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VISUAL AND CROSS-MERCHANDISING FEATURES IN ONLINE ART-MATERIALS STORES IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

The growing role of digital tools for promoting and selling consumer goods has contributed to the development of omnichannel retail. Stores that effectively provide the opportunity for online-shopping with subsequent delivery, were able not only to survive the regime of general self-isolation, but also to strengthen their position on the market. Against the background of mass interest in online learning, reinforced by the influence of time in general, and the pandemic in particular, special working conditions and competition are being formed on any market, especially in the "home and hobby" sector, including the figural arts. The desire to spend the most useful leisure time, reduce stress and satisfy the need for creative self-realization, encourages people to pay attention to the offers of art-materials stores. Taking into account the possibilities of the digital retail space, we emphasized the role of mutual influence of related markets: the market of producers and sellers of art-materials, the knowledge market represented by online schools, studios, courses, printed and digital books, the market of artists' works. This fact was the basis for recommendations on cross-merchandising in the electronic environment. In addition to the analysis of compliance with the general requirements to the organization of visual merchandising of any online stores, the article proposes to assess the level of cross-merchandising of 5 leading online stores for artists by 4 parameters: the visual presentation, description of technology use, collaboration with artists, schools and publishing houses, blog's information richness.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of the topic of this study is due to the insufficient degree of study of the organization of merchandising in online stores and their mobile applications in general, as well as the author's personal interest in both the problems of retail trade and the market of art-materials, in particular. Digitalization of the economy and its leading sector – retail trade has transferred a significant share of transactions to the digital retail space. One of the obvious limitations of shopping in an online store is the inability to directly review and test a particular art- material before making a decision about buying it. In this situation, the quality of visual merchandising on the website or in the store's mobile app can significantly offset this disadvantage. It is important to play with colors and textures, to understand the conditions and represent the possibilities of using, achieving a particular effect. In this regard, certain (specific) recommendations should be formed for the organization of the digital retail space of the art supplier, which was the subject of this study. In addition, the possibilities of cross-selling on the market of goods for artists are of interest from a scientific and practical point of view. Leisure time in self-isolation during the next wave of the pandemic, consumers are increasingly choosing to fill in ways that reduce stress, develop creative thinking and develop intelligence. The need for online retailers of art-materials to improve visual merchandising is reinforced not only by the growing competition, but also by the desire to get the maximum "yield" in connection with major shopping events such as Inktober, Black Friday, Christmas and New Year.

2. Problem Statement

As noted earlier, the problems of visual and cross-merchandising in online stores of art-materials have not been sufficiently studied. Of particular relevance is the content analysis of industry practices of visual merchandising, which affect the formation of customer loyalty. In general, the scope of empirical studies on Internet merchandising is limited. However, some works of scientists can significantly help in the further development of this study.

Thus, Sundström et al. (2019) confirm the insufficient knowledge of the organization of merchandising and the problems of managing the psychoemotional state of buyers in the digital environment.

Successful completion of sales stages according to the AIDA model in the Internet environment is complicated by the digital environment of customer decision-making. The organization of returns of purchases is undesirable for both parties. Mandal et al. (2020) note that to solve such problems, modern online stores are increasingly acquiring various multi-channel. Son et al. (2019) agree with them, which among the problems of online stores highlight the lack of goods in stock, return and cancellation of orders. Therefore, much attention in research should be paid to the issues of visual merchandising, its effective presentation in the electronic catalog of an online store.

From this point of view, the work of Berg and Lindström (2021) is interesting, they pay attention to the adequacy of consumers' perception of the size of the product on the image on the Internet. Xia et al. (2020) write about the importance of effective product display for b2c sellers.

The digital transformation of retail and the development of new competencies are covered in Claes et al. (2016) works. The authors introduce the concept of "retail design", which largely determines the success of sales in the Internet space.

3. Research Questions

The list of questions raised in this study is related to the problems and prospects for the development of merchandising in Russian online stores of art-materials. The logical sequence of their consideration was consistent with the "trends-connections-opportunities" scheme.

It was necessary to emphasize the influence of both socio-cultural factors and the process of digitalization on the structural transformation of the consumer market.

It was important to note the desire of modern society for creative self-realization and the search for the necessary information. Further, it was logical to consider the types of sources of such information, in addition to online stores of art-materials. These were social networks and websites of representatives of related markets: artists, producers and sellers of art-materials, drawing schools and book publishers. Therefore, one of the tasks was to determine the nature of their interrelation, the use of various forms of collaboration as ideas for cross-merchandising.

Given the specifics of art-materials as an object of retail sales, we assumed that the adaptation of the classical rules for the design of digital retail space in this study will not be enough. In the online stores selected by us for comparative analysis, it will be necessary to develop special requirements for visual merchandising related to the demonstration of the image of paints on the surface, the description and presentation of video materials on the technique of using art-materials, recommendations for obtaining additional knowledge in the field of interest.

4. Purpose of the Study

It should be taken into account that the results presented in this article demonstrate the initial stage of a larger study of the problems of merchandising in online stores. Earlier, we considered the continuity of traditional principles of visual merchandising in the digital retail space. We also described the criteria for personal and collective effectiveness of merchandisers for an offline store and its digital implementation. In this regard, we consider it necessary to identify a particular goal - the focus of this stage of work and a comprehensive goal. The purpose of the study is to highlight the principles of visual and cross-merchandising of online art-materials stores. We plan to devote future studies to the development of a system of indicators and methods for evaluating the effectiveness of merchandising of online stores of goods for artists. The comprehensive goal of the study can be defined as the search for ways to improve merchandising in the digital trading space on the b2c market.

5. Research Methods

First of all, we would like to draw attention to the fact that when solving the set tasks, it is not enough to limit yourself to the study of one market of art-materials. The peculiarity of its development lies in its

close connection with the dynamics of related markets, which obliges us to adhere to the principle of study complexity (Figure 1).
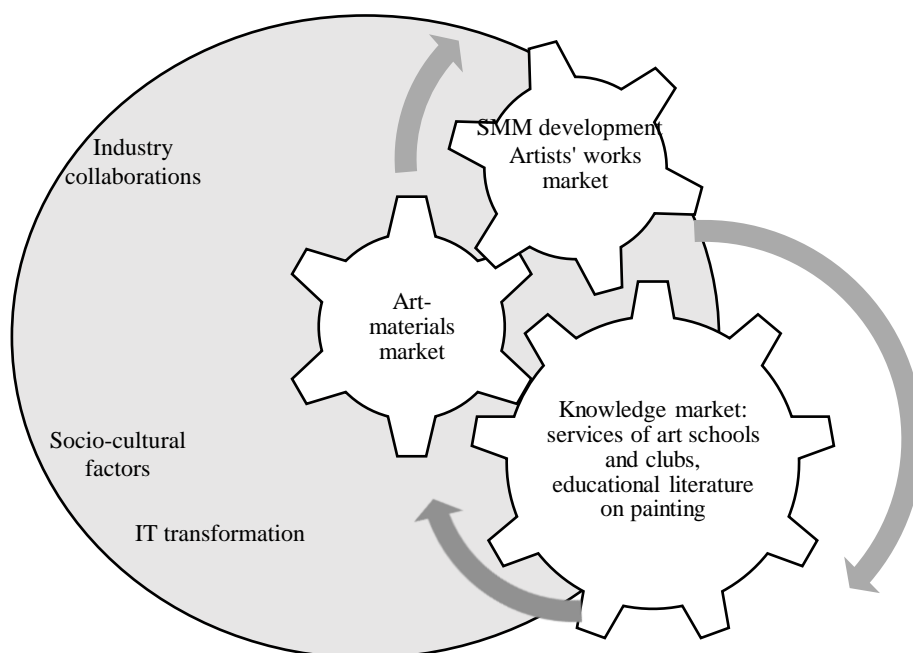

Figure 1. Factors and markets of goods and services for creative development in the field of painting
Source: author.

The methodological basis of this study is mainly represented by office technologies. Thus, the study was conducted to fill the websites of leading online stores in Russia, where you can buy goods for artists (Red Pencil, Etudesite, Art-Kvartal, Peredvizhnik and Artlavka). Content analysis of reviews of purchases on the market under study and in related areas allowed understanding the need for additional information or negative consumer experience caused by the wrong choice of goods. Of course, in the conditions of insufficient knowledge of the problem, we needed benchmarking as an analysis of the best practices of visual merchandising in European online stores (Jakson's Art).

The study of the digital environment of the art market is based on general scientific, systematic, structural-analytical, and empirical methods. These methods allowed us to identify specific parameters of visual and cross-merchandising of the online art materials store, as well as to describe the nature of interaction of related markets.

6. Findings

In desire to satisfy the highest need for self-realization, consumers are increasingly finding themselves in creativity, learning and discovering new horizons of development. One final result - the work (drawing, painting) involves several different kinds of resources at once: inspiration, knowledge and skill, time and money, art materials. Social networks in Russia are used daily by more than 50% of citizens of different ages. The majority of users (70%) consider social networks to be a source of "new and important information" (Volkov & Goncharov, 2020). In August 2020, about 70% of Russians used YouTube and

Instagram (more than half an hour a day) (LiveDune, 2020). Analysts note the growing popularity of social networks designed to post photo and video content, including for the consumption of news information.

In these two most popular channels, individual artists and art school teachers demonstrate their work, speed painting, organize marathons, challenges, informing about lessons, master classes, training courses, testing results of materials training courses, promotions in trade and book publishing companies.

As a rule, artists known in social networks are ambassadors of specific brands of art-materials, recommending them for use in the performance of certain lessons. At the same time, the most attractive visualization of the product as an object of the promotion is provided and the idea, and technique of its use in the creative process are presented. This significantly increases the chances of the product being sold, unlike a simple presentation in the electronic catalog of an online store, even with a high-quality professional photo.

The distribution of the audience between the main areas of training in terms of the number of students in 2019 shows that creativity accounts for 19% (second place after industrial training and advanced training). The online segment "Art, painting" occupies 2% of the total market volume of additional b2c training in Russia (Volkov & Goncharov, 2020).

Indirect competition and at the same time partner support to the online education market is traditionally the book market, the structure of which is also undergoing changes under the influence of digitalization. It should be noted that artificial intelligence is actively coming to the book business, which is developing in two directions. The first is recommendation services: analysis of readers' preferences, purchasing behavior patterns, and conversion rate improvement. The second is its use in editorial and publishing processes: planning sales volumes and calculating the printed books runs (Information and analytical portal University Book, 2020).

Books that teach drawing, recommended in art schools and written by artists, usually introduce readers to the properties of certain materials in the initial chapters. At the same time, authors often write about their preferences, thereby drawing attention to various brands.

Online stores of art-materials, in turn, presenting the product in an electronic catalog, on the same page place a link to a video review of this product in social networks (usually YouTube).

On the Russian market, the trend of making materials by artists, such as sketchbooks or handmade watercolors, is becoming popular. In this case, the product is presented twice on the artist's personal page and on the page or website of a well-known online store.

The study of the largest online stores of art-materials on the Russian market allowed us to identify a number of advantages and disadvantages in the organization of both visual merchandising in general and cross-merchandising in particular (Figure 2).
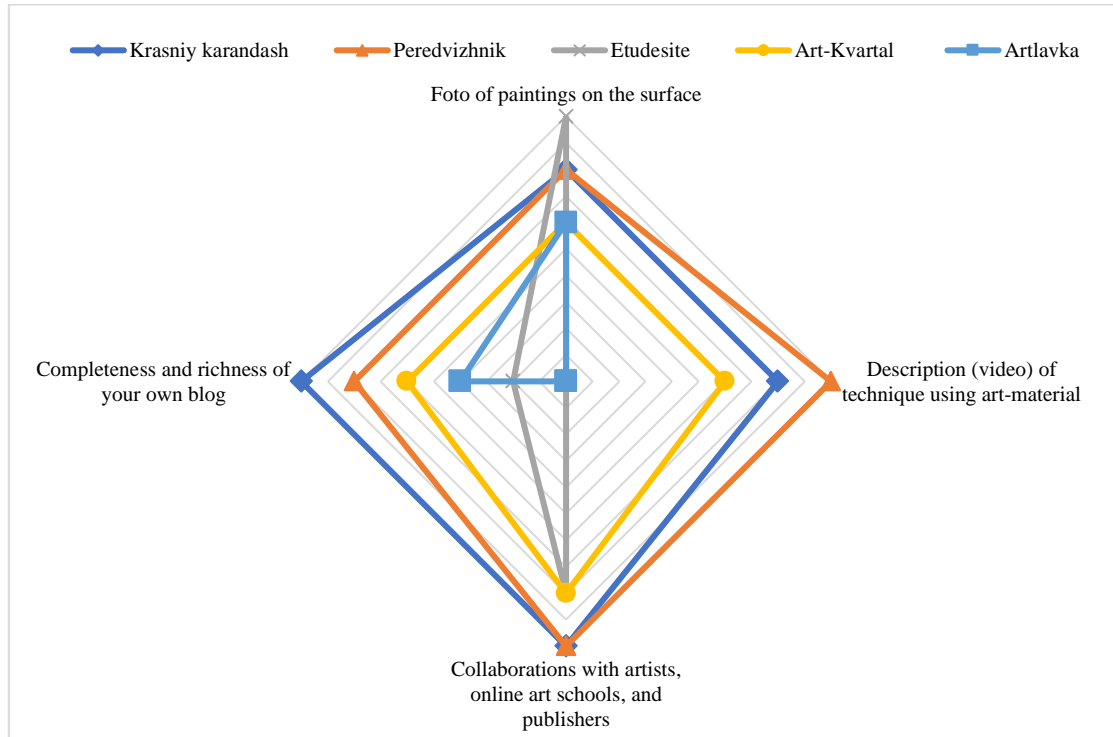
Figure 2. Key performance parameters of visual and cross-merchandising in leading Russian online art-materials stores

Source: author.

The standard of visual merchandising on the European market of art-materials can be called the British supplier Jackson's. This store successfully promotes its own brand products. The aesthetics of the store's website can serve as an example for Russian stores. For all the proposed parameters of cross-merchandising evaluation, you can put the highest points, but collaboration activity can only be traced in the blog. On the pages of the electronic catalog there is information only on the offered product.

None of the online stores studied has its own mobile app. In our opinion, this can be defined as a significant omission, in which marketplaces are involved in the competition on the art-materials market. The largest Russian aggregators (Ozon, Wildberries, Beru) increase the chances of implementing art-materials, as they provide the consumer with the convenience of "visiting" the store at any time and in any place, thus ensuring the mobility of purchases.

Trade aggregators have less richness of the range, offering only the most popular products on the mass market, but significantly win in price, offering similar ones at a price lower by about a third (Kirillova et al., 2019; Korzhova et al., 2019). None of these Russian marketplaces shows any specific signs of visual and cross-merchandising of an art-materials store, except for the offer of related products (for example, a sketchbook when buying pencils, and vice versa). Sellers of some well-known brands present on the marketplace's trading platform, in rare cases, present photos with the image of paints or graphic materials on the surface.

7. Conclusion

Summing up the results of the study of Russian online stores of art-materials, we can note a fairly high level of organization of visual and cross-merchandising in them. Almost all study objects use the opportunities of collaborations with representatives of related markets. As a rule, Russian online art-materials stores work closely with online drawing schools. However, mutual promotion with book publishers and individual artists is much less common. Statistics confirm the growth of the population's activity in social networks. Modern users are confident in navigating the digital space, but this achievement needs to be supported, to point the way to new information, to new resources. Cross-merchandising is applicable not only in the online store, but also directly on the pages of art-materials stores in social networks. Expanding the reach of the audience, promoting the brand of representatives of related markets, as well as web analytics are usually carried out using hashtags.

In this study, we evaluated only the specific parameters of online stores that are typical for art materials stores:

– visual presentation of goods (photos of paints on the surface);

– description (video) of the technique using art-materials;

– collaborations with artists, schools, and book publishers;

– completeness of information and saturation of the blog with events in related markets.

Thus, well-organized visual and cross-merchandising in online art-materials stores ensures the development of related markets:

– manufacturers of art-materials;

– a knowledge market represented by online schools, studios, courses, and a book market;

– market of artists' works.

A modern online store of art-materials acquires the properties of an ecosystem. The tendency of forming a single retail space that comprehensively meets the needs for creative self-realization is noted.

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