CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH ONLINE SHOPPING

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Abstract. *Online product shopping is a big challenge for companies nowadays. Unlike other products that can be bought online, fashion products are more complicated to present in an online store. In addition to that, new trends in this area indicate a change in consumer behavior, which is directed by the current reduction of permitted physical contact (Covid-19) towards shopping "from home". This paper analyzes the different attitudes of consumers when making decisions about e-purchasing fashion products. In addition, research was presented that aims to examine the factors that positively affect the satisfaction of fashion clothing customers in online stores. Data collection was performed by a survey and it included 82 respondents. The results of the research indicated several factors that affect the satisfaction with online shopping of fashion products, among which are the age of respondents, saving time in online shopping, the possibility of purchasing brand names that are not available in retail stores in the Republic of Serbia, as well as a larger selection of products. The results of the research enable a better understanding of consumers and the identification of some of the key elements of their satisfaction with the online shopping. While our sample is of fashion products shoppers, proposed constructs and relations can be extended towards different contexts, e.g. acquisition of wide array of goods online, or acquisitions of services like online consulting, teleworking or online teaching.*

Keywords: *online shopping, customer satisfaction, fashion products, research*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has changed the way of life, habits, and behavior of people in the modern world. As a consequence of globalization, and under the influence of digital media, consumerism is spreading more and more, while having big effects in all aspects of the lives of society. Thanks to the advancement of information technology, consumers today are well informed and have the opportunity to easily, in a very short time, compare several similar offers, that inducing; price, quality, range, and many others without having to spend some time and visit retail outlets. Also, they are becoming more accustomed to the online environment and less concerned about security risks and online privacy. Another feature that can be seen in modern consumers is the increased level of expectations from companies, all because of the ability to have an extremely large selection and unlimited availability of all data in one place.

Accordingly, manufacturers and sellers make great efforts to respond to the demands of the modern environment, striving to attract and encourage consumers to buy their products through various marketing activities and strategies. However, it appears that manufacturers will adapt products to the needs, desires, and habits of consumers and what makes them satisfied. A satisfied customer is a prerequisite for the success of the company. It is a category that has been in focus for decades, and in modern business, it is a topic that is more current than ever. In essence, it represents the inevitable theoretical and rhetorical concept of modern management. In an increasingly competitive market, where companies are "fighting" for customers, consumer satisfaction is treated as a key indicator or element of a successful business strategy. Therefore, it is considered an important indicator of business performance and is part of many management models and tools.

Also, consumer satisfaction is an integral part of the shopping process. This process consists of several stages through which a typical buyer goes through a purchase decision. The first phase of the buying process is the customer's perception of the product or the perception of the need that the product can satisfy. The next steps are research and evaluation of alternatives, followed by a purchase decision [1]. Therefore, for the buying process itself to begin, the consumer must have a need for a product. On the other hand, shopping is not just about meeting needs. The customer buys out of desire, which most often occurs as a result of certain product information through various marketing campaigns.

Customer behavior is a complex category because it is influenced by personal (values, beliefs, attitudes, perception, motivation, and knowledge), social (family, reference groups, individual

influences, social class, culture, and subculture), and psychological factors (information processing, learning, change of attitudes and patterns of behavior). The study of consumer behavior is essential, as it helps businesses to improve their marketing strategies and management activities. It helps to understand the way consumers think about different brands and products and what makes them happy.

This paper analyzes the factors that affect consumer satisfaction when buying textile and fashion products online. The aim is to identify the factors that contribute to consumer satisfaction and to propose specific marketing activities based on them, which in practice should lead to better results of online fashion stores. More specifically, it will be investigated the influence of the size and diversity of the assortment offered on the satisfaction of consumers, as well as whether there is a difference between respondents of different demographic characteristics.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Consumer satisfaction with online shopping is the subject of several scientific disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, consumer behavior, sales management, and digital marketing. In the available literature, the definition of consumer satisfaction differs in many ways. Some authors define satisfaction as a phenomenon that indicates a situation in which the performance and benefits of a product exceed customer expectations [2]. The overall mood of the consumer before, during, and after the purchase can be satisfied or unsatisfied. Customers are constantly in the active process of valuing purchased products while integrating those products into their daily spending activities [3].

Whether the customer is satisfied, it will primarily affect the company's profit and then incensement of the production, employment growth, a better image, but also the reputation of the company. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the purchase is much more than the current feeling. It is based on the perception of the value of the product, which has two views: the appropriateness of the use of the product, i.e. the extent to which it provides what is expected and reliability, and the extent to which the product is error-free [4]. In addition, the value represents the difference between the total expected value and the total costs incurred during the purchase of a particular product [5]. It is the value of the product for the customer requirement satisfaction.

The expected value for the customer is most often associated with factors such as appearance, functionality, design, and color of the product, as well as the image and reputation of the company, the quality of additional services, and after-sales activities [6]. In addition, the price of the product

and the time that the customer has to spend to find the most suitable product from available displayed products, based on the available ones are cited in the literature as extremely important factors in the purchase process [7].
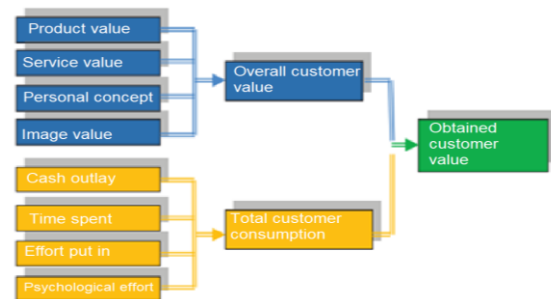
Fig. 1 Obtained and delivered customer value [8]

In the process of assessing consumer satisfaction with e-shopping, it is essential to define needs, capacities and contributions to consumer satisfaction. [9] suggests the following steps in achieving consumer satisfaction:
1. Identify consumer segments and the most important characteristics they believe products and services should possess
2. Identify consumer requirements for each target market
3. Incorporate consumer requirements into the tasks and specifications of the marketing plan
4. Define the steps in the process of implementing the planned activities
5. Assess the ability to meet consumer requirements
6. Apply for the program, i.e. embed consumer values in products and services
7. Evaluate the results and identify steps to improve the program

In order to effectively manage consumer satisfaction, it is necessary to measure and evaluate it. It is a demanding and complex process, as it stems from consumer expectations, but it does not diminish the importance of clear insight into customer feedback in terms of their satisfaction with the product or service. Especially since the level of consumer satisfaction directly affects the company's business results, whether it is manifested through increased consumer loyalty, or whether it is further product recommendations.

Consumer satisfaction is the ultimate goal that all manufacturers and sellers strive for because satisfaction with shopping in most cases leads to its repetition [10] . A satisfied customer will rarely and much harder decide on a change, but in most cases, he/she will remain loyal to the company.

Decades ago, the fashion industry survived in local stores with significantly less recognizable brands. People adapted the products from the catalog to their wishes, turning them into custom

made clothes. The growth of the Internet has drastically affected fashion brands, whose business communication has been completely changed, and a large number of them have crossed their national borders and become internationally known [11] .

After the actualization of the appearance of social media, the behavior and habits of customers changed. In the past, consumers spent more time with magazines and stores, looking for items on the shelves. Today, with the use of Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest, consumers have at their disposal an almost unlimited choice of fashion content, trends, and styles, which is regularly improved and updated [12] .

The economic background, the evolution of the digital offer, and the passion of younger consumers for fashion clothing is a set of new factors for managers in the fashion industry. This industry is under pressure to digitize and take full advantage of new technologies, to improve diversity in its range, and to address growing demand organizationally through online shopping, as a business sustainability program [13]. Even though consumers continue to shop in physical stores, they also feel there are a lot of benefits when shopping online.

Online shopping saves time for modern people because they are so busy that they cannot, or do not want to spend a lot of time shopping. While traditional stores have a physical limit on the maximum number of products that can be presented to consumers, online stores have virtually no limit and can easily present thousands of different products [14] . However, the impact of assortment perception on a visit to a particular traditional or online store has not yet been fully explored. Bashir et al. (2019) point out that the concept of diversity of choice is relevant for increasing or decreasing the value of online shopping among consumers [15] .

In addition to the similarities and general principles of this modern way of shopping, consumer behavior when buying fashion products online has its specific characteristics. Some of them are the inability to directly check the size, color, and material compliance with images and colors and materials in the real world, but in many ways, decisions are made based on their perceptions and conclusion of certain details. In an effort to reduce the amount of perceived risk, consumers tend to gather information to reduce uncertainty and assess the consequences [16] . Also missing are elements such as interaction with the seller, a sense of the atmosphere in the store, and touching, testing, or trying on clothes [17] . Besides, consumers are also influenced by the announcements of friends or influencers when making purchasing decisions [18].

Another significant influencing factor in the purchase of fashion products is the pandemic of the COVID 19 virus, as a result of which changes in the habits and behavior of consumers from traditional to online shopping have been registered. Some studies have shown that online sales have increased by as much as 50 percent [19] .

3. RESEARCH

In this research that was conducted in the Republic of Serbia, a total of 82 respondents participated, of which 49 were female and 33 were male. Of all respondents, 29.3% are respondents aged between 18 and 23, 59.7% are aged between 24 and 35 and 11% are respondents older than 35. The sample consists of respondents from various professions, such as students, marketing managers, economists, programmers, lawyers, etc. 31.7% of respondents are students, while 64.6% are employed and 3.7% are unemployed.
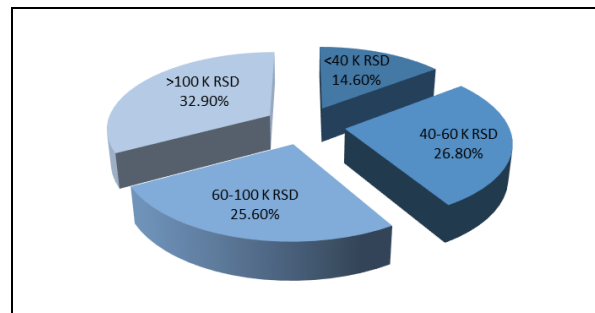

Fig. 2 Monthly income of research participants

3.1. RESEARCH METHODS

Data collection was conducted in Belgrade, in December 2019, using a questionnaire created in Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions, which were structured so that the first part consisted of questions related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age category, occupation, and monthly income. The second part of the questionnaire contained ten questions about the experience in previous online purchases. Here the questions were offered as multiple choice. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of 8 opinion statements regarding various aspects of online fashion stores, as well as the satisfaction of the respondents. The answers were offered in the form0of a Likert 5-point scale (from absolutely disagree to agree). Data were processed and analyzed using SPSS 20 software package.

3.2. RESEARCH RESULTS

The highest percentage of respondents (around 33%) buy online once a month, around 23% buy

Fig. 3 The frequency of online shopping

During one online purchase, respondents most often (about 57%) buy only one product, while a significantly smaller number is (about 29%) of those who buy two products, while three or more products are bought by about only 13% of respondents. The device through which they most often make online purchases is a mobile phone (70%), while 22% of them buy via computer, and the smallest number of them (about 7%) buy via tablets.

A significant number of respondents believe that the products match the description on the site (47.6%) while 25.6% of them believe that the products fully correspond to what is presented in the online store (Figure 4).
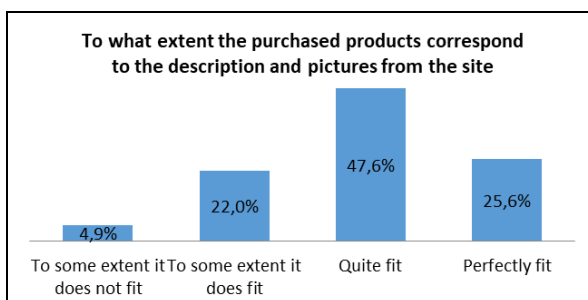

Fig. 4 Compliance of purchased products with the description in the online store

The appearance and functionality of the available pages for online shopping were rated by most respondents as very good (51.2%) or excellent (15.9%), while 30.5% of respondents rated it as average. Only 2.4% of respondents rated the website as somewhat poor, and no one rated it as very bad (Figure 5).

Also, most respondents buy in online stores that offer products that are not available in stores in our country, such as AliExpress, eBay, and brands that are not available on our market (more than 62%). In

about once every six months, about 12% buy online once a year, while around 30% buy online once every few years (Figure 3).

addition, respondents usually spend less than 5 thousand RSD per month for online shopping (almost 44% of respondents), while between 5 and 10 thousand RSD allocate about 27%, between 10 and 30 thousand spend by about 28% of respondents, and more than 30 thousand RSD in online shopping is spent by 11% of respondents.
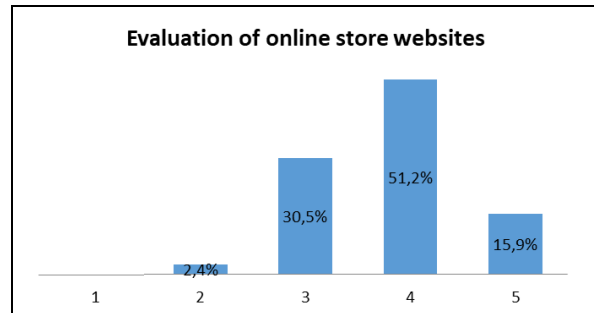
Fig. 5 Evaluation of the look and functionality of an online store website

When buying online fashion products, respondents are most concerned about whether the size will suit them (41.5%) as well as the quality of the product (40.2%), while they are significantly less worried about whether the color will suit them (6.1%), whether there will be some abuse (4.9%) or some other possible problems (7.3%).

On the other hand, they recognize the biggest advantage of online shopping as time savings (62.2%), a larger selection of products (23.2%), money savings (9.8%) and fast and easy and fast delivery (4.9%). In addition, the largest percentage of respondents (45.1%) are familiar with the possibility of returning products purchased online but do not trust this option, while a slightly smaller percentage of them know and believe in this possibility (37.8%), and as many as 17.1% of respondents are not even aware of this possibility.

An independent sample t-test showed that females (M = 1.71, SD = 0.82) and males (M = 2.33, SD = 1.26) differ significantly only in the amount of money they spend in online shopping (t (82) = -2.76, $p < 0.01$) with data indicating that men spend more. According to other observed criteria, such as frequency of purchases, evaluation of sites and how much the purchased products correspond to the description, no statistically significant difference was found between the two genders.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicate that the participants of different ages differ significantly regarding evaluation of online store websites (F $(79,2)$ = 5.13, $p < 0.05$), average

amount of products purchased online ($F_{(79,2)}$ = 3.4, $p < 0.05$), as well as awareness of the possibility of returning products ($F_{(79,2)}$ = 3.44, $p < 0.05$) (Figure 6).

Additionally, participants of different ages don't differ significantly regarding frequency of online shopping, number of purchased products, and attitude on perception of compliance of purchased products with the descriptions on the site.
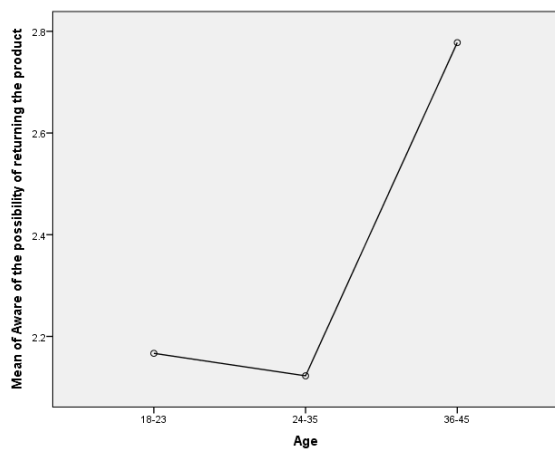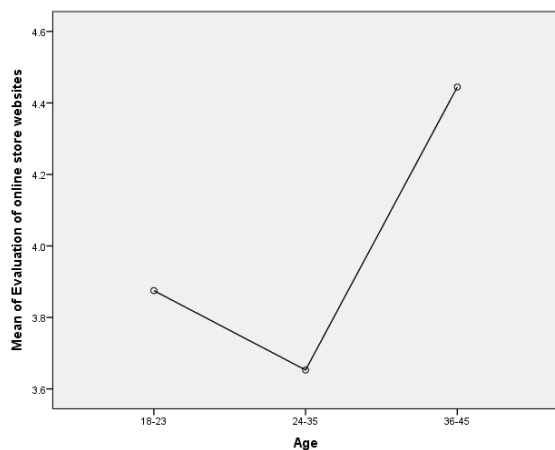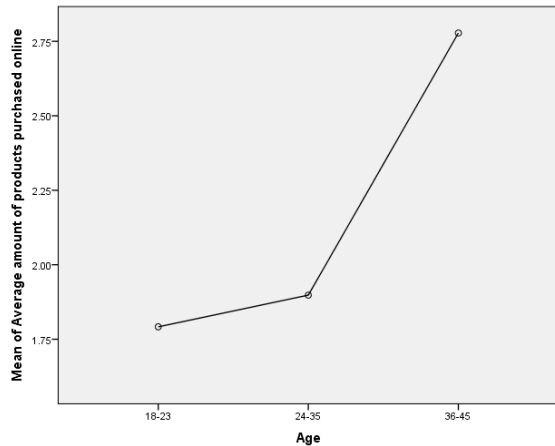
Fig. 6 Differences between participants of different age categories

As it was expected, the results of the one-way ANOVA test confirmed that participants of different employment status differed statistically regarding the average amount of products purchased online ($F_{(79,2)}$ = 5.88, $p < 0.05$) (Figure 7).
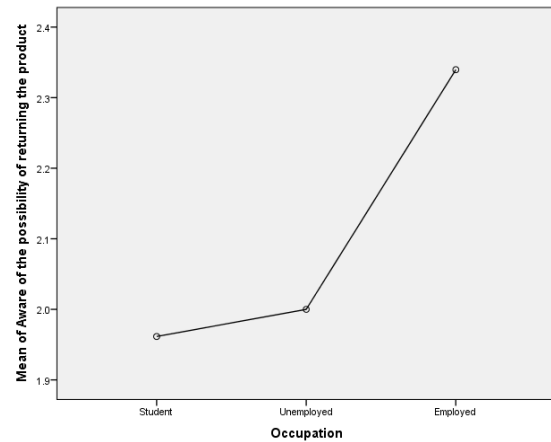
Fig. 7 Differences between participants of different employment status

A correlation test was used to analyze the Pearson correlation coefficient of certain variables and the results are presented in the Table 1.

Monthly income of participants is in positive correlation with frequency of online shopping ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$), number of products purchased online ($r = 0.434$, $p < 0.01$), perception of compliance of purchased products with the description on the site ($r = 0.263$, $p < 0.05$), and awareness of the possibility of returning the product ($r = 0.252$, $p < 0.05$).

Frequency of online shopping is in positive correlation with number of products purchased online ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$), evaluation of online store websites ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$), and average amount of products purchased online ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$).

Compliance of purchased products with the description on the site is in a positive correlation with evaluation of online store websites ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), as well as average amount of products purchased online with awareness of the possibility of returning the product ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 1 Results of correlation test

	S1.	S2.	S3.	S4.	S5.	S6.	S7.
S1. Monthly income	1	**0.24***	**0.43****	**0.26***	0.18	0.18	**0.25***
S2. Frequency of online shopping	**0.24***	1	**0.23***	0.14	**0.24***	**0.48****	0.14
S3. Number of products purchased online	**0.43****	**0.23***	1	**0.22***	**0.21***	**0.24***	**0.22***
S4. Compliance of purchased products with the description on the site	**0.26***	0.14	**0.22***	1	**0.62****	**0.42****	**0.25***
S5. Evaluation of online store websites	0.18	**0.24***	0.21	**0.62****	1	**0.35****	**0.29****
S6. Average amount of products purchased online	0.18	**0.48****	**0.24***	**0.42****	**0.35****	1	**0.51****
S7. Awareness of the possibility of returning the product	**0.25***	0.14	**0.22***	**0.25***	**0.29****	**0.51****	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The mass use of the Internet and digital media in modern society has caused a change in the desires, needs, habits, and overall everyday life of people, which is one of the basic features of the modern age. Caused by globalization, and under the influence of digital media, consumerism is increasingly developing and spreading, acting on all aspects of the life of the individual and society as a whole. Consumers today, thanks to the development and progressive advancement of information technology, quickly get the necessary information and have the opportunity to very easily and quickly compare prices, features, and range of offers in online stores, without having to waste a lot of time physically visiting traditional stores. All this has led to the emergence of extremely demanding consumers, who have an unlimited amount of available information and a large selection of products and services. In this regard, manufacturers and sellers make great efforts to respond to the demands of the modern environment, striving to attract and encourage consumers with a variety of marketing activities and strategies to buy their products and thus create a satisfied consumer. Consumer satisfaction is a function that depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the product or service and consumer expectations. Buyers consider and evaluate offers, therefore if their expectations are met, they will be satisfied. A large number of companies and organizations assess and measure the satisfaction of their customers because it is one of the main factors in retaining old and gaining new customers. They are redirecting their business accordingly. The results presented in this paper can also help guide the activities of companies, which indicate the importance of certain factors in consumer satisfaction with the online purchase of fashion products. Among these factors, the need for a rich and diverse offer of fashion products is emphasized, as well as the most realistic presentation of products within the possibilities of an online store. Also, it is recommended that fashion brands in the online environment focus primarily on the younger population, which shows the greatest inclinations towards online shopping. Extension of research findings is possible, because overall customer value and total customer consumption rely on the similar items in different contexts, starting from online shopping of goods from different industries to online acquisition of services, e.g. consulting, freelance specialized services or online teaching.

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