

Consumer choice process when purchasing the staple food

Rozhodování spotřebitele o nákupu základních druhů potravin

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Abstract: After 1989, there were significant changes in food consumption, both in volumes and structure. These changes happened due to various factors. The most important factors with influence on demand and food consumption were: development of income levels of Czech inhabitants, development of consumer prices of food and non-food products and services, offer and availability of products on the market, advertising and promotion, health education, joining the EU. Besides the above mentioned factors, an impact on consumption also have such factors as quality development, extent of self-provision with food products, or the degree to which the needs are satisfied. The fundamental influence on consumption has the development of consumer prices of food and capital goods and services in relations to development of incomes, thus buying power. In the last few years, there was a visible tendency to decreasing influence of prices on food consumption. The paper focuses on the development of consumption and changes in consumption patterns, motivation and attitudes. Presented data are based on the marketing research conducted by the Department of Marketing and Trade, Mendel University in Brno, in fall 2004.

Key words: staple food, consumption, consumer behavior, marketing research, Czech Republic

Abstrakt: Příspěvek se zaměřuje na vývoj spotřeby základních potravin a změny v nákupních zvyklostech, motivaci a postojích. Prezentovaná data vychází z marketingového výzkumu realizovaného Ústavem marketingu a obchodu, Mendelova univerzita, na podzim 2004. Po roce 1989 došlo k významným změnám ve spotřebě potravin, a to jak z hlediska objemu, tak i struktury. Tyto změny byly zapříčiněny řadou faktorů. Mezi nejdůležitější faktory, které ovlivnily poptávku a spotřebu potravin, patří: vývoj úrovně příjmů obyvatel, vývoj spotřebitelských cen potravinářských a nepotravinářských produktů a služeb, nabídka a dostupnost výrobků na trhu, propagace, zdravotní osvěta, vstup ČR do Evropské unie. Mimo uvedené faktory mají na spotřebu vliv vývoj kvality, rozsah samozásobení či stupeň nasycenosti potřeb. Spotřebu zásadně ovlivňuje vývoj spotřebitelských cen potravin a kapitálových statků a služeb vzhledem k vývoji úrovně důchodů, tedy kupní síla. V několik posledních letech se projevuje tendence klesajícího vlivu cen potravin a spotřebu. Z výsledků šetření vyplynulo, že pro spotřebitele je rozhodující při nákupu základních druhů potravin, jako je chléb a bílé pečivo, maso k přípravě pokrmů, mléko, máslo, vejce, a nápojů, minerální vody, pivo, čaj a káva, zvykové chování. Pro výrobce jsou důležité informace a zjištění, že spotřebitel je ovlivněn novinkami, inovacemi a reklamou u takových potravin, jako je sladké a trvanlivé pečivo, jogurty a sýry, salámy a masové konzervy a polotovary, z nápojů pak čaj, víno a minerální vody. Spotřebitelé, kteří jsou ovlivněni péčí o svoje zdraví, nakupují cereální pečivo, ryby a drůbež, jogurty a sýry a z nápojů minerální vody. Při zkoumání důvodů změn nákupního chování je důležité zjištění, že změny chování a jejich důvody při nákupu potravin jsou odlišné pro jednotlivé kategorie zákazníků. Jiné důvody mají jednotlivé sociální skupiny, jiné jednotlivé věkové kategorie, jiné pro skupiny různého místa bydliště. Pokud nevezmeme tyto identifikační skupiny v úvahu, nejčtenější důvod změn nákupu u všech druhů potravin byl zdravý životní styl, následovala rozšířená nabídka výrobků a poslední důvod byl finanční. U nápojů je situace velmi odlišná. Tři důvody jsou téměř rovnoměrně zastoupeny a identifikační skupiny s výjimkou věkových kategorií nemají na změnu nákupního chování vliv.

Klíčová slova: základní potraviny, spotřeba, chování spotřebitele, marketingový výzkum, Česká republika

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INTRODUCTION

In relation to the satisfaction of basic physiological needs – food, beverages – the evaluation of consumer behavior is often based on the theoretical presumption that individuals act in a rational manner. However, results of the recent research have proved that, when buying foodstuffs and beverages, consumers are influenced also by habits, current moods, situations, emotions and that the behavior of individual consumer segments is quite different.

When analyzing the consumer behavior (Schiffman, Kanuk 2004), it is necessary to pay attention to all three stages of this process. The *preparatory stage* is determined by the product, its characteristics and marketing activities on the one hand and social factors (family, friends, social group, age, etc.) on the other.

The second stage – *the process stage* – is influenced by psychological factors (consumer's personality, his attitudes, perception, and motivation). And finally the third stage – *the final stage* – is characterized by the purchase decision and the postpurchase behavior (repeat purchase).

Factors, which influence purchase decision, affect individual groups of consumers in a different way. For a consumer research concerning individual staple food categories, the following demographic characteristics were used: sex, age, affiliation with a social group and domicile. Demographic characteristics, which are easily available, measurable, and helping to localize the target market, were supplemented with psychological (personality, attitude, involvement) and socio-cultural characteristics (social class, religion, family life-cycle). Due to demandingness of such a survey, we could not include these characteristics in our research. Analysis and results of the survey (via questionnaire) about customer behavior then allow to predict the behavior of customers and to learn what, why, when, where, how and how often they buy. In the final phase, sellers and producers elaborate strategic plans of development and management. (Hague 2003; Stávková, Foret 2003).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The survey via questionnaires aiming to analyze the consumer decision process when buying staple foods and beverages was conducted using a sample of 1 750 respondents. The sample was selected in such a way that it should represent the structure of the Czech population according to 4 identification characteristics – age, sex, social group, and size of

the settlement where the respondents have their permanent place of residence.

The answers provided information about reasons and the decision-making process when buying four staple food categories, *meat* and meat products, *milk*, dairy products and eggs, non-alcoholic and alcoholic *beverages* and *bakery* and confectionery products. This paper analyses reasons of consumer buying decisions. The respondents could select the following alternatives:

1. Do you buy individual food categories routinely?
2. Do you search for newcomers and are your decisions based on advertising and/or innovations?
3. Are your decisions based on the preference of healthy nutrition?
4. Other reasons.

The following questions should disclose, whether the customers perceived a change in their consumption patterns (concerning four food categories mentioned above) within the last 10 years. And if yes, which was the reason. The provided options were:

1. Healthy lifestyle
2. Extended assortment of offered products
3. Financial reasons
4. Other reasons.

For the analysis of the processed data, the following statistical methods were used: distribution of frequencies of all provided alternatives and the χ^2 -test of dependency of qualitative indicators.

RESULTS

Frequencies of respondents, whose motives for purchases of basic foodstuff were influenced by routine, newcomers, healthy lifestyle or other unidentified factors are illustrated in Figures 1–4.

Meat and meat products show that the majority of purchases of meat were based on habits. Only when buying poultry and fish, the customers were motivated by the healthy lifestyle. Respondents buying salami and canned meat products were influenced by the width and variety of the offered assortment (Figure 1).

Milk and dairy products illustrate that routine purchases predominated also when buying milk, butter and eggs. Purchases of cheese and yogurts were influenced by the assortment and by the healthy lifestyle (Figure 2).

It results from Figure 3 that only two basic categories of bakery products – bread and rolls – were purchased in a routine way. Purchases of sweet and dry bakery products (biscuits) were influenced by

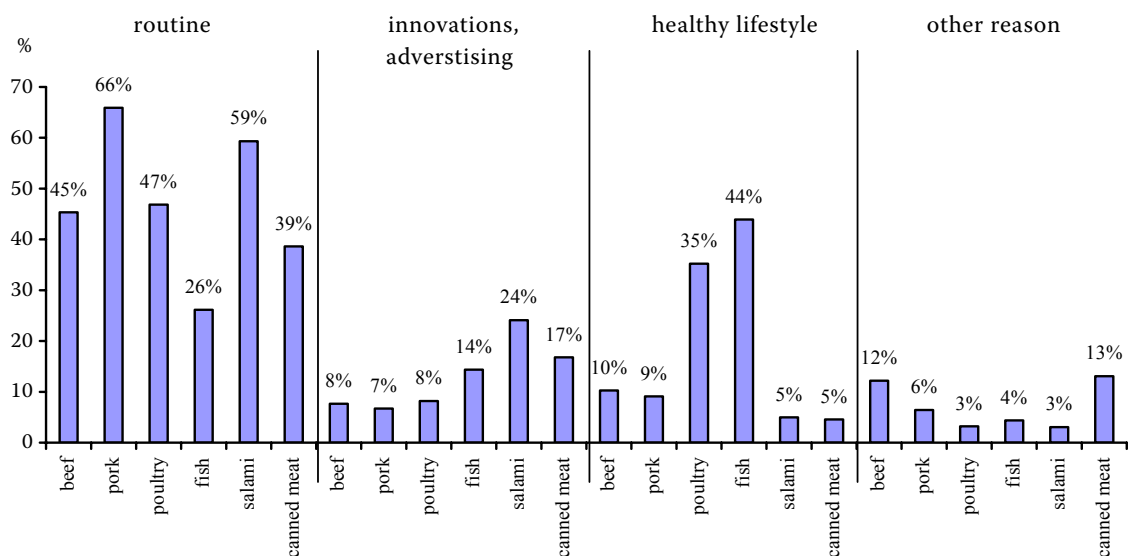


Figure 1. Frequencies of motives when buying meat and meat products

the width and variety of assortment and also by innovations while purchases of cereal products were motivated by the healthy lifestyle.

Beverages indicate that the width and diversity of assortment influenced purchases of tea and mineral waters. Alcoholic beverages were also influenced by demand for specific assortment and quality. Routine purchases were the most frequent when buying coffee (Figure 4).

Frequencies of respondents classified into individual social groups did not show any significant differ-

ences. Similar observations concerned frequencies in individual age groups and the size of settlement. Questions that should provide answers about reasons of changes in consumption patterns are presented in Tables 1–4. These tables also include values of χ^2 , and indications of significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ (+) and $\alpha = 0.01$ (++)

It follows from these results that changes in consumption patterns of bakery products, meat and meat products, and milk and dairy products were influenced by the factors of health protection and

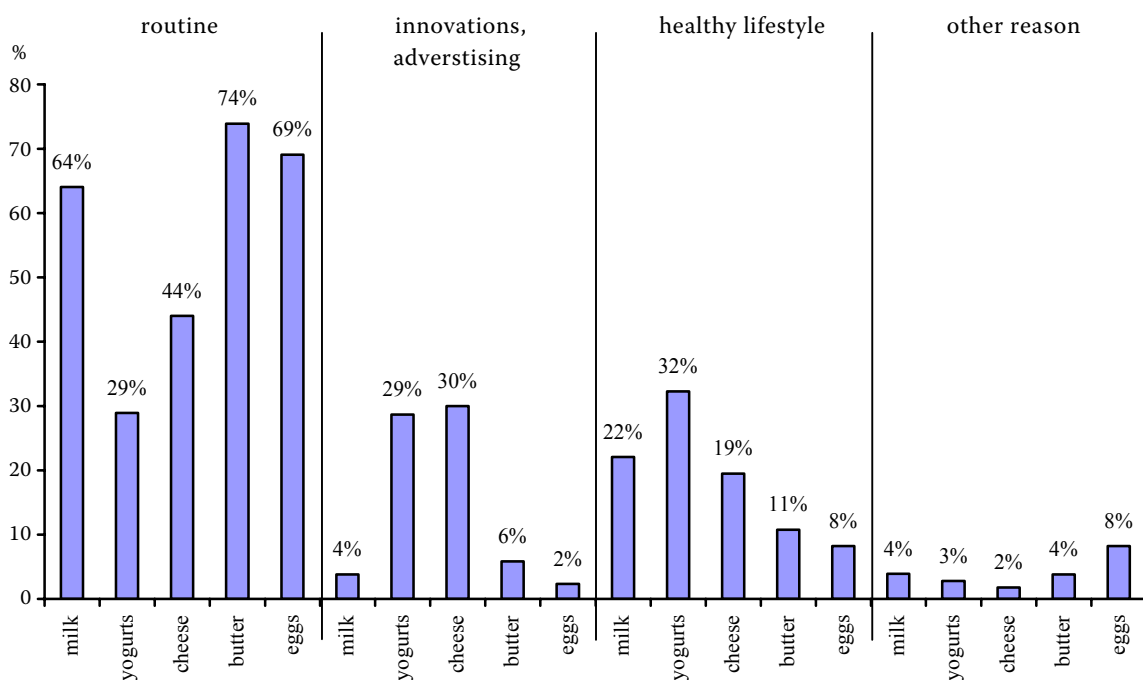


Figure 2. Frequencies of motives when buying milk and dairy products

healthy lifestyle. Extended offer of products was another important factor. Financial reasons were mentioned in the last place.

We can differentiate in the behavior of retired people; their decision-making process is influenced by financial reasons. The healthy lifestyle is the most important factor in the age group of “productive age” (25–60 years). The place of residence did not show

any significant effect on differences in the behavior of people from towns and villages.

Changes in the customer behavior in the market of meat and meat products were mostly influenced by the financial reason in the group of retired people; other social groups were mostly influenced by the extended assortment (Table 1). This factor was also the most important in the group of farmers. It is of interest

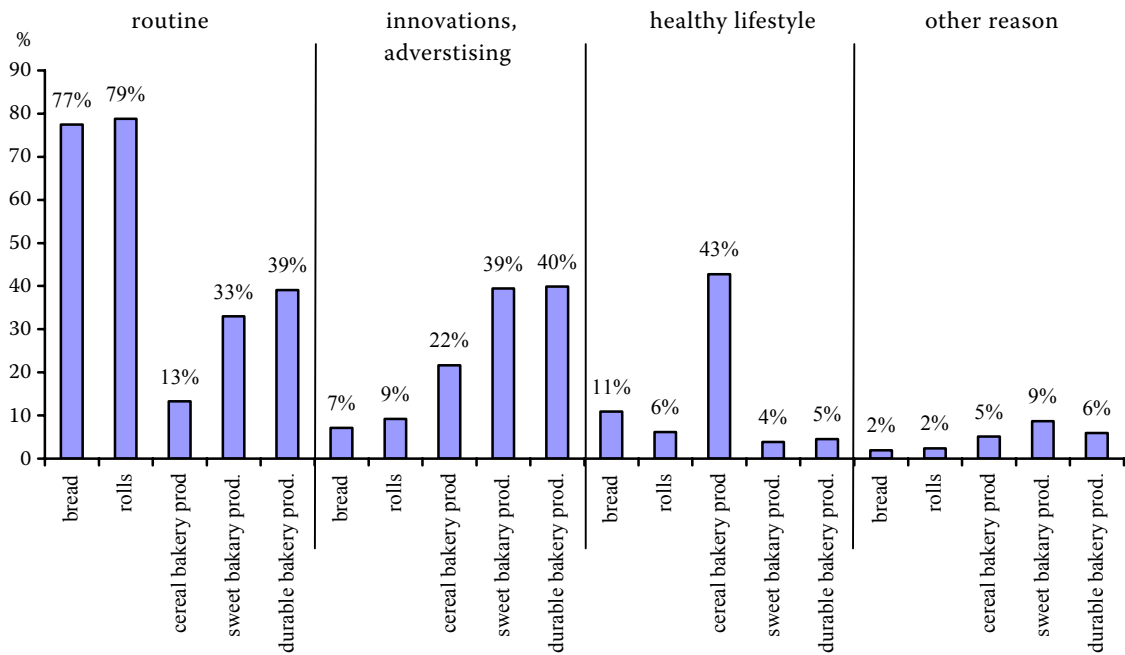


Figure 3. Frequencies of motives when buying bakery and confectionary products

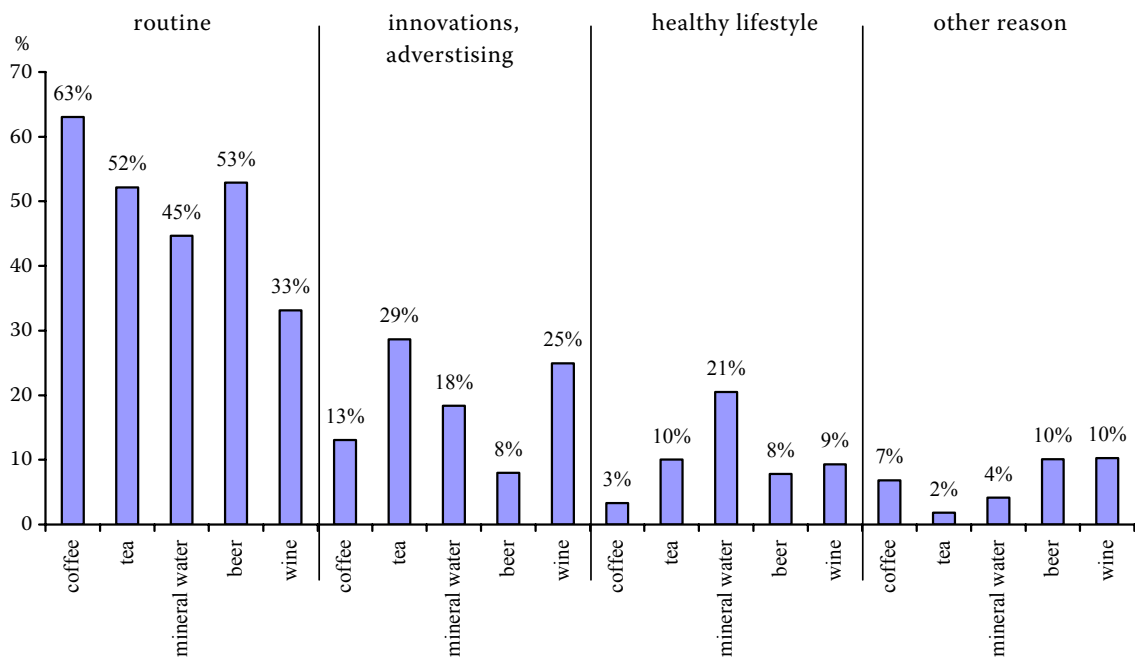


Figure 4. Frequencies of motives when buying non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages

Table 1. Reasons of changes in consumption of meat and meat products and milk and dairy products(% of respondents)

		Meat and meat products				Milk and dairy products			
		healthy lifestyle	extended assortment of products	financial reasons		healthy lifestyle	extended assortment of products	financial reasons	
Sex	men	39	40	22	$\chi^2 = 36.21^{++}$	44	36	19	$\chi^2 = 15.70^{++}$
	women	55	27	18		55	31	14	
Social group	employees	50	34	17	$\chi^2 = 74.60^{++}$	54	32	14	$\chi^2 = 53.47^{++}$
	farmers	36	43	21		44	36	20	
	entrepreneurs	47	40	13		51	43	6	
	retired	33	25	42		44	24	32	
	other	53	28	19		49	36	15	
Age	15–24 years	55	29	16	$\chi^2 = 77.2^{++}$	52	35	14	$\chi^2 = 55.09^{++}$
	25–60 years	48	35	16		52	36	13	
	over 60 years	32	27	41		45	23	32	
Residence	less than 3 000	42	36	23	$\chi^2 = 10.97^+$	47	33	20	$\chi^2 = 9.04$
	3 000–90 000	48	33	19		50	35	14	
	over 90 000	52	29	18		54	32	14	

that there were differences in factors influencing purchasing decisions of men and women. Men tended to appreciate a wider assortment than women.

Table 1 also shows that there are differences in attitudes of women and men to the purchase of milk and dairy products. As a reason for changes in con-

Table 2. Reasons of changes in consumption of bakery products and non-alcoholic and alcoholic products (% of respondents)

		Bakery products				Non-alcoholic and alcoholic products			
		healthy lifestyle	extended assortment of products	financial reasons		healthy lifestyle	extended assortment of products	financial reasons	
Sex	men	48	32	20	$\chi^2 = 4.29$	35	35	30	$\chi^2 = 3.92$
	women	52	32	16		40	32	28	
Social group	employees	54	31	16	$\chi^2 = 67.70^{++}$	41	33	27	$\chi^2 = 15.03$
	farmers	43	35	22		38	34	28	
	entrepreneurs	49	40	11		36	39	25	
	retired	36	25	39		32	29	39	
	other	54	32	14		36	32	32	
Age	15–24 years	45	34	21	$\chi^2 = 94.16^{++}$	39	32	28	$\chi^2 = 10.30^+$
	25–60 years	62	25	13		38	34	28	
	over 60 years	30	44	27		33	28	39	
Residence	less than 3 000	46	34	21	$\chi^2 = 14.25^{++}$	37	32	31	$\chi^2 = 5.08$
	3 000–90 000	49	34	17		37	36	27	
	over 90 000	57	27	16		39	30	30	

sumption of these products, women mentioned more often the healthy lifestyle, while men appreciated a wider assortment. In this food category, the healthy lifestyle was mentioned as the main reason for changes in consumption in all social groups. Financial reasons were not so significant. There were also no great differences depending on the place of permanent residence of the respondents.

Table 2 shows that people changed their consumption patterns of bakery products mostly due to health reasons; they preferred cereal bakery products. Significant differences were among the individual social groups, and the financial reasons were the most important in the group of retired people.

As one can see in Table 2 (Beverages), the reasons for changes in consumption patterns were different than those mentioned for foodstuffs. Financial reasons were as important as the healthy lifestyle and a wider assortment. This could be influenced by the fact that the question concerned all beverages so that this was a very variable category of products and for that reason the answers were too general.

The χ^2 -test was used to evaluate dependencies existing between individual groups on the one hand and reasons of changes in consumption pattern on the other. Its results indicate that, with the exception of beverages, there was a significant relationship between almost all categories of foodstuffs and the reasons of changes. In case of beverages, there was only a dependency ($\alpha = 0.05$) between age and reasons of change in the consumption pattern.

CONCLUSION

The results of this survey indicate that routine behavior is typical for purchases of breads, rolls, meat, milk, butter, eggs, and some beverages (mineral water, beer, tea and coffee). For producers, an important information represents the fact that consumers are influenced by newcomers, innovations and advertising when buying such kinds of food as sweets and biscuits, yogurts, cheese, salami, canned meat products, semi-finished products and some beverages (tea, wine and mineral water). Consumers, who were strongly interested in their health, purchased

cereal bakery products, fish, poultry, yogurts, cheese and mineral water.

When analyzing the reasons of changes in consumption patterns, it was demonstrated that the reasons differed in dependence on the affiliation with the individual groups of customers. There were different reasons for individual social groups, individual age categories, and different localities. If we omit these identification groups, the most frequent reason for changes in consumption patterns in all categories of foods was the healthy lifestyle followed by a wider assortment. Financial reasons were mentioned on the last place.

As far as the beverages were concerned, the situation was completely different. All three reasons were almost equally important in all groups. The age group was the only exception, where a dependency was demonstrated.

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