

RESEARCH ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR ON BUCHAREST MEAT MARKET

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Abstract

The paper aimed to analyze consumer behavior for meat on Bucharest market, using a sample of 100 individuals, representatives as age, sex and profession, who were interviewed within a structured questionnaire based survey on their preference to buy and consume meat. The answers were processed using the semantic differential and Likert Scale. The obtained results pointed out that white meat is the top preference, because it is healthier and its price is more acceptable compared to red meat. However, men prefer red meat, no matter its price. The most preferred meat sorts in order of their importance are chicken meat, pork and beef. Consumers prefer to buy 1-2 kg fresh meat from supermarket every 2-3 days. Income/family and meat price are the major factors limiting the amount of consumed meat and buying frequency. The term of availability and meat origin have become more and more important criteria on which buying decision is based, besides meat quality. All consumers prefer to consume Romanian meat which is tasty and has a pleasant flavor. As a conclusion, consumers expectations from meat producers are related to a large variety of meat of a higher quality. Also, presentation form in packed portionated meat parts on the shelf as well as hygiene come on the next positions from consumers side in order to satisfy their needs better.

Key words: Bucharest, consumer behavior, meat market, trends

INTRODUCTION

Meat occupies a central place in human diet because of its nutritive value and especially its content in high value protein, essential aminoacids, vitamins and minerals [2].

Among the most important factors influencing consumption behavior there are: age, gender, training level, income per family, information, meat type, meat properties (taste, smell, tenderness, aspect, succulence), quality, food safety and health assurance, easy preparation [7,9,17].

Consumer behavior is a dynamic phenomenon, being featured by new trends regarding easy supply from supermarkets and hypermarkets, easy meat preparation, choice of high quality meat sorts with less cholesterol, lean consistence, succulence and tenderness, special flavor, fresh meat packed in small packages corresponding to a diversified diet and quantitative needs of a modern family interested to assure health and life for all the family members at a convenient price [5,8,11,12].

Meat consumption increased in all the EU countries by 46 % in the last years, except Italy, Belgium, Spain and United Kingdom [16]. Meat consumption in Romania registered a flexible evolution along the last two decades. In 1990, meat consumption accounted for 68.28 kg/inhabitant and in the year 2000 it declined to 44.90 kg/capita. Then, it started to increase again reaching 62 kg at present, of which pork comes on the 1st position (34.18 kg), poultry meat on the 2nd position (21 kg), and beef on the 3rd position (7,8 kg) [13,14].

To study consumer behavior, a large variety of methods of marketing research could be used [5,6,15]. Important research results emphasized major aspects of meat product [1,3,4,10,18].

In this context, the paper aimed to analyze meat consumer behavior in order to establish consumer profile and major trends with a deep impact on producers future strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research work aimed to study meat consumer behavior in order to evaluate consumer profile based on buying preference, frequency of buying, motivation used in purchasing decision, place of buying and perception on essential meat characteristics. For this purpose, a sample of 100 individuals of various age, gender, training level and income was used and involved in a structured questionnaire based survey. The interviewees responded a list of various questions mainly with bipolar and multiple choice answers. Their answers were processed using semantic differential and Likert Scale, specific marketing methods for such a study [5,15]. The experiment was carried out in one of the supermarkets of the capital in November 2012.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Cultural and socio-professional features of the individuals used in the sample

Age structure reflects a balanced ratio between young persons and elder persons, the share of individuals younger than 40 years being 30 %, the ones aged between 40 and 50 years accounted for 20 %, the ones belonging to 50-60 years category represented 30 % and the ones older than 60 represented 20 %. (Table 1).

Individuals' gender ratio was balanced: 50 women and 50 men, for allowing to test

gender differences regarding meat buying behavior.

Table 1. Age structure of the interviewed persons

Younger than 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	Older than 60 years	Total
5	10	15	20	30	20	100

Individuals' structure by profession pointed out that 64 % of the interviewed persons were employees, 14 % pensioners, 10 % housekeepers, 10 % students, 2 % unemployed.

Individuals' structure by average monthly income per family reflects a higher share of the persons belonging to the category Lei 1,001-1,500 (36 %) and also of the ones belonging to income category Lei 1,501-2,000 (34 %). About 5 % of the interviewed persons received in average over Lei 2,500 per family per month, while 14 % of the respondents received less than Lei 1,000 (Table 2).

Table 2. Structure of the interviewed persons by average monthly income per family (Lei/month/family)

Less 1,000	1,001-1,500	1,501-2,000	2,001-2,500	Over 2,500	Total
14	36	34	11	5	100

Frequene of meat buying pointed out that 26 % interviewees buy meat 2-3 times a week, but most of them, more exactly 56 % respondents buy meat once a week, and 11 % buy every two weeks. However, 4 % respondents buy only 1 time a month and 2 % buy every 2-3 months (Table 3).

Table 3. Frequene of meat buying

2-3 times a week	1 time a week	1 time every two weeks	1 time a month	1 time every 2 -3 months	Rarely than 1 time every 2-3 months	Total
26	26	11	4	2	1	100

Consumption frequene. About 42 % individuals consumed meat daily, 36 % respondents consumed every 2-3 days, 14 % once a week and 6 % consumed every two weeks.

Consumer preference for meat presentation form. Most of the interviewed persons (87 %) answered that they prefer to buy fresh meat and not frozen meat.

Consumer preference for the place where to buy meat. About 42 % interviewed persons answered that they prefer to buy meat from supermarket and hypermarket, 22 % buy from minimarket in the district where they live and 17 % buy from the butcher's shops situated in agromarket and less persons buy from small shops and cash and carry. (Table 4).

Table 4. Consumer preference for the place where to buy meat

Hypermarket	Supermarket	Mini market	Cash and carry	Specialized shop	Butcher's in Agromarket	Total
19	23	22	8	11	17	100

Differences regarding consumer preference for the place where to buy meat in close relation to occupation. The answers pointed out that employed persons, but also students prefer to buy meat from supermarket and

hypermarket, but also from mini market in the district where they live, while pensioners, unemployed people and housekeepers prefer to buy meat from butcher's and specialized shops in agromarket (Table 5).

Table 5. Consumer preference for the place where to buy meat by occupation

Occupation	Hypermarket	Supermarket	Mini market	Cash and carry	Specialized shop	Butcher's in agromarket	Total
Students	2	3	3	-	-	2	10
Employees	15	16	16	8	6	3	64
Pensioners	2	2	2	-	3	5	14
Unemployed	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Housekeepers	-	2	1	-	2	5	10
Total	19	23	22	8	11	17	100

Consumer preference for the type of consumed fresh meat. Most of the interviewed persons (51 %) mentioned that they prefer to consume white meat, 37 % prefer red meat, while 12 % consume both red and white meat (Table 6).

Table 6. Consumer preference for white and red meat

White meat (poultry, fish)	Red meat (pork, beef, sheep)	White and red meat	Total
51	37	12	100

Consumer preference for white and, respectively, red meat is influenced by gender. While men prefer especially red meat, women prefer to consume white meat (Table 7).

Table 7. Differences regarding consumer preference for white and red meat depending on gender

	White meat	Red meat	White and Red Meat	Total
Men	13	33	4	50
Women	38	4	8	50
Total	51	37	12	100

Consumer preference for various meat sorts. About 35 % respondents prefer poultry meat, 31 % prefer to consume pork which is traditional in Romania, 22 % prefer fish, 11 % prefer beef (Table 8).

Consumer preference for various meat sorts depending on age. From the category younger than 40, representing 30 % of the interviewed persons, 43.3 % prefer red meat and 56.7 % prefer white meat. About 40 % respondents belonging to 41-50 years age category prefer red meat and 60 % prefer white meat. From the 51-60 age category, 43.3 % respondents prefer red meat and 56.7 % prefer white meat. From the persons older than 60, 45 % prefer red meat and 55 % prefer white meat. Therefore, the most aggregated meat is white meat, no matter age (Table 9).

Buying habit. About 44 % of the interviewed persons prefer to buy between 1-2 kg at once. Obviously, the amount of bought meat is close correlated with consumption need of the family. Thus, 33 % prefer to buy 0.5-1 kg meat, 11 % less 0.5 kg and 10 % between 2 and 3 kg. During the last years, meat was bought in smaller amounts because of the limited budget, on one hand, and on the other hand, because of the wish to diversify diet by including more vegetables and fruits (Table 10).

Criteria fundamenting buying decision. Among the most important criteria fundamenting the buying decision, the respondents mentioned: meat sort, aspect and freshness, nutritive value, cholesterol content, color, taste, brand, presentation on the shelf (in bulk or prepacked), easy preparation, price and advertising (Table 11).

Table 8. Consumer preference for various meat sorts depending on gender

	Pork	Beef	Sheep	Venison	Chicken	Fish	Total
Men	27	7	1	-	6	9	50
Women	4	4	-	-	29	13	50
Total	31	11	1	-	35	22	100

Table 9. Consumer preference for various meat sorts depending on age

	Younger than 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	Older than 60 years	Total
Pork	1	3	6	6	10	5	31
Beef	-	1	2	2	2	4	11
Sheep	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Venison	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chicken	3	4	3	7	11	7	35
Fish	1	2	4	5	6	4	22
Total	5	10	15	20	30	20	100

Table 10. Buying habit for fresh meat

Less than 0.5 kg	0.5-1 kg	1-2 kg	2-3 kg	Over 3 kg	Total
11	33	44	10	2	100

Table 11. Observed values for the importance of criteria used for consumer's buying decision for meat

Criterion	Very important	Important	Satisfactory important	Less important	Unimportant
Meat sort	62	25	8	2	3
Aspect and freshness	78	14	4	1	8
Color	44	20	18	10	8
Nutritive value	40	47	5	6	2
Cholesterol content	42	36	7	10	5
Taste	60	25	8	3	4
Brand	38	30	10	12	10
Presentation type on shelf (in bulk, prepacked)	36	28	12	9	4
Easy preparation	37	43	8	5	7
Price	66	20	4	4	6
Advertising	10	15	17	18	34

The score achieved by each criterion is presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Ranking of criteria used in buying decision for meat depending on importance

Criterion	Score	Criterion	Score
Aspect and freshness	4.68	Cholesterol content	4.00
Meat sort	4.41	Easy to prepare	3.95
Sale price	4.36	Presentation form on shelf	3.90
Taste	4.34	Brand	3.74
Nutritive value	4.17	Advertising	2.31
Color	4.02	-	-

The score emphasizes how important are meat sensorial characteristics (aspect, freshness, taste, color), nutritive value and cholesterol content which determine meat quality and price. Easy cooking is linked to time saving during cooking and meat presentation (in bulk and prepacked). Producer brand is important as a guarantee of meat quality and advertising is on the last position being less important.

Consumer interest to know meat origin, manufacture date and shelf life has been more and more evident during the last years. The interviewed persons confirmed this aspect mentioning that 67 % are interested of meat origin, more exactly of producer name, 45 % are very attentive to manufacture date and 70

% pay attention especially to availability term (Table 13).

Table 13. Consumer interest for meat origin, manufacture date and expiration date

	Meat origin	Manufacture date	Expiration date
Interested	87	90	95
Uninterested	13	10	85
Total	100	100	100

Regarding meat origin, most of the interviewed individuals specified that they prefer Romanian meat because it is very tasty while it is prepared compared to imported meat. The degree of importance for meat origin, manufacture date and expiration date are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Importance of meat origin, manufacture date and availability term

Criterion	Very important	Important	Satisfactory important	Less important	Unimportant
Meat origin (Romanian or imported)	51	30	4	2	13
Manufacture date	50	28	8	2	8
Expiration date	56	27	8	4	5

The score achieved by these criteria was the following one: on the 1st position it is placed expiration date with the score 4.25, reflecting how important is as meat to be fresh, non altered, healthy. On the 2nd position it is situated meat origin which registered a score of 4.04, because 87 % of Romanians prefer Romanian meat and 13 % prefer to taste imported meat too. The manufacture date registered a score of 3.98.

Consumer satisfaction degree for fresh meat market of Bucharest is good in general, despite that it varies from a criterion to another used to appreciate this aspect. So, 62 % respondents affirmed that Bucharest market offers „high quality meat” and 17 % respondents appreciated that its quality is „very good”. About 57 % respondents affirmed that

meat sorts commercialized in the market are „good” and 15 % appreciated to be „very diverse”. Meat presentation form is considered „good” by 37 % respondents and „very good” by 8 %. Also, packaging way is considered „good” by 35 % respondents and „very good” by 8 % of them. Fresh meat price is considered „acceptable” by just 22 % respondents and „very acceptable” by 10 % of them. About 38 % interviewed persons mentioned that meat price is „high” and 10 % respondents consider that meat price is „very high”.

Quality/price ratio is considered „good” by 40 % respondents. The interviewed persons’ opinion on meat market of the capital is „good” in general (Table 15).

Table 15. Consumers’ satisfaction for Bucharest meat market

	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Weak	Very weak	Total
Meat sorts	15	57	26	1	1	100
Meat quality	17	62	19	1	1	100
Presentation form	8	37	29	10	16	100
Packaging way	8	35	29	10	18	100
Price	10	22	20	38	10	100
Quality/price ratio	15	40	24	20	1	100
Total	73	253	147	80	47	-

The scores calculated based on Likert Scale for each of the aspects taken into account are presented in Table 16. The scores reflect that consumers would like a more accessible price

for a higher quality meat presented in a large variety of sorts and mainly prepacked on shelf, advertising being lacked of importance.

Table 16. Ranking of criteria characterising consumers satisfaction degree for Bucharest meat market

Meat sorts	Meat quality	Presentation form	Packaging	Price	Quality/Price ratio
3.84	3.73	3.11	3.05	2.84	3.48

The interviewed persons considered that meat sort is on the top position as importance. Then meat quality and quality/price ratio are also very important, a reason to be placed on the 2nd position. Finally, presentation and packaging forms are also important.

Consumers’ future expectations from meat producers. In order to identify the aspects of major importance for meat producers to set up their future strategies in order to cover better consumers need, the individuals included in the sample were asked to express their opinion on the aspects which producers

have to pay attention to. Their answers are presented in Table 15. About 79 % respondents agreed that producers have to pay more attention to meat quality, 67 % are expecting to a large range of meat sorts (turkey, pheasant, rabbit, goose, duck, quail), 52 % respondents are expecting to more prepacked meat, 48 % respondents would like to find an improved presentation form for meat on shelf, and 20 % respondents are satisfied by meat market in the capital (Table 17).

Table 17. Consumers’ agreement/disagreement regarding the future expectations from meat producers

Aspect	Total agree + 2	Agree + 1	Neutral 0	Disagree - 1	Total disagree - 2
Meat quality improvement	48	32	18	2	-
Diversification of meat sorts	40	34	12	10	4
Improvement of presentation form	47	30	10	3	-
Increased prepacked meat	38	32	12	10	8
More accessible meat price	40	50	10	-	-
Intensified advertising	12	10	64	9	5
I am satisfied by meat offer in the capital meat market	35	10	17	28	10

Note: Likert Scale: Total agree +2, Agree +1, Neutral or zero, Disagree – 1, Total disagree - 2

The scores calculated based on Likert Scale for each of the aspects taken into account are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. Scores calculated for consumers’ opinion upon the future expectations regarding meat supplied by producers

Aspect	Score
Meat quality improvement	1.26
Diversification of meat sorts	0.86
Improvement of meat presentation form	0.27
Increased share of prepacked meat	0.82
More accessible meat price	1.30
Intensified advertising	-0.09
General satisfaction for meat offer on Bucharest market	0.32
Total score	4.74

The scores reflect that consumers would like a more accessible price for a higher quality meat presented in a large variety of sorts and mainly prepacked on shelf, advertising being lacked of importance.

CONCLUSIONS

The opinion test regarding consumer preference for meat commercialised on the capital market pointed out that the actual market meets consumers expectations but there are still several aspects which should be improved as follows: meat quality, sort, presentation form, packaging and price. White meat is preferred by most of consumers being healthier, tender, with less cholesterol and cheaper.

Gender creates differences regarding consumed meat sort, so, men prefer red meat while women prefer white meat (chicken, fish).

The preference ranking depending on meat origin placed chicken, pork and beef on the 1st three positions, while sheep and venison meat are less agreed. Fresh meat is preferred by everybody and not frozen meat.

Income is a major factor influencing buying frequency, amount of bought and consumed meat and is close related to meat price and buying place.

Persons with a smaller income buy eat rarely and mainly from specialized shops and butcher's in agromarket, while persons with a higher income buy more meat per week and mainly from supermarket and hypermarket.

It was noticed a continuous increasing trend as consumers to buy meat from supermarket and hypermarket, taking into account that they need to buy many other products at a single transport in order to save time.

Availability date is very important for all the consumers, but also meat origin, because Romanians prefer Romanian meat which is tasty, easy to cook and with a special flavor while is prepared.

As a conclusion, Romanian consumer profile is characterized by its preference for fresh and tender meat, of Romanian origin, mainly white meat, of good quality and hygiene, correspondingly packed and presented on the shelf of a supermarket or hypermarket and sold at an accessible price.

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