



Consumer Behaviour and Loyalty When Purchasing Sporting Goods

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Purpose: More and more people are involved in sports and active leisure, purchases related to sporting goods therefore increase. Due to diverse offer of sports equipment on the market, customers are becoming more and more demanding, and companies have found themselves facing a multitude of competing providers. The purchase is influenced by various factors, which consumers first analyse in detail and then make a purchase decision. The main purpose of this study is therefore to present the factors, namely how and on what basis consumers make their choices in a wide range of sports equipment, and what they pay more attention to when making further purchases and purchase decisions.

Study design/methodology/approach: We conducted a quantitative survey using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was published on the IKA web portal, emailed to friends and acquaintances and shared on social networking sites (Instagram, Facebook). 215 people took part in the survey,

Findings: We found that respondents buy sporting goods for leisure, hiking, cycling, running, fitness and skiing. They carry out their purchases physically in the shop. The most frequently purchased sporting goods brands, namely Nike and Adidas, are also their favourite sporting goods brands. Respondents describe their brand as having to be of high quality, trustworthy and offer the most for the price. We found that respondents often do not know which brand they were going to buy, even just before entering the store. Once they find a suitable brand, almost half of them find it difficult to switch.

Originality/value: Based on the results, we present some recommendations for companies selling different brands of sporting goods.

Keywords: purchase behaviour, consumer decision-making, consumer loyalty, sporting goods

1 Introduction

The purchase decision-making process is dynamic and complex. Consumers are becoming more and more demanding in terms of quality, and competition in each industry is growing. The overall perception of the product is the result of combining the price information, evaluation of the internal characteristics of the product and other external stimuli (Vukasović and Jagodič 2017; Vukasović and Jagodič, 2021).

Before a company can develop a marketing strategy to meet the needs of consumers, it has to be clear how consumers make their own purchase decisions, understand the purchasing process and purchase habits. Successful companies usually research the process of purchase decisions for their products. They ask consumers when have they met the product and the brand, what is their belief in the product and/or the brand, how high is their commitment to the purchase, how they choose products and whether they are satisfied with the purchased product. They monitor their consumers at every step, while they pay attention to the changes that shall occur in the future purchasing behaviour of their consumers (Vukasović and Jagodič, 2021).

The evaluation of marketing concept from mere selling to consumer oriented marketing has resulted in buyer behaviour becoming an independent discipline. Consumer Behaviour is a study of how individuals make decisions on spending their available resources (time, money

and effort) in consumption related aspects. It is a study of when, why, how, where and what products people do or do not buy. It blends elements from psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology and economics. It attempts to understand the influencing factors of a customer purchase decision-making process, both individually and in groups by understanding its demographics and behavioural variables, impacts on the consumer from groups such as family, friends, reference groups, and society in general (Sethi 2018).

In the modern age of globalisation and saturation of the market with the same and similar products and a range of different providers, buyers need to think carefully before they buy. It is in the strong interest of companies to keep consumers coming back and repeat purchases. This is, however, being far from an easy task nowadays, with all the possible choices and available information that influence the transformation of behavioural patterns and consumer behaviour. Businesses have to fight harder for consumer loyalty, as just winning new consumers is far from being enough. It is necessary to keep existing consumers coming back. Developing lasting relationships with consumers is therefore crucial, as this brings functional and social benefits. Consumer loyalty takes five different forms. The first form is loyalty to the brand, the second loyalty to the store, the third loyalty to the company, the fourth loyalty to the service provider and the last, loyalty to the person in the company. All forms of consumer loyalty are important for businesses, and each form needs to be given the attention it deserves (Musek Lešnik 2007, 49-60).

Nowadays, more and more people are active in their leisure time, recreating, playing sports and taking care of their health. However, such activities also require appropriate footwear or sports equipment. Not everyone has it, so they can either borrow or buy it. This represents the purchasing power of sporting goods, resulting in more and more sports equipment providers on the market. The dilemma of where and what to buy usually arises before we make a purchase, since today, in the age of globalisation, the range of sports equipment is extremely wide and varied. The consumer is often faced with the difficult task of making purchase decisions. The main purpose of this study is therefore to present the factors, namely how and on what basis consumers make their choices in a wide range of sports equipment, and what they pay more attention to when making further purchases and purchase decisions. In other terms, we explored how consumers make choices when buying sporting goods, what influences their decisions, and their loyalty to certain brands. By studying the relevant literature and conducting a quantitative survey using an online questionnaire, we researched how consumers make decisions when buying sporting goods, what influences their decisions and what their brand loyalty is. Knowing the factors that influence consumers' decisions to buy or not to buy a product or service is very important for businesses. Only a good analysis of consumer behaviour can help them offer the right products or services to succeed in the market. Studies have given no attention to consumer purchasing behaviors towards sportswear brands in Slovenia.

The article has the following structure. In the literature review section, the purchase decision-making process and factors influencing consumer behaviour in the process of purchase decision-making will be presented. After that, the importance of consumer loyalty will be presented. In the next section, the authors will summarize the methodology, data collection, and sample. After that, the results will be presented and discussed. In the last section, the authors will present the conclusions with summary, practical implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2 Theoretical background and literature review

2.1 *The purchase decision-making process*

The buying behaviour of consumers is a set of actions involving them in purchasing various things, their usage, disposing of products and services, including decision practices and handling these actions (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard 1986). “Consumer behaviour is a process when people select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires” (Spacil and Teichmannova 2016). Consumer behaviour “includes mental, physical and emotional activities which people do when they want to select, purchase, use or throw away the product or the service that fulfils their needs and demands” (Eshra and Beshir 2017). However, mental, physical and emotional activities are some critical features of consumer’s behaviour that may be involved in the selection, purchasing and usage of products to fulfil their needs and wants (Wilkie 1994; Priest, Carter, and Stat 2013), as these features may influence their decision, namely what to buy, why to buy, when to buy, where to buy and how to use a product, with potential critical approach. Further, Furaiji, Latuszynska, and Wawrzyniak (2012) have submitted their views that consumer buying behaviour is a series of steps in which consumers initially recognise their needs, seek sources to fulfil these needs, make decisions to purchase something to satisfy these needs, analyse available information, set plans and finally try to implement these plans (Rehman et al. 2017). The extant literature indicates the five steps that consumers go through in making purchase decisions as identifying the problem, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, purchase and post-purchase behaviour (Mensah and Amenuvor, 2021).

Consumer behaviour refers to the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services for the satisfaction of their wants. There are different processes involved in the consumer behaviour. Initially the consumer tries to find what goods he would like to purchase, then he selects only the ones promising greater utility. Selection completed, the consumer makes an estimate of the available money which they can spend. Lastly, the consumer analyses the prevailing prices of the goods and takes the decision about the ones to be consumed (Rani 2014).

2.2 *Factors influencing consumer behaviour in the process of purchase decision-making*

The understanding of consumer behaviour extends to various fields of science and is a key to successful marketing. Consumer behaviour is defined as a behaviour consumers demonstrate while searching for, buying, using, disposing of and evaluating products, services, ideas that are expected to satisfy their needs (Schiffman and Kanuk 2015). The process of purchase decision-making is defined as a comprehensive process of consumer decision-making that occurs mostly in five, occasionally at seven consecutive levels (Peter and Olson 2005; Solomon 2018). The process includes all parameters a consumer may encounter while buying products for the first time and experiencing a high level of buying commitment. As mentioned above, the expanded process of purchase decision-making consists of five or seven levels: problem/need identification, data and information collecting, alternatives evaluation, consumer choice and post buying behaviour/result; as for the seven-level model, the use of buying alternative (satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product bought) and disposal of unused products and their parts are added. The models are not exactly the same, but what they all have in common is the fact that due to the complexity of the phenomenon under consideration, they include a large number of steps that try to present consumer behaviour in the most vivid way possible (Vukasović and Jagodič, 2021).

Consumerism is an active movement of today’s society. Trends, such as globalisation, specialisation and increasing competition change together with the consumer role. A consumer

is no longer a mere classical buyer and product consumer, but is turning into an active participant in product design, development and supply (Wang, Lo, and Yang 2004). Companies should, therefore, have better knowledge of consumers nowadays. They should be familiar with the factors influencing their purchase decision-making. During this process, consumer behaviour is affected by various factors. These can be divided into several factor (influence) groups: psychological (motivation, attitude, learning and memory), social (reference groups, family, individual role and position, status), personal (age and level of a family life cycle, occupation and financial situation, lifestyle, personality and self-image, values and beliefs), cultural (culture, social class), economic (price-monetary and non-monetary aspect, income, quality), individual differences, subjective norms and environmental impacts (Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel 2006; Bennett 2011; Schiffman and Kanuk 2015; Kotler and Armstrong 2018; Vukasović 2020; Vukasović and Jagodič, 2021). These factors make consumers develop product and brand preferences. Although many of these factors cannot be directly controlled by marketers, understanding of their impact is essential as marketing mix strategies can be developed to appeal to the preferences of the target market (Rani 2014).

Companies need to understand the factors influencing consumer behaviour, not only to keep existing customers but to attract new ones, as well as to gain competitive advantage in the market place. Understanding consumer needs and wants enables companies to determine what to produce and how to serve their customers better than competitors. The modern marketing concept expects companies to place customers at the centre of their organisation and to create value to satisfy their expectations. By doing so, these companies increase the likelihood of becoming market leaders. Therefore, success of companies is associated with understanding and developing insights into the factors influencing consumer behaviour (Gunay and Baker 2011). By identifying and understanding the factors that influence their customers, brands have the opportunity to develop a strategy, a marketing message (Unique Value Proposition) and advertising campaigns more efficient and more in line with the needs and ways of thinking of their target consumers, a real asset to better meet the needs of their customers and increase sales (Rani 2014).

2.3 The importance of consumer loyalty

During the process of selling and buying, loyalty (among other things) represents an important part. User loyalty has been defined by Lovelock and Wirtz (2016) as a conscious decision by the user. But it does continue for a longer period, until its benefit is greater than its cost. The users a company most wants are loyal users. As Vida et al. (2010, 235) state, the feelings of belonging and loyalty are important factors. A relationship that keeps mutual connections together is divided into three types of connections- economic or financial connections based on direct benefits arising from the transactions, structural connections based on shared resources, shared infrastructure and coordinated processes, and sociological and psychological connections, which create interpersonal bonds based on satisfaction of social needs and security. To gain a comprehensive knowledge of loyalty-maintaining bonds, we also have to acquire knowledge of the opposing forces that loosen loyalty bonds and create infidelity.

Loyalty is generally considered to be one of the ways in which consumers express their satisfaction with a product or service. For this reason, there is a large body of research in literature on the influence of satisfaction on consumer behaviour (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán 2001, 1239). A satisfied consumer is not necessarily loyal as well, while a loyal consumer is usually satisfied. Companies therefore need to monitor not only satisfaction, but also consumer loyalty itself, and work on keeping existing customers, not just attracting new ones. Consumer loyalty is a long-term willingness to buy products from the same brand with which they have had a positive experience in the past. A loyal consumer appreciates and

is inclined to repurchase the same brand and not to try competing brands. Loyalty is a complex and multidimensional concept that relates to the future.

While understanding and tracking satisfaction and loyalty of consumers as a group is very important, it is equally important to understand individual consumer behaviour. Jones and Sasser (1995, 9-12) divide consumers into four homogeneous groups based on their unique behavioural characteristics, intensity of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, level of loyalty and response styles. These consumer groups are: apostles, mercenaries, hostages and terrorists. Apostles are loyal consumers who are very satisfied and return to the company again and again. Their needs and expectations are aligned with the product or service offer of the company. Loyal consumers are the cornerstone of a company, spreading their satisfaction and positive experiences to others. Getting as many apostles as possible and, conversely, as few terrorists as possible should be the goal of every company. Terrorists are extremely dissatisfied and disloyal consumers who have switched and left a company because of a negative experience that can no longer be repaired. In order to minimise the number of such consumers it is necessary to identify the reasons for leaving or fleeing. Consumers who are dissatisfied, yet despite various reasons and obstacles remain loyal to a high degree, are called hostages. When the opportunity arises, the hostages can quickly change companies and switch to the competition, spreading bad publicity, damaging the company and becoming terrorists. That is why hostages should also be given attention. Mercenaries are satisfied but costly consumers, who quickly switch to the competition when they find a cheaper offer. They show lower levels of loyalty and chase bargains and fashion fads (Jones and Sasser 1995, 11-13).

Consumer loyalty and behavioural patterns are changing due to the increasing choice and information available. Companies are therefore paying more and more attention to consumer loyalty and fighting for it, as it is no longer taken for granted. In today's world, understanding and knowing consumer behaviour and valuing consumer loyalty is important for both success and survival of companies. Consumers who keep coming back and are not interested in what is on offer elsewhere, are extremely valuable resource. To attract new, loyal consumers and to keep the existing ones is becoming an important strategic objective. Attracting new consumers alone will not be enough for long-term success, so companies need loyal and returning consumers. Well-established links between consumers and companies bring a number of benefits to both. A loyal consumer enables a company to save and increase revenue and provides benefits by spreading the good word about the company, contributing to improvements, favouring new products, forgiving mistakes more quickly, not being susceptible to competitors' offers, deciding earlier to use new sales channels, keeping the company in their consciousness, understanding the company better and making last-minute decisions more easily. There are significant benefits for the consumer in terms of time saved, effort saved on decision-making and acceptance of a lower level of risk (Musek Lešnik 2007, 49-53). Today, the consumer has a lot of choices to make and a lot of options to make the final choice. It is essential for companies to focus on consumers and develop loyalty programmes (Vukasović and Junc 2014, 8).

Consumer satisfaction is also reflected in loyalty to a brand. For companies, brand loyalty represents stability and a strong advantage over competitors in the market. An existing customer is considered to be both the cheapest and the most valuable, and should be given due consideration. It is in the best interest of companies to enter and stay on the market with their brand, and to win over as many loyal consumers as possible. Consumers are more at risk when buying a new or untested brand than when being loyal to a brand. Repeated purchases of the same brand equal satisfaction, and switching brands can be seen as an indication that the consumer was not satisfied with the brand. As the trend towards brand switching is increasing with all the choice on the market, this is also a concern for retailers. The reasons for switching

brands are varied, and may be due to simple boredom, consumer dissatisfaction or finding cheaper alternatives. Rebranding can also be caused by so-called promotional sales, where sellers use lower prices to attract customers. When customers see a new and better opportunity, they simply switch brands (Možina, Zupančič, and Postružnik 2010, 326-327).

With an increasing range of sporting goods on the market, in order to remain competitive and sell the product, the retailer needs to keep up with consumer purchasing habits and analyse the market all the time. Retailers or companies need to know the entire purchasing process and all the relevant factors that influence consumer decisions when buying its own or competitors' products or services. Post-purchase behaviour is equally very important. It makes the company understand what it is that keeps consumers coming back to buy again and again, and how they become loyal to the product and the brand. For consumers, therefore, constantly adapting the offer is an unavoidable task. It is also crucial that companies analyse in detail which sporting goods brands are close to their customers and include only those sporting goods brands that are chosen by the largest number of consumers before finalising their offer.

With the new insights gained and the analysis of the results of the survey, we want to present sporting goods companies with new ideas, potential opportunities for improvement and adjustments to their own offer and sales strategy. This could make their business and brand more competitive in the market. After all, it is the customer who decides to buy, so it is very important to know and adapt to their wishes and needs.

3 Materials and methods

3.1 Methodology, data collection and sample

We conducted a quantitative survey using an online questionnaire. The survey questionnaire consists of 15 questions, open-ended and closed-ended. For 7 questions there is only one answer, for 2 questions there is more than one answer, for 3 questions any answer is required, 1 question is of the type where the respondent ranks the answers on a scale, 1 question asks for agreement and 1 question asks about the influence. The questionnaire was published on the 1KA web portal, emailed to friends and acquaintances and shared on social networking sites (Instagram, Facebook). We performed the processing and analysis of the collected data with the SPSS software tool. Attributable variables were represented by frequency distributions, numerical variables by measures of mean and dispersion. The following statistical procedures were used to test the hypotheses: the chi-square test for equal probability, the Kullback 2Î test, and the t-test for independent samples to compare arithmetic means.

215 people took part in the survey, 131 women (61%) and 84 men (39%). Figure 1 shows the gender ratio of survey participants.

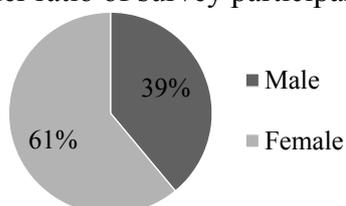


Figure 1: Gender of respondents

To check the age structure of the respondents, we have created age groups for easier presentation. Most of the respondents, 89 (41.3%), belong to the 21-30 age group, followed by the 41-50 age group with 50 respondents (23.2%), then the 31-40 age group with 47 respondents (21.8%). The 51+ age group included 21 respondents (10%), while the lowest number of respondents was in the under-20 age group, with 8 respondents (3.7%).

The last demographic question related to the employment status of the respondents. The majority of respondents are employed, accounting for 151 people (70%), 1 person (0.5%) is retired and 34 people (16.5%) are high school or university students. Among the respondents, 16 (7%) are self-employed and 13 (6%) are unemployed.

3.2 Research results

This section is an analysis of the issues related to consumer behaviour when purchasing sports products. The first question in this section asked about the purpose of purchasing sporting goods. Figure 2 shows that consumers are most likely to buy sports and leisure products (82.0%) and hiking products (55.9%). Follows equipment for cycling (29.8%), running (28.6%), fitness (24.2%) and skiing (19.3%). Then come volleyball (8.1%), basketball (8.1%), football (6.8%). The lowest purchases are related to handball (1.2%), martial arts (1.9%) and tennis (5.0%).

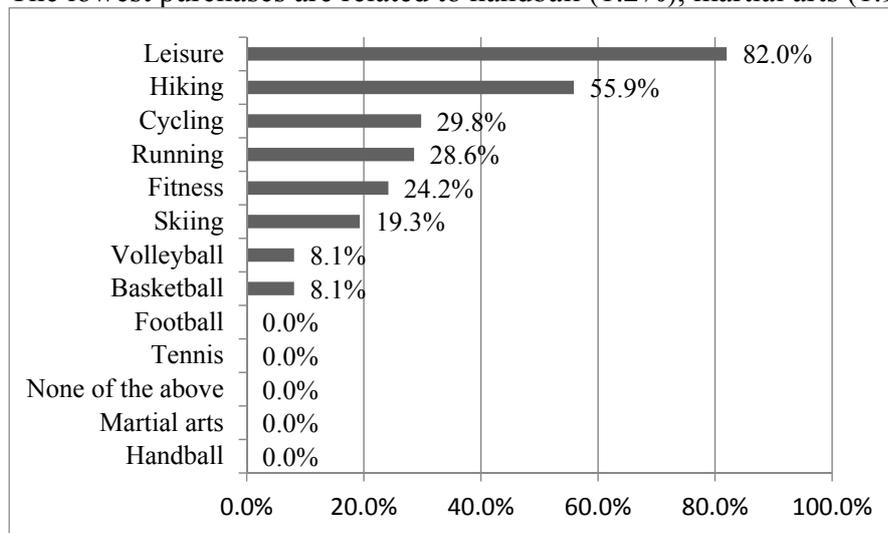


Figure 2: Purchase intentions of sports products

We also wanted to know where respondents most often shop for sporting goods. Consumers make most of their purchases physically in-store (80.8%) and the least through online shops (19.2%).

The next question asked which brand they think of first when they hear the phrase "sports product". The largest number of respondents, namely 76 (43.43%) answered with Nike and 59 (33.71%) with Adidas. These are also the only two brands chosen by more than three respondents. This is to be expected as Nike and Adidas are the leading brands in sports products and equipment. In Interbrand's (2020) ranking of the world's top 100 brands, Nike ranks 15th and Adidas 50th.

We asked respondents which two brands of sporting goods manufacturers they prefer to buy. It turns out that Nike (44.05%) and Adidas (35.71%) are top brands again. Follows Asics (2.38%). The other brands were chosen by three or fewer respondents.

Figure 3 shows the answers to the question about their favourite brand. 131 (39.0%) respondents consider their brand to be of good quality, 70 (43.0%) respondents consider it to be trustworthy and 67 (42.0%) consider the brand to offer the most for the price. The smallest number of respondents consider that their favourite brand is in line with trends and fashion (25.0%) and that it puts a lot of emphasis on improvement (17.0%).

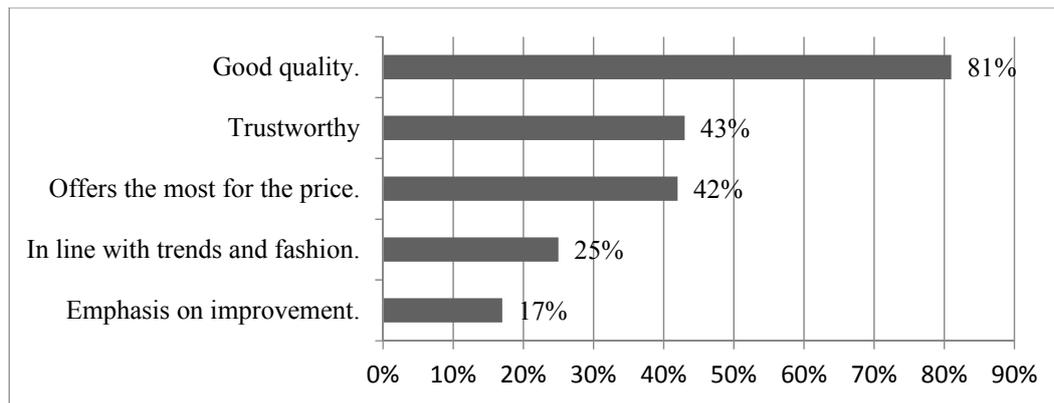


Figure 3: Brand claims

Respondents chose Nike 58 (42.3%) as their favourite brand of sports products, and Adidas 46 (33.6%) as their second favourite brand. 6 (4.4%) respondents do not have their favourite brand. The Salomon brand was chosen by 5 respondents (3.6%), Jack Wolfskin and Reebok were chosen by 3 respondents (2.2%). Less than 2% of respondents chose other brands.

The questionnaire also asked respondents to agree with the following statements:

- 1.a: Before entering a shop, I know exactly which brand I am going to buy.
- 2.a: I find it difficult to find a suitable brand, the range is just too wide.
- 3.a: When I find a brand I like, I find it hard to switch.
- 4.a: If the brand I am looking for is not available at the time of purchase, I will choose another brand.
- 5.a: If I don't have time to research the quality of different products, I will most probably choose the brand I bought last time.

Table 1 shows the extent to which respondents agree with the above statements related to the purchase of sporting goods. 110 (69%) of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that if they do not have time to research the quality of different products, they will most likely choose the brand they bought last. More than half of the respondents, namely 96 (59%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement "I find it difficult to find a suitable brand, the range is just too wide". If the brand they are looking for is not available at the time of purchase, 92 (57%) of respondents will choose another brand. 70 (43%) of respondents strongly agree or just agree that when they find a brand they like, they find it difficult to switch, while 48 (30%) strongly disagree or just disagree with the same statement. A small proportion of 35 respondents (21%) strongly agree or just agree with the statement that they know exactly which brand they are going to buy before entering the store, while the largest proportion of 55 respondents (34%) neither agree nor disagree with this statement.

Table 1: Claims related to the purchase of sporting goods

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I totally agree	Total
1.a	Number	21	50	55	28	7	161
	Percentage	13.0	31.0	34.0	17.0	4.0	100
2.a	Number	26	70	43	18	4	161
	Percentage	16.0	43.0	27.0	11.0	2.0	100
3.a	Number	14	34	43	49	21	161
	Percentage	9.0	21.0	27.0	30.0	13.0	100

4.a	Number	9	23	37	78	14	161
	Percentage	6.0	14.0	23.0	48.0	9.0	100
5.a	Number	7	20	24	96	14	161
	Percentage	4.0	12.0	15.0	60.0	9.0	100

3.3 Testing the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The quality of sporting goods impacts the customer's purchase decision.

To test the hypothesis, we used a chi-square test of equal probability based on the first- and second-ranked respondents' answers to the question on the influence on purchase decisions when buying sporting goods.

Table 2: Influencing the purchase decisions when buying sporting goods

	Number	Percentage
Price	64	20.7
Product quality	99	32.0
Brand	38	12.3
Popularity	39	12.6
Convenience	69	22.3
Total	309	100.0
$\chi^2 = 40.887, g = 4, p = 0.000$		

The chi-square test of the equal probability hypothesis is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 40.887, g = 4; p = 0.000$). Not all answers were equally likely. We reject the null hypothesis and, with a risk of less than 0.1%, claim that even in the basic set, most respondents would rank the quality of the product (32.0%) and the brand (12.3%) 1st and 2nd in terms of influencing their purchase decision when buying sporting goods. The hypothesis can be confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: Younger consumers are more influenced by brands in terms of consumer loyalty.

To test the hypothesis, we created three age groups, up to 30 years, 31 years to 40 years and 41 years and over, and carried out a Kullback $2\hat{I}$ test.

Table 3: The impact of age on consumer brand loyalty

Age		No impact at all	No impact	It neither does not impact nor impacts	Impacts	Strong impact	Total
Up to 30	Number	4	10	17	33	5	69
	Percentage	5.8	14.5	24.6	47.8	7.2	100.0
31-40	Number	3	7	9	15	3	37
	Percentage	8.1	18.9	24.3%	40.5	8.1	100.0
41 and more	Number	1	11	19	22	2	55
	Percentage	1.8	20.0	34.5%	40.0	3.6	100.0
Total	Number	8	28	45	70	10	161
	Percentage	5.0	17.4	28.0	43.5	6.2	100.0
$2\hat{I} = 5.549, g = 8, p = 0.698$							

The value of the Kullback $2\hat{I}$ test ($2\hat{I} = 5.549$, $g = 8$, $p = 0.698$) between the age groups did not show a statistically significant difference in opinion on how much the brand affects consumer loyalty to the brand. We keep the null hypothesis, we cannot generalize the data to the base set. In the sample, more than half of younger people aged up to 30 (55.0%) and less than half of older people (31-40, 48.6%; 41+, 43.6%) rated the brand as influencing or very much influencing their loyalty. Since the differences are not statistically significant, the hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Consumers most often choose to repurchase sporting goods on the basis of price.

Table 4: Reason for repurchasing sporting goods

	Number	Percentage
Quality of Product	59	36.6
Price	12	7.5
Brand	4	2.5
Positive experience	86	53.4
Total	161	100.0
$\chi^2 = 113.211$, $g = 3$, $p = 0.000$		

The chi-square test of the equal probability hypothesis is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 113.211$, $g = 3$; $p = 0.000$). Not all answers were equally possible. We reject the null hypothesis and, with a risk of less than 0.1%, claim that even in the basic set, most respondents would choose a positive experience (53.4%) among the factors that most often lead them to make a repeated purchase of sporting goods. Product quality is the second most important factor (36.3%), while brand is the least important factor (2.5%). Hypothesis 3 cannot be confirmed, as only 7.5% of respondents chose the price.

Hypothesis 4: Consumers most often get information and knowledge from social networks before purchasing sporting goods

Table 5: Obtaining information before purchasing sporting goods

	Number	Percentage
From relatives, friends, acquaintances	59	36.6
From sellers (store visit)	32	19.9
Through print advertising	6	3.7
On social networks (Facebook, Instagram ...)	30	18.6
From the media (radio, TV, internet)	34	21.1
Total	161	100.0
$\chi^2 = 43.876$, $g = 4$, $p = 0.000$		

The value of the chi-square test of the hypothesis of equal probability is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 43.876$, $g = 4$; $p = 0.000$). Not all answers were equally possible. We reject the null hypothesis and, with a risk of less than 0.1% claim that even in the basic set most respondents would answer that before buying sports products they most often obtain information and knowledge from relatives, friends, acquaintances (36.6%) and the least from printed advertisements (3.6%). We cannot confirm this hypothesis, as the answer that they obtain information and knowledge via social networks was only chosen in the 4th place (18.6%).

Hypothesis 5: Men know more accurately than women which brand they are going to buy before they enter a shop.

Table 6: Brand choice according to gender and t-test values for independent samples

					t-test		
		Number	AM	SD	t	Degrees of freedom (g)	p-value (α)
To what extent do you agree: Before entering a shop, I know exactly which brand I am going to buy.	Male	58	2.98	1.084	2.728	159	0.007
	Female	103	2.52	0.989			

Under the assumption of homogeneity of variances ($F=0.020$, $p=0.887$), a t-test for independent samples showed statistically significant differences ($t=2.728$, $g=159$, $p=0.007$) between men and women in their agreement with the statement that they know exactly which brand they would buy before entering a store. We reject the null hypothesis and with a risk of 0.7% claim that even in the basic set, more men ($M = 2.98$) than women ($M = 2.52$) would agree with this statement. Hypothesis 5 can be confirmed.

3.4 Key findings of the research

As more and more brands of sporting goods appear on the market, competition is getting tougher. Companies are doing everything they can to bring their offer closer to their customers, to best meet their needs. As more and more people play sports recreationally, professionally and as amateurs, we researched where consumers most often buy sporting goods and which are the brands they buy. Based on the results, we present below some recommendations for companies selling different brands of sporting goods.

Before launching, companies should analyse in detail which brands are close to their customers' hearts and include only those sporting goods brands that are chosen by the most consumers. These brands are Nike, Adidas, Salomon, Jack Wolfskin and Rebook. For the other brands, the data collected suggests that less than 1.5% would choose them. We advise companies to focus on selling in physical stores, as this is the choice of the majority of consumers. We recommend that companies include leisure, hiking, cycling, running, fitness and skiing products in their product range. Above all, the sporting goods brands they offer must be high quality, trustworthy and offer the most for the price. We suggest that they do not change their offer too often, as almost half of consumers find it difficult to switch brands of sporting goods they like. The most important thing is to include quality products, affordable and comfortable sports products in their offer, as these are the most important factors influencing a decision to purchase sports products. We also recommend creating a positive buying experience for consumers and offering quality products, as these are two of the most important reasons for repeated purchases. We also advise to advertise through the media (radio, TV, internet) and to encourage customers to spread their good opinion among friends, acquaintances and relatives, as almost half of the respondents get most of their information from these sources.

4 Conclusion

In our daily lives we simply have to shop for different products or services. Customers are becoming more demanding and companies face a multitude of competing providers. Purchases are influenced by various factors, which consumers analyse in detail before making a purchase decision. On the other hand, it is the task of companies to research consumer behaviour before, during and after purchase. Analysis is made by asking various questions such as: why consumers buy, when they buy, what they buy, etc.

We found that respondents buy sports products for leisure, hiking, cycling, running, fitness and skiing. 81.0% of respondents shop physically in-store. The most frequently purchased sporting goods brands are Nike and Adidas, which are also most favourite sporting goods brands. Respondents describe their brand as having to be of high quality (81.0%), trustworthy (43.0%) and offering the most for the price (42.0%). We found that respondents often do not know exactly which brand to buy before entering the store and that they find it difficult to find the right brand due to the wide range of products on offer. Once they find a suitable brand, almost half (43.0%) find it difficult to switch, and more than half choose another brand if the selected one is not available. 69.0% usually choose the brand they bought the last time.

The field of research is limited to the sports industry and sporting goods, so the results can not be generalised to other industry. In the future, it would be interesting to research why other brands do not reach the popularity of Nike and Adidas, and to analyse consumer purchasing behaviour for sports products in more detail, to provide companies with even better insights and recommendations on which products and brands to include in their sporting goods offer. A more detailed analysis could also be made across various age groups, as the products they buy also differ in their intended use.

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