CONSUMER INSIGHTS AGENCY

ŠTEFAN ŽÁK (ED.)

EXPLORING CONSUMER CHOICES

NEW FRONTIERS IN RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

scientific papers collection

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EXPLORING CONSUMER CHOICES: *NEW FRONTIERS IN RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES*

SCIENTIFIC PAPERS COLLECTION

Consumer Insigths Agency, s.r.o.
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INTRODUCTION

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Dear readers, you are now holding in your hands a work that captures the ever-evolving landscape of consumer behaviour research. This collection of scientific papers delves into the intricate dynamics of decision-making processes, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of consumer interactions in a rapidly changing global marketplace. By integrating cutting-edge methodologies with empirical studies, the collected works aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering innovative insights into how individuals and groups navigate the complexities of modern consumption. The title reflects the exploratory spirit that underpins the contributions, pushing boundaries to uncover new dimensions of understanding in consumer behaviour. At the heart of this collection lies a commitment to interdisciplinary exploration, combining perspectives from psychology, sociology, economics, and technology to address the pressing questions of our time. Each paper represents a frontier of research, examining how traditional models are being reshaped by emerging technologies, shifting demographics, and the transformative power of digitalisation. This collection invites readers to engage with diverse perspectives and methodologies, fostering a deeper appreciation of the choices that define consumer landscapes and the innovative strategies that can shape their future.

Consumer behaviour represents a dynamic and complex domain that integrates insights from various disciplines, including psychology, economics, sociology, and technology. This collection of scientific papers summarises current research and theoretical contributions, uncovering new aspects of this topic and offering a deeper understanding of the phenomena influencing consumer decision-making. Each paper focuses on a specific aspect of consumer behaviour, collectively forming a comprehensive mosaic of trends and challenges shaping today's markets.

The first paper focuses on the utilisation of artificial intelligence in consumer behaviour research. It details how modern technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics are fundamentally transforming traditional approaches to data collection and analysis. The paper

illustrates specific cases where artificial intelligence is employed to identify individual and group behaviours, demonstrating how these technologies enable more personalised and effective consumer engagement. The authors also address potential challenges, including ethical considerations and data privacy issues inherent in this area.

Another paper examines the behaviour of Generations X, Y, and Z, analysing their differing responses to the influence of opinion leaders. This study provides a detailed account of how various demographic groups perceive marketing campaigns mediated by influencers and identifies factors influencing their decision-making. The research underscores the importance of tailoring marketing communications to meet the needs of individual generations and offers recommendations for the more effective use of opinion leaders in marketing strategies.

A third paper delves deeply into the field of behavioural economics and its application in marketing. It discusses core phenomena such as loss aversion, the anchoring effect, and the paradox of choice, linking these concepts to specific practical examples. The authors explore how these phenomena affect consumer psychology and how they can be utilised to create more effective marketing campaigns. The study offers extensive empirical data supporting theoretical claims and serves as inspiration for further research.

The significance of in-store marketing is comprehensively examined in the next paper, which explores how visual elements, spatial arrangements, and the overall atmosphere of retail spaces influence consumer decision-making. The authors focus on the impact of elements such as lighting, music, and product placement on shopping behaviour. The paper also includes an analysis of specific cases where improvements in retail environments have led to increased sales and customer loyalty.

The impact of consumer reviews on purchasing decisions is one of the main topics of another paper. The research highlights how positive and negative reviews influence customer trust in products and services. It discusses the importance of review authenticity and their strategic use in building brand image. Additionally, the paper analyses the effect of reviews on customer loyalty and provides practical guidance for their effective integration into marketing campaigns.

The sports environment offers unique opportunities for brand building, as explored in another paper. This study thoroughly examines the emotional

connection between sports brands and their fans. It analyses how the combination of traditional and digital media can strengthen customer relationships and ensure long-term loyalty. The paper emphasises the importance of consistent communication and the use of sporting events to increase brand visibility.

E-commerce in the food sector is a rapidly growing segment, addressed in a standalone study. It analyses consumer behaviour on digital platforms, focusing on factors such as price accessibility, service quality, and user-friendliness. The study also evaluates technological innovations like personalised recommendations that enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The conclusion of this collection is dedicated to the dynamics of digital marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour. It provides a detailed look at tools such as social networks, personalised emails, and visual content, which can increase consumer engagement and loyalty. Research findings demonstrate how the effective use of these tools can contribute to the long-term success of brands in the digital marketplace.

This publication is an output of the project funded by the Scientific Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences – project No. 1/0505/22 *Implementation of innovative research methods and techniques in the consumer behaviour research in the conditions of the Slovak market of research suppliers and research buyers*. The project was focused on the comprehensive elaboration of the issue of examining consumer shopping behavior with an emphasis on the use of innovative research methods and techniques to define the impact of individual attributes of the digital environment on the process of collecting data on consumer behavior.

This collection of scientific papers represents a significant contribution to interdisciplinary research on consumer behaviour. Each paper offers a unique perspective on current issues and challenges relevant not only to the academic community but also to practitioners. We believe this collection will serve as a source of inspiration for further research and provide valuable insights for creating effective marketing strategies.

prof. Ing. Štefan Žák, PhD., MBA, LL.M.

EXPLORING THE MULTIFACETED ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT: ***Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping marketing research and consumer behaviour analysis, offering unprecedented opportunities to understand, predict, and influence consumer behaviour in a data-driven economy. AI technologies, such as machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics, enable the real-time analysis of large datasets and adapt to dynamic consumer preferences. These tools significantly enhance traditional research methods, overcoming limitations in scalability and the processing of unstructured data. AI transforms data collection and analysis by enabling unobtrusive and accurate methods, such as computer vision and IoT sensors, providing insights into both observable behaviours and underlying motivations. Applications include behavioural segmentation, personalized marketing, and predictive modelling, which foster deeper engagement and customer loyalty. However, integrating AI into consumer behaviour research presents challenges, including ethical concerns about data privacy and algorithmic bias, as well as the need for high-quality, representative data and effective interpretation. Addressing these issues is critical for maximizing AI's potential. In addition to transforming data analysis, AI is revolutionizing how marketers interact with consumers by enabling highly personalized and context-aware communication strategies. This article reviews the role of AI in advancing consumer behaviour research, highlighting its applications, effectiveness, and ethical considerations. By synthesizing current knowledge, it provides actionable recommendations for future research.***

KEY WORDS: **artificial intelligence, consumer behaviour, marketing research.**

JEL: ***M31, M10, O33.***

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping numerous fields, with its transformative influence particularly prominent in marketing research and the study of consumer behaviour. AI comprises an array of advanced technologies, including machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics, which collectively empower systems to analyse extensive datasets, discern patterns, and make data-driven decisions. These capabilities are redefining how marketers understand, predict, and influence consumer behaviour within an increasingly data-centric economy [1]. As consumer preferences and behaviours grow in complexity, the integration of AI into marketing research offers unparalleled opportunities for deeper insights, operational efficiency, and strategic flexibility.

Traditionally, marketing research has relied on methods such as surveys, focus groups, and observational studies to uncover consumer preferences and motivations. While these methodologies have significantly contributed to the development of marketing theory and practice, they often face constraints related to scalability, speed, and the capacity to process unstructured or dynamic data. The advent of AI addresses these limitations by providing tools capable of analysing large-scale datasets in real time, uncovering latent patterns, and adapting to shifting consumer dynamics. For instance, machine learning algorithms can detect trends and forecast future consumer preferences based on historical data, while NLP facilitates the extraction of actionable insights regarding sentiment and intent from textual data, including social media posts and online reviews.

The study of consumer behaviour, a foundational pillar of marketing research, explores how individuals make decisions regarding the acquisition, utilization, and disposal of goods and services. This area encompasses psychological, social, and cultural dimensions, rendering it multifaceted and inherently dynamic. AI technologies significantly enhance the understanding of consumer behaviour by enabling granular analyses at both individual and collective levels [3]. AI-powered behavioural segmentation transcends traditional demographic-based approaches, focusing instead on actual consumer actions and preferences. Predictive modelling further supports this understanding by anticipating consumer needs, thereby guiding targeted marketing strategies and improving customer engagement. Personalization—a cornerstone of modern marketing—is amplified by AI-driven systems that tailor interactions based on individual consumer data, fostering customer loyalty and satisfaction [4].

AI also introduces a paradigm shift in the collection and analysis of consumer behaviour data. Conventional data collection methods, which often rely on self-reported measures, are susceptible to biases and inaccuracies. In contrast, AI tools such as computer vision and IoT sensors enable unobtrusive observation and data acquisition, offering more reliable and comprehensive insights. For example, eye-tracking technologies can evaluate consumer engagement with visual advertisements, while AI-enabled chatbots collect real-time feedback during customer interactions. These advancements allow researchers to probe not only *what* consumers do but also *why* they do it, bridging the gap between observable behaviours and their underlying motivations [14], [7], [10].

Despite its vast potential, the integration of AI into consumer behaviour research presents several challenges. Ethical concerns, including issues of data privacy and algorithmic bias, demand robust governance and transparency. Moreover, the efficacy of AI-driven insights hinges on the availability of high-quality, representative data and the ability of organizations to interpret these insights effectively. Nevertheless, the transformative potential of AI in enhancing the precision and depth of consumer behaviour research is indisputable, opening new avenues for scholarly exploration and practical application.

This article seeks to systematically examine the role of AI in advancing the field of consumer behaviour research, addressing three primary objectives: (1) to identify key applications of AI in marketing research and consumer behaviour analysis, (2) to assess the effectiveness of AI in understanding and predicting consumer behaviour, and (3) to propose actionable recommendations for the ethical and strategic integration of AI into marketing practices. By synthesizing existing literature and identifying future research directions, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the interplay between AI, marketing research, and consumer behaviour, providing a robust foundation for both theoretical advancement and practical innovation.

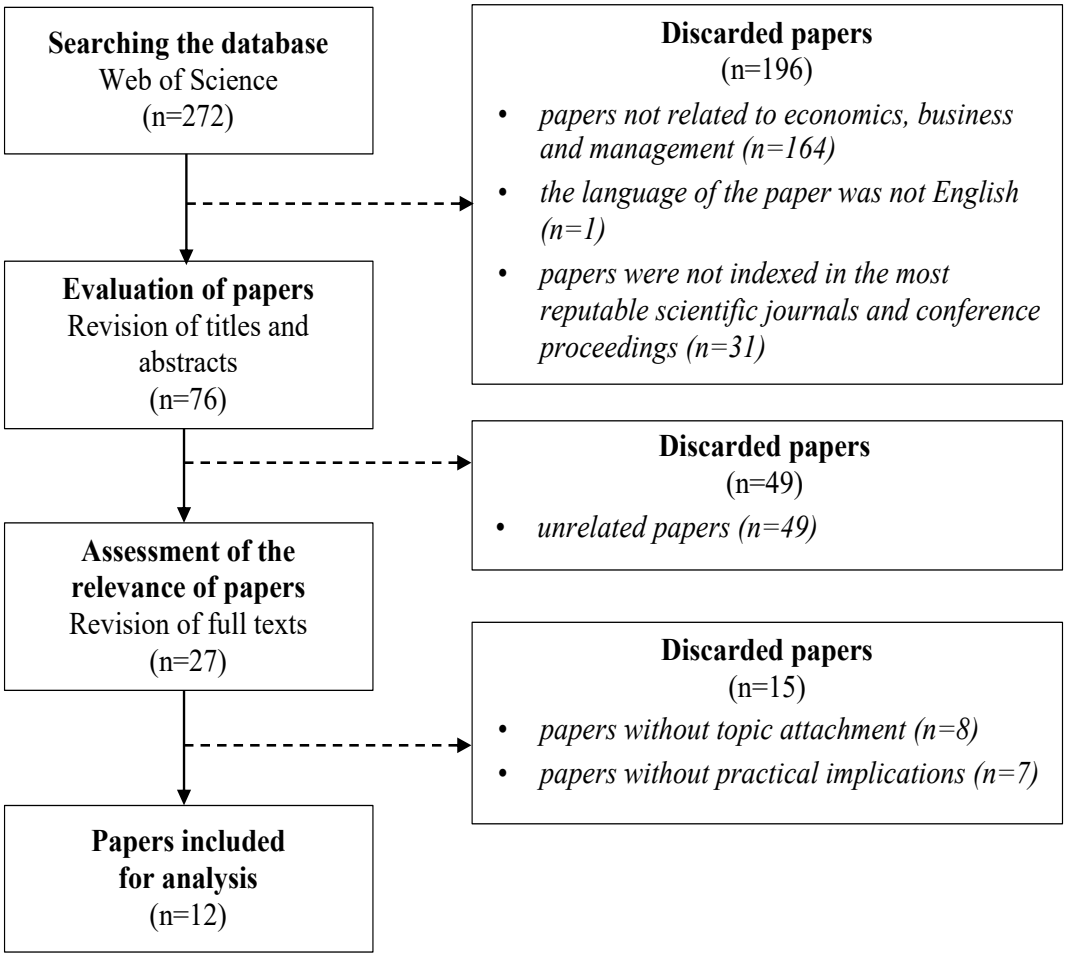
METHODS

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in consumer behaviour research has emerged as a prominent area of interest, attracting significant attention within both professional and academic domains. Recent scholarly efforts have extensively examined this subject, resulting in a growing body of literature that reflects diverse perspectives and objectives tailored to specific audiences. Beyond individual research articles, comprehensive monographs have contributed to the rigorous analysis of factors influencing consumer behaviour, including the

intricacies of gift-giving practices. Notable contributions to this field include the works [8] and [11], which offer in-depth and scholarly examinations of these phenomena. To achieve a systematic and thorough understanding of the academic discourse on AI and consumer behaviour, this study employs the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. This approach ensures a structured and replicable review of the academic literature addressing the integration of AI into consumer behaviour research.

The analysis specifically targeted peer-reviewed scientific journal articles and conference proceedings indexed in the Web of Science database, chosen for its extensive coverage and emphasis on high-quality research outputs. The review focused on publications from 2014 to 2024, reflecting contemporary advancements in the field. Relevant keywords were strategically selected to encompass the thematic scope of the inquiry.

Figure 1. Selection process of the scientific papers included in the PRISMA analysis.



Source: based on authors' own research

The initial search yielded 272 records, exclusively comprising peer-reviewed articles and conference proceedings. To enhance the dataset's relevance, records were refined to include only those classified under the fields of economics, business, and management. Additional exclusion criteria were applied to remove non-English publications and articles not indexed in highly reputable journals or conference proceedings. After applying these refinements, the final dataset consisted of 76 articles deemed highly relevant for further in-depth analysis. This curated collection of literature facilitates a comprehensive exploration of AI's transformative impact on consumer behaviour research, providing a robust foundation for understanding academic engagement with this rapidly evolving subject area.

A comprehensive manual review of the titles and abstracts of all articles retrieved through the initial search was conducted to exclude studies that did not align with the research objectives. This process resulted in the retention of 49 articles from peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings for further analysis. For cases where the relevance and eligibility of an article could not be clearly determined from its title or abstract, a full-text screening was performed. This additional evaluation led to the exclusion of 15 studies, culminating in a final selection of 12 articles for inclusion in the systematic review.

An analysis of the temporal distribution of publications and citation trends revealed consistent academic interest in the topic of AI and consumer behaviour research throughout the study period. The sustained engagement underscores the topic's significance in the academic discourse on consumer behaviour. A detailed examination of the selected articles highlighted notable variations in the scholarly treatment of AI applications in consumer behaviour research, influenced by the geographic and cultural contexts of the authors' countries of origin. These findings suggest that the interpretation and emphasis placed on AI's role in consumer behaviour research are shaped by regional academic traditions and socio-economic factors, offering valuable insights into the global landscape of this field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final analytical selection comprised 12 studies, addressing various dimensions of implementing AI in the consumer behaviour research. An analysis of the scientific journals in which the identified studies were published reveals that *Journal of Business Research* and *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* contributed the largest number of articles, with four publications included in the

review. A detailed summary of the distribution of publications across various journals, along with the frequency of articles in each, is presented in the *Table 1*.

Table 1. Number of papers in scientific journals (final database of 12 papers).

Publication Titles	Record Count
Journal of Business Research	2
Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2
Ieee Transactions on Engineering Management	1
International Journal of Market Research	1
Journal of Economic Surveys	1
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	1
Journal of the Knowledge Economy	1
Marketing Letters	1
Service Industries Journal	1
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	1

Source: based on authors' own research

The scientific impact of the papers can be assessed through the citation frequency they receive within the scholarly community. The selected papers collectively accumulated 193 citations from 2014 to 2024, yielding an average of 16 citations per paper. Three papers achieved over 30 citations, as detailed in *Table 2*. Particularly notable is the study [2], published in the *International Journal of Market Research*, which stands as the most frequently cited work in this selection, with a total of 53 citations. After studying the content, it is evident that the citations mainly refer to the area on which the article focuses. The paper assumed that the digital transformation driven by the increasing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally reshaping enterprise processes, with marketing emerging as one of the most affected domains. This paper investigates the application of AI in marketing, categorizing it into five core functional themes (integrated digital marketing, content marketing, experiential marketing, marketing operations, and market research) and 19 sub-functional themes. Through a systematic literature review, the study evaluates 57 relevant

publications, identifies 170 specific use cases of AI in marketing, and ranks them based on their scope, impact, relevance, and contributions. The research discusses both practical and academic implications, proposing a future research agenda to explore the ongoing transformation of marketing practices driven by AI adoption. The findings offer a comprehensive overview of AI utilization in marketing across various sectors and research contexts [2].

All 12 articles point to the fact, that artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in marketing, organizational decision-making, and consumer behaviour research. These contributions can be categorized into three thematic areas, reflecting distinct but interrelated domains of inquiry.

Table 2. List of the most cited papers from the final database of 12 papers.

Title	Authors	Source Title	Publication Year	Total Citations
Artificial intelligence in marketing: A systematic literature review	Chintalapati, S.; Pandey, S. K.	International Journal of Market Research	2022	53
Anthropomorphized artificial intelligence, attachment, and consumer behavior	Hermann, E.	Marketing Letters	2022	36
Advancing Consumer Behavior: The Role of Artificial Intelligence Technologies and Knowledge Sharing	Olan, F.; Suklan, J.; Arakpogun, E.; Robson, A.	Ieee Transactions on Engineering Management	2024	32
The influence of anthropomorphic appearance of artificial intelligence products on consumer behavior and brand evaluation under different product types	Zhang, Y.; Wang, Sh.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2023	17
Artificial intelligence, firms and consumer behavior: A survey	Abrardi, L.; Cambini, C.; Rondi, L.	Journal of Economic Surveys	2022	17
Artificial intelligence and empirical consumer research: A topic modeling analysis	Vaid, S.; Puntoni, S.; Khodr, A.	Journal of Business Research	2023	12

Source: based on authors' own research

The first thematic area focuses on the utilization of AI in marketing strategies and organizational operations. This body of research examines how AI technologies are implemented to optimize marketing efforts and enhance firm-consumer interactions. By synthesizing existing literature and empirical studies, scholars provide comprehensive insights into the evolving trends and practices

associated with AI in the corporate sector [13]. This theme underscores the strategic importance of AI in fostering competitive advantage, streamlining operations, and tailoring consumer experiences.

The second thematic cluster explores the impact of anthropomorphized AI on consumer behaviour. Anthropomorphism, or the attribution of human-like characteristics to AI systems, has been shown to significantly influence consumer attitudes and decision-making processes. Research in this domain investigates how consumers form emotional attachments to AI-powered products and services, particularly those with human-like appearances. Additionally, the influence of anthropomorphic features on brand perception and evaluation varies across product categories, suggesting a nuanced interplay between design elements and consumer psychology [9]. This theme highlights the importance of incorporating psychological principles into the design of AI systems to enhance consumer acceptance and satisfaction.

The third area delves into the role of AI in advancing consumer behaviour research. Scholars in this field examine how AI technologies facilitate deeper insights into consumer preferences, behaviours, and decision-making patterns. This includes the application of advanced analytical methods, such as topic modelling, to extract meaningful patterns from large datasets [6]. By integrating AI-driven methodologies, researchers can uncover previously inaccessible dimensions of consumer behaviour, paving the way for more robust empirical investigations and knowledge sharing within the academic community.

Together, these thematic clusters illuminate the multifaceted ways in which AI is reshaping marketing practices, influencing consumer behaviour, and enhancing research methodologies. This categorization provides a structured framework for understanding the diverse applications of AI in this rapidly evolving field.

Special mention should be made of the article [12]. The article investigates the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in empirical consumer research, using a topic modelling analysis to explore existing literature. AI techniques, ranging from basic regression models to advanced neural networks, have increasingly been used to understand consumer behaviour and marketing interfaces. The study highlights the rapid growth of AI applications in consumer-relevant research, with over 90% of such studies emerging post-2009, and a significant surge from 2019 to 2020. The research identifies 16 consumer-AI topics through an analysis of 119 empirical papers and maps these onto Schmitt's Consumer Psychology of Brands framework. Key areas explored include consumer preferences, brand

relationships, online behaviour, risk, and targeting strategies. The study reveals that while traditional models like regression remain dominant, techniques such as deep learning are underutilized, presenting opportunities for future research. Significant gaps exist, particularly in understanding individual-level consumer dynamics and the integration of AI techniques to enhance predictive accuracy in high-stakes contexts like purchasing decisions or consumer profiling. The authors advocate for interdisciplinary collaborations between AI and consumer behaviour researchers to harness the potential of advanced methods like natural language processing and neural networks. Additionally, the article underscores the managerial implications of AI in improving marketing strategies, though it notes that adoption by businesses is still limited [12]. Overall, the study serves as a foundational framework for advancing the use of AI in consumer research, highlighting areas ripe for exploration and offering a roadmap for leveraging these technologies to unlock deeper consumer insights. The authors emphasize the importance of aligning AI methodologies with evolving consumer behaviours and market needs to drive innovation in the field.

CONCLUSION

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into consumer behaviour research represents a groundbreaking shift in the methodologies and frameworks used to understand, predict, and influence consumer decision-making processes. By harnessing the capabilities of AI technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics, researchers and marketers can now access unprecedented analytical power. These technologies facilitate the real-time processing and analysis of vast, complex datasets that were previously unmanageable using traditional research methods. Importantly, AI addresses long-standing challenges in marketing research, such as the limitations posed by scalability and the complexity of unstructured data, enabling a deeper and more nuanced understanding of both observable consumer behaviours and the motivations that drive them.

AI has proven to be a versatile tool within the realm of marketing, with applications ranging from behavioural segmentation and the creation of personalized marketing strategies to the use of predictive modelling to forecast consumer trends. Advanced behavioural segmentation allows marketers to group consumers based on intricate patterns of behaviour, preferences, and needs, leading to more targeted and efficient marketing efforts. Personalized marketing strategies, powered by AI, go beyond traditional demographic-based approaches,

allowing for the tailoring of messages and offers to individual preferences and behaviours in real time. Predictive modelling, another critical application, enables businesses to anticipate consumer needs and behaviours with remarkable accuracy, fostering proactive engagement strategies rather than reactive responses.

Moreover, the study highlights the transformative potential of emerging AI-driven data collection techniques. Innovations such as computer vision and Internet of Things (IoT) sensors offer unobtrusive yet precise methods for capturing consumer behaviour in natural settings. These tools bridge the gap between observed actions and intrinsic motivations, providing a more holistic view of the consumer decision-making process. For instance, computer vision can analyse facial expressions, gestures, and movements to infer emotional states, while IoT devices can track consumer interactions with products or environments in real time, offering insights that were previously difficult or impossible to obtain.

Despite the numerous advantages that AI brings to consumer behaviour research, its integration is not without challenges. One significant concern is the ethical implications of using AI, particularly regarding data privacy and algorithmic fairness. As AI relies heavily on large-scale data collection, there is a heightened risk of infringing on consumer privacy. Moreover, algorithmic bias—where AI systems inadvertently reinforce existing stereotypes or exclude certain groups due to biased training data—poses a critical risk to the validity and equity of AI-driven insights. Ensuring the ethical use of AI requires stringent data governance policies, transparency in AI operations, and ongoing monitoring for potential biases. Additionally, the reliance on high-quality, representative datasets remains a barrier, as AI's effectiveness is contingent on the quality and diversity of the data it analyses.

The practical deployment of AI also necessitates a robust interpretative framework. While AI can generate sophisticated insights, the task of interpreting these insights to inform actionable strategies requires a high level of expertise. Misinterpretations can lead to misguided decisions, underscoring the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between data scientists, marketing professionals, and domain experts. Furthermore, integrating AI insights into existing organizational practices often requires significant investments in training, infrastructure, and cross-functional alignment.

This research underscores the transformative impact of AI on consumer behaviour analysis, offering a structured framework for its strategic and ethical integration. It emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that maximizes AI's potential while addressing its inherent challenges. By synthesizing advancements in AI applications, the study provides actionable recommendations for leveraging these technologies to refine marketing practices. For instance, organizations are encouraged to adopt hybrid approaches that combine AI-driven insights with human intuition and creativity, ensuring that marketing strategies are both data-informed and contextually relevant.

Additionally, the study identifies opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, recognizing that the successful deployment of AI in marketing often requires input from fields such as psychology, sociology, data science, and ethics. By fostering such collaborations, researchers and practitioners can expand the boundaries of consumer research and develop innovative solutions that align with societal expectations and ethical standards. The transformative potential of AI, therefore, lies not only in its technical capabilities but also in its ability to drive innovation through collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts.

In conclusion, the integration of AI into consumer behaviour research marks a paradigm shift in the way consumer insights are generated and applied. Its ability to process and analyse vast datasets in real time, coupled with its versatility in applications ranging from segmentation to predictive modelling, has revolutionized the field. However, realizing its full potential requires addressing ethical and practical challenges, ensuring that AI is deployed responsibly and effectively. By providing a comprehensive framework for strategic and ethical integration, this research contributes to advancing both the theoretical understanding and practical application of AI in marketing, paving the way for future innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration in consumer behaviour research.

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GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE INFLUENCE OF OPINION LEADERS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF GENERATIONS X, Y AND Z

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ABSTRACT: ***Opinion leadership plays a pivotal role in marketing communication, significantly impacting consumer behaviour across various stages of the decision-making process. This study focuses on examining the influence of opinion leaders on consumer behaviour within three generational cohorts—Generations X, Y, and Z. The objective is to analyse the preferences and responses of these generations to marketing stimuli mediated by opinion leaders and to identify differences in their approaches to purchase decisions.***

The theoretical section explores the concept of opinion leadership, its historical evolution, mechanisms of integration into marketing strategies, and its connection to consumer decision-making processes. Contemporary approaches to influencer marketing and its significance in shaping the customer journey are also discussed. The empirical section is based on a survey that investigates respondents' interactions with opinion leaders and the impact on various stages of the customer journey. The methodological approach combines theoretical and empirical methods, with emphasis on literature analysis, hypothesis construction, and data collection through a structured questionnaire. Analytical tools are employed to identify behavioural patterns and correlations between generational affiliation and perceptions of opinion leaders. The study contributes to the theoretical advancement of consumer behaviour and marketing communication research and establishes a foundation for further exploration in this domain.

KEY WORDS: ***opinion leader, influencer marketing, consumer behaviour.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M37.***

INTRODUCTION

Opinion leadership represents a process wherein an individual influences the attitudes or behaviours of those in their surrounding environment. These leaders play a pivotal role in the two-step communication model, which involves the transfer of information from mass media to influential personalities, who subsequently disseminate it to a broader audience [1]. A significant characteristic of opinion leaders is their ability to impact social networks, engage in both formal and informal communication, and maintain exposure to mass media [13]. This capability positions them as informal leaders whose influence extends beyond daily social interactions to decision-making processes within a broader societal context.

These individuals are frequently regarded as experts in their respective domains, although their status is rooted more in trust and informal recognition than in formal authority. Their capacity to tailor content to their audience and effectively convey complex ideas positions them as crucial actors in the dynamic landscape of modern marketing. The influence of opinion leaders has been identified as key in various studies examining the effectiveness of their communication in disseminating innovations, driving social change, or shaping consumer behaviour [3]. Social media has amplified this phenomenon by providing a platform through which opinion leaders can extend their reach and deepen their impact.

The role of celebrities as a tool for marketing communication is equally significant. By endorsing products or services, celebrities can shape consumer decision-making, a practice known as "celebrity endorsement." Such collaborations enhance brand recognition and establish a positive brand image. Various models, including the FREDD model, the attractiveness source model, and the credibility source model, define criteria for selecting an appropriate celebrity. These models emphasise aspects such as familiarity, expertise, attractiveness, relevance to the target audience, and specific behavioural traits [4].

Influencer marketing represents an essential phenomenon that has emerged alongside the widespread adoption of social media platforms. Influencers, as modern opinion leaders, blend characteristics of celebrities and ordinary individuals [5]. Their reputation is intrinsically tied to the content they produce on social media and the relationships they cultivate with their followers. This relationship is characterised by a high degree of trust and authenticity, enabling influencers to effectively shape their audience's decision-making processes.

The influencer marketing process encompasses several critical stages. The first

stage involves content creation, which must be tailored to the interests and preferences of the target audience. This content is often developed in collaboration with brand marketing teams, with an emphasis on creative and engaging presentation. The second stage entails campaign management, which includes coordinating between influencers and brands and monitoring the campaign's progress [8]. Monitoring is essential to assess campaign performance and identify potential challenges that may affect its success.

Measuring outcomes represents the final, yet equally vital, stage of influencer marketing. Return on investment (ROI) is one of the most critical indicators of campaign success. Brands analyse metrics such as reach, engagement, sales figures, and audience feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of their collaborations with influencers [2]. This process goes beyond tracking results, aiming to derive insights for optimising future strategies.

The significance of influencer marketing continues to grow within the context of digital trends and evolving consumer behaviour. Influencers act as mediators between brands and consumers, fostering stronger relationships between the two. Their impact is evident not only in purchasing decisions but also in shifts in audience attitudes and preferences. This underscores the importance of designing authentic and relevant campaigns that align with the values and expectations of contemporary consumers. Influencers' influence extends beyond promoting products, encompassing advocacy for social and environmental causes, thereby amplifying their role in today's marketing ecosystem [2].

The consumer decision-making process comprises seven stages, beginning with the identification of a need and culminating in the disposal of the product. The initial stage, need identification, occurs when a consumer recognises a discrepancy between their current state and their desired state [7]. This discrepancy may be triggered by external stimuli, such as advertising or recommendations, or internal factors, such as hunger or emotional needs.

In the subsequent stage, the consumer gathers information necessary to resolve their issue. This process includes sourcing data from reliable channels, such as reviews, recommendations from acquaintances, or online searches [17]. Next is the evaluation of alternatives, during which the consumer compares various options based on criteria such as price, quality, brand, and other factors.

The fourth stage is the purchase itself, which is influenced by product availability, pricing policies, and experiences from prior interactions with the brand. Consumption follows as the consumer assesses whether the product meets

their expectations and fulfils their needs. A positive experience can lead to increased brand loyalty.

The penultimate stage involves post-consumption evaluation, where the consumer reflects on the appropriateness of their purchasing decision. Reviews and feedback play a vital role at this stage, potentially influencing the decisions of other consumers [18]. The final stage is product disposal, which includes recycling, donation, or discarding, with ecological considerations playing an increasingly significant role. Modern consumers are becoming more aware of the importance of sustainable practices, impacting their decision-making throughout all process stages.

The customer journey concept visually represents interactions between the customer and the brand throughout the entire purchasing process, highlighting the significance of each touchpoint in this dynamic [6]. The journey is divided into three primary phases: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. The pre-purchase phase encompasses all activities undertaken by the customer before making a purchasing decision, including information searching, analysing available options, and comparing products or services [9]. During this phase, customers can be influenced by marketing campaigns, reviews, recommendations, and other factors shaping their preferences and expectations.

The purchase phase focuses on the act of purchasing, involving product selection, payment, and associated processes such as customer support or interactions with sales personnel [12]. This phase is critical for creating a positive impression, as the purchasing experience can affect overall customer satisfaction and their willingness to return to the brand [10]. Modern technologies, such as mobile applications, self-service kiosks, and virtual assistants, enable the simplification and personalisation of the purchasing process.

The post-purchase phase includes activities related to product usage, quality assessment, and feedback provision [11]. Building customer loyalty during this phase involves service offerings, loyalty programmes, and other initiatives that foster a positive relationship between the customer and the brand. Each customer touchpoint can positively or negatively impact their experience, directly affecting satisfaction and loyalty. Negative experiences, such as delayed deliveries, inadequate support, or product quality issues, can significantly undermine customer trust.

Modern technologies and digital platforms provide brands with tools to enhance interactions at all customer touchpoints. These tools include analysing customer

behaviour data, automated customer relationship management systems, and advanced content personalisation methods [14]. By effectively leveraging these technologies, brands can not only meet customer expectations but also anticipate their needs and offer solutions that exceed them. In this way, the customer journey concept contributes to establishing long-term and valuable relationships between customers and brands [15].

Opinion leaders play a crucial role across all phases of the customer journey, as their influence surpasses traditional forms of marketing communication [11]. In the pre-purchase phase, these leaders often serve as sources of inspiration and essential information, helping customers identify their needs and discover new products or services [13]. Their ability to influence opinions and preferences is pivotal at this stage, as they can reshape how customers perceive market offerings.

During the purchase phase, opinion leaders reinforce customer confidence in their decisions. Their recommendations and experiences provide customers with the assurance that their choices are sound, thereby reducing uncertainty and alleviating potential doubts. Opinion leaders may also actively participate in the purchasing process through social media engagement or direct interaction with customers [16].

In the post-purchase phase, opinion leaders are instrumental in strengthening customer loyalty and promoting positive experiences [7]. Their feedback and evaluations can not only enhance customer satisfaction but also inspire others to make similar decisions. By fostering a strong community around the brand, they contribute to building long-term relationships that underpin successful marketing strategies.

The characteristics of Generations X, Y, and Z emphasise the distinct values and preferences of each. Generation X is known for its pragmatic approach to advertising and focus on product value, favouring trusted and verified sources [7]. These consumers view opinion leaders primarily as experts who offer objective, fact-based recommendations. Generation Y, or Millennials, demand authenticity, ecological values, and social responsibility [17]. For this generation, opinion leaders often serve as sources of inspiration, with their ability to connect personal experiences to shared values being highly appreciated.

Generation Z, raised in the digital era, expects a high degree of personalisation and rapid digital communication. This generation values authenticity and interactive connections with opinion leaders via social media platforms. Leaders who can create engaging content that resonates with their values and fosters trust

are particularly influential. This generation focuses on pragmatic decision-making and the integration of digital and offline experiences, often perceiving opinion leaders as mentors or guides who help them navigate the complexities of digital content and marketing offers [17].

These insights into generational consumer behaviour demonstrate that marketing approaches must be tailored to the specific needs of each group. Generation X prefers factual and clear promises, while Generations Y and Z respond to emotional and visual stimuli. This trend highlights the necessity of personalisation and creativity in marketing communication. Based on these findings, effective marketing strategies can be developed to address the needs and expectations of various generations. Integrating opinion leadership and influencer marketing into these strategies can yield significant results in enhancing customer loyalty and satisfaction.

METHODS

The objective of this scientific article is to examine the influence of opinion leaders on consumer behaviour across different generational cohorts, specifically Generations X, Y, and Z, and to analyse how these groups respond to stimuli associated with purchasing decisions. Achieving this aim necessitated the establishment of a robust methodological framework that integrates both theoretical and empirical approaches. The foundation of this study was an extensive review of existing literature, which provided a conceptual understanding of key themes such as opinion leadership, influencer marketing, and consumer decision-making processes. These concepts were then operationalised within a research framework that encompassed systematic data collection and rigorous analysis.

The research methodology was structured into two primary components. The first component entailed a theoretical exploration rooted in scholarly and professional sources. Analytical methods, including comparison, deduction, and induction, were employed to scrutinise relationships among core concepts. This theoretical inquiry examined the historical evolution of opinion leadership, its integration into marketing strategies, and the theoretical frameworks that elucidate its impact on consumer decision-making. These insights formed the basis for articulating specific research questions and hypotheses, which were subsequently tested in the empirical phase.

The second component of the methodology was devoted to empirical investigation. Data collection was conducted via a structured questionnaire survey

designed to capture nuanced patterns of consumer behaviour in relation to interactions with opinion leaders. The survey targeted respondents categorised into generational cohorts, with each generation analysed based on its distinct characteristics and behavioural preferences. The questionnaire incorporated both closed and open-ended questions, enabling the acquisition of quantitative metrics and qualitative insights into consumer attitudes and practices.

A pivotal element of the methodology involved the systematic processing and analysis of collected data. Statistical techniques were utilised to test hypotheses and uncover behavioural patterns among respondents. The analysis specifically focused on examining correlations between generational affiliation and perceptions of opinion leaders. Advanced analytical tools facilitated the efficient handling of substantial datasets, ensuring precision and reliability in the derived findings. To enhance the credibility of the results, triangulation methods were employed, allowing for the validation and cross-verification of findings through multiple data sources. This methodological triangulation ensured that the conclusions drawn were robust and reflective of the studied phenomena. By synthesising diverse datasets into a unified framework, the study achieved a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The practical execution of the methodology was underpinned by a commitment to scientific rigour and ethical standards in engaging with research participants. The electronic distribution of questionnaires ensured respondent anonymity and convenience, while stringent data protection measures safeguarded personal information throughout the research process. These practices contributed to the methodological integrity and overall credibility of the study. The methodological design effectively integrated the theoretical and empirical components, facilitating a holistic examination of the research subject. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies allowed for a multifaceted analysis of the topic, accommodating its inherent complexity. This approach enabled the identification of actionable insights with practical implications for marketing strategies.

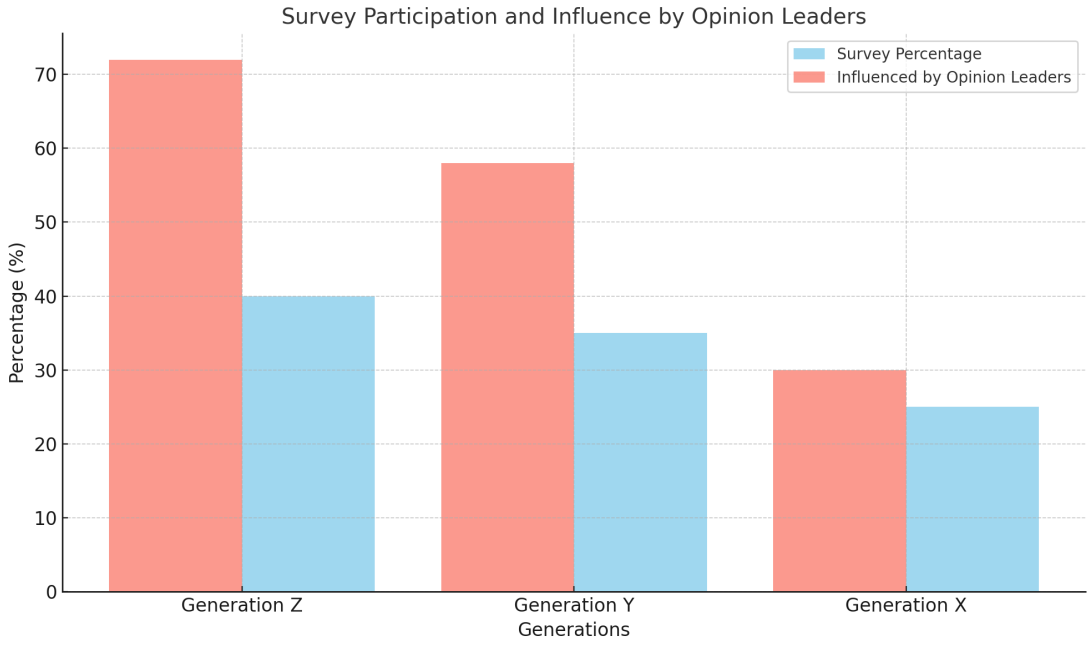
The research design was tailored to account for the specific characteristics of each generational group. By focusing on generational distinctions in consumer behaviour, the study provided a nuanced understanding of how opinion leaders influence diverse demographic segments. This methodological approach yielded a rich body of knowledge with applications extending beyond academic inquiry to practical domains such as marketing and consumer engagement. The scientific rigor embedded in the study ensured that the findings were not only reliable and

valid but also positioned to inform future research and strategic decision-making in consumer-focused disciplines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study focused on understanding the influence of opinion leaders on consumer behaviour across Generations X, Y, and Z. These findings were derived from an analysis of data collected through a questionnaire survey involving 100 respondents. The survey was designed to account for various aspects of consumer behaviour and its relationship with opinion leaders. The questionnaire was structured into sections reflecting the phases of the purchasing decision process and the role of opinion leaders in these phases. The survey included 40% respondents from Generation Z, 35% from Generation Y, and 25% from Generation X. Generation Z dominated the use of digital platforms and exhibited the highest inclination towards interaction with opinion leaders on social media. As many as 72% of respondents from this generation stated that their purchasing decisions were directly influenced by content from influencers. Generation Y demonstrated a positive attitude towards opinion leaders, with 58% of respondents confirming their impact on purchases, particularly in the fields of fashion and technology. Generation X was more sceptical about the influence of opinion leaders, with only 30% of respondents indicating that opinion leaders affected their purchasing decisions.

Figure 1. Survey participation and influence by opinion leaders



Source: based on authors' own research

One of the key findings was that Generation Z prefers visual and interactive content, reflecting their interest in platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. This generation values influencers who communicate authentically, emphasising their personal experiences with products and responding to current trends. An overwhelming 72% of Generation Z respondents indicated that their purchasing decisions are directly influenced by reviews and recommendations on social media. Generation Y, on the other hand, favours content with strong emotional appeal that often highlights values such as sustainability and social responsibility. More than 60% of respondents from this generation consider these values a critical factor in their purchasing decisions. For example, campaigns focusing on eco-friendly products or community support were rated extremely positively. Generation X placed the greatest emphasis on reliability and factual information, reflecting their preference for traditional advertisements and personal recommendations. Only 30% of respondents from this group stated that opinion leaders significantly influenced their decisions, indicating a more conservative approach to marketing strategies. These generational differences underline the need for diversified marketing approaches that reflect their values, habits, and preferences.

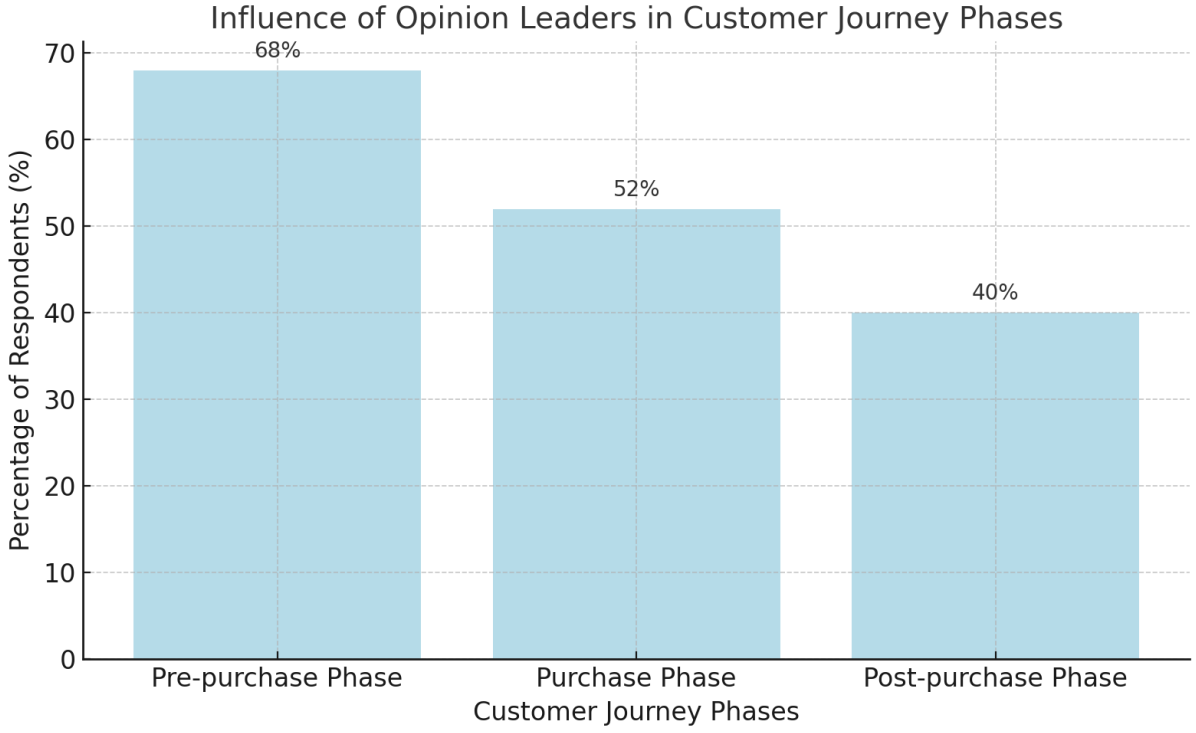
Data analysis revealed a strong correlation between generational affiliation and the likelihood of purchasing based on an opinion leader's recommendation. Among Generation Z, the correlation was the strongest, with a Pearson coefficient of 0.78, indicating a high degree of susceptibility to this form of marketing. As many as 72% of respondents from this generation reported that they regularly follow influencers and that their recommendations directly impact their purchasing decisions. Generation Y exhibited a Pearson coefficient of 0.65, suggesting a moderately strong influence. Approximately 58% of respondents from this generation confirmed that they prefer influencers who address topics relevant to them, such as sustainability or fashion. On the other hand, Generation X displayed only a weak correlation, with a Pearson coefficient of 0.28. Just 30% of respondents in this group indicated that opinion leaders influence their purchasing decisions. These differences highlight the necessity to tailor marketing strategies to the specific needs and expectations of each generation, with particular emphasis on the platforms and forms of content they prefer.

The discussion builds on the findings of the study and provides a deeper interpretation in the context of consumer behaviour and the impact of digital transformation. The results show that Generation Z is the largest recipient of marketing messages from influencers, due to their reliance on digital platforms

and social media. For this generation, authenticity, rapid communication, and the possibility of immediate interaction are essential. Generation Y is characterised by a combination of emotional and rational approaches to purchasing decisions, with an emphasis on values consistent with their lifestyle. Generation X, by contrast, remains largely loyal to traditional sources of information, such as reviews from acquaintances or experts.

The discussion also includes an analysis of the importance of individual phases of the customer journey in the context of the influence of opinion leaders. In the pre-purchase phase, influencers were identified as key actors who help customers discover new products and shape their expectations. In this phase, 68% of respondents indicated that they use influencer reviews to gather information about products. During the purchase phase, 52% of respondents stated that trust in the influencer was crucial for their final decision. In the post-purchase phase, 40% of respondents confirmed that the influencer's recommendation influenced their willingness to share a positive experience with the brand.

Figure 2. Influence of opinion leaders in customer journey phases



Source: based on authors' own research

The overall interpretation of the results suggests that the influence of opinion leaders is strongly conditioned by generational factors and closely linked to the technological preferences and values of individual groups. For Generation Z, it is

recommended to focus marketing campaigns on authentic and visually engaging content that utilises digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. These platforms enable the creation of interactive campaigns that resonate with their values and preferences. For Generation Y, marketing strategies should incorporate elements of sustainability and social responsibility, reflecting their interest in environmental and social issues. In this context, it is important to emphasise emotional storytelling and the added value of products. Generation X appreciates facts, transparency, and reliability in marketing communication, which means leveraging more traditional formats such as expert reviews or recommendations from acquaintances. These insights provide a basis for creating effective marketing strategies that can reflect the specificities of target groups and leverage the potential of digital marketing to maximise the reach and effectiveness of campaigns.

CONCLUSION

It is crucial to highlight that the study's findings include the development of a comprehensive framework for the strategic planning of influencer marketing, aimed at ensuring its effective implementation. Strategic planning for influencer marketing encompasses several critical stages. The initial phase involves the clear definition of objectives, which may include engaging new customers, strengthening relationships with existing ones, enhancing product sales, or conveying the brand’s core values. Integral to this process is the identification of key performance indicators (KPIs), such as influencer post reach, growth in follower numbers, or the frequency of unique discount code usage, all of which serve as measurable benchmarks for evaluating the campaign's success.

The subsequent step is the allocation of a budget, which can be adjusted over time based on the degree to which predetermined objectives are being met. Another indispensable element is the thorough analysis of corporate communication practices, which includes defining the brand’s voice—specifying the tone, language, and emotional resonance the company seeks to project in its interactions with both internal and external stakeholders. Complementing this is a competitor analysis, which examines how other organisations utilise influencer marketing, the types of influencers they collaborate with, and the nature of the content they produce. For companies whose competitors have yet to adopt influencer marketing, this presents an opportunity to secure a distinctive competitive advantage.

An essential component of this framework is the identification of the target audience, which provides the foundation for selecting appropriate influencers. Leveraging an ideal customer profile can aid in precisely defining the audience demographic. The selection of influencers should be guided by multiple factors, including their alignment with the brand's image, follower demographics, and engagement metrics. Following this, establishing clear terms of collaboration is imperative. These terms may cover areas such as contract duration, exclusivity clauses, the nature of the content to be produced, the social media platforms to be utilised, and the specifics of financial or non-financial compensation.

The final stage of implementation involves the active collaboration between the company and the influencer. This includes co-developing content that aligns with the company's strategic objectives, resonates with the influencer's personal brand, and appeals to their audience. Additionally, maintaining a constructive and professional relationship with the influencer is vital, as it facilitates seamless content production and enhances the likelihood of achieving the intended outcomes. Overall, this process demands meticulous coordination between the company and the influencer to ensure the development of a coherent and impactful marketing strategy, thereby maximising the effectiveness of influencer marketing initiatives.

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BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS AND ITS IMPACT ON MARKETING STRATEGIES: A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: ***Behavioural economics represents an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from economics and psychology to understand the factors influencing decision-making and individual behaviour across various contexts. Unlike traditional economic theories, which assume rational consumer behaviour, behavioural economics emphasises the role of cognitive biases, emotional reactions, and other psychological factors that significantly shape decision-making processes. This article focuses on the analysis of four selected behavioural economic phenomena: loss aversion, social proof, anchoring effect, and the paradox of choice. In the theoretical section, these phenomena are characterised in detail based on a review of relevant literature, highlighting their significance in marketing practice. The empirical section employs quantitative methods to examine the interactions of these phenomena with consumer behaviour, with particular attention to their application in various marketing strategies. The research underscores the interdisciplinary nature of behavioural economics and its contribution to modern marketing strategies. The theoretical and empirical findings presented in this article provide a solid foundation for further research in this field, as well as practical applications for optimising marketing campaigns. This article makes a significant contribution to understanding consumer behaviour by providing valuable tools for effectively adapting marketing activities to the dynamic market environment.***

KEY WORDS: ***behavioural economics, loss aversion, social proof, anchoring effect, paradox of choice.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M37.***

INTRODUCTION

Behavioural economics represents an interdisciplinary field of study that integrates insights from economics and psychology. Its research aims to elucidate how psychological factors influence individual decision-making and behaviour across various contexts [2]. Unlike traditional economic theory, which assumes human rationality, behavioural economics is grounded in empirical findings that highlight humans' susceptibility to cognitive biases and emotions [14].

The historical development of this discipline traces back to the works of Adam Smith, who, as early as the 18th century, underscored the psychological dimensions of human decision-making. A significant advancement came with Herbert Simon's introduction of bounded rationality, which recognised that decision-making is constrained by information, time, and cognitive capabilities [14]. The seminal contributions of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who identified heuristics and cognitive biases affecting human judgment, further solidified the discipline. Kahneman's Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2002 affirmed the critical importance of behavioural economics [5].

Behavioural economics finds extensive application in marketing, where it enhances understanding of consumer decision-making processes and informs strategies to effectively influence consumer behaviour [8]. Marketing campaigns frequently incorporate phenomena such as anchoring effects, loss aversion, social proof, and the paradox of choice [5]. These empirically validated concepts serve as powerful tools for optimising marketing strategies.

Loss aversion, which describes the tendency of individuals to perceive losses as more impactful than gains of equivalent magnitude, has become a cornerstone principle within behavioural economics [3]. This phenomenon is particularly effective in influencing purchasing behaviour by creating a sense of urgency, thereby driving higher conversion rates [17]. Common phrases such as "Limited stock available" leverage this effect to encourage quicker decision-making among consumers.

Social proof, referring to the inclination of individuals to base their decisions on the actions of others, has proven to be an exceptionally effective mechanism for building trust between customers and brands [13]. Demonstrating high volumes of reviews or social media followers significantly enhances positive influence and drives purchasing decisions [11].

The anchoring effect represents the tendency of individuals to rely heavily on an initial piece of information (the anchor) when making decisions [7]. This

phenomenon provides valuable insights for pricing strategies, where the original price of a product serves as a reference point to highlight a discount. Retail networks often display two prices—the original and the discounted—to encourage more favourable purchase decisions [9].

The paradox of choice arises in scenarios with an overly extensive product offering, leading to decision-making fatigue [10]. This concept underscores the importance of simple and streamlined offerings, enabling consumers to make faster and more satisfying decisions [12].

These insights underscore that integrating behavioural economic principles into marketing represents a highly effective approach, not only enhancing sales performance but also fostering trust and loyalty among customers.

Consumer behaviour models constitute a fundamental framework for understanding decision-making processes, which are vital for both academic research and practical applications across various economic sectors [1]. Traditional models, such as the economic and psychoanalytic models, are predicated on the assumption of rationality, wherein consumers make decisions based on logical evaluation of costs and benefits. The economic model focuses on utility maximisation and cost minimisation, while the psychoanalytic model emphasises internal motives and subconscious influences on purchasing behaviour [6].

Conversely, contemporary models, including the Howard-Sheth model and the Black Box model, reflect the complex interplay of internal and external factors shaping consumer behaviour [16]. The Howard-Sheth model offers a detailed perspective on decision-making, encompassing product selection, evaluation of alternatives, and final decisions [4]. This model also highlights the influence of social environments and prior experiences on individual choices.

The Black Box model adopts a systematic approach to analysing internal processes within consumers, influenced by external stimuli such as marketing activities and cultural norms [6]. This model emphasises that internal factors, such as values, motivations, and beliefs, are crucial for understanding why consumers respond to specific stimuli in the ways they do [15].

Integrating these models into practical marketing enables more effective targeting of distinct market segments and the development of strategies that account for both economic and psychological dimensions of consumer decision-making. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of customer needs and their satisfaction through personalised solutions.

Behavioural economics has proven to be practically beneficial in numerous areas of marketing, offering significant value not only for academic research but also for real-world business applications [8]. Its principles provide deeper insights into how consumers react to various stimuli, whether psychological, social, or economic. In marketing, behavioural economics is particularly crucial for designing campaigns focused on building customer trust and loyalty [2].

Applying psychological principles such as anchoring effects and loss aversion enables firms to segment markets more effectively and tailor products or services to the specific needs of consumers. Experimental methods, which incorporate these principles, allow firms to test various marketing approaches before full-scale implementation [14]. This leads to improved efficiency of advertising expenditure and resource optimisation.

Behavioural economics also contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of consumer behaviour, which is essential for identifying factors that motivate individuals to make purchases. Firms that integrate these insights into their strategies achieve not only better financial outcomes but also higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. This interdisciplinary approach further paves the way for innovative solutions in digital marketing, where traditional methods often fall short. The result is more effective market needs fulfilment and value creation for both customers and businesses.

METHODS

The aim of this research was to explore the impact of selected phenomena of behavioural economics on consumer behaviour and their application in marketing strategies. The phenomena under investigation included loss aversion, social proof, anchoring effects, and the paradox of choice. The focus of the study was on specific aspects of these phenomena and their interaction with consumer decision-making processes.

Research questions were formulated to enable a comprehensive examination of the selected phenomena. These questions addressed how information about limited stock availability influences purchasing decisions, the role of customer reviews in product selection, the impact of initial price anchoring on perceived value, and the consequences of an extensive product offering on decision-making motivation. The research was designed to quantitatively assess the influence of these variables on consumer behaviour.

The methodology combined secondary research and quantitative analysis.

Secondary sources included academic monographs, scientific articles, and statistical data obtained from reputable databases such as Statista and GlobalData. These sources provided the theoretical foundation for understanding the phenomena and identifying key factors influencing consumer behaviour.

Primary research was conducted using a structured survey. The survey was designed to capture respondents' perceptions of the selected behavioural economic phenomena. It consisted of questions evaluating the impact of loss aversion, social proof, anchoring effects, and the paradox of choice. Respondents were randomly selected to ensure a representative sample. The survey was constructed based on extensive theoretical research, with each question reflecting a relevant aspect of the phenomena under study.

Data collection was subjected to statistical analysis, employing descriptive and inferential methods. Descriptive methods provided a basic characterisation of the respondents and general trends in their answers. Inferential methods were used to test hypotheses and examine relationships between variables. These methods included correlation analyses and tests of statistical significance, facilitating a deeper understanding of the observed behavioural patterns.

The methodological framework underscored the interdisciplinary nature of the research, which integrated insights from behavioural economics and marketing. This integration enabled a detailed analysis of the mechanisms by which behavioural phenomena influence consumer decision-making. The quantitative approach ensured objectivity and allowed for the collection of data that were statistically significant and generalisable to a broader population.

The use of a survey facilitated the effective gathering of detailed and reliable data on respondents' perceptions of the phenomena. The survey's structure was designed to maximise the accuracy and reliability of responses. Respondents had the opportunity to express their attitudes and opinions regarding the selected aspects of behaviour, with a particular emphasis on their specific experiences and preferences.

The methodology also included a pilot test of the survey on a small sample. This step identified and addressed potential issues in question formulation, ensuring that the survey would effectively capture relevant data. This process enhanced the quality of the collected data and its suitability for subsequent statistical analyses.

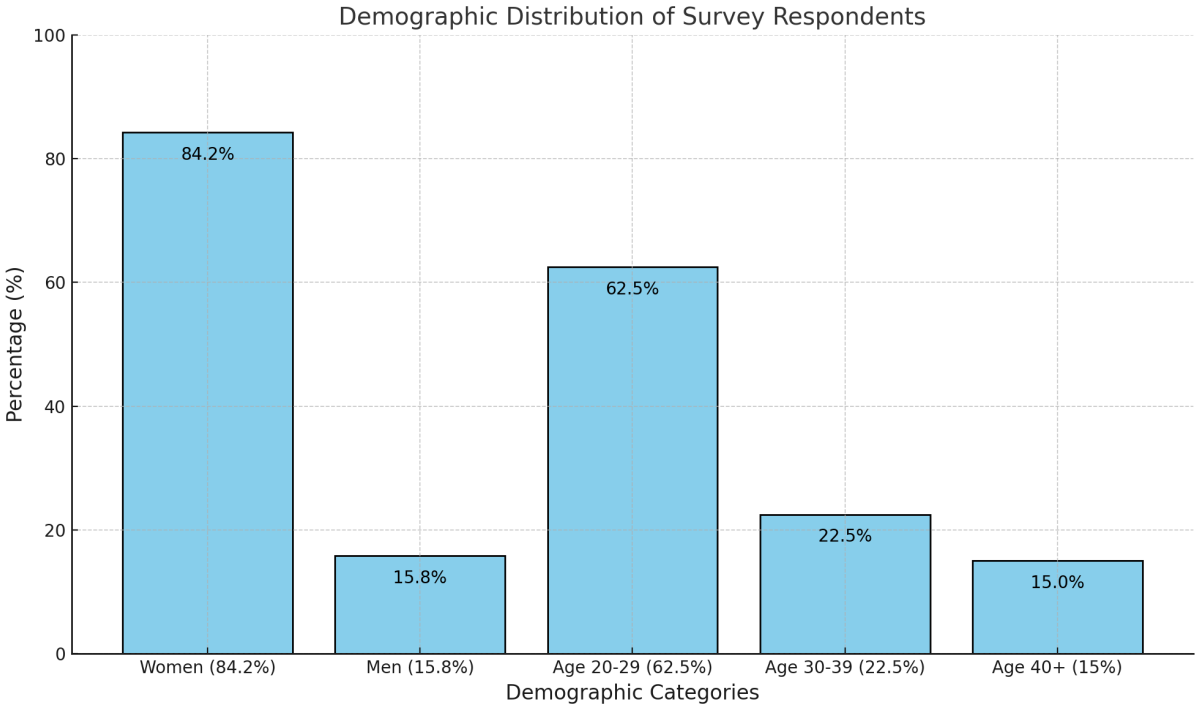
This methodological approach provides a structured perspective on how theoretical knowledge can be combined with empirical methods to analyse complex phenomena in marketing. The interdisciplinary strategy creates a

foundation for further research and practical applications, highlighting the importance of connecting theory with empirical evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative research was conducted using a structured questionnaire distributed via the Google Forms platform. A total of 120 participants took part, with 84.2% being women and 15.8% men. Demographic analysis revealed that the largest group of respondents fell within the 20 to 29 age category (62.5%), followed by those aged 30 to 39 (22.5%). Respondents predominantly resided in Slovakia and were all active shoppers in brick-and-mortar or online stores.

Figure 1. Demographics distribution of survey respondents.



Source: based on authors' own research

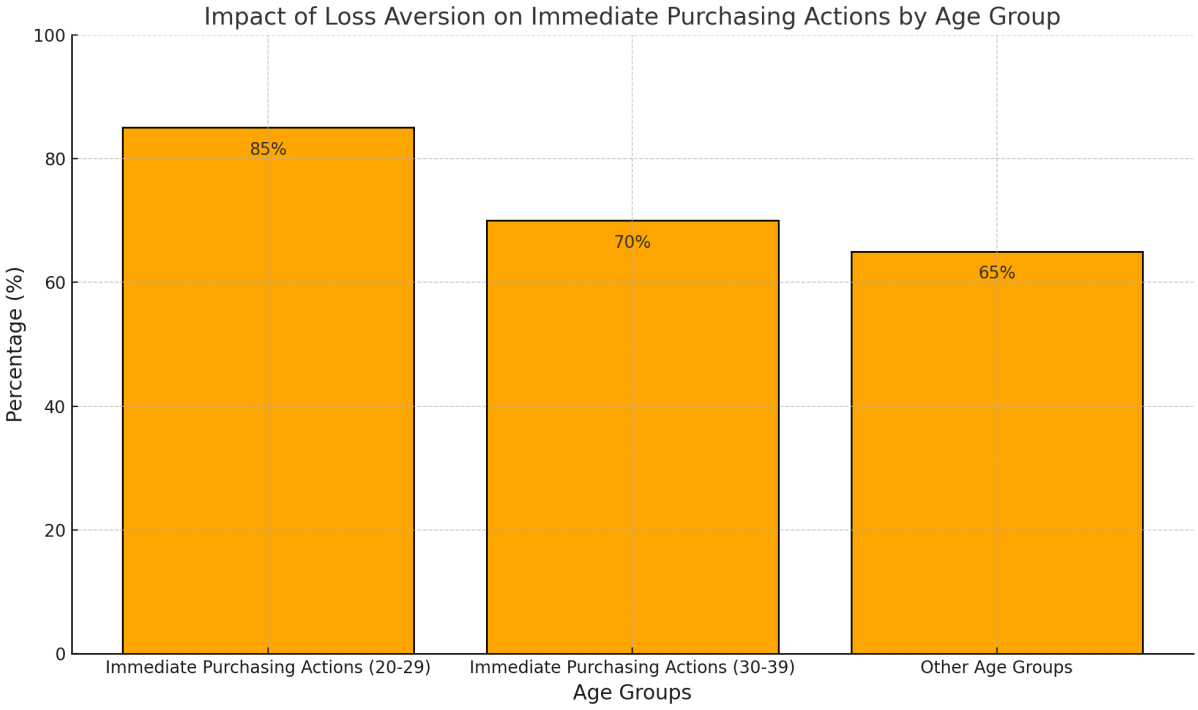
The research focused on examining four selected phenomena of behavioural economics: loss aversion, social proof, anchoring effect, and the paradox of choice. Participants responded to questions evaluating the influence of these phenomena on their purchasing behaviour and decision-making. The results were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, enabling the identification of significant trends and correlations between variables.

In the case of loss aversion, 76% of respondents indicated that information about limited stock availability was a motivating factor in their purchase decisions. This phenomenon was particularly prominent among younger respondents, who preferred products labelled as “limited edition,” highlighting the psychological

impact of urgency. Respondents exposed to messages about the last available item showed a significantly higher likelihood of purchase, often reinforced by visual and textual elements emphasising scarcity.

A detailed statistical analysis revealed that loss aversion had a strong correlation with immediate purchasing actions ($p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that consumer decision-making processes are substantially influenced by the perception of potential loss of opportunity to acquire a product. Significant differences were observed across age groups, with younger respondents aged 20 to 29 showing a more intense reaction to this type of stimulus compared to older categories.

Figure 2. Impact of loss aversion on immediate purchasing actions by age group.



Source: based on authors' own research

It was also noteworthy that the effect of loss aversion was not limited to specific product types but was universally present across various market segments. However, products with high symbolic value, such as luxury brands or unique offerings, elicited a somewhat stronger response to this phenomenon. These insights provide valuable guidance on effectively integrating this concept into marketing strategies to maximise customer engagement and loyalty to the brand.

Social proof emerged as a key factor influencing purchase decisions. As many as 82% of respondents reported that customer reviews and product ratings significantly impacted their choices. A higher percentage of positive reviews increased respondents' trust in products and brands, thereby raising the likelihood of purchase. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced for products with high visibility on social media, where active engagement from other customers greatly enhanced product appeal.

Further analysis showed that respondents preferred products with high ratings (e.g., 4 out of 5 stars or more), with this tendency being especially strong among younger age groups. Additionally, it was observed that detailed reviews describing customers' experiences had a greater impact on purchase decisions than simple ratings without commentary. This highlights the importance of transparency and the availability of information in the online environment.

Respondents often sought out products with a high number of reviews, with the number of reviews being as important as their average rating in many cases. This phenomenon demonstrates that social proof can create a strong trust effect in a product, subsequently enhancing the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Marketing campaigns that emphasised social evidence (e.g., a large number of satisfied customers) showed high effectiveness in acquiring new customers and building loyalty among the existing clientele.

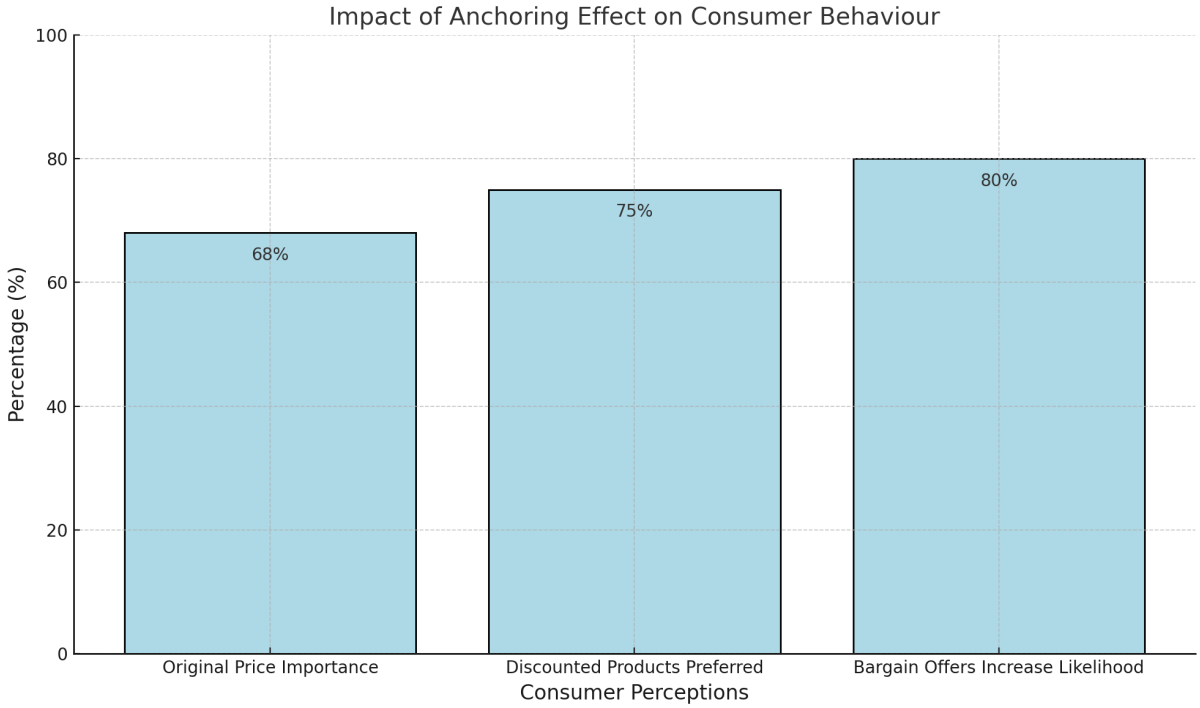
The anchoring effect was examined through questions related to price perception. The majority of respondents (68%) indicated that the original price of a product played an important role in their purchase decisions. This phenomenon was evident across all age groups but was particularly significant among respondents aged 30 to 39, where the original price served as a reference point for evaluating the value of a discount. Respondents preferred products marked with discounts, with discounts presented as “bargain offers” significantly increasing the likelihood of purchase.

Further analysis revealed that anchoring to the original price positively influenced not only the perceived value of the product but also respondents' emotional reactions to the advantage gained through the discount. This effect was observed not only in high-priced products but also in everyday consumer goods, demonstrating the broad applicability of this phenomenon in various marketing segments.

When comparing age groups, younger respondents (20 to 29 years) reacted less intensely to price anchoring, while older respondents (40 years and above)

attributed greater importance to the original price in evaluating the attractiveness of an offer. This variation in response may be influenced by life experience and financial priorities across age groups.

Figure 3. Impact of anchoring effect on consumer behaviour.



Source: based on authors' own research

The anchoring effect was also enhanced by visual elements, such as graphical displays of the original and discounted prices, which emphasised the contrast between these two values. It was found that such displays not only supported decision-making processes but also increased the appeal of discounted prices in the eyes of consumers. This finding underscores the need for effective design in marketing campaigns that utilise visual elements to maximise the impact of anchoring on consumer behaviour.

The paradox of choice was examined through questions about the size of product offerings and their impact on decision-making processes. As many as 71% of respondents stated that an overly wide product range caused them decision-making uncertainty, leading to either complete avoidance of a decision or unnecessarily prolonged deliberation. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced among respondents aged 20 to 29, where 78% reported frustration with excessive product choices.

Respondents preferred clear and simple offerings that enabled faster decision-making without the burden of excessive information. Simplified choices were

associated with higher satisfaction with the final decision. When comparing age groups, older respondents (40 years and above) exhibited a slightly greater ability to handle decision-making in conditions of extensive offerings, potentially indicating the influence of life experience on consumer behaviour.

Statistical analyses confirmed that reducing the number of options in the product range increased customer satisfaction with their choice, with the greatest effect observed in product categories with broad assortments, such as clothing or electronics. Respondents exposed to narrower offerings demonstrated higher satisfaction and less frequently experienced feelings of "buyer's remorse." This phenomenon highlights the importance of optimising product offerings in retail stores and e-commerce platforms.

Additionally, a significant influence of visual product arrangement on mitigating the paradox of choice was identified. Clear categorisation and logical arrangement of products improved respondents' ability to quickly identify preferred options, which also increased their satisfaction with the decision-making process. These findings indicate that the design of product offerings and presentation plays a crucial role in addressing consumers' decision-making challenges.

The discussion focused on verifying the stated hypotheses and interpreting the research results, with an emphasis on their implications for marketing practice. Key findings confirmed the significance of behavioural phenomena such as loss aversion, social proof, anchoring effects, and the paradox of choice, all of which have a fundamental impact on consumer decision-making.

The first hypothesis, concerning the increased motivation to make purchases through information on product stock levels, was validated. Results indicated that 70.8% of respondents considered this information a decisive factor in their purchasing decisions. These findings align with theories in behavioural economics that emphasise the power of loss perception and its influence on consumer behaviour. Based on this, it is recommended to highlight limited product availability in marketing communications, as this can lead to higher immediate conversion rates. A specific proposal includes the incorporation of visual elements, such as red or yellow alerts on limited stock, which can enhance the psychological effect of urgency.

The second hypothesis, that reviews are a key factor in purchasing decisions, was also confirmed. As many as 85% of respondents stated that reviews played a crucial role in their buying choices. Respondents preferred products with higher

ratings and detailed reviews. This phenomenon suggests that marketing strategies should emphasise positive reviews and ensure their visibility on relevant platforms, thereby increasing consumer trust in products and brands. Recommendations also include actively engaging customers in product evaluations through various rewards or loyalty programmes. This approach allows businesses to gather valuable feedback and increase the volume of reviews, improving product visibility.

The third examined area was the anchoring effect, where up to 80% of respondents considered the initial price a key reference point when making decisions. This finding supports the use of visual elements that highlight the contrast between the original and discounted price. It is recommended that retailers effectively present price anchors and use graphic elements to enhance the perceived value of discounts. A specific proposal includes introducing interactive features, such as dynamic price charts or alerts on historical discounts, which could provide customers with insights into the value of current offers. These strategies can significantly influence customers' emotional responses and strengthen their confidence in the attractiveness of the offer.

The final area examined was the paradox of choice, which identified that a wide range of options can lead to decreased motivation to choose and prolonged decision-making processes. As many as 71% of respondents stated that an excessive range of products caused them uncertainty in their choice. This phenomenon highlights the need to optimise product portfolios and establish clear categorisations of offerings. Simplifying choices can improve customer satisfaction and accelerate decision-making. Proposed measures include creating pre-configured product bundles or recommendations based on customer preferences. Such personalised offerings can eliminate decision paralysis and enhance purchase satisfaction.

The discussion also pointed to the importance of well-organised product arrangements in stores and online environments. Clear categorisation and logical product structures facilitate customer navigation and selection, contributing to a positive experience. Optimisation suggestions include the use of advanced filters and search tools that enable customers to quickly find products matching their needs.

The overall discussion emphasised that behavioural economics provides valuable tools for understanding and influencing consumer behaviour. Implementing insights from this research into marketing practices can increase

the effectiveness of sales strategies and improve the overall customer experience. The recommendations and proposals from the discussion suggest that the key to success lies in combining psychologically grounded strategies with technological innovations that enable their effective implementation in practice.

CONCLUSION

Behavioural economics plays a crucial role in contemporary marketing as its insights provide a deeper understanding of consumer decision-making processes and behaviours. These insights are fundamental for designing effective marketing strategies that enable companies to respond dynamically to the ever-changing needs and expectations of consumers. This scientific article focused on examining selected behavioural economic phenomena and their application in marketing strategies to enhance their effectiveness and improve the customer experience.

The key findings of the research confirmed the significance of behavioural phenomena such as loss aversion, social proof, the anchoring effect, and the paradox of choice, all of which have a demonstrable impact on consumer decision-making. These phenomena offer companies tools to influence customer decisions and adapt marketing activities to current market trends.

The research demonstrated that information on limited product availability significantly motivates customers to act promptly. As many as 70.8% of respondents considered this information a critical factor in their purchasing decisions. This finding reinforces the importance of loss perception as a pivotal driver of consumer behaviour. It is recommended that marketing communications emphasise limited stock availability, as this can lead to higher immediate conversion rates. A specific proposal includes incorporating visual elements, such as red or yellow alerts, which enhance the psychological impact of urgency and encourage faster customer decision-making.

Social proof also emerged as a significant factor, with 85% of respondents identifying reviews and ratings as essential to their purchasing decisions. A higher volume of positive reviews increased consumer trust in products and brands, thereby raising the likelihood of purchase. These findings underscore the importance of actively engaging customers in providing product reviews and ensuring their visibility on relevant platforms. Companies are advised to implement strategies that reward customer feedback, thereby increasing the quantity and quality of reviews, which in turn improves product visibility.

The anchoring effect, which focused on price perception, revealed that 80% of respondents regarded the original price as a critical reference point when making purchase decisions. This effect highlights the importance of visual contrasts between original and discounted prices, which evoke emotional responses and enhance perceived value. Innovative approaches, such as dynamic price charts or alerts for historical discounts, are recommended to provide customers with a better understanding of the attractiveness of current offers.

The paradox of choice presented a challenge associated with excessive product offerings, which can lead to decision paralysis among customers. As many as 71% of respondents stated that an overly broad range of products caused uncertainty and prolonged their decision-making process. The findings highlight the need to optimise product portfolios and create clear, well-organised offerings to simplify customer choices and enhance satisfaction. Proposed measures include pre-configured product bundles and personalised recommendations, which can eliminate decision-making uncertainty and improve the overall shopping experience.

Beyond these phenomena, the article emphasised the importance of clear product arrangements in both physical and online retail environments. Logical categorisation and product organisation simplify customer navigation and contribute to a positive shopping experience. Recommendations include the use of advanced filtering and search tools that allow customers to quickly find products aligned with their preferences and needs.

In conclusion, behavioural economics provides invaluable tools for understanding and influencing consumer behaviour. This scientific article confirmed that applying these principles in marketing strategies enables companies to increase sales efficiency and build long-term customer relationships. The success of such strategies lies in the integration of psychological insights with technological innovations, facilitating flexible and effective adaptation to customer needs in a dynamic market environment.

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF IN-STORE MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN A RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT: ***This paper investigates the role of in-store marketing as a pivotal element of contemporary retail strategies, examining its potential to shape consumer behaviour and enhance overall sales performance. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of how various in-store marketing tools influence consumer decision-making. The research encompasses an analysis of elements such as visual merchandising, promotional activities, shelf organisation, thematic campaigns, and environmental factors, highlighting their combined impact on the consumer shopping experience. Focusing on a case study of Tesco Stores SR, the paper explores the dynamic interaction between consumer psychology and retail marketing strategies. The research delves into how marketing tools can be utilised not only to attract but also to engage customers in meaningful ways, creating a shopping environment that fosters loyalty and repeat visits. In addition, the study examines the integration of traditional marketing techniques with innovative technologies, such as interactive digital displays and personalised promotional mechanisms, to adapt to the shifting demands of a modern consumer base. The paper also emphasises the strategic importance of aligning marketing strategies with demographic and psychographic characteristics to maximise their effectiveness. Moreover, the research provides actionable recommendations for retail practitioners. By addressing these key aspects, the paper contributes to the broader discourse on retail marketing, offering both theoretical and practical perspectives.***

KEY WORDS: ***in-store marketing, consumer behaviour, retail strategies.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M21.***

INTRODUCTION

In-store marketing constitutes a pivotal instrument in the modulation of consumer behaviour within the retail domain. This multifaceted construct integrates an array of strategic methodologies and tactical implementations designed to enhance the consumer's shopping experience while simultaneously eliciting impulsive purchasing behaviours [3]. The paradigm amalgamates elements of merchandising and point-of-sale advertising, encompassing visual product displays, shelf organisation, promotional signage, and marketing initiatives. According to data from the Point of Purchase Advertising International (POPAI) study conducted in 2014, approximately 82% of purchasing decisions are executed in-store, underscoring the profound significance of this marketing approach [9]. The capacity of in-store marketing to influence consumer decision-making at critical junctures, commonly referred to as "moments of truth," remains unparalleled in its efficacy.

In the context of strategic retail operations, in-store marketing is conceptualised as a deliberate approach employed to directly influence consumer behaviour during their physical interaction with retail environments. Its overarching objective is to construct an optimised retail atmosphere conducive to heightened impulsivity in purchasing decisions, whilst fostering a positive experiential dimension for consumers [8]. Such strategies exhibit pronounced efficacy within high-traffic retail environments, including hypermarkets and supermarkets, where consumers encounter a diverse range of sensory stimuli. Integral components of in-store marketing encompass visual merchandising, effective spatial arrangement of products, utilisation of promotional signage, and the cultivation of an engaging store atmosphere characterised by meticulously curated elements such as auditory and visual stimuli [5].

The theoretical underpinnings of in-store marketing are further expanded by the concept of shopper marketing. This discipline is predicated on the systematic planning and execution of marketing activities that influence consumer behaviour throughout the entirety of the purchasing process. Empirical findings suggest that approximately 76% of consumer decisions are made within the retail environment itself, substantiating the critical role of shopper marketing strategies [9]. Such strategies often entail the strategic placement of products in high-visibility zones, commonly denominated as "hot zones," strategically located at entrances or endcaps to maximise consumer engagement. These zones are empirically validated as loci of increased consumer attention and subsequent purchase probability.

Merchandising, as a corollary of in-store marketing, encompasses the orchestration of product presentation strategies within retail environments. This domain entails the optimisation of product placement, design considerations, and packaging configurations to augment consumer accessibility and engagement. For instance, research substantiates that products positioned at eye-level height yield a higher likelihood of purchase [1]. Moreover, the dichotomy of "hot" versus "cold" zones within shelf arrangement paradigms facilitates the maximisation of spatial utility and product visibility. Hot zones, characterised by elevated consumer traffic, are juxtaposed against cold zones, which are typically reserved for staple products with consistent demand patterns. The strategic utilisation of these zones exemplifies a sophisticated understanding of consumer navigation and behavioural tendencies within retail settings [7].

The atmospheric construct of the retail environment exerts a substantive influence on consumer perceptual and behavioural responses. The incorporation of auditory, visual, and olfactory stimuli within retail spaces is demonstrably linked to variations in consumer affective states and decision-making processes [6]. For instance, empirical analyses reveal that slower tempo music extends the duration of consumer engagement within the retail space, thereby augmenting purchase volumes. Similarly, the deployment of strategically calibrated lighting schemes enhances the aesthetic appeal of products, fostering a conducive environment for increased sales [10]. The psychological interplay between colour schemes and consumer mood further exemplifies the nuanced mechanisms through which environmental stimuli modulate consumer behaviour. Specifically, chromatic configurations such as red and blue have been identified to evoke states of excitement and tranquillity, respectively. Olfactory stimuli, exemplified by the scent of freshly baked goods, have been empirically validated to trigger impulsive purchase behaviours through sensory activation.

A comprehensive analysis of factors influencing consumer behaviour within the framework of in-store marketing necessitates an examination of cultural, psychological, social, and personal determinants. Cultural dimensions encapsulate regional disparities in consumer preferences and purchasing paradigms. Psychological determinants encompass emotional and cognitive reactions to environmental stimuli, while social factors address the influence of normative frameworks and peer validation on consumer choices [10]. Personal factors, including demographic variables such as age, income, and lifestyle, further delineate the heterogeneity of consumer segments. The incorporation of these multifactorial determinants into the strategic calculus of in-store marketing

enhances the precision and efficacy of marketing interventions.

The spatial configuration of retail environments represents a critical determinant of consumer navigation and purchasing patterns. Predominant architectural typologies within retail layouts include grid patterns, free-flow configurations, and guided pathways [11]. Grid layouts, frequently employed in supermarkets, optimise spatial efficiency and facilitate systematic consumer navigation. In contrast, free-flow configurations prioritise consumer autonomy and are often utilised in high-end retail establishments to enhance exploratory behaviours. Guided pathways, designed to direct consumer movement along predetermined trajectories, leverage visual and physical cues to maximise product exposure and unplanned purchases. The scientific optimisation of these configurations underscores the interplay between environmental structuring and consumer behavioural outcomes.

Promotional materials, including Point of Sale (POS) and Point of Purchase (POP) tools, are indispensable components of in-store marketing strategies. These artefacts function as both informational and persuasive instruments within the retail environment [4]. POS materials, strategically positioned at transactional junctures such as checkouts, are tailored to incentivise ancillary purchases and reinforce consumer commitment to brands. Conversely, POP materials, distributed across the sales floor, utilise visual and spatial dynamics to attract consumer attention and stimulate purchase behaviours. Empirical studies consistently validate the efficacy of these materials in enhancing consumer brand perception and augmenting retail profitability [13].

Empirical exemplifications of in-store marketing efficacy are observed across diverse cultural and economic contexts. In the Indian retail sector, promotional interventions have been shown to significantly amplify impulsive clothing purchases [12]. Similarly, in the Brazilian market, the effectiveness of price and product promotions has been demonstrated to transcend regional economic variances, underscoring the adaptability and universality of in-store marketing strategies. These case studies illuminate the versatility of in-store marketing in addressing the variegated exigencies of global consumer markets [13].

The strategic application of in-store marketing engenders a multiplicity of advantages, encompassing sales augmentation, optimisation of consumer decision-making processes, and the cultivation of an enriched retail experience [2]. These methodologies are instrumental in fortifying the competitive positioning of retailers within an increasingly dynamic marketplace. By

harnessing the scientific insights underlying consumer behaviour and environmental psychology, in-store marketing initiatives exemplify a synergistic alignment of theoretical constructs and practical applications. Consequently, in-store marketing emerges as a quintessential paradigm for advancing retailer efficacy and consumer satisfaction in contemporary retail ecosystems.

METHODS

The primary objective of the study was to explore the impact of in-store marketing strategies on consumer behaviour within the retail environment. The research aimed to assess the extent to which promotional activities within stores, such as posters, floor markings, audio advertisements, tastings, and discount coupons, influence consumer decision-making processes and drive impulsive purchases. Additionally, the study sought to evaluate the efficacy of specific in-store marketing tools implemented by Tesco Stores SR, a.s., and to propose actionable recommendations for enhancing their marketing practices.

A significant component of the research entailed the identification and analysis of consumer reactions to various in-store marketing stimuli. The primary aim was to comprehend how these stimuli affect consumer purchase decisions and to provide insights into optimising customer experiences within retail settings. This entailed investigating the effectiveness of in-store promotional tools in shaping consumer behaviour, fostering positive emotional engagement, and ultimately increasing sales. The secondary objective was to establish practical guidelines for retail operators to implement effective in-store marketing strategies that resonate with their target demographics. Furthermore, the research addressed the identification of emerging trends and innovative approaches in the field of in-store marketing, aiming to enrich the academic discourse and provide a robust framework for practical applications.

The methodological framework of the research combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive examination of the subject matter. The process began with the formulation of a concise outline, wherein the thematic structure of the research was meticulously defined. This foundational stage was followed by an extensive literature review, which involved the selection and analysis of secondary sources, including academic publications, industry reports, and digital materials relevant to in-store marketing. The literature review served to contextualise the research within existing knowledge and to highlight gaps that the current study sought to address.

Primary data collection formed a core aspect of the methodology, employing surveys and questionnaires directed at a carefully selected sample population. This method was instrumental in gathering firsthand insights into consumer attitudes and behaviours concerning in-store marketing practices. The data collection process also incorporated direct observations and case studies, particularly focusing on Tesco Stores SR, a.s., to evaluate the practical application of in-store marketing strategies. The combination of these methods ensured a balanced perspective, integrating both subjective consumer feedback and objective observations of marketing practices.

The research methodology emphasised the application of scientific methods, including analysis, synthesis, and induction. The analytical phase involved the dissection of the research problem into manageable components to facilitate a detailed examination of specific variables. Following this, the synthesis phase integrated the findings into a cohesive narrative, providing a holistic understanding of the interplay between in-store marketing and consumer behaviour. Inductive reasoning was employed to derive generalised conclusions from the observed data, enabling the formulation of practical recommendations tailored to the retail sector.

The operational framework of the study included several key stages. Initially, the research problem was precisely defined, outlining the specific objectives and scope of the study. This was followed by the selection of appropriate research tools and methodologies, ensuring alignment with the overarching research goals. The subsequent stage involved the systematic collection and processing of both primary and secondary data. This included the utilisation of statistical techniques to analyse survey results, providing empirical evidence to support the study's conclusions.

A notable feature of the research was its focus on the practical implications of in-store marketing. By examining the marketing strategies employed by Tesco Stores SR, a.s., the study offered real-world insights into the effectiveness of various promotional tools. This case study approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of how theoretical concepts in in-store marketing translate into tangible outcomes within the retail environment. Furthermore, the research underscored the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to the specific needs and preferences of target consumer groups, highlighting the role of demographic and psychographic segmentation in optimising marketing efforts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial analysis entailed a comprehensive examination of the application of various marketing tools designed to enhance sales. This analysis specifically focused on a particular Tesco Stores SR store located on Farského Street in Bratislava. The store was selected due to its strategic location and high customer footfall. The primary focus of the analysis was the identification and evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing materials, such as visual displays, shelf labelling, posters, seasonal promotions, and other POS (point-of-sale) and POP (point-of-purchase) tools.

The evaluation of marketing materials began with an assessment of the store's entrance. Observations revealed that the entrance to the retail outlet was prominently marked with the company's logo and well-lit, ensuring its visibility and facilitating easy orientation for potential customers. At the entrance, large posters were displayed to inform customers about ongoing promotions and discounts available through the Clubcard loyalty programme. These visual elements were designed to immediately capture attention and motivate customers to enter the store.

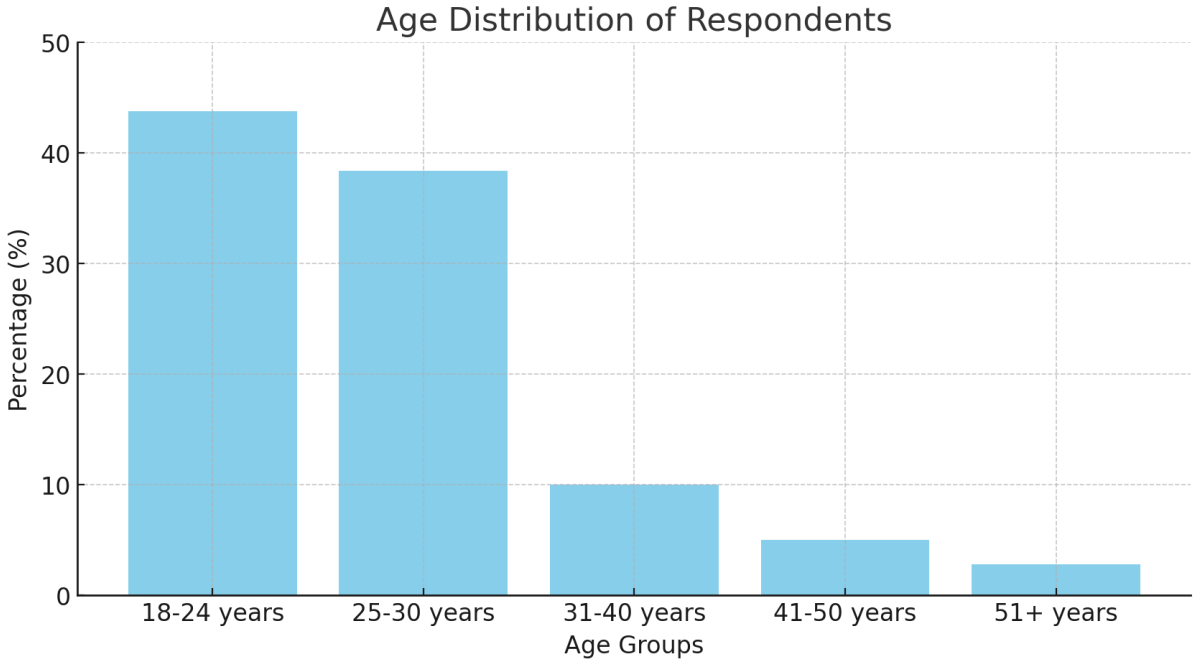
Within the store's interior, various marketing tools were identified. Shelf labels were prominently displayed and well-organised, simplifying product identification and providing essential information. Promotional items were marked with yellow price tags bearing the word "Discount" alongside the reduced price. These tags effectively attracted customer attention and encouraged impulsive purchases. Additionally, the store utilised wobblers and banners extending from shelves, drawing customers' gaze towards promotional products.

Key elements of in-store marketing included pallet displays featuring promotional goods and advertising stands. These elements were strategically positioned in high-traffic zones to maximise exposure. Overhead signs were installed on the ceilings to function as navigational aids, helping customers move through the store with ease. Furthermore, it was observed that seasonal decorations and themed displays had a positive impact on customers' emotions, potentially increasing their willingness to make purchases.

In the checkout area, effective sales techniques were identified. Shelves stocked with impulse-buy items such as confectionery, magazines, and small packaged snacks were placed near the cash registers, enhancing the likelihood of impulse purchases. Cashiers frequently employed cross-selling techniques by suggesting complementary products, thereby boosting overall sales.

Subsequent quantitative research was conducted through a survey involving 112 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed via the Google Forms platform and comprised 16 questions. Respondents were divided into five age groups, with the largest proportion (43.8%) aged 18–24 years. The second-largest group (38.4%) consisted of individuals aged 25–30 years. Gender distribution revealed that 72.3% of respondents were women, while 27.7% were men.

Figure 1. Age distribution of respondents

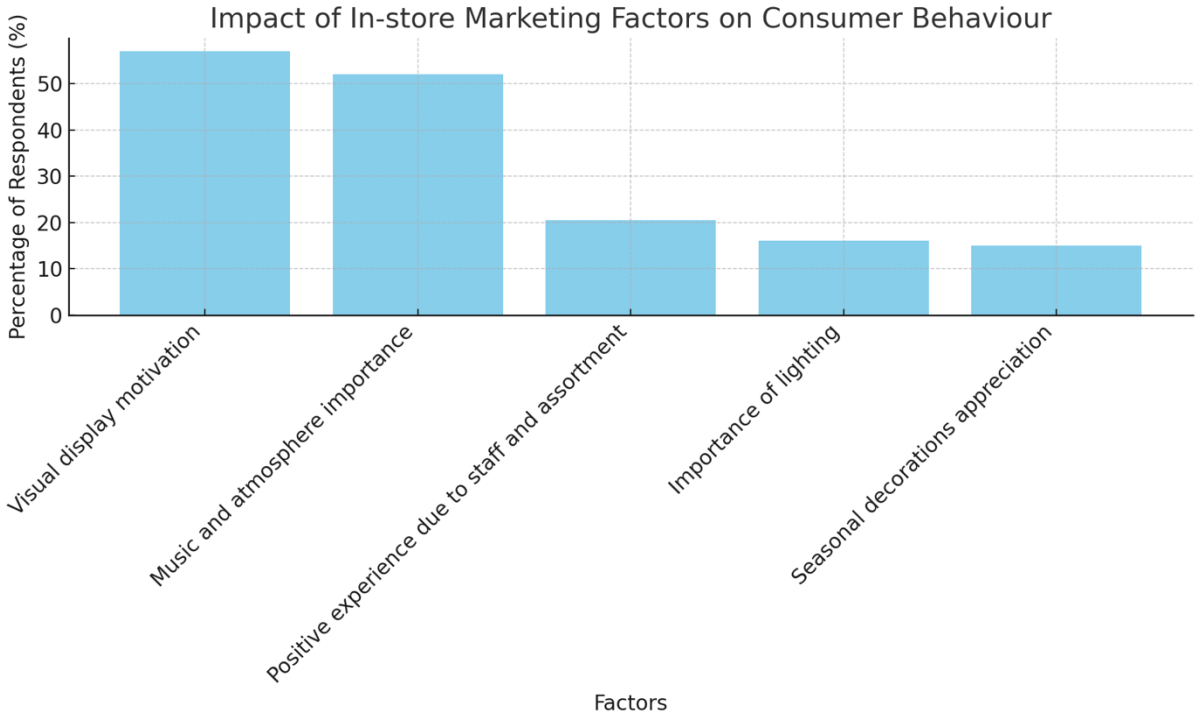


Source: based on authors' own research

The survey aimed to assess the impact of in-store marketing on customer behaviour. Data indicated that factors such as visual presentation, store design, lighting, music, and colour schemes significantly influenced customers' positive perceptions. A total of 57% of respondents stated that visually appealing product displays motivated them to make impulsive purchases. More than half of the participants (52%) identified music and atmosphere as key factors that encouraged them to spend more time in the store.

Furthermore, 23 respondents highlighted that their positive shopping experience was influenced by friendly staff, a wide assortment of products, and attractive promotions. An additional 18 respondents emphasised the importance of well-lit areas when selecting products, while 15% appreciated seasonal decorations tied to promotional events.

Figure 2. Impact of selected In-store Marketing Factors on Consumer Behaviour

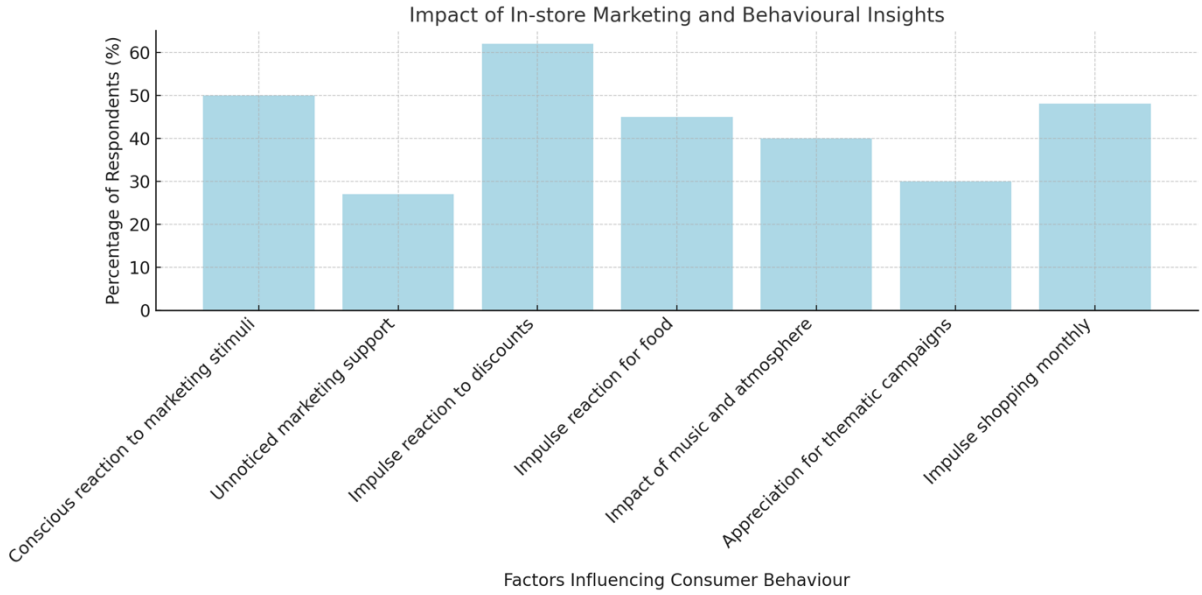


Source: based on authors' own research

One significant finding was that 50% of respondents acknowledged consciously reacting to marketing stimuli, demonstrating the effectiveness of such tools. However, 27% reported that they did not notice promotional activities, indicating a need to improve the visibility of marketing efforts within stores. The study also revealed that 62% of respondents impulsively reacted to discount offers, with 45% doing so specifically when purchasing groceries. Music and atmosphere were pivotal for 40% of participants, who reported that these elements positively influenced their mood and willingness to remain in the store.

Moreover, 30% of respondents appreciated thematic campaigns associated with specific holidays or events, describing them as attractive and engaging. Impulse buying was statistically confirmed as a common consumer behaviour, with 48% of respondents admitting to making impulsive purchases at least once a month, offering practical implications for retail strategies.

Figure 3. Impact of other In-store Marketing Factors on Consumer Behaviour



Source: based on authors' own research

The findings provide a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of in-store marketing and its impact on customer decision-making processes. The research emphasised that visual presentation and store design significantly influence positive customer mood and conscious purchasing decisions. Music, lighting, and colour schemes were identified as key factors that create a pleasant shopping experience, thereby encouraging customers to spend more time in the store and subsequently make impulsive purchases. Additionally, the critical role of thematic campaigns and seasonal decorations was highlighted, with 30% of respondents finding these elements attractive and engaging.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of in-store marketing as a strategic mechanism for influencing consumer behaviour, with significant potential to enhance sales and overall customer satisfaction. A principal hypothesis posited that over 50% of customers exhibit impulsive purchasing behaviour. This hypothesis was substantiated through an empirical analysis of survey data collected from 112 respondents. The data revealed that impulsive purchasing constitutes a prevalent behavioural pattern among consumers, offering essential insights for the formulation of targeted marketing strategies. Furthermore, the research highlighted that the strategic deployment of elements such as lighting, auditory stimuli, visual merchandising, and seasonal decorations exerts a positive influence on consumer affect and decision-making processes.

The analysis further indicated that over 50% of participants consciously responded to marketing stimuli, thereby emphasising the importance of sophisticated visual communication and the meticulous design of retail environments. However, the observation that approximately 27% of respondents failed to perceive promotional activities signals a critical need to enhance the visibility and innovative appeal of marketing campaigns. Moreover, the findings elucidated that for 40% of respondents, music and the overall atmospheric conditions of the store significantly influenced their willingness to remain within the retail space, whereas 30% identified thematic campaigns and seasonal decor as particularly engaging elements.

Arising from these findings, several specific recommendations have been delineated. These include the optimisation of checkout zones through the strategic expansion of impulsive product assortments and the creation of visually stimulating areas to support sales initiatives. Additionally, the integration of advanced advertising technologies, such as dynamic electronic displays, is advocated to provide real-time information regarding discounts and promotional activities. Such innovations hold the potential to augment consumer engagement and facilitate access to comprehensive product information. The implementation of cross-selling and up-selling strategies within checkout areas constitutes another pivotal recommendation. Training programmes for cashiers should be instituted to develop proficiency in suggesting complementary or premium product alternatives, thereby elevating the average transaction value. Concurrently, the systematic monitoring and evaluation of these interventions' efficacy is imperative to optimise their impact on sales outcomes.

In-store marketing emerges from this analysis as a fundamental component of contemporary retail strategy, with demonstrable capacity to bolster customer loyalty and drive sales growth. The research identifies the personalisation of promotional offerings, the deployment of interactive digital interfaces, and the creative utilisation of retail spaces as transformative approaches for enhancing operational performance. Furthermore, the findings advocate for the alignment of marketing strategies with the nuanced preferences and behavioural patterns of target demographics. This encompasses the use of predictive analytics to anticipate consumer behaviour, the incorporation of tailored promotional mechanisms, and the proactive adaptation to evolving consumer trends. Retail organisations are encouraged to pursue a synergistic integration of traditional and digital marketing modalities to maximise reach and operational efficiency.

In conclusion, this study substantiates the indispensable nature of in-store marketing within the retail ecosystem, affirming its strategic utility in shaping consumer decision-making and fortifying competitive advantage. When employed judiciously, in-store marketing strategies can yield substantial improvements in the quality of the customer experience and generate sustained economic benefits for retail enterprises. Future research trajectories should prioritise a more granular exploration of consumer preferences and leverage emerging technological advancements to innovate and refine in-store marketing paradigms.

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EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF CONSUMER REVIEWS ON PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR: INSIGHTS FOR STRATEGIC MARKETING

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ABSTRACT: ***The paper investigates the influence of consumer reviews on purchasing behaviour, emphasising their role as a critical tool for information dissemination and trust-building in the contemporary marketplace. Consumer reviews have emerged as a significant factor in decision-making processes, shaping perceptions and guiding consumers in their evaluation of products and services. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical research, this study provides a comprehensive examination of how reviews impact consumer behaviour and outlines practical applications for businesses. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to explore the dynamics of review utilisation and its implications for consumer trust, satisfaction, and decision-making. A structured survey was conducted to collect primary data from a diverse sample of respondents, focusing on their attitudes towards reviews, preferences for different review formats, and the factors influencing their trust in reviews. Key areas of focus include the authenticity and timeliness of reviews, the influence of multimedia content on consumer perceptions, and the phenomenon of negativity bias, where consumers prioritise negative reviews over positive ones. The study also examines the role of influencers and professional reviewers in shaping consumer trust and explores the disparity between the creation and consumption of reviews. The findings of this research offer actionable recommendations for businesses aiming to harness the potential of reviews as a strategic tool.***

KEY WORDS: ***consumer reviews, purchasing behaviour, empirical research.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M21.***

INTRODUCTION

Consumers influence market processes through their demand, determining which goods and services succeed in the marketplace. A critical aspect of a company's success lies in understanding consumer needs and preferences, enabling the achievement of a competitive advantage. Consumer satisfaction with purchased products or services affects their loyalty and simultaneously influences other consumers through reviews. Reviews serve as a vital decision-making tool, whose effectiveness depends on their quality and credibility [3].

The definition of a consumer highlights their role as an individual or household purchasing products and services to satisfy needs. Consumers may not always be the purchaser but can also be the user of goods and services. Consumer protection focuses on ensuring fair access to information about products and eliminating unethical business practices [9]. Legal regulations in this area precisely define terms and obligations. Consumer typologies encompass conservative, impulsive, rational, and emotional consumers, as well as those whose behaviour cannot be easily classified.

Consumer behaviour is defined as a dynamic process involving interactions between individuals, their environment, emotions, cognition, and actions. According to various authors, this process is determined by needs and desires influenced by cognitive, affective, and behavioural factors [11, 4, 7]. Consumer behaviour is often analysed at the micro-level, focusing on the individual, and at the macro-level, which includes entire social groups or society.

The factors influencing consumer behaviour are divided into internal and external. Internal factors include personality traits, lifestyle, attitudes, and values. External factors represent cultural, social, and economic influences, as well as marketing activities. Cultural factors define values, beliefs, and customs, often rooted in demographic and geographic characteristics. Social factors include the influence of family, reference groups, and social status, which is often shaped by education levels and income potential. Psychological factors encompass motivation, self-confidence, attitudes, and interests, which change under the influence of life situations [7].

Consumer motivation represents a key aspect of behaviour, rooted in needs and desires. Sigmund Freud and Abraham Maslow defined two main theories of motivation. Freud emphasised subconscious motives influencing consumer decisions, while Maslow described a hierarchy of needs as a pyramid, where the satisfaction of lower needs enables the fulfilment of higher ones [5]. These

theories provide a deeper understanding of consumer decision-making and behaviour.

Consumer decision-making occurs in a five-step process, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. Each step plays a crucial role in shaping the final decision and is influenced by internal and external factors [13]. Decision-making processes vary depending on the type of purchase, which may be impulsive, extensive, limited, or habitual.

Consumer reviews, in general, represent a valuable source of information for customers seeking independent and objective opinions on products and services. These reviews can take various forms, including written assessments on online platforms, verbal references, audiovisual presentations via platforms like YouTube, or comments on social media [14]. Such information provides not only basic product characteristics but also insights into user experiences, their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, significantly affecting consumer decision-making. From a marketing perspective, reviews are a notable expression of word-of-mouth communication, demonstrably impacting brand and product perceptions [12].

Reviews reveal not only the inherent properties of a product but also the quality of the associated customer experience, including ordering processes, customer service efficiency, delivery speed, or interactions with the seller's staff [2]. These elements, referred to in service theory as "moments of truth," evaluate a provider's ability to meet customer expectations. Positive reviews, in addition to enhancing brand credibility, contribute to building customer loyalty, while negative reviews can identify weaknesses requiring remediation and optimisation. For instance, Kotler's model of consumer behaviour highlights the importance of feedback as an integral component of the decision-making process [4].

The significance of consumer reviews has exponentially increased due to their widespread availability on digital platforms. The phenomenon of digital transformation has introduced the democratisation of information, enabling customers to read and compare reviews in real time. Statistics show that over 90% of consumers read online reviews before making a purchase, with 88% considering them as trustworthy as personal recommendations [1]. Furthermore, algorithms of search engines and e-commerce platforms, such as Amazon or Google, prioritise products with a high number of reviews and favourable ratings, affecting their visibility and sales potential. This phenomenon, known as the "social proof effect," has become an integral part of digital marketing [10].

Despite these benefits, reviews are exposed to manipulation risks, such as fake reviews intended to unfairly discredit competitors or artificially enhance a product's reputation. This issue is a subject of academic discourse focusing on the ethical aspects of digital marketing [15]. To mitigate this risk, platforms are introducing mechanisms to verify the authenticity of reviews, such as verification badges, inappropriate content filtering, or artificial intelligence to detect anomalies. Customers should therefore critically evaluate reviews and distinguish between authentic and potentially manipulated ones.

Companies can proactively encourage the generation of reviews through incentive programs, such as discounts or rewards for feedback, while leveraging these reviews to optimise their processes. For example, the continuous improvement model can be applied based on customer feedback, leading to increased satisfaction and loyalty. Another trend is the integration of reviews into marketing strategies, where they are used as a form of social proof to enhance the persuasiveness of advertising campaigns [8].

In summary, consumer reviews are a significant phenomenon in the modern economy, combining elements of traditional word-of-mouth marketing with innovative tools of the digital era [6]. Their proper utilisation can strengthen competitive advantages, improve customer experiences, and enhance brand credibility. On the other hand, ignoring their potential or manipulating them can negatively impact a company's reputation [16]. Therefore, it is crucial for academia and practice to pay increased attention to this phenomenon and further develop theoretical and practical insights in this area.

A comprehensive discussion of the factors influencing consumer decision-making requires relevant research outcomes to support effective marketing strategies and a better understanding of consumer needs.

METHODS

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the influence of consumer reviews on purchasing behaviour. This investigation focuses on determining the extent to which reviews, representing the experiences and evaluations of other consumers, affect decision-making processes in the acquisition of goods and services. A structured survey served as the principal method for collecting empirical data from a representative sample of respondents. The subsequent analysis of these data facilitated the formulation of evidence-based recommendations aimed at enabling businesses to utilise consumer reviews

strategically within their marketing and sales frameworks. The research was systematically divided into multiple sub-objectives to achieve the overarching aim effectively.

The initial sub-objective involved the systematic acquisition and critical analysis of extant literature pertaining to consumer behaviour, its determinants, and the specific role of consumer reviews. This theoretical framework provided the foundation for subsequent empirical investigations, encompassing definitions of core concepts and the identification of variables that influence consumer decision-making mechanisms. Additionally, this phase included an exploration of the psychological and social motivations underpinning the production of consumer reviews.

The second methodological phase was centred on the development of a meticulously designed questionnaire, constructed to serve as the principal instrument for primary data collection. The questionnaire was rigorously formulated to capture comprehensive demographic data on respondents, as well as their attitudes, preferences, and perceptions regarding consumer reviews. It integrated both closed-ended questions, designed to ensure consistency and comparability of responses, and open-ended questions to elicit nuanced qualitative insights into consumer behaviour and review impact.

The subsequent phase involved the deployment of the questionnaire across a diverse respondent population via online dissemination channels over a defined two-week period. This approach facilitated the acquisition of data from a heterogeneous sample, ensuring representation across key demographic and socio-economic categories. The collected data were processed and transformed into graphical representations, enhancing the interpretability and clarity of the findings for analytical purposes.

The final sub-objective centred on the rigorous analysis of the acquired data and the derivation of actionable insights. Analytical methods employed included descriptive statistical techniques for summarising and quantifying the dataset and comparative methods for identifying significant behavioural patterns and variations across different respondent segments. The application of these methods enabled the extraction of critical insights, which informed the development of practical recommendations for businesses to optimise the utilisation of consumer reviews as a tool for influencing purchasing behaviour.

The methodological structure underpinning this research reflects a systematic and scientific approach to both data collection and interpretation. The theoretical

components of the research were derived through a comprehensive review and synthesis of relevant academic and professional literature, employing inductive and synthetic methodologies to construct a robust conceptual framework. The empirical segment of the research relied heavily on the structured survey as a primary data collection mechanism, with subsequent data processing undertaken using advanced analytical software tools. This process facilitated the transformation of raw data into interpretable formats, such as tabular and graphical representations, to support evidence-based conclusions.

The analytical techniques employed in this research encompassed a wide range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Descriptive statistical measures, including arithmetic means, medians, and quartile distributions, were applied to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data interpretations. Comparative analytical frameworks were utilised to examine variances and correlations between distinct demographic and behavioural segments within the respondent pool. These methodologies ensured the objectivity and robustness of the analytical outcomes, while mitigating the influence of potential outliers or extreme values within the dataset.

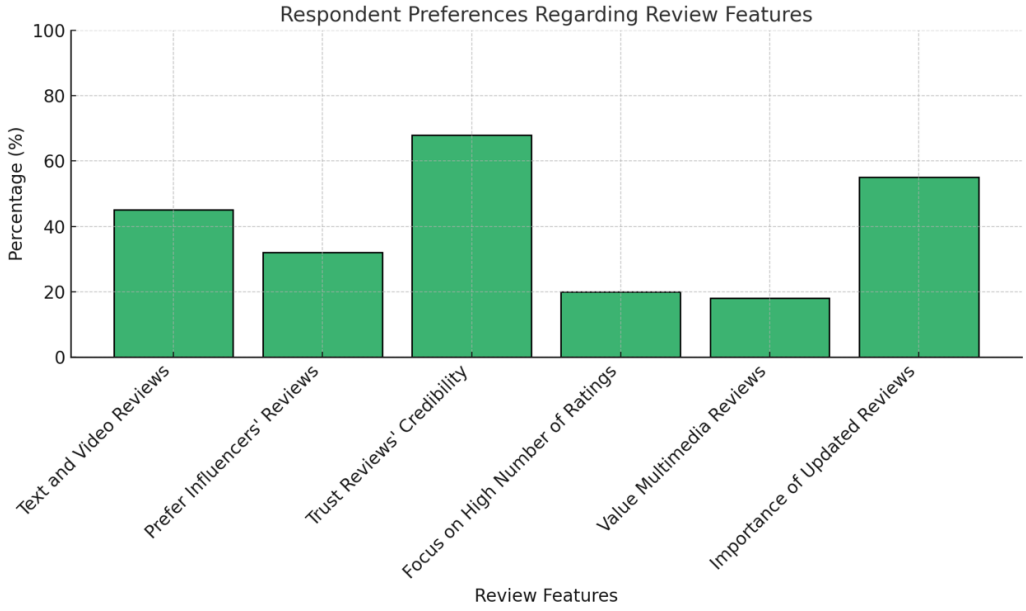
Based on the analytical findings, a series of targeted recommendations were developed to guide businesses in the strategic utilisation of consumer reviews. These recommendations emphasise leveraging reviews as a mechanism to enhance consumer trust, promoting transparency within corporate communications, and integrating consumer feedback into iterative processes aimed at improving product and service offerings. The effective implementation of these strategies has the potential to amplify the positive impacts of consumer reviews while minimising adverse reputational risks, thereby fostering sustainable competitive advantages for businesses in a dynamic market environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this research was to evaluate the impact of reviews on consumer purchasing behaviour through a survey that focused on understanding respondents' attitudes towards reviews of products and services. The survey was conducted in March 2024 and included 35 questions, the first eight of which addressed the demographic characteristics of respondents, while the remaining questions focused on purchasing behaviour and the influence of reviews on decision-making. The questionnaire was distributed online and completed by 127 respondents.

Demographic data revealed that the respondents were predominantly female (approximately 79%). This gender imbalance may be attributed to a lower interest among men in completing online surveys. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 27 years, representing 90% of the sample. This age distribution likely reflects the method of distributing the survey via student groups on social media platforms. Regarding educational attainment, more than half of the respondents had a secondary education, while one-third had completed a bachelor's degree. Geographically, the Bratislava and Žilina regions were most represented, reflecting the survey's distribution strategy. In terms of purchasing behaviour, 37% of respondents reported shopping online several times a month, while 33% shopped online less than once a month. This trend underscores the growing importance of e-commerce. Among the factors influencing purchasing decisions, price was dominant (95% of respondents), followed by quality (85%) and functionality (65%). Reviews were deemed important by 62% of respondents, highlighting their significance as a decision-making tool. Additionally, 45% of respondents stated that they considered both textual and video reviews when making purchasing decisions. Video reviews, commonly found on platforms such as YouTube, were valued primarily for their visual presentation of products. Furthermore, 32% of respondents showed a strong preference for reviews by well-known influencers, whom they perceived as experts in their respective fields. Trustworthiness was a key factor for 68% of respondents, while 20% considered only reviews with a high number of ratings.

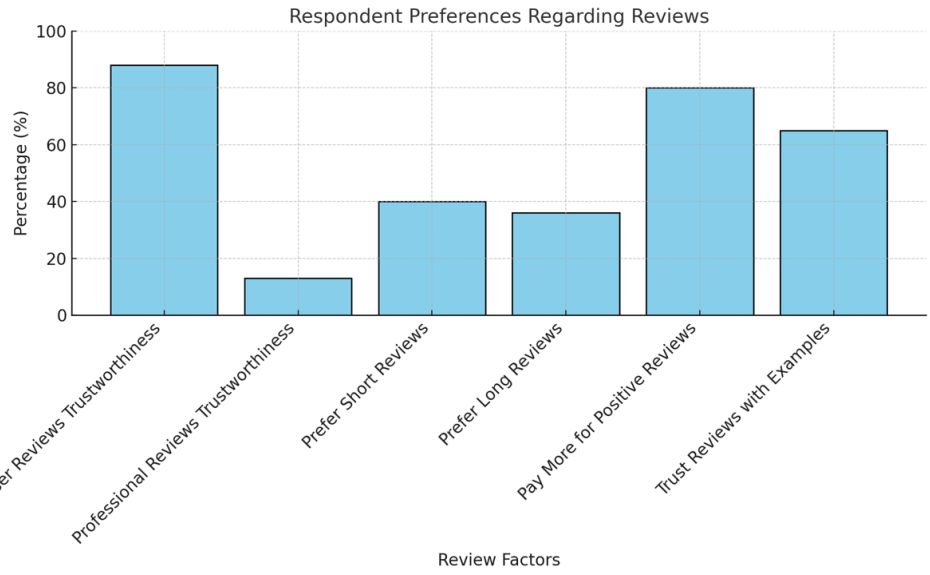
Figure 1. Respondents' preferences regarding review features



Source: based on authors' own research

A key finding was that 95% of respondents stated they had made purchases based on recommendations from family or friends. Similarly, a high percentage of respondents reported negative shopping experiences, underscoring the need for reliable information before making a purchase. When evaluating the influence of reviews, more than three-quarters of respondents agreed that reading reviews reduces the likelihood of dissatisfaction with a purchase. However, only 27% actively wrote reviews, indicating an imbalance between review consumption and creation. An interesting supplementary finding was that 18% of respondents reported placing greater value on reviews containing photos or videos. This trend highlights the increasing emphasis on multimedia content in online environments. Moreover, 55% of respondents considered it important for reviews to be regularly updated, as older reviews may not reflect current experiences. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers seeking to effectively target their audience. Respondent‘s preferences showed that user-generated reviews were considered more trustworthy than professional reviews (88% compared to 13%). Most users preferred shorter reviews (40%), while 36% favoured longer texts. Respondents appreciated the authenticity and clarity of user-generated reviews, though some acknowledged the advantages of professional reviews, such as their quality and depth. Notably, a majority (80%) were willing to pay a higher price for a product with positive reviews. Furthermore, 65% of respondents expressed confidence in reviews containing specific examples of product usage. Such reviews were regarded as practical and informative, as they offered more than subjective evaluations.

Figure 2. Respondents’ preferences regarding review factors



Source: based on authors' own research

It also emerged that 50% of respondents preferred reviews written by authors whose previous assessments had proven reliable. This finding highlights the importance of the long-term credibility of review authors. Interestingly, reviews featuring specific technical details were popular among respondents with technical or specialist backgrounds, affirming the need for segmentation in reviews based on target audiences.

On the other hand, respondents expressed scepticism towards reviews that contained excessively positive evaluations without any critical remarks. This phenomenon, identified as the "over-enthusiasm effect," may lead to the deliberate disregard of such reviews. These insights underscore the importance of balanced evaluations that include both positive and negative aspects of a product.

The discussion section interprets these findings within the context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks. The greater emphasis on reviews by other consumers reflects the concept of "social proof," which highlights the influence of collective experiences on individual decision-making. Conversely, the lack of active review creation may be associated with a lack of motivation or the age profile of respondents, as younger consumers tend to be more passive in this regard.

Importantly, consumers preferred reading negative reviews first, perceiving them as more valuable. This phenomenon can be explained by the psychological "negativity bias," wherein negative information exerts a stronger influence on decision-making. However, the timeliness of reviews must also be considered, as older evaluations may no longer reflect the current state of products or services.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that reviews play a pivotal role in consumer decision-making. However, their effective use requires a focus on authenticity and transparency. For businesses, it is essential not only to encourage the creation of reviews but also to respond effectively to negative evaluations to maintain consumer trust.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on the empirical findings of this research, a series of evidence-based recommendations have been formulated to enable merchants to optimise the strategic utilisation of reviews in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour and enhancing overall customer satisfaction.

Merchants should adopt a systematic and transparent approach to addressing negative reviews. These reviews ought to be acknowledged publicly to convey a

commitment to resolving customer concerns. For reviews containing legitimate criticism, it is imperative to delineate the corrective measures undertaken. Conversely, in instances of unfounded reviews, merchants should provide a clear and professionally articulated response to reinforce trustworthiness.

The implementation of more sophisticated and user-friendly review systems has the potential to enhance the precision and interpretability of ratings. Such systems could incorporate visual cues, including colour-coded scales ranging from red to green, and quantitative descriptors, such as percentage breakdowns, to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the evaluation metrics. This methodological advancement would streamline the decision-making processes of consumers who rely on review data.

Stimulating customer engagement in the creation of reviews is a critical component of an effective review management strategy. Despite the prevalence of review utilisation among consumers, a notable disparity exists in the frequency of review contributions. To address this gap, merchants could deploy motivational incentives, including discount schemes, reward-based contests, or personalised expressions of gratitude. For smaller enterprises, establishing direct communication channels to solicit feedback can serve as a mechanism to foster stronger customer relationships.

Leveraging positive reviews as a marketing asset is a pivotal recommendation. Merchants are encouraged to prominently feature favourable customer evaluations on their digital platforms or integrate these testimonials into broader promotional campaigns. By doing so, businesses can enhance product credibility and strengthen consumer confidence, thereby catalysing sales growth.

The preference among consumers for reviews characterised by authenticity and contemporaneity necessitates a proactive approach to ensuring the veracity and regular updating of review content. Merchants should advocate for the inclusion of multimedia elements, such as high-quality photographs and videos, within reviews. Such enhancements not only augment the informational value of reviews but also bolster their perceived reliability and persuasive impact.

A nuanced understanding of the psychological phenomenon known as "negativity bias," whereby consumers exhibit a predisposition towards prioritising negative reviews, is essential for effective review management. Merchants must remain vigilant in monitoring and addressing such reviews with a professional and constructive demeanour to mitigate potential reputational risks and maintain customer trust.

These recommendations delineate a robust framework for merchants aiming to harness the potential of reviews as a strategic tool for fostering customer satisfaction, cultivating trust, and achieving a competitive advantage in a dynamic marketplace. Emphasising authenticity, regular content renewal, and active customer engagement constitutes a foundational strategy for sustainable success.

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RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE BRAND AWARENESS BUILDING IN SPORT: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT: ***This article addresses the issue of building brand awareness within the context of sports marketing, analysing both theoretical and empirical dimensions crucial for understanding brand perception and its market positioning. Brand awareness is a fundamental element of effective communication and long-term customer loyalty; hence, the article highlights the importance of its systematic examination. Attention is given to the integration of modern digital tools, such as social media, and traditional media, enabling the effective targeting of diverse demographic groups. The study further explores how visual brand elements, including logos, colours, and slogans, contribute to brand memorability and emotional connection with consumers. The methodology of this article combines an in-depth analysis of the relevant literature and the execution of marketing research, which provides both quantitative and qualitative insights into the behaviours and preferences of target groups. The research focuses on identifying key factors influencing brand awareness, such as sporting achievements, communication through social media, and direct interactions with the brand at public events. The study also examines differences in preferences between younger and older age groups, reflecting the need for hybrid strategies that blend digital and traditional communication channels. The findings of this research provide a framework for implementing personalised and inclusive strategies that can lead to the long-term sustainability and success of a brand in a competitive environment.***

KEY WORDS: ***brand, sports marketing, brand awareness.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M37.***

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a brand originates from the Old Norse word "brandr," meaning "to burn," and was historically used by craftsmen to mark their products. In ancient times, brands served as a method of identification and a guarantee of quality, allowing artisans to showcase their skills and distinguish themselves from competitors. Over time, a brand evolved into a symbol of reliability and originality. During the medieval period, product branding expanded across various guilds, ensuring customers could recognise goods based on their origin and quality [2]. The modern concept of a brand as an identifier of products and services began to take shape in the 16th century, when branding started to also fulfil the functions of differentiation and quality assurance. This paved the way for establishing business identity. By the 19th century, with the advent of industrialisation, branding became an integral part of business strategies. In an increasingly competitive environment, differentiation of products and their relevance in the market were not only required but essential [10]. Consequently, branding emerged as a tool to build relationships with customers and foster loyalty.

A brand can be perceived as a symbolic and abstract entity, representing more than just a physical product [2]. It is a concept that exists in the consumer's mind, associated with feelings and associations that the brand evokes. A successful brand can elicit positive emotional responses and sustain its added value over the long term.

Brands serve multiple functions essential to their position in a competitive environment, each with distinct dimensions and manifestations. The identification function enables consumers to quickly and unequivocally recognise a company's products and services in the market. This recognition is often the outcome of long-term marketing strategies involving unique logos, names, or product packaging [13]. The protective function is crucial for ensuring legal protection of the brand and its unique elements, including trademarks, patents, and other legal measures that prevent copying or misuse by competitors. The segmentation function allows brands to target specific consumer groups based on demographic, geographic, psychographic, or behavioural factors. This ability to segment helps brands address diverse target audiences with tailored products or services [19]. The communication function facilitates the effective transmission of information between the brand and the consumer through various channels, such as advertising, social media, or direct marketing. This function also creates an emotional connection with the brand, meaning that customers not only remember

the brand but also develop a positive relationship with it. Emotional connection is particularly significant, as brands that can evoke emotional responses tend to achieve higher loyalty and repeat purchases. Additionally, the functions of a brand extend to broader aspects, such as representing the values and culture it promotes. For instance, a brand may symbolise a particular lifestyle, ethical values, or an ideal that consumers aspire to [8]. Thus, a brand not only offers products or services but also creates a community of consumers who share similar values and interests. These functions collectively shape the brand's image and its position in the market, contributing to its long-term success and competitiveness.

The functions of a brand also reflect the values it represents and the culture it embodies. A brand may portray a personality or ideal that consumers wish to emulate and also create a community of consumers who share common values and interests.

Brands can be categorised into various types based on their characteristics and target audience. One fundamental category is manufacturer brands, which are directly associated with producers [19]. These brands focus on building trust and assuring customers of the origin and quality of the products. Retailer brands, on the other hand, are specific to retail chains, where products carry the name of the store or a proprietary label, aiming to provide a cost-effective alternative. Generic brands, in contrast, represent unbranded products often competing on price.

Product brands primarily cater to the rational decision-making of consumers, emphasising functional attributes like quality, durability, and price. These brands appeal to customers' pragmatic needs. Conversely, lifestyle or prestige brands target the emotional aspects of purchase decisions, highlighting social status, individuality, and the values that customers wish to express through their use [8]. Such brands frequently include luxury products and exclusive services that enhance their prestige.

Glocal brands are unique in their ability to combine global accessibility with local relevance. These brands adapt their products and marketing strategies to local cultural and economic conditions, enabling better market adaptability [1]. Examples include multinational corporations that offer products customised to local traditions and consumer preferences. This flexibility helps brands address diverse customer bases while building trust in local markets, thereby gaining a competitive edge [14]. The diversity of brand types reflects the need to respond to varying consumer demands and expectations, with each category offering specific strategies and benefits.

Brand equity represents the difference between a perceived unbranded product and a branded one. Research indicates that consumers are willing to pay more for a product from a brand that meets their expectations and earns their trust. This concept encompasses brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and associations linked to the brand [5].

The CBBE (Customer-Based Brand Equity) model outlines the processes of building brand equity through several key aspects, including brand identification, understanding its significance, fostering lasting and positive relationships with consumers, and effectively meeting their expectations [15]. Brand identification involves the brand's ability to distinguish itself from competitors and be instantly recognisable to customers, often achieved through unique visual designs, logos, and communication strategies. Understanding the significance of a brand lies in its ability to evoke specific associations and emotions in consumers, which reinforce emotional connections. This aspect also includes the expression of the brand's values and culture, which must resonate with customers.

Another critical component of the model is building relationships with consumers. This entails more than one-time interactions and focuses on establishing long-term emotional connections that lead to loyalty and repeat purchases [15]. Fulfilling expectations is an integral part of this process, as consistent brand performance ensures customer trust in its products or services. The model emphasises that emotional connection with the consumer is a vital element of a successful brand. The emotions and trust that a brand can generate significantly influence its perception and foster long-term customer loyalty [17]. Moreover, consistent brand performance creates a stable foundation, ensuring its competitiveness and sustainable growth in the market.

Brand awareness encompasses a consumer's ability to recognise and recall a brand in a purchasing context [16]. This process includes brand identification at the point of sale and in the consumer's memory. Brand dominance is achieved when consumers associate a specific product with only one brand.

Marketing in the sports environment is distinctive and unique because products and services are closely tied to emotional value, experiences, and consumer loyalty [11]. In sports marketing, the emotional relationship brands can establish with fans and spectators plays a pivotal role. These connections are forged through sports events, sponsorships, partnerships, and digital platforms, including social media and interactive campaigns that enable continuous communication with consumers [18].

Key elements of sports marketing include brand promotion during sports events, where the brand becomes part of the audience's experience [4]. Sponsorship of sports teams, individuals, or events goes beyond financial support, serving as a means for brands to gain visibility and credibility among the public [9]. Partnerships in sports marketing may involve joint projects, campaigns, and events that create mutual synergies between collaborators.

The significance of a brand in sports lies in its ability not only to build but also to maintain long-term fan loyalty [20]. This loyalty is often rooted in emotional connections that persist regardless of a team's or athlete's performance. A strong sports brand can transform fans into ambassadors who actively disseminate positive messages about the brand.

Building a brand in sports involves not only traditional tools like logos, slogans, and advertising campaigns but also sophisticated strategies aimed at creating brand identity [3]. These strategies include associating the brand with values such as teamwork, determination, fairness, and innovation. Attention is also given to aesthetic and design elements that help the brand achieve visual recognition and emotional significance [6], [7]. This process also involves continually creating positive associations and emphasising emotional connections between fans and the brand. Creating these connections often involves brand ambassadors, such as sports stars, coaches, or even fans themselves.

Moreover, modern technologies and analytical tools enable brands to better understand fan behaviour and preferences, leading to more personalised approaches and effective communication. In this way, sports marketing is becoming increasingly sophisticated while remaining focused on the emotional core that connects the brand with its consumers.

METHODS

The primary objective of this scientific article is to analyse brand awareness within the context of sports marketing and propose measures to strengthen it. Achieving this goal requires a comprehensive approach that combines the examination of theoretical insights about brands with practical verification of their application through empirical research. The article aims to provide answers on how to effectively build and maintain a positive perception of a brand among targeted consumer groups. In doing so, it contributes not only to theoretical knowledge but also to the practical improvement of marketing strategies in real-world conditions.

The methodological framework of the article is based on a combination of theoretical and empirical approaches, ensuring its comprehensiveness and scientific relevance. The initial step involves an analysis of existing literature and concepts related to brands, their functions, value, and strategies for building awareness. This analysis provides a theoretical foundation for understanding key aspects that influence brand perception, including the emotional and rational factors that consumers consider when interacting with a brand. It also offers an overview of methods used to measure brand awareness, loyalty, and overall perception in various contexts.

The empirical component of the article focuses on conducting marketing research to gather data necessary for analysing brand awareness and identifying factors affecting its perception. The primary method of data collection is a survey, which facilitates quantitative evaluation of respondents' opinions and preferences. This survey is structured to cover multiple dimensions of brand awareness, including recognisability, associations, quality, and loyalty. It is designed to identify specific elements that contribute to successful brand communication and the development of trust among consumers. Respondents are selected based on predefined criteria, such as age, geographic location, and level of interest in sports, ensuring the sample's representativeness and the relevance of the data collected.

The analysis of the collected data incorporates statistical methods that enable the interpretation of relationships between various variables and the testing of hypotheses outlined in the article. Key research questions include identifying elements that significantly enhance brand recognisability, analysing communication channels used by consumers, and determining the influence of the brand on consumers' decision-making processes. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of preferred communication strategies and their effectiveness, creating opportunities for specific recommendations to build a stronger brand.

In addition to the survey, the article suggests employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, which provide a more detailed understanding of consumer motivations and expectations related to the brand. These methods yield valuable insights into the emotional and social dimensions of brand interaction, which can be surprisingly decisive in establishing long-term relationships between consumers and the brand.

The methodological approach emphasises the importance of a systematic and multidimensional examination of the brand, focusing on the integration of

theoretical knowledge with empirical data. By combining these approaches, the article seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of the current state and future prospects of the brand. This section lays a solid foundation for formulating recommendations and practical measures to support the brand in a competitive environment. Specifically, it focuses on strategies to enhance brand awareness, improve communication with consumers, and strengthen the emotional connection between the brand and its audience.

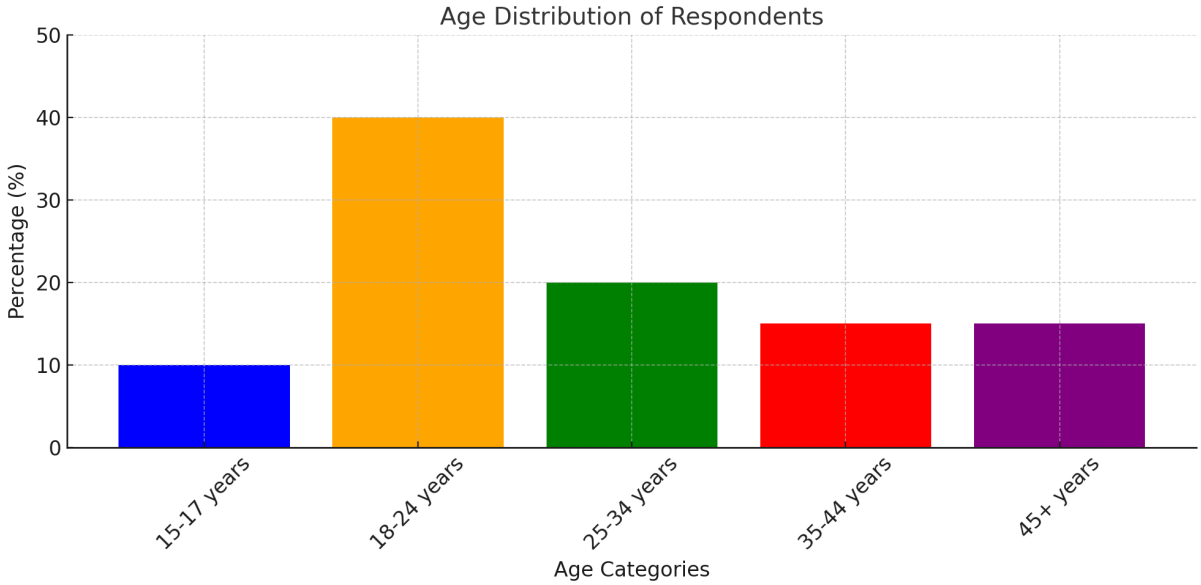
The research findings will be interpreted in the context of current trends in sports marketing, enabling the identification of new challenges and opportunities for brands. Particular attention is given to the impact of digital technologies and social media on how consumers perceive brands and how these tools can be effectively leveraged to build long-term loyalty.

In conclusion, the article contributes to the expansion of the knowledge base in the field of sports marketing and brand management through its methodology and objectives. It offers a systematic approach to analysing brands and proposes measures that could have a tangible impact on their success and competitiveness in the market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire distributed via digital platforms, allowing for a broad and representative sample of respondents. A total of 136 responses were collected, of which 135 were valid and suitable for analysis. The sample was meticulously selected to ensure diversity in age, regional, and demographic groups. The largest age group comprised respondents aged 18 to 34 years, accounting for approximately 60% of the total sample. This demographic is often associated with high activity on social media and a strong interest in brands, which adds significant value to the analysis. In terms of geographical distribution, responses were predominantly from urban areas, with the Bratislava region representing the largest share, reflecting the brand's localization and primary reach. A significant portion of the sample also included respondents from central Slovakia, contributing to a broader understanding of brand perception across various regions of the country. From a demographic perspective, the sample included men and women in nearly equal proportions, enhancing the relevance of the results for both genders.

Figure 1. Age group distribution of respondents



Source: based on authors' own research

One of the key indicators was the level of brand awareness, which emerged as crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of communication strategies and the brand's perception among the target audience. The majority of respondents demonstrated a good understanding of the brand, with 78% indicating that they could correctly identify its visual elements, such as the logo, colour scheme, and other characteristic symbols. This result suggests that the brand's visual identity is well-established and effectively supports its recognizability.

In addition to visual elements, respondents also highlighted the importance of the sports achievements represented by the brand. A significant portion of respondents (65%) considered sports successes as the main factor influencing their perception of the brand. This aspect was particularly important for younger age groups, who are more likely to follow sports events and share them on social media.

Another critical factor was personal interactions with the brand's activities, which play a fundamental role in building emotional connections and strengthening consumer loyalty. Several respondents indicated that participating in public events organized by the brand, such as sports tournaments, open days, or charitable activities, helped deepen their relationship with the brand. These events were perceived not only as opportunities for direct fan engagement but also as a way for the brand to demonstrate its values and support the community.

Events organized by the brand often included interactions with brand ambassadors, such as renowned athletes or influencers, further enhancing the emotional bond between the brand and its fans. Respondents emphasized that the opportunity for personal contact with the brand's representatives or promoters contributed to their positive perception of the brand and increased their trust in its values.

Additionally, these events served as a significant tool for raising brand visibility in regional communities, where direct digital channels are often lacking. Organizing local events thus provided the brand with the opportunity to reach a broader audience, including groups that are otherwise less active on social media. These activities were evaluated as exceptionally effective, particularly in fostering loyalty among long-term fans.

Based on the data obtained, it is evident that public events have great potential to become a cornerstone of the brand's marketing strategy. Regularly organizing such events could help integrate the brand more effectively into the lives of its target audience and ensure a long-term emotional connection, which is essential for building loyalty and strengthening the brand's position in the market.

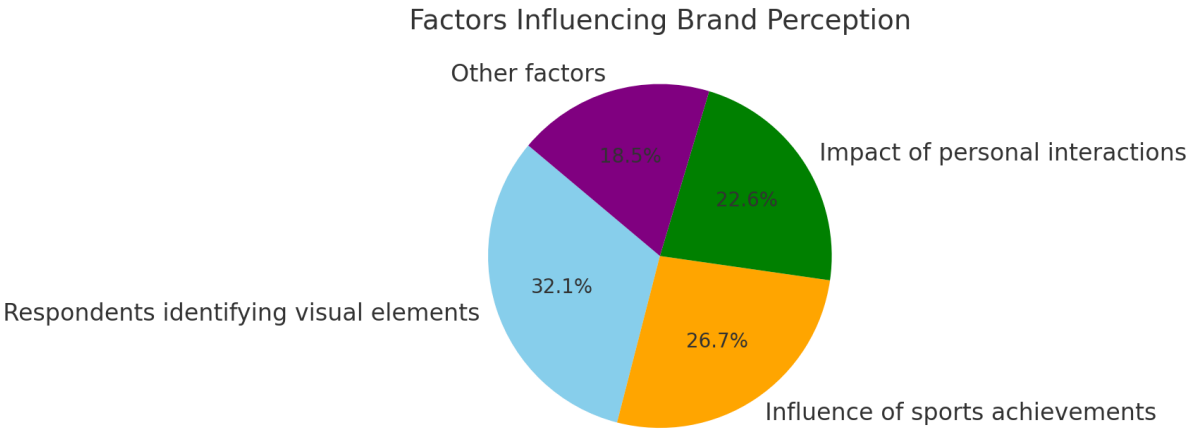
Despite the high level of brand awareness, certain challenges emerged from the survey, indicating room for improvement. Some respondents, especially from older age groups, reported limited knowledge of the brand's visual identity details, such as colour schemes, the logo, or official slogans. This group of respondents often stated that the brand's visual elements were not sufficiently memorable or that they lacked information about their symbolic meaning. This aspect highlights the need for more targeted and personalized communication activities that consider the specific preferences and needs of different age groups.

While younger age groups responded positively to modern and dynamic elements of visual communication, older respondents preferred more traditional and conservative forms of brand presentation. This underscores the importance of diversifying communication strategies to address the broad spectrum of target audiences. Moreover, some older respondents noted that their interaction with the brand was limited by the lack of information available through traditional media, such as television or print, compared to digital channels.

Overall, however, the results confirmed that the brand has solid foundations on which to further build its awareness and strengthen its market position. Improvements in targeted communication could facilitate more effective

engagement with diverse target groups, thereby enhancing the brand's overall perception and its ability to cultivate long-term loyalty among fans.

Figure 2. Factors influencing brand perception.



Source: based on authors' own research

Respondents emphasized that effective communication through social media is critical for engaging the target audience, particularly younger generations, who constitute a significant portion of the fan base. Digital channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok were identified as the most important tools for reaching this demographic due to their ability to deliver quick and visually appealing information. Social media enables the brand to maintain constant contact with fans, increasing their engagement and supporting real-time interaction.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of authentic and consistent visual communication, which is essential for maintaining recognizability and a positive brand image. Consistent use of the brand's colour scheme, logo, and slogan helps create a unified image that consumers easily remember. Many respondents appreciated the brand's creative social media posts, including dynamic videos, infographics, and event photos. These formats effectively convey the brand's emotions and values, thereby deepening the emotional connection with the audience.

Another important aspect was the brand's interaction with consumers through comments, messages, and live streams. Several respondents noted that their positive experience with direct communication with the brand's representatives enhanced their trust and loyalty. A brand that actively responds to fans' questions and feedback is perceived as more approachable and trustworthy.

Despite these successes, significant challenges remain, particularly in reaching older age groups who are less active on social media. This group often prefers traditional communication channels, such as television, print, or radio, and exhibits lower levels of interaction with digital content. The research revealed that this demographic tends to trust information disseminated through traditional media more and views digital platforms as less accessible or complex to use. These factors underscore the need for targeted communication that considers the preferences of older generations and their limited digital engagement.

The brand could consider expanding its marketing strategies to better reflect the preferences of these groups. This could include integrating a hybrid communication model, where digital campaigns are complemented by traditional formats such as TV ads, print articles, or sponsorship of regional events. Additionally, reaching older generations could involve direct activities, such as local workshops or personal meetings, which would allow for deeper interaction with the brand and strengthen emotional connections. Such approaches could make communication with older consumers more effective and increase their trust in the brand.

The results also revealed that certain groups of respondents exhibit lower levels of engagement and loyalty to the brand, indicating a lack of effective communication tailored to their needs. This group primarily includes older respondents with limited access to digital content and less frequent use of social networks. Diversification of communication strategies should include the use of diverse channels and personalized messages. For example, adapting visual communication to reflect the preferences of older generations, such as more classic graphic elements, simpler designs, or traditional typography, could increase engagement within this group.

Moreover, the brand could collaborate with community organizations or clubs that play a significant role in the lives of older generations. This way, the brand could become more relevant and trustworthy for this target group. Diversifying communication strategies is crucial to ensure that the brand can reach a wide range of target groups while strengthening its market position.

The discussion of the results highlighted several potential measures that could improve the brand's market position and enhance its perception among target groups. One of the main recommendations is to expand collaboration with influencers, who can effectively reach younger demographic groups, especially on social media, where these groups are most active. Engaging local partners, such

as community organizations or small businesses, could also increase brand awareness and strengthen its credibility in local communities.

Another essential measure is investing in the creation of high-quality and regular content that not only resonates with the target audience's values but also offers an educational or entertaining dimension. For instance, creating thematic videos, blogs, or interactive posts on social media could help the brand maintain consumer engagement while strengthening its expert position in the market. The frequency of publishing is also important and should be high enough to maintain the audience's attention without overwhelming them with information.

In addition, the brand should actively promote interaction with consumers through comments, responses to messages, or organizing public events. Increased frequency of these interactions can not only foster loyalty but also deepen the emotional connection between consumers and the brand. These activities may include both digital communication and physical activities such as workshops, contests, or charitable events, further enhancing consumer engagement.

Based on the survey results, the brand should also consider implementing a targeted strategy for older age groups that prefer traditional communication channels such as television, print, or radio. This approach can help the brand reach a broader spectrum of consumers and strengthen its position in a diverse market environment. Personalized campaigns tailored to individual demographic groups can significantly increase communication effectiveness and overall brand awareness.

The results not only reflect the current state of brand awareness but also identify opportunities for its further development and strengthening its position in the market. Implementing the recommendations derived from these results can contribute to the brand's long-term sustainability and competitiveness in a dynamically changing market environment.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing strategies and brand awareness for a sports club. Based on the conducted marketing research and its subsequent analysis, key factors influencing brand perception were identified, enabling practical recommendations to improve the brand's performance and strengthen its market position.

One fundamental finding is that the brand of the sports club maintains a stable position among its fans; however, there is significant potential to enhance its

visibility beyond the sports community. The sports club benefits from a loyal fan base, yet there is room to expand awareness of its brand beyond the traditional target audience and to strengthen its presence at international sports events.

A notable strength of the sports club is its longstanding history and stable foundations. The club boasts a skilled team of players and coaches, which positions it as a leader in its sector. These factors were highly appreciated by survey respondents, who particularly valued its contribution to the development of youth sports. Opportunities such as collaboration with local schools and participation in European competitions offer the club avenues to reinforce its position in both regional and international markets.

One of the primary recommendations for improving marketing communication is the utilization of modern digital tools, such as social media, to deepen engagement with the target audience. Several respondents indicated that regular and consistent content publishing on platforms like Instagram and TikTok could enhance interaction with the brand. Special attention should be given to creative formats, such as dynamic videos and posts from sporting events, which were regarded by some respondents as appealing and impactful.

Despite positive feedback on digital communication, certain shortcomings were observed in reaching older age groups who prefer traditional media such as television and print. For this target audience, the sports club could consider implementing hybrid communication strategies that combine traditional and digital channels. Additionally, involving local communities through family-focused events could deepen the emotional connection between the club and its supporters.

Another recommendation is to focus on building the brand through collaborations with influencers and club ambassadors, who could help improve its visibility. Such collaborations could particularly appeal to younger generations who follow trends on social media and are active in the online space. Respondents noted that direct contact with the club's representatives could strengthen their loyalty and positive perceptions of the brand.

In conclusion, the brand of the sports club is built on solid foundations that enable it to effectively strengthen its market position. Implementing the recommended strategies could enhance its ability to attract new fans, increase the loyalty of its existing base, and deepen emotional ties with its supporters. In this way, the brand can achieve long-term sustainability and success in a competitive environment.

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COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH ON THE DIVERSIFICATION OF CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR ON FOOD E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS: AN AGE-FOCUSED ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT: ***This article presents a comprehensive analysis of consumer purchasing behaviour on food e-commerce platforms, with an emphasis on identifying behavioural differences across various age groups. The research examines the fundamental determinants shaping consumer decision-making, while also addressing product and service preferences in the context of technological innovations and ecological trends. Attention is given to the dynamics of consumer interactions with digital platforms, mapping how these factors influence satisfaction and loyalty toward specific e-commerce platforms. The article offers an analytical perspective on key factors shaping purchasing behaviour in the online environment, such as price accessibility, easy access to product information, user-friendly interface clarity, and the quality of services provided. Additionally, technological innovations, such as personalised recommendations and automated customer services, are examined as foundational elements of modern e-commerce strategies. This analysis provides deeper insights into evolving trends in online shopping and identifies strategies that could enhance customer satisfaction and enable more efficient adaptation of offerings to various market segments. It also addresses how platforms can respond to the changing expectations and needs of consumers in the dynamically evolving e-commerce environment***

KEY WORDS: ***consumer behaviour, food e-commerce platforms, technological innovations.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M21.***

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing encompasses an extensive spectrum of activities that employ digital technologies to advertise products and services across diverse platforms. This approach integrates all operations involving electronic devices, ensuring a seamless experience for consumers and marketers alike [5]. The proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed how consumers engage with brands, reshaping their expectations and buying patterns. Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for direct customer interaction, fostering brand loyalty and creating vibrant online communities.

In contemporary business strategies, digital marketing plays a pivotal role, offering unique opportunities to collect and analyse consumer data. These insights enable companies to tailor marketing campaigns more effectively, ensuring that they resonate with target audiences [17]. Additionally, digital marketing facilitates the creation of value-added experiences through personalised content, targeted advertising, and interactive engagements. Such measures not only enhance the perceived value of products but also strengthen customer relationships.

The integration of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, further enriches digital marketing capabilities. These tools allow for predictive analytics, real-time decision-making, and automation of repetitive tasks, thereby optimising marketing efforts [2]. As a result, companies can expand their distribution channels, ensuring product accessibility across multiple touchpoints and enhancing the overall consumer journey [19]. Moreover, digital marketing fosters inclusivity, enabling businesses of all sizes to compete on a global scale by leveraging cost-effective digital tools.

Online marketing, a subset of digital marketing, focuses solely on internet-based activities. It involves building an online presence through websites, blogs, social media, and emails. This form of marketing aims to attract customers and strengthen their loyalty to the brand.

E-business refers to a comprehensive array of processes that utilise the internet, intranet, and extranet to enhance and optimise business operations [7]. This domain goes far beyond the mere act of buying and selling, embedding itself in critical areas such as customer relationship management (CRM), order processing, and supply chain coordination [6]. By incorporating these elements, e-business not only improves efficiency but also supports the development of integrated systems that respond dynamically to changing market demands.

One of the most significant aspects of e-business is its ability to harness data and analytics for informed decision-making. Through advanced tools and platforms, businesses can monitor consumer behaviour, forecast trends, and adapt strategies in real time [18]. This capacity for agility enables firms to remain competitive in fast-paced industries, particularly when dealing with global markets.

The success of leading e-business models, such as Amazon and Uber, highlights the transformative impact of technological innovation and digital integration. Amazon exemplifies excellence in leveraging logistics, AI-driven recommendations, and customer-centric interfaces to set new standards in e-commerce. Similarly, Uber's business model redefines traditional services by connecting users with providers through a seamless digital platform, demonstrating the potential of e-business to disrupt established industries [16].

Moreover, e-business fosters collaboration across various stakeholders, including suppliers, partners, and customers [12]. The use of extranets facilitates secure communication and resource sharing, promoting transparency and efficiency throughout the value chain. Internally, intranet systems streamline employee operations, enhancing productivity and fostering innovation within organisations.

In summary, e-business represents a paradigm shift in how companies approach commerce, communication, and operational management. Its multifaceted nature, underpinned by cutting-edge technologies, positions it as a cornerstone of modern business practices, enabling enterprises to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

E-commerce, a component of e-business, includes all forms of online trading. This concept allows customers to purchase goods and services without physical presence in a store. Various e-commerce models, such as B2B (business-to-business), B2C (business-to-consumer), and C2C (consumer-to-consumer), exist [15]. Trends like mobile shopping, social commerce, and sustainability significantly influence the development of this segment.

E-shops have become a vital part of modern commerce. An e-shop is defined as a platform enabling the sale of goods and services over the internet. Key elements of a successful e-shop include an intuitive design, a clear product catalogue, a straightforward ordering process, and secure payment options [9].

Food e-commerce platforms, such as Tesco Online Shopping or FreshBox.sk, reflect the growing consumer demand for convenient and time-efficient shopping. This segment offers a broad range of benefits, including the ability to order fresh

groceries directly to one's doorstep without visiting physical stores. Flexibility in delivery options and specialised products, such as organic goods, allergen-free items, or specific dietary needs, attract various consumer groups [10]. Recent years have seen improved service quality and availability, driven by increased competition, contributing significantly to customer base expansion.

Although less popular compared to other e-commerce segments, food e-shops in Slovakia are gradually gaining prominence. This trend is supported by expanding service offerings, such as fresh grocery delivery, and the implementation of advanced technological solutions that simplify and accelerate shopping [14]. Platforms now offer personalised recommendations based on previous purchases, enhancing customer satisfaction [8]. Moreover, investments in eco-friendly packaging and sustainable solutions appeal to environmentally conscious customers. These innovations make food e-shops an increasingly attractive alternative to traditional shopping methods.

Online shopping behaviour is a complex process influenced by factors such as product availability, price, trust in the e-shop, and shopping convenience [4]. This process begins with need identification, where customers determine what they seek or which problem they aim to resolve. This is followed by an information-gathering phase, during which customers compare various options available in the market. This phase often includes reviewing feedback, ratings, and recommendations from other users.

After gathering information, customers proceed to evaluate alternatives, weighing the pros and cons of individual products or services. Trust in the brand or retailer and previous shopping experiences play a critical role at this stage. Positive experiences increase the likelihood of repeat purchases [1].

The final purchasing decision is often influenced by additional factors, such as discounts, special offers, product availability, and delivery speed. Post-purchase, customers assess their satisfaction with the purchase, a phase crucial for building loyalty [13]. Positive experiences often lead to recommendations to other potential customers.

Online shopping behaviour is dynamic and continuously evolving, influenced by technological innovations, social trends, and individual customer preferences [3]. Increasing emphasis on personalisation and convenience has led to the integration of modern tools such as chatbots, artificial intelligence, and recommendation algorithms, providing tailored product offerings that meet specific customer needs.

Trends such as personalisation, artificial intelligence, and influencer marketing significantly transform the online shopping environment. Personalised content provides customers with a sense of individual attention, enhancing their satisfaction and loyalty [11]. AI systems, including chatbots, respond to customer queries in real time and analyse previous interactions to offer the most relevant solutions. These tools optimise shopping processes and enhance customer support efficiency.

Another significant trend is the use of augmented reality (AR), which allows customers to visualise products in real environments before purchase. For example, customers can use AR technology to see how new furniture will look in their homes, reducing dissatisfaction post-purchase. Equally important is the integration of social media into sales strategies [16]. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok enable brands to engage with customers through visually appealing content, boosting engagement and brand awareness.

Today's customers prefer simple and convenient shopping experiences, prompting the implementation of omnichannel models. These models ensure seamless integration between online and offline shopping [7]. For instance, a customer can start their shopping journey online, browsing products on a mobile device, and complete the purchase in a physical store. Innovations in logistics and delivery, such as rapid delivery options or flexible order pick-up choices, significantly enhance customer satisfaction.

Additionally, sustainable practices, including eco-friendly packaging and waste reduction, are gaining traction. These initiatives reflect the growing demand for responsible shopping and have become an essential part of marketing strategies. Alongside these trends, modern technologies and innovative approaches continue to evolve to meet rising consumer expectations in the online domain.

This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive insight into the current state of digital marketing, e-commerce, and online shopping behaviour. The summarised findings from the literature form a solid foundation for further research and analysis of the specificities of shopping behaviour on food e-commerce platforms.

METHODS

The purpose of this scientific paper is to investigate and elucidate the determinants shaping consumer purchasing behaviours on food e-commerce platforms, with a particular focus on variances across demographic cohorts. This

investigation entails a comparative analysis of behavioural patterns within three principal age brackets, striving to discern the underlying motivators and impediments influencing decision-making in the realm of online grocery procurement. To accomplish these aims, the study is structured into theoretical and empirical components. The theoretical framework furnishes a foundational basis by delving into constructs such as digital marketing, online commerce, e-commerce dynamics, and virtual storefronts, while concurrently delineating the parameters that influence consumer behaviour and identifying emergent trends and archetypes.

The empirical dimension of this investigation centres on a primary research initiative employing an electronic survey meticulously crafted to amass comprehensive data regarding purchasing proclivities across disparate age groups. The survey instrument was rigorously designed to encompass demographic queries, including gender, age, and regional domicile, alongside specific interrogatives aimed at elucidating the factors steering purchasing determinations in the digital grocery domain.

The methodological architecture integrates a mixed-method approach, melding qualitative and quantitative paradigms to furnish a robust and nuanced analysis. The theoretical framework was synthesised through a meticulous review of extant scholarly literature, encompassing domestic and international research outputs, monographs, and credible digital resources. The empirical segment utilised a standardised questionnaire disseminated through social media channels. Participants were categorised into three distinct age segments: under 30 years, 30 to 50 years, and over 50 years. The questionnaire comprised a spectrum of question types, including closed-ended, semi-open, and scaled items, designed to ensure the acquisition of detailed and multifaceted data.

The investigation examined pivotal determinants such as product accessibility, pricing strategies, trust in digital platforms, convenience, and the technical attributes of the ordering interface. Furthermore, it scrutinised intergenerational behavioural divergences, accounting for the unique preferences and exigencies of each demographic segment. The deployment of the survey yielded critical insights into the preferences and constraints shaping consumer interactions with food e-commerce platforms.

Data were subjected to rigorous statistical analysis, emphasising the extraction of salient trends and behavioural patterns. Visualisation tools, including bar charts and tables, were employed to distil and convey findings effectively. This

analytical process enabled the identification of both ubiquitous determinants and idiosyncratic attributes influencing purchasing behaviours across different age cohorts.

From a methodological vantage point, this research significantly enhances the comprehension of online consumer behaviour dynamics within the Slovak context. The adopted methodology not only evaluates the prevailing state of online shopping but also paves the way for the articulation of actionable strategies aimed at augmenting the customer experience within the domain of food e-commerce. These findings hold substantial applicability for practitioners and policymakers' intent on refining their understanding of consumer needs and devising interventions to better cater to these demands.

The methodological rigour embedded in this study ensures the dependability and validity of its outcomes. By integrating a mixed-methods framework, the research adeptly captures both quantitative trends and qualitative intricacies, thereby providing a holistic portrayal of the research problem. The segmentation of respondents by age further illuminates generational distinctions in online purchasing behaviour, offering granular insights that can inform bespoke marketing and operational strategies.

The employment of advanced statistical techniques fortifies the credibility of the findings. The utilisation of visualisation tools, such as bar graphs and pie chart, facilitates the lucid representation of complex datasets, while advanced analytical methods uncover latent correlations and patterns embedded within the data. This comprehensive analytical approach underscores the methodological integrity of the study.

Furthermore, the research underscores the transformative role of technological innovation in modulating consumer behaviour. The proliferation of digital instruments, including algorithmic recommendations and conversational chatbots, is fundamentally reshaping the online shopping milieu. These advancements, coupled with intuitive user interfaces and tailored marketing endeavours, exert a profound influence on consumer engagement and satisfaction. By decoding these dynamics, stakeholders within the e-commerce sector can strategically align their operations with the evolving preferences of their clientele.

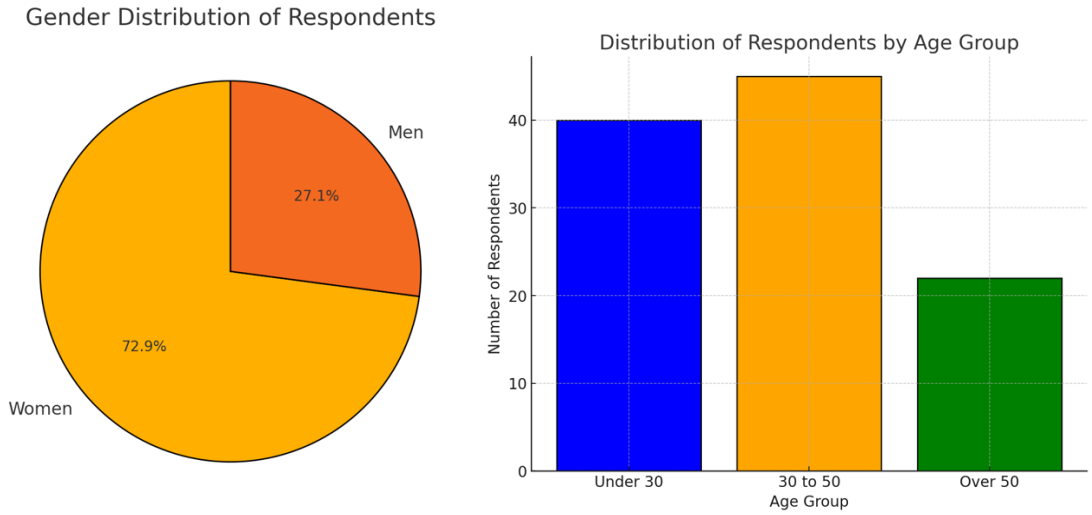
In summation, this investigation elucidates the multifaceted determinants of consumer behaviour on food e-commerce platforms and furnishes pragmatic insights to enhance the competitive standing of these platforms. By leveraging the findings, businesses can streamline their processes, refine their marketing

initiatives, and ultimately elevate customer satisfaction. The methodological paradigm advanced herein serves as a robust scaffold for subsequent research endeavours, fostering deeper explorations into consumer dynamics within the rapidly evolving e-commerce landscape.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide a detailed and expansive insight into consumer purchasing behaviour on food e-commerce platforms, offering a deeper understanding of the differences among age groups in their decision-making processes. The research involved 107 respondents, of whom 72.9% were women and 27.1% were men. This diverse sample enabled the identification of unique patterns of behaviour and preferences across three distinct age categories: under 30 years, 30 to 50 years, and over 50 years. These categories provided a valuable foundation for examining the specific factors influencing online purchasing decisions.

Figure 1. Gender and age groups distribution of respondents.



Source: based on authors' own research

Data analysis revealed that the price of goods was the most significant factor influencing decision-making across all age groups. Younger respondents (under 30 years) also prioritised product availability, reflecting their preference for quick and flexible shopping experiences. In contrast, respondents in the middle age group (30 to 50 years) preferred detailed and accurate product information, enabling them to make more informed decisions. Older respondents (over 50 years) exhibited a stronger orientation towards price accessibility and the

simplicity of the ordering process, highlighting their need for convenience and reliability.

The findings revealed that iTesco is the most frequently used food e-commerce platform across all age groups, indicating its broad acceptance and established market position. Lidl and Lunys followed, with these platforms gaining popularity due to their combination of affordability, quality of service, and diverse offerings. Additionally, younger respondents (under 30 years) showed a marked enthusiasm for exploring alternative platforms, such as Wolt Market. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a manifestation of dynamic consumer behaviour characterised by curiosity and a willingness to experiment with new platforms and technologies.

This trend underscores the importance of innovation and flexibility in the current food e-commerce landscape. Younger users often prefer platforms that can quickly adapt to their evolving needs and offer advanced technologies such as personalised recommendations or intuitive mobile applications. Furthermore, they are motivated by the availability of diverse delivery options, including express delivery, which facilitates efficient planning and convenience.

In contrast, older respondents tend to focus on well-established and stable services provided by platforms like iTesco, which offer consistent quality and a straightforward ordering process. These generational differences highlight the need for segmented marketing strategies capable of addressing the diverse expectations of consumers. Emphasising technological innovation and the ability to adapt to emerging trends is, therefore, essential for maintaining competitiveness in the dynamic food e-commerce market.

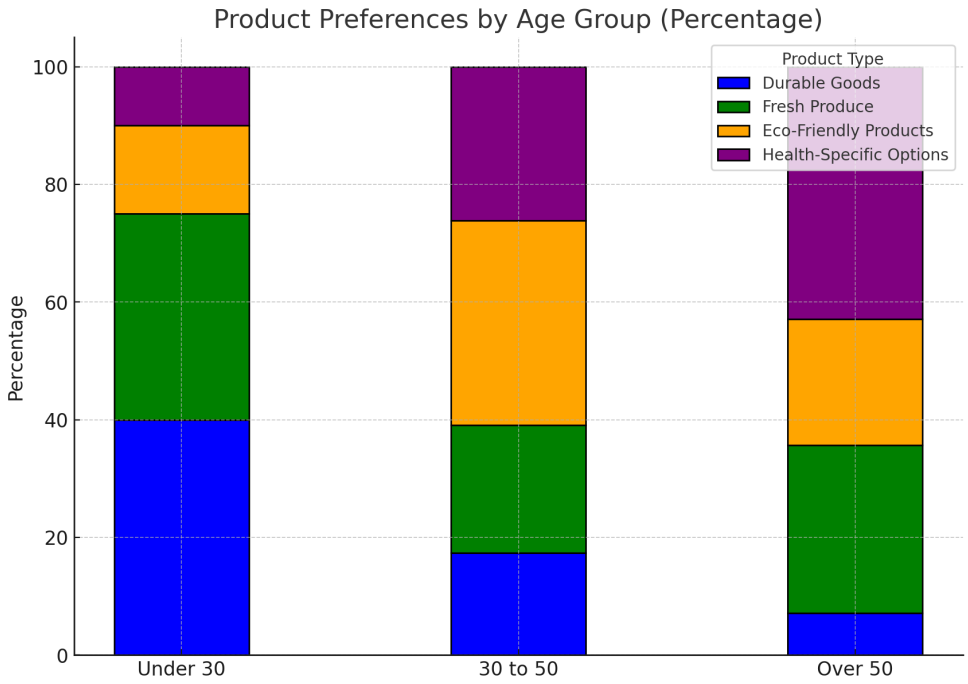
Preferences in product selection also varied significantly by age, with each demographic exhibiting specific needs and expectations. Younger respondents (under 30 years) showed a preference for durable goods, fresh fruits, and vegetables, indicating their practicality and focus on a healthy lifestyle. Their choices also reflected an interest in the ease of storage and flexibility in meal planning, which is particularly important for younger consumers with busy lifestyles. Additionally, they expressed a heightened interest in products available in various packaging sizes, supporting their efforts to maintain a balanced diet.

Respondents in the 30 to 50-year age group placed a greater emphasis on eco-friendly products and healthy nutrition, reflecting their increased awareness of environmental issues and concern for their health. This group was inclined to invest in products with certifications for sustainable production, often seeking information about the origin and composition of items. This trend highlights their

willingness to align their shopping habits with broader societal and environmental goals. Moreover, this age group demonstrated an interest in innovative products that align with their lifestyle and values.

Older respondents (over 50 years) focused on fresh products, with their purchasing decisions often influenced by health needs and preferences. This group prioritised the quality and freshness of products, frequently seeking items specifically tailored to their health conditions, such as low-sodium or gluten-free options. Additionally, older customers appreciated the clarity and reliability of e-commerce platforms, enabling them to make easier choices and safely complete their purchases. These factors are crucial for building trust and fostering long-term relationships with customers in this age group.

Figure 2. Product preferences by age group (percentage).



Source: based on authors' own research

The survey further uncovered varying priorities among age groups regarding repeat purchases, identifying specific factors that motivate different categories of customers to return to the same platform. For younger respondents (under 30 years), loyalty programmes, regular discounts, and other incentives were identified as key motivators, enhancing their sense of value and reward for loyalty. These factors are particularly significant for this demographic, which often seeks dynamic and interactive shopping environments. Their motivation is also

influenced by gamification, which can increase engagement and support long-term loyalty.

Conversely, older respondents (over 50 years) valued transparency and consistency, demonstrated by their greater appreciation for precise and comprehensible product information. The reliability of delivery services emerged as a critical factor for this group, which values predictability and simplicity in the shopping process. Furthermore, older customers regarded stability and quality as indispensable aspects, often favouring platforms with a long-standing reputation for reliability. This preference reflects their emphasis on trust, which is a key element in building long-term relationships with customers.

These findings emphasise the need for tailored marketing strategies capable of addressing the unique expectations and values of each age group. A personalised approach based on a precise understanding of customer preferences could lead to increased satisfaction and strengthened loyalty behaviours, thereby improving the overall performance of food e-commerce platforms.

Statistical analysis unequivocally confirmed that simplicity and clarity of e-commerce platforms are among the most crucial factors influencing user satisfaction. Users positively evaluated platforms offering intuitive interfaces, straightforward product search processes, and clearly defined ordering steps. This focus on clarity reflects the need to eliminate unnecessary complications and streamline the shopping process, which is essential for maintaining customer loyalty.

Technological innovations, such as product recommendation algorithms, play a significant role in enhancing the user experience. These algorithms enable personalised offers by presenting products that align with customers' previous purchasing habits or current preferences. Personalised marketing messages, which reflect individual customer needs and interests, contribute to higher engagement levels and a positive perception of the brand.

Moreover, these technological advancements provide e-commerce platforms with a competitive edge by allowing them to respond more rapidly and effectively to changing market demands. Personalised recommendations and automated processes not only improve customer satisfaction but also increase the likelihood of repeat purchases. In a competitive environment, the ability to offer a unique and individualised experience becomes a critical factor for success.

The discussion subsequently linked these findings with the theoretical framework, offering a broader and deeper context for understanding customer

preferences and behaviour. The findings highlighted significant differences among age groups, affirming the necessity of segmented marketing strategies. These strategies must account not only for demographic factors but also for psychographic characteristics, such as values, attitudes, and lifestyles of the target groups. While younger users prefer dynamic, visually appealing, and interactive campaigns that emphasise timeliness, technological innovation, and personalisation, older consumers gravitate towards stability, reliability, and long-term value.

For younger customers, digital elements such as social media, gamification, and influencer marketing are crucial in fostering engagement and creating an emotional connection with the brand. These campaigns should be flexible and capable of responding quickly to changing trends to maintain their attention. Conversely, older consumers favour a more traditional approach, where the focus is on transparency, consistency, and the quality of offered services. For this group, communication centred on values and benefits that go beyond the basic functionality of a product is particularly important.

In addition to differences among age groups, the discussion emphasised the need to incorporate broader environmental and societal themes into marketing strategies. These themes resonate across all generations, but their impact varies depending on individual attitudes and preferences. Introducing eco-friendly initiatives, such as using sustainable packaging, minimising waste, and supporting local producers, can not only enhance customer trust but also differentiate the brand in a highly competitive market. Such measures may be particularly attractive to the middle age group, which is willing to invest in products associated with sustainability and ethical trade.

The discussion also suggested that technological innovations and digital tools could significantly support the segmentation and personalisation of marketing. Utilising advanced algorithms to analyse customer behaviour and predict their needs enables companies to better tailor their offerings and create personalised experiences. These tools can be pivotal in enhancing customer satisfaction and building their long-term loyalty. In an environment where customers increasingly expect higher service standards, the ability to effectively utilise data becomes a competitive advantage.

The study also identified several key areas that could significantly contribute to improving the overall shopping experience for customers on food e-commerce platforms. One of the most important areas is the expansion and deepening of

product information. Providing detailed data, such as origin, composition, nutritional values, and quality certifications, not only increases transparency but also strengthens customer trust in the offered products. Information should be presented clearly and intuitively to allow customers to easily compare available options and select the product that best suits their needs.

Another important aspect is improving the availability of products and services. This includes regular updates of inventory, optimising logistics, and faster delivery of orders. Customers also appreciate the possibility of personalised delivery planning, including the selection of specific time slots, which allows them to better align purchases with their daily routines. Flexibility in this area can significantly enhance their satisfaction and loyalty.

Diversification of payment options represents another area with potential for improvement. Introducing modern payment systems, such as mobile payments, digital wallets, or instalment purchase options, can attract a broader spectrum of customers. These innovations enable a simpler and more convenient shopping process, which is particularly important for younger age groups who prefer technologically advanced and time-efficient solutions.

Additionally, eco-friendly initiatives, such as waste minimisation and the use of sustainable packaging, can improve brand perception among environmentally conscious consumers. These measures may include the use of recyclable materials, offering reusable packaging, or implementing systems to reduce the carbon footprint in logistics. Such steps not only promote sustainable development but also differentiate the brand in the competitive market and strengthen its social responsibility.

The implementation of these measures could lead to greater customer satisfaction, long-term loyalty, and a positive perception of the brand, ultimately contributing to the enhanced competitiveness of e-commerce platforms in the dynamic food e-commerce market.

In conclusion, the survey provided extensive insights into the purchasing habits of customers on food e-commerce platforms. This information not only contributes to understanding the dynamics of online shopping but also offers a solid foundation for future research and practical applications that can improve customer experiences and strengthen the position of e-commerce platforms in the market.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study presents a synthesis of key findings and practical implications derived from an in-depth analysis of online consumer behaviour on food e-commerce platforms. The Slovak online market, akin to its global counterparts, has undergone dynamic development in recent years, underscoring the need for a better understanding of consumer behaviour and its determinants.

The primary objective of this study was to identify differences and similarities in online shopping behaviour among customers across various age groups. The research was conducted on two levels: theoretical and practical. On the theoretical level, the study provided an overview of current knowledge on digital and online marketing, e-commerce, and specifically food e-commerce platforms. It also explored key concepts such as types of online shopping behaviour and the factors influencing them. The practical component involved the implementation of a survey, which was subsequently analysed using graphical and tabular methods.

The findings revealed that consumer behaviour on food e-commerce platforms is significantly diversified by age. Younger consumers (under 30 years) prioritised speed and flexibility in shopping, including product availability and user-friendly mobile applications. Their preferences included durable goods, fresh fruits, and vegetables, reflecting their focus on practicality and a balanced diet. The 30 to 50-year age group oriented towards eco-friendly products and detailed product information, indicating a conscientious approach to shopping and an emphasis on quality. Conversely, older consumers (over 50 years) preferred straightforward ordering processes and price accessibility.

One of the key findings was that iTesco dominated as the most frequently used food e-commerce platform across all age groups. Younger consumers, however, expressed interest in alternative platforms such as Wolt Market, suggesting their openness to innovative solutions. This trend highlights the importance of institutionalising technological innovations and personalising offerings.

The discussion also addressed practical recommendations for food e-commerce platforms. Principles such as providing detailed product information, improving product availability, and expanding payment options were identified as critical for enhancing customer satisfaction. Moreover, introducing eco-friendly initiatives, such as waste minimisation and the use of sustainable packaging, proved to be an effective way to attract environmentally conscious consumers.

In conclusion, the study emphasises the necessity for segmented marketing strategies that reflect the unique needs of different age groups. These findings

provide a solid foundation for future research and practical applications in the field of e-commerce, enabling food e-commerce platforms to address the challenges of an ever-evolving market.

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THE DYNAMICS OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: A QUANTITATIVE EXPLORATION OF TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT: ***Digital marketing has emerged as a pivotal discipline within contemporary marketing, fundamentally reshaping the interaction between enterprises and consumers in the online sphere. This scientific article investigates the influence of selected digital marketing instruments on consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on their efficacy in shaping preferences and guiding decision-making processes. Emphasis is placed on the critical role of content personalisation, visual communication, and the strategic utilisation of social media platforms in achieving marketing objectives. The research underpinning this article is grounded in primary data derived from an electronic survey administered to a diverse cohort of respondents, stratified by age and demographic characteristics. Quantitative analytical methodologies, including statistical data processing, were employed to uncover nuanced insights into consumer preferences and purchasing behaviours. Furthermore, the segmentation of respondents based on generational and socio-demographic factors provided a robust framework for understanding the heterogeneity of target audiences. This analysis identifies the key determinants of digital marketing campaign efficacy, exploring consumer responses to personalised email communication, social media engagement, and influencer collaborations. The article underscores the significance of employing visually compelling elements and interactive content formats to enhance consumer engagement and foster brand loyalty.***

KEY WORDS: ***digital marketing, consumer behaviour, marketing communication.***

JEL: ***M31, M10, M37.***

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has, over the past decades, become an integral part of business practices both domestically and internationally. Its rapid evolution can be attributed to technological advancements, increasing digitalisation, and globalisation, which collectively transform how companies communicate with their customers [1]. From the initial steps of commercial internet usage and the emergence of companies like Google, Amazon and Alibaba, digital marketing has gradually developed into a multidimensional discipline encompassing various aspects of marketing communication, customer engagement, and technological tools.

Digital marketing focuses on utilising digital channels to acquire customers, build their preferences and loyalty, increase sales, and support brand development [5]. This type of marketing integrates the internet, mobile devices, and other digital technologies to enable flexible, personalised, and interactive communication between businesses and their target groups. The expansion of the internet and the rise of social networks have increased the availability of marketing tools, resulting in a dramatic shift in the dynamics between sellers and customers.

The digital environment provides a unique opportunity to collect and analyse consumer data. However, it also comes with challenges such as data protection and managing large volumes of information [2]. The growth of technological platforms and social channels has heightened the need for regulation and transparency in data management. Regulatory frameworks create a foundation for trust between businesses and consumers while also offering opportunities for companies to effectively communicate their values and commitments.

Digital marketing offers significant advantages over traditional forms of marketing. Key elements include flexibility, the ability to respond immediately, and the capacity to measure campaign success in real time [3]. Companies that effectively utilise digital channels have a significantly higher chance of succeeding in competitive environments. Personalised content and a focus on individual customer needs increase customer retention and foster loyalty.

One of the main characteristics of digital marketing is its ability to reach a wide spectrum of customers through various channels such as social networks, search engines, emails, and mobile applications. Digital marketing is not merely a subset of traditional marketing; it represents an independent discipline that combines adaptability with mass distribution. Social networks, for example, allow

companies not only to communicate with their target audience but also to collect valuable data on their preferences and behaviour [4].

Marketing communication is an integral part of digital marketing, focusing on effectively conveying information between businesses and their customers. Online communication channels such as emails, social networks, and websites facilitate personalised and interactive communication, significantly influencing customer decision-making [10]. This form of communication enables companies to build their brand, raise awareness about their products and services, and establish long-term relationships with customers.

Consumer behaviour in the online environment reflects the dynamic nature of the digital market, directly influencing how consumers make decisions. This process involves recognising a need, actively seeking information, carefully evaluating available options, deciding and engaging in post-purchase behaviour, which includes providing feedback and building trust towards the brand [6]. The online environment offers consumers unrestricted access to a wide range of information, enabling them to use tools such as reviews, price comparisons, and recommendations from other users, thereby improving the quality of their decisions.

Critical factors influencing online consumer behaviour include the simplicity and clarity of website interfaces, the availability of relevant information, and personalised communication from companies. Interactive features such as chatbots or tailored offers can increase consumer engagement while also strengthening their trust in the brand [7]. This process is further shaped by technological innovations such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, which enable companies to more accurately predict customer behaviour and respond more effectively to their needs.

An essential aspect is the emotion a brand evokes in a consumer during interactions. Positive experiences, such as quick responses to inquiries or unexpected bonuses with purchases, can significantly increase customer loyalty [8]. Conversely, negative experiences, such as technical issues or a lack of transparency, can lead to a loss of trust and subsequently customers. Companies that successfully integrate these insights into their strategies have a higher likelihood of achieving long-term success in competitive markets.

Another significant aspect of digital marketing is its ability to adapt to current trends and technological innovations. Mobile marketing, including communication via SMS or push notifications, represents an effective way to

engage consumers directly and in real time. Similarly, the impact of artificial intelligence and machine learning on consumer data analysis allows companies to anticipate customer behaviour and tailor their marketing strategies accordingly.

It is also important not to associate digital marketing solely with social networks or online advertising. Its components include tools such as search engine optimisation (SEO), email marketing, and content marketing [2]. These tools allow companies to reach their target audience through precisely targeted campaigns and leverage available technologies to maximise their effectiveness.

With the growth of digitalisation and the increasing emphasis on online communication, businesses must also pay attention to the ethical aspects of digital marketing [9]. Transparency, accountability, and trust are critical factors influencing the relationship between businesses and consumers. Interaction in the online environment should be based on clear rules and mutual understanding between the parties.

In conclusion, digital marketing represents a dynamic and constantly evolving phenomenon that offers companies the opportunity to effectively engage their customers and build long-term relationships. Its success, however, depends on the ability to adapt to changing market conditions, leverage modern technologies, and emphasise ethical principles. Research and analysis of the effectiveness of digital tools are essential for better understanding consumer needs and optimising marketing strategies, contributing to the success of businesses in the global market.

METHODS

The methodological section of this scientific article focuses on clearly defining objectives and describing the methods employed to achieve the stated research aims. The primary goal of the study was to analyse the impact of digital marketing communication on consumer behaviour, with an emphasis on identifying tools that positively or negatively influence consumers' decision-making processes.

The primary objective was to determine which digital marketing tools effectively motivate consumers to make online purchases and which, conversely, act as barriers. Secondary objectives included quantifying respondents' expenditures on various categories of products purchased online, analysing preferences between online and brick-and-mortar stores, and segmenting consumers based on their shopping habits and demographic characteristics.

To achieve these objectives, a combination of qualitative and quantitative

methods was employed. The research process involved several meticulously planned and executed steps. Abstraction was used to theoretically define key concepts such as digital marketing and digital marketing communication and to understand consumer behaviour in the online environment. This phase allowed the structuring of interconnections between various aspects of the research and laid the groundwork for subsequent analysis.

Analysis and synthesis were the primary methods used to link the interrelations between digital marketing tools and consumer decision-making processes. This combination of methodologies facilitated a deeper understanding of the factors influencing decision-making and helped identify key moments that enhance or diminish the customer experience.

Primary data collection was conducted through an electronic questionnaire distributed to respondents across different age and demographic groups. The questionnaire included a mix of closed and open-ended questions aimed at collecting both quantitative and qualitative data about respondents' purchasing preferences and behaviour. The total number of responses exceeded expectations, resulting in a robust dataset for analysis.

Secondary data collection was based on a review of domestic and international literature, professional articles, and available research studies. This literature provided a theoretical framework and contextualisation of findings derived from primary data. The combination of primary and secondary data offered a holistic view of the issue and allowed for the formulation of conclusions supported by empirical evidence.

Induction was an essential tool for drawing conclusions from the collected data. This approach enabled the extrapolation of findings to a broader context, which is crucial for identifying trends and providing practical recommendations. Quantitative data analysis was carried out using advanced statistical software tools, including regression analysis, correlation studies, and data clustering. These methods allowed for precise identification of patterns in respondent behaviour, revealing key factors that influence their purchasing decisions.

The analysis involved processing data obtained from electronic questionnaires, with statistical tests used to verify hypotheses about the impact of digital marketing tools. The analysis also included an assessment of data structure, which helped categorise respondents based on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, and income. These categories facilitated market segmentation and the identification of preference trends among different customer groups.

Furthermore, the analysis was complemented by visualisations of results through graphs and diagrams, which simplified the interpretation of findings and provided a clear overview of the relationships between the examined variables. Emphasis was placed on interpreting results in a practical context, ensuring that the insights gained could be directly applied to optimise marketing strategies. In this way, the quantitative analysis not only provided a detailed understanding of consumer behaviour but also offered concrete recommendations for improving the effectiveness of digital marketing tools.

The study is based on several key research questions designed to enhance the understanding of consumer behaviour and its relationship with digital marketing communication. The main research questions include: Which digital marketing tools most effectively motivate consumers to make online purchases? What factors of digital communication pose barriers in customers' decision-making processes? What is the relationship between demographic characteristics and consumer preferences for various types of digital marketing communication? How do individual elements of digital marketing influence customer loyalty and satisfaction? Additionally, the study explored the frequency and volume of online purchases in relation to consumer preferences and their trust in digital tools.

These questions provide a comprehensive foundation for a deeper analysis of consumer behaviour and its interaction with digital marketing strategies. During the research, key elements were identified that have the potential to significantly enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns, as well as areas that require increased attention during implementation. The research questions serve not only to understand current trends but also to formulate practical recommendations for businesses.

The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics between digital tools and consumer behaviour. This methodology offers a solid framework for analysing the success of various digital marketing strategies and identifying effective practices for businesses aiming to improve their communication with customers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

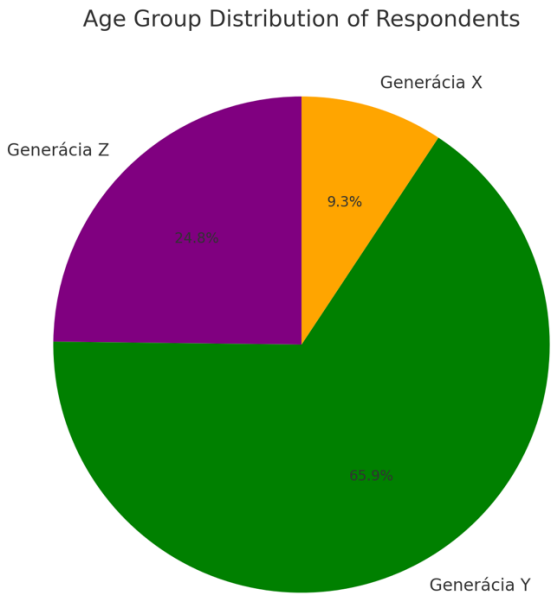
The research process was conducted through an electronic questionnaire distributed to respondents via Google Forms, enabling the collection of representative data on the impact of digital marketing on consumer behaviour. The questionnaire was anonymous and comprised 23 questions, some of which

allowed multiple answers. Distribution took place over 76 days, and a filtering question ensured that only respondents with online shopping experience completed the survey.

The sample consisted of 130 respondents, of whom 129 met the survey criteria. The number of respondents was segmented according to demographic indicators, including gender, age, education, occupation, and place of residence. Men constituted the majority (58.91%) compared to women (41.09%), reflecting the distribution of the questionnaire in work environments with a predominance of male staff.

The primary demographic categories were generations Z, Y, and X. Generation Y (millennials) was the largest group (65.89%), followed by generation Z (24.81%) and generation X (9.3%). This distribution allowed an analysis of the preferences of each age group concerning digital marketing communication.

Figure 1. Age group distribution of respondents



Source: based on authors' own research

The analysis indicated that personalised email campaigns and content created on social networks were the most effective digital marketing tools, capable of eliciting immediate responses. Specifically, 78% of generation Z respondents and 65% of generation Y identified personalised emails as one of the most effective tools for capturing their attention. These emails contained tailored offers that matched individual needs and preferences, significantly increasing the likelihood

of opening (average open rate of 52%) and subsequent actions such as browsing products or making a purchase (conversion rate of 34%).

Content on social networks was similarly effective, with interactive posts and videos achieving high engagement rates, particularly among younger respondents. Videos on platforms like TikTok and Instagram were rated as dynamic and authentic, with an average of 60% of respondents stating that such communication encouraged them to explore a brand further. In contrast, only 15% of generation X respondents indicated a preference for similar forms of communication, highlighting their lower effectiveness for older age groups.

Conversely, PR articles and gamification proved less effective in the Slovak context. PR articles were perceived as overly generic or insufficiently relevant to the target group, resulting in low interaction rates (only 9% of respondents considered them valuable). Gamification, despite its popularity in some international markets, achieved only a 12% success rate among Slovak consumers, likely due to insufficient localisation and cultural adaptation. These findings underscore the need for a more creative approach when implementing these tools in the local market.

An interesting finding was that generation Z respondents showed a significantly higher interest in interactive content, such as videos on TikTok and Instagram. Up to 72% of this generation stated that their decision to engage with a brand was influenced by visually appealing and dynamic forms of communication. These videos were rated as authentic and entertaining, often featuring elements of humour or education that resonated with younger audiences. Examples of successful strategies include short videos with product reviews or demonstrations, which achieved an average engagement rate of 58%.

On the other hand, generation Y preferred content with higher informational value, such as detailed product reviews and tutorials. Up to 64% of respondents from this generation stated that their purchase decisions were influenced by the availability of reliable information and independent evaluations. This difference in preferences between generations highlights the need for segmentation and content customisation based on demographic specifics.

For both generations, it proved essential to ensure the availability of personalised content that reflects individual needs and interests. For example, content focused on ecological products or sustainability was highly rated among younger consumers. The effectiveness of influencer marketing was also evident, with 48% of generation Z respondents stating that their purchase decision was

directly influenced by recommendations from well-known personalities on social networks.

This difference in preferences underscores the need for dynamic strategies capable of addressing various target groups through diversified channels and formats. Marketing teams should analyse the behaviour of individual segments and create content that resonates as closely as possible with their expectations.

Factors that discouraged respondents from online shopping included weak website security, reported by 47% of generation X respondents, and insufficient communication from sellers, identified as an issue by 39% of all respondents. These aspects were particularly critical for older respondents, who require a high level of reliability and trustworthiness when shopping online. The findings highlight the need for investments in robust security infrastructure and proactive customer support.

On the other hand, discounts and promo codes distributed via email successfully stimulated browsing offers and making purchases, with 68% of respondents stating that these incentives motivated them to interact with the seller. Discounts were an effective way to attract customers to their first purchase, most utilised in categories such as fashion (33%) and electronics (28%). Promo codes were especially influential among generation Y, with 72% indicating they had used them at least once in the past year. These data emphasise the importance of personalised offers and targeted marketing to drive conversions and customer loyalty.

Customer experience emerged as a decisive factor for repeat purchases and long-term customer loyalty. Up to 82% of respondents indicated that delivery speed significantly influenced their satisfaction, with 65% expecting delivery within 48 hours of placing an order. Similarly, after-sales services, such as easy returns or accessible customer support, were appreciated by 71% of respondents.

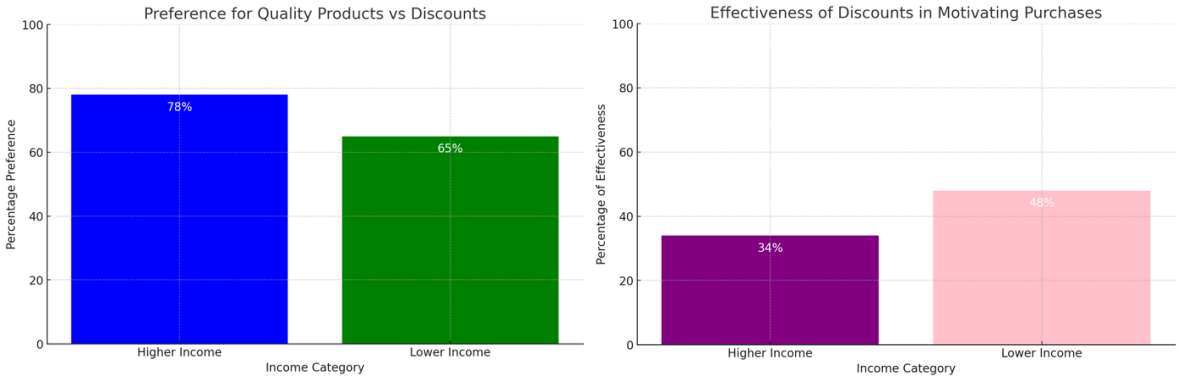
Personalised communication through chatbots or automated responses significantly improved the shopping experience. As many as 56% of respondents stated that they valued having their questions and issues addressed promptly and efficiently, with artificial intelligence technologies enabling the provision of accurate and rapid responses. Additionally, 44% of respondents noted that personalised product recommendations based on their previous purchases or browsing history significantly increased their trust in the brand.

Interestingly, customer satisfaction was closely linked to the emotional aspect of communication. Examples include sending personalised thank-you messages

or special birthday offers, which positively influenced the brand perception of 37% of respondents. These practices demonstrate that combining technology and empathy in communication can significantly contribute to building long-term customer relationships.

Statistical analysis revealed the importance of income categories in purchase decision-making, with notable differences in consumer preferences across groups. Respondents with higher education and income indicated a focus on product quality and brand reliability, confirmed by 78% of this group. These respondents often preferred well-known brands and were willing to invest more in products that met their high expectations. Conversely, respondents with lower incomes stated that their purchase decisions were primarily influenced by discounts and sales, which 65% of this group confirmed. This price orientation was particularly evident in categories such as food and clothing.

Figure 2. Preference for quality products and discounts in motivating purchases.



Source: based on authors' own research

Visualisations of results through graphs and diagrams provided a detailed overview of differences between income categories. The graphs showed that higher-income respondents tended to evaluate their purchases as more deliberate, often stating that they conducted extensive product comparisons before making a purchase. In contrast, lower-income respondents were more likely to make impulse decisions, with 48% reporting that their purchase decisions were influenced by momentary discounts or advertising campaigns.

These findings highlight the need to segment marketing strategies according to income groups to ensure higher communication relevance and better alignment of content with the expectations of target customers. They also point to the potential to use different marketing channels for each group, such as sophisticated informational campaigns for premium products aimed at higher-income

categories and price-oriented promotional campaigns for customers with lower incomes.

The discussion of the results suggested that digital marketing tools need to be tailored to the specific needs and expectations of individual market segments. It also showed that the effectiveness of digital marketing tools could vary significantly by generation and demographics. While younger generations prefer interactive and visually appealing content, older consumers emphasise reliability and trustworthiness in the seller.

In conclusion, the results of this study underscore the need for continuous monitoring of consumer preferences and the adaptation of digital strategies to reflect changing market dynamics. Effective use of digital tools can contribute to increasing customer loyalty and supporting the long-term growth of businesses.

Based on the analysis of data, several key areas have been identified that need to be considered when formulating strategies.

For Generation X, which is characterised by a more conservative approach to online shopping, it is essential to focus on building trust, reliability, and a sense of security throughout the purchasing process. This segment places significant emphasis on ensuring the protection of personal data, with 78% of respondents identifying this as a key factor when shopping online. They also value high-quality customer support capable of effectively addressing questions and issues, as well as process transparency, which eliminates any uncertainties. Companies should invest in robust security measures, such as SSL certifications, and provide easy access to detailed product information, including real photographs, reviews, and demonstration videos. This approach ensures long-term customer loyalty and significantly increases the likelihood of repeat purchases.

Moreover, Generation X prefers personalised communication delivered through more traditional digital channels, such as email marketing. As many as 63% of respondents reported regularly reading email offers, provided these are tailored to their personal preferences and interests. This channel enhances their shopping experience by offering relevant and useful information about available products and services. Furthermore, this generation appreciates email campaigns that include special offers or discounts, which motivate them to make immediate purchases. Personalised communication combined with a strong focus on security thus creates ideal conditions for building a trustworthy and effective relationship between the brand and the customer.

Generation Y, also known as millennials, represents a tech-savvy and critically thinking group of consumers who prioritise content with high informational value and a focus on transparency. Reviews of products, detailed specifications, and comparisons have a significant influence on their decision-making process, with 84% of respondents in this generation stating that their decisions were strongly influenced by online reviews and the experiences of other users. Therefore, companies should invest in creating rich content, such as detailed guides, in-depth videos, and expert posts on social media, which explain the features and benefits of products comprehensively.

Additionally, Generation Y shows a growing interest in eco-friendly and sustainable products, highlighting their value-oriented focus on environmental protection. A survey revealed that 76% of respondents from this generation prefer brands that actively engage in ecological initiatives and offer products with a low environmental impact. Hence, companies must target their marketing campaigns on communicating sustainability and transparently presenting their ecological practices to increase trust and loyalty among this generation.

It is also important to utilise social media for interaction and the establishment of long-term relationships with customers. Generation Y appreciates the opportunity to engage through polls, discussions, and comments, which allow them to express their opinions and feel part of a broader community. As many as 68% of respondents stated that brands that actively respond to their comments and provide direct feedback are perceived as more trustworthy. Interaction on social media should be authentic, empathetic, and focused on addressing customer needs, thereby enhancing engagement and satisfaction. This strategic approach can effectively support long-term success and positive brand perception among millennials.

Generation Z, the youngest segment of respondents, is characterised by its dynamism, flexibility, and high engagement on social media, where they spend a significant portion of their free time. This group prefers visually appealing and interactive content, with 76% of respondents reporting that their decisions to engage with a brand were influenced by the visual style of communication. Videos on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, offering short and captivating formats, are the most effective tools for this generation. Formats such as shorts and stories that reflect current topics, trends, and communication styles typical for this age group are considered an essential part of digital campaigns.

In addition to the visual aspects of content, Generation Z prefers content that is authentic and reflects the values they share. As many as 62% of respondents stated that they prefer brands that present transparent and sustainable values. This generation is highly sensitive to social issues, such as climate change and equality, which companies should consider when developing their strategies. Another significant element is the involvement of influencers. According to the survey, 48% of this group reported that their purchasing decisions were influenced by recommendations from well-known personalities, with the success of these campaigns depending on the authenticity and credibility of the influencer. Brands collaborating with influencers aligned with the values and interests of this generation achieve better results.

Influencers play a crucial role in building trust and emotional connections between the brand and consumers. Up to 55% of Generation Z respondents stated that when making purchase decisions, they prefer brands recommended by influencers they follow and consider relevant. Companies should strategically leverage this aspect by carefully selecting partners who reflect the brand's identity and can authentically communicate its values and product features. Collaboration with influencers should be integrated into a broader marketing strategy to ensure consistency and continuity of messaging.

Another factor influencing the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z is interactivity. As many as 68% of respondents stated that they choose brands that actively engage them in their campaigns through polls, challenges, or creative competitions. These elements not only increase engagement but also foster loyalty and positive brand perception. Combined with innovative technologies such as augmented reality or personalised messages, this approach can be even more effective. Brands that can harness these trends will secure a leading position in this dynamic and technologically oriented generation.

For all generations, it is crucial to ensure a seamless and hassle-free shopping journey, including intuitive website design, fast product delivery, and high-quality after-sales care. These factors have a decisive impact on repeat purchases and customer loyalty. Additionally, communication through chatbots and automated systems should be optimised to effectively address customer queries.

The discussion on the effectiveness of individual digital marketing tools highlights the need for segmentation and the adaptation of strategies. It is essential to analyse the preferences of specific target groups and, based on this data, create personalised communication. Tailoring campaigns and content strategies can

increase engagement and improve the overall results of marketing activities. It is recommended to use modern analytical tools to monitor the effectiveness of digital campaigns. These tools enable the collection of detailed data on consumer behaviour and support informed decision-making. In this way, companies can effectively adapt their strategies to meet the needs and expectations of individual market segments.

CONCLUSION

Digital marketing, which has significantly transformed communication between companies and customers, is currently one of the key areas of focus for stakeholders. At the same time, it is essential to critically evaluate the effectiveness of individual tools and concentrate on those that truly deliver the expected results.

Research clearly indicates that companies implementing personalised communication through email marketing achieve higher levels of consumer interest and engagement. This tool, particularly effective among Generation X and Y, offers opportunities for more targeted communication based on individual customer preferences. Email campaigns that provide relevant offers and content tailored to customer needs not only drive sales but also enhance the relationship between the brand and the customer by creating a sense of personal care and attention. In contrast to this positive trend in email marketing, the research revealed that more traditional tools, such as PR articles, have a limited influence on consumer decision-making. While PR articles do contain relevant information, they were perceived by respondents as less authentic and overly commercial, often deterring them from engaging with the brand. This finding underscores the need for broader use of modern and interactive tools to effectively reach consumers. The concept of gamification also showed reduced impact, as it has not yet fully developed in the Slovak market. Although gamification has the potential to boost consumer engagement through interactive games and competitions, its effectiveness depends on the quality of implementation and local adaptation. Additionally, it is important to consider generational differences, as younger generations, such as Generation Z, are more inclined towards this type of engagement than Generation X.

A significant finding is the emphasis consumers place on website security and active communication from sellers. Generation X and parts of Generation Y reported that weak protection of personal data and unclear communication deter them from making purchases. This highlights the necessity for companies to

invest in security measures while also providing customers with a simple and transparent shopping journey. For Generation Z, known for its engagement on social media platforms, collaboration with influencers has proven to be a key tool. Such collaborations must be authentic and credible; otherwise, they risk failure. Companies should harness the potential of social networks to promote visually appealing and short-form content, such as videos and stories on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Economic factors, such as discounts or promotional codes, continue to play an important role in motivating consumers. Promotional codes effectively encourage consumers to browse offers and complete purchases. These findings highlight the importance of regularly updating marketing campaigns to reflect the preferences of specific target groups. The results of this research confirm the necessity of tailoring marketing strategies to different generational groups and utilising modern analytical tools to monitor the effectiveness of digital campaigns. The combination of personalisation, technological innovation, and a focus on customer values and needs represents an optimal approach to successfully building relationships between brands and their target audiences.

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This collection of scientific papers delves into the intricate dynamics of decision-making processes, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of consumer interactions in a rapidly changing global marketplace. By integrating cutting-edge methodologies with empirical studies, the collected works aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering innovative insights into how individuals and groups navigate the complexities of modern consumption.

At the heart of this collection lies a commitment to interdisciplinary exploration, combining perspectives from psychology, sociology, economics, and technology to address the pressing questions of our time.

Each paper represents a frontier of research, examining how traditional models are being reshaped by emerging technologies, shifting demographics, and the transformative power of digitalisation. This collection invites readers to engage with diverse perspectives and methodologies, fostering a deeper appreciation of the choices that define consumer landscapes and the innovative strategies that can shape their future.

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