

CONSUMER ATTITUDES IN MARKET SEGMENTATION

Dragutin Gutić¹, Tomislav Petrić²

Abstract *It is known, as well as accepted in marketing, that consumer attitudes are a variable which is used in behavioral approach to market segmentation. Former experience and published literature is almost completely based on the direction of attitudes and market segments are defined and differentiated among positive and negative consumer attitudes.*

Attitudes, as complex and very complicated mental categories, always give much more possibilities than its direction. They can successfully be applied in market segmentation. In this work the authors tried to analyze and point to more metrical aspects of market segmentation on the basis of attitudes through direction, stability, intensity and change of attitude direction and intensity. Since attitudes are almost always and very often an important factor in consumer behaviour function, the authors tried to present market segmentation models also on the basis of relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

Key words: *consumer attitudes; consumer behaviour; market segmentation*

JEL classification: *M 31, D 21, Z 13*

INTRODUCTION

Consumer attitudes have always been taking the central place, not only in theory but also in marketing practice. This is a realistic view, since it would be incompatible to consider marketing as a philosophy of creating customer satisfaction and it is known that in the spectrum of satisfaction attitudes have almost as a rule its prominent place. Up to now in marketing theory consumer attitudes have mostly been connected with consumer behaviour [Kesić, 1999:133]. There were practically no significant or greater contributions about other areas and segments of marketing.

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Even if it had been done, it was somehow In this work, our intention is to point out market segmentation, in which knowing consumer attitudes is in causal connection with marketing efficacy.

THE TERM CONSUMER ATTITUDES

It might sound unbelievable, but since the 1960s of the past century, when consumer attitudes became the subject of marketing experts' interest, till today there have been very few researchers who understand and know the term, essence and meaning of attitudes in marketing. There are even fewer of those who know how to examine and use them at all in an adequate and productive way. Why is this so? In definitions and generally in life the term attitude is often equalized with different terms such as: "understanding", "opinion", "world view" etc. Attitude is primarily an emotional experience, as opposed to "understanding", which is of intellectual nature and is based on the processes of rational elaboration.

Understanding is a verbal manifestation of claims and presumptions. Opinion, on the other hand, is one's personal statement about his attitude, situation or an object. Opinion can, and it doesn't have to, be a verbal manifestation of an attitude. World view also doesn't reflect one's individual attitude, because most often it reflects the whole system (set) of attitudes.

Senečić thus in a certain sense mistakenly equalizes attitudes with motives[Senečić,1997:81]: "Primary reason for measuring attitudes is getting insight into reasons why people behave the way they do» [Dichter,1962:62].

There are few dozens of official definitions of an attitude. Although it was said years ago, Allport's definition [Allport,1972:, 52]of an attitude is still actual conceptually and in terms of contents.

He says that an attitude is mental and neural state of organism's readiness based on organized experience, which has direct and dynamic influence on an individual's relations towards all the objects and situations it refers to[Allport, 1972:73]. An attitude is, above all, a very complex psychological category, thereby also important in people's behaviour generally, just as well in behaviour of consumers of material goods and services. Exactly in this complexity of content lies the basic essence of lack of understanding and thereby wrong approaches to consumer attitudes and their research.

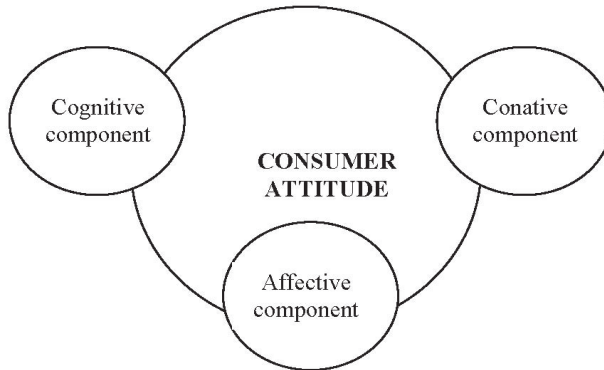
There are prevailing opinions that attitudes consist of three components [Rot, 1988:103]:

- a) cognitive
- b) affective (emotional)
- c) conative (willing, actional, active).

Cognitive component is made of comprehensions and beliefs towards objects connected with an attitude. The most important are evaluative beliefs which enclose attributing positive or negative qualities to an object.

Emotional component refers to emotions or affects which are connected with an object. These emotions are most often manifested through the level of attraction or repulsion towards an object. Emotional component gives persistence, firmness and motivational dimension to attitudes. In fig. 1 we present the concept of consumer attitude.

Fig 1: The concept of consumer attitude



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

Conative component, on the other hand, determines readiness of an attitude holder in his getting closer or withdrawing from the object towards which an attitude exists. It is determined by the direction and intensity of an attitude.

CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

Why are attitudes interesting in marketing? Here also we come across general, unselective and insufficiently considerate approach. In textbooks treating consumer behaviour domain they are in most cases included into important psychological

factors of consumer behaviour. However, views of relation of consumer attitudes and behaviour are all but not homogeneous. On the contrary, they are very divergent. Fishbein says about this: "More than 70 years since the beginning of research of attitudes, there is still little or not at all evident that one's attitudes towards some object show some relation between attitude and behaviour[Fishbein,1980:477]. Studies with the aim of proving that an attitude is the consequence of behaviour are more often.

As opposed to such opinions, Burton gives primary role to attitudes in behavior: "Process through which man and human brain come to believe is not only complex, but often also a subconscious process...It could be claimed with practical certainty that maybe 90 % of impulse for purchase is based on attitudes». [Burton, 1950:19]:

On the other hand, the third group claims that behaviour is conditioned by attitudes, but that at the same time attitudes are conditioned by consumer behaviour. "Knowing attitudes can not predict behaviour of people whose attitudes we know with complete certainty. People's actions do not always have to be a result of an attitude, because actions completely opposite to existing attitudes are possible. People's behaviour depends on numerous different determinant factors, and attitudes are one of them, very important indeed, but not crucial in every situation [Kotler, 1988:143]. Kotler's view of consumer behaviour is also interesting (Kotler, Lane,2008). Around the 1980s of the past century he included them into psychological factors of consumer behaviour, giving them an important space and place, and at the beginning of this century he does not even mention them as factors of consumer behaviour [Kotler and Lane,2008:184].

Why are some authors' opinions about the relation of attitudes and behaviour so different? Part of the answer might also be lying in the fact that it is not possible, at least as practice is concerned, to observe the relation attitudes-behaviour in an universalistic way. This relation should be observed from the aspect of concrete product/service, concrete market and in certain time. On the same market, the same segment of consumers, but at different times, consumer attitudes can differ not only in its intensity, but also in its direction.

CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND MARKET SEGMENTATION

Numerous approaches and numerous variables are used in market segmentation. There is no universal approach, nor the scheme according to which it would be

determined which model and which variables are the best for segmentation. Dibb S. et al. point out that it is necessary to “connect the variables to the needs, usage and behaviour towards the product” in order to choose them [Dibb et al, 1995:75].

It is interesting that Kotler classified the consumer attitudes as a market segmentation variable into two places, i. e. under the two denominators: at the same time into psychography, but also into a variable inside consumer behaviour [Kotler and Lane, 2008:252]. In this way, he points out the example of SRI Consulting Business Intelligence’s inside the psychographic segmentation, which set the segmentation system with the help of VALS frame, and which was based on 4 demographic questions and 35 questions about attitudes.

Considering the attitudes as market segmentation variable through consumer behaviour, the same author pointed to five groups of attitudes: enthusiastic, positive, indifferent, negative and unfriendly. We have no knowledge of it, but it can be assumed with considerable certainty that Kotler related positive and negative attitudes to their intensity. Doing so, extremely positive attitudes actually appear “enthusiastic”, and extremely negative attitudes appear “unfriendly”. Group “indifferent” is probably the one in which consumers do not have clear (or at all) formed attitude about the product.

One of the basic propositions and a request in choosing variables for market segmentation is also achieving as high as possible level of homogeneity (homogenization according to chosen characteristics) of consumers classified into certain homogeneous group, that is market segment. At consumer attitudes this level of homogeneity is not so simple. While consumers with positive or negative attitudes with extreme or greater intensity can relatively easily be identified and homogenized, this can hardly be achieved with those consumers whose attitudes (whether positive or negative) are of low intensity. As a rule, such attitudes do not essentially influence the behaviour of these consumers. In this way it is questionable to classify consumers with such attitudes into the group of consumers with strong or extreme attitudes.

Unlike positive and negative attitudes with high level of intensity, whereby identification of consumers (holders of such attitudes) is relatively clear and not such a complicated procedure, with consumers having positive or negative attitudes of low (border) intensity this is more difficult. There is often little difference between positive and negative attitudes with low intensity, because both of them do not show greater influence on consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour with such

attitudes (if attitudes have more significant role in this behaviour) is mostly passive and in an uninterested form towards purchasing products (indifferent consumers).

Market Segments on the Basis of Consumer Attitudes

Model on the Basis of Attitudes Direction

Market segmentation on the basis of consumer attitudes is possible according to the direction of these attitudes. This means that consumer segments can be established as:

1. Consumers with positive attitudes towards product or service (segment 1)
2. Consumers whose attitudes towards product or service are still not registered (segment 2)
3. Consumers with negative attitudes towards product or service (segment 3)

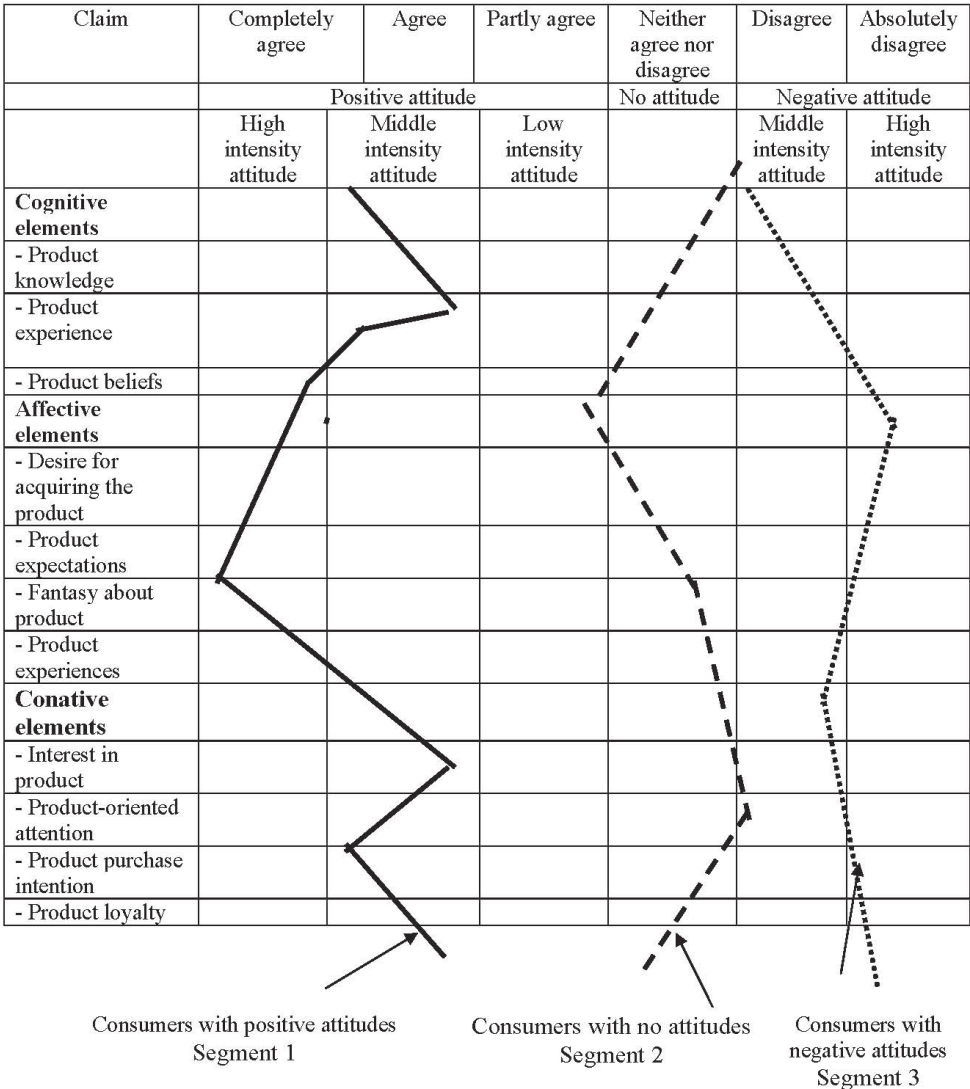
We presented this model with the Likert scale in fig. 2.

Modelling market segments with the help of consumer attitudes direction is probably one of relatively clearer and in metrical sense simpler approach. Establishing attitudes direction does not involve greater difficulties as a rule. In this way it is appropriate for market segmentation approach. Therefore it is only necessary to establish attitudes direction among the examinees (potential consumers) and then segments are relatively familiar to us.

Model on the Basis of Attitude Stability

Unlike the previous model, in which consumer segments are established only with the help of attitudes direction, it is somewhat more difficult to approach market segmentation modelling with the help of stability of consumer attitudes. Stability of consumer attitudes is a dimension which has an important qualitative value for attitudes.,Namely, the statement that it is a matter of consumer segment with positive or negative attitudes towards product or service has quantitative trait, because it points only to the direction (quality) of an attitude. Attitude stability points to quality of these attitudes, that is to which extent it is a question of their persistence. Not rarely is persistence of consumer attitudes a determinant which gives them firmness and motivational dimension in analyzing and predicting consumer behaviour.

Fig. 2 Market segmentation model on the basis of attitudes direction measured in Likert scale



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

We presented the market segmentation models on the basis of attitudes stability in fig. 3.

Market segments on the basis of stability of consumer attitudes can be identified as:

1. Consumers with markedly unstable attitudes (segment 1)

2. Consumers with unstable attitudes (segment 2)
3. Consumers with stable attitudes (segment 3)

One of the greatest problems that we need to count on with this model is that to establish the stability of consumer attitudes we need to perform measurement of attitudes several times, that is at several time points.

Model on the Basis of Attitude Intensity

Like stability, intensity of consumer attitudes is an attitude determinant which has and gives qualitative dimension, meaning and value to attitudes in consumer behaviour. Attitude intensity points to dynamic character of attitudes, that is their change during certain time. This fact indicates to market researchers the need to observe and record consumer attitudes during product's life cycle on the market. Doing so it is possible to establish and control the effects of marketing communication with consumers and generally of marketing activities. In fig. 4 we presented the model.

According to attitude intensity, it is possible to define the market segments:

1. Positive consumer attitudes with very high intensity (extreme attitudes) whose average curve value is between 4,5 and 5,0– segment 1
2. Positive consumer attitudes with middle intensity (average curve value is between 3,0 and 4,5)– segment 2
3. Positive consumer attitudes with low intensity (average curve value is between 1,0 and 3,0)– segment 3
4. Negative consumer attitudes (average curve value is between -1 and -5)– segment 4

Models on the Basis of Change of Consumer Attitudes

Although consumer attitudes are relatively permanent mental structures, during time they change under the influence of numerous and different known and unknown factors. Change of attitudes, thereby also the consumer segments on the basis of their attitudes change should be observed through:

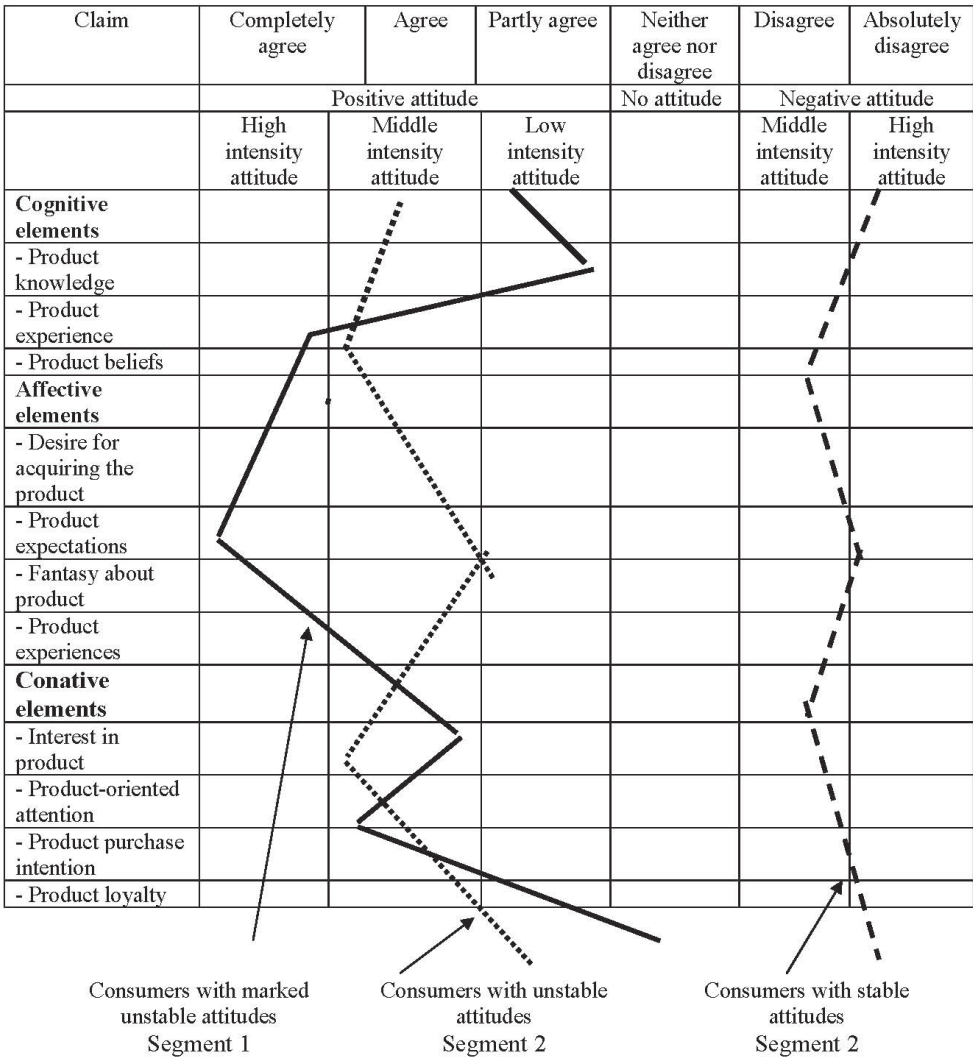
- a) change of attitude intensity
- b) change of attitude direction

Model on the Basis of Change of Attitude Intensity

Change of intensity (strength) of consumer attitudes can point to positive or nega-

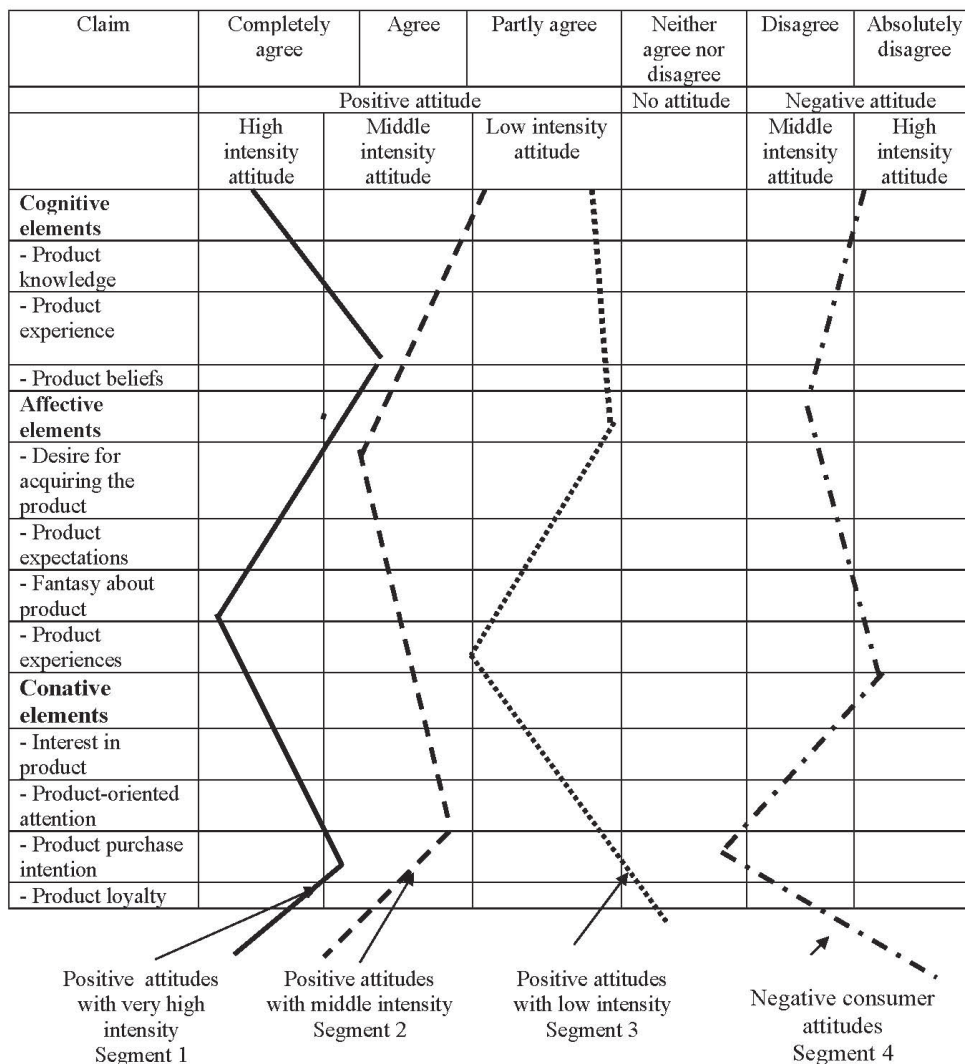
tive attitude development – from positive towards more or less positive, and negative towards more or less negative attitudes. With careful observation of attitudes through the change of their intensity it is also possible to observe the change of direction of these attitudes in certain cases. In fig. 5 we presented market segments according to the change of intensity of consumer attitudes .

Fig. 3 Market segmentation model on the basis of consumer attitudes stability measured in Likert scale



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

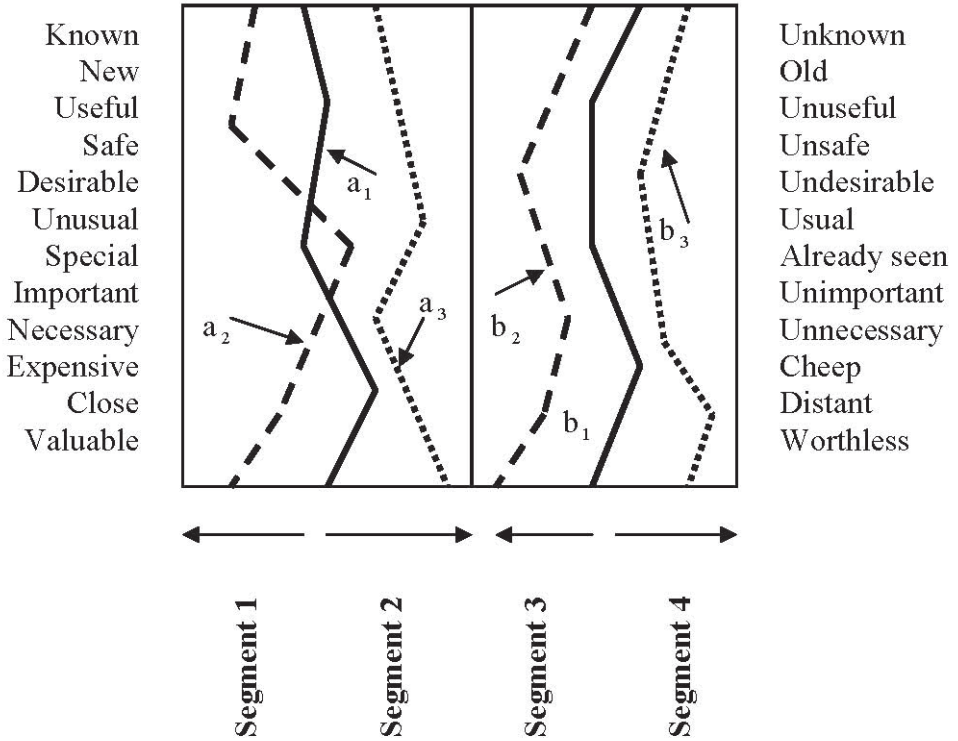
Fig. 4. Market segmentation model on the basis of intensity of consumer attitudes measured in Likert scale



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

From the aspect of change of intensity of consumer attitudes it is possible to distinguish several consumer segments:

Fig. 5 Market segmentation model on the basis of change of consumer attitudes intensity presented by the semantic differential



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

Segment 1.

Positive consumer attitudes with middle (moderate) intensity which change into positive attitudes of high intensity.

Change direction: $a_1 a_2 \rightarrow$

Segment 2

Positive consumer attitudes with middle intensity show the direction of change towards positive attitudes of low intensity and possible transition into the area of negative attitudes of low intensity.

Change direction: $a_1 a_3 \rightarrow$

Segment 3

Negative consumer attitudes at the middle intensity border which change towards negative attitudes of low intensity and doing so they point to possibility of change into positive attitudes of low intensity.

Change direction: $b_1 b_2 \rightarrow$

Segment 4

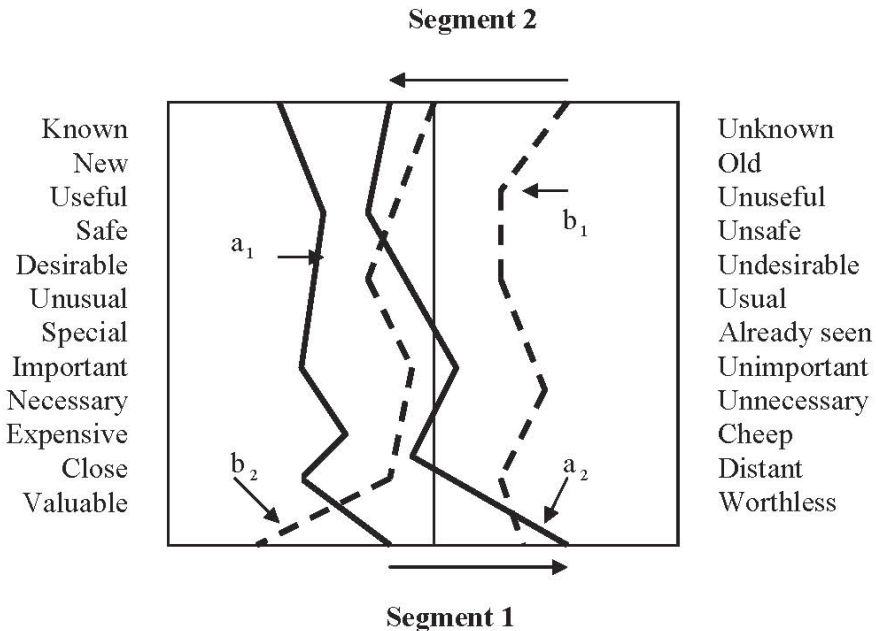
Negative attitudes among consumers of average values of semantic differential curve with middle values (around 3,0) which show direction towards negative attitudes of high intensity (an average value of semantic differential curve above 4,0 to 5,0).

Change direction: $b_1 b_3 \rightarrow$

Model on the Basis of Change of Attitude Direction

It is also possible to define market segments through the change of consumer attitude direction. In fig. 6 we presented the model.

Fig. 6 Market segmentation model on the basis of change of consumer attitudes direction presented by the semantic differential



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

These segments are:

Segment 1

Positive consumer attitudes switch to negative attitudes.

Change direction: $a_1 \ a_2 \rightarrow$

Segment 2

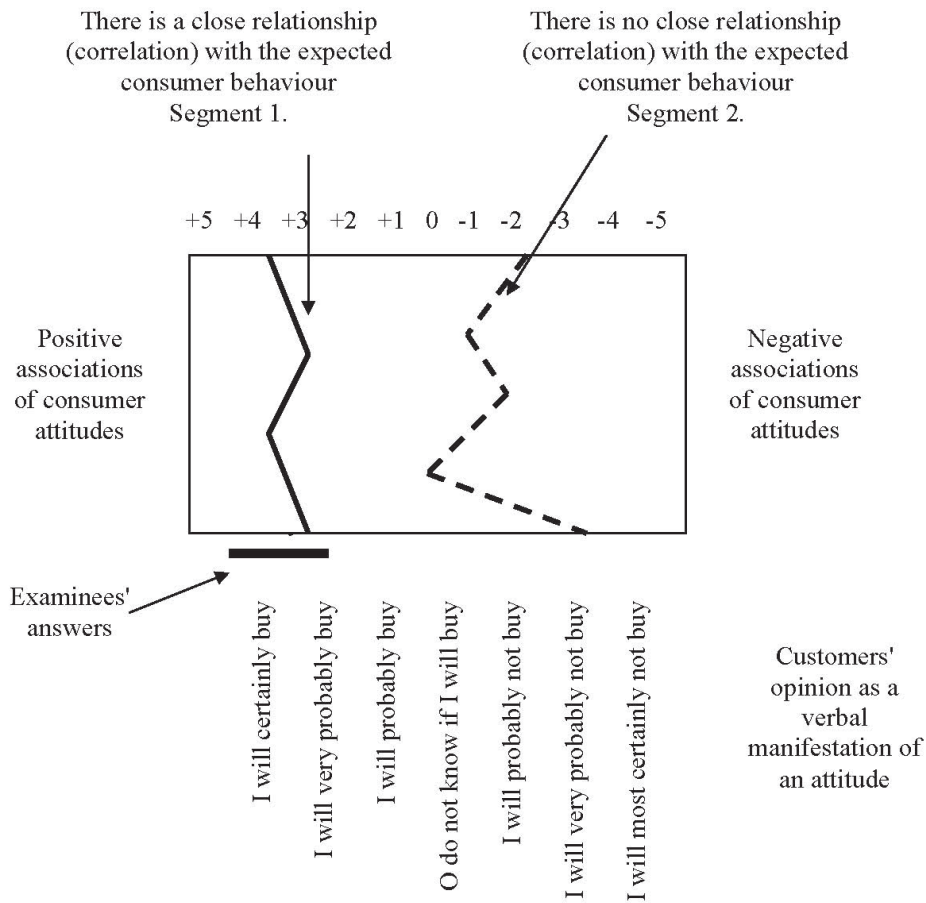
Negative consumer attitudes switch to positive attitudes.

Change direction: $b_1 \ b_2 \rightarrow$

Model on the Basis of the Relationship Between Consumer Attitudes and Behaviour

There has always been an attempt in marketing to examine and analytically study consumer attitudes through their relationship in the function of consumer behaviour. Thereby an attempt to present market segments through this relationship is certainly also interesting. In fig. 7 we presented two segments. In the first one consumer attitudes demonstrate close correlation with the expected consumer behaviour and in the second one this is not the case. In fig. 8 we also tried to present possible market segments through the relationship between consumer attitudes and behaviour.

Fig. 7 Market segmentation model on the basis of the relationship between consumer attitudes and behaviour measured by the semantic differential



Source: The research of authors, 2012.

Fig. 8 Market segments on the basis of the relationship between consumer attitudes and behaviour.

Consumer behaviour (B)	Negative	Segment 2 A+B-	Segment 4 A-B-
	Positive	Segment 1 A+B+	Segment 3 A-B+
		Positive	Negative
		Consumer attitudes (A)	

Source: The research of authors, 2012.

Segment A+B+

It is characterized by positive attitudes and positive consumer behaviour as well.

Segment A+B-

Positive consumer attitudes which did not produce positive, but negative consumer behaviour.

This might point to the fact that attitudes have no influence on this behaviour.

Segment A-B-

This segment contains negative consumer attitudes and negative behaviour as well. Negative attitudes will almost always in and of themselves generate negative consumer behaviour.

Segment A-B+

Although it is rarity, negatively registered consumer attitudes can in certain situations have positively registered consumer attitudes. In behaviour analysis attitudes did not have greater role in making a purchasing decision.

CONCLUSION

With this work we wanted to point to values and meaning of consumer attitudes in market segmentation. Consumer attitudes are not simple, but on the contrary – very complex mental functions and categories which behave in a very complex manner through market and consumption. Former marketing literature, indeed, included consumer attitudes as behavioral models and variables. However, these approaches aspected consumer attitudes in a simplified way, while doing so disregarding number of determinants and dimensions of attitudes, which point to the need for more careful approach.

We indicated that market segmentation through consumer attitudes should be performed not only from the aspect of attitude direction (positive, negative), but also through their stability, intensity, change of direction and change of intensity. Also, because of the fact itself that consumer attitudes are almost always and very often an important factor in the result of consumer behaviour, we find it important to establish market segments also on the basis of the relationship between consumer attitudes and behaviour.

We are aware that this work is a pioneering attempt to give to this exceptionally valuable marketing topic a completely new initiative for further thinking, consideration, elaboration and especially to argue for use of the models we presented in real market situations.

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STAVOVI POTROŠAČA U SEGMENTACIJI TRŽIŠTA

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Sažetak: Poznato je i u marketingu prihvaćeno da su stavovi potrošača varijabla koja se koristi u bihevioralnom pristupu segmentaciji tržišta. Dosadašnja iskustva i publicirana literatura u svijetu se skoro isključivo temelje na smjeru stavova i tržišne segmente definira i diferencira unutar pozitivnih i negativnih stavova potrošača. Stavovi kao kompleksne i vrlo složene mentalne kategorije daju uvijek znatno više mogućnosti od njihovog smjera, a koje se mogu uspješno primijeniti u segmentaciji tržišta. U ovom radu autori su pokušali obraditi i ukazati na više metričkih aspekata segmentacije tržišta na temelju stavova kroz smjer, stabilnost, intenzitet, te promjene smjera i intenziteta stavova. Obzirom da su stavovi skoro uvijek ili vrlo često značajan faktor u funkciji ponašanja potrošača, autori su pokušali prezentirati i modele segmentacije tržišta na bazi odnosa stavova i ponašanja

Ključne riječi: stavovi potrošača; ponašanje potrošača; segmentacija tržišta

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