THE DEVELOPMENT OF RETAIL STORE TYPES IN THE CONTEXT OF REGION AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT
The aim of the article is to analyze the prevalence of retail stores in Latvian regions and consumer behavior in Latvia. The authors have analyzed the prevalence of largest retail stores in regions and consumer behavior in retail using available statistical data and research done by the authors. As a result of the study, the role of shop assistants was determined during the purchasing process, and the results of the study have been compiled from the viewpoint of generations. These results can help retail companies to work more effectively by choosing the most appropriate retail store types
KEY WORDS: *Consumer behavior, Retailing, Retail store types, Generation.*

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Introduction

Research problem: Latvia saw one of the highest increases in retail sales in 2013. Persisting macroeconomic stability and rising real disposable incomes resulted in higher private spending, which was one of the main contributors to the country's GDP over the review year. Lower income tax and rising real wages resulted in higher real disposable incomes in 2013 and improved consumer confidence, thus encouraging people to spend more on discretionary goods, both in the grocery and non-grocery sector. Non-grocery retailers outperformed their grocery peers in 2013, mainly thanks to a further improvement in customer purchasing power which in turn shaped buyer preferences in favour of larger purchases that were not affordable during the economic downturn. Despite the growth of non-store retailing, traditional retailing in stores has held its positions. Therefore, it is important to recognize store types and their development trends.

Research purpose is to produce recommendations for store development in regions using statistical data and the study made by the authors.

Research object are particularities of consumer behaviour and retail stores in Latvia.

The main goal is to analyze the prevalence of store types in the regions of Latvia. The study attributes particular importance to the role of shop assistants and their influence on the decision making of customers during the purchasing process.

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Research tasks are to analyze statistical data of retailing and retail stores in regions; to analyze the importance of shop assistants and what the seller does correctly or incorrectly; to establish division of generations and their proportions in Latvia; to develop decision making tools for retailing companies.

Research methods: The authors employ well-known methods of research – analysis and synthesis methods, grouping, comparison etc.

1. Development of retail stores in Latvia

Latvia saw one of the highest increases in retail sales in 2013. Persisting macro-economic stability and rising real disposable incomes resulted in higher private spending, which was one of the main contributors to the country's GDP over the review year. Increasing private spending encouraged retailers to open new stores and expand their assortments with higher-priced grocery and non-grocery goods, thereby providing additional stimulus to retail sales growth. Lower income tax and rising real wages resulted in higher real disposable incomes in 2013 and improved consumer confidence, thus encouraging people to spend more on discretionary goods, both in the grocery and non-grocery sector. Non-grocery retailers outperformed their grocery peers in 2013, mainly thanks to a further improvement in customer purchasing power which in turn shaped buyer preferences in favour of larger purchases that were not affordable during the economic downturn. Higher disposable incomes enabled Latvians to renew spending on electronics, home appliances and home improvement products, thereby stimulating overall non-grocery growth. An additional boost to non-grocery sales came from customers' willingness to improve their appearance by buying new apparel, footwear and beauty products. With a value share of 10 %, Depo DIY SIA was the leading player in non-grocery retailers in 2013. The company's strong position can mainly be attributed to its large stores which offer a broad variety of goods, ranging from home improvement and gardening to food and pets. (Euromonitor, 2014) These tendencies can be seen by examining the net turnover share in trade shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Net turnover share in trade for 2012, %

Trade	Net turnover share, %
Food and beverage	55
Home and garden	22
Equipment and suupplies for office and production	7,8
Clothing, footwear and accessories	5,5
The rest	10

Source: Statistical data, 2014

Meanwhile, the dominating grocery players, Rimi Latvia SIA and Maxima Latvija SIA, enlarged their non-grocery assortments, especially in supermarkets and hypermarkets, in order to defend their market share from non-grocery rivals. Maxima Latvija SIA runs sales through conveniences stores, supermarkets and hypermarkets while Rimi Latvia SIA operates through Supernetto discounters, supermarkets and hypermarkets. Both grocery retail chains compete for the leading position in the market by attempting to provide the best possible prices, large discounts and comprehensive loyalty programmes. Companies are regularly running massive advertising campaigns via TV, outdoor media and the internet. (Euromonitor, 2014) Store-based retailing is expected to perform healthily over the forecast period and record modest growth rates as the Latvian economy stabilises. The non-grocery channel is projected to see slightly faster expansion compared to grocery retailing as consumers will allocate a major portion of rising real disposable incomes to discretionary items. In contrast, non-store retailing is predicted to continue to record rapid annual growth rates thanks to the surging popularity of shopping over the internet (Euromonitor, 2014). The increasing use of smartphones and tablet computers fuelled growth within non-grocery retailing during 2013. Internet retailer 220.lv SIA was the leading player in 2013, accounting for 8 % of total non-store retailing value sales. The company managed to outperform previous market leader direct seller Avon Cosmetics Latvia SIA, mainly due to the increasing popularity of shopping online and soaring demand for electronics and appliances. It should be noted that 220.lv SIA has a very broad product assortment ranging from fragrances and child goods to furniture and sports (Euromonitor, 2014).

Despite the growth of non-store retailing, traditional retailing in stores has held its positions. Therefore, it is important to recognize store types and their development trends. However, there is no unique method of categorizing retailers.

Some studies (e.g. Jin and Kim, 2003; Arnold and Reynold, 2003; Geuens, Brengman and Rosette, 2001; Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson, 1994) provide evidence that shoppers patronise diverse store formats as they find an opportunity to interact with others as well as store personnel, share their experience and knowledge with others, and bond with others at store format (Jayasankaraprasad and Kathyayani, 2013: 9).

The authors will use the conventional classification method of retail stores based on their size and assortment. These include malls (shopping centers), hypermarkets, department stores, supermarkets, specialized supermarkets, warehouse stores, specialized stores, convenience stores (neighbourhood stores), boutiques, pop-up stores, discounters and express stores (Berman, Evans, 2003: 280‒282; Newman, Cullen, 2005: 24‒27). The article will analyse the most widespread retail store types, such as hypermarkets, supermarkets, convenience stores (neighbourhood stores), in Latvia as a whole and in its regions. The largest members of the market which represent these retail store types are Rimi, Maxima, Top, AIBE and LaTS. Their turnover and profits/losses have been summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Financial data of largest retailers (thsd lats/thsd euro)

Retailer	Year	Turnover (thsd lats/thsd euro)	Profit/loss (thsd lats/ thsd euro)
Maxima	2012	450 368.000/640 815.931	14 342.000/20 406.828
	2011	413 210.000/587 944.861	1 870.000/2 660.770
	2010	390 450.000/555 560.298	10 700.000/15 224.728
Rimi	2012	443 326.000/630 796.068	8 950.000/12 734.703
	2011	417 160.000/593 565.205	6 345.000/9 028.122
	2010	391 800.000/557 481.175	5 228.000/7 438.774
top!	2012	7 980.000/11 354.517	19.994/28.449
	2011	5 490.000/7 811.566	6.363/9.054
	2010	4 100.000/5 833.774	0.068/0.097
AIBE	2012	5 940.000/8 451.859	No data
	2011	4 895.697/6 965.949	-109.924/-156.408
	2010	4 200.000/5 976.062	-77.893/-110.832

Source: www.nozare.lv 2014

In the study "101 most valuable Latvian enterprise" done by the business idea magazine "Kapitāls", IBS Prudentia and Riga Fund stock exchange in 2012 "Maxima Latvija" (with a value of Ls 174.1 million on the 01.01.2012) was in 10th place, whereas in the 2013 study (with a value of Ls 173.4 million on the 01.01.2013) it was in 11th place. Their largest competitor "Rimi Latvia" in the 2012 and 2013 studies with a value of Ls 131.5 million on the 01.01.2012 and a value of Ls 141.7 million on the 01.01.2013 was in the 16th place (www.nozare.lv, 2014).

There are 196 food stores operating under the trademark *top!*, 99 of which are *top!* and 97 *mini top!* stores owned by 17 local enterprises (April 2014): "Firma Madara 89", LLC, JSC "LPB", JSC "Diāna", "Lars Limited" LLC, "Gabriēla" LLC, "Dekšņi" LLC, "Mārksmens" LLC, "Madara 93" LLC, "AA & Co" LLC, "Krista – A" LLC, JSC "Roga – Agro", "ESSA" LLC, "G.A.L." LLC, "Lekon" LLC, "Ogres Prestižs" LLC, "Pārtikas veikalu grupa" LLC and "Oregano" LLC. "Iepirkuma grupa" LLC is the enterprise that represents the supermarket chain *top!* and provides for joint purchasing procedures and common marketing activities for the whole supermarket chain. (www.toppartika.lv). In contrast, "Latvijas tirgotāju kooperācija AIBE" is an enterprise with international experience. Its founders are not only Latvian entrepreneurs and the trading camera, but also the cooperation "Aibe mažmena" in Lithuania. At the moment there are around 450 stores in Latvia, which operate in various Latvian regions as part of AIBE.

Rimi and Maxima are represented in the hypermarket, supermarket, convenience store and discounter segments, whereas *top!* and AIBE operate mostly in the convenience store segment.

The entry and increasing activity of large supermarket chains in the convenience store segment in various regions in Latvia shows both that these regions are becoming more appealing and that the supermarket chains are willing to strengthen their positions in this retail segment. Turnover, staff costs and number of employees according to region are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Main entrepreneurship indicators in trade by statistical region for 2010–2011

Trade	Region	Indicators					
		2010			2011		
		Turnover (thsd euro)	Personal costs (thsd euro)	Number of persons employed	Turnover (thsd euro)	Personal costs (thsd euro)	Number of persons employed
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	Riga region	13149341	592882	86132	15145932	604808	80072
	Pieriga region	2255263	150154	23774	2591351	155979	21944
	Vidzeme region	578355	37000	9009	568641	36121	8286
	Kurzeme region	725000	42872	10333	1005471	50438	10991
	Zemgale region	867594	41862	10023	1024269	45084	9491
	Latgale region	512566	37738	12275	619538	40770	11479
Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Riga region	3379139	251563	45059	3436765	262780	42868
	Pieriga region	1022969	92135	16652	1016873	92921	14885
	Vidzeme region	245180	24530	6237	231154	22451	5585
	Kurzeme region	276083	26602	7245	342175	32657	8044
	Zemgale region	304158	27719	7007	363038	29621	6930
	Latgale region	262337	27794	9085	283136	29435	8556

Source: Statistical data, 2014

From Table 3 it is evident that the lowest trade figures are in the Latgale and Vidzeme regions, whereas the best figures are in the Riga and Pieriga regions. Respectively, staff costs are the highest in the Riga and Pieriga regions and the lowest in Latgale and Vidzeme regions but turnover per retail employee is the highest in the Riga region, the lowest in the Vidzeme region.

The number of Rimi, Maxima, *top!* and AIBE stores in regions is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Number of shops of Maxima and Rimi by statistical region

Region	Maxima			Total	Rimi			Total
	XXX hyper-market	XX super-market	X neighbour-hood store		Hyper-market	Super-market	Supernetto (discounter)	
Riga region	3	5	47	55	12	21	24	57
Pieriga region	–	6	18	24	4	3	8	15
Vidzeme region	–	5	11	16	–	2	5	7
Kurzeme region	–	4	12	16	2	6	6	14
Zemgale region	–	3	11	14	2	2	7	11
Latgale region	–	3	16	19	1	3	5	9
Total	3	26	115	144	21	37	55	113

Source: www.rimi.lv, www.maxima.lv, 2014

It can be seen from Table 4 that the strategy of Maxima is oriented towards opening hypermarkets only in Riga, whereas Rimi also has hypermarkets outside Riga, except the Vidzeme region.

The number of stores of *top!* and AIBE in regions is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Number of shops of Top! And AIBE by statistical region

Region	Top!		Total	AIBE
	supermarket (top)	convenience store (mini)		convenience store
Riga region	5	–	5	37
Pieriga region	15	13	28	18
Vidzeme region	25	25	50	18
Kurzeme region	29	45	74	4
Zemgale region	14	5	19	41
Latgale region	7	7	14	45
Total	95	95	190	163

Source: www.top.lv, www.aibe.lv, 2014

Most of AIBE stores are located in Latgale, Zemgale and Riga regions but *top!* stores – in Kurzeme and Vidzeme regions.

2. Consumer behaviour in retail

The study results can be analysed and interpreted from various perspectives but in order to achieve the aim of the study the survey results were summarised by dividing all respondents into generations.
Generations which have been surveyed during the study are (Levy, 1998: 98−104):

- “Net” generation: 0–19 years old;
- “Y” generation: 20–30 years old;
- “X” generation: 31–45 (50) years old;
- “Post-war” generation: 51−62 years old;
- “Silver” generation: older than 63 years.

A questionnaire was made to carry out the reasearch. When answering questions about whether or not the shop assistant, when selling a good in a shop, influences customer decision about buying the good, 50 % of respondents answered positively, whereas 48 % thought that the actions of the shop assistant influence them rarely.

When compiling answers about what is done incorrectly in stores, respondents indicated that the shop assistant:

- is impolite, communicates very little or does not communicate at all. A contrasting opinion was also expressed that shop assistants are too active and insistent with their offers;
- are willing to help as soon as the customer has entered the store without having the chance to see the assortment;
- is in a bad mood, is impatient;
- often is busy with his/her own affairs, chats, eats, argues, plays videogames and so on;
- enforces his/her own opinion, is too persistent, does not give the customer the chance to assess the good on his/her own;
- stands next to the customer and observes him/her, follows the customer like a shadow, thinks of the customer as a potential thief;
- is not interested in selling;
- is not knowledgeable about the assortment of goods and their applications, often is incompetent;
- does not like if the customer touches the good with his/her hands but ultimately does not purchase it (more applicable to clothing stores) and so on.

After analysing the answers, the authors conclude that Latvian customers pay attention, analyse and observe the work of shop assistants. Customers form their opinion about the company according to the actions of the shop assistant, who thus forms the overall image of the company. During more detailed interviews customers revealed that it is very difficult to change the negative experience they have had and very often information about their negative experience is spread within the social class of the customer through word of mouth.

The results of the study also indicated positive experience during shopping and that this experience encourages repeated purchases. This validates the assumption of the authors that the sales assistant plays a very important role in the process of purchasing goods. Taking into account theories of determining and analysing customer needs, it can be concluded that any complaint encompasses potential needs. The authors would like to emphasize that, when analysing customer complaints, a list of customer needs can be constructed, which can be used by shop assistants working in the store. This approach to shop assistant training can ensure that the actions of shop assistants are oriented towards satisfying customer needs and expectations.

Respondents also mentioned various situations when during selling something was not done correctly or when the customer did not benefit from the purchase. Therefore, in order to clarify how often this happens, various specific questions were asked.

The “Net” generation said that sometimes the shop assistant convinces them to make a purchase. In addition, occasionally a purchase is made only because the good was well-position in the store. According to the “Net” generation, the layout of shops is important, but the shop assistant can rarely convince them to purchase a good which will not benefit them economically or socially. Respondents have also noted that sometimes conflict situations arise with the shop assistant, and that 50% of the time the cause is due to the shop assistant and 50% of the time the cause is due to the customer or various external factors. However, it is clear that the opinion of the shop assistant could differ from the opinion of the customer.

The answers of the “Y” generation were similar, but some slight differences could be noticed. Respondents in this generation said that they have occasionally purchased a good if it is well-positioned in the store. They also noted that the layout of the store *always* plays a role in the purchasing process and choice of goods. The shop assistant rarely influences them; however, sometimes conflict situations arise. According to the “Y” generation, the cause of these situations is more often the customer rather than the shop assistant. 55 % of the respondents have noted that the conflict is caused by various external factors. Respondent answers indicate that the “Y” generation is characterized by social maturity and the ability to individually make well-grounded decisions. It is possible that the “Y” generation carefully plans its expenditure and does not make unreasoned purchases.

After studying the answers given by the “X” generation to the aforementioned questions, it can be concluded that shop assistants sometimes convince this generation to make a purchase and that members of this generation often purchase goods if they are well-positioned in the store. This generation considers that store layout is more important than shop assistant influence. Conflict situations, which occur rarely (this is a sound indicator based on the age group and social experience of this generation), are more often initiated by customers themselves, but more rarely by shop assistants or various external factors.

The Silver and Post-war generations have mutually similar views; however, they are not identical.

Summarizing the results of the study, it can be concluded that: when the age of the customer changes (according to the indicated generations), the influence of the shop assistant on the decison to make a purchase changes as well. As the age increases, the influence of the shop assistant increases as well, whereas for younger customers a more important factor is the layout of the store.

This can be explained using various psychological, social, economic and other factors. It should be noted, however, that the habits of the new generation of consumers are changing and that the causes of these changes are directly or indirectly related to the development of information technologies and the internet.

The study confirms that, during the purchasing process, shop assistants, communication and other factors play an important role.

By using the available statistical data about regions it is possible to determine the development trends of every region and find correlations with retail stores located there. Looking at the population statistics it can be seen that the Vidzeme region has the lowest population (only 10 % of the whole population of Latvia); whereas half of the population lives in the Riga and Pieriga regions (see Table 6). Hence, all retail store types are widespread in these regions, and they have the largest number of hypermarkets and supermarkets.

Table 6. Number of inhabitants by statistical region

	2011	**2012**	**2013**
LATVIA	2074605	2044813	2023825
Riga region	659418	649853	643615
Pieriga region	371952	370128	369987
Vidzeme region	211995	208728	205949
Kurzeme region	271143	266433	262755
Zemgale region	255111	251495	248845
Latgale region	304986	298176	292674

Source: Statistical data, 2014

On the other hand, if the population is viewed in terms of its generations, it is seen that around 60 % of people living in regions are working-age. This means that mostly they are people from the “X” and “Y” generations. If we look at the Silver generation, the size of this generation is increasing every year, and this is especially evident in regions.

Table 7. Population by sex and by main group by statistical region at the beginning of the year, %

	2012			**2013**		
	Under working age	**Of working age**	**Over working age**	**Under working age**	**Of working age**	**Over working age**
LATVIA	14,3	63,6	22,1	14,4	63,2	22,4
Riga region	13,2	64,1	22,7	13,6	63,4	23
Pierīga region	16,1	63,8	20,1	16,2	63,4	20,4
Vidzeme region	14,1	63	22,9	14	62,8	23,2
Kurzeme region	15,1	62,5	22,4	15,1	62,1	22,8
Zemgale region	14,9	64	21,1	14,9	63,7	21,4
Latgale region	13,3	63,4	23,3	13,3	63,1	23,6

Source: Statistical data, 2014

Looking at people’s incomes in regions, it is seen that the lowest average salary is in the Vidzeme region.

Table 8. Avarage monthly wages and salaries by statistical region of Latvia (in Euro)

		2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**
Bruto	LATVIA	633	660	685	716
	Riga region	724	757	778	815
	Pieriga region	603	622	649	677
	Vidzeme region	485	518	528	560
	Kurzeme region	544	559	598	608

		2010	2011	2012	2013
	Zemgale region	508	547	571	597
	Latgale region	440	468	475	490
Neto	LATVIA	450	470	488	516
	Riga region	511	534	551	583
	Pieriga region	429	447	466	491
	Vidzeme region	351	376	384	410
	Kurzeme region	392	404	430	441
	Zemgale region	367	395	413	436
	Latgale region	320	340	345	358

Source: Statistical data, 2014

Taking the size of the population and people's incomes into account (see Table 8), the Vidzeme region is not attractive to the large retail chains Rimi and Maxima because there are relatively few of these stores in this region. On the other hand, Aibe, *top!* and LaTS convenience stores are more popular.

Conclusions

After analysing the study results, the authors conclude that the Latvian consumers pay attention to shop assistant work, they analyse and observe them. Depending on the shop assistant's behaviour, the buyer forms an opinion about the company and shop, hence shaping the overall image of the company. During in-depth interviews, people pointed out that it is difficult to change the negative experience, and often this negative experience is disseminated in the buyer's social layer through word of mouth.

The authors conclude that the shop arrangements, advertising of the goods at the point of sale, and shop assistant behaviour have a great impact during the purchasing process. It must be noted that the shop assistant's behaviour can decisively affect customer decision making during the purchasing process in particular age groups.

Looking at the main entrepreneurship indicators in trade, population size and people's incomes it can be concluded that retailers pay attention to economic and demographic parameters by choosing the store types which they open in each region.

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MAŽMENINĖS PREKYBOS PARDUOTUVIŲ PLĖTRA VARTOTOJŲ ELGSENOS IR REGIONO KONTEKSTE

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Santrauka

Šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti mažmeninės prekybos parduotuvių paplitimą Latvijos regionuose ir Latvijos vartotojų elgseną. Remdamiesi prieinamais statistiniais duomenimis ir savo tyrimo rezultatais, autoriai išanalizavo didžiausių mažmeninės prekybos parduotuvių pasiskirstymą Latvijos regionuose ir vartotojų elgseną mažmeninėje prekyboje. Tyrimo metu apibrėžtas parduotuvių konsultantų vaidmuo pirkimo procese, tyrimo rezultatai įvertinti kartų požiūriu. Šie rezultatai gali padėti mažmeninės prekybos bendrovėms dirbti efektyviau, pasirinkus tinkamą mažmeninės prekybos parduotuvės tipą.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *vartotojų elgsena, mažmeninė prekyba, mažmeninės prekybos parduotuvių rūšys, kartos.*

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: M11, M31, F1