Prosumer attitudes as a new component of consumer behaviour on the food market

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Abstract
The main objective of the study was to identify signs of prosumer attitudes of food products consumers. In recent years a dynamic changes in consumers behaviour has been observed. Consumers of the XXI century are active representatives of the demand side, who find themselves quite comfortable in an extensive world consumption. They also turned from the passive clients into a well-informed in the market offer consumers. The increase of knowledge and consumers awareness is the result of the rapid development of technology, in particular common access to the Internet. Consumers also engage themselves in cooperation with the producers. Active attitude of the consumers to co-creation of the market offer nowadays is defined as the phenomenon of prosumption. Consumers, previously passive recipients of the product manufactured by the company, take over part of the product development process on themselves. On the other hand, producers through communication with consumers, encourage them to introduce their ideas. An important aspect of accompanying these relations is a partnership cooperation.

Key words: consumer behaviour, food market, prosumption

JEL Classification: D10, D19, M39

1. Introduction

The term prosumption arose from the combination of the words: production and consumption, and is a phenomenon of interpenetration of these two processes (Jung 1997). The concept of prosumption was first used by an American sociologist and futurologist Toffler (1997) in the scientific publication 'The Third Wave'. The author explained this phenomenon as the movement of the production process from manufacturers towards the consumers. According to Toffler prosumption is a phenomenon characteristic to the third wave of social development. In the wave of agricultural society, prosumption might have been identified with the production and consumption of food by farmers for themselves. In the wave of the development of the industry, the consumers departed from producing goods for themselves, by using the commercially available system of exchange. Consumers of the third wave undertake cooperation with the producers, by which they can have an impact on the market offer.

According to some authors (Hajduk & Zalega 2013, Mitręga 2013) the phenomenon of prosumption, although present in the literature for the past 30 years, only recently caught the attention of the researchers. In addition, a large gap in the conceptualization and in the measurement of the phenomenon complicates the creation of a commonly accepted definition. As stated by Ritzer (2014), the very notion of prosumption remains niche and still not very popular. It is associated, among others, with the dominant manner of perceiving and describing the economic and social world, as a combination of two separate spheres - production and consumption.

By grasping the phenomenon of prosumption quite widely, it can be defined as any activity undertaken by the consumers consciously aimed at increasing the value associated with the
purchase and use of the product (Mitręga & Witczak 2012). The tendency of consumers towards presumptive behaviours is based on a particular state of mind (the cognitive and affective sphere), but the prosumption alone is expressed in the behavioural sphere (Mitręga 2013). Prosumption is a result of an expansion of individualism and the regress of massive production and provides a way of consumers' expressing their own "self" (Sowa 2015).

Prosumption is quite a diversified phenomenon. In a general manner, it can be divided into two types. The first is exhibitionist prosumption, expressed through an active participation of the consumers in the processes of customization of the products. The second type is rationalist prosumption, which consists of reducing the cost of the purchase and the usage of products. It occurs when the buyer independently performs some conventional actions attributed to the manufacturers or the retailers (e.g. packaging, transport, registering of goods) (Mitręga 2015).

As noted by Tapscott and Williams (2008), contemporary prosumption must be linked to providing the consumers with the appropriate tools which allow them to influence the offer of the companies. Moreover, cooperative partnership and sharing of benefits must occur between these two groups of market actors. Fisk (2009) indicates that in the process of engaging the consumers to cooperate with the company, four stages take place:
- co-determination - encouraging end-buyers to participate in the projection, creation, sharing ideas for products and services by means of various methods and forms, e.g. contests, innovative programs,
- co-design - understanding the expectations and consumer preferences, the ability to recognize their emotions and behaviors, as well as the creation of tools and instruments, through which the final buyers will be able to present their solutions and ideas,
- co-development - enabling the consumer to make decisions, raising awareness about the need to find a compromise and the issues concerning the dissemination of the manner of resolving a number of dilemmas, e.g. regarding the payment method or the maintenance service,
- co introduction - resolving particular issues relating to the introduction of the product into the market combined with actions such as promotional campaigns, support programs, etc.

Prosumers may be perceived as kind of external employees of companies who constitute their innovative potential and influence the competitive advantage (Mróz 2010). But above all, prosumers are competent and active consumers (Flis 2014). According to Domańska (2009) a person who is a prosumer is characterized by certain behaviors, which include becoming familiar with the opinions of other buyers before making a purchasing decision, describing brands and products on the Internet, co-production of products, slogans or advertising campaigns by participating in various promotions. Primary indications of the development of prosumer attitudes are (Kall & Sojkin 2008):
- changes in the area of the buyer’s values, which is expressed the consumer's need for greater participation and activity in the development of the product offer,
- growing criticism of consumers in relation to pseudo-innovations resulting from their knowledge,
- increasing competition on the market and product assimilation, which makes the manufacturer offer buyers a unique and often individualized benefits in order to gain competitive advantage,
- popularization of technologies enabling the consumer to co-produce the offer,
- increasing area of interactivity media which enable the manufacturer an appropriate use of competence and experience of buyers, which in turn promotes the formation of prosumer attitudes and behaviours,
- consumers’ model of spending free time focused around homes,
changes in the labor market, which involve bringing the official duties to home and maintain contact with the company via the Internet.

Although the prosumers are a very diverse group, yet some features are common to all buyers showing these attitudes, primarily the openness towards innovation and commitment. Prosumers are proud of the fact that they are not afraid to experiment and they think for themselves. They are eager to talk about their own experiences with new products, but are also keen on hearing about others' experiences. They are opinion leaders; other people value their point of view and advice given. Moreover, prosumers are characterized by skepticism, since, although they appreciate the media and advertising as a source of information or entertainment, they do not take the media uncritically (Zmierzch konsumeryzmu era prosumentów 2005).

Prosumers wishing to match the new product to their preferences better are inclined to actions that were previously reserved only for the producer. Yet, the manufacturer allows the consumer to participate in the process of creating a new product through the implementation of a part of the process of value creation (Staniszewski 2009). Depending on the degree of the consumer's involvement in the company's operations three types of prosumers may be distinguished (Szul, 2013). The first group consists of active consumers, whose involvement is nonetheless limited only to the assessment and evaluation of products on the internet forums or the websites of the stores. The second group consists of the prosumers participating in activities which purpose is to make the offer more attractive as well as the prosumers taking part in the campaigns prepared by the companies. The third group constitutes the innovative prosumers, who exhibit the aforementioned actions and try to influence the companies' offer by themselves.

The approach leading to the transformation of the consumer from a passive recipient of the offer into its active wizard is derived from the concept of holistic marketing. Of course, not every consumer has the creative potential allowing for his incorporation into the process of creation or the skills enabling a clear and transparent communication of his expectations to the manufacturer. Therefore, the manufacturer ought to strive to develop the competence of the buyers, which may bring profit in the future development or production of the product (Kall & Sojkin 2008).

2. Data and Methods

The study was conducted in 2015 using PAPI method. The study involved 233 respondents. Women accounted for approximately 63.5% of the examined and men 36.5%. The studied sample was dominated by young people, aged 18-27 years old, with the share of 31.8%. Respondents aged 28-44 years old accounted for 36.0%, those aged 45-64 constituted 21.98%, and over 64 years - 7.3% of the sample. Three groups of subjects were identified by education level, among which 9.0% declared primary education, secondary education 32.6.5%, and 58.4% higher. Percentage of the respondents rating 63.9% accounted for urban dwellers, while the remaining 36.1% of the surveyed constituted the residents of village. In the descriptive analysis of the results, the structure indicators were used. In order to analyse the relationship between the characteristics measured on a nominal scale the nonparametric chi-square test of independence ($\chi^2$) was used, while the strength of correlation relationship was examined using Cramer’s V coefficient and the Yule’s $\Phi$ coefficient (for tables 2x2).

The main objective of the study was to identify signs of prosumer attitudes of food products consumers.
3. Results and Discussion

The prosumptive activity of buyers may manifest itself in different ways. Manufacturers encourage and inspire the consumers to co-participate in the creation process of products, designing the packaging, and indicating the media used by the buyers in the course of gathering information about the product. An example of a proprosumer action in Poland may be, for example the Lays brand potato chips campaign, within which the company Frito Lay encouraged the buyers to design their own original flavours of the product. Subsequently, 4 most interesting proposals were selected and introduced into sale. The tool for motivating the consumers to participate in the action was the guarantee of the payment of 1 percent of the profits from the sale of the new product (Szymańska 2011). In turn, Dr. Oetker led a campaign with the aim to support the launch of two new flavours of Guseppe pizza selected by consumers during another promotional campaign. The activities were carried out on a specially created website www.pojedyneksmakow.com and on the Guseppe pizza profile on Facebook. The action aimed to encourage the consumers to experience new flavours of pizza and then vote for their favourite. The taste which received the largest number of votes from the consumers was to be permanently incorporated into the product range. The participants were provided with prizes (Przegląd handlowy 2015). An unusual promotion mechanism involving the consumers in the development of the product had been proposed by Redd's beer manufacturer. It was a precedence action, in which the manufacturer has enabled the customers to design packaging and then introduced them to the market. Participants were able to use the wizard available on the site www.redds.pl, which helped design the cans. The innovative idea of fun was met with great interest - the competition attracted more than 15,000 entries (Marketing przy kawie 2007).

Research prove that today, despite the changes in consumer behaviour, the average buyer is usually reluctant to take prosumer action. The main obstacle in the manifestation of prosumer attitudes is the mentality of consumers, which is determined by their personality and the environment in which they live (Baruk 2011). In addition, consumers in Poland are not prepared for the role of prosumers (Baruk 2014).

The results of own study show that nearly 74% of the respondents agree with the statement that final purchasers should have an impact on the process of creating a food product. The rest of the surveyed (ca. 26%) have the opposite opinion and believe that there is no need for the consumers to have an influence on what the food producers offer on the market. Verification of the results obtained by means of the $\chi^2$ test, confirmed the existence of a weak dependence between the answers received to this question and the gender, age and place of residence of the respondents (Table 1). Among men, over 83% of the surveyed replied yes, whereas among women the rate was approx. 68%. Age also differentiated the respondents. Most responses confirming that consumers should have an impact on the process of creating a product were obtained among persons aged 18-27 years old (79%) and aged 45-64 (approx. 78%), while the lowest percentage of the responses appeared among people over 64 years old (approx. 35%). A greater proportion of individuals favourable to the influence of the consumers on the process of product creation was among the urban population (78.5%) than in rural areas (65.5%).
Table 1: The opinion of the respondents regarding the participation of the consumers in the process of co-creation of food products vs. demographic characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic variables</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Cramer’s V coefficient</th>
<th>Yule’s Φ coefficient</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>6.528</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1674</td>
<td>0.0106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>14.747</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.252</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td>4.7316</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1425</td>
<td>0.0296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>2.7815</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1092</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s calculations

Modern prosumers were formed under the influence of the Internet and social media (Bobola 2013), which serve as the main channel of communication for them. This fact is also reflected in the results of the study. From the point of view of the respondents, the main manifestation of market activity of the consumers, which to the greatest extent can influence the market offer of food products, are opinion and information posted by them on discussion forums and social networks. The tendency to post opinions about the brand, company or product is both a cause and symptom of prosumption (Abramek 2014). It is associated with the universal access to the Internet and the rapidity and easiness of obtaining and transmitting information through this medium. This tendency is being exploited by manufacturers who give the internet users the ability to add comments on the products, brands, promotional campaigns, etc. on their websites. It should also be noted that, from the point of view the manufacturers, gathering information through various internet forums constitutes sometimes a much faster and easier way to learn the opinions and preferences of the users of the products, rather than conducting marketing research. In connection with the dominant belief of the respondents, stating that communication via the Internet is the best expression of the market activity of the consumers, the remaining manifestations were identified by the relatively small percentage of respondents (Table 2).

Table 2: Manifestations of market consumer activity in the opinion of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion forums</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social forums</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing opinions by means of a helpline</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in marketing research</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in lotteries</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in sensory studies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in contests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with a customer service agent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s calculations

Among the reasons for which the consumers exhibit prosumer attitudes, the majority of the respondents indicated negative reasons determining the activity of the consumers. The primary reason is the manifestation of direct dissatisfaction with the current market offer of the companies. But also such reasons as the desire to enrich the product range and to have an influence on quality improvement can also be included to grounds relating to critical evaluation of the companies. This is not the best aspect of prosumption, since it should rely on willing and partner cooperation and not forced by a product offer that does not meet the expectations of the buyers. The remainder of the surveyed pointed to the stimuli positively motivating the consumers towards prosumptive behaviours. Among these, the contests with the possibility of winning a prize constituted the main argument. The desire to share their ideas and the pleasure of creating a product appeared to a lesser extent (Table 3).
A competent utilization of the activity, commitment and knowledge of the prosumers by food manufacturers may provide an opportunity to achieve competitive advantage. Properly motivated and encouraged prosumer may be a source of company success, e.g. through his influence on brand promotion. This may enable the product to materialize in the consciousness of other consumers and strengthen its market position. In addition, the acquired prosumer may represent a very valuable asset for the producer. He can be very loyal, and loyalty is a feature that is particularly valuable for manufacturers.

As for the scope of the impact that the consumers might have on the product development process, the opinion of the surveyed is divided (Table 4). The highest percentage of the surveyed indicates the change in the current recipe of the product by changing the taste. Such a high percentage of those indications in regard to other results stems from the fact that taste is a decisive determinant in the consumer process of choice and purchase of food products. Therefore, the respondents notice great opportunities of the modification of market offer, e.g. by introducing new flavours for existing products. A relatively large group of respondents believe that the influence on the creation of a food product may be expressed through participation in the creation process of commercials and designing names. These are typical marketing activities that do not require specialized knowledge from the consumers, but rather their creativity and ingenuity. Given that almost everyone can take part in this type of actions, the manufacturers often encourage end-buyers to the aforementioned activities. Other possibilities of influencing the process of creating the products by the consumers are less interesting from the point of view of the respondents.

**Table 3: Reasons for prosumer attitudes in the opinion of the respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with the market offer</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contests with prizes</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desire to enrich the product range of the market offer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desire to improve the quality of the product</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desire to share ideas</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pleasure and fun while creating a product</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s calculations

**Table 4: The range of consumer impact on the process of creation of food products, in the opinion of respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of the consumer on the process of creation of food products</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the modification of the recipe by changing the taste</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the creation process of commercials, slogans</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the design of the product name</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the design of packaging</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in the process of changing production technology</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s calculations

4. Conclusion

The prosumers is a group of consumers who are active more than average. Openness to innovations, commitment and willingness to co-create new market solutions in terms of products and their marketing are the main determinants of being a prosumer. They acquire information about products or prosumer actions thanks to modern technology and inform others about their related experiences. For the average consumer they constitute a group of opinion leaders with their knowledge and experience. The prosumers constitute an important...
group for both the buyers and the manufacturers for which they are assistance in gaining competitive advantage on the market.

The results of the study show, that the majority of respondents have opinion that consumers should have an impact on the process of food products creating. Respondents think, that the participation of consumers in this process may concern cooperation with the producers in the range of modification of the taste of products, creation process of commercials, slogans and products names. In the opinion of respondents, the main reason of manifestation by consumers the prosumer attitudes is dissatisfaction with the offer of products available on the market, but also the desire of entertainment through participation in contest organized by the producers.

References


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