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**Marika BASESKA GJORGJIESKA,
Tatjana PETKOVSKA MIRCHEVSKA,
Dusica NEDELKOSKA ***)

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PSYCHOGRAPHICS IN
CUSTOMERS' LIFESTYLE DETERMINATION: THE
MACEDONIAN FURNITURE MARKET**

Abstract

Psychographics has emerged as an important method of market and marketing research, especially of consumer behaviour research. Understanding the consumer behaviour issues is essential for the decision making process and market positioning of companies. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the possibilities for using this method in the market research process in Macedonia.

AIO technique as one of the most significant psychographic methods is used in the research, conducted on the sample of 136 customers with 55 AIO and VALS statements divided into 16 factors. By using the empirical research, this paper demonstrates the importance of the consumer's psychographic characteristics and the influence of their lifestyles on the decision making process in the case of furniture market. The results of the research in this paper and the way of implementation the psychographic as a method of marketing research could be very useful for the decision making of small, medium and large companies.

Key words: psychographics, AIO, marketing research, lifestyle, furniture market

*)Marika Baseska Gjorgjieska, Ph.D., Faculty of Economics, University St. Kliment Ohridski-Prilep, e-mail: marika.baseska@uklo.edu.mk
Tatjana Petkovska Mirchevska, Ph.D., Institute of Economics, University St. Cyril and Methodius-Skopje, e-mail: tatjana@ek-inst.ukim.edu.mk
Dusica Nedelkoska, Ph.D., F.I. "Vitaminska" AA Prilep,
e-mail: duned2002@yahoo.com

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Introduction

The strong competition, the customers with specific and very precise needs and demand provoke the necessity of better understanding the customers and their behaviour throughout the buying process. Markets nowadays are heterogeneous and usually the mass marketing research tools are not successful enough in determination of consumer satisfaction. That's the reason for emerging need of using the research methods that deeper investigate the consumer behaviour while buying. Taking into consideration that the lifestyle of customers depends and influences on the customers' behaviour and decision making process the psychographics methods are increasingly used.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the possibilities for using this method by the Macedonian companies in the market research process. AIO technique as one of the most significant psychographic methods is used in the research, conducted on the sample of 136 customers with 55 AIO and VALS statements divided into 16 factors. By using the empirical research method, this paper demonstrates how consumer psychographic characteristics and their lifestyles influence the decision making process of furniture customers.

1. Literature review

Conceptually any business strategy should be based on understanding, meeting and even exceeding the needs of target segments (Wind & Bell, 2007, p.223). Some authors since 1964 have stressed that traditional demographics traits such as age, sex, income, education levels are no longer sufficient to serve the basis of marketing strategy and neither demographic traits such as values, tastes and preferences were more likely to influence consumers' purchases than their demographic traits (Yankelovich & Meer, 2006).

Using the results of the research in US in 1991, Peterson in one of the very few empirical studies of segmentation and SME's found that small and medium sized companies tend to use demographic and geographic customer variables to segment the market, rather than

lifestyle variables. He surveyed Small Business Institute client firms in the US and found that 73.8 percent of small manufactures utilized some form of segmentation and target marketing (Hine & Carson, 2007, p.207). But, these data could be limited in helping enterprises generate insights of the customers and Companies need for more customers' information about how people spend their money and time.

Researchers as well as practitioners believe that there is a link between lifestyle of customers and the way they make decision in the process of buying products on the market (Baharun, 2011, pp. 5040-5047). Understanding the consumer behaviour is essential for companies in order to target the right consumer segments. As per Surdu (Surdu, 2012), Nike and Adidas focus on demographic, psychographic and behavioural segmentation, dividing the markets by sex and age as demographics, and interests and activities as psychographics variables.

Marketers' use of psychographic variables for market segmentation has been developing during the past decades. Psychographics has emerged as an important method of market and marketing research. This method is used to understand consumers' behaviour and the way they make decision in buying process. Lately, such researches have been used by the Companies as the innovative method of the market and marketing research.

Psychographics is one of the several generic methods in segmenting the market and customers into groups based on lifestyle and personality characteristics. It is a market segmentation approach in which people are grouped according to their lifestyle, values, beliefs, attitudes. Psychographic segmentation can divide customers to different social classes and predict future needs and wants of people as marketing strategy (Sarli & Tat, 2011, p.6). Wells concludes that „psychographics can supplement demographics in interesting and useful ways“(Wells, 1975, p.202).

2. Theoretical background

The term "psychographics" as a technique has been used from the beginning of the 20th Century. More precisely, it was used during 1920's to describe people by their looks. It was later used during 1920's to describe a technique for classifying people by attitudes. Afterwards, it was developed by the researches in the late 1960's in order to provide a better profile of consumers and to give a picture of what they want,

believe and think. There are many "fathers" of the term psychographics. According to most of the researchers, it is Emanuel Demby who declared himself as a pioneer in psychographic research in 1974 (Demby, 1989, p.21). He defines psychographics as „the use of psychological, sociological, and anthropological factors, such as benefits desired (from the behaviour being studied), self-concept, and lifestyle (or serving style) to determine how the market is segmented by the propensity of groups within the market – and their reasons to make a particular decision about a product, person, ideology, or otherwise hold an attitude or use a medium“(Demby, 1989, p.26). Since 1975, it has been concluded (Wells, 1975), that psychographic methods have offered a way of describing consumers that have many advantages over alternative methods, even though much work on reliability and validity remains to be done. Psychographic methods have offered new ways, new dimensions and new vocabulary of customer’s profile name. Many companies know who buys their product, but not why these specific people buy their product.

Psychographics includes social class, lifestyle, personality and other demographics variables. Psychographic segmentation provides dividing of different markets on the basis of lifestyle and values (Michman, at al., 2003, p.13). Beatty, Homer and Kahle (1988, pp.375-380) made segmentation by using VALS and LOV methods and showed that by measuring psychographics variables, most important values and their ranking can be identified. Tam and Tai (1998, p.61-77) have applied psychographic segmentation at Chinese female markets. They found out psychographic statements and they stated that psychographic variables depend on time and circumstances of socio-economic situation and that they are changeable. Also, a researcher should rigorously apply existing similarities and differences among consumers. Lin (2002, p.249-268) confirmed that combining segmentation variables like demographics and psychographics simultaneously can create precise information of sub-markets. Group of researches (Ahmad, et al., 2010, pp.227-243) presented that one of the best approaches for better understanding of the customers is psychographic segmentation. In their research in 2014 they obtained result consistent with previous studies in the marketing literature, that lifestyle is an important potential factor influencing the future consumers’ behaviour (Ahmad, et al., 2014, pp.124-145). Sarli and Tat (2011, p.6) concluded that psychographic segmentation is a precise technique in order to adopt products towards consumers’ needs and wants. Suragh et al. (2013, p.172-187), used this approach to define segments of female and male college students and examine substance

(cigarettes, other tobacco products, alcohol, and marijuana) use differences in US and concluded that psychographic segmentation can identify young adult subgroups with differing psychographic and substance use profiles and inform health campaigns and message targeting youth. According to Mullen (2013, p.110), psychographics is defined as quantitative research intended to differentiate and aggregate consumers in terms of psychological dimensions. In fact, by psychographic research, a different types of customers' profiles could be created and connected with their psychological motivations in the decision making process. Using the psychographics rather than other techniques in market research, these profiles produce much richer descriptions of potential target segments (Boone, 2014, p.292).

Also, psychographic segmentation can be used to create advertising that will influence consumers to think warmly about a particular brand (Yankelovich & Meer, 2006, p. 3). Psychographics by Zografos and Alcroft evaluates the beliefs, opinions and interests of consumers by measuring psychological characteristics (religious beliefs, opinions about crime, personality characteristics, leisure activities) rather than demographic characteristics of consumers (Zografos & Alcroft, 2007).

2.1. Using AIO method for psychographics segmentation

AIO (activities, interests, opinions) concept is a technique used in psychographic analysis for measuring consumers' lifestyle. From a historical perspective, the creator of this technique is William Wells. According to a study published in 1979, authors of this technique are Leo Burnett and William Wells, who developed it at the late sixties of the XX century (Madden, 1979). By using this technique, analyses can be made regarding activities, interests and opinions of consumers. Customers are usually asked questions in the form of conclusions and they are required to respond depending on the degree of agreement and disagreement.

In general, AIO psychographic studies are using the series of reports (list of psychographic statements) that are designed to keep in mind the various relevant aspects of consumer personality, buying motives, interests, attitudes, beliefs and values (Dj, et al., 2014, p.154-163). The way of life, however, can be measured by asking consumers questions about their attitudes, as activities, interests, and opinions (AIO method) (Konu, 2007, p.303-314). Activities are related to the fact that consumers work, shop and spend their leisure time. The way people carry

out their work, the types of their hobbies, are the important characteristics in describing the consumers profile and their behaviour on a specific market. Interests relate to the consumer's priorities in food, fashion, recreation, technology products which help marketers to create proper marketing message to the targeted customer. Opinions respond to the views of consumers about world events, economic situation, politics, culture, morality.

In general, this technique has been implemented on a large sample using a standard questionnaire containing many questions that require an answer based on how much they agree or disagree with the given conclusion. The questions are clear, unambiguous and precise. There are general and specific questions to assist the marketers' detection of pros and cons of a brand. Thus, some authors in 1971 made 300 AIO items (views) and Cosmas in 1982 used a questionnaire with 250 views (Vyncke, 2002, p.448). The questionnaire can be sent by mail, or marketers can use telephone and internet. This psychographics or lifestyle research usually takes the starting point of the AIO extensive research that leads to diverse lifestyle typologies using cluster analysis techniques (Vyncke, 2002, p.448). Responses of consumers ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree" are measured with Likert's scale. Based on the AIO technique it is possible to group consumers with similar responses into market segments. These statements or responses are called „Inventory“.

Besides the AIO technique, VALS (Values and Life-styles) psychographic technique is used for psychographic segmentation and it is available as worldwide classification system of the customer market. SRI Consulting Business Intelligence's VALS program (Hawkins, 2010, p.495) is the most popular tool of psychographic research by marketing managers helping them to develop effective strategies. Hawkins argued that the original psychographics focuses on measuring Activities, Interest and Opinions contained in inventory AIO (Dj, et al., 2014, p.154-163). VALS was developed at Stanford Research Center in the USA, by Arnold Mitchell in 1978, and makes systematic classification of nine groups of adults under nine different values that appear through lifestyle. VALS technique is most popular when it comes to psychographics analysis. It serves to develop more effective strategy of businesses worldwide. It could be used in all stages of marketing. VALS is used by companies as the technique to obtain information that will help them and can be implemented in all phases of the marketing process. However, in

this paper we will use AIO and some of VALS statements in order to determine how the consumer clusters depend on their lifestyle.

3. Psychographic research of furniture market in the Republic of Macedonia

3.1. Methodology and Research Methods

The data of the study of lifestyle of the furniture consumer in the Republic of Macedonia were collected using a self-structured questionnaire consisting of three parts.

The first part of the structured questionnaire contains questions about obtaining the consumer demographics, such as sex, age, education and income.

The second part has 55 AIO and VALS views. The views are formulated views of the Wells and Tigert activities, interests and opinions of people on certain things. Several of them are those of the SRI questionnaire (SRI Consulting Business Intelligence Research Programs). The respondents could answer by using Likert's five point scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree".

In the third part of the questionnaire respondents answered about their furniture choices and what affected their choice when buying furniture.

The on-line questionnaire was conducted in the period of March to September, 2013. Actually, 136 valid questionnaires were collected. Respondents were divided on the basis of factor and cluster analysis with SPSS-20.0 software. By reducing the number of variables, factor analysis procedures tend to retain as much as possible of the information and make other significant variables easy to work. Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as a method of extraction, the number of variables was reduced from 55 to 16 factors that served to divide consumers with k-means clustering on the special features and the way of life. This method is very suitable to form segments of consumers, because usually there are no prior information on the number of segments and variables associated with the groups. PCA was designed to better explain dimensions between different variables, and clustering was made after that. The factor and cluster analysis were made on the basis of a questionnaire that included variables closely related to lifestyles and values of consumers. Adequacy was assessed using the Bartlett test and

test KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin). In this research KMO showed value of 0.664, Bartlett test was Sig. .000, both indicating that the questionnaire variables of the lifestyle are suitable for the Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization was used as a method of rotation. After that Hierarchical cluster analysis was done which resulted in two clusters. Because it was a large sample, and according to research of many experts in this area, the most appropriate use of k-means (k-environments, where k is the number of environments) cluster analysis was to define the cluster centers. All survey respondents were connected to the nearest center. As best solution 4 groups were designated-clusters of consumers, because k-means cluster analysis allows to choose the number of clusters and to use a large database.

3.2. Results and Discussion

The descriptive statistics of the 136 respondents is shown in Table 1. The respondents are Macedonian nationwide, consisting of female (n=92, 67.6 %) and male (n=44, 43.5%). Majority have high education (n=75, 55.1 %). Most have salary between 20 000 and 50 000 Macedonian denars¹ (see Table 1).

The data in the following table shows the division of consumers according to their values and AIO's. This table allows us to characterize the clusters by variables and by median factors. Thus, the consumers in cluster 1 want to buy branded goods as such the third and fourth cluster. This is evident from the values of the final cluster centers. When interpreting the data, 6.00 was taken as the lowest value.

Thus, any value greater than this, was considered a valid interpretation and explanation of each cluster. The highest values in each cluster separately for each factor that participated in clustering, show the most relevant features of that cluster or group.

¹Denar is Macedonian currency, 1€≈62MKD

Table 1: Gender, Salary and Education of Macedonian customers				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 Male	44	32.4	32.4	32.4
2 Female	92	67.6	67.6	100.0
Total	136	100.0	100.0	
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 <10 000	2	1.5	1.5	1.5
2 10 000-20 000	21	15.4	15.4	16.9
3 20 000-30 000	50	36.8	36.8	53.7
4 30 000-50 000	49	36.0	36.0	89.7
5 >50 000	14	10.3	10.3	100.0
Total	136	100.0	100.0	
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 Elementary	2	1.5	1.5	1.5
2 High	45	33.1	33.1	34.6
3 Faculty	75	55.1	55.1	89.7
4 MSc or PhD	14	10.3	10.3	100.0
Total	136	100.0	100.0	

Source: Calculations based on own survey data

In the interpretation of each value for each factor all the variables that contain the factor with a value greater than 6.00 were taken into account (see Table 2).

Table 2: Final Cluster Centers

Factors	Clusters			
	Accomplishers	Traditionalists	Economists	Practitioners
Traveling	2.13	1.68	1.66	2.46
Price	6.08	7.51	12.75	11.30
Brand	10.27	8.95	10.38	10.08
Decision	6.87	6.22	6.84	6.65
Angry	.09	.09	.10	.09
Family	7.87	7.93	9.38	11.98
Community	8.33	4.90	6.19	7.29
Tradition	2.21	3.10	3.41	3.18
Payment	2.67	2.25	2.41	2.86
Uncertainty	.12	.14	.16	.15
Diversity	2.67	2.17	2.75	2.67
Panache	6.27	4.54	5.41	5.88
Life	.04	.03	.03	.03
Education	10.33	6.22	7.50	9.17
Clothing	1.43	1.62	2.08	2.74
Activity	13.80	8.68	12.25	6.83

Source: Calculations based on own survey data

The research profile of consumers sample in this paper is more focused on price, quality and family life in the decision making process. The educational level of the respondents is high, which means that promotional activities of Companies especially in furniture market could specialize in particular media and they can use this method to segment market and target the right customer (see Table 3).

Table 3: Macedonian clusters and their characteristics

CLUSTERS	CHARACTERISTICS
Accomplishers	The first cluster (15 members according to the number of cases per cluster) consists of people who love sports activities. This can be seen from the highest obtained factor activity value, which contains attitudes 11, 16, 17, 18 and refer to sports activities, sports, visiting sport events and reading sports pages in newspapers. So, this group prefers attending a sport event more than going to a dance. Members of the group often play sports, enjoy talking about sports and usually read the last pages of the newspaper designed for sports hindsight. Sometimes, they are able to influence friends' decision when buying (variable 35 - factor

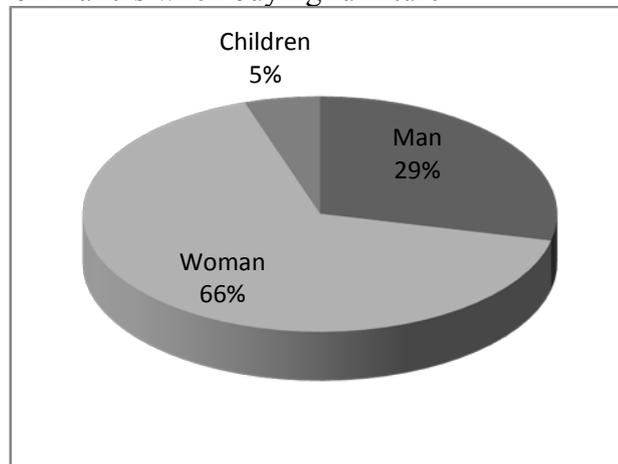
	Education). They believe in education which according to them should be paid by the Government (variable 39 - factor Education). They consider education as necessity to find themselves (variable 40 - factor Education). They are fond of branded clothing, and believe that sometimes it is worth to pay more to get more quality. This is evident from the high value of the factor Brand (10.27). They are active in the community in every field and they are interested in politics. They are the boldest of all clusters. They dress stylishly and want to be in contact with other people. They like to watch the latest movies and they want to be always updated about the circumstances. The colours and products packaging are important for them. We named this cluster as Accomplishers. They enjoy talking and believe in education. This cluster is consisted mostly of women aged 30-40 years.
Traditionalists	The second cluster has 41 members. Majority of this cluster want branded products. However compared to the first cluster, product price plays a significant role in the selection. This is confirmed with the highest average value of factors allocated to the factor analysis. So, factor Brand provides data that describe this cluster as cluster of people who spend a lot of time with friends talking about products and trying to stick to famous brand names. This cluster is consisted of both men and women aged 40-55 years, who live an active life practicing sports activities. (Factor Activity indicates the average of 8.68). The cluster members keep order and discipline in their home. They love their children and family and they don't want to dissolve the home. Education is somewhat important to them, but less than to other three clusters. Compared to other clusters, they are less interested in novelties. They are named as Traditionalists.
Economists	The third cluster (32 of the total number of respondents) is economy oriented. The price of the product is the most important for them. The cluster factor Price has the highest average of 12.75. They often know how to negotiate and check the price of the product in several stores. They are family oriented and like to buy branded products. They want to be part of the social events and often participate in them.
Practitioners	The fourth segment (48 of 136 subjects) is the largest one. The average age of the members is 30-40 years. Product price, family and education are the most important to them. They are the largest group of consumers at Macedonian market. Surprisingly, men dominate this group. They wish

	proven name of products (factor Brand with a mean of 8.10), but they are reluctant to pay for it (cost factor by averaging 11.30). They are called Practitioners and they are home oriented. Also, they are committed to the family and believe in education that according to them should be paid by the Government. It is considered that they are well IT educated because they always have the answer to the questions regarding the Internet and computers.
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Source: Calculations based on own survey data

The characteristics of Macedonian customers which were included in the survey are showed in Tab. 3. Most of the respondents in Macedonia, as per Cluster analysis made with SPSS, were named Practitioners. The consumers' profiles, their activities, interests, opinions and values could be valuable information for the companies and marketers in creating ads for the target market segments. In the case of Practitioners profile they should address to the price, family and education in their ads. Also, one of the very important data refers to the gender characteristics in the decision buying process of furniture in Republic Macedonia.

Figure 1: Decision makers when buying furniture



Source: Calculations based on own survey data

Also, according to the results shown in Fig. 1, women in the families are mostly involved and in charge of the decision making process of buying furniture, which means that they have the key role in this process.

This brief analysis shows the importance of using the psychographic method in market research for the Companies in general, and the importance of determining the psychographic consumers profile for the positioning of the offerings in using the appropriate marketing and promotional tools, based on the lifestyle and values of the target segments.

Conclusion

By using the psychographic methods in defining and segmenting the target markets, companies could define the consumer characteristics as important information in creating their marketing strategies. Psychographics is a new technique, rarely used on the Macedonian market. In this paper, by using primary research, the psychographic is used for defining the consumer characteristics, their segmentation and profiles on the furniture market in Macedonia. The results of the research in this paper and the way of implementation the psychographic as a method of market research could be useful for the small, medium and large companies especially on the furniture market.

The received data from the questionnaire shown in this paper could be important information about the lifestyles of the consumers as a company input in creating successful marketing strategies.

The purpose in using psychographics as a precise technique is to adapt products towards consumers' activities, interest, opinions, needs and values. In other words, psychographics as a method for market research of Companies' customers will reduce cost of ads, increase the profits, as enterprises will be familiar with consumer's needs and wants and will serve them, or will target only one group of customers which require their products. The benefits of psychographic studies have implication for marketing planning by Companies. Product development, pricing decisions, product distribution and promotion strategies can be based upon knowledge of the psychographics segmentation for customer's values, attitudes, lifestyle, willingness and ability to pay.

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