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ORGANIZATION OF A CUSTOMER SERVICE SYSTEM IN TRADE ORGANIZATIONS

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The purpose of the textbook on "Organization of a customer service system in trade organizations" is to study the basics of forming a customer service system in modern trade. The textbook is intended for students in such fields of study as 38.03.06 "trading business" and 38.04.06 "trading business" as part of bachelor's and master's programs.

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Introduction

The purpose of the textbook on "Organization of a customer service system in trade organizations" is to study the basics of forming a customer service system in modern trade. When forming a service system, a large role is given to both probabilistic characteristics and directly to consumer behavior.

The unevenness of the customer flow in trade organizations is one of the problems of the trade business. It depends on many factors: on the type of trade organization, on time, seasonality, on subjective and objective reasons that depend on the buyer.

For a successful even distribution of the customer flow, schedules are drawn up in which it is possible to approximately calculate the attendance of the store by customers, and peak hours, where it is necessary to concentrate all attention and use the necessary additional resources of the organization.

There are a number of factors that depend on the economic and political situation in the country, on the actions of a trade organization, on new products that the organization offers, and others. One example of such a situation is a store that sells only designer clothes of its own particular brand. These stores target specific market segments.

Customer behavior is the activity directly involved in the acquisition and consumption of products and services, including the decision-making processes that precede and follow this activity.

The behavior of buyers is influenced by two types of motivating factors. Marketing motivators include four elements:

product, price, product distribution methods, and sales promotion methods. Other stimuli are composed of the main forces and events from the buyer's environment, economic, scientific, technical, political, and cultural environment. Having passed through the "black box" of the buyer's consciousness, all these stimuli cause a number of observable consumer reactions: the choice of a product, the choice of a brand, the choice of a trading company, the choice of the time of purchase, the choice of the purchase volume.

The task of the market leader is to understand what happens in the "black box" of the consumer's consciousness between the arrival of stimuli and the manifestation of responses to them. The "black box" itself consists of two parts. The first part is the characteristics of the buyer that influence how a person perceives and reacts to stimuli. The second part is the process of making a purchasing decision, on which the result depends.

The characteristics of the buyer are formed under the influence of both external and internal factors. External factors include factors of cultural influence: culture, subculture, social status, and social factors: reference groups, family, roles, and statuses. Internal factors include, first of all, personal factors: age, gender, marital status, stage of the family life cycle, occupation, economic status, lifestyle, personality type, and a person's self-image. The second group of internal factors consists of psychological factors: motivation, perception, assimilation, beliefs, and attitudes.

1. Irregularity of the buyer flow in trade

The unevenness of the customer flow in trade organizations is one of the problems of the trade business. It depends on many factors: on the type of trade organization, on time, seasonality, on subjective and objective reasons that depend on the buyer.

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The seasonality of the range of goods sold also has a strong influence on the unevenness of customer flows. It should be noted that not only the number of buyers directly affects the unevenness of the customer flow, but also the time of their service.

When selling social goods, discounts are often applied, depending on the time of purchase. This allows you to reduce the flow of customers during peak hours, making it fairly uniform throughout the day.

Also, the unevenness of the customer flow is affected by one-time large discounts that are organized around the world. It is on these days that people are more willing to buy goods, even if they do not need it. During the time of large discounts, which last from 1 to 5 days, some trade organizations receive more revenue than from several months of normal operation of the store. Like, for example, “Black Friday” is a day of big discounts on a different range of goods in many stores, from retail chains to online stores. This concept, “Black Friday”, appeared on the Russian market relatively recently and is gaining momentum every year. And if traditional stores allow, in the event of an increase in customer flow, an increase in service time, then in Internet commerce, delivery of goods must be carried out just in time. On the other hand, such a business model only requires an increase in labor resources, while for traditional trade, the problem will be the lack of adequate space.

For a more even flow of customers, the basics of merchandising are applied. The layout occupies an important position in trade. There are a number of ways to attract attention and evenly distribute the flow of buyers. As an example, for interest and quick adaptation on the trading floor, near the entrance, you can carry out a promotional display with goods on sale. With such a move, it can be predicted that the client is most likely to buy a product at a discount, since at the entrance he will immediately pay attention to these products at a discount. The product being sold can be put on an attention-grabbing shelf, immediately perceptible to the human eye, you can make a discount on it by marking it with a bright price tag, or attach a gift to this product. Thus, a customer is more likely to buy a product using the above display methods than if the same product were on the shelf on a par with others. Also, when building and developing a store plan, it is necessary to take into account the location of product groups, as this affects purchasing power. In almost every retail chain, a method of controlling the flow of customers is used.

A classic example of such a situation is the purchase of everyday essentials. Bakery products are usually laid out at the end of the trading floor, which encourages the consumer to buy goods from other product groups.

Increasing loyalty by organizing discounts, charity events, holding holidays, competitions, introducing discount and accumulation cards directly affect the uniformity of the customer flow in trade organizations.

The unevenness of the customer flow can also be solved by opening cash desks, for better and faster provision of services to the population, before that, of course, having calculated all the costs of servicing cash desks and losses from lost customers. But the way queuing itself also has great potential. Currently, the opening of express service cash desks is popular. Such cash desks, although they increase the average length of the queue, nevertheless, lead to a decrease in the waiting time for buyers with a small number of purchases and have a positive effect on the efficiency of the economic activity of the trade organization as a whole. Another way to reduce the length of the queue is to organize a common queue into several cash desks.

2. The problem of choosing the optimal size of the cash node of a retail store

The task of determining the size of the cash node of the store is important in modern trade. An increase in the size of the cash point leads to an increase in the cost of staff training and an increase in the payroll fund, as well as to inefficient use of the area. Reducing the size of the cash node leads to an increase in queues, a decrease in the quality of service.

In the classical theory, the number of cash desks is determined primarily based on the area of the store's trading floor. However, a large number of factors influence the size of a store's checkout unit.

The various assortment of goods sold by a trade organization is characterized by both the average service time and its different variability. From the point of view of optimizing the number of cash registers, it is the variability of service time, aggravated by the variability of the flow of customers, that has a negative impact on the economic activity of trade organizations. The increase in the variability of customer flows leads to a decrease in the average load factor of the cash desk, while the queues themselves and, accordingly, the outflow of customers will be higher.

An important factor is the positioning of the store. Obviously, premium segment stores have very different requirements for the quality of service. In such stores, the occurrence of large queues is unacceptable, while the service time for one customer is quite high. The friendly attitude of the cashier, the answers to all the questions of the buyer lead to an improvement in the image of the store, but only in the absence of queues. Of course, the flow of customers is highly dependent on probabilistic factors, and it is impossible to completely guarantee the absence of queues. In this situation, it is important to increase the comfort level of the customer waiting in line. To this end, the buyer may be offered additional free services and gifts, such as a cup of coffee. An important element in improving the comfort of waiting is the use of an electronic queue system. In economy class stores, the situation is different. In these stores, the main criterion is the level of prices for the goods sold. The very attitude of the buyer to the queues is more loyal. The social function of such stores is also important. These factors determine, first of all, the requirements for reducing the costs of a trade organization.

The efficiency of economic activity, the main indicator of which is undoubtedly profit, is determined by the number of buyers, the income from one buyer and the costs incurred by the trade organization. Thus, the achievement of maximum efficiency is realized by forming a balance between the number of customers who left the store or later refused its services, and the costs of the trade organization. The presence of small queues is also a positive factor for the trade organization. The checkout area is hot, while waiting in line, the buyer can examine the goods offered to him in sufficient detail.

The very way of organizing queues also affects the efficiency of the economic activity of a trade organization. The way of organizing the general queue into several cash desks reduces the average waiting time in the queue, while the fast-moving queue is more positively perceived by customers. Various methods can be used to organize a general queue, from directing customer flows with the help of decorative grilles to organizing an electronic queue system. The electronic queuing system is quite effective in terms of customer comfort, but the costs of its implementation are higher, in addition, the switching time of the system is also higher.

The location of the trading organization has a huge impact on determining the number of cash desks. When a trading organization is located in the zone of influence of transport hubs, the ratio of the buyer to the queue and the probability of the buyer's refusal to purchase is primarily determined by the schedule of vehicles. Moreover, the buyer will evaluate the very possibility of visiting the trade organization, depending on the predicted waiting time in line and the buyer's time availability.

The current trend is the transition to self-service devices for customers. With the introduction of these technologies, there is a saving on maintenance personnel, but at the same time, maintenance time increases, which leads to a loss of usable area. The very same costs for sales personnel are also decreasing, but it is required to increase the security service in order to avoid theft.

The optimization of the flow of customers during the working day has great potential. The development of incentive measures depending on the time of day and the day of the week can be used as a mechanism for such regulation. This will allow leveling the corresponding fluctuations in the customer flow.

Currently, many trade organizations use the system of cash desk differentiation depending on the quantity of goods purchased. This approach leads to an increase in the average queue across the entire sales organization, but at the same time, different buyers will spend different times in the queue. The buyer, who has collected a large assortment of goods, has already spent more time both on the selection of goods and on the road to it. The choice of store is made by the buyer in advance, taking into account a lot of factors. The probability of leaving such a buyer is much lower, but the loss of the store from his departure is also higher. All this leads to the search for a certain compromise between the number of cash desks that allow serving customers with a small number of purchases, and the growth of queues at other cash desks. The dimensions of the checkout node are determined by the optimal maximum flow of customers, at which all cash desks work and the average waiting time for a customer in the queue does not exceed rational indicators. The schedule of cashiers' exit during the working day is determined based on the non-linearity of the flow of customers.

3. Research of behavior of buyers

Customer behavior is the activity directly involved in the acquisition and consumption of products and services, including the decision-making processes that precede and follow this activity.

In order to make informed decisions aimed at stimulating sales in the retail trade, a comprehensive study of the following issues is necessary:

- how do consumers make a purchase decision;
- what factors influence consumers' purchasing decisions;
- how do consumer characteristics and their environment affect purchases;
- who or what has the greatest influence on the purchase decision;
- what criteria are used to select the product and place of purchase?

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For the most part, these factors are beyond the control of market leaders. But they should definitely be taken into account when developing a sales promotion program.

It should be noted that in many cases, the characteristics of buyers are not easy to identify. The behavior of buyers may be search-based and not fit into generally accepted standards. For example, a conservative consumer can initiate the purchase of new products, and on the contrary, the innovator can perceive the model of behavior of the conservative.

Cultural factors have the greatest and most profound influence on consumer behavior.

Culture. Culture is the widely accepted norms and values that are assimilated by society and determine the general norms of behavior. It is the main root cause that determines the needs and behavior of a person.

The concept of culture includes three sets of factors that form a model of culture — a three-dimensional matrix. This matrix represents the totality of a set of cultural values, the material environment and the institutional (social) environment.

A set of cultural values is the totality of all the values that a person has created in the course of their activities. These include material values, which are various objects: books, works of art, buildings and structures, etc. — and the spiritual accumulations of humanity— relationships, knowledge, ideas.

In the material environment, these values can manifest themselves in the form of the economic development of the country, the characteristics of the region, the scientific level, etc.

In the institutional (social) environment, cultural values can manifest themselves in the form of the legal policy of the state, the peculiarities of political activity, the business environment, religious and national characteristics of society.

The strongest influence of culture on the behavior of buyers occurs in the areas of self-perception: this is the definition of yourself, your place, role in the world, awareness of your social status, self-confidence, worldview, assessment of the space in which a person is constantly located, the idea of time, preferences in clothing and appearance, eating habits. Culture also significantly influences relationships in the family, organization, society, values and norms, beliefs, mental processes and learning, work style, and experience.

The teaching and inculcation of cultural values takes place from the birth of a person, when his parents and the people around him inculcate existing and assumed values from day to day. Culture does not contain instincts, but it affects how they are satisfied. Cultural values determine the direction of consumer behavior, as a result of which sometimes the individual's own needs and needs can take a back seat.

Culture most often acts as a kind of limiter of needs and ways to meet them. Often, under the influence of cultural values, traditions, and customs, people are forced to leave their needs not fully satisfied. This is because values are fairly well-established beliefs, ideas that the consumer accepts over a long period of their life. On the other hand, the values of any person can change, acquiring a new form.

There is a link between cultural values and consumption goals. The importance of culture and cultural values in consumer behavior and its dynamic development have led to the need for research on their nature. Currently, two research methods are widely used: the method of inventory of cultural values and the method of interviewing respondents.

In accordance with the first method, all possible values that can prevail in the consumer in the process of purchasing a product are described and studied. Taking into account the analysis of each of the studied values, a strategy is formed for each product relative to this value. Usually, there are 8 basic values that prevail in the modern buyer:

– self-realization, success, growth;
– emotional arousal;
– a sense of achievement;
– self-esteem, self-esteem growth;
– a sense of belonging, connection, communication;
– respect by other people;

– emotional and physical security;
– fun, joy, a pleasant pastime.

When using the second method, special marketing research is conducted to identify the structure of consumer values, as well as the dynamics of their changes. Respondents (the interviewed) can be either specially selected people who fit a certain market segment, or random people who are interviewed directly at stores or on the street.

Culture influences all human activities. There is a culture of work and life, an economic and social culture, a culture of family relations, etc.

One of the types of culture is the culture of consumption — this is the prevailing form of use of the entire set of consumer goods by the members of a given society. It includes beliefs about consumer values and norms that regulate consumption and consumer habits that arise from the constant consumption of goods, consumer rights and obligations.

Consumer culture has objective and subjective aspects.The objective aspect of the consumer culture includes the characteristics of the product, the conditions of its purchase, sale, i.e. what exists independently of the consumer. The subjective aspect reflects the individual's attitude to the product and its properties, how a person perceives the product and remakes it to suit his taste.

The culture of consumption is not sustainable. It is in a constant process of change and reproduction. The dynamics of consumer culture is manifested in the rapid change of preferences, fashion, consumer basket, in the form of their presentation and interpretation (often prestigious things quickly become old-fashioned, etc.).

The rationing of consumer culture consists of certain parts, such as:

- norms — rules and patterns of behavior dictated to a person by the prevailing culture in his society;
- ideals — desirable norms that are admired, but not available in the present and near future;
- samples — patterns of behavior that are recommended to the buyer as the most desirable;
- law — a set of norms and patterns of behavior, enshrined in legislative acts. For violation of rights, there is a liability, also stipulated by law.

Subculture.In addition to the general culture that is common to most members of society, there are also subcultures in any social association of people. A subculture is the culture of a large group of people who belong to a larger social group. Subculture is different from culture. Subcultural differences in the modern world are determined by various factors: ethnicity, religious preferences, occupation, region, gender, age, social-class factors, etc.

A subculture may coincide in some views with the main culture, such subcultures are called supportive. There are also subcultures, the values of which are opposed to the values of the main cultures, these subcultures are called counterculture. Sociologists believe that the term “counterculture” refers to a subculture that not only differs in its values from those of the dominant culture, but also challenges it, thereby provoking a culture war. Recently, in many cases, members of society are suspicious of the subculture, because they do not know what to expect from it. If, with the help of subcultures, a person can perceive and express the basic values of society in different ways, then the counterculture speaks of an individual contradiction and rejection of the samples of the main culture of society. The desire to accept the values of the counterculture arises in the individual as a result of the negative experience of following the patterns of the dominant cultures. At the same time, it is worth noting that conflicting values of the counterculture can cause long-term disagreements in society. Sometimes the values of the counterculture penetrate the mainstream culture through the media and become part of the culture itself. At the same time, the impact on the dominant culture can be both positive and negative. For the purposes of sales promotion, the study of subcultures common in the occupied market is important, since their neglect can cause not only their disregard by representatives of individual products or trading enterprises, but also open dissatisfaction.

Social status. In almost every society, there are different social (social) classes — relatively stable groups within society, characterized by the presence of their members of similar values, interests and behaviors based on their economic situation. A social class is determined not on the basis of a single variable, but on the basis of occupation, income, education, value orientation, and similar characteristics of its members, and there is always the possibility of switching from one class to another.

Individuals belonging to the same class tend to behave in much the same way. They are characterized by general preferences of goods, brands in clothing, household supplies, leisure activities, cars.

Social class influences people's opinions about how they should shop. People from the lower classes usually prefer local familiar shops. Upper- and middle-class consumers are more confident in their purchasing abilities, they can go shopping in unfamiliar places and are ready to search the entire store to find the right thing.

Because social classes exhibit different patterns of consumption, they constitute natural market segments. Therefore, some market leaders focus their efforts on a single social class. The target social class assumes a certain type of store in which the product should be sold, the choice of certain means of dissemination of information for its advertising, and a certain type of sales promotion activities.

Reference groups. Numerous reference groups have a particularly strong influence on human behavior. Reference groups are groups that have a direct (i.e. personal contact) or indirect influence on a person's relationships or behavior.

Groups that have a direct influence on a person are called membership groups. These are the groups that the individual belongs to and interacts with. Some of these collectives are primary, and interaction with them occurs regularly. These are family, friends, neighbors, and work colleagues. Primary collectives are often informal. In addition, a person belongs to a number of secondary collectives, which, as a rule, are more formal, and interaction with which is not permanent. These are various kinds of public organizations, religious associations, professional associations and trade unions, etc.

Primary groups are usually the most influential ones. They are rather small social formations and are characterized by cohesion and motivated participation in joint activities. Members of such a group exhibit similar beliefs and behaviors.

The individual is also influenced by groups to which he does not belong. They can be desirable — a group to which a person wants or strives to belong, and undesirable — a group, the values and behavior of which the individual does not accept.

It is advisable for market participants to identify all the reference groups of the specific market in which they sell their products. Reference groups influence people in at least three ways. First, the individual is confronted with new behaviors and lifestyles. Second, the group affects the individual's attitude and self-image, as he tends to "fit in" with the group. And third, the group pushes the individual to conform, that is, to conform to some recognized or required standard, which can affect their choice of specific products and brands.

Family. A strong influence on the behavior of the buyer can be exerted by his family members. The family in which a person is born is called the guiding (orienting) family. Here a person receives instructions about religion, politics, economics, ambition, self-respect, love. Even when the buyer no longer interacts closely with their parents, their influence on their unconscious behavior can still be very significant. In countries where parents and children continue to live together, parental influence can be decisive.

A more direct influence on everyday purchasing behavior is exerted by the individual's generated family, i.e., his spouse and children.

The family is the most important consumer purchasing organization in society, and it is subjected to a comprehensive study. Market leaders are interested in the roles of husband, wife, children, and the influence that each of them has on the purchase of a variety of goods and services.

The family has an important social or group influence on individual shopping decisions. This influence manifests itself mainly in two areas. First of all, the stage (stage) of the family life cycle, being already a personal (internal) factor, as shown in Figure 2, determines to a large extent the nature of purchases made by its members. Demographic factors of age, marital status, and having children play an important role in shaping individual and joint shopping behavior. These issues are discussed in detail in the next section. In addition, the family often acts as one of the most influential reference groups for the consumer, exerting normative, comparative, and informational influence on them.

Roles and statuses. An individual is a member of many social groups. In any social group, a person occupies a certain position (a salesman, an engineer, a manager is a professional position; a member of a political party is a social and political position; a young man, a child, a father, a son, etc.). Any position implies the presence of others associated with it (director-subordinates), and, consequently, the presence of relationships. The normative system of actions expected of an individual in accordance with his social position is called the role. Thus, the role to a certain extent does not depend on the individual characteristics of a person, but is determined by his place in the structure of relations.

Each role has a certain status that reflects the degree of positive evaluation of it by society. A person often chooses products that speak about his status in society. So, the company's presidents drive Mercedes or Cadillac cars, wear expensive, beautifully tailored suits. Market leaders are aware of the potential for turning goods into status symbols, but it should be remembered that such symbols differ significantly not only for different social classes, but also for different geographical areas.

Age and stage of the family life cycle. With age, there are changes in the range and nomenclature of goods and services purchased by people. In the first years, a person needs products for baby food. In the years of growing up and maturity, a person eats a wide variety of foods, in old age — special dietary ones. Over the years, a person's tastes in clothing, furniture, recreation, and entertainment have also changed.

As mentioned above, the nature of consumption also depends on the stage of the family life cycle. There are the following main stages of the family life cycle:

- young singles — earnings are relatively small, but the need for goods is also small, so there are some amounts of free money left. These people are focused on fashion and leisure, spending a significant portion of their income on clothing and vacations.
- young couples — young couples without children are usually in a better position compared to the previous stage, because there are two sources of income. They account for the maximum number of purchases, and in particular durable goods: furniture, household appliances, cars.
- young parents — the appearance of the first child significantly changes the structure of spending and consumption.
- mature families — the structure of consumption still largely depends on children, significant amounts are spent on their education. At the same time, with the growth of parents' income, it becomes possible to replace durable items, purchase luxury items.
- older households — in adulthood, people usually follow the usual pattern of consumption or reduce it due to

a decrease in income. More money is spent on medical care and recreation.

Economic situation. The economic situation of an individual greatly affects his choice of goods. It is determined by the size of the expenditure part of income, the size of savings and assets, creditworthiness, and views on spending funds as opposed to their accumulation.

Lifestyle. Individuals belonging to the same subculture, the same social class, and even the same occupation may lead completely different lifestyles. Lifestyle — the established forms of human existence in the world, which find their expression in their activities, interests and beliefs.

Lifestyle draws a "comprehensive portrait" of a person and their interaction with the environment. It shows more than the fact of belonging to a certain social class or type of personality. Knowing that a person belongs to a particular social class, we are ready to draw certain conclusions about his intended intention, but we cannot imagine him as an individual. Knowing a person's personality type, we can draw certain conclusions about their distinctive psychological characteristics, but we are unlikely to learn much about their activities, interests, and beliefs. And only the way of life will draw us an exhaustive portrait of a person in his actions and interaction with the world around him.

Personality type and self-image. Each person has a very specific type of personality that influences their buying behavior. Personality type — a set of distinctive psychological characteristics of a person that ensure the relative consistency and constancy of his responses to the environment.

The personality type is usually described on the basis of such individual traits as self-confidence, alertness, influence, attachment, independence, aggressiveness, fickleness, restraint, deference, love of power, sociability, love of order, adaptability. In addition, each person has an idea of himself, i.e. a mental image of himself.

Knowing the type of personality can be useful in analyzing consumer behavior, when there is a certain relationship between the types of personalities and the choice of products or brands. Market leaders should strive to create an image of a product or trading enterprise that corresponds to the images of their own "I" of the target market members.

Motivation. At any given time, a person experiences many different needs. Some of them have a biogenic nature, i.e. they are the consequences of such states of internal physiological tension as hunger, thirst, and discomfort. Others are psychogenic, i.e. they are the results of such states of internal mental tension as the need for recognition, respect, and spiritual closeness. Most of these needs are not intense enough to motivate a person to perform an action at any given time. A need that has reached a sufficiently high level of intensity becomes a motive.

Motive (or motion) — a need that has become so urgent that it forces a person to look for ways and means to satisfy it. Satisfaction of the need reduces the internal tension experienced by the individual.

Psychologists have developed a number of theories of human motivation. The most popular of them are the theory of Sigmund Freud and the theory of Abraham Maslow.

Freud believed that people are mostly unaware of the real psychological forces that shape their behavior, that a person grows, while suppressing a lot of drives. These drives never completely disappear and are never completely under control.

Thus, a person does not fully understand the origins of their own motivation.

Abraham Maslow believes that human needs are arranged in order of hierarchical importance from the most to the least urgent. According to the degree of importance, the needs are arranged in the following order: physiological needs, self-preservation needs, social needs, needs for respect and needs for self-affirmation. A person will strive to meet first of all the most important needs. As soon as he manages to satisfy some important need, it temporarily ceases to be a driving motive. At the same time, there is an incentive to satisfy the next most important need. For example, a starving person is not interested in events taking place in the world of art and politics. As the next most important need is met, the next one comes to the fore.

Perception. A motivated person is ready for action. The nature of his actions depends on how he perceives the situation. Any stimulus is known through sensations, i.e. through the flow of information that affects the senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. However, everyone organizes and interprets this sensory information in their own way, so different people, being equally motivated, can act differently in the same objective situation, because they perceive this situation differently.

Perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets incoming information to create a meaningful picture of the world around them.

Perception depends not only on the nature of the physical stimuli, but also on the relationship of these stimuli to the environment and the individual. People may have different responses to the same stimulus due to selective perception, selective distortion, and selective memorization.

Selective perception means that consumers may perceive the same information differently due to different needs, motivations, and experiences. The individual is simply unable to respond to all stimuli. A person weeds out most of them. People are more likely to notice stimuli:

– related to their current needs,
– the ones they expect,
– sharply different in some of their values from the usual ones.

Selective distortion. Even the stimuli noticed by the consumer are not necessarily perceived by them as it was intended by the sender. Each person strives to fit the incoming information into the framework of their existing opinions. Selective distortion refers to the tendency of people to transform information, giving it personal significance. At the same time, people tend to interpret information in such a way that it supports, rather than challenges, their established ideas and judgments.

Selective memorization. Much of what a person learns is simply forgotten. People tend to remember only information that supports their attitudes and beliefs.

Assimilation. A person learns knowledge in the process of activity. Assimilation is the process and result of cognitive activity-the acquisition of knowledge, competences, skills. Under the influence of accumulated experience, certain changes occur in the behavior of the individual.

In the process of assimilation, two directions can be distinguished: generalization and the establishment of differences.

Generalization is a form of increasing the volume of knowledge by mentally moving from the particular to the general. It is carried out by comparing a group of objects (or representations of them) and identifying their identical, repetitive or common properties

The opposite of the generalization process is the process of making distinctions. Establishing differences means that a person has learned to recognize differences in sets of stimuli and can make appropriate changes in their response.

Beliefs and attitudes. Through actions and assimilation, a person acquires beliefs and attitudes. And they, in turn, influence his buying behavior.

A belief is an individual's mental characterization of something. Beliefs can be based on real knowledge, opinions, or just faith. They may or may not be accompanied by an emotional charge and are the basis of relationships and further actions.

Attitude — a stable favorable or unfavorable assessment of an individual of an object or idea, the feelings experienced towards them, and the direction of possible actions, formed on the basis of existing knowledge and beliefs.

Relationships allow an individual to behave relatively stably in relation to objects that are similar to each other. A person does not have to re-interpret something, and each time react in a new way. Relationships allow you to save physical and mental energy. That is why they are difficult to change. The various relationships of an individual form a logically coherent structure, in which changing one element may require complex adjustment of many others.

Thus, the final choice of an individual is the result of a complex interaction of factors of a cultural, social, personal, and psychological nature. Many of these factors are not influenced by the market actor. However, knowing them is useful for identifying buyers with an increased interest in the product. Other factors are influenced by the market leader and suggest to him the most effective ways to stimulate sales, allowing to cause the strongest response from buyers.

4. The process of making a purchase decision

Consider the stages that the buyer overcomes on the way to making a purchase decision. There are six main stages that the consumer goes through: awareness of the need, search for information, evaluation of options, purchase, consumption, and evaluation of alternatives after consumption (Figure 3). It follows from this that the purchase process begins long before the act of purchase and sale, and its consequences are manifested for a long time after the commission of this act.

Let's look at these steps in more detail.

Awareness of the need. The purchase process begins when the buyer is aware of the problem or need, i.e. the difference between the real and desired state. There are two types of needs: functional and psychological. Functional (rational) needs are directly related to the physical characteristics of the product (refrigerator for storing food, hair dryer for styling hair). Psychological (emotional) are associated with personal satisfaction from the process of buying and owning a product.

The need can be aroused both by internal motivational factors (hunger, thirst, occupation, desire to increase prestige, etc.), and by external factors (family, reference group, etc.). A certain role in the awareness of the need is played by the specific situation in which the buyer is located. In addition, the need may arise under the influence of marketing incentives (the type of a particular product, sales promotion measures, etc.), as well as other sources of information, but in this case, contact with the product or a source of information about the product is necessary, as shown in Figure 3.

At this stage, the market leader needs to identify the circumstances that usually push a person to realize the need. It is necessary to determine: what tangible needs or problems have arisen, what is the reason for their occurrence, how they led a person to a specific product. By collecting detailed information, the market leader is able to identify the stimuli that most often attract the individual's interest in the product. After that, you can develop marketing plans using the identified stimuli.

Search for information. When the awareness of the need has occurred, the consumer can look for ways to meet it. If the urge is strong, and the product that can satisfy it is easily available, the consumer can make a purchase. If not, then the need will most likely just be deposited in his memory.

The search can be internal or external in nature. Internal search is the extraction of information from memory. The process of storing information goes through the following stages:

Contact. First of all, the consumer should pay attention to the information. As soon as the information is received, its initial processing begins.

Attention is the selective orientation of perception to a particular object. It is activated when the information is of interest to a person, i.e. under the influence of memory.

Understanding. If attention is attracted, the information received is mentally analyzed and compared with the information stored in memory, and as a result, understanding arises.

Acceptance. As a result of understanding, information can be rejected (and forgotten) or accepted and stored in memory, and later used in internal search.

In addition to information obtained from various external sources, a person's memory stores previously realized, but not realized needs and information about the degree of satisfaction with the previous purchase of similar goods. All this serves as the basis for internal search.

If the internal search results in sufficient information, the external search is not required. If the internal search did not give a final result, the consumer begins to collect additional information. Various sources can be used for this purpose:

- personal sources — family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances;
- mass media;
- commercial sources — advertising, exhibitions, etc.;
- sources of empirical experience — touch, study, use of goods.

The relative influence of these sources of information varies depending on the product category and the characteristics of the buyer. The consumer receives the most information about the product, as a rule, from commercial sources, and the most effective are usually personal sources.

The intensity of the external search depends on the strength of the motivation, the amount of initial information available to the buyer, the ease of collecting additional information, the value value that the buyer attaches to the additional information, and the satisfaction that he receives from the search process.

Pre-purchase evaluation of options. As a result of the collection of information, the consumer is more aware of the brands of goods available on the market and their properties and places of purchase, and additional information helps to filter out a number of options from among the considered ones.

At this stage, the buyer forms a set of criteria, i.e. specific indicators, by which the options will be compared. Such criteria can be various indicators of the quality of the product, price, prestige and status, satisfaction from the ownership of the product, etc. An important criterion is often the brand of the product. A special group consists of criteria related to the place of purchase: the location of the enterprise, the level of service, satisfaction with previously made purchases, etc.

Obviously, the number of criteria and the degree of their significance will be different for different products and for different buyers. As in the search process, various external and internal factors will play a big role here: the attitude of other people, family budget, lifestyle, psychological factors, as well as the buyer's interest — as a rule, the higher the interest, the greater the number of criteria.

As a result of comparing the options according to the selected criteria, some of the original options will be discarded. The remaining options that meet the consumer's purchasing criteria make up the *selection set* from which the final choice will be made.

The complexity of evaluating options before buying largely depends on what the consumer's goals are. In particular, when making a decision is habitual, the evaluation stage may simply consist in forming an intention to buy the same product as before. Sometimes evaluating alternatives before buying is much more difficult, especially when buying expensive durable goods.

The intention to make a purchase is also influenced by unforeseen factors of the situation which can occur suddenly and change the intention to make a purchase at the very moment when the consumer was ready for action.

Purchase. At this stage, the transaction is processed, including payment for the goods and their receipt by the buyer.

Consumption. The act of buying is usually followed by consumption or use. In this case, the consumer can vary the time of use as follows:

– use at the first opportunity;
– short-term deferral for later use;
– long-term storage with the expectation of using the product in a special case.

In the behavior of the buyer after the purchase, the market leader should be interested in one more step, namely: what will the consumer, in the end, do with his product? If the consumer adapts the product for use in some new purposes, the seller should be interested, since these goals can be beaten in advertising. If consumers reserve a product, use it little or get rid of it, it means that they are not very satisfied with the product and that the favorable rumor in its favor will not be very active. Equally interesting is how the consumer eventually gets rid of the product. If he sells it or makes a trade deal with it, it will reduce the volume of sales of new products. Given all this, the seller needs to study how exactly the product is used and how to get rid of it, in order to find answers to possible problems and opportunities.

Reaction to the purchase. After buying a product, the consumer will be either satisfied or dissatisfied with it. He will have a number of reactions to the purchase, which are of interest to the market leader.

The degree of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the purchase depends on the relationship between the consumer's expectations and the perceived properties of the product. If the product meets the expectations, the consumer is satisfied, if it exceeds them, the consumer is very satisfied, if it does not meet them, the consumer is dissatisfied. The same applies to the place of purchase of the product. The relevant information is stored in the buyer's memory.

If the seller exaggerates the performance characteristics of the product, the consumer will have too high expectations, which will result in disappointment. It follows that the seller must make such statements in favor of the product that would reliably reflect its properties.

Common to all consumers after a purchase is a feeling of some anxiety, which is called cognitive dissonance. This is because choosing one product often involves rejecting the attractive features of other products.

The feeling of discomfort usually increases in the following situations:

- expensive purchase;
- the decision is difficult (the presence of a large number of alternatives or criteria, each option contains advantages that are not present in the other options);
- the solution does not involve alternatives;
- the buyer, by virtue of his nature, is prone to anxiety when purchasing goods.

Post-purchase dissonance can lead to a refusal to re-purchase, a loss of the buyer's commitment to the brand, or a loss of loyalty to the merchant.

Actions after purchase. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product will affect the subsequent behavior of the consumer. In the case of satisfaction, the consumer is inclined to share favorable reviews about the product or trade enterprise with other people. An unsatisfied consumer reacts differently. He may refuse to use the product, return it to the seller, or try to find some favorable information about the object of purchase. Dissatisfied consumers have a choice of actions or inaction. They can send a complaint to the firm, contact a lawyer, or contact some groups that may be able to help the buyer achieve satisfaction. In addition, he may simply stop purchasing this product or visiting this trading company in the future, as well as express his unfavorable impression of it to friends and other persons.

Not every purchase requires the consumer to go through all the stages. When making everyday purchases, some steps may be skipped. Thus, when purchasing a brand of toothpaste that is familiar to them, the buyer immediately makes a decision about the purchase after realizing the problem, skipping the stages of collecting information and evaluating options. However, to understand the reasons and the nature of the behavior of buyers, it is necessary to consider all the stages, because they reflect all the considerations that arise in the purchase process, especially when the consumer is faced with a new situation.

In order to correctly influence the behavior of consumers, it is necessary to know in advance what kind of purchase is mainly made by consumers of a certain market segment. To do this, you need to consider the features of each type of purchase.

Initial purchase. If a person has an unsatisfied need for a particular product for the first time, they will most likely start actively searching for information about this product. This will be an external search, i.e. studying the advertising offers of various companies, seeking advice from friends, relatives, acquaintances, and an internal search-referring to past experiences, analyzing associations that have surfaced in memory associated with a similar or given product, or even listening to your intuition.

Repeat purchasing, as a rule, is not characterized by high consumer loyalty. If a consumer comes for a second time to buy a product, this does not mean that he will buy the same product as the first time, and in the same trading enterprise. If the satisfaction with the first product was high, then it is likely, of course, that a second purchase of the same product will be made. However, if this product is not on the shelf, a consumer can switch to another product.

Impulse purchases differ from the first two types in that they are not planned for the consumer. Such purchases are made for various reasons: limited time to purchase, limited range of products, the impact of sales promotion measures.

The buyer's decision is also influenced by the so-called risk, when he does not have full confidence in all the consequences of the purchase. The risk may be financial for expensive purchases, physical, if the product may somehow affect the health or safety, etc.

Depending on the degree of risk, there are three ways to make a purchase decision:

– A detailed solution to the problem occurs when the upcoming purchase involves a significant amount of risk, as well as if the buyer does not have enough knowledge about the product or the product must meet an important need. In this case, the buyer is strongly involved in the purchase process, visits several retail outlets, and spends a lot of time and effort searching for information and evaluating alternatives.
– Limited solution to the problem — the buyer is familiar with the product to some extent, the risk associated with the purchase of the product is moderate. In this case, cus-

tomers usually choose familiar stores and products of familiar brands. One of the main ways to solve the problem is impulse buying.

– The usual decision-making is carried out on the principle of “I will buy the same thing as last time in the same store.” The risk is minimal, no search for information or evaluation of alternatives is carried out. An example of this approach is loyalty to a brand and a store, the degree of which can be influenced by the convenience of the location, the breadth of the assortment, various discount systems, etc.

The degree of the expected risk depends, among other things, on the completeness of the available information, so to reduce the risk, the consumer can abandon the decision and try to get additional information.

Understanding the needs of the consumer and the purchase process is the basis for the successful operation of a trading company. By finding out how consumers overcome the stages of problem awareness, searching for information, evaluating options and making a purchase decision, as well as their reaction to the purchase, a market leader can collect a lot of information about how to better meet the needs of their customers. After understanding the various participants in the purchase process and understanding what has the main impact on their buying behavior, the market leader will be able to develop an effective program to support their attractive offer addressed to the target market.

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