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Characteristics of customer behaviour in certain
decisions on purchasing of long-term, investment-
type services

Theses of Doctoral Dissertation

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1. Aim and hypotheses of the dissertation

The Social Science Encyclopaedia, published in 1928, determined the terminology of insurance as the followings: „It is a hazardous contract in which one of the parties (the insured) performs definitely, the other party (insurer) performs only after the insurance event.” This definition calls the attention to a special tendency and it does not show positive opinion and it has not changed considerably since then. Core of the insurance is trust and marketing want to built upon it in the sector as well. Every insurance company tries to form their image to build and strengthen their clients’ trust both in institution of insurance and in insurance companies.

Despite this effort clients are distrustful of insurance companies or of their agents, advisors; moreover they often think that buying certain insurance is riskful, especially if it means long-term commitment for them. Clients devaluate their risks, thereby their demands on insurance, their current life-status determines their insurance priorities and as laics they consider these financial services in a different way than insurance experts. Interpersonal relationships, emerging during an insurance counselling, exercise definite influence on the purchase of this type of services. This is the reason why insurance marketing covers complex problems and issues.

My interest in this theme has evolved during my university years where, as an economist on specialization of finance-insurance, I have met a lot of information concerning the theme of insurance, which established my professional interest. Along with the professionalism I have known the human side of insurances due to my work as an insurance sales representative at the beginning then as a marketing manager.

In my researches more and more factors allowed to make a conclusion that – due to any kind of reason – the clients and the insurers judge the insurance and the institutional system of the insurance from a different viewpoint, not talking about the solution of the individual insurance needs. Naturally either deepening the problems, in special cases the concrete conflicts, arising from the different view or generating additional problems is not the aim of my researches. Its aim is anyway to shed light on the fact that in a consumer – service provider relation, where consumer decisions are born specially for long term and where the product, manifesting the service, is based on complicated mathematical–statistical (actuary) methods, it is important to know the factors that define it and influence the clients' consumer behaviour.

Considering, that today – in a scientific sense – few people deal with insurances (in the literature we find examples rather only on more simple problems of online marketable types of policy) which can be marketed online example), and on the other hand, though in terms of consumer behaviour and services marketing, insurance can be considered as a special „good”, I find it important to present my knowledge systematized in the paper for the Hungarian scientific public life and call the attention to the social, economic aspects of these problems. Keeping the proposals of the dissertation workshop-debate in mind, I aimed to complete the work that, taking into account most aspects of the consumer behaviour, forms and justifies a model that will be applicable and can be tested not only in the insurance sector but in other services demanding long-term decisions. In the course of four researches on the model I made the investigations concerning the model's every single elements aiming – independently of the type of research and keeping in mind the limitations in the sample size - to justify or even reject the formulated hypotheses.

1.1. Problem statement, aim of the dissertation

The fundamental view of marketing, that puts the client needs into the focus of the activity. The insurance, as the accomplishment of a service, will be successful if the insurer has accurate knowledge about the insurance needs, the potential clients' values, aims of the clients, and the client has information on the insurance service and on the fact that he/she received such a problem solving that meets his/her needs. The insurance marketing, due to the sharpening competition and from material-financial reasons, is important for the single insurance companies, and at the same time the aim is to promote and improve the acceptance by the consumers.

The insurance is a financial service where a client gets risk-assumption, safety guarantee and a payment promise in return for the paid premium in case of his/her damage. So the insurance is an abstract good and - as the services generally - intangible. At the time of taking out the insurance policy the client undertakes an obligation onto the continuous payment of the premium, the insurer onto the taking over of the risk respectively. The client however, directly, does not get any kind of perceptible equivalent in exchange for his money, and that is why it is necessary to provide a clear explanation, information for the customer before selling the product.

The above statements are true for the life insurance as well, but it is necessary to emphasize, that compared to insurances formulated in generalities (that contains all the

property insurances, all the personal protection, within this the life insurances) the life insurances are typically long-term services, when the contract, in the premium payment period – what can be even the full duration – is in a sleeping phase, and payment service of the insurer will occur at the time of expiration or at the supervision of risk event. The insurance (including the life insurance as well) has special parameters among services, so the role of these characteristics goes strong in the purchase decision process. **My aim is to place the insurance as service in the issues of long term shopping decisions.**

Also the special merchandise nature of insurance justifies that **I should map special aspects of consumer behaviour of the insurances** and examine the factors that can play role in the attitude of individuals towards insurances or in their „insurance-choice” process.

The exploration of factors effecting clients’ demand and defining and influencing purchase process makes possible to line up a system that describes the long-term service type choice. Creating a model, which summarizes all those factors, influencing the insurance-type choice, was included in the objectives of my dissertation.

Role of seller is marked up in services, or in many cases it turns into an exclusive determinant. Although services are intangible by their physical nature, after all they can be made tangible. The insurance materializes in the form of the insurance policy, the client buys the tangible carrier of the promise concerning the service so. Just because intermediaries can be switched into the distribution process. For selling insurances insurance companies developed mostly one-level (producer→intermediary→consumer) sales channel (Kotler – Keller [2006], p. 617). The intermediary is the person who personifies the service provider for the client. He/she is the person who surveys the needs, provides with information, and if the essence is too complicated or not understandable for the customer, the latter will judge the insurance as too risky, he/she can desist from it so. It can be important to know whether **judgement of insurances and spread of their “consumption” is derived from the difference between the point of view of service provider (intermediary) and that of buyer?**

Insurance market covers wide range of services that include the possibilities of shifting of risks concerning property and life (see chapter 3.2., p. 16) at the same time. Complexity of insurance build-ups makes personal dimension reasonable (purchase process of a complex life-insurance would rather demand an intermediary, while simple property insurance does not either), anyway more complex “products” include the most risks of covering adequate demands on insurance. That is why, foregoing with the researches of the dissertation, it seemed to be justified narrowing of product-scope, and to come to the fore the more

sophisticated products (pre-research with questionnaires – insurance; TGI secondary-analyses – personal protection; quantitative research – pension endowment insurance). Moreover at macroeconomical level problems of pension system and need of self-care support the shifting of the focus of my research. **This is the way we can reach the examination of customers' behaviour concerning pension aimed life insurances from the original views on general insurances.**

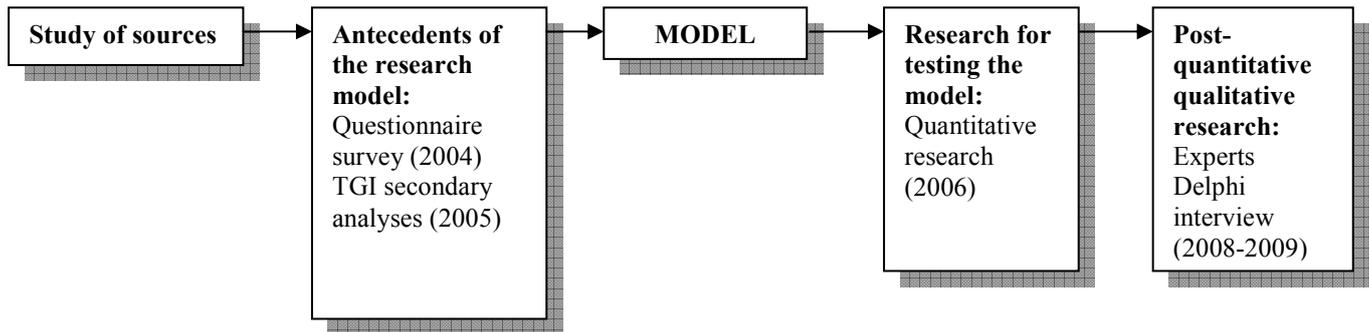
Main goal of my paper is to find answers among the factors of customers behaviour to the question that how these factors can influence the clients' behaviour on choosing insurances and if in the relation of service provider – client there are any differences in their view that effect general thoughts on insurances.

In the first part of the dissertation we can know the characteristic elements of the insurance market, where we can follow the development of judgements on insurances throughout certain era of the history. Then I show the product of insurance market, I examine the problem of pension system (including the role of long-term savings) and the characteristics of insurance services. I introduce marketing characteristics of clients, grounded to the literature background of customers' behaviour, where setting in of the approach of risks has a relevant role in the well-known aspects of clients' behaviour. I will cover new trends of clients' behaviour and the role of trends, counter-trends and changed customers' habits.

The second large unit of my dissertation introduces the examinations which are the bases of research model: questionnaire research of client-attitudes concerning capability of personal relation forming the public judgement and its results, or the results of a secondary analyses on the TGI database, that examined family relations, risk personality, income status and role of attitudes on money in purchasing insurances. The above-mentioned two researches served as antecedents and the results of these show the objective and subjective system of conditions when choosing among the types of insurances.

In the third part of the dissertation further quantitative researches were conducted for testing the model, where lifestyle variables, variables of other money concerned aspects, and customer attitudes were in the focus. From results of examination on clients' side the most significant ones were confronted with insurance purchasing managers within the frame of a panel research by Delphi method with special regards to the fact that service is not free from stereotypes of the employees.

1. figure: Build up of the thesis



1.2. Hypotheses

With the help of the statements of literature and the results of desk researches we can have complex picture on the issues of insurances, including questions on service provider-claimant side. The difference between the aspects of experts and laics in clients' behaviour and in the selling strategy and communication of insurer can be grasped. Starting from the above-mentioned I have determined the **hypotheses of the dissertation**.

The life period of the individuals basically influences the consumption (Hofmeister-Tóth [2008]; Kotler – Keller [2006]). The first versions of the life period hypotheses (Modigliani – Brumberg [1952]; Ando – Modigliani [1963]) examined the relationship between saving intention and current income. According to the researches in Hungarian households (Tóth – Árvai [2001]; Ulbert – Csanaky [2004]) savings shows close relation, beside gender and qualification, with the property and income status as well.

H1: insurers and clients judge influence of income status on purchasing intention of personal insurance in a different way.

From the non-physical nature of the service risk premiumling of the clients is especially high, role of perceived risk in insurance purchasing is dominant (Málovics et al. [2005]). Individuals have different number and differently deep information and experience of decision that determine the measure and development of risk perception. (Engländer – Slovic – Szabó [1988]; Slovic [1987]; Málovics et al. [2005]). Different points of view in risk perception of experts and laics (Málovics et al. [2005]; Zoltayné [2002]) have an effect on service purchasing. Attitudes towards risks, (Foscht-Swoboda [2005]; Trommsdorff [2004]), risk attitude (Pennings-Smidts [2000]; Smidts [1997]; Weber-Milliman [1997]) can be

interpreted from two points of view: on the one hand it means the attitude of individuals concerning risks of their life, and on the other hand evaluation of risks of insurances and insurers is relevant as well.

H2: Risk perception is evaluated by the insurers as clients are not aware of risks related to their life, while clients, beyond their own risks, percept risks concerning insurers and transactions.

Bases of researches on family consumption are that family is a sphere where individuals' system of values and norms develops and is protected during their lifetime (Andics [2006]). According to the sociological and anthropological approach to risks reference groups transmits them (Zoltayné [2002]). Family has an obvious effect on savings decisions of individuals. Family status in itself is a kind of lifestyle variables (Burnett – Palmer [1984]). Among Rokeach values family safety is well-known (Rokeach [1973]) that plays role in long-term decisions of customers market without any doubt. Although these type of customer decisions has men's dominancy, decisions are made together with women (Pape [2002]).

H3: Clients and insurers see differently the influence of family status on taking out insurance.

We can meet diversity of definitions on lifestyle in literature. Hofmeister-Tóth [2008] determined that “lifestyle is the general way how people live and how they spend their time and their money.” It means that lifestyle of individuals is shown from products and services they purchase.

H4: According to insurance experts lifestyle of customers has less effect on purchasing personal insurance than according to clients.

Characteristics of insurances can cause difficulties when selling; communication makes possibility to compensate these disadvantages. In current communication transmitting agent channel that is made up from (among others) client network in the case of insurers, have special role. Judgment of client depends on personality, professionalism, communication, attitude, outward and inward characteristics of the agent.

H5: Clients and insurers consider different characteristics of the agents as important in an insurance purchasing process.

The Hungarian pension system has significantly changed due to the reform of 1998. Classic economic theories and models deal basically with individuals as rational and well-informed persons (Simonovits [2004a], [2004b]). Banyár–Mészáros [2004] represent however the point of view that individuals are not able to pay attention to their short- or long-term interests and to make intertemporal decision. Reaching retiring age cannot be mean as risk: „adequate way of preparation on declining years is saving, in place of insurance” (Németh Gy. [2003], p. 60-61).

H6: Relation between preferring long-term investment forms and purchasing pension insurance are considered by insurers and clients in a different way.

In the classic purchasing process also insurance clients go through 5 phases: phases of problem-recognition, information collection, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing decision and post-purchase behaviour. (Kotler [2002] p. 233-240; Hofmeister-Tóth [2008] p. 219-240; Kenesei – Kolos [2007] p. 92-93; Kotler – Keller [2006] p. 266-276; Bauer – Berács [2006] p. 80-84; Józsa [2000] p. 71-75). The phase of information collection has outstanding role in customer behaviour, since clients often make their decision with little information. This state can be observed not only before the decision of service purchasing but also in every phases of the service; the developed internal unpleasant feeling is compensated by the so called positive illusions (Taylor-Brown [1988]).

H7: Status of personal and online information in an insurance purchasing process is considered by insurers and clients in a different way.

We can see transformation of customers’ attitude towards money in investment decisions in customers markets: linking of money and ideas becomes possible. People spend much more for long-term improving of their quality of life, and they do not think already on exclusively such financial solutions that make the illusion of fast money (Gerken [1993]).

H8: According to clients and insurers those (qualitative and quantitative) aspects that influence customers’ decision on purchasing personal insurance have different importance.

2. Methodology of the dissertation and the research model

Insurance purchasing process is a really complex problem both from the aspects of customers' behaviour due to the characteristics of insurance services. Among the factors of customers' behaviour there are such objective elements that determine, other subjective elements rather modulate or modify individuals' (personal) insurance purchasing process. Nevertheless management of insurance sector is not free from certain stereotypes that do not promote the development of equality in the "fight" of laics-experts.

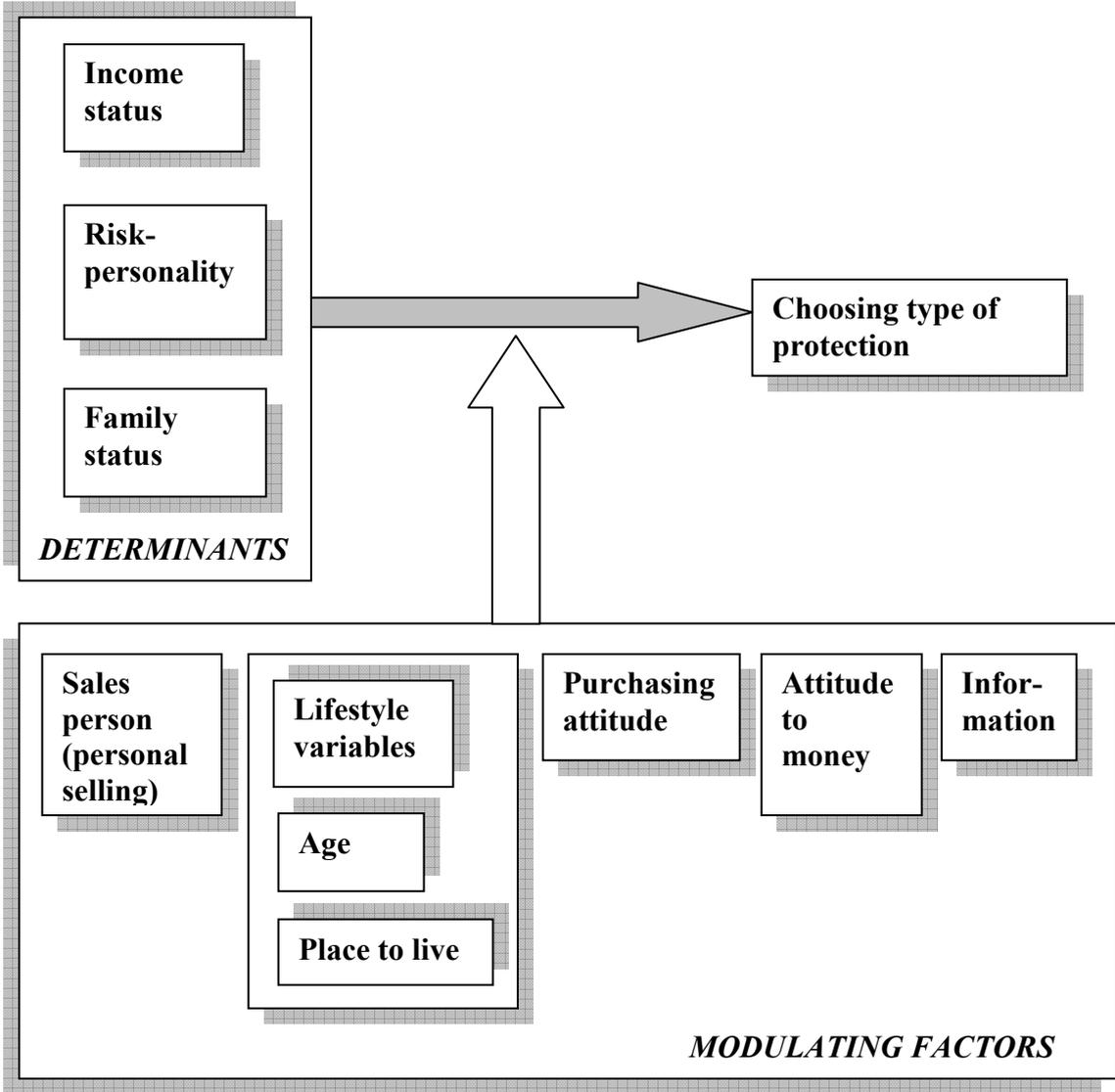
Review of the characteristic elements of insurance market and literature background on customers' behaviour in insurance purchasing together with ideas being derived from the review grounded the research hypotheses and methodology. *As an antecedent of the research model* results of two examinations were presented: *a quantitative questionnaire survey* where I wanted to know the role of personal relations in insurance purchasing process and how people in their active life phases believe on insurance or rather on the insurance companies.

The other pre-research was related to a subprogram of a research project trying to explore modelling of customer lifestyle. The topic of research in Business Science Institution of Faculty of Economic Science of the University of Szeged was the special area of sociology of consumption: an examination of consumption structure of determined segments of customers and refinement of the methodology of lifestyle researches. This part of the research aimed the verification of the nationwide representative results of the *Target Group Index (TGI 2005)*, with special regards to the examination of segment overlaps and identification of group deviations in sociology of consumption.

Results of these two researches have shown those factors that determine or rather can modulate the choice among certain personal insurance types, so assignment of insurance-choice's determinants and modulators became possible. Changes in own income have the biggest effect on arising customers'demand for insurances. **Income status** by nature influences the ability of insurance purchasing. Risk perception towards debt and certain investment forms and judgement of the importance of being insured can derive from **risk-personality**. Factor of **family status** have shown relationship with choice of certain type of insurance in every cases. In the research model I considered these ones as determinants. Determinant is something that defines the output of the model (choice of insurance type) without modulators. As we have seen it in the case of all the three factors there are secondary sources and tendencies of insurance activities as results of the pre-research so during research phases following the modelling I have not made examinations considering these factors.

From the results of the questionnaire survey was found out that at this financial service the insurance sales representative can significantly influence the process. The role of the information is similar, since according to the asked persons the information, available on the Internet, are good, but require additional explanation, so this electronic channel is only partly able to replace the agent's role in insurances.

2. figure: General model on choice of insurance



In addition, the way of life of individuals (**lifestyle variables**), and the **attitude to money** (considering savings etc.), and the **purchasing attitudes** also make influence on need for certain insurance types, or on their choice. The above factors (the **salesperson, lifestyle, age, place of living, purchasing attitudes, attitude and information relating to money**) function as *modulator*, rather tinging than determining the process. I consider factors, which

strengthen or weaken process determined by determinants as modulators. In the following researches after modelling it was worth examining more deeply the place of lifestyle, place of living, age and attitude on money in the model, since results from secondary sources and pre-research were limited. In the researches to test the model, I did not examine the role of sales representative and information, since I got results from the pre-research on it, that show their role in the model.

During the pre-researches some element's place in the model proved to be correct, while other factors have shown that their role requires further research. Starting from the above model, during the quantitative research I have examined the modulating role of certain elements, like lifestyle, attitude to money and purchasing attitude in long-term immaterial investment decision of customers. My chosen research target group was the buyer of insurance products, with special regards to pension endowment insurance. Basic concept of the research was that customer groups from quantitative survey created a network that seems to be necessary to explore the social finestructure. My aim was not to show the statistically average customer, but to explain the deviations from average, to explain the fact that cannot be derived from the TGI. The aim of the research was to further test lifestyle customer groups, which can be gained from TGI database with multivariate data analyses, with primary quantitative research. By this method overlaps between the different segments, differences from the segments (deviancies) could be drawn and instability of segments could be examined.

I made the examination only on since in the TGI secondary analyses, in case of certain attitudes, coherency with pension insurance was almost everywhere seen, moreover practically every premium reserve insurance can be thought as pension endowment. I have found significant relationship in five cases considering hypotheses of the research. One hypothesis was partly confirmed and four hypotheses have not significant relationship. With further analyses over 50, in case of non-hypothesised relation, I realized significant relationship. Based on the received results I have determined the factors within modulators that modify the process drew in the model into positive or negative direction (positive and negative modulators).

The presented three researches examined all the elements of my model in the clients' side, but for the test of hypotheses, considering certain factors, received results should confront to the viewpoint of a group of experts working in insurance industry. Practice of insurance market is not free from stereotypes on the motivation of clients, so it was not uninteresting to compare the results of research on clients' side. In the research methodology

post-quantitative qualitative researches' role is improving for the refinement of interpretation of quantitative results. The examination of this issue is reasonable because of the fact that research antecedents are quite sporadic. That is why I compared the most relevant results of clients' side researches with stereotype opinion of workers in insurance industry within the frame of qualitative research of Delphi method, independently of the fact that it was a confirmed hypotheses or not or a research by-product. Delphi is such a technique that is suitable to reach consensus with multiple repetition, so participant experts have the possibility to refine their approach and to deal with the complex problem.

Delphi asking contained a three-step iteration due to the phenomenon of panel stress, on a 24, a 19, and at last 16 experts' panel. It seems to be developed consensus in experts' opinion in 13 cases of the determined 20 statements, while in 7 cases opinions show less possibility on the consensus. In these latter cases experts' opinion divided in two representative groups.

3. Evaluation of the results, conclusions

3.1. Evaluation of the results

Based on the results of above-mentioned researches we can state if hypotheses determined at problem posing became true. Evaluation of results was made possible by comparing the results and statistical significancies (chapter 5.1.4., 5.2.1., 6.1.1. and 6.2.4.) from sample examination at clients' side and generalized results of Delphi research on expert panel, under the Grounded Theory (Glaser–Strauss [1967]; Corbin–Strauss [1990]; Flint et al. [2002]). I accomplish the interpretation of result according to this:

In the case of hypothesis H1, *insurers and clients judge influence of income status on purchasing intention of personal insurance in a different way*, on the one hand at the questionnaire survey of personal relation we got a result that changes in income status have strong effect on the arising of demand for insurances. On the other hand, in TGI analyses it became clear that those attitudes determining income status (e.g. notion of using credit cards and intention to save) show coherence with the purchasing of saving nature life insurances. Among the results of quantitative researches it became clear that those who think purchasing with credit card is good, do not have pension endowment life insurance because they want to realize safety of retiring years by other sources. Opinion of experts does not absolutely show this result. Two different aspects were realized: the one is that there is not a relation between income status, intend to saving and premium reserve life insurances since there are plenty

other – more preferable – investment forms. The other aspect identifies itself with the opinion of clients' side. Concerning credits and long term savings we can state in sum that according to the experts long-term savings can be viable along with credits, however according to one of the groups dispreference of saving along with credit can be true at only the middle class, while the other group states definitely that there are different goals of these two financial solutions and that is why they do not eliminate each other. Taking into account that opinion of experts are not homogeneous, **H1 hypothesis can partly be accepted.**

In the case of H2 hypothesis, *risk perception is evaluated by the insurers as clients are not aware of risks related to their life, while clients, beyond their own risks, perceive risks concerning insurers and transactions*, examination at clients' side showed that a high percentage of the customers (almost 85%) does not premiuml that he/she is an equal partner of the insurer. Moreover importance of being insured, perception of riskiness of different forms of investments and reluctance at debt have definite relationship with choosing of endowment insurance (endowment, mixed, unit-linked). From the above mentioned we can see that risk perception of clients is determined by risks and hazards of their own life and their risk perception concerning insurers as well. Concerning statements on risk-personality when asking the experts, opinions show in the same direction as premium reserved life insurances have not the ability to debt management, unit-linked insurances may complete this role. The experts uniformly represent the standpoint that any insurances are able to create a safety feeling, but the advisor has to survey correctly the suitable insurance amount for the client.

Similar to the afore, risk perception emphasizes the role of advisor in relation of long-term savings since they think that clients are not aware of risks to their own life, which can cross the realization of savings. According to the above **H2 hypothesis was accepted.**

According to H3 hypothesis, *clients and insurers see differently the influence of family status on taking out insurance*. Examinations at clients' side show that family status has coherence in its tendency with choosing of certain insurances, where there was seen that choosing endowment insurance was significant in families with 1 or 2 children. According to the experts' opinion insurance purchasing intention increases at clients with family since responsibility and risk perception is higher than the average. **That is why H3 hypothesis is not accepted.**

Results of researches on clients' side of H4 hypothesis, *according to insurance experts lifestyle of customers has less effect on purchasing personal insurance than according to clients*, acknowledged that in a family's life, with the progress of children's age, intention to taking out pension insurance, arising from the motivation of taking care of others, decreases,

but in the case of family with little children we can find strongly significant relationship. In contrast with the above the standpoint of experts is that in purchasing pension aimed life insurance self-care has significant motivation power and less the motivation of taking care of others. Whether conscious career planning emphasizes keeping of life quality at the same level, even during pension years, both at clients' and at experts' side answer was yes. The stress and performance pressure was marked as positive modulator at clients' side, which means that these variables on lifestyle make the purchasing of pension aimed insurances more emphatic since once everybody wants to slow down és live more calmly. In contrast with this statement most of the experts stated that because of the stressful lifestyle there is less money and attention to thinking of pension, that is why long term savings keep in background. **H4 hypothesis was partly accepted.**

H5 hypothesis stated that *clients and insurers consider different characteristics of the agents as important in an insurance purchasing process*. At the questionnaire survey of personal relation it became clear that professional skills and ability of establishing relations appear really markedly in clients' behaviour and being informed, reliability and discretion, moreover being helpful has significant role as well. Two opinions of asked experts only partly reflected this. The group that agreed with the importance of professional skills and making relations, for long term successfulness of agents, added some more characteristic among that neither reliability nor discretion and being helpful was marked. The other group of experts says that success of selling does not depend on professional skills, but simply on making relations, sympathy and trust. However from the results of questionnaire survey we can see that at clients' side sympathy and trust concerning the agent has not a relevant role in selection among insurance companies. **H5 hypothesis was accepted.**

H6 hypothesis assumed that *relation between preferring long-term investment forms and purchasing pension insurance are considered by insurers and clients in a different way*. Due to the asking of clients we can say that those who prefer long-term investment forms, have pension aimed insurance because of its aimed and regular characteristics and because they do not want to give up anything at their retiring years. According to experts' opinion preferring long-term investment forms has not close contact with pension aimed insurances since it is not sure that the aim is to keep living standard at retiring years and – what is more - plenty other investment forms are available as well. Usability of unit-linked type insurances and role of advisors is emphasized at pension-aimed savings. Experts think it important to determine precisely long term aims/goals by the clients, however they think that clients may prefer long term investments, most of them do not take even a step for. **H6 hypothesis was accepted.**

Examining H7 hypothesis, *status of personal and online information in an insurance purchasing process is considered by insurers and clients in a different way*, we revealed at clients' side that according to their opinion, understandable answers on the arising questions influenced the output of insurance contract binding, they think it necessary to let the customer know the different type of insurances. They think that information can be accessed at the Internet as good, but they need more explanation, so this electric channel can partly compensate the role of agents. Experts' aspect is that clients make their purchase on emotional bases, so role and responsibility of advisor is increased from the point of provided information. In connection with information on Internet there was not a uniform standpoint among the experts. According to one group of experts Internet can compensate the human dimension in case of simple insurances, where online information are enough to the decision, but in case of a complex insurance these type of information are not suitable. Other group believe in human dimension exclusively in connection with selling (purchasing) process of insurances. **H7 hypothesis was partly accepted.**

Examining clients' side of H8 hypothesis, *according to clients and insurers those (qualitative and quantitative) aspects that influence customers' decision on purchasing personal insurance have different*, in researches concerning personal relations we revealed that most of clients choose insurance company for shifting their risk according to the measure of premiums and suitability of construction. Among the aspect of decision, previous positive experiences and reputation of the insurance company and moreover experiences of acquaintances have significant role. It is obvious that personality of agent and advertisements have little effect on the choice of the clients. So, we can say that customers make their purchasing decision and bind their insurance contract under information based on facts and experiences. Questionnaire research, examined attitude of customers as well, approved that the above-mentioned two aspects are the first in criteria system of clients. According to experts' view quantitative parameters (measure of payable premium, prospected yield) are more relevant at the clients' choice on insurance than suitability of insurance or any other qualitative parameters. They think that quantitative parameters attract clients at their purchasing based on emotional aspects. **H8 hypothesis was partly accepted.**

In sum we can say that the bulk of the above-mentioned hypotheses are partly or completely proved. This let us to conclude that clients and persons working in insurance industry consider factors (and their role) influencing insurance purchasing process in a different way. In such a way laic-expert relation is supported by not only insurance

professional skills and different level of knowledge on insurance conditions, but stereotype (in certain cases incorrect) reaction of experts on aspects of customer behaviour. As a form of this domination of unit-linked insurances can be observed in insurance markets, that stands out also among preferences of sales-experts. Unit-linked insurances can be considered as universal products that can solve almost any life-situation of customers, not to talk about the fact that because of the changes of content of insurances as a matter of fact investments (or rather investment funds) will be sold as life-insurances. In this way differences, - whose factors on the one hand are unknown, and on the other hand arose from bad “habits” of insurance professionals -, can be eliminated from among points of view. Professional habits may probably derive from reactions to negative judgements of insurance-sales.

It is an interesting but it is likely not a casual reaction from the professionals that in case of agents such soft factors are thought to be key of success as skill of making relations and sympathy as compared to the requirement of professional knowledge. As we could see in the literature part of the dissertation, research prove that cognitive trust is formed by – first of all - competency, which serves the protection of clients on the one hand, and can be able to make agents’ work more appreciated. That is why in insurance purchasing of individuals, where there is a demand on “human touch” at clients’ side, professionalism, knowledge of the agent and information has bigger emphasis. However we can say that more and more client think consciously concerning his/her financial cases that manifest in lifestyle, attitude related to money and attitude of customers. To the relational decision of customers three things are needed: perfect information, a not too complex product and that the result have effect on the decision-maker individual’s fate (Denzau és North [1994]). This cannot be realized in decision-making of clients during insurance purchasing, so during the purchase factors, which can compensate the lack of rationality, come to the fore.

3.2. Conclusion

In the above we saw that in insurance markets clients and the insurers formed a judgement on factors defining single insurance choice diversely, the imperfection of the informations defines the cooperation fundamentally between them, from which we may conclude the presence of an informational asymmetry for disadvantage of client of the insurance service. The informational asymmetry is actually one of the basic problems of marketing, since in the great majority of the cases a producer knows better his own product, than its potential customer.

From the consumers' side the important source of insurance-purchase decision making is the information, that gets in the course of the communication from the insurer through the agent to the client. The efficiency of the business processes, their success depend fundamentally on the success of the communicational process. In the communication theory the success criterion of the communicational process is „the noise exemption”, however the content of the information, his perfectness are determining fundamentally in terms of economic efficiency of the process. However the perfect information does not appear in every economic (business) process as an aim. This phenomenon is described in the communication theory as the interpersonal deception theory, the establishment of which is that, one of the parts of the communicational process has more information on a certain situation, a person, an object or an event, than the other one, that he/she does not wish to share with the other party. The economic theory knows this issue as asymmetric information (Kovács [2006]). It is possible to formulate in a totally everyday manner *the informational asymmetry*¹ that salesman knows it better what sells than the customer what buys. This may put the customers in a defenceless position, and between the insurance companies (salesmen) and the clients (customers) raises distrust, that can be fundamentally led back onto lack of information, or onto the inappropriate form of communication. According to Hámori ([2003], 85.p) ”the domain of the confidence and the distrust so in one the realm of the imperfect informations and uncertainty.” As I mentioned it, according to Denzau and North [1994] fulfilment of three criteria has to be together in order to make it possible to bring a rational decision: on the one hand the decision maker has to possess suitable information; on the other hand he/she has to be interested in the result, so the result influences the decision maker's individual fate; third let the object of the decision not be too complex and sophisticated. In the case of the insurances the fulfilment of two conditions from three is quite dubious, since if the informations would be perfect at all, insurance products are so complex and complicated, that they exceeded far a laic's capability to overview. Since the confidence may substitute these missing conditions to some extent, just like one of the most positive premiulings, on a paradoxical manner it is indispensable for the rational decision making (Hámori [2003]).

Stiglitz [1977] (cited by Málovics et al. [2005]) dealt with the phenomenon relevantly on the insurance activity and argued that the informational asymmetry exists in a reverse situation as well: the clients know their unique risks better, which they are trying to conceal from before the insurer in order to obtain the given service with a more favourable fee.

¹ We could meet with the informational asymmetry as an expression first in Akerlof's [1970] study, who through his jalopy model sheds light on it, how the limited information may upset the market balance.

Therefore insurance company specifies a suitable sum of an average risk as a premium. This premium for the insured with a low risk is too high, so they step out of the danger community, the insured with a higher risk are left only hereby. The average insurance premiums do not however cover their risk, so the insurer positions (raises) to this the insurance premiums. The counter-selection is completed on a manner like this, that is why individuals with higher risk take out insurance only. However one more scope of problems appears at the same time, when it is not an individual's interest to make an effort for the prevention of damage, since the insurer pays the insurance sum anyway. We call this motivation deficiency: a moral risk (Varian [208] p. 678). Kovács [2006] showed it through an economic deduction in his study, that the phenomenon of the informational asymmetry may constitute a problem in the insurance market, since the informations coming from the risk community lay the foundations for the calculation of the premiums creating the insurance coverage.

If we approach to the issue of the informational asymmetry from the consumers' side, we find the principal-agent problem with a good chance among economic theories (Gömöri [2001], 46.p). Onto the insurance-purchase process this means that it is a client who entrusts the agent with an advisory and an insurance offer activity, for which the agent gets a royalty, (since the transaction means a kind of benefit to the employer). The literature of the informational asymmetry calls the ill-informed party an employer, while an agent the well informed party. The coverage of the mentioned agent royalty is built into the insurance premium. The employer cannot control the process of the agent's work and its „quality” at the same time, he/she sees the final result only. In this case we can see the problems of the moral risk from the other side, so the question is that: what kind of contract would persuade the agent to attest the most beneficial behaviour, effort for the employer.

The characteristics of the services confirm the significance of the personal contacts on a manner like this, since the personal selling provides a distinguished opportunity for compensating the deficiency of the objective perceptibility and for counterbalancing the problem of its judgement with the development of a confidential relation. At the same time in the mediators' application the danger of the negative result may grow, if given information differs from the insurer's actual offer and the features of the service which can be accomplished by it. As a result of this, the role of the cognitive dissonance, following the making of the long-term investment decision, is outstanding.

In the sense of the above the theses of the dissertation can be formulated in the followings:

T1: Informational asymmetry is observable among the actors of insurance market which, on the one hand, is an informational deficit and on the other hand manifests as an informational discrepancy.

T2: There is significant informational asymmetry in the relation of the service providers and the clients concerning risk perception of insurance clients, the importance of the agent characteristics, and related to preferences of long-term investment forms and the purchasing of pension-aimed insurance.

T3: Limited significant informational asymmetry exists in the relation of provider-client in case of preferring the credits and the savings, the judgement of the lifestyle variables and the contact of the life insurances with a pension aim, the personal and on-line informations, and the viewpoints of the insurancee-purchase decision.

T4: There is not an informational asymmetry regarding to the role of the family status influencing an insurance-purchase willingness.

Based on all these it is verifiable, that significant informational asymmetry exists in the consumer insurance market in the relation of the service providers and the clients. This means on the one hand, at the side of clients, informational deficit which derives from the identifiable, knowledge and competence deficiency, and on the other hand, informational discrepancy between the two actors.

4. The novelties, limits, opportunities of development and application of the research

4.1. The new and partly new results of the research

The new and partly new research results of my dissertation are the undermentioned ones:

- For a new result can be considered
 - in the research of the consumer behaviour the revealed features of the insurance market attitudes;
 - in the banking and insurance sector the results of the clientele's and the service providers' comparative opinion research.

- For a partly new research result can be considered
 - methodological novelty, application of the post-quantitative qualitative research (questionnaire survey and the database secondary analyses followed by an iterative Delphi interview series);
 - exploration of a target area which has not been examined earlier on the insurance market (life insurances with a pension aim);
 - separation of the determinant and modulator variables in the examined marketing phenomenon;
 - separation of modulator variables of the model by their strengthening and weakening effect.

4.2. The limits of the research and additional research directions

In the course of the researches I took the advantage of the narrowing down, which means the narrowing down of the insurance service scope primarily, what made it possible on the insurance product, which can be considered one of the most complex ones, (pension endowment life insurance) to evaluate the thoughts of clients' and experts' side. This should be mentioned as the limit of the researches, so in the course of additional examinations it may be worth investigating in a more extensive product range

In addition overall testing of the relationship between the variables of the model could have strengthened the scientific value of the research furthermore because of this doing the quantitative research onto the full wider spectrum in the future would be reasonable.

Concerning a **qualitative examination** on the expert side **sample size** is mentionable as a limit, where the systematic recruitment of the expert panel substituted the large sample quantitative results. The opportunity of the accomplishment of a large sample quantitative research may arise on the expert side, but regarding a result my opinion is that significant change cannot be expected from this, indeed in a certain view, because of the asking technique, would result in a loss of information.

It is worth making additional researches in the view of those statements, where the points of view diverged in the course of the expert panel examination, or rather where in Delphi research, independently from the fact of progressing into the direction of the consensus, minority opinions realized.

I did not examine within the framework of the dissertation the eventual regional differences in the consumer behaviour in the area of the personal protection, to make examinations in this direction, in the course of additional researches, may be reasonable.

That question can be raised whether the economic changes going on between 2004 and 2010, and its consequences in the behavioural attitude, particularly the effects of the monetary crisis, are covered in the dissertation? Considering, that attitude is conservative, it may represent in the behaviour on short-term, the effect of the environment appears on a mid-term if at all, the frameworks of the paper did not make this possible. I wished to show the lasting tendencies in the dissertation, however this research direction may be interesting.

Considering, that the international literature served as a basis in the considerable part of my researches and the secondary research data showed the results of foreign country examinations primarily, making an **international comparison** may be justified.

Considering the final model made by the received result, **testing the model in another area**, that is related to long-term financial decision, may be the direction of going on.

4.3. The possibilities of application of the research results

The results of research can be applied in certain theoretical and practical areas, like:

- *in education*: in subjects concerning **supply management** or trainings specialized in **finances**;
- *on the area of counselling, sales management*: the knowledge of the model's factors and adapting of the insurance's (potential) clients make it possible to know better the client claims and risks, hereby to develop a more fruitful cooperation in the agent – client relation on a long term; the results can be useful for the insurance providers to the sales planning
- *in product development*: since the parameters of the model's elements concerning the given individuals make possible to define a well confinable and qualifiable, actual or potential target group, the product development makes an opportunity to develop product characteristics that suit to the target group's risks, mentality and lifestyle the best
- *in the forming of advertisement messages*: it is possible to adjust to the targetted consumer group in the course of the creative work, because advertisement messages can be formulated in a style and with such solutions, what is based on the knowledge

of the target group's features, moreover the dissertation may help to avert related consumer uncertainty on the insurance products;

- *in media planning*: the knowledge of the aspects of target groups' consumer behaviour makes it possible for the marketing communication to select those media, with which consumers target group(s), taking the actual media usage into consideration, the mostly available.

Also in the insurance market can be stated, that the competition will be ever bigger. The competition may come forward however in a short-term in the insurance premiums, on a long distance it can develop only in the standard of the service. Taking the clients' view into consideration, if the insurance companies would manage to prove the fairness, necessity and transparency of the insurances it would be easier for the insurer in the survey of the market needs, the product development and the realization, since they would not meet with resistance of that strength. My opinion is that the "personal touch", the (expert) advise and the human factor is, what may be the key solution of this problem.

My commitment to this theme will determine the direction of my researches in the future, which according to my hopes will make, beyond the scientific results, practical realisation possible.

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