

Research Article

Investigating the Consumer Alienation Model in Iran's Market Place

Kambiz Heidarzadeh Hanzaee and Banafshe Golpour

Department of Business Management, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Tehran, Iran

Abstract: In Current survey Allison's Consumer Alienation from Market place is evaluated in Iran's environment. Tehran as capital of Iran has chosen as target of cluster sampling. Collected data analyzed with Exploratory Factor Analysis by means of SPSS 19 and confirmatory factor analysis via Lisrel. Alison's scale has 4 factors and 35 items by default, after data processing, extracted factors has ended to same 4 factors and 17 items. The rest of the study is organized as follows: In introduction, a brief review of consumer alienation. Materials and Methods is describes, Allison's point of view and scale, the methodology of this research and presents the proposed approach besides, the data/population for validating the model is discussed there and next approach is validated and implemented using real market data. Significant findings are indicated in results and in discussion the results of current survey is compared with two most important similar studies. Conclusion summarizes the study and talks about and future study. Eventually, Table 1 is added.

Keywords: Consumer alienation, consumer alienation scale, Iran marketplace Neil K. Alli

INTRODUCTION

The generally accepted definition of the concept of alienation in social sciences would seem to be that alienation is a state of perceived oneself as being socially apart from society (Bearden and Mason, 1983). Researchers have assumed that alienation propose a unique sociological vehicle for investigating consumer marketplace problems and discontent. As such, alienation appears to be a potentially useful area of research for identifying factors associated with consumer dissatisfaction (Lambert, 1980).

One of the issues surrounding alienation on which nearly all sociologists agree is that "alienation is a psychologist state of an individual"(Clark, 1959). Its measurement is most always based on the "presence of certain attitudes and feelings" (Kanungo, 1979). Rooted in sociology and social psychology, alienation is a feeling of separation or estrangement from institution, person, value(s), or society in general (Wright and Martin, 1987) and also Nettler describes the alienated person as one who has been estranged from, made unfriendly toward, his society and culture it carries" (Nettler, 1957). The concept of alienation remains contentious and controversial in behavioral science, especially regarding a possible theory of alienation. However, consensus does rule on some points (Gaski and Ray, 2004): Alienation involves a relationship between an individual or group and some aspect of the environment. This relationship is one of undesirable

separation. Alienation refers to a *subjective* state that may be amenable to measurement. (Gaski and Ray, 2004). Consumer alienation from market place has been addressed mainly on a theoretical level (Allison, 1978). Fromme sees the "marketing orientation" as the basis for all alienation (Fromm, 1990). The fact that monetary value is placed on so many aspects of man's existence is to him the "hallmark" of alienation He believes the economic system is responsible for the feelings of alienation that individuals experienced as consumers. As Lambert said: Defining alienation can help "identify basic sources of discontent" and can be a useful tool to "business in developing and directing affirmative action's and to mitigate the problems of consumerism" (Lambert and Kniffin, 1975). Alienation has been linked to marketing for decades and (Allison, 1978) was pioneering in measurement of consumer alienation, defines as feeling of separation from the norms and value of market institutions, practices, or one's self in consumption role.

Hilger further contemplated alienation and the consumer (Hilger and Dahringer, 1982). Her measure of social alienation was a combination of statement taken from Dean and Middleton (Middleton, 1963). Each of the five statement was thought to tap a different dimension of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and self-estrangement (Seeman, 1959).

Consider current economic situation of the world, especially Middle East and more exclusively Iran

Corresponding Author: Kambiz Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, Department of Business Management, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran, Tel.: (+98)21-44860966

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societal pathology, certainly large segments of the population who (Gaski and Ray, 2004).

The aim of this study is to investigate the consumer Alienation model in current socio-economic situation of Iran by means of Allison's scale of alienation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to evaluate consumer alienation model, as Allison (1978) describes-and his scale's items reflects-the syndrome of alienation was conceptualized initially on the basis constructs of powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness and social isolation.

Powerlessness is defined as feelings held by consumers that they are unable to help determine market practices, an inability to control the market environment or events within the marketplace. Normlessness within the market system is represented by a distrust of business and market practices, often manifested in unclear standards for buyers. Social isolation from the market place is characterized by feelings of estrangement from the institutions, practices and outputs of the commodity market system. Feelings of self-estrangement arise from an inability to identify with behavior traditionally associated with the consumption role (Allison, 1978; Bearden and Mason, 1983). These definitions are based largely on the classical theory of Durkheim (1897), Seeman (1959), Weber (1968), Marx (1972) and Tannies (2002).

Allison's (1978) scale items-which initially was formed from Dean's (1961) subscales of powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness and social isolation-appraised using 35 item inventory statements developed and validate by Allison (1978). Each statement in the scale was followed by a 5 place Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). The questionnaire was allocated to 4 sections the consumer alienation measure consisted of Dean's subscale. Reliability and validity of Dean's index are reported by Robinson *et al.* (1991) and Miller and Salkind (2002). But in order to reassuring, the internal consistency of measurement instrument accessed via Cronbach's coefficient alpha, as it shows in Table 1, the result is near 1 and it is a proof of reliability of measurement instrument.

Reliability statistics: In Allison's research the demographic variables was included sex, age, marital status, ethnic origin, but in current research because of social reasons we omitted the variable of ethnic origin and the demographic variables include sex, age and marital status (Table 2).

Using cluster method, a convenience sample (307 individuals) representative of Iran's Capital (Tehran) citizens was provided and data collecting and data analyzing was conducted in Fall and Winter of 2011.

The questionnaire was originally designed in English and then translated in to Persian (common language of Iranians). Translated questionnaire

Table 1: Extraction method: Principal component analysis

Communalities	
	Extraction
p2	0.637
p3	0.637
p4	0.628
p5	0.669
SI1	0.625
SI2	0.567
SI3	0.652
SI4	0.549
SI5	0.688
SI6	0.675
SI7	0.615
SI8	0.722
SE1	0.603
SE2	0.585
SE3	0.590
SE4	0.573
SE5	0.666
SE6	0.631
SE7	0.670
n1	0.705
n2	0.566
n3	0.703
n4	0.646
n5	0.599
n6	0.587
n7	0.706
n8	0.623
n9	0.615
n10	0.638
n11	0.636
n12	0.667
n13	0.658
n14	0.679
n15	0.654
p1	0.704

Table 2: Calculated by authors Spps 19

Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.929	28

Table 3: Demographic specifications

	Sample n = 307
Male-female	43%-67%
Single-married	39%-61%
Age	24-65

reviewed by 24 marketing experts in order to confirm content validity.

The scale items were chose originally to reflect powerlessness, normlessness; social isolation and self estrangement, factors representing each of these variants of alienation were anticipated to appear. The 35 items were factor analyzed based on quota sample of 307 Iranian individuals. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) which is a complex, multi-step process, was applied to evaluate Consumer alienation in Iran Market place. EFA, traditionally, has been used to explore the possible underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables without imposing a preconceived structure on the outcome (Child, 1990). By performing EFA, the underlying factor structure is identified (Suhr and Colorado, 2006). The first step when performing a

Table 4: Calculated by authors

Kaiser-meyer-olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.884
Bartlett's test of sphericity	4966.165
df	595.000
sig.	0.001

factor analysis is to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis. This involves inspecting the correlation matrix for coefficients of 0.3 and above and calculating the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Ferguson and Cox, 1993). This information can be obtained from SPSS in the same analysis as used for Factor Extraction (Table 3).

KMO and Bartlett's test: As it obvious in Table 3 KMO value is above 0.6 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant and therefore it is concluded the factor analysis is appropriate. The second step involves determining how many underlying factors there are in the set of variables.

The Communalities table (Table 4) shows the proportion of each variable's variance that can be explained by the factors. The extractions table (Table 5) shows, all extracted factors have a acceptable function in indication of variables. The goal of factor extraction is to identify the number of latent dimensions (factors) needed to accurately account for the common variance among the items (Reise *et al.*, 2000).

Considering Table 5 the components that have an eigen value of 1 or more is considered to determine how many factors to extract. As it's showed in Cumulative % column first 17 factors components explain a total of 63.916% of the variance.

The initial factor extraction in an EFA produces orthogonal variables that are often not readily

interpretable. Thus, after the initial extraction, a typically rotation will change the factor pattern to a psychologically interpretable position (Thurstone, 1947). Simply stated, simple structure implies that items load highly on one or perhaps two factors and have near zero loadings on the remaining factors (Reise *et al.*, 2000).

In the Rotated Component Matrix (Table 4) the loading of each of variables on four factors are selected.

RESULTS

As Table 6 shows, main loading on component 1 (Social Isolation) are items SI1, SI2, SI4, The main Items on component 2 (Self estrangement) are SE6, SE5, The main items on third component (Normlessness) are n15, n9, n14, n13, n5; and on fourth component (Powerlessness), p2.

The significant results of conducting EFA shows the main items of first component, were: SI1, SI2, SI4 which means the, 3 variables as following is the most important for determination of *Social Isolation* from Iran's market place:

- **SI 1:** Mass Production has done away with unique products.
- **SI 2:** Even with so much advertising it is difficult to know what brand is best.
- **SI4:** It is difficult to identify with business practices today.

The most significant result about the first component is SI1 which is the highest loading of component.

The primitive loadings second component or (*Self Estrangement*) was 2 items:

Table 5: Calculated by authors

Initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1.885	5.387	5.387	1.885	5.387	5.387
1.755	5.014	10.400	1.755	5.014	10.400
1.571	4.490	14.890	1.571	4.490	14.890
1.554	4.441	19.331	1.554	4.441	19.331
1.460	4.170	23.501	1.460	4.170	23.501
1.408	4.022	27.523	1.408	4.022	27.523
1.329	3.797	31.320	1.329	3.797	31.320
1.289	3.682	35.001	1.289	3.682	35.001
1.258	3.594	38.595	1.258	3.594	38.595
1.187	3.391	41.986	1.187	3.391	41.986
1.174	3.356	45.341	1.174	3.356	45.341
1.141	3.259	48.600	1.141	3.259	48.600
1.112	3.178	51.778	1.112	3.178	51.778
1.102	3.150	54.928	1.102	3.150	54.928
1.085	3.099	58.027	1.085	3.099	58.027
1.055	3.016	61.042	1.055	3.016	61.042
1.006	2.874	63.916	1.006	2.874	63.916
0.953	2.722	66.638			
0.926	2.647	69.285			
0.886	2.532	71.817			

Table 6: Calculated by authors

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
SI1	0.617			
SI2	0.518			
SI4	0.471			
n11	-0.361			
SE2				
SI8				
n6				
SI3				
p3				
SE6		0.578		
SE5		0.496		
SE3		-0.481		
n10		-0.430		
n4		0.390		
p4				
SE1				
SI6				
n15			0.614	
n9			0.456	
n2			-0.434	-
				0.361
n14			0.417	
n13			0.374	
n5			0.358	
n3				
p5				
n12				
n8				-
				0.437
p2				0.430
SI7				0.395
SE7		0.313		0.369
SI5				0.331
n7				0.312
n1				-
				0.302
p1				
SE4				

- **SE6:** After making a purchase I often find myself wondering “why.”
- **SE5:** I often feel frustrated when I fail to find what I want in the store.

There are five items extracted for indicating the third component (*Normlessness*):

- **N13:** Advertising usually presents the true picture of the product.
- **N12:** Most Claims of product quality are true.
- **N5:** Products are designed to wear out long before they

For the last component (*Powerlessness*) there was one prominent item which was: the following of questionnaire which its goal is the component of powerlessness:

- People are unable to help determine what products will be sold on stores.

Considering the highest loading on each of the components, the nature of underlying latent variable

represented by each component was identified and they are present as follows:

- First component: SI1
- Second component: SE6
- Third component: N15
- Fourth component: P2

DISCUSSION

Allison scale of Consumer Alienation generated from an initial pool of 115 items with each item developed to reflect a specific variant of consumer alienation, but as a result of a review by 35 judges the pool was reduced to 50 items. The 50 items were then factor analyzed based on a 368 individual sample, the expected four-factor structure did not hold, so consumer alienation was re-conceptualized and redefined as feelings of separation from the norms and values of the marketplace as it consider in current study. The final 35-item scale was observed to possess high reliability and high test retest reliability, Allison also provides evidence of construct validity (Allison, 1978).

Further analysis of the scale by Bearden and Teel (1983) suggests that the scale is actually comprised of three factors, representing,

- Business ethics, or beliefs about the ethical behavior of business
- Informed choice, or opinions about the usefulness of more information
- Personal norm, or attitudes about one’s personal norms about consumption

The length of the scale was also reduced to 22 items. Further validity testing of the shortened measure by Bearden and Teel (1983) lends additional support to the validity of the scale.

But in current investigation results shows, Allison’s consumer alienation scale can determine alienation of Iranian consumers with the same components of Powerlessness, Normlessness, Social Isolation and Self estrangement but there is a difference; the items are reduced in Iran’s market place. According the results of Exploratory Factor analysis only 17 items have an Eigen value of 1 or more and also it’s necessary to mention that the first most effective component is powerlessness and Normlessness, Social Isolation and finally Self-estrangement respectively, as it shows in Table 7 which is summarized the construct correlations, Average Variance Extraction and composite reliability.

Table 7: Lisrel result-calculated by authors

Construct	P	N	SI	CCR	AVE
Powerlessness	1			0.823	0.414
Normlessness	0.13	1		0.887	0.501
Social. isolation	0.09	0.07	1	0.865	0.477
Self-estrangement	0.17	0.11	0.14	0.847	0.466

CONCLUSION

The current study evaluated Alison's scale's of consumer alienation in Iran market place, the scale has been tested using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on a sample of 307 Iranian consumers. The results reveal that Alison's scale could provides a good explanation of alienation of Iranian consumers with the same component of Powerlessness, Normlessness, Social Isolation and Self estrangement, but with less (it was 17 items extracted) items. Of special significance it was found that Powerlessness plays a more important role in forming alienation of Iranian consumers.

Current Iran's economy, political and as a result social situation has a great impact on consumer's different attitudes especially alienation, as a suggestion for future research evaluating the economical and political on consumer alienation could be a effective help to improve the scale.

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