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MARKETING BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS IN SHAPING THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF ENTERPRISES – A THEORETICAL STUDY

Marketing in a competitive economy plays a key role in the development of organizations (enterprises) that want to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage on the market. One of the problems developed in marketing is consumer behavior, thanks to which companies sell their products/services. As part of the behavior, we can distinguish marketing behaviors of consumers, which are the company's reaction to the customer and the customer to the company. The aim of the study is to present the problem of consumer marketing behavior in shaping the competitive advantage of enterprises. The study was based on the study of the subject literature contributing to the discipline of Management and Quality Sciences.

Keywords: marketing, consumer behavior, competitive advantage.

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МАРКЕТИНГОВА ПОВЕДІНКА СПОЖИВАЧІВ У ФОРМУВАННІ КОНКУРЕНТНИХ ПЕРЕВАГ ПІДПРИЄМСТВ – ТЕОРЕТИЧНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Маркетинг у конкурентній економіці відіграє ключову роль у розвитку організацій (підприємств), які хочуть досягти та зберегти конкурентну перевагу на ринку. Однією з проблем, що розробляються в маркетингу, є поведінка споживачів, завдяки якій компанії продають свої товари/послуги. Як частину такої поведінки можна виділити маркетингову поведінку споживачів, яка є реакцією компанії на клієнта і клієнта на компанію. Метою дослідження є представлення проблеми маркетингової поведінки споживачів у формуванні конкурентних переваг підприємств. Дослідження ґрунтувалося на вивченні тематичної літератури, що стосується дисципліни менеджменту та наук про якість.

Ключові слова: маркетинг, поведінка споживачів, конкурентна перевага.

Introduction. In today's market of products/services, there is a permanent process of attracting new consumers (customers), keeping them with a given company (customer loyalty), modifying their behavior and selling them as many products/services as possible. To this end, companies must reach for various types of marketing techniques that stimulate consumer behavior.

The importance of the undertaken research problem results from the importance of marketing techniques in business as the main tool of action that determines the result of business efficiency. The consumer in the 21st century is becoming more and more fastidious, from which companies have to come up with new methods of influencing consumer preferences through various marketing techniques.

The aim of the study is to present the marketing behavior of consumers in shaping the competitive advantage of enterprises. The article discusses the problem of marketing techniques. The study is the result of a theoretical study conducted by the author of this study, which is part of the issues of Management and Quality Sciences.

Marketing and consumer behavior

The basics of sales marketing were invented over 50 years ago. To this end, marketing techniques are developed, thanks to which ordinary buyers add more products to the basket than they have planned (Kwarciak, 1997).

A marketing technique is a decision-making process by business owners to increase customer interest in a particular product or service.

Marketing activities, to be effective and efficient, must take into account such aspects as:

1. Market interest,
2. Appearance and properties of the advertised product,



3. The direction and scope of the company's activities.

The main task of marketing is “production of potential consumers”. To achieve its goal, marketing uses four main and means (Roger, Best, 2013, International marketing. Market-based Management-<http://www.mbm-best.com/img/InternationalMarketing.pdf>):

1. Commodity policy,
2. Price determination,
3. Various sales channels,
4. Promotion tactics.

The lowest price strategy is to provide special discounts and initiatives to increase purchases of given products/services.

There should also be different programs for shoppers who make different types of purchases – whether primary, repeat or habitual. It is understood that this requirement only makes sense if none of the types of purchases made as part of a given activity are of greater value than others (Vidili, 2021, pp. 183-209).

Marketing techniques and marketing tools are very important in the marketing activities of the company. Understanding the essence of marketing techniques requires the presentation of a few examples, i.e.:

1. Advertising banners are a technique aimed at attracting customers,
2. Discounts, bonuses, gifts, other programs – should also be treated as marketing techniques. When using a discount card, the return is not the card itself, but sending text messages or appropriate e-mails to its holders. And this adoption, as everyone knows, is called direct marketing.

These marketing techniques can be used both in the b2b and b2c segments (Sandhusen, 2008). Factors such as:

1. The mass nature of the promoted product or service, the existence of active or passive demand for it – The greater the mass and activity of the demand, the less need and possibility to use personal and group techniques.
2. Industry fragmentation – a large number of small and medium-sized companies in the absence of a leader with a significant market share or wide consumer involvement – The more fragmented the industry in which the company operates, the greater the need for personal and group techniques.
3. The reputation of the company and/or its products in this market segment. The greater the fame, the less the need for personal and group techniques.

Creating a promotion program always starts with the analysis and type of preferred demand for the product. Fragmentation is then evaluated. If necessary, the promotion program is clarified and supplemented. Notoriousness is evaluated last: as in the previous step, the program is corrected if necessary (Zortea-Johnston, Darroch, Matear, 2012, pp. 145-164).

However, in the development of a new marketing technique, there are certain rules, if not followed, all efforts will go to the bottom:

1. Compliance with reality. If the product does not meet the declared characteristics, no marketing technique will help in promotion. The buyer will remember that he wanted to be cheated and is unlikely to buy this product again,
2. Topicality. Studying market trends and meeting the interests of ca- main marketing goals to present the goods from the best side. For example, the Coca Cola company has released the Zero line with zero sugar, for supporters of a healthy lifestyle who do not want to give up their favorite carbonated drinks.

Marketing tools are technological solutions to promote products, goods and services. Most companies use several different platforms in parallel for different purposes, such as analytics, advertising, and even social media marketing. A business should be prepared for future success from the moment it starts, and digital marketing helps automate and manage many time-consuming manual tasks. Thanks to marketing tools, you will gain time to focus on the most crucial elements of the company's operation (<https://pl.wix.com/blog/artukul/narzedzia-marketingowe> 06.04.2023).

Theory of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is a cycle that includes the process of buying, using and getting rid of a good. It includes not only physical actions, but all operations that take place in the psyche at the moment of choosing and buying a product. In essence, consumer behavior should show actions aimed at satisfying needs. They are presented as an ordered cycle of reactions to various stimuli (https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Zachowania_konsument%C3%B3w 13.04.2023).

A consumer is any person who wants to buy a good/service in order to satisfy needs. A consumer is a consuming entity, i.e. acting on the demand side. It should be emphasized that the concept of a consumer is most often understood as an economic entity that consumes the purchased products. This term has a wide range of meanings. A consumer can be a person, a group of people, an enterprise, as well as an organization that uses the value in use of products (Dąbrowska, 2006).



The purchase of goods/services by the consumer is influenced not only by various marketing techniques, but also by the so-called consumer levers with which we can put pressure on the consumer. Examples of such levers could be:

1. Information perceived in the phenomenon,
2. Stimulus situation conducive to assimilation of information,
3. Psychological characteristics of the recipient.

Sources of information that affects the consumer are, for example: (Ozimek, 2006)

1. Personal – family, friends, neighbors, opinion leaders,
2. Commercial – advertising, sellers, packaging, exhibitions,
3. Public – consumer organizations, non-commercial messages in the media,
4. Experimental – contact with the goods, tastings, samples of the goods.

With the help of consumer levers, you can create new consumer desires and change them in the direction we want to achieve the intended goal.

Consumer behavior – consumption, consumerism. In the social sciences of the late twentieth century, consumption is seen as a social and cultural process involving cultural signs and symbols, and not just as a utilitarian economic process. Consumption can be defined as an inseparable socio-economic factor (Hague, Jackson, 1992). Logical people and organizations. We do not always consume because we have such a need, but we consume because it is required by the given situation in which we want to show ourselves. For example, we cannot afford to buy an iPhone, but the group we are a member of has an iPhone and therefore I must have one too to be well perceived in the group (according to the saying: “put yourself up and put yourself up”) (Hossain, Agnihotri, Rushan, Rahman, Sumi, 2022, pp. 240-255).

The customer’s demand becomes the basis for shaping demand and supply on the market. Demand is expressed as the number of products and services that consumers can purchase over a period of time at a given price and income level. The market mechanism leads to a balance between supply and demand, and marketing plays an important regulatory role in this process. The basis of the marketing regulatory system is the law of demand, the distribution of goods among consumers.

Consumer choice maximizes the rational consumer’s utility function under resource constraints. In addition to the general principles of a rational consumer, there are features that are determined by the influence of tastes and preferences on the consumer. The American economist H. Leibenstein distinguished three typical cases of mutual influence (Leibenstein, 1950, pp. 183-207):

1. Bandwagon effect. The consumer, wanting to keep up with others, buys what others buy. It depends on the opinions of other consumers and this relationship is direct (Leibenstein, 1950, pp. 183-207),
2. The snob effect. In this case, the consumer is dominated by the desire to stand out from the crowd. And here the individual consumer depends on the choice of others, but this relationship is inverse Leibenstein, 1950, pp. 183-207),
3. Veblen effect. T. Veblen called prestige or demonstrative consumption, vividly described by him in “The Theory of the Leisure Class” (1899), when goods and services are used not for their intended purpose but to make a lasting impression on others Leibenstein, 1950, pp. 183-207).

During the creation of the market, the separation of market segments, the consumer reacts to the marketing activities of enterprises. Satisfying the needs of the consumer is becoming more and more difficult. Therefore, marketers* (marketers) begin to pay more attention to the motivational tools for introducing a product/service to the market, its promotion, etc. The monitoring of consumer behavior begins, i.e. the study of their reactions to old and new products/services. Competition is becoming fiercer, and one of its manifestations is the attempt by enterprises to attract consumers from competitors (Grover, Dresner, 2022, pp. 48-65).

Marketing consumption analysis enabled Company X to adapt the brand/brands to existing consumption patterns in the market. When buying goods in large shopping centers, hypermarkets allow consumers to save money because the products are offered in large quantities at discounted prices. From what both the producer and the consumer win. Consumer needs research is essential for practically all companies that want to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage on the market. By understanding what consumers are like and what their desires and preferences are, a company can improve its bottom line.

Marketing techniques management. The composition and scope of expenses generated by advertising activity depends on the life cycle of the advertised products, goods, works, services, forms and methods used to disseminate advertising, the organizational structure and management structure of the enterprise and its belonging to a particular economic sphere. For production companies, the costs of promotional activities related to the

* A marketer is a person who deals with all marketing activities in an organization. A marketer can be a manager or a person (not a manager) who has been employed in a position related to the marketing of an organization (enterprise).



creation of demonstration rooms and product showrooms are characteristic; for enterprises from the sphere of “services” – costs of sending advertising materials and telephone advertising; for commercial enterprises – costs of advertising at points of sale and places of mass use. The variety of areas of advertising activity of commercial enterprises leads to the emergence of various types of advertising costs that require optimization in the conditions of costly new methods of advertising distribution and the increase in prices of traditional advertising media. The importance of solving this problem is also due to the imperfection of the legal framework, consisting in the lack of criteria for the division of advertising expenditure, the structure of advertising expenditure, the procedure for documenting justification of it and its reflection in the accounting and tax accounting of a commercial enterprise.

However, it can be argued that at some level, the more resources are spent on advertising, the more revenue it can generate proportionately, provided that its quality and effectiveness increase with the amount of costs. There is a possibility that with inappropriate income there will be spending pits that will not gain financial growth from advertising, but will only increase costs.

Perspective potential of marketing techniques. Digital marketing is developing very intensively. There are new, more effective ways to achieve business goals. The use of virtual and augmented reality technology is one of the main trends in recent years.

It is logical that their further development should be expected. While in 2019, AR experiences were just beginning to emerge in the form of start-ups, in the next decade, all the largest online retailers will have them. It works using a special application with access to a camera, thanks to which you can see what shoes, clothes, cosmetics, household appliances, furniture and many other things will look like (Zigart, Schlund, 2020, pp.75-82). In recent years, a decline in the effectiveness of mass mailings has been observed. Trying to offer your products or services to as many people as possible is not the best solution. Financial costs are increasing and the return on investment is decreasing. The first step in marketing is to offer services for which there is a demand (Tutaj, Parkitna, Harcej, 2018, pp. 946-964).

The most successful enterprises were Google and Yandex. Their contextual advertising adapts to the interests of the person concerned. The automated algorithms of Yandex and Google have learned to recognize the interests of users based on their behavior on the web. These algorithms can collect all this data for advertisers to increase their marketing impact on consumers. On the one hand, advertising increasingly interferes with the user’s private life. On the other hand, the success of contextual advertising is related to personalization, to the ability to show the product to the user ready to buy, and preferably to anticipate their interest. And if you do not use data from Google or Google Analytics (<https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/analytics/13.04.2023>), Brand 24 (<https://brand24.com20.05.2022>) and other services, you will inevitably remain behind the competition.

In 2020, many people found out that any event can be organized online. This includes fitness training, group or individual classes and much more. More and more attention is being paid to interacting with bloggers and online influencers. It’s not just about advertising products or services. It is enough to involve such a person in an online event to arouse the interest of their recipients (Tong, Luo, Xu, 2020, pp. 64-78).

The direction of analyzing the activity of thought leaders is developing separately. To increase the effectiveness of advertising, it is necessary to take into account the blogger’s style of behavior, his image and many other factors. This creates work for public relations departments. Successful companies hire social media specialists (Instagram, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and others). Working with bloggers in 2020 has reached a new level. Bet on the number of posts is hopelessly outdated. Already at the beginning of the year it became clear that just publishing a post with a nice advertisement is not enough. Bloggers, together with brands, began to create full-fledged promotional strategies. The warm-up in the target group lasted several days or even weeks.

The pandemic accelerated the development of the influence of marketing on monetization in the CPA model. Advertisers no longer pay per image. They expect to work with bloggers for conversions and leads, and are willing to pay a percentage of sales. Reach and number of subscribers rank second, but CA blogger quality, conversion, and subscriber solvency are included in influencer KPIs (Dwivedi, Hughes, Coombs, 2020). The modern approach to advertising does not require a large amount of information for the client. It is natural for a person to want to clarify certain issues. The classic way to solve this problem is through the work of online consultants. Chatbots are a modern approach (Lokman, Amedeen, 2019, pp. 1012-1023).

The main task of the marketer is to find ways to increase the engagement of the audience. As research shows, people trust a brand much more if it is recommended by someone who knows it.

Exemplification of consumer behavior management in an offline environment. One can use the example of the Biedronka chain in Poland (<https://www.biedronka.pl/pl> 20.04.2023), which has won an honorable place on the list of grocery stores for many consumers. This is due to the fact that this store skillfully uses marketing and other techniques that increase both the number of sales and the average bill at the expense of customers. The main techniques they use are:



1. Labyrinth in the store – entering the store for a bottle of water, the buyer will have to go through a number of other goods that can encourage the consumer to make impulse purchases – cheese, a packet of chips, a chocolate bar, etc. After passing such a labyrinth, the customer stands at the checkout, where he is surrounded by various candy bars and chewing gums that he is likely to take as a reward at the end of the maze, which in many cases causes the customer to leave the store with extra items he didn't even plan to take.

2. Red price tag – looking at the shelves in the store, you can often see red price tags that act as markers and inform you that the purchase of this product is more advantageous than others, but with a regular white price tag.

3. Playing with positioning – price tags in the store are not placed at the bottom of the product, as in all others, but at the top, so that customers get the false impression that they are buying the product at a low price. An example can be shelves with sausages, where the price is PLN 1.20/100g under product A, but the actual price of it is PLN 1.60/100g and is above the product.

4. 1 + 1 = 1 tactic – often on store shelves there are signs with promotions where you buy 2 products for the price of 1, which is very attractive to the consumer.

5. Loyalty program – the store has its own application and the my ladybug card, the consumer who has such a card receives special discounts and promotions for products, e.g. with the my ladybug card you can buy orange juice not for PLN 3, but for PLN 2.49, or buy a card with 2-3 products and receive them with a 30-40% discount.

6. Specials of the week – every week on Saturday, they place leaflets with promotions for products that are not in high demand, placing shares in the 1 + 1 tactic and shares with loyalty cards there.

All the above methods influence the fact that customers prefer shopping in the store, considering it as the most profitable, which is not true, because according to the ASM Sales Force study, this store is ranked 6th in terms of the price of the average basket of goods (<https://www.asmsalesforce.pl/badanie-raport-shopping-basket-February-2023/12.05.2023>).

Exemplification of online behavior management. One example of behavior management in the Internet environment may be the Apple store (<https://www.apple.com/store13.05.2023>). They use a strategy of tactics that involves playing on a sense of belonging, attachment to an exclusive brand. When a consumer enters an Apple website, they immediately feel that they belong to a group of people using Apple technology, which gives them a sense of comfort and makes them a more loyal consumer buying from them. This is just the beginning, because they use other, more effective tricks that are simple in nature – they play with the price (<https://www.asmsalesforce.pl/badanie-raport-koszyk-zakupowy-luty-2023/> <https://www.apple.com/store14/05/2023>):

1. The first example is when the customer likes the product very much, but its price seems too high – then the method of dividing the price into parts is used. For example, after selecting the latest iPhone, the customer sees a price of \$999. They seem expensive, but see that they can be spread over 24 months and the phone then only costs \$40 a month. Seeing a small amount, he calms down. People tend to think of the price they have to pay now, not in the future.

2. The second example is a swap game – when selecting a phone, the customer sees the price of the latest iPhone at USD 999, but does not notice the attachment and opens the configuration menu, where increasing the memory by 2 times will cost another USD 100, so the phone can hit the consumer not for \$999, but for \$1099 or more, depending on whether the customer decides that it is worth overpaying. This game is used in all types of equipment: you attract the buyer with a low price, and then for a small amount you increase the characteristics of the equipment so that the product becomes twice as expensive for the consumer.

3. The third example will be a load of locomotive products – the customer chooses a MacBook and is immediately offered to buy more memory, housing, branded mouse, keyboard and other things that the consumer does not really need, but starts to think about buying them and believes that it is better to buy them immediately in a package than to add them separately, and here in the Apple store he will order not only a macbook, but also a number of accessories for it.

Interpretation of the studied cases. The case studies show the factors influencing customers' decisions to increase the sales volume and popularity of the presented Biedronka and Apple stores in Poland, because they use them very intelligently to attract potential customers and maintain the interest of existing customers. In order to keep customers interested in shopping in the Biedronka store, a product scanner was introduced in the application and individual discounts for each customer.

The Apple store changed after the last presentation of its website design and added a new feature – AR browsing, thanks to which the customer can feel the latest iPhone in the hand or the latest MacBook on the desk, and encouraged customers to buy something and bring that feeling into the life.

These two stores don't use every marketing gimmick imaginable, but they don't have to. They have well-developed basic techniques that work every year.

Summary. Modern marketing (the second decade of the 21st century) has become subtle and radical, which is not surprising, given the increasing competition in the global market and the sophistication of consumer desires.



An important role in organizations (enterprises) is played by marketers responsible for all marketing activities. Every customer wants to get the best quality products/services for little money. Each increase in the quality of a product / service is associated with a higher price level, but with the use of appropriate marketing techniques, you can sell the so-called. product/service for little money. These and other marketing activities in the company are handled by marketers.

Marketers aim to eliminate the company's weaknesses, increase profitability by attracting new customers and reducing costs. Management systems are aimed, among other things, at acquiring potential and retaining existing customers.

The promotion of products/services and the use of new technologies are suitable for reducing advertising costs. The Internet definitely contributes to the globalization of the product/service market, while the 2020 pandemic has accelerated this process. Currently, you have to act not with tens or hundreds, but with thousands or even millions of competitors on the global market.

Technology in marketing plays such a role that all marketing activities become automated, and the specialization of the marketer tends towards creativity. It can be said that the processes of globalization and technological development are gaining momentum, and their history will be even more interesting to watch and study in future works and research.

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