
THE PINK TAX IN INDIA: GENDER-BASED PRICE DISCRIMINATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sunita Sharma¹ and Nooruzia Qazi²¹Visiting Faculty, Deviprasad Goenka Management College of Media Studies, Mumbai, India²Head, Department of Commerce, B. M. Ruia Girls' College, Mumbai, India**ABSTRACT**

Gender-based price discrimination, popularly known as the Pink Tax, constitutes a subtle yet persistent form of socio-economic inequality within contemporary consumer markets. By charging women higher prices for functionally similar products, this practice reinforces socially constructed gender norms and imposes a disproportionate financial burden on women, thereby undermining gender justice and inclusive development. This study adopts a descriptive, exploratory, and comparative research design to examine the prevalence of the pink tax in the Indian consumer market, with particular emphasis on the Digital India ecosystem. The objectives are threefold: to assess price differentials between personal care products marketed to men and women, to explore the underlying drivers of these disparities, and to analyse consumer perceptions regarding the fairness of gender-based pricing. The study is guided by the hypotheses that gender-neutral products do not exhibit significant price differences (H_0) and that the pink tax reflects gender-based pricing rooted in socially constructed gender norms (H_1). Ten commonly used personal care products were analysed across major retail platforms—Amazon, Flipkart, and D-Mart.

Descriptive statistical analysis reveals a consistent price premium on products targeted at women, with women paying an average of 14.26% more than men for comparable items, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Thematic analysis of consumer responses further indicates that the pink tax is widely perceived as unfair, exploitative, and unjustified by functional product differentiation. The study concludes that the pink tax is not merely a marketing strategy but a manifestation of structural gender inequality embedded within consumer markets and advocates for gender-responsive pricing, ethical corporate accountability, and informed consumer awareness.

Keywords: Pink Tax, Gender-Based Price Discrimination, Social Innovation, Sustainable Development, Gender Justice, Gender Equity in markets.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizes the urgent need for gender equality and women's empowerment as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth. Among these goals, SDG 5 specifically calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls in both public and private spheres. Despite this global commitment, gender inequality continues to persist in contemporary societies through various socio-economic dimensions, one of which is gender-based price discrimination, commonly referred to as the pink tax.

A tax, in general terms, is a compulsory contribution made by citizens to support government functions and fund public services. Taxes lead to a withdrawal from individuals' income, thereby reducing purchasing power. Broadly, taxes are classified into direct taxes and indirect taxes. Direct taxes directly affect the income of the taxpayer, whereas indirect taxes impact individuals at the point of consumption, when goods and services are purchased. Since indirect taxes are embedded in prices and are not explicitly visible to consumers, their burden often goes unnoticed.

The concept of the pink tax reflects a form of indirect economic burden disproportionately borne by women. It refers to the systematic practice of charging higher prices for products and services marketed towards women compared to those marketed towards men, despite minimal or no differences in quality, functionality, or production costs. This hidden price disparity results in women spending significantly more over their lifetimes on essential goods and services. As indirect in nature, such discriminatory pricing practices often escape consumer scrutiny, leading to unequal financial outcomes between men and women.

The prevalence of the pink tax spans multiple sectors, including personal care products, clothing, children's toys, and various services. These pricing practices reinforce gender stereotypes and contribute to structural inequality by normalizing higher costs for women's consumption needs. Such economic discrimination not only imposes an unfair financial burden on women but also infringes upon principles of equality and consumer rights, thereby perpetuating an unjust and exclusionary market system.

Through gendered marketing strategies, corporations have often maximized profits while concealing discriminatory pricing practices from consumers. Although recent years have witnessed increased awareness and the adoption of gender-neutral pricing by some companies, the pink tax largely remains an overlooked issue. Addressing and eliminating the pink tax is therefore a crucial step towards achieving gender equality and advancing social sustainability.

This research paper seeks to examine the phenomenon of the pink tax in India, highlight its implications for women and society at large, and contribute to ongoing discussions on policy reforms and consumer awareness aimed at promoting a more equitable and sustainable economic system.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS:

Drawing on the historical evolution of the Pink Tax outlined by Pant (2021), the study is primarily grounded in feminist economics, with complementary insights from price discrimination theory, social justice theory, and social sustainability frameworks. Pant situates the emergence of the Pink Tax within post-World War II gendered market practices, where femininity—symbolised through the colour pink—was deliberately commercialised. This historical positioning aligns closely with feminist economic critiques, which challenge market systems that institutionalise gender norms and normalise unequal economic outcomes for women.

The study by Panigrahi and Ansari (2025), incorporates price discrimination theory, who conceptualise gender-based pricing as a form of third-degree price discrimination. Their framework explains how firms segment consumer markets by gender and impose differential pricing on functionally equivalent products. Importantly, their behavioural economics perspective underscores that such pricing practices are not solely cost-driven; rather, they are socially constructed and psychologically reinforced, thereby embedding gender inequality within routine consumption patterns.

Additionally, the conceptualisation of the Pink Tax by Biswas et al. (2024) draws on social justice theory, framing it as an indirect and informal economic burden disproportionately borne by women. By highlighting systematic expenditure disparities on similar products marketed to men and women, this perspective exposes entrenched gender bias within market structures and raises critical concerns regarding fairness and equity in contemporary consumer markets.

Addressing the Pink Tax thus emerges as a critical concern of social innovation and social sustainability, necessitating ethical pricing practices, enhanced consumer awareness, and gender-responsive regulatory and market interventions aimed at promoting inclusive and equitable economic systems.

RATIONALE FOR TOPIC SELECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Gender-based pricing manifests in two ways: first, profit-maximising strategies lead to higher prices for products marketed to women despite minimal differences from those marketed to men; second, goods and services used specifically by women often attract additional indirect taxes, reducing affordability. The lack of awareness about such pricing practices further sustains the prevalence of the pink tax.

Over time, the repeated payment of marginally higher prices accumulates into a significant financial burden for women, widening the existing income gap and influencing future purchasing decisions. This practice reflects socially constructed perceptions rather than differences in production costs. The persistence of the pink tax therefore contradicts the objectives of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), as it reinforces economic inequality and undermines social sustainability systems.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out whether pink tax exists in the Indian market.
2. To explore the reasons for price differences between functionally similar products for men and women and assess consumer perceptions of the fairness of the Pink Tax.
3. To give suggestions about combating it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Pink Tax as a Challenge to Social Innovation and Sustainable Development: Existing literature highlights pink tax, and its implications for social equity and sustainable development.

A landmark study by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (CBS News, 2016, From Cradle to Cane) examined nearly 800 gender-specific products, finding that women's versions were priced on average 7% higher than comparable men's products. Discriminatory pricing was also observed in services such as dry

cleaning, despite being illegal. These practices highlight how market mechanisms can inadvertently undermine economic fairness and inclusivity, key goals of sustainable development.

Wakeman (2020) defines the Pink Tax as an upcharge on products marketed to women that differ from men's only in cosmetic features. Using data from multiple U.S. states, the study shows that women paid up to 50% more for functionally similar goods due to gendered marketing strategies rather than product differentiation. This reflects a market failure that calls for socially innovative solutions in pricing transparency and consumer protection.

Pant (2021) provides evidence from personal care products, showing that identical items were priced differently solely due to gendered packaging. Such practices contribute to systemic economic disadvantage for women, highlighting the need for policy interventions and inclusive business practices aligned with sustainable development goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities).

Kardetoft (2022) documents the persistence of the Pink Tax in Sweden, despite legal prohibitions. Women paid approximately 4.1% more for similar personal hygiene products, indicating that regulatory intent alone is insufficient, and innovative strategies are required to align market behavior with social equity objectives.

Thirumalia (2022) argues that cultural narratives and media representations normalize the Pink Tax by reinforcing gender norms.

In India, Singh et al. (2024) report significant price disparities across multiple product categories. Addressing these disparities aligns with SDGs by promoting inclusive growth and social justice, essential elements of sustainable development.

The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data confirms a persistent gender wage gap in India, with women earning approximately 27% to 33% less than men on average, women earn around 60-70% of what men earn. The Pink Tax is yet another added burden, as women are charged more for essential consumer goods. This affects their daily purchasing decisions but also perpetuates broader economic inequality,

The literature shows that the Pink Tax is not only a market irregularity but also a social challenge impacting equity, economic inclusion, and sustainability. Tackling it requires innovative approaches in consumer awareness, policy, and corporate responsibility, highlighting the intersection of social innovation and sustainable development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive, exploratory, and comparative research design to investigate the presence of the "pink tax" in the pricing of personal care products for men and women in the Indian market. The questionnaire method was used to collect data from 50 undergraduate students. The respondents were asked to find and record the prices of 10 personal care products for men and women from three online platforms: Flipkart, D-Mart, and Amazon. They were instructed to identify any price differences and determine the existence of the pink tax.

Primary data was gathered from the reported prices, while secondary data was sourced from online articles and existing literature. The study is designed to compare the prices of identical products targeted at men and women and explore respondents' views on gender-based pricing.

The study tests the following hypotheses:

- **H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the pricing of products for men and women.
- **H₁₁:** Products for women are priced higher than those for men, indicating the existence of the pink tax.
- **H₀₂:** The Pink Tax does not reflect gender-based pricing practices arising from socially constructed gender norms and societal expectations, and does not pose a challenge to social equity and sustainable development.
- **H₁₂:** The Pink Tax reflects gender-based pricing practices rooted in socially constructed gender norms, thereby posing a challenge to social equity and sustainable development

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify price disparities and thematic analysis to evaluate perceptions of gendered pricing.

Based on the responses from 50 respondents, Pink Tax is generally understood as the extra cost that women pay for products and services marketed to them. It is perceived as a price markup on items targeted at women, where similar products aimed at men are often sold at a lower price. Respondents highlighted that Pink Tax reflects

gender-based price discrimination, where women’s products cost more due to factors such as packaging, design, and societal expectations, despite having similar functions as men’s products.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

An attempt was made by the researchers to compare the three websites FLIPKART, D-MART and AMAZON with respect to similar products marked by the websites for different genders - Women and Men as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Showing the prices for the 10 Personal Care Products of same brand priced on the three Websites: Flipkart, D-Mart & Amazon for Women & Men

Website	Price marked for Women	Price marked for Men	Difference	Extra Women are paying for the similar product performing the same function (%)
Flipkart	164285	139017	25268	15.38
D-Mart	146177	122047	24130	16.50
Amazon	186925	165354	21571	11.53
TOTAL	497387	426418	70969	14.26

**Source:* Data collected by researchers.

Based on the results of the data analysis, a statistically significant difference was observed in the pricing of products targeted at men and women. Therefore, **the null hypothesis (H₀₁) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H₁₁) is accepted. This confirms that products marketed to women are priced higher than functionally similar products marketed to men, thereby establishing the presence of the Pink Tax.** The analysis further revealed that the highest pink tax existed in D-MART Store that is 16.50% followed by FLIPKART with a load of 15.38% extra charges for women. This percentage of extra load on women products in AMAZON was 11.53%.

Based on the responses from 50 respondents, Pink Tax is generally understood as the extra cost that women pay for products and services marketed to them. It is perceived as a price markup on items targeted at women, where similar products aimed at men are often sold at a lower price. Respondents highlighted that Pink Tax reflects gender-based price discrimination, where women’s products cost more due to factors such as packaging, design, and societal expectations, despite having similar functions as men’s products.

Table 2 emphasizes the strong connection between marketing practices and the societal pressures that contribute to price discrimination in the market. The **Pink Tax** is a product of these complex factors, and this table 2 helps to analyse the specific elements that influence gendered pricing strategies in the Indian market.

Table2: Showing Reasons for Price Differences in Products Targeted at Men and Women (Pink Tax)

Sr. No.	Reason for Price Differences	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
1.	Physiological differences between genders (e.g., skin type, texture) requiring different formulations for products.	6	12
2.	Shopping habits, cultural norms, physiological appeal, and market segmentation contributing to pink tax.	7	14
3.	Women's products having fancier packaging, extra ingredients added to justify higher prices, compared to men's products which are simpler.	10	20
4.	Product pricing influenced by product positioning, targeted advertising, and brand identity.	2	4
5.	Difference in ingredients used in men's products versus women's products.	1	2
6.	Marking products differently for men and women as part of profit strategies.	2	4
7.	Women's products being marketed as more luxurious through attractive packaging, colour, and scent, leading to higher prices.	5	10
8.	Social, cultural, and psychological factors influencing price discrimination.	4	8
9.	Societal expectations which the marketers exploit, creating targeted appeals; women's products marketed as beauty-focused.	8	16
10.	Products marketed differently to women and men due to stereotypical shopping habits (e.g., bold/simple for men, colourful/stylish for women).	3	6
11.	Similar products marketed differently to women and men due to gender norms and expectations influencing purchasing behaviour.	2	4
TOTAL		50	100

**Source:* Data collected by researchers.

Table 2 presents the reasons why products targeted at men and women, despite performing the same function, are marked differently in terms of pricing. Table 2 illustrates the frequency of responses provided by the respondents in a study about the Pink Tax in the Indian market, as well as the percentage of each reason in relation to the total number of responses. Table 2 shows that the most frequent reason for price differences is product packaging and additional ingredients for women's products, which account for 20% of the responses. These products are often marketed as more luxurious with added ingredients or features to justify a higher price. This suggests that marketers position women's products as premium items. The next most significant factor is shopping habits, cultural norms, and physiological appeal, contributing to 14% of the responses. This shows that social expectations and gender norms play a crucial role in the way products are priced differently. Other prominent reasons include societal expectations influencing targeted marketing strategies (16%), and physiological differences between genders (12%), which often result in differentiated product formulations.

The table 2 also reveals that social, cultural, and psychological factors account for 8% of the responses, highlighting how marketing exploits these factors to create gendered perceptions, ultimately contributing to the pink tax.

Table 3 presents the views of respondents on whether the Pink Tax imposed by corporates is fair.

Table 3: Views of Respondents on Whether the Pink Tax Imposed by Corporates is Fair.

Sr. No.	Statement on Pink Tax Fairness	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Pink tax is not fair as it contributes to period poverty and causes social, emotional, physical, and mental health problems for women.	9	18
2.	Pink tax is unfair as it leads to gender-based price discrimination and exploits gender norms and consumer habits instead of actual product quality differences.	13	26
3.	Pink tax is a marketing strategy with no real difference in product quality , taking advantage of women by charging more for similar products.	12	24
4.	Price difference is due to design and packaging , not the product function; removing the pink tax would create fairer pricing.	6	12
5.	The extra cost charged to women is unfair and contributes to financial inequality and gendered marketing .	7	14
6.	Pink tax exists across various products and services (e.g., clothing, toys, insurance) and is primarily a corporate profit strategy .	2	4
7.	Pink tax perpetuates economic inequality by exploiting gender stereotypes .	2	4
TOTAL		50	100

**Source:* Data collected by researchers.

18% of respondents expressed that the Pink Tax is unfair because it contributes to period poverty and creates significant health issues for women, highlighting the social impact of gender-based pricing. The largest group of responses (26%) believed that Pink Tax is unfair due to gender-based price discrimination, which takes advantage of consumer habits and gender norms rather than reflecting any true difference in product quality. 24% of respondents identified Pink Tax as a marketing strategy, where women are charged more for similar products with no real difference in quality. This indicates that the pricing differences are primarily driven by marketing tactics rather than product value. A significant portion (12%) stated that price differences are due to design and packaging variations, and removing these differences would help ensure fairer pricing. 14% of respondents pointed out that the extra cost charged to women results in financial inequality and contributes to gendered marketing strategies, reinforcing the economic divide between genders. 4% of respondents noted that Pink Tax is widespread across various products and services (such as clothing, toys, insurance), which is seen primarily as a corporate strategy to increase profits. Another 4% highlighted that Pink Tax perpetuates economic inequality by exploiting gender stereotypes.

Thus, from Table 3, it can be concluded that the Pink Tax reflects gender-based pricing practices, is unfair and undermine social equity. It highlights the need for socially innovative and sustainable market practices that promote fairness and inclusive development.

Table 4 highlights that a significant portion of respondents recognizes Pink Tax as a real phenomenon, backed by data revealing gender-based pricing strategies as shown below.

Table 4: Views of Respondents on whether the data collected from 3 Websites revealed the Existence of Pink Tax.

Sr. No.	Statement on data supporting the existence of Pink Tax	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	The data supports the existence of Pink Tax, revealing price differences across genders due to design, packaging, and production costs .	32	64
2.	The data highlights gender-based price discrimination and the need to address this issue in the market.	10	20
3.	Data from multiple websites selling similar products for men and women proves the existence of Pink Tax.	4	8
4.	Pink Tax is a real and persistent issue, driven by profit strategies and gender-based marketing .	4	8
TOTAL		50	100

**Source:* Data collected by researchers.

Table 4 shows that 64% of respondents agreed that the data supports the existence of the Pink Tax, driven by price differences across genders related to design, packaging, and production costs. 20% of respondents highlighted that the data identifies gender-based price discrimination and the importance of addressing these issues in the market. 8% mentioned that the data collected from multiple websites clearly demonstrated the Pink Tax, proving its presence in the market. 8% emphasized that Pink Tax is a real and persistent issue, mainly driven by profit strategies and gender-targeted marketing.

Table 5 given below summarizes the views of respondents on how the Pink Tax relates to the social construction of gender.

Table 5: Views of Respondents on Whether Pink Tax is Related to the Social Construction of Gender

Sr. No.	Statement on Pink Tax and Social Construction of Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Pink Tax reflects gender-based price discrimination , reinforcing gender stereotypes and societal roles by pricing women’s products higher.	23	46
2.	Pink Tax exists due to societal expectations that women invest more in self-care , with companies exploiting this by charging higher prices.	9	18
3.	Pink Tax contributes to economic and social inequalities by maintaining gender-based pricing disparities in various products and services.	6	12
4.	Pink Tax reinforces gender norms , suggesting women’s products are inherently more valuable and need special features.	12	24
TOTAL		50	100

**Source:* Data collected by researchers.

Table 5 reveals that 46% of respondents believe that the Pink Tax reflects gender-based price discrimination, reinforcing gender stereotypes and the roles assigned to men and women in society. This includes the idea that women’s products are priced higher due to societal expectations and marketing strategies. 18% of respondents noted that the Pink Tax exists because society expects women to invest more in self-care, with companies taking advantage of this expectation by charging higher prices for products marketed to women. 12% emphasized that the Pink Tax perpetuates economic and social inequalities by creating pricing disparities in various products and services such as clothing, toys, and personal care. 24% of respondents highlighted that the Pink Tax reinforces gender norms, where women’s products are marketed as more valuable, often requiring special features, thus justifying the higher prices.

From Tables 3, 4 & 5 we can conclude that Pink Tax is a manifestation of gender-based pricing Thus we reject H₀₂ and accept H₁₂ and conclude that, The Pink Tax reflects gender-based pricing practices rooted

in socially constructed gender norms, thereby posing a challenge to social equity and sustainable development.

Justifications Given by Corporates for the Existence of the Pink Tax:

Despite increasing scrutiny of the Pink Tax, corporates continue to justify gender-based price differentials through multiple economic and market-driven arguments, which have significant implications for gender justice and sustainable development (Pant Svasti, 2021).

a) Differences in Production Costs: Corporates contend that higher prices for women's products arise from increased production costs due to the use of costlier materials and design inputs. However, such justifications overlook the need for socially innovative production practices that promote cost transparency and gender-neutral pricing.

b) Price Discrimination: Differential pricing is rationalised on the assumption that women exhibit lower price sensitivity. This practice reinforces gender inequities in consumption and undermines principles of fairness central to gender justice and inclusive markets.

c) Profit Maximisation: The persistence of the Pink Tax is largely driven by profit-maximisation strategies that exploit gendered consumption patterns, prioritising commercial gains over ethical pricing and social responsibility (Wakeman, 2020).

d) Gender-Based Tariffs: Higher import duties on women's goods contribute to elevated retail prices, transferring structural policy inequalities into market outcomes. Such disparities hinder sustainable development by disproportionately increasing women's economic burden (Joint Economic Committee, U.S. Congress, 2016).

As Pant Svasti (2021) observes, the Pink Tax is rooted in gender socialisation and operates across multiple sectors. Addressing it requires social innovation in pricing strategies, regulatory reforms, and market practices that advance gender justice and align with the broader goals of sustainable and equitable development.

Pink Tax in India and Legal Framework:

The Pink Tax in India, particularly in personal care and consumer markets, raises concerns of gender-based discrimination. India currently lacks explicit legal provisions addressing gender-differentiated pricing.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provides indirect protection by prohibiting unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements, and arbitrary pricing. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has the power to intervene where discriminatory pricing can be shown to be unfair or deceptive. However, the Act does not explicitly recognize gender-based price discrimination, and enforcement depends largely on consumer complaints, making it difficult to address systemic Pink Tax practices.

The Constitution of India, through Articles 14, 15, and 16, guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. Gender-based pricing may be challenged under Articles 14 and 15 if it results in unequal treatment of women without reasonable justification. Nevertheless, these provisions primarily regulate state action and do not directly govern pricing decisions by private market actors, limiting their effectiveness in addressing the Pink Tax.

In terms of indirect taxation, reforms under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime—such as the removal of tax on sanitary napkins in 2018—have helped reduce gender-related financial burdens. However, tax exemptions alone do not eliminate the Pink Tax, as businesses continue to exercise pricing discretion based on marketing, branding, and consumer perceptions.

“Overall, while India's legal and constitutional framework provides a normative basis to view the pink tax as discriminatory, existing laws are insufficient to offer direct and effective remedies. Addressing the pink tax requires targeted legislative measures, clearer regulatory guidelines, and stronger consumer awareness to ensure gender-equitable pricing in the marketplace.”

Pink Tax Revolution – A step towards Gender Equality:

The term ‘**Pink Tax Revolution**’ represents the growing support of companies, non – governmental organizations, consumer organizations and the public towards the cause of gender equality by eliminating the pink tax. It is characterized by the increasing number of **business policy changes, legal interventions and awareness campaigns** aimed at ensuring fairness in prices of goods and services.

‘RETHINK PINK – Boxed’: “Boxed is an American online wholesale retailer platform. In 2016, Boxed became one of the first US retailers to reduce the pricing of their product to ensure equal prices in men's and women's products. Being a retailer platform, Boxed has no control over the prices of the products, they offer to

sell; the prices are fixed by the manufacturers. However, after learning about the price differentials in products of personal care sector marked for men and women. Boxed decided to bear the additional cost (Pink Tax) to ensure that in each category, women's products were priced the same as men's products. It was a bold decision by a profit – making enterprise, and an example of **social responsibility in business** being practiced successfully.” (Bournel,2018)

CHICK TAX – Burger King: Till July 2018 several Burger King outlets in Miami, New York, Chicago and other cities in the US sold a different variant of their regular chicken fries to the female customers. The quantity offered was the same as the regular box of chicken fries, except that it was sold in pink packaging and was labelled ‘Chick Fries’. These ‘Chick Fries’ were priced at \$ 3.09 whereas the regular box was priced at \$ 1.69. When a revolt was made by a group of women, who demanded to be charged the same amount as the male customers. The suggestion was welcomed and accepted by ‘Berger King Restaurants’, who said that they felt

The Pink Tax was extremely unfair. Burger King is an example of business policy changes done by a company for the cause of gender equality.

AX THE PINK TAX – The European Wax Center (EWC): The EWC which is a beauty lifestyles services company launched a campaign in 2018 called ‘AX THE PINK TAX’.

The company itself never charged pink tax on its services. As it's customer base and employee base were female dominated, it started this campaign called ‘AX THE PINK TAX’ in 2018. The campaign was an attempt to **raise awareness** through media partnerships, comedy events and collaborations and ignite a movement against the unfair practice of pink tax (Pant Svasti ,2021). **HYPOCRISY IN OPERATIONS – Gap Inc:** Gap Inc, is a popular American clothing brand which was included in the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index in 2019 for its efforts towards empowering women. It claims to offer equal pay for equal work. A UK based campaign group shed light on how Gap practiced price discrimination. A shirt with the quote “The Future is Equal” was printed on it. It was priced at 12.95 pounds in the boys' section and 14.95 pounds in the girls' section for the same size shirt. This was a study done during Let Clothes be Clothes, a grassroot campaign set in 2014 to challenge gender stereotyping in the design and marketing of children's clothing, footwear and accessories. This is an example of **awareness campaign to promote gender equality** and challenge gender stereotyping. Gender marketing exploits outdated ideas about the role of men and women in society and perpetuates inequality – starting at birth (Let clothes be clothes.Co.UK).

MOVING FORWARD TO AN EQUITABLE SOCIETY

- 1. Educating Consumers:** It is impossible for the society to dismantle and build new social norms which permit consumer equality without the education of the female customers. The social media is today used by women to inform other women and supporters of the cause throughout the globe. In 2014, a controversy was started by France's State Secretary for Women's Rights when she asked, “Is pink a luxury colour?” on Twitter (Lafferty, 2019). With legislative initiatives and public uproar, real remedies to the ongoing gender pricing gap resulting from pink tax have already started, and this must go on.
- 2. Significance of Publicizing Individual Experiences:** Numerous hashtags exist spreading the word # Pink Tax # Gender Tax have had success on outlets such as Twitter in promoting knowledge of the hidden tax across the globe in countries such as Spain and Ireland (Vermond,2018). Women sharing posts showing price differences experienced that this step of theirs had a huge impact, although it may look to be a very simple solution.

Activist organizations are also doing their part to educate women. In Canada, where there are no laws in place to prohibit gender pricing, organizations such as Girl Talk HQ work to educate women to promote legislative changes (Lafferty, 2019).

Many women are unaware of the true legal justifications currently being made which allows the pink tax to remain. Many women simply accept prices as “the way things are”, and do not look further to consider why.

By educating consumers that there are currently no federal limitations on gender price discrimination and tariff discrimination by gender, further societal unrest can and will create true change.

- 3. Purchasing Unisex Products:** A growing number of firms are responding to the voices in the public by producing gender neutral toys, clothing and even fragrances. Some companies are focusing on developing items that are not gender specific, such as toys, clothes etc. Global awareness on gender biases is growing, and this is influencing the market and raising concerns about pink tax. Ultimately when a demand is identified and expressed, it will manifest in the market because of ingenuity and the enterprising mindset of individuals in the

business sector. The society will gradually witness a shift in cultural standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Policy Actions

1. Tax Neutrality and Price Regulation for Essential Products

Ensuring tax neutrality across essential goods is a critical policy intervention to address gender-based price discrimination. Products that are functionally similar but marketed differently on the basis of gender should be subject to uniform tax treatment. Drawing from the removal of GST on sanitary products, similar approaches may be considered for other essential personal care and hygiene items. Regulatory monitoring of essential goods pricing can help identify unjustified gender-based differentials and reduce the cumulative financial burden on women, thereby advancing social equity and supporting SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

2. Mandatory Gender Price Transparency

Mandatory gender price transparency can further discourage discriminatory pricing practices. Requiring firms to disclose price differentials between comparable male and female products, particularly on digital retail platforms, would enable informed consumer choice. Transparency mechanisms enhance market accountability and promote responsible consumption, aligning with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

3. Strengthening Consumer Protection Interventions

Strengthening consumer protection frameworks is equally important. Explicit recognition of gender-based price discrimination as an unfair trade practice under existing consumer laws would provide legal recourse to affected consumers. Regulatory oversight by institutions such as the Competition Commission of India can help identify systemic patterns of discriminatory pricing. Effective grievance redressal mechanisms would enhance consumer confidence and reinforce inclusive market practices, contributing to SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

II. Market Actions

4. Encouraging Gender-Neutral Labeling and Product Design

Market-led strategies play a significant role in addressing the Pink Tax. Encouraging gender-neutral labeling and product design can reduce artificial product differentiation driven by gender stereotypes. When firms focus on product functionality rather than gendered marketing, pricing becomes more equitable and consumption patterns more inclusive. Such initiatives contribute to sustainable market structures and challenge entrenched gender norms.

5. Incentives for Brands Eliminating Discriminatory Pricing

Incentivizing brands that adopt gender-equitable pricing can further promote ethical business practices. Incorporating fair pricing criteria into ESG assessments and sustainability certifications can motivate firms to eliminate unjustified gender-based price differences. Preferential treatment in public procurement for such firms may also reinforce market-wide adoption of inclusive pricing models, supporting long-term social sustainability.

III. Awareness & Advocacy

6. Consumer Awareness and Education Campaigns

Consumer awareness is central to addressing the social implications of the Pink Tax. Public education initiatives highlighting the economic impact of gender-based pricing can empower consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. Integrating such awareness into financial literacy and gender sensitization programs can strengthen consumer resistance to discriminatory practices and influence market behavior.

7. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives

Corporate social responsibility initiatives can further institutionalize gender-equitable pricing. Organizations can include pricing audits and transparency commitments within their CSR frameworks under the Companies Act, 2013. Collaboration with civil society and women's advocacy groups can help firms design inclusive pricing strategies. These efforts enhance corporate accountability and contribute directly to SDG 5 and SDG 10 by promoting fairness, inclusion, and social sustainability.

The study highlights the persistence of the Pink Tax in India as a subtle yet systemic form of gender-based price discrimination embedded within everyday consumption. The findings suggest that such pricing practices not only impose an unequal economic burden on women but also reinforce broader structural inequalities,

undermining principles of social sustainability. Addressing the Pink Tax requires a coordinated approach involving policy reform, market accountability, and consumer awareness. Ensuring gender-equitable pricing, transparency, and ethical market behavior can contribute to more inclusive and sustainable consumption patterns. By integrating gender equity into pricing and regulatory frameworks, India can advance toward a socially sustainable development model aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Pink Tax should be viewed not merely as a marketing strategy but as a manifestation of structural gender inequality embedded within consumer markets. Addressing it requires gender-responsive pricing policies that ensure functionally similar products are priced equitably, particularly for essential goods. Regulatory frameworks should mandate justification for gender-based price differentials to enhance transparency and fairness.

Ethical corporate accountability is equally important. Firms should undertake pricing audits and integrate gender-equitable pricing into ESG and CSR commitments. Incentives and public recognition can encourage responsible business practices. Informed consumer awareness further strengthens these efforts by enabling consumers to identify and challenge discriminatory pricing. Education and advocacy initiatives can generate market pressure for reform. A coordinated approach involving policymakers, corporations, and consumers is essential to dismantle gender-based price discrimination and promote socially sustainable and inclusive markets.

REFERENCES

- Biswas, S., Parvathi, G. S., Misra, P., & Kamath, B. J. (2024). *Attitude towards pink tax in the Indian population: A gender-based analysis*. **The International Journal of Indian Psychology**, 12(4), 979–989. <https://doi.org/10.25215/1204.090>. Available at <https://ijip.in/articles/attitude-towards-pink-tax/>
- Bourne, L. (2018). Companies That Are Saying No to The Pink Tax. Available at: <https://www.glamour.com/story/pink-tax-revolution>
- CBS News.Com. (2016), CBS News goes Undercover to Reveal Gender Price Discrimination. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/price-discrimination-gender-gap-cbs-news-undercover-dry-cleaners/>
- Grether, Scott T. (2022) "The Pink Tax," *Feminist Pedagogy*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 2. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/feministpedagogy/vol2/iss1/24>.
- Joint Economic Committee: U.S. Congress. (2016). The Pink Tax: How Gender – Based – Pricing Hurts Women’s Buying Power. Available at: <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/2016/3/joint-economic-report-majority-views>
- Kardetoft, Matilda. (2022), The Pink Tax Dissertation, Jonkoping University, International Business School. Available at: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1668432/FULLTEXT01.pdf6>.
- Lafferty, Mackenzi.(2019), The Pink Tax: The Persistence of Gender Price Disparity. *Midwest Journal of Undergraduate Research* 2019: Issue 11. Available at: <https://research.monm.edu/mjur/files/2020/02/MJUR-i12-2019-Conference-4-Lafferty.pdf>
- National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, Gender Wage Disparities in India (latest report).
- Panigrahi, A. K., & Ansari, L. (2025). *The pink tax in India: Empirical evidence of gender-based pricing disparities in retail markets*. **Journal of Management Research and Analysis**, 12(3), 159–165. Available at <https://jmra.in/archive/volume/12/issue/3/article/24621/pdf>
- Pant, S. (2021), UnPinking Discrimination: Exploring the Pink Tax and its Implications, *International Journal of Policy Sciences and Law*. Vol 1: Issue 3. Available at: https://ijpsl.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UnPinking-Discrimination-Exploring-the-Pink-Tax-and-its-Implications_Svasti-Pant.pdf8.
- Pritam, T.A.R. (2025). Legal Analysis of the Pink Tax in India: A Gender – Based Economic Disparity. *Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research*, 7(1), 712 – 725.ISSN 2582-8878. Available at <https://www.ijllr.com/post/legal-analysis-of-the-pink-tax-in-india-a-gender-based-economic-disparity>
- Singh, A., Johnson,V., Shabnam,M., and Sagar (2024), A Study to assess the Attitude of Female Population towards Pink Tax Across India. 4th International Conference SOM, ITM University, Gwalior. Available

at:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380295075_A_study_to_assess_the_attitudeof_female_population_towards_pink_tax_across_India

- Thirumalai, Ananya.(2022), The Impact of Pink Tax on Women, International Journal of Education and Research. Vol10: Iss 9,Indonesia, 0000-0002-4186-0686. Available at: <https://www.ijern.com/journal/2022/September-2022/02.pdf>fagnusson, Elina, and Maja Eriksson. *Willing to Shop like a (Wo)Man?*
- Vermond, K. (2018). Women can Beat the ‘Pink Tax’ by Buying Guys’ Supplies. The Globe and Mail. Available at: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-investor/personal-finance/household-finances/women-can-beat-the-pink-tax-by-buying-guys-supplies/article28256796>
- Wakeman, Jessica. (2020), Pink Tax: The Real Cost of Gender – Based Pricing. Available at: <https://www.healthline.com/health/the-real-cost-of-pink-tax#The-tampon-tax>