Analysis of the consumer's reasons and driving factors for buying

by
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Abstract. One of the biggest challenges for companies nowadays is to convince the consumers to buy their own products and not the ones from the competitors. For this, it is important not only to know the needs, preferences and options of the consumer, but also to know the factors which determine the consumer to buy these products. This article presents the results of a research about the reasons and reactions of consumer behavior. More precisely, there are analyzed the free recall factors which a consumer mentions to take in consideration when making the buying decision for several product groups. The results of the research show that the price, the brand and the quality of the product are the most frequent factors which the consumers mentions, but there are also other product specific factors. Based on these results a company should adjust its communication strategy in order to determine the consumer to buy its products.

Key words: consumer behavior, buying motives, buying decision, product groups.
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1 Introduction

The biggest challenge for the analysis of the consumer is the fact that in recent years the needs and preferences of the consumer have changed according to the development of the society in which we live. According to Solomon et. al. the consumer doesn’t want to fulfill his basic needs, but he also defines by them his image, express his personality and consolidate his image in the society (Solomon, et.al. 2010, pg. XIV). Besides the classic factors which influence the consumer behavior such as culture, social groups, family and personality (Kotler, Bliemel, 2001, pg. 325), the behavior of the consumers in the world is more and more influenced by globalization. The access to internet, mobile communication as well as more efficient transportation means has increased the information a consumer has. A research by Alden, Steenkamp and Batra (2006) confirm the fact that influence of globalization is stronger in countries which have a high exposure to media and in materialistic cultures (Alden, Steenkamp, Batra, 2006, pg. 227-239). Still Dursaa and Kragh (1998) remark that the globalization influences on consumer behavior depend also on the product category. So the more cultural values are associated with a certain brand, the more difficult is the acceptance of international product (Djursaa, Kragh, 1998, pg. 23-38).

Marketing research has shown that consumer buy not the products for themselves, but for several reason by which a certain product can influence in a positive way their lifes. Knowing the factors which contribute to the buying decision can influence easier the consumer. For this reason it is important for any company to know them. From a methodological point of view there are several forms of determining the factors which influence the consumer behavior. According to Aaker (1991), there are four phases of product awareness and knowledge (Aaker, 1991). The first phase and the most inconvenient one is when the consumer is unaware of a brand. In this stage the probability that he buys the product is very low. The second phase is the aided recall. The consumer doesn't remember some brands or brand characteristics but he is able to recognize them. A more conveniente phase is the unaided recall, when the consumer can remember without help the characteristics of a certain product. The last and the most conveniente for companies is the top of mind awareness, where the consumer can not only mention a certain brand, but he can also give details about it. This is the phase where the probability that the consumer will buy the product is the highest. In this article there is analyzed the unaided recall of the factors which...
influence the buying decision of the Romanian consumer.

2 Methodology and coordinates of the research

The objective of the research was to determine the cognitive and emotional reactions of the consumer behavior and the rationality of this behavior. The research was done in the period November 2011-December 2011. For the research, there were chosen an equal number of men and women and there was also a homogeneous distribution among 5 age groups. The respondents within every segment were chosen on a random basis. There were received 711 answers. The questionnaire contained questions about the general behavior of the consumer, the emotional-impulsive behavior of the consumer as well as the way in which the consumers behave for 13 different product groups.

In this article there is analyzed the unaided factors which influence the behavior of the consumer. For each of the 13 product groups the consumer was asked to mention the most important three factors on which he makes his buying decision, without having any answer options. The results presented contain the cumulated values of the three main factors, without taking in consideration the order of mentioning them. In the following there are presented the results only of 7 of the 13 analyzed product groups. Among the seven categories, there were chosen the cans, fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products, cooked products, alcoholic beverages and sweets.

3 Factors and unaided reasons for buying

In this chapter there are presented the reasons which the consumer mention about buying products of several types. These reasons can be used in advertising or in other marketing communication means to influence much easier the consumer in their buying decision. In this article there are presented the most important 5-6 factors for buying for each product group. Consumers also mentioned other factors, but they were not so frequent.

In figure 1, there are presented the main factors for buying cans. As it can be observed the most important factor which influences the consumers when buying cans is the price. 85% of the consumer mention that the price is important when making the buying decision.

![Figure 1. Top 5 buying influencing factors for cans](Source: Own research results)

The second highest importance, being mentioned by 52% of the consumers is the brand. The brand assures the consumers about the characteristics and safety of the product and it is also an identification element. 40% of the consumers mention the quality as an important buying reason. Quality is a factor which is expected by many consumers with the remark that it is a subjective construct. The quality of the products is often related to the expectations of the consumers and can be of more types. We can talk about the quality regarding the ingredients, the quality of the taste, the quality of the package and so on. Moreover a product which is considered of high quality for certain consumers doesn't necessary have to be of quality for other consumers. Despite all these it is a factor which influences the consumer and for this reason it must be taken in consideration and used in different communication means.

Another important factor, mentioned by 24% of the consumers is the "best before" date. Cans are not fresh products and in many cases they are bought to be kept for a longer period of time. For this reason the validity period is very important in the case of cans. The quality of the product is also an important factor in the
buying decision. Depending on their need, consumers buy bigger or smaller portions. For this reason companies should adjust their sortiment to fulfill the needs of the consumers.

Besides the factors analyzed in figure 1, there are also other factors which are mentioned by the consumers, when buying cans. There are mentioned factors like the producer, ingredients, country of origin, aspect, package and so on. Mentioned factors typical for this product are the content of preservatives, content of salt or the fact that it is practical and needs no preparation. Some of the consumers even mention that they buy it because the product brings them satisfaction. In order to be succesful a company which produces cans should take in consideration all these factors and should integrate them in the marketing communication means.

For the product group fruits and vegetables, the influencing factors are different as this product group is totally opposite to cans. In the case of cans, the valability period of the products is very long in opposition to fruits and vegetables, which are natural and fresh. This has also an impact on the reasons which determine the buying decision. The most important influencing factors for fruits and vegetables can be observed in figure 2.

The main reason for buying fruits and vegetables is the price. 86% of the consumers mention the price as one of top 3 aspects which they take in consideration when buying fruits and vegetables. On the next places are the quality (39%) and the aspect (38%). As for cans, in the case of the quality it is difficult to analyze the elements which are considered to be qualitative for the consumer. Still it can be an element which should be used and taken in consideration for the marketing communication means. Also in the case of the presentation of the products in the store, they should look good, as it is an important factor for buying.

The first two reasons for buying fruits and vegetables can be also found at cans. The next to elements are typical for this product group. 26% of the consumer mention the country of origin as a factor which influences the buying decision. Some countries have also better climate characteristics for growing certain types of fruits and vegetables. Besides the aspect, the fresh look of the products is also a factor which is mentioned by many consumers (24%). As expected the brand is not one of the most mentioned factors as there are not many known brands in this product group. Although, 20% of the consumers mention the brand as factor for their buying decision and 7% of the consumer mention the producer as a factor for the buying decision. 4% of the consumers event mention that they prefer products from Romanian producers.

Besides these general factors, there are also other products group specific factors as for instance the colour, the smell, he taste of the products the content of vitamins and other. Some of the consumers prefer the season specific products and they rather buy fruits and vegetables directly from the paysans who produces them. Availability and proximity of finding the products are also factors mentioned for the buying decision.

As it can be observed in figure 3, for the product group meat the most important factor in the buying decision is the price. 82% of the consumer mention the price as important reason in the buying decision. As meat is a product group with not that many brands, the next most important factors in the buying decision of meat are the quality and the aspect. 39% of the consumers mention the quality as important buying factor, while 34% of the consumers
mention the aspect as an important factor. It is important to mention that in the case of meat the aspect gives an important insight about the quality of the products. 26% of the consumers mention the brand as important factor in the buying decision, while another 7% mention the producer.

Figure 3. Top 7 buying influencing factors for meat  
(Source: Own research results)

The freshness of the products and the production date are another important elements in the buying decision of meat products. 23% of the consumers analyze the freshness of the meat products when buying them, while 20% analyze the date when it was produced and the "best before" date. It is important to mention that meat is an easy perishable product so that the quality of the meat is determined by its production date. Another important aspect in the buying decision is the country of origin. It is known that in some regions of the world there were problems with health of the animals so for this reason the country of origin is an important factor in the buying decision. Besides this, in some countries the hygiene norms are better monitored than in others so that consumers trust more the products from certain countries. Regarding the influence of the country of origin, 4% of the consumers prefer Romanian meat products.

Besides these frequent factors there are also other important elements mentioned for the buying decision of meat products. Consumer take in consideration different aspects regarding the aspect of meat as for instance the taste, the smell or the colour. The type of meat is also very important for the buying decision (3%) and the amount of fat (1%). The easyness of the preparation, the diversity of food types which can be prepared and the necessity of eating meat are also taken in consideration in the buying decision for meat products. Consequently a meat company should take in consideration all these aspects when developing its strategy. So the meat should be presented in a nice manner in the store and it should be fresh. As meat is an easy perishable product, the meat companies should have a very well organized planning system as all the products which can not be sold within the short validity period (1-2 days) can not be sold anymore.

Milk products are also easy perishable goods, but in comparison to meat, on this market there are more powerful brands and producers. This is reflected in the order of the influencing factors on the buying decision, as it can be observed in figure 4. As in all analyzed product groups, the price plays an important role in the buying decision. 84% of the consumers mention that they take in consideration the price when buying milk products. 53% of the consumers mention the brand as factor in the buying decisions, while 11% of the consumers mention the producer. The quality of the products is mention by 37% of the consumers, while the validity period is mentioned by 25% of them. Although there in not put to much focus on the country of origin in the case of dairy products, 10% of them mention it as an important factor in the buying decision.

Figure 4. Top 6 buying influencing factors for dairy products  
(Source: Own research results)

Among other elements regarding the content, which influence the consumer are the freshness
(8%), the amount of fats (5%), the amount of calories, the ingredients (5%) as the content of preservatives, of bio ingredients or even of powder milk. Another aspect is the fact there are some consumers which are allergic to dairy products so that they buy only special products. Marketing elements such as advertising, packaging or aspect also influence the consumer. So 5% of the consumers are influenced by advertising, 5% are influenced by the package while 8% are influenced by the aspect. Dairy products are also bought because they are healthy and the consumers like them.

In figure 5 there can be observed the main reasons for buying cooked products, a more recent developed product group. As for the other product groups, price is the most important factor for the buying decision. Despite this, it can be observed that price is mention by only 76% of the consumers, which is a lower value compared to the other product groups, where price is mentioned by more than 80% of the consumers. Although the price plays an important role for the buying decision, this influence is lower than in the case of other product groups. On the second place after the price it is mentioned the quality with a value of 41%. Although there are not many brands in the field of cooked products, 31% of the consumers mention the brand as an important buying factor. Probably the consumers associate the cooked products with the store from where they buy them. Another 4% mention also the producer.

The next most important factor for the consumer is the aspect of the cooked products. 28% of the consumer mention the aspect when making the buying decision for food products, while another 11% mention the freshness, which can be also determined with the help of the aspect. 14% of the consumer mention the valability period as an important factor for the buying decision.

Besides these, there are also other factors which are mentioned to influence the buying decision. In the case of the cooked products, there are many factors regarding the convenience and the impulse. So many consumer state that they buy cooked products because they save time (2%), it is easier to buy them cooked, it is difficult to produce them at home or even because they start to have appetite, when seeing them. They are also bought because of their ingredients (9%), taste (5%), necessity (5%) or variety.

In the case of alcoholic beverages the price and the brand are the most important factors which influence the buying decision. As it can be observed in figure 6, 83% of the consumers make the buying decision based on the price. As an advertising intense branch, the influence of the brand is the highest compared to other product groups. So 61% of the consumers admit that they make their buying decision based on the brand. Quality has also an important role in the buying decision, as 36% of the consumer mention it as an important factor in their buying decision. Among the most mentioned reasons for buying are also the valability period (11%), taste (9%) and country of origin (9%).

The buying decision for alcoholic products is also influenced by several aspects regarding the marketing of the products such as the package (7%), producer (7%), advertising (6%) or aspect (4%). Besides this there are specific reasons regarding alcoholic beverages such as the content of alcohol (3%) or ingredients (4%). It is also interesting to observe that there are also many mentioned factors about the feelings and emotions of the consumers. There are respondents who state that they buy alcoholic products for fun (3%) or because of preferences, satisfaction, experience or because they have appetite on it or because of the state of mind. So it can be observed that the buying decision is
not only taken because of the characteristics of the products but also because of the feelings to which the products are associated.

The last analyzed product group are the sweets. As it can be observed in figure 7, in the case of sweets price is also the most important factor in the buying decision. 80% of the consumers mention the price as the most important factor. As a product group influenced by advertising, the brand has an important role in the buying decision, so that 57% of the consumers mention the brand with a high influence, while 35% of the consumer mention the quality. Valability period, ingredients and taste have also a significant role in the buying decision.

Besides these, there were also mentioned factors such as advertising (8%), aspect (8%), package (7%) country of origin (7%) and producer (6%). Aspects related to the content of the product are also very important so that the consumer take in consideration the amount of calories or preservatives or the flavour. Similar to the alcoholic beverages sweets are also a product which is bought because of the fact that the consumer has appetite on it or it indulges some pleasures.

4 Conclusions

As the methodology of the research shows, the responses presented in this article are the factors mentioned unaided by the consumer and represent in this sense only the opinions of the consumer. Although some of the mentioned factors can be improved by being more specific, these results are very important because they show the elements, reasons and factors which crosses through the mind of the consumer when he is asked about the elements which influences the buying decision. Besides this it is a good element of control to see what the consumers perceive and memorize in an unconscious way from all the marketing communication means.

Of course these are just the perceived conscience factors of the consumer, while the decision might be based also on other unconscious elements.

As the results of the research show price is the most important element for the buying decision, according to the opinion of the consumers. For all product groups, more than 75% of the consumers mention the price in the top 3 factors that influence the buying decision. The next to important factors, which alternate from one product group to another are quality and the brand. As mentioned in the article the quality from the perspective of the consumer is a subjective construct as it is not determined what a consumer associates with quality. Still from a marketing perspective it is useful to use the construct of quality in the communication as it has a high impact on the consumer. The brand has highre importance in more advertised branches as for instance cans, dairy products, alcoholic beverages or sweets. It is interesting that few consumers mention advertising as influencing factors, although they are influenced by the brand, which is created with the help of advertising. This shows the unconscious influence of advertising. Besides these there were mentioned other product group specific
factors such as aspect, valability period, country of origin and others.

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References

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