



FACTORS INFLUENCING THE FORMATION OF THE IMAGE OF AN "IDEAL" ENTERPRISE IN THE FIELD OF CIRCULATION IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD ECONOMY DIGITALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article presents the results of a study aimed at the process of forming the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise. **Results:** The author's definition of an "ideal trading enterprise" has been developed, the most important characteristics of such an enterprise from the point of view of its technological, commercial, marketing, and social image have been considered, and a methodological approach to the process of forming the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise has been developed. **Conclusion:** The main criteria for classifying the store's trading floor as "ideal" have been defined. The main factors of forming a positive image of a trading enterprise in the conditions of digital transformation of the retail sphere have been identified.

Keywords: Organization's image; Trading enterprise; Digitalization; Global economy.



FATORES QUE INFLUENCIAM A FORMAÇÃO DA IMAGEM DE UMA EMPRESA "IDEAL" NO CAMPO DA CIRCULAÇÃO NO CONTEXTO DA DIGITALIZAÇÃO DA ECONOMIA MUNDIAL

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo apresenta os resultados de um estudo voltado ao processo de formação da imagem de uma empresa comercial "ideal". **Resultados:** Foi desenvolvida a definição do autor de "empresa comercial ideal", consideradas as características mais importantes de tal empresa do ponto de vista de sua imagem tecnológica, comercial, mercadológica e social, e uma abordagem metodológica ao processo de formação da imagem de uma empresa comercial "ideal" foi desenvolvido. **Conclusão:** Foram definidos os principais critérios para classificar o pregão da loja como "ideal". Foram identificados os principais fatores de formação de uma imagem positiva de uma empresa comercial nas condições de transformação digital da esfera do varejo.

Palavras-chave: A imagem da organização; Empresa comercial; Digitalização; Economia global.

1 INTRODUCTION

There is an objective need for systematization of knowledge, as well as scientific development and justification of the problem of creating a positive image of an "ideal" trading enterprise that helps attract customers and achieve sales plan indicators in the new conditions of digitalization of the world economy, which leads to hypercompetition in the field of circulation, to retain the existing and ensure a more profitable competitive positioning of domestic wholesale and retail enterprises.

The problem of forming the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise is relevant both from a theoretical point of view and from the standpoint of its practical significance. The relevance of the topic of this study is also since the digital transformation of retail requires not only the introduction of innovative technologies in wholesale and retail retail, but also the development of a new methodological approach to the creation, management, and maintenance of the image of a retail organization. Based on the fact that the image of a trading enterprise is an important factor affecting its competitiveness, marketing position, share price, pricing and quality of products sold, the attractiveness of the enterprise as an employer, the evaluation of partners and competitors, i.e.; almost all aspects of its activities, it should be noted that a positive image increases the competitiveness of a trading enterprise and significantly facilitates its access to resources (information, personnel, material, financial). A positive image has a direct impact on both sales volume and customer satisfaction, forming their loyalty by improving the consumer's attitude to the retail organization and its products.

Thus, the image can provide a long-term strategic advantage for a retail organization.

Theoretical and methodological aspects of the image as an element of marketing communications were considered in the works of foreign and domestic scholars, such as G. Bobby, P. Kotler, Zh-Zh. Lamben, I.V. Aleshina, G.G. Pocheptsov, O.A. Feofanov, V.M. Shepel, etc. Numerous publications are also devoted to the problems of forming the organization's image, among which the works of famous foreign and domestic scholars should be noted, namely K. Boulding, J.T. Bowen, G. Dowling, S. Patti, J.M. Stefanelli, I. Ya. Alekhina, T. M. Akhtyamova, T.A. Burtseva, O.V. Vetchanova, L.V. Danilenko, V.G. Korolko, S.A. Naumova, T.N. Piskunova, N.L. Rogaleva, E.V. Rodionova, A.Sh. Sanatulova, V.D. Sekerin, I.M. Sinyaeva, M.V. Tomilova, V.M. Shepel, V.D. Shkardun, and others.

They consider both theoretical issues of creating an image at the level of an organization and highlighting its main types and structures; and methodological techniques for building its positive image. However, for all their importance, these studies, in our opinion, were only limited to considering the general issues of identifying the essence of the "image" and "corporate image" concepts, as well as analyzing the factors influencing its formation. Currently, there are no scientific studies that reflect the economic content of the "ideal trading enterprise" concept, as well as the definition of "the image of an ideal trading enterprise"; there are also no effective mechanisms for forming the image of a retail organization with the allocation of individual stages of creating its attractive image in a strategic perspective. These aspects determined the purpose of this study, which consists in the development and scientific substantiation of the essential content of the "ideal trading enterprise" concept, as well as the analysis of the principles of forming and maintaining its image as an element of the market strategy of a trading organization in the conditions of digitalization of the sphere of circulation.

The scientific novelty of the research consists in the development of a methodological approach and instructional techniques for determining and analyzing the main factors affecting the formation of the image of an "ideal" enterprise in the field of circulation in the conditions of digital transformation of the world economy.

2 METHODS

The following methods were crucial during the development of the methodology for forming the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise: system, complex, situational. The system allowed presenting a general picture of the development of the image of a

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trading enterprise in the conditions of digitalization of the world economy. An integrated approach allowed considering all the factors that influence the formation of the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise in their synergistic unity. The situational approach made it possible to take into account the current situation in retail, concerning its digital transformation. Other methods were used: induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, logical unity of theory and practice, graphics, and block structuring.

In general, the use of this palette of methods allowed developing a methodology for forming the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise, which will allow forming not only a vision of the real image of a trading organization by the management but also building plans for its necessary adjustment, taking into account the requirements of the target audience.

As is known, the concept of the image was introduced into scientific circulation by the American economist K. Boulding in 1961. In the special literature, the concept of "image" is interpreted as a consciously formed image of an object that gives it additional values and is designed to have a certain psychological impact on specific groups of society. An image is an effective form of communication that can create in the target audience exactly the perception that is necessary to achieve specific goals. Being today one of the key characteristics of its carrier, the image performs several important functions, both in the communication process and in the processes of socialization and development of an individual.

Thus, in the most general sense, the image can be considered as a system of people's ideas about any object (Burtseva and Mironova, 2008; Sekerin and Tuleeva, 2007).

While agreeing with this interpretation in general, we still want to note that image is a very important characteristic inherent in both a person, a group of people, and a product or service, it is an image of an object that is perceived by the target audience. The image has a complex multi-level structure determined by its carrier and determines a variety of approaches to its interpretation. Hence, concerning the organization, the image can be qualified as an impression that the organization makes on the surrounding people and which is fixed in their minds in the form of more or less developed emotionally colored judgments about it (Tomilova, 1998, p. 90).

Thus, I.V. Aleshina defines the image as a figure of the organization in the representation of public groups (Aleshina, 2008, p. 18).

M.V. Tomilova is in solidarity with her, who writes that image is a holistic perception (understanding and evaluation) of the organization by different groups of the public,

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formed based on information stored in their memory about various aspects of the organization (Tomilova, 1998, p. 5-17).

Moreover, these ideas are always generalized, that is, relying even on rather small and partial details, a person interprets them, and he/she has an opinion about the organization as a whole (Burtseva and Mironova, 2008, p. 34).

In other words, the figure of an enterprise, its image is the perception of the individuality of this enterprise, the awareness of its specific features, characteristic features. As a rule, an enterprise expresses its individuality through the products and services offered, the quality of service, the attitude towards its employees, partners, and suppliers. In this regard, we agree with the statement of F. Kotler, who notes that the image is the perception of the organization or its products by society (Kotler, 2006, p. 87).

It is important to achieve several important goals with the help of a well-constructed image:

- positioning of the organization in the market,
- avoiding competitors,
- attracting the attention of a potential target audience,
- encouraging consumers to take active actions,
- increasing customer loyalty,
- sales promotion.

Traditionally, it is considered that the main components of the organization's image are: corporate philosophy; the history-legend of the company; the appearance of the corporation; corporate culture; the development of relations with society. In other words, the image of a corporation should contain four main components:

- Image of the product – to what extent high quality and necessary to meet the needs of customers it produces;
- Management and financial image – whether it manages effectively or whether it makes sense to become its shareholder;
- Public image – is the corporation active as a member of society, how is it characterized from the standpoint of social responsibility;
- The image of the corporation as an employer – how it treats its employees.

The advantages of a positive image are obvious. However, it does not arise by itself and does not exist by itself. Purposeful systematic work is required to form an attractive image of the organization, which, in turn, will require serious efforts from the company itself.

There are three types of the company's image — it is real, mirror (reflected), and ideal. The real one reflects the prevailing attitude of the public. The mirror image is the management's idea of what the target audience thinks about the company. The ideal (positive) image is understood to be the image that the company strives for. All its efforts should be reduced to the fact that it is possible to put an equal sign between the real and ideal image because the established positive image of the company will form a stable positive presentation of the enterprise and will work for business development for a long time.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In our opinion, these methodological approaches can equally be attributed to "the image of a trading enterprise" concept.

We consider the image of a trading enterprise to be an objective phenomenon. There is an image of a huge ultramodern shopping and entertainment center and a small shop that is located within walking distance from the house. However just as the artist's brushstrokes form a complete image in the picture, so the appearance of the store, its aggregate image, is born from the individual images formed in the minds of customers. In this context, the image in the conditions of growing competition will act as an identifier for the choice of goods and services. The behavioral motivations of people concerning the store, including the activity or passivity of customer behavior, will largely depend on which associations prevail in the picture of the image. The further the retail enterprise deviates in its image characteristics from the image of the "ideal store" that has developed in the consumer's head, the less often it will be visited.

In this context, we consider it important from a methodological point of view to develop our definition of the "ideal trading enterprise" concept.

In our opinion, an ideal trading enterprise, or an ideal store, is an integral concept of retail, it is a retail store, fully equipped with personnel trained in modern digital technologies, capable of actively selling and achieving high results in objective indicators of the effectiveness of the commercial activity.

The formation of an "ideal", in fact, "collective" image of a trading enterprise – a certain standard for orientation, is, in fact, the achievement of such a state of retail and technological chains that it is necessary to strive for.

We consider it necessary to include the following among the most important of these characteristics:

- the range of products considered in terms of its width, depth, and novelty;



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- the price level and the dynamics of their changes following the changes in various environmental factors (competitors' prices, seasonality, etc.);
- the location of the store, its availability, which determines the time spent on a shopping trip;
- the opening time of the store and the time spent in it, depending on both the speed and convenience of finding the goods necessary for the buyer and the length of the queue at the checkout; the availability of self-service cash registers;
- using new digital technologies for paying for purchases;
- impeccable quality of goods and services sold;
- novelty and quality of the product packaging;
- compliance with the shelf life of products;
- quality of sales service (qualification of personnel);
- courtesy (courtesy of the staff, sensitivity to customer requests);
- the design of the store; the atmosphere of the store, which depends on the style of the interior, the types of display of goods, lighting, smells, background music, etc.;
- a range of services, including assistance in choosing a product, various additional services (currency exchange, car parking, etc.);
- sales promotion;
- using digital technologies;
- the efficiency of relations with suppliers.

The image of an attractive commercial enterprise should be focused on the current values of modern society, in which it carries out its commercial activities. Taking into account these values will allow forming a competent policy of interaction with all external and internal contractors: consumers, own employees, suppliers, partners, etc. It should also be flexible, that is, following the constantly changing market situation, constant work should be carried out to adapt the image to new challenges of the external environment, the needs of customers and partners. In other words, the "ideal" trading company should have several unique competitive advantages that distinguish it in the eyes of customers.

Therewith, we believe that, in principle, an "ideal" trading enterprise can hardly exist in reality – both due to the subjectivity of consumer assessments, and their allocation of various criteria and approaches to the interpretation of the "ideal store" concept. Therefore, it seems to us that to a certain extent, the concept of a store as a kind of "standard" can be close to this in its economic content, the positive image of which will act as an important criterion for the effective development of a retail organization. In

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this context, we considered it necessary to highlight the main characteristics of the trading floor of such an enterprise.

In our opinion, the ideal trading floor should look as follows: carefully worked out design, modern reliably working trading equipment in the general style of an interior, its correct arrangement with the maximum efficiency providing easy movement and access to goods, competent lighting and correct placement of goods on showcases, shelves, and counters. The ideal store should also be referred to as a store with the best service culture, the best set of services and price offer, maximum territorial proximity, or short delivery time in the format of online purchases.

Thus, summarizing the above, it should be emphasized that the success of modern retail primarily lies in the invisible spiritual plane – the world of feelings and emotions of the buyer. Since buyers live in conditions of excess supply, the decisive factor affecting the frequency and volume of purchases for them is the positive attitude that the buyer will feel when entering the store, and it consists of ease of movement, easy and quick access to goods, their exposure. The buyer is pleased to be in the store, where comfortable conditions are created for him/her: the interior delights the eye; there is a high level of culture of commercial service, politeness, sensitivity, the competence of the staff. Therewith, we believe that, along with such unique characteristics, there are some general rules for any store that can turn it into an ideal retail outlet. First of all, it is necessary to carry out the layout of the trading floor in such a way that not only to lay out the goods face first, but also to use every meter of useful area with maximum benefit. Then it is necessary to think over such zoning of the store so that it provides easy movement of visitors around the floor and convenient access to goods. In particular, we recommend making passages of at least 1.8 meters. We also suggest taking into account several details when placing the cash register node:

- it should be easily visible to those customers who have already chosen the product and are ready to pay for it;
- visitors paying at the checkout should not interfere with other visitors;
- modern digital technologies are used in the payment of goods by buyers;
- the convenience of the cashier's work and control over the leaving customers should also be necessary conditions.

Taking into account the active transition of the retail from the offline format to online, from the standpoint of online business, the ideal store will be the one where the buyer can easily find and choose the product, make the desired purchase. Such an online store must meet a number of the following criteria: provide as much information about

goods and services as possible; provide guarantees to customers; describe in detail the delivery mechanism and conditions for returning goods; provide high-quality services; have a simple name and a domain name that are easy to remember. Since the image of a trading company is an ideal object that arises in the minds of customers, it is not subject to direct measurement. It can be estimated only by the attitude of consumers, which will be manifested in the frequency of visits to the store and the size of the average receipt. From here, having created the image of a trading enterprise, it will need to be constantly monitored.

Thus, we consider the image of a trading company to be the result of the interaction of a large number of factors, some of which the company can control, while most of the factors cannot be controlled, although it is possible to try to influence them in some way.

Having analyzed the assessments of specialists existing in the scientific literature, we adapted them to the reference domestic trading enterprise and found it necessary to identify several of the most important image-forming factors for such an enterprise. The main blocks of factors, as it seems to us, should be the following:

1) Technological image:

- High potential for research and development and new product developments;
- Wide opportunities for the use of modern digital technologies in retail and technological processes;

2) Retail image:

- Wide opportunities for combining offline and online trading;
- High quality of products sold and customer service standards;
- High activity in the application of new sales promotion mechanics;
- Improving relations with suppliers.

3) Marketing image:

- Close attention to the needs of customers, constant monitoring of customer behavior;
- Innovative tools for marketing communications;
- Formation of new and updating of existing loyalty programs.

4) Image of reputation:

- Support for traditions;
- Attentive attitude to employees;
- Sensitive attitude to customers, politeness, courtesy of sellers;
- A high degree of public confidence.

5) Image of social responsibility:

- Attention to environmental problems;
- The use of "green" technologies in packaging;
- The ability to quickly adapt to the negative challenges of the external business environment;
- Active public contribution.

Thus, acting as an intangible asset of a trading enterprise, the image increases its competitiveness in the market. It forms the intangible capital, the "goodwill" of the organization. The image contains a descriptive and evaluative component, which represents the totality of all knowledge about a trading company and is associated with certain aspects of its activities. In this context, an image is an important tool for forming and managing consumer opinion.

The image as a scientific phenomenon cannot be considered in isolation from the process of its formation. Several factors (elements) influence the formation of the image. Let us highlight the most important of them:

1. The popularity of the organization. To what extent is information about the retail organization distributed and to what extent are representatives of different segments of the public aware of its existence;
2. The established reputation. What is the real assessment that has been developed about the trading company from buyers, employees, partners, competitors;
3. Readiness for change. How flexible and fast is the company able to adapt to the changed environmental conditions;
4. Innovation. The degree of innovation of the enterprise in the field of digital technologies in trading operations and methods of working with customers;
5. The prestige of the product. Who forms the target audience of the retail organization, in which segment sales are carried out;
6. Advertising principles. How often does the organization conduct advertising campaigns, promotions;
7. Competitiveness. How much does the trading company perform better than its main competitors?

In a complex of all these elements, an idea is formed about a particular store, about how well-known and popular it is, sells a high-quality innovative product, or is far from digital technologies.

Speaking about the formation of the image of a retail organization, it should be noted that in its essence it is a complex multidimensional process of purposeful and

consistent creation of the image of a trading enterprise during intersubjective interaction that occurs in the process of communication at various levels of social interaction. All this makes it necessary for the authors to develop their methodological approach to the formation of the image of a trading enterprise.

We believe that the development of this methodology will allow forming not only the vision of the real image of the trading company's management but also assessing the prospects for creating the desired image.

Therewith, we proceed from the assumption that in the new conditions of digital transformation of the retail sphere, for the competitive positioning of a trading enterprise, purposeful and careful work is necessary to create an ideal image, which should be sought when forming an attractive image in the eyes of the target audience. This is the ultimate goal, after which it will be necessary to maintain the reputation at the desired level. Figure 1 shows the proposed methodological approach to the process of forming such an image, consisting of three main blocks.

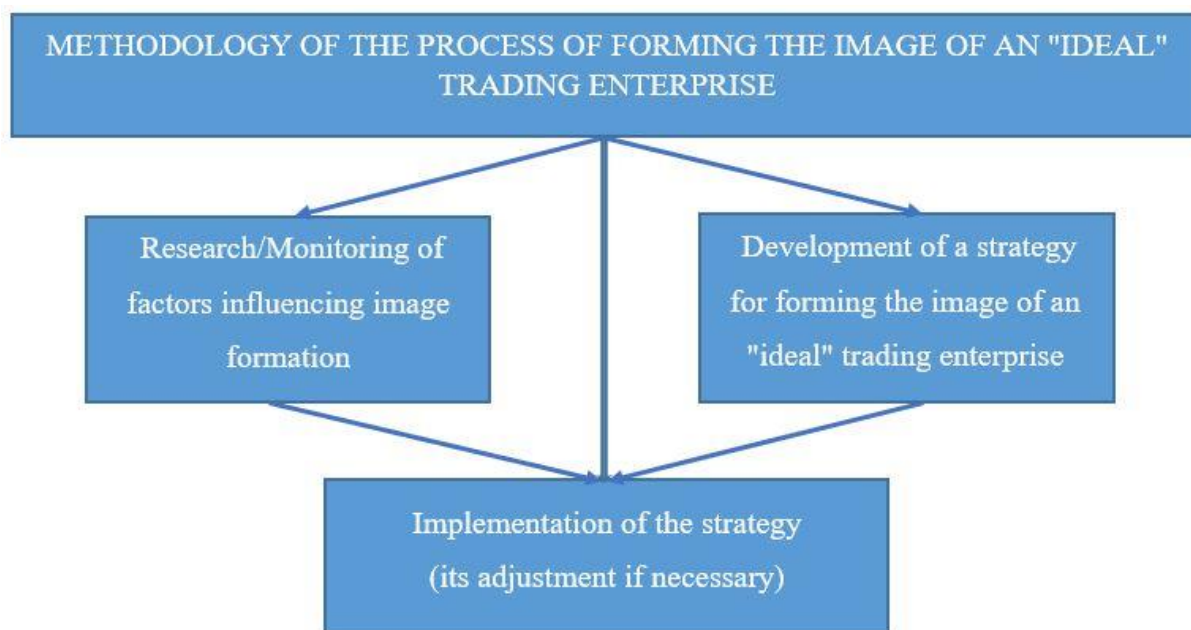


Figure 1. The process of forming the image of a trading enterprise. Source: developed by the authors

Let us consider each of the declared blocks in more detail.

The first block: Research/Monitoring

Following the logic of developing a methodological approach, before starting work on the formation of our image, we consider it necessary to conduct a preliminary study. First of all, the target audience, its needs, and preferences have been studied. Today

it has become quite obvious that the domestic wholesale and retail market is characterized by high innovation. Key trends that have changed world retail, namely Big Data, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), neurotechnology, cloud computing, blockchain technology, business process automation, and robotics, augmented and virtual reality, 3D printing, the use of voice assistants to search and order goods, as well as the transition of retail from offline to online have actively influenced the Russian realities. This means that consumer preferences have changed, and taking into account the harsh conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been noticeable changes in consumer behavior and its motivational characteristics. In this regard, Internet sites and forums where potential customers communicate and leave feedback are subject to research.

The company itself has also been analyzed, its weaknesses and strengths have been highlighted, its reputation at the current moment has been evaluated. The image policy of competing enterprises has also been monitored.

Second block: development/adjustment of the strategy

Based on the data obtained as a result of the study, an action plan has been created to form a positive image of the company. It takes into account the influence of the main factors that need to be taken into account in this process. For example, a very important component of the competitiveness of a trading enterprise, and therefore the creation of its attractive image, is the quality of trading services.

Figure 2 shows the "pyramid" of the components of the quality of trading services. It demonstrates that the most important component in this "pyramid" is the quality of the goods sold by the store. If the product is of poor quality, no high-quality trading service can ensure customer satisfaction and the formation of a positive image of the store.



Figure 2. The "Pyramid" of the components of the quality of retail services.

Source: Compiled by the authors according to Bragin (2019).

Considering the great importance of the quality of retail services in achieving the main goal of any retail organization: maximum satisfaction of customer needs, we

believe that, along with the well-known ones (stability and breadth of the product range, compliance with the standards of technological customer service, professionalism of employees, active communication policy of the store), another unique way to improve the quality of customer service can also be a well-known method of material incentives for personnel, which was introduced in the "Butik.ru" store. This refers to the "bonus for a smile", the essence of which was that sales consultants were polite, courteous, positive, and cordially welcomed each visitor, and managers would evaluate their behavior and then charge a bonus in a certain amount from the salary (Gorenova, 2012; Panasenko, 2021; Krasilnikova, et al. 2021).

The third block: implementation of the strategy

After careful preparation, the planned activities are implemented to achieve the desired image of the organization. If the first two stages were carried out qualitatively, then as a result, the popularity of the organization will gradually grow, and a positive image of the company will be formed in the eyes of the target audience. However, when needed, it is necessary to adjust the measures for the formation of the image. The adjustment is carried out after the initial strategy has been implemented, and its effectiveness has been monitored. If some goals for creating an image have not been achieved and the reputation of the organization still does not meet expectations, the necessary improvements are made to the plan.

As for the direct method of forming the image of a modern retail organization, it can be represented by the following sequence of steps (Shkardun and Akhtyamov, 2001, p. 71-73):

1. Analysis of the marketing environment of the organization and the identification of target (most important for its activities) groups of the public.
2. Formation of a set of the most significant image-forming factors for each of the target groups of the public.
3. Development of the desired image of the organization (in terms of established strategic goals) for each target group of the public.
4. Assessment of the state of the organization's image in each of the target groups of the public.
5. Development and implementation of an action plan for the formation of a positive image of the organization in the minds of target groups.

6. Monitoring of the achieved results and correction of the plan (if necessary).

In conclusion, we consider it necessary to note that the image of a retail organization (enterprise) is one of the most important tools for achieving its strategic goals related to the main aspects of its commercial activities.

The established positive image of a retail organization will form a stable positive image of it and will work for business development for a long time.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Thus, having considered the main blocks of the methodological approach to the development of a strategy for forming the image of an "ideal" trading enterprise, we come to the conclusion that it is necessary to offer and work out effective retail and marketing tools, using which a trading enterprise can become the most attractive in the eyes of the target audience, the public, partners. Therefore, the quintessence of the methodological approach proposed by us is the strategy of forming the image of a retail organization.

This strategy should include the main stages and sequence of retail marketing activities to create equality between the real and desired image, and should also be aimed at using fundamentally new ways to stimulate sales, both adapted to the conditions of digitalization of retail, and based on taking into account the new requirements of consumers and society.

In our opinion, the development of this strategy, which is based on the key principles and approaches used in modern retail practice, taking into account the specifics of the present moment, is designed to contribute to the formation of a stable positive image of an "ideal" trading enterprise.

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