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A GENERATIONAL COMPARISON OF MALL-VISITING BEHAVIORS IN ÁRKÁD BUDAPEST: UNDERSTANDING SENIOR CONSUMERS

LÁTOGATÁSI SZOKÁSOK GENERÁCIÓS ELEMZÉSE AZ ÁRKÁD BUDAPEST BEVÁSÁRLÓKÖZPONTBAN: IDŐSKORÚ VÁSÁRLÓK VIZSGÁLATA

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Abstract

The market situation of European shopping centres has been significantly changed compared to previous decades for a number of reasons. Among other reasons, it is important to underline the ageing European population. Furthermore, the ratio of elderly is projected to increase further in Hungary. These demographic processes lead to wide range of socio-economic impacts on the country. One of the consequences that senior customers are becoming increasingly important target group for shopping centres nowadays. They have already had a considerable purchasing power in Budapest. Meanwhile, shopping centres in the capital city are still focusing on young generations. For this very reason, researches required to get a better insight into the behaviors of senior customers.
This paper aims to explore differences and similarities in shopping behaviors between different age groups of customers in the case of Árkád Budapest. The author gathered published official statistical information from the website of Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) and analyzed the current demographical situation in Budapest. The analysis of mall-visiting behaviors is based on questionnaire which contains responses of 156 purchasers. Descriptive statistical methods were implemented by the author. Expected research findings are support to increase our knowledge about mall-visiting behaviours of senior customers in Budapest.

Keywords: ageing, Silver Generation, spatial moving behavior, shopping mall, Budapest

Absztrakt

Az európai bevásárlóközpontok piaca jelentős változáson ment keresztül az elmúlt évtizedekben. Fontos kiemelni az okok közül az idősödő európai népességet. Magyarországon is növekszik az időskorúak aránya. Ezek a demográfiai folyamatok nagy hatással vannak az ország társadalmi-gazdasági környezetére. Az egyik fontos következmény, hogy napjainkra az időskorú vásárlók egyre fontosabb célcsoporttá válnak a bevásárlóközpontok számára. Budapesten már jelentős vásárlóerővel rendelkeznek. Éppen ezért szükséges, hogy jobban megértsük az időskorúak vásárlási attitűdjeit.
Jelen esettanulmány az időskorúak és a fiatal korosztályok között megfigyelhető generációs különbségek feltárásával foglalkozik az Árkád Budapest potenciális vevőkörében. A szerző a Központi Statisztikai Hivataltól származó hivatalos statisztikai adatok alapján vizsgálta az aktuális demográfiai helyzetet a fővárosban. A bevásárlóközpont látogatási szokásainak elemzése egy 156 fő kérdőíves mintán alapszik, amit leíró statisztikai elemzési eszközökkel vizsgált. A kutatási eredmények hozzájárulnak, hogy a budapesti időskorú vásárlók látogatási szokásait megérthessük.

Keywords: öregedés, ezüstgeneráció, térbeli mozgáspálya, bevásárlóközpont, Budapest

INTRODUCTION

According to HCSO, Hungary's population is aging and the ratio of elderly is projected to increase further (Földházi, 2012). This change in social structure leads to wide range of socio-economic impacts on the country (Vukovich, 1991; Hablicsek, 2004; Molnár & Koczor-Keul, 2013). Obviously, it has a significant effect on the retail sector. The state of shopping malls in small-scale or local commerce has also changed compared to before (C&W, 2017). Partly for demographic reasons, the clientele of shopping malls is undergoing a change in structure, leaning towards the older generations.

Moreover, the current silver generation has different attitude towards shopping centres than the previous one. Most of senior shoppers didn't use shopping malls around the time they started appearing in Hungary in the last millenium. By contrast, older generations are going to the mall more commonly in recent years. GfK Hungary (2019) conducted research on the visitors of shopping malls in 2018. In their research, they concluded that while mainly those below 30 years of age are still the ones that mostly make up the clientele of shopping malls of Hungary, ratio of middle-aged and senior purchasers has become significant as well. These obvious changes in demographic processes and shopping behaviour must become a drive to shopping malls' management and units to focus their business policy on the older generations more in the future (Kovács & Sikos T., 2019).

This is a hard to realise task from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, older generations are extremely heterogeneous buyer groups on their own. This makes it hard to affect them with a focused marketing strategy. On the other hand, their generational specifics cause them to need more attention compared to younger generations (Myers & Lumbers, 2008). A relevant example is the adaptation of online communication channels and tools, which is already a mainstay in the younger generations' everyday lives. However, we must also mention that even among the older generations, their usage is spreading steadily (NMHH, 2018). Furthermore, this group has already shown a relatively high level of adaptation in Hungary in 2018. Yet, the speed and method of adapting they show is different to younger generations as well.

My general goal with this research is to analyse the attitudes the clientele of Árkád Budapest shows, and to unearth generation gaps. I aimed to understand the differences in visiting habits among those below 30, between 30 and 60, and above 60. This study is made up of three sections. The first part of the study deals with the choice of location of Árkád Budapest. The second part focuses on the demographic state of the mall's direct neighbourhood. Finally, the third part contains the results of a questionnaire conducted in Árkád Budapest. I also touch on the frequency of the mall's clientele visiting, the average amount spent per capita, and the transportation of choice of the clientele. The analysis also deals with the frequency and value of online purchases, since this is something that has a fundamental effect on the visiting numbers of the physical location of the sales.

ATTRIBUTES OF HUNGARIAN SENIOR CONSUMERS

Generation marketing within developed market economies isn't considered a newcomer of marketing practice anymore. In the United States, it's been in use since the 1950's, since the business sector quickly identified the usefulness of segmenting the consumers by age groups (Konczosné et al. 2010). During the following decades, most welfare countries with mature economies generally applied it, and the topic of senior marketing amassed a significant amount of literature sources (e.g. Schiffman & Sherman, 1991; Angell, Megicks, Memery, Heffernan & Howell, 2012; Rousseau & Venter, 2014).

By the time of the Millennium, not only such countries dealt with such a marketing practice however. Even in the ex-Social Bloc countries of Eastern Europe, not to mention developing countries are also applying it in practice. Of these, China is one deserving a special mention, as it has a significant business potential, and at the same time, a unique demography (Eberstadt, 2019). In post-socialist countries (one of which is Hungary), marketing science only became important after the Regime Change (Sikos T., 2009). This late entry had palpable effects both in the practical application of the senior age group's research and that of consumer attitude of such countries, Hungary included. This is exactly the reason for the region having many unique features, which can't be likened to either the United States or Western Europe. However, we can also clearly see that the number of studies dealing with the topic is on the rise, albeit gradually, since the Millennium happened (e.g. Csizmadia & Győri Szabó, 2014; Lesakova, 2016; Dołhasz, 2016).

However, methods of marketing analysis were mainly developed in the Western world. Nowadays, the groupings mainly accepted in generation marketing are based on Generations, a work by Neil Howe and William Strauss (Strauss & Howe, 1991). In this book, the authors differentiate between six active groups around the Globe. Members of a generation are at the same time, the representatives of an age group hard to determine perfectly. However, their historical experiences align, since they lived through the same socio-economic and cultural phenomena during their lifetimes. Therefore, we can say that there are multiple similarities in their behaviour patterns, and as such, their consumer habits (Törőcsik, 2009). Today, most of the senior age group's members are from the "baby boomer" generation. They were born between 1946 and 1960, after the World Wars concluded. In this generation, we can also find the so-called Ratkó Children (1952-1956), which makes this age group the largest in Hungary.

They are different in various aspects from their preceding generation, the "veterans", who were born before 1945. "Baby boomers" are mostly conservative in their outlook, but they are more open than "veterans" who were born before the war, hence, of strict norms of life. They weren't subject to such unreasonable financial constraints that plagued their parents. Furthermore, most of them lived their golden years in a long-lasting World Economy conjuncture, mostly in a secure way of life. This had an effect both on the relative size of savings and the consumption initiative. However, "baby boomers" were all born into socialism, meaning they don't know the feudal political-economic system of earlier days, but many of their members also consider market economies somewhat foreign (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2019).

Above age 60, each age group shows an increase in the female ratio, which is another factor affecting consumer behaviour. It's also important to note that for those of higher age, households made up of a single individual are more prevalent. This is especially notable due to the higher mortality rate of men (Molnár & M. Barna, 2012).

The income of the elder generations compared to the others can also be called advantageous. According to HCSO, the net income per capita was actually the second highest in the elderly households, exceeded only by middle-aged households in 2017. Seniors financial affairs can also be reliably called stable, as most of them are pensioners.

Specifics of their age also have a significant effect on their habits of purchase, hence, their consumer structure is different to that of younger age groups. It's also important to note that only their main attributes can be 'generalised' reliably, as those of older age groups are usually a heterogeneous segment of the market. We can conclude that purchases related to healthcare are twice the upper average of Hungary for the elderly. The reason is their deteriorating health, a natural consequence of aging. Furthermore, they spend more of their income for lodging upkeep, furniture, and foodstuffs as well (HCSO, 2014). Among those above 60, internet usage is an even less widespread method of spending free time, when compared to countries of the European Union with a higher than average level of livelihood (Győri Szabó, Csizmadia, & Kovács, 2015). Purchasing of seniors have multiple functions. For most of them, it's more than simply satisfying the material necessities, and also has importance as a method of interaction among peers (Kang & Ridgway, 1996).

SOURCE AND METHOD

The selection criteria for observed shopping mall was complex, but the most important factors were long time duration of being an operational shopping centre and impact on shopping culture in the region. The research territory, Örs Vezér Tér, is among of the most famous shopping places in Hungary for decades, especially because of its shopping centres. Sugár Üzletközpont was the first mall opened in this place in 1980. It is one of the oldest shopping centre in Budapest and still exists today. Sugár Üzletközpont was the most Western-style shopping centre in the socialist era of Hungary, so it had a great influence on shopping behaviour of current older generations. This shopping mall can be considered the "twin" of Árkád Budapest. It was built directly next to Sugár Üzletközpont after the change of regime in Hungary. Nowadays, Árkád Budapest has become the dominant shopping centre between two of them (Sikos T., 2018).

The data used for evaluating populace state came from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and the KEKKH (Central Office of Governance and Electronic Public Services) database. The attitude analysis of those visiting a shopping mall came from a random sampling, on-site questionnaire conducted in 2017. A total of 156 participants answered the questionnaire in the Árkád Budapest[21], whom were sorted into three age groups based on their respective ages. Among the participants, there were 64 young adults (below 30), 43 were middle-aged (30-60), and 49 were elderly (60 and above). The three age groups analysed separately as part of the questionnaire were very distinct in age as the visitors of the shopping mall. Nearly 61% of the young adults (below 30) stated that they are still in education. Nearly all middle-aged were visitors with a job, meaning economically active. Finally, nearly 86% of the elderly (60 and above) were retired. 72% of the participants were from Budapest, and 68% were female. Processing the data from the questionnaire was conducted using the basic toolset of descriptive statistics, since the number of cases in the database made it impossible to conduct multi-variable mathematical statistics methods.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Evaluation of Árkád Budapest's physical location

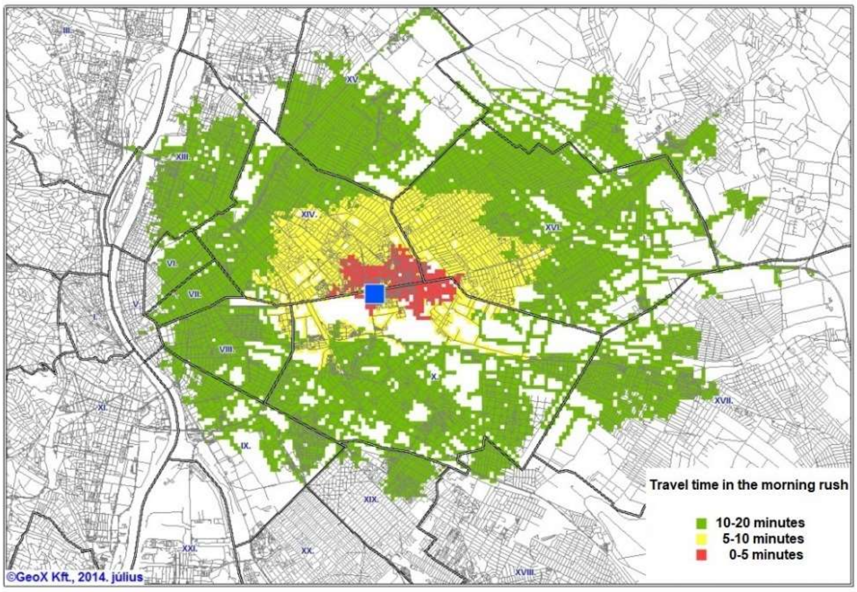
Árkád Budapest opened its gates on 20. March, 2002, in the Örs Vezér Tér, and by today, became one of the most liked shopping mall of Hungary. The shopping mall is on the border

[21] The questionnaire, and the processing of data was done in cooperation with Zsombor Kápolnai Ph.D student, a member of SZIU's Enyedi György Regional Doctoral School.

between Budapest's X. and XIV. Districts, in the old brownfield belt of Budapest. The area of interest Árkád Budapest has is regional, and as such, larger than the 20-minute approach distance. However, according to various questionnaires, it's obvious that most of the participants come from nearby districts.

Its successful operations are highly dependent on the excellent choice of location (see in more detail: Sikos T., 2018). One of the most notable advantages to its physical location is that it's in the commute centre of the capitol. This is where the most used subway line of Budapest (M2) meets the similarly highly populated HÉV coming from Gödöllő (H8). This place also houses multiple destinations of various bus lines coming from the agglomeration and the capitol.

Figure 1 Árkád Budapest's area of interest during morning rush hours



Source: http://www.geoindex.hu/wp-content/uploads/01_reggel-1024x724.png

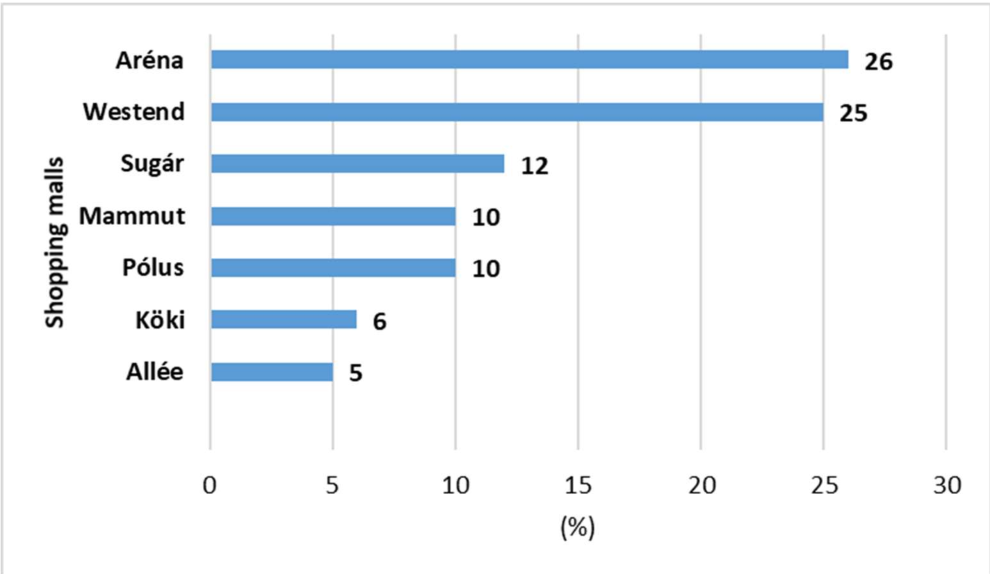
Therefore, the shopping mall's visitors mostly consist of those travelling or changing lines in the area, going to work or school using the same lines. 90% of the young adults below 30 arrived in the shopping mall via public transport. This ratio for the middle-aged group reduced to merely 42%, whereas 53% of the elderly were in a similar situation.

The usage of a personal car was most prevalent for those in their middle-ages, as 42% of the participants from this age group used their own cars to arrive in the shopping mall. Árkád Budapest has a great location from this perspective too, since it can be arrived at from most of the Pest-side districts within 20 minutes, even during morning rush hours (Fig. 1).

Commuting by walking and other means was highest for the elderly (28%). Within the 10-minute range of Árkád Budapest, there are multiple large-scale residential districts. From these, many people, including elderly, arrive in Árkád Budapest. This result is hardly surprising as well, since the effective range of commuting for the elderly is smaller in comparison to that of those in their active ages (Bopp, Der Ananian, & Campbell, 2014).

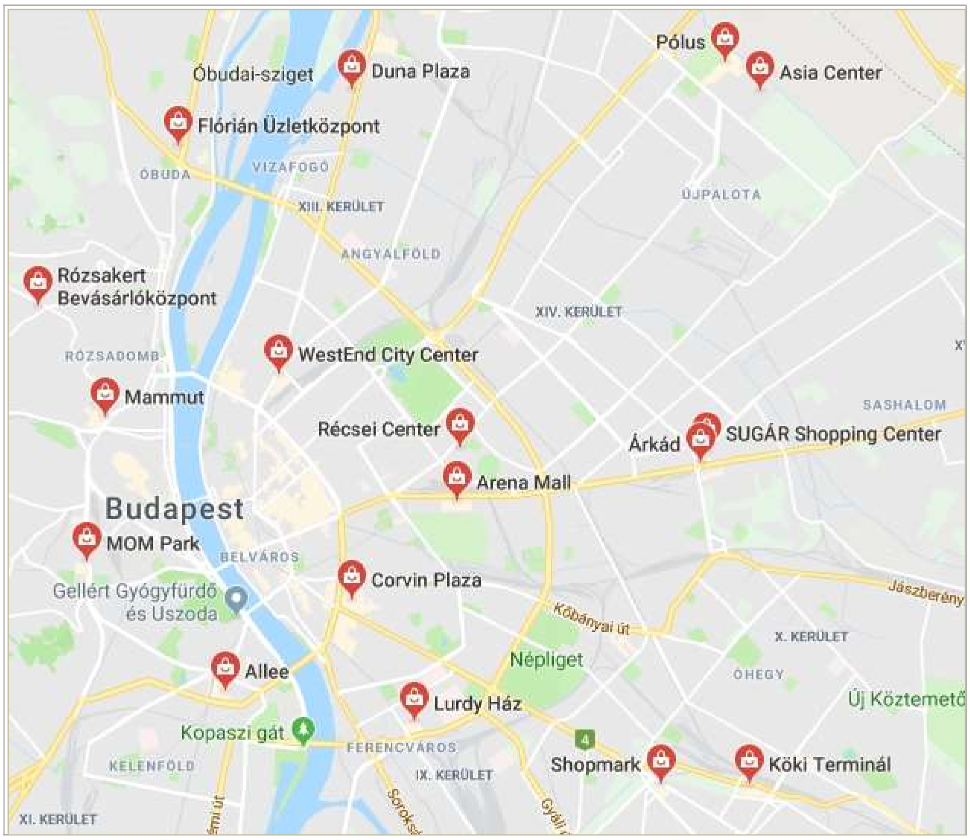
During the analysis of the range of interest, we also have to consider the location of the other shopping malls (Fig. 3) and their own clientele's sizes (Fig. 2). The collected cross-visitation data shows that the most notable competitors are shopping malls similar in size to Árkád Budapest, and those that have a regional sphere of influence. However, we also have to note that the number of shopping malls according to the age groups in question shows significant inconsistencies. This value is 2,39 shopping mall per capita for the younger age groups, 2,16 for the middle-age group, and a significantly lower 1,61 for the elderly.

Figure 2 Clientele of shopping malls, as percentage of total number of answers



Source: own research 2017

Figure 3 Location of the main competitors in 2018



Source: GoogleMap

The main competitors according to the questionnaire were Aréna Mall and WestEnd City Center. However, we also have to consider that among the various age groups, there were once again inconsistencies. Both WestEnd City Center (31%) and Aréna Mall (28%) had higher visitation ratios among those below 30, compared to other age groups. Among the middle-age group's members, Aréna Mall reached up to 26%, whereas WestEnd City Center merely arrived at 18%. And as for the elderly, Aréna Mall (20%) and WestEnd City Center (18%) had similar, albeit the lowest ratings. We should also note the Sugár Business Centre, which is not only neighbouring the Árkád Budapest, but has a direct bridge between the two. This shopping mall got 12% of all answers, finishing in place 3 of shopping malls that got a mention. It's in a specific circumstance, therefore, it's advised to be managed separately during the analysis. It isn't direct competition for Árkád Budapest, since the two trade complexes have a strong cooperation between each other. Their units and services fill in each other’s gaps on the market of capitol shopping malls (Kovács & Sikos T. 2018a). Among the elderly participants, Sugár Business Centre actually got the highest rating (30%).

Age structure of the shopping mall's range

According to the statistical data gathered from HCSO, we can conclude that the population change processes of Budapest are similar to Hungary's own trends. In 2016, the number of those aged above 60 was 469.788, which was 27,68% of the entire population of the capitol. This was higher than the national average. The elderly, be it in numbers or in ratio, have a higher presence within the total populace number.

The capitol's over 60 group isn't significant due to numbers only. Their purchase power is very high as well (Kovács & Sikos T., 2018b). Their most important source of income is their retirement, 38,7% of them have an average of over 150.000 HUF monthly within the capitol. This ratio is only 22,7% nationally, and 15,2% of the retired elderly have a monthly income of 200.000 HUF. This is more than twice of the national average (7,5%) (HCSO, 2016).

According to the official statistical data of the KEKKH, we can conclude that in 2016, a total of 262.314 people were living in the direct area of interest of Árkád Budapest. Within this, the elderly numbered 74.105, which in and of itself could support a smaller shopping mall already. Of the three districts, the XIV. has the eldest populace on average (29,4% are elderly), whereas the XVI. (27,4%) and the X. (25,5%) show a value that's just a bit lower. However, the ratio of elderly was almost the same as that of the capitol itself (27,74%).

The XIV. District has the highest density among all age groups, almost 44% of the total population in the analysis. Furthermore, most of the people in question are within the 10-minute commute range. The X. District with its nearly identical populace (28%) and the XVI. District with yet again, the same number (28%) are quite behind. Therefore, among the districts within the analysis, the XIV. District is the most notable from multiple analysis perspectives.

As it was assumed prior to the analysis, the questionnaire results by living area showed significant differences among the age groups. 61% of the young adults that participated lived in the capitol, whereas this value for the middle-age group reached 76%, and further increased to 84% for the elderly. Nearly 48% of all participants came from the X. XIV. and XVI. Districts, in the reach of the area of interest of Árkád Budapest. The lowest value was similarly for young adults (34%), followed by the middle-age group (54%) and the elderly (61%). Therefore, the effective range of commute for young adults in the sample was larger than that of the middle-age or elderly groups. This is also proven by how 22% of young adults, and 20% of the middle-age group came from a different town of the agglomeration, however, only 14% of the elderly were the same. The visitors that came from the rural areas only made up a notable portion among the young adults (17%).

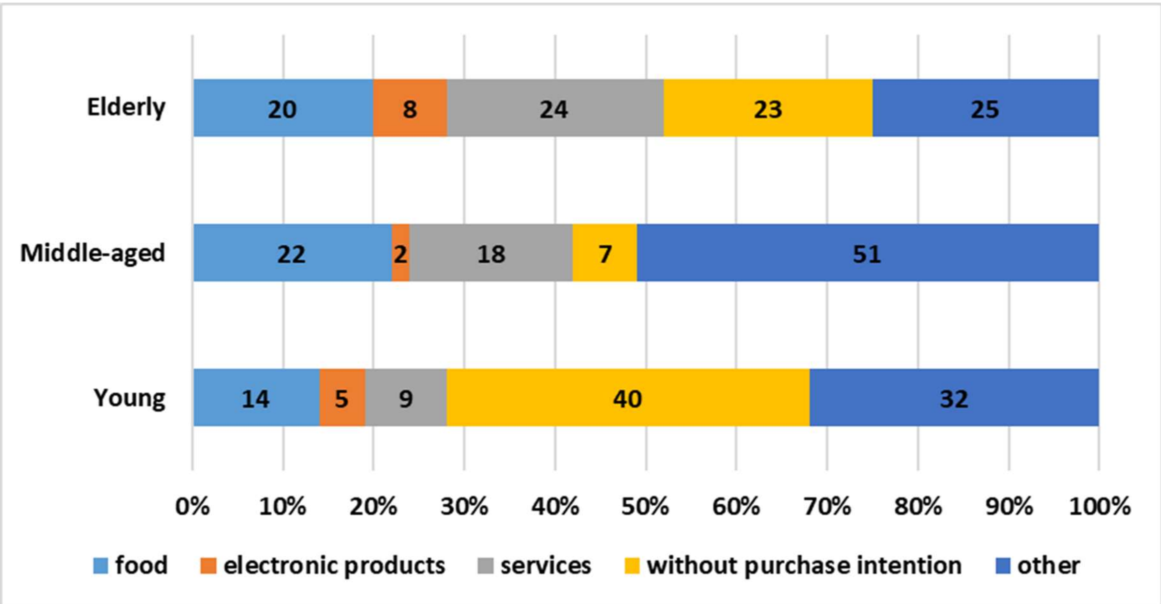
This age structure ambivalence of the area of interest of Árkád Budapest is an excellent attribute in itself. However, it's not easy to satisfy the different needs of different generations simultaneously. This means a notable challenge to the management of the shopping mall.

Analysis of purchase occasions

The goal of analysing purchase occasions is to conduct the comparative analysis of average payouts. For us, internet-based purchases are just as important as those that concluded in the shopping mall, and as such, they are a part of our analysis.

The primary goal of the various age groups when they visit is by no means a negligible point of interest when analysing visitation habits. The reason is that shopping malls can be filled with shops and services that are tailored to the needs of the age groups in question only if these factors are understood. As we could assume in advance, age groups once again produced inconsistencies among each other in this regard. However, these didn't always show up clearly, and weren't completely consistent in significance either (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 Goal of age groups for visiting shopping mall

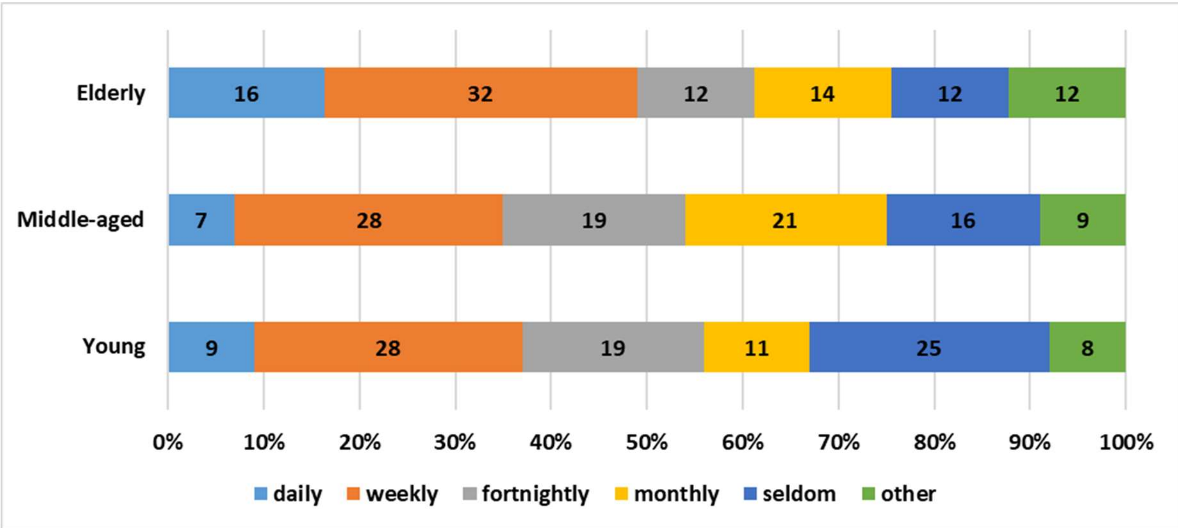


Source: personal research 2017

In the case of the elderly consumers, it's important to note that they had the highest ratio of visiting the shopping mall for a related service. However, the ratio of seniors coming for no particular reason was high as well, albeit quite a lot lower than those of the young adult generation (40%). Their reason for visiting Árkád Budapest was to spend their free time. This ratio can be seen as negligible for the participants in their economically active years (7%). Foodstuffs purchases served as a significant reason for all age groups, but was a comparatively more important reason for those of the middle-age and elderly groups. Buying electric appliances was highest for elderly group (8%). It's obvious that they're not the ones purchasing the highest number of such appliances, however, younger generations usually buy such items from the internet, or other purchase locations. In the 'other' category, the most frequent reasons were pre-organised meetings or purchase of clothing.

We also compared the frequency of visits (Fig. 5) and the amount of money spent on average during visits (Fig. 6) among the various age groups.

Figure 5 Purchase frequency



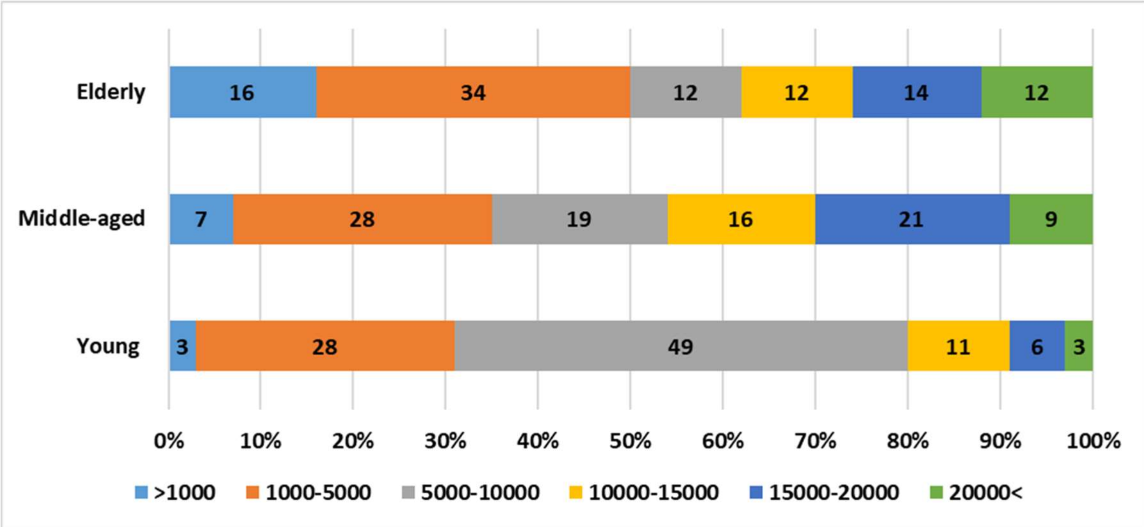
Source: personal research 2017

There were distinct differences between the various age groups from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, among the young adult buyers of Árkád Budapest, there was an extremely high amount of those that visit less than once a month (25%), which is allegedly connected to the high amount of those coming from rural areas. On the other hand, among the elderly consumers, the highest amount of those visiting daily can be observed (16%). This, however, is related to the number of residential areas close by. Furthermore, in the case of the middle-age group, those that visit every two weeks, or every month were the most prevalent, which is understandable due to them usually coming for a set reason, with a pre-determined purchase to make. With their job and family, they have less time to spare as well.

Most of the young adults below 30 were still in education, whereas most of the elderly people above 60 were already retired, and as such, these age groups had a lower potential income compared to the middle-age group. However, the frequency and goal for visiting were also varied for those in their economically active years. About half of the retired spend less than

5.000 HUF every visit. The mid-range values are a relatively small portion (5-20.000 HUF). However, the number of visits with more than 20.000 HUF spent is insignificant. In the case of young adults, the amount spent varies significantly, since nearly half of them spend 5-10.000 HUF a visit, which is the highest among age groups for this category. For the middle-age group, spending above 10.000 HUF is the most frequent.

Figure 6 Average spending by visit (in Hungarian Forint)



Source: personal research, 2017

Nowadays, we can't neglect the internet sales channels either, since the services and the sales achievable using them have a significant effect on shopping malls. In recent years, the time people spent in the shopping mall saw a constant decrease, and in some product groups, the income spent in some actual store locations has been slowly dwindling as well. However, about 90% of sales around the Globe still happens offline, and the two channels are melding together slowly (KPMG, 2018). They become complementary in commerce gradually. In shopping malls, we can see internet-based companies and parcel points more frequently as well.

According to the questionnaire results, among those visiting Árkád Budapest, most purchase using the internet once a month, or even less frequently. However, it's important that the largest group of the elderly buyers (69%) quite simply doesn't use the internet to conduct purchases at all. This counts as a very notable difference compared to the other two age groups (middle-age group: 23%, young adults: 21%). Among those buying via the internet, the middle-age group and the young adult group show no significant difference, since both age groups have a similar ratio of those buying on the internet. However, we can say that the middle-age group does so a bit more frequently. However, those buying on the internet occasionally show no difference to the young adult age group. Yet, our conclusion is that more detailed information can't be extracted due to the limited number of participants in our sample. Looking at the purchase values, lower, mainly less than 10.000 HUF purchases are most notable for young adults, since nearly two-thirds of their group said they buy in this range per visit. The elderly consumers are the most notable in terms of extreme cases, since they frequently conduct purchases both below 5.000 HUF a visit, and more than 20.000 HUF a visit. On the other hand, the average amount spent a visit for the middle-age group shows a much more balanced outline.

The results on the usage frequency of the e-parcel point show that they were used by only every fifth participant during our data collection. Even they only used it once a month, or not even that frequently. The young adults and the middle-aged used these points more frequently (20% and 21% respectively), whereas using them wasn't prevalent to that level for elderly people (14%). We must note that if we look at the ratios only among those buying on the internet, 25% of young adults and 27% of the middle-aged said that they use the e-parcel point service, but almost half (47%) of the elderly claimed that they use it.

SUMMARY

Árkád Budapest is a shopping mall with a regional area of interest. The clientele is mostly made up of middle-aged people economically active, and young adults still in education. However, the amount of elderly, mainly retired is on the increase as well. These results show similarity to previous researches were conducted in this topic area before.

The sphere of Árkád Budapest's influence is rather wide, so those above 60 years of age can also become a significant group within all visitors. Most of the retired come from the nearby residential areas, and are frequent visitors of the shopping mall. However, they have purchase habits that differ significantly from those of young adults and the middle-aged, from various perspectives. All this results in the fact that shopping malls should dedicate more focus to the elderly in the future.

The results of the empirical research suggested conclusions on the frequency of visits, their goals and the commute ranges which were all consistent with international literature regarding habits of the elderly. It's important to note that using different services had a higher ratio than for younger generations among their reasons for visiting. Results validated that the elderly should be counted as a heterogeneous consumer group from this perspective as well. This was clearly shown by how balanced the answers regarding the reason for visiting the shopping mall were among them. Among the elderly, one notable group is those who visit daily, but spend little. They are mainly retired, and due to their numbers, they should have specific importance.

In a generation comparison, the elderly showed the most notable difference compared to the younger visitors in terms of internet usage.

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