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MALE-ORIENTED MARKETING – ASSUMPTIONS AND CONDITIONS

Introduction

Recent social and cultural changes, the increasing affluence of women, their growing professional status and contribution to household budgets as well as the increasingly greater involvement of men in household duties and care over children result in a gradual obliteration of differences between the traditional roles of men and women and the necessity to redefine the notions of femininity and masculinity. Referring to traditional, and frequently stereotypical ideas about men and women is becoming insufficient in marketing or even undesirable for present-day companies. Men, who so far have been perceived as strong, aggressive, and active, are becoming gentle and caring and they expect an offer and communication that would be addressed to their changing needs and would suit their new model of masculinity. For many companies the concept of male-oriented marketing may be a response to the changing situation on contemporary markets.

1. Man as a consumer

The development of effective man-oriented strategies and marketing instruments requires a thorough analysis of the features and behavior of that consumer group. According to J.Cunningham and P.Roberts the behavior of men on the market is determined by a general desire of success, which shows in the will to gain advantage, outperform the rivals and to take the dominating position. In order to achieve these targets, men apply various strategies. They surround themselves with status symbols, focus on activities that are visible and rewarding and finally they create hierarchy and concentrate more intensely on objects rather than people¹. Natural tendency to compete and the target-orientation are also typical for men-

¹ Cf. J. Cunningham, P. Roberts, *Zakupy na obcasach. Sekrety kobiecych motywacji (Inside her Pretty Little Head)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012; A similar view is expressed by M. Barletta, who describes men as individualists, who look at the world through the prism of themselves, consider other people important but concentrate rather on objects or events, o aim at gaining a success by means of competition and

consumers. There are some other characteristic features of this group of consumers that are crucial from the point of view of business whose marketing is oriented on men.

Men as consumers²:

- strive to solve problems only after they appear,
- in their efforts to achieve the target concentrate on the specific, the facts and numbers,
- look for the possibly most convenient solutions,
- tend to buy brands that they know,
- are more patient to wait for the results of the functioning of a product,
- are loyal to brands and products that they have tested,
- tend to spend more on the brand that they like,
- are usually well prepared to do the shopping, both in the financial and informative sense,
- appreciate more the benefits resulting from applying the product rather than its benefits related to the price;
- tend to accept an expert's rather than their friend's opinion,
- less frequently take advantage of promotions,
- are less susceptible to salespeople influence.

The image of a present-day man-consumer is becoming increasingly multidimensional. Apart from typically masculine features such as the will to dominate and control, new characteristics appear such as sensitivity and emotionality, which are usually related to women. As a result, the creation of offers for men requires a thorough recognition and understanding of their needs, expectations and preferences; consequently a new approach to that group of consumers is necessary.

2. Decision making process of male buyers

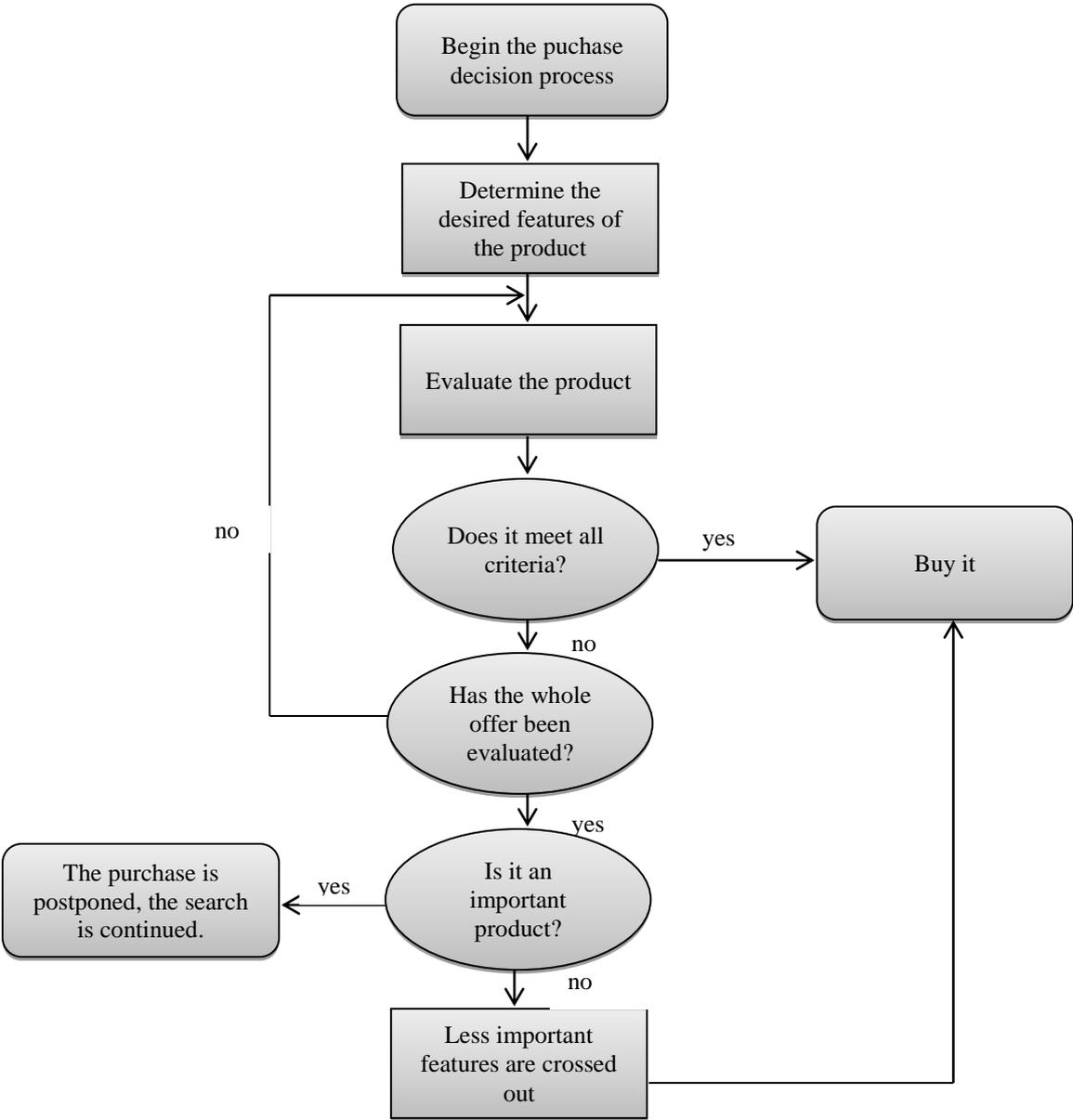
Biological, social and cultural differences between women and men, which result in a different perception of an offer and different market behavior, are also reflected in the purchase decision making process. Men, whose choice is usually rational and planned, make

create hierarchical structures that reflect their vision of the world [more on the subject in: M. Barletta, *Marketing skierowany do kobiet (Marketing to Women)*, CeDeWu, Warszawa 2006].

² See: J. Izmałkova, *Materiał na wspaniałych konsumentów*, „Marketing w praktyce” 2013, No 11; A. Arwaj-Sidorowicz, A. Nowak, *Co z tym seksem w sprzedaży?*, „Marketing w praktyce” 2013, No 11; H. Maquire, *Pan w centrum handlowym*, „Marketing w praktyce” 2013, No 11.

purchases in order to meet a particular need and treat shopping as a kind of hunting or mission. The process seems to them troublesome and they try and make it as short as possible, while the inability to conclude a planned purchase is seen by them as a failure. When purchasing, a male consumer is looking for the best solution and the purchasing process is linear in character³. The recognition of a problem triggers the search for information and selection processes as regards the significant features of the desired product. In the next step, alternatives are evaluated on the basis of the most crucial features, followed by purchasing the product that meets the criteria best (fig.1).

Fig.1. Decision making process of male buyers



³ Cf. M. Barletta, *Marketing...*, op. cit.

Source: D. Jaffe, *Gender Marketing: New Insights for New Concepts*, Conference Gender and Marketing, Praga, 14 November 2007, <http://www.genderstudies.cz/download/Jaffe.pdf> (Accessed:13.02.2014)

In the purchase decision making process, a male consumer follows a straight path with the aim to reach the target. In the course of the search for the desired product or service, he eliminates the ones that do not meet the assumed criteria. However, he finally attempts to limit the choice to the most significant alternatives. Having defined his requirements as regards the offer, he purchases the product or service fairly quickly and decidedly.

3. Assumptions of male-oriented marketing

The concept of male-oriented marketing is a part of a wider notion of gender marketing, which assumes that women and men – having different roles depending on sex – have also different needs and expectations as regards products and services. Already at the stage of product and service designing, gender marketing makes attempts to consider the fact that different life styles and frequently different living situations of women and men result in different consumer decisions⁴.

Targeting a particular consumer group requires on the part of business the recognition of the factors that are the result of the biological, social and cultural differences between the two sexes. B.Deutsch points out to four elements that should be considered when planning and implementing marketing to men. They are⁵:

- time – men purchase quickly, make a list of requirements that includes a limited number of the desired features of the product they are looking for; they concentrate on the target, i.e. the purchase,
- causality – they are concrete in action and decision making, prefer clarity and literality of views and conduct,
- space – they do not associate the space (i.e. the place where they are buying) with going into relationships with other people,
- other people – men value individuality, they are focused on themselves and prize self-reliance; they consider contacts with people as competition and divide other people into losers and winners.

⁴ Cf. R. Sambor, B. Schedl-Richter, *New Working Environments: Why men prefer to operate video projectors and women love their smartphones. Gender aspects at the office?*, <http://bene.com/office-furniture/new-working-environments-gender-aspects-at-the-office/> (Accessed: 13.02.2013)

⁵ See: *How Marketers Should Appeal to Men*, <http://www.bulldcitymutterings.com/2010/04/how-marketers-should-appeal-to-men.html> (Accessed:13.02.2014)

Arranging male-oriented offer and communication requires the consideration of features that are typical both for men-consumers and the new image of men in the present-day world. When buying a product, men are driven by a concrete need. Thus, in order to turn their attention to the offer, the product must be noticed and considered to be significant. Apart from the product itself that must meet the expectations of a man-consumer, there are other functional aspects that are important: product availability, the length of the queue at the cash desk or an easy access to the car park. Men appreciate innovations as long as they contribute to product effectiveness and functionality. Packaging and the looks of the product are of lesser significance to men; the same applies to their interaction with a shop assistance. It is important that companies that are targeting their marketing to men should recognize consumer behavior in a store. After an extensive research, P.Underhill presented differences between male and female behavior in stores. According to him, men spend less time watching products, they tend to look for them without asking for help and prefer to gain information from printed or virtual materials rather than from face-to-face conversations or contacts with the selling staff⁶.

Male-oriented marketing compels companies to support their marketing operations and strategies on thorough investigations aiming at the recognition of the way of thinking and purchase decision making by men. Moreover, market segmentation should be conducted and adequate marketing programs should be constructed with the aim of taking into consideration the needs and expectations of men-consumers.

4. Analysis of the questionnaire survey results

The changing needs, expectations and consumer behavior of contemporary men should constitute an incentive for consumer-oriented business to start marketing that takes such processes into consideration. Male-oriented marketing is a concept – although still not very popular – which may be a promising direction of action for many companies. In order to find out about the characteristics, consumer behavior and convictions concerning gender-oriented marketing, a questionnaire survey among 167 respondents was conducted.

The questionnaire form included 9 questions on purchase making decision concerning products of various categories, the behavior and features of men consumers and the views on gender-oriented marketing.

⁶ See: P. Underhill, *Dlaczego kupujemy?*, MT Biznes, Warszawa 2001; H. Maquire, *Pan w centrum handlowym...*, op. cit.

The survey covered 80 women (48% of respondents) and 87 men (52%). The group in the age range of 20-30 years was the most numerous (79% - 132 respondents), the second biggest group were respondents in the age range of 31-40 years (14% - 23 respondents). The share of other age ranges was insignificant: 41-50 years (4% - 7 respondents), below 20 and over 50years (3% - 5 respondents).

The respondents were asked to state who in their households buys products belonging to various categories. Women declared buying food, cleaning products, drugs and pharmaceuticals themselves (52%, 53% and 50% , respectively), while men dominated as regards purchasing electronics and white goods (80% of men pointed at themselves and 41% of women pointed at their husbands or partners), cars (75%) and financial products (56% of men pointed at themselves and every third woman pointed at her husband or a partner). As many as 95% and 89% of women declared buying cosmetics and clothes or shoes, respectively. In the case of men, the figures regarding that category were 40% and 64%, respectively, which may indicate an increase of interest among men as the target group of these products. Every third respondent (35%) declared making purchase decisions on his/her own as regards furniture and household facilities and in the category of holiday services the figure was 52% . Here, the differences between the sexes were insignificant.

The respondents were definitely convinced (90%) that gender has an impact on consumer behavior. According to 72% of the respondents, a man-consumer searches for the most convenient solutions for which he is willing to pay a higher price; however, he is more loyal to the brand (71%) and pays more attention to the product value (55%). More than half of the respondents (58%) stated that men – when choosing a product – tend to rely on an expert’s rather than their friend’s opinion. (table 1)

Table 1. Women and men as consumers, by respondents

Buying behavior	Woman		Man	
	responses (%)	number of responses	responses (%)	number of responses
Collects more information before buying	56	94	44	73
Is a more demanding consumer	67	111	33	56
when buying a product, tends to rely on expert’s than friend’s opinion	42	70	58	97
is more loyal to the brand	29	49	71	118
pays more attention to the quality of the product	45	75	55	92
pays more attention to the price of the product	52	87	48	80
looks for the possibly most convenient solution, and agrees to pay a higher price for that	28	46	72	121
pays more attention whether the product and brand are in line with gender	67	111	33	56

Source: Author’s research

The respondents were also asked to select from a list of 13 features the ones that characterize men-consumers best. According to the respondents man-consumer is practical (66%), loyal to brand (50%), decisive (46%), target-oriented (45%) and rational (41%). The above features were attributed to men-consumers almost equally by the respondents of both sexes. In addition, the male respondents characterized men-consumers as demanding, and every third woman described men-consumers as competitive (table 2)

Table 2. Responses to the question: *Which features in your opinion characterize men-consumers best?*

Features	Responses of women		Responses of men	
	%	number	%	number
rational	41	33	41	36
patient	15	12	21	18
loyal to the brand	46	37	54	47
demanding	31	25	51	44
decisive	49	39	44	38
practical	65	52	69	59
target-oriented	42,5	34	47	41
competitive	30	24	17	15
impulsive	16	13	10	9
susceptible to influence	20	16	8	7
emotional	4	3	7	6
sponataneous	19	15	23	20
indecisive	14	11	8	7

Source: Author's research

For 58% of respondents it is important and for 18% it is very important that products on the market should be targeted to their gender. Every fifth responder (21%) considered targeting products to a particular gender unimportant (table 3)

Table 3. Responses to the question: *To what extent is it important to you that products on the market should be targeted to your gender?*

Significance of targeting products to particular gender	Responses	
	%	Number
Definitely important	18	30
Important	58	97
Unimportant	21	35
Definitely unimportant	3	5

Source: Author's research

When asked about the current dominating type of marketing as many as 63% of respondents stated that it was gender-targeted marketing, while every third of the respondents expressed the opinion that it was gender-neutral marketing. As regards men-targeted

marketing, every third respondent considered it an important tool of operation for many companies and a prospective direction of marketing (37% and 34%, respectively) – table 4.

Table 4. Responses to the statement: *For you men-targeted marketing is..*

Opinion on men-targeted marketing	Responses	
	%	number
Tool of operations important to many companies	37	61
Prospective direction of marketing	34	57
Unimportant creation and preservation of artificial divisions and stereotypes	20	34
Inefficient tool of gaining customers	9	14

Source: Author's research

Conclusion

An ideal man- or woman-consumer does not exist. However, due to social and economic changes on the market, consumer expectations and the competition, companies look for new ways of reaching customers. As the research indicates, men are increasingly more involved in buying products (both for themselves and the households) that so far have been purchased by women (this is particularly visible as regards the cosmetics and clothes or shoes categories). However, the way men make decisions and the factors that they consider in the purchase decision processes are different from the ones that occur in the case of women-consumers. Consequently, it seems indispensable that companies should develop some precise tools to reach the changing male market. Male-oriented marketing should consider the specific characteristics of men-consumers and, simultaneously, combine the traditional images of masculinity and the new roles played by contemporary men. The respondents stated that the market is dominated by gender-oriented marketing but one should be aware of the fact that supporting the marketing on gender stereotypes may have effects opposite to the expectations. Thus, it seems crucial to conduct thorough investigations and to carry out a precise segmentation so that a marketing strategy and tools are developed with the aim to build long lasting relationships with the male-consumer market.

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Abstract

The changes occurring in society, especially the ones related to the different perception of traditional female and male roles, as well as the new patterns of femininity and masculinity result in the development of gender-oriented marketing that makes it possible to work out efficient methods of influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions on the basis of real differences between the two sexes and not on the commonly known stereotypes. Man-oriented marketing may become a response to the new expectations and behavior patterns of men-consumers and be an opportunity for many companies to win a segment of loyal customers.

The article characterizes men-consumers by their features and purchase-decision process. It also presents the assumptions of male targeted marketing. Selected results of a questionnaire survey are presented that aimed at the determination of consumer purchase behavior with a particular consideration of men and the opinions on gender-oriented marketing.