

## YOUNG PURCHASERS OF FOOD

Iwona Kowalczyk

Warsaw Agricultural University SGGW

**Abstract.** In the article the results of a research carried out in 2005 on the sample of 134 respondents are presented. The results of the research indicate that young consumers are very active on the food market. Teenagers derive their knowledge about nutrition mainly from their family home but also from school as well as from books and literature publications. Together with age the range of participation of grammar school teenagers in family shopping has declined, while their role and activeness of individual purchaser has risen. Families were commonly shopping mainly in small near-home shops and also, but less frequently, in hyper- and supermarkets. Teenagers were shopping individually mainly in small near home shops and school shops spending on average 9 PLN per week. While choosing the shopping place grammar school teenagers took under consideration mainly the price level and the quality of goods offered. The most important factors taken into consideration by the tested teenagers while buying food individually were: the freshness, the taste and the brand. Teenagers were engaged in decisive process of purchasing food for the family household mainly as far as products which were meant for them as consumers. Products such as beverages, chips, sweets and ice-creams were the main items of their individual purchase. Basing on the results of the survey a rather positive attitude of the tested teenagers was noticed towards promotion of sales. They were also more prone to impulsive purchase and more than averagely prone to novelties.

**Key words:** food market, young consumers, shopping behaviour

## INTRODUCTION

Young people account for a significant (numerous) part of the society. Yet they were not of importance on the consumer's market for a long time. Actually until the mid fifties (1950's) children and teenagers were considered not to play any role in the process of making purchase decisions. Since then a greater attention has been drawn to purchase made by children and teenagers and to their influence on purchase decisions taken by other members of their families.

The following circumstances have influenced the growth of interest in children and teenagers as participants of the market:

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Corresponding author – Adres do korespondencji: Dr inż. Iwona Kowalczyk, Department of Organization and Economics of Consumption of Warsaw Agricultural University SGGW, Nowoursynowska 159 C, 02-776 Warsaw, Poland, e-mail: iwona\_kowalczyk@sggw.pl

- they purchase products on numerous markets themselves,
- they have a significant influence on decisions taken by their parents,
- growing up, they stand for (represent) a group of potential buyers of many products in the future [Garbarski 2001].

According to Olejniczuk-Merta [2001] children and teenagers play the following roles in market processes:

- they buy products for themselves,
- they buy products for the family,
- they advise and inform regarding products which do not concern them,
- they are initiators of purchasing articles which are meant for them.

Children and teenagers, acting not as deciders but as initiators of certain purchase or those who influence parents' decisions, play the most significant role in global purchases of the family [Gajewski 1994, Rudnicki 2000, Żelazna 2000]. Teenagers quickly absorb knowledge, are open to new technologies, products and new ideas of transmitting information, advertisement and acceptance of new forms of sales. In numerous cases, especially as far as new technology based products are concerned, knowledge and advisory of young consumers is a condition under which adults buy those products. Young people are a group of most innovative customers, who as the first ones buy new products on the market and later transmit them to other segments as "already tested". They teach and inform members of the family about products and new market trends.

Market activity of children and teenagers and their influence on purchase decisions taken by the family grow together with adolescence and development of personality. Children become consumers at the age of 4, because they start to have their needs, their own preferences, *they have cognitive possibilities*, which allow them to express their needs towards the market's offer. At the age of 5 to 6 they accompany their guardians in shopping, they also have small savings. Being 7 to 8 children learn how to "be a purchaser" on the market. They start to understand the mechanism of goods and money exchange and the value of money, they also start to purchase some goods themselves. At the age of 9 to 11 their knowledge of a household's budget and purchase preference are being formed. At that time they often already are advisors of their parents. Even higher market activity is revealed by teenagers at the age of between 12 and 14. A strong dependence on fashion, contemporaries and opinion leaders is noticeable in their consumers' choices. Purchase preferences among teenagers at the age of 15 and above are already well established, they often become "family experts" especially in the field of electronic products. This results from their natural cognitive curiosity, which drives them towards novelties. Even several years old children initiate purchase. At the age of between 16 and 19 even as much as 70 to 90% of them suggests their families which food products or clothing they should buy, they also influence the choice of culinary offer [Olejniczuk-Merta 2004].

Apart from the age of a child there are the following features which decide of his role in the purchase process: life cycle and family structure, family wealth level, education of its members, division of chores in the family, as well as a kind of purchase decision to be taken and a sort of product to be purchased [Żelazna 2000]. Most frequently teenagers participate in purchasing food products which are being consumed by all members of the family. 35-40% of children and teenagers participate in purchasing RTV equipment and computers. The percentage of young consumers in purchasing cars and household equipment is lower and stands for 15-30% [Olejniczuk-Merta 2001].

Producers and distributors who offer consumptive goods, including food, concentrate their attention more often on teenagers because of their growing market activity. This, still not completely recognized group of consumers is a real "challenge" and a chance for development of many sectors of the market.

### **THE AIM OF THE SURVEY**

The aim of the survey conducted was to analyse consumptive behaviours of grammar school teenagers on the food market as well as defining differences in this field among behaviour of country and city teenagers.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY**

The study of purchase behaviour of grammar school teenagers was conducted in June 2005 in a country grammar school in Sienno (Malopolskie province) and in October 2005 in one of Warsaw grammar schools. The survey covered 134 respondents altogether. The choice of a sample was in part intentional (grammar school teenagers took part in this survey), an in part accidental (fortuitous). The survey technique was an inquiry sheet including 20 questions concerning examined problems, which was distributed among teenagers. Questions were of three kinds: open, closed and multiple choice. In the question concerning a frequency of family shopping a serial, four degrees scale was used (0 – never, 1 – sometimes, 2 – often, 3 – always). In the question concerning acceptance of activities in the field of sales promotion by grammar school teenagers taking part in the survey, a 5 degree scale was used: (-2 – definitely I do not like, -1 – rather I do not like, 0 – neither I like nor I do not like, 1 – I rather like, 2 – I definitely like). Evaluation of the frequency of purchase of promoted products was performed with use of a 5 degree scale (0 – never, 1 – seldom, 2 – quite often, 3 – often, 4 – very often). For evaluation of a degree of innovation of respondents a 4 degree scale was used: (1 – I am usually not interested in new products, 2 – I do not trust novelties, I only get them if someone recommends, 3 – I am interested in new products, I gather information, compare with other products and try to test it, 4 – I am very interested in new products and want to test them straight away).

### **RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

In the structure of the respondents, there were more girls (53%) than boys (47%). 33.6% of respondents were 14 years old, 58.2% were 15 years old while 8.2% accounted for 16 years olds. As far as residence is concerned grammar school teenagers both from the country and from the city equally accounted for 50% each. In the questionnaire there was also a question concerning receiving pocket money by the teenagers. Answers given proved that 82.8% of grammar school teenagers taking part in the survey was receiving pocket money. 83.6% of them were country teenagers, 82.1% were from the city. After calculating the average value it occurred that in the city the average

amount of pocket money accounted for 39 PLN, while in the country 32 PLN [Rożek 2006].

One of the aspects raised within the primary survey was to determine the most essential source of food knowledge among the examined group of grammar school teenagers. The survey showed that for respondents the main source of knowledge in the nourishment field is their family home (71.6%). The second place was taken by the school (57.5%), and the third by books and press (34.3%). Further places in the hierarchy were taken by advertisement (26.9%), colleagues and acquaintances (8.2%). Almost 9% of respondents stated that they do not widen their knowledge in this field.

Resulting from the survey the priority position of the family home as a source of knowledge about nutrition is justifiable because, according to Kreżel [2004], the family is a first teacher, it "filtrates" the norms and information coming from the outer world giving it a sufficient rank. The family also gives its opinion and strengthens those factors which in its opinion are the most essential and weakens those which may be harmful. Norms and behavior models which are later modified by personal experience and influence of other social groups are first transmitted within the family.

The next issue risen by this survey was a frequency of food purchase for the needs of the family household and the participation of grammar school teenagers in it. Obtained results prove that everyday purchase of food is very common – 60.4% of respondents stated that in their family household food is bought every day.

Basing on the results obtained it was stated that 41.8% of young respondents often take part in family food shopping and 42.5% do it occasionally. Hardly 3.7% of grammar school teenagers who were examined always assisted their parents in shopping, while 11.9% admitted that they never take part in it. The average frequency of family shopping amounted to 1.37 (in scale from 0 to 3). Taking residence under consideration, country grammar school teenagers more often participated in family food shopping than teenagers from the city (on average 1.40 and 1.34 accordingly). As far as gender is concerned, girls participated in food shopping more frequently than boys (on average: 1.54 and 1.17 accordingly). This fact was also noticed by Olejniczuk-Merta [2001] who stated that the gender contributes to differentiation of children's participation in family shopping and acts in natural, fully understandable manner, what means that boys relatively more often than girls participate in purchasing of such goods as a car or a VCR, while girls more frequently participate in purchasing household supplies or food. Taking the age of the participants of the survey under consideration it may be noted that the older the child gets the less frequently it participates in family shopping, and so in case of 14 year olds the average amounted to 1.53, for 15 year olds to 1.32 while 16 year olds participated in family shopping with an average frequency of 1.09.

Families were usually shopping in small near home shops (60%) also in supermarkets (44.8%) and hypermarket (33.8%). Analysing the interdependence of the place of family shopping with the location of the family household it was stated that in city households families are usually shopping in hypermarkets and small near home shops while grammar school teenagers from the country most frequently chose small near home shops and supermarkets.

The obtained data show that 67% of respondents treats their presence in family shopping as a way of helping their parents, 43.3% states that this is their obligation and 21.6% simply likes it. 16.4% of respondents considers family shopping as amusement and 13.4% as a way of spending free time (Table 1).

Table 1. The respondents attitudes towards common, family shopping, %  
 Tabela 1. Stosunek respondentów wspólnych, rodzinnych zakupów, %

Specification Wyszczególnienie	Amusement Zabawa	Obligation Obowiązek	Way of spending free time Sposób spędzania wolnego czasu	Pleasure Przyjemność	Way of helping parents Pomoc rodzicom	Small meaning Małe zna- czenie	Others Inne
Total Ogółem	14.9	43.3	14.9	21.6	67.9	18.7	0.7
Urban areas Miasto	13.4	40.3	16.4	11.9	64.2	19.4	0
Rural areas Wieś	16.4	46.3	13.4	31.3	71.6	17.9	1.5

Within the primary survey it was decided to determine what is the function (role) of young respondents in food purchasing. Grammar school teenagers declared that they were inventors mainly in case of ice-creams, chips, crisps, sweets, juices and milk deserts. They were advisors mainly regarding processed meat, milk deserts, fruits, sweets and juices, whereas deciders while purchasing ice-creams, sweets and juices. Grammar school teenagers were purchasers mainly during purchase of ice-creams, sweets, chips, crisps and beverages, and they were main users in case of ice-creams, sweets, juices, crisps, chips, fruits and milk desserts. Obtained results indicate that examined teenagers in the least extent were involved in purchasing of meat, oils and fats, cereals, fish and processed fish, and also milk and cream (Table 2).

Participation of teenagers in the market is connected not only to the fact of their influence on purchase decisions taken by their parents but it also results from owning and spending their own money. The survey shows that grammar school teenagers spend on average 8.75 PLN every week where 9 PLN was spent by teenagers from the city and 8.6 PLN from the country. Most often with their own money they bought food such as: sweets (73.4%), beverages (56%), ice-creams (39.4%), and also, but less frequently, chips and crisps (18.3%), vegetable and fruits (14.7%) and confectionery bread (13.8%).

The place where grammar school teenagers most frequently bought food individually was a small near home shop (75.2%). This place was declared more often by country grammar school teenagers (87.9%) than by those from the city (60.8%). The second shopping place often chosen by teenagers who were tested was a school shop (67%) which was more frequently pointed by grammar school teenagers from the city (68.6%) than by country ones (65.5%). Kiosk as a shopping place was pointed by 30.3% of teenagers, more frequently by those from the country (32.8%) than from the city (27.5%). Much less frequently pointed shopping place was a supermarket (14.7%) more frequently declared by country grammar school teenagers (15.5%) than city ones (13.7%). Grammar school teenagers were occasionally shopping individually in hypermarkets (5.5%), petrol stations (4.6), markets and bazaars (2.8%).

Low prices (63.4%), high quality (60.4%), wide variety of products (47.8%), nice and cultural service (25.4%) and distance from home (25.4%) were the main factors taken under consideration by grammar school teenagers while choosing the place for food

Table 2. The functions of grammar school teenagers during the food purchasing, %  
 Tabela 2. Rola gimnazjalistów podczas dokonywania zakupów poszczególnych grup produktów żywnościowych, %

Product Produkt	Function – Funkcja					
	inventive person pomysłoda- dawca	advisor doradca	decision maker decydent	purchaser nabywca	consumer konsument	no function nie pełni żadnej funkcji
Milk deserts Desery mleczne	37.3	42.5	12.7	18.7	40.3	14.9
Milk, cream Mleko, śmietana	4.5	23.1	2.2	3.7	17.9	54.5
Milk-based beverages Napoje mleczne	20.1	27.6	5.2	7.5	28.4	35.1
Cheese Sery żółte, topione	15.7	35.1	9.7	7.5	28.4	26.1
Bread Pieczywo	3.7	30.6	3.0	14.2	22.4	35.8
Cereals Przetwory zbożowe	6.7	15.7	3.0	0	10.4	64.4
Crips, chips Chrupki, chipsy	41.8	23.1	14.2	29.9	42.5	17.9
Sweets Słodyczne	40.3	38.8	18.7	32.1	47.0	6.7
Ice creams Lody	43.3	34.3	25.4	35.8	52.2	3.0
Juices Soki	37.3	38.1	15.7	19.4	45.5	2.2
Beverages Napoje	27.6	32.1	6.7	20.1	35.1	20.1
Mineral water Woda mineralna	10.4	22.4	9.7	13.4	29.8	32.8
Fruits Owoce	29.1	41.0	14.2	15.7	41.0	7.5
Vegetable Warzywa	6.7	23.1	3.0	1.5	20.9	52.2
Meat Mięso	0.7	6.7	1.5	0	0.7	90.3
Processed meat Wędliny	6.7	43.3	3.7	6.0	20.1	29.1
Oils and fats Tłuszcze	2.2	14.2	1.5	3.0	9.7	68.6
Fish and processed fish Ryby i przetwory	6.0	25.4	3.0	2.2	8.2	55.2

purchasing. Restrainedly essential were such features like: a habit (19.4%) and an easy access by means of transport (17.2%). As the least essential young respondents considered convenient opening hours (10.4%), promotion and advertisement (10.4%) and an attractive shop window (4.5%).

As far as conditioning of choice of food products is concerned, according to teenagers who took part in the survey, the most essential features taken under consideration while taking purchase decisions were: freshness (especially while purchasing bread, meat and processed meat, vegetable and fruits, fish and processed fish also milk and processed milk), taste (essential while purchasing vegetable and fruits, sweets, non-alcohol beverages, fish and processed fish and processed meat) and brand (essential while choosing such food products as non-alcohol beverages, sweets, cereals, fats also milk and processed milk). Further places were taken by: the price, the nutritional value and the package appearance (Table 3).

Table 3. Conditions of choice of food products, %  
Tabela 3. Czynniki wyboru żywności, %

Product Produkt	Feature – Cecha					
	taste smak	brand marka	freshness świeżość	price cena	nutritional value wartość odżywcza	package appearance wygląd opakowania
Bread Pieczywo	63.4	9.0	83.6	27.6	30.6	6.0
Cereals Produkty zbożowe	47.0	41.8	29.1	46.3	38.0	10.4
Milk and dairy products Mleko i przetwory	66.4	26.1	66.4	28.4	30.6	9.0
Meat Mięso	62.7	13.4	82.8	34.3	22.4	3.0
Processed meat Wędliny	70.1	18.7	82.8	32.1	22.4	5.2
Oils and fats Tłuszcze	37.3	38.8	35.1	46.3	32.1	14.9
Fish and processed fish Ryby i przetwory	73.9	11.2	79.8	33.6	22.4	5.2
Fruits and vegetables Owoce i warzywa	78.4	4.5	81.3	28.4	32.8	3.0
Sweets Słodyczne	77.6	44.8	13.4	48.5	20.1	33.6
Beverages Napoje	76.1	54.5	14.9	49.2	17.9	29.1

Another issue examined within the primary survey was to determine the influence of promotion on purchase decisions of grammar school teenagers. The obtained results prove that young respondents usually prefer the following shopping place promotions: promotional decline of prices (62.7%), tasting (61.2%), additional free amount of the

product (60.4%), gifts added to the product (45.5%), coupons (34.3%) and contests and lotteries (32.1%). The hierarchy of preferred forms of promotions is differentiated by the residence of the respondents. City grammar school teenagers mostly preferred such forms of promotions as: tasting, promotional drop of prices and additional free amount of the product, while their country contemporaries preferred additional free amount of the product, promotional decline of prices and coupons.

The average level of acceptance of actions in the field of promotion of sales among tested grammar school teenagers oscillates in between indifferent and positive attitude and amounts to 0.46 (in a scale between -2 to 2). Taking residence under consideration city grammar school teenagers were more positive towards promotion of sales in shopping places comparing to the group of teenagers from the country (on average 0.61 and 0.3 accordingly). As far as gender is concerned girls preferred promotion sales much more than boys (on average 0.65 and 0.24 accordingly). In the case of age it occurred that the older grammar school teenagers are the lower is their positive attitude towards promotion sales in shopping places (14 year-olds – average 0.67, 15 year-olds – average 0.4, 16 year-olds – average 0).

The survey conducted proved that grammar school teenagers were quite often buying promoted food products. Average frequency of purchasing this kind of articles by young consumers amounted to 1.68 (in a scale from 0 to 4). Taking residence into account it occurred that country grammar school teenagers were buying promoted food products a little more frequently than the city teenagers (on average 1.73 and 1.63 accordingly). Moreover girls more often than boys took advantage of promotions (on average 1.76 and 1.59 accordingly). On the other hand taking age under consideration it occurred that younger grammar school teenagers were buying promoted products more often than the older ones (accordingly: 14 year-olds – average 1.78, 15 year-olds – average 1.63, 16 year-olds – average 1.64).

Young respondents influenced by promotion mainly bought: beverages (26.1%), sweets (23.9%) and milk products (23.1%). They usually purchased those products in super- and hypermarkets (accordingly 58.2% and 49.2% of responses).

Stimulating purchasers to impulsive purchase is one of the goals of sales promotion. Therefore it was interesting to determine whether grammar school teenagers purchase food products without planning and what are the motives of this kind of purchase decisions. Basing on answers given it can be stated that almost 80% of the grammar school teenagers who were questioned do it. This kind of behaviour was more common among country teenagers (83.6%) than among city teenagers (76.1%). Under the influence of impulse grammar school teenagers purchased mainly: sweets, beverages, ice-cream, chips and milk products. Obtained information are in line with the Kwarciany's opinion [2005], who claims that unplanned purchase is a domain of young people. According to him chocolate, cookies, non-alcohol beverages, sweets, candy-bars, waffles, and yoghurts are among the products which are most frequently bought without planning.

Attractive exhibition and intensive distribution of products, mainly through alternative forms of sales like the internet, telephone and vending machines, favours impulsive shopping. It was interesting to determine if and to what extent these kinds of offers were used by teenagers. Basing on answers given it may be stated that none of respondents used internet as a distribution channel of food. Telephone ordering was used by 17.2% of young consumers mainly to buy pizza. Vending machines are usually used by grammar school teenagers to buy cold beverages (37.2%) and sweets (12.7%).



Within the primary survey it was decided to test the grammar school teenagers' attitude towards food market novelties. The obtained results prove that 13.4% of grammar school teenagers are very interested in new products and they want to test them straight away. 45.5% of tested teenagers are interested in new products, they gather information, compare with other products and try to test it. 20.1% of respondents does not trust novelties and they only purchase them when someone recommends. 20.9% were usually not interested in new products, because they preferred well known, already tested products. In relation to Grabarski's typology [2001], according to which 14% of consumers are innovators, 36% are imitators, 36% late imitators and 14% are conservatives, the tested population's tendency to novelties was a little higher than average. This attitude is conditioned by a young age of the respondents.

Taking residence of grammar school teenagers under consideration it can be stated that teenagers from the city are a little more interested in market novelties than those from the country (average in a scale from 1 to 4: 2.7 and 2.4 accordingly). Boys were more trusty towards new products than girls (average: 2.7 and 2.3 accordingly). Taking the age of respondents under consideration it may be stated that younger grammar school teenagers were more interested in new products than older ones (14 year olds – average 2.6; 15 year olds – average 2.5; 16 year olds – average 2.2).

## SUMMARY

The presented data indicate that young consumers are very active on the food market. Teenagers derive their knowledge about nutrition mainly from their family home but also from school as well as from book and literature publications. Together with the age the range of participation of grammar school teenagers in family shopping declined, while their role and activeness of individual purchaser rose. Families were commonly shopping mainly in small near home shops and also, but less frequently, in hyper- and supermarkets. Teenagers were shopping individually mainly in small near home shops and school shops spending on average 9 PLN per week. While choosing the shopping place grammar school teenagers took under consideration mainly the price level and the quality of goods offered. The most important factors taken under consideration by tested teenagers while buying food individually were the freshness, the taste and the brand. Teenagers were engaged in decisive process of purchasing food for the family household mainly as far as products which were meant for them as consumers. Products such as beverages, chips, sweets and ice-creams were the main items of their individual purchase. Basing on the results of the survey a rather positive attitude of tested teenagers was noticed towards promotion of sales. They were also more prone to impulsive purchase and more than averagely prone to novelties.

Comparing purchase behaviour on the food market between city and country teenagers it can be stated that:

- country teenagers participate in common, family shopping more frequently than their counterparts from the city,
- teenagers from the city get on average slightly higher pocket money than their counterparts from the country but the amount spent on food is comparable in both groups,

- country grammar school teenagers usually purchase food individually in small near home shops and kiosks, while city teenagers in school shops,
- no essential differences were noted between choices of country and city teenagers as far as conditions for choosing a shopping place and the hierarchy of price determining the choice of food products,
- city grammar school teenagers are slightly more interested in novelties in the food market than country teenagers, they also have more positive attitude towards promotion of sales in shopping places than country participants of the survey.

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## MŁODZI NABYWCY ŻYWNOCI

**Streszczenie.** W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badania przeprowadzonego w 2005 roku na próbie 134 respondentów na temat zachowań nabywczych młodzieży gimnazjalnej na rynku żywności. Uzyskane dane świadczą o dużej aktywności na rynku żywności młodych konsumentów. Wiedzę o żywieniu badana młodzież czerpała głównie z domu rodzinnego, ale także wносиła ją ze szkoły oraz publikacji książkowych i literaturowych. Wraz z wiekiem zmniejszał się zakres uczestnictwa gimnazjalistów we wspólnych rodzinnych zakupach, natomiast rosła ich aktywność jako samodzielnych nabywców. Wspólne zakupy żywności były realizowane głównie w małych sklepach osiedlowych, a także, choć rzadziej, w hiper- i supermarketach. Samodzielnych zakupów badana młodzież dokonywała głównie w małych sklepach osiedlowych oraz sklepikach szkolnych. Najważniejszymi czynnikami branymi przez badanych pod uwagę podczas samodziel-

nych zakupów żywności okazały się być: świeżość, smak oraz marka. Młodzież angażowała się w proces decyzyjny dotyczący żywności nabywanej na potrzeby gospodarstwa domowego, głównie jeśli chodzi o produkty skierowane dla niej, jako konsumentów. Również takie grupy produktów, jak napoje, chipsy, słodycze, lody były głównym przedmiotem samodzielnych zakupów rynkowych. Stwierdzono raczej pozytywną postawę badanej młodzieży w stosunku do działań z zakresu promocji sprzedaży, jej dużą skłonność do realizacji zakupów impulsowych, a także nieco większą niż przeciętna skłonność do innowacyjności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rynek żywności, młodzi konsumenci, zachowania nabywcze

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