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Behaviour patterns in buyers as a premise for creating communication strategy between the company and the market

Key words: consumer, communication, advertising, market, strategy, social and cultural factors, internal factors, consumer's behaviour patterns

Summary: The consumer is in the centre of interest in the market economy. Success of the company producing and selling products depends on his/ her market decisions. Knowledge of consumer's behaviour patterns and factors which shape him/ her constitutes the basis for formulating the company's marketing strategy.

The paper addresses significance of having information about consumer's behaviour patterns for creating the marketing strategy of the company. It indicates the role of social and cultural factors in defining the promotion strategy. Their effect on the concept of the message, and the selection and role of various types of media in its execution is highly significant. The paper discusses, in particular, the effect of education of the society on the type and on the scope of application of advertising messages. The importance of colour or graphic symbols in perception of the message and success of the advertising campaign is discussed. Interaction of reference groups and opinion leaders is an important factor affecting consumer behaviour patterns, taken into account in designing promotional actions, especially in the field of advertising. The paper emphasises major significance of the effect of these factors on purchase of a product in the communication policy.

The paper also describes psychological factors which shape consumer's behaviour patterns and their effect on the strategy of communication between the company and the market. It indicates usefulness of information about motivation in consumers in designing the communication message by the company. Knowledge of their nature allows selection of the appropriate instruments which stimulate purchase of the product. Attention has also been paid to the mechanisms of consumers' perception of advertising messages and their features recommended to make it attract their attention. The paper discusses the effect of learning on consumer's behaviour patterns and the role of this factor in the communication process. It also discusses the role of attitude and personality in developing consumers' behaviour patterns and usefulness of information about at-

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titudes and personalities of prospective buyers in preparation of the contents of communication messages. The paper indicates also usefulness of information about lifestyles in building communication strategy, mostly in designing advertising messages.

1. Introduction

Knowledge of consumers, their needs, the mechanisms behind market decisions, and behaviour patterns is the basis for activities of the company in the market economy. Consumers, with their purchases, decide about success or failure of the company. From the point of view of the company, consumers are the main source of uncertainty, therefore their behaviour patterns require systematic research (1, p. 256). The research provides the basic premises for formulating the marketing strategy of the companies. Companies, intending to formulate marketing strategy so that it results in the appropriate outcome in the form sought of the expected behaviour patterns of the consumers, must be aware of the factors which shape them and of the degree and nature of the changes in behaviour under specific changes in these factors. A general relation between knowledge of consumers' behaviour patterns and marketing strategy of companies is presented in Figure 1. Without knowledge of these issues, formulating marketing strategy is basically impossible.

2. Information about consumer's behaviour patterns in creating the marketing strategy

The need of information about the consumer and his/ her behaviour patterns in developing marketing strategy applies to all stages of formulating this strategy. The reason is that it is used in selecting the target market segment, the product policy, the pricing policy, the distribution policy and the promotion policy.

Knowledge of principles of consumers' behaviour patterns in the market is necessary also for formulating communication strategy between the company and the market. Knowledge of internal as well as social and cultural conditions on which consumers' behaviour patterns depend is used especially broadly in formulating this strategy.

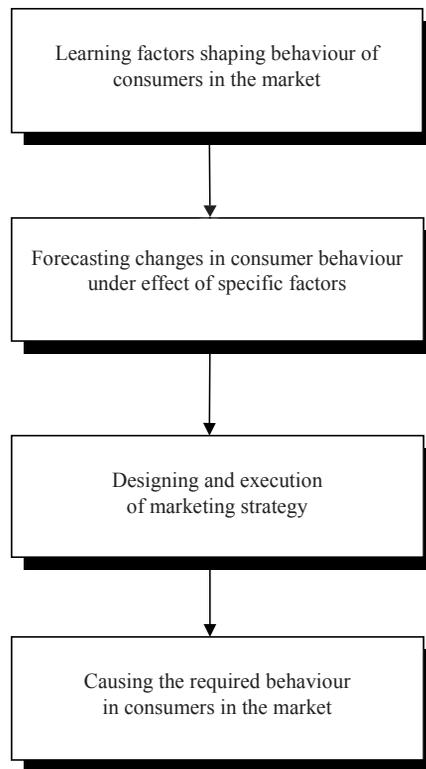


Figure 1. The relation between research in behaviour patterns in consumers and marketing strategy of companies

Source: author's own study.

3. Role of social and economic factors in building communication strategy

To formulate communication strategy of a company with the market, knowledge of social and cultural conditions for consumers' behaviour patterns is necessary. What values and forms of behaviour are accepted by consumers depends on their belonging to a specific culture or subculture. It has a major effect on the concept of the message, the selection and role of various types of media in its execution.

In American and European cultures, television is a very important, broadly used advertising medium which is less appreciated and used on a smaller scale in, for example, Islamic countries. The type of the used message is also highly dependent on the level of education of the society, and this applies in particular to the scope of

printed advertising. Advertising in the form of various types of publications, leaflets and flyers is addressed to social groups of higher level of education. On the other hand, external advertising proves better its grasp for groups of low level of education, e.g. posters. Extensive use of graphic symbols on packages is also recommended as much as it is possible.

Success of an advertising campaign depends also on the use of the proper colour or graphic symbol. For example, white in majority of countries expresses peace, innocence, and purity, but in Japan and Pakistan it stands for mourning. Green is associated with hope, youthfulness, but in Switzerland it means something unwanted, immature, and in Malaysia it is related to danger and death in the jungle. Thus, execution of products or packages in unwelcome colours causes their rejection by consumers. In this country, using green colour by a water sports company to identify its products would thus prove to be ineffective. The meaning of some colours in selected countries is given in Table 1.

Interaction of reference groups and opinion leaders is an important factor affecting consumer behaviour patterns, taken into account in designing promotional actions, especially in the field of advertising. Major significance for defining communication policy comes especially from determining the effect of these factors on purchase of a product. If the effect of a reference group or opinion leaders on consumer's behaviour patterns is clear, the advertising should present the purchase of the promoted product by persons from these groups. It is especially important in case of promotion of products related to ostentatious consumption. The reason is that purchase of these products, as the research shows, remains under strong effect of reference groups and opinion leaders.

4. Effect of psychological factors on designing communication strategy

How the signals will be received which are broadcast by a company in a promotional campaign depends on such factors as motivation, perception, learning, attitude, personality or lifestyle. These factors affect the form, contents and frequency of messages. They also affect the nature of arguments used in communication messages. They decide about size, colour and shape of the objects perceived.

4.1. Knowledge of consumers' motivation and designing communication strategy

In creating an advertising message for the given product, we should have information about motivations which induce consumers to make a purchase decision. Knowledge of the nature of the motivations underlying consumer's behaviour patterns allows designing the appropriate instruments stimulating to the purchase of a given

product. The nature of motivations indicates also their susceptibility to shaping by activities of the company.

Table 1

Colour geography

Country	Colour					
	Black	White	Red	Green	Blue	Yellow
Austria	Mourning	Innocence	Anger, love, passion, fire	Hope	Fidelity	Jealousy
Brasil	Mourning, death, secret	Peace, purity	Warmth, passion, hate, fire, anger, violence	Hope, freedom, immaturity, illness	Peace, coldness, indifference	Joy, sun, happiness, illness
Denmark	Mourning, worry	Innocence, purity	Love, danger, fire	Hope boredom, health	Quality	Danger, falseness, modesty
Finland	Worry, jealousy	Innocence, purity	Anger, love, passion, fire	Hope modesty	Coldness, without money, innocence	–
France	Worry, drunkenness, jealousy pessimism	Purity, youth	Anger, heat, pleasure, sobriety	Something young, fear	Anger, fear	Illness
Italy	Depression	Innocence, fear, failed love affair	Anger, danger, fire	Youth, lack of money, anger	Fear	Anger
Pakistan	Mourning, helplessness	Mourning, sobriety, elegance	Promise of marriage	Happiness, piety, eternal life	–	Virginity, weakness, anger
Portugal	Mourning, worry, hunger	Peace, innocence, purity	War, blood, passion, fire	Hope	Jealousy, difficulties, problems to be solved	Despair, plague
Sweden	Mourning, worry	Goodness	Anger, madness, fire	Inexperience, goodness	Recklessness, something frozen, cold	Without money
Switzerland	Pessimism, something illegal	Purity, innocence	Anger, fire	Something unwanted, immature	Madness, anger, love affairs	–

Source: author's own study.

Thus, if the underlying reason for the consumer's behaviour pattern is his/ her own pleasure, which means that he/ she is internally motivated, it is difficult to change. If this is the case, the company must adjust the appropriate promotion strategy to them, and should strengthen it with the appropriate advertising message. It refers to the products acquired for hobby time and the products acquired with a strong

internal pursuit of a goal. However, if the consumer's behaviour pattern is motivated externally, e.g. it comes from the intention to win a prize, these motivations are more susceptible to be shaped by the market. Thus the consumer is more susceptible to advertising of products of competitive companies.

Breaking down the motifs into rational and emotional in planning a promotional campaign is also useful. The concept of the advertising message calling upon rational motifs requires displaying quality parameters of a product or economic benefits from the purchase. In the concept of advertising calling upon emotional motifs, coming from instincts or feelings, the company strives for attracting and keeping attention and generating positive feelings for the product.

4.2. Perception and communication process

Effective communication of a company with the buyers depends on perceiving advertising messages by them. The company, creating an advertising message, must take into account the fact that consumers cannot perceive all the stimuli addressed to them. The stimuli addressed to them are filtered, thus only some of them are perceived. Usually, attention of consumers is attracted by stimuli related to their unsatisfied needs, especially when these are current needs, as well as stimuli not fully unanimous, surprising and such which clearly differ from the ones received before, e.g. significant reductions in prices, advertisements which incite interest and are intriguing. Also, the stimuli which consumers expect are easier perceived.

Stimuli addressed to prospective buyers are often distorted. This is due to the fact that people are inclined to interpret information so that it is in line with their established opinions and beliefs.

Subjectivity and selectivity of perception makes attracting attention of prospective buyers very difficult. For a marketing offer to arouse interest of the consumer, it must be clearly distinguished from among other offers existing in the market. The message thus must be properly constructed and include elements which the consumers will accept. It follows from the research by Bogusław Kwarciak that the most important positive features of advertising for the average recipient are:

- elements of entertainment;
- understandable transmission of information important for the consumer;
- warm, sensual atmosphere giving the recipient good moods (2).

On the other hand, pieces of information which cause fear, anxiety, etc., are not welcome.

Apart from the content, physical features of the advertising message are also important in advertising, such as: size, colour, shape of the advertised objects, use of motion, contrast, etc. The proper shaping of these features may broaden the scope of perception of the consumer.

If advertisement does not result in a satisfactory consumer's reaction, the stimuli addressed to him may be enhanced. It may be achieved by increasing the frequency

of emission of the advertisement in television or radio, increasing intensity of sound, increasing dimensions of external advertisements or by introducing contrast with a different colour or typeface, etc.

Knowledge of sensitivity thresholds should be the basis for increasing intensity of advertising stimuli (3, 4, 5, 6), especially the upper threshold of perception whose exceeding causes lack of reaction or results in a typical reaction on a standard level. In accordance with the Weber-Fechner law, if the strength of the stimulus increases exponentially, the impression increases linearly (cf. 5, p. 326; 6, p. 61). It allows determination of the degree of enlarging a press advertisement to attract attention of recipients and of increasing intensity of voice in television or radio commercials to win a larger auditorium.

4.3. Importance of learning in designing communication strategy

Learning mechanisms form another factor significantly affecting the process of communication of the company with consumers. These mechanisms are expressed by relationships between stimuli which affect an individual and his/ her reactions to them. These reactions may occur immediately or after a time.

The process of learning and remembering a communication message depends on the nature of the acquired product and commitment of the consumer. In case of selectable products of high price, the process of active learning is occurring. Strong commitment of the consumer makes him/ her actively search for information and process it selectively. Advertisements placed in select media, providing the consumer with reasonable arguments for the promoted brand, are conducive for intentional memorising of the information. In case of frequently purchased articles of low price, the process of learning and memorising communication messages is rather passive. Advertising these products must be exceptionally attractive so as to attract attention of the consumer. Detailed argumentation is unnecessary in this case, and displaying the name of the brand and the related smart slogan will be sufficient. Advertisements should also cause pleasant associations with the brand in the consumer.

The relationship of the consumer to the product is shaped systematically throughout the process of making decisions by the consumer. It is illustrated in Figure 2.

In the first stage of the decision-making process, the objective of the promotional activities is to attract attention and cause interest in the product. These activities are to result in identification of the product by the consumer and his/ her becoming aware of its existence in the market. In the second stage of the decision-making process, free samples of the product are introduced. The objective is to encourage the consumer to test the product and get to know it. In this stage, slips allowing acquisition of a product at a very low price are used. In the next stage, the company affects the consumer with purchase of cost reduction tickets. The degree of this reduction is lower and lower, so that finally the consumer makes the decision to purchase the product without promotional support. In the process of affecting the consumer, he should better and better learn the features of the product.

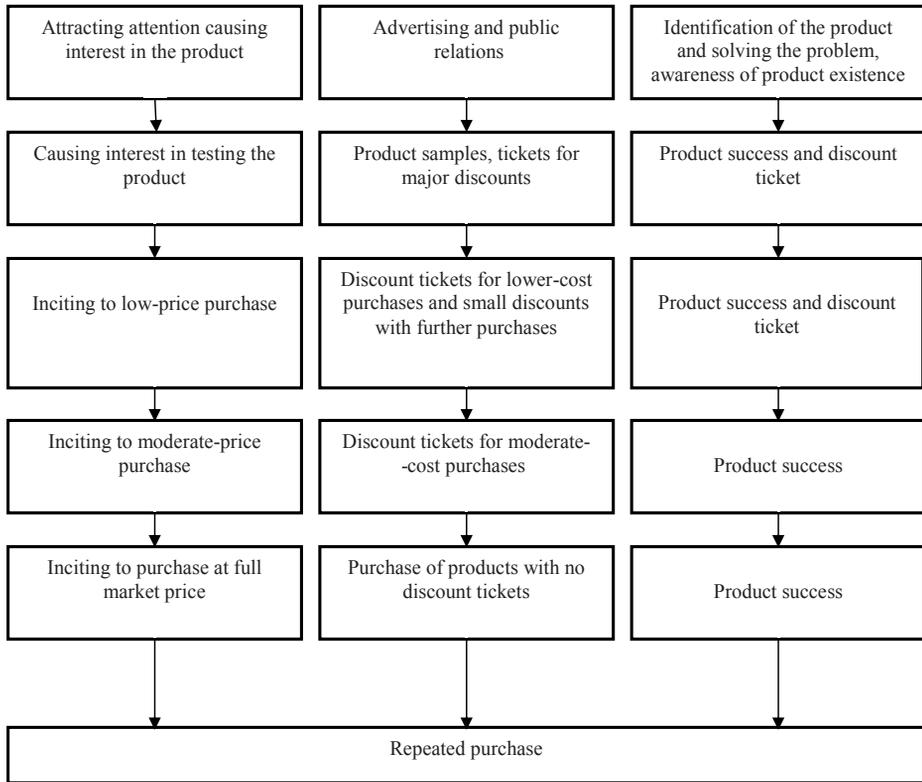


Figure 2. Staging intensity of promotional activities adjusted to the process of making decisions by the consumer

Source: (7, p. 263).

The product which gives the customer most satisfaction has chances to be bought again. According to the behaviourist theory of learning, satisfaction from the product is for the consumer a sort of reinforcement which stimulates repeated purchase. The opportunity to win a prize is also a new experience for the consumer, which is conducive for learning.

4.4. Attitude and communication process

The factors which affect the process of communication of the company with consumers include attitude. The attitudes of consumers result from their earlier experience, family traditions or cultural values, which create for the consumer the reference system in making market decisions. The consumer assuming a specific attitude releases him/ her from the necessity of reassessment of the product again and again and determines his/ her behaviour for a longer time.

Intending to effectively advertise the product, the essence is to learn the nature of consumer attitudes and possibilities of their changes. These possibilities depend on whether they express the basic values of the consumer or peripheral values. The attitudes which express fundamental values are very resistant to change. The attitudes of peripheral nature are relatively easy to change.

With promotion instruments, it is possible to affect change of both the cognitive element in the attitude and the emotional element or inclination to a specific purchase.

Change in the cognitive structure of the attitude may be achieved with promotion measures which perform information functions, mostly advertising. In this case, press advertisements are especially useful and enable delivery to the consumer relatively largest resources of information on the given product, service, and consequences for the consumer.

The effect of the attitude on the emotional element consists in adopting such a concept of advertising which stimulates the feelings of consumers, thus creating pressure leading to change in the attitude towards the given product.

Change in the behavioral element of the attitude, i.e. inclination to specific behaviour patterns in the market, may be achieved with various measures of supplementary promotion: sales, demonstrations, free sample, discounts.

4.5. Personality and communication process

The information about features of personality of the prospective buyer is useful in preparation of the contents of communication messages. Typologies of personality differentiating consumers according to susceptibility to external stimuli are especially useful. They are used in creation of message content.

Breaking down consumers into reactive and reproductive types offers major possibility of using in advertising activities. The former feature high susceptibility to persuasion, are easily subjected to suggestions and opinions of other people. Communication message of persuasive nature should be thus addressed to this group of consumers. Reproductive types feature quite fixed patterns of behaviours and likings, are conservative and consistent in their behaviour and not easily succumb to suggestions. Therefore, communication messages based on objective features of the product will be more appropriate for them.

The typology of personality by David Riesman may also be useful in communication with consumers. He differentiated three groups of consumers:

- with orientation for tradition, strong personal binds with the past, these are individuals resistant to changes;
- with internal orientation, focused on the personal system of values;
- with external orientation, focused on other people, taking over their values, attitudes and behaviour patterns from others.

The nature of orientations in consumer's behaviour patterns determines the way of perception external stimuli by them, which affects communication with persons

of varied orientations. Thus, e.g. persons focused on the past may look out for such elements in communication messages. In turn, the internal orientation of consumers results in expectation of the relationship of the content of the communication message with the system of values accepted by them. The communication message to the persons focused on other people should be based on using familiar people, like actors, sport people, TV presenters, journalists, as well as common people, who confirm significant values of the advertised product in satisfying their needs.

M. D. Veron's differentiation of types of personality on the basis of the type of their perception also creates the possibility of application in advertising activities. These are the so-called perception (opposing) types, including: reacting to colour and shape, visual and tactile, analytical and synthetic, active and passive.

However, the possibilities of using personality variables in communication with consumers is limited. It results from the difficulty in selecting groups of consumers of similar personality.

4.6. Effect of lifestyle on building communication strategy

Knowledge of lifestyles is used very broadly in the communication process. It is applied mostly in the field of advertising. It helps in building new communication strategies and in selecting and using media in advertising campaigns.

The analysis of lifestyles in the target segments allows the companies to discover new concepts for advertising messages and to adjust the current visions of the system of social values embedded in the messages.

Each social group features different sensitivity to media, and recognising these sensitivity variations allows to assess the means of message and select these which best meet the expectations of the buyers. The selection of media done in this way which relate to consumer lifestyles facilitates adjusting them to various products and types of promotional actions.

The analyses of lifestyles allow better understanding of different groups of recipients, tracking their development and changes in market expectations. These analyses allow to discover new advertising ideas, update the old issues and select the appropriate media.

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Zachowania nabywców jako przesłanka tworzenia strategii komunikacji przedsiębiorstwa z rynkiem

Streszczenie: W gospodarce rynkowej w centrum zainteresowania znajduje się konsument. Od jego decyzji rynkowych zależy sukces przedsiębiorstwa produkującego i sprzedającego produkty. Wiedza o zachowaniu konsumenta oraz o czynnikach go kształtujących stanowi podstawę przy formułowaniu strategii marketingowej przedsiębiorstwa.

W artykule zwrócono uwagę na znaczenie posiadania informacji o zachowaniu konsumenta dla tworzenia strategii marketingowej przedsiębiorstwa. Wskazano w nim na rolę czynników społeczno-kulturowych w ustalaniu strategii promocji. Mają one bardzo duży wpływ na koncepcję przekazu, na dobór i rolę różnych rodzajów mediów w jej realizacji. W artykule omówiono w szczególności wpływ wykształcenia społeczeństwa na rodzaj i zakres stosowania reklamy. Wskazano na znaczenie koloru czy symbolu graficznego dla postrzegania przekazu i dla powodzenia kampanii reklamowej. Ważnymi czynnikami zachowań konsumpcyjnych, branymi pod uwagę w projektowaniu działań promocyjnych, zwłaszcza w dziedzinie reklamy, są oddziaływania grup odniesienia oraz liderów opinii. Artykuł zwraca uwagę, że istotne znaczenie dla polityki komunikacji ma ustalenie siły wpływu tych czynników na zakup produktu.

W artykule dokonano także charakterystyki czynników psychologicznych kształtujących zachowania konsumenta i ich wpływu na strategię komunikacji przedsiębiorstwa z rynkiem. Wskazano na przydatność informacji o motywacjach konsumentów w projektowaniu przez przedsiębiorstwa przekazu komunikacyjnego. Znajomość ich charakteru pozwala dobrać odpowiednie instrumenty pobudzające do zakupu produktu. Zwrócono także uwagę na mechanizmy postrzegania przez konsumentów przekazu reklamowego oraz na cechy, jakie powinien on mieć, aby przyciągał uwagę konsumentów. W artykule omówiono wpływ uczenia się na zachowanie konsumenta i rolę tego czynnika w procesie komunikacji. Poruszono także rolę postaw i osobowości w kształtowaniu zachowań konsumentów oraz przydatność informacji o postawach i osobowościach potencjalnych nabywców w przygotowaniu treści przekazów komunikacyjnych. Wskazano również na przydatność informacji o stylach życia ludności w budowaniu strategii komunikacji, a w szczególności w projektowaniu przekazów reklamowych.

Słowa kluczowe: konsument, komunikacja, reklama, rynek, strategia, czynniki społeczno-kulturowe, czynniki wewnętrzne, zachowanie konsumenta
