

PRIMER KVANTITATIVÉ SURVEY IN CASE OF THE MEAT QUALITY AND SAFETY

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ABSTRACT

Managers of a meat-processing small works were interested in the customers' behaviour. I made the personal questionnaire method to recognize attitudes, motivations and opinions. In my survey I asked the buyers about the place of shopping, the main reasons of their choice, and the most important differences in the food safety between the small and the big factories.

The main conclusions of the examination are: most answerers do their shopping in the hypermarkets, because of the rich selection and the low price, but a little part of the buyers likes small meat-shops or the meat-market, because of the quality and the freshness. When they choose a meat-product a lot of answerers are wedded to one maker. The people usually buy meat-products of big companies. In the most purchasers' view the big meat-companies are reliable, and they like their products, but the little part of them believe only in the small companies, they believe in their products, they think their meat-quality and food safety are better.

Key words: consumers' survey, meat-quality, food safety

1. INTRODUCTION

I carried out a survey on purchasing behaviour upon the request of a meat-processing firm in the Region of the Southern Plain, the proper scope of which is meat-processing, retail and wholesale trade of meat and meat products, in addition to pig-breeding. Managers of the firm wanted to obtain some information about:

- purchasing habits in connection with meat products
- consumer preferences
- motivations to purchase something
- opinions about small and big meat-processing firms

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

To achieve my research aim I chose the questionnaire method. Using this method I got answers quickly, on the one hand, while I obtained enough numerical data, on the other hand, which helped me to perform correct evaluation. At the same time I gave the answerers the opportunity to write down their opinion which later could tinge and support the numerical assessment.

I chose the answerers randomly without aiming for being representative, since the main purpose was to sketch a general outline of the problem in question.

The questionnaire was filled in with the help of the Internet, which partly tightened the circle of the potential answerers (Internet-users) but it made possible that the questionnaire could reach every part of the country within minutes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although I did not aim for being representative I still made the effort to ask people from both sex, from different age, with different level of education and from different residence. Structure of answerers is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographical structure of answerers (%)

<i>Sex</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>woman</i>					
	20,0	80,0					
<i>Age group</i>	<i>18-30</i>	<i>31-45</i>	<i>45-60</i>	<i>60-</i>			
	20,0	57,0	20,0	3,0			
<i>Place of residence</i>	<i>Southern Plain</i>	<i>Northern Plain</i>	<i>Northern Hungary</i>	<i>Mid-Transdanubia</i>	<i>Southern Transdanubia</i>	<i>Western Transdanubia</i>	<i>Mid-Hungary</i>
	47,0	3,0	10,0	5,0	13,0	3,0	19,0
<i>Educational level</i>	<i>elementary</i>	<i>secondary</i>	<i>higher</i>				
	2,0	25,0	73,0				
<i>Activity</i>	<i>employee</i>	<i>student</i>	<i>pensioner</i>	<i>other</i>			
	65,0	10,0	5,0	20,0			
<i>Income</i>	<i>Much worse than the average</i>	<i>Worse than the average</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Better than the average</i>	<i>Better than the average</i>		
	0,0	7,0	62,0	28,0	3,0		

The first question referred to the place of food purchase. From different kind of shops the supermarket was preferred (45,0%), while other places got the less point (3,0%). Only a small part of the answerers mentioned discount shops (7,0%) and small shops (8,0%), on the other hand, chains of stores – for example, Coop, CBA-, and bigger networks of shops – for example Spar- were chosen in a higher rate (16,0% and 21,0%).

We can study the places of meat purchase from the following answers. Purchase can be performed together with other foods (57,0%), or in places different from them (43,0%). The first example was marked by those who go shopping to supermarkets or bigger department stores, referring to the wider selection of goods and sales. Those who buy meat somewhere else mentioned the market place and the butcher's shop, however, there are some people who get the necessary meat from relatives, friends. (Lehota 2001, Kotler 2006)

To support the choice of the shop the answerers gave different explanations (Figure 1).

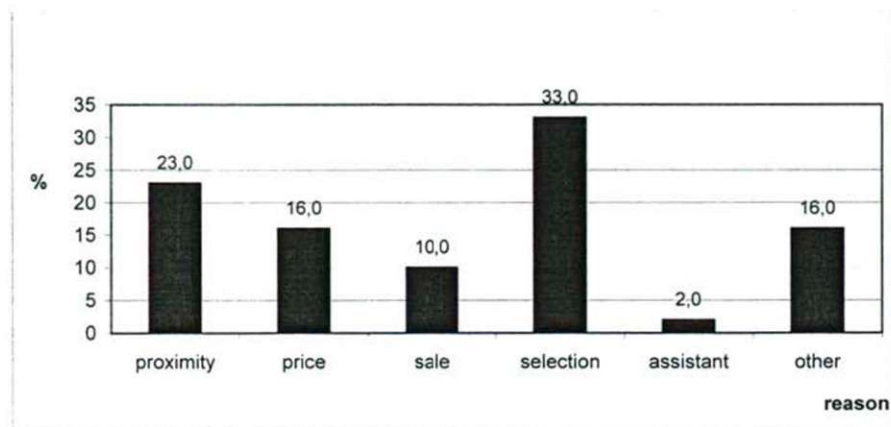


Figure 1. Structure of answers according to the motivation of the place of purchase

Most of them (33,0%) explained their decision with the wider choice of goods which also means that they buy everything in one place in order to save time. It is verified by the importance of "proximity" which is marked as the second most important reason (23,0%) meaning saving of time again. Price is an important factor too, since "the generally low prices" and "current sales" motivate 26,0% of the answerers altogether to buy something.

Those customers who get the meat from "other" places gave the following reasons (literal quotations):

- It has a better quality; who invest work, energy, knowledge, hope and time can share more profit this way,
- Reliability,
- Good quality, fresh products,
- The meat is always fresh, they know me because I regularly do my shopping there,
- Fresh Hungarian products,
- Foods are safe,

which means that the most important factors are quality, freshness and reliability. (Gal 2008, Gal-Kiss 2008)

We can decide to choose a certain meat product from several points of view. The opinion of the repliers is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The most important factors in purchasing a certain meat product

Reasons	Structure of answerers (%)
Same products	42,0
Maker	45,0
Price	6,0
Commercial	2,0
Package	0,0
other	5,0

We can conclude from the figure that most of the answerers (45,0%) choose the products of the same manufacturer because they know and like them. A similar number of the repliers (42,0%) say that they generally buy the same product, independently from its maker. The other factors were important only for some answerers. The following motivations belong to the "other" reasons:

- Appearance,
- Necessity
- Content, ingredients

To continue my research I would like to describe the differences in the opinions on small- and big firms. Firstly, I asked the participants about their preferences regarding the type of firms, and, if they can, to mark the manufacturer. It can be concluded, according to the answers, that a much bigger part of the costumers (56,0%) buy the products of bigger factories than the ones from smaller meat-processing firms (20,0%). Besides, a significant number of the answerers (24,0%) said that they did not know or were not interested in the name of the manufacturer. However, they listed mostly "Pick" and "Délhús" and some poultry processing plants. Only a few of them could list smaller meat processing firms. (Töröcsik 2006, 2007)

Question on reliability belongs to this problem and the following results can be experienced: nearly the half of the answerers (48,0%) put trust in bigger firms, and less than their quarter (23,0%) have faith in smaller plants. On the other hand, the name of the firm does not matter for 29,0% of the costumers – they believe in neither of them.

Those who prefer bigger companies explained their decision as it follows (literal quotations):

- Bigger firms are controlled better,
- They generally distribute examined and checked products, since the scandals they have paid more attention to the expire date,
- Checked hygienic conditions,
- They cannot allow themselves to have more serious scandals,
- Stricter quality control,
- More products are sold so there is not a bigger quantity of older ones to sell,
- Developed technology,
- Smaller firms can cheat more easily,
- They are bound by rules more strictly.

Those who chose smaller firms verified their decision this way:

- They can pay more attention to the process, their products are closer to the "home-made" ones,
- They know the firm, like its products and trust them,
- Quality is important for smaller ones as well, since they can easily lose their costumers,

- They do not sell “uniformed” products,
- Perhaps they pay more attention to quality,
- They have a better overlook because of the quantity,
- They may not dare to distribute bad products in a small town,
- It is important to be fresh in case of products so it may be easier to follow a smaller stock.

Finally, I listed some statements and it was the answerers’ task to decide whether they judge them as true or false (Figure 2.). The following statement was thought to be true by almost everyone (91,0%): “The system of quality control is obligatory for each firm.” (This opposes the above mentioned explanations!) However, 60% think that “bigger firms are controlled better than smaller ones, and regulations are kept more strictly, too” (it can be paralleled with what I mentioned in connection with reliability). The statement: “bigger firms try to get more profit rather than to reach higher quality” is thought to be real by 45,0% of the repliers which is not a too positive opinion about bigger firms, anyway. Also, 38,0% consider the products of big companies better than the ones in case of small firms (“Products of big meat-processing enterprises are of better quality than the ones of small businesses”). A bit more (56,0%) criticize the small plants by disagreeing with the following statement: “Small enterprises cannot allow to make products of not suitable quality”. Regarding the issue from the aspect of big firms: according to the participants of the research, although the system of quality control is obligatory for every firm. They are controlled more times than smaller ones, it is still not sure that their products are better. Moreover, it is generally thought they are aiming at making profit only.

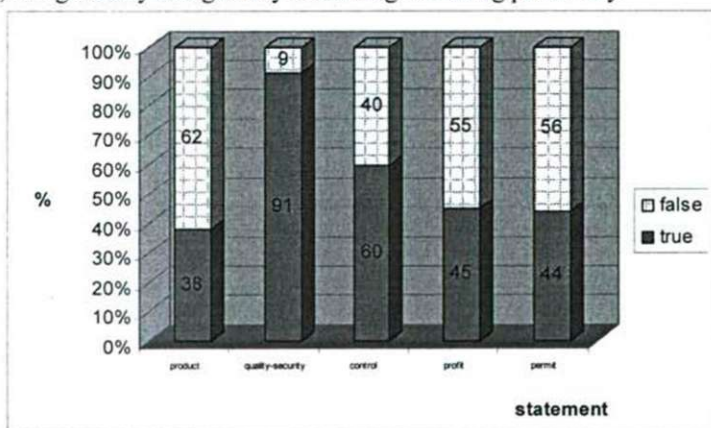


Figure 2. Structure of answerers considering some statements true or false (%)

4. CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTION

Regarding the answers of the questionnaire I made the following conclusion:

- In case of purchase it is important to save time and money that is why the answerers prefer supermarkets with wider selection of goods and with current sales.

- The firm should count on the –unfortunately, small- group which regards quality, reliability more important; who know the shop assistant and dislike the impersonal mammut-stores. It would be the subject of a further research to find out who they are exactly and what parametres they have.
- Trust in bigger firms is based on false belief, this misbelief should be dispelled. Reconstruction of the image in case of small firms should be carried out with the help of a well-based PR activity. It should not be done independently but in cooperation with other smaller companies, or with an outside help, for example with a support from “Hús-Céh”.
- Sale of products could be increased with a wider range of marketing tools: methods to stimulate sale (sales, samples), exhibitions, fairs, brochures, direct marketing.

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