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Selected problems in marketing research on consumers with motor disabilities

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Summary. The aim of the article is to identify the problems encountered by a researcher addressing the issue of recognizing behaviours manifested by consumers with motor disabilities. For example, in order to obtain the primary data needed to carry out the deductive process, above all, it is necessary to strive to ensure their representativeness. In research on market behaviour of consumers with disabilities, the pursuit of representativeness results in a number of methodological and organizational problems. To ensure the representativeness of marketing research, a random selection, free from the intentional factors of the researcher, should be used. However, in the case of the study group, random sampling is almost impossible due to the difficulty of selecting the appropriate study population list. This article is the result of the problems experienced in the many-year processes of carrying out research on this segment.

Introduction

During the design and conduct of the research process, the main activity of the researcher is focused on the appropriate formulation of the research assumptions and the selection of sampling and data collection methods. It is also important to have a properly constructed tool used for data collection on the social phenomenon studied (Niedbalski, 2017, p. 35–36).

The purpose of this article is to discuss the problems the researcher has to face when conducting studies among people with motor disabilities. The difficulties described will mainly relate to the methods of selecting the research sample as well as the methods and techniques for collecting the research material, its development and further use. Ethical dilemmas, which the researcher is forced to address, will also be mentioned.

Problems with sample selection

In principle, random sampling methods are independent of the will and interference of the researcher, so they are objective. In addition, no individual selected in random sample selection can be replaced by another or omitted during the study (Maison, Noga-Bogomilski, 2007, p. 121–122). The highest statistical efficiency is achieved by stratified sampling, while ensuring the greatest possible homogeneity (Churchill, 2002, p. 538). However, the research group often does not constitute a uniform and homogeneous structure (Flick, 2010, p. 58–66).

The basic problem that stands in the way of stratified random sampling among disabled consumers is the impossibility of obtaining a list of members of the studied population. In addition, the official records of the population are burdened with a number of errors related, among others, to not taking into account persons without a legal disability certificate. In fact, there are individuals who will not be included in the data collection process, which will affect the representativeness of the results.

Another problem important from the point of view of the researcher of the behaviours of consumers with disabilities is the legal barriers to acquiring names of selected individuals as access to them is governed by the Personal Data Protection Act (Helbin, Wolek, Wyszomirski, 2014, p. 13346). The disability and the need to participate in rehabilitation classes can also cause irregular and prolonged periods of living outside the place of permanent residence. For this reason, the author often visited medical institutions during many years of research on market behaviour of people with motor disabilities.

Problems with method selection

When planning a research process, a decision should be made whether primary or secondary data will be used. Data collection from primary sources is usually carried out in the respondent environment, which guarantees greater access to data and greater freedom of data collection. When deciding on this form of research, a decision should be made about the most appropriate method for acquiring data interesting for the researcher.

The main criterion for classifying the methods of data collection from primary sources is the way they are collected in terms of the category of factor used during the measurement (survey and non-survey methods), the level of measurement control (indirect and direct methods), the method of communication between the researcher and the respondent (written or oral), quantitative or qualitative nature of the measured features or the causal effect of the relationship between the studied variables (experiment) (Kaczmarczyk, 2014, p. 55–56).

While conducting research on people with motor disabilities, a researcher often assumes the possibility of using one of the questionnaire methods consisting in direct written contact – an auditorium questionnaire or a direct questionnaire. It is assumed that this would make it possible to obtain interesting data under conditions of high control and with a high response rate of the respondents. An additional advantage would also be the shortening of data collection time.

In practice, however, it often turns out that motor disability in its scope affects the upper limbs. This obviously reduces the willingness of the disabled person to participate in a written survey with direct contact. In addition, respondents often refuse to participate in such a study because direct contact significantly diminishes their level of anonymity.

In order to ensure greater anonymity, indirect survey methods can be used. They do not require direct contact between the source of information and the person conducting the measurements and they use various mass media (for example, postal, telephone or internet survey). The downside of such methods, however, is the fact that the researcher has far less control over the data collection process itself, and the rate of return is no longer as high as in the case of direct methods.

The development of new technologies has made it very popular to study behaviour in virtual reality. The specificity and parameters of the internet allow us to study behaviour in virtual reality without direct contact with the subject and based on textual interactions. Data on site-centric traffic, server-centric traffic or user-centric activity are collected (Mider, 2013, p. 30–31). The techniques for quantitative behavioural and attitudinal research are useful; nonetheless, they may not be sufficient for qualitative research. However, such research, limited by the lack of contact and observation of the subject, gives the researcher the opportunity to maintain distance and objectivity, which is very important in the research on behaviour of consumers with motor disabilities.

This possibility of „isolation” from the respondents signals further problems arising in the course of conducting research in the group of people affected by disability.

Ethical controversy

The research community is usually a non-homogeneous structure. In addition, the group of people with disabilities is characterized by a high degree of hermeticity caused by internal fear of people outside their immediate surroundings. The environment of people with disabilities is most often explored by people who do not experience disability and therefore, in the eyes of the subjects, they are unable to recognize their needs or expectations. Unclear may be the intention of the researcher who attempts to enter the environment. Such behaviours are due to the negative experiences of people with disabilities in stereotyping and stigmatization, leading to social marginalization or even exclusion (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, Lofland, 2007, p. 120).

The researcher should be characterized by full objectivity so that their own beliefs do not affect the course of the research process (Rószkiewicz, Perek-Białas, Węziak-Białowolska, 2013; Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, 2001, p. 100; Konecki, 2000, p. 152). It is easy to fall into the trap of perceiving the subjects through one's own prism and experiences and lead to the absolutization of one's own position towards the examined environment (Stec, 2005, p. 231).

The primary data collection is a long-term process, which, along with the prolonged stay in the studied environment, presents another difficulty. By entering into the world of disabled people, the researcher follows the rules of the group, participates in their activities and becomes a member of a community which they are only supposed to explore (Chomczyński, 2006, p. 72; Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias 2001, p. 117–118). This entails the risk of increasing the sense of identification with members of the group and losing the objectivity, which is essential in conducting research.

To intentionally reduce contact with disabled people and thus maintain the required objectivity and reduce the „researcher problem”, it is possible to rely on the information collected from the administrative registries. Registry-based research has many advantages (Jasiński, Bożykowski, Zajac, Styczeń, Izdebski, 2015, p. 49–50). First of all, such studies are much cheaper than representative studies and provide full anonymity. The registries also allow for working on the data of the entire population, whereas the survey is conducted only on its part. Another advantage is the high degree of completeness of the collected data and the ability to analyse the dynamics of the studied phenomena, which also allows for drawing conclusions about the period not covered by the research. However, registry-based research has significant limitations. One of the most important among them is the inability of conducting qualitative analyses because the data collected in the registries do not focus on getting to know the opinions and attitudes of the members of the population. Another

significant limitation is the fact that many people who are actually affected by motor disability have never been registered because they do not have a formal disability certificate. There are also problematic discrepancies in definitions and the fact that data from the registries are made available with considerable delay.

Conclusions

The high level of awareness and involvement of the researcher may have a large (and not necessarily positive) impact on the course and outcome of the research process conducted on people with disabilities. In direct contact research with disabled people, the researcher is accompanied by constant emotional tension. On the one hand, it is a feeling of compassion, on the other, the desire to put oneself in the shoes of the respondents and to learn the mechanisms regulating the behaviour within the studied community. Therefore, it can be said that the researcher of behaviours of the disabled is constantly accompanied by a sense of ambiguity and moral uncertainty.

It should also be stressed that in the study of people with disabilities, the appropriate approach is inductive rather than deductive. This means that a small number of researches takes into account the testing of existing models and theories, and the conclusions of the research and hypotheses are based on preliminary observations (Dobrogowska-Schlebusch, Niedźwiedzka, 2015, p. 287–288). As a result, people with disabilities are treated differently than the rest of society.

Research conducted among consumers with disabilities is not easy, but its importance for social policy is so great that we cannot lead to the situation in which the discomfort accompanying the researcher results in its abandonment.

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Wybrane problemy badań marketingowych nad konsumentami niepełnosprawnymi ruchowo

Słowa kluczowe: konsument, niepełnosprawność ruchowa, metody zbierania danych, dobór próby

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie problemów, na jakie napotyka badacz podejmujący problematykę rozpoznania zachowań przejawianych przez konsumentów niepełnosprawnych ruchowo. Przykładowo, aby uzyskać dane pierwotne niezbędne do przeprowadzenia procesu dedukcyjnego, należy przede wszystkim dążyć do zapewnienia ich reprezentatywności. W badaniach zachowań rynkowych konsumentów niepełnosprawnych dążenie do osiągnięcia reprezentatywności prowadzi jednak do wielu problemów metodologicznych i organizacyjnych. W celu zapewnienia reprezentatywności badań marketingowych należy zastosować dobór losowy, wolny od czynników intencjonalnych badacza. W przypadku badanej grupy przeprowadzenie doboru losowego warstwowego jest jednak

prawie niemożliwe ze względu na trudności doboru odpowiedniej listy badanej populacji. Artykuł jest wynikiem problemów doświadczanych w wieloletnich procesach prowadzenia badań w omawianym segmencie.

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Cytowanie

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