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Target groups of retail brands

Grupy docelowe marek detalicznych

The literature emphasizes the growing significance of retail brands and differentiation of retail brands` strategies, also in terms of their target groups. Nevertheless, a few studies examine the strategic role of particular target groups of retail brands, especially on the Polish market.
The purpose of this article is to answer the question: which consumers segments have the greatest significance as the target groups of retail brands for retail chains operating in Poland?
The empirical research was conducted in an attempt to answer the question above. Data were collected through CATI survey of 143 randomly recruited retail chains operating in Poland.
The findings indicate that target groups of retail brands considered as the strategic ones for retailers in Poland are diversified. They strongly vary in terms of economic, geographic, life style and demographic criteria for market segmentation. Amongst the most important target groups retailers mentioned: residents of large cities, high-quality oriented consumers, novelty — seekers and seniors.

W literaturze przedmiotu podkreśla się rosnące znaczenie marek detalistów, w tym marek sieci detalicznych oraz wskazuje się, że w ostatnich latach następuje znaczne zróżnicowanie strategii marek detalistów, w tym grup docelowych tych marek. Niewiele jest jednak badań dotyczących znaczenia grup docelowych w strategiach marek sieci detalicznych, zwłaszcza tych działających na polskim rynku.
Celem artykułu jest więc odpowiedź na następujące pytanie badawcze: które grupy docelowe mają największe znaczenie jako segmenty docelowe marek dla działających w Polsce sieci detalicznych?
W celu odpowiedzi na to pytanie przeprowadzono badania ilościowe metodą ankietową z zastosowaniem techniki CATI na próbie143 losowo wybranych, działających w Polsce sieci detalicznych.
W wyniku badań empirycznych potwierdzono, że segmenty docelowe produktów oznaczonych markami detalistów są zdywersyfikowane. Gestorzy badanych sieci detalicznych za istotne segmenty docelowe uznali konsumentów różniących się kryteriami ekonomicznymi, geograficznymi, stylu życia i demograficznymi. Wśród najważniejszych wskazali m.in. mieszkańców dużych miast, konsumentów zorientowanych na wysoką jakość, poszukujących nowości i osoby starsze.

Key words:
retail brand, retailer, retail chain, target groups, segmenting.

Słowa kluczowe:
marka detalisty, detaliści, sieci detaliczne, grupy docelowe, segmentacja.

Introduction

The subject-matter literature emphasizes that for many decades retail chains had been associated with low prices (Helms, Haynes and Cappel, 1992, p. 3–14), but lately they started implementing the strategy of competing using unique features that translates into the introduction of products marked with retail brands, offering unique functional or emotional benefits (strategy of creating added values). Changes in strategy of the retailers that go towards the strategy of differentiation are also connected with extension in terms of target groups of their own brands.

If one monitors market practices of retail chains, one can find many examples of diversifying and extending target groups of retail brands. However, few studies examine the significance of respective target groups, especially the ones relating to Polish market.

This article consists of three parts. The first part includes a review of literature on the brand strategy of the retailers, especially target groups, and presents typology of these target groups. The second part presents research methodology and general profile of research sample. The third part presents findings of empirical research concerning the meaning of respective target groups of retail brands amongst researched enterprises. The article is summed up with the conclusions.

Target groups of retail brands — literature review

Increase in share of retail brands is accompanied by changes in the strategies of those brands, including quality improvement of products market with retail brands (Gonzalez Mieres, Diaz Martin and Trespalacios Gutierrez, 2006, p. 61; Burton, Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Garretson, 1998, p. 293–306). Richardson, Jain and Dick (1996, p. 159–185) pointed out increasing diversity of retail brands: from brands competing using low prices to the brands offering high quality. Thus, since the 1990s the quality gap between the retail brands and manufacturer brands has been decreasing. In the last few decades, retail brands have been evolving from the so-called generic private labels into the brands offering high quality and significant added value that is comparable to the manufacturer brands (Laaksonen, Reynolds, 1994, p. 37–46; Sprott and Shimp, 2004, p. 305–315). This, in turn, involves a change of approach of the retailers towards defining target groups for their own brands. However, researchers view the recommendations on the strategies of the retail brands differently. Soberman and Parker (2006, p. 125–139) belive that even the brands of the higher quality should still be cheaper, whilst Ailawadi and Harlam (2004, p. 147–165) indicate that it would be a mistake to position retail brands as cheap as it can lead to the loss of profit margin. According to Helms, Haynes and Cappel (1992, p. 3–14), retailers can also use the combination approach that combines competing using unique features of the offer and low costs which enables to obtain higher profitability and greater market shares (Miller and Friesen, 1986, p. 255–261; Wright, Hotard, Kroll and Tanner, 1990; Hall, 1983).

Issues related to segmentation and differentiation of the profile of the retail brands` buyers have been discussed in the literature since 1960s (including: Frank and Boyd, 1965, p. 27–35; Rao, 1969, p. 56–70; Szymanski and Busch, 1987, p. 425–431; Sinha and Batra, 1999, p. 237–252; Batra and Sinha, 2000, p. 175–191; Corstjens and Lal, 2000, p. 281–291; Miranda and Joshi, 2003, p. 34–47; Whelan and Davies, 2006, p. 393–402; Vahie and Paswan, 2006, p. 67–84; Baltas, 2007, p. 328–341). In 1967 Myers (1967, p. 73–81) published an article on the relations between discretionary income and retail brands' purchase. Baltas, Doyle and Dyson (1997, p. 988–995) declared that consumers do not always prefer cheaper products marked with retail brands and when the price of a manufacturer brand increases, they often buy products of the other manufacturer brands and not of the retail brands. Nevertheless, the research didn`t enable to create any clear profile of the consumers that are more prone to purchasing retail brands and only allow to confirm that this is a group that includes a wide scope of consumers with diverse demographic and economic features, lifestyles and values.

There are also many research and publications concerning consumers' perception of retail brands' attributes (Baltas, 1997, p. 315–324; Baltas, Doyle and Dyson, 1997, p. 988–995; Gonzleas Mieres, Diaz Martin and Trespalacios Gutierrez, 2006, p. 761–772; Grunert, Esbjerg, Bech-Larsen, Bruns and Juhl, 2006, p. 597–608; Glynn and Chen, 2009, p. 896–914), including differences in consumers` perception of retail brands` quality vs manufacturer brands (Hoch and Banerji, 1993, p. 57–67; Quelch and Harding, 1996, p. 99–109; Batra and Sinha, 2000, p. 175–191). According to Richardson, Jain and Dick (1996, p. 159–185), the following factors influence purchasing of retail brands by consumers: external attributes of the product directed at the increase in its perceived quality (price, prestige), marketing, sociological and economic factors, including differences between retail brands and manufacturer brands; as well as value for consumer and perceived risk. Other authors mentioned other factors that determine purchasing of retail brands, such as promotion (Burton, Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Garretson, 1998, p. 293–306) and product category (Sinha and Batra, 1999, p. 237–251). Furthermore, the following have been found: the negative correlation between the attitude of consumers toward the retail brands, loyalty to the brand, price perception to quality ratio, and impulsiveness of shopping (Beldona and Wysong, 2007, p. 226–235); positive and statistically significant correlation between the price and perceived quality of products market with retail brands and between the name of the retailer brand and perceived quality of this brand (Rao and Monroe, 1989, p. 351–357). This implies that the price is not the most significant factor determining the perception of the quality of products marked with retail brands.

Consumer segmentation and selection of the target groups for the products marked with retail brands constitute a prerequisite of the effective marketing strategy (Segal and Giacobbe, 1994, p. 38). As Kotler observed, "markets consist of the consumers that differ in many aspects" (1999, p. 243). Knowledge of consumer behavior, including the profile of potential buyer, may constitute a factor of developing their competitive advantage (Peter and Olson, 2010, p. 9).

Initially, the owners of the retail brands used only economic criteria for consumer segmentation.

Currently, as the evolution and diversification of retail brands progress, more and more developed procedures of consumers' classification are being used. They include economic, demographic and psychographic criteria (Ducarozz, Vandenbulcke, Lecron and Fouss, 2013). Similarly to Myers, (1967, p. 73), Burger and Scott (1972, p. 219) noticed that the criterion of relatively low income is not an exclusive determinant of purchasing retail brands. Authors proved that products marked with them were purchased by consumers belonging to different economic and demographic groups and thus, psychographic variables could constitute significant criteria of segmentation. The results of a recent empirical research (including Ailawadi, Neslin and Gedenk, 2001, p. 71; Baltasa, 2001, p. 1510; Sethuraman and Gielens, 2014, p. 146) lead to similar conclusions. Their authors evidence that nowadays, amongst retail brands buyers, there are people of different economic statuses who differ in terms of demographic features and psychographic profile. The latter is considered as an especially significant criterion of distinguishing target groups for retail brands. The following are emphasized: price sensitiveness, value perception, quality perception, and perceived risk related to the purchase. As Shukla, Banerjee and Adidam (2013, p. 423) noticed, when creating profile of target groups for the retail brands, one should consider its socio-demographic and psychographic features. The authors added that retail chains that were successful on the market not only distinguished segments of consumers, but also identified smaller sub-segments within them.

Both subject-matter literature and observation from the modern market practice of retail chains lead to the conclusion that target groups of retail brands can be considered as diversified. Currently, retail chains' owners not only offer relatively cheap own brands representing a lower quality level than the manufacturer brands, but also high-quality and premium brands (Cuneo, Lopez and Yague, 2010, p. 952; Kumar and Steenkamp, 2013, p. 23). The range of products is being extended-retail brands are available in almost all product categories (Miquel-Romero, Caplliure, Sanchez, 2014, p. 667). Furthermore, different strategies of their positioning are being implemented — in terms of criteria of low price, high quality, and emotional benefits (Carpenter, 2005, p. 976; Huang i Huddleston, 2009, p. 976). Thus, products offered under these brands may be an answer to the needs of different target groups. They differ, e.g. due to the income level, age, dwelling, preferences and lifestyles. Among the consumers who purchase retail brands one can meet young people and seniors, residents of big cities and villages, members of small households and large families, people preferring traditional products or novelties, and the so-called "transumers", i.e. people looking for new experiences (Lawson, 2010, p. 842). Rich people, people with relatively low income, and the so-called "smart shoppers" reach for them (Atkins and Kim, 2012, p. 360–375). Within the segments of the retail brands buyers one can also find people oriented towards ethical values, searching for ecological and healthy products, and digital consumers who use information and communications technology intensively (Labrecque, Esche, Mathwick and Novak, 2013, p. 257–267).

In view of the segments of retail brands' buyers defined in the subject-matter literature, one can distinguish the following groups of consumers:

1) Segments of consumers distinguished due to the economic criteria: high-quality oriented consumers, price-sensitive consumers and smart shoppers.
2) Segments of consumers distinguished due to the geographic criteria: residents of large cities, residents of small or medium towns.
3) Segments of consumers distinguished due to the lifestyle criteria: novelty-seekers, digital consumers, transumers, consumers caring for health, consumers oriented towards traditional products, consumers oriented towards regional products, eco-friendly consumers and oriented towards ethical values.
4) Segments of consumers distinguished due to the demographic criteria: large families, parents of infants or small children, seniors, young adults (18–24), teenagers (13–17).

Changes in the strategy of the retail brands are also visible amongst the retail chains operating on emerging markets, including Poland. Thus, the aim of this article is to reply to the following research question: which consumer segments have the greatest significance as the target groups of retail brands for retail chains operating in Poland?

The authors state the thesis that retail chains operating in Polish market diversify target groups of their brands. They attach great significance not only to the target groups distinguished due to the traditional economic, demographic or geographic criteria, but also to the ones distinguished due to the lifestyle criteria.

Methodology and research sample profile

In order to answer the research question and verify the thesis above, a critical analysis of the subject-matter literature was performed and a quantitative empirical research was conducted. Data was collected using the survey method in the form of a telephone review with the application of CATI technique. The research sample was randomly selected amongst retail chains in Poland. The retail chains` research sample was evolved from the base of Portal Spożywczy "List of 700 retail chains and wholesalers` chains in Poland" and other ratings (including "Marketing rating of retail chains"). The research was conducted nationwide. 143 interviews were conducted with respondents — representatives of the highest levels of retail chains` management, including owners and co-owners, chief executive officers and their deputies, board members, marketing directors and other managers authorized by those given above.

A vast majority of responded enterprises had solely Polish capital (72%) or predominant Polish capital (11,2%). Only 16.8% of researched chains had dominant foreign capital. Retail chains represented different types of retail formats, including: 42% — specialist retail chains, 25.9% — convenience store chains, 14% — supermarket chains, 11.9% — discount chains, 9,8% — department store chains, 6.3% — stalls. Only 3.5% of them represented cash & carry chains or hypermarket chains. Individual owners were managing a couple of retail formats. Most of the researched chains covers the national market (83.9%) and only 23 of them are international retail chains. Sales area of 27.3% researched chains in 2013 was below 1200 square meters, 50.4% dispose of 1201–4000 square meters, 22.4% — over 4000 square meters. The chains differ also in terms of amount of stores owned in Poland. In 2013, 25.2% of them had less than 10 stores, 25.9% — 10 to 18 stores, 25.2% — 19 to 45 stores and 23.8% — more than 46 stores.

Target groups of retail chains in Poland — the empirical results

Differentiation in terms of retail brands positioning methods and their target groups are significant constituents of retail brands strategy evolution. Table 1 presents the significance of respective target groups of retail brands amongst retail chains in Poland in the recent 3 years.

According to the data given above (Table 1), measurement of homogeneity using coefficient of Cronbach-Alfa displays high reliability of the scale. All calculated coefficients are above 0,7.

Analysis of the target groups of retail brands that are extremely or rather significant for the responded enterprises operating on the Polish market can lead to the conclusion that they attach great significance to the economic, demographic, lifestyle and geographic criteria. Nevertheless, the geographic criteria seem to be of relatively low importance. The segment distinguished due to the economic criterion (high-quality oriented consumers) is the most significant for the researched retail chains — 84,7%. Also consumers oriented towards traditional products were mentioned as extremely or rather significant — 79%. In the first positions of the five extremely or rather significant segments appeared 3 target groups distinguished due to the demographic criteria: young adults — 76,6%, large families — 74,2% and seniors — 71,8%. High percentage of indications obtained also: residents of large cities (68,5% — geographic criterion) and novelty-seekers (68,5% — lifestyle criterion), price-sensitive consumers (66,1% — economic criterion) and consumers oriented towards regional products. Over a half of the respondents mentioned also consumers caring for health (65,3% — lifestyle criterion), residents of small or medium towns (64,5% — geographic criterion) and smart shoppers (54% — lifestyle criterion). Exactly a half of the respondents mentioned teenagers (demographic criterion). For less than a half of the retail chains operating in Poland following segments appeared to be extremely or rather significant: eco-friendly (44,4% — lifestyle criterion), digital consumers (41,9% — lifestyle criterion), transumers (34,7% — lifestyle criterion), oriented towards ethical values (34,7% — lifestyle criterion) and parents of infants and small children (29,8% — demographic criterion).

The rating of the greatest significance target groups of retail brands amongst responded enterprises in Poland appear in Table 2.

According to the rating given above (Table 2), the most significant target groups of retail brands for retailers operating in Poland are residents of large cities (39,5% — geographic criterion) and high-quality oriented consumers (37,9% — economic criterion). Also, following segments distinguished due to the lifestyle criteria appeared to be ones of the greatest significance for respondents: novelty-seekers (31,5%), oriented towards regional products (30,6%), caring for health (30,6%) and oriented towards traditional products (27,4%). About 1/3 of responded enterprises recognized residents of small or medium towns (29,8% — geographic criterion) and seniors (28,2% 0 demographic criterion) to be at highest significance. Large families (26,6% — demographic criterion), price-sensitive consumers (25,8% — economic criterion) were pointed to be a little bit less important. Young adults (18–24, demographic criterion) occurred to be at greatest significance for 20,2% of respondents. Smart shoppers (economic criterion) and digital consumers were very important as target groups of retail brands for 15,3% of researched retail chains. Relatively little points got: consumers oriented towards ethical values (12,9% — lifestyle criterion), parents of infants and small children (12,1% — demographic criterion) and transumers (11,3% — lifestyle

Table 1

The results of significance of the respective target groups of retail brands amongst retail chains in Poland in the recent 3 years in a 5 — point Likert scale from 1 — not at all significant, 2 — rather insignificant, 3 — neither significant nor insignificant, 4 — rather significant, 5 — extremely significant.

Target groups		Number of retail chains	Percentage of retail chains	Coefficient of Cronbach-Alfa
1	2	3	4	5
	Segments of consumers distinguished due to the economic criteria			
High-quality oriented	2 — rather insignificant	6	4,8	0,820
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	13	10,5	
	4 — rather significant	58	46,8	
	5 — extremely significant	47	37,9	
Price-sensitive consumers	1 — not at all significant	3	2,4	0,834
	2 — rather insignificant	15	12,1	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	24	19,4	
	4 — rather significant	50	40,3	
	5 — extremely significant	32	25,8	
Smart shoppers	1 —not at all significant	14	11,3	0,797
	2 — rather insignificant	8	6,5	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	35	28,2	
	4 — rather significant	48	38,7	
	5 — extremely significant	19	15,3	
	Segments of consumers distinguished due to the geographic criteria			
Residents of large cities	1 — not at all significant	7	5,6	0,806
	2 — rather insignificant	1	0,8	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	31	25,0	
	4 — rather significant	36	29,0	
	5 — extremely significant	49	39,5	
Residents of small or medium towns	1 — not at all significant	3	2,4	0,819
	2 — rather insignificant	7	5,6	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	34	27,4	
	4 — rather significant	43	34,7	
	5 — extremely significant	37	29,8	
	Segments of consumers distinguished due to the lifestyle criteria			
Novelty-seekers	2 — rather insignificant	14	11,3	0,804
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	25	20,2	
	4 — rather significant	46	37,1	
	5 — extremely significant	39	31,5	
Digital consumers	1 — not at all significant	11	8,9	0,830
	2 — rather insignificant	19	15,3	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	42	33,9	
	4 — rather significant	33	26,6	
	5 — extremely significant	19	15,3	
Transumers	1 — not at all significant	11	8,9	0,814
	2 — rather insignificant	20	16,1	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	50	40,3	
	4 — rather significant	29	23,4	
	5 — extremely significant	14	11,3	
Caring for health	1 — not at all significant	3	2,4	0,800
	2 — rather insignificant	13	10,5	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	27	21,8	
	4 — rather significant	43	34,7	
	5 — extremely significant	38	30,6	
Oriented towards traditional products	1 — not at all significant	3	2,4	0,807
	2 — rather insignificant	6	4,8	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	17	13,7	
	4 — rather significant	64	51,6	
	5 — extremely significant	34	27,4	

Cont. table 1

1	2	3	4	5
Oriented towards regional products	1 — not at all significant	3	2,4	0,807
	2 — rather insignificant	15	12,1	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	24	19,4	
	4 — rather significant	44	35,5	
	5 — extremely significant	38	30,6	
Eco-friendly	1 — not at all significant	7	5,6	0,800
	2 — rather insignificant	14	11,3	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	48	38,7	
	4 — rather significant	44	35,5	
	5 — extremely significant	11	8,9	
Oriented towards ethical values	1 — not at all significant	6	4,8	0,811
	2 — rather insignificant	11	8,9	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	64	51,6	
	4 — rather significant	27	21,8	
	5 — extremely significant	16	12,9	
Segments of consumers distinguished due to the demographic criteria				
Large families	1 — not at all significant	4	3,2	0,813
	2 — rather insignificant	15	12,1	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	13	10,5	
	4 — rather significant	59	47,6	
	5 — extremely significant	33	26,6	
Parents of infants and small children	1 — not at all significant	14	11,3	0,809
	2 — rather insignificant	36	29,0	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	37	29,8	
	4 — rather significant	22	17,7	
	5 — extremely significant	15	12,1	
Seniors	1 — not at all significant	3	2,4	0,817
	2 — rather insignificant	13	10,5	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	19	15,3	
	4 — rather significant	54	43,5	
	5 — extremely significant	35	28,2	
Young adults (18–24)	1 — not at all significant	4	3,2	0,813
	2 — rather insignificant	9	7,3	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	16	12,9	
	4 — rather significant	70	56,5	
	5 — extremely significant	25	20,2	
Teenagers (13–17)	1 — not at all significant	10	8,1	0,823
	2 — rather insignificant	19	15,3	
	3 — neither significant nor insignificant	33	26,6	
	4 — rather significant	54	43,5	
	5 — extremely significant	8	6,5	

Source: own elaboration

criterion). According to the rating given above, the least significant target groups of retail brands are eco-friendly consumers (8,8% — litestyle criterion) and teenagers (6,55% — demographic criterion). To conclude, the responded enterprises attach great significance to the target groups distinguished due to the economic, geographic, lifestyle and demographic criteria as well.

Conclusions

Segmentation of potential buyers of retail brands constitutes a significant element of the strategy of retail chains in general and a factor of developing their competitive advantage on the market. Together with the evolution, diversification of retail brands and changes in the area of purchasing behavior of

Table 2
Rating of the greatest significance target groups of retail brands amongst retail chains in Poland

Target groups of retail brands in Poland	N= 124	Percentage
Residents of large cities	49	39,5
High-quality oriented	47	37,9
Novelty-seekers	39	31,5
Oriented towards regional products	38	30,6
Caring for health	38	30,6
Residents of small or medium towns	37	29,8
Seniors	35	28,2
Oriented towards traditional products	34	27,4
Large families	33	26,6
Low price-oriented	32	25,8
Young adults (180 24)	25	20,2
Smart shoppers	19	15,3
Digital consumers	19	15,3
Oriented towards ethical values	16	12,9
Parents of infants and small children	15	12,1
Transumers	14	11,3
Eco-friendly	11	8,8
Teenagers (13–17)	8	

Source: own elaboration

consumers, owners of retail brands use more and more complex segmentation procedures and distinguish numerous groups of buyers. Even just a few decades ago, only economic criteria were used to group consumers. Currently, segments of consumers are identified using economic, geographic, lifestyle and demographic criteria.

As it was demonstrated in the empirical research, the owners of retail brands in Poland target their brands to various consumer groups. Among their buyers one can identify groups of people differing in the level of income, dwelling place, lifestyles and demographic features. The following were mentioned as the most significant groups of consumers by the researched enterprises: residents of big cities (classified according to the geographic criterion), high-quality oriented consumers (according to economic criterion), novelty-seekers , oriented towards regional products and caring for health (according to lifestyle criterion) and people differing in the demographic features, including age. The research confirms the conclusions that can be drawn from the global subject-matter literature, according to which nowadays retail brands are being purchased by the target groups of consumers that differ significantly.

Thus, it has been confirmed that retail chains operating in Poland diversify target groups of their brands. The owners of retail brands attach great significance not only to the target groups distinguished due to the traditional economic, demographic or geographic criteria. They consider target groups distinguished due to the criteria of lifestyle also as very important.

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