

Consumer Attitudes Towards Supermarket Shopping:

“A Case Study of Samsun Province”

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Abstract

Marketing strategy have been developing and transforming day by day according to feedbacks from customers. Therefore, face to face surveys and internet surveys have increased their importance to perceive the changing behaviors of customers and their reactions against new products. As a result of the gathered data from customers, more rational marketing strategies have been enhanced to increase to serve both for better satisfactions of customers and for better profitability rates for companies. The focal point of this research is to highlight the consumer attitudes towards supermarket shopping of Samsun province in Turkey. According to the results of face to face surveys, applied to supermarket customers, the deficiencies and advantages of selected supermarkets have been accentuated. Finally, it is aimed to emphasize the means of providing better infrastructure concerning supermarket shopping opportunities for customers after the results of this research.

Keywords: consumer attitudes, supermarket shopping, Turkey

Introduction

The impact of supermarkets on both producers and consumers has recently attracted the attention of many researchers focused mainly on developing countries. The uneven and rapid shift from groceries to dominant supermarkets as a part of global commodity chains has triggered cultural, economic and social consequences for these countries. In particular, the diversification of capital accumulation from small scale groceries to multinational supermarkets has also substituted the spending and consuming habits which used to be based on fiduciary relationships such as buying on tick. Introduction of new and comprehensive range of commodities brought to market with lower prices has ended as the predominance of supermarkets over groceries. In addition, well established location, transportation services, accepting credit cards and instalment system, advantages and discounts for their own supermarket cards, better customer relationships and parking opportunities are beneficial for most of the customers.

The aim of this study is to investigate consumer attitudes towards supermarket shopping in Samsun Province. In this way, it is intended to focus on customer satisfaction through different supermarket brands. Moreover, importance and effectiveness of different strategies for overcoming the customer expectations are also major focal points of this research.

Literature Review

Researches about “supermarkets” have rapidly been increasing due to wide variety of environmental, individual, social and economic dimensions of consumers’, with the globalization of food supply chains and international standardization of food regulations all over the world. Smoyer-Tomicet. Al. (2006) has examined potential reasons for differences in supermarket accessibility between Canadian, U.S., and U.K. cities. Another research made by Boselieet. al. (2003) has focused on five business-based case studies of the supply chain for fresh horticultural produce sold in African and Asian supermarkets, or exported to supermarkets in Europe. In addition, Cacho(2003) highlights a shift in the assumptions of development economic models as a missing issue for developing countries in the context of supermarket and smallholder farmers.

Cassady and Mohan (2004) aimed to investigate another dimension of supermarket research whether supermarket-sponsored shuttles can be selfsupporting or make a profit in

low-income urban areas. In details, researchers focused on low income, low vehicle ownership, and high population density in California in order to identify potential markets for shuttle programs. Dietary implications of supermarket development was focused by Hawkes (2008). Researcher defined these implications in 2 dimensions for supermarkets as positive and negative. In details, positive implications of supermarkets were expressed as making more diverse diet available and accessible to more people, while reducing the ability of marginalised populations to purchase a high-quality diet, and encourage the consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor highly-processed foods as negative implications. Gürbüz et. al. (2008), in their research, aimed to find out the dimensions of supermarket services quality and explore the relationship between perceived supermarket service quality and customer satisfaction and behavioral intention while using SERVQUAL scale. On the other hand, Okumuş (2005), explained the major objective of in his research as to examine differences between expectations and satisfaction of the discount store and supermarket consumers. Additionally, helping marketing managers in developing marketing strategies for the discount stores and supermarkets was defined as the secondary objective of his research. Furthermore, Larson et. al. (2005) implemented analyses of extraordinary dataset revealing the path taken by individual shoppers in an actual grocery store, as provided by radio frequency identification tags located on their shopping carts. Researchers applied multivariate clustering algorithm for data sets with unique and numerous spatial constraints. Baltaset. al. (2010) emphasized the use of multiple stores by supermarket customers. Researchers, focused on the relationship among multiple storage and customer income, satisfaction and expenditures by use of cost-benefit analysis. On the other hand, another distinctive topic as warehouse club's membership fee, was examined by Kim and Choi (2007). A consumer model of store choice was built in their research for analyzing a duopoly model of competition between a warehouse club and a supermarket.

Research Methodology

This research was based on the presentation and interpretation of survey results conducted in Samsun Province. Simple random sampling method was used through the research. Therefore, according to sampling method, 370 customers were randomly selected. Data was gathered by the application of face to face surveys to supermarket customers. Statistical presentation of the basic indicators of supermarket customers and their shopping preferences were the basis of the methodology of this research. According to survey results, it was intended to figure out the basic characteristics and expectations of supermarket customers

through shopping and the main indicators for defining their satisfaction levels through supermarkets' selling policies. The main methodology of this research is based on the descriptive statistics and their interpretation for more effective supermarket policies in order to achieve not only better service for customers but also more profits for supermarkets. Therefore, it is intended to first put forward the existing situation for supermarket shopping in Samsun and second make suggestions to improve existing situation and constitute better future applications in supermarket services.

Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter is based on the expression and interpretation of the results of the selected indicators that supermarket customers were asked during face to face surveys. Therefore, it is intended to figure out the basic characteristics and expectations of customers. Table 1 figures out the supermarket customer profile and preferences for milk and dairy products, meat and baked products. Majority of the customers as it is visible from Table 1 preferred to buy these 3 different product groups by order of, usual market, butcher and bakery. However, approximately 24% of men and 28% of women, apart from other 2 product groups, preferred to buy milk and dairy products from street markets where local producers sell home-made milk and processed dairy products. This situation is an indicator of the potential for improvement of local milk production and market in Samsun province. On the other side, small scale home production for these items and complications of preservation and transportation conditions constitutes the main obstacles. Developing a milk and dairy products cooperative for increasing the productivity, standardization of hygiene and constituting better marketing opportunities are believed to provide a transformation from home-made production into market orientated production that not only farmers benefit higher levels of income but also customers get access for better service and conditions. Age profile of customers for 3 group of products on Table 1 was concentrated on 26-35 and 36-45. Moreover, the share of overall customers according to their involvement in 26-35 and 36-45 age group occurred as 32.4% for milk and dairy products, 36.2% for meat and 40.2% for baked products. The supermarket shopping when observed on the table for the majority of the customers were made from specific and usual supermarket rather than any market. Therefore, it is important to gain the priority of being the "usual market". The key role to become "usual market" is to clearly and correctly perceive customer expectations and to satisfy these expectations for any customer profile.

On the other side, educational levels of majority of the customers on Table 1 observed as having higher education degree with the share of 21.3% for milk and dairy products, 24% for meat and 24.5% for baked products. Following these shares, university graduation levels for these products have the second biggest ratio for supermarket customers, which indicates that customers having higher education levels could decide more rational choices for selecting the most attractive supermarket for shopping. The higher education is expected to bring more selective properties and higher expectations for shopping culture. Another important indicator regarding the customer profile for understanding the purchasing power of supermarket customers is the monthly income levels. According to Table 1 it is seen that majority of the supermarket customers are involved in the category of having 751-1500 TL monthly income. The shares of this income level for milk and dairy products, meat and baked products are as follows: 21% for milk and dairy products, 32.7% for meat and 25.4% for baked products.

		Milk and Dairy Products				Meat			Baked Products		
		Usual Market	Delicatessen	Any market	Street market	Butcher	Usual Market	Any Market	Bakery	Usual Market	Any Market
Gender	Women	106	5	17	50	128	44	6	132	39	7
	Men	118	17	11	46	131	49	12	140	33	19
Age	Below 18	12	3	1	3	14	4	1	12	6	1
	Between 19-25	45	8	9	10	46	22	4	50	14	8
	Between 26-35	65	6	7	22	70	28	2	81	14	5
	Between 36-45	55	4	3	31	64	25	4	68	19	6
	Between 46-55	35	0	6	20	43	11	7	47	9	5
	56 and more	12	1	2	10	22	3	0	14	10	1
Education	Primary school	65	5	14	56	105	27	8	102	28	10
	High school	79	6	10	26	89	26	6	91	19	11
	University	69	11	4	14	61	34	3	74	19	5
	Graduate school	8	0	0	0	3	4	1	4	4	0
	Postgraduate school	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
Monthly Income	Below 300 TL	24	3	4	19	36	9	5	35	11	4

Monthly Income	Between 301-750 TL	52	6	13	34	73	27	5	72	24	9
	Between 751-1500 TL	78	5	6	30	88	26	5	94	16	9
	Between 1501-3000 TL	48	8	4	11	47	21	3	56	11	4
	3001 TL and more	22	0	1	2	15	10	0	15	10	0

Table 1.SupermarketCustomer Profile and Preferences for Milk and Dairy Products, Meat and Baked Products

Increasing living standards, developments in communication and information systems brought about the increasing expectations of supermarket customers for receiving better service. Internet shopping possibilities and car parking opportunities are two important factors that affect the decision-making process of supermarket shopping. Table 2 figures out the importance of these factors for supermarket customers. Customers were asked to answer their decisions in Likert Scale form. 35% of women were undecided while 32% of men disagreed with the importance of internet shopping on their decision-making process of selecting supermarkets for shopping. This indicator highlights the lack of internet usage among supermarket customers in Samsun province. However, the more the internet usage the less advertisement costs for supermarkets. Therefore, developing attractive conditions for supermarket customers on internet shopping is believed to play an important role for decreasing the advertisement costs for supermarkets. Another important feature of internet for supermarkets can be specified as quick responses for changes in the new products, product variety and features, payment advantages etc. 18% of overall customers involved in the survey stated that they strongly agree with the importance of internet for supermarket shopping.

		Internet shopping					Car Parking				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Gender	Women	33	18	64	53	12	31	39	15	74	19
	Men	34	35	45	62	14	29	50	26	72	15
Age	Below 18	8	4	1	3	3	6	4	2	3	4
	Between 19-25	13	13	25	16	4	15	17	8	26	6
	Between 26-35	16	18	31	31	5	13	25	11	45	6
	Between 36-45	19	9	27	33	6	11	27	12	38	6
	Between 46-55	7	7	17	24	5	14	12	5	20	9
	56 and more	5	2	8	7	3	1	4	3	14	3
Education	Primary school	23	15	50	43	9	18	25	19	66	12
	High school	21	19	32	40	8	19	27	12	49	14
	University	17	16	26	29	9	20	31	9	30	8
	Graduate school	2	3	0	3	0	2	4	1	1	0

	Postgraduate school	6	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
Monthly Income	Below 300 TL	10	6	17	12	4	4	6	8	22	10
	Between 301-750 TL	19	15	34	29	8	16	17	13	46	13
	Between 751-1500 TL	15	20	40	40	4	7	36	12	58	6
	Between 1501-3000 TL	12	8	13	29	8	22	20	6	20	3
	3001 TL and more	13	4	5	5	2	11	10	2	0	2

Table 2.Importance Levels of Internet Shopping and Car Parking for Supermarket Customers

Table 2 also shows that customers involved in the age group of 36-45 are the majority (9%) that specified that they disagree with the importance of internet. On the other hand, 9% of customers in the age group of 26-35 explained that they are undecided about the internet shopping on their decision-making process. The level of customers that strongly agree with the importance of internet can be seen on Table 2 regarding their age levels. The range between 19 and 45 age constitutes the majority of customers that strongly agree. However, it is visible that there is a descent for the customers older than 45. In other words the older the people the less internet usage for supermarket shopping. Another important indicator is the education levels of customers for internet usage. Table 2 figures out the relationship between education level and internet usage. Majority of the customers (38%) in the survey observed to be graduated from primary school. On the other hand 0,2% of the customers have the graduate level of education as the minority in overall customers. 36% of the primary school degree holders stated that they are undecided about the

importance of internet shopping. Therefore, internet can be introduced to this group of customers in order to influence their decisions for time and energy saving while decreasing transportation costs. Moreover, majority of the high school (33%) and university (30%) degree holders stated that they disagree with the importance of internet on supermarket shopping. Approximately 87% of the customers having post graduate degree mentioned that they strongly agree with the importance of internet usage on their supermarket selecting criterions.

Table 2 points out the importance of car parking facilities for supermarket customers in Samsun province. According to Table 2, approximately 40% of customers disagree with the car parking facilities in the supermarket. On the other hand, 24% of customers also specified that they strongly agree with the car parking facilities. Majority of the age groups except below 18 stressed that they disagree with the parking facilities. Majority of primary school degree holders (47%) and high school degree holders (40%) indicated they disagree with the importance of car parking facilities. In addition, majority of customers having university degree (31%), graduate school degree (50%) and post graduate school degree (67%) have mentioned that they agree with the importance of car parking facilities. Majority of the customers (31%) that took place in income level between 1501-3000 TL and majority of customers (44%) that took place in income level of more than 3001 TL pointed out that they strongly agree with the importance of parking conditions. According to these statistical values, the higher income levels brought about the higher needs and expectations for car parking issues in supermarket shopping.

Importance levels of flexible working hours and variety of the goods for supermarket customers is figured out on Table 3. 40% of women strongly agreed and another 40% of women agreed with the importance of flexible working hours. Similarly, 41% of men strongly agreed and another approximately 41% of men agreed with the importance of flexible working hours.

		Flexible working hours					Variety of the goods				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Gender	Women	70	70	22	13	3	125	49	2	0	2
	Men	79	78	17	16	2	132	57	2	1	0
Age	Below 18	10	6	1	1	1	16	3	0	0	0
	Between 19-25	26	26	11	8	1	52	19	1	0	0
	Between 26-35	47	38	7	8	0	65	32	2	0	1
	Between 36-45	43	32	10	7	1	69	23	0	0	1
	Between 46-55	17	34	4	5	1	39	20	1	1	0
	56 and more	6	12	6	0	1	16	9	0	0	0
Education	Primary school	51	55	21	10	3	91	46	1	1	1
	High school	54	49	9	8	1	87	32	2	0	0
	University	39	39	9	10	1	72	24	1	0	1
	Graduate school	2	5	0	1	0	4	4	0	0	0

	Postgraduate school	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Monthly Income	Below 300 TL	16	21	10	2	1	32	17	0	0	1
	Between 301-750 TL	40	42	7	13	3	71	33	0	1	0
	Between 751-1500 TL	38	59	16	6	0	85	31	3	0	0
	Between 1501-3000 TL	39	19	6	7	0	51	19	1	0	0
	3001 TL and more	16	7	0	1	1	18	6	0	0	1

Table 3.Importance Levels of Flexible Working Hours and Variety of the Goods for Supermarket Customers

It is clear from Table 3 that for all age categories the majority of the answers from customers have concentrated on strongly agree and agree regarding the flexible working hours of supermarkets. Additionally, same situation can also be said for the education levels and monthly income levels of customers.

On the other hand, variety of the goods taking place in the supermarkets is also an important issue for some customers. In other words, in order to achieve customer satisfaction, it is important to present wide variety of goods that can allow customers to compare and choose the best option for price and quality. 70% of women and 69% of men emphasized that they strongly agree with the importance of variety of goods in the supermarkets for customer satisfaction. Majority of the customers regarding age, education level and monthly income level resulted in strongly agree and agree for the importance of variety of goods. As a result, apart from disparities in social and economic situations of customers, it is vital to provide a wide variety of goods.

Conclusion

Assessing consumer attitudes and developing marketing policies according to customers having different social and economic backgrounds is not only important for supermarkets but also for any company. Therefore, this paper has focused on consumer attitudes towards supermarket shopping in Samsun Province. Basic indicators have been selected to figure out consumer attitudes differentiated in social and economic dimensions.

It is observed from survey results that customers who were interested in buying milk and dairy products preferred shopping from street markets where local producers sell home-made milk and processed dairy products. This situation is an indicator of the potential for improvement of local milk production and market in Samsun province.

Another important factor chosen as defining the consumer attitudes is the internet shopping. Almost one fifth of the customers involved in this research specified that they strongly agree with the importance of internet for advertorials and product information and payment conditions. In other words, internet is an important item for comparing and deciding which products to buy. Therefore, improving internet infrastructure and encouraging customers for the use of internet is believed to decrease the advertisement costs for

supermarkets. It is also observed from the survey results that age is an important factor in internet usage. Thus, the target group of focusing on younger customers and let them be aware of internet shopping might be a good advantage for supermarkets to gain competitive advantage through decreasing costs.

Parking facilities in supermarket area is another factor selected in the survey for perceiving consumer attitudes. However, research results indicated that almost half of all customers did not specified a need for parking. On the contrary, it is also observed that the higher the income the more need for parking place for supermarket customers.

Flexible working hours is surprisingly appeared to be a factor that many customers strongly agreed with its importance for deciding supermarket shopping. In details, results of the survey pointed out that customers involved in all age, education and income categories agreed with the importance of flexible working hours on decision-making process of supermarket shopping. Therefore, constituting flexible working hours also might provide competitive advantage for supermarkets.

Variety of goods also mentioned as an important item not to be underestimated by supermarkets. It is also observed from the results that most of the men and women, apart from social and economic disparities, strongly agreed with the importance of variety of goods during shopping. Providing a wide variety of goods let customers compare and decide the best option to buy during supermarket shopping activities.

Finally, research results figured out that consumer attitudes differ in social and economic backgrounds of customer. Therefore, defining customer categories for age, income, education, etc. and constituting different marketing strategies for each category is believed to help supermarkets to gain competitive advantage.

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