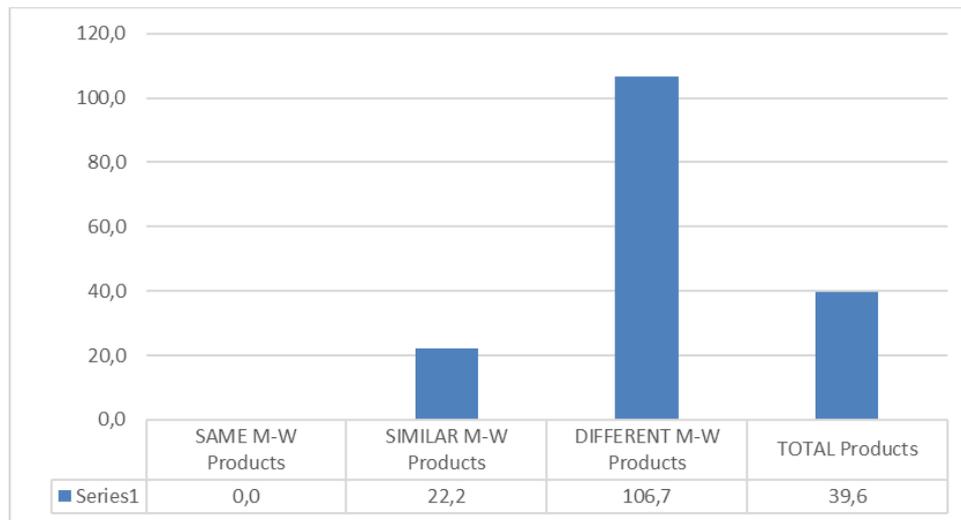
Graphic I. Price difference per group of products. Products’ prices targeted to women vs. products targeted to men (%)



Regarding the analysis of the number of references offered, in Group 4 (products exclusive for a gender) we find the greatest number of references offered (73.9% of the total of references analyzed), and where the offer destined to women (539 references) is significantly higher (+145.0%) compared to men-oriented offers (220 references). Graphic 2 represents the percentage difference in the number of products targeted to women compared to those aimed to men, both for each study group as well as in total. This greater offer for women is observed in all Groups and in all chains, except that of identical products, where there is offer parity.

Considering the aforesaid, H3 is demonstrated.

Graphic II. Difference in the number of references per Group of products. Women-oriented vs. Men-oriented references (%)



5. Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this research was to analyse the phenomenon of gender discrimination through price in the consumption of personal care products, their relationship with communication in media as creators of gender identities and the strategies adopted by companies thereof. It is a problem of increasing social relevance that prejudices women, concerns society and alerts companies. Therefore, we have approached the problem from an academic perspective that allows to clarify its real dimension so to facilitate its solution.

Analysis results show that gender discrimination through price is not currently a usual practice in companies, at least not with the prevalence indicated in previous studies. The contradiction between these results and those of previous researches might not be such if we consider that, in order to survive, companies keep attentive to the market in a broader sense, including their consumers in their monitoring, as well as the society, institutions and all those groups of influence related to their activity. As a consequence of the increasing social sensitivity and repeated complain of this practice as evidently unfair (*The Times*, 2016), its reprobation on different forums, and especially social networks, and even its legal forbidding in some countries or markets (Elegido, 2011), companies might have modified their price policies, thus equalling them for identical products targeted to men and women. This equation could have been promoted both by manufacturers as well as retailers. In the first case, by offering the same sales prices. In the case of retailers, and before the existence of different costs, by applying different margins to offer the same sales price to the public (retail price). In both options, the purpose would be to avoid appearing before public opinion as responsables of gender discrimination, due to the possible negative effects on the company's image or its brands.

Price difference by gender has been often explained by affected companies through differences in products' costs. The existence of price differences based on cost are widely supported by literature, arguing that the application of different prices allows a more accurate cost distribution (Philips, 1983; Tiróle, 1989), providing a better global result for the company (Baumöl and Swanson, 2003) and contributing with a differential value better adapted to consumers' needs (Marcoux, 2006).

The application of different prices by gender could include even products classified in Group 1 (*quasi* identical products) since they can have different direct costs as the result of different manufactures and sales' volume. However, the rationale based on costs can be considered as more applicable in Group 2 (similar products with non-functional differences) and specially in Group 3 (similar products with functional differences), where product components can be substantially different in the versions targeted to every gender.

The problem generated by the rationale based on different manufacture costs is the difficulty to have access to them by any client or external observer. Companies like P&G, have mentioned different manufacturing costs as basis to explain discriminatory prices for men and women. In these cases, it is said that even though the technology to manufacture these products is the same, the differences in components (like the case of shaving blades) or in ingredients (result of a type of skin between men and women) have an effect in a justified difference of final product's price.

Other factors that may support the final price difference of similar products are different commercialization's expenses derived from each brand's strategy. In this section, numerous marketing activities towards the consumer would be considered, including investment in advertisement, gifts and product samples among these activities, as well as promotional activities, among others.

The underlying, substantial, problem leads to a reflection of complex ethical nature. When products are similar, but costs are different, establishing an average price so that all consumers pay the same entails to prejudice those who should be paying less (Marcoux, 2006). Avoiding this differentiation also entails a form of discrimination, although it is not perceived.

Finally, results evidence a relevant differential fact in the treatment of genders by companies. The offer of personal care products is deeply oriented to women, with a proposal of solutions substantially superior to the ones targeted to men and at significantly higher prices. Through offer, products with more specific benefits are suggested, which represents greater value for the female consumer, but also a higher price.

Differentiation of products by gender and extra price observed on versions targeted to women can be analysed from a feminist perspective as the companies' response towards an androcentric reality that attributes the meaning of neutral to the masculine and the value of specific and different to the feminine (De Miguel Álvarez, 2009), and that along with a greater intensity of the offer targeted to women, it contributes to the social reproduction of stereotypes of both genders.

The feminist economy has evidenced a systematic concern for analysing the dimension of gender within economic problems and the public policies proposals (Perona, 2012). Feminist economists state that the traditional current or dominant paradigm within this discipline is built on the basis of a hierarchical dualism that exalts the vision of masculine and hides the value of feminine (Pérez Orozco, 2014). An androcentric and stereotyped vision of the human condition, that could be present in the different consumption routines of daily life.

At the same time, and as previous studies already indicated, media act as builders of gender identities (Del Moral, 2000; Almansa-Martínez and Gómez de Travesedo, 2017). These constructions are assimilated by companies, which in their vocation for satisfying customers, launch proposals of specific products for every gender. With this, companies collaborate so that stereotypes derived of gender identities acquire more relevance and social acceptance (Carosio, 2008). This situation becomes more acute in the case of women considering that the extensive and assorted offer they receive, even though it aims to making them feel well with themselves, as Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2011)

mentioned in her research, it can lose its stimulating character, turning them into victims of this strategy (Nieto Morales, 2016).

To delve into the object of this analysis, and as possible future research lines, we suggest performing comparative studies in other categories, both in consumption good as well as services. It would also be desirable to analyse the communication claimed by each product, depending on the fact there are equal offers for both genders, comparable or exclusive.

The pink tax represents a problem that orientates us to pay attention to contents issued by media, the visibility of the role of women in our society, and probably the need to review the resulting stereotype of the female gender installed on society. A review that could start by questioning the way of consuming.

6. List of references

- A Almansa-Martínez & R Gómez de Travesedo-Rojas (2017): “El estereotipo de mujer en las revistas femeninas españolas de alta gama durante la crisis”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 72, pp. 608- 628. <http://www.revistalatinacs.org/072paper/1182/32es.html> (01-09-2017). DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-2017-1182.
- V Apaolaza-Ibáñez, P Hartmann, S Diehl & R Terlutter (2011): “Women satisfaction with cosmetic brands: The role of dissatisfaction and hedonic brand benefits”. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(3), pp.792-802. <http://www.academicjournals.org/AJBM> (20-09-2017). DOI:10.5897/AJBM10.305.
- I Ayres & P Siegelman (1995): “Race and Gender Discrimination in Bargaining for a New Car”. *American Economic Review*, 85 (3), pp. 304–21.
- BOE (2007): *Ley Orgánica 3/2007 de 22 de marzo para la igualdad efectiva entre hombres y mujeres*.
- LE Bolton, L Warlop & JW Alba (2003): “Consumer Perceptions of Price (Un) Fairness”. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (March), pp. 474-91. <http://warrington.ufl.edu/departments/mkt/docs/alba/alba1.pdf> (19-09-2017).
- L Borghans, B H.H. Golsteyn, JJ. Heckman & H Meijers (2009): “Gender Differences in Risk Aversion and Ambiguity Aversion”. *Journal of the European Economic Association, MIT Press*, 7(2-3), pp. 649-658. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14713.pdf> (01-09-2017).
- M Busse, A Israeli & F Zettelmeyer (2017): “Repairing the Damage: The Effect of Price Knowledge and Gender on Auto Repair Price Quotes”. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 4, February, pp. 75–95. DOI:10.1509/jmr.13.0291.
- A Carosio (2008): “El género del consumo en la sociedad del consumo”. *La Ventana, Revista de Estudios de Género*, 3 (27), pp.130-169.
- BL Connelly, ST Treviso-Certo, RD Ireland & CR Reutzell (2011): “Signaling theory: A review and assessment”. *Journal of Management*, 37 (1), pp. 39-67.
- WJ Baumöl & DG Swanson (2003): “The new economy and ubiquitous competitive price discrimination: Identifying defensible criteria of market power”. *Antitrust Law Journal*, 70(3), pp. 661-85.

B de Blasio & J Menin (2015): *From Cradle to Cane: The Cost of Being a Female Consumer. A Study of Gender Pricing in New York City*. New York City Department of Consumer Affairs.

E Del Moral-Pérez (2000): “Los nuevos modelos de mujer y de hombre a través de la publicidad”. *Comunicar*, 14, pp. 208-217.

<https://www.revistacomunicar.com/verpdf.php?numero=14&articulo=14-2000-27> (03-09-2017).

Diario Público (2018): *El sistema fiscal penaliza a las mujeres*.

<http://www.publico.es/economia/discriminacion-genero-sistema-fiscal-penaliza-mujeres.html> (26-01-2018).

M Duesterhaus, L Grauerholz, R Weichsel & N Guittar (2011): “The Cost of Doing Femininity: Gendered Disparities in Pricing of Personal Care Products and Services”. *Gender Issues*, 28(4), pp.175-191. DOI:10.1007/s12147-011-9106-3.

JM Elegido (2011): “The Ethics of Price Discrimination”. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 21(4), October, pp. 633-660. DOI:10.5840/beq201121439.

O Espiritusanto & P Gonzalo (2011): *Periodismo ciudadano. Evolución positiva de la comunicación*. Madrid: Ariel y Fundación Telefónica.

AE Fallon & J. Rozin (1985): "Sex Differences in Perceptions of Body Shape ". *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 94 (1), pp. 102-105.

OC Ferrell, D Kapelanianis, L Ferrell & L Rowland (2016): “Expectations and Attitudes Toward Gender – Based Price Discrimination”. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1, pp. 1-18. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-016-3300-x.

N García & L Martínez (2009): “La representación positiva de la imagen de las mujeres en los medios”. *Comunicar*, 32, XVI, pp. 209-214.

<https://www.revistacomunicar.com/verpdf.php?numero=32&articulo=32> (22-09-2017).

DOI:10.3916/c32-2009-03-002.

GOBIERNO DE CANARIAS (2017): *Proyecto de Ley de Presupuestos de la Comunidad Autónoma Canaria 2018*.

HEARTS MAGAZINE (2013): “La mujer española scanner 12-13”.

www.hearst.es/content/download/1313/8868/file/Total%20poblacion.pdf (03-09-2017).

E Heller (2010): *Psicología del color. Cómo actúan los colores sobre los sentimientos y la razón*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gil.

LKG Hsu (1989): "The Gender Gap in Eating Disorders: Why Are the Eating Disorders More Common Among Women?". *Clinical Psychology Review*, 9, pp. 393-407.

JS Hyde (2016): “Sex and cognition”, *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 38, pp. 53-56.

DOI:10.1016/j.conb.2016.02.007.

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE (2016): “The Pink Tax. How Gender-Based Pricing Hurts Women’s Buying Power”. *United States Congress*. December 2016.

KANTAR WORLD PANEL (2015): *Cuotas de Mercado de la distribución*.

<https://www.kantarworldpanel.com/es/grocery-market-share/> (03-09-2017).

- ME Kite, EL Deaux & EL Haines (2008): *Gender stereotypes*. En F. L. Denmark y M. A. Paludi (Eds.), *Psychology of women. A handbook of issues and theories* (2ª Ed., pp. 205-236). Westport: Praeger.
- P Kotler (1976): *Marketing management: Analysis, Planning, and Control*. (3º Ed.) Prentice-Hall.
- M LaFrance & AC Vial (2016): "Gender and nonverbal behavior". En D. Matsumoto, H. C. Hwang, y M. G. Frank (Eds), *APA handbook of Nonverbal Communication* (pp. 139-161). Washington: American Psychological Association.
- C Liston-Heyes & E Neokleous (2000): "Gender-based pricing in the hairdressing industry". *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 23, pp. 107-26.
- JR Lott & RD Roberts (1991): "A guide to pitfalls of identifying price discrimination". *Economic Inquiry*, 29, pp.14-23.
- AM Marcoux (2006): "Much ado about price discrimination". *Journal of Markets and Morality*, 9(1), pp. 57-69.
- M Martín-Llaguno (2002): "La tiranía de la apariencia en la sociedad de las representaciones". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 50.
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/2002/latina50mayo/5005mllaguno.htm> (04-09-2017).
- M Matud-Aznar, C Rodríguez-Wangüemert & I Espinosa-Morales (2017): "Representación de mujeres y hombres en prensa española". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 72, pp. 765-782.
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/072paper/1191/41es.html> (22-09-2017). DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-2017-1191.
- J Meyers-Levy & B Stemthal (1991): "Gender Differences in the Use of Message Cues and Judgements". *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28 (February), pp. 84-96.
- A de Miguel Álvarez (2009): "El legado de Simone de Beauvoir en la genealogía feminista: la fuerza de los proyectos frente a la fuerza de las cosas". *Investigaciones Feministas*, 0, pp. 121-136.
- NACIONES UNIDAS (1979): *Convención sobre la eliminación de todas las formas de discriminación contra la mujer*. Nueva York (18-09-1979).
- C Nieto-Morales Concepción (Coord) (2016): *Los jóvenes del siglo XXI en el contexto de la globalización*. Madrid: Dykinson.
- C Peña-Marín (1992): "La representación de los géneros en publicidad. Nuevas imágenes de mujer". *Jornadas Mujer, Publicidad y Consumo*. Valencia.
- A Pérez Orozco (2009): *Subversión feminista de la economía. Aportes para un debate sobre el conflicto capital-vida*. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños.
- E Perona (2012): "La economía feminista y su aporte a la teoría económica moderna". *Estudios-Centro de Estudios Avanzados*. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 27, pp. 27-43.
http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1852-15682012000100003&lng=es&tlng=es
- A Picot-Lemasson, G Decoc, F Aghassian F & JL Leveque (2002): "Influence of hairdressing on the psychological mood of women". *Int. J. Cosmet. Sci.*, 23 (3), pp.161-164.

- L Philips (1983): *The economics of price discrimination*. Cambridge: University Press.
- D Redolar, J Lladós, J Catalá & E Papaoikonomu (2016): “La discriminación es rosa”. *UOC News*. <http://economia-empresa.blogs.uoc.edu/marketing/discriminacion-rosa/> (22-09-2017).
- C Santamarina (1992): “Género y comunicación”. *Jornadas Mujer, Publicidad y Consumo*. Valencia.
- L Shallat (2003): *Mujer, consumo y ciudadanía: De mujer a género*. Santiago de Chile: Consumers Internacional.
- JL Stevens & HJ Shanahan (2017): *Structured Abstract: Anger, Willingness, or Clueless? Understanding Why Women Pay a Pink Tax on the Products They Consume*. In: Stieler M. (eds) *Creating Marketing Magic and Innovative Future Marketing Trends. Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Springer, Cham.
- G Stigler (1987): *A theory of price*. New York: Macmillan.
- M Subirats (1994): “Conquistar la igualdad: la coeducación hoy”. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 6, pp.48-78.
- THE TIMES (2016): *Women charged more on ‘sexist’ high street*. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/women-charged-more-on-sexist-high-street-3gpwv2ck3qd> (25-09-2017).
- J Tiróle (1989): *The theory of industrial organization*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- UNIÓN EUROPEA (2004): *Directiva 2004/113/CE de 13 de diciembre de 2004 por la que se aplica el principio de igualdad de trato entre hombres y mujeres al acceso de bienes y servicios y su suministro*.
- L Xia, KB Monroe & JL Cox (2004): “The Price Is Unfair! A Conceptual Framework of Price Fairness Perceptions”. *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (4), pp.1-15. <http://bear.warrington.ufl.edu/weitz/mar7786/Articles/price%20fairness.pdf> (22-09-2017).
- A Walzer & C Lomas (2008): “Mujeres y publicidad: del consumo de objetos a objetos del consumo”. *Pueblos*, 15, pp. 18-19.

How to cite this article in bibliographies / References

R Manzano Antón, G Martínez Navarro, D Gavilán Bouzas (2018): “Gender Identity, Consumption and Price Discrimination”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 73, pp. 385 to 400.
<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/073paper/1261/20en.html>
DOI: [10.4185/RLCS-2018-1261en](https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2018-1261en)

Article received on 12 October 2017. Accepted on 11 February.
Published on 19 February 2018.