

EXAMINATIONS CARRIED OUT IN RELATION TO THE SHOPPING HABITS AND SATISFACTION OF COSTUMERS IN THE SHOPS OF COOP SZEGED LTD.

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ABSTRACT

Different shop types have different life cycles: introduction, growth, stagnation and decline. The form of supermarkets is in a stage of decline in each EU country.

For customers coming to the supermarkets of Coop Co., in Szeged is typical to do their shopping every day or more times a week. Shoppers come to do mainly their daily shopping in the shops. The main reasons for choosing them were the wide range of goods and the suitable accessibility of shops. Coop has its own brand which is very popular with customers. There are customers who directly come to the shops to buy products with this brand. Shoppers would extend the range of products with Coop-brand and also would like to see longer opening hours. The customer segment involves people living close to the shops. Our questionnaire survey supports these statements.

Keywords: shopping habits, costumers, supermarket, questionnaire survey, sales

1. INTRODUCTION

Different types of shops have different life cycles: introduction, prosperity, stagnation, decline. The form of supermarket is in the stage of decline in each EU country.

Retail trade (Kotler 1988) involves all the activities which mean the direct transfer of a product or service to the final consumer for personal and not commercial use. By retail trade in shop we mean the way of distribution when marketing is connected to a given place, generally to a shop, and the consumer has to take longer or shorter way to get the desired product. Forms of retail trade are forms with or without a shop, and the form of organization in retail trade.

The form of organization in retail trade can be franchise marketing or chains of shops. Chains of shops include separated small shops which established a joint organization in order to keep their markets or customers. An example for this chain is Co-op Hungary which was created by joining several smaller shops. .

Supermarkets are shops of 400-2.500 m² ground-space located in town centres or residential areas. Supermarkets can be owned by independent vendors or they can be units belonging to a chain. In case of chains both the exterior and interior are positively of high standard, while it shows a varied image in case of independent businesses depending on the age of the building, on the solid capital and taste of the owner. The best-known supermarket chains in Hungary are Spar, Match and Coop supermarkets.

The COOP Szeged Regional Commercial Exclusive Stock Corporation (COOP Szeged Kereskedelmi Regionális Zártkörű Részvénytársaság) was established on 30

November, 1999. The COOP Szeged Co. took over the activity of Dél-Tisza menti ÁFÉSZ, which has been working for more than fifty years. The COOP Szeged Co. takes part in the commercial integration created by the different organizations of ÁFÉSZ both regionally and nation-wide regarding both procurement and marketing. At a national level integration involving procurement and marketing is managed by the COOP Hungary Co. owned by the economic companies ÁFÉSZEK and COOP. The COOP Szeged Co. is a member of the national COOP chain of shops, its shops of retail trade work as its organic parts. Today the COOP Szeged Co. runs twenty-three supermarkets in Szeged and its neighbouring settlements in the categories of COOP Supermarket, COOP MAXI and COOP.

As it has been written in the specialist literature of marketing (Kotler 1991) (Tomcsányi 1973) (Cravens 1987) (Hoffmann 1990) (Lehota, Tomcsányi 1994) (Dolan 1995) (Bauer, Berács, Kenesei 2009) (Illés, Végh, 2010), customers' behaviour has undergone a huge change in the last few years. A demand for comfortable shopping has increased. Nowadays we can experience a growing competition between the organizations of retail trade. Solid capital, flexibility, policies of price and selection, marketing strategy has an increasing importance in this situation. For units with a small ground-space introduction of bigger stores with more solid capital means a serious challenge and danger at the same time, also adjustment to the altered situation needs an increased concentration since they have to find the potential advantages in competition and then to utilize their opportunities.

Our hypotheses are as follows:

- 1. In case of the consumer segment of those who do their shopping in the shops of Szeged Coop Co. shopping on a daily basis or several times a week are the characteristic features.
- 2. Products with Coop-label are getting more popular among costumers.
- 3. Costumers want longer opening hours.
- 4. The consumer segment involves people living within the area of the shops.

The aim of our research is to either support or reject these hypotheses with a questionnaire survey and also to give some suggestions to improve conditions.

2. MATERIALS and METHODS

As primary research we carried out a questionnaire survey. We got 1550 questionnaires filled in in the shops of Coop Szeged Co. between 10 and 30 June, 2010. Our purpose was to assess the customers' habits and level of satisfaction in relation to the shop. We asked the reason for going to the given shop, how often they go there, why they may choose another supermarket, and also what changes they would implement.

Most of the answerers are in the age category of 30-34 and regarding their profession they are mainly intellectuals. More than a half of them go to the supermarket every day or several times a week. We assessed the level of the customers' satisfaction regarding bakery products, meat and meat products, vegetables, fruit, opening hours, the professional competence and friendly attitude of the shop assistants by the means of a five-point scale. We attached different values to each answer so by putting them together we obtained the level of satisfaction. Also, we put emphasize on how much the answers differ from each other so we could calculate deviation and variance (Lukács 2002), as well.

3. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Most of the customers chose the given supermarket because of the wide range of goods and good accessibility. Other important aspects for them were the offer of goods on sale, and also the relatively cheap brands of the shops. If they choose another place to go shopping, it is because they can buy cheaper products in the big hypermarkets. Another important factor for choosing other shops is that stores of certain companies offer more products on sale.

Lots of costumers consider important that the shops should give a suitable amount of goods on sale. In this case it is worth mentioning the frequency of sales since if the shops do not have special offers on a regular basis, the customers will prefer others. Everybody is satisfied with the frequency and quality of sales in these shops.

The consumer segment expressed their satisfaction in connection with bakery products which gained 4,22 on the five-point scale. The assessment was not so much positive in case of meat and meat products, and the customers were dissatisfied with the price of vegetables and fruit.

The customers are totally satisfied with the employees of the Coop supermarkets regarding both their competence and positive attitude towards them. A lot of customers would support longer opening hours because late in the evening they are forced to do their shopping in retail shops. The consumers suggested a new image, besides longer opening hours.

1. Our hypothesis has been proved because most of the answerers (38%) do their daily shopping in the supermarkets. The other high proportion was of those who come to the shops more times a week (26%).
2. According to hypothesis 2 customers like the products with Coop-brand which has been proved since there are some customers (10%) who come to the supermarkets for these products only, and also would like to see the selection enlarged with more new products.
3. Our hypothesis which says that customers need longer opening hours has also been proved. A lot of them go to Tesco or to other shops because of the short opening hours.
4. With this hypothesis we assumed that the consumer segment involves people living around the supermarket. It has been proved, too, since people living nearby go to most of these supermarkets, apart from the shop number 1011.

It is important that the supermarkets should continuously pay attention to the changes in customers' needs. It is also significant that companies should employ the most suitable ones and also they have to meet the requirements of quality.

Customers do their daily, smaller shopping in the supermarkets of the examined Szegedi Coop Co. They say that prices are too high, so they do their bigger shopping in hypermarkets. There should be a more competitive price strategy so that customers can go for bigger shopping to the given supermarkets.

In case of bakery products the selection of goods should be enlarged. Being aware of modern, more conscious nutrition the consumers prefer the healthier whole wheat products.

Significant changes should be carried out in case of meat and meat products. A lot of people complained about the quality and freshness of products. The quality insurance system should be rendered stricter so that customers cannot get tainted products. Also, the selection should be enlarged. Customers would like to see more red fresh meat and smoked products.

Policy of price of vegetables and fruit should be significantly changed. Customers think that the price of these products is extremely high so they rather go to the market to buy

the necessary products. There should be a bigger vegetable and fruit stand so that everybody can fulfill their needs.

A lot of customers can do their shopping only late in the evening, and since these supermarkets close at nine, they go to 24-hour shops.

A lot of customers like the products with Coop-brand, so the enlargement of their selection would invite more customers to the shops.

As a consequence, it can be said that the chain of shops should improve its competitiveness in order to become successful. Thus, it has to improve its products and services permanently. Unlike the strategy of rivals, new things should be found out by the means of which the chain of stores will be different from the others, so it becomes unique. Changes in customers' needs should be assessed continuously and should be reacted at once. Training of employees is inevitable for the sake of success. It is important to aim at the needs of more consumer segments, at more markets. Price strategy should be elaborated with special attention so that everybody can find the most appropriate product for themselves.

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