

The Pink Tax Effect: Analyzing Consumer Behavior and Pricing Dynamics in Women's Products

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ABSTRACT

The "Pink Tax Effect," a pricing phenomenon in which goods marketed to women are sold for more than comparable or identical goods offered to men, is the subject of this study. Through an examination of pricing dynamics and consumer behavior, the study pinpoints the causes of this discrepancy, including societal standards, gendered marketing tactics, and brand perception. To determine why women are more vulnerable to these pricing strategies, psychological factors such as perceived value, brand loyalty, and the influence of societal expectations are examined. The study also looks into how merchants and manufacturers use packaging, product design, and targeted advertising to support charging more for women's goods. It draws attention to the financial burden that the Pink Tax places on women as well as its wider effects on economic justice and purchasing power. The study intends to increase awareness of the Pink Tax and its hidden consequences by thoroughly examining pricing structures and consumer behaviours. In order to combat gender-based price discrimination, it advocates for more pricing transparency, consumer education, and legislative actions. The study aims to educate consumers and persuade stakeholders to implement fair pricing methods by bringing these systematic practices to light.

Keywords: Gendered Pricing, Brand, Pricing, Psychological.

OBJECTIVES

To analyze consumer awareness and perception regarding the Pink Tax and its influence on purchase decisions.

To evaluate the impact of Pink Tax on consumer behavior, particularly in terms of brand loyalty, willingness to pay, and product substitution.

To investigate the psychological and sociocultural factors influencing women's acceptance or resistance towards higher-priced gendered products.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed that a pink razor or a women's shampoo costs more than the regular blue or black ones marketed for men even though they basically do the same thing? That's what people mean when they talk about the "Pink Tax." It's not an actual tax, but a name given to the extra money, women are often charged just because a product is designed or branded for them. This pricing difference shows up in all sorts of everyday products from personal care items like razors, deodorants, and shampoos to clothes, toys, and even some services like dry cleaning or haircuts.

The main reason behind this? Marketing. Companies often make tiny changes to the product maybe a softer scent, a curvier shape, or pastel-coloured packaging and then label it as “for women.” These changes may look nice, but they usually don’t justify the higher price. What’s really happening is that businesses are taking advantage of social norms and gender expectations. Women are often more brand loyal and feel a stronger push from society to buy certain products to look or feel a certain way. This gives companies an opening to charge more. Over time, paying a little extra here and there really adds up and it ends up hurting women financially without them even realizing it.

To get a better understanding of how people feel about the Pink Tax, we spoke to everyday shoppers through survey. Many women shared that they had always felt something was unfair when buying products, but didn’t know there was actually a name for it. When they learned more about the Pink Tax, most were upset and said they’d think twice before buying gender-specific products again. Some even mentioned switching to men’s products, especially when they found them cheaper and just as effective. A few people also said this issue made them more aware of how companies play into gender stereotypes for profit.

But we didn’t stop at just observing price tags. To dig deeper and understand how widespread the issue is and how people truly feel about it we designed a detailed survey and reached out to the public. The questions covered a range of topics: from basic demographics like age, location, education, and income, to their shopping habits, awareness of gender-based pricing, and how often they encountered it in their daily lives. We asked them about the kinds of stores they shop from, how much they spend on personal care and hygiene products, and what influences their purchase decisions whether it's the price, brand, packaging, or gender labels.

A particularly eye-opening set of responses came when we asked people if they had ever noticed a price difference between men’s and women’s products. Many said yes. Others weren’t sure, which suggests that these pricing gaps are often subtle and go unnoticed. When asked directly if they had heard of the “Pink Tax” before, only a fraction of respondents were aware of the term. But once it was explained, most agreed that women’s products were often more expensive and felt that this was unfair and intentional on the part of companies. In fact, many believed this kind of pricing discrimination exists not just in personal care, but across clothing, dry cleaning, haircuts, toys, and even healthcare.

To support these findings with data, we ran several statistical tests using SPSS, a software tool used to analyze large sets of data. We compared the prices of gendered products like razors, deodorants, shampoos, and clothing items. We explored correlation analyses to see how people’s attitudes and beliefs influenced their buying habits. For example, we found that women who considered personal care products “essential” were more likely to pay higher prices, regardless of brand or gender labels. This shows how societal norms and beauty standards can shape not only what we buy, but how much we’re willing to pay. The results were clear: in most categories, women’s products cost more, and the difference wasn’t just by chance it was real and measurable.

In short, the responses and data showed a strong pattern: the Pink Tax is not just a theory it’s something people are experiencing every day. By combining real voices from the public with strong statistical analysis, we can now clearly say that gender-based pricing is a systemic issue that deserves more attention, consumer awareness, and regulatory action.

So why does this all matter? Because it’s not just about a few extra rupees or dollars. The Pink Tax quietly chips away at women’s spending power and contributes to a wider gap in financial equality especially when you consider that many women also earn less than men for doing the same work. By studying this issue closely and sharing both people’s opinions and data-backed results, we hope to spark awareness, change in buying behavior, and better policies that protect consumers from gender-based price discrimination.

In short, the Pink Tax is a real problem hiding in plain sight. It’s time we recognize it, talk about it, and take steps big or small to make shopping fair for everyone.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptual Background of the Pink Tax

The practice of charging more for goods and services targeted at women than for nearly identical products targeted at men is known as the "Pink Tax." It is a subtle but persistent form of gender-based price discrimination in international markets, even though it is not an actual tax imposed by the government [12]. In areas like toys, personal care, and apparel, women's products typically cost 7% more than comparable men's products, according to early studies like *From Cradle to Cane: The Cost of Being a Female Consumer* [12].

Traditional social roles and marketing tactics that divide customers into groups according to gender stereotypes have been connected to gendered pricing [5]. Highlighted that these price disparities, which are frequently excused by differences in appearance or design, represent the economic cost of femininity in contemporary consumer markets. Therefore, gender-based pricing contributes to structural inequality in consumer economies and goes beyond individual purchasing decisions [3], [5], [10].

Gendered Marketing and Pricing Dynamics

One of the main causes of the Pink Tax's continued existence has been found to be gendered marketing tactics. In order to conform to perceived gender preferences, marketers frequently alter product design, color, fragrance, and packaging, creating artificial differentiation between male and female variants [1], [9]. found that pink-coloured packaging and feminine imagery increase perceived value among women consumers, giving marketers justification for charging premium prices.

Further research shows that rather than functional distinctions, these practices mainly rely on psychological cues and symbolic differentiation. For example, [9] noted that companies employ gender segmentation to create emotional bonds, enhancing brand loyalty and attachment in spite of price differences. This strategy is consistent with the emotional branding theory, which positions goods marketed to women as representations of self-expression, beauty, or confidence [13].

Furthermore, by suggesting that women need specialized products for fundamental tasks like grooming or hygiene, gendered marketing frequently perpetuates preexisting stereotypes [5]. This perception enables businesses to present "feminine" product versions as superior or high-end, as demonstrated in [10]. Together, these results show how emotional, symbolic, and aesthetic appeals are used by gendered marketing to maintain price disparities [1], [5], [9],[13].

Consumer Awareness and Perception Studies

Consumer awareness of the Pink Tax varies by demographic. Because they frequently believe that price differences are a reflection of brand value or product quality, many women are unaware that they pay more for comparable goods [2]. On the other hand, social media activism and rising digital literacy have raised awareness recently. Online debates and public support for fair pricing have been sparked by campaigns like #EndPinkTax [11].

As per [14], consumers are encouraged to engage in substitution behavior by recognizing unwarranted price differences and choosing men's or gender-neutral alternatives. However, due to cultural conditioning and limited exposure to gender equality campaigns, awareness levels are still relatively low in developing nations like India [16].

Reference [16] also noted that demographic factors like location, income, and education have a big impact on awareness and buying decisions. Higher awareness consumers are more likely to question discriminatory pricing practices and show more scepticism toward brand messaging. On the other hand, people with less exposure or awareness still make routine purchases, frequently putting convenience or brand loyalty ahead of price [2], [16].

As a result, awareness plays a crucial mediating role in how customers view and react to the Pink Tax in the marketplace [2], [11], [14], [16].

Psychological and Sociocultural Dimensions

The Pink Tax's sociocultural and psychological aspects emphasize how social norms and gender identity influence consumer behavior. Internalized norms that associate femininity with aesthetic consumption, personal care, and appearance frequently impact women's purchasing decisions [17]. According to Reference [17], these kinds of trends increase consumers' receptivity to branding signals that convey sophistication or elegance.

From a psychological standpoint, willingness to pay is largely determined by perceived value. Especially in the beauty and personal care sectors, consumers usually equate higher costs with better quality or emotional fulfilment [4], [8]. Reference [4] showed that women perceive price as a sign of status and dependability and are more receptive to symbolic messaging and emotional branding.

This behavior is also influenced by sociocultural factors. The idea that purchasing appearance-related products is both desirable and essential is supported by media representations of women as image-conscious consumers [7]. Even when customers are aware of unfair pricing, these representations deepen their emotional ties to brands and foster patterns of dependency [3], [7].

In the end, the reason why many women continue to pay more for gendered products can be explained by the interaction of psychological incentives and societal pressures [3], [17]. This suggests that, in addition to being an economic issue, the Pink Tax is a behavioural and cultural phenomenon that is deeply embedded in the development of consumer identities [3, 4, 7, 17].

Economic and Policy Perspectives

In terms of the economy, the Pink Tax increases the already-existing gender wealth gap and places a long-term financial burden on women. Over time, the cumulative effect of paying more for routine goods and services reduces savings and purchasing power [12]. According to Reference [12], in certain markets, the extra money that women spend each year as a result of the Pink Tax may amount to USD 1,351.

From a policy standpoint, several global initiatives have been started to address gender-based pricing discrimination. The European Parliament [6] called on member states to review pricing policies and promote gender-neutral pricing standards. By prohibiting gender-based price disparities for essentially identical goods, legislative reforms like California Assembly Bill 1287 (2022) also guarantee transparency in marketing practices [14].

However, there is currently no clear legislation in India that addresses the Pink Tax. The necessity of specific consumer protection legislation that acknowledges gender as a factor in pricing fairness was underlined by Reference [18]. According to academics like [15] and [18], labelling standards and comparative price displays are two ways that public policy should promote price transparency. Gender inequality in market participation is sustained when discriminatory pricing goes unchecked in the absence of such measures.

Therefore, policy changes in conjunction with consumer advocacy and education are essential to lessening the moral and financial ramifications of gender-based pricing [6], [14], [15], [18].

Research Gap Identification

Few studies have looked at the Pink Tax in the Indian context, despite the fact that it has been widely studied globally from the perspectives of marketing, consumer psychology, and policy. To fully understand consumer responses, there is a dearth of integrated analysis that combines behavioural, sociocultural, and psychological factors [15], [16], [18].

There is a knowledge gap regarding how cultural values and awareness levels influence women's attitudes toward price discrimination in developing economies because the majority of previous research has concentrated on Western markets. In order to close these gaps, this study examines Indian consumers' awareness, perceptions, and behavioural reactions to the Pink Tax, paying special attention to psychological and sociocultural factors.[15], [16], [18].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, which allows for the systematic investigation and statistical measurement of consumer perceptions and behaviors related to the Pink Tax phenomenon in India. Quantitative research is particularly suited to this study as it facilitates objective assessment and numerical analysis, enabling researchers to identify trends, patterns, and correlations among consumer responses.

A descriptive research design was employed, aimed at providing a detailed account of consumer awareness, attitudes, and behaviors concerning gender-based pricing. The design was chosen to capture the current state of consumer perceptions across multiple product categories, including personal care products, household services, fashion, and lifestyle products. By employing this approach, the study not only documents consumer opinions but also enables comparative analysis across demographic segments such as gender, age, education, and income level, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the Pink Tax's impact on consumer decision-making.

Population, Sampling, and Sample Size

The target population for this study included consumers in India who actively purchase personal care, hygiene, household, and lifestyle products. These products were selected as they commonly exhibit gender-based pricing differences, making them relevant for the study of the Pink Tax phenomenon.

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants. This non-probability sampling method was deemed appropriate due to practical constraints and the exploratory nature of the study, ensuring the inclusion of respondents who are readily available and regularly engaged in purchasing the products under investigation.

The final sample consisted of 50 respondents, representing a diverse mix of genders, age groups, educational backgrounds, and income levels. This demographic diversity ensures that the study captures a wide spectrum of consumer perspectives, enhancing the reliability of insights derived regarding awareness, perception, and behavioral responses to gender-based pricing.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected were analysed using SPSS software employing multiple statistical methods to ensure comprehensive understanding:

Crosstabulation and Chi-Square Tests: To explore relationships between demographic factors (gender, education, income) and product selection criteria, identifying patterns and potential influences on purchasing behavior.

Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation: To measure the strength and direction of associations among variables such as awareness, perceived fairness, perceived intentionality, and brand influence.

One-Way ANOVA: To examine significant differences between male and female respondents regarding their willingness to continue purchasing women's products despite higher prices, revealing gender-based behavioural patterns.

These techniques collectively allow for both descriptive and inferential insights, enhancing the study's reliability and interpretability.

Reliability, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

Reliability: Ensured by employing pre-tested, structured questionnaires, consistent coding of responses, and standardized measurement scales, minimizing potential errors in data collection and analysis.

Validity: Maintained through clear operational definitions and careful measurement of relevant variables, ensuring that the questionnaire accurately captures consumer perceptions, awareness, and behavior related to gender-based pricing.

Ethical Considerations: Respondents were fully informed about the study's objectives, and strict measures were taken to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. The study adhered to ethical research practices, ensuring integrity, transparency, and respect for participant rights.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data on consumer awareness, perceptions, and behaviors related to the Pink Tax in India. It consisted of six sections with close-ended questions and 5-point Likert scales for easy analysis.

Section 1: Personal Information – Captured demographics such as age, gender, education, income, employment, shopping habits, and brand influence.

Section 2: Awareness & Perception – Measured awareness of gender-based pricing, perceived fairness, and beliefs about companies' intentional pricing.

Section 3: Purchasing Behavior & Preferences – Explored factors influencing product choice, past purchases of men's alternatives, and willingness to switch to gender-neutral products.

Section 4: Industry-Specific Pricing – Assessed observed price differences across categories like personal care, clothing, and services, and consumer responses to these differences.

Section 5: Psychological & Social Impact – Examined the perceived impact of the Pink Tax on financial independence, support for regulations, and social media influence.

Section 6: Additional Thoughts – Collected open-ended feedback on personal experiences and suggestions to reduce gender-based pricing.

ANALYSIS

ONE WAY -ANOVA

Descriptives

TABLE 1

		N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Brand loyalty	Female	36	.894	.149	1.70	2.30

	Male	14	.730	.195	1.65	2.49
	Total	50	.845	.119	1.78	2.26
Product quality	Female	36	.760	.127	1.52	2.03
	Male	14	.770	.206	1.70	2.59
	Total	50	.773	.109	1.66	2.10
Specific formulation for women's needs	Female	36	.770	.128	1.49	2.01
	Male	14	.514	.137	2.27	2.87
	Total	50	.795	.112	1.75	2.21
Social norms/marketing influence	Female	36	.934	.156	2.07	2.71
	Male	14	.745	.199	1.93	2.79
	Total	50	.878	.124	2.13	2.63
Unawareness of alternative options	Female	36	1.117	.186	2.32	3.07
	Male	14	.893	.239	1.70	2.73
	Total	50	1.072	.152	2.26	2.86

ANOVA TABLE 2

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand loyalty	Between Groups	.051	1	.051	.071	.791
	Within Groups	34.929	48	.728		
	Total	34.980	49			
Product quality	Between Groups	1.343	1	1.343	2.308	.135
	Within Groups	27.937	48	.582		
	Total	29.280	49			
Specific formulation for women's needs	Between Groups	6.801	1	6.801	13.502	.001
	Within Groups	24.179	48	.504		

	Total	30.980	49			
Social norms/marketing influence	Between Groups	.010	1	.010	.013	.910
	Within Groups	37.770	48	.787		
	Total	37.780	49			
Unawareness of alternative options	Between Groups	2.324	1	2.324	2.066	.157
	Within Groups	53.996	48	1.125		
	Total	56.320	49			

Interpretation

A statistically significant difference was found in “specific formulation for women’s needs” ($p = .001$). This indicates that female respondents perceive gender-specific formulations as more important compared to males. The mean scores show that women are more inclined to believe that products designed “for women” justify higher prices due to added care, softness, or specialized ingredients.

This aligns with psychological and sociocultural influences—marketing narratives, gender-targeted packaging, and social conditioning—that make women more accepting of higher-priced “female-oriented” products.

In contrast, factors like social norms and marketing influence ($p = .910$) did not show a significant difference, meaning both genders equally recognize marketing’s role but react differently to it.

Product performance VS Age group TABLE 3

Crosstab			
Count			
Crosstab			
Count			
Chi-Square Tests TABLE 4			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.836 ^a	12	.053
Likelihood Ratio	14.835	12	.251
Linear-by-Linear Association	.712	1	.399
N of Valid Cases	50		

CROSS TABS		Age group				Total
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	
Product performance	Not Important	4	1	0	0	5
	Slightly Important	2	1	1	0	4
	Moderately Important	2	2	0	0	4
	Important	7	6	0	0	13
	Very Important	21	2	0	1	24
Total		36	12	1	1	50

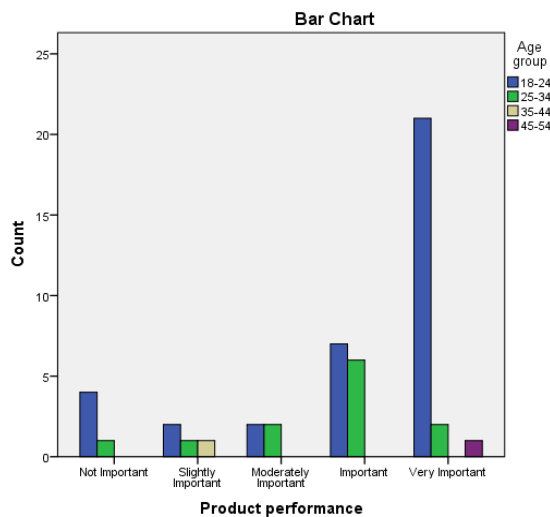


FIGURE 1

Interpretation:

The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 20.836$, $p = 0.053$) shows no significant association between age group and the importance of product performance, though it is close to significance. Most respondents aged 18–24 rated performance as very important, indicating that younger consumers value quality more when making purchases. This suggests that product performance influences younger buyers' willingness to pay higher prices, even under the Pink Tax effect.

Symmetric Measures				
TABLE 5				
	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.

Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.121	.148	-.841	.404 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.257	.135	-1.839	.072 ^c
N of Valid Cases		50			

Non parametric Correlations: Spearman's

		Brand loyalty	Product quality	Women Product Design	Impact of Pink Tax	Gender Pricing
Impact of Pink Tax	Correlation	.068	-.271	-.101	1.000	.307
	Sig.	.640	.057	.487	.	.030
	N	50	50	50	50	50
Gender Pricing	Correlation	.199	.229	-.013	.307	1.000
	Sig.	.167	.109	.930	.030	.
	N	50	50	50	50	50

TABLE 6

Interpretation:

The correlation results indicate that the impact of the Pink Tax is positively correlated with the perceived fairness of gender pricing ($r = 0.307$, $p = 0.030$), suggesting that respondents who perceive stronger effects of the Pink Tax also tend to view gender-based pricing as unfair.

Other variables like brand loyalty ($r = 0.068$, $p = 0.640$), product quality ($r = -0.271$, $p = 0.057$), and women's product design ($r = -0.101$, $p = 0.487$) show weak and statistically insignificant correlations, implying these factors have limited influence on perceptions of the Pink Tax.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the Pink Tax significantly affects fairness perception, it does not strongly alter consumer loyalty or product quality evaluation.

CONCLUSION

This study on the Pink Tax shows that many people know women's products often cost more than similar men's products, but most still end up buying them. Many women believe that brands charge extra just because products are labelled "for women."

The results show that younger people care more about product performance and quality, even if it costs more. However, brand loyalty and social influence also play a big role — people often buy the same products

because of habit, trust, or image, not just price.

The analysis found that some pricing differences are clearly noticed and seen as unfair, especially in personal care and fashion items. Overall, the study highlights that while awareness about the Pink Tax is increasing, it hasn't fully changed buying behavior yet. There is a strong need for fairer pricing, consumer awareness, and policies that stop gender-based price differences in India.

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