Research Regarding the Purchase Decision Process of Consumer of Food Products

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Abstract
Consumer behavior includes all thoughts, feelings and actions involved in the selection, purchase, use of products or services. When they watching an advertisement on TV, when they read a book or recycled packaging, people fall into a certain behavior. The decision process is the software of the whole model, and involves the crossing of some specific stages: recognition of the problem, gathering the information, evaluation of alternatives, product selection and post-purchase evaluation. The succession of these stages can be interrupted at a moment in time temporarily or permanently.

Keywords: agricultural products, consumer, decision, purchase.

1. Introduction

Consumer behavior in general and particularly consumer of food products behavior reflects people's behavior in case of buying and/or consumption of products. Define consumer behavior seems to be, at first site, a relatively easy step. But in reality, the definition of this concept requires taking into consideration of certain varieties of elements, resulting a series of definitions presented in the literature over the last decades. Given the complexity of the concept, for its definition, the scientists have turned to various sciences, starting from anthropology, sociology and psychology, then ending with economy and marketing. For more comprehensive understanding of this concept is important to highlight the concept of behavior in general, consumer behavior is "a component of economic behavior of people, which in turn, represents a manifestation of human behavior" [1,2]. So, the behavior also represents the modality to act in certain situations or circumstances, the whole objective manifestations of the people through which they externalize their mental life [3,4].

Behavior, in psychological terms, represents the conduct of a topic taken into consideration in a medium in a given unit of time. The behavior depends on the individual and the environment. It corresponds to a situation or an object susceptible to reduce tensions and meet the needs of the individual. Also in psychological terms the behavior designates what is objectively observable in the global reaction of the individual, regardless of what he says, of his thoughts and attitudes.

In economic terms, human behavior is not a simple sum of mechanically repeated acts but is the result of accumulation of life experiences. At the same time, consumer behavior analysis, in terms of economic theory is a complex analysis, which involves taking into consideration of some aspects related to economic utility, preferences and constraints of consumer choice.

So, consumer behavior has been defined in many ways, but none of the definitions can not enjoy of a universal acceptance. This concept is used by specialists in different contexts, resulting a multitude of definitions. Such a definition has been elaborated by the American Marketing Association,
which describes consumer behavior as a dynamic interaction referring to the impression and perception, behavior and common situations in which people direct their exchange activities [5-8]. It can be distinguished five roles that an individual can perform in adoption of buying decision [9-11]:

- **The initiator** is the one who suggests to buying idea of an product or service;
- **The prescriber** is the one who, explicitly or implicitly, exerts an influence on the final decision;
- **The decision-maker** is the person who determines in part or in full the purchase decision (what to buy, when to buy, where to buy);
- **The buyer** is the one which makes the actual purchase, it may be different from the one who consumes or uses the product; the user or consumer is the person who consumes or uses the product or service.

2. Materials and methods

Through this study we aim to analyze the main stages of the decision process of purchasing specific products or services, namely: problem recognition, gathering information, evaluation of alternatives, product selection and post-purchase evaluation.

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation.

3. Results and discussion

Purchasing behavior regards a less widely area and refers, specifically, to the evolutions through which consumers passes when decides to purchase a product.

An individual takes daily more decisions. Some of them are taken by the individual alone, and others under the influence of other persons. These influences are found also to the consumer purchasing decisions, in what P. Kotler calls the center of decision-making and involving at least two people.

Actual purchase decision is not adopted immediately it appears at a result of a sequential process, with a certain amount of time. Even if the decision is made unconsciously, the steps by which it is accomplished are aware. A classification of the main types of decisions can be realized after each step is completed, being obvious: the extended decision, limited decision and the routine decision.

*Extended decision*. To the complex articles, expensive or on which the consumer has not the experience to purchase them, because he perceives the existence of serious risks, the time spend for researching and evaluating alternatives will be much longer than for other decisions.

*Limited decision*. The buyer is willing to lose some time for purchase. Perceived risk is moderate, because the purchase is influenced by previous purchase, but can be investigated also some new alternatives.
Routine decision. It is obvious that in this case the consumer wants to lose as little time as he can with buying and use not all the information from the stages of decision process. Perceived risk is minimal, because he usually buys the same brand. Routine decision-making processes are mechanical processes that require low effort from the consumer. Routine in the purchase decision case is determined by loyalty and inertia. Fidelity is a variable that describes the behavior of consumers who regularly buys the same brand. Inertia is defined as being the regular buying of a brand without it benefit from a favorable attitude of the consumer. Inertia is the consequence of the perception of differences between brands on the market, and the emergence of a new brand may lead to the formation of a favorable attitude for the brand purchased and give up of the brand buying until then. A consequence of inertia is impulse buying, which is done under the influence of emotional factors. The consumer takes the product off the shelf, without thinking too much on the decision.

Another classification can be considered after the manner of decisions-making in:
- **Programmed decisions** - routine decisions, are repetitive, are always taking in the same way, being characteristic of the goods purchased daily or very high frequency;
- **Unscheduled decisions** - considers the existence of a new complex problem, is unstructured and is not part of the routine. Each purchase decision of the consumer is the response to the appearance of an unmet need. In the moment when the consumer is aware of the existence of unmet need go through several stages to manifestation to a purchase behavior.

According to a study conducted in the US market, the decisions were grouped in: specifically planned decisions - choosing the brand or product is performed before and it then the product will be bought; general planned decisions - the choice of the category of the product is made before, and product selection is made in the store; substitute decision - replacement of the especially planned product or general with one substituted in the store; unplanned decisions - the product is bought without the decision to be taken before entering the store and decisions from the store - is the sum of the general decision, substitute and unplanned decisions.

As shown in Figure 2, for the majority decision of this nature, people take a process consisting of five typical sequences. These steps make up what the literature calls the general model of decision making purchase. So, the entire decision-making process being the software of the entire model, involves the completion of these steps of which sequence can be interrupted at a time provisionally or definitively.

**Figure 2. Stages of decision purchase process [12]**

Identification of unsatisfied need is the first phase of the purchase decision process. At this stage, the consumer notifies the existence of a great difference between need satisfaction as he would like and how it is satisfied the need today. The emergence of unsatisfied need generates that difference. When there is an unsatisfied need, the consumer will seek information to satisfy that need. Search must be understood as being the information about certain products in order to assess them. The information is necessary to identify existing alternatives in order to fundament the purchase decision. For example, a consumer identifies a need and then seeks information in the marketplace (in prebuying step). Many experienced consumers, on the other hand, prefer to update the information to keep up with market changes, engaging in a constant search for information.

As the product has a higher value and a lower frequency of purchase, the sought information tends to have a larger volume, and its sources are more diverse compared to products with lower value, but high frequency of purchase. If the consumer has a high degree of fidelity to a particular product, it hardly needs information. The quantity and nature
of the information requested is closely related with the amount of information which the consumer has, based on previous experience and the cost that he takes in the case of a wrong decision (cost of error). Speaking of looking for information, it can be said that this is both a physical and mental activity. Thus, the search takes place both in interior and exterior plan. Internal search involves checking existing knowledge about the need in question: "How we did last time?", "Where can I find what I need?". Internal search is the search mental process in the consumer memory to find information stored in the past about certain goods, information serving to fundamenting the purchase decision. This type of search is based on past experience of consumer product and is considered to be an active storage, but also information that the consumer has registered the environment, talking with friends, the mass - media, as this passive storage. If through the inner search is not reached a satisfactory solution, the consumer begins a search for information from external sources: from friends, family, colleagues, prospects, media, packaging, etc. In conclusion, the external search is the information process based on interaction with the external environment of the consumer.

Most purchases are not planned well in advance, most decisions being taken in the store. Decisions of this type are characterized by one or more of the following:

a) **Spontaneity.** Consumers are stimulated by promotional materials or sellers, which transmit them the necessary impetus to trigger decision-making process that takes only a few seconds.
b) **Emotion.** In addition to allowing the entry into possession of the desired product, the act of purchase by itself provides utility that generates excitement. Moreover, there are not the people who occasionally buy just to procure emotions, to temporarily exit the daily boredom.
c) **Indifference to consequences.** Despite any doubts, people buy to the first impulse, without consideration of possible negative consequences, avoiding thinking about risks.

After shopping is made, consumers analyze the choice that they did: "We chose well?" "The product ranges to expectations?". Once the consumer has purchased the product will begin a process of assessing the extent to which its performance meets the need for which has been purchased and are suitable price. This evaluation is done in a certain period of time which varies according to the type of product purchased. The result of this evaluation is manifested by consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Some customers even pass through a state of psychological discomfort caused by the opinion that rejected variants had the desired characteristics, condition called post-purchase dissonance.

### 4. Conclusions

To return to a state of inner harmony, the consumer make some effort to reduce dissonance meaning: avoid information that could lead to increased cognitive dissonance, change some attitudes that has to the buy product, try to collect as more information as he can with in accordance with the decision to purchase.

The consumer can choose first the mark, brand and then the place where to buy, can choose first place and then mark or can choose both together. Choosing commercial outlets depends on the geographic location of the store, the offered range, of prices level, sales staff behavior, the way of serving, interior ambience, quality of clients and advertising.

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