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THE INFLUENCE OF LOGISTICS AND WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY ON THE E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN'S RETAIL ENTERPRISE

The proliferation of the Internet, as well as its utilization as a marketing tool, has led to a shift in traditional distribution channels from street-side stores to e-commerce. It is, therefore, essential to conduct in-depth research regarding the scope of e-commerce usage in order to develop a more efficient marketing strategy for retail entities. This paper aims to explore the parameters for a culture-driven marketing strategy in Kazakhstan, a country that is characterized by a high uncertainty avoidance culture. A qualitative data collection (n=250) for cross-sectional analysis of retail enterprises in Kazakhstan was conducted to identify cultural differences that may affect customers' perception of marketing and logistics. This survey was divided into four main categories and the results of trust-based marketing strategies were analyzed through multiple regressions, t-tests and 95% confidence interval for p-value estimations. The findings revealed the lack of interest in the transparency level of the grocery retailers, as well as an inclination towards cash-on-delivery methods in risk aversive cultures.

Keywords: e-commerce, risk-aversive culture, retail enterprises.

1. INTRODUCTION

The internet's explosive growth and its popularity as a marketing tool have led to a change in the world's distribution channels from conventional street-side businesses to e-commerce (Gawor, Hoberg, 2019). Due to considerations including quick access to product-related information, time convenience, honest Cash-on-delivery way (COD) of payment, online shopping has become more popular in many emerging Asian and other developed nations (Tandon et al., 2016). Customers tend to use this digital platform for various reasons, including searching for the needed product, spending leisure time (Hamed, El-Deeb, 2020), and comparing the online and offline platforms of the stores (Harris et al.,

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2017). Revealing the core motivation and need of E-commerce usage may navigate retail enterprises to develop more efficient marketing strategy, therefore it is It is essential to conduct detailed study on the considered scope.

In Kazakhstan, almost 82% of the population are the internet users (Zhussupova, 2021) and the frequency of usage non-cash, online payment methods has soared from 23% to 83% just in the last 5 years (Oralova, 2022). However, the rates of E-sales in the sphere of retail enterprise, especially in the sector of grocery markets remains to be less that 3% (Развитие e-commerce в РК, [Development of e-commerce in Kazakhstan], 2022). Several studies on the similar tendencies has been already conducted in other developing nations like India (Tandon et al., 2017), Jordan and Arab world (Al-Adwan et al., 2022), revealing the primary reason for this pattern to be in the cultural differences and the mentality of each nation. It was stated, that countries like Kazakhstan have a predominant a high uncertainty avoidance cultures – avoidance of ambiguity – that challenge the development of the E-commerce on the market (Hofstede, 1991). This paper will aim to fulfill the gap in the existing literature by conducting research on identifying the appropriate parameters for the Kazakhstani culture driven marketing strategy.

Trust plays the key role in the uncertainty avoidance marketing strategy (Kim, Stoel, 2004; Loureiro et al., 2018; Al-Adwan et al., 2022) as it encourages customers will to purchase and repurchase the product without the preliminary quality assessment. There are several factors affecting the trust development: supply-chain management of the ordered products (Restuputri et al., 2021), online platform's (e.g., website, mobile application) functionality (Carlo et al, 2006), and the socio-demographic contribution to the prevalence's (Zwick, 1957). This research compares the effects of each of these factors on the three grocery store merchants in Kazakhstan: "Magnum", "Metro" and "Yuzhnyu". This tactic is expected to provide prospects for identifying important customer behavior patterns with regard to the various marketing strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customers' Perception and Response

In E-commerce, customers perception is vitally important and can be derived from the satisfaction and trust level evaluation. In relation to online purchasing, customer satisfaction appears from the discrimination of the expected and received value of the product (Kotler, 2003), from product receiving judgmental output (Gundersen, 1996), and emotional response (Oliver, 2014). It is essential for the online platforms profitability (Guo et al., 2012) and proven to have auspicious impact on trust levels of the customers (Cho, Hu, 2009). It can encourage the high index of customers loyalty (Safa, Von Solms, 2016) and repurchasing rates, consequently creating a favorable influence on the brand reliability and customers trust with the product providers (Ganesan, 1994).

The acquired from satisfaction trust assists retail enterprises in developing their popularity rates and enhancing the client sampling. There are several existing ways of quantifying the trust inducing terms' impact on the enterprise, including those based on evaluating the cognitive processes responsible for online information acceptance. Although the computational approaches like Stimulus-Organism-Response (S–O-R) (Mehrabian, Russel, 1974) and Information Processing Theory (IPT) (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968) have been created, prominent way of impact estimation remains to be the Word-of-Mouth (WOM) (Özdemir et al., 2016). It refers to people tendency to share the information with their peers by recommending channels of distribution, products, and specialists. The WOM

can take place through face-to-face communication or may appear in the organized form of rating, feedback threats on the webpages (Meilatinova, 2021). Considering the significant influence of the WOM and its high creditability in the uncertainty avoiding nations (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). the fundamental output of this work will goal to reach the high rates of WOM among Kazakhstani society, in the sector of grocery retail enterprise.

2.2. Logistics in E-commerce

E-commerce services highly rely on the developed supply-chain management system. A number of logistics-related factors, such as prompt delivery services, the ability to return products, and the accuracy of inventory measurements when placing orders, help to shape the overall brand image (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). Customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty levels are positively correlated with each of these factors (Garcia et al., 2020). To elaborate on each of the spheres, consistency in delivery time management enables customers to plan their purchases more methodically, resulting in a more dependable company image (Restuputri et al., 2021). The possibility of returning a product has different consequences on the viability of the company. The critics assert that the return process lowers the product's gross profit margin due to increased additional transportation costs and reversed logistics (Samorani et al., 2019), whereas the supporters contend that despite the individual profit being lower, the overall increase in the cost of goods sold as a result of this function availability increases the company's net revenue (Janakiraman et al., 2016). Additionally, the ability to exchange a product tends to increase a customer's satisfaction with the brand because the customer can return the item if it doesn't meet their expectations or was damaged during shipping (Chang et al., 2013). The system's reversibility lowers the risk associated with online sales and increases customer confidence in the company (Chang et al., 2013). Finally, inventory measurements are similar to timely delivery services in that they give clients the chance to plan their purchases in accordance with the goods that are offered on the platform (Xing et al., 2010). Given that the rate of product expiration is generally low in the context of grocery retail businesses, all these logistical aspects are particularly crucial. As a result, this article will pay particular attention to how customers perceive the supply chain management system within the context of Kazakhstani grocery retail businesses.

2.3. Targeted Marketing: Socio-demographic variable

Targeting the most valuable possible client category is crucial, as is evident. (Hood et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2009), and doing so has historically produced some noteworthy outcomes in the grocery retail industry because there were some age-based purchase tendencies for meat and fish items (Zwick, 1957). The example of marketing targeted towards high-income, high-education households has demonstrated the efficacy of other logical group-related targeting (Bawa, Shoemaker, 1989).

There are several predictive models that has been created based on the socio-demographic variables. A plethora of studies believe that although the segregated information is relatively low, it may cause predictive modeling of the marketing strategies. The models has been mostly generated using AI (Sheth, Kellstadt, 2021), Machine Learning (Verma et al., 2021; Cui, Curry, 2005) and Linear Regression (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003) based analysis that utilize the grocery retailers as a benchmark and were specifically created to avoid overfitting (Islam et al., 2022). The two main directions for the analysis of the socio-demographic variables are based on the revealing the past customers behavior and on the identifying the key social factor that can help predict the

future purchasing patterns. The approach of utilization demographic clustering was questioned in several studies (Islam et al., 2022), however, it is still continuous to be a reasonable data collection techniques because this type of information is accessible and inexpensive to obtain (Islam et al., 2022), especially in the considered case of Kazakhstani market, where the availability of information related to grocery retail industry is limited.

2.4. Website Design

Customers' perceptions of the business are significantly influenced by the website's design and presentation: the more user-friendly, the better. Numerous technology adaption models, have been developed to assess the wide range of factors influencing the attractiveness of technologies, mostly being based on either the development of the subject's cognitive reaction or the measurable metrics of the behavior.

The following factors reveal to have possible influence on the development of customers trust, loyalty and satisfaction levels: the security (Seffah et al., 2008), design functionality (Wolfinbarger, Gilly, 2003), customization of options – personalization (Benslimane, Yang, 2007), search options (Calisir et al., 2010), and avoidance of informational overload (Benslimane, Yang, 2007). There are different ways how the user study can be created and conducted, and, in most cases, it should altered to fit the scope of the study. The distinguished dimensions will be included in this study as the key points for the assessment of E-commerce grocery enterprises.

Overall, the conducted literature review has proved the significance of customers satisfaction, trust, logistics management, targeted marketing, and the website designs' role in the research in the scope of E-commerce. Identified knowledge will be used to create a well-supported and structured methodology for the assessment of Kazakhstani grocery retail enterprise.

3. METHODS

This paper has collected a qualitative data (n=250) for the cross-sectional analysis of the retail enterprises in Kazakhstan and for revealing the cultural differences that may affect the perception of enterprises' marketing ang logistics. The approach of utilization demographic clustering was questioned in several studies (Islam et al., 2022), however, it is still continuous to be a reasonable data collection technique because this type of information is accessible and inexpensive to obtain (Islam et al., 2022), especially in the considered case of Kazakhstani market, where the availability of information related to grocery retail industry is limited. Considering the existing gap, the results of this survey regarding the consumers' attitude towards grocery retail's marketing and logistics is exploratory, and the first of the known kind.

It was suggested by many works that the consumers' food preferences, attuited towards grocery shopping tend to be drastically segmented. Therefore, classification and segmentation of the data will be crucial. Participants are firstly classified based on the geographical location of the survey, including 5 largest cities of Kazakhstan: Almaty, Astana, Shymkent. Aktobe, and Karaganda. Most of these cities greatly vary in terms of allocation and provide an opportunity to conduct a study on the diverse background.

The survey itself can be divided into 4 main categories: collection of socio-demographic parameters, evaluation of the grocery retails digital marketing strategies, assessment of the logistic strategies in the grocery retail enterprise, and the conclusive assessment of the customers attitude to the shift for digitalized grocery retail. The majority

of questions for the survey have been obtained from the Data in Brief Journal and papers estimating the loyalty inducing factors among customers ((Ibrahim, Aljarah, 2018)).

The random sample of 250 participants has been created and divided among 5 cities. The demographical values were aimed to mimic the weighted distribution of each of the population in terms of gender, age, and income rates based on the statistical information provided by the Republic of Kazakhstan's Bureau of National statistics. The resulted demographic distribution is as following:

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants (n=250)

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	116	46.4
Female	134	53.6
Age group		
< 20	24	9.6
20-30	73	29.2
30-40	62	24.8
40-50	60	24
> 50	31	12.4
Monthly income in tenge		
< 100,000	28	11.2
100,000-200,000	52	20.8
200,000-300,000	38	15.2
> 300,000	132	52.8
Place of residence		
Almaty	64	25.6
Astana	56	22.4
Shymkent	44	17.6
Aktobe	41	16.4
Karaganda	45	18

Source: authors' calculation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey results went through the manual quality control on inattentive responses, normalized using Z-score scaling and investigated by the mean and regression analysis. The values significance was tested using T-test and P-values.

4.1. Mean Analysis

The mean analysis showed that overall customers tend to value the flexibility of logistic parameters and existence of digital marketing when evaluating the attractiveness of the grocery retail. Table 2 and 3 illustrate the resulted mean values for each of the assessed category. All of the mean values proved to be significant centered on the p-value of the confidence level of 95%.

Table 2. Mean and P values of the logistic parameters

Logistic Parameters	Mean Values	P-value
Fast Delivery	4,3	0.034
Product Quality	4,7	0.018
Return Policy	4,7	0.012
Online Payment	2,9	0.035
Transparency	2,7	0.045

Source: authors' calculation.

Table 3. Mean and P values of the marketing parameters

Marketing Parameters	Mean Values	P-value
Website Existence	3,9	0.047
Mobile App Existence	4,1	0.032
Website Functionality	4,0	0.049
Mobile App Functionality	4,0	0.038
Electronic Commerce	4,8	0.045
Trust	4,9	0.019
Bonuses	4,7	0.041

Source: authors' calculation.

The survey values were scored from 1 to 5, indicating the minimum and maximum impact of the parameter to the retail enterprise appeal, respectively. The product quality, return policy in terms of logistic parameters and electronic commerce with trust in terms of marketing parameters are responsible for the greatest values averaging in the range of 4,7 to 4,9. Overall, the main tendency is rooted in the positive shift (>3) in all values, except for the online payment and transparency attribute. The further in-depth analysis of the additional comments revealed the reasonings for such indexes: customers are worried about the safety issues in relation to the online payment methods; customers allocate more attention on the final product itself, rather than on the logistics transparency and the basis of the product.

The obtained results are similar to the ones that were revealed in the analysis of other risk-aversive nations. The prevalence of the cash-on-delivery payments along with the less levels of transparency awareness are one of the main features of the risk-aversive cultures (Hamed & El-Deeb, 2020). These results navigate to the first meaningful conclusion of this paper – importance of the inclusion of Cash-payment method in the logistics development, that in turn may minimize the risks factor of online grocery retailing for Kazakhstani customers.

4.2. Regression analyses

Regression analyses were performed on Python 3.0 using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). The method's formula is as following:

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y_i})^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - b_1 x_1 - b_0)^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{n}(\hat{\epsilon_i})^2 = min$$

. . . .

The formula estimated the squared sum of the b_0 and b_1 (beta) values of the independent variables to minimize the sum of squared residuals (S). The regression was used to identify the existence of the significant associations between the defined parameters of retail enterprises' – logistics and marketing – affecting the brand perception and attraction.

Null hypothesis: no statistical significance exists in a set of given observations.

Alternative hypothesis: statistical significance exists in a set of given observations

The results were investigated based on the T-statistics. As it is known if *T-value = coef. /std err* is significantly different from 0, meaning, the absolute T-value is higher or equal to 1.96, meaning $|t| \geq 1.96$, the value is significant and greater the evidence against the null hypothesis. The confidence interval for the study was chosen to be 95%, meaning that only the p-value of lower than 0.05 is considered significant.

The first type of performed regression, illustrated at Fig. 1 estimated the factors that are significantly affecting the cultural risk aversion of Kazakhstanis people. Results justified the scope of this work and significant associations between the logistics, marketing, and risk indexes of customer's perception. Although, the effect of the geographical location proved to be not significant, thus, further differentiation by cities will not be estimated. The reasoning for the residence disassociation may be rooted in the relatively unifies culture across the entire country.

```
======================================
Dep. Variable:          RiskAversion
--------------------------------------------------------------
              coef    std err      t      P>|t|    [0.025    0.975]
--------------------------------------------------------------
Intercept    -0.2035    0.063   -3.227    0.001    -0.328    -0.079
LogisticsFlexibility  0.1423    0.020    7.073    0.000     0.103     0.182
DigitalMarketing      0.4331    0.052    8.308    0.000     0.330     0.536
GeographicalLocation -0.0132    0.059   -0.225    0.822    -0.129     0.103
```

Figure 1. Regression analysis on the factors associated with risk aversion

Source: authors' calculation.

Other two types of regression were performed on deriving the significant associations for the brand attractiveness rates. The results are consistent with the findings in the section of mean analysis (Fig. 2 a, b). The values of online payment and transparency showed the negative T-value, indicating the reverse direction and negative correlation with the brand attractiveness. All the remaining indexes in the logistics' and marketing's parameters have positive significant association with branding, except for the transparency (insignificant t-value), proving their importance for the grocery retail enterprises in Kazakhstan.

The highest t-value was allocated to the feature of bonuses; thus, single variable regression diagnostics have been performed to check the creditability of the modeling assumptions in case of the single regressor. The results (Fig. 3 a, b, c, d) revealed the fitted and controlled model regarding utilized variables and residuals and justifies the models credibility based on the systematic interconnection between graphs.

```
=========================================
        Dep. Variable:        Appealing_brand
=========================================================================
             coef    std err         t     P>|t|     [0.025    0.975]
-------------------------------------------------------------------------
Intercept   -0.0074    0.015    -0.482     0.630     -0.038     0.023
FastDelivery  0.0271   0.004     7.324     0.000      0.020     0.034
ProductQuality 0.0310  0.006     5.545     0.000      0.020     0.042
ReturnPolicy  0.0423   0.006     7.146     0.000      0.031     0.054
OnlinePayment -0.0457  0.007    -6.832     0.000     -0.059    -0.033
Transparency -0.0132   0.009    -1.435     0.152     -0.031     0.005
=========================================================================
             coef    std err         t     P>|t|     [0.025    0.975]
-------------------------------------------------------------------------
Intercept              -0.0126    0.029    -0.435    0.664    -0.069    0.044
WebsiteFunctionality    0.0321    0.007     4.398    0.000     0.018    0.047
WebsiteExistence        0.0713    0.020     3.524    0.001     0.031    0.111
MobileApplicationExistence     0.1562  0.022  7.181  0.000    0.113    0.199
MobileApplicationFunctionality 0.0739  0.023  3.215  0.001    0.029    0.119
ElectronicCommerce      0.0662    0.023     2.894    0.004     0.021    0.111
Trust                   0.0800    0.022     3.636    0.000     0.037    0.123
Bonuses                 0.2762    0.019    14.809    0.000     0.239    0.313
```

Figure 2. a) Regression analysis on the logistic factors associated with risk aversion, b) Regression analysis on the marketing factors associated with risk aversion
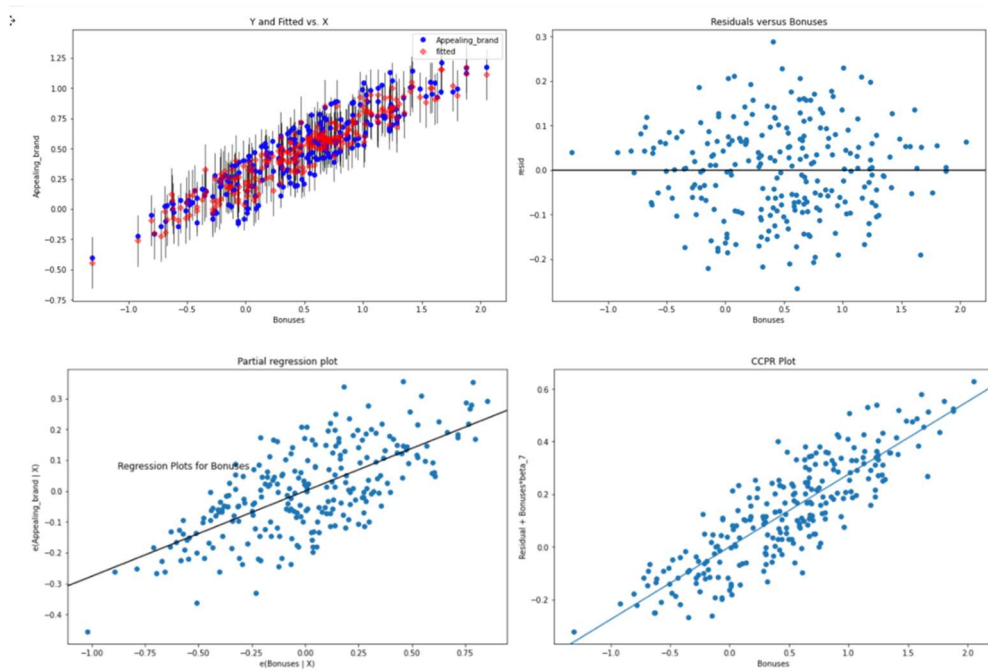
Source: authors' calculation.

Figure 3. The graphs illustrate the singular regression for the marketing parameter of bonuses: a) the dependent variable and fitted values, b) the residuals of the model, c) partial regression plot, d) CCPR plot

Source: authors' calculation.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of trust-based marketing strategies reveals that each of the factors considered in this work – fast delivery, product quality, return policy, online payment availability – has its own influence on the trust level of the customers. *In the case of "Magnum", the socio-demographic factors are the most influential, and as for of "Metro", the supply-chain management of the ordered products is the most important. Finally, "Yuzhnyu" is mainly affected by the online platform's functionality.* Among the commonly shared feature it is possible to see the lack of interest in the transparency level of the grocery retailers and increased support of cash-on-delivery method, in Kazakhstan, and in general, cultures with risk repulsive societies. Findings are supported with the multiple regressions, t-test and confidence interval of 95% for the p-value estimations. The null hypothesis for each considered feature, except transparency has been rejected, proving the noncoincidental correlation between the obtained results.

Overall, this research suggests that trust is a crucial factor in the uncertainty avoidance marketing strategy and provides valuable insights into the trust-based marketing strategies in Kazakhstan and can be used as a starting point for further research.

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