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FOOD PREFERENCES OF YOUNG CONSUMERS ON THE EXAMPLE OF MILK

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents results of research related to preferences and attitudes of young consumers (at the age of 10-17 years) on the example of milk. It was shown, among other things, that milk is a product consumed often, mainly because of nutritive value, good taste and positive influence on health. Average consumption of milk – about 2.5 glasses a day is similar to average daily level recommended by food science. Younger children consume milk in lower quantities, usually to meals in different forms. For teenagers milk is mainly a beverage, and they drink it in higher quantities, usually impulsively without any special occasion.

Key words: milk, preferences, consumption, market of young consumer

Introduction

Young people constitute a considerable part of every society. Since the end of WW II we can talk of teenagers as a separate segment of market consumers, mainly in the United States of America. In Poland young consumers' market started to be developed at the beginning of the 90's of the last century. The main premises of this market forming was a gradual passage from the period "of revalorizing" in looking at the young generation to the period when young people started to be treated as a social, intellectual and economic potential of the country (**Olejniczuk-Merta** 2001). Separate market of young consumers is manifested in growing market activity of young people, in increase of sums of money spent by them and also in forming and development of numerous forms of young people's participation in market processes. Age limits of children market appear to be smooth. Several groups of young consumers are separated by **Olejniczuk-Merta** (2001). They are: children at the age to 4 where mainly mothers are the representatives of the small persons, at the age of 5-6 who start contacts with the market and participate in it; children at the age of 7-8, starting to understand what the budget is and what is possible to buy for one's own pocket money; teenagers at the age of 12-13,

linking into wide contacts with the market, buying commodities personally in order to satisfy their own needs; young people the age of 15 and older, with permanent and individualized contacts with the market. 19 is most often the top age limit closing the market of the young consumer, so age determining persons still dependent, immature in the social, legal and psychomotor aspect.

Children and teenagers are the significant and perceptible buying power nowadays, what is associated with having own funds, and thus independently buying or included to the family purchases. According to the research provided by **Olejniczuk-Merta** (2001), the somewhat richer pocket money had young people in the age of 15-19 years, they usually come from big towns, have educated and well earning parents. Every fourth researched young person declared that he had on average 70 zloty or more a month. The money basically comes from parents and is simply pocket money. As far as distribution of pocket money is concerned, it is usually spent on leisure time activities such as entertainment and the recreation, and secondly on purchasing various food products, mainly drinks, sweets or chosen dairy products. Next to it come clothing, cosmetics, home electronics and footwear bought by youngsters, especially teenagers. Such a structure of young consumers' expenses appears to be rational and it is the next argument confirming young people's evolution from passive to fully active and conscious participants of market processes who have passed both effective and quick education and possessed the ability to adapted themselves to the changing conditions.

The paper disenser one form of young consumers' market activity. The focus is set namely on both their behaviour and preferences on the example of dairy products, specially milk.

Material and methods

Empirical data have been utilized for the analysis of young consumers' behaviour on the milk market. It came from the research conducted in 2004 in the Turek administrative. In order to build structure of the research sample, three schools were randomly selected: primary, gymnasium and secondary. The age was the main criterion of respondents' sampling. 336 young people at the age from 7 to 17 years were researched. Two methods were used for collecting primary data, namely the direct questionnaire and group interview (called focus group). Focus groups were conducted among the youngest respondents, mainly at the age 7-10 years.

The collected data were analysed using selected indicators of one-dimensional data analysis, namely indicators of the structure and measures of the position (arithmetic mean). Cross tabulation was used as the tool of the analysis and the presentation provided for both one and two-dimension analysis.

A part of the discussed research focusing on the 10-17-year-old respondents is presented in the paper, as well as their dietary behaviour and preferences in relation to dairy products, specially milk.

Importance of milk in feeding of young people

Milk and its preserves are among the most universal and standard value food products. They provide for considerable quantities of standard value and easy assimilable animal protein characterized by high biological value in daily diet.

Moreover they are also the source of numerous mineral components, particularly the calcium and magnesium, potassium, zinc which jointly create milk alkaline properties. Milk and its preserves are also rich in vital bones' matter - the phosphorus and a lot of vitamins, particularly the riboflavin (B₂ vitamin), B₁ vitamins, B₁₂ and B₆. The fat of milk is the carrier of vitamins soluble in fats, namely A and D, which are significant for the increase and development of young organisms.

In the opinion of food scientists milk and preserves should be the necessary element of daily diet, since it is hard to realize the norms recommended for the daily consumption without their participation, in particular for the calcium and the riboflavin.

Energy value of milk, is formed depending on the content of the fat from 351 kcal/l for low fat milk to 654 kcal/l for full fat milk, the content of protein oscillates from 3% to 36% (**Kuchnatowicz et al.** 1998).

And thus milk is a low-calorie, full protein product. A daily consumption of milk and preserves should reach approximately two glasses of milk and milk drinks, 50 g of cottage cheese, 20 g of hard cheese which deliver calcium in the quantity recommended by feeding norms.

However, the quantity of dairy products consumption depends both on age and sex. And so the 12-year-olds should consume from 0.85 to 0.95 l of milk and preserves daily, while 13-18-year-olds from 1.1 to 1.51 depending on the sex.

Characteristic of respondents

It has been already mentioned that the participants of the research were both children and teenagers between 12 and 17. The sample structure was as follows: 11% of children at the age of 10, 12% – 11, 10% – 12, 13% of teenagers at the age of 13, 15% – 14, 14% – 15, 13% – 16 and 12% – 17. The research participants comprised 53% of girls and 47% of boys. All of them were citizens of the Turek administrative district. Young consumers' pocket money comes mainly from their families (parents, grandparents). 3/4 declared spending a part of this budget on dairy products, mainly in school shops and groceries located on the way to school. More money declare spending 1/10 of it on purchasing milk and its preserves. The ones having lower budgets spend about 3/4 of their funds to buy the products: sweets, cold drinks and also ice cream are the main groups of foodstuffs which consume pocket money of children and teenagers.

Dietary attitudes of consumers in the age of 10-17 years in relation to dairy products

Milk and its preserves are very popular dietary products which are consumed by children and teenagers willingly.

In relation to popularity of dairy products, young consumers have most often pointed milk, yoghurt, cheeses (cottage and hard), rather often milk desserts and butter, and relatively rare cream and condensed milk.

Their declarations corresponded to the kind of products which are popular at home and at the same time most often consumed by household members. They were the following products giving in the order of preference: milk, yoghurt, buttermilk, milk desserts and kefir. However, young consumers choose yoghurts most willingly (50% of indications), next milk (29% of indications) and milk desserts (20%).

As the research showed, respondents, irrespectively of young age, represented rather rational attitudes towards consumption of milk. When they were asked about the reasons of consumption of milk they expressed full approval in the relation to the fact that milk was a tasty drink, and also was a necessary component of daily diet, and they accepted opinion that milk quenched the thirst perfectly.

Young respondents did not have a specified opinion related to the reason of milk drinking because other people do it and related to the fact, that milk is widely advertised and recommended for consumption on TV.

They expressed the attitude of disapproval in relation to the fact, that consumption of milk could be connected with parents' order (Fig. 1).

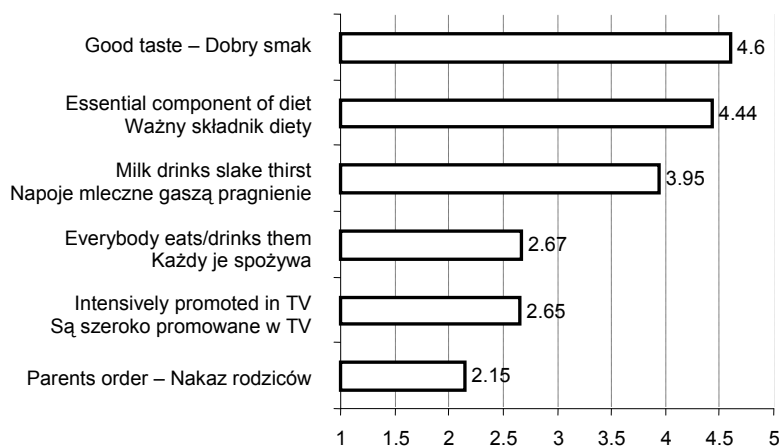


Fig. 1. Reasons of consumption of dairy products among young consumers
Ryc. 1. Powody konsumpcji produktów mleczarskich wśród młodych konsumentów

All the enquired children and teenagers declared consumption of milk. However, the frequency of consumption of milk in various forms was diversified. Respondents most often consume milk with flakes or without additions. Young consumers use milk with somewhat lower frequency for the preparation of different drinks, for instance cacao, chicory coffee, e.g. Milk is used most rarely as the addition for tea.

The most often pointed forms of milk consumption correspond to preferences of young consumers related to milk temperature. Over 40% of respondents indicated cold or tepid milk. Only 17% of respondents preferred hot milk.

It turns out that young consumers attach importance to the content of fat for various reasons, mainly dietetic. Such an attitude was declared by 60% of respondents.

Almost every third respondent showed that the most willingly chosen milk contained 2% of fat. 1.5% and 3.2% milk fat content was selected less willingly.

Evaluating both the participation of milk in various packages, as well as its various validity terms, the respondents indicated that UHT milk was the one most frequently purchased and consumed. Additionally fresh milk with short consumption validity period was bought with a similar frequency. Whereas pasteurized milk in plastic foil was relatively rarely consumed.

Quite big popularity of fresh milk is a result of the specificity of the region where young respondents live and close neighbourhood of the dairy cooperative.

The conducted research showed that consumption of milk had rather pulse character among young consumers. Above half of them admitted that they drank milk or they used it to various dishes when they felt like it, but only every fourth young respondent did it regularly to meals. Over 20% of respondents, mainly younger children, showed they drank milk before sleep.

Milk is the drink consumed comparatively often. Above half of the respondents said that they drank milk more frequently than once a day and every fifth youngster – once a day. Additionally, the popularity of milk consumption is also indicated by the quantities of milk consumption. Almost half the children and teenagers (46%) drink more than three glasses a day, but every third youngster – two glasses (Fig. 2).

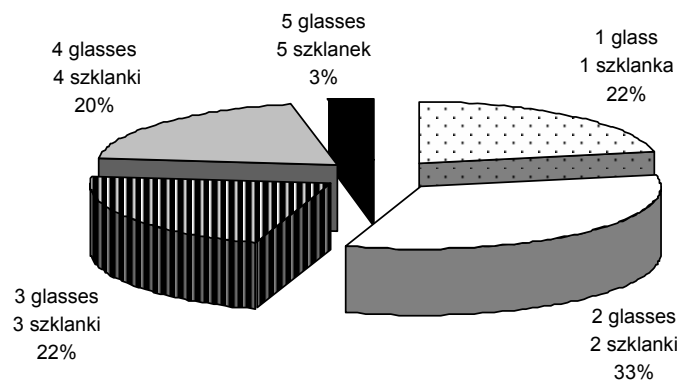


Fig. 2. Daily quantity of consumption of milk by young consumers
Ryc. 2. Dzienna ilość mleka spożywanego przez młodych konsumentów

10-17-year-old consumers are active market participants who frequently have their own money and do shopping on their own. They also participate in family purchases, playing significant decision roles and influencing choices of products. In relation to milk and more precisely its attributes, i.e. the brand, fat content or packaging almost half the respondents declared they selected the products all by themselves or influencing the buyers' choice.

It particularly it refers to older respondents. 38% of young market participants declared that parents often decided on the choice of milk. Other respondents, mainly younger people, when told to buy milk, purchase what they have been asked to buy.

In relation to the factors which decide on the choice of milk both at the purchase, and for consumption, young people pointed the producer and brand as most important factors, while individual habits, preferences regarding sensory features, smell or taste as well as fat content came only next in the sequence.

Significantly less important factors playing same role while selecting milk were promotion in the shop, size and kind of package or consumption validity term (Fig. 3).

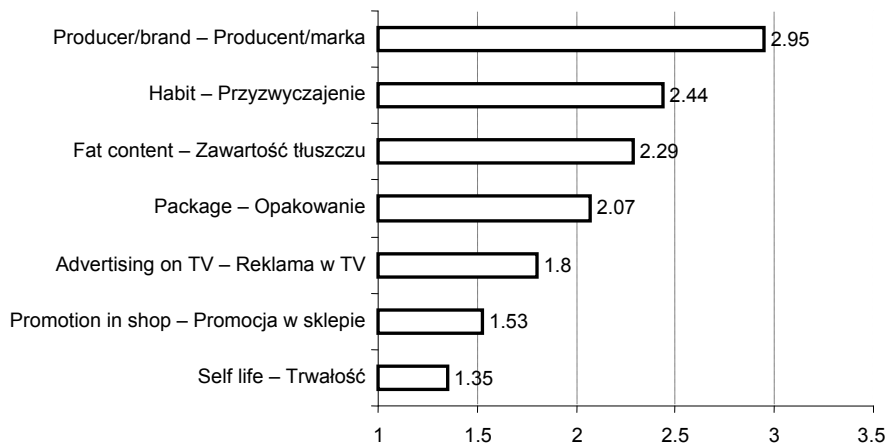


Fig. 3. Importance of factors which influence the choice of milk (average evaluation of importance in the scale from 4 – very important – to 1 – unimportant)

Ryc. 3. Ważność czynników decydujących o wyborze mleka (średnia ocena ważności czynników w skali od 4 – bardzo ważny – do 1 – nieważny)

The young, aware of own choices consumer also admits that he attaches importance to milk brand and he has his own favourite brand of milk. It refers to over 60% of the respondents. Other young people declare that they do not have their favourite milk brand so they consume the one is at home and if they are to choose, they do it at random.

While the brand seems a relatively significant factor of choice, the knowledge of the brands among the youngsters appears insufficient.

Children and teenagers have most often given Sielska Dolina as their favourite brand of milk (43%) and Łaciate (41%). The following brands appeared less frequently: Łowickie, Kościan and Białe.

Milk does not have a suitable substitute considering of the nutritive value. Young people, focusing on its nutritive value also regard it as thirst quenching drink.

Other thirst quenching drinks selected by youngsters were: fruit juices (38%), carbonated taste drinks (30%) and mineral water (20%). Only every other tenth young consumer chooses tea instead of milk.

Conclusions

1. More and more clearly separating young consumer's market is favoured by a growing activity of its participants, the increase of sums of money spent on various purposes, development of different forms of participation in market processes, sped market and consumer education.

2. In spite of the specificity of the young consumer is market it is possible to say that the young consumer shows rational attitudes and preferences in regard to consumption of dairy products.

3. Milk is a frequently consumed product, mainly because of its nutritive value, good taste and positive influence on health; average consumption of milk – about 2.5 glasses a day is similar to the average daily level recommended by food science.

4. Younger children consume milk in lower quantities, usually to meals in different forms. For teenagers milk is mainly a beverage, and they drink it in higher quantities, usually impulsively without special occasion.

5. Young, active participant of market processes plays different roles in buying, among other things, as chooser and buyer for himself, buying for his family and also an adviser and informant about buying products.

6. In consumer's decision of young people a very important role in the choice of milk is played by the brand of a product; most children know brands of milk, have their own favourite brand and prefer this brand in daily consumption.

Literature

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PREFERENCJE ŻYWIENIOWE MŁODYCH KONSUMENTÓW NA PRZYKŁADZIE MLEKA

Streszczenie

Pomimo specyfiki rynku dziecięco-młodzieżowego można zauważyć, iż młody konsument przejawia racjonalne postawy i preferencje w odniesieniu do spożycia produktów mleczarskich. Chętnie zjada różne produkty, a w szczególności spożywa mleko, ma wyraźnie określone preferencje odnośnie do rodzaju mleka, zawartości tłuszczu, formy spożycia czy też stopnia podgrzania mleka. Mleko jest więc produktem powszechnie spożywanym, wybieranym głównie ze względu na walory odżywcze, zdrowotne i smakowe. W decyzjach konsumpcyjnych młodych konsumentów istotną rolę odgrywa marka produktu; większość dzieci i młodzieży zna marki mleka, ma swoją ulubioną i tę markę preferuje w codziennym spożyciu.