

EXPLORATION OF CONSUMER'S BUYING BEHAVIOUR CONNECTED WITH AVOIDING PURCHASES

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Abstract:

The role of purchasing behavior in consumer life is more and more often discussed in literature. Diversification of retail formats and new possibilities of products delivery (e.g. Parcel Lockers, free of charge delivery from e-markets), as well as increasing technological capabilities, make shopping easier and more enjoyable (e.g. through mobile applications). Those processes increase quantities of purchased goods and also influence potentially satisfaction with purchase. Surprisingly, there is a group of consumers, who consciously avoid purchasing activities, despite their good or very good financial situation. This group is neglected up to date in literature. In an article, the author will present the results of its own qualitative study (data was collected via FGI in 2015) among younger consumers (20-30 years old) from Lublin Voivodeship (in the east of Poland), who not only forgo purchases but also avoid them. The purpose of this article is to present motivations of those consumers immersed in technology and possibilities of the contemporary world, as well as to introduce their purchasing strategies. The author is convinced that similar behavior exists also in other age groups or other countries, and the analysis would be an interesting contribution to knowledge of consumer behavior.

Keywords: avoiding purchase, consumer behaviour, qualitative research, young consumers

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of the literature on consumer behavior can leave us with an impression that most consumers like shopping (Wastbrook, 1985; Levin, Levin, Heath, 2003) or at least they are geared towards them in a neutral way (a utilitarian way). The observation of such phenomena as the spread of the Internet penetration (in Poland 74%), consumer's income increase (since 2013 to 2014 - 3,2%), or a high level of adoption of e-commerce naturally lead research into new phenomena in consumption, including eg. excessive consumption or addiction to shopping (shopaholic). Observation of such trends as slow life or keeping away consciously from media consumption (a trend of being offline) by customers suggest that a group of consumers who from various reasons do not like shopping, e.g. due to the ethical reasons or have negative previous experiences, as well as a feeling discriminated by some brands (e.g. the lack of clothing sizes for people who are very thin or obese) may play a significant role.

The literature frequently shows behaviour associated with the lack of satisfaction in the context of after-purchase behavior (Singh, 1990; Grupa, 2012). The author did not find any studies that would show how the lack of satisfaction with the purchases would influence next purchases. Polish literature offers only few studies that try to answer the question of whether Poles treat shopping as obligation or necessity (with no definite answer) (Skorek, Dzienanowska, Kacprzak, 2014), or explore purchasing strategies of young people at school age (the focus of research is moved to the point whether the young people like to go shopping with their parents) (Wardzala, 2014).

2. METHOD

The article is based on the results of qualitative research – focus group interviews (FGIs) conducted in November 2015. The study participants were young persons (20-30 years old) from the province of Lublin (Eastern Poland), who describe their financial situation as good or very good. In this way, income is not determined by the negative attitude due to purchase decisions. The study took part in two groups (total of 20 participants): those who represent negative attitudes towards shopping and those who like them. The participants (men and women) were selected on the basis of a specially prepared questionnaire, which verified the attitude to shopping and shopping habits. The participants, due to their young age are people who live for instance in lodgings, in the family house or already established their own families. Hence, they make all or only a part of purchases for themselves (other goods are bought by parents and/or their partners).

The main subject of the study concerned the behavior of consumers in the fast moving consumers goods market (FMCG) and it is a part of a larger project in which the author verifies the consumer behavior associated with a unit packaging of a product.

Before the test (FGI), the consumers had to perform two tasks. The outcomes presented in the article stem from the results one of them. The consumers were asked to go to a random store and buy any product from a sweets category. While shopping, participants of the study had to observe all their emotions and behavior associated with this purchase. During FGI they described the entire shopping process.

3. CHARACTERISTIC OF GROUP #1 – CONSUMERS WHO DO NOT LIKE SHOPPING

From the beginning of the study, it could be observed that consumers who do not like shopping feel very strong, negative emotions that affect the shape and length of the purchasing process. Studies have shown that they often experience feelings such as embarrassment, fatigue, discouragement, impatience and irritation. Their negative attitude is mainly caused by bad experiences at the stage of purchase, usually resulting from the retail space (crush in a shop; long queue; obtrusive sales personnel; the size of retail space, where consumers may get lost; clutter advertising, all trying to catch attention). It is worth pointing out that different types of allergies and illnesses seemed to influence as well the negative attitude towards purchases.

Very noticeable was that almost all participants expressed the same belief that when they go shopping, they know exactly what they are intending to buy. These consumers do not trust promotions. They often mentioned that they verified their attractiveness. They treated multipacks with reserve, as indicated, they do not like to collect things, or waste food, because some products cannot

be used after the expiry date. They declared that their approach to the new product is reasonable (but it is needed to conduct a shop experiment to be able to check the accuracy of this behavior). They try to verify whether something is worth buying (e.g. by checking ingredients). They are very sensitive to unfair practices in trade, for example sticking new prices or labeling products with "promotion" tags that have reduced only a little price in comparison to the regular one. However, their distance to the promotion activities does not mean that they do not use them at all: *"When it comes to promotions, I do not look through leaflets in order to search for promotion. I do not buy what is on special offer, only usually the other way round. If I need something I check if it is cheaper than normally and usually I buy goods with better price "*

Assuming that in the classic purchasing process in the physical channel there were five phases (Garbarski, 2001; Solomon, 2006): awareness of the need, the search for information, evaluation of the alternatives, the purchase decision and after-purchasing behavior, it seems to be clear that people who do not like to go shopping would have two extreme strategies: the first one to significantly extend the process or the second one to try to completely shorten it.

The extension of purchasing process occurs when a customer feels that he needs to prepare himself in a special way to unpleasant emotions, which are raised by shopping. Not only he creates a shopping list with things he needs/wants but also he mentally prepares himself to 'I have to go shopping' activity. They emphasized that going out for shopping twice a week is a great experience that increases feeling of stress and a need to overcome the growing discouragement.

Shortening the purchasing process is associated with the desire to deal with this unpleasant for a consumer activity as soon as possible. Such purchases may also be made with a list that allows to quickly select what a consumer needs currently without necessity to think and seek ideas for particular goods in the store.

Example statement depicting the attitude and behavior of the consumer, who does not like to go shopping: *"Well, in general, for me, shopping is a last resort. I do not like this activity ...to go to a store where I will have to 'fight' with a shop assistant convincing her that I really do not want exactly this toothpaste which is on a special offer because I wanted another, hearing words 'But can you take it? And when you can take it the second product will be free' I do not like such situations. I go shopping once a week. Usually with my mother, because someone has to push the shopping trolley and carry the shopping bag, so I am going only for that reason. If I need to have something every day, I have a younger brother whom I give 2PLN and I am asking him to go to a shop to make purchases for me. When it comes to preparing something for my boyfriend, of course – I can do it, but he must come with products bought. It is really terribly annoying activity for me. As for any new product... If Mom buys something -- I live with my parents--well, ok I can try, if it is good, I can buy it next time. But I do not test new product, I mean I do not buy them for this reason. I am not prone to special offers. All I want is to go along an alley not looking around, and just go out."*

4. CHARACTERISTIC OF GROUP #2 – CONSUMERS' WHO LIKE SHOPPING

The second group embraces people who display a positive attitude towards shopping. These consumers are more willing to do them. However, this does not mean that they do it often. They rather consider the prospect of shopping as much more pleasant and inviting. They buy in small shops and large shops. Like the previous group, they are divided into those who buy quickly, and those who needs more time. Urgency does not stem from avoiding shopping, but rather from the fast pace of life and lack of time to do so. Extending the purchasing process stems from a desire to getting know the shop offer well and not making decisions in haste.

Diversity of the group in terms of frequency of shopping depended on cooking and eating habits. Those who are planning meals for few days in advance, usually do bigger shopping and if possible buy everything they need for the entire week (they declare that if they needed something which they currently lack, they would buy it in nearby shops). In contrast, those who pay less attention to diet and preparation of dishes, because for instance they have already become accustomed to doing the same meals, are willing to buy products at shops on their way to/from work and the choice of a store is dictated by its location.

People in this group are distinguished by positive attitude towards buying new goods. Some of them claimed that they like "to be on time" knowing what is currently in stores. Some even of them event felt compulsion to try something that he or she has not previously had a chance to have. These consumers had also much more favourable approach to discounts and more often make use of special offers (obviously, there were those who declared that they are trying not to buy on discounted products and calculate whether an offer is actually worth it).

5. PURCHASING STRATEGIES OF PEOPLE WHO DO NOT LIKE SHOPPING

The survey allows to observe several purchasing strategies that affect the shape and length of their purchasing process. It is noteworthy that a consumer may apply several strategies during one shopping.

Firstly, the consumers with a negative attitude towards purchases are trying to shorten the time of decision and lower the number of alternatives. To achieve those goals they analyze prices. The cheapest products are selected by them when the product category is not especially important subjects they would like to pay attention to e.g., pasta. If a product category is important for a consumer (eg. emotional or health reasons) - then one could see that they are a lot more prone to choose the already known and proven product/brand. The proven product is the one that was bought in a family home and/or consumer never failed before. If the category is unknown - the respondents are seeking products that fall in the "medium price" range, what means are neither the cheapest one nor the most expensive.

Secondly, these people are trying to shop as seldom as possible, so they try to do big shopping once for a longer period, e.g. once a week. Such purchases more frequently are made with a shopping list. Such a list has for those people double meaning - on the one hand, they are sure that they do not forget about the products they need, and so they will not have to repeat purchases by buying missing things (reducing the frequency of feeling negative emotions). On the other hand - the list is a kind of protection against the effects of promotion, because if the product is not on the list, it means that it is not necessary to buy.

Another strategy is routine of buying the same products, which helps to reduce the shopping time and effort, which takes to find them. It reduces the potential risk of the feeling of dissatisfaction with failed purchases. Routine purchases do not always stem from habits to specific products, but may result from a deliberate and planned action. For instance, a young man, who is the head of the family, with concern about the health of his wife and a child has prepared a list of products, which included products that are considered healthy. To do so he analyzed product ingredients. He remembered their names and now he knows worth buying products. One-time efforts devoted to the analysis of many products is now by faster shopping.

People who do not like to go shopping try (if it is possible) to buy in small corner stores, which simplifies many tasks, for example shorten the time of purchase, as the rotation of products in these stores is rare and usually for a long time they lie in the same destinations.

If the shopping take place in the company of others they take the pressure for those people to get them to shorten time of buying. Widespread it becomes complaining and even try bribery (e.g. if we do the shopping quickly I will help in household chores).

The most interesting strategy, which revealed the study, is to avoid shopping. It takes the form in which consumers trying to make someone else do the shopping there - e.g. partner, the younger brother. They are able to pay for small amounts (e.g. 5 PLN), or compensate in other way the execution of the shopping tasks by someone else.

6. THE RESULTS OF THE TASK

These strategies attempted at verifying purchasing behaviour by asking participants to do the task before FGI sessions. During the study, participants talked about their purchases. They had to buy any product from a 'sweets' category. Some of them went shopping especially because of this reason,

others purchased something accidentally in a random shop on their way to home. This task confirmed that:

- this is not the selection process (e.g. looking for information, the analysis of alternatives), but just being in the store evokes the most negative emotions caused by e.g. standing in queues, shop assistants who somehow try to force to buy something offering additional products or embarrassment resulting from the feeling of being observed by a security guard;
- negative attitude towards purchases may affect their duration - from quick shopping in the local shop, where the choice can be even made by a saleswoman (one participant asked for any chocolate bar) to a few minute long process of comparing compositions of chocolate;
- respondents prefer shopping in small shops, because they declare they can complete the process faster.

The quasi-experiment showed, that not all respondents knew right away what they want to buy and they did not go to the store with a ready plan. This could be a result of a specific situation in which they find themselves (it was not a typical shopping), or a negative attitude to the category of a product that they buy (since not everyone eats sweets, some people decided to buy it for someone else, e.g. as a gift for a boyfriend who likes it and the product will not be wasted).

What is worth pointing out is the fact that although consumers declared that they do not like shopping, after completion of tasks, some of them felt satisfied. However, the feeling of joy can be perceived as a result of finishing the given task. The second possible explanation is that perhaps shopping dislike phenomena does not have necessarily mean that somebody does not like them all at all. It can serve as a generalization only.

Comparing this group to the group who likes making purchases, it clearly shows that shopping paths seems to be different. Firstly, in the second group several people bought two or even three products, although the task required to buy only one product. Some people from this group had eaten their candy before they came for the meeting where study was conducted, so they brought only packagings of those products. Some of survey participants felt stressed, because they wanted to eat those products but they refrained themselves from since they did not know what the product would be used for during the test. These consumers are much more likely for testing new products. What is more, they emphasised they wanted to try something new. Their decisions affect emotions, eg. one of female consumers who went shopping with an intention to buy something new, brought a chocolate bar, because, as she claimed, it reminded her of childhood and suddenly she wanted to have it, *"I was not sure, what I want, but I knew that I wanted something new, then I saw "Bajeczny"[The Polish brand of chocolate bar, which has the same taste as one type of a chocolate candy from "Mieszanka Wedlowska"-- a package of chocolate candies], which reminded me of childhood. My parents used to buy "Mieszanka Wedlowska" for me."*

The large shop area, or a large range of choices were not such a considerable problem for them, and it did not lead to noticeable frustration. Definitely it was more difficult to choose a product making a final decision. However, they approached much more positively to the clerks, who proposed various products. In some way, they celebrated going shopping, having their own rituals, for example when they are in a shop, they have to buy particular products each time (e.g. a candy bar of particular brand).

Table 1: The purchasing process during the task

Participant number	Purchasing process
#1	Purchase was made immediately after entering the store. The boy asked shop assistant for selling him "any chocolate bar." The cashier gave him a random product without asking for further details. The study participant paid for it. He was very pleased with this purchase because the woman did not ask any questions. She just answered to his request and everything did not take much time. The purchasing process lasted less than a minute.
#2	The girl immediately assumed that she would buy dark chocolate she was run out of. The purchasing process lasted long, because she scanned all chocolate bars on shelves, assessing their ingredients, the content of cocoa in terms of a relation to the price. She claimed that it was not associated with any emotion: <i>"This is just pure statistics, calculation"</i> . As a result, she chose a product of brand which she knows, although earlier she has not bought it. She left the shop satisfied.

#3	She did not have any specific plan for what to buy. In the course of doing her shopping she decided she wants sweet gums, which were at the checkout. She was annoyed and impatient because she had to stand for 15 minutes in a queue.
#4	He went to a shop and did not have a specific plan for what to buy. When he looked in the shop he drew attention to his favourite candy bar, who chose (due to preference, unique taste). Buying was fast and the study participant was satisfied with the purchase.
#5	She bought a candy bar during purchases that were already planned. She admitted that it was not a typical shopping. In fact, she focused on the task, pulled the headphones from her ears, which serve it for listening to music. She was watching how people influenced her and looked on the way how she buys. She was surprised that in the store was no music, but it seemed to her that usually in this type of store music is played on regular basis. She paid attention to the fact the product was made by Polish manufacturer, as well as on its weight and price. She chose a product that her boyfriend would like because she does not eat sweets. After shopping, she was irritated by the amount of product that she had to carry home,. She complained that an ear in a plastic bag suddenly broke and purchases were heavy.
#6	It was a quick purchase in a small shop. The boy pointed out that it was a purchase under duress, because he has not wanted for anything sweet, but since he had to choose something that he chose what he likes. He looked around, on the shelves, pointed out that the shop is nice because there are no people and flies pleasant music on the radio. He did not pay attention, how much the product weighs or how much it costs, assuming that it is the same as in other stores.
#7	She went to buy her favourite candy bar. She felt pleased that a bodyguard and a saleswoman told her "Good morning" and after that she felt so well. She noted that in the store music is played, but she did not want to pay attention on it. She quickly found the product, but she felt the irritation at the cash register when she saw how many people are in the queue and how big their shopping are. She asked to be missed by someone, but nobody wanted, which intensified the negative feelings. In addition, the salesperson tried to offer her additional products, which only angered her. Standing in a queue she began to listen to music that only irritated her. She wanted to give up the task, but eventually overcame it and ended, though it cost her much.
#8	She assumed that she buy a chocolate, but she did not close up on this product. Eventually she chose between the two of them. One of them was on the promotion and she knew this brand. The other, which she take into account was something new for her, something not attempted. She decided to take second product as she considered that the promotion was not beneficial. When she choosing a product she was observed by a security guard, because in the shop was a few people. In addition, she was discouraged to see how much people is in the queue and was looking for an opportunity to get out of the store, so when a new cash register was opened she quickly took advantage of it before it has formed a new queue.
#9	She bought a cakes on the occasion of making other purchases. She chose them because they were in the promotion. She bought it for the boyfriend.
#10	She went specifically to a neighborhood grocery store because she wanted to shorten the purchase process. She went only to the chocolate display window because she did not want looking for sweets throughout the store. She pointed to the cashier, who was not satisfied with her job, which served consumers repulsive manner. After all, the girl spoke about the women in a positive way, because the saleswoman not proposed her to buy anything extra, what was for her the much-anticipated situation.

Source: Own analyse which is based on focus group interviews (FGIs).

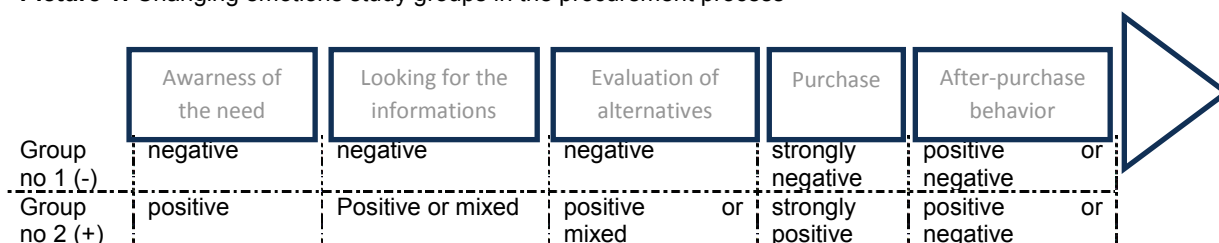
7. THE DIFFERENCES IN THE CONSUMERS PURCHASE PROCESS

By direct comparison of the behavior of both groups during the study, there are noticeable some differences in the purchasing process. The awareness of the need to go to the next shopping can be seen as positive (for those who like shopping) or negative (for customers who are avoiding shopping). This correctness occurs also in the case of subsequent stages: looking for information and evaluation of alternatives. Nevertheless, not always people who like to shop, like searching for information (it may be due to the sense of information overload) and choose the best available alternative (for FMCG market it is difficult to meet objective evaluation criteria). The biggest differences are at the stage of purchase, which has been shown previously. It is interesting that liking for purchases does not always corresponds with peoples' satisfaction of accomplishments, despite the fact that the entire process was considered as a positive one. The study pointed to dissatisfaction with their own choices caused eg.:

- purchase under the influence of promotion/advertising, eg. *"I always feel bad after such shopping. I go shopping I always felt happy that I can finally buy something, but then I felt bad that once again these promotions influenced me."*
- buying something to eat according to a consumer should not have, because it is unhealthy,

- buying something that ultimately did not like, and the biggest frustrations felt by the combination of these last two elements, namely the purchase of something before then to shrink, and in addition, the product did not meet their expectations, eg. *"As I myself, when I let myself to have something sweet and then it turns out to be not tasty, I'm mad with myself that I had broken my diet and healthy eating resolutions, and wasted all my efforts for something awfully tasting like that. What's more, I know ate a lot of bad calories and it even wasn't worth it! I have 'sinned' with something that was not worth to do so. Oh, I was angry for that "*

Picture 1: Changing emotions study groups in the procurement process



Note: The symbol means consumers with negative (-) or positive (+) attitudes towards shopping
Source: Own analysis, based on focus group interviews (FGIs).

8. DISCUSSION OF STUDY RESULTS

The selection of the product category have an impact - emotional category. This category is often seen negatively - not a small pleasure, but rather a source of negative emotions associated with the violation of own rules, diet and so on. This could influence the test results.

The study explore the buying behavior of consumers, who so far seem to be overlooked in the literature. The performed analysis shows a significantly two consumer groups differ from each other. These differences affect the shape and length of the process of purchasing behavior and choices during shopping.

It should be noted that the test results could be affected by choice of product category - FMCG market, where there is a very large diversity of products, the purchase of which requires frequent redo and choosing sweets (for task), which is an emotional category (the author depended on choosing the category that it is readily available and can be purchased independently by everyone - even people who do not like sweets, or consider them to be harmful can buy dark chocolate when cooking or baking).

It is certainly an interesting area for further research, and requires verification of quantitative research. These studies could give answers to questions such as:

- Do negative attitude to shopping is a reluctance to buy at all, or only in relation to this (FMCG) category?
- Are described in the article purchasing behavior are a way to deal with the dissatisfaction earlier, or perhaps the result of some strong convictions about shopping? Are the behaviors are the result of one of the characteristics (or several) referred to in the literature as the big five (Mulyanegara&Tsarenko, 2005).
- Do negative attitude to shop in traditional trade leads to more frequent opting for shopping in e-commerce?

These issues will be continued by the author in subsequent studies.

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