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## THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOGETHER WITH AN ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN MODERN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The history of consumer behavior dates back to the beginnings of man's existence because he has always felt the need and strived to satisfy it. However, consumer behaviour as a subject of research is considered a relatively young field. Its interdisciplinary character is evidenced by the fact that consumer behavior is considered on many scientific levels, such as psychology, sociology or economics. There is, therefore, no single definition of consumer behavior that can be considered mandatory, as each of them draws attention to different aspects of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior has been evaluated over the years, leading to a change in the perception of consumption and the emergence of trends that help to create a profile of the modern consumer. Knowledge of current trends and the needs that the modern consumer feels helps companies create a marketing strategy that gives them a market advantage. The purpose of this study is to explain the origins, changes in consumer behavior, as well as to define the profile of the modern consumer and the characteristics of selected trends in consumption.

**Keywords:** consumer behaviour, consumer, consumption, trends.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Dynamic environment in which people live has affected customers behaviour, which caused changes in modern businesses. Today, consumers have richer and more varied range of goods and services, which creates the freedom to choose and purchase goods and services, promotes the genuine consumer preferences and free choices, and creates the conditions for an ever greater individualisation of their satisfaction. This has also led to increased attention being paid to issues related to consumer behaviour. Knowledge of these behaviours allows companies to adapt their marketing communications methods and their offer to their customer's needs. Latest trends play crucial role in clarifying customer's needs, while in the same time creating new operating principles for business. The real challenge for business is not only to follow the existing trends, but to use them as an inspiration for the future in the first place. The complexity of the problem of consumer behaviour, the variety of decisions and the factors that determine it, causes interest in these

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aspects among representatives from various scientific circles. The consumer is one of the most frequent discussion topics and subjects of theoretical concepts presented. (Bartosik-Purgat, 2011).

## 2. CONSUMER AND CONSUMPTION – ORIGINS

In order to properly understand consumer behaviour, we should focus on specifying the term consumer or consumption in the first place. The term of consumption comes from the Latin word 'consumere' and has been subject to evolution over the centuries transforming its meaning. In antiquity, the word 'consumere' had two meanings, where one meant the consumption and using goods and the other the removal or different ways of obtaining them (Maciaszczyk, 2014).

A. Aldridge believes that the word 'consumere' dates back to the 14th century, when such meanings as: to consume, destroy, waste, squander, exhaust – this is indicated by the pejorative overtones of the term (Aldridge, 2006). According to F. Bylok in German the word "consumieren" in the sense of consumed goods was first used by the German theologian and writer J.B. Schupp in 1663 (Bylok, 2005).

R. Williams traced the modern evaluation of the word consumption meaning in English. In his publication he points out that the word consumption as a neutral and abstract meaning, describing the action of a market participant opposed to production, did not occur until the 18th century, with establishment of the "bourgeois social economy" (Williams, 1976).

Since the 19th century in Poland, the word consumption has been synonymous with ingestion and was understood as the final purpose of production. It was less frequently used as a synonym for cachexia – in this sense, it referred in particular to the development of lung disease, formerly referred to as dryness, nowadays it is called tuberculosis (Bylok, 2005). Considering the dictionary definitions of consumption from the mid-20th century, it can be seen that they focused mainly on: eating, ingesting, using goods by buyers (Hostyński, 2006). Nowadays, most authors recognise this word as everything that leads to satisfying demands (Iwański, 2014).

As far as the word consumer is concerned, it only appears in the early 14th century. However, its meaning is far from its current understanding and has definitely negative connotations (Kieźel, 2004). The breakthrough period was the middle of the 19th century, when the word began to evolve into an economic term, implying the appearance of an abstract individual on the impersonal market. In this perspective, the consumer replaced the customer – so far perceived as a unit having its own needs, which were satisfied by the supplier, leading to a lasting personal relationship between the buyer and the supplier. Unlike the customer, the consumer is a person living in a world saturated with advertising, where his needs are generated by people (Aldridge, 2006). Currently, a consumer is defined as any person who feels a need to consume, makes a purchase (or otherwise obtains a product) and satisfies his or her need by consuming or using products. In marketing literature, 'consumer' is often replaced by 'customer' or 'buyer' (Smyczek, Sowa, 2005).

## 3. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR DEFINITIONS

Consumer behaviour as a research subject is a relatively young scientific field. However, the history of consumer behaviour can be traced back to the beginnings of human existence and consumption. Man has always felt needs and strived to satisfy them (Maciaszczyk, 2014). He has also always looked for food, as well as other available resources, which

enabled him to live. In a broad sense, behaviour is understood as: every observable reaction to environmental stimuli, all reactions and attitudes of a living organism to the environment (*Encyklopedia powszechna*, 1996). Therefore human behaviour should be considered as a reaction to specific internal and external stimuli (Zatwarnicka, 2016).

The concept of consumer behaviour derives from the American term “consumer behaviour”. It began to appear in Western literature in the mid-1960s, while in Poland it did not appear until the late 1980s. The period until 1940 can be called the pre-scientific period. Consumer behaviour was then subject to observation and analysis from a social and philosophical point of view (Kieźel, 2004). The main reason for the development of research on consumer behaviour is accepted to be the changes related to their behaviour on the market, which were caused by an increase in the variety of offers and a noticeable increase in the society's wealth (Woźny, 2012). It was then when ordinary people started to be treated as consumers who made their own choices according to their own needs and tastes (Wolanin-Jarosz, 2006).

The development of research on the theory of buyer behaviour has changed the definition and significantly broadened the scope of the concept of consumer behaviour, which may take on different meanings, proving its interdisciplinary character (Woźny, 2012). Consumer behaviour has become the subject of research in many scientific disciplines such as psychology, sociology and economics. Each of these disciplines brings specific theories and interpretations of consumer behaviour (Wolanin-Jarosz, 2006). Psychology focuses on the research of individual aspects of consumer behaviour, considering among other: psychological state, emotions, personality of a given individual. On the other hand, social psychology, studies human behaviour from the social point of view, and also explore communication processes (Kędzior, Karcz, 1988). In sociology, consumer behaviour refers primarily to social aspects, where microsociology is concerned with small social units (e.g. reference groups, families and relations between members of these groups), and macrosociology studies interactions within large organisations, which include, among others: political parties or cultural associations (Wolanin-Jarosz, 2006). In economics, consumer behaviour refers primarily to the process of consumption, which is understood as the process of satisfying human needs (Zalega, 2012).

The literature defines the subject of consumer behaviour in various ways, drawing attention to its various aspects.

Table 1. Review of selected definitions of consumer behaviour

Authors	Definitions
Hansen (1972)	These are all the activities and perceptions of the consumer that make up product selection, choice and consumption.
Fabiunke, Fischer, Jager, Koppert (1976)	Consumer behaviour is the result of an individual's sense of need, encompassing a set of objectively and subjectively defined, rational and unreasonable, conscious and unconscious actions in preparation for decision-making about the purchase and during consumption.
Szczepański (1976)	Consumer behaviour should be understood as the feeling of need and their hierarchy, the choice of ways to meet these needs according to an established hierarchy, the choice of available means of consumption and their use.

Table 1 (cont.). Review of selected definitions of consumer behaviour

Authors	Definitions
Pohorille (1980)	It is a way for the consumer to prioritise his or her needs, choosing the goods and services that will be used to satisfy them and way of using those goods.
Engel, Blackwell, Miniard (1993)	Consumer behaviour can be understood as any activity that involves the acquisition, usage and having at disposal of consumer goods, together with the decisions that precede and condition them, which shows that this behaviour consists of two types of purchase and consumption reactions.
Światowy (1994)	Consumer behaviour should be treated as a set of activities, actions and practices aimed at obtaining and handling resources to meet needs. In this approach, consumer behaviour can be defined as activities relating to the search for, purchase and evaluation of goods and services that meet a given need.
Antonides F. van Raaij (2003)	Consumer behaviour consists of mental and physical activities (individuals and small groups), including their motives and the reasons for this, concerning the orientation, purchase, use, maintenance and disposal of the product from the market, public sector and the household, enabling the consumer to function and achieve his or her objectives and values (taking into account the individual and social consequences and thereby achieving satisfaction and well-being).

Developed based on: (Śleszyńska-Świdorska, 2017).

These definitions show that consumer behaviour is a series of logical, orderly actions, linked to consumer's decision to purchase specific products to meet his or her needs. Behaviour is also linked to the buyers attitude. Shaped through their own experiences or modern media, they often influence consumer behaviour. Product, advertisement, brand or place of sale can be regarded as marketing attitudes, and the evaluations of such objects can be shaped and changed under the influence of marketing activities (Baran, Marciniak, Taranko, 2017). Attitudes therefore involve judging someone or something, while consumer behaviour is a way of acting that involves with the satisfaction of his or her needs (Sobczyk, 2018).

#### 4. MODERN CONSUMER

Dynamic changes in the environment have led consumers to seek new ways of meeting their needs. This has an impact not only on changes in the consumer decision-making process, formulation of new goals in the consumption process, but above all on the forming of a new type of consumer - the modern consumer. The behaviour of modern consumers is much more complex and much more difficult to predict than it used to be. Nowadays, consumers have become specialists in purchasing, who have very quickly adapted to the changing reality.

The modern consumer behaviour is primarily influenced by:

- increase in the role and importance of information,
- diversity of the market offer,
- modern technologies,

- new position in the market forces,
- changes in living conditions,
- the Internet.

Unlike a traditional consumer, the consumer of the 21st century is an independent, committed individual who actively seeks market information. Consumer has knowledge about brands, is more aware of his or her rights, and has a rational attitude towards the commercial offer, which is related to the fact that his or her strategic skills in budget management have been developed (Małysa-Kaleta, 2010). Modern consumer also likes to use personalised products, wants to have an influence on the product he/her chooses. He or she also eagerly shares their opinion on products and services with other consumers.

Table 2. The characteristics of the traditional and modern consumer

<b>Traditional consumer</b>	<b>Modern consumer</b>
Looks for convenience	Looks for authenticity
Adapts to the market	Emphasises individuality
Little involved	Highly involved
Conformist	Independent
Poorly informed	Well-informed
Low consumer awareness	High consumer awareness
Unethical behaviour	Ethical behaviour
Low level of responsibility	High level of responsibility

Developed based on: (Małysa-Kaleta, 2010).

An interesting approach to the silhouette of a modern consumer is presented by T. Słaby, characterising him among others as a person (Słaby, 2006):

- dynamic, demanding, constantly creating new needs,
- having experience, gained through their activities and outside processes,
- wanting to live, seeking to satisfy their needs on different levels of life and to experience new experiences
- having knowledge and skills in modern information media
- not showing significant loyalty to the purchased products ,
- having knowledge of the techniques and principles of marketing instruments,
- wishing to have more free time, which is very valuable to him,
- with greater mobility.
- multicultural, which makes his or her needs similar to those of other societies,
- aware of their role in the market and, consequently, their new power.

Other characteristics of the consumer of the 21st century are presented in his works by E. Kieźel. According to her, the modern consumer is more willing to take inconsistent actions to distinguish himself from others. His behaviour is unconventional, changing the determinants of social status and creating his needs to the limits of unreality (Kieźel, 2006).

## 5. TRENDS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

In order to meet the needs of today's customers, companies must not only keep track of current changes, but should also focus on forecasting future trends in their buyers behaviour.

According to J. Tkaczyk, the trend in consumer behaviour can be defined as: the direction of a changes in the consumer's lifestyle, which was created as a result of the influence of the economic, demographic, social, legal or technological environment (Tkaczyk, 2012). It is worth noting that global consumption trends in particular countries may occur with different intensification and to varying degrees contribute to consumer choices.

Among the many trends in consumption, we can distinguish:

- Hybridisation of consumption – This manifests itself in the fact that certain cultural patterns are imposed through products. This trend is linked to the progressive process of economic globalisation (Zalega, 2012).
- Conscious consumption – The consumer pays attention to the economic practices of the manufacturer. Otherwise, ethical consumption - The consumer pays attention to whether the manufacturer does not use cheap labour or whether the packaging is recyclable (Płażyk, 2011).
- Multi-channel sales – This is where companies offer their products and services in multiple channels simultaneously. It is important that the distribution channels are consistent with each other. This allows buyers to change them at will during the transaction. The consumer can familiarise themselves with the offer of an online shop, contact the sellers using their personal advice, order the product and pick it up at the point of sale, or buy it there (Łodziana-Grabowska, 2014).
- Consumer ethnocentrism – this is patriotism in the area of consumption. It involves consumers choosing native products: national, regional or local in the first instance, and only then imported products (Płażyk, 2011)
- Virtualization of consumption – The virtualization of consumption, as well as its mediation, can be understood as increasing the level of satisfaction of financial needs for education or culture through electronic media such as the Internet, television or telephone (Jaciow, Wolny, 2011). The progressing process of virtualization of consumption is primarily related to the increasing in the number of purchases of products and services made over the Internet.
- Cocoonisation of consumption – Transfer of services that the consumer had previously used outside to the house – e.g. shopping with delivery, exercising at home instead of gym, or settling bills via the Internet (Płażyk, 2011).
- Shopoholism – its manifestation is the purchase of goods and services which the consumer cannot control, often making useless purchases (Zalega, 2012).
- Deconsumption – This is a deliberate and fully conscious restriction on the purchase and consumption of goods and services to levels that are reasonable from the buyer's point of view (Zalega, 2012).
- Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS). It is about leading a healthy, active and responsible lifestyle. Consumers also attach great importance to environmental protection, social justice and sustainable development (Mróz, 2013).
- Freeganism – It is the re-use of products that have been thrown away and are still fit for consumption. It is often characterised as an anti-consumptionary lifestyle, which primarily consists of boycotting the current economic system. It is most adapted by young people (Płażyk, 2011).
- Self-treatment (Do It Yourself Doctor) – It manifests itself through consumers increased interest in their own health, physical and mental condition. Consumers

themselves try to control the functioning of their own body. They make their own diagnosis and look for ways to cure the disease on their own (Mróz, 2013).

- Gender blending – It is blurring of the boundaries between traditional roles that have been attributed to women and men. Men take actions that were previously reserved for women (childcare, running a house, fulfilling themselves in professions dominated by women at the time). Women, on the other hand, are increasingly oriented towards self-fulfilment at work, competition or personal development (Mróz, 2013).
- Seeking consumer (trysumer) – This trend is related to the willingness of consumers to test market novelties, to seek new sensations and experiences. Seeking consumer checks the credibility of marketing messages on his own. He is eager to look for new ways to meet his requirements, checks opinions about products, uses different types of guides and learn from more experienced users (Mróz, 2013).

The trends presented above shows steadily increase of consumer awareness, therefore consumer expectations are growing too. The behaviour of consumers as purchasers on the market for goods and services are varied. On the one hand, there is a process of unifying consumption and taking over patterns from other countries, and on the other hand, there is an individualisation of shopping preferences and lifestyles.

## 6. SUMMARY

Changes in economies operate over the years all around the world have led to changes in consumer behaviour. Consumption has taken on a positive role. It is no longer a means of achieving goal, it become goal itself. It can be said that it has evolved from a tool for meeting needs into an action that sets the goal of a life situation. Knowledge of the changes taking place in consumption and consumer behaviour is important for businesses, so that they can discover not only the opportunities but also the risks that arise from exploring new markets. The change in the role of the consumer in the market for goods and services is worth noting. From a purchaser who is not very committed, looking for convenience and not very conscious, he has become a conscious consumer, open to novelties, who is willing to look for innovative ways to satisfy his needs. Consumer behaviour is an integral part of every economy and is one of the main factors determining its growth. The active participation of consumer behaviour in the processes of economic and social development makes the changes taking place in this area subject to continuous analysis in practice. Science field focused on issue of consumer behaviour is constantly evolving, showing it as a complex phenomenon that can be studied from different scientific disciplines.

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