

Magdalena Maciaszczyk
Lublin University of Technology

Tendencje zmian zachowań rynkowych konsumentów niepełnosprawnych ruchowo

TENDENCIES OF CHANGES IN MARKET BEHAVIOURS OF PHYSICALLY DISABLED CONSUMERS

The article is a literature review and concerns the issue of tendencies of changes noticed in market behaviours of both healthy and physically disabled consumers. It is essential to notice that the way of making decisions and making choices is possibly a result of growing consumer awareness of disabled people but also generation changes undergoing on the market. Such generation changes are resulting in modifications both in a system of values and in the way that market participants communicate. Additionally, continuous globalization and digitization determining the process of consumer behaviours are also important. Internet is more frequently chosen as an alternative method of a barrier-free cybernetic communication channel where consumers from different groups can interact in the marketplace. A medical condition of a customer is becoming completely irrelevant and extraneous as the interactivity and dynamics of market changes let everyone adjust the market offer to own requirements and wants. Globalization means that customers with motor disorders are no longer limited to local communities and therefore the interest of young disabled consumers in virtual communities is growing.

Key words: changes of values, consumer choices, determinants of consumer behaviour, disabled consumers, globalization, shopping habits

INTRODUCTION

Modern consumers are constantly changing and the process of their change is influenced by numerous factors. The mentality of consumers is undergoing transformation, especially in the hierarchy of values and principles. The meaning of qualitative aspects of the consumption that allow to increase in the quality of life is growing. The trend of critical attitudes and doubts concerning the future – social, political and economic, is becoming more marked across the societies but in such a context the meaning of individual development and expression is growing. People are trying to adapt to changeable and uncertain reality and at the same time they want to keep and articulate their individuality. For this reason the meaning of possibility of expressing personal feelings and emotions and emphasizing different preferences and tastes is increasing. It should not be possible to talk about the general population of consumers as there are many single groups that need to be treated individually. One of such groups is a segment of consumers with physical disabilities.

According to a report created by the United Nations, ten percent of the world's population have some degree of disability, which means more or less 650 million people

and over 50 million people with disabilities in the European Community alone [Lovelock 2010, Chang, Chen 2011]. In Poland data concerning disabled persons are systematically published with the quarterly frequency. The most up-to-date material from the Economic Activity Populations –BAEL - concerning the population of disabled people, refers to the 3rd quarter of 2014 [Aktywność..., 2014]. According to this data the population of disabled persons at the age of 16 in 2013 reached 3,332 thousand people. What is more important, 578 thousand people was professionally active and 2,755 thousand disabled people was professionally passive. The number of unemployed disabled amounted to 97 thousand. It is obvious then that the segment of disabled consumers is a huge, barely explored area [Vezina *et al.* 1995].

In such a reality, where the number of mobility impaired consumers is slowly but continuously growing, it should be extremely important to name dissimilarities in values and differentiate between needs and expectations of healthy consumers towards, for example, the store selection and the customer service or towards the product itself.

The following paper presents the overview of hypotheses concerning sources and tendencies of changes in consumer behaviours or hierarchy of values and supports them with analysis based on a series of research conducted by the author. The last part concludes.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON CONSUMERS

Globalization consists in spreading the concept of identical or at least similar trends and patterns of consumption among different nations and its progression has a fundamental influence on the arrangement of consumers' principles and values [Mazurek - Łopacińska 2003]. Consumers strive for modern and more attractive lifestyle and desire comfortable goods of high quality. Possessing global products is the way of building up one's self-esteem. But the most important factor is the increase of spatial mobility which allows mobility challenged consumers to feel the part of a mainstream society.

After many years of isolation and marginalization disabled persons want to experience world hence the trend of globalization and the culture of consumerism come upon a breeding ground. The consumerism is provoking and activating people to express themselves but it concerns mainly young people that are under the influence of the newest trends of international culture, especially in film, music or fashion.

Forces of globalization are bringing changes in the consumer culture [Craig *et al.* 2009] and one of the most noticeable transformations is increasing materialism. Because of easy contact through both traditional (TV) and new (Internet) media the global flows of cultural products, values and lifestyles are unstoppable. That predominant and all-encompassing phenomenon is affecting consumer tastes, preferences and market behaviours. What is more, even if people are not travelling abroad, they are still being influenced by that consumer culture brought through media and foreign brands.

JOB MARKET

Politics of European Union countries, Poland included, put a pressure on the equality and contend with the discrimination against all sorts of social groups. This

means that many legal documents are signed to improve the situation of disabled people in every aspect of life.

Thanks to changes in legislature a sequence of changes is also occurring on the labour markets. A tendency of managing the diversity in a workplace is trendy. And so both social and economic situation of disabled people changes. More and more challenged persons find employment. From 2007 in Poland an appreciable increase of the activity rate and the indicator of employing disabled people is noticed, particularly among the ones in an economically productive age. While in 2007 the activity rate of disabled persons in an economically productive age amounted to the 22.6%, in 2008 - 23.9%, in 2009 - 24.6%, it reached the level of 25.9% in 2010, and even grew up to the 26.4% in 2011. According to latest data based on the new National General Census from 2011 and based about new BAEL methodologies - in 2010 the activity rate amounted to the 25.7%, in 2011 grew to the 26.3%, and in 2013 reached 27.3% [Aktywność..., 2014].

It is not just a result of legislative changes, but also changes in the access to, in their broadest sense, work and education (through eliminating architectural barriers, scholarships for disabled persons, etc). According to the same report, in 2013 a total number of 59.3 thousand of job offers for disabled persons was tabled in local employment agencies. Amongst this number of the 14.8% of offers (8.8 thousand) constituted subsidized job offers.

Furthermore, a tele-working enabling people with motor disability to take the employment up and performing duties entrusted them without the necessity of going out is more and more popular.

Easier accessible jobs mean definitely higher income of challenged customers. Income in turn define the so-called standard of living of the consumer which means his buying potential and preferences. In the result they determine customer behaviours by affecting the way of evaluating and choosing products on the market [Kasperek-Hoppe 2003, Woś 2003, Rudnicki 2000]. The level of income is also interrelated with the subjective view of a price of a good and the price moulds the consumer behaviour by altering the perception of the product features [Falkowski, Tyszka 2006, Mazurek-Łopacińska 2003]. As a main source of individual's income, professional career concurs to individual's self-development, stimulates his activity [Majchrzak 2008, Frączek 2003]. It is possible to state then that employment is capable of satisfying higher level needs such as the need of achievements, self-esteem, self-actualization and knowledge [Maslow 1990]. In such a way therefore the improved professional situation of disabled people correlates with their self-assurance and shapes their existence on the market.

E-ACTIVITIES

Contemporary markets - especially virtual - are extremely dynamic. It is easy to notice that there is an increasing tendency to widening and diversifying product lines. Such a fragmentation of market offer results in new products and services directed at narrow market niches [Solomon *et al.* 2010]. Increasing number of products is designed to meet special needs of just one single focused group of consumers – among others

men, women, young people, elderly, ethnic minorities, users of BMW cars, fans of horrors, etc., no matter, whether the specific segment is global or local.

The Internet, as the comparatively new channel enabling disabled consumers acquisition of different goods, at the very beginning is forcing consumers into making a decision with the reference to choice of this form of the purchase and establishing the own preferences associated with the activity online. Back in year 2010 a series of research conducted by the author showed, that a considerably large number of disabled consumers rejected the possibility of online shopping and decided to make a real rather than virtual effort [Maciaszczyk 2014a]. Disabled persons far more rarely than the healthy counterparts declared purchasing goods through Internet. It occurred that almost 40% of the examined disabled never bought anything via this channel while among people without any disabilities this amount was half smaller. Results of the same research revealed that the possibility of saving time and purchasing without the need to go out was assessed by over the 90% of examined disabled persons as completely unimportant or of a very little importance.

However, the crucial reason of choosing local shops rather than virtual seemed to be an aspiration of satisfying the needs for self-actualisation, affiliation and being a part of a group of consumers and not being an anonymous Internet user. The aspirations to establishing and supporting social networks ensured some level of societal acceptance.

Now the situation is becoming different as the research conducted in year 2013 revealed slightly changing tendencies. In the course of 3 years a number of disabled persons using the Internet increased and now 6% less disabled respondents stated that they had never made e-purchases. Also answers to questions regarding the meaning of time confirmed the tendency of becoming accustomed to Internet. Still a large portion of examined physically disabled persons - as far as the 76% - seem much to marginalise factors connected with saving time and effort. Moreover a distinct change can be seen in the factor of curiosity as a determinant of e-shopping [Maciaszczyk 2014b]. This seems to confirm the thesis that during last three years disabled consumers had many possibilities and much time to inure themselves to possible threats, increase the level of perceived benefits resulting from the online shopping or simply to get used to entering into transactions via this medium. Moreover, subjectively perceived material status of disabled consumers has improved as well as the availability of mobile devices having the access to Internet is constantly growing.

Virtual communities facilitate communication and interactions among its members, even – or maybe especially those, who have restricted motor abilities. It denotes an affiliation of different people sharing common interests who use electronics to communicate and share interests, resources, experiences and knowledge [Kardaras *et al.* 2003]. Such communities are a recognised source of valuable information as well as a means of social interaction. According to Flavian and Guinaliu [2005] and Schau and Muniz [2002] participating in a virtual community strengthens an individual's feelings of acceptance, security and trust and help to gain confidence and validation of self – identity, which is extremely important in case of disabled people who often have limited opportunities of interacting with the society. Other research proved that virtual communities constitute an important word of mouth communication channel and have a considerable influence on members' consumption habits and behaviours [Muniz, O'Guinn 2001].

Within virtual communities, as Annett-Hitchcock and Xu [2015] notice, various methods of communication are used to share knowledge and information on product availability, brand recommendation, etc. Those methods involve blogs, chat forums, links, instant messages, photos or audio files. Any user can easily join a special interest group chosen due to his interests or state of health, such as ones made up by people with different types of disabilities, to share concerns, experiences and problems faced. The Internet as a medium gives the hope of reducing or even eliminating the perceived risk related to shopping [Childers, Kaufman-Scarborough 2008].

GENERATION CHANGE

Taking the age of the customer into consideration in the literature of a subject 4 or 5 groups of customers are usually mentioned. Those are [Rusak 2014, Fenney 2012, Shih Yung 2012, Hardey 2011, Reisenwitz, Iyer 2009]:

- * Matures known also as Veterans, Seniors, Traditionalists or even the Silent Generation - people born before 1945
- * Boomers or the Baby Boomers - those born between 1945 – 1964
- * Generation X known as X'ers or Post Boomers - born between 1965 – 1980
- * Generation Y called Millennials, Nexters or the Internet Generation - born between 1981 – 1994
- * Generation Z – born after 1995.

Although dates given above are stipulated and depend mainly on the country, variations in defining generations seem to result from, in addition to regional differences, distinct economic conditions. Access to different technologies and different values moulded different needs and expectations. Every single generation got used to different way of selling goods. Different factors determine the whole process of buying, different values are being perceived as important and therefore, sensibility and responsiveness to market communicates and marketing strategies is different. The traditional distinction between healthy and challenged consumers is becoming increasingly blurred. It is no longer the state of health that matters. Now it seems that the crucial condition determining one's buying habits is his age and common generational in-group membership.

Figure one presents a distinct description of different generation members and their vulnerability to different marketing tools, regardless of the state of health.

In researches conducted in different countries [Gupta 2011, Cleveland *et al.* 2009] it had also been proved that younger people were more materialistic than older people. Growing up in the spirit of searching for unique and perfect offers adjusted to personal expectations young customers are resistant to the traditional marketing content. They are no longer loyal just switching to constantly new brands. Those trends seem to suggest that modern consumers are better informed, feel conscious of their negotiating power and bargaining position and that their personal experience is gaining more importance.

Fig. 1 5 Generations defined – market behaviours.

| | Matures | Boomers | Generation X | Generation Y | Generation Z |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Marketing influence | Printed material and radio persuasive | Mass and Traditional media | Direct and Targeted media | Viral / Electronic Media | Interactive campaigns |
| Purchase decisions | Brand emergence Telling | Above-the-line Brand-loyal Authorities | Below-the-line Brand switches Experts | Through Friends Lack of Brand Loyalty Friends | Positive Brand association Brand evangelism Trends |
| Financial characteristics | Long-term saving Cash No credit | Long-term needs Cash Credit | Medium-term Goals Credit savvy Life-stage debt | Short-term wants Credit dependent Life-style debt | Impulse purchases E-Stores Life-long debt |
| Personality | Authoritarian Commanders | Commanding Thinkers | Co-ordinating Doers | Empowering Collaborators | Inspiring Co-creators |

Source: The authors' own compilation based on: Generations Defined: 50 years of Change over 5 Generations. <http://mccrindle.com.au/the-mccrindle-blog/generations-defined-50-years-of-change-over-5-generations>

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of last years certain tendencies are seen. Young people unrelatedly to the state of health show more materialistic values. A significance of the culture of consumptionism is growing and influences patterns of consumers' market behaviours.

As Partala notices [2011], the universality of the Internet also concurs to changing buying habits. Internet is more frequently chosen as an alternative method of a barrier-free virtual communication channel where consumers of all types can interact in the marketplace. A medical condition of a customer is fading into the background as the interactivity and dynamics of market changes let everyone fit the market offer to own expectations and needs. Globalization causes that customers with motor disorders are no longer limited to local communities and therefore the interest of young disabled consumers in virtual communities is growing.

Irrespective of the place of purchase, disabled consumers demonstrate the growth of critical approach to shopping and building the consumer awareness [Maciaszczyk 2014a].

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Słowa kluczowe: *determinanty zachowań konsumenckich, konsumenci niepełnosprawni, wybory konsumenckie, zmiana pokoleniowa, zmiana wartości*

Informacja o autorce:

dr Magdalena Maciaszczyk

Politechnika Lubelska,
Wydział Zarządzania,
Katedra Marketingu
Ul. Nadbystrzycka 38
20-618 Lublin
mail: m.maciaszczyk@pollub.pl