

CONSUMER SATISFACTION RESEARCH IN MAXI FACILITIES

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Abstract: The research on Maxi supermarkets was conducted through a survey with 102 respondents, using a Google questionnaire as a data collection method. The aim of the research was to understand the attitudes and experiences of users regarding the services of Maxi Supermarket, as well as the reasons why users return to this brand. The survey included questions that allowed us to explore customer satisfaction, perceptions of the supermarket and its impact on respondents' daily lives. This research also contributes to the understanding of the role of the Internet as a resource for information, entertainment and other activities, with a particular focus on how users experience and use the Maxi Supermarket online platform. The obtained data will serve as a basis for analyzing competitive strategies and improving the user experience in Maxi supermarkets. The results of the research will indicate the key aspects that need to be improved, as well as the areas in which Maxi is already successful. Our ultimate goal is to strengthen relations with users and improve business through innovative approaches and creativity in work.

Key words: user experience, online survey, Maxi supermarkets, customer satisfaction, business improvements

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer research is a complex process in which manufacturing and sales companies analyze the wishes, needs and ways of attracting the attention of consumers. This process marks a significant advance and revolution in the marketing world. Namely, in the early stages of marketing development, the main focus was on questions such as how and to whom to sell, what to produce and the like. However, in recent years, the consumer has been placed at the center of the marketing strategy, with a special emphasis on understanding his needs. By studying consumer behavior, businesses gain key information about the products consumers want, the amounts they are willing to spend, ways to expand the market, and opportunities to improve products to make them more acceptable to consumers. On the basis of this information, companies can optimize their marketing activities with the aim of satisfying the wishes and needs of consumers, thereby achieving an increase in sales and achieving higher profits [1]. In the modern business environment, gaining a competitive advantage is only possible through research and understanding of the decision-making process of consumers when purchasing products and services, as well as the factors that motivate them to make a purchase. Apart from planned purchases, consumers often make impulsive decisions under the influence of various stimuli. Impulse buying is the tendency of consumers to make spontaneous purchases, guided by the emotional-psychological aspects of the product and tempted by the persuasion of salespeople [2]. However, this feeling can occur after the purchase in the form of cognitive dissonance [3]. The impulse to buy is hedonic and induces emotional conflict, since the consequences are ignored because the purchase is made without prior thought [2]. Impulse buying begins without purchase intention, where consumers are exposed to stimuli that cause them to buy impulsively [4]. Darmavan and Gatheru (2021) consider impulse buying as an activity that carried out by potential consumers who are in stores and exposed to external stimuli [5]. In such circumstances, there is an urgent desire to make an immediate purchase. A study by Lestari (2023) indicates that consumers do not always buy rationally. Sometimes, there is a purchase that is based more on emotional factors, an impulse purchase or an unplanned purchase [6]. In addition, this study indicates that unplanned shopping is a trend for individuals with certain stimulation without prior planning or intention to make a purchase. The explanation of the basic concepts of consumer behavior highlights the pronounced interdisciplinary nature of this relatively young marketing field. It is difficult to find another field that integrates different scientific disciplines to such an extent. Consumer behavior relies on concepts and methods from psychology, social psychology, sociology, social biology, cultural anthropology, demography, anthropogeography and economic sciences. A particularly important role in research

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methodology is played by quantitative disciplines such as mathematics, statistics and operational research. The study of consumer behavior began when manufacturers and sellers realized that consumers do not always act in accordance with the assumptions of marketing theory. Although they occasionally follow trends and choose popular products, many consumers refuse to buy what the majority use, opting for products and services that they feel are tailored to their specific needs, personality and lifestyle. These trends are expected to become even more pronounced in the future. The development of consumer behavior as a special scientific discipline is the result of numerous factors. The key reason lies in the knowledge of marketing experts that consumers do not make purchase decisions solely based on economic and rational motives. Today, we are faced with the era of the mass consumer market, which is marked on the one hand by a large number of customers, and on the other hand by increasingly sophisticated communication and promotion techniques. The evolution of marketing as a business concept and its practical application directly contributed to the development of consumer behavior as an academic and applied scientific discipline. Manufacturers and retailers, even before marketing became a scientific discipline, intuitively recognized the importance of understanding consumer behavior for successful business. They acquired this knowledge through daily interaction and sales of products and services. However, with the growth of markets and companies, direct relations with consumers have decreased, which required the application of new research methods in marketing. The decisive moment occurred in the 1950s, when it became apparent that prior research into consumer needs and wants could significantly increase sales and profits. That period in developed countries marks the beginning of the dominance of marketing as a key business strategy in the economy and society. The study of consumer behavior covers a wide range of fields. This discipline deals with continuous processes that reflect the essence of marketing philosophy, according to which companies exist to fulfill the needs and wants of their consumers. The ultimate goal of any successful marketing strategy is to achieve consumer satisfaction. What specifically characterizes consumer behavior as a scientific discipline are: 1) generalization and conceptualization; 2) controlled observation; 3) orientation to prediction; 4) searching for cause-and-effect connections and relationships, and 5) striving for explicit explanations of events and behavior, as well as inference [7]. The consumer is a being shaped by social and cultural influences. He is an individual with his own identity, but at the same time a family member, a representative of a certain group, social class, nation, race, religion or state. A consumer is a person who has money and the desire to buy products and services. Also, consumers can be companies or institutions, such as schools and hospitals, that buy products and services for the needs of performing their basic activities. When explaining the terms related to the behavior of end and business consumers, it is important to highlight the differences between customer, user and consumer of products and services. A user is an individual or an institution that occasionally or temporarily uses a particular product or service, even if it is not an actual customer. Usually, the user is not the owner of the product or service. The largest number of users is found in consumer durables and services. For marketing companies, it is important to determine whether the user has a role in decision-making during the purchase process. For products where the customer and the user are different, it is necessary to take this difference into account when creating a strategy. Maxi is a well-known supermarket chain that operates in Serbia and the region, with a history that begins in 2000, when the first Maxi store was opened in Belgrade. Since then, Maxi has grown into one of the leading retail chains in Serbia, known for its wide range of products and affordable prices. Delez Serbia, also known as Delez Maxi, is part of the international company Ahold Delhaize, headquartered in Belgrade. Founded in 2000, the chain had 476 stores in the region by 2016 and had a market share of 20.60% in Serbia. Over the years, the company has significantly expanded its network, opening stores all over Serbia and continuously adapting the offer to the needs of consumers. Maxi stores offer a diverse range of products, including fresh groceries, food products, beverages, hygiene items and household items. Maxi is recognizable for its availability, product quality and pleasant atmosphere in its stores. Thanks to various promotions, discounts and promotions, it has become the favorite choice of consumers for everyday shopping. During 2022, Maxi was the largest retail chain in Serbia, according to revenues of 135.4 billion dinars. In addition to physical stores, Maxi has also developed an online shopping platform, allowing consumers to order products online and have them delivered to their home address. This innovative approach further enhanced the shopping experience. With a long-standing presence and reputation for quality, Maxi occupies a significant place on the retail market in Serbia.

2. RESEARCH PART OF THE WORK

The research was conducted from October 1 to October 20, 2024 using a Google questionnaire. The consumer is a being shaped by social and cultural influences. He is an individual with his own identity, but at the same time a family member, a representative of a certain group, social class, nation, race, religion or state. A consumer is a person who has money and the desire to buy products and services. Also, consumers can be companies or institutions, such as schools and hospitals, that buy products and services for the needs of performing their basic activities. When explaining the terms related to the behavior of end and business consumers, it is important to highlight the differences between customer, user and consumer of products and services. A user is an individual or an institution that occasionally or temporarily uses a particular product or service, even if it is not an actual customer. Usually, the user is not the owner of the product or service. 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With a long-standing presence and reputation for quality, Maxi occupies a significant place on the retail market in Serbia, while 27.7% visit rarely. Only 7.9% come daily, indicating that they focus more on weekly shopping. Recommendation: Strengthen strategies that encourage weekly purchases, while specialized offers or loyalty programs should be developed for regular visitors. The most important factors when buying: Price is the key factor for 34.7% of respondents, while product range is important for 25.7%. Recommendation: Focus on competitive prices and a wide assortment. It is necessary to regularly update the offer and work on better pricing policies. Looking at online shopping: 73% of respondents do not shop online, which indicates that the majority still prefer traditional ways of shopping. Recommendation: Develop a strategy to encourage online shopping, especially for the 18% of respondents who plan to switch to online shopping. Also, you should investigate the reasons why 9% of respondents will never use online shopping and think about ways to overcome their doubts. Using the Maxi application: 40.6% use the Maxi application, which is a positive signal, while 45.5% still do not use it. Recommendation: Strengthen the promotion of the application in order to attract users, with special emphasis on the 13.9% who plan to use it. Environmental awareness: 23% of respondents are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products, indicating the potential for promoting sustainable products. Recommendation: Develop marketing campaigns that encourage environmental responsibility, with the possibility of special discounts for ecological products. Customer support and experience: 56% of respondents are satisfied with their experience at Maxi stores, while 21% consider the experience to be "somewhat" good. Recommendation: Although most are satisfied, work should be done to improve customer support and optimize services in order to increase the number of very satisfied users and reduce the number of dissatisfied ones. The competitiveness of Maxi stores: 37.6% of the respondents think that Maxi stores are somewhat competitive, while 19.8% think that they are very competitive. Recommendation: It is necessary to investigate the competition to a greater extent and try to improve the aspects that could make Maxi stores more dominant in the market.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis of the research results allows a detailed insight into the behavior, preferences and attitudes of customers who visit Maxi stores. The data collected can serve as a basis for developing marketing strategies, improving the user experience, as well as improving business operations within Maxi stores. The structure of the sample by gender shows that men make up the majority of respondents (58.4%), while women make up a smaller part (41.6%). This discrepancy may be the result of the specifics of the market, the availability of respondents or the characteristics of the sample itself. It is recommended that future research strive to achieve gender balance in order to gain a more accurate insight into the purchasing habits of both sexes. Also, researching the differences in buying habits between men and women can help in further adjusting the offer and marketing. The structure of the sample according to age groups indicates the dominance of younger and middle-aged groups, with the highest percentage of respondents in the 18-25 years (30.7%) and 26-45 years (27.7%) groups. These groups represent the most active customers and are likely to be the key to most sales transactions. Although older groups (over 46) make up a smaller part, they are significant, as they may have specific needs and require special targeting in marketing campaigns. It is recommended to focus marketing on younger customers (18-45 years), but at the same time develop strategies to attract older customers, especially from the 65+ group. The geographical representation shows that the largest number of respondents is from Vojvodina (48%), while Belgrade makes up 29% of the sample. The rest of the country is less represented, especially Western, Eastern and Southern Serbia (23%). This result indicates that Vojvodina and Belgrade are key markets that Maxi stores already cover, while it would be useful to develop marketing strategies that will attract customers in less represented parts of the country. In addition, the research of specific needs of consumers from other regions can contribute to a better personalization of the offer. The income structure shows that the largest number of respondents have incomes between 60,000 and 120,000 dinars (31%), which is a typical working population. Also, a significant number of respondents (29%) have no income, which may indicate a high level of unemployment or social vulnerability. For this segment, it is recommended to develop affordable products, but also specialized promotions and offers for customers with lower incomes, as well as considering the possibility of targeting unemployed people with special discounts and promotions. The frequency of visits to Maxi stores indicates that 40.6% of respondents visit the store several times a week, while 27.7% visit rarely. Only a small percentage (7.9%) come daily, suggesting that most customers shop once a week. Therefore, it is advisable to develop strategies that encourage weekly purchases, such as discounts or special offers. For regular visitors, a loyalty offer could be developed that would provide them with additional benefits. Factors influencing the purchase indicate that price is the key factor for 34.7% of respondents, while product range is important for 25.7%. This means that buyers are primarily motivated by competitive prices, but also by a diverse offer. This information indicates the need for regular updating of the assortment and development of pricing policies that can compete with similar stores on the market. The product offering should be broad enough to meet the different needs of customers, while at the same time mechanisms must be developed to maintain price competitiveness. Online shopping is still poorly represented, as 73% of respondents do not use this option. However, 18% of respondents plan to switch to online shopping, which indicates the growing potential for digitalization of the market. It is recommended to develop a strategy that will encourage online shopping, perhaps through promotions or education about the benefits of this way of shopping. Also, researching the reasons why 9% of respondents will never use online shopping can help in understanding their doubts and enable taking the necessary steps to overcome the obstacles. The use of the Maxi application shows that 40.6% of respondents use the application, while 45.5% are not interested in using it. Although the number of users of the application is significant, there is an opportunity to increase its use. Increased promotion of the application, especially to those users who already plan to use it, is recommended in order to increase penetration and user engagement. Environmental awareness among respondents is at an enviable level, as 23% of respondents are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. This indicates a growing demand for sustainable products, and Maxi stores could introduce environmentally friendly products into their offer and develop marketing campaigns that encourage environmental responsibility. Such

campaigns can also include special discounts for ecological products. Customer support and experience in Maxi stores shows that 56% of respondents are satisfied, while 21% felt that the experience was "somewhat" good. Although the majority of respondents have a positive opinion, work should be done to further improve customer support, in order to increase the number of extremely satisfied users and reduce the number of those who consider the experience to be not completely positive. The competitiveness of Maxi stores was assessed by 37.6% of respondents as "somewhat competitive", while 19.8% considered them to be very competitive. These data suggest that Maxi stores are not completely dominant in the market, which means that there is room for improving competitiveness, through improvement of assortment, prices or promotions. A more detailed analysis of the competition is recommended in order to identify areas for further development.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the research results provided key information on the behavior, preferences and needs of Maxi Store customers, which enables informed decisions to be made to improve business strategies. The results show that men are dominant in the sample, but it is advisable to achieve a balance between the sexes in order to ensure a more accurate insight into the buying habits of both sexes. Also, younger and middle-aged groups make up the majority of customers, but older groups, although a smaller segment, have specific needs that require special attention in marketing. Geographical analysis indicates the importance of Vojvodina and Belgrade, but there is potential for stronger promotion in less represented parts of the country, which would cover a wider market spectrum. Revenue data suggests the need to develop affordable products and special offers for lower income groups, while strategies to increase the frequency of purchases could encourage spending among regular customers. Pricing and product range are key factors influencing purchasing, which means it's important to maintain price competitiveness and a wide range of offerings. Developing online channels and promoting the use of the application can contribute to increased customer engagement, while environmental awareness among consumers is proving to be a growing trend, which creates an opportunity to promote ecological products. Customer support and the overall experience in Maxi stores were rated positively, but there is room for improvement, especially in terms of service personalization. Although the stores are not completely dominant in the market, competitive analyzes can help identify areas for further improvement, which could make Maxi even more competitive and recognizable in the market. It is recommended that all these factors be integrated into a comprehensive plan to improve business and customer experience, with the goal of further expanding market share and meeting the needs of different consumer segments.

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