

PREFERENCES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC WHEN SHOPPING FOR FOOD

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Received: March 26, 2012

Abstract

TURČÍNKOVÁ, J., BRYCHTOVÁ, J., URBÁNEK, J.: *Preferences of men and women in the Czech Republic when shopping for food*. Acta univ. agric. et silvic. Mendel. Brun., 2012, LX, No. 7, pp. 425–432

Buying behavior of men and women shows considerable differences. The individual stages of purchase decision-making process lead to convergence or conversely deepening of these differences. The paper provides results of analysis of chosen aspects of consumer behavior of men and women in the Czech Republic. It focuses on the grocery shopping in small-sized shops. Due to the complexity of the problem the research could not cover all aspects associated with this topic. It identifies who in a household is responsible for grocery shopping, how often and in what quantity of purchases. The paper examines to what extent is a purchase planned and by what a consumer is usually stimulated to an impulsive shopping. Further, it describes factors leading to a choice of shopping place and to a satisfaction with shopping conditions. The primary data was collected through a method of in-depth interviews conducted from January to March 2011 on a sample of 56 respondents in the three smaller stores in the Moravské Budějovice, and via questionnaire survey which took place in all regions of the Czech Republic ($n = 5809$) among respondents aged 12+. The results confirmed we can observe differences in shopping behavior of women and man, even though the importance of various factors taken into account when making a choice of a particular food product show significant differences from the gender perspective (none of the analyzed factors was found to have higher statistical significance than weak, $p < .05$). The qualitative research, however, revealed that women tend to make more frequent purchases and keep a certain level of supplies at home, while men tend to leave shopping till it becomes necessary, they are more likely to stick to their shopping list and more loyal to their favorite products. Women are more flexible when in need to replace a missing product with its substitute. The proportion of impulsively purchased items in a shopping basket is higher for women than for men. The findings should help in particular small-scale operators of stores.

consumer behavior, men, women, grocery shopping, gender marketing

The behavior of each consumer on the market with groceries is very individual. It is not easy to predict the behavior of individuals; however, it is somewhat easier to predict the behavior of groups of customers. This means we can segment customers according to certain criteria. This contribution develops knowledge of gender marketing, which is based on the possibility of the existence of uncontested differences in shopping behavior of men and women. Differences between men and women in society are considered natural.

Style changes in food shopping are caused by developments and changes in society. In many families, there are now both men and women busy

working which leads in the haste and lack of time. People are no longer willing to devote as much time to buying groceries as before. Consumers and their wishes and desires differ significantly, so it is virtually impossible for vendors to meet all the requirements perfectly. Market segmentation can help to deal with this problem. Market segmentation can be performed according to various criteria. For example, Kincl (2004) gives two types of segmentation: segmentation of customers according to the characteristics and segmentation according to customer responses.

Traditional theory sees woman as a housewife taking care of household and children. Man

is viewed as a protector of woman, head and breadwinner. This attitude in understanding male and female roles in modern society is already somewhat obsolete. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) suggest that with the development of society there is a convergence of gender roles in some areas.

Men usually know better in advance what they want to buy. According to psychologists, goal-orientation and a successful purchase actually represents for them a completing of a task. Men tend to prepare shopping lists more often than women, either as real notes, or at least as one stored in memory. Women are often focused on their social surroundings. They choose and shop for the whole family. With regard to the factor of time, men often buy only what they need right now, while women do forward thinking of what may be needed in the near future. Men are usually reluctant to ask the sales personnel for any help (Baker, 2007, compare with Severová, 2002, according to her men require professional advice from vendors much more than women because they do not have as many shopping experiences as women). By men, as the best source of information are considered printed materials (brochures and flyers), instructional video or computer projection (Baker, 2007; Severová, 2002; Underhill, 2002).

The literature indicates that the consumer passes through purchase decision-making process of five phases. The process is influenced by a variety of factors. These can be sorted into several categories, the classifications of various authors differ. Komárková *et al.* (1998) reported as a key factor consumer's lifestyle. Factors can be divided into internal and external. Brown (1996) mentions three kinds of factors influencing purchase behavior: psychological, personal and social. Kotler (2001) adds cultural factors, which he considers as the most important, because they have significant impact on consumer behavior. In addition to these influences Solomon *et al.* (2002) point out that consumer is also influenced by the choice of when, where and how they do their shopping, thus, the situational factors (physical environment, time pressure, physical environment, etc.). They are reflected in all stages of purchase decision-making process (Bartová, Bárta, Koudelka, 2004).

Firms try to influence consumers through their marketing mixes. Effective marketing mix appropriately combines all its variables so that the maximum value is provided to customers and to meet the company's marketing goals.

The effects of store environment as an important factor in purchasing process are stressed, for example by Koudelka *et al.* (2007) or Zamazalová (2009). These factors include assortment, merchandising, store atmosphere, sales personnel, and perceived risk among others. Vendors should pay close attention to the place of sale; it is the place where the final decision-making of the customer takes place. It is the last place where you can still reverse his decision in favor of the advertised

brand or product. The set of factors (elements) of the shopping environment includes (Cimler, Zadražilová, 2007):

- Store design,
- Store layout,
- Presentation of goods – merchandising, POS materials,
- Staff,
- Customers.

The aim of merchandising is to improve the general merchandise visibility in stores, increase the attractiveness of selling space and, thus, attract customers, increase sales and increase the subjective value in the eyes of the buyer (Zamazalová, 2009). All places do not have the same quality. The best quality areas should be filled with impulsive items and products, which bring profit and turnover (Bárta, Páník, Postler, 2009).

Men move faster in aisles than women. They spend less time looking around and exploring goods. In many cases it is difficult to get men to look at anything they don't intend to buy. The overall buying process seems to be more effective than in case of women. At the same time, according to Underhill (2002), the desire of men for fast shopping is so strong that they may be easily influenced and persuaded to buy a product they originally did not want to buy and which is also often not needed.

Women, according to Underhill (2002), exhibit opposite characteristics. Many women have positive attitude to shopping: they browse stores slowly, examine their merchandise, compare products and values, respond to staff, ask questions, try things and purchase them. Women take pride in their skills shop carefully and well. Women take consumption more seriously and want to buy systematically. Things they consider buying are first of all examined and, if accepted, they add them to their considered set of possible solutions. Then they evaluate alternatives and then finally decide (Brown, 1998; Underhill, 2002).

Significant differences can also be expected at the level of information processing. According to available information, the conclusions are being processed more subjectively in case of women than of men and the effectiveness of communication requires the involvement of different promotion formats for each gender. Effect of advertising on purchases is usually denied by both genders. If the influence of advertising is admitted, it is mostly by women (Zamazalová, 2009; Brychtová, 2008).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaire survey. Structure of the respondents for qualitative research was chosen according to the rules of quota sampling, the results are partially generalizable. The interviews were conducted from January to March 2011 on a sample of 56 respondents in three smaller convenience

stores in the Moravské Budějovice. Respondents were interviewed individually or in couples (in cases when both partners were shopping together). Questioning took place immediately after their purchases. This timing was intentional, given that the respondent can best recall information about the just-completed purchase.

Set of respondents consisted of respondents from various social groups, levels of completed education, and age categories. For this research segmentation by gender of the respondent was pivotal. Of the total 56 respondents, 50% of respondents were men and 50% women. A content analysis was applied to process the responses.

The questionnaire survey took place in all regions of the Czech Republic in three phases. The total number of questionnaires utilized for processing was 5809. Data collection was carried out among respondents aged 12+, both in electronic form (via a questionnaire system ReLa developed by the Department of Marketing and Trade at FBE MENDELÚ) and printed form in order to obtain information as well from consumers who do not use the internet. Non-probability convenience sampling method was used. The questionnaire was focused on consumer preferences according to the marketing mix elements and basic knowledge of the characteristic of shopping behavior. Questions (except identification questions) were formulated as statements with which respondents were according to Likert scale to express levels of agreement on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 means "strongly agree" and 1 "strongly disagree"). After elimination of incomplete questionnaires, the data were processed using the statistical software Statistica v. 9, resulting in calculations of frequencies (absolute and relative), for the quantitative characters were calculated mean, median, mode, variance, standard deviation, skew and spikiness. For this paper, the results of analysis of contingency were selected (Turčínková, 2011; Turčínková, Kalábová, 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Grocery shopping is a necessary and important activity for each household. The main buyer of food is usually a woman. She is the initiator of the purchase decision-making for majority of basic groceries. Men are more or less actively involved in the purchasing processes; they contribute and influence the buying habits of women. It is not very common that men would be in the role of the main buyer of food. This situation occurs, however, if the woman is very busy working, or the man lives alone by himself.

We explored whether we can observe statistically significant differences in importance of factors influencing a choice of a particular food product. However, as the Tab. I suggests, there are no significant differences between men and women in this respect. The only three factors worth a notice are expiration date, then whether a product is in a special offer and whether a product belongs to healthy nutrition. In all three cases the factors play a greater role for women than for men.

The roles of both genders when shopping for food vary depending on the purchased products. The in-depth interviews revealed that women primarily take care of ingredients for cooking and food, as respondents reported, that may never be missing at home (such as bread, milk, processed cheese). In contrast, men more likely buy the food when they feel like eating something (candy, chips).

Research shows a close relationship between the frequency and size of purchase. Women (especially living in households with children) tend to forward thinking and anticipate what could be needed in the near future, not only what is needed now. Their big purchases in the supermarkets and hypermarkets are supplemented with purchases in smaller convenience stores. They do grocery shopping up to 6 times a week. In contrast, men usually buy food depending on the current needs and stock up to a much lesser extent (if they do, then it usually is

I: Results of the contingency analysis

	contingency coef.	p-value
Features and product parameters	0.0585561	0.01861
Product contents	0.1355003	0.00000
The possibly highest quality	0.0432302	0.28665
Well known and respected brand	0.0449280	0.23097
Convenient and attractive packaging	0.0331061	0.70493
Czech origin	0.0581611	0.02022
Expiration date	0.1889035	0.00000
Low price	0.0971004	0.00000
Product is in a special offer	0.1501850	0.00000
Product belongs to healthy nutrition	0.2144653	0.00000
Energy value (calories)	0.1340189	0.00000
Friends' recommendation	0.0908916	0.00000
Recommendations from experts	0.1071320	0.00000

Source: Questionnaire survey, 2010, PEF MENDELÚ, n = 5809

for different reasons than women, mostly to avoid frequent visits to stores). They prefer medium-sized purchases, 2 to 3 times a week.

Women plan their purchases of food ahead, especially if it is a purchase of multiple items. Most of the times, they often only try to remember their shopping lists. For smaller purchases they base them mostly on experience and buy foods that they are in the habit of buying. They typically only remember the categories of goods that need to be purchased and if the preferred brand is unavailable, they buy a substitute more often than men would (see Fig. 1).

The smaller purchases of food by men are frequently not planned ahead, while in the case of bigger purchases, they prepare shopping list almost always. If a man lives in a household with a partner, both of them participate in the preparation of a list or the shopping list is set by a woman. Analysis of in-depth interviews suggests an indirect correlation between commitment to preparation of the shopping list and then holding on to it. The less a man is involved in list preparation, the more rigorously he follows the list when shopping.

If a man does not find the desired product at the expected place, he either leaves and doesn't buy anything, or replaces it with another one, or begins to search for a product most often with the help of information boards and signs. Help of staff is rarely used. A woman reacts in the same situation in such a way that the product is either replaced with another immediately, or looks for help of sales personnel. Women only rarely leave without a purchase of at least substitute if the originally desired product is unavailable (see Fig. 2).

Even though the purchase of food is more or less planned, the conclusions of in-depth interviews suggest the importance of impulse shopping. Consumers almost always buy something in addition to their original lists. Men stick to their shopping lists more strictly than women, they also try to do their shopping as quickly as possible and they do not pay much attention to the rest of the goods. Share of impulsively purchased items is,

therefore, smaller than in case of women. These factors work as incentives for impulsive shopping for men: striking and attractive product displays, second placement of goods and appealing price offers. Men often impulsively buy food that appeals to their taste and they are willing to spend more money on delicacies than women.

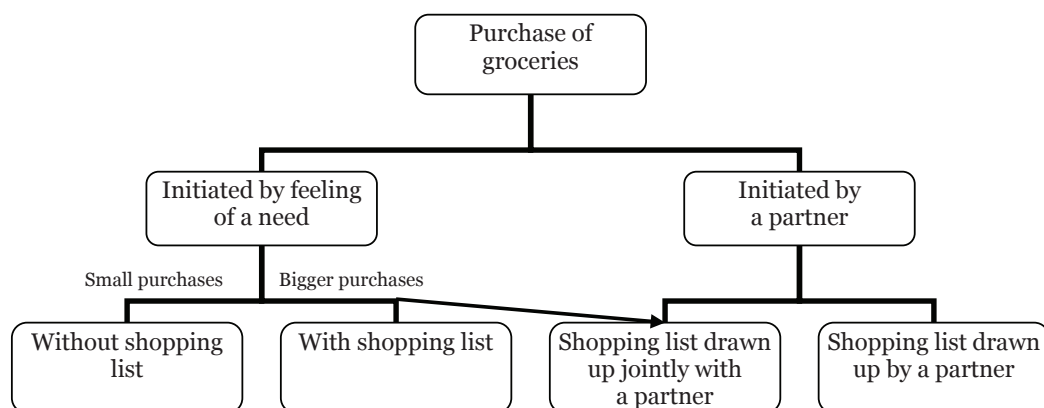
Women are more likely to buy impulsively than men, sometimes more than half of the purchased goods was originally unplanned. The main incentive to impulsive buying for women are low prices of goods or special price offers, the prominent placement of goods within the store plays a role to a lesser extent than for men. Women most often impulsively buy ingredients for cooking and various goodies (mostly for children).

Men prefer to buy food rather in smaller convenience stores and supermarkets. Hypermarkets are usually selected only for big purchases when they go shopping along with their partner. On the contrary, women prefer supermarkets and hypermarkets. Small shops are visited mostly for smaller purchases of fresh food products and product with shorter durability.

The research identified advantages and disadvantages of individual store formats, as perceived by men and women (see Tab. II). Men have somewhat more rational approach; they appreciate if the store layout is efficient and like to make quick and smooth purchases. Women have significantly higher demands on a shopping place. They expect a pleasant atmosphere, friendly staff, great selection of goods and low prices.

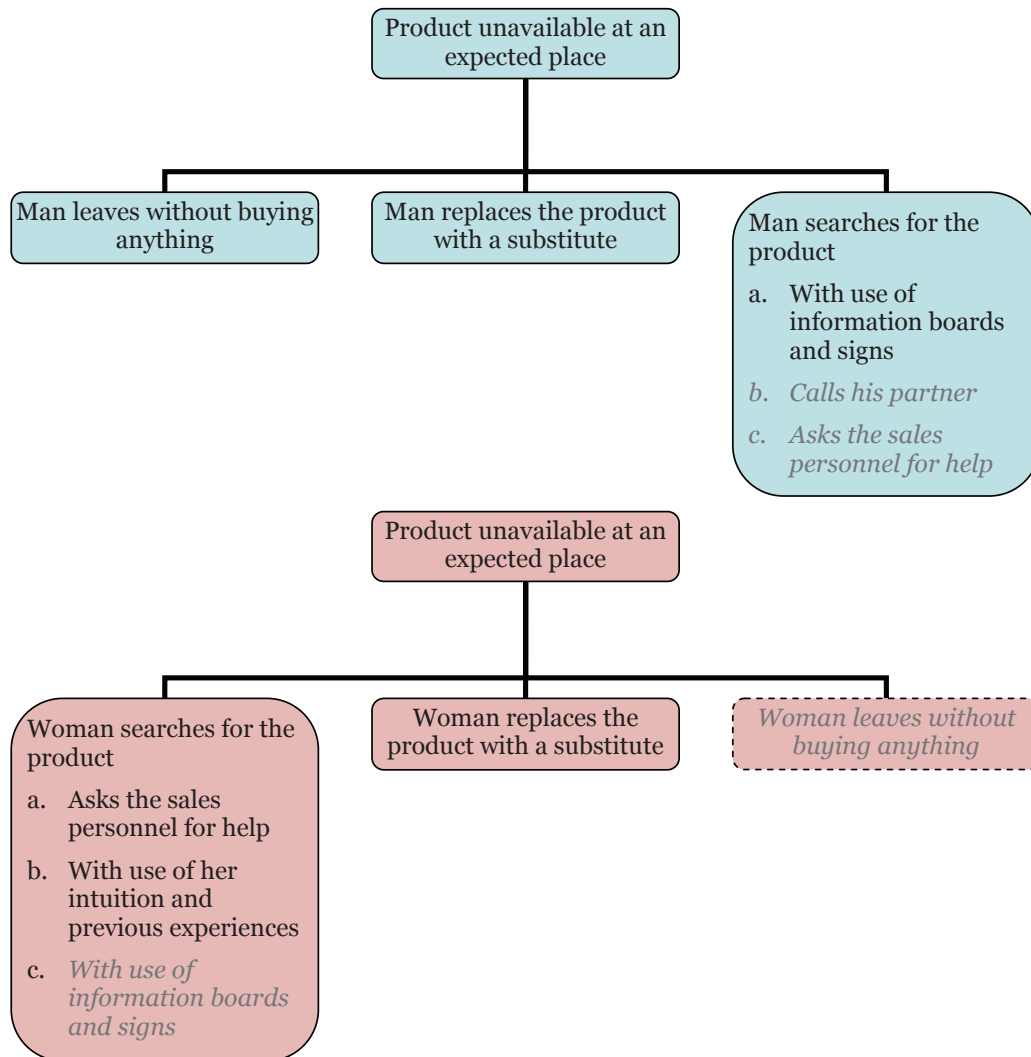
Results of in-depth interviews yielded evaluation of significant factors affecting the selection of the main shopping places. They point to factors rated with mid importance by both genders. They were: proximity to shops, good road access and parking, orientation within the outlet and orderliness. The factors in lighter print were interesting, but less frequent comments.

The second group includes factors, which are perceived differently by men and women. They are:



1: *Men and their shopping planning*

Source: In-depth interviews, January to March 2011, n = 56



2: Men and women and their response to unavailability of searched product

Source: In-depth interviews, January to March 2011, n = 56

Note: The text in lighter print and italics are the less likely ways men or women would behave in this particular situation.

II: Advantages and disadvantages of shopping formats as perceived by men and women

	Advantages		Disadvantages	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Small self-service store	Fast purchase Nearness (Adequate width of assortment)	Dedicated staff Personal approach Convenience	Problems with parking	Narrow assortment Higher prices (Smaller room)
Super/hypermarket	Parking next to the store Lower prices (Each member of family finds something for himself)	Lower prices Big assortment	Frequent queues at check-outs Don't allow fast shopping (Unnecessarily wide assortment)	Unavailability of sales personnel Rather difficult orientation in the store
Discounter	Lower prices	Lower prices (Unconventional assortment)	Narrow assortment Unorganized merchandise displays	Less pleasant shopping experience (Unaesthetic shopping environment)

Source: In-depth interviews, January to March 2011, n = 56

- *Great width of assortment* – by men considered as unimportant factor, in some cases even discouraging, for women it is important, while they prefer wide selection and choice.
- *Time required for completion of a purchase* – for men, it is the most important factor, if the store allows fast shopping, because men are not willing to spend too much time with grocery shopping. Women consider this as only a moderately important factor.
- *The willingness and helpfulness of staff* is unimportant factor for men. Advice provided by staff is requested only in exceptional cases. On the other hand, for women the personal contacts and advice provided by sales personnel is sometimes even the decisive factor in the selection of goods.
- *The price level of goods and products provided in special offers* are rather insignificant for men (except seniors), while for women it is one of most important factors. Special price offer of goods is the major incentive for women to buy them impulsively.

Recommendations for small-format stores managers were based on the research findings. The emphasis is placed on the different preferences of men and women and how to best adapt their shops to their requirements.

1. Know your customers and their wishes.

Mainly women (living in a household with a partner and children) are a group of customers who make mostly only complementary purchases in small stores, in addition to large purchases in supermarkets and hypermarkets. In small stores, they usually buy food products, which don't allow to

be stocked up, i.e. foods with shorter durability (e.g. bread, some milk products, fruits and vegetables, sausages).

These customers, however, almost always buy more food than originally planned to buy. This means that if the merchandise is displayed efficiently, the impulsive purchases may become more frequent.

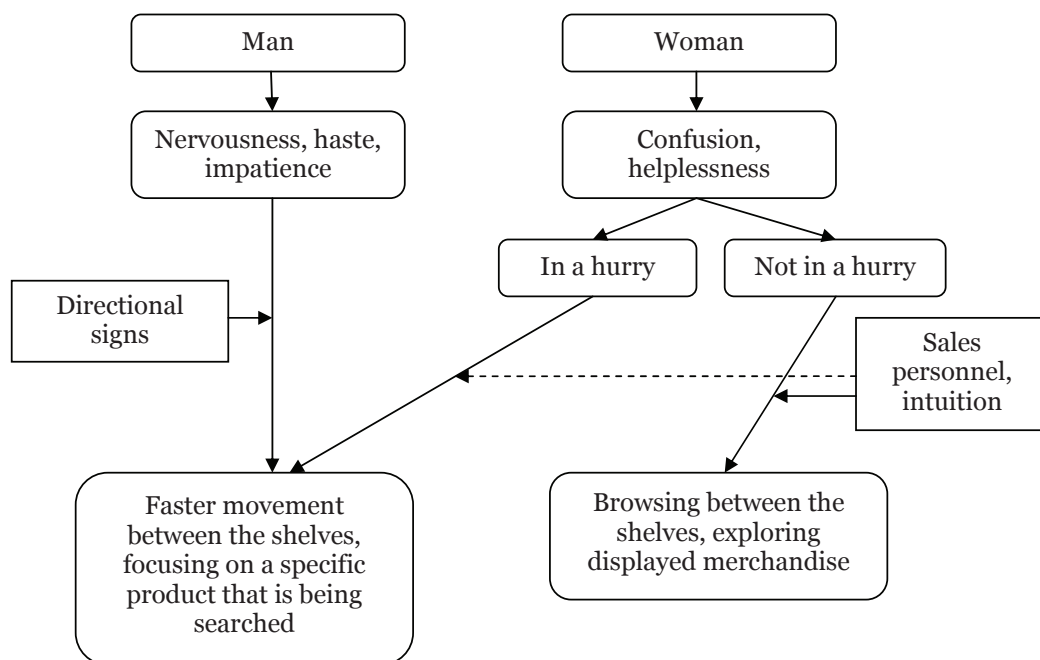
Especially men (living in a household alone) are customers who prefer small-size stores as their main shopping places. They prefer quick and convenient purchase to wide range of assortment and lower prices. Interesting is a segment of customers (mainly man with big workload and lack of time) with high purchasing power. They are also quite demanding and require more luxurious and more expensive food. These customers should be well taken care of by the store in order not to lose their favor. The solution may be to extend the offer with a category of delicatessen and imported foods.

2. Define a reasonable range of products.

The range of products is a sensitive factor to men. They expect adequate (reasonable) range of products. Too wide assortment can lead to poor orientation within store. On the other hand, the customer may not find the desired product, if the range is too narrow and shallow. And that also leads to negative impression especially to men.

3. Facilitate orientation in the store.

Good orientation in the store is the key to fast and convenient shopping that today's customers require. Women and men have different approaches and strategies when looking for a product, which should be taken into account and adjust the store layout and design to the needs of both genders.



3: Poor orientation and search for a specific product, comparison of men and women and their typical behavior

Source: In-depth interviews, January to March 2011, n = 56

Men prefer traditional navigation tools. They appreciate simple navigation system showing the location of a particular group of product range. This can be solved by using the navigation panels hanging above the shelves or labels on the floor in front of a shelf. Efficient are also POP / POS tools that customers do not perceive as advertising, but rather as tools to improve orientation in a store. Women use the navigation system in stores only to very limited extent and instead they prefer to turn to the sales personnel. Therefore it is necessary to ensure the availability of staff in the outlet (see Fig. 3).

4. Contact with sales personnel.

Especially women perceive contact with the sales personnel as the main advantages of small stores when compared to large-size stores. This competitive advantage needs to be promoted and the availability of sales personnel needs to be ensured as well. They should be familiar with the products offered in the store and they should find their ways in the store. Moreover, a salesman should be "customer-friendly" and express their willingness to respect the wishes of customers.

5. Multiple placement of merchandise.

Men often choose goods from the racks and displays at multiple locations within stores, not only in their locations according to their category where they belong. They give them the opportunity to simplify their purchase and avoid searching goods on the shelves.

6. Eliminate the absence of merchandise.

The absence of a product is particularly a problem for men who do not like to replace their favorite products by substitutes. This situation may deter them from future visits of the store, especially if this happens repeatedly. Women deal with the absence of a desired product differently. If the outlet offers adequate substitute, they are usually willing to switch.

7. Encourage impulsive buying.

The primary conditions for impulsive buying are attractive merchandise displays that catch customers' attention. Prominent placement of merchandise can be carried out through baskets or racks of various kinds. Their position should be chosen in such a way as not to restrict the movement of customers. If the area gets crowded, the effect may be the opposite, and customers instinctively avoid such a place. The most common triggers for impulsive buying are:

- For women – special price offers. It is necessary to indicate such an offer at least with tags on shelf talker. Of course, the greater the price reduction, the more customers seem to be attracted.
- For men – cravings for certain food or food products. Taste can be stimulated by tempting food product displays (especially true for fresh food without packaging). Food used as ingredients for cooking can be supplemented with pictures of the final meal and its recipe and, thus, inspire customers to prepare meals and buy the necessary ingredients.

8. Allow parking next to the store.

Many today's customers save time by doing their shopping on their way to strategic places (e.g. on the way home or to work). They often travel by car. And the possibility of a comfortable and easy parking is most of all appreciated by women. Moreover, mobile customers are not so limited by the amount of goods they can handle themselves and carry home; their purchases tend to be bigger.

The interviewed respondents were in most cases from the city where the research was conducted, Moravské Budějovice, and its vicinity. For this reason, it would be useful and certainly interesting to conduct research in other cities in the Czech Republic. There were also only selected factors in focus of our research, which requires further research that may cover issues not included in this study.

SUMMARY

Buying behavior of men and women shows considerable differences. The different stages of shopping and decision-making process lead to convergence or conversely deepening of these differences. Vendors who want to meet the wishes of their customers and become successful in the market should recognize the different needs of men and women and take them into account in their business and marketing activities.

In addition to the immediate needs, women take into consideration also the future needs of food. They often buy in advance to build up stock at their households. Sometimes they do shopping up to 6 times a week. Men shop for food mostly when it becomes necessary. They don't tend to build up stock of food products that much. They shop for food less often than women, they prefer to avoid large purchases, or they take part in them as an escort of their partner.

Men are more likely to stick to their shopping lists, they follow not only the category, but they typically search the particular indicated product. They are loyal to their favorite products and if out of stock and unavailable – it is seen as a big problem. They don't like to replace them. This condition can even result in discouragement for repeat visit. Women are more flexible in following their shopping lists. The absence of required goods is not much of a problem for them. Nevertheless, the shop must offer an adequate compensation; then a woman can even view this as an opportunity to try something new.

Goods purchased impulsively represent a significant part of the total purchase. Women buy more impulsively than men. The main trigger for women is especially cost-effective offer of goods and a visible (striking) indication of discounted goods that attracts attention. Men also often require a rational reason to buy, such as stimulation in a form of in-store tasting with presentation of a suitable product (ingredient) for preparing their favorite meals etc.

Acknowledgement

The research was carried out with the financial support of Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports under a project "Forming the structure of agriculture and food industry and trends of behaviour of business subjects in the process of integration of Czech Republic into EU" (MSM 431100007).

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