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THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF SALES AND SALES PROMOTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Abstract. The importance of sales and its promotion is constantly increasing. Technological progress contributes to the constant development of marketing activities of companies and the introduction of innovations. It is necessary to attract customers and establish a long-term relationship with them. Along with changes in consumer tastes and new preferences, it is necessary for companies to correctly select sales promotion tools and use them effectively. Sales promotion tools can influence consumer buying behavior and loyalty. Companies today focus on existing and new customers. Smart leaders try to focus their business not only on short-term success, but also on long-term results. Relationship marketing influences customer loyalty. Organizations are pooling their efforts to achieve this goal in terms of products, pricing, distribution, incentives and services. In relationship marketing, special attention is paid to loyal buyers. The task of finding and retaining a client becomes increasingly individual. In the face of competition, it is important to know and constantly study your client. Not only to discover its advantages, to guess the hidden desires, but also to understand the reasons why the company is losing its customers. Study of these issues is important in modern conditions. The author discusses the opinions, definitions and views of various researchers regarding the mentioned problem, and then draws conclusions and offers some recommendations.

Keywords: customers, sales, personal selling, sales promotion, relationship marketing

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Introduction. In modern conditions organizations with smart leaders focus on existing and new buyers, they are focused on the long term perspective, not just the short term. Such companies combine their efforts to achieve customer loyalty. High quality service creates loyal customers, that is, those who buy the company's products in the largest quantities. Such buyers influence other people to buy as well. Loyal buyers are satisfied with the purchase of the product. They pay money for the benefit of this company for a long time. Marketing helps to increase sales by offering the quality of service that customers expect [Seturi, Urotadze 2017]. According to modern marketing approaches the buyer is the main object of the company's attention. Customer prefers to buy from the company that will give him the most satisfaction. It is very important to retain customers, but in most cases organizations focus on attracting new customers. One way to retain customers is to keep them completely satisfied [Seturi 2019].

We studied a number of works of foreign and Georgian scientists in the direction of sales, sales promotion and relationship marketing. In the process of working on this article, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, we relied on available sources that refer to trade

in general, sales and the use of marketing approaches in it. In the process of studying literary sources and drawing conclusions, we used the methods of induction, deduction, analysis and synthesis. Thus, we used secondary data in the process of work: Internet sources, statistical data, information available on the website of Georgian companies.

Literature review and the problem statement. Now, while working in the market, more and more companies are trying to attract the attention of consumers. In the conditions of the development of market relations in our country, the role of trade is increasing. Which causes that marketing, trade and sales are becoming an object of increasing attention in Georgia. It represents an important field of activity that is in direct contact with the population and ensures the satisfaction of its requirements [Todua, Mghebrishvili 2017]. The volume of sales and the number of employees in this area have increased [Mghebrishvili, Urotadze 2016]. Various forms of non-store trade are increasingly developing in the country [Mghebrishvili, Seturi 2015]. Marketing, sales and trade had an interesting way of their development in our country [Silagadze, Mghebrishvili, Keshelashvili 2021].

Sales promotion plays a big role in attracting customers. Kotler Ph. and Armstrong G. separated from each other such types of promotion: consumers, trade (retailers and wholesalers) and business (industrial buyers) promotion [Kotler, Armstrong 2015].

Blattberg R., taking into account who the stimulation is aimed at, distinguishes three main types of sales stimulation: consumer stimulation, retailer stimulation, trade stimulation. Consumer incentives include promotions offered directly to customers by the manufacturer. Retail incentives means offers made by retailers to consumers. Stimulating trade through promotions and offers offered by the manufacturer to retailers [Blattberg 2012].

Sales promotion has different methods and approaches. Each of them brings different results. It should be taken into account that socio-ethical factors, personal influence and other factors affect this. For example, there is a "utilitarian and hedonic" utility model of consumer utility [Chandon 2000]. Utilitarian benefits mean functional, cognitive and instrumental aspects. The user is given the values necessary to achieve the goal. Hedonic benefits involve a more non-instrumental side and in this case, the functional side is less valued.

Personal selling is direct communication between a company representative and a potential buyer [Kotler, Armstrong 2015]. The seller's communication efforts are aimed at providing information to the customer and convincing him to buy the offered product. Personal selling is an effective tool for stimulation, because it involves communication with potential buyers and their response [Kotler, Keller 2015].

After the end of the incentive program of sales promotion consumers may perceive a particular brand or store as a supplier of expensive products and purchase only during certain promotions [Gedenk 2006]. It is also worth noting the attitude of consumers towards sales promotion tools. Schindler [Schindler 1998] proposes the notion of responsibility for a promotion or discount and the attribution of the reason for accepting this discount by the so-called "smart consumer" to various factors.

In modern conditions consumers and businesses are influenced by the social networks. Therefore social media marketing can play a big role in the success of personal sales representatives and building relationships with customers [Todua, Vashakidze 2018]. In Georgia social media marketing is actively used in the process of personal sales. However, flexible mechanisms for its assessment are still underdeveloped. Georgian companies successfully use social media marketing tools to manage relationships with customers, including personal

sales. Most Georgian consumers turn to social media quite often in relation to personal sales. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are the leaders in this respect [Todua, Vashakidze 2020].

Salespeople must be able to adapt their strategies to customer needs, customer communication styles, relationship needs and strategies. This is followed by a comprehensive discussion of how to achieve effective sales and career development through planning and continuous learning [Castleberry, Tanner 2010; Miśkiewicz 2018; Miśkiewicz 2020; Miśkiewicz 2021].

Sellers provide potential buyers with information about the products they sell, so they can improve brand perception, which is of great importance in modern conditions [Seturi, Todua 2019]. Personal selling has features: it involves a direct and interactive relationship between two or more people, where each party can more closely observe the reactions of the others; personal selling enables different types of relationships to emerge, from sales relationships to friendships; reaction because personal selling forces buyers to listen to the salesperson [Firmansyah, Margono 2019].

Recommended find it useful to group customer needs into main types that focus on the buying situation and benefits. They are described as follows: situational needs, functional needs, social needs, psychological needs, knowledge needs. Categorizing buyer needs by type can assist the salesperson in bringing order to what could otherwise be a confusing and endless mix of needs and expectations [Ingram, Avila 2015].

The company can use different approaches and means to retain the buyer. In this regard, it is possible to use the following tools: price and discounts; purchases - incentives during purchase; points and system of accumulation of points; unification of partner companies to create a single system of points accumulation; gifts and prizes; By purchasing the product, the buyer participates in various social programs; Privileges for permanent clients; personalization or individualization of services; participation of the buyer in the process of improvement of products; Speed - the speed and efficiency of solving the problems raised by the buyer [Kochlamazashvili, Kandashvili 2011]. The use of various stimulating promotions has a positive effect on the increase in sales volume.

Various short-term incentives or sales incentives encourage customers to buy a product or service and offer a reason to buy right now. The purpose of action-oriented marketing measures is to directly influence the behavior of the firm's customers [Chaharsoughi, Yasory 2012; Banasik, Miśkiewicz, Cholewa-Domanagić, Janik, Kozłowski Banasik, Miśkiewicz, Cholewa-Domanagić, Janik, Kozłowski 2022; Coban, Lewicki, Sendek-Matysiak, Łosiewicz, Drożdż, Miśkiewicz 2022].

The importance of discount incentives for firms has been discussed in a number of studies. A key premise of these studies is that discounts affect consumers who are only interested in the economic value of the money saved. However, research and business practices show that this is not always the case. Therefore, it is interesting to ask the following question: are there any benefits other than monetary savings that give impetus to consumers [Bicen, Madhavaram 2013; Coban, Lewicki, Miśkiewicz, Drożdż 2022].

In the field of sales ethics, researchers have increasingly focused on the emotional elements of sales and ethics. Researchers Raj Agnihotri & Michael T. Krush developed a model based on an ethical view of the interaction between person and situation. They investigate the effects of a basic social emotion, empathy, as an important situational aspect, and the influence of trust in a sales manager on ethical behavior. They study the influence of a salesperson's ethical behavior on his sales growth (performance results) [Agnihotri, Krush 2015].

According to one view, factors influencing the formation of customer loyalty to the company can be divide to material and non-material factors. Material factors focus on the customer's

need to make a profit by saving money and time. They can be divided into traditional and software factors. Traditional material factors can be attributed to: location of trading points; assortment of goods, its quality, etc. With these factors, repeat purchases are made by the customer not based on thoughtful and emotional loyalty, but "automatically". Programmatic factors of loyalty include: preferential discounts, gift with purchase, special loyalty programs. The immaterial factors ensure the emotional satisfaction of the client with high-quality service and attention to the buyer [Kochlamazashvili, Kandashvili 2011; Miśkiewicz 2022].

Specific actions to build relationships with customers vary significantly from company to company, but they are crucial to build long-term relationships [Ingram, Avila 2015]. As for sales, it builds the relationships necessary to succeed in a competitive market. After receiving the initial order, the sales representative should schedule a return visit from the customer to ensure that all promises regarding installation, training, and service have been fulfilled. Which will reveal any issues during this time, alleviating any doubts and concerns that may arise after the sale is complete. The seller visits the buyer again to make sure he is satisfied and will continue to buy in the future [Olariu, Ioana 2016; Cyfert, Chwiłkowska-Kubala, Szumowski, Miśkiewicz 2021].

Personal qualities that salespeople need to build long-term relationships: caring for customer, joy at work, harmony in the relationship, patience in closing the sale, kind to people, morally ethical, faithful to word, fairness in the sale, self-control in emotions [Futrell 2011; Czyżewski, Matuszczak, Miśkiewicz 2019; Furmaniak, Gauden, Leżańska, Miśkiewicz, Błajet-Kosicka, Kowalczyk 2021; Prokopenko, Miśkiewicz 2020; Saługa, Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, Miśkiewicz, Chład 2020].

The organization's sales representative must be competent. The term competence refers to the basic qualities expected of a sales representative. This includes: courage, cleanliness, fluency in communication, deep knowledge of the products themselves, etc. When this happens, consumer demand for the product increases [Adewale, Adeniran, Oluyinka 2019].

Sales personnel serve other people, contribute greatly to the well-being of people, help consumers make purchasing decisions. Unfortunately, their salaries are very low in our country today. Only a truly motivated sales force will be able to put customer needs first [Seturi 2020].

Research results. One of the most important tasks facing Georgia is to achieve economic growth, which is impossible without the growth of production of Georgian products and the development of business as the main driver of economic progress. And sales can play an important role in the country's economy. Sales directly affect the company's success in the market. The work of companies in the market is becoming more difficult. With the help of marketing communication tools, companies try to provide information, convince and remind their products to consumers in direct or indirect ways. Personal selling and sales promotion occupies an important place in marketing communications.

Personal selling allows sellers to tailor their presentation to each potential buyer. A salesperson can see the customer's reaction to his selling approach and adjust it if necessary. Sales promotion helps companies to increase their sales volume more. Increased brand loyalty is beneficial for the manufacturer, but may not be so beneficial for the retailer. Therefore, there is a need to identify the reasons for the increase in sales. Sales promotion has short-term and long-term effects. Sales growth in the short term can also affect the long term. The dramatic increase in purchases and loyalty may not be sustained after the end of the incentive program.

Each method of sales and sales promotion brings different results and effects. In developing sales promotion tools, it is necessary to consider not only the benefits of the manufacturer and the retailer, but also the consumer's impressions.

In the conditions of competition, it is of great importance to know and constantly study your own client, not only to reveal its advantages, to guess the hidden desires, but also to understand the reasons for which some customers go to competitors. Selling in the twenty-first century is no longer as easy as it was in the last century - when demand often exceeded supply. Today, the client is more demanding and the seller needs much more effort. A fake smile is not enough for buyers.

It is also worth noting that in modern conditions consumers and businesses are influenced by the Internet and social networks. Which requires by companies to use them effectively.

The success of companies greatly depends on their sales departments, as they interact directly with customers. Therefore, they have the greatest impact on sales. The company needs to hire a salesperson with excellent communication and interactive skills. Success factors in personal selling can be measured by many indicators.

Needs of potential customers is numerous. It is difficult for salespeople to perceive and understand them on a customer-by-customer basis. Discounts and sales incentives greatly influence buyer decisions. However, this alone does not define the loyalty of buyers.

The most important issue in sales is consideration of ethical principles by sellers. It is worth noting that consumers buy not only under the influence of rational motives, but they are also influenced by emotional aspects.

Keeping customers satisfied is important because it leads to their trust. Unfortunately, many companies do not realize the importance of this issue. Professional salespeople see their customer base as an extremely valuable asset that cannot be ignored. To maintain and strengthen customer relationships, salespeople are involved in performing after-sales activities.

Companies' levels of customer relationships vary. Many organizations just sell products to customers and then forget about them, while some organizations develop close relationships with their buyers. Establishing a long-term relationship between a sales representative and a customer is facilitated by the establishment of trust between them. Consumers want to deal with a seller they trust. If the company wants the buyer to return to it, it must satisfy the customer and provide a high quality of service.

A salesperson must possess the art of a good sales presentation. The core of a sales presentation is the discussion of the product, marketing plan, and business proposition. With a great presentation, sales personnel can ethically serve others, build long-term relationships based on truth. Sales personnel work in different ways. They deal with many cases. Each customer contact presents a unique challenge for salespeople.

The professional activity of sales staff is difficult and requires a lot of effort. Sometimes people have negative attitudes and opinions towards sales staff. However, such an attitude is not always unfounded. When sellers mislead consumers, it negatively affects consumers. Personal selling can make a buyer want to buy. Personal selling influences customer demand for a product. When an organization's sales representative is viable and competent, there is a positive increase in customer demand.

Motivating salespeople has always been one of the main challenges for sales leaders and, for companies as a whole. Recently, such challenges have intensified. The motivation of the sales staff is one of the important issues. Increasing the wages of sales workers in direct contact with customers can bring positive results.

Conclusions. Sales promotion and personal selling are important elements in a unified system of marketing communications. Producing organizations must orient the work of each of their sales representatives in such a way as to ensure an increase in demand for the product to

be sold. Because even a quality product cannot be sold on its own, but with the help of a sales representative and personal selling, the product can be sold best. It should also be noted that in the conditions of the modern competitive market, the role and importance of sales stimulation has increased. However, there are frequent shortcomings in this direction, for the correction of which we have some recommendations:

- Customer loyalty is influenced by the sales personnel, but in order to achieve the best and long-term results, it is necessary that the entire company itself is focused on the customer. This involves taking the following measures: the image of the company should be attractive to the client, customer service standards should be developed, service standards should be implemented and controlled;
- Only promotions cannot help companies to retain buyers; Because the business is developing rapidly, the competition in the market is increasing, it is necessary to rely on basic and fundamental issues;
- Retention of customers is carried out by fully satisfying their needs. The customer evaluates and determines the degree of satisfaction. And customer satisfaction is the result of the company's overall activity.

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