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THESES OF THE PH.D. DISSERTATION

Ph.D. program: Management in the wood industry
Leaders: Pakainé Dr. Kováts Judit CSc
Sciences: Materials science and technologies

ANALYZING THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF THE SENIORS IN THE FURNITURE MARKET

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1. THE MOTIVATION OF THE TOPIC CHOICE, THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

This PhD thesis focuses on the over-sixty population, restricting the focus to a little-studied, but crucial area: their role as furniture customers, decision-making processes, and preferences. The findings demonstrate that the sector is far from homogeneous, despite the fact that some characteristics are shared by all generations. However, as a function of labor market activity, education, family circumstances, and perceived affluence, disparities in purchasing style and certain parts of the purchasing process emerge. The study discovered three clusters within the segment, each with distinct purchasing attitudes and preferences in relation to the aforementioned characteristics, influencing the segment's accessibility in the furniture market.

2. THE ESSAY STRUCTURE

The dissertation is organized into three sections and seven chapters.

After the general importance of the topic choice (chapter 2), the secondary research covers the first major part, in which the research findings and main models dealing with consumption and purchasing patterns (chapter 3) are presented, with a special focus on age-related (furniture) purchasing patterns and the domestic furniture trade. The first main theme group's concluding portion discusses the fundamental concepts for senior marketing development (Chapter 4)

Primary research is the subject of the second main component. Following an explanation of the methodology (chapter 5), the scientific findings (chapter 6) are presented. Subsequently, the hypotheses (Chapter 7) are chosen based on the findings.

The research results were analyzed (Chapter 8), which included the synthesis of theses, the presentation of the author's senior buying style model, and the establishment of further research objectives.

3. THE METHODS APPLIED

A descriptive, quantitative survey was employed to conduct the research, which included both online and paper questionnaire survey methodologies. Due to the online and offline nature of the survey, it was critical that the questionnaire be pre-tested, as the questions needed to be simple to comprehend and answer while still giving for a comprehensive and multifaceted examination of the subject. The items in the survey must be clear, easily understandable, and simple to answer, in addition to being fundamentally proficient. The answers may be relevant to the phenomena under research and of no use if they are not based on adequate professional basis. Given the diversity of responders, it was thought necessary to create a set of questions that could be understood by anyone and their answers did not need complex computations. Personal interviews were conducted to achieve this, which helped create the questionnaire. Before coding, the questions were double-checked.

The sample did not include any questionnaires that were methodologically wrong or incomplete. The data was collected in the fall of 2020. The overall sample was made up of 329 questionnaires, of which 312 were analysed after being checked and cleaned. The IBM SPSS Statistics 25 mathematical-statistical program was used to conduct the analysis.

To measure the questions generated for each topic in the structured questionnaire, nominal, ordinal, and interval level variables were created. A scale of agreement (Likert) was utilized within the interval scale to measure attitudes and opinions, with respondents expressing their agreement with statements on a range of 1 (not at all true) to 5 (completely true).

Closed questions about the respondent's choices and knowledge were added to the attitude questions.

The data was broken down into two parts: first, frequency analysis were performed, followed by background analyses based on socio-demographic parameters. Statistical methods were employed in the latter to see if there were any significant variations in the responses to the questions across the different demographic groups. The following variables (in order of importance) were included in the analysis:

- gender of respondent
- age,
- education levels
- the employment situation
- financial situation as determined by self-reported earnings
- relationship status,
- ones current address,
- details about ones residential property

The age of the respondent was used as a filtering criteria in the survey in accordance with the research topic, with a minimum age of 60 required to be included in the sample.

The following were the main concern of this study:

- the perception of furniture as an environmental element, its role in shaping the physical environment, and its relationship to personality
- the original source and influence of information prior to furniture purchase, the extent to which ICT and media tools are available to the age group, the disclosure of those involved in the decision, and the importance of authenticity.
- the buying process, from information gathering through decision-making
- judgment criteria relating to the product's hard factors: quality, origin, usefulness, and comfort
- perceptions of innovation, acceptance of novelty, and openness to smart' solutions - price and willingness to invest

4. UNIQUE AND NEW RESULTS

HIPOTHESIS 1

The general marketing communication activities of manufacturers and merchants, which are applied to all age groups, affect the furniture purchase decisions of the senior population.

HIPOTHESIS 2

The senior population cannot be a primary target group for the furniture sales market because to manufacturers' and retailers' general marketing communication activities for all age groups, but there is a model that can capture the marketing communication processes with this age group.

The researchers focused into a variety of questions that go into considerable detail on the hypothesis. The entire sample shows that the 60+ age group has poor perceptions of marketing communication activities, with respondents agreeing less than moderately with the statement that they frequently notice commercials for furniture makers. Perceptions of advertising impact were even lower, with an average of 2.51 agreeing on a five-point scale with the attitude statement "furniture ads have a big impact on me," while the attitude statement "furniture store ads sound like they're talking to me" was clearly rejected with a value of 2.17. The average for the entire sample, however, shows that information from television shows, newspapers, and magazines seems to be of moderate interest to the group, with slightly higher than average scores for women, those with higher education, and the active population, but no particularly outstanding results. The first cluster is the most receptive to marketing communication, with outcomes that are above average but not exceptional.

Personal relationships have a greater influence and value among seniors than marketing communication effects, with spouse and children having a particularly strong influence (the influence of friends is not confirmed).

Seniors enjoy nice furniture and agree that it can reflect the owner's personality. However, they do not go to furniture stores for no reason, and they only buy new furniture for strong reasons, even if they are only moderately attached to their current furniture.

Hypothesis H1 is rejected in this form for the reasons stated above, but we cannot conclude that marketing communication activities have no influence on seniors. The hypothesis-driven thesis requires a reformulation of the result based on the conclusions.

In view of the facts, Hypothesis H2 is accepted.

HIPOTHESIS 3

In their purchasing decisions, the elderly generation chooses furniture made by Hungarian manufacturers.

In order to test the hypothesis, the research used a variety of questions. On the one hand, attitudinal adjustment was used to investigate the willingness to pay for furniture made in Hungary in a purchase situation, as well as the importance of Hungarian origin in the ranking of other choice variables.

The first and second clusters have the most support for Hungarian but more expensive furniture and the willingness to pay (without factoring ability to pay), meanwhile the third cluster has a very low, fairly unsupportive outcome. Men agreed that they would be willing to spend additional for Hungarian furniture, while women disagreed. The home origin of the furniture does not justify a larger expenditure among retired individuals, but it is only marginally different from the mean among active people. Those with greater education and more income/savings are more likely to buy Hungarian furniture, and those with less education and income are less likely to agree.

This is not to indicate that in a decision-making context, this level of (on average moderate) openness may take priority over other factors. The quality and pricing of the furnishings are clearly more relevant than the country of origin in the overall rating. When demographic parameters are taken into account, it becomes obvious that Hungarian heritage ranks lower than third in several groups. Men, who make up the first two groups, definitely rank lower in significance, whereas inactive people and those with better incomes/savings simply rate higher in priority, but not first.

On the basis of the test results, Hypothesis H3 is rejected.

HIPOTHESIS 4

When it comes to purchasing furniture, the seniors prefer to shop with a familiar merchant.

The overall pattern is one of cautious deliberation before making a final selection, with 58 percent of respondents visiting many stores before deciding. For one in every five senior purchasers, commitment to a particular furniture brand or store, i.e. brand loyalty and shop loyalty, emerges as a choice consideration. There are also significant differences in shop selection between clustersWith 43 percent of cluster members buying exclusively from a brand or specifically from a store, the first cluster has a far greater percentage of shop and brand loyalty. The percentage of people that shop around as much as possible is lower than normal, with 43% visiting multiple stores before making a selection. The second group is made up of reasonable, middle-aged persons who share decision options. They are as cautious in their research as they are in their shopping choices: two-thirds of them visit many stores before making a selection. Only 17% of people are loyal to a store or a brand. The conventional cluster, which is the third, has the highest incidence of devotion to low-cost furniture stores. Although there is no evidence of brand loyalty in the cluster, a third of them are openly shopaholics. Men are far less inclined than women to be devoted to a certain store (10 percent and 24 percent). Men have a little stronger brand loyalty than women (5 percent and 2.7 percent). However, shop and brand loyalty is significantly stronger among the educated than among the general population, with one in every five seniors dedicated to a certain furniture store and one in every ten loyal to a specific brand. Brand loyalty is lacking among those with a secondary education; yet, 13 percent of the active population is brand loyal, although the same is not true among the retired. Shop loyalty is crucial to one out of every four people in the top two income categories, but only one out of every ten people in the lower income levels.

On the basis of the survey results, Hypothesis H4 is rejected.

HIPOTHESIS 5

Although the senior population is not interested in using smart technology and solutions in smart furniture, there is a segmentation criterion (gender) that may be used to identify a cluster of innovative persons within the target group.

In any case, the average value of the responses to the questions did not reach 3.5. The perception of smartphones gained this value in the first, most open cluster, i.e. agreement with the statement varied from neutral to agree - the highest value recorded. Cluster members were significantly more than medium in their agreement that they enjoy modern technology and shopping online. Following the average, the second cluster was typically below the first, and the third cluster was even less likely to agree. There were just a few relevant replies to the inquiry about bluetooth solutions. In all aspects, males are more sensitive to ICT solutions and their use, and the same is true for the ratio of elementary, secondary, and higher education, where openness to smart devices grows as educational attainment improves. Unsurprisingly, individuals who were still working in some capacity had higher average values for all attitudes toward innovation, with retired people's responses all falling below the average. It should be mentioned that none of these demographic groups had a mean above 3.0, thus all genders, labor market position, and all three educational categories tend to disagree with the attitude group statements, with the difference being mainly in the degree of disagreement. Those without children are the most receptive to smart solutions, followed by those in a relationship, but no longer with children (average values are generally medium or below here, with a few exceptions).

On the basis of the test results, Hypothesis H5 is accepted.

My theses are articulated below, based on the hypotheses described above and the outcomes of the primary research:

THESIS 1.

The marketing communication operations of manufacturers and merchants have a moderate impact on senior population furniture purchase decisions.

Other elements, such as demographic and societal characteristics, have a greater impact on purchase decisions among people aged 60 and higher.

THESIS 2.

For furniture producers and dealers, the senior population should not be a key target group.

Manufacturers and merchants' marketing communications operations are poorly perceived by seniors, and advertising and message acceptance are low.

THESIS 3.

In their purchasing decisions, the older population does not like furniture made by Hungarian enterprises.

The effect of Hungarian origin is larger than average in some groups, but it is still not the deciding element in furniture purchases.

THESIS 4.

When it comes to purchasing furniture, the seniors do not purchase at the same store they always do.

Seniors examine their (limited) options and expectations, as well as a variety of alternatives, before opting to purchase furniture. They visit the storefronts and want to see what is available in person. A quarter of seniors have strong brand and store loyalty.

THESIS 5.

The usage of smart technology and solutions in smart furniture is not popular among the seniors.

They are loyal to the solutions they are familiar with, do not consider devices actually and solutions to be a part of everyday life, and have a limited tolerance for innovation. There is also a segment of seniors, that are more receptive to adopting smart products and online solutions, although their adoption of smart solutions is still low.

THESIS 6.

In terms of purchasing habits, seniors are not a homogeneous group, and there are various separate clusters of 60+ age groups.

According to the findings, the first (Open Novelty), second (Thoughtful Realists), and third (Traditionalists) groups had distinct purchasing preferences. These groups' shopping styles influence their information intake, purchase decisions, and store selection mechanisms.

5. SENIOR PURCHASING STYLE MODEL

According to a literature review on senior shopper behavior, the study of senior shopper typology has gotten a lot of interest from academics over the last decade. The research's more key points on generational, lifestyle, and purchasing behavior approaches are summarized in the relevant chapters, and the research reveals the purchasing characteristics of seniors in the furniture market after revealing the specificities of the domestic furniture market and summarizing the most relevant consumer analyses.

The main study has revealed a model of senior purchasing style in the furniture market, in which the contribution of independent and dependent components is supported not only by literature analysis, but also by comprehensive primary factor analysis.

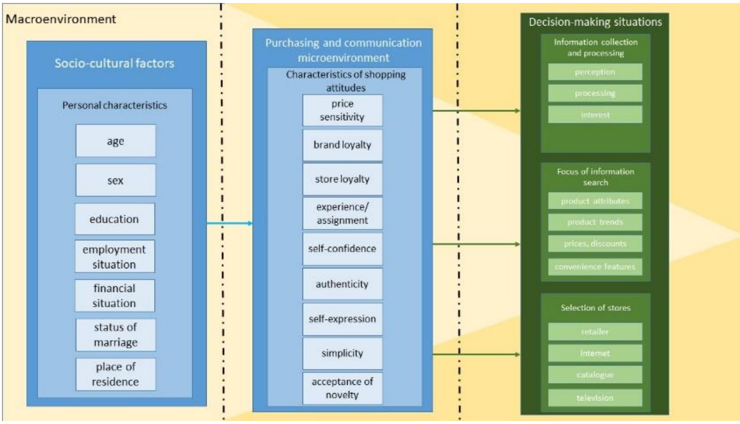
According to the cluster analysis, the 60+ generation is not homogeneous in terms of purchasing habits, yet there are some features that are shared across generations.

The study examined the correlation between seniors' profile of the respondents and their purchasing behavior, their behavior while considering product alternatives, their information seeking style, the influence of shop aspects on purchasing behavior, and their decision-making style.

The model is based on various time honored models.

According to the foregoing, shopping orientation is an important variable in shopping behavior that assist in the identification of different types of shoppers based on attitudes, interests, shopping mechanisms, information searches, store selection, store attribute evaluation, and demographic characteristics.

The following image illustrates the conceptual analyses, secondary studies of the furniture business and the seniors' sector, and primary analyses of seniors' attitudes about furniture buying that were utilized to construct the model:



Source: authors editing

6. PUBLICATIONS

6.1 Foreign-language publications

Rétfalvi Péter – Bednárik Éva (2021): Senior age group and smart furniture, In: Kajos, Luca Fanni; Bali, Cintia; Preisz, Zsolt; Polgár, Petra; Glázer-Kniesz, Adrienn; Tislér, Ádám; Szabó, Rebeka (szerk.) **10th Jubilee Interdisciplinary Doctoral Conference** : Book of Abstracts, Pécs

Rétfalvi Péter – Bednárik Éva (2021): Older People and Smart Furniture, In: **International Journal of Engineering, Management and Humanities** 2

Rétfalvi Péter (2018): Studying the marketing activity of furniture manufacturers, In: Bódog, Ferenc; Csiszár, Beáta; Hayden, Zsófia; Mészáros, Orsolya; Sapolov, Anatolij; Pónusz, Róbert (szerk.) **7th interdisciplinary docotoral conference**, extended edition, Pécs

Rétfalvi Péter (2018): Measuring logistics performance on the furniture market, In: Bódog, Ferenc; Csiszár, Beáta; Hayden, Zsófia; Mészáros, Orsolya; Sapolov, Anatolij; Pónusz, Róbert (szerk.) **7th interdisciplinary docotoral conference**, extended edition, Pécs

Rétfalvi Péter – Bednárik Éva – Némethné Tömő Zsuzsanna (2018): Studying the marketing activity of furniture manufacturers, In: Bódog, Ferenc; Csiszár, Beáta; Hayden, Zsófia; Mészáros, Orsolya; Sapolov, Anatolij; Pónusz, Róbert (szerk.) **7th interdisciplinary docotoral conference**, extended edition, Pécs

6.2 Hungarian-language publications

Rétfalvi Péter (2019): A szenior korosztály vásárlói elégedettségének vizsgálata a bútorpiacon, In: Kőszegi, Irén Rita (szerk.) **III. Gazdálkodás és Menedzsment Tudományos Konferencia**, Versenyképesség és innováció Kecskemét

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Rétfalvi Péter - Bednárik, Éva - Némethné Tömő, Zsuzsanna (2019): Szenior vásárlási szokások a bútorpiacon, **GRADUS** 6, eISSN 2064-8014

Rétfalvi Péter - Bednárik, Éva - Némethné Tömő, Zsuzsanna (2018): Szenior vásárlási szokások a bútorpiacon, In: Keresztes, Gábor (szerk.) **Tavaszi Szél 2018 Konferencia**, Konferenciakötet II., Budapest

Rétfalvi Péter - Bednárik, Éva - Némethné Tömő, Zsuzsanna (2018): A vevői elégedettség és kiszolgálási színvonal mérése a hazai bútorpiacon, In: Keresztes, Gábor (szerk.) **Tavaszi Szél 2018 Konferencia**, Konferenciakötet II., Budapest