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Summary. Ice cream is still seen in Poland as a seasonal dessert, which task is to cool down on hot days. Seasonal consumption of ice cream in Poland results in low consumption comparing to Europe, although there are prospects and possibilities for changing this trend. Family ice cream is an important part of the ice cream market in Poland, which is developing towards innovative flavours, additives and packaging. As most part of the ice cream market, especially in the summer season, is impulse purchasing, the purpose of the paper is to try to evaluate the purchase decisions on the family ice cream market. The paper presents the results of a questionnaire survey on family ice cream shopping. The criteria determining the choice of ice cream: frequency of consumption, preferred type of ice cream and other factors determining the purchase of ice cream were evaluated. The results of the study showed that consumers preferred ice cream in large packages with different flavours. Family ice creams are however seen as quite expensive dessert.

Introduction

The ice cream market in Poland has been growing more and more dynamically lately. This development depends both on the offer of manufacturers and the attitudes of consumers. Consumers are willing to buy an ice cream more often (not only in the summer), so it was decided to analyse consumers behaviour in this market. The purpose of the study was to analyse purchase decisions making on the ice cream market and to assess the influence of various factors related to the product and its brand, which determines the purchase of ice cream. The purchasing decision process is the identification and choice between the various proposals, based on the values and preferences of the consumer. The first step is to recognize the problem or to make it clear what is needed to be purchased. The next steps are: identifying ways to meet one's needs and making a real buying decision. Based on the information gathered and the evaluation of alternative offers, the customer makes the selection that best fits his needs and expectations. The final stage of the process is purchase and evaluation. Taking into account the last stage in making buying decision by consumer, ice cream producers have started to introduce innovative flavours, additives and packaging, and have also addressed their offer to meet needs of niche customers, such as vegans or allergy sufferers.

Such a decision making process also takes place in the market of food products, including ice cream. However, it does not always look like the one shown above. In the case of ice cream, most commonly bought in the summer, the decision-making process often looks a bit different, as shown in the paper. The aim of the study was to evaluate the purchase decisions on the family (take-home) ice cream market. In order to achieve the aim of the research, a survey on family ice cream shopping decisions and preferences was conducted. The criteria determining factors that affect the purchase of ice cream, such as most selected flavour ice cream, favourite kind of family ice cream, most commonly selected family ice cream capacity, most often chosen family brand ice cream, the amount that respondents were willing to pay for family ice cream and ice cream prices in the opinion of the respondents were evaluated. Consumers preferred ice cream in large packages with different flavours. Family ice creams are however seen as quite expensive dessert.

Review of the literature

A consumer purchase is a response to a problem; to make a purchase, a consumer goes through a series of steps in order to make it. These steps can be described as:

1. Problem recognition.
2. Information search.
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Product choice.

After the decision is made, the quality of that decision affects the final step in the process, when learning occurs based on how well the choice worked out. This learning process, of course, influences the likelihood that the same choice will be made the next time the need for a similar decision occurs. Since some purchase decisions are more important than others, the amount of effort we put into each one differs. Sometimes the decision-making process is done almost automatically; we seem to make snap judgements based on very little information. At other times, reaching a purchase decision begins to resemble a full-time job (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Hogg, 2006).

Decision making during the purchase of ice cream depends mainly on the kind of ice cream. Some ice creams are bought because of the impulse (that is why they are called „impulse ice cream") and some are bought for later consumption, at home, with family and friends (they are called „family ice cream" or „take-home ice cream"). Factors influencing the purchase decision are quite different when buying impulse or family ice cream.

The ice cream market can be divided into two main categories depending on the type of ice cream: the impulsive ice cream market and the family ice cream market. On the market the impulsive ice creams (especially in summer) are dominating, although in many Polish homes there are eaten as a dessert family ice cream prepared as low calorie dessert, decorated with fruit, nuts, glazes, sprinkles, nuts. Sometimes whipped cream is also added. The largest group of ice cream consumers are customers who consume them several times a year or once a month, more than 40% of consumers declare family ice cream 1–3 times a month (Palka, 2015).

Family ice creams in plastic containers of up to 1 litre capacity are increasingly popular among consumers, especially premium ice cream, the highest quality ice cream. Smaller, with a capacity of 500 and 750 ml, are not so popular because of the relatively high price per 100 cc. Family ice cream is most often purchased by consumers in large stores and hypermarkets, their supply is higher there, and there is the wider range of them (Palka, 2015).

In consumer behaviour, there are two opposing features. On the one hand there is attachment to the product and the well-known, tried and tested brand that does not cause any risk. On the other hand, there is a curiosity about new products, hence the importance of the promotion, advertisement, interesting, drawing attention to packaging that encourages consumers to purchase goods for „trial". In order that the purchase of „trial" is perpetuated and dominated the previous habit, there is needed: a better quality and encouraging, often a promotional price (Palka, 2013).

The Ice Cream market in Poland is forecast to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.8% in US$ terms during 2015–2020. The Polish consumers are opting for value for money products in the ice cream market. The 'Take-Home and Bulk Ice Cream' category accounts for the highest Off-trade & On-trade volume consumption in Poland. Hypermarkets & Supermarkets is the leading distribution channel in Poland's Food market. Flexible Packaging is the most commonly used packaging material in Poland's Ice Cream market. Strong economy and high incomes of consumers is driving the Ice Cream market in Poland. The market is led by the 'Take-Home and Bulk Ice Cream' category in both Off-trade and On-trade volume consumption. Food & Drinks Specialists account for the highest distribution share of Ice Cream in the country. Unilever Plc, Nestle SA and Food Care are the leading players in the Polish Ice Cream market (*Poland…*, 2017; *Consumer…*, 2017).

As ice cream is a very seasonal product, producers struggled with promoting ice cream consumption over the months outside of the period April to the end of September, as outside of the peak season sales plummeted by about 50%. However, due to the traditional habits of Poles that shift has been very slow and without major successes. The average Pole consumed four litres of ice cream per annum in 2016, a number much lower than in other European countries. The growing popularity of discounters and convenience stores supported growth of impulse ice cream, as the frequency of purchases, especially during the summer months, increased. Unilever Polska led sales of ice cream in both 2015 and 2016. The company offered a wide portfolio of products, including Algida, Magnum and Carte d'Or. The former was the most important, reaching sales amounting to millions in 2016. Over the forecast period, consumers will be encouraged to purchase ice cream during months outside of the summer, as the average consumption per capita in Poland is much lower than in other European countries. Private label products and premium brands are expected to be growth drivers over the forecast period, as customers will be split between those looking for a best price and those looking for the best products in terms of flavour (*Poland…*, 2017).

The decision to purchase an ice cream is influenced by several factors, most important of which is the desire of consumption of tasty and delicacy. Consumers prefer the traditional forms and flavours of ice cream but are open to new ideas and innovations (Palka, 2017).

Methodology of the research

Ice cream market is an interesting and growing segment of the frozen products market, so it was decided to perform a study assessing consumer preferences regarding ice cream. The paper presents the results of a survey on consumer preferences. The study discusses factors influencing the purchase of ice cream such as:

- factors that affect the purchase of ice cream,
- most selected flavour ice cream,
- favourite kind of family ice cream,
- most commonly selected family ice cream capacity,
- most often chosen family brand ice cream,
- the amount that respondents were willing to pay for family ice cream,
- ice cream prices in the opinion of the respondents.

The survey was conducted among 197 respondents in 2016.

Research results

Factors that affect the purchase of ice cream are shown on figure 1. The most important are the desire to improve mood, consume tasty dessert and cooling during hot weather. Although ice cream is a high calorie dessert, this feature is not a popular factor affecting purchase of ice cream.

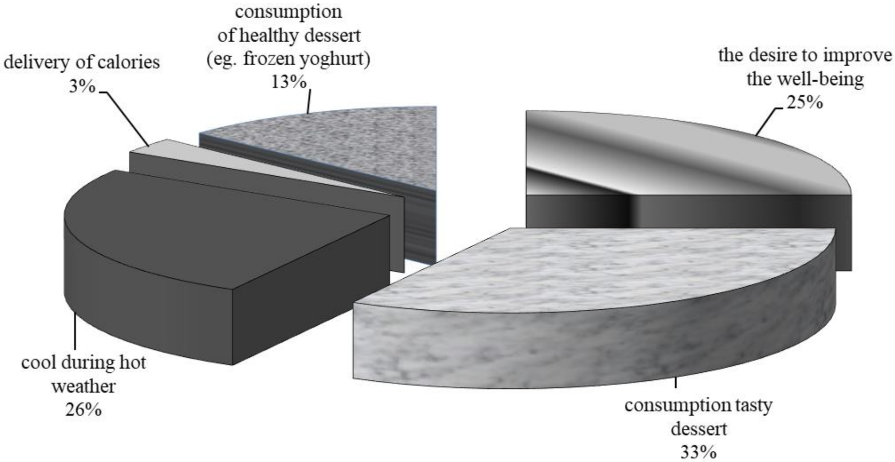

Figure 1. Factors that affect the purchase of ice cream

Source: own study.

Respondents mentioned many favourite tastes (fig. 2), the most popular of which was the cream flavour.

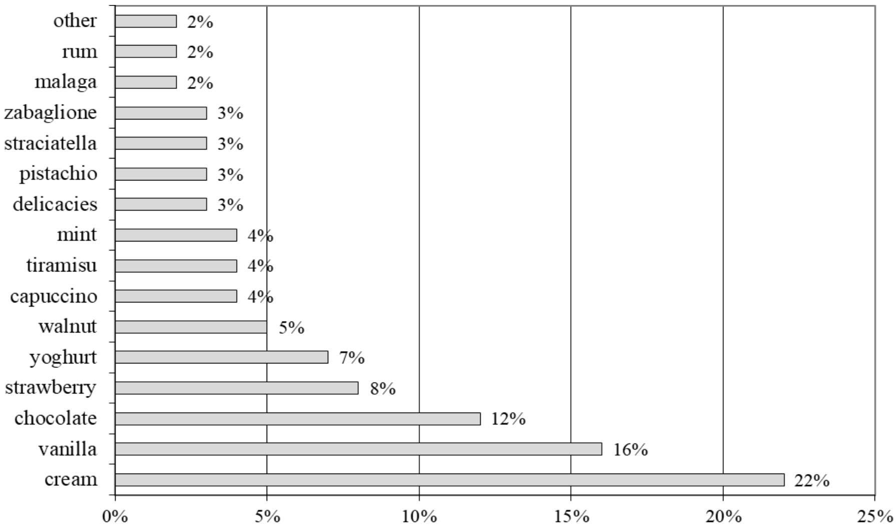

Figure 2. Most selected flavour of ice cream

Source: own study.

Slightly less were the tastes of vanilla and chocolate. The next most popular were strawberry and yoghurt. About 5% of the respondents (or less) choose a walnut, tiramisu, cappuccino or mint flavour as their favourite. The Director of Nestle also suggested that The Poles most often reach for cream, vanilla, chocolate, and fruit ice cream (Woźniak, 2016a).

Favourite kind of family ice creams (fig. 3) were one flavour or several flavours ice creams (55% respondents in total). Over 1/4 of respondents prefer sorbets and 18% mostly like dessert ice cream (such as Carte D'or). Grycan and Carte D'Or are the leading brands in the 'Take-Home and Bulk Ice Cream' category in Poland (*Poland…*, 2017).

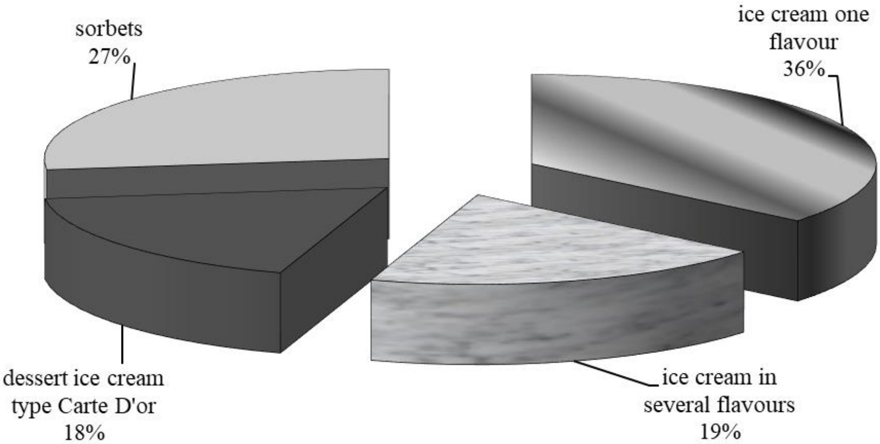

Figure 3. Favourite kind of family ice cream

Source: own study.

The packaging capacity of family ice creams decreases systematically. Ten years ago, the 1–1.5 litre containers were the most popular, now such a large capacity is popular for the price, although family ice creams are also sold in 0.5 litre and less (Bełżecka, 2013)

Respondents asked about most commonly selected ice cream capacity answered with a choice of 0.5 and 1 litre (fig. 4). Most of them chose a 1 litre response. Such a capacity, and even greater, is more profitable. In terms of 100 ml, such an ice cream costs less than those of a capacity of 0.5 litres. In addition, for a family of five, 0.5 litres of ice cream is the most inadequate capacity.

The biggest world players are present at the polish market. They are international companies, as well as some very strong Polish companies. The biggest company in ice cream market in Poland is Unilever (Algida), the second place belongs to the company PPL Koral, the third to the R & R Ice Cream (Zielona

Budka), and the fourth to Nestle (Nestle Schöller). In fifth place there is the company Grycan Lody od Pokoleń (Woźniak, 2016b; Euromonitor International, 2016; Palka, 2013; Palka, 2015).

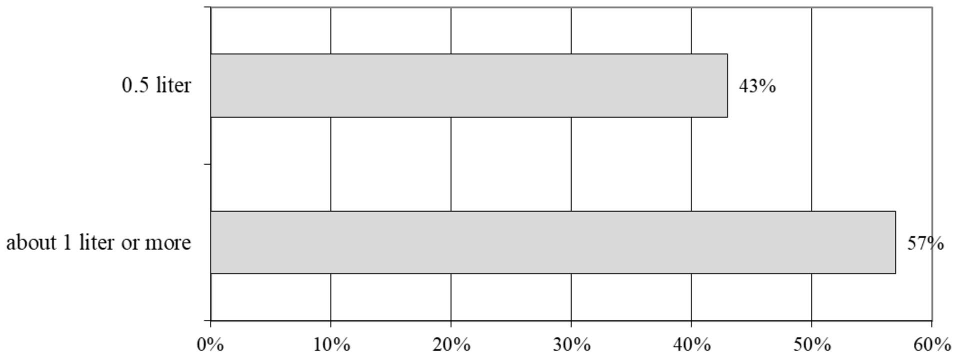

Figure 4. Most commonly selected family ice cream capacity

Source: own study.

Most often chosen family ice cream's brands/producers are shown in figure 5. The most popular was „Algida Śmietankowa” which could be the most traditional creamy taste for the Poles. Often bought are also ice cream made by Grycan or Koral and Zielona Budka.

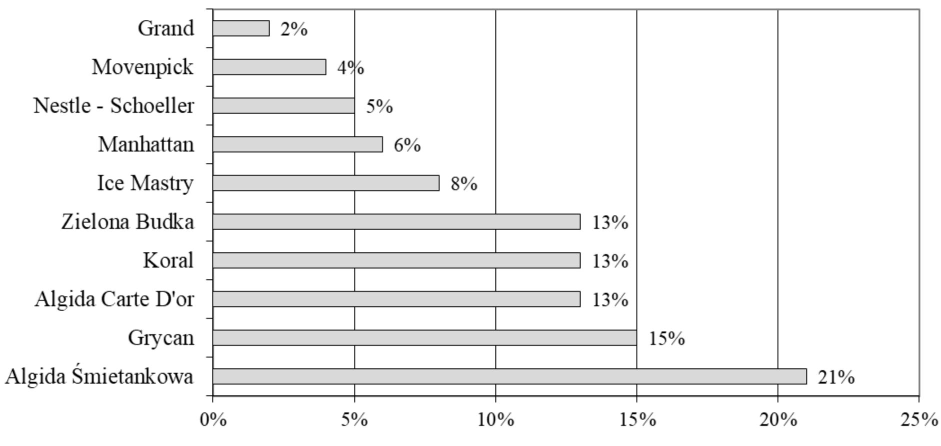

Figure 5. Most often chosen family brand/producer ice cream

Source: own study.

Respondents asked about the price for family ice cream packaging answered (fig. 6), that they would be willing to pay not more than 15 PLN. Only 9% of consumers could afford more expensive ice cream. 21% of them would prefer to buy cheap ice cream, up to 5 PLN for one packaging of ice cream.

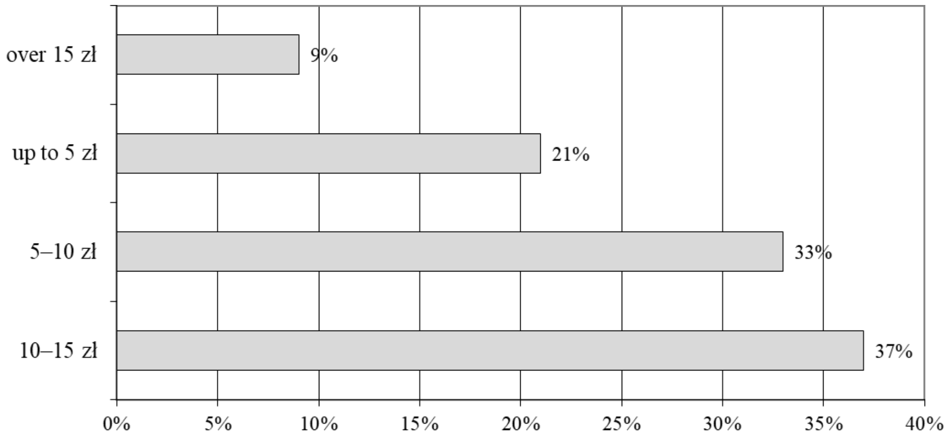

Figure 6. The amount that respondents were willing to pay for family ice cream packaging

Source: own study.

Respondents were also asked about their opinion about the ice cream prices. Over 35% of consumers said that the prices are high, almost 40% of them considered the ice cream prices as middle. Only 17% of the respondents thought that they were low and 8% didn't have any opinion.

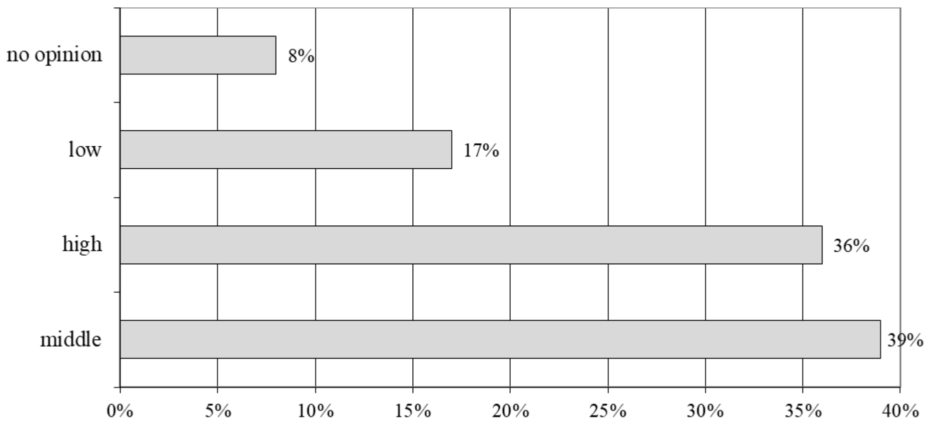

Figure 7. Ice cream prices in the opinion of the respondents

Source: own study.

The market of ice cream and frozen desserts in Poland is growing, the average Pole spends on the ice cream more and more, and ice creams are becoming less and less of a seasonal product. Euromonitor International provides also that in 2015 the average Pole spent on ice cream amount of 43.40 zloty, while in 2014 it was 41.90 zlotys, and in 2013 – 39.90 PLN (*Rynek lodów…*, 2016).

Summary

The ice cream consumer makes a purchase decisions in two different ways, depending on the type of ice cream. Types of ice cream depending on the way of consumption are divided into Impulse ice cream (Single Serve), and Family (Take-Home) ice cream. When buying family ice cream few factors are taken under consideration. The most important are favourite taste and the price. The price determines the brand and manufacturer of ice cream, as some are too expensive for the buyer. That was why respondents preferred bigger capacity of ice cream than 0.5 litre. This choice is also determined by the unit price per 100 ml. The choice of one or several tastes of ice cream in one packaging depended probably on the price. Dessert ice creams such as Carte D'or are more expensive.

The Poles eat ice cream mostly to improve mood, consume tasty dessert and cooling during hot weather. Family ice cream are usually taken home and eaten with family and friends so they could be eaten all over the year, not only during summer.

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Podejmowanie decyzji zakupowych na rynku lodów

Słowa kluczowe: lody, rynek, sezonowość, decyzje zakupowe, kryteria zakupu

Streszczenie. Lody są w Polsce wciąż postrzegane jako deser sezonowy, którego zadaniem jest schłodzenie w upalne dni. Z tej sezonowości spożycia lodów w Polsce wynika niskie spożycie na tle spożycia w Europie, aczkolwiek są perspektywy i możliwości na zmianę tego trendu. Lody familijne stanowią istotną część rynku lodów w Polsce, który rozwija się w kierunku innowacyjnych smaków, dodatków i opakowań. Znaczna część rynku lodów, w szczególności latem, charakteryzuje się zakupami impulsywnymi, dlatego celem artykułu jest ocena decyzji zakupowych na rynku lodów familijnych. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań ankietowych na temat zakupów lodów familijnych. Oceniono kryteria decydujące o wyborze lodów, częstotliwość spożycia, preferowany rodzaj lodów i inne czynniki decydujące o zakupie. Rezultaty badania wskazują, że konsumenci preferują duże opakowania lodów o zróżnicowanych smakach. Lody familijne są jednakże postrzegane jako drogi deser.

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Cytowanie

Palka, A. (2017). Making purchase decisions on ice cream market. *Marketing i Zarządzanie*, *2* (48), 53–62. DOI: 10.18276/miz.2017.48-05.