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Advertising
MARKETING

THESIS

**Segmentation-targeting-positioning strategies on the pet food
market in Romania**

SUMMARY

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Cluj-Napoca

2023

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Summary

The present doctoral thesis is divided into three distinct parts, aiming to examine the process of strategic marketing planning and the concepts of segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP), as well as to investigate the segmentation of B2C consumer markets through a systematic analysis of the specialized literature in this field.

The first theoretical part addresses strategic marketing planning, with a focus on the concepts of segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP). The theoretical section continues with a systematic analysis of the specialized literature on segmentation of B2C consumer markets.

The practical part of the thesis constitutes the second section and focuses on marketing research conducted within the Romanian market of pet food products. The first research involves an extensive administered questionnaire with over 1,500 respondents, specifically emphasizing the COVID-19 pandemic period, thus providing relevant insights and novel contributions to the specialized literature regarding consumer purchasing behavior of pet food products during this period.

The second practical part centers on a case study of a company active in the Romanian pet food market, analyzing market segmentation practices and their impact on the company's strategic objectives. The results obtained from the research and analysis contribute significantly to the field of strategic marketing planning and segmentation of B2C consumer markets, providing relevant perspectives and practical recommendations.

Therefore, this thesis makes a substantial contribution to the understanding and application of segmentation, targeting, and positioning concepts in the context of B2C consumer markets, offering valuable information and new perspectives in this field.

Key words: Segmentation, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Strategy, Pet Food Market, B2C Market, COVID-19 Pandemic.

Chapter I. Introduction - Strategic Marketing Planning and the Role of STP in the Planning Process

The first part of the thesis focuses on the importance of strategic marketing planning within companies. Strategic planning aims to identify an action plan for the long-term survival and growth of an organization. This chapter details the process involving market analysis, competition analysis, and internal resource analysis, which ultimately leads to the identification of marketing opportunities and ensuring a strategic fit between the organization's objectives and capabilities and the changing environment.

Marketing planning takes place at the business unit, product, and market levels, supporting the company's strategic planning through detailed plans for specific marketing opportunities. It includes the analysis of internal and external environments, conducting a SWOT analysis to evaluate the current situation of the company, and setting primary objectives and marketing strategies. A key point of originality in the thesis and an important aspect emphasized in the introduction is the shift in approach by many companies attempting to offer personalized products tailored to the individual needs and preferences of customers. This change is motivated by the example of companies that, due to a lack of attention to strategic planning and meeting customer needs, have faced the brink of bankruptcy, while their competitors who adopted segmented marketing strategies achieved greater success.

This chapter makes significant contributions to the literature and practical applications by synthesizing information on strategic marketing planning and highlighting the fact that strategic marketing planning is essential for the long-term success of a company.

This thesis is structured into nine chapters, addressing the following subjects:

- I. Strategic Marketing Planning and the Role of Segmentation-Targeting-Positioning (STP) in the Planning Process.
- II. Details the stages of segmentation and the variables used in segmentation.
- III. Targeting and the options available to firms regarding market targeting of identified segments.
- IV. Positioning, which includes the differentiation of offerings in the market and the development of positioning maps that companies can use to assess this process.
- V. Consumer Market Segmentation B2C: Systematic Literature Review highlighting the latest advancements in segmentation methods.

VI. Chapter six provides an overview of the design of the practical research in the subsequent part of the thesis.

VII. This chapter presents the results of extensive research conducted for the pet food market (B2C), including an analysis of pet food purchasing behavior before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the influence of the workplace on pet food purchasing behavior during the pandemic.

VIII. The Market Segmentation Process at the Firm Level, with a case study conducted on a company operating in the local pet food market.

IX. The final chapter draws conclusions from both the theoretical and practical parts of the thesis, including the limitations of the research and future directions for further investigation.

Chapter II. Market Segmentation

The next chapter of the thesis focuses on the process of market segmentation, specifically on consumer market segmentation (B2C). Market segmentation is an essential process in marketing, as demonstrated by the comprehensive analysis of specialized literature in this thesis. This segmentation process involves dividing the market into distinct and homogeneous groups, known as segments, based on specific criteria. The purpose of segmentation is to better identify and understand the needs, preferences, and behaviors of consumers so that companies can develop and offer products and services that effectively cater to each segment.

Within consumer market segmentation, various criteria are used to define and delineate segments. The main segmentation criteria are geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral. As highlighted in this chapter, segmentation often occurs using multiple segmentation variables. This aspect is referred to as "multiple segmentation" in the specialized literature, a concept that is also analyzed in this thesis. Multiple segmentation involves the use of multiple segmentation criteria to create more precise and well-defined segments. This approach allows companies to effectively identify and target consumers, better satisfying the needs and preferences of different consumer groups.

This part of the thesis also extensively discusses the efficiency required in the market segmentation process. For effective consumer market segmentation, certain requirements and practices are necessary, as presented in the thesis. First and foremost, collecting and analyzing relevant consumer data is essential. This may include demographic, behavioral, psychographic,

and geographic information. The more accurate and comprehensive the data, the more suitable and efficient the segmentation will be. Secondly, defining segmentation criteria is crucial. These criteria should be relevant to the industry in which the company operates and enable the identification of distinct and homogeneous consumer groups. Additionally, segmentation criteria should be measurable and easy to use in practice. Moreover, effective segmentation involves selecting the most appropriate segmentation variables and developing clear profiles for each segment. These profiles should include detailed information about the characteristics and preferences of each segment, as well as the specific needs and behaviors of consumers within that segment. It is also important to evaluate the size and attractiveness of each segment. This involves analyzing the growth potential and profitability of each segment, as well as the existing competition within those segments.

This chapter makes an important contribution in practice by demonstrating that firms need to develop marketing and communication strategies tailored to each segment. This may involve personalizing messages and offers, adapting distribution and promotion channels to the specific needs and preferences of each segment. By adhering to these requirements and practices, companies can benefit from effective consumer market segmentation, allowing them to strategically focus their resources and efforts, strengthen their competitive advantage, and maximize their success in the market.

Chapter III. Targeting

This chapter presents the next step of the STP process, namely targeting the selected market segments. Targeting is an essential process in marketing that involves selecting the market segments that a company intends to address and satisfy efficiently. The correct choice of target segments is crucial for the strategic success of a company, as it involves the efficient use of resources and a focus on those consumer groups that offer the greatest potential for profitability and growth.

In the targeting process, it is necessary to evaluate the available market segments to determine their size and growth potential. This involves analyzing data and information about consumers, their buying behavior, preferences, and needs, in order to identify those segments that offer significant opportunities for business development and success.

Additionally, the attractiveness of a segment must be considered in the targeting process. The attractiveness of a segment refers to its potential profitability and accessibility, as well as the level of competition within that segment. Attractive segments will be those that present high growth opportunities, profitability potential, and a low level of competition.

When choosing target segments, the company's objectives and resources must be taken into account. Strategic alignment between the selected target segments and the organization's objectives is essential. Additionally, available resources, such as the marketing budget, production capacity, and expertise, need to be considered to ensure that the company can address and satisfy the needs of the target segments efficiently.

Depending on the adopted strategy, a company can choose different targeting approaches. Undifferentiated targeting strategy, also known as mass marketing, involves addressing the entire market with a single product or service. This strategy is based on the assumption that consumers have similar needs and preferences, and a universal product can satisfy these requirements.

In contrast, differentiated targeting strategy, also known as differentiated marketing, involves addressing multiple distinct market segments, a niche, or even individuals, with offerings and messages specifically tailored to the characteristics and preferences of each segment. This approach recognizes the diversity and variability of consumers and aims to create personalized offerings for each segment. By understanding and adapting to the specific needs and preferences of each segment, the company can achieve greater relevance and attractiveness in the eyes of consumers, leading to increased satisfaction, loyalty, and brand loyalty. On the other hand, concentrated targeting strategy involves addressing a single market segment with a unique offering specifically tailored to those particular needs and preferences. This strategy focuses on identifying and excellently satisfying a narrow segment, providing it with superior value and building close relationships with consumers in that segment.

This chapter has several practical implications, providing companies with a detailed analysis of the possibilities they have for effectively targeting selected segments. Whether it is mass marketing or differentiated marketing (or even concentrated targeting or micromarketing), a strategic and personalized approach to target segments can significantly contribute to the success and growth of a business in the market.

Chapter IV. Positioning

Positioning is a crucial aspect of marketing strategy that involves creating a unique and distinct image and perception of a product or service in the minds of consumers. In this chapter, various aspects of positioning and how they can contribute to creating a competitive advantage in the market are explored, providing firms with a much clearer perspective on positioning their products/services/brands in the market.

The first part of this section discusses different ways to differentiate a product or service to give it a unique position in the market. These ways include differentiation through product, distribution, price, promotion, and brand. Furthermore, positioning maps are discussed, which are tools used to visualize the position of a product or service in comparison to competitors based on attributes relevant to consumers. Positioning maps can help identify gaps in the market and identify a distinct place for the offered product or service.

Next, the choice of an appropriate differentiation and positioning strategy is explored. This involves evaluating the market, consumers, and competition to identify opportunities and unmet consumer needs. Based on this information, differentiation and positioning strategies can be developed to allow the product or service to differentiate itself and occupy a niche in the market.

Finally, this part of the work addresses the communication and delivery of the chosen position to consumers. This involves developing and implementing a coherent marketing mix that effectively communicates the positioning and value of the product or service to consumers. Additionally, delivering the chosen position involves ensuring a consistent and high-quality experience in all interactions with consumers. From product design and packaging to after-sales services and support, the company must ensure that all aspects of the consumer experience reflect the desired positioning and the promise of product or service value.

Chapter V. Consumer Market Segmentation in B2C: Systematic Review of Literature

This section focuses on the systematic review of literature in the field of consumer market segmentation in the B2C (business-to-consumer) context. The aim of this analysis is to synthesize and evaluate the relevant research and findings in the field of consumer market segmentation over the past decade.

The introduction highlights the importance of consumer market segmentation in the B2C context and presents the objectives of the systematic review of literature. This involves identifying

and selecting the general criteria used for segmenting B2C consumer markets, as well as selecting and analyzing articles from relevant journals and publications in the period from 2012 to 2022.

Next, the general criteria used for segmenting B2C consumer markets are presented. In the following stages, the process of journal and article selection used in the systematic review is described. The selection is based on the relevance, authority, and scientific rigor of the sources. This ensures that the analysis is based on valid and up-to-date information in the field of consumer market segmentation in the B2C context.

The subsequent part of the work presents the relevant journals and publications in the period from 2012 to 2022 that were included in the analysis. These sources include reputable publications in the field of marketing and consumer behavior that make significant contributions to the research and understanding of consumer market segmentation in the B2C context.

In the central part of the analysis, the main findings from the analyzed articles are presented. These findings include trends and patterns identified in the segmentation of B2C consumer markets, as well as the factors that influence the segmentation process and its impact on marketing strategies and business decision-making.

Finally, the conclusions of the systematic review of literature are presented, highlighting the main aspects and contributions of the research in the field of consumer market segmentation in the B2C context.

Chapter VI: Research Design

This chapter provides a detailed presentation of the approaches and methodology used in the conducted study. It emphasizes the importance of choosing the research topic, which focuses on the pet food market in Romania, particularly on the strategic marketing aspects. This part of the work highlights the lack of systematic marketing approaches within companies in this sector, both from a practical experience and theoretical standpoint. Additionally, it highlights the lack of empirical research focusing on strategic marketing and target marketing in the pet food market in Romania.

The novelty of the study lies in identifying efficient segmentation criteria for selecting target segments in the pet food market, with the aim of providing differentiation elements for

positioning to companies in this industry. It also emphasizes that there are few structured models of strategic planning and marketing used by firms in this sector in practice.

The research methodology involves a mixed approach, combining theoretical and practical aspects. Relevant bibliographic sources were used for the study's topic, and descriptive research, surveys through questionnaires, and interviews were conducted to obtain quantitative and qualitative information about the pet food market and the buying behavior of pet owners in Romania. Special attention was given to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this market, as the research was conducted during the pandemic period.

The research focused on two interconnected directions. The first direction analyzed changes in consumer behavior regarding the purchase of pet products before and during the pandemic. Purchasing preferences, both online and offline, as well as preferences for home delivery services, were investigated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second direction of the research focused on the influence of respondents' work mode (remote, hybrid, or on-site) on their buying behavior. Important factors considered in the purchase process and the budget allocated for pet food were analyzed based on the work mode during the pandemic.

Chapter VII: Research Findings - for the Consumer Market (B2C)

This chapter presents the research findings conducted in the doctoral study, focusing on the pet food market in Romania in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter focuses on two important aspects: analyzing the buying behavior of pet food products before and during the pandemic, as well as the influence of the workplace on the buying behavior of pet food products during the pandemic.

In the first section, the buying behavior of pet food products before and during the COVID-19 pandemic is analyzed. The research discusses how the pandemic has influenced consumers' preferences, needs, and habits regarding the purchase of pet food. Changes in buying behavior are examined, such as the increase in online purchases, changes in brand preferences, or shifting priorities in choosing pet food products.

The second section focuses on the influence of the workplace on the buying behavior of pet food products during the pandemic. The impact of the transition to remote work and the restrictions imposed by the pandemic on consumers' needs and preferences regarding the purchase

of pet food is analyzed. Aspects such as the availability of free time, allocated budget, store accessibility, and preferences related to pet food products are examined.

The results bring several elements of originality to the forefront. Firstly, they provide a deeper understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the buying behavior of pet food products in the B2C consumer market. These findings offer valuable insights for industry players, such as producers, retailers, and marketers, in developing marketing strategies and adapting to changes in consumer needs and preferences. Secondly, they make significant contributions by closely analyzing buying behavior and the influence of the workplace during the pandemic period. The research provides significant contributions to the specialized literature and enriches existing knowledge about consumer behavior in the context of the pandemic. These conclusions can be applied in practice to support informed decision-making and the development of effective marketing strategies in the pet food industry.

Within this chapter, the research results regarding the buying behavior of pet food products in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the B2C consumer market are highlighted. The detailed analysis of these results provides a deeper understanding of the changes that occurred in consumers' preferences, needs, and habits during the pandemic.

By analyzing the purchasing behavior of pet food products before and during the pandemic, the research emphasizes significant changes in this domain. An increase in online purchases and a shift in brand preferences are observed, driven by the pandemic restrictions and the adaptation to new buying and consumption conditions. Additionally, the research highlights the influence of the workplace on pet food purchasing behavior during the pandemic. The transition to remote work has had a significant impact on the availability of leisure time and how consumers plan and make pet food purchases.

The research results bring significant contributions to the B2C consumer market, offering valuable information for industry stakeholders. Manufacturers, retailers, and marketers can utilize these results to adapt their marketing strategies and better respond to the changing needs and preferences of consumers during periods of change and uncertainty.

By conducting a detailed investigation of buying behavior and contextual influences, the research contributes to the development of existing knowledge and enhances the understanding of consumer decision-making processes. This enables the industry to make more informed decisions and develop more efficient marketing strategies in line with new trends and consumer preferences.

Ultimately, the results obtained within this chapter contribute to the advancement of research in the B2C consumer market and provide a fresh perspective on buying behavior in the context of the pandemic. These conclusions can serve as a basis for future research and the development of innovative and adaptable marketing strategies in a continuously changing environment.

Chapter VIII: Market Segmentation Process at the Firm Level: A Case Study of HUSSE Cluj

This section of the thesis focuses on the market segmentation process at the company level, specifically through an in-depth case study of HUSSE Cluj. In this chapter, an introduction to the case study is presented, followed by an overview of HUSSE Cluj and its key elements.

The first part describes the vision, mission, and objectives of the company, highlighting the strategic goals it pursues. Additionally, HUSSE Cluj is presented as a franchisee, and the "Husse" brand is discussed in the context of its internationalization. An important aspect addressed in this chapter is the marketing environment in which HUSSE Cluj operates and the key elements that influence its activities.

The objectives of the case study are detailed in this chapter, along with the methodological part of the research. Both questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews are utilized to obtain relevant data and analyze the collected information.

The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through questionnaires and interviews are conducted in detail within the thesis. The questionnaire results are examined, evaluating their impact on market segmentation and the company's marketing strategies. In-depth interviews are also used to gain a broader perspective on the segmentation process and obtain valuable qualitative insights.

This chapter highlights the case study of HUSSE Cluj and provides a detailed presentation of its market segmentation process. By employing appropriate methodologies and carefully analyzing the obtained data, this case study offers a fresh perspective and understanding of how the company approaches market segmentation and develops its marketing strategies. The results and conclusions of this case study can be effectively utilized for the development of adapted and innovative marketing strategies in the pet food industry.

Chapter IX: Conclusions

This final chapter of the thesis outlines the main conclusions of the study and emphasizes its original contributions. The first section synthesizes the results and findings obtained during the research. The importance and relevance of the study are highlighted, along with its contribution to the research field. The main conclusions and discoveries related to the addressed topic are presented, showcasing how they address the initially formulated research questions and objectives.

The following section discusses the methodological or theoretical restrictions and limitations encountered during the research. This demonstrates a critical and transparent approach to the study and provides a framework for a deeper understanding of the obtained results. Moreover, identifying and acknowledging limitations serves as a starting point for future research and the improvement of utilized methodologies.

In the last section, potential directions for future research are emphasized. This highlights the originality of the study and contributes to the development of knowledge in the addressed field. Gaps in the existing research are identified, and themes or aspects that can be further investigated are proposed, opening up new perspectives and research possibilities.

This chapter brings the doctoral thesis to a close, effectively highlighting the main conclusions of the entire work and emphasizing its original elements. Through a concise summary of the obtained results, recognition of limitations, and proposal of new research directions, the thesis makes significant contributions to the marketing field and serves as a platform for future research in this domain.