

## **PREFERENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE MILK MARKET**

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to present results of research related to preferences of young people (students) on the milk market. The paper focuses on aspects connected with milk consumption, as well as the process of choice – preferred type, package, brand and place of purchase.

**Key words:** milk, behaviour, young consumer, consumption, purchasing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Milk has been accompanying humans for ages, delivering essential nutritional components. It plays a crucial role in human life, especially as a source of excellent food [Sznajder 1999]. Milk and its derivatives find their place in a Food Pyramid so that they should be placed in everyday diet. Milk is the main source of calcium, and also delivers highly biological valued proteins, B – group vitamins, and vitamins: A and D. Moreover, it is a source of mineral elements such as magnesium, potassium and zinc [Zasady... 2000]. According to the Institute of Food and Nutrition two glasses of milk should be consumed per day to ensure a suitable amount of calcium, and a lot of proteins. In the babyhood time one type of food – and it is milk – has to deliver to the organism all the necessary nutritious elements, as well as protect it from infections. That is the reason why milk contains many more resources of nutritious elements than any other kind of food [Sznajder 1999]. Milk does not have a suitable substitute considering the nutritive value [Adamczyk 2005].

According to the research done by CBOS [Upodobania kulinarne... 2005] in November 2000, and then repeated in 2005, about 75% of surveyed Poles declare that they eat in a healthy, or even very healthy way. During the 5 years this belief did not change

significantly. Meanwhile in recent years milk consumption in Poland has rapidly decreased. In the year 1990 milk consumption *per capita* in Poland equalled 242 litres (milk and its derivatives in equivalent of milk, without milk processed for butter), while in the years 2006-2008 it was appropriately 176 and 185 litres [Rynek mleka... 2008]. Moreover, on the milk market there is a visible tendency of changes in consumers' preferences in the direction of higher processed and more attractive for consumers products such as yoghurts, kefirs or cheeses (so called added value products) [Łaba 2007].

Increasing level of competition on the dairy market leads to launching new products assortment and a battle for consumers. Nowadays milk is available in different forms, packages and of different characteristics. These changes have been occurring gradually since the year 1989. Before that – in the central planned economy – it was a consumer, who had to adjust his needs and demands to what was imposed either by rationing system or by product availability [Sznajder et al. 1998]. After the year 1989 a return from a consumer devoid of choice to the consumer making conscious decisions has occurred [Sznajder 1999].

Increasing level of competition between dairy companies causes that being familiarized with consumer preferences, motives driving them to act and criteria taking into account while making decisions has become very important. Hence, the objective of this paper is to present the popularity of milk consumption, as well as to recognise students' preferences related to its consumption and purchase.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Material for this study is based on empirical data coming from research conducted using audience questionnaires, in December 2008 among the students from Social – Economy Faculty in the University of Life Sciences in Poznań. The sample containing 180 students was selected using quota sampling method, where the main criterion of respondents' sampling was the year of studies. The structure of the sample is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Sample selection for the survey  
Tabela 1. Dobór próby do badań ankietowych

Year of studies Rok studiów	Number of students in Social- -Economic Faculty Liczba studentów na Wydziale Ekonomiczno-Społecznym	Share in the population Udział w populacji	Size of sample Liczebność próby
I	587	38%	68
II	245	16%	28
III	221	14%	26
IV	237	15%	27
V	267	17%	31
Total – Razem	1 557	100%	180

Source: own calculations.  
Źródło: opracowanie własne.

Research was conducted among a group of students, as on the one hand they are young people, thus from their preferences and shopping habits the future directions of dairy industry are dependent on. On the other hand studies are carried out at such a time when a big part of young people start to become self-dependent (in the researched sample more than half of the respondents were living during the studies outside the family house, almost 1/4 was already working) and making self-dependent decisions concerning the choice, place of products purchase, as well as the way of obtaining them and dispensing financial resources.

In the research 72% of women and 28% of men took part. About 1/3 came from the country, 36% – from the towns up to 100 thousands inhabitants and 28% – from cities over 100 thousands inhabitants. Nearly half of the researched students during the studies were living in a family house, 1/5 were living in dorm, 13% – at students’ hostels, 13% of students indicated digs and 9% of respondents owned a flat.

The collected data were analysed using selected indicators of one-dimensional data analysis – indicators of the structure and measures of the position.

## RESULTS

### Milk consumption

Despite the decreasing trend in milk consumption in recent years and increasing popularity of added value products, as many as 85% of respondents declared that they drink milk – from which more than 1/4 – at least once a day, and 40% – a few times per day. Students asked about assessing the importance of the reasons determining milk consumption, as the most important stated that they like this beverage. The next in order mentioned, was the fact that milk is healthy and rich in nutritive value. As the least important reason of drinking milk was considered the fact that it quenches thirst well (Fig. 1).

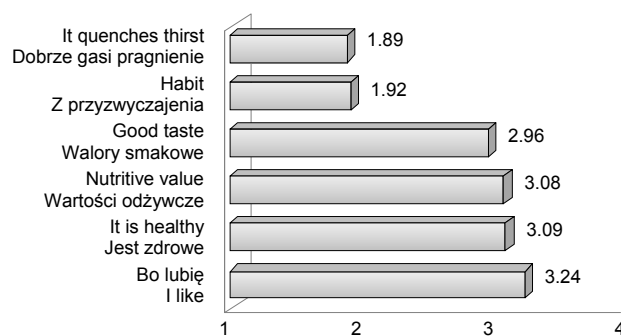


Fig. 1. Importance of reasons determining the consumption of milk (average evaluation of importance in the scale from 4 – very important to 1 – unimportant)

Source: own research, n = 180

Rys. 1. Ważność powodów decydujących o spożywaniu mleka (średnia ocena ważności powodów w skali od 4 – bardzo ważny do 1 – nieważny)

Źródło: badania własne, n = 180

When it comes to the quantity of consumed milk – 1/5 of respondents drink up to 0,5 litre of this beverage per week, 28% – from 1 to 2 litres, and 21% – drink more than 2 litres per week.

Milk is consumed most often for breakfast or supper or just when consumers fancy it. The most rarely milk is used for dinner (in case of 81% of respondents milk is never drunk for dinner). The biggest popularity gained milk as an additive for coffee. It is also often consumed with cereals and as a liquid milk or cacao. The most preferred is cold milk – in the structure of consumption it takes on average 46%, while warm milk – 27%, and hot – 26% (Fig. 2).

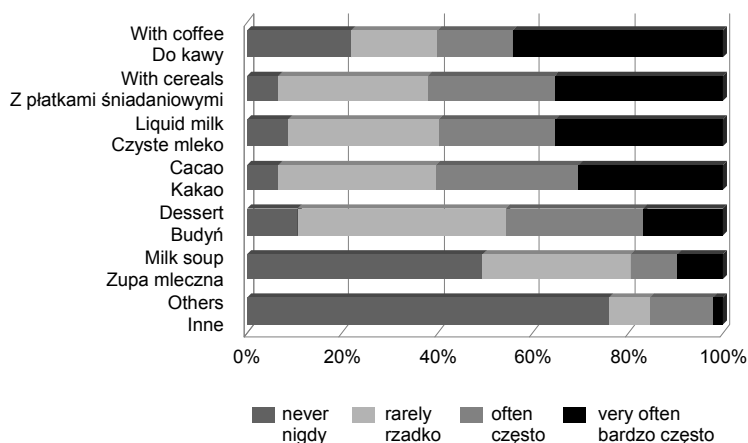


Fig. 2. Preferred forms of milk consumption – evaluation of the frequency of milk consumption in different forms

Source: own research.

Rys. 2. Preferowane formy spożywania mleka – ocena częstości spożycia mleka w poszczególnych formach

Źródło: badania własne.

## STUDENTS' PREFERENCES REFERRED TO THE CHOICE OF TYPE AND PACKAGE OF MILK

Economic transformations that have occurred after 1989, the development of free market economy and increasing level of competition contributed to the necessity of adjusting supplies to the consumer, his needs and demands. In the dairy sector a lot of new products have appeared and new technologies of processing and packaging have been applied. A lot of new products of an extended shelf life or packaged in more functional and esthetic package were developed and launched on the market [Sznajder 1999]. Nowadays on the Polish market 3 forms of milk can be distinguished: fresh milk, pasteurized milk or UHT milk (abbreviation from Ultra High Temperature). When it comes to packages used in retail trade these can be: a carton, a bottle or a foil.

UHT milk appeared on the Polish market in the nineties. It was a novelty, difficult to get used to by consumers [Mleko czarno-białe 2008]. Nowadays, almost 20 years after

that, this is the most popular type of milk among students (49% of indications in the structure of consumption). Next in order most often purchased by students is fresh milk, and the most rarely – pasteurized milk. As regards the type of package – students definitely prefer carton – in the structure of chosen packages it takes more than 3/4, the least popular is milk in foil (7% of indications in the structure of preferred packages). This is another evidence for young people’ tendency to choose comfort in use products with functional features. According to the survey, consumers most often select packages of 1 – litre capacity (83% of indications), more than 1/10 of respondents prefer milk of a 0.5 litre capacity, and only single persons declared the choice of smaller than 0,5 and bigger than 1 litre packages.

### Students’ buying preferences in the choice of milk

According to the conducted research, while choosing milk students attach importance neither to the advertisement nor to the current promotions. During the purchase process they take into account mainly the shelf life of the product. Other important factors determining the choice are fat content, taste values and price.

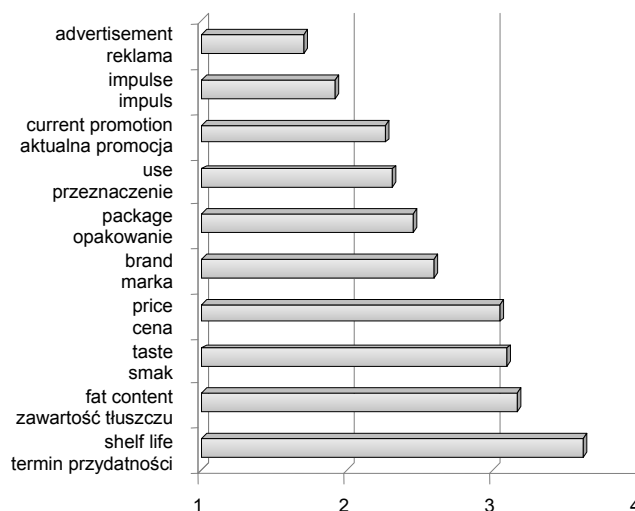


Fig. 3. Importance of factors taken into account during milk selection (average evaluation of importance in the scale from 4 – very important to 1 – unimportant)

Source: own research.

Rys. 3. Ważności czynników uwzględnianych przy wyborze mleka (ocena w skali od 4 – bardzo ważne do 1 – nieważne)

Źródła: badania własne.

On the basis of the research a relationship in preferences concerning fat content can be noticed – along with the fat content fall, also the percentage of students who consume it decreases. This relationship is shown in Figure 4.

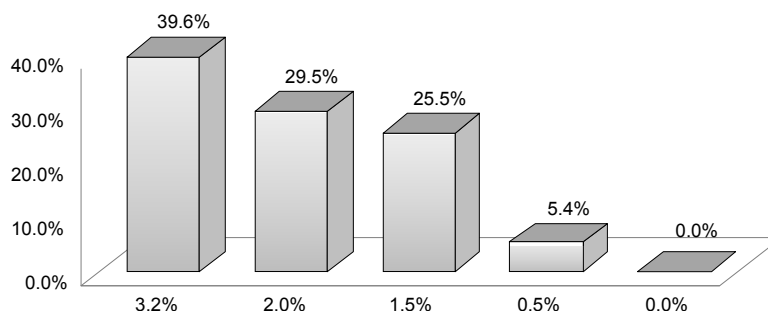


Fig. 4. Percentage of people purchasing milk of different fat contents  
Source: own research.

Rys. 4. Odsetek osób zakupujących mleko o poszczególnej zawartości tłuszczu  
Źródło: badania własne.

Despite the fact that in recent years a dynamic development of megastores could be noticed [Krawczyk 2005], it turned out that more than half of the students still prefer to do the shopping in a traditional grocer's shops. Discount shops come in second. Super- and hipermarkets are only on the 4<sup>th</sup> position. Most often students buy milk once or twice a week, usually 1 package (57%). A great deal of respondents – as many as 1/3 – buy two or three packages per one shopping. Only a small number buy more. Students asked how much they spend weekly on milk, declared that it is less than 5 zlotys (almost 50% of the surveyed people). Not many more than 40% of respondents spend on milk up to 10 zlotys per week and only a small percentage – spend more than 10 zlotys.

#### Students preferences related to the brand of milk

When in the nineties UHT milk appeared on the Polish market, initially its first characteristic trait was lack of brands. The most important information located on the package was a big inscription: "milk" [Mleko czarno-białe 2008]. Today it is difficult to imagine, especially for young people, who do not remember that time. It seems that something such as brand is an obvious matter. The first created on the Polish market in 1995 by the Mlekpól corporation brand of milk was Łaciate. The image given to the brand contributed to the unusual success of Mlekpól – in half a year from the appearance of Łaciate its share in the market increased from 4% to 40% [Mleko czarno-białe 2008]. This success can be observed until today, what is confirmed by the conducted research. Łaciate is the most often mentioned by students both as the best and the most often purchased brand of milk. The second place is taken by Łowickie, and the next Jana and Mlekovita. Although students asked about the factors taken into account while making the decision which milk to buy, they did not mention brand as the most important criterion and they put it on the 5<sup>th</sup> place among factors determining the choice, on the basis of the conducted research it can be affirmed that brand loyalty is high. Almost 1/3 of respondents always buy the same brand, and 40% buy 2 or 3 brands interchangeably.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the conducted research a couple of conclusions related to the students' preferences in milk choice can be drawn:

1. Despite the systematic fall of milk and its derivatives consumption, young people still drink this beverage willingly. Nevertheless in the consumption structure there is a visible movement in the direction of milk drinks and other highly processed products.

2. The main reason of choosing milk by students is its nutritious value. Most often the one with the longest shelf life (UHT), packed in 1 liter capacity carton, purchased in small shops close to the place of living is chosen.

3. Students people prefer convenience and comfort in relation to the product, which is milk.

4. This popular beverage is especially liked in the form of cold milk, and consumed most often as a liquid milk or as an addition to different kind of meals, such as: cereals, soups or hot drinks (coffee).

5. The main factors impacting the choice of milk in case of young people are: shelf life, taste values and fat content. Also marketing factors such as price and brand are taken into account.

6. A big brand loyalty level among students can be observed, as they buy most often the same brand, or they choose interchangeably 2-3 brands. The most preferred brand of milk is Łaciate.

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## PREFERENCJE LUDZI MŁODYCH NA RYNKU MLEKA

**Streszczenie.** Transformacje gospodarcze, jakie zaszły w Polsce po 1989 roku, wprowadzenie zasad wolnorynkowych oraz wzrastający poziom konkurencji na polskim rynku mleczarskim przyczyniły się do konieczności wprowadzenia zmian w asortymencie produktowym. Aby stać się konkurencyjnym i dostosować się do potrzeb konsumentów, nie-

zwykle ważne staje się rozpoznanie ich preferencji, a także motywów podejmowania decyzji. Wyniki badania wskazują na to, że mleko wciąż odgrywa ważną rolę w życiu młodych ludzi – jedynie preferencje konsumentów ulegają zmianie. Najczęściej wybierane przez studentów jest mleko o pojemności 1 l, w kartonowym opakowaniu. Podczas wyboru młodzi ludzie kierują się głównie terminem przydatności i zawartością tłuszczu, z kolei reklama została uznana za czynnik w najmniejszym stopniu oddziałujący na proces decyzyjny konsumentów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** mleko, zachowania, młody konsument, spożycie, zakupy

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