

Influence of sociological determinants in consumer behavior

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Abstract

Consumer behavior belongs within the scope of delicate issues in theoretical marketing concepts of marketing. The main reason for such treatment of specific issues derives from human individuality in the decision making process for purchasing. From the complexity of human nature, arise challenges in their efforts to look at the internal motives of consumers, their psychological elements and conditions, the internal psychological determinants of behavior, but also the influence of culture, social class, family, lifestyle, as external sociological determinants, regardless of the particular autonomous characteristics of being socially exposed to certain environmental impacts that are undoubtedly of great importance to one's behavior as a consumer. On the other hand, there is a series of hidden motifs for which their oversight is necessary because they are crucial to the decision-making process. Having this in mind, the researchers focused their objectives on analyzing the determinants of consumer behavior in the decision-making process to be marketed.

Various sources of data have been used in the analysis and the theoretical processing of the work. Most of them have a secondary character and include domestic contemporary literature and foreign literature related to this issue.

The basic concept of this paper, besides the introductory

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part and the conclusions, is also composed of interrelated parts. Given the analysis of different sociological determinants such as culture, social classes, reference groups and so on we understand their impact and their importance in bringing decisions in the market for personal consumption.

Keywords: Sociological determinants; family; social classes; reference groups; decision-making; purchase;

1. Introduction

At the center of economic theory and practice there is also a market for personal consumption which gives a great importance to the aspects of consumer behavior, from the fact that the products do not appear independently in the market but are accompanied by many other products that meet identical or similar needs at a sufficiently high level of substitution. From this, the reaction and behavior of consumers to any concrete product represents that element on the basis of which an effective marketing mix concept can be developed in order to achieve differential benefit in the market.

The analysis of consumer behavior in the personal consumption market is in fact an analysis of how consumers under the influence of determinants make decisions about spending their separate resources for purchasing products and services for which there is assurance that they will satisfy their needs and needs at the desired level. Further, the analysis deals with how consumers are using the products and services they buy, how much do those brands / product brands cost, how often and where they buy them, and first and foremost why one buys and uses concrete products and services. Looking at the content aspect, consumer behavior is a process in which consumers respond to their needs by answering questions: what people buy, why they buy the product, where they buy the product, when and how often, how they value their products, as well the feelings and attitudes that consumers create with the purchase and use of products. From customer experience to the use of products, the behavior of the decision to buy the brand or the same product depends to a large extent.

From this we can conclude that without the proper information about the demands and wishes of consumers, their behavior during the act of purchase and determinants that influence the decision making process for purchase, today it cannot be imagined without the success of companies in

the market. From these reasons it is quite understandable why companies with the aim of better positioning and achieving higher sales in the personal consumer market at the center of their marketing research put the customer on the market. Understandably, consumer behavior research should be a continuous activity, given the dynamics of their demands and desires, as well as the factors surrounding them.

2. Sociological determinants in consumer behavior

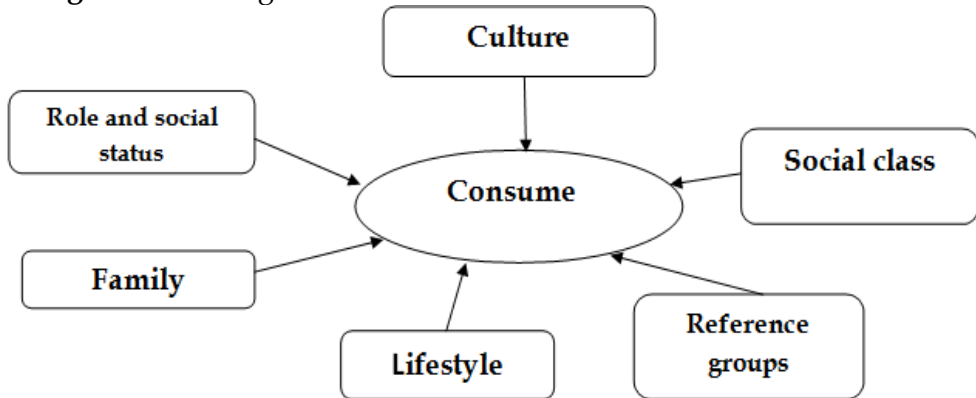
In order to generally explain the behavior of consumers, it is impossible not to emphasize the importance of sociological determinants in consumer behavior, because sociology as a science deals with the study of society and the behavior of people as representatives of different groups. According to societies, people as consumers are also stimulated by the influence of the group they are part of.

In sociological explanations of the process of meeting the needs of consumers, the human is observed as a social being, whose behavior affects the environment in which one lives and works. The consumer is part of the society and meets one's personal and social needs in the social environment system where participates.

The system of values within the society itself is human-oriented and its formation as a social being, which during this period will not lose its individual characteristics.

From a sociological point of view, the process of behavior is explained through the creation of motivation, perception, structure and attitudes (Engel, Blackwell, Miniard, 1990, p.63).

Sociological factors have a great impact on consumers, and based on the affiliation of the person in any of the social groups determines one's behavior as a consumer.

Figure 1: Sociologic determinants of consumer behavior

Source: Maricic (1991)

According to sociologists, the motivation of the person besides the personal needs and desires has a great influence on the particular society in which he is part. In the sense that we have said in advance, because of the rational formation of the marketing activity program, it is especially important to know who makes the purchase decision (individual or social group (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1993, p. 338).

2.1. Culture as a determinant of consumer behavior

In the global aspect, culture has a fundamental and far-reaching impact on consumer behavior in the market. With its characteristics contributes to the society's distinction from others. In determining its detailed study it is necessary to consider and analyze the characteristic factors of a particular society, such as language, knowledge, belief, folklore, traditions, customs, technology, work habits and so on. Culture is the framework in which consumers' goals are created, but at the same time it is an efficient and trustworthy tool to accomplish those goals.

Regarding the oversight of our issues, it is particularly important to note that economic theory includes a large number of definitions for culture. Different opinions of different authors during its definition are the result of different approaches in explaining its complexity. In a broad sense, culture is described as a way of life. Acceptable is the definition on which culture refers to a set of values, ideas and symbols that people communicate with each other, explain and evaluate as a member of a society (Maricic, 1993)

From the aspect of impact analysis, culture is defined as a sum of learned beliefs, values and traditions which lead consumer behavior as a member of a particular society.

For marketing needs, culture can be defined as a list of acceptable values, beliefs, consumers and behaviors which are typical for members of a particular society.

Culture is often seen as sum of the traditions that connect the members of one society to the other. It should also be noted that common language or behavior is the most critical component of culture, which enables the sharing of values and experiences among people.

For marketing it is important to know that culture has a great impact on meeting customer desires and their behavior. Culture also affects the structure of consumption, the decision-making process of consumers and the creation of organizational promotion by companies.

2.2. Social class as a determinant of consumer behavior

People as the underlying subjects of a social order have always been divided into classes and layers. In society there is a hierarchy of classes and layers that are distinguished by factors influencing them. The position of consumers within the framework of a particular society will be bright if it is considered that every social class represents a different target group and that the notion of social class is defined as "relatively homogeneous and stable division of society, set hierarchically, whose members have similar values, interests and behaviors ". The social class is also defined as a "group of people who have similar behaviors, and is based on the economic position of the market". By social class we mean "hierarchical division of society into relatively different and homogeneous groups, primarily depending on the attitudes, values and lifestyle" (Hawkins, Roger and Coney, 1989, p.127).

The social class system is characterized by a hierarchical structure from the lowest class to the highest class. Thus, in social class frames, groups of people (customers) are linked to each other, not individuals. Participation in one of the social classes shows that others may be the same or superior. Through the social class in the true sense of the word is expressed prestige, power or power and privileges.

Given into consideration our previous findings and our approaches to determining the dependence of this determinant on consumer behavior, we need to emphasize the basic characteristics of the social class, and they are:

- a) they symbolize status
- b) they are multidimensional
- c) they are hierarchical
- d) respectively they impact the consumer behavior
- e) they are homogeneous
- f) they are dynamic.

Compared to the social class, the notion of social stratification is more complicated. It is defined as a particle in a given class or social group. Although there is no interdependence between the various social divisions while the mobility between the various layers is limited.

In literature they are some characteristics of social layers:

Individuals within the layer show a tendency to behave similarly, in contrast to people between the two layers;

- It is considered that individuals, depending on representative layer, hold the superior position,
- Social stratification in most cases encompasses a large number of social characteristics such as occupation, income, wealth, education etc., and not just a characteristic;
- Individuals can move from one layer to another. The volume of fluctuation depends on the rigidity of the social strata.

Except for the belief that all people are the same, again practice shows that some are different from others, or some are a higher degree in the social hierarchy, or some below.

The social class and the layers as a determinant in a certain way determine the behavior of consumers in the decision-making process. Participation in one of the classes or social strata forces consumers to behave and typically resort to this class or layer.

Given the methodological comparison procedure, we will dwell on the traditional structure of American society that recognizes seven social classes. Even that:

Table 1: The traditional structure of American society

Class	Size
High-high	0,3%
High-medium	12,5%
High-low	1,2%
Medium	32%
Working class	38%
High-low	9%
Low-low	7%

Source: Maricic (1991, p. 82)

- High class - high (less than 1%) in which the social elite lives in inherited wealth. Its representatives are characterized by the high amount of money donated for humanitarian purposes, the real estate they possess, the heirs enroll in highly prestigious educational institutions, etc.
- High class- medium (12%) - the representatives of this class have no inherited wealth, they are people who are preoccupied with education and personal career, family-oriented and family values, they represent good consumers in the real estate market, furniture, automobiles, clothing, etc.
- High class-low (2%). This class consists of people who have independently earned high income or wealth through their work and engagement, usually coming from the middle class. This category usually includes the so-called "new rich people" customers who choose impressive products and services, thus impressing the lower strata.
- Medium class (32%), in this class are middle-income workers, it is customary to buy custom-made products with the sole purpose of being in step with the trend. Most of the income is allocated to their children, who lead them to higher education and achieve high learning outcomes.
- Working class (38%) Representatives of this class are average salary workers. Their economic power is often associated with support from close relatives.

- Low class-high (9%) Representatives of this class are workers, but their standard of living is slightly higher than the poor. They are a little paid, uneducated people who perform unskilled jobs.
- Low class-low (7%), this class includes people living from social assistance, with a very low standard of living, being in poverty, without any income.

Thus presented the traditional structure of American society has the shape of rhomboid (narrow in the beginning and the end, broad in the middle) that is quite typical of developed countries. In the less developed states, the structure of society is in the shape of a pyramid (the poor are based on the bottom of the pyramid).

As a final conclusion from what we have said so far, from the point of view of consumer behavior, we can say that without the knowledge of classes and social strata there is no possibility that the marketing program of companies matches the wishes and needs of consumers, layers representatives or relevant classes.

2.3. Referential groups as a determinant in consumer behavior

Depending on what kind of group it belongs to, it has a great or minor impact on members. Thus, informal primary groups have a great impact on members due to honesty and inter-ethnic contacts with which members are interconnected, without being obliged to change. This is not the case for secondary informal groups, where due to the space of their members, it develops itself and itself assesses the opportunities.

The interest for social groups from the aspect of consumer behavior is quite high because society through them is presented as one of the main factors affecting the consumer what, when and how to buy.

The impact of reference groups on consumer behavior can be different - positive when customer accepts and negative - when the customer is avoided.

In essence, there are different types of impact of reference groups on consumer behavior:

- **Normative influence** - when reference groups affect overall values and consumer behavior.
- **Comparative influence** - which forms the specific attitudes of consumers. This impact largely depends on normative influence

- **Influencing Influence** - Through it the referent group forms consumer behavior through providing the necessary information and facts relevant to consumers, in order to successfully develop the process of purchasing products and services.
- **Identification influence** - identification individualization is the most powerful influence, which implies the guiding attitude and behavior of the individual in the reference group (Ristovska-Jovanovska and Jacovski, 2003, p. 94).

2.4. The family as a determinant in the consumer behavior

"Family" means two or more persons related to blood, marriage, or adoption, and live together. The family is part of the primary reference group, which has a positive and more pronounced impact on consumers. The family's influence on the individual is oriented in many directions so that it is reflected in the formation of one's values, thoughts and attitudes not only in the social, economic and political sense, but also in the personal ambitions and characteristics of the individual.

Within the concept of family we distinguish: - **Nucleus** in the family, which forms married couples with the children. It is the so-called close family; expanded family is the family in which apart from family members belong to family relatives such as spouse's parents. The family directly affects the formation of values, attitudes, beliefs and behavior of individuals through: economic status, emotional support, child socialization and lifestyle (Maricic, 1993).

Various family life cycle classifications can be found in the various literatures that provide a clearer picture of consumer behavior. Viewed from the aspect of consumerism and market segmentation, the concept of the five-stage life cycle of the family is mostly used:

- In the first phase of any family life, there are new or unmarried persons. They are mainly persons who have just completed their education or are just employed, so they make decisions for the creation of their family. Having a very high income, I spend the money for rent, for apartment equipment, food, clothes, travel, etc.
- In the second phase of the family life cycle there are married couples without children. This phase is dependent on the plans for expanding the family, material, profession, interest etc.
- In the third phase of the family life cycle there are married couples having children, and those divorced with or without children.

- In the fourth phase of the family life cycle are persons aged between 35 and 65 years. In this category counted married couples and divorced with and without children.
- In the fifth phase of the family life cycle, persons over 65 years are found.

The concept of the cycle of family life allows one to recognize family habits for consumption, depending on the type and category of products one buys. This concept emphasizes the meaning of the age of income in the behavioral analysis of households during consumption. During this, each stage varies according to the desires and needs, as well as according to the financial condition and the family experience. This in turn enables the definition of a relatively homogeneous market segment and the establishment of an adequate marketing mix.

3. Conclusion

Based on the knowledge gained from secondary sources we can conclude that sociological determinants have a significant impact and represent the basis for customer behavior during the decision-making process for purchasing.

During the detailed analysis of these determinants, culture was first determined as determinant. It turns out that the influence of culture has been implemented in consumer behavior, and is expressed through their values, beliefs and attitudes towards their purchasing decisions.

Family as a determinant in consumer behavior is one of the most powerful influences on the individual in consumption. The family's impact on the consumer is more oriented, so it reflects on the formation of values, attitudes and opinions as well as on the personal characteristics of the consumer that are reflected in the decision-making process of purchasing decisions.

From the analysis carried out, we conclude that life style has multiple impacts on consumers. On the one hand, it has a direct and indirect impact on the motivation of consumers, thus influencing their behavior. On the other hand, the lifestyle affects the needs and attitudes of consumers and through them also in the behavior when purchasing and using the products. The desired lifestyle affects the outcome of the decision made by

consumers, but the opposite of the outcome of the decision made to consume affects the lifestyle.

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