

# The impact of direct marketing on consumer choices in the furniture sector

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Received: 18 Dec 2024

Revised: 10 Feb 2025

Accepted: 28 Feb 2025

To keep customers engaged and continue to expand in a market that is becoming more and more competitive, businesses need to use smart communication and promotional strategies. Direct marketing is a successful strategy for influencing consumer behavior, especially in sectors where decision-making heavily relies on product exposure and information accessibility. This study looks at how direct marketing affects the wood and furniture industries in Kosovo, with a particular emphasis on how it affects customer choices and company performance. The study is organized into two key parts: an empirical inquiry using primary data gathering and a theoretical analysis based on a thorough literature evaluation. Descriptive and comparative analyses are used to examine current concepts, definitions, and viewpoints on direct marketing, and secondary data from various scholarly publications is used to create the theoretical framework. Understanding how direct marketing affects customer purchasing behavior is given special attention. A structured survey given to 210 respondents from strategic urban centres in Kosovo served as the basis for the study's empirical component. The results show no meaningful correlation between promotional offers or social media marketing formats and purchase decisions, even if direct marketing is crucial for sustaining consumer awareness. This shows that showroom visits are preferred over internet purchases, indicating that traditional customer behavior is dominant. Nonetheless, a noteworthy association was noted between the kind of social media platforms utilized and customer involvement, highlighting the significance of platform selection.

**Keywords:** direct marketing, manufacturing companies, furniture, wood industry

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing is the process of organizing and executing the creation, pricing, distribution, and marketing of concepts, products, and services in order to generate exchanges that satisfy both individual and organizational goals (McDaniel Jr. & Gates, 2014). Marketing is a social and managerial process through which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through the creation, delivery, and exchange of valuable products with the others (Kotler & Keller, Marketing Management, 2012). The development of a brand is mostly dependent on marketing, and an inventive marketing mix requires strong communication support. Customers' purchase decisions are influenced by the marketing mix (Fareniuk & Chornous, 2023).

The process and actions through which people look for, choose, buy, use, assess, and discard goods and services to fulfil their needs and desires are referred to as consumer behavior. Purchase decisions for many goods and services are the outcome of a protracted and intricate process that may involve in-depth research, brand comparisons, assessments, and other actions (Solomon, Bamossy, & Askegaard, 2002).

The customer becomes aware of marketing and environmental incentives. Numerous psychological processes come together with certain consumer traits to produce the decision-making and purchase decisions. The challenge for manufacturers is to comprehend what transpires in the consumer's mind between the outward stimuli and the

ultimate purchase decision. Customers' responses to different marketing stimuli are influenced by four major psychological processes: motivation, perception, learning, and memory (Kotler & Keller, Marketing Management, 2006).

Consumers expect varying degrees of service, and knowing the variations among the clientele will enable service providers to better meet the needs of each individual. High school or college students looking for a new laptop, for instance, are more likely to comprehend the characteristics they're seeking for if you operate an electronics store than someone purchasing their first computer (Cooltrack, 2020). The quality of the company's goods and services has a direct impact on customer trust; if the products and services are good, customers will stick with the business for the rest of their life and, most importantly, will recommend it to others (Webster & Wind, 1972).

Manufacturing companies use public relations (PR) to spread information and communicate with a large audience. The emphasis is on customer exposure to the brand, corporate reputation, and communication (Insights, 2023). The company cannot conduct adequate market research to determine the needs and requirements of the target clients if its marketing department is not operating (Ademi & Avdullahi, 2021).

Serving customers through direct marketing has been rapidly expanding and is becoming more and more valuable every day. Direct marketing is a method of reaching and delivering goods and services to clients directly, without the need of middlemen. The dissemination of products, information, and promotion with an emphasis on interactive customer engagement is known as direct marketing (Nayak & Siddiqui, 2024). Direct marketing involves making an offer and asking for a response (Nayak & Siddiqui, 2024).

Marketers today cultivate enduring connections with clients. Loyal clients receive birthday cards, informational papers, or special deals. There are several ways for direct marketers to connect with consumers: catalogues, telemarketing, television, kiosks, websites, mobile devices, and direct mail (Kotler, 2002). Indirect marketing focuses more on customer interaction after a purchase, whereas direct marketing aims to persuade a consumer to acquire goods or services. Increasing brand recognition and cultivating a devoted following that will make repeat purchases are the objectives of direct marketing (Rapp & Collins, 1990).

Consumer behavior is also impacted by direct marketing. When it comes to infrequently purchased items, like furniture, customers are willing to spend time deciding what to buy, attempting to find out more specific information about the product, and ultimately visiting additional locations where these items are offered for sale (Zwierzynski, 2017). Comparing the decision-making process to regularly purchased things, it is noticeably longer and more complex (Mazurek-Lopacinska, 2003). There is no one predominant method used in the economics literature to analyze consumer behavior; instead, a variety of approaches are used. However, the factors that influence consumer behavior can be clearly divided into two categories: direct and indirect factors (Kleczek, Kowal, Waniowski, & Woznicka, 1992; Gajewski, 1994; Zwierzynski, 2017; Kiezel, 2000; Rudnicki, 2004; Swiatowy, 2006).

Table 1. The determinants of consumers' behaviours in the furniture market.

Indirect Determinants¶			Direct Determinants¶
Economic	Demographic	Marketing	Psychological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supply</li> <li>• incomes</li> <li>• expenses and savings</li> <li>• possibility of taking credit</li> <li>• possessed durable goods resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consumer's age</li> <li>• consumer's gender</li> <li>• household size</li> <li>• household location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• product features</li> <li>• product price</li> <li>• kind of product distribution</li> <li>• advertising related to a given product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• needs</li> <li>• viewpoint</li> <li>• motives</li> <li>• attitudes</li> <li>• preferences</li> <li>• personality</li> <li>• learning</li> <li>• risk related to an acquisition</li> </ul>

Source: (Zwierzynski, 2017)

The elements that have the biggest impact on consumers' decisions to buy furniture are displayed above in the table 1. Rembisz and Sielska (2015) state that three indirect factors economic, demographic, and marketing determinants as well as one direct factor psychological determinant are the primary factors influencing customer behavior in the furniture market. Customers' decision-making process is becoming increasingly complex due to the proliferation of product possibilities, the development of retail selling platforms, and the efficient utilization of promotional activities (Oztop, Erkal, & Gunay, 2008). Customers' choice of furniture that fits their lifestyles is crucial for the home's comfort as well as the time, effort, and money invested in it (Oztop, Erkal, & Gunay, 2008). Hence, it is necessary for consumers to select appropriate furniture (Intille, 2002).

Although manufacturing marketing has a lengthier and more intricate sales cycle than B2C marketing, it is fundamentally B2B marketing. These characteristics frequently result difficulties for this type of marketing (Berger, 2021).

The modern world, the progressiveness of the technologies employed, their diffusion in the economy and society, the quality of production, the attraction and implementation of advanced technologies, and the availability and accessibility of the nation's resources are all characteristics of the modern world. According to some authors (Ilyash, Lupak, Vasylytsiv, Trofymenko, & Dzhadan, 2021), innovation and technological activities are a significant part of the formation and strengthening of competitive advantages. Considering the opportunities and challenges of the new industrial revolution, we also recommend examining and assessing the marketing efficiency indicators as a component that characterizes the industrial sector's capacity to market competitive, high-quality industrial products and grow.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE PRODUCTIVE SECTOR IN KOSOVO

Companies in sectors like furniture, which have a higher concentration of innovation, technology, and design, must be able to effectively respond to the growing demand for new solutions. This is especially true considering the changes that have occurred since the Covid-19 pandemic. These solutions integrate design, sustainability, and technology to improve outdoor spaces and adapt domestic spaces to the new demands for multifunctionality (from smart working to distance learning) (Murmura, Musso, Bravi, & Pierli, 2024). Companies already do this, showing a mature approach to sustainability and design, obviously made of materials (certified, recycled, recyclable), but also of increasingly efficient and sustainable production processes (Green Italy, 2022).

In the production sector, more specifically for the furniture production, in the Kosovo Business Registration Agency (ARBK) are registered in several different groups, such as:

- 1245 businesses, their main activity is the production of carpentry and carpentry,
- 533 businesses, is the next group for the production of kitchens and
- 510 businesses, where most of these companies are limited liability companies, dealing with the production of other furniture (ARBK, 2023).

Manufacturing businesses, in contrast to other businesses, face greater challenges; these challenges include processes that take longer and cost more to complete items. The foundation of operations management is made up of processes. They convert sources into products. The firm's competitive edge lies more in its capacity to perform things well than in its products (Panariti, 2008).

According to the authors Hellriegel and Slocum (2008), inputs are very important since they are employed in the production of goods and services. These inputs include financial, human, IT, and physical resources, as well as managers' expertise. During the transformation process, the organization uses management, technology, and production processes to turn inputs into outputs, such as products and services, profit and loss, employment of people, and other expected consequences. The product's brand is any word, sign, symbol, term, expression, name, or combination of these that is used to identify and name the product.

In Kosovo, consumers, for various reasons, are oriented to meet their needs or even purchase mobile phones and certain items through loans. These opportunities are offered by the financial institutions of Kosovo or even in agreement with the companies that deal specifically with the production of mobile phones according to customer requirements. In conditions of mass production, credit is an instrument that slightly adjusts supply to demand as market demands become more massive. By allowing the credit, property-legal relations are created between the seller

and the buyer. The granting of consumer loans is done in a planned and previously calculated way to ensure the sources of funds.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Our investigation began with an examination of the literature, which included articles in scientific journals and pertinent works by other writers. In order to review and draw conclusions regarding the comprehension of the role of direct marketing in general, and particularly the critical role that direct marketing plays in the behavior of consumers during the purchasing decision-making process, these literatures have been analysed using methods of description and analysis. In addition to these two approaches, the comparison method has been used in this section of the paper to compare the findings of different writers with respect to words, definitions, and concepts that each author came up with. Through comparison, we have improved our concept, idea, and comprehension of the crucial role that marketing specifically, direct marketing plays in customers' purchasing decisions.

The primary research method is used to collect data in the second section of the investigation. A structured questionnaire was utilized to collect the required data. The seven sections of the questionnaire were developed using prior research as a guide (R., Doraszelski, & Draganska, 2009; Chang, 2016; Honka, Hortacsu, & Vitoriono, 2017). The included questions, however, were changed and adjusted to match the circumstances of our study. The questionnaire is constructed with structured questions. The first part of the questionnaire consists of questions aimed at obtaining demographic information, such as: the age of the consumer, gender, monthly family income, and the number of family members. In this study, the target group comprises employed individuals aged 21 and above. The second part of the questionnaire were categorized from the questions related to the main topic of the research, such as questions regarding to the impact of the direct marketing in the consumer behavior and decision-making process of buying. The sample size was 210 respondents, residents of Republic of Kosovo, most of them were from Prishtina, Ferizaj, Vushtrri and Mitrovica. The survey has been conducted through online platform, Google Forms. The sample has been selected using simple random sampling, as it has been impossible to access the database of consumers of the companies that were the subject of this study. The data gathered from the survey, were processed in the SPSS program where their interdependence was analyzed with statistical analysis.

## METHODS

The hypothesis of this study has been conducted based on the literature review of different scientific papers and study reports to determine the role of direct marketing on the consumer behavior and decision-making process of buying. The three hypotheses are listed below:

H1- The offers displayed on social media platforms by furniture companies in Kosovo influence consumers' choices.

H2- The forms of promotion on social media platforms used by furniture companies in Kosovo influence consumers' choices.

H3- The types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo influence consumer choices.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In this section of the paper, the results derived from the questionnaire are presented, which was distributed to 210 respondents who were part of the study sample. The questionnaire was constructed using the census method, where initially the questions posed related to respondents' personal data, while the second part of the questionnaire was characterized by questions directly related to the study topic, specifically concerning the understanding of the role and impact of marketing on consumers' choices regarding furniture brands and companies in Kosovo.

Based on the results derived from the survey, out of 210 respondents, 53.3% of them are aged 21 to 35 years old, 14.8% are aged 36-55 years old, 13.3% are aged 18-20 years old, 11.4% are over 55 years old, and 7.1% of them are under 18 years old.

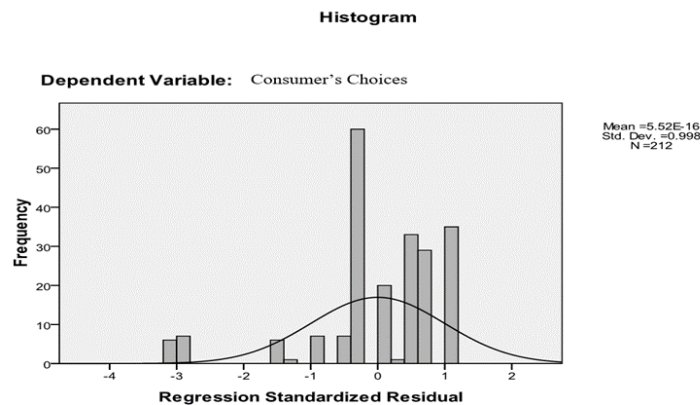
In the focus of the study, there were two genders, and out of the respondents, 50.5% of them were female, while the other group, comprising 49.5%, were male. Regarding their marital status, 47.1% declared themselves as single, 37.6% as married, and 15.2% as engaged. As for their employment status, 45.7% of them stated they were employed, 30.5% were students, 17.1% were unemployed, and the remaining 6.7% were retired.

To test the hypotheses presented in this paper, statistical methods from the SPSS package were used. The independent variables were defined as:

1. The offers displayed on social media platforms by furniture companies in Kosovo;
2. The forms of promotion on social media platforms used by furniture companies in Kosovo; and
3. The types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo.

On the other hand, as a dependent variable is defined: consumers' choices. Below is presented the Histogram graph, where are included the independent variables and dependent variable.

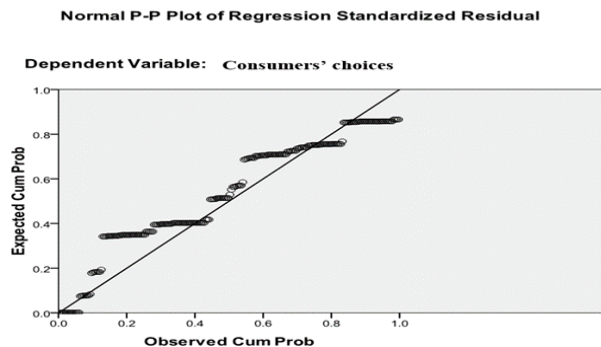
Graph 1. Histogram Graph.



Based on the data resulting from the histogram graph 1, we can say that the data of this model follow a normal distribution, as the regression curve has a bell-shaped form.

Below in graph 2 is presented the probability that exists between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Graph 2. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual.



Based on the probability presentation, we can say that the data of this model have a normal distribution and there is a linear relationship between them. This relationship is distinguished directly from the graph because the points are distributed very close to the regression line, excluding some of them which are considered in the error term.

The following table 2, presents descriptive statistics such as the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the variables included in the model.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumers' choices	75.2783	21.25389	212
The offers displayed on social media platforms by furniture companies in Kosovo	70.3774	21.60281	212



The forms of promotion on social media platforms used by furniture companies in Kosovo	72.5377	21.56998	212
The types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo	73.0943	23.07849	212

From the descriptive statistics: the average consumers' choices for furniture companies in Kosovo is 75.2% with a deviation of 21.2 units. The average impact of offers on social media platforms is 70.3% with a standard deviation of 21.6 units. Similarly, the forms of promotion on social media and types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo, have an average of 70% with a standard deviation of about 22 units.

### CORRELATION BETWEEN VARIABLES

The analysis of correlations between two variables is usually used to depict the direction, nature and significance of bivariate relations among studied (Rahman, 2013). In the table 3, are shown the calculations of Pearson Correlation coefficient for the studied variables, based on the correlation analysis. The variables of the study are presented below:

- Independent variables:
  - ☐ The offers displayed on social media platforms by furniture companies in Kosovo;
  - ☐ The forms of promotion on social media platforms used by furniture companies in Kosovo; and
  - ☐ The types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo.
- Dependent variable, which is related to "Consumers' choices for furniture companies in Kosovo".

It is important to note that the correlation coefficient is an indicator of relations between two variables and can be between -1.00 and 1.00. Values -1.00 and 1.00 show a strong correlation between studied variables, whereas values closer to 0.00 show a poor correlation. Negative values indicate an inverse relation between variables, whereas positive values indicate a direct relation between them.

The table 3, represents the correlation between the variables of the study.

Table 3. Correlation coefficient

		Consumers' choices	The offers displayed on social media platforms	The forms of promotion on social media platforms	The types of social media and their combination
Pearson Correlation	Consumers' choices	1.000	.815	-.067	-.163
	The offers displayed on social media platforms	.015	1.000	-.169	.082
	The forms of promotion on social media platforms	-.067	-.169	1.000	.056
	The types of social media and their combination	-.163	.082	.056	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Consumers' choices	.	.000	.025	.009
	The offers displayed on social media platforms	.415	.	.007	.118
	The forms of promotion on social media platforms	.167	.007	.	.207

	The types of social media and their combination	.009	.000	.207	.
N	Consumers' choices	212	212	212	212
	The offers displayed on social media platforms	212	212	212	212
	The forms of promotion on social media platforms	212	212	212	212
	The types of social media and their combination	212	212	212	212

Y - X1 (81.5%): There is a medium positive correlation between consumer choices regarding mobile phones in Kosovo and offers on social networks. This means that, with the increase of X1 (offers on social networks), Y (influence on consumer choices) also increases, and vice versa. This statement is correct, because (P-value = 0.000 < 0.05).

Y-X2 (67%): There is a medium negative correlation between consumer choices regarding mobile phones in Kosovo and the promotion formats on social networks used by mobile phones in Kosovo. This implies that, with the increase of X2 (promotion formats on social networks), Y (consumer choices) decreases, and vice versa. This statement is not correct, because (P-value = 0.025 < 0.05). And X3 (selected types of media and their combination) is not statistically significant in the model, because the confidence level is not within the confidence interval (P-value = 0.207 > 0.05). Therefore, it should not be interpreted.

#### MULTIVARIABLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The multivariate regression analysis was used to analyse the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The next calculations are presented below with the multivariable regression analysis (table 4).

Table 4. Multivariable Regression Analysis. Model Summaryb

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
						R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	
1	.840 <sup>a</sup>	.705	.016		21.08122	.030	2.157	3	208	.094	1.713

a. Predictors: (Constant), the offers displayed on social media platforms, the forms of promotion on social media platforms, and the types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo.

b. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choices regarding to furniture companies in Kosovo.

R Square indicates how much of the dependent variable's variance is explained by the independent variables. In this model, 84.0% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. The remaining 16.0% is explained by variables that are not included in the model through random error.

The Durbin-Watson test indicates whether there is autocorrelation in the model. Typically, Durbin-Watson test values between 1.5 and 2.5 indicate no autocorrelation.

R - Based on the overall correlation coefficient result (R = 84.0%), it could be concluded that these data have a positive linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables to a high degree, because the percentage of the coefficient is above 80%.

R<sup>2</sup> - Based on the resulting R Square value from the table (R<sup>2</sup> = 70.5), it could be concluded that the coefficient of determination results in an average level of explanatory power. Therefore, the independent variables (X1, X2, X3) manage to explain the dependent variable (Y) to a moderate level.

Table 5 shows the variance analysis statistical test, namely ANOVA.

Table 5. Results of the variance analysis statistical test - ANOVA.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2875.691	3	958.564	140.357	.004 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	92438.889	208	444.418		
Total	95314.580	211			

a. Predictors: (Constant), the offers displayed on social media platforms, the forms of promotion on social media platforms, and the types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo.

b. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choices regarding to furniture companies in Kosovo.

Based on the data presented in the table above, it may be concluded that the independent variables have a significant relation with the dependent variable, which in our case is "Consumers' choices regarding to furniture companies in Kosovo", with the value reaching  $F(3, 208) = 140.357$ , and significance value  $p = 0.004$ , which is under the required level of significance  $p < 0.05$ .

The t-test is implemented in the table 6, in order to support or reject hypothesis from H1 to H3.

Table 6. Statistical significance of independent variable: Coefficients a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	88.716	8.499		10.438	.000		
The offers displayed on social media platforms	.019	.068	.019	.271	.787	.963	1.038
<sup>1</sup> The forms of promotion on social media platforms	-.053	.068	-.054	-.782	.435	.967	1.034
The types of social media and their combination	-.149	.063	-.161	-2.349	.020	.988	1.012

a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choices regarding to furniture companies in Kosovo.

Based on the results derived from the calculations of the table above, it could be concluded that the hypothesis H1: "The offers displayed on social media platforms by furniture companies in Kosovo influence consumers' choices", is highly rejected, considering that the significance value of  $p = 0.787$  is above the standard required value of  $p < 0.05$ , which means that there is no significant relations between two explored variables. This means that offers presented on the social media by furniture companies in Kosovo, do not have a significant influence on consumers' choices for respective companies' offers.

On the same way, the hypothesis H2: "The forms of promotion on social media platforms used by furniture companies in Kosovo influence consumers' choices", is highly rejected, considering that the significance value of  $p = 0.435$  is above the standard required value of  $p < 0.05$ , which means that there is no significant relations between these two variables. This means that forms of promotion presented on the social media platforms by furniture companies in Kosovo, do not have a significant influence on consumers' choices for respective companies' offers.

On the other hand, based on the results from the table 6, it could be concluded that the hypothesis H3: "The types of social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo influence consumer choices", is highly supported, considering that the significance value of  $p = 0.020$  is below the standard required value of  $p < 0.05$ , which means that there are significant relations between these two studied variables. This means that the types of



social media and their combination used by furniture companies in Kosovo, have a significant influence on consumers' choices for respective companies' offers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research paper's analysis indicates that direct marketing is crucial for furniture companies. The findings of this research paper have validated the critical role that direct marketing plays in a company's ability to generate and expand its clientele as well as retain existing ones. Based on the study's findings, it is evident that there are no significant relationships between the deals that Kosovo furniture shops post on social media and the options that customers choose from among those businesses. This indicates that offers made by Kosovo furniture companies on social media do not significantly affect consumers' decisions to accept those offers. This may be the case, as most Kosovo's furniture buyers prefer to purchase their furniture in-store, and they are hesitant to purchase furniture online. Therefore, their decisions may not be highly influenced by the offers that the relevant companies post on social media. Additionally, based on the results, it can be argued that there are no significant relationships between how Kosovan furniture companies advertise on social media and the preferences of customers for any furniture companies in the country. This presents another aspect of the conventional purchasing habits of Kosovo's furniture companies' clients. The findings indicate that individuals would rather visit stores rather than make purchases online. In addition, the findings of our study indicate that there are significant relationships between the kinds of social media platforms and how they are combined by Kosovo's furniture enterprises and the preferences of their customers. This explains why direct marketing is so important for keeping customers informed about their products, locations, promotions, and other pertinent details. Although the direct marketing of furniture businesses in Kosovo did not had a satisfactory impact, its role is undoubtedly significant

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Besides to its importance, this study has also some limitations, which are listed below:

1. The inability to access the database of consumers of the companies being studied in this paper has made it impossible to apply the type of proportional random sampling;
2. The small number of consumers who were part of the sample, as a result of the difficulty in finding them.

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