

PECULIARITIES IN CONSTRUCTION OF SEGMENTATION MODELS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract. Strategic marketing development is a major area of Lithuanian manufacturing companies, which seeks to improve business. In order to develop a strategic marketing plan, companies encompassing several business models are faced with the need to adapt those models here and highlight the lack of skills to carry out marketing activities for the sharp divide in the business models in the marketing literature. In order to give the latter companies a theoretical foundation for development of strategic marketing for sustainable business, which highlights the need for business model adaptation in the process of segmentation, it is worthwhile to analyze the scientific segmentation models and prepare recommendations for model construction. The scientific article is based on marketing research in window manufacturing and mounting business that enables to create a step-by-step market segmentation model, which is based on adaptation of different business models. The main tendencies identified in the sector (high market and technological uncertainty, intense competition) makes it a very characteristic example of a business, which seeks to improve competitiveness.

Keywords: segmentation, segmentation model, strategic marketing, business.

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JEL classification: M30, M31.

1. Introduction

Competition is one of the main reasons that encourage companies to adopt new approaches strengthening their market position. Design and implementation of a strategic marketing plan is required to develop the business itself as well as effective solutions that would reduce competition and reinforce its position in the market.

It can be reasonably argued that the segmentation stage is the most important in strategic marketing as it allows identifying the marketing gaps in a company and finding new avenues for brand development, as well as clarifying the understanding of market trends and competition, and thus creating preconditions for increased

profitability. Segmentation allows users to target segments that are the most valuable. Segmentation preconditions all other strategic marketing planning stages to be of greater particularity and to be more concentrated, which makes it possible to achieve a better quality in planning.

The object: market segmentation process and its applicable models.

Key scientific issues exist in the following areas:

1. The process of segmentation. There is a lack of knowledge of how to integrate and specify the stages of the segmentation process so they would comply with the market segmentation as the latter is most often perceived as a result, while the process of segmentation analysis is often unappreciated.
2. Application of segmentation models. It is noted that the limitations of this process, created by diversity of business models (business-to-business and business-to-customer), determines the need for new research that would enable to achieve efficiency in the process of segmentation.

According to the scientific issues the objectives are as follow:

1. To investigate the process of segmentation in the step-by-step manner.
2. To analyse possible application of segmentation models for business-to-business and business-to-customer.
3. To prepare a segmentation model that would reflect each step and every component in the process of segmentation. To compile a segmentation model that would include different business models in every stage.

Research methods: scientific periodical literature and analysis of primary data collection methods (expert survey, a questionnaire survey, primary data analysis using methods of applied mathematics).

Marketing planning for window manufacturing and mounting business is special because it is one of those few businesses that combine both business models – business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) – that are usually isolated in the marketing theory. The business of window manufacturing and mounting is unique in this aspect of the product specificity. In principle, products can be sold directly to end-users who wish to replace their home windows, or to companies operating in the construction sector. The latter buy windows depending on their product requirements, as one of the elements that contribute to the value of the proposal to be submitted to the final consumer. One way or the other, the product is unique because there is no need for modifications. Under the existing conditions of market segmentation, the strategic marketing planning is faced with the need for dual marketing proposals.

Based on this business model, the obvious need to fill existing gaps in the theory of marketing is highlighted.

2. Market segmentation

Segmentation is vital for strategic marketing planning because of its multi-phase impact on all other activities in this process. Grundey, D. (2008a); Martinkus, B. *et al.* (2009); Gudonavičienė, R., Alijosiene, S. (2008); Alimiene, M., Kuvykaite, R. (2008); Jaafar, M. *et al.* (2008); Grundey, D., Zaharia, R. M. (2008) agree that the quality measurement of the strategic marketing planning consists of individual assessment of each process stage, quality of its implementation and consistent logic. The thoroughly completed segmentation stage is a significant step in this planning process.

The most general sense of market segmentation is the division of consumers according to selected characteristics, which are mainly determined by differences among consumers. This is especially important in terms of the current business aiming to identify the different needs of consumers. According to these criteria, consumers are divided into homogeneous groups, which are heterogeneous in terms of one another.

While segmentation is considered throughout the literature of marketing, only one author distinguishes the essential understanding of the sequence segmentation problem. Baines, P. *et al.* (2008) expressed the view that first, it is necessary to separate concepts of market segmentation and product differentiation. Product differentiation is different from market segmentation as in case of a product differentiation a manufacturer simply provides more product options, while segmentation starts with the needs of a consumer. Identification of segments and the required marketing-mix are the first steps of segmentation. The provision of a new proposal follows next. While in case of a product differentiation the focus is solely on a new proposal. This perception must be followed for segmentation of the entire process: first, on the basis of the analyzed algorithms, it is necessary to identify the segments for the purpose of adapting their marketing-mix and provide a valuable offer. In retrospect, segmentation was first applied to markets with several vendors that offered identical merchandise. Such market segmentation was recognized as the way to increase competitiveness. This approach is mainly suitable for any business that finds itself in the midst of intense competition.

Although market segmentation is a complex activity, it is an inevitable phase of the strategic marketing planning, thus it must be carried out in a high-quality manner depending on the existing conditions of competition in business. Kaklauskas, A. *et al.* (2009); Sirtautienė, D., Sirtautas, V. V. (2009); Jaafar, M. *et al.* (2008); Grundey, D. (2009); Jumpponen, J. *et al.* (2009) argued that market segmentation has a direct impact on marketing planning as well as on all further steps of the strategic marketing planning. This can be confirmed by the scientific literature analysis. Literature provides various sequences of the strategic marketing planning.

McDonald, M. (2007) defines segmentation as the third of the ten planning stages of the strategic marketing planning process. This activity can only be performed subsequent to analysis of the external environment. Hutt, D. M. and Speh, W. Th. (2007) suggest that segmentation is one of the previous works, which are conducted or supported by the

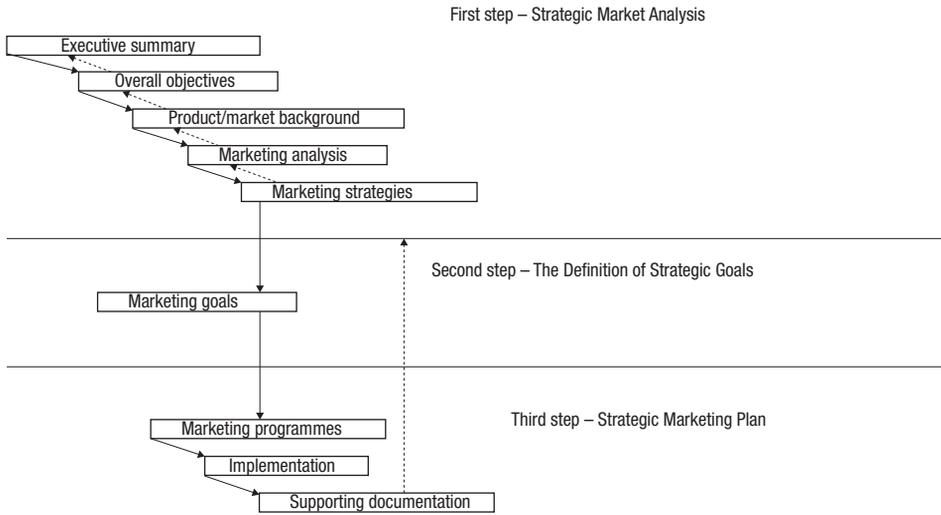


Fig. 1. Marketing planning process. A scheme (Source: Baines *et al.* 2008)

preliminary targets or whilst reviewing an existing strategy. Baines, P. *et al.* (2008) submits segmentation to the multiple strategic marketing planning implementation phases of market analysis and marketing analysis; however, this is still one of the preceding activities in the planning as provided in Fig. 1. Gilligan, C. and Wilson, M. S. R. (2009) provide stages of strategic marketing planning that are significantly fewer in comparison with other authors. The latter scheme is the most susceptible to interpretation. In this case, segmentation is carried out immediately after analysis of the external environmental and next to the assessment of business opportunities.

Only one of the authors – Fifield, P. (2007) – states that market segmentation has to be done midway through the strategic marketing plan: subsequent to analysis of the external and internal environments and prior to design of strategy.

It is obvious that segmentation falls into the category of the initial activities of strategic marketing planning as it has unquestionable assets of a significant impact on all other stages.

Looking at segmentation as a process, it is worthwhile starting with an understanding that not all consumers are identical, and that in marketing theory and practice, there is a need for many unique cases of systematic knowledge, which enable the distribution of consumers between homogeneous groups. The effectiveness of market segmentation depends on the level of knowledge in terms of different consumer features and understanding of the customer characteristic that has the decisive influence on the product purchase decision as well as the knowledge of a marketing specialist of the characteristics within each segment. In fact, segmentation allows getting to know customers

and their needs in order to create a precise value proposition, which allows maximizing sales. Abromaityte-Sereikiene, L. (2008) and Banyte, J. (2008) summarize that the choice of target market segments reduces competition as competition in each segment is less than in case of the mass-marketing approach.

The only drawback of segmentation (assuming that the selection of segmentation criteria has been made in a high-quality manner and the target segments have been chosen according to the applicable value proposal of the company) is that while the company focuses its marketing on one or more target segments and has a strong position with an applicable value proposal, it remains uncompetitive in other segments. However, sale results achieved in the target segment outweigh losses in other segments. Financially, it is more beneficial to the company.

The main measure of effectiveness of market segmentation is the ability to identify consumers with a different product demand as this enables a company to target those segments and meet the demand; in other words, the company could use the benefits of the segment.

3. Segmentation model formation

Segmentation is the division of buyers into smaller groups to identify the patterns of customer needs. This definition reveals only the final result of the activity of market segmentation, which has to be achieved by required actions, each with a coherent logic.

Criteria that can identify consumer segments are analyzed in the scientific marketing literature as the possible segmentation basis, but the concept of segmentation is usually perceived as a result, rather than the process of segmentation.

In summary, McDonald, M. (2007); Paley, N. (2006); Harridge-March, S. (2008) and Strauss, R. (2009) listed the segmentation stages in the context of theory without obvious distinction but rather leaving the freedom for interpretation, so they could be adapted to each unique business case. However, this creates conditions for numerous errors. Segmentation, as one of the most difficult activities of the strategic marketing planning is insufficiently defined in terms of the algorithm of consecutive steps. On the contrary, it is more often perceived as one and indivisible activity in STP (segmentation, targeting and positioning) process. In scientific literature, this process is called STP, often emphasizing that these activities are carried out consistently, as provided in Fig. 2.

Kotler, Ph. *et al.* (2003) distinguishes only two phases of segmentation, defined as the determination of the principles of market segmentation and description of each segment. In this case, the first phase can be significantly expanded and is susceptible to interpretation.

Baines, P. *et al.* (2008) identifies the stages of segmentation in terms of high marketing research impact for every of them. These authors argue that it is always important to ensure that these activities (marketing research and STP) would be carried

out continuously. Review or update of a marketing strategy always demands for a new consumer market segmentation: the perceived market information leads to market segmentation, which consists of identification of groups of similar customers. In each unique business, market segmentation criteria are based on marketing research. The segmentation model designed by Baines, P. *et al.* (2008) is susceptible to interpretation.

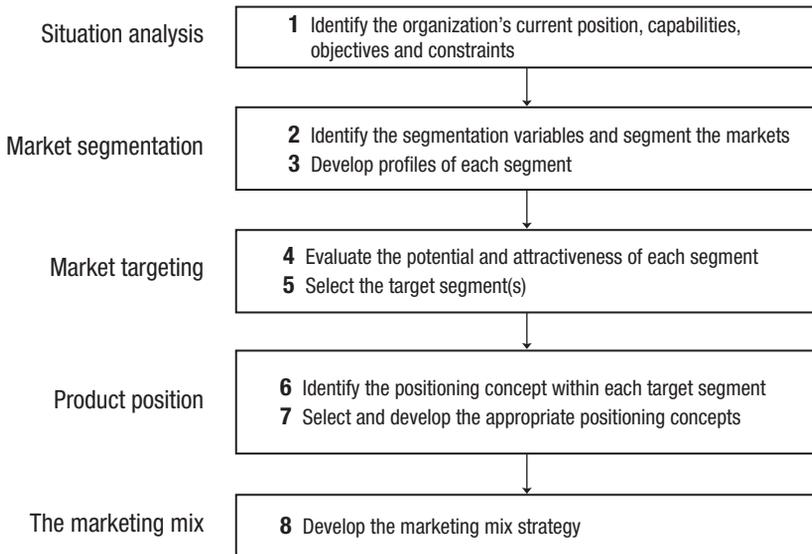


Fig. 2. Segmentation, targeting and positioning stages (Source: Gilligan, Wilson 2009)

Hutt, D. M. and Speh, W. Th. (2007) distinguish two stages of segmentation model, recommended for business-to-business market. In particular, these stages are the macro-segmentation that includes a division of the organizations according to their characteristics, size, geographical location, organizational structure; and the micro-segmentation that requires a deeper knowledge of marketing, enabling to concentrate on criteria of customer decision-making characteristics.

Segmentation is the process that uses the macro-segmentation as a filter, which helps evaluating and rejecting unacceptable companies that do not meet the defined marketing goals and then move towards a deeper analysis of the acceptable ones. This saves both time and financial resources.

Because of the effect of all other stages of strategic marketing planning, segmentation, targeting and positioning are named to be the essence of planning (Gilligan, Wilson 2009). This approach shows a deeper understanding of the strategic marketing planning, where segmentation is important for the implementation of the marketing business from the very beginning.

Gilligan, C., Wilson, M. S. R. (2009) suggests that the segmentation process begins with a review of a natural segment. Usually, every business has clearly visible heterogeneous groups of customers that can be referred to as natural segments even without deeper investigation. Various authors attribute this activity to a process that has to be somehow performed by marketing specialist intuitively by default. When there are no clear natural segments, it is necessary to carry out a number of formal procedures that are usually comprised of three phases:

Study. An investigator carries out informal interviews and focus group discussions to understand the motives, attitudes and behaviours.

Analysis. On the basis of the findings achieved during the first phase, the investigator finds relevant segmentation criteria and determines the existing market segments.

Establishment. The investigator designs profiles of each segment, including defined characteristics: attitudes, behaviours, demographics, psychographic and innovation capacity.

These three phases represent the most intimate view of the market segmentation process. Comparison of the segmentation stages provided by Gilligan, C. and Wilson, M. S. R. (2009) with the segmentation model by Sarabia, F. J. (1995) reveals that the latter differs by further disclosed elements that have the major impact on the process and different phases of the strategic marketing planning levels: in the view of the author, collection of information essentially depends on the availability of human resources in a given company. The next stage – the creation of segments – is implemented through quantitative marketing research in this model. Subsequent to this activity, the segments are defined and evaluated. Segment selection and positioning in this case is attributed to the marketing strategy and segmentation model, to the segment research level, as provided in Fig. 3.

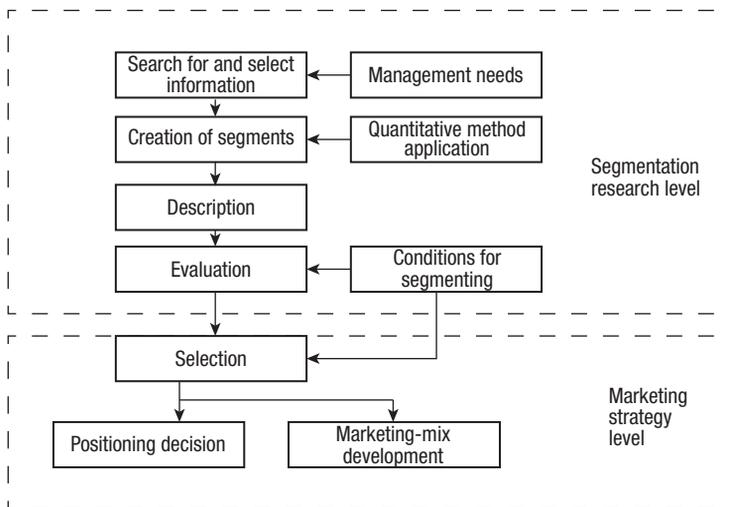


Fig. 3. STP algorithm (Source: Sarabia 1995)

Analysis of scientific and periodic literature allows suggesting that the segmentation model might comprise of up to three main stages: finding of relevant segmentation criteria, identification of segments and compiling of segment profiles.

4. Market segmentation in business that encompass a number of different business models

In order to adapt the segmentation model in business of durable goods, particularly in window manufacturing and mounting business, market segmentation theory highlights the divide between business-to-customer and business-to-business. As per marketing literature, that a company operates through one or another model, whereas businesses that include both models is not analysed.

According to strategic marketing planning approach, the combination of business models becomes important in the segmentation stage, when the operating margins and differences between customer characteristics become especially significant in order to gain further quality of planning. It should be emphasized that the use of the combination of business models is important for high quality segmentation and further stages of the STP algorithm. So far, segmentation is relevant for all phases of strategic marketing planning, as important is the understanding and extended application of business models that provides further opportunities for planning.

Multidisciplinarity of businesses creates a need to explore new theoretical solutions that can be adapted in business practice. The analysed case of window business has highlighted the need to create a segmentation model, which includes both business models. Basically, if it is possible to combine business models, it is worthwhile to analyze the possibilities to extend and take advantage of this new approach for model extension, trying to raise the marketing of a company to a new level.

Whereas the issue is market segmentation in a specific business, it is worthwhile applying the approach of business model extension in precisely the segmentation stage that has a strategic planning approach. Gummesson, E. and Polese, F. (2009) presents a new position in this regard, arguing that it is necessary to extend traditional business-to-business and business-to-customer perception in today's marketing. Both the vendor and the customer operate in a single integrated network and because of that the connection must be mutual. Gummesson, E. and Polese, F. (2009) argue that roles of a seller and a customer are often misunderstood as a customer is perceived as someone who responds while the vender is thought to be active. Information technologies empower customers to be active and respond, even to contact the company and be easily accessible. There is a shift away from the one-way information transfer towards the communication that is implemented and supported by relationship marketing and customer management systems.

In addition to business-to-customer, customer-to-business and customer-to-customer relationships should be underlined. These relationships emerged largely due to the

impact of information technologies (IT) on consumers. IT enables easy communication through sharing of experiences in relation to the product. Such factors must be evaluated and integrated into the marketing system.

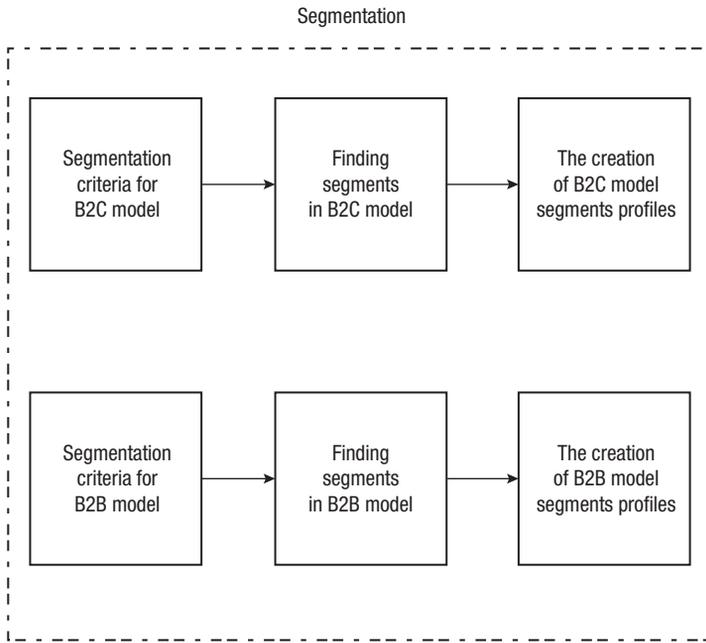


Fig. 4. Segmentation model (Source: set up by authors, on the basis of Gilligan, Wilson 2009; Baines *et al.* 2008; Sarabia 1995; Gummesson, Polese 2009)

On the other hand, business-to-business marketing awareness should also be extended as the initiative comes from both directions, sometimes pushing at each other and in other times – helping each other to change the course of action. The value is gained on both sides.

Returning to the segmentation model for business that would comprise of both business models, it is necessary to separate segmentation activities in business-to-business and business-to-customer markets because of the need for different studies and diversity of results. Segmentation model is presented in Fig. 4.

In case of the approach of the strategic marketing planning, there is no need to separate business models if the segmentation stage business model has no impact on ongoing activities and the formation of both business goals and the mission, carrying out the analysis of external environment. In different cases, after the positioning phase, the separation of business models can be avoided.

5. Validity of the unique segmentation model

Two studies have been made in order to support and specify the segmentation model. In order to validate the first step of the segmentation model that is based on the expansion of business models, the expert interview has been used. Criteria for eligibility of experts were selected on the basis to the aforementioned aim and the hypothesis of the research: activity – the window manufacturing and mounting business; position in the organizational hierarchy – higher or top-level managers; job – directly or closely related to marketing (sales, product development). Eight experts were sufficient to validate the results and conclusions of the research. According to experts, the latest research showed that, IT (the customer-to-customer relationship) is one of the most important criteria for segmentation.

In order to justify opportunities for expansion of business models as a criterion for the first and the third segmentation model stages, the customer survey was conducted. Grundey, D. (2008b) agrees that typical sector for marketing research helps to simplify the developed theoretical model. Window market has been chosen as the typical example. In this case, filter questions helped identifying the currently existing customers with valuable opinion, i.e. customers that purchased windows within the four-year period. The main questions were formulated on the basis of the elements of the marketing-mix to identify the significant parameters for each of the customers when selecting a product. Since it was intended to investigate consumer preferences for marketing-mix elements, it was possible to link those preferences to the various criteria of segmentation in order to take this as a different segmentation basis. The reliability of study results amounts to 90 percent. The study logic enabled to design unique criteria as the basis for segmentation. The results showed that the use of media is a relevant customer segmentation criterion with the following components: intensive use of the lean-forward media, and use of the lean-back media. Use of media in general is yet another important criterion, however, due to low impact in this area, it is rather non-use of media. These criteria describe the customer's susceptibility to the customer-to-business and customer-to-customer relationships. This study also substantiated the relevance of the criteria for the third segmentation stage.

Understanding the segmentation model as a process provides a possibility to reflect on each stage of the expansion of business models and translate them into appropriate criteria. While constructing the first phase of the segmentation model, it is worthwhile to carry out a selection of analyzed market segmentation criteria as well as the third stage of the segmentation model – the selection of segment evaluation criteria. In case of business-to-customer, it is useful to use the customer behaviour criterion: customer willingness to use customer-to-customer relationships. In the first phase of the segmentation model, this approach can be adapted as one of the criteria for homogeneity or heterogeneity of a segment, leading to the development of various ways of distribution, linking it to different methods of supporting communication with customers. This is the opportunity to give a customer an active role in creation of the new value, which

is closer to the marketing conception aimed at meeting of consumer needs. According to this view, the choice of segmentation criteria for business-to-customer market must be related to possible relationships discussed above. One of the evaluation criteria of a segment must be the expansion of communication possibilities in both cases of business models.

This approach leads to higher quality of strategic marketing planning because of a deeper understanding of relationship models in company network and ability to see opportunities and threats in another dimension.

6. Practical guidelines for constructing the market segmentation model: principles based on window manufacturing and mounting business

With reference to scientific marketing literature and marketing research, the segmentation model for window manufacturing and mounting business was proposed. This example reflects practical application of theoretical segmentation model.

Recommended segmentation criteria are set out in the first stage, understanding that they must be combined with other criteria selected for each unique event. Based on these criteria, the second stage is the fragmentation of the market into segments. The last step of the model includes recommended criteria, which allow creating a profile for each segment. This unique case includes the criteria that should be extended based on the first-phase. The market segmentation model of the window manufacturing and mounting business is provided in Fig. 5.

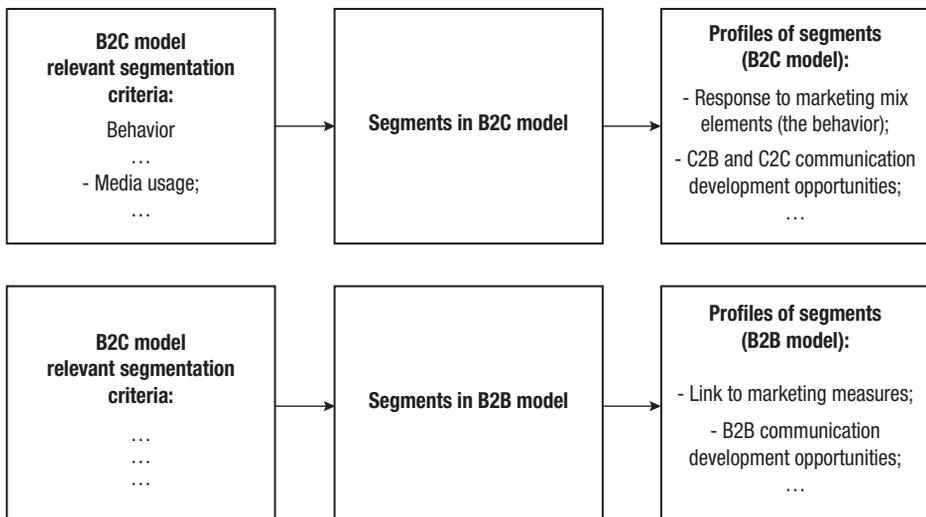


Fig. 5. The market segmentation model for the window manufacturing and mounting business

In order to consistently describe a typical market segmentation model for the window manufacturing and mounting business, the segmentation criteria need to select. Marketing research (the primary data collection methods used: a survey and expert interviews) allowed the purification of the most important criterion in this case. In addition to topical segmentation criteria, the most significant differences between groups of consumers in this business were identified. Media usage criteria were based on options of the business model expansion in order to differentiate customers who use the customer-to-customer relationship.

Consumer survey was used for identification of segments. In essence, the business-to-business segmentation in the window manufacturing and mounting business is more complex than business-to-customer segmentation as criteria are less certain. Since this market has few consumers that are very important, finding differences that identifies homogeneity within and heterogeneity outside segments is difficult.

The best tool for this is macro-segmentation. In this case, the requirement of heterogeneity in segments is satisfied by the best quality. The conclusion of the evaluation segment profiles was made by using different criteria for both business models, including opportunities for development of communication in terms of consumer-to-business and customer-to-customer relationships in the first case and opportunities for the development of communication in terms of business-to-business in the second case.

7. Conclusions

Target marketing is important as it concentrates the marketing strategy of a company and creates conditions for design of a realistic and profitable product or service proposal for a target customer. Besides, it encourages company to focus on itself. All of this begins with the exterior, focusing on consumer and the market. In part, segmentation is a market fragmentation on the basis some chosen scheme. However, this scheme calls for a coherent logical choice and the adaptation of a particular business.

The segmentation process has been studied and for this reason the main stages of segmentation were identified, comprising of segmentation criteria selection, market segment extraction, selection of profile criteria for segments and profile construction.

The scientific marketing literature generally distinguishes market segmentation depending on different business models. Although the differences between segmentation processes are insignificant: in case of business-to-customer, segmentation comprises of criteria selection, market segment extraction, selection of profile criteria for segments and profile construction; while in case of business-to-business, segmentation consists of macro-segmentation and micro-segmentation, that contain segmentation criteria selection, market segment extraction, selection of profile criteria for segments and profile construction. The segmentation model adapting two business models was established.

The article proposed the model of market segmentation, adapting business-to-business and business-to-customer models. The model was presented by elaborating each segmentation phase. An example is given for the window manufacturing and mounting business. The proposed segmentation criteria and segment evaluation criteria allows for evaluation of the appeal of various market segment in order to select the ones, in which the value proposition of the company would be preferred and most valued. These criteria enable companies to consistently improve their marketing processes, flexibly responding to market changes.

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SEGMENTAVIMO MODELIŲ SUDARYMO YPATUMAI: TEORIJA IR PRAKTIKA

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Santrauka

Strateginės rinkodaros plėtra yra svarbi sritis Lietuvos gamybos įmonėse. Ji padeda pasiekti geresnių verslo rezultatų. Siekiant plėtoti strateginį rinkodaros planą, kelis verslo modelius apimančios įmonės susiduria su poreikiu pritaikyti tuos modelius ir pabrėžia įgūdžių stoką, vykdam rinkodaros veiklą ir tiksliai pritaikant verslo rinkodaros literatūroje pateiktus modelius. Norint suteikti įmonėms strateginės rinkodaros tvarios plėtros teorinius pagrindus, kurie reikalingi verslo modeliams pritaikyti segmentavimo procese, būtina išanalizuoti mokslinius segmentavimo modelius ir parengti rekomendacijas modeliui sudaryti. Straipsnis grindžiamas rinkodaros tyrimais langų gamybos ir montavimo versle, kurie leidžia žingsnis po žingsnio sukurti rinkos segmentavimo modelį ir remiasi įvairių verslo modelių pritaikymu. Nagrinėjamas sektorius, pasižymintis aukštu rinkos bei taikomų technologijų neapibrėžtumu ir susiduriantis su itin intensyvia konkurencija, yra vis naujų konkurencingumo stiprinimo sprendimų siekiančio verslo būdingas pavyzdys.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: segmentavimas, segmentavimo modelis, strateginė rinkodara, verslo modelis.

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