

STUDENT'S BEHAVIOUR AS CONSUMER

COMPORTAMENTUL DE CONSUM AL STUDENȚILOR

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Abstract. *The paper presents the mean aspects concerning the student's behaviour when they buy products and services. In this order, we have analyzed the all products and services bought by the students from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration – specialization Marketing, between 1st and 31st of November 2010. The main objective was to identify the products and services bought by the respondents, the place and the day of buying, types of shops and the distance and the place of the products on the shelf into the shop. The results indicate that, in their choices, the students surveyed are influenced by age, social status and their disposable income. They prefer nearby shops and services firms, they buy especially non-food products and brands and allocate significant sums for transport, communication and food services.*

Key words: students, consumer behaviour, products, services

Rezumat. *Lucrarea prezintă aspectele principale privind comportamentul de consum al studenților. În vederea identificării modului în care studenții achiziționează diverse produse și servicii de pe piață, am analizat totalitatea cumpărăturilor efectuate de studenții Facultății de Economie și Administrarea Afacerilor – specializarea Marketing, în perioada 1 noiembrie-31 noiembrie 2010. Scopul acestei cercetări a constat din identificarea principalelor produse și servicii achiziționate, locul și zilele efectuării cumpărăturilor, tipul de magazine și distanța parcursă, locul pe raft al produselor, achizițiile făcute de aceștia pe zile din lună și din săptămână. Rezultatele indică faptul că, în alegerile lor, studenții chestionați sunt influențați de vârstă, de statutul social și de veniturile pe care le au la dispoziție. Ei preferă magazinele și firmele de servicii aflate în apropiere, cumpără în special branduri și produse nealimentare și alocă sume importante pentru servicii de transport, comunicații și servicii de alimentație.*

Cuvinte cheie: studenți, comportament de consum, produse, servicii

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the market includes a huge variety of products and services from which buyers can choose what they want to purchase exactly. Their producers, but also distributors are interested in what makes people choose one product or another, one service or another, a particular store or a day of a month or week, to influence the decisions of buyers. In the process of buying, there are many factors that affect choosing a product or another by the consumers. Thus, consumers are influenced in their choice by socio-cultural factors (culture, social class, family, social status), personal ones (age, stage and life cycle, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle) and psychological characteristics of each individual (personality and self-image, motivation) (Narayana Rao). K. Monroe and J. Guitinan (Bonoma T., Zaltman G,

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1978) state that the influence factors in consumption are different, depending on the type of products. Thus, consumers are not willing to make big efforts for convenience goods, because they know exactly what product they are looking for, and choosing stores is based on experience and information they have, predisposition for certain stores having also an important role. "When the shop is the issue, although the producers are aware of sales trends, it is harder to understand how the purchasing decision of the consumer was influenced in that universe, the consumer reacting differently depending on the type of store, the category of products they are buying and, respectively, the communication stimuli (Baciu, 2008). For special goods, the customers are willing to make considerable efforts to buy goods that have certain well-defined characteristics and choosing the store depends on the presence or absence of some certain marks they are looking for, as well as on the vendors' skills in helping the client. Shopping goods are purchased following the visit to several shops, catalogues presentation being important in this case. The researchers sought to understand what consumers want in a shop and they found that low prices, quality, possibility of choosing and services are important. Also, consumers are increasingly interested to save time when they go shopping, time being evaluated in distance and arrangement of goods in departments. They want, in addition, to buy with pleasure (characterized by comfort, cheerfulness, lack of congestion) and to simplify life (no queues at the pay desks, like late hours, clear presentation of products, the presence and kindness of staff). In the literature, a dominant role is taken by impulse buying, the ones they did not put on a list, they did not planned at home, but they purchased directly in stores, under the influence of certain factors, in particular the visibility (packaging and positioning of products on shelves). Studies indicate that approximately 65% of buying decisions are taken directly in supermarkets, and over 50% are unplanned purchases, the percentage varying by good category. In addition, consumers have a natural tendency to concentrate and observe firstly the goods located at the eye level on shelves and, therefore, the arrangement of goods leads to a more easy identification (Business Research Study).

The research aims to analyze the behaviour of students in the process of purchasing goods and services, in order to adequate the merchandising techniques by the managers of trade and services companies from Iasi County.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The objectives of the study were: identifying the reasons behind the students' choice of shops, identifying the day of the week and of the month in which students do their shopping, description of major purchased brands, place of goods on shelves and of the purchased goods by students. The study is based on the analysis of purchases made between 1 to 30 November 2010 by students of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iasi, specializing in Marketing, second year of study. *The research method was the inquiry, the questionnaire* being used as a tool for data collection. Respondents were keeping all receipts and invoices from the above mentioned period, purchases being then registered into a database from Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program. This includes information on: the day of the week and month in which purchases were made, the purchased good / service, the brand, the price, the reason of choosing the good and the place on the shelf (at eye, hand, base level etc.), the

store, the distance to this store, the type store and the reason for choosing it. There was processed information from 32 students (22% from lasi, 78% from other localities). November was chosen because purchases are not influenced by special events (holidays, vacation etc.). The sample was chosen because of the significant proportion of students in the economic life of lasi. Data were statistically analyzed using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As a result of processing the data using SPSS, it resulted that most of the purchases are made on the 15th of the month (9%), and the least - especially in the second part of the month, in says as the 18th, the 20th, the 26th (2%) (figure 1). Also, the participant students in the survey prefer Monday to make necessary purchases (figure 2), behaviour that is influenced in our view, by the moment when parents give them financial allowances (especially in weekends).

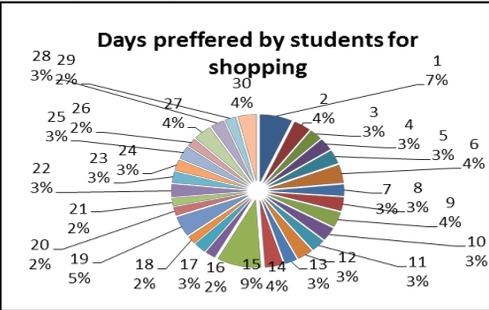


Fig. 1 - Day of the Month in which Students Do Shopping

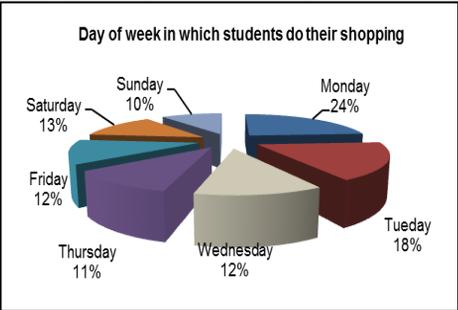


Fig. 2 - Day of the Week in which Students Do Shopping

In terms of the acquired marks, it is noticed (figure 3) that the brands are the most sought after, the store's own branded products representing a rate of 11% of the purchase, less than the share of the own brands at national level.

The purchased goods by students are located, especially at the hand level (31% of total) and eyes (36% of all purchases). As shown in figure 4, 33% of all purchases are placed on shelves above or below the gondolas or are services (catering units, public transport services etc.).



Fig. 3 - Brands Purchased by the Students

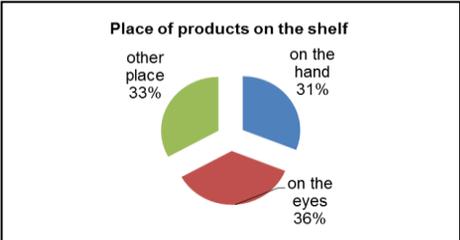


Fig. 4 - Place on Shelf of the Purchased Goods by Students

In this case, we noticed that also the students buy more goods under impulse, even if their incomes are lower than those people who have other occupations (especially those who work). Moreover, other studies show that

young people are more drawn by the displayed way of goods on shelves in stores and are more disposed for an impulsive buying behaviour (to Thirmizi, 2009).

The reasons mentioned by students that stay on the basis of purchasing decision making are (figure 5): necessity / need (70% of them), impulse - their attractiveness in a certain time (9%), promotions and prices being the least frequent (4% respectively 3% of total purchases). Most of the purchases are carried out in hypermarkets and supermarkets (34%, respectively 28% of total), followed by convenience stores (26%), public catering units or other types of services and shops. We note here that the purchases were expressed as frequency and not as value, as prices.

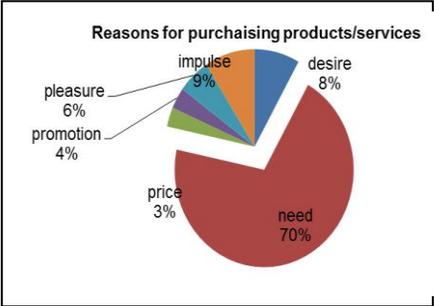


Fig. 5 - Reasons of Purchasing Goods and Services by Students

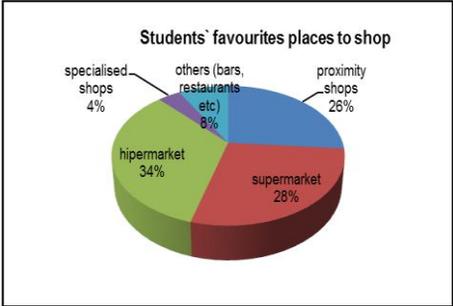


Fig. 6 - Students Preferred Places in Doing Shopping

Regarding the reasons of choosing shops, the distance is the reason that prevails (44% of all purchases), followed by diversified supply of goods (23% of shopping) and prices (figure 7).



Fig. 7 - Reasons for Choosing Shops by Students

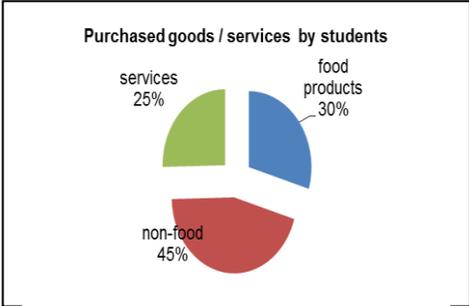


Fig. 8 - Purchased Goods / Services by Students

The outcomes show that the students buy in a high proportion, non-food goods (46% of total spend) but also food goods (29% of the amount they spend), while for services they allocate about 25% of the total money (figure 8). We included transport, public catering services and spending on leisure in the category of services.

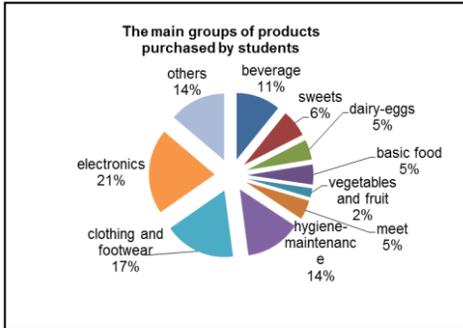


Fig. 9 - The Main Good Groups Purchased by Students

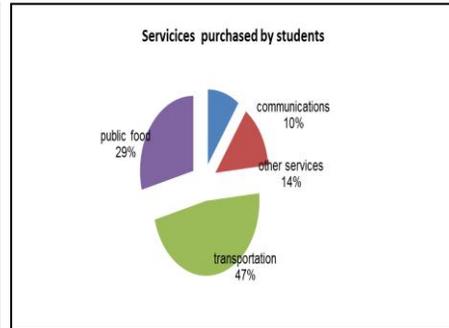


Fig. 10 - Services Purchased by Students

In terms of purchased good groups, we notice the following situation (figure 9): A significant amount is allocated by students for electronic products (21% of total), clothing, footwear (17%) and hygiene-maintenance (14%). Foods that are high in proportion are drinks (juice, tea, coffee, alcohol) - 11% of total, confectionary (6% of total), convenience food (we include here bread, rice, salt, flour, sugar) with spending 5% from the total amount, meat and meat-food and dairy products with the same percentage. Vegetables and fruits are purchased at the least, according to this study (only 2% of total). In the other products category we included the bazaar products (cigarettes, bags, etc.), noting that they register an important position in students' purchasing (14% of total).

Data shows that students buy mainly transport services (here were included expenditures with local transport, but also other travels made by students) representing 47% of the total, followed by catering services (29% of the total allocations for services). As expected, students draw an important part of their monthly budget for communications (mobile telephony in particular), other services (hairdresser, tickets to museums, discos, clubs) representing 14% of the expenditure of students to acquire services (figure 10).

CONCLUSIONS

Following the survey developed among the students at Marketing specialization within the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration - "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iasi, it has been ascertained that they have a consumer behaviour influenced by the level of income, employment status (the buy brands and lesser the goods made under the own brand of stores) and age.

The income influences the purchases they make, in terms of days of the week and of the month when they go shopping (most purchases are made in the middle of the month, when parents take salaries), but also in the way they perceive the goods as necessary or bought under impulse (for example, a menu in a food service unit is considered a necessity).

Also, the questioned students prefer convenience stores for consumer goods (goods / services they purchase with a high frequency, such as bread, coffee, even copying services), due to proximity to home or place of studies.

Supermarkets and hypermarkets are shops often frequented by students and are preferred for the wide range of products, pricing, special offers and promotions, the majority purchasing from these places. Special stores (pharmacies, textiles and footwear, etc.) occupy also a very important place in choosing goods by students.

Even if prices are an essential criterion for the buying decision of Romanians, the students have different reasons when choosing a store or a good, being influenced in their choice, by age and occupation (they prefer the brands for most of the purchased goods).

The study also indicates that, in terms of good groups, the surveyed students spend a significant proportion of the money they have available to non-food products (electronics, cigarettes, other bazaar-type goods, clothing, and shoes) because, in our opinion the parents are the ones who provide most of the necessary food.

Transport services have an important share in total spending of students, being followed by catering services. Because young people often are concerned about communication with others, we have highlighted these services separately in the study, indicating that the students behave according to their age in this regard.

The study outcomes can be used by the managers of trade and services companies from Iasi, in adapting the merchandising techniques on how behave a significant percentage of their buyers, respective the students.

The study has several limitations, related to the chosen research method and the rather reduced sample, which leads us to affirm that, for being generalized to all students, the results will have to be validated by a broader study, on a sample consisting of students from several faculties and specializations, with a wider representation.

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