

MARKETPLACE TRADE – SELECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OR INEVITABLE DECLINE?

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Purpose: The aim of this article is to present changes in the role of marketplace trade as a form of retail. Marketplace trade is one of the oldest forms of retail; however, its importance in supplying buyers with everyday items is systematically decreasing. The author attempts to answer the question of whether this form of retail is facing inevitable decline, or whether its selective development is possible.

Design/methodology/approach: The article presents official data from the Central Statistical Office, the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office, and the Statistical Office in Poznań, as well as the results of surveys published in specialist literature. The above-mentioned statistical data concern both the whole country and the Wielkopolska region. The conducted analyses cover the years 2010-2020.

Findings: The article discusses the level of development of marketplace trade, its importance in the distribution of everyday products (FMCG) and the factors determining the use of this form of retail by customers. The main part of the analysis concerns the issue of whether marketplace trade is in the phase of decline or development. The discussion is supported by data on the changes in the number of permanent and temporary marketplaces in Poland and selected counties of the Wielkopolska region. Also included is a diagnosis of customers' preferences regarding the choice of a marketplace/bazaar/market as a place for doing their shopping.

Research limitations/implications: In the future, it is worth repeating the research among actual and potential customers of bazaars and markets; also among the lessees of market stalls and booths, i.e. the sellers of goods.

Practical implications: The article also indicates the determinants of choosing a specific marketplace, bazaar or city market as a place for making purchases. For this purpose, the results of several surveys relating to the functioning of marketplace trade in selected cities are presented.

Originality/value: The results of the analyses have both cognitive and pragmatic value, especially in the context of preparing and implementing development plans for this retail format in individual cities and municipalities.

Keywords: Marketplace trade, retail trade marketing.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Marketplace trade is one of the forms of traditional out-of-store retailing. It has a centuries-old tradition in our country. In the past, the market square was the vital “heart of the city”, its true centre, where trade and crafts thrived, and public life flourished. The square where the market was held was an inherent element of the structure of each city, playing an important role in creating the final form of the current urban space. The process of the creation and expansion of market squares began in Poland in the 11th century with the emergence of commercial settlements in the vicinity of rulers’ castles and castle towns. These settlements were inhabited by merchants and townspeople. The market square was situated in the central part of such settlements, where stalls and inns appeared. The town square performed commercial functions and was the most important focus of urban life. The town square was a form of the original spatial concentration of trade. Over time, the importance of market squares changed as a result of spatial transformations. As the population of the city grew, so did the demand for commercial space. In the twentieth century, street trading began to be relocated and removed from market squares, with the result that the primary function of the centre square was a purely representative one. Street and marketplace trade was pushed out of city centres and moved to new locations, namely squares and market halls located in the centres of city districts. In addition, large fairs, exhibitions and trade fairs began to appear, giving some cities, such as Poznań or Kraków, a special market character.

It is also worth mentioning that in Poland a dynamic growth in the importance of markets and bazaars occurred during the political transformation, i.e. at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. The most famous marketplace of that time was Stadion Dziesięciolecia in Warsaw, where over 5,000 business entities operated. Thousands of people made a living at that marketplace. The Różycki Bazaar was also very popular. The activity of the largest marketplaces involved both exporting goods and supplying the domestic market. In 1997, the largest exporters among marketplaces were the following (Kropiwnicki, 2003, p. 170):

- Stadion Dziesięciolecia in Warsaw – with a value of exports at 370 mln USD,
- Białystok – with 145 mln USD,
- Tuszyn near Łódź – with 110 mln USD.

In the times of real socialism, marketplaces gave an opportunity to obtain goods that were otherwise difficult to get, as well as being enclaves of the first stirrings of a market economy (Świetlik, 2020, p. 102). The political transformation in 1989 resulted in the creation of over a million micro-enterprises which sold goods directly to customers from stalls, camp beds and so-called “jaws” (metal booths) (Ciechomski, 2014, p. 27). They were the impetus for the primary accumulation of capital and the transformation of the archaic economy of permanent scarcity into a new economic system.

A separate issue is the rapid development of marketplace trade in border regions. A real market boom occurred there at that time as a consequence of the opening of previously sealed state borders (Powęska, 2016, p. 17; Dołzblasz, 2013, p. 102). Disproportions between prices and incomes on both sides of the borders as well as the underdevelopment of the retail infrastructure resulting from the previous economic system, the privatisation of trade, the liberation of entrepreneurship and, above all, the economic transformation that initiated all these changes played a significant role in the dynamic development of cross-border trade, particularly in marketplaces (Zuba, Zuba, 2018, p. 327). However, cross-border marketplace trade in such cities as Gubin and Guben, Zgorzelec and Görlitz, Cieszyn and Český Těšín or Terespol and Brest is now past its glory days. Undoubtedly, this was to a large extent influenced by the long-lasting restrictions of international transport and border traffic due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Marketplace trade, while maintaining its primarily local character, complements other forms of retailing, including those based on stationary retail outlets (Szumilak, 2008, p. 26). At the same time, is a form of retail whose organisation and functioning are most influenced by local government.

Markets perform a number of important socio-economic functions, particularly in relation to the local commercial space. First and foremost, they provide an important complement to other forms of retail; affect the development of the local labour market, production and marketing; and contribute to the construction of local food systems; as well as fulfilling a socio-cultural role (Gonzalez, Waley, 2013, p. 965).

2. Statistics illustrating marketplace trade in Poland

It should be assumed that the terms *market square*, *trading square*, *marketplace* and *bazaar* can be treated as synonyms and used interchangeably. According to the definition included in the methodology of marketplace research, a marketplace is “a separate area, a square (sometimes fenced), where agricultural products (animal and plant) are sold locally between agricultural producers (farmers) and commercial units or between farmers and non-agricultural population on specific days of the week” (Metodologia..., 2002, p. 5). The above definition focuses on the selling and purchasing of agricultural produce, but also other goods are traded in marketplaces. According to the definition of the Central Statistical Office (GUS), marketplaces are separate areas and structures (squares, streets, market halls) with permanent or seasonal small-retail outlets or facilities intended for trading on specific days of the week or every day (Rynek Wewnętrzny..., p. 29). Seasonal markets are defined as those squares and streets where retail facilities operate for a period of up to 6 months due to increased customer traffic (e.g. seaside tourist traffic) and this activity is repeated in subsequent seasons.

The role of marketplace trade is confirmed primarily by the fact that its share in the retail FMCG market is estimated at about 5-10% (Kosicka-Gębska, Tul-Krzyszczuk, Gębski, 2011, p. 30 et seq.). This share, as well as the number of permanent and seasonal markets, is systematically decreasing. Analysing changes in the number of selected types of stores and retail facilities in Poland in the last decade, one can observe a very significant increase in the number of supermarkets, which in the years 2010-2020 rose by 83%. According to the methodology of the Central Statistical Office, this category also includes discount stores. On the other hand, as regards the formats of hypermarkets, department stores and petrol stations, a process of retail concentration and saturation of commercial space with these types of retail outlets is observed. Data relating to this issue are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Number of selected types of stores and retail facilities in Poland in 2010-2020

Specification	Supermarkets	Hypermarkets	Department stores	Trade stores	Petrol stations	Permanent markets	Seasonal markets
2010	4461	562	67	303	9603	2235	6913
2011	5006	565	66	280	9596	2232	6564
2012	5468	572	64	246	9481	2215	6506
2013	6210	592	64	227	9053	2207	6460
2014	6509	593	66	217	8905	2210	6729
2015	6903	589	70	205	8991	2222	6768
2016	7042	586	54	177	9099	2199	6938
2017	7317	564	75	182	9326	2173	7194
2018	7659	570	73	177	9340	2156	7127
2019	7945	567	73	171	8666	2156	7088
2020	8170	546	75	157	8120	2122	6248
Growth rate 2020/2010 in %	183.1	97.2	111.9	51.8	84.6	94.9	90.4

Source: own compilation based on Central Statistical Office data: Rynek Wewnętrzny w 2020 r. table 36 and Rynek Wewnętrzny w 2014 r. table 31.

In 2020, the national register kept by municipal local government units contained 2,122 permanent markets, including 2,047 markets with predominantly small-retail trade. The total number of permanent markets was lower by 34 compared to the figure for the previous year (Rynek Wewnętrzny..., p. 31).

Changes in the numbers of selected retail forms (markets, supermarkets and petrol stations) in Poland in the years 2010-2020 are presented in Figure 1.

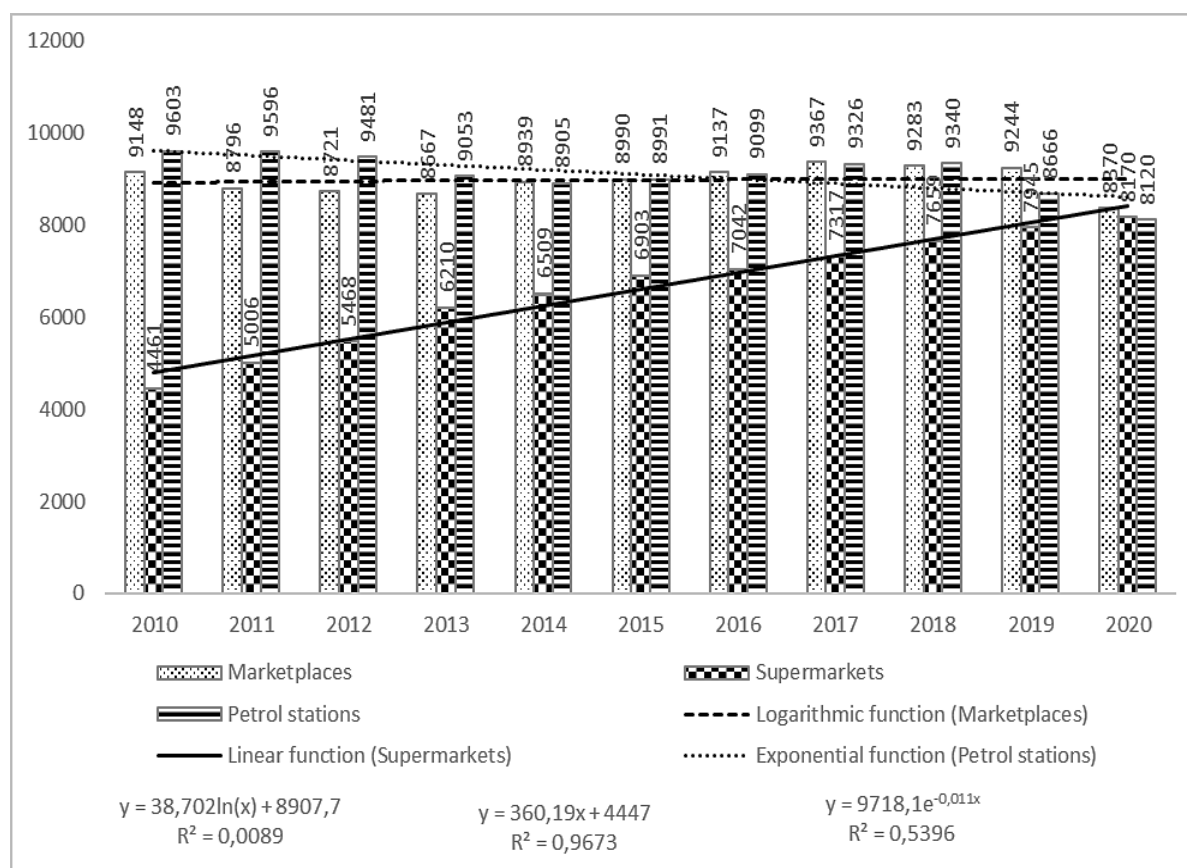


Figure 1. Changes in the number of marketplaces, supermarkets and petrol stations in Poland in the years 2010-2020. Source: own compilation based on data from Table 1.

A significant decrease in the number of marketplaces occurred in the years 2010-2013. During this period, the Polish economy experienced the effects of the global financial and economic crisis, which was reflected in the intensification of negative trends on the labour market and a deterioration of consumers' incomes. Consumers' willingness to spend money on food decreased, and the importance of price as a criterion for its selection increased (Świetlik, 2014, p. 9 et seq.). Intense competition led to the development of new large retail formats, especially discount stores, which became a real threat to the development of marketplaces. In the past decade such discount chains as Biedronka, Lidl, Netto and Aldi recorded significant increases in terms of newly opened stores. Biedronka, the retail leader in Poland, recorded particularly impressive increases in turnover and FMCG market share. A sharp decline in the number of seasonal markets (from 7088 to 6248, i.e. by almost 12%) occurred in 2020, as illustrated in Figure 2.

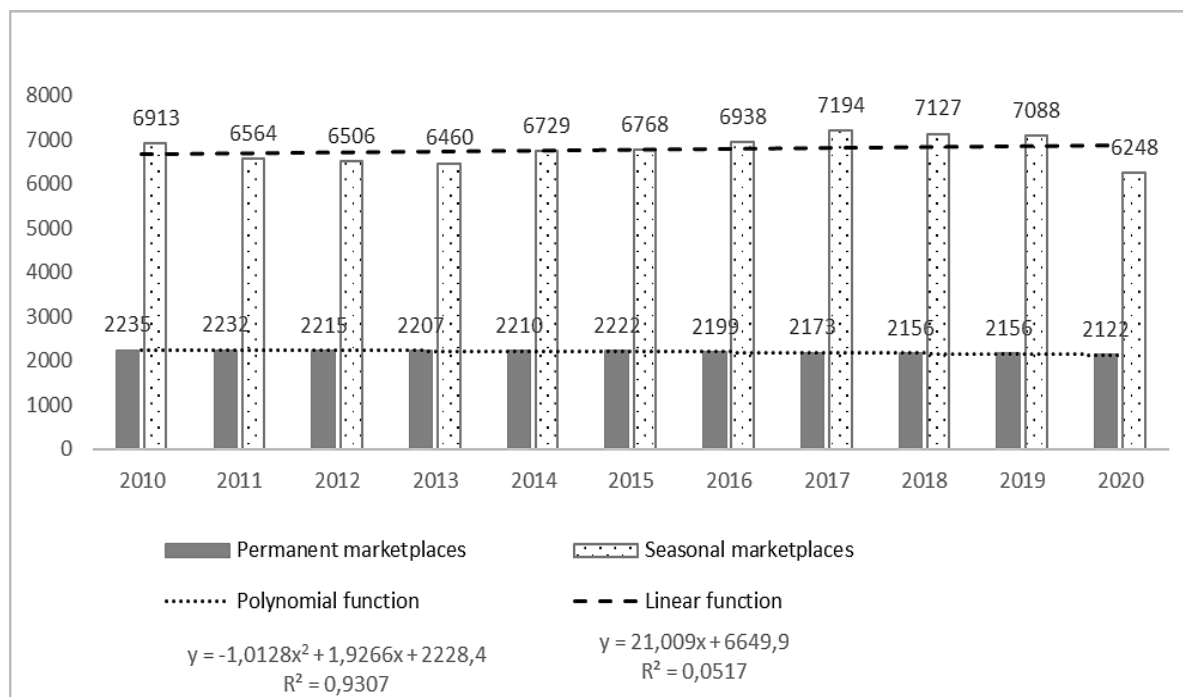


Figure 2. Number of permanent and seasonal marketplaces in Poland in 2010-2020. Source: Own compilation based on data from Table 1.

Data from the Central Statistical Office show that in the analysed period in Poland there were on average about 6 marketplaces per 100,000 people.

In 2020 the largest number of marketplaces disappeared in the Mazowieckie Province – 6 establishments, followed by 5 establishments each in the Łódzkie, Pomorskie and Wielkopolskie Provinces. In comparison to the previous year, the total area of permanent marketplaces decreased by 1.8% (Rynek Wewnętrzny..., p. 31). The largest decreases in marketplace area occurred in the Mazowieckie Province (by 69.1 thousand m²), Łódzkie Province (by 54.1 thousand m²), Świętokrzyskie Province (by 38.5 thousand m²) and Pomorskie Province (by 37 thousand m²). In permanent marketplaces, transactions were made in approximately 86.6 thousand permanent small-retail outlets, among which 45.7 thousand operated daily. The permanent market network was supplemented by seasonal markets, the number of which decreased by 840 establishments in 2020. Significantly lower annual receipts from marketplace fees (by 20.5%) compared to 2019 were recorded.

As regards comparing the level of development of marketplace trade in spatial terms, very interesting research results are presented in Wojdacki, K. (2016), p. 228. These are shown on the map below (Figure 3).



Legend:

Dark colour: development of marketplace trade.

Grey colour: stagnation in the development of marketplace trade.

Light colour: recession of marketplace trade.

Figure 3. Spatial differentiation of marketplace trade development in Poland. Source: Wojdacki, K. (2016). Terytorialne zróżnicowanie rozwoju handlu targowiskowego w Polsce – analiza statystyczna, Wydział Zarządzania UW, Problemy Zarządzania 14/1(1), p. 227.

The highest level of marketplace trade development is noted in the Podlaskie and Świętokrzyskie Provinces. The situation in the Podkarpackie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Provinces is also favourable. The Opolskie, Dolnośląskie and Pomorskie Provinces are at the other extreme: in these regions there is a strong downward trend in the importance of marketplace trade as a distribution channel for frequently purchased goods.

3. Marketplace trade in Wielkopolska

A downward trend in the number of permanent and seasonal markets was also observed in the past decade in Wielkopolska (Table 2).

Table 2.

Marketplaces in Wielkopolska

SPECIFICATION	2010	2015	2018	2019
Permanent marketplaces (as of 31 December)	237	235	226	225
Permanent small-retail sales outlets	11840	10032	9092	8557
Seasonal marketplaces (during the year)	473	436	453	451
Annual receipts from marketplace fees in thousand PLN	27602.5	23098.2	17395.2	17437.5

Source: own compilation based on: Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Wielkopolskiego 2020, p. 135.

The number of permanent small-retail outlets on marketplaces, such as stalls or kiosks, decreased within the decade by as much as 27%. It is also worth noting the significant decrease (from 27.6 million PLN to 17.4 million PLN, i.e. by more than 1/3) in the annual receipts from

marketplace fees. Admittedly, these fees usually do not exceed 1% of the income of an average municipality, but there are some local government units, such as the municipality of Tuszyn in the Łódzkie Province, where 15 years ago this figure exceeded 30% whereas currently it stands at 10% (Bury, 2013, p. 128). Due to the decrease in the number of tenants, revenues from fees for the operation of municipal and community markets and revenues from parking fees charged to motorised customers are falling.

In 2018, the annual receipts from marketplace fees on permanent and seasonal markets amounted to approximately 187.4 million PLN, which was about 76.5 million PLN less than in 2008. The fact that from 2016 some municipalities took advantage of the possibility to waive the collection of fees, in order to support small entrepreneurship and maintain marketplaces on their territory, was of significant importance here (Świetlik, 2020, p. 108). It is worth noting at this point that receipts from market fees are a significant source of income in some cities and municipalities, especially those smaller ones that do not have a developed industry. As the number of marketplace sellers drop, these receipts decrease significantly.

Tables 3 and 4 present statistical data on marketplace trade in Wielkopolska, taking into account the sub-regions, counties and the largest cities of the province.

Table 3.
*Marketplaces in Wielkopolska in 2019**

Specification	Permanent marketplaces					Seasonal marketplaces (during the year)	Annual receipts from marketplace fees in thousands PLN
	number	area in m ²		permanent small-retail sales outlets			
	total	total	of which sales area	total	of which marketplaces opened daily		
Province	226	1122845	824963	9092	5259	453	17395.2
Poznań Subregion	37	215549	197992	1271	718	6	3742.1
Kalisz Subregion	50	306720	223198	2021	1078	15	4896.2
Konin Subregion	57	279194	189776	2491	1339	405	2791.5
Leszno Subregion	40	153309	103377	731	230	9	3337.2
Piła Subregion	32	138847	101306	968	303	17	2628.2
City with county status:							
Poznań	10	29226	9314	1610	1591	1	–
Kalisz	5	95606	77842	347	337	–	2254.0
Konin	4	49398	28101	396	396	3	694.3
Leszno	3	23929	9872	78	78	–	380.3

*As of January 1st.

Source: own compilation based on: <https://poznan.stat.gov.pl/dane-o-województwie/powiaty-865/handel---dane-powiatowe-1071/>.

Table 4.
*Marketplaces in Wielkopolska according to county**

Specification	Permanent marketplaces					Seasonal market-places (during the year)	Annual receipts from market-place fees in thousands PLN
	number	area in m ²		permanent small-retail sales outlets			
	total	total	of which sales area	total	of which market-places opened daily		
Jarocin	6	27160	12396	24	24	6	160.7
Kalisz	6	49202	41780	200	8	2	157.3
Kępno	1	15234	11000	–	–	1	136.0
Krotoszyn	7	41353	25449	730	–	–	970.3
Ostrów Wlkp.	13	34776	19642	658	657	2	666.2
Ostrzeszów	6	35841	30777	42	32	2	303.9
Pleszew	6	7548	4312	20	20	2	247.8
Gniezno	9	23862	17195	375	282	2	342.6
Koło	8	31857	26688	279	161	3	257.4
Konin	13	86536	55323	230	19	7	345.5
Słupca	6	28894	19813	370	18	270	762.2
Turek	9	29954	25369	368	290	120	139.9
Września	8	28693	17287	473	173	–	249.6
Gostyń	11	27645	21209	185	–	1	686.5
Grodzisk Wlkp.	2	6434	6110	–	–	2	410.6
Kościan	4	32370	29174	75	75	–	872.6
Leszno	2	3300	3300	–	–	3	29.7
Międzychód	5	5400	2190	75	75	1	76.8
Nowy Tomyśl	6	18044	8242	14	2	1	430.9
Rawicz	5	23985	15130	24	–	1	220.5
Wolsztyn	2	12202	8150	280	–	–	229.3
Chodzież	4	15859	10249	24	–	–	90.0
Czarnków-Trzcianka	8	21996	15442	126	5	7	551.6
Piła	8	53210	35725	705	190	6	1158.2
Wągrowiec	5	34331	29416	28	28	3	390.4
Złotów	7	13451	10474	85	80	1	438.0
Oborniki	8	32283	31192	538	6	–	222.8
Poznań	18	146520	138159	106	86	3	2200.5
Szamotuły	5	18200	17640	626	626	1	462.6
Środa Wlkp.	3	8394	4593	–	–	1	605.4
Śrem	3	10152	6408	1	–	1	250.8

*As of January 1st 2019.

Source: own compilation based on: <https://poznan.stat.gov.pl/dane-o-województwie/powiaty-865/handel---dane-powiatowe-1071/>.

The largest numbers of permanent and seasonal markets are located in the Konin sub-region, and at the county level, in the counties of Ostrów Wielkopolski, Konin and Gostyń. This is due to long historical traditions (these were once privileges granted to cities) in organising fairs and markets.

In Poland, new marketplaces are being built and old ones are modernised with co-financing from European Funds. Many of them were built or modernised under the “My Marketplace” programme, which offered funding towards the building of marketplaces to local government units with a population of up to 50,000. A marketplace could be built on condition that 50% of the produce sold there came from local farmers. The sum of 54 million euros was allocated for this purpose from the Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013.

4. Customer attitudes to marketplace trade

The reasons for the recession in marketplace trade are manifold. Among them, there are external reasons related to intense competition for customers and their financial resources from such retail formats as online shops, shopping centres, discount stores, supermarkets and many others. Changes in the shopping preferences of some consumers, especially the younger generation, are undoubtedly of significant importance as well.

A study carried out by researchers from the Department of Market and Consumption at the University of Economics in Katowice involved 1,100 respondents who shopped at marketplaces, fairs, bazaars and market squares (Malinowska, 2016, p. 117). Only about 16% of them declared that the marketplace was the most frequent place for doing their shopping. The respondents were also asked to assess the number of markets in the place where they lived. Almost 2/3 of the respondents thought that the number of such points of sale was appropriate, and 1/4 said that there were too few markets. Only slightly over 4% of the respondents said there were too many markets in their area, and the remaining participants had no clear opinion on this matter.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate the functioning of marketplaces in terms of selected criteria. The results indicate that customers generally favourably assessed the functioning of marketplaces (average rating 4.05 on a scale from 1 to 7, where 7 was the highest). The best assessment was given to the level of customer service at marketplaces (average rating 4.55, over 50% of positive ratings). The choice of products was also assessed highly (47% of positive ratings), but one in four respondents negatively assessed the variety of products on offer at marketplaces. Over 46% of respondents also positively assessed the level of prices of products offered at marketplaces and the quality of the goods (45%). At the same time, 1/3 of the respondents had reservations about the quality of the products offered. The worst scores were given for the forms of payment offered to customers by traders – over 64% of negative ratings. The hours of operation of marketplaces also received as much as half of negative opinions (50%). On the other hand, for the vendors selling goods at marketplaces a big drawback is sometimes their unsatisfactory technical infrastructure, and in particular a lack of sanitary facilities, as well as quite excessive, in their opinion, fees charged for renting a stall or entering a marketplace (Michalak, Sojkin, 2018, p. 237 et seq.).

The results of a survey carried out on a group of 119 inhabitants of Cieszyn show a generally positive attitude to the existence of marketplaces in Cieszyn (66%), with only 8% of the respondents regarding markets in Cieszyn as a negative phenomenon, and 25% having no opinion on the matter (Kulczyńska, 2020, p. 38). The factors most often indicated by the residents who positively assess the functioning of the markets in the city space include lower prices of goods (23% of responses), atmosphere of the marketplace (20%), wide selection of products (18%), high quality of products (12%) and favourable location of the market (10%).

On the other hand, the respondents with a negative attitude to Cieszyn markets indicated poor organization of the market's operation as a reason for their opinion, and in particular a shortage of parking spaces (69%), excessive noise (42%), and litter around the market square (36%). A small number of respondents also indicated a poor sense of security and fear of theft (22%). The survey also showed that despite the declining role of marketplaces, the residents of Cieszyn continue to shop there (85%). The respondents buy both food (62%) and non-food products (38%) at the markets. Vegetables (29%) and fruit (24%) are the most frequently bought food products because their availability is the best and their quality is the highest.

Interesting results from an assessment of large cities in Poland according to their level of development in marketplace trade are presented in Bieszk-Stolorz, B., Felsztyńska, I. (2018), p. 415. All Polish cities with a population of over 200,000 (16 cities) were included in the study. In 2016, the leaders were Kraków, Radom, Częstochowa and Wrocław, with Sosnowiec coming at the bottom of the ranking.

In conclusion, the results of the analyses show that a typical customer who shops at marketplaces prefers organic products, which are not mass-produced and which are also relatively cheap. Marketplace customers, especially the elderly, particularly appreciate the greater availability of fresh products; direct contact with the seller, who can inform them about the origin of the products; lower prices; as well as the possibility of bargaining.

5. Conclusions

With more and more customers moving to shopping centres, discount stores and online shops, it seems important not to let marketplaces fade into oblivion. It is essential to provide city residents with alternative and diverse shopping options and choices. Therefore, marketplaces should continue to enrich the range of alternative options as regards shopping for daily necessities, especially fresh fruit and vegetables. Their function of integrating local communities is also important. Meanwhile, in the reality of the very modest budget resources of many local governments, one can often see the rather passive attitudes of some city and municipality authorities with regard to modernising marketplace trade, including the infrastructure of market squares, or offering promotional and financial support to market traders.

Marketplace revitalisation programmes and favourable legislation which makes it easier for agricultural producers to sell food produced on their own farms have not slowed down the recessionary tendencies. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a decidedly negative impact on the number of transactions and the sales revenues generated by market sellers.

As regards the question posed in the title of this article, whether the future of marketplace trade is selective development or inevitable decline, the answer seems to be selective development. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a re-evaluation of many things: it has changed shopping preferences, eating habits and lifestyles. It has changed attitudes regarding health protection, including the way of doing shopping and the safety of the origin of the purchased goods. One can hope that in the near future there will be a revival in marketplace trade, prompted by a growing interest among consumers in purchasing safe and unprocessed food.

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