PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS. EVIDENCE FROM LARGE SURFACE STORES IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: The present paper aims to identify coordinates of the buying behaviour prior to the Easter celebration displayed by people shopping from large surface stores in Bucharest, Romania. Through a comprehensive semi-structured, disguised and direct observation performed by people based on an observation guide with 7 topics conducted in three Kaufland stores located in various parts of Bucharest, quantitative and qualitative peculiarities of the buying and consumption behaviour of 413 individuals were uncovered. The findings of this study display the product categories, types and brands chosen by shoppers in large surface stores as well as coordinates of the in-store behaviour, rendering a detailed image of the conclusions prompted by the buying decision-making process with tremendous significance for the retail sector in Romania.

Key words: observation, observation guide, purchasing behaviour, behaviour patterns, semi-structured, disguised and direct observation

Introduction

Observation is a marketing research technique with a broad usage prompting distinct advantages in data collection about people, actions, situations (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008), objects and events (Haydam and Mostert, 2013) in which the researcher does not interact or communicate with the subjects (Catoiu et al., 2004). One of the most important peculiarities of this method resides in the fact that the collected data depict what individuals do and not what they say they do (Wells and Lo Sciuto, 1996). Reflecting a particular behaviour or various ways of interaction (Atkin, 1978), the data obtained through observation aid a researcher understand how individuals act but with no clues about motives and influencing factors inducing that particular action, recording a naturalistic behaviour and even rendering behavioural patterns (Malhotra, 2004). With no involvement in an event (Arnoud and Wallendorf, 1994), observation is deemed suitable for use if (Boote and Mathews, 1999) the object under investigation is a social process or a mass activity and/or easily observable and/or occurring at a subconscious level and/or the observed consumers do not want or cannot communicate with the researcher. Observation can deliver quantitative and qualitative data recorded by humans or machines (Chamberlain and Broderick, 2007) recording the actual behaviour and not the stated one (Papuc, 2007). The extant literature reveals several forms of observation used in particular situations, a comprehensive grouping being:

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structured-unstructured; participant-nonparticipant; ongoing, sampled; disguised; undisguised (Chelcea, 2004).

The in-store observation has emerged as a distinct research field due to the comprehensive buying behaviour data obtained through the use of this technique. In general, observation performed within stores can deliver valuable data about inventory and product category, brand, shelf location, facing and price, display, POP (point of purchase) material and product testing (Datculescu, 2004; Proctor, 2005).

The current study has its roots in a previous research performed in 2012 (Papuc and Edu, 2013), the observation sheet comprising topics tested in the respective research and additional ones according to the present study objectives.

Research methodology

The research goal was split into five major objectives with a special focus on the buying behaviour of five product categories which record high volumes prior to the Easter celebration: fruits and vegetables, meat and meat-by-products, sweets, cleaning products and alcoholic beverages.

We defined our research objectives considering the following chapters:

- Research coordinates: date, store, duration, client residential coordinates,
- Purchase size,
- Store travelling,
- Selection behaviour,
- In-store behaviour: expressions, sensorial conduct, communication.

10 hypotheses were presumed for the objectives pursued in this research:

- More than 50% of the buyers spend 30 minutes or less in one of the three stores.
- Most of the buyers reside in Bucharest, Ilfov, Prahova, Giurgiu and Ialomita.
- More than 90% of the buyers shop using a trolley.
- At least 50% of the individuals make the first stop in a store at the “fruits and vegetables” section.
- Fruits and vegetables are purchased at a higher frequency, followed by meat and meat-by-products, alcoholic beverages, sweets and cleaning products.
- More than 50% of the shoppers select more than one product from the sections were they stop.
- More than 50% of the buyers select products from inside the section at middle height.
- The buyer displays a wide variety of in-store gestures in the buying process.
- The buyer tries to gather intelligence about an offer by reading the price tags, the product instructions, by touching and testing the product.
- The buyer communicates with his/her companions, other buyers and store employees in the buying process.

The researched population was represented by people over the age of 18 purchasing from large surface stores in Bucharest and the research method used

was a semi-structured, disguised and direct observation performed by people in stores based on an observation guide with 7 topics to be completed by the observers.
The sampling method was a mixture of two random sampling methods: multi-stage and systematic random sampling centred on two variables- gender and age- and the sample was built based on the percentages found in the observed population:

- gender: male- 48.4%; female- 51.6%,
- age groups: 18-40 y.o.- 43%; 41-60 y.o.- 34%; over 60 y.o.- 23%.

The sample size was set at 413 people, considering a sampling error of 3.46% and a significance level of 95%.
The individuals were selected using a counting system. Every other 10th individual was observed in the large surface stores from the entrance point to the exit one.
The research was performed in three Kaufland stores located in Bucharest: Kaufland Colentina, Kaufland Mihai Bravu and Kaufland Valea Cascadelor.

Data analysis

The data were collected with the help of 23 students from a master's program as part of their project based on a permission granted by Kaufland's management.
Based on gender and age, 200 men and 213 women aged 18 and over (178 people between 18 and 40 years old, 140 people between 41 and 60 years old and 95 over 61 years old) were observed in the three mentioned Kaufland stores (Kaufland Colentina- 72, Kaufland Mihai Bravu-179 and Kaufland Valea Cascadelor- 162) between April 02 and April 19, 2014, the time interval ending just before Easter.
The buyers were observed from the entrance point until the exit one. The duration of the observations varied from a few minutes up to several hours. The Figure 1 displays the distribution of the performed observations.

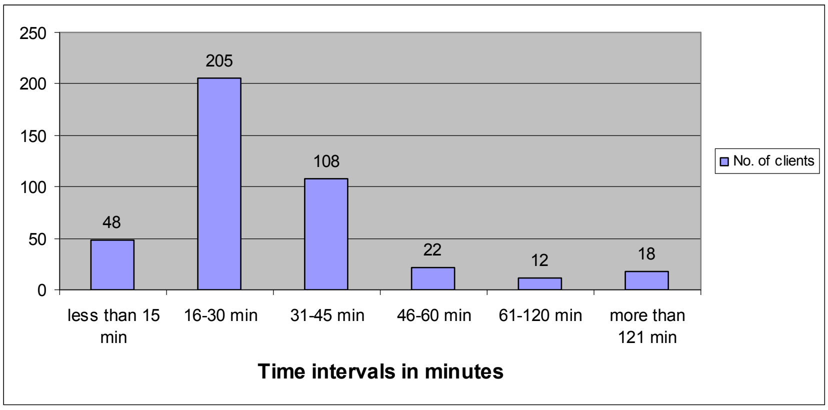

Figure 1. Time spent inside the store

In connection with the afore-mentioned idea, the main place of residence of the people found in these stores when the observations took place was pointed out based on the car registration plates found in the parking bays. As it was expected, the cars registered in Bucharest totalled the largest number, followed by the ones registered in the neighbouring counties, Ilfov and Giurgiu, fact which is understandable as many individuals commute daily from these counties for work and/or prefer to travel to Bucharest because of their preference for large surface stores, and especially for Kaufland. An interesting finding was that another neighbouring county, Prahova, was surpassed by Buzau, which is further away from Bucharest.

Related to the shopping behaviour, it was observed if the buyers entered the stores with a trolley or other devices. The large number of people choosing trolleys (92.7%) can be explained based on shopping behaviour features, but also on the fact that the stores do not offer alternatives in this regard, such as baskets or mini-trolleys. The other findings were: bags- 5.3%, boxes- 0.5%, baby carriages- 0.25% and empty-handed- 1.25%.

The in-store observation started with the first stop inside the store. According to the observation sheet, the first store section and the first store section of the five under observation in this study (fruits and vegetables, meat and meat-by-products, sweets, cleaning products and alcoholic beverages) had to be circled by the observers. In the research methodology it was established that an individual would have to stop (to be understood as checking or buying items) in at least three of the five store sections to be included in the sample.

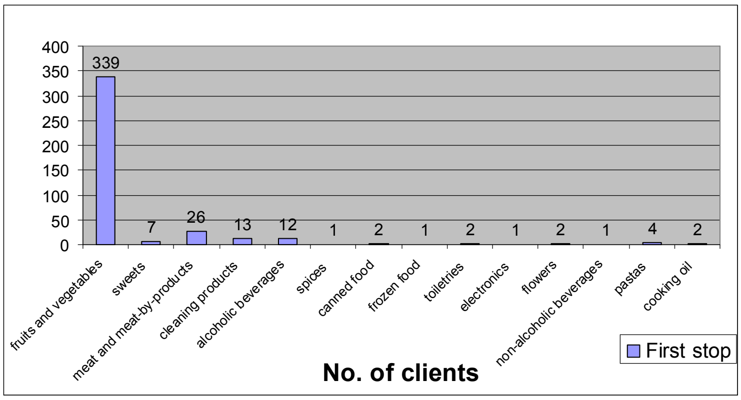

Figure 2. First stop inside the store

The study focused on uncovering if the buyers used a shopping list or not, regardless of its type, an actual paper list or an electronic one loaded on a mobile phone or tablet. The conclusions are interesting in the fact that just a minority used a shopping list, meaning 19%.

The observation continued with the product categories and/or brands picked up by the individuals. Based on the findings, the most selected items from the 5 investigated categories and the associated percentages of the observed individuals in each section are presented.

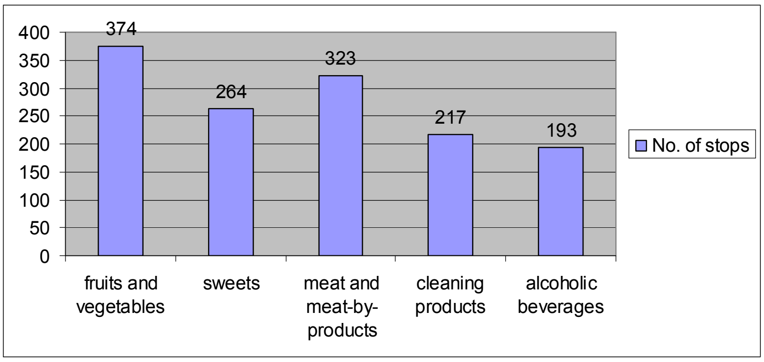

Figure 3. Number of stops per store sections under study

Also, based on counting, the most selected brands for some of the items are listed for sweets, cleaning products and alcoholic beverages. Regarding the "Fruits and Vegetables" section, the shoppers chose a wide variety of fruits and vegetables displaying different tastes but, considering the numbers, there was a focus on a few of them, matching to a certain extent the culinary habits appropriate for the respective festive season. The most selected fruits were: oranges (22.4 % of the observed individuals), followed by bananas (20.5% of the observed individuals), apples (17.6% of the observed individuals) and lemons (10.1% of the observed individuals). As for vegetables, the most selected ones were: tomatoes (16.8% of the observed individuals), potatoes (11.5% of the observed individuals), green salad (11.1% of the observed individuals) and cucumbers (10.7% of the observed individuals).

The figures for the "sweets" category display a purchasing behaviour centred on chocolate in various forms (tablets, eggs, waffles, bunnies, bars and spread), biscuits, sweet bread, ginger bread and sponge cake, reflecting rather traditional consumption behaviour.

For meat, the findings display a contradictory picture with chicken and pork leading in the preference ranking of the observed individual while lamb (mutton) is a staple meat during Easter or a "must" dish due to religious and traditional reasons. The situation could be explained through either changes in the traditional values or orientation towards other types of meat and even financial reasons.

Table 1. Sweets selected by shoppers

Sweets	**Percentage of buyers**	**Most selected brands**
Ginger bread	4.5	Katy, Panibu
Chocolate tablets	31.3	Laura, Novatini, Poiana, Primola, Toblerone, Milka, Schogetten, K-classic, Katy, Heidi, Africana
Chocolate and vanilla pastry	1.3	Vita Star, Boromir
Nougat	0.3	
Biscuits	17.1	Petit Beurre, Dunia, Pims, Ulpio, Joe, Maronetti,

		Milka, Oreo, Autentic Rom, Happy Choice, Fox, Biskrem, Belvita, Pepito
Chocolate spread	1.3	K-classic
Chocolate waffle	4.5	Joe
Chocolate egg	4.8	Jacquot
Chocolate bunny	3.2	Jacquot
Sweet bread	13.2	Boromir, Panettone, Luci-Pol
Baklava	0.3	
Pralines	2.3	Laura
Caramel candy	1	Poiana Chokotoff, Rom Toff
Sponge cake	3.5	Magura, Acasa, Barni
Halvah	1.3	
Ice cream	2.3	Amicii, Milka
Chocolate bar	1.9	Lion, Milka, Twix
Cereal bar	1	Nestle, Stilla Natura
Cookies	2.9	
Marshmallow	2	

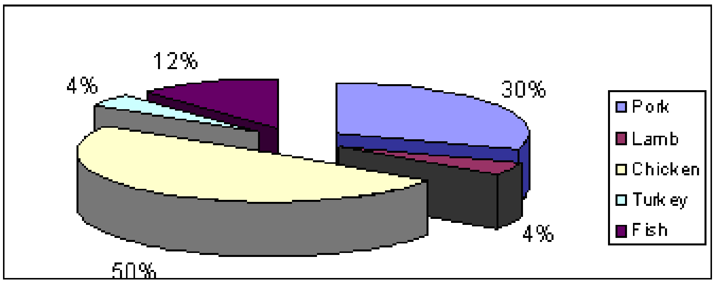

Figure 4. Types of meat purchased (including fish)

As for cleaning products, the most selected types and brands were: bathroom cleaning products (30.9% of the observed individuals), centred on nine brands (Domestos, Pronto, Rivex, Savex, Cilit, Bref, Duck, Ajax, Mr. Proper), followed by dish washing products (26.6% of the observed individuals), where four brands were especially chosen (Feya, Fairy, Pur, Axion), detergent (10.1% of the observed individuals) with mainly eight brands preferred (Ariel, Clean, Persil, Bonux, Tide, Dero, Ace, Vanish), dusting products (10.1% of the observed individuals) with two brands (Pronto and Clean) and fabric softener (9.2% of the observed individuals) with four brands (Lenor, Cocolino, Silan and Semana).
In the case of alcoholic beverages, the buyers displayed an expected behaviour, with beer leading the options (56.1% of the observed individuals) almost equally divided based on container (can and bottle- 52.4% of the observed individuals, represented by the following brands: Timisoreana, Tuborg, Ambrosius, Dab, Stephans brau, Heineken, Golden Brau and plastic- 47.6% of the observed individuals with the next brands: Bucegi, Albacher, Anker, Azuga, Bergenbier, Ciucas, Noroc). The second place was claimed by wine- red, white and pink-

chosen by 31% of the observed individuals, selecting Romanian and foreign brands. Spirits (whisky, brandy, liquor, vermouth, vodka and gin) were selected only by 12.8% of the observed individuals.
The percentages of the buyers selecting a product or several products from each of the five store sections of interest to us (fruits and vegetables, meat and meat-by-products, sweets, cleaning products and alcoholic beverages) were computed, showing a considerable weight towards more than one product (72% of the individuals selected more than one product). This situation is understandable considering that the venue is a large surface store displaying a sizeable assortment and/or that a religious celebration was very close.
Based on the collected data, in-store product selection peculiarities were unveiled. In this regard, the products were selected from low, middle and high levels of either the edges or aisles within the designated store sections at more or less equal frequencies.

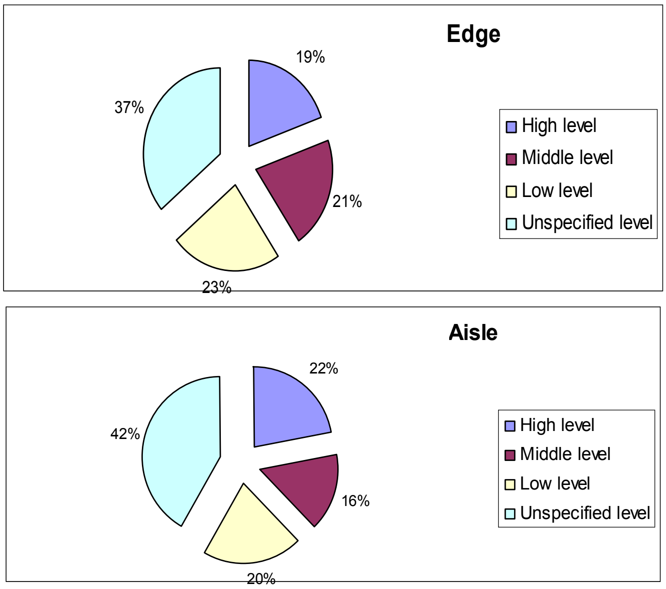

Figure 5. In-store product selection

The high propensity of choosing items from aisles, with 62% of the shoppers doing so, can be explained by the wider variety displayed there. Also, the high percentage of “unspecified level” for both, edges and aisles, can be explained by the difficulty encountered by the observers in detailing the behaviour of individuals selecting several products from different levels.
As to the in-store behaviour, just a small percentage of the buyers (7%) returned to the previously visited store sections either to leave or to choose more or different products, leading us to the conclusion that the buyers knew very well what products to purchase.

Related to the in-store marketing communication, 91% of the buyers selected items, which were the objects of the in-store marketing communication, being influenced in a significant proportion by techniques such as price reductions (86%), radio advertisements (9%) and additional quantity and product units (5%).

The qualitative side of this research was designed to uncover behavioural aspects on three levels: expressions, sensorial conduct and communication.

The content analysis performed on the collected data provided interesting coordinates pertaining to the three dimensions under study.

With regard to the expressive behaviour, the main findings were grouped in: content, joy, surprise, body gestures, curiosity, hasting and relaxation.

The sensorial conduct was prompted by: price reading, product and package analyses, special offer analysis, instructions reading and price comparisons. These findings are in sync with the advantages of buying products at traditional stores (Stefko et al., 2011).

As to the communication/interaction part, 52% of the observed individuals interacted with their companion/s, store staff or other shoppers or talked over the phone about their shopping experience.

Conclusions

Based on the collected data, each hypothesis presumed at the beginning of the study should be assessed and confirmed, partially confirmed or rejected:

H1: More than 50% of the buyers spend 30 minutes or less in one of the three stores can be confirmed as 61.2% of the shoppers spent less than 30 minutes inside the stores.

H2: Most of the buyers reside in Bucharest, Ilfov, Prahova, Giurgiu and Ialomita can be partially confirmed as the first two alternatives were ranked as it was assumed, with Bucharest and Ilfov but followed by Giurgiu, Buzau and Arges.

H3: More than 90% of the buyers shop using a trolley can be confirmed as 92.7% of the shoppers chose trolleys when entering the stores.

H4: At least 50% of the individuals make the first stop in a store at the “fruits and vegetables” section can be confirmed as 82.08% of the shoppers made the first stop at the “fruits and vegetables” section.

H5: Fruits and vegetables are purchased at a higher frequency, followed by meat and meat-by-products, alcoholic beverages, sweets and cleaning products can be partially confirmed as the first two options were ranked as it was assumed. According to the collected data, the order was: fruits and vegetables, meat and meat-by-products, sweets, cleaning products and alcoholic beverages.

H6: More than 50% of the shoppers select more than one product from the sections where they stop can be confirmed as 72% of the buyers purchased more than one product from each store section where they stopped.

H7: More than 50% of the buyers select products from inside the section at middle height can be partially confirmed as 62% of the buyers selected products from the store aisles but only 21% picked up products from the section’s middle level.

H8: The buyer displays a wide variety of in-store gestures in the buying process can be confirmed as the buyers displayed gestures, such as: content, joy, surprise, body gestures, curiosity, hasting and relaxation.
H9: The buyer tries to gather intelligence about an offer by reading the price tags, the product instructions, by touching and testing the product can be confirmed as the shoppers pursued the following actions: price reading, product and package analyses, special offer analysis, instructions reading and price comparisons.
H10: The buyer communicates with his/her companions, other buyers and store employees in the buying process can be confirmed as 52% of the observed individuals interacted with their companion/s, store staff or other shoppers or talked over the phone about their shopping experience.
The present research provides interesting details about the buying behaviour peculiarities displayed by people prior to the Easter celebration offering an image of the product categories, types and brands chosen by shoppers in large surface stores as well as coordinates of the in-store behaviour. This study delivers findings of quantitative and qualitative nature of the individual buying decision process with significant value for the retail sector. However, this study, being an observation, rendering the actual behaviour and not the declared one, unveils merely effects of the buying decision process, without carrying answers pertaining to the motives underlying these decisions, but these answers are the prerogatives of surveys.

Summary

Prior and during festive seasons, individuals tend to change their consumption and hence buying behaviour to comply with certain traditions. However, in recent years due to financial constrains on one side and generation change on the other, new tastes and habits are prompted adding to the traditional ones or even replacing some of them. Only the manufacturers and retailers which monitor these shifts and tailor their assortment accordingly stand a chance to preserve and strengthen marketing goals, such as market positions and shares.

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WZORCE ZACHOWAŃ ZAKUPOWYCH. OBSERWACJE ZE SKLEPÓW WIELKOPOWIERZCHNIOWYCH W RUMUNII

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu określenie współrzędnych zachowań zakupowych przed Świętami Wielkanocnymi przejawianych przez ludzi robiących zakupy w sklepach wielkopowierzchniowych w Bukareszcie w Rumunii. Poprzez obszerną semistrukturalną, z ukrycia i bezpośrednią obserwację wykonaną przez ludzi na podstawie przewodnika obserwacji z 7 tematami, przeprowadzoną w trzech sklepach Kaufland zlokalizowanych w różnych częściach Bukaresztu, zostały wykryte ilościowe i jakościowe osobliwości zachowania zakupowego i konsumpcyjnego 413 osób. Wnioski z niniejszego badania wskazują kategorie produktów, rodzaje i marki wybrane przez kupujących w sklepach wielkopowierzchniowych, jak również współrzędne zachowania w sklepie, czyniąc szczegółowy obraz wniosków wyłonionych w procesie podejmowania decyzji zakupu, które mają ogromne znaczenie dla sektora detalicznego w Rumunii.
Słowa kluczowe: obserwacja, przewodnik obserwacji, zachowanie zakupowe, wzorce zachowań, semistrukturalny, obserwacja bezpośrednia i z ukrycia

購買行為模式在很大程度上面店 之前的復活節慶祝活動在羅馬尼亞首都布加勒斯特進行的三個Kaufland 賣場觀察

摘要：本文旨在確定之前就被人從羅馬尼亞布加勒斯特大型水面店購物所顯示的復活節慶祝活動的購買行為的坐標。通過基於觀察指導與7主題位於布加勒斯特的各個部分3
Kaufland店進行人進行了全面的半結構化，偽裝和直接觀察，413人購買和消費行為的定量和定性的特點進行了揭露。這項研究的結果顯示在大型水面商店的購物者在店內的行為，以及坐標選擇的產品種類，型號和品牌，呈現由購買決策過程的巨大意義，促使結論的詳細圖像零售業在羅馬尼亞。
關鍵字：觀察，觀察指導，購買行為，行為模式，半結構化，偽裝和直接觀察