

LOGISTIC SERVICE AS A DETERMINANT OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN E-COMMERCE

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Purpose: The purpose of this article is to indicate the importance of logistic customer service for building customer loyalty in e-commerce.

Design/methodology/approach: The work is of theoretical and empirical nature. The theoretical part was based on the literature on the subject. The empirical part presents analyzes of a secondary study and the results of own research conducted by the author.

Findings: Based on the study, it has been shown that the logistics aspects of electronic commerce expressed in the 7R rule are the foundation for creating satisfaction, and thus e-customer loyalty.

Research limitations/implications: In the future, it is advised to conduct ongoing research and analysis of customer expectations for e-commerce logistics to respond, in advance, to changing customer preferences.

Practical implications: The research results can be a starting point for building customer service strategies by electronic commerce entities.

Social implications: Research shows how digitization affects changes in trade, not just electronics.

Originality/value: The article is addressed to business practitioners, e-commerce managers, as well as academics and students interested in the subject of customer loyalty and e-commerce.

Keywords: e-commerce, logistic service, customer loyalty, 7R.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Identifying the expectations of modern e-consumers is the foundation of customer relationships, service systems and shaping their loyalty. It is not easy, because there are currently 5 generations of customers on the market, who differ significantly from each other, even by the degree of technology adaptation and online shopping, and thus the expectations regarding e-commerce service also vary.

Building its position on the market, the brand should be based on the values accepted by each of the mentioned generations of consumers (Greatest/Silent – born before 1945, Baby Boomers – born between 1946-1964, Gen X – born between 1965-1981, Gen Y/Millennials – born between 1982-2004, Gen Z – born after 2005).

It should be remembered, that it is necessary to flexibly treat the diagnosed values and observe emerging changes, as well as take into account the needs of individual consumers, which may break from the established stereotypes. The changes occurring in virtual markets mean that customer loyalty is not a permanent asset of the company, but a resource that needs to be enriched. Any organization that wants to exist and be successful in the modern market must be guided primarily by customer care (Chaudhuri, and Holbrook, 2001). The customer asks the manufacturer in the hope that their expectations regarding the product or service will be fulfilled, paying money in the hope of fulfilling these expectations. Customer care pays off because it rewards the supplier with customers' loyalty by spreading positive opinions about the supplier and returning to them.

Competitive and economic advantages stemming from the strengthening of customer relationships have been widely tested and discussed by practitioners and scholars of relationship marketing and in the customer satisfaction and post-consumption research fields.

Many studies, developed early into the business from the company into business marketing field, have focused on the antecedents and consequences of market relationships, identifying cognitive, affective and behavioral constructs – satisfaction, trust, loyalty and cooperation (Kim, and Yu, 2016) that qualify the relationship life cycle, from customer satisfaction to customer loyalty and partnership (Costabile, 2000, p. 2).

This article attempts to identify the factors that create customer loyalty in e-commerce. The paper is of theoretical and empirical nature and its foundation is a review of literature on the subject. The empirical part, however, is based on the results of own research, conducted by the author on both the demand and supply side of the e-commerce market.

Own surveys of online store customers were carried out in the period from August 2019 to September 2019. The link to the online survey was made public via Facebook social network. The selection of respondents for the research sample was random, using the so-called “convenience sampling” method. The study involved 2,246 people, 1,984 of whom declared that they had made purchases on the Internet and were asked to answer the questionnaire. The e-shops survey was also conducted using an electronic questionnaire and invitations to the survey were sent by e-mail. In total, 9,987 messages were sent, inviting to participate in the survey. 135 correctly completed questionnaires were received, representing a return rate of 1.35%. The results of the e-shop survey cannot be considered representative of the entire population, but they are of significant importance when illustrating the studied problem. From among 135 respondents, 122 companies declared that they sell products via the Internet, therefore further research results related to this group of enterprises.

2. The essence of customer loyalty

The success of every business organization depends on the satisfaction of its customers. Whenever a business is about to start, customers always come “first”, and then the profit. Companies that have succeeded in fully satisfying their customers’ needs will remain in the top position in a market. Today, companies know that customer satisfaction is the key component for the success of the business and, at the same time, plays a vital role in expanding the market value. In general, customers are people who buy goods and services from the market or the business that meets their needs and demands. Customers use money in order to purchase products to meet their expectations. Therefore, companies should determine their pricing in relation to the quality of the product that attracts the customer and will serve to maintain a long-term affiliation (Khadka, and Maharjan, 2017, p. 1).

Loyalty is a complex concept, difficult to define clearly. In the colloquial meaning, it means attachment, dedication, commitment (Andrew, and Yap, 2013). The essence of the phenomenon of loyalty is emphasized by the definition of recognizing it as a definite state of customer relationship with the company, whose products they buy, with high durability, long-term span and acceptance of the offered purchase terms, emphasizing that a loyal customer is a regular customer (Kotler, 1991), who does not succumb to the actions of competitors (What is brand loyalty?, 2020).

Customer loyalty presents a paradox. Many see it primarily as an attitude-based phenomenon, that can be significantly influenced by Customer Relationship Management initiatives, such as the increasingly popular loyalty and affinity programs. However, empirical research shows that loyalty in competitive repeat-purchase markets is shaped more by the passive acceptance of brands than strongly-held attitudes about them (Uncles, et al., 2002, p. 3).

Habit makes a consumer with a positive attitude towards a product or store brand change it only if the right incentive is used, while loyalty, being most often the result of satisfaction, means faithfulness to the brand, which is based on strong emotional foundation and which is followed by repetitive and informed choices, which, consequently, gives little incentive.

It is worth emphasizing, that customer loyalty is not a permanent feature and can quickly disappear if the cost of the product or the level of service changes to the detriment of customers (Bramham, 2005, p. 115).

It has been suggested that loyalty includes some degree of predisposition towards a brand. Brand loyalty is viewed as multidimensional construct, determined by several distinct psychological processes, and entails multivariate measurements. Customer perceived value, brand trust, customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior and commitment are found to be the key influencing factors of brand loyalty (Punniyamoorthy, Mohan Raj Prasanna, 2007).

Commitment and repeated purchase behavior are considered necessary conditions for brand loyalty, followed by perceived value, satisfaction and brand trust.

It is assumed that the source of loyalty is customer satisfaction. Satisfaction means to feel content after achieving or gaining what the person desired or wanted. Customer satisfaction theories are based on social and experimental psychology studies, carried out by Hoppe (1930) and Lewin (1936) in the first half of the 20th century.

Investigating the “self-esteem” (and self confidence) construct, these scholars discovered the foundation of “confirmation/disconfirmation” paradigm, useful to explain the perception of “satisfaction” and the link between satisfaction and trust (or at least self-trust).

Customer satisfaction (often abbreviated as CSAT) is a term used frequently in marketing. It is a measure of how the products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation (Farris et al., 2010).

In literature, the antecedents of satisfaction are studied from different perspectives. The considerations extend from psychological to physical and from normative to positive aspects. However, in most cases, the consideration is focused on two basic constructs, such as customers’ expectations prior to purchase or the use of a product and their relative perception of the performance of that product after using it.

It is difficult to know whether customers are satisfied with the availability of the product or services. Therefore, satisfying customers is not an easy task (Khadka, and Maharjan, 2017, p. 2). Satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers – and the satisfied, loyal and productive employees create the value (Khan, 2013, p. 186).

Customer’s expectations about a product tell us how they anticipate the performance of that product. As suggested in the literature, consumers may have various “types” of expectations when forming opinions about a product’s anticipated performance. For example, four types of expectations are identified by Miller (1977): ideal, expected, tolerable minimum and desirable. While Day (1977) indicated among expectations the ones that are about the costs, product nature, efforts in obtaining benefits and – lastly – expectations of social values. Perceived product performance is considered an important construct, due to its ability to allow making comparisons with the expectations.

Organization’s ability to attract and retain customers is vital to its success. Customer loyalty requires a strong appetite of the customer for a product. Marketing tools, such as integrated marketing communications (IMC) and branding, can be used in ways to increase perceived attraction between the consumer and the brand. These tools are used to boost emotional response and attachment to the brand, as well as influence the feelings the customer has for a brand. Both are important for congruency and relationship, which, in turn, lead to the development of brand loyalty (Cheng et al., 2011).

Cheng et al. revealed that, for the service industry, the cost of developing a new customer is at least 5 to 9 times the cost of maintaining an old customer. If customer loyalty can be effectively increased by 5%, then the profit may increase by 25-85%. Therefore, if the industry

wants to reduce expenditures on money and time cost, it shall focus on maintaining customers, instead of obtaining the new ones. It will bring a long- or short-term profit by maintaining a long-term relationship with the customer.

3. Logistic customer service in e-commerce

The dynamic development of e-commerce, expressed by the expansion of new entities and increasing acceptance of online purchases, means that it must meet the challenges arising from the conditions of the modern market. Traditional marketing instruments, such as the price, product range or discounts, are no longer sufficient. Research indicates that logistic customer service related to the delivery of products is becoming increasingly important.

The new economy has changed the face of modern business. Virtual offices, universities and enterprises offer e-product packages that are becoming increasingly popular and accepted. The dynamic development of e-commerce deserves special attention in e-business convention. Similarly to stationary trade, it has to meet the requirements of the modern market and, above all, customers, whose experience provokes increasing demands and expectations. At the same time, e-commerce, operating in a very competitive environment, must find ways to influence customers adequate to the specifics of its functioning. The value of the offer defined by comfort associated with logistics services, from ordering to its implementation in the form of product delivery, is increasingly important for customers. This is not an easy task, because logistics needs are closely related to the variety of products and customers, which translates into the need of high flexibility and efficiency of operation and creating the image of an online store.

The largest e-commerce markets in Europe – Germany, Great Britain and France altogether – account for over half of the total consumption of the European countries. The greatest popularity of online shopping is enjoyed by the UK, as 93 percent of consumers aged 15-79 shop on the Internet. The largest percentage of online sales is generated by clothing and footwear, purchased by over half of Europeans. France, as one of the largest European economies, is characterized by slightly above-average number of consumers of e-commerce and Internet penetration. Average annual expenditure is in line with the European average. E-commerce in Poland began to develop relatively late, but, in recent years, it has recorded clear increases. Nevertheless, Poland is below the European average in terms of the number of e-customers, Internet penetration (71%) and average annual spending on online shopping (EUR 352 per person). Italians spend slightly more than Poles, spending EUR 396 on average on online shopping. In a three-year research perspective, however, this expenditure is increasing. The highest amounts for e-shopping are spent by the English and the Germans (Majchrzak-Lepczyk, 2019).

The choice of a logistics model in e-commerce is one of the first decisions that must be made by the organization that begins selling on the Internet. The logistics model is nothing more than the way the company decides to manage the sales, storage and dispatch of their products. However, choosing the right logistics model for e-commerce is not the easiest task – for several reasons. First of all, some of those models are still little known on the Polish market, hence it is difficult to find suitable partners, who will provide a given service (e.g. distributors or courier companies). The most common e-commerce logistics models include:

1. The warehouse model of distribution

This model of distribution is the oldest, but still popular among small e-commerce businesses. Owning a warehouse is a good option, both for small e-stores that sell a narrow, easily-manageable range of products, and big ones, that have enough resources to handle the costs of renting space and employing workforce.

The pros of a private warehouse:

- a. Full control over own stock.
- b. Possibility to quickly react in case of complaint or return request.
- c. Lower prices of stock when buying a large number of items.
- d. No middlemen and, therefore, no delays or complications that are beyond the owner's control.
- e. If the owner sells locally, they can offer the possibility of personal pick-up.
- f. Possibility to adjust the shipment to the work hours of the post office and courier companies to speed up deliveries.
- g. Possibility to easily personalize orders and packaging to boost brand awareness.

The cons of a private warehouse:

- a. The control over own stock also means responsibility for it. Managing all the orders is very time-consuming.
- b. This solution has low scalability, due to limited space available.
- c. The need to employ warehouse workers or do the heavy lifting by oneself.
- d. Big upfront investment.
- e. High and unavoidable cost of rent may get a small store out of business during tough times.

Due to the development of e-commerce, an enterprise is limited under logistics bottleneck, especially for medium and large enterprises, breaking the bottleneck will become very important. Therefore, these enterprises have to increase costs in self-operated logistics (the company manages the logistics business by itself and completes the enterprise logistics distribution business), so that they can take control, revitalize enterprises, increase brand value and reduce the transaction costs (Yue, 2019, p. 13).

Under this logistics mode, the enterprise can control logistics functions and assets directly, ensure accurate and timely supply, quality of customer service, as well as maintain long-term relationship between enterprises and customers. However, enterprises need to invest a lot of

money in building warehouses, purchasing logistics equipment and information management systems, which increases the burden on enterprises (Yuehui, et al., 2017).

2. Logistics Alliances

A logistics alliance is a group or team of trading experts who work together to help companies competently and successfully manage and deliver their products. Companies can hire or join logistics alliance groups to empower the alliance group to provide assistance, establish supply chains and offer business advice for the company (Heuberger, 2017). Enterprises can choose the best and most suitable logistics companies in different areas by logistics alliances. At the same time, enterprises can also easily manage warehousing and distribution by using IT, while sharing commodity circulation and logistics information of various logistics companies, so that the range of logistics service and commodity circulation space is expanded, finally achieving distribution to the consumers. In the process of choosing a logistics alliance, enterprises also build survey evaluation and elimination system, thus optimizing the resource of logistics alliance and improving cross-regional cooperation of logistics distribution and competitiveness.

3. Third Party Logistics

Third Party Logistics (3PL) providers typically specialize in integrated operations of warehousing and transportation services that can be scaled and customized to customers' needs, based on market conditions, to meet the demands and delivery service requirements for their products. Services often extend beyond logistics, to include value-added services related to the production or procurement of goods, such as services that integrate parts of the supply chain. A provider of such integrated services is referenced as a third-party supply chain management provider (3PSCMP), or as a supply chain management service provider (SCMSP). 3PL targets particular functions within supply management, such as warehousing, transportation or raw material provision (Walker, 2014).

4. Fourth Party Logistics

Fourth Party Logistics (4PL) is a supply chain integrator, which mobilizes and manages resources, capabilities and technologies provided by organizations and complementary services to provide an integrated supply chain solution. Fourth Party Logistics not only controls and manages specific logistics services, but also proposes solutions for the whole logistics process and integrates the procedures through e-commerce. Therefore, there are many kinds of Fourth Party Logistics providers, and the degree of change can be very large. The key function of the Fourth Party Logistics is to provide customers with the best value-added services, that is fast, efficient, low-cost and personalized services. The development of the Fourth Party Logistics needs to balance the ability, technology and trade management of the Third Party Logistics, but it can also expand its own operational autonomy.

To keep up with an increasing demand from e-commerce channels and meet the expectations of consumers, organizations will need to invest in their warehouses and distribution centers, as well as increase the development and implementation of advanced

supply chain and logistics processes (Atkins, 2019). Companies that fail to keep up with logistics trends risk losing competitive advantage and falling out of favor with consumers (Xiao, et al., 2012).

Logistics in e-commerce is a very important element of running one's own online store. It has a huge impact on how quickly and effectively the orders will be processed. For the customer, the most important is the quality of service and the time of delivery of the product, while, for the entrepreneur, it is important to minimize costs and have enough goods to meet the needs of each client. It is not entirely possible to reconcile the preferences of both the company and consumers. One needs to set a goal, try to achieve it effectively and constantly strive for the development of the company.

One of the less common thoughts about the components of digital and retail revolution is how the customers will receive the products from online stores. The most important customer of logistic service is its end user – the one, who indicates the place and time of delivery. The end user in the presented considerations is an individual consumer, satisfying their personal needs, making purchases in e-commerce.

Most frequently, logistic customer service is associated with the activity related to delivery, but before it occurs, a number of activities takes place in the entire supply chain (Ying, et al., 2016).

In the discussed considerations, it was assumed, that logistic service is the effect of the logistic system of the enterprise and the supply chain in order to provide benefits of functional, economic and psychological nature. The process of order processing by the online store is shown in Figure 1.

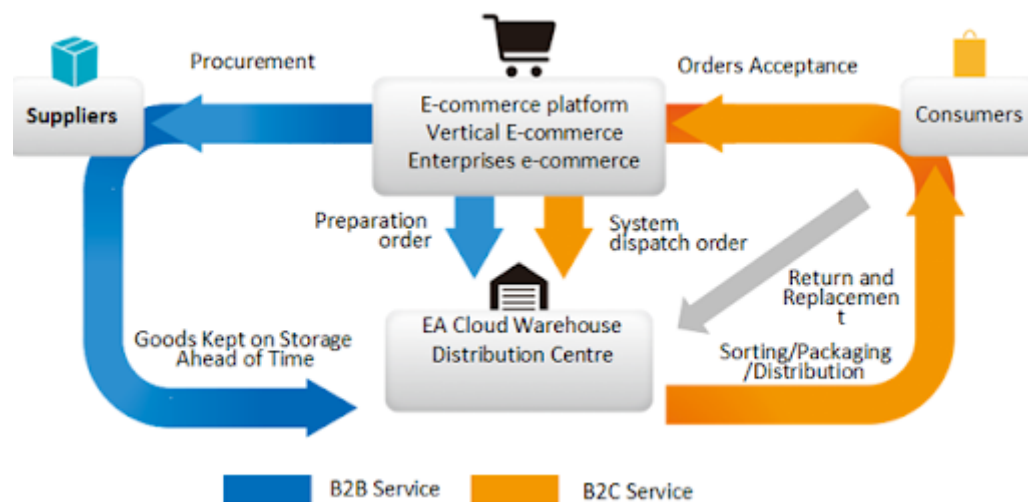


Figure 1. Logistic distribution of e-commerce. Adapted from: <http://www.logistics-ea.com/en/Services/dswl.html> (15.04.2020).

The first point of contact between the customer and an e-shop is the choice of products that the customer wants to buy, then the order will be finalized through its confirmation and payment or the option of payment on delivery. Just after paying for the order, it goes to the online store system. Then the whole process of physical execution of the order begins. The order is

processed if all the data is correctly completed. When the products are in stock, they are picked up – the employee, to whom the order has been assigned, collects in the warehouse the products that should be in the order.

Later, all these products are packaged and the package is ready for pickup by a courier. During this time, a courier label is also generated in accordance with the delivery method chosen by the customer. The complete order is waiting for the courier to arrive, the order is issued and the package is delivered by the courier to the customer.

Logistics distribution is an end part of e-commerce and the rapid development of e-commerce also drives the development of logistics distribution. At the same time, it puts forward higher requirements for logistics distribution. In general, e-commerce and logistics distribution are manifested in such aspects. Firstly, e-commerce promotes the improvement of logistics infrastructure. High efficiency and global characteristics of e-commerce require logistics distribution to achieve this goal. Secondly, e-commerce promotes the progress of logistics technology. The level of logistics technology is an important factor to realize the efficiency of logistics. Establishing an efficient logistics system adapted to the operation of e-commerce and speeding up the improvement of logistics technology plays an important role (Yue, 2019, p. 11).

Logistics distribution constitutes a complete e-commerce activity. Logistics distribution is the support, foundation and guarantee of e-commerce activities, and also the key to the practice of e-commerce. The realization of logistics distribution also realizes the value of e-commerce. The advantages and disadvantages of logistics distribution and its efficiency directly restrict normal development of e-commerce.

4. Logistics as a factor of building customer loyalty

In traditional trade, the seller sells a product that is available on the proverbial shelf. On the other hand, in e-commerce, they sell the promise of order fulfillment, in particular, the promise that the right customer will be provided with the right product, of the right quantity and condition, at the right place, at the right time and at the right cost.

All these elements have an impact on building satisfaction, and thus customer loyalty – this impact can be both positive and negative. Some of those elements are very closely related, e.g. delivery time and costs. The financial benefits and costs are well-known. However, it is worth trying to group activities and develop a catalogue of factors relevant to the customer in e-commerce in terms of logistics, having a non-financial dimension, such as:

1. availability of goods,
2. time of delivery,
3. place of delivery or reception of goods,

4. goods packaging,
5. transfer of information.

For many companies, the increased popularity of online commerce means increased complexity of operations and processes. The role of logistics and its enormous importance in e-commerce can be discussed in many ways. Any more or less experienced seller is able to agree with the statement that e-commerce is largely logistics.

Logistics, as already mentioned many times, is a key element of the online store's operation, but it should not be reduced only to the shipping of the order, because it can also perform additional functions that create value for the customer. As can be seen in Figure 2, logistics can be a source of competitive advantage, a reason for customer satisfaction, as well as reduction of costs.

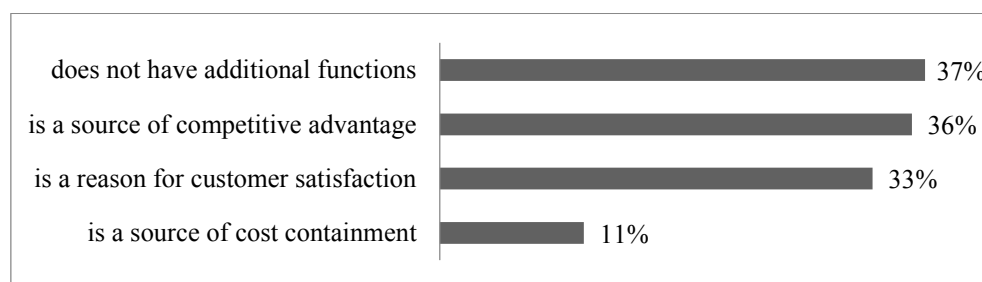


Figure 2. Additional functions performed by logistics in online stores. Adapted from: M. Maciejczak, V. Schyrsky, *Logistics of online stores as part of their development strategy*, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Warsaw, p. 115.

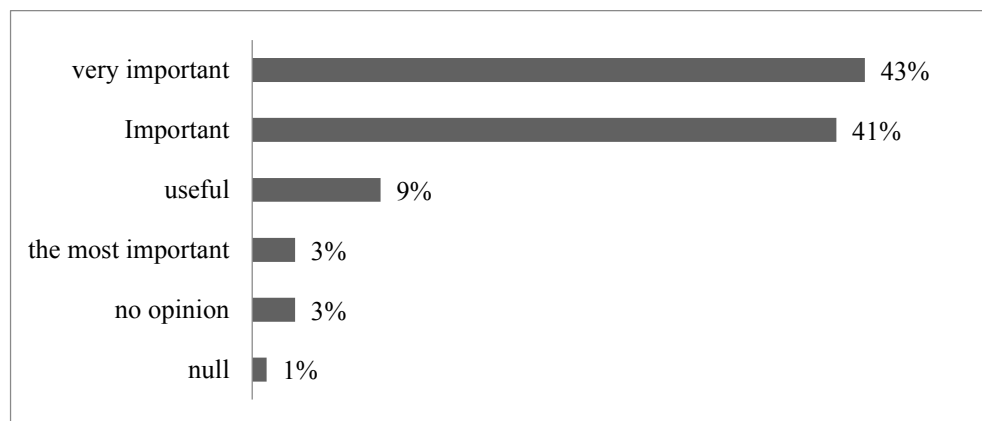


Figure 3. Evaluation of the importance of logistics in online stores. Adapted from: M. Maciejczak, V. Schyrsky, *Logistics of online stores as an element of their development strategy*, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Warsaw, p. 116.

According to the presented research results, over 43% of respondents believe that distribution logistics is a very important element in the operation of online stores. Over 40% consider it a significant factor, and over 9% consider it a useful factor. Among the remaining respondents, 2.63% consider distribution logistics as the most important factor, while 1.32% considered it unimportant (Figure 3). The optimization of logistics activities is important not only for the seller, but – above all – for the customer, because the whole supply side of the market is fighting for them and their satisfaction.

Consumers are getting used to a certain level of service and, therefore, expect a satisfactory level of service in every e-store. Online stores are outdoing each other in solutions designed to attract customers, which is why the standard has become, for example, placing a preview of the e-store's inventory on the store's website, including information about the time of order processing.

Shopping experiences have a fundamental impact on loyalty in e-commerce websites, translating into four dimensions, which are: the convenience of using the website, customer autonomy, sense of relationship with the company and customer confidence in e-commerce website. These elements have an impact on satisfaction, which determines loyalty, as does the image of the store shaping customer experience.

Behavioral approach says that a loyal consumer is the one, who regularly purchases from a given company. In this case, loyalty becomes a result of pragmatics, not individual positive feelings, whose significance falls to the background. The behavioral approach, therefore, assumes that loyalty is the behavior involving the repetition of purchasing certain products. This behavior results from the satisfaction of using the goods/services. This approach is the oldest understanding of the concept of loyalty. The author's own research has shown that over 91.4% of respondents can be considered loyal customers of a proven online store, from the point of view of behavioral approach, because they repeat purchases at least 4 times a year.

On the e-stores side, 29% have no more than 10% of customers, who repeat purchases at least 4 times a year, and another 18% value the share of regular customers at 11-20% (Figure 4).

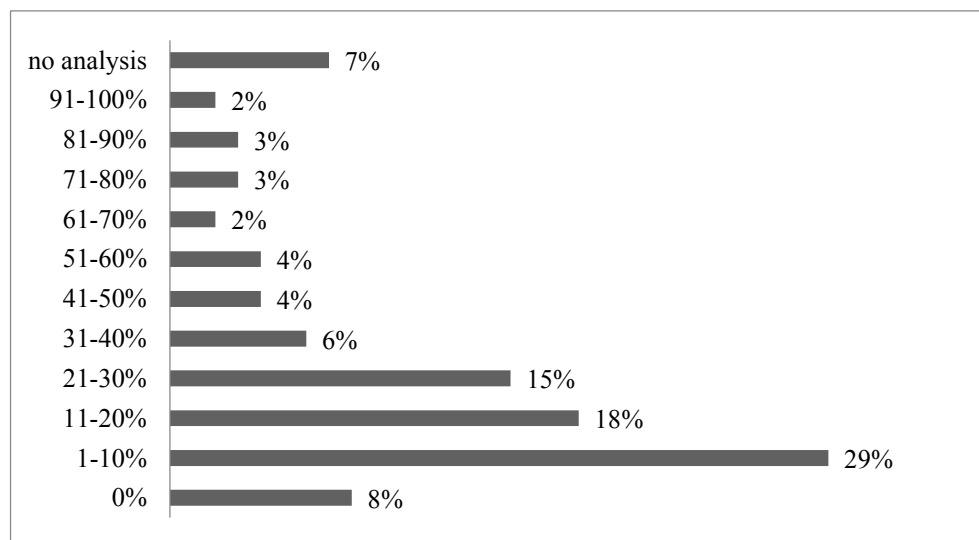


Figure 4. The percentage of regular customers of online stores in the opinion of the surveyed enterprises. Source: own research.

However, it is worth paying attention to the fact that the main reason why they regularly repeat purchases in the same e-store is the trust to the seller (83% of respondents – Figure 5), which is the result of meeting expectations, i.e. providing the expected value. This trust is also expressed by the customers not taking such actions as checking the contents of a shipment in

the presence of a courier (59.6% of the respondents do not do this and 15.4% makes it dependent on the type of products ordered) and checking the date of posting – 34,5% of the customers do not do it. In addition, 89.4% of buyers are satisfied with the quality of the received goods.

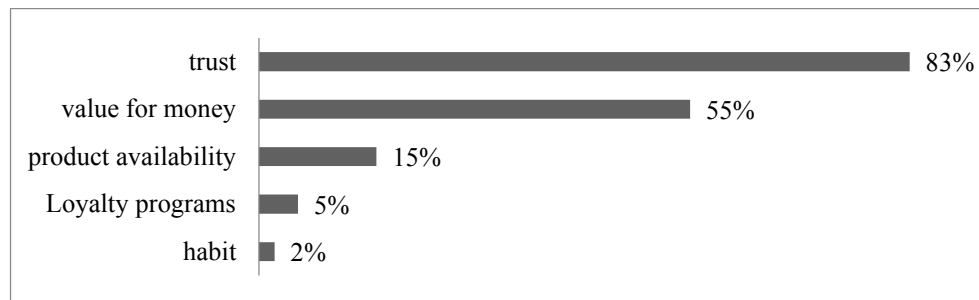


Figure 5. Reasons why customers repeat purchases in the same e-stores. Source: own research.

Based on the analysis of research results, it can be unequivocally stated that the loyalty of e-customers is not convergent with the behavioral approach, but is emotional, resulting from the consumer's subjective feelings and trust in the seller, which is the result of meeting customer expectations, compliance of goods with the description in e-shop website, timely delivery of orders and communication with customers (Figure 6.).

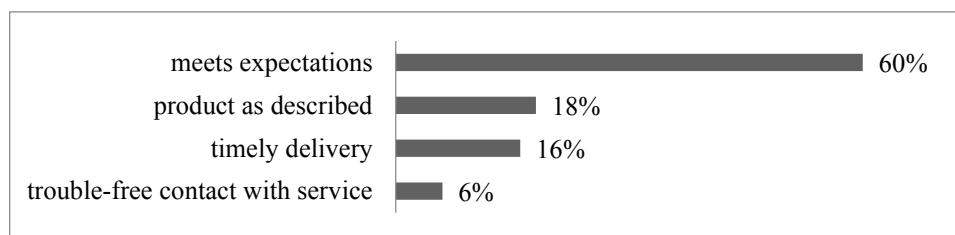


Figure 6. Reasons why customers repeat purchases in the same e-stores. Source: own research.

In the case of e-stores, one can observe a phenomenon known as the network effect for the Internet environment. The external effect of the network occurs when the value of a product or service for a user is determined by how many consumers use this product/service. One of the results of this effect is that each additional network user benefits its existing participants. In other words, the network effect means that the value of a product or service is created by users, not by the manufacturer (Begg, et al., 2007, p. 437).

A larger number of people using a given e-commerce website, positive image and good reputation of the website, as well as reviews and comments posted online by consumers increase trust, increasing the sense of consumer security and minimizing transaction uncertainty (Tsai, and Huang, 2009).

Trust in business is a derivative of the credibility of the parties entering into transactions. Credibility is not an unambiguous and obvious feature. Each of its addressees can perceive and evaluate it differently. Something that inspires confidence in some, can hurt and discourage others. The key element here is the source of information, on the basis of which we issue an opinion on a given topic. Nowadays, the access to the information is almost limitless, but some of it may be written by unreliable sources.

Every customer wants to be sure that the transaction concluded via the Internet will be successful and they will receive the ordered goods and bring profit to the company. Before placing an order, a potential contractor checks the credibility of the e-store to avoid any possible risk.

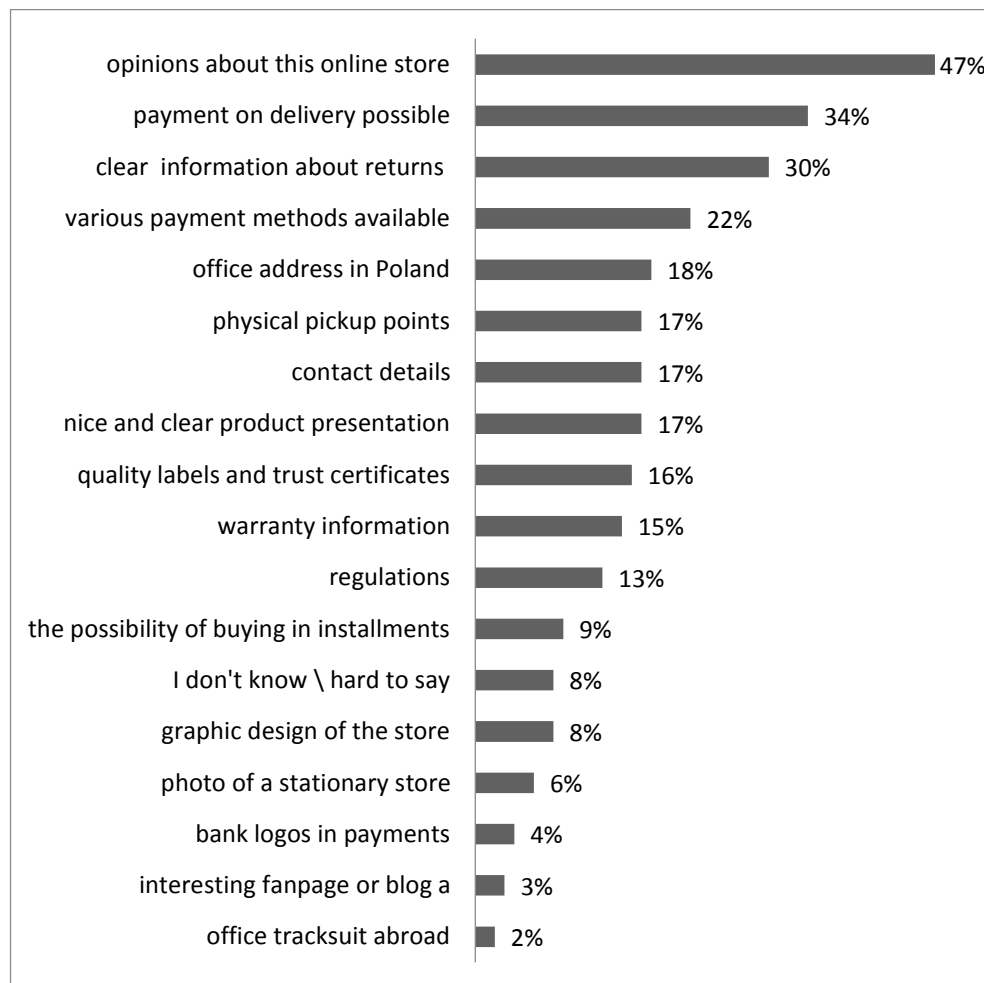


Figure 7. The aspects affecting the client's belief that this store is reliable (multiple choice of answers possible). Source: own study based on: E-Commerce Report in Poland. Gemius for e-Commerce Polska.

According to Gemius research, conducted for the Chamber of Electronic Economy, customers assess the credibility of an online store primarily on the basis of the opinions of other consumers who have used the offer of the seller (Figure 7). The second of the indicated factors was the possibility of payment on delivery, while on the third place was the information on the conditions of return and complaints. It is worth noting that the following items include aspects such as: address data, warranty information and purchasing regulations, i.e. information that should be on the website of every e-store, without exception.

Logistics is such a wide range of issues that it is difficult to find a clear definition in the literature on the subject. To facilitate the understanding and the spectrum of importance of logistics as a science and business area, the 7R rule was created, which, apart from a defining role, describes what logistics does in practice.

According to the 7R rule, logistics consists of delivering the right product, in the right quantities and at the right price, with the right quality, to the right recipient and the right place, at the right time.

Due to the fact that the research results presented earlier clearly indicated that logistics aspects, such as return policy or payment terms, are key attributes of e-store's credibility, respondents were asked to indicate the criteria influencing their decision to buy a specific product in a specific store with a hierarchy of importance, where: 1 – is the most important, 9 – is the least important. Based on the obtained results, the average for each criterion was calculated.

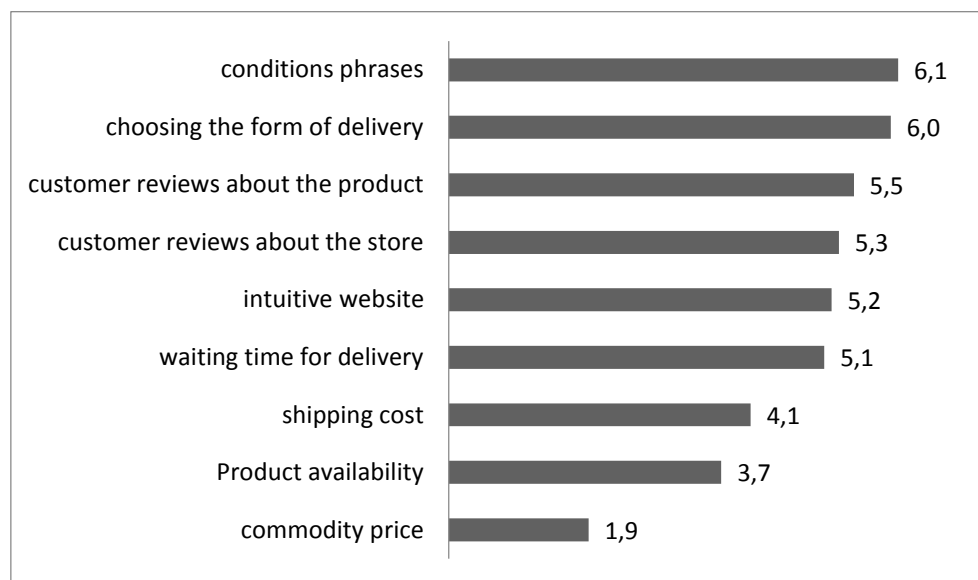


Figure 8. Criteria affecting regular e-customer purchasing decisions. Source: own research.

The obtained results confirm previous respondents' declarations as to the factors creating e-customer loyalty (Figure 8). The most important aspect is the price of the goods, then their availability. As much as 54.7% of the respondents indicated product price as the most important, which proves that customers do not want to overpay for products that meet the same expectations. Other criteria were strictly logistical factors, such as cost of delivery and waiting time for the delivery.

Comparing the criteria building customer loyalty in the network to the 7R principle, it can be seen that, in at least 5 aspects, they converge, because the customer expects goods to be available, which corresponds with the principles of "the right goods" and "the right quantity", then the customer wants the order to arrive at a specified time and cost (declared by the seller) and to the indicated place, which corresponds with the principles of "the right price", "the right place" and "the right time".

Separating logistics as a category, to which the e-entrepreneur should pay special attention, is a confirmation of the huge role of logistics in online sales. Equally to management and marketing, we focus on optimizing logistics processes, i.e. all the elements that have contributed to the shape of today's e-commerce.

Customer satisfaction with purchases is a consequence of the effectiveness of activities relating to the organization of logistics processes. This is a challenge for e-commerce entities in absorbing innovative solutions that create value for the customer. Modern customers expect authenticity and new values, showing commitment to the purchase process. Being well-informed, through recommendations and expressing their opinions in the online environment, may have an impact on contributing to the value of a market entity.

5. Conclusion

Creating customer loyalty is not an easy task, it also requires time and provides the consumer with the expected value. The question arises – how to meet customer requirements? It is definitely worth conducting market research, especially among one's own clients, because it is the most effective way of gathering relevant information. Only then is it much easier to adjust the service level and manage attributes that directly affect customer satisfaction.

It should be noted, that loyalty is a category strongly related to the emotions of a buyer, who strives to meet their needs. To satisfy the need at a certain level, it is necessary to create appropriate conditions materially (technological background) and non-materially (communication with the client). As demonstrated by our own research and the analysis of secondary research, logistic customer service in electronic commerce is the foundation for building customer loyalty.

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