

Analysis of the influence of advertising on the frequency of post-purchase dissonance in a selected sample of respondents

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Abstract: This article deals with the problematics of the post-purchase dissonance phenomenon in the period of time when consumers' shopping habits were affected by measures aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. That resulted in consumers being in many cases forced to switch to online shopping for safety reasons. Without the possibility to try the products before the actual purchase, the expectations were formed only through advertising. The aim of this article was to identify whether and to what extent advertising can have an effect on the increase of post-purchase dissonance. Based on the research, it brings conclusions that could be helpful in trying to gain a more thorough understanding of the chosen issue.

Keywords: Advertising, consumer behavior, influence, post-purchase dissonance.

Introduction

In practice, we encounter post-purchase dissonance quite often. The frequency of post-purchase dissonance is affected by several factors. Undoubtedly, one of these factors is advertising, which formulates consumer ideas about a product or service. In particular, when strict restrictions have been in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, many people were essentially forced to switch to online shopping. In addition to its advantages, such a way of shopping also has many disadvantages, including the fact that we cannot inspect or test the goods before purchase. Our expectations are therefore bound to the idea we have of the goods. Such an idea is relatively strongly determined by advertising. As post-purchase dissonance has a rather powerful impact on customer loyalty and the formation of their attitudes towards the company, we decided to examine this phenomenon in more detail.

1. THE CONSUMER DECISION PROCESS

There are five stages of the consumer decision process:

- 1) problem or need recognition,
- 2) information search,
- 3) evaluating alternatives,
- 4) purchase decision,
- 5) and post-purchase behavior" (Koudelka 2010, p. 118).

1.1. Problem / Need Recognition

It is the first stage of the Consumer Decision Process. At this stage, the purchasing process begins. The problem or need arises from internal stimuli of the consumer (hunger, thirst, cold, etc.) as well as external stimuli (traditions, culture, etc.), or the stimulus arises in response to marketing tools, e.g. advertising, packaging, price, the influence of the sellers, etc. (East, Vanhuele, Wright, 2008). The role of a marketer is to identify the factors and situations that affect or guide the process of problem recognition and develop a strategy that attracts the customer's interest and supports the customer's need positively (Kotler, Armstrong 2004). Moreover, its role lies in researching consumers to find out what kinds of problems or needs arise, what stimuli cause them, and how they lead the consumer to a specific product (Kita et al., 2002).

1.2. Information Search

If the consumer finds an unsatisfactory condition, he begins to gather the necessary information. This process of searching for and gathering the information relating to a consumer decision process can take place differently for everyone, in terms of thoroughness and time course. We generally recognize internal and external information search (Shiffman, Kanuk 2004). The internal search for information means the recovery of certain information in the consumer's memory. They are often the result of experience or represent perceptions stored in memory earlier. Internal search relies on association networks. An individual has learned (as part of the psychological learning process) a certain amount of information about a range of products. Concerning the external information search, the consumer obtains information for purchase evaluation and decision directly

from his surroundings (Shiffman, Kanuk 2004). If the internal information is not sufficient and lacks the required parameters (eg outdated information), the pressure to obtain external information is increasing (Koudelka 2010).

The information that the consumer gathers and needs for his decision are as follows (Richterová 2010, p. 50):

- criteria suitable for assessing the solution of a problem,
- various alternative solutions and
- the performance or characteristics of alternative solutions in terms of individual evaluation criteria.

1.3. Evaluating Alternatives

In solving the identified problem, the consumer uses the information he obtained about the product while evaluating the individual solution alternatives. Not all customers can use a simple and uniform decision-making process, nor a similar procedure for all products. Therefore, there are several types of evaluation. The number, type, and significance of the used evaluation criteria depend on the type of product, consumers, and purchasing situation (Majumdar, 2010). The evaluation criteria represent various features that consumers take into account when solving their problems. The consumer aims to satisfy his needs. Each product is perceived as a set of properties offered to the consumer. The consumer attaches a product the meaning depending on the expected benefit. For simple products, the number of evaluation criteria is small, while the decision-making process for technically complex and costly products may include a large number of criteria (Kita et al., 2002).

1.4. Purchase Decision

This stage of the decision process brings the reflection of the consumer's previous steps into his purchasing action - the purchase (or rejection) of the selected product. The evaluation of the alternatives carried out by the consumer in the previous stage resulted in the choice of the specific product that the consumer wants to buy - the purchase intention (Smith 2000). However, this purchase intention differs from the purchase, as it goes through various circumstances that may affect the purchase decision. At this point, the following factors may cause this gap:

- attitudes of others - the impact of other people before the purchase, the behavior of other customers in the store, but also the sellers, the influence of shopping groups is significant,
- risk perception,
- situational factors - the situational impacts of the business environment are particularly decisive (Koudelka 2010).

1.5. Post-Purchase behavior

Purchased products are consumed and subject to consumer evaluation. Post-purchase behavior is the final stage in the Consumer Decision Process. Consumption and evaluation of the purchased product are part of the post-purchase processes. The following figure shows the post-purchase behavior of the consumer. This behavior may include several activities, which will ultimately be reflected in the level of consumer satisfaction with the product, or the company, and in its predispositions to repurchase this product (Richterová et al., 2010).

After the purchase, the consumer evaluates the product and determines whether the product meets his expectations. Post-purchase dissonance, product consumption, and waste disposal are potential impacts on the purchasing evaluation process. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction depends on the extent to which the product meets the consumer's expectations. Resignation, transfer to another brand, product, or store, can reflect a negative purchase evaluation (Hoyer, Wayne, Macinnis 2008). Post-purchase evaluation thus creates a link and predisposition of a consumer for future purchasing decisions" (Hawkins, Best, Coney 1989).

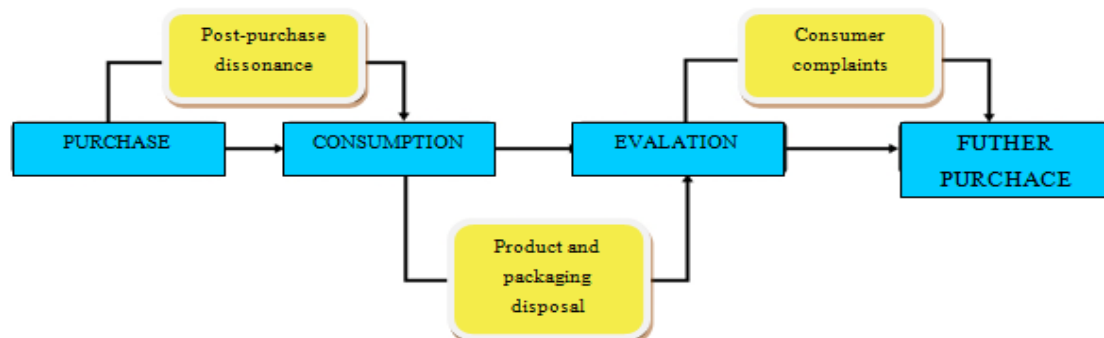


Figure1 Post-purchase behavior of the consumer

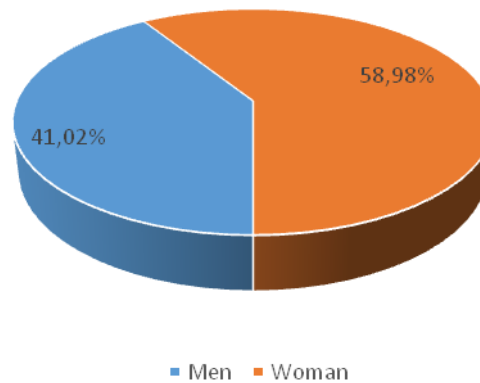
(Source: Hawkins et. al. 1989, p. 664)

The previous figure illustrates the process of post-purchase behavior of the consumer. The purchase of the product is followed by its consumption, disposal of the product and packaging, the evaluation of the product (the consumer can raise complaints), and further purchase. There may be so-called post-purchase dissonance between the purchase and consumption. Refer to the post-purchase dissonance characterization below.

From the moment of purchase choice, some consumers assess and evaluate their purchase decisions. This situation is common, especially with purchases made with considerable interest and with limited resources of the consumer. In this situation, post-purchase dissonance may occur, i.e., the consumer may be in doubt or be uncertain whether his decision to purchase the product was correct. These doubts (sometimes referred to as regrets) are typical of situations where the consumer realizes that he has chosen the only alternative, although the alternatives he has rejected have the desired attributes. It can result in a condition that leads to dissatisfaction with the purchase (Richter et al., 2010).

2. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

We surveyed to find out the possible connections in the selected area. The following text includes the survey results. Within the scope of the survey, we developed a questionnaire to find out the opinions of respondents from the selected sample. Concerning the pandemic situation, the data collection was realized online from 14 August 2021 to 5 September 2021. After gathering and clearing the data, we collected responses from 668 respondents. The essential characteristics of the research sample are as follows.



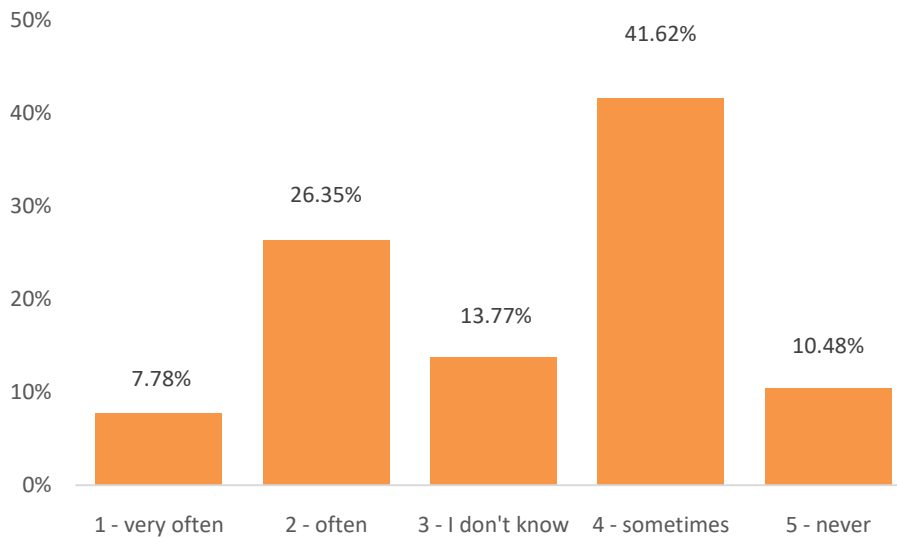
Graph 1 Distribution of respondents by gender

Source: own processing

The average age of the respondents was 37.43 years. This figure is slightly lower than the average age of the population of the Slovak Republic, which is approximately at the level of 40.8 years. We assume that the cause of the decrease was due to the online distribution of the questionnaire. The youngest respondent to the survey was 16 years old and the oldest 74. Other characteristics indicate that the median was at the level of 35 years and the modus at 31 years.

3. SURVEY RESULTS

Our survey focused mainly on finding out the possible influence of advertising on the frequency of post-purchase dissonance among customers. Therefore we will aim at this area in the presentation of results. Respondents answered on a scale of 1 to 5. The following graph shows the distribution of their answers.



Graph 2 Distribution of respondents' answers

Source: own processing

Based on the presented results, it is possible to elicit several interesting facts. However, we consider the finding to be the most serious that, although respondents are to some extent aware of the influence of advertising on the emergence of post-purchase dissonance, they think this influence does not appear so often. The presented results support this statement, showing that more than half of the respondents gave answers 4 - sometimes (n = 278; 41.62%) and 5 - never (n = 70; 10.48%).

To examine this question as thoroughly as possible, we decided to test whether and to what extent it is possible, in this case, to disclose possible differences in the opinions of respondents depending on their gender. For this reason, we proceeded to postulate the following research hypothesis:

H: We assume that there are statistically significant differences in the frequency of experiencing post-purchase dissonance under the influence of advertising, depending on the gender of the respondents.

We based this hypothesis on two questions, namely the question concerning the gender of respondents and the question, the results of which we presented in the previous graph. To evaluate this hypothesis, we used Pearson χ^2 . To perform the necessary calculations, we used the Statistic program. The following tables show the measured results.

Table 1 Hypothesis evaluation

<i>Pohlavie</i>	N/%	1- veryoften	2- often	3- I don'tknow	4- sometimes	5- never	Total
<i>Man</i>	N	7	33	20	60	17	137
	%	2.10%	9.88%	5.99%	17.96%	5.09%	41.02%
<i>Women</i>	N	19	55	26	79	18	197
	%	5.69%	16.47%	7.78%	23.65%	5.39%	58.98%
<i>Total</i>	N	26	88	46	139	35	334
	%	7.78%	26.35%	13.77%	41.62%	10.48%	100.,00%

(Source: own processing)

Table 2 Pearson χ^2

Pearson χ^2	df	p
3.79065	4	0.435079

The data in Table 1 present both the frequency and the percentage of responses obtained from respondents. The data presented show that the most common answer in both men and women is 4 - sometimes;

in men (n = 120; 17.69%) and (n = 158; 23.65%) in women.

Since the resulting value of $p = 0.435079 > 0.05$, we are obliged to reject the hypothesis. Thus, the alternative hypothesis H_a applies: there are no statistically significant differences in the frequency of experiencing post-purchase dissonance under the influence of advertising, depending on the gender of the respondents.

4. CONCLUSION

The results suggest that the impact of advertising on the post-purchase dissonance frequency is not negligible. Of course, the period in which the survey took place was significantly affected by various constraints. However, thanks to such conditions, we can disclose connections that might appear unimportant. Despite being partially limited in implementing the survey, we dare to say that our conclusions offer opportunities for reflection and further investigation.

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