

BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS OF SPORTING GOODS CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT. The actual aims of this paper is to study and analyze the consumer's behavior regarding sports articles, which represent a relatively new area of studying all over the world and especially in our country. At the beginning of the sports products and services development, the countries and the organizations that were acting on this market and in these countries have noticed the necessity of applying the marketing elements and products, but also the studying of these ones in order to find out the consumer's preferences, so that their business can develop, grow and lead to a worldwide evolution of this domain. This study wants to develop a sports marketing strategy, based on the previous support of studying and analysis of the sports articles, but also based on the needs of the customer of these products and the identification of the primarily elements that stand for the base of influencing the customer's behavior when buying sports articles and products. Our objectives are the following: to identify the interest for sports products and articles inside the group; the preferences of the targeted group regarding the brand of sports products and articles-most wanted; the setting of the category from which most customers buy sports products and articles.

Key words: *sporting goods, consumer, consumers behavior*

REZUMAT. *Analiza comportamentului consumatorilor de articole sportive.* Prin prezenta lucrare se urmărește studierea și analiza comportamentul consumatorului de produse sportive, care reprezintă un domeniu de studiu relativ tânăr în lume și în special în țara noastră. La începutul dezvoltării pieței de produse și servicii sportive, țările și organizațiile ce activau pe această piață și în aceste țări au observat necesitatea punerii în aplicare a elementelor și produselor de marketing precum și studierea acestor în vederea aflării cerințelor de pe piață, astfel încât afacerea lor să se dezvolte, să ia amploare și

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implicit să ducă la o evoluție de ansamblu a domeniului. Prezenta lucrare își propune dezvoltarea unei strategii de marketing sportiv, realizată pe fondul studiului și analizei prealabile a pieței de produse și articole sportive, precum și a nevoilor consumatorului de aceste produse și identificarea factorilor primordialii ce stau la baza influențării comportamentului consumatorilor în achiziționarea de articole și produse sportive. Ca și obiective ne-am propus următoarele: identificarea interesului pentru produsele și articolele sportive în cadrul grupului; opțiunea grupului țintă referitor la marca de produse și articole sportive cea mai căutată; stabilirea categoriei de consumatori ce achiziționează cel mai mult articole și produse.

Cuvinte cheie: *articole sportive, consumator, comportamentul consumatorului*

Introduction

The actual aims of this paper is to study and analyze the consumer's behavior regarding sports articles, which represent a relatively new area of studying all over the world and especially in our country. At the beginning of the sports products and services development, the countries and the organizations that were acting on this market and in these countries have noticed the necessity of applying the marketing elements and products, but also the studying of these ones in order to find out the consumer's preferences, so that their business can develop, grow and lead to a worldwide evolution of this domain.

The economic development of the countries, the diversity and the enrichment of the products and services supply, the growth of competition between companies, the speed with which appear new products, the growth of interdependence between national markets, all these represent just elements that "complicated" the existence of the organizations oriented to profit or to obtain other goals.

The studying of the consumer's behavior has become, in this way, an answer to the questions shown up at the organizational level regarding the ways of developing the business.

The principles of consumer's behavior of sports products and articles play an extremely important role for the organization at the time they are being used to define and to integrate the market orientation in its entire activity process. The market orientation or the orientation for the customer can be defined as a deeply knowledge of the consumers' needs and desires, of the competitive domain and the type of market, all these being necessary in developing the organization's plans and actions to generate satisfaction for the customer (Mihăilescu, 2006; Gherasim, Gherasim, 2003; Mitrea, Boboc, 2000; Mitrea, Boboc, 2000).

Objectives

This writing wants to develop a sports marketing strategy, based on the previous support of studying and analysis of the sports articles, but also based on the needs of the customer of these products and the identification of the primarily elements that stand for the base of influencing the customer's behavior when buying sports articles and products.

Our objectives are the following:

- to identify the interest for sports products and articles inside the group;
- the preferences of the targeted group regarding the brand of sports products and articles-most wanted;
- the setting of the category from which most customers buy sports products and articles.

Theoretical support

As the well-known marketing professor and specialist, Philip Kotler claims, the customer's behavior appears as a way out, being the result of several inputs, received, evaluated and transformed by the human being.

The studying of the human being behavior, regarded as the customer, has its origin in studying of the human behavior in general, the last one being during the time, an attractive element for many specialists, from different areas-economy, psychology, biology.

The American Marketing Association defines the consumer's behavior as "dynamic interaction between affect and cognition, behavior and environment, through which individuals realize their problems relating to trade in their lives".

A definition that takes a more explicit form states that consumer's behavior represents that behavior that he displays while searching, purchasing, using, evaluating and giving up to a product, service or idea, all of which are likely to satisfy a need. A consumer is a person who seeks to satisfy his various needs by purchasing goods. (Mitrea, Boboc, 2000; Mullin, 1999; Opreșan, 2001)

Any marketing approach is strictly conditioned by the characteristics of the population from which you extract the upcoming segments of potential consumers. Any community or population has a number of peculiarities of social and economic nature that influence directly or indirectly the act of buying and consumer's behavior.

"Specialists in marketing always ask what causes consumers to buy products. In terms of sport products there is a wide range of divergent views" (Mitrea, Boboc, 2000, p. 90).

For this purpose, knowing some elements such as: age structure of the population, the structure of gender, income, consumer market, etc., are especially helpful for developing marketing strategies by studying consumer's behavior of sport articles and products.

The orientation of any marketing research that proposes to find out the behaviors regarding buying and demand, must consider and analyze the population, both in terms of consumption needs, on the one hand, and the purchasing power, on the other hand. A general stock stems from the demographic population in the area investigated (number and structure of population by age group), to which are added or deducted, the population flows. The last ones integrates the natural movement of population (date of birth and death) and migratory movement (given by immigration and emigration). In addition to these quantitative aspects, for marketing activity are at least equally important the qualitative data-different types of structures that exist and evolve within the worldwide population. Of these, the most important concerns the structure of the population after its main criteria (Mitrea, Boboc, 2000; Mullin, 1999; Opreșan, 2001):

- *age groups* that can highlight types of very young populations, medium, mature, aged or very aged;
- *gender* that can notice types of populations with strong male, female representation, or balanced;
- *marital status* – not married, married, divorced, widowed;
- *level of training* – primary, secondary, vocational secondary, higher education;
- *the degree of participation in activities useful to society* – active population employed population, the unemployed population;
- *residence* – urban and rural population;
- *ethnic groups*, involving issues of cultural, anthropological aspects, etc.

These elements, which define in particular the socio-demographic profile of a population, are operational, in terms of marketing specialist, in so far as they are related to the elements that define the degree of economic development of the same population, the latter being expressed through a series of indexes such as income, the consumer price index, inflation, etc.

Regarding Romania, for example, the transition to a market economy meant the start of a slow but constant phenomenon of demographic ageing. The economic situation seems to be changing in the future, we are witnessing at the present to a process of economic growth, but the demographic trends, however, will undoubtedly have a due date in the future.

The subjects and the place

The research was carried out inside the Association Sports Club, 'REMEMBER' from Câmpulung Moldovenesc, on a representative number of 50 people, aged 18 years and over 60 years, of both genders and coming from different social classes. The study and research took place over a period of five months, i.e. from October 2014-March 2015 and was primarily focused on members and clients of the Sports Club Association, 'REMEMBER'. Of the 50 people interviewed most are men with a share of 68%, while the number of female gender was 16 with a share of 32%. Of those questioned in the first place are those between the ages of 19-24 with a rate of 46%, followed by those over 40 years old with 24% years of age and those aged between 27-40 years with 20%, and the last place are those aged less than 18 years with 10%. Of the 50 people surveyed 66% IE 33 people are unmarried, 11 persons (22%) are married and have children, and last place is equally shared between those being divorced persons and divorcees who have children with 2% each. A number of 29 people representing 58% are employed and 18 people representing 36% are pupils or students, three persons, namely 6% are unemployed and no retired persons.

Research methods

Bibliographical study method: this method constitutes the initial and mandatory step in any scientific investigation. Documentation constitutes a permanent obligation of professional ethics of any specialist. There have been studied various documents and works of authors related to marketing, consumer's behavior regarding sport articles and products existing on the market.

The questionnaire Method: it has been applied to a number of 50 subjects of different ages and genders originating from various social classes and different status and income, a total of 23 questions structured after their content in:

- introductory questions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
- filter questions: 7 and 8;
- content questions: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22;
- personal questions: 23.
- After the form of response to the questions of the questionnaire have been used:
- unstructured open questions – with free with free answer: 3, 6, 12, 13, 14;
- closed questions bihotomical: 1, 2; trihotomical: 15; multihotomical: 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22.

Statistical method: for the processing, interpretation, and labeling the results we have used the Microsoft Office Excel 2003 statically program for analyzing the collected data, and making the tables.

Case study method: It has been used the method of case study as a research tool document associated with the questionnaire method. For this I analysed the Sports Club Association, REMEMBER “from Câmpulung Moldovenesc, club founded in 2011 by reorganization, based on law, split from sporting association, “REMEMBER”, Association that was founded in 2004. Sports Club Association “REMEMBER” is a private sporting club, non-profit, and has its own arrangements for the administration and management of the budget and approved by the heritage of its General Assembly in compliance with the law, which is based on the Club’s status. The Governing Board is the one who approves the management plan and shall carry out the duties contained therein, giving the organizational and material support for the proper management of the business. The main activity of leadership, coordination and administration of the Club shall be charged to the Chairman together with the accounting officer, in collaboration with the Club and also with the support of the coaches and trainers. The main object of activity is practicing bodybuilding, fitness, but consists of the following departments of aerobics, Kangoo Jumps, Kick boxing and Thai boxing and departments of minifootball, tennis. Financial-accounting compartment is led and coordinated by the Chief Accountant of the club together with the Board of Directors which decides on apportionment and spending money for every department and areas of activity.

Results

Of those 50 sport products and articles consumers were questioned about, a number of 47 people used to buy these products and sporting goods, representing a 94%, compared with the three persons i.e. 6% that didn’t use to.

Of those 50 consumer products and sporting goods, questioned a number of 41 people didn’t use to buy products and sporting goods in large numbers in a month, representing a percentage of 82%, compared to the 18% 9 persons i.e. that used to buy more often in a month.

Of those 24 people questioned IE 48% said that Adidas was the brand that they knew best, compared to 32% i.e.16 who said that Nike company was that they knew a lot better. A number of five persons representing 10% responded that both companies Puma and others they knew best.

A number of 28 people representing 56% buy sporting goods occasionally, 20 people (40%) buy monthly, weekly and rarely just one person representing 2% buys these products and sporting goods of the 50 surveyed.

Of those questioned, 22 persons representing a 44% buy products and sporting goods from Adidas, 14 persons i.e. 28% buy from Nike, 7 persons representing 14% of those questioned answered that they buy from other brands. At the opposite pole lies Puma and LaCoste brands with 3, and 2 people each representing 6 and 4%, and Kappa and Lotto with one person with 2%.

Of those questioned, 25 subjects (50%) buy sporting goods because they're comfortable and loose, 12 subjects surveyed (24%) as it is the style that approached, out of the necessity for practicing sports and sporting activities are 7 subjects (14%), and 6 subjects (12%) buy for other reasons.

In the top of the preferences of those questioned 21 people with a rate of 46% Adidas company is located as the most preferred, followed by Nike with a number of 13 people representing 28%. PUMA lies in the third place in the rankings with a preference for 7% meaning 3 persons. At the opposite pole lies Kappa and Reebok with 0%.

The brands Adidas and Nike with a very small difference are considered to be of the highest quality among those asked 18, and 16 people representing 36% and 32%. On the last places there lies Reebok, a person, with 2% followed by Kappa with 0%. There is a relatively good percentage for other companies such as LaCoste, Puma and others: 10%, 5% and 4%.

The brands Adidas and Nike to very small differences are considered to be of the highest quality among those polled, 18 16 people representing 36% to 32%. The last places lies Reebok a person with 2%, followed by Kappa with 0%. A relatively good percentage have obtained the other companies LaCoste, Puma and others: 10%, 5% and 4%.

The 1st place in the top 50 adverts according to those questioned lies Adidas with a percentage of 46%, followed by Nike with 34 percent and the big difference with 8% LaCoste. The last places being Puma and Lotto 2% and Reebok with 0%. Of the 50 subjects questioned 64% of them feel that the products from Adidas are selling best, and second place are those from Nike with a share of 30%. Surprisingly is the fact that in their view the products from Puma, Kappa, Reebok, LaCoste don't sell, with a percentage of 0%.

Those questioned consider that the best sneakers are from Adidas 42% and at 32% from Nike. From other brands a number of 6 subjects meaning 13% consider that are sold the best. They are followed by the sneakers from Puma 4%, LaCoste, Kappa, Reebok and 2%.

The most important decision-making factor in the purchase of a sports article is the quality which results from questioning the 50 subjects, in which a number of 30 people representing 60% responded in the affirmative. The price is important for the other 16 meaning 32%, while for the remaining 4, 8% more important is the appearance/design.

The 1st place in the top of the wishes to change something at your favorite brand is to reduce the price with a percentage of 43%, in second place with 25% of those questioned would not change anything. They are followed by those who want to change the design with a share of 18% and those with advertising at the rate of 14%.

Out of a total of 50 subjects a number of 23, 46% consider that company with the worst product range is Lotto, followed equally by Reebok, Puma and Kappa with 16% each. Nike, Adidas and others are located at the top with the least bad range 0%.

The worst according to those questioned answered range is influenced by the design of 56%. The other 13 people, 26 percent consider the quality as an important factor and 9 i.e. 18% of people consider that a range of products is poor due to obsolete products.

A 50% of people surveyed believe that Nike products are not cheaper than those at Adidas, instead 10% of those questioned believe that they are, while the remaining 40% don't know if they are cheaper or not.

The majority of those questioned, a number of 35 persons representing a percentage of 70% responded that they find out from other sources about the emergence of a new product or article, while six persons i.e. 12% find the fastest from friends. They are followed by those for which the information source is the TV, a rate of 10% and those located in newspapers/magazine. No person finds out about the existence of a new article or product.

Most of those questioned consider that they are not influenced by anybody in the decision-making process, i.e. 70% people, while 12% acknowledge that friends have an influence on their decision, and the seller is considered to have the lowest impact on their decision to purchase only 2%. Ads and family are the following sources of influence on decision-making in proportion of 10% and 6%.

Regarding sneakers, the majority of those polled are willing to pay more for a pair, 82% than those who can pay no more than 150 lei, i.e. 20%; for pants instead the proportion was reversed in the sense that those who are willing to pay less are 50% than those who can pay more, 28 percent. 56% for t-shirt people are willing to pay between 0-100 lei at the expense of those who can pay more than IE 14%. Training suits between 150-350 lei, and it would allow for 50% towards those who would pay between 0-150 lei 18%. A fleece jacket is more expensive and would allow 52% of others who pay less than 14%. For a cheaper blouse they would pay 50% to 22% that don't think it worth paying more.

Table 1. How much you are willing to spend for sporting goods regardless their brand?

Sneackers 0-150 lei	10	20%
Sneackers 150-300 lei	41	82%
Pants 0-100 lei	25	50%
Pants 100-200 lei	14	28%
T-shirt 0-100 lei	28	56%
T-shirt 100-150 lei	7	14%
Tracksuit 0-150 lei	9	18%
Tracksuit 150-350 lei	25	50%
Jacket 0-150 lei	7	14%
J., 150-350 lei	26	52%
Jumper 0-100 lei	25	50%
Jumper 100-200 lei	11	22%

Of those questioned, 38 people have stated that 76% sports items prices are high, 7 people 14% asserted that are very high, and 3 persons 6% consider that they are extremely high. An insignificant percentage of 2% consider that prices are low and very low.

The lowest rates according to those questioned are considered to be held by Lotto brand with 14 people 28% of those questioned answered, followed with 22% Kappa with 14%, Puma, Reebok 12%, LaCoste and Nike with 8% each. A percentage of 4% considers that Adidas and other brands have higher prices than the companies listed.

Most of those polled 38% have spent between 130 and 200 RON in the last month, and the least are only 10% and claimed that they spent on average between 0-60 RON last month.

For nearly half of those questioned answered i.e. 46% the most important thing when purchasing an item or product is the quality, the design lies in the second place with a rate of 26% followed by product brand with 16% and its price with a rate of 12%.

A number of 29 people 58% said that their family income is greater than 1600 RON, 11 people representing 22% have a family incomes between 1001-1600 RON, while those with a family income ranging between 501-100 RON represents 16% of the number of the questionnaires sent and only 2 people (4%) are those whose family income is of less than 500 RON.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to help me find out the views and opinions of the consumers about the brands of sports articles and products as well as their wishes from those brands.

Such questions have had connection with the frequency of purchase, with the quality and price of products and sports articles as well as with the most sought and well-known brand but also with the social category which is most interested in these products, and sporting goods.

Therefore the key questions and those that wanted to be that the objectives of this work as a result of the questions asked and the answers from the respondents, we were able to highlight the following conclusions:

1. When asked about how big the interest towards products and sports articles was, most of those questioned responded in a very large number that they used to buy these products and sporting goods but not very often.

So therefore the interest among the group and thus the general public for purchase of products and sporting goods is a high one over a period of time greater than a short one (a month for example), which indicates that the market and the marketing of this product area is in a perpetual increase regardless of what category of the population purchases and uses these products.

2. Among those questioned and most sought-after brands acquired were Adidas and Nike that have stayed at quite a considerable difference from other brands like Puma, Kappa, Reebok and more.

The conclusion would be that these two large companies dominate the market for products and sporting goods through their marketing strategy and advertising very good and aggressive “, which they practice currently and are up to date at all times with the requirements of the consumers, attempting to satisfy these requirements, also through the study of the market and fashion not only by the behavior of the population.

3. To the question which consumer category is the most interested in buying and using these products, there are most persons aged between 19-25 years, as well as those over 40 years old and the majority are employees or pupils/students with a middle income and above average showing an increased interest in purchasing these products.

The brands Reebok, LaCoste, Kappa, and Lotto are the most poorly rated according to those questioned, and due to the fact that the price/quality ratio, design/diversity is not a good one and the marketing strategy also, although the majority of subjects questioned replied that they are not influenced by anybody when buying an item.

As a final conclusion, we note that the vast majority of consumers are moving towards brands already dedicated to presenting a variety and quality of their products to the detriment of the price quite high, having different tastes in their choice.

From the point of view of macro environment company products and sporting goods, market competition is relatively small, but the most imminent danger is the growing number of counterfeit items and products of poor quality that invade the market and lead to the deterioration of the image and quality of the original products.

However consumers adopt this kind of products and articles, may some even appropriated it as a part and parcel of their daily life, which is gratifying for manufacturers of these products, noting that the type of clients is increasingly diversified from day to day, and growing.

So for performance athletes and for athletes in general, sports items and products of particular importance in the conduct of their remarkable construction give them breathability, comfort, safety, helping them to reach more easily the performance or to achieve their objectives.

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