

ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ НА БЪЛГАРСКАТА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ

# ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ

*ECONOMIC STUDIES*

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## THE IMPACT OF PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: A CASE STUDY OF THE BEVERAGE INDUSTRY IN KOSOVO<sup>4</sup>

*This paper offers a detailed analysis of the beverage market in Kosovo, with a specific focus on the role of promotional activities in influencing consumer behaviour. The study delves into how various promotional strategies, including discounts, product samples, and free coupons, contribute to the development of products in diverse business environments. By combining both primary and secondary data sources, the research explores the relationship between these promotional activities and consumer purchasing decisions within the beverage sector.*

*The study emphasizes the need to distinguish between the broader beverage industry and the specific segment analyzed, particularly local products such as non-alcoholic beverages, juices, and soft drinks, which are central to the research. The scope of the study focuses specifically on non-alcoholic beverages, including juices and soft drinks produced locally in Kosovo.*

*This distinction is important as the broader term 'beverage industry' encompasses a variety of products, including alcoholic drinks and energy beverages, which are not part of this analysis. By narrowing the scope to local products, the study aims to provide a targeted understanding of consumer behaviour and the impact of promotional activities in key regions such as Prishtina, Gjilan, and Ferizaj. The findings demonstrate that promotional strategies such as free samples, coupons, and bonus packaging are particularly relevant and effective for local brands in these segments, offering insights into how these tools influence consumer decision-making at the regional level.*

*While the findings align with existing literature on promotional practices, they provide valuable insights into the specific dynamics of the Kosovo beverage market, an area that has received limited attention in the context of the region's business environment. The paper underscores the importance of integrating promotional strategies within the*

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*overall marketing mix to foster consumer engagement and influence purchasing decisions.*

*The primary objective of the study is to assess how diverse promotional strategies affect consumer behaviour in Kosovo's beverage market, concentrating on key consumption centres and highlighting the significance of locally produced beverages.*

*Keywords: promotion; beverage market; consumer behavior; decision-making; local products; marketing mix*

*JEL: M00; M20; M31*

## **1. Introduction**

Today, the market offers a wide range of promotions that we encounter almost every day. Promotion, as a marketing activity, plays a crucial role in building communicative relationships with customers. In this study, we will explore how the beverage industry organizes its promotional activities and how the promotion process for products is executed by beverage manufacturers. Marketers increasingly rely on promotional activities as effective strategies to reshape consumer perceptions of brands and enhance their interest in making purchases. In the market, marketers must adopt various strategic techniques to differentiate their products and attract more consumers. Consumers make purchasing decisions daily, and marketing professionals concentrate on the process of purchase decisions, as major corporations carefully analyze consumer behaviour to determine key factors such as: What products do consumers choose? Where do they make their purchases? How much do they buy? When do they buy? And why do they buy? (Grewal et al., 2021). Marketing specialists analyze current consumer purchases to understand what, where, and how much is being bought. However, understanding the "why" behind consumer behaviour in purchasing is a greater challenge, as answers are often hidden deep within the consumer's mind (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). This complexity highlights the importance of effective promotional strategies that can resonate with consumers' motivations and drive purchasing decisions. This relates to what consumers seek to fulfil. They engage in daily purchases and encounter various offers, yet their needs and desires correspond to their prioritized needs for fulfilment. The customer decision-making process involves stages such as recognizing needs, seeking information, evaluating alternatives, and completing post-purchase activities (Grewal, et al., 2021).

The marketing communications mix, often referred to in a corporate context, comprises a targeted blend of advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotions, and direct marketing strategies a company uses to clearly communicate value to customers and build sustainable relationships with them. Sales promotion is a significant element of promotion aimed at generating various effects to enhance and increase sales. It is one of the most short-term instruments in the promotional mix. While advertising or personal selling may encourage consumers to "buy," sales promotion tells them to "buy now" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020).

To identify the impact of sales promotion on consumer behaviour within the beverage industry in Kosovo, we have established the following research objectives:

- To examine whether the "Buy One, Get One Free" offer impacts consumer purchasing behaviour in the beverage industry.
- To determine the influence of coupons on consumer purchasing behaviour in this industry.
- To explore the effect of free samples on consumer purchasing behaviour.
- To identify the impact of bonus packaging on consumer purchasing behaviour within the beverage industry.

Undoubtedly, the paper also has limitations, which may vary. One potential limitation of this study is the limited understanding of the marketing activities and promotional strategies used by some companies in the beverage industry, as some of these may differ from those documented in existing literature. Another limitation is the availability of accurate data on the impact of promotional activities on Kosovar consumers, which could be influenced by external factors, such as market interconnections and seasonal changes in demand.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Concept of Sales Promotion*

Promotional activities are fundamental components of the promotional mix, with promotion itself being a key element of the marketing mix. According to Kotler et al. (2020), promotional activities serve as primary tools in marketing, typically designed for short-term use to stimulate rapid or excessive purchases of specific products or services by consumers or businesses. This can lead to impulsive buying decisions (Muruganantham, G.; Bhakat, R.S., 2013), who define impulse buying as "a consumer purchasing a product with little or no planning, triggered by an unexpected stimulus." Promotional activities are regarded as marketing tools used to attract customer attention (Bhandari, 2014). Retail sales promotions, used by retailers in modern trade, aim to increase sales among consumers, utilizing tactics such as displays and flash discounts. Today, consumers can easily decide on their purchases, but the relationship between brand equity and the perceived value at the time of purchase plays a crucial role. This relationship influences how consumers assess the brand (Yee & Al-Khaled, 2024). The concept of 'promotion' has gradually evolved to reflect affordable discounts in the minds of consumers. This transformation not only signifies cost savings but also emphasizes the added value and benefits customers can receive, making products more accessible and appealing at a reasonable price (Katrandijev, 2016).

Promotional strategies facilitate rapid sales generation and influence various elements of consumer behaviour. As discussed in the study's objectives, the significant increase in sales promotions—especially within consumer markets—can be attributed to several influencing factors. First, within companies, product managers face increasing pressure to boost current sales, and promotions are seen as effective short-term sales instruments (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). Furthermore, promotional activities are essential marketing tools for both manufacturers and retailers, aimed at boosting sales and encouraging customers to purchase more. Such activities include free samples, discount coupons, price reductions, and "buy one,

get one free" promotions, through which retailers or manufacturers market their goods or services using strategic communication methods. It is vital for retailers to focus on customer reactions when using promotional tools. By employing these tools, retailers or manufacturers can accelerate customer purchasing behaviour, as promotional activities effectively stimulate buying actions (Nasir & Bal, 2016). Companies must focus on developing comprehensive strategies by analyzing promotional activities from multiple perspectives. As consumers have become more diverse and have access to various information sources, they can quickly acquire details about a company's products or services (Bondarenko & Vyshnivska, 2023).

There are several interesting studies on consumer attitudes towards sales promotions, which vary depending on the country or region (Katrandjiev, 2016). However, such research is limited in Kosovo, which makes this paper a valuable starting point for comparisons with other countries in the Balkans.

## *2.2. Key instruments in promotional activities*

To achieve the objectives of sales promotion, various instruments can be used, each yielding different outcomes. Consumer promotions encompass a broad range of tools, such as product samples, coupons, price discounts, premiums, point-of-sale displays, lotteries, and event sponsorships (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). Sales promotions often leverage a combination of tools to influence the market. Based on the target group, promotional instruments can be categorized into: consumer stimulation, intermediary stimulation, sales staff stimulation, and opinion leader stimulation (Reshidi & Ceku, 2006). In today's consumer market, preferences have shifted, particularly in the realm of promotion. Consumers are now almost fully informed about their purchasing decisions. With increased reliance on the Internet, the purchasing experience has undergone significant changes. Consumers must navigate an overwhelming array of goods and services that are available through various online communication networks (Vasan, 2024). According to Vasan (2024). Generation Z emphasizes the use of Web 2.0 search tools, highlighting that the adoption of technology can better measure the effectiveness of promotional activities and their influence on purchasing behaviour. This study will examine the impact of promotional activities on this generational group, particularly from a physical perspective.

*H1. Promotional sales instruments notably enhance consumer buying behaviour.*

## *2.3. Product sample*

Among the primary instruments of sales promotion is the product sample, used for promotional purposes and often included as an initial informative step for customers interested in a product. Offering samples is one of the most effective—yet costly—ways to introduce a new product or renew interest in an existing one (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). A free sample serves to create awareness for a new product, thereby generating demand. Although the sample size may be limited, it should be large enough to provide a meaningful experience to the target audience, showcasing what the product offers. Once demand for the product increases, free samples can be discontinued. According to Ashraf et al. (2014), note

that when a company launches a new product, public awareness is typically low. To create market visibility for the product, marketers employ various promotional tools, with free samples being a key tactic. By receiving free samples, consumers can try the product at no cost, which creates interest among potential buyers. A sample is essentially a small portion of the product meant for consumer testing. Similarly, free sampling aims to boost sales.

This study suggests that offering free samples has a positive relationship with consumer purchasing behaviour (Ahmad et al., 2015). Additionally, the free sampling approach motivates customers to experience newly introduced products, taking into account their characteristics and the time involved. This strategy is particularly effective in shaping purchasing decisions, as it connects customers with their preferred brands and increases sales of the promoted product (Shamout, 2016). In today's digital era, consumer preferences have evolved. The e-commerce sector is growing substantially, and online shopping has become a significant aspect of modern consumer lifestyles (Tubalawony, Kurniawan, & Ningsih, 2024).

*H2. Offering free samples has a positive impact on consumers' purchasing decisions.*

#### *2.4. Free coupon offers*

Free coupon offers are another effective tool for product promotion, particularly prevalent in the beverage industry. Customers often prioritize understanding the tangible benefits they can gain from a promotional offer. The term "coupon" refers to discounts that customers can receive on products at their regular prices. A free coupon provides an opportunity to obtain a price reduction on a specific product. Coupons facilitate trial purchases of different products and services, while free coupon promotions can encourage consumers to switch brands. By offering coupons, manufacturers and retailers actively promote their products (Mughal, Mehmood, & Ahmad, 2014).

"Coupon advertising" refers to those customers who take advantage of product discounts. Coupons are considered no-cost offers for specific products, making them accessible to customers who may not otherwise purchase the product at full price. Coupons are easy to access and straightforward for customers to understand, making them highly effective for encouraging first-time product trials (Mughal et al., 2014).

*H3. Free coupons significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour in a positive manner*

#### *2.5. Summary of the literature review*

The literature review explores various dimensions of consumer behaviour in response to promotional activities. Sales promotion is identified as a crucial element of the marketing mix, with tools like product samples, free coupons, and price discounts playing a significant role in influencing purchase decisions. Previous studies have highlighted factors such as impulse buying and consumer preferences, demonstrating the effectiveness of these tools in shaping purchasing behaviour.

It is noted that Generation Z, in particular, relies heavily on digital platforms, emphasizing the importance of web-based promotional strategies. However, most studies focus primarily on online consumer behaviour, leaving gaps in understanding the effects of promotional activities in physical retail environments. This paper seeks to address these gaps by investigating how various promotional tools influence consumer decision-making, particularly within Kosovo's beverage market, with an emphasis on balancing digital and physical promotional strategies.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data to achieve its objectives. Secondary data were collected from the literature to provide a theoretical foundation and a deeper understanding of the importance of sales promotion and its influence on consumer behaviour. The core of this research, however, is based on primary data obtained through a structured questionnaire.

The research follows a descriptive design and adopts a quantitative methodology to examine and test the hypotheses derived from the literature review. The independent variables under investigation include "price reductions," "free product samples," and "free coupon offers," while the dependent variable is consumer purchasing behaviour, with a specific focus on individuals purchasing local beverages. The primary aim of this research design is to utilize quantitative techniques to deliver detailed analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between promotional tools and consumer behaviour (Morse, 2016).

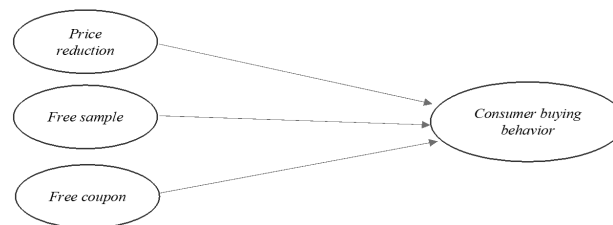
The questionnaire was distributed to 105 consumers selected randomly, primarily targeting shoppers at large supermarkets that stock local products. The selection of supermarkets was strategic to ensure access to respondents who frequently encounter promotional activities for local beverages. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the research and the structure of the questions to encourage honest and accurate responses. Data collection took place from August to September 2021. A total of 105 questionnaires were distributed across retail locations in Pristina, Gjilan, and Ferizaj. Out of these, 80 were successfully completed, yielding a response rate of approximately 76%. The responses were systematically coded and entered into SPSS software for statistical analysis.

The chosen methods provide a robust framework for understanding the impact of promotional strategies on consumer purchasing behaviour. However, the justification for selecting quantitative research lies in its ability to objectively measure the correlation between promotional tools and consumer responses, allowing for generalizable and data-driven conclusions. Furthermore, the random sampling technique ensures the representation of diverse consumer perspectives, while SPSS software facilitates rigorous analysis of the collected data.

### 3.1. Research model

In this section, we will present the conceptual model of the study, which illustrates the key variables: free coupons, free samples, and price reductions. These variables will be examined for their impact on consumer buying behaviour. By analyzing how these promotional strategies influence purchasing decisions, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play in consumer behaviour and the effectiveness of different promotional tactics. Consumer behaviour encompasses multiple stages of interaction with the product and brand, beginning with need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. Promotional activities, such as coupon campaigns and free samples, play a critical role at different stages, shaping both immediate and long-term consumer preferences.

**Figure 1. Research Model of Variables**



The research model we have adopted focuses on the interconnection of variables that will be explored through the research questions posed to a randomly selected group of consumers. The purpose of this model is to investigate the connections between the independent variables – such as price discounts, free samples, and complimentary coupons – and their effect on consumer purchasing behaviour. The conceptual model of consumer behaviour emphasizes its dynamic nature, progressing through stages like need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. Promotional activities play crucial roles at these stages, providing stimuli that influence and guide consumer decisions over time.

### 3.2. Research hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated in this study are as follows:

- H1. Promotional sales instruments notably enhance consumer buying behaviour.
- H2. Offering free samples has a positive impact on consumers' purchasing decisions.
- H3. Free coupons significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour in a positive manner.

These hypotheses are grounded in the comprehensive research framework developed for this study and will be validated using the statistical software SPSS. Following the validation of

these hypotheses, we will present an in-depth analysis of the results obtained from regression analysis. This approach will clarify the strength and nature of the relationships among the variables and enhance our understanding of how promotional strategies impact consumer behaviour. The primary goal of this research is to deliver practical recommendations for marketers looking to enhance their promotional strategies in a highly competitive marketplace.

### *3.3. Data analysis*

This research aims to explore the connections between different promotional strategies and their effects on consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on purchasing behaviour related to fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). Additionally, the study aims to examine the interrelationships among these variables. To test the connections between the variables, the hypotheses, and the influence of the associated activities in the research, we employed regression analysis to assess the impact among the variables.

This analytical approach allows us to quantitatively evaluate how different promotional strategies affect consumer decisions, providing a clearer understanding of their effectiveness in driving purchases. By elucidating these relationships, the study contributes to the broader field of marketing research, offering insights that can inform the development of more effective promotional campaigns.

### *3.4. Regression analysis*

A regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the effect of sales promotions on consumer behaviour, particularly within the beverage sector in the country. The findings from the analysis revealed that promotional strategies have a significant and measurable influence on consumer behaviour, especially in terms of purchase decisions and brand preference. These strategies, such as price reductions, free samples, and coupons, were found to directly shape consumer attitudes and purchasing patterns. As a result, we can confidently conclude that the hypotheses regarding the impact of sales promotions on consumer behaviour were strongly supported and validated based on the regression analysis results. This analytical technique provides a robust framework for understanding how various promotional strategies affect consumer purchasing decisions, offering empirical support for the proposed hypotheses.

The findings provide valuable insights into the field of marketing by emphasizing the effectiveness of sales promotions in influencing consumer preferences and behaviours. Specifically, the results highlight how various promotional strategies, such as price reductions, free samples, and coupons, significantly impact purchasing decisions. These insights are essential for businesses looking to tailor their marketing efforts to better meet consumer demands and optimize sales outcomes. By demonstrating the positive correlation between promotional activities and consumer behaviour, the research provides a clear understanding of how these strategies shape consumer choices, ultimately leading to increased brand engagement and sales in the beverage sector. Here's the table format for the model summary:

**Table 1. Model Summary – Promotional tools facilitate the purchase of the product**

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .958 <sup>a</sup> | .918     | .917              | .21544                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product promotion aids consumers in product selection.

Prediction (Constant); Product promotion aids consumers in product selection. According to the R model, a positive result of 0.958 is predicted, with an adjusted R square value also indicating a positive outcome at 0.917.

**Table 2. Coefficient for promotional tools that facilitate product purchasing**

| Coefficients                                          |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                                                 | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | Sig. |
|                                                       | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)                                            | .460                        | .084       |                           | 5.452  | .000 |
| Product promotion aids consumers in product selection | .850                        | .029       | .958                      | 29.568 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Promotional tools facilitate product purchasing.

The unstandardized coefficient in relation to the following variable, "product promotion aids consumers in product selection," is 0.46 and 0.850, indicating a positive correlation. In comparison, the standardized coefficient is 0.958, which demonstrates a higher value than the preceding variable. This suggests that product promotion significantly influences consumer decision-making.

**Table 3. Summary of the Model – Promotional tools demonstrate a positive influence on consumer purchasing behaviour**

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .844 <sup>a</sup> | .713     | .709              | .42213                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Promotional sales instruments notably enhance consumer buying behaviour

The prediction (constant) indicates that promotional tools have a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour. According to the R model, a positive result of 0.844 is forecasted, along with an adjusted R-squared value of 0.709, which also reflects a positive correlation.

**Table 4. Coefficient for promotional tools having a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour**

| Coefficients                                                          |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                                                                 | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | Sig. |
|                                                                       | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)                                                            | .675                        | 0.154      |                           | 4.384  | .000 |
| Promotional tools have a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour | .688                        | .49        | .844                      | 13.912 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Product promotion informs the customer about products

The unstandardized coefficient related to the variable "promotional tools have a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour" is 0.675, indicating a positive relationship, along with a standardized coefficient of 0.844, which is higher than the previous variable's coefficient of 0.688. This suggests that promotional tools significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour, reinforcing their effectiveness in driving consumer decisions.

**Table 5. Summary of the Model – Free Samples Assist Consumers in Product Selection**

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .931 <sup>a</sup> | .867     | .866              | .39719                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Free samples assist consumers in product selection.

Prediction (Constant): Free Samples Assist Consumers in Product Selection. According to the R model, a positive result is forecasted at .931, with the adjusted R-squared value also being positive at .866.

**Table 6. The coefficient for the third hypothesis – Free samples facilitate the purchase of the product**

| Coefficients                                        |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                                               | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | Sig. |
|                                                     | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)                                          | -.161                       | .111       |                           | -.1452 | .150 |
| Free samples assist consumers in product selection. | 1.033                       | .046       | .931                      | 12.581 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Free samples facilitate product purchasing

The unstandardized coefficient for the variable indicating that free samples facilitate product purchasing is beta -0.161, indicating a negative effect, while the standardized coefficient is beta 0.931, demonstrating a higher positive value compared to the previous variable.

**Table 7. Summary of the model – Free coupons facilitate product purchasing.**

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .909 <sup>a</sup> | .827     | .825              | .42134                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Free coupons facilitate product purchasing

Prediction (Constant): Free coupons facilitate product purchasing. According to the R model, a positive result of 0.909 is forecasted, with the adjusted R-square also indicating a positive value of 0.825.

The unstandardized coefficient for the variable "Free Coupons Facilitate Product Purchases" is beta -0.392, indicating a negative effect, while the standardized coefficient is beta 0.909, demonstrating a higher positive value compared to the previous variable. The positive unstandardized coefficient of 1.099 further reinforces the overall impact of free coupons on facilitating consumer purchases, suggesting that while there may be instances where the effect is less pronounced, the overall trend remains significantly positive.

**Table 8. Coefficient for Free Samples Have a Positive Effect on Consumer Buying Behavior**

| Model                                       | Coefficients                |            |                           | T      | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                                             | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |        |      |
|                                             | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)                                  | -.392                       | .181       |                           | -2.169 | .033 |
| Free coupons facilitate product purchasing. | 1.099                       | 0.57       | .909                      | 19.297 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Free samples have a positive effect on customer buying behaviour

**Table 9. Model Summary – Free coupons have a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour**

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .932 <sup>a</sup> | .869     | .867              | .32136                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Free coupons have a positive effect on consumer buying behavior.

According to the R model, a positive result is predicted with a value of .932, while the adjusted R-squared is also positive at 0.867. This indicates a strong relationship between the independent variable of free coupons and the dependent variable of consumer buying behaviour.

**Table 10. Coefficient for free coupons having a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour**

| Model                                                             | Coefficients                |            |                           | T      | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                                                                   | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |        |      |
|                                                                   | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)                                                        | .694                        | .115       |                           | 5.632  | .000 |
| Free coupons have a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour. | .833                        | .037       | .932                      | 22.746 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Free coupons assist consumers in selecting products.

The unstandardized coefficient related to the variable indicating that free coupons have a positive effect on consumer buying behaviour is -0.694 (negative) and 0.833 (positive), compared to the standardized coefficient of 0.932, which represents a higher value than the preceding variable.

### 3.5. Discussion of data and hypothesis validation

The findings of the study should be connected to the stages of consumer behaviour to ensure their relevance and validity. Consumer behaviour follows a process involving multiple stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. By tying the results to these stages, we gain a clearer

understanding of how sales promotions influence consumer decision-making across each phase.

Regarding the audience's demographics, it's important to examine how factors like age, income, education, and other variables impact the effectiveness of sales promotions. Younger consumers, for instance, are more likely to engage with online promotions, such as digital coupons or free samples, while older consumers may prefer traditional in-store promotions. Understanding these demographic differences can help marketers tailor promotional strategies to specific groups, ensuring a more effective and targeted approach.

The research targeted consumers who had previously purchased beverages, which allows for a deeper understanding of how their past experiences with these products influence their purchasing decisions. This focus on a specific segment helps contextualize the role of promotions in shaping consumer behaviour, making the findings more actionable for marketing strategies. The study's findings align with existing research that shows the positive impact of promotional activities on consumer buying behaviour. Sales promotions are recognized as key drivers of consumer decision-making, influencing buying behaviour across various regions. The findings demonstrate that 'buy one, get one free' offers are particularly effective during the purchase decision stage, while free samples significantly impact the initial information search and product trial stages. These results reinforce the idea that consumer behaviour is not a one-time act but a process influenced over time by ongoing promotional efforts. This reinforces the essential role that marketing strategies play in shaping consumer perceptions and encouraging purchases. These insights highlight the need for marketers to design promotional strategies that align with the specific stages of consumer behaviour, ensuring that the tools used are optimized for maximum impact at each phase of the decision-making process.

### *3.5.1. Hypothesis validation*

**First Hypothesis:** The first hypothesis, which suggested that sales promotional tools have a significant positive impact on consumer behaviour, was validated. Regression analysis revealed strong relationships between variables, with the highest standardized coefficient ( $\beta = 0.958$ ), indicating that promotional tools not only encourage purchases but also foster consumer engagement and loyalty.

**Second Hypothesis:** The second hypothesis, asserting that free samples positively influence consumer buying behaviour, was not supported by the findings. The regression analysis showed an unexpected negative value of -0.16, suggesting that free samples may not always lead to increased purchases. This result could be due to market saturation or the lack of alignment with consumer preferences, indicating that free samples might not always be an effective promotional strategy.

**Third Hypothesis:** The third hypothesis, which posited that free coupons positively impact consumer buying behaviour, was confirmed. The regression analysis revealed a strong positive correlation (0.69), suggesting that financial incentives, such as coupons, effectively encourage immediate consumer action and drive sales performance.

Our study contributes to the broader understanding of how promotional activities affect consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of beverage consumption. It shows that well-structured promotional strategies, such as price reductions, free samples, and coupons, can have varying effects on consumer purchasing decisions. Moreover, the research confirms that financial incentives, like coupons, play a key role in influencing consumer behaviour, supporting the notion that discounts are powerful tools in promotional strategies.

In conclusion, the study highlights that sales promotion programs are critical in shaping consumer behaviour and driving purchasing decisions. The findings underscore the importance of continually adapting promotional strategies to consumer preferences and market conditions. The study also suggests that while some promotional methods, like coupons, may be universally effective, others, such as free samples, may require further adjustment to align with consumer expectations and needs.

### *3.6. Recommendations*

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that local beverage companies implement targeted promotional strategies tailored to consumer preferences. Specifically:

**Leverage 'Buy One, Get One Free' Offers:** These promotions were found to be particularly effective during the purchase decision stage. Companies should use them to drive immediate purchases, especially during peak shopping times, such as weekends or holidays.

**Distribute Free Samples Strategically:** Free samples should be placed in high-traffic locations such as supermarkets or at events to encourage trial among consumers who are unfamiliar with the product. This method can be especially effective for new product launches, as it helps build brand awareness and trust.

**Adopt Digital Coupons:** Younger consumers, who are more likely to shop online or use apps for discounts, can be effectively engaged through digital coupons. Developing a user-friendly online platform or partnering with local e-commerce sites can enhance the reach and effectiveness of such campaigns.

**Create Demographic-Specific Campaigns:** Tailoring promotional activities to specific consumer segments is crucial. For example, older consumers may respond better to traditional in-store discounts or loyalty programs, while younger demographics prefer digital engagement.

In addition to these strategies, companies should establish a robust monitoring system to assess the effectiveness of these promotional efforts in real time. This will allow businesses to adjust their strategies based on consumer feedback and sales data. By using a data-driven approach, companies can ensure their promotions remain relevant and impactful, fostering sustained consumer engagement and loyalty.

Moreover, it is essential for manufacturing organizations to adopt diversified and creative promotional strategies that are aligned with consumer preferences. Such an approach will contribute to increased sales revenues and a broader market reach. The study findings indicate that product samples have a consistently positive effect on promotional activities within the

beverage industry, reinforcing the importance of well-structured promotional efforts for achieving significant benefits.

This aligns with the work of Ogunsiji and Odunlami (2011), who emphasize the need for a well-established sales promotion department staffed by experienced personnel. This department should focus on developing a diverse range of promotional strategies that align with the company's overall goals. Additionally, adequate budgeting for these activities is critical, as sales promotions can deliver substantial long-term benefits. A well-invested promotional budget can help companies increase sales, improve product visibility, and enhance market acceptance, while also educating consumers about the company's offerings.

Another key recommendation is the implementation of a modernized, computerized distribution system. Such a system will allow managers to more effectively track sales activities, address customer feedback, and manage complaints. This comprehensive approach not only improves operational efficiency but also strengthens relationships with consumers, leading to sustained business growth.

However, companies must also be mindful of the potential negative repercussions of overusing sales promotions. While strategies like price reductions, free samples, and coupons can drive short-term sales, they can undermine long-term brand value and customer loyalty if overused. Consumers may begin to expect frequent discounts, which can diminish the perceived quality of the product and weaken the brand image. Additionally, if promotional offers do not align well with consumer needs or market trends, they may lead to unsatisfactory consumer experiences and harm the brand's reputation. Excessive promotions can also create increased competition among businesses, potentially eroding profit margins.

Finally, it is crucial that promotional activities are integrated into a broader marketing communications strategy. While promotions can boost immediate sales, care should be taken to balance short-term promotional efforts with long-term brand positioning and relationship-building with consumers. Over-reliance on frequent, deep discounts or free samples may not effectively communicate the brand's values and messaging, potentially prioritizing sales over the long-term health of the brand.

### *3.7. Recommendations for future research*

Building on the insights from this study on the impact of promotional activities on consumer behaviour in the beverage industry in Kosovo, we propose the following directions for future research:

- **Enhanced Focus on Digital Campaigns:** Future studies should prioritize digital promotional strategies, capitalizing on the growing reliance of consumers on online platforms. This includes using social media, email marketing, and targeted online advertisements to reach and engage the intended audience more effectively.
- **Integration of Interactive Advertising:** Researchers should explore the potential of interactive advertising, such as gamification, polls, or augmented reality experiences, to enhance consumer engagement and foster more memorable interactions with the brand.

- **Data-Driven Approaches:** Future research should emphasize the use of data analytics to better understand consumer behaviour and preferences. By closely monitoring these factors, companies can fine-tune their promotional activities to cater to the specific needs and desires of their consumers, increasing the effectiveness of their marketing strategies.
- **Cross-Channel Strategies:** Future studies should explore integrated marketing approaches that combine traditional and digital promotional methods. Such strategies can reinforce brand messages and enhance consumer engagement across multiple platforms.
- **Focus on Content Marketing:** Developing relevant, valuable content that resonates with consumers can strengthen brand loyalty and positively influence purchasing decisions. Future campaigns should focus not only on promoting products but also on educating and informing consumers about the benefits and values of the products they are offered.

### 3.8. *Conclusions*

This study aimed to explore the impact of sales promotions on consumer behaviour, specifically within the beverage sector in Kosovo, and to validate the influence of promotional activities like price reductions, free samples, and coupons on consumer purchasing decisions. The research has successfully met its objectives by demonstrating that sales promotions can significantly influence consumer behaviour, though with varying degrees of impact depending on the type of promotional strategy employed. The findings revealed that while sales promotional tools, particularly price reductions and coupons, positively affect consumer behaviour, the effect of free samples was less pronounced, suggesting that the effectiveness of this promotional strategy can vary depending on factors like consumer preferences and market conditions. These results underscore the importance of understanding the diverse consumer segments and the role that demographic factors play in shaping responses to promotions. By targeting specific consumer groups with tailored promotional strategies, businesses can increase engagement and drive sales.

The study also highlights the relevance of continuously adapting promotional strategies to align with changing consumer preferences and market dynamics. As consumer behaviour continues to evolve, particularly with the increasing reliance on digital platforms, businesses must remain agile and innovative in their promotional approaches. The recommendations provided in this study emphasize the need for diversified, targeted promotional strategies that not only drive immediate sales but also build long-term brand loyalty. In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights to the field of marketing, particularly in understanding the role of sales promotions in influencing consumer decision-making. By validating the hypotheses and addressing the implications of promotional strategies, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how these activities impact consumer behaviour at different stages of the purchasing process. The findings can serve as a guide for marketers seeking to optimize their promotional efforts and effectively engage their target audience, ultimately improving sales performance and consumer satisfaction.

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