
INTERDEPENDENCE OF INTERESTS OF SELLERS AND CONSUMERS BY SELLING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS ON MARKETPLACES

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ABSTRACT

Marketplace sales in trade dates back to the Middle Ages. The meaningfulness and development of communication gained real meaning with the development of the marketplaces. Today, personal selling is part of the distribution of agricultural products and part of modern marketing. With the development of the global market and modern information technologies, the role of marketplace sales has taken on another dimension. The aim of this paper is to define the model of efficient sales on the market through direct marketing, sales promotion and living words. The results of theoretical research are based on scientific and professional literature, statistical data and tables, authors' experience, whereas field empirical research was conducted using a questionnaire. The results of empirical research show that the average desire for changes in the behaviour of sellers in sales and consumers in shopping is not present enough. From the conducted research, it can be concluded that in certain previously mentioned aspects of changes in behaviour, marketing communication can be established that will contribute to increasing consumer satisfaction and information.

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Introduction

Marketplace sales are the oldest form of human activity. The latest trends in the last ten years in developed countries point to the fact that green markets have regained their old

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reputation by selling fresh products that are much higher quality than in other shopping centres. Agricultural production is one of the key activities of the economy of the Republic of Serbia, given the availability of natural and human resources (Užar et al., 2019). Marketplaces are one of the oldest market institutions in the trade of agricultural products and one of the primary indicators of the development of the agricultural complex (Kuzman et al., 2020). In developed countries, the trend of developing green markets is based on the extension of working hours, accompanied by additional services to consumers. The sale of fruits and vegetables on the marketplace is still mostly related to smaller producers, as well as to producers of organic products. Its activities in the promotion should emphasise a certain seasonal extra value of the product, a better offer, quality and freshness compared to the competition. (Prdić et al., 2021). Marketplaces in the future cannot be a serious competition to retail chains, except for a large concentration of supply, but they can be places to sell fresh products and products of organic origin. In the past period, the biggest changes in the marketplace activity occurred as a consequence of the establishment of new, organised forms of supplying the population with various items, including fresh food. (Ostojić et al., 2013). Personal and intensive, interactive communications in the form of direct marketing, personal sales and sales promotion as well as living words make a long-term step forward in marketplace sales.

Marketplace vendors use sales and communication techniques to guide the customer to buy their product. The fact is that in the era of competition, sellers on the marketplace realise that the relationship with consumers is very important, that the integration of personal sales instruments has a long-term significance for successful sales. Creativity and intelligence of the seller are the basic prerequisites for efficient sales. Product sales as a marketing tool, integrated with the word-of-mouth in terms of on-site sales, is an approach in which the seller and buyer directly determine the common interest, based on appropriate quality and low prices and good communication that results in consumer satisfaction as end user (Prdić et al., 2019). The essence of a good value delivery system is a set of key business processes that help deliver special value to the customer (Mittal et al., 2005).

The point of sale and the word-of-mouth is the last attempt of the seller to successfully communicate with the consumer. The art of trading is an old method of trade that can be safely applied in the marketplaces. Creativity in communication derives from the goal of sales and is focused on communication with the consumer in order to persuade them to buy products. A skilled salesman should show understanding for the customer who visited the marketplace and his point of sale. The eye of the seller in the marketplace is a special element of successful sales. We know that the marketplaces are special social institutions where an experienced seller promotes his product as “absolutely good” without interfering much with the competition. However, we know that consumers in the marketplace have previous experiences, so attraction can only be done through the visual image of the point of sale.

Modern living conditions in urban areas impose continuity in the supply of fresh agricultural products as a condition. Dynamic living in urban areas poses an additional challenge to survival (Bott et al., 2019). They (marketplaces) contribute to many social benefits, increase income, social communication and interaction, development of social wealth, as well as a stronger degree of connection between consumers and the local community. (Bonanno et al., 2017). There is an introduction of innovations in agricultural production and sales. Future research must comprehensively conceptualise the interaction between consumers, labels and trust in order to provide a complete picture of how trust works in relation to product labels. (Tonkin et al., 2015). Labels can often increase sales due to the display of various slogans (eg safe for tuna, healthy environment, etc.), especially for those consumers who are environmentally aware and who are willing to pay more for such a product. (Teisl et al., 2002; Zahirović et al., 2021). The supply chain of agricultural products implies an integrated interest within the chain starting from agricultural producers, marketplaces, local urban community, consumers and the social community.

Material and methods

The central problem that we analyse in the paper is the design of an integrated model of personal sales, which would include all types of communication processes and thus be the result for solving various problems. The operational problem of the research is personal sales that arise directly on the marketplace, but also in academic, professional and business circles that deal with personal communications. The problem is reflected in the fact that so far no coexistent and comprehensive model of marketplace sales on the marketplace has been defined. Thus, sellers are not aware of what belongs to that model and are not aware that they use various instruments to convey information about themselves and their offer. Building the seller's image and sales success depends on the communication process, especially in the market, because communication takes place before the purchase process (direct marketing) in the form of interactive communication and directly through sales and sales promotion as well as living words (Karavelić et al., 2021). The aim of the theoretical part is to design a conceptual model of integrated marketing communication, which would show the complexity and connectivity of all elements in the communication process. It is also the goal of designing a usable communication model with answers to the questions of all participants in the model, marketing the communication model in the marketplace sales process based on consumer satisfaction. Marketing research is a function that connects consumers, customers and the general public with the marketer through information - and that information is used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems, to design, improve and evaluate marketing actions, to monitor marketing performance and to improve the understanding of marketing as a process. (Kotler et al., 2017).

The implementation of research objectives is based on the application of marketing research methods. The theoretical aspect of the research is based on the application of existing literature, authors' experience and existing communication models. Data

for qualitative analysis of data were obtained by the method of testing through a questionnaire at the Fish Market in Novi Sad, Zeleni Venac in Belgrade and Niš Green Market Tvrdava. Of the special methods of cognition, methods of analysis and synthesis, logical deduction, statistical data processing and tables are used. The intention is to apply the set methods to achieve an effective theoretical model of communication by studying the existing literature and starting from the research problem, and based on the results of empirical data, set the following hypotheses.

The total number of surveyed sellers who agreed to fill in (to answer) to the survey questionnaire is 75, of which 25 of the sellers were from the each of the three marketplaces that were the subject of the survey. This sample represents about 50% of the size of the possible sample if the approximate number of vendors coming to the marketplace for a minimum of 5 days is taken into account. The research was conducted on green markets. The aim of the research is to bring the common interest closer in the time of global marketplace conditions, huge competition and everyday communication between sellers and consumers. The problem of research is personal sales, on which the success of sales depends, as well as communications based on modern information technology, but also the attitudes of consumers. Today, consumers are more and more educated and informed, who rightly set higher standards in the field of purchasing products that affect the quality of life. When it comes to consumers who were surveyed on a sample of 50 at each market, the survey can be considered relevant because the content of the questionnaire was structured so that consumers who come to the marketplace at least 3 times a week answered. The analysis also includes the number of people who deal with marketing and communications in the three subject market administrations. We expressed that as a share in the total number of employees in companies. The average number of employees involved in marketing and communications is 5.5%, which is quite low compared to the total number of employees.

Based on the data of the Association of Marketplaces of Serbia, the number of employees who actively participate in the promotion of markets on the market is quite low, considering the aggressive marketing activities of the competition.

The intention is to look at the overall interest in selling agricultural products on the marketplace from the point of view of marketplaces, sellers and consumers and point to the fact of increasing the number of employees in marketing, thus resulting in the application of new forms of behaviour and the sellers themselves. Hypothesis H3 will examine the marketplace awareness of consumers and their willingness to change their buying behaviour and change the behaviour of sellers in sales.

The intention is to apply the set methods to achieve an effective theoretical model of communication by studying the existing literature and starting from the research problem, and based on the results of empirical data, set the following hypotheses.

H1: Marketplace vendors do not make enough use of marketplace sales in sales - sales vendors do not use personal communications as a concept of efficient sales.

H2: The sellers in the marketplace do not sufficiently fulfill the wishes and expectations of their consumers.

H3: Consumers in the market have a positive attitude about the potential change of sellers and their own behavior in shopping - the average desire for changes in the behavior of sellers in sales and consumers in shopping.

Results of empirical verification

Analysis of research of the marketplace sellers

95% of sellers who have been selling at the marketplace for more than 10 years answered the questions from the survey conducted on the three marketplaces in question. So this research can be considered relevant because it is about salespeople who have a wide range of knowledge in sales and thus the social and societal roles of markets. Based on the experience of the authors and the data that have been verified in terms of the years spent on the marketplace, the data can be considered realistic. Based on the set hypotheses of the research in the empirical part, the connections between the sellers on the marketplace and the attitudes and behaviour of consumers when shopping will be studied.

Table 1. Personal sales - the most important communication instruments of marketplace vendors

Communication through sales promotion	81%
Point of sale communication	74%
Personal sales-word-of-mouth -direct marketing	49%
Communication with well-known and loyal customers	45%
Significance and place of the marketplace	41%
Consumer attitudes	43%
Internet sales and communication	36%
Sales and marketing events in the marketplace	27%

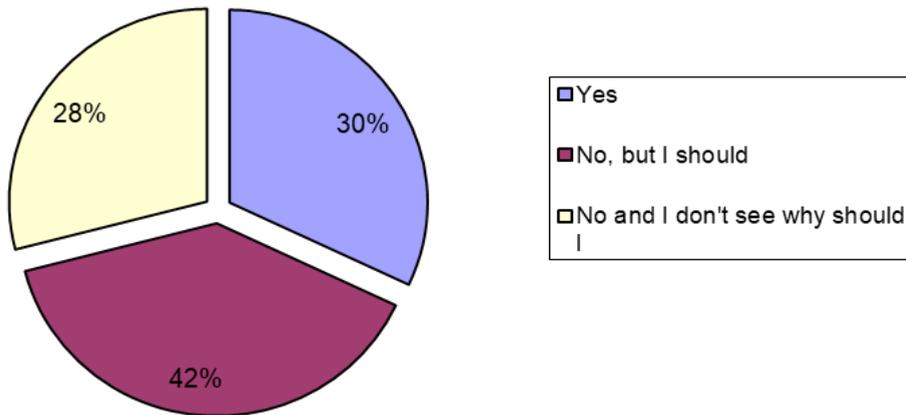
Source: Author's research

Vendors' attitudes (Table 1) on the most important communication instruments allow us to draw conclusions from H1.

Based on the attitudes of sellers about the use of marketplace sales in sales from the above research, we see that they do not use marketplace sales enough. Thus, we realise that hypothesis H1 has not been confirmed. Thus, marketplace sales in the form of personal sales, direct marketing and live words were not sufficiently applied by sellers, which would manifest the success of communication in higher sales. Salespeople attach great importance to sales promotion and point-of-sale communication, but they are ad hoc sales attempts based on the author's experience and conversations with salespeople. They are not part of a personal communication strategy. From this it can be concluded

that the strategy of personal communication of sellers is necessary as a prerequisite for successful sales and business success. The success of the seller's communication can be determined in different ways, i.e. from different aspects. The success of the seller's communication from the aspect of economic stability and weather relations with consumers will be observed, considering the instruments of sales promotion, direct marketing and living words from a position that can increase and contribute to the seller's reputation and market position.

Figure 1. Implementation of the concept of personal sales (database)



Source: Author's research

Conducted research with sellers of agricultural products on the marketplaces in question when it comes to the implementation of the concept of personal sales in the form of maintaining a database of consumers based on the survey are as follows:

- Yes, I have the database formed - 30%
- No, but I should introduce it - 42%
- No, and I don't see why should I keep the records - 28%.

Based on the communication findings during the survey, a large number of sellers keep a database, but they are quite out of date and superficial. These databases are only lists that are not kept in the internal and online database of vendors. And from this test of H1 hypothesis, it is clear that vendors do not keep systematic databases. Therefore, they are not able to use data from the database for sales purposes, so it can be concluded that the element of personal communications, performed through direct marketing in the form of a database is not adequately applied. Therefore, hypothesis H1 has not been confirmed.

Respondents surveyed in response to the question from Hypothesis H1 were able to give an answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 expressed a negative opinion and 5 a distinctly positive one. According to the data in Table 1, the average assessment of the insufficient use of marketplace sales in sales is 2.5 in the area of all three subject marketplaces.

Table 2. Data on the average assessment of the application of personal communications

	N	Mean	Stand. deviation	Std. Error Mean
Insufficient application	150	2.5	0.760	0.0764

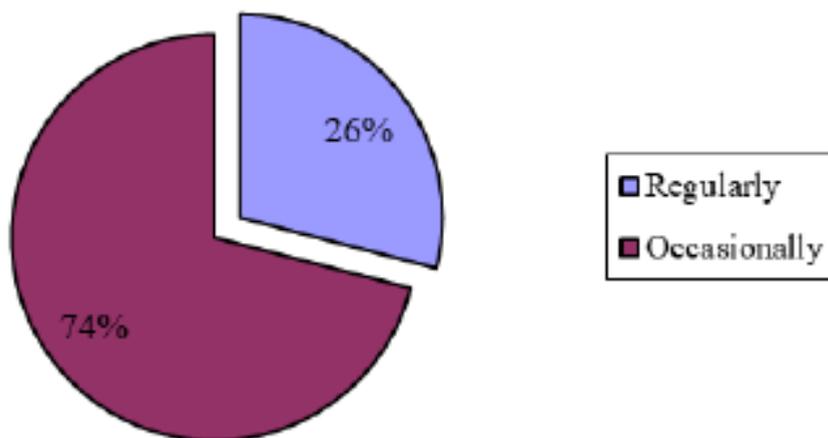
Source: Author's research

Table 3. One sample test, average score of personal communication application (close value = 3).95% Confidence interval of the Difference

	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Insufficient application	-6.185	148	0.000	-0.478	-0.6112	-0.3256

Source: Author's research

According to the data of empirical verification, where the significance is a $* = 0.000 = 0\%$, and $* < 5\%$, which shows that the average value, the assessment of insufficient use of personal communications, is different from the tested value, so it can be concluded that accept the hypothesis that the average score of the application of marketplace sales in all three marketplaces is 3 since it is equal to 2.5 in the sample, which means that it is less than 3.

Figure 2. Control of personal communication strategy

Source: Author's research

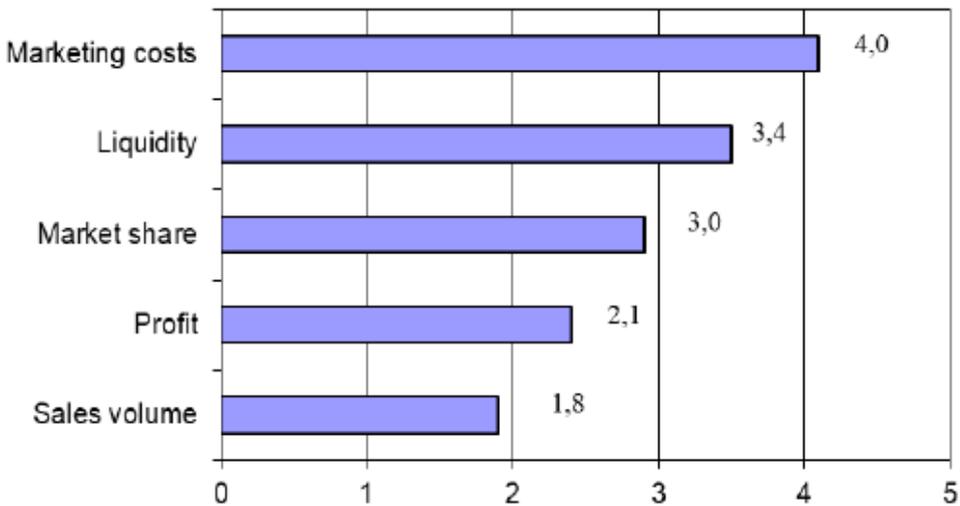
Researching the success of personal sales control in the measure of fulfilling the wishes and expectations of its consumers with the surveyed sellers of fruits and vegetables, the results are quite unsatisfactory. Only 26% of the surveyed sellers regularly control the adopted communication strategy and 74% do not. Control of personal communication is the most important act without which it is not possible to accurately determine and specify the results of communication and sales. The results of the research indicate that the control of the adopted strategy of personal communication is not implemented,

so the sellers have to face it and look for solutions, especially when observing the marketing activities of competing companies.

The following elements were used to measure the results of marketing control:

- Sales volume 1.8%
- Profit 2.1%
- Market share 3.0%
- Liquidity 3.4%
- Marketing costs 4.0%

Figure 3. Instruments for measuring personal sales control



Source: Author's research

It should be noted that the importance of measuring individual instruments has been recorded so that 1 is the most significant factor and 5 the least significant. From the mentioned research, it is clear that marketing costs are the least important item in measuring the achieved sales results. There is no awareness among sellers that the strategy of marketing control of marketplace sales can increase sales and achieve other business results. Namely, the strategy of successful personal communication, which ultimately increases the business result, cannot be achieved either through the control of the personal communication strategy, which is conducted to a very small extent, or the importance of marketing costs with sellers on the marketplace. H1 has not been confirmed from the above paragraphs.

When it comes to the second hypothesis H2 in which sellers in the marketplace do not sufficiently meet the wishes and expectations of their consumers, we will look through the prism of implementing the concept of communication and measuring their effects on sales. As one of the predictable consequences of communication and fulfillment

of consumer desires in our research model, is a higher level of service by sellers. The perceived quality is shaped as a consequence of fulfilling the wishes and expectations of its customers. The expected level of consumer satisfaction is significantly influenced by personal communications.

Table 4. Data on the average assessment of consumer satisfaction by changing the attitudes of sellers

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Consumers' attitude	150	3,8	,6630	,07661

Source: Author's research

Table 5. One sample test, average consumer satisfaction rating (close value = 4).95% Confidence interval of the Difference.

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Consumers' attitude	-0.078	148	0.926	-0.00504	-0.11332	0.1232

Source: Author's research

According to the obtained empirical research data $a^*=0.926=92.6\%$, and $a^*>5\%$, which shows that the average value, the assessment of changing sellers according to the requirements of their consumers, does not differ from the tested value, so it can be concluded that can accept the hypothesis that the average assessment of the desire to change sellers on all three marketplaces is 4. Therefore, according to the obtained data, hypothesis H2 can be accepted.

Based on research, the degree of integration of personal communication based on H2 on changing sellers and in order to change behaviour based on consumer attitudes, we can measure through certain groups of variables depending on the goals of communication through:

- Organisation of sellers observing the instruments of communication, knowledge of sales techniques and cooperation with marketplace administrations
- Interactivity reflected in the strategic coherence of communication, special programmes for fulfilling consumer desires, measuring realised consumer desires and consumer databases
- Vision of communication within the communication plan, social care, sales focus on healthy and safe products
- Strategic analysis of communication harmonised with the position on the marketplace and the position of the marketplace on the wider market, shaping intensive internet communications at the center of the external message
- Planning communications in the special part of personal communications, planning communications with regard to consumer needs, planning the offer

of healthy products, researching relationships with consumers, using personal communication instruments and designing sales programs based on dialogue with consumers.

In order to maintain the trust of customers, bidders must invest special marketing efforts in raising confidence in their products, as well as improving other activities that are not directly related to the product but contribute to its better sales. (Zarić et al., 2016).

If we apply the above in market sales, it is clear that sellers must make an effort to form a marketing mix that will be used as their own source of competitive advantage. Competitive advantage in market sales depends on the unique elements of supply, competition and consumer needs. Constant monitoring of variables keeps, loses or gains an advantage in a short time. Producers largely do not adhere to the appropriate agricultural production techniques. (Vlahović et al., 2016). Integration of product offer - through the development of agricultural clusters, strengthening farmers' associations, promotion of agricultural cooperatives; only by uniting do farmers have the ability to make up for what each of them lacks (finance, cheap inputs, modern machinery and technology), with a significant increase in their bargaining power - both vis-à-vis the state and the food industry, trade and exporters. (Paraušić i et al., 2007).

By analysing the global market and the age in which we live and work, we come to the conclusion that the technology of production and supply must be part of an organised market. The concept of supply integration can be successfully implemented in the concept of production and sales. With certain efforts in the financial, organisational, technological sense, the marketing effort will be the basis of the competitive advantage of agricultural producers. All subjects of production and sales on the domestic market should work on the principles of socially responsible business in the future.

Analysis of consumer research in the marketplace

Researching the attitudes and perceptions of fruit and vegetable consumers in the marketplace enabled knowledge and preferences, motives for buying products as well as the adoption of certain communication strategies to increase sales. By comparative analysis of consumer attitudes as well as the appropriate marketing strategy of marketplace sales of the seller's business, it is possible to predict and adjust the marketing strategy of marketplace sales to the needs and desires of consumers in order to establish long-term relationships with consumers.

Table 6. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of consumers in the marketplace

Gender/Sex	Women	105	70%
	Men	45	30%
Age	18-30	28	25%
	31-40	35	23%
	41-50	49	32%
	51-60	18	12%
	Over 60	10	8%

School level	PhD/master	8	5%
	High	40	27%
	Higher/third degree	28	19%
	Medium	62	41%
	Lower	12	8%
Status	Employed on a long-term basis	65	43%
	Employed on a part-time basis	24	16%
	Unemployed	19	12%
	Student/pupil	19	12%
	Retired	23	17%
Own source of income	Yes	99	66%
	No	51	34%
Monthly income per household	Up to RSD 35,000	34	22%
	From RSD 35001 to 52000	48	32%
	From RSD 52000 to 62000	49	33%
	Over RSD 62000	19	13%
Work field	Industrial production	33	17%
	Public sector	52	26%
	Education and science	32	16%
	Trade sector	37	19%
	Insurance sector	8	4%
Type of activity	Catering	29	15%
	Agricultural	18	12%
	Non-agricultural	88	59%
	Mixed	44	29%
Number of household member	One member	2	13%
	Two members	38	25%
	Three members	46	31%
	Four members	31	21%
	Five members or more	15	10%

Source: Author's research

The structure of the sample according to demographic characteristics of gender, age, education is given in the table (Table 6). The results of the research show that 70% of the consumers in the marketplace are women and 30% are men. When it comes to age structure, they are mostly middle-aged people who range from 30 to 50 years old. When we look at the sample of respondents according to employment and monthly household income, we come to the conclusion that the standard of living in our country is low. This statement is confirmed by the data from the research that 54% of respondents have a monthly income below the national average if we take incomes up to 52,000 thousand dinars for that average. The analysis of the research results shows that it is necessary to use market segmentation based on a combination of several criteria as a basis for choosing a personal communication strategy. In addition to the tools of the marketing mix, it is necessary to combine demographic and psychological criteria. Namely, in order to choose an adequate personal communication strategy, it is necessary to know about the attitudes and perceptions of consumers. Direct marketing, sales promotion and live word are very effective, for establishing partnerships between sellers and consumers in the marketplace.

Table 7. Data on the average assessment of consumer change (sellers-consumers).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
User change	150	3.989	0.637	0.0641

Source: Author's research

Table 8. One sample test, assessment of changing user behaviour (close value = 3.8).95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
User change	3.031	148	0.003	0.1954	0.0667	0.3122

Source: Author's research

According to the obtained empirical verification data, $a^*=0.000=3=q,3$, $a^*<5$, which means that the average estimate of the change between sellers in sales and consumers in purchases differs from the tested value. So it can be concluded that the hypothesis that the average desire for a change in behaviour in the whole set is 3.8 cannot be accepted. The hypothesis that the average assessment of the desire for a change in behaviour in the whole set is 3.8 cannot be accepted, since it is equal to 3.989 in the sample, which is greater than 3.8. From the above, it can be concluded that hypothesis H3 was not accepted.

Thus, consumers in the marketplace do not have a positive attitude about the potential change of sellers and their own behaviour in shopping. In the future, it is necessary to maintain continuous research on consumer attitudes and adjust your offer accordingly. It is desirable to expand the range of existing offers based on social and demographic characteristics of consumers. That is why an increasing number of companies are not only innovating their products and processes in accordance with environmental requirements, but are also working on continuous education and consumer information and creating segments with a new lifestyle (Ottman, 2011).

Consumer characteristics and attitudes imply a strategy of personal communication transformation that is focused on selling fresh and healthy products. The effects of this application are conditioned by the differentiation of consumers according to their wishes and preferences in terms of market value. The producers expressed their satisfaction with the profile of customers who come to the marketplace, because most of them are customers who know what an eco-product is and who know what they want to buy (Šiljan et al., 2017).

Lately, there has been a consumer preference, driven by lifestyle and awareness of the importance of the environment and its preservation. Global time has identified a number of negative activities that affect the environment. That is why the concept of production of organic healthy products is primarily important for sale on the marketplace. Consumers are also not willing to sacrifice product quality and performance, nor are they necessarily willing to pay a premium price for "green" products (Lin et al., 2012).

In accordance with the elements of its own budget, the consumer buys organic products in the form of criteria generated by innovation and differentiation in sales. Starting from the fact of stimulation for the purchase of organic products, the basic goal of marketplace sales of sellers is to create messages that give the true value of the product. Since only 5.5% of employees in the marketplaces in question are engaged in marketing and communications, the strategy of marketing channels should be created in a way that emphasises the importance of marketplaces for the sale of fresh and organic products.

Research recommendation

Modern tendencies provide a chance for marketplaces to develop while preserving their traditional social role. When it comes to domestic marketplaces in question, in which only 5.5% of employees are engaged in marketing, a change in access to the marketplace is required. It is known that the Republic of Serbia has key resources in agriculture, so it is necessary to achieve a significant competitive advantage in the domestic, regional and global markets and develop its own brand of fruit production and vegetables as well as organic products. This research also has certain limitations. The restriction can be placed in the context of the sample size in relation to the number of markets in the Republic of Serbia. Therefore, in future research, it could be recommended to conduct a new research on a much larger sample in order to make the results more representative. New research, over a longer period of time, would contribute to consistency and greater reliability of results.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the degree of interdependence of marketplace sales used by sellers in order to increase sales based on the wishes and expectations of their consumers. The goal is also how consumers in the marketplace can influence sellers and their own positive attitudes with their behaviour. In addition, the goal is to establish attitudes that can contribute to successful communication and sales, and ultimately contribute to the overall social scale of values that can arise from good communication. The results of empirical research in the practical application of marketplace sales are insufficient and different in the tested value of hypothesis H1. The tested value of the assessment of the application of marketplace sales is 3, while in the sample it was 2.5, which means that it is less than 3, so the hypothesis was not accepted, based on which the conclusion is that sellers use personal communications to a sufficient extent. When it comes to hypothesis H2, the assessment of changing sellers at the request of their consumers does not differ from the tested value, so it can be concluded that sellers want to change at the request of their consumers, since the average assessment of willingness to change does not differ from the tested than in all three marketplaces 4. In hypothesis H3, on the desire to change the attitudes of sellers in sales and consumers in shopping, we see that the average tested desire to change is 3.8. The average score of behavioral changes is 3.9, which is greater than 3.8. The conclusion is that there is no desire for changes in the behaviour of sellers and buyers in the whole set, so H3 was not accepted, due to insufficient desire for changes in behaviour.

The results of empirical research show that changes in the marketing strategy of selling agricultural products to sellers are necessary. The result of a change in the marketing strategy of marketplace sales must be compatible with the identified attitudes of consumers. It is necessary to harmonise personal communications in sales through direct marketing, sales promotion and words-of-mouth with consumer requirements. In that sense, to increase the sales efficiency, it is necessary to identify the personal needs of consumers, but also specific needs through social responsibility. Personal needs should be identified through personal motives for shopping, financial, product quality, health care, but also social through corporate social responsibility, taking into account a healthy environment.

Since the effect of personal sales is insufficiently researched on the domestic market, this research can be considered as a good start for future research. Choosing a good strategy of marketplace sales of sellers will lead to connecting different interests in the supply chain of fresh agricultural products in the marketplace. The development of modern information technologies enables the connection of marketplaces, sellers and consumers in the supply chain, so sales can be made more efficient. Connecting all interested parties will enable the institutional solution of the problem of the work of the market and emphasise the traditional, social and demographic value for domestic sellers and consumers, and increase the overall sales effect of the marketplace.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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