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IMPACT OF SELLER'S GENDER ON PURCHASER'S CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR¹

The article deals with research results, which prove impact of seller's gender on purchaser's consumption behavior. It defines main factors, which impact cooperation between sellers and purchasers of different gender in the buy and sell process. There are following ones among them: an idea about gender of the ideal seller, pleasant communication with seller, attentive attitude (clearness and understanding of the answer to questions, provision with wide information, and interest in conversation), detailed representation of the necessary information for purchaser etc. Results of the conducted studies can be used as a methodic tool to form sellers' staff, to define and to distinguish their functions and roles etc.

Keywords: trade enterprises, buy and sell process, gender factor, cooperation between seller and purchaser, management of sellers' staff.

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Problem statement in general. Aggravation of competition between trade enterprises updates search of impact methods on purchasers' behavior. Practice shows that purchasers' behavior control and its orientation in the necessary line are important competitive advantages of the trade enterprise. In general, a number of economic, social, cultural, psychological and other factors impacts purchasers' consumption behavior. Gender factor is among them. It shows impact of seller's and purchaser's gender on the buy and sell process of goods (items or service). Marketing research of gender peculiarities concerning sellers and purchasers cooperation in the buy and sell process of production and their results consideration in personnel policy, particularly while forming sellers' staff, are updated from these positions for trade enterprises. These researches give base to form marketing communications complex measures, and they investigate content, structure and form to submit sellers' communicative appeals, which take into account specific nature of being perceived by purchasers of different gender.

Analysis of the recent research and publications. Problems concerning analysis and consideration of gender peculiarities in purchasers' and sellers' behavior are studied in works of many foreign and native scientists. The role of different gender representatives' psychology in the marketing (trade) activity was investigated by R. Foxall, R. Goldsmith, Z. Braun [12], B. Harry [3], V.H. Zazykin [4].

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Psychological aspects to perceive advertisement by representatives of different genders are studied in the work of A.M. Lebedev-Liubimov [7], M.M. Ivchenko [5]. Peculiarities of men's and women's behavior formation in the history are observed in the work of A. Kuznetsov [6]. Specific nature of different genders representatives' behavior in the buying process is investigated in the work [8]. General bases of consumers' behavior, including gender factor are shown by M.A. Oklander [9], O.V. Prokopenko [10], T.A. Aleksandrova, L.M. Naumova [1], D. Statt [11] etc.

Analysis of foreign authors' publications on the given topic proves that they observe applied aspects of gender factor impact on consumers' behavior at various markets. Particularly, A. Perju-Mitrana, A.E. Budacia [13] and L.P. Ling i Mr. R. Yazdanifard [17] in their work study peculiarities of men's and women's consumer behavior at the *on-line* trade market. M. Chattalas [14] in his work presented national stereotypes' impact, including men's and women's role to make consumers' decisions. E. Koca, F. Koc [15] present peculiarities of designer cloth brands gender perception. Jo-Hui Lin, Shu-Ju Lee, Ching Yeh, Wen-Hwa Lee⁴, Jehn-Yih Wong [16] clarify specific nature to make decisions by male and female consumers at the tourism market. The work of M. Lipowski i M. Angowski [18] observes an impact of gender factor on consumers' decision making at the services market. G.Mortimer, P. Clarke analyze peculiarities to make decisions by supermarket visitors (men and women) [19]. V. Stan [20] studies an impact of gender factor on formation and keeping of consumers' loyalty.

However the above and analogical works both native and foreign mostly deal with detailed analysis of gender peculiarities in the purchasers' consumption behavior, and also with specific nature of behavior of sellers with different gender.

Distinguishing of the unsolved parts in the general problem. Although this topic, dealt with gender factor impact on buy and sell processes of production, is deeply studied, the problem on seller's gender impact on purchaser's consumption behavior remains insufficiently explored. Investigations and considerations of those questions in trade enterprises' practical activity will enable to improve process to form and to prepare their personnel, to increase efficiency of measures to motivate consumers, to increase goods turnover and to advance efficiency of activity on the whole.

The object of the article is to analyze seller's gender impact on the purchaser's behavior and to define main factors, which influence the cooperation between sellers and purchasers of different gender in the buy and sell process.

Main material presentation. In order to achieve the set objectives, the research was carried out in the mobile phones shops "Comfy", "Foxtrot", "Moyo", which are located in the shopping center "Manufacture" in Sumy. Such a choice of trade places was justified by the fact that the given center is the most popular among city inhabitants (12,5 thousand constant visitors of approximately 270 thousand inhabitants), who spend their free time and go shopping. Goods (mobile phones) were chosen owing to those opinions that they are bought and used by men and women. It means that goods are universal and they take into account consumers' gender peculiarities to a small extent. It let to avoid the goods' impact (its features) on purchaser's perception of the sellers' gender.

Time of the research conduct (during the week): during peak hours in the evening (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday from 18.00 to 21.00), in the morning and in the afternoon (Monday, Wednesday, Sunday from 10.30 to 13.30). The information was gathered by method of men's and women's inquiry at the age from 18 to 60 years old. The structure of the gathered information (in the gender context) fits the structure of population in the city: 56% of the total number of inhabitants is women; 44% – men. Analysis of the gathered information was carried out with the help of Excel programs. The inquiry was added with observations of cooperation between sellers and purchasers in the above mentioned shops.

The research was carried out by the scheme:

- evaluation of the above shops visitors' service quality;

- evaluation of purchasers' trust to sellers (empathy);
- identification of purchasers' idea about gender of "ideal" seller;
- defining of purchasers' opinions concerning the fact – with sellers of which gender it is more pleasant to communicate;
- defining of purchasers' minds concerning the fact – sellers of which gender are more attentive to them;
- identification of main factors by which purchasers estimate attentive attitude of sellers to them, and to evaluate attention separately by every index;
- identification of purchasers' information main sources about mobile phones models features, and seller-consultant's recommendations place among them;
- defining of purchasers' ideas concerning the fact – seller of which gender gives the necessary information in more detail.

Generalization of analysis results, carried out by the given scheme, is shown below in fig. 1-8.

Fig. 1 demonstrates results of evaluation by respondents (by the ten-to-one scale) of purchasers' serving quality in the studied shops. Separate constituents of quality were evaluated for every shop: material outfit of the shop, level of personnel competence, the serving process, empathy (seller's interest to solve client's personal problems, attempts to solve client's problems, sympathy etc.).

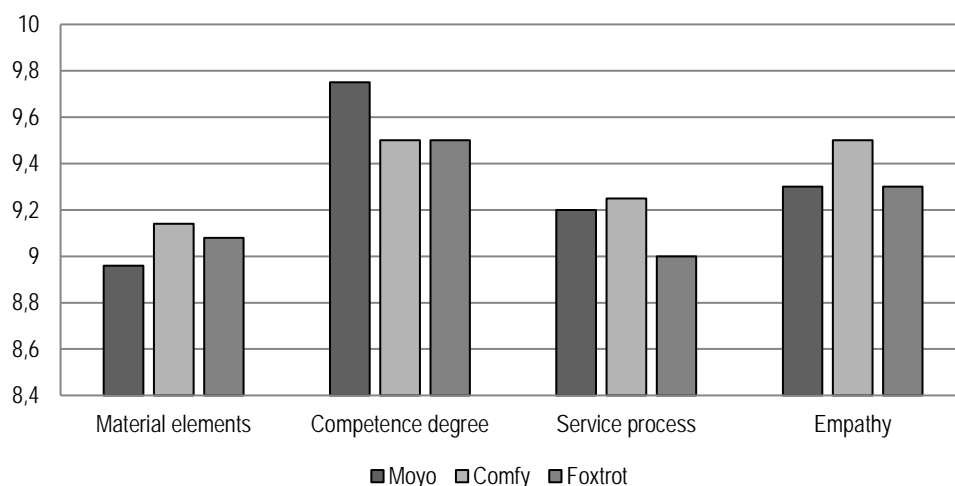


Figure 1 – Estimation of service quality factors (formed by authors)

As fig. 1 shows, all three shops have high level in purchasers' service quality. It is located at the similar level, service is almost the same, there is a small deviation. This is explained by the fact that analyzed shops keep standards in trade policy, technical equipping and shops' design, personnel policy, consumers' service policy and follow their keeping. Therefore, competence and empathy, which depend on sellers (qualification, experience, personal features), have the highest level among factors of service quality in all shops.

Let us observe the empathy factor in more detail. This parameter is the best one in the shop "Comfy". "Foxtrot" and "Moyo" are on the second place (fig. 2). However, difference in estimations is not great. In all shops consultants do not only answer clients' questions, but also try to propose several variants to solve problems, ask more questions, suggest alternatives etc.

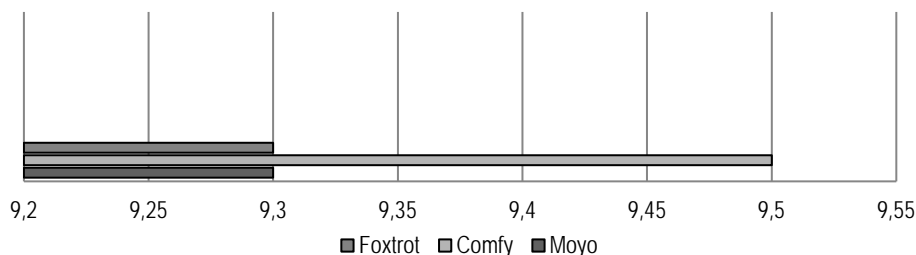


Figure 2 – Empathy of the studied shops (formed by authors)

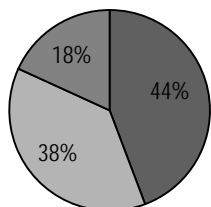
Let us observe main question concerning impact of seller's gender on purchasers' consumption behavior. During the research sellers and purchasers of male and female gender were present in all shops. The results of observations in all shops have similar indices. Consultants of both genders are polite with purchasers, they offer help softly. They told that they would help visitors of the shop, who refused the consultation, with pleasure if they have some questions.

During the observations of the buy and sell process it was found out that women, who came to the shop only to look at the mobile phones models and accessories to them, more often refused the consultation and did not ask any questions. At the same time, men, in spite of their motive to visit the shop, they were interested in extra information about models, entering into dialogues with consultants. Men were communicating rather seriously with sellers of male gender; they were conducting a free talk with women, alternating between personal questions on information about a good. Such situation was specially observed among young purchasers.

Purchasers, who came to the shop in order to buy a mobile telephone, were talking with male and female sellers and asked about necessary information. There were also such situations, when purchasers visited all shops at the given territory, but made decision on the basis of the fact, which seller described the model of the phone in the best way. If we can see who sold more phones, it is obviously that men are more qualified in this question and have higher level of trust. Based on this reason, there are more male sellers-consultants in shops of the mobile phones. There is a stereotype that only man must be a seller of the mobile phones, because they are more skilled in goods concerning technical devices. Respondents also suppose that a man is an ideal seller of mobile phones. Women are less trusted and they are less qualified sellers. However gender does not have any value for 18% of respondents (fig. 3).

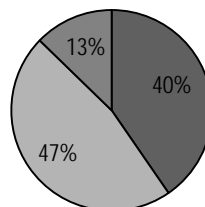
Taking into account the opinion about the fact with whom it is more pleasant to communicate, female sellers are leaders there (fig. 4). It can be explained by the fact that purchasers prefer to communicate with female sellers, because psychologists prove that it is more pleasant to talk with a woman, than with a man. To the respondents' minds, male seller is more attentive to them (fig. 5). However, there is a small difference between evaluations by this parameter of male and female sellers. It justifies the fact that purchasers suppose all male and female sellers of the analyzed shops rather attentive to them. One of the seller-consultant's main task is to be able to listen attentively and if necessary to answer questions of the potential consumers.

Among main criteria, by which respondents distinguish the person, who is more attentive to them, clear and comprehensive answers for their questions concerning mobile phone and peculiarities of its usage (fig. 6) are main factors. Respondents prefer male sellers by these factors. As for women, their skill to take interest to conversation prevails. They easy and relaxed communicate with clients via friendly conversation, providing them with necessary information.



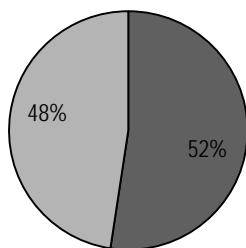
■ Men □ Women ■ Difficult to answer

Figure 3 – Purchasers' idea concerning the fact of what gender an ideal seller must be (formed by authors)



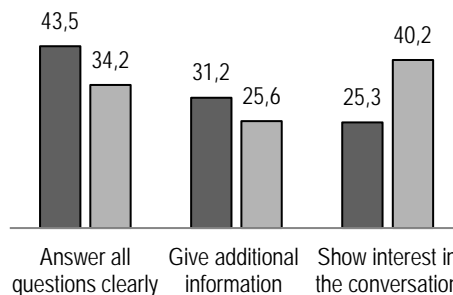
■ Men □ Women ■ Difficult to answer

Figure 4 – Pleasant communication (formed by authors)



■ Men □ Women

Figure 5 – Attentive attitude (formed by authors)



■ Men □ Women

Figure 6 – Factors, which characterizes attention (formed by authors)

Searching of information about possible variants while planning the purchase, most respondents conduct it in Internet, although they mostly got used to buy goods in a simple shop of mobile phones (fig. 7). Besides, respondents trust both friends' minds and workers-consultants' opinions in the same way. Accordingly, it is important for seller-consultant to be able to give the purchaser necessary information about main features of production and accessories, to argue necessity to pay attention to some models of mobile phones, to dispel purchaser's doubts etc.

In respondents' opinion, a male seller-consultant is a leader in main features and recommendations concerning mobile phone usage (fig. 8) One expected such an idea, because, as for technical devices, men have more credibility, they a priori are supposed to be the most skilled in this question.

The results of analysis prove that there are essential differences in various gender consumers' perception. It is logically that among sellers-consultants of mobile phones in the studied shops, most of them are men. Due to the carried out research, male sellers influence the purchasers' consumption choice of mobile phones and prevail. However, according to data of the fig. 6, female sellers show more interest in communication with purchasers. Besides, most purchasers mentioned that it is better to communicate with female sellers (fig. 4); female sellers are more interested in communication with

customers (fig. 6). In this context, part of the sellers' personnel has to include women. It is necessary to distinguish roles, which male and female sellers must play.

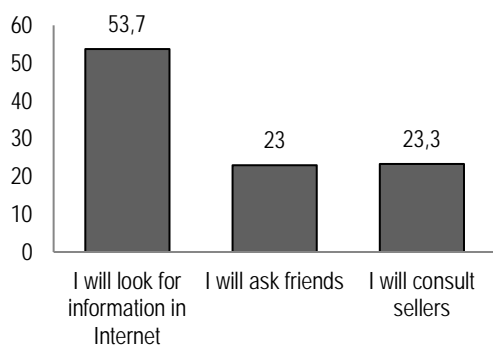


Figure 7 – Sources of information about features of mobile phones (formed by authors)

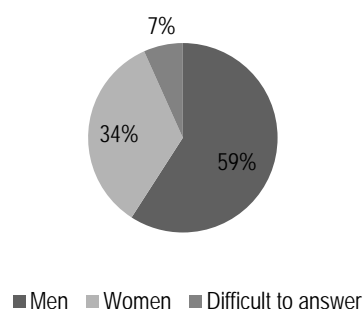


Figure 8 – Seller of which gender give information in detail (formed by authors)

According to results of the above material, the profile of the mobile phones seller has been formed (table 1). He characterizes a way how purchasers perceive sellers (men and women) and in fact it shows their views concerning the best one from seller's gender positions. It should be mentioned that there will be another profile for other goods (product groups).

Table 1 – Seller's profile of mobile phones according to purchasers' ideas (formed by authors)

Feature	Man	Woman
Idea about the gender of an "ideal" seller	*	
Pleasant communication		
Attentive attitude, including:		
- clear answers;	*	
- provision with additional information;	*	
- showing of interest in conversation	*	
Information representation in more detail	*	

It should be mentioned, that there is some difference of goods (items and services), and of their sellers by gender feature [2], i.e., building materials, bench-work tools, cars etc. are sold mainly by men. At the same time, cosmetics, ladies' underwear, most food are sold by women. Besides, there are some stereotypes in families concerning the problem, who (man or woman) buys some types of goods and how he or she behaves in the buying process: most consumption expenditures are made by women (the practice shows that it is 80%). In comparison with men, women are more sensitive to the price reducing, they visit great deal of shops and compare goods and their prices; as for men, they are less inclined to ask a seller for help, they are not inclined to stand in queue etc. However nowadays traditional ideas about men's and females' roles are being changed, particularly in the European culture: there are less professions which are mostly male or female ones; men's and women's functions are changed in families, including those ones, related to the consumption behavior etc. It updates conduct of the research, presented in this article.

Conclusions and directions for further research. The results of the study confirm hypothesis concerning seller's gender impact on purchaser's consumption behavior. By the example of mobile phones shops authors define the character of female and male sellers' perception by purchasers. The received results prove that purchasers prefer male sellers, as more qualified in questions concerning peculiarities of mobile phones functioning, which are complex electronic devices. Although they mention that, it is more pleasant to communicate with female sellers. They confirm that male sellers are more attentive in general, than female sellers. Men answer questions clearly and are better understood, provide purchasers with additional information. They also present information about phones in more detail and peculiarities of their exploitation. However, women are more interested in conversation. They have to complement each other: male sellers have to provide purchasers with technical, logically structured information; female sellers have to play with emotions. It means that it is necessary to employ representatives of both genders to the sellers' personnel of mobile phones at the trade enterprises. They will play different functions, achieving the general aim – to satisfy consumers' needs and demands largely than competitors do. Finally, it will let to increase sales and profit amounts, to strengthen market positions of the trade enterprise etc. The problem to define an optimal ratio of male and female sellers has to be solved separately for every shop, taking into account production, which it realizes, features of consumers etc.

The received results can be used as methodic tool while forming staff of sellers, defining and distinguishing their functions and roles, forming measures of marketing communication system, developing communicative requests to consumers etc. Further studies have to be oriented to investigate gender peculiarities of the buy and sell processes of various productions. It will let to form and to ground recommendations concerning staff schedule of sellers from concrete trade enterprises in view of their gender considering the production type and its use (implementation) peculiarities.

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Вплив статі продавця на споживчу поведінку покупця

У статті викладено результати досліджень, які доводять вплив статі продавця на купівельну поведінку покупця. Визначено основні фактори, що впливають на взаємодію покупців і продавців різної статі у процесі купівлі-продажу. Серед них виділено: уявлення про стать ідеального продавця, приємність спілкування з продавцем, уважливість ставлення (чіткість і зрозумілість відповіді на поставлені запитання, надання розширеної інформації, прояв

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зацікавленості у розмові), детальне висвітлення потрібної для покупця інформації тощо. Результати проведених досліджень можуть бути використані як методична допомога при формуванні штату продавців, визначенні і розподілу їх функцій і ролей тощо.

Ключові слова: підприємства торгівлі, купівля-продаж, гендерний фактор, взаємодія продавця і покупця, управління штатом продавців.

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Влияние пола продавца на покупательское поведение потребителя

В статье изложены результаты исследований, которые доказывают влияние пола продавца на покупательское поведение потребителя. Определены основные факторы, которые влияют на взаимодействие покупателей и продавцов различного пола в процессе покупки-продажи. Среди них выделены: представление о поле идеального продавца, приятность общения с продавцом, внимательное отношение (четкость и понятность ответа на поставленные вопросы, предоставление расширенной информации, проявление заинтересованности в разговоре), детальное освещение необходимой для покупателя информации и т. п. Результаты приведенных исследований могут быть использованы как методическая помощь при формировании штата продавцов, определении и распределении их функций и т. д.

Ключевые слова: предприятия торговли, покупка-продажа, гендерный фактор, взаимодействие продавца и покупателя, управление штатом продавцов.

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