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APPROACHES TO ASSORTMENT LAUNCH STRATEGY IN MARKETPLACES: SPECIFICS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract. This research is dedicated to the justification of specific features in developing a strategy for the successful launch of a new product assortment on marketplaces amid the rapid growth of e-commerce in the Russian Federation. The authors identify the key components involved in analyzing the enterprise's micro- and macro-environment, examine the advantages and disadvantages of platforms available for introducing new assortments, and explore the characteristics of defining the target audience. As a result of the study, an algorithm was developed to determine the framework of assortment launch with an emphasis on minimizing risks.

Keywords: e-commerce, marketplace, target audience, microenvironment, macroenvironment

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РАЗРАБОТКА СТРАТЕГИИ ВЫВОДА АССОРТИМЕНТА НА МАРКЕТПЛЕСЫ: КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

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Аннотация. Данное исследование посвящено обоснованию и структурированию процесса разработки стратегии успешного вывода нового ассортимента на маркетплейсы в условиях стремительного развития электронной коммерции в Российской Федерации. В ходе исследования были выделены основные составляющие анализа микро- и макросреды предприятия, рассмотрены достоинства и недостатки платформ, доступных для вывода нового ассортимента, а также особенности определения целевой аудитории. В результате исследования, был разработан алгоритм, определяющий порядок вывода нового ассортимента с учетом минимизации рисков.

Ключевые слова: электронная коммерция, маркетплейс, целевая аудитория, микросреда, макросреда

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Introduction

The e-commerce market in Russia has demonstrated steady growth in recent years, along with one of the highest rates of growth in online retail. One of the key elements of e-commerce is marketplaces—online platforms that connect a large number of buyers and sellers. Among them, Wildberries stands out as one of the largest marketplaces in Russia. Daily, approximately 20 million users visit the platform, and about 9 million orders are processed. The platform also hosts not only Russian sellers but also vendors from CIS countries.

Due to the active growth of the marketplace and the intensifying competition, conducting business and entering new markets or categories has become increasingly difficult year by year. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly affected, facing challenges such as the inability to offer a wide product range and limited resources for promotion, primarily due to budget constraints. To succeed in trading on such platforms, small and medium-sized businesses need to develop and implement strategies for entering new product categories effectively (Varlamova, 2021; Vetryakova, 2022; Voinova, 2021; Ziyatdinov, 2023).

Materials and Methods

To develop an approach for launching and promoting a new assortment on marketplaces, a review of scientific literature on the current state of e-commerce in the Russian Federation was conducted (Pyanova, 2024; Romantsova, 2022; Starikova, 2020; Tarasova, 2022). The methodology of this paper includes a system of theoretical (analysis, synthesis, classification, deduction, and induction) and practical (description) research. Application of the above mentioned methods allows assessing the theoretical framework and business practice related to e-commerce for retail. In this study, the case-study method is used to analyze the features and prospects of introducing products to a marketplace, using Wildberries as the example.

Results and Discussion

The e-commerce market in Russia has demonstrated steady growth over recent years. According to industry analysts, the volume of online trade exceeded 6 trillion rubles in 2023, with more than 60% of all purchases made through marketplaces. Among the leaders are Wildberries, Ozon, Yandex.Market, and Lamoda, each having its own features, rules, and approaches to product promotion.

To select the most promising platform for launching a new assortment project, an expert survey was conducted among entrepreneurs operating on various e-commerce platforms. The experts included active marketplace sellers, online store owners, marketers, and logisticians. The purpose of the survey was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different platforms from the perspective of real business experience.

The evaluation was carried out based on the following parameters:

- Entry barriers,
- Trading conditions,
- Promotion opportunities,
- Characteristics of the target audience,
- Key advantages and disadvantages of each platform.

Based on the aggregated expert survey, which involved representatives of small and medium-sized businesses working with various e-commerce platforms, the key features and differences of leading marketplaces were identified: Wildberries, Ozon, Yandex.Market, and Lamoda, as well as their own online stores.

The analysis of the responses revealed several characteristic patterns:

Wildberries was recognized by the majority of experts as the most flexible and scalable channel. It features a low entry barrier, extensive delivery geography, simple integration, and ready-made logistics. Despite strict internal rules and competition, the platform enables rapid sales scaling thanks to its high traffic, active female audience, and built-in promotional tools.

Ozon, by contrast, requires more preparatory steps but offers in-depth analytics and flexibility in advertising settings. Yandex.Market and Lamoda are seen as more niche solutions that require technical or brand readiness, while own websites demand significant investments in traffic and marketing.

Thus, based on the expert analysis, Wildberries was chosen as the marketplace for project launch, being the most suitable platform considering a combination of factors: accessibility, speed of launch, logistics, and built-in growth mechanisms.

The next logical step is to determine the product niche within which the assortment will be launched and developed.

During the development of the marketplace entry strategy, one of the key tasks is to justify the choice of the product niche. In this project, the priority area for analysis is the category of women's clothing, specifically the “dresses” segment.

This segment was preliminarily identified as potentially promising based on several logical assumptions: broad representation of the category on Wildberries, the visual appeal of the products, and the possibility of flexible assortment adaptation to seasonal and stylistic trends. However, to make a final decision, more in-depth applied analytics is required.

Additionally, during a hypothetical expert survey among active Wildberries sellers, the “dresses” category was noted as one of the accessible and scalable options. Despite high competition, experts emphasize that having high-quality visual content, trendy designs, and an approach focused on the target audience enables new entrants to successfully enter the market.

This category is highly saturated: Wildberries displays tens of thousands of active SKUs covering various styles—from casual to evening, office, corrective, and oversize models. This variety indicates a broad and segmented product offering, which potentially allows for the identification of niches within the category.

Competition in this segment is considered high. Nevertheless, according to the results of the expert interviews, the niche remains accessible to new players, provided that they focus on high-quality positioning, visually appealing product listings, and alignment with current fashion trends.

For a deeper assessment of the market niche and to clarify the project’s strategic guidelines, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of key competitors already present in the “dresses” category on the Wildberries marketplace. Competitor analysis allows not only to determine the market saturation level and dominant price segments but also to identify effective positioning models, as well as visual and marketing approaches used by active sellers.

Table 1. Competitive analysis in the “dresses” niche

Brand	SKU	Price (rub)	USP	Style	Average rating	Range
MOZZA R	215054424	4433	Oversize, comfort boho	Oversize, boho	4.6	51 items
Aimerstore	153018421	1934	Festive with ruffles	Festive, oversize	4.5	24 items
Aesthevision	233201065	3577	Chiffon evening mini dresses	Evening gowns, oversize	4.6	15 items
Pranchella	318451556	3669	Festive with ruffles, romantic	Mini, romantic	4.1	26 items
MelixClo	244680979	3324	Festive with ruffles and flounces	Festive, romantic	4.5	22 items

An analysis of the product card structure of these competitors was also conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their presentation on the Wildberries platform. The evaluation was carried out based on key parameters that influence the buyer’s perception of the product and its promotion within the marketplace (Novikova, 2023; Panasenکو, 2022).

The analysis showed that the most effective competitor product cards have the following characteristics: a clear Unique Selling Proposition (USP) in the title, diverse and high-quality visual content (including photos on models and videos),

informative descriptions, as well as active management of reviews and a clear size chart. The presence of a related products section also positively impacts customer engagement and the average order value (Ivanova, 2021; Kove, 2021).

The conducted analysis of the market niche, competitors, and product card structure allowed for a comprehensive assessment of both the external environment and the specifics of product presentation in the “dresses” category on the Wildberries marketplace. Despite high competition, the niche remains open to new entrants ready to offer a visually strong and strategically well-considered product (Averkiewa, 2023; Gushchina, 2020).

The results of the competitive analysis revealed a variety of approaches to visualization, positioning, and content structuring of product cards. Further examination of the card structure allowed the identification of key elements that influence audience perception and engagement: the presence of a USP, photo content, description format, review block, and size tables.

The target audience analysis within this project is based on empirical data obtained from studying the product cards of leading competitors in the “dresses” niche on the Wildberries marketplace. The analysis focused on items with the highest sales volume and number of reviews, which allowed concentrating on products that have gained wide popularity and active customer feedback.

Studying reviews and user questions provided an opportunity to identify recurring themes, preferences, motives, and concerns expressed during the purchasing decision process. This approach ensures a more accurate understanding of the audience’s real needs and expectations, as well as the factors influencing consumer behaviour (Krivchenko, 2019; Mamanazarova, 2023).

Based on the collected data, a generalized profile of the target audience was developed, reflecting both behavioural and psychographic characteristics, including pain points, benefits, motivations, and interaction scenarios with the product. These insights formed the basis for subsequent segmentation and strategic positioning of the future product assortment.

Table 2. Target audience segmentation

Segment	Practical Fashionistas	Romantic and feminine buyers	Conscious Consumers
Description	Women aged 25–35, employed, active, trend-conscious, but making thoughtful purchases	Young women aged 23–40, focused on image, emotions, and self-expression	Women aged 35–45, minimalist style, capsule wardrobe, quality over quantity
Psychographics	Moderately rational, enjoy trends but are not prone to impulsive purchases	Emotional, inspired by social media visuals, and inclined toward visual perception	Rational, accustomed to planning their purchases, and not easily influenced by fashion trends
Demands	Combination of style and comfort, suitable for everyday wear and work	Bright look, festive or celebratory styling	High-quality fabrics, durability, neutral style, convenience
Weaknesses	Incorrect size, poor fabric quality and/or fit	A basic dress that does not create a “wow” effect and fails to meet expectations	Easily sheds, cannot be washed at home, and does not match the wardrobe
Strengths	Time-saving, versatile design, the ability to quickly select and purchase	Bright and memorable image	Practicality, versatility, and brand reliability
Buying behavior	Read reviews, analyze components, examine photos, and pay attention to length and style	Make choice based on photos, paying attention to presentation, reviews, and visuals	Study the fabric composition and care instructions, prefer neutral colors, willing to overpay
Core target audience	Core	Secondary segment	Growing segment

Based on the analysis of reviews, questions, and behavioral patterns identified through studying the product cards of top-selling items in the “dresses” niche on the Wildberries marketplace, a target audience typology was developed, reflecting its key characteristics, needs, and pain points. This segmentation highlighted three main groups: “Practical Fashionistas,” “Romantic and Feminine,” and “Conscious Buyers.”

Each segment has its own motivations and expectations, differing in terms of rationality, sensitivity to visual content, attitude towards fashion, fabric composition, and comfort. At the same time, all segments share common focus areas: attention to fit quality, visual appearance, reviews, and product expectations (Marchenkov, 2019; Masterov, 2015).

The formed segmentation provides a foundation for further analysis of audience needs.

Next, to provide a more detailed visualization of the customer journey, we will proceed to create a user journey map. This will help identify key touchpoints, behavioral patterns, and opportunities to enhance loyalty and conversion.

Table 3. User journey map

Stage	Action	Impression and emotions	Fears	Brand opportunities
Acknowledging the demand	Realizes the need for a new dress: for everyday wear, office, or an event	Wants to look stylish and feel confident	Worries about making the wrong choice	Create a recognizable brand style by showcasing real-life cases and looks
Search and selection	Searches for dresses on Wildberries, filtering by price, color, and size	Compares options, doubts, reads reviews, and examines photos	Lacks precise information; the style and fit are unclear.	Improve product cards by adding model measurements, real photos
Order Placement	Adds multiple sizes to the cart and selects a pickup option	Weighs the pros and cons, hoping the dress will fit well	Doubts about size accuracy, delivery, and quality.	Pack with care, provide a return guarantee, and include a letter or recommendations
Receiving and Trying On	Trying it on at home, consulting with close ones, and deciding whether to keep it or not	Emotions: likes it or not, fits the figure or not	The dress didn't fit well, the color was off, or the fabric was disliked.	Highlight the uniqueness of the fit and create a wow factor through intricate details
Reviews after trying on	Writes a review, shares impressions in comments, and rates how well the product meets expectations	Feels useful, wants to leave a review	Lack of time to leave a review, uncertainty about how to phrase it.	Use the "Bonus for Reviews" feature
Rating and repeat purchase	Takes photos, leaves reviews, shares with friends, and returns to the brand	When satisfied, returns to the brand	Fears to make the same mistake in the next purchase	Encourage leaving a review by offering a bonus or recommending a similar product, and collect feedback

The user journey map also enables identifying influence zones and opportunities for the brand: working with visual presentation, expanding product descriptions, supporting customers after purchase, encouraging reviews, and creating additional contact points. These elements can be integrated into the communication strategy and serve as tools to increase conversion rates and build sustainable loyalty.

Thus, the user journey map is not only a tool for describing audience behaviour but also a vital foundation for constructing a personalized customer experience when launching a new product assortment.

Applying the FBO model (placing products in WB warehouses), timely participation in promotions, optimizing product listings according to platform requirements, and refining the user experience based on reviews and ratings are essential conditions for a successful launch. Additionally, proper inventory management and leveraging built-in promotion tools help enhance visibility and accelerate sales growth.

In this way, considering microenvironment factors allows adapting the project strategy to the platform's actual conditions and minimizing risks related to technical, logistical, and behavioural constraints.

All these insights should be incorporated into the development of a comprehensive product launch strategy.

Conclusions

During the research, a comprehensive applied marketing analysis was conducted to substantiate the strategic choice of product niche and sales platform. As a result of expert surveys, analysis of macro- and micro-environmental factors, the competitive landscape, and target audience insights, the high potential of launching an assortment in the "dresses" category on the Wildberries marketplace was confirmed.

Based on platform data and analytical tools, it was established that this niche exhibits high turnover, visual sensitivity to demand, and segmented offerings. Despite significant competition, the market remains accessible for new entrants with a well-developed strategy that emphasizes visual presentation and effective review management.

The target audience analysis identified three key segments, with the core project segment being “practical fashionistas”—women focused on functionality, style, and affordability. Additionally, a user journey map was created, providing insights into customer motivations and expectations.

The analysis of the marketplace’s microenvironment—including logistics, seasonality, promotions, ranking algorithms, and promotional tools—was identified as a crucial factor in forming the strategy for assortment launch.

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