

TRENDS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHANGES. OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTS

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to review the approaches to the analysis of consumer behaviour conditions and to determine their suitability for segmentation analyses, with particular attention paid to the food market. The starting point for consideration is the placement of consumer behaviour in the theory of consumption, with emphasis on the contribution to its development by other scientific areas and disciplines. The next section is devoted to the overview of various classifications used to describe the determinants of consumer behaviour. In addition, the paper presents consumer typologies and their significance in the process of segmentation. The last part of the study is devoted to the methods of assessment of the level of satisfaction of food needs.

Key words: consumer behaviour, theory of consumption, behaviour patterns, consumer typologies, level of satisfaction of consumer needs

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour is the subject matter of research of numerous fields of science, including economic, as well as psychological and sociological, as evidenced by the multitude of studies in this area. This paper presents both directions of changes in consumer behaviour, as well as research methodology, with identification of the broad view of this issue in its various aspects: theory, methodology and application.

THE PLACE OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE THEORY OF CONSUMPTION

The interdisciplinary approach to research into the economics of consumption results from the multiplicity of its areas, verging on economics, social, biological and agricultural sciences. Contribution of other scientific fields and disciplines is used to create the

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theory and examine the processes occurring in different areas of consumption. In terms of theory and application of consumption research, a particular place and attention is given to “consumer behaviour” and its determinants, as well as the decision-making process arising therefrom. The multifaceted approaches used to describe the causative factors of consumer behaviour determine the typology of consumers on the basis of social and psychological conditions. As a result of activities conducted in this area, it is possible to determine consumer “lifestyles”. Another important aspect, from the point of view of research into consumption, is the assessment of the level of satisfaction of purchasing needs. The approach to the economics of consumption, as a sub-discipline of economics, stems from the essence of the concept and the function fulfilled by it in the economic system. The scope of consumption includes both the direct act of satisfying individual needs, as well as human behaviour in the process of production, exchange and consumption of goods and services. In the macroeconomic approach, consumption is treated as a stage of social reproduction, responsible for the finalisation of the whole reproduction process. This multifaceted approach to consumption indicates its special place in economic sciences. At the same time, it should be noted that previously (in the period of so-called school of classic economics, i.e. at the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, as well as pre-classic approaches, including Mercantilism, Physiocracy and Marxist economics), consumption was pushed to the margins of the theory of economics [Bywalec, Rudnicki 1999]. Oscar Lange left a significant mark on shaping the view on the role of consumption in the centrally planned economy. According to him, consumption was the subject of interests of non-economic sciences [Lange 1978]. The position of consumption in economic sciences was developed in the 1960s and is attributed mainly to such outstanding scientists as Krzyżewski [1959], Lipiński [1960], Hodoly [1965] and Piasny [1967]. In the 1970s, consumption gained a permanent position in economic sciences. Particular contribution in this regard came from Pohorille [1971], Hodoly [1975], Zielińska [1978] and other scientists.

DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

There are numerous classifications of determinants of consumer behaviour in the market. A similar approach in this regard is presented by: Szwacka-Salmonowicz [1991], Marciniak [1994], Garbarski [2001], and Żelazna et al. [2002]. In light of these approaches, economic, social and marketing factors are of key importance in the shaping of consumer behaviour in the market. A slightly different approach to this question is presented by Kall [1992], who identifies the following determinants of consumer behaviour: psychological, personality-related and social factors. Boczar and Kossut [1983] presented a definitely different classification, taking into account the role of objective social and economic factors in the shaping of consumer behaviour in the market.

Simultaneously, it should be noted that the dichotomy-based division of such determinants, as proposed by Kramer [1983], Wiszniewski [1983], as well as Kos and Nowak [1988], offers a certain derogation from the aforementioned classifications.

A definitely different principle of classification of consumer behaviour determinants was proposed by Mynarski [1990] and Żelazna [2000]. There is a great similarity of the divisions developed by these authors with the division proposed by Kotler [1994]. The classification adopted by these authors limits the division of such determinants to two groups: family-related (internal) and external – located outside the family. The division of determinants of behaviour of consumers in the market, as adopted by Duliniec and Żelazna, is based on the aforementioned proposal. According to Duliniec, internal determinants include: needs, motives, perceptual processes, attitudes and preferences, personality as well as learning and memory process. On the other hand, external determinants include: economic, social and cultural factors as well as marketing activities. A similar form of division has been proposed by Żelazna, by reference to the factors in the sphere of food and nutrition. However, Żelazna has defined internal determinants as those which directly characterise the consumer or his/her household, while external determinants as those which constitute the macro-environment of the consumer [Żelazna 2000, Żelazna et al. 2002]. In light of divisions presented by Mazurek-Łopacińska, the development of consumption remains under the influence of demographic, cultural, economic and technological factors. Changes occurring in the area of these factors determine the main trends of consumption transformation and define opportunities for new qualitative phenomena and new consumer behaviour [Mazurek-Łopacińska 2003]. The analysis of demographic determinants is combined, in particular, with the aging process in highly developed countries, the increasing number of single-person households, and growth in the professional activity of women. Separation of technological factors is a relatively new approach. Such factors include, i.a.: interactive communication, forms of direct sales, eco-friendly technology and development of biotechnology. The presented division of determinants of consumer behaviour in the consumption market indicates a similarity of the approaches in this area [Bywalec, Rudnicki 2002].

An extended classification of determinants of consumer behaviour in the market, with reference to the food market, was created by Szwacka-Salmonowicz and Zielińska [1996], who combined it with the specific nature of this market. According to them, the basic factors influencing the level and structure of consumption are: economic, biological, demographic, psycho-social and socio-professional factors.

The weight and the significance of individual factors are related to the nature of the product satisfying consumer needs in terms of food [Szwacka-Salmonowicz 2003]. For instance: in the market of basic food products, the most important are economic and social factors. In the market of luxury food products, there is a growth in the importance of psychological and marketing factors. At the same time, it should be noted that the proposed division is rather artificial due to the complexity of consumer behaviour, and the related complementary influence of various factors on the market decisions of food consumers. Food consumers satisfy both their needs in terms of necessity and needs in terms of aspirations. As mentioned before, the realisation of the first group of needs (basic needs) is affected mainly by demographic and biological factors. On the other hand, needs in terms of aspirations are shaped primarily by socio-psychological factors and fulfilled by luxury food products.

CONSUMER TYPOLOGIES AND MARKET SEGMENTATION

Consumer typology involves examination and definition of features differentiating consumer behaviour and its determinants, and then, identification of types of consumers whose behaviour, in the sphere of consumption, is similar. The division (typology) of consumers may be executed by taking into account their affiliation to a certain type of household, by means of traditional demographic, economic and social criteria [Gutkowska et al. 2001]. The aforementioned classifications are limited to the description of general determinants of consumer behaviour. In order to consider the complete set of features of each group of consumers, we also have to take into account social and psychological characteristics, which make up the so-called lifestyle.

The achievements in terms of publications on the global lifestyles of society are quite extensive. European studies indicate consumer typologies based on the concept of lifestyle – the acknowledgement of motivations and the system of values shared by consumers (the following methodologies are of key importance in this regard: Eurostyle and 4C – Cross Culture Consumer Characteristics – lifestyles, opinions, interests, consumer behaviour patterns [Szwacka-Mokrzycka 2013]. These methodologies are based on the concept of Euro-consumer, i.e. a standard buyer of standard products. The concept of Euro-consumer emerged in the European Union at the end of the 1980s, in the period of advanced research into consumer lifestyles. The results of the research formed the basis for attempts at segmentation of the European market. Consumer typologies, based on the concept of their lifestyle, provided an opportunity for a system approach to consumer behaviour. These typologies allow for the differentiation of target groups by learning the motivation and the system of values shared by consumers. They also form the basis for the development of communication strategy. Within the Eurostyle typology, we can differentiate sixteen Euro-segments [Komor 2000]. As mentioned before, another of these typologies – 4C – is a method of identification of different segments of buyers, on the basis of their objectives, motivations and value systems. At least seven types of consumers can be differentiated here. For each type, a separate set of objectives, motivations and value systems is determined. In light of different views on the subject of existing consumer typologies, we may conclude that they do not indicate a truly European profile of the buyer in the background of other profiles based on lifestyles [Tkaczyk 2012]. Nevertheless, it is possible to differentiate segments of consumers who behave in a similar manner and share similar values, regardless of the country of residence.

The research conducted in Poland after 1997, focused mainly on the analysis of demographic and socio-economic trends [Zielińska 1989, Kusińska 2009]. However, less attention was paid to lifestyles which are necessary for the proper description of consumers, their preferences and predictions as to changes in their behaviour patterns. However, in 1998, in Poland, studies based on the psycho-graphic segmentation, similar to 4C methodology, were initiated. They took into account various lifestyles, opinions, interests and consumer behaviour models [Tucek, Friedlaenderova 2002].

Today, the process of globalisation continues to progress, as a result of unification of consumer behaviour patterns in the global perspective. In light of the ongoing transformation, we should recognise consumption as a process involving popularisation of products available in global markets. This situation is conducive to unification of consumption

models and consumer behaviour. Among factors affecting globalisation of consumption, we can distinguish those which are conducive to the process, as well as those which hinder its development [Mazurek-Łopacińska 2003]. Conducive factors include factors related to demand and those related to supply. Demand factors are primarily associated with the creation of the modern lifestyle, and search for the food belonging to the category of so-called convenience food. Among the factors contributing to such globalisation, we should also mention the possibility for consumers to buy global products and the increase in their spatial mobility. Among the factors associated with supply, we should mention increased competition and the desire of companies to achieve economies of scale, as well as the free movement of production factors and development of new technologies. Undoubtedly, another factor contributing to globalisation is the development of competition and the search for new markets by companies (in international terms).

The key factor hampering the globalisation of consumption involves cultural circumstances. In light of such circumstances, we can distinguish global attitudes of consumers, expressing themselves in the acceptance of global products, and ethnocentric attitudes associated with acceptance of domestic products, with strong cultural connotations.

Despite the fact that the Polish consumption model is becoming more and more similar to the one observed in other EU countries, there are still essential differences. The basis for identification of such differences is provided by the following factors: the level of economic advancement, the degree of experience in the implementation of the principles of market economy and cultural differences [Szwacka-Mokrzycka 2013].

The process of market segmentation offers a practical dimension to consumer typology.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF CONSUMER NEEDS

The basis for assessing the level of satisfaction of consumer needs is provided by the results of econometric and single-source studies (Target Group Index). The source of information for the analysis of econometric studies is provided by GUS (Main Statistical Office) household budget surveys. For many years, econometric analysis methods have been a recognised tool of research into the growth rate of consumption of consumer goods and changes in their structure. Because of their quantitative nature, they provide a variety of measures enabling assessment of such changes. These measures are the parameters of various models of demand and income elasticity coefficients defining the force of response of demand to changes in the income levels of consumers [Zielińska 1978].

As a result of many years of work, aimed at the substantial analysis of the processes of food consumption, the adequacy of different econometric models was verified against the background of description of empirical processes of development of food consumption in Poland. Based on the results of the work of numerous authors, it has been determined that the most suitable, for the purposes of description of food consumption processes, are those functions of demand which offer the asymptote defining the empirical level of consumption saturation, on the assumption that consumer incomes grow indefinitely. The presented methodology has been repeatedly verified by the successively published data

on household budgets. This has provided results showing long-term dynamics of changes in food consumption along with estimates of the saturation level in the coming years [Szwacka-Salmonowicz, Zielińska 1996, Szwacka-Salmonowicz 2003, Kwasek 2008, 2012].

The basis for diagnosis of changes in the consumer behaviour patterns and segment analysis, as well as assessment of changes in the system of purchasing preferences of consumers, has been provided by the results of single-source studies – Target Group Index (TGI). TGI studies are conducted by the Research Institute of Millward Brown Company [Wielkopolan 2001]. These studies enable us to position existing brands, determine behaviour of their users, type of use or consumption, and to describe, in detail, the consumers and market segments. Based on the results of single-source studies (TGI), it was possible to assess the level of satisfaction of food needs and purchasing preferences of consumers, and to conduct segmentation analyses [Szwacka-Salmonowicz 2003, Szwacka-Mokrzycka 2013].

CONCLUSIONS

Consumer behaviour and its determinants, as well as the resulting segmentation process, have a special place and significance in the consumption research in terms of theory and application. Having reviewed the scientific achievements in the field of analysis of changes in the behaviour patterns of Polish consumers, it should be noted that they are extensive both in theoretical and research terms. There are many classifications of determinants of consumer behaviour. Changes in such determinants define the main trends of consumption transformation and opportunities for new qualitative phenomena and new consumer behaviour. In the development of the issues in question, a special role is played by scientific studies regarding the influence of various factors on the shaping of consumer behaviour and their implications for segmentation decision-making processes. The basis for the assessment of the level of satisfaction of consumer needs is provided by the results of econometric and single-source studies (Target Group Index). As a result of many years of work, aimed at the substantial analysis of the processes of development of food consumption, the adequacy of different econometric models was verified against the background of description of empirical processes of development of food consumption in Poland. The results of single-source studies (TGI) serve as the basis for assessment of the level of satisfaction of food needs and purchasing preferences of consumers, as well segmentation analyses.

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TENDENCJE ZMIAN ZACHOWAŃ KONSUMENCKICH. PRZEGLĄD KONCEPCJI

Streszczenie. Celem opracowania jest dokonanie przeglądu podejść do analizy uwarunkowań zachowań konsumenckich i określenie ich przydatności do prowadzenia analiz segmentacyjnych, ze szczególnym zwróceniem uwagi na rynek żywnościowy. Punktem wyjścia rozważań jest umiejscowienie zachowań konsumenckich w teorii konsumpcji z podkreśleniem wkładu innych dziedzin i dyscyplin naukowych w jej rozwój. Następnie dokonano przeglądu różnych klasyfikacji wykorzystywanych do opisu uwarunkowań zachowań konsumenckich. Przedstawiono ponadto typologie konsumentów i ich znaczenie w procesie segmentacji. Ostatnia część opracowania została poświęcona metodom oceny poziomu zaspokojenia potrzeb żywnościowych.

Słowa kluczowe: zachowania konsumenckie, teoria konsumpcji, wzorce zachowań, typologie konsumentów, poziom zaspokojenia potrzeb konsumenckich

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