

THE ROMANIAN BISCUIT CONSUMER PROFILE

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Abstract

The food market in Romania is extremely complex and has suffered changes in the last 10 years. Knowing its tendency regarding the biscuit consume in Romania is highly important, because it will develop a lot in the next few years.

Key words: market, biscuits, consumer's profile

INTRODUCTION

The markets' globalization brought with itself not only new opportunities, but challenges for enterprises. One of the challenges is the consumer's profile. The food market is extremely complex and needs a different approach also because of the UE's legislations that Romania has to obey.

The food consuming behavior suffered mutations due to some factors, like: the developed countries' influence, the care for health and physical appearance, replacing the family dinners with fast, individual ones, reducing aliments' cooking time, so on so forth.

The biscuit market is still far from consolidation in Romania. Not only there are more and more "players" entering the game, but the existing ones have a tendency of expanding their influence over more areas and even creating new subcategories, by developing local brands or using the global existing ones. In the last three years, the market evolved continuously, the producers bringing innovations forward. Currently, the niches have a low share on the market, but a long-term growth potential. Simple biscuits (no crème and ingredients, such as peanuts, fruits, etc.) represent an important side of the consuming market- over 40%- being the common ones used in "snacking" purposes.

Meanwhile, local players are talking about the growth of the "premium" market side and the polarization of consuming preferences, also in the detriment of the medium-ranged price market area (Andreea Bogdan,

2015). It goes without saying that the fight between the producers intensifies, as we assist to a diversification and specialization of the products. The market polarizes once the low-segments and premium-price areas grow (Ziarul financiar, 2016).

The premium side of the market was, for a long time, represented, firstly, by imported biscuits and lately there is a market outline of the premium made in Romania biscuits (Otilia Stanciu, 2015). The variety of assortments is an effect of the market's diversification. More and more producers need to launch new products, because the classic assortments sales have clapped (Ziarul financiar, 2015).

In Romania, the biscuit market is estimated, regarding the capacity, to 60.000-70.000 tons per year and, regarding the value, to approximately 50 millions euros. Biscuits are a self-sufficient part of the baking industry, with a permanent presence in the population's consume. (Andeea Bogdan, 2016). Regarding the statistics, sweet and packed biscuits represent the largest part of the profile market. Only on the low-income group, the bulk biscuits share is over 50%. The most biscuits are concentrated in the price range of 1.5-15 RON and, considering the medium and low parts, they weight between 50 and 150 grams and have a medium price of 1.15 RON/100 grams (.Poulain, Jean Pierre, 2007).

In Romania, the biscuit market is considered one of the most dynamic ones from the food industry, thanks to more and more companies entered this market side by own production or through import. It is not an easy market, but it has growth possibilities regarding the value-added products part (Marian Truta, 2016).

In accordance to specialists, *the market will continue to grow*, even if the consuming of biscuits in Romania is one of the lowest in Europe. In Romania, the biscuit consume per capita is only 2.2 kilograms, compared to other countries from the region, like Bulgaria and Serbia (3 kilograms), or The Czech Republic, with 6 kilograms. We are behind other neighboring countries regarding the variety, too (Ziarul financiar, 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The conditions impose knowing the Romanian biscuit consumer's profile. Thus, we have made a market research by applying a questionnaire in Oradea, Bihor county, to determine the consume frequency, consumers' preferences, the type of product that is consumed, the type of shop from where it is going to be bought from and the consume behavior. The total population is represented by the total number of people from Oradea, older than 18. The universe population volume is 155.951 on 1st January 2015. Regarding the sample, we chose a stratified one, with a probabilistic

character and randomly chose the individuals. To be valid, the sample includes a number of 383 persons. The questionnaire contains 15 questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After we applied the questionnaire we got the following results:

- Young people(aged between 25 and 34) prefer biscuits
- As a frequency of the consume, more than half(55%) confirm that they eat biscuits at least once a week and, regarding the day time, most of them(49%) consider them as good between meals. Other options show that they are consumed as desserts (27%), at the dinner (27%), breakfast (24%) or during the day, at work (24%) or at school (24%)
 - Due to the results of the study, the peoples' preferences from the Bihor County tend, about 86%, to packed biscuits, with families consisting of more than 5 members having a preference for the bulk ones.
 - Analyzing the results regarding the type of consumed products, more than half of the people (53%) suggested, on the 1st place, sweet, simple, flavorless biscuits. The salted and simple met 49% of the options, while the "sandwich" ones, together with flavored ones, being the choice of only a third of interviewed people.
 - Regarding the type of shop, the people orientate themselves towards food shops (42%), then supermarkets and small shops
 - Regarding the consumer's behavior, most of the people take into consideration the price and quantity. Moreover, as far as it concerns the brands they choose, they are not exclusive, more than half of them admitting that, in the near future, they might change the biscuits brand.

CONCLUSIONS

The main expectances of a client from this product are:

- Low price: the clients must be differently treated because they are different too, resulting different needs, wishing accessible products
- Special conditions: the consumers want products capable of fulfilling various and exigent needs
- Innovation: the consumers are interested in new products, not only regarding the ingredients, but psycho-sensorial characteristics

- Value for money: the price must be low compared to the high quality of the product.

In conclusion, the challenge for any company is attracting and especially making customers choose that specific company, by offering quality products at low prices. The management abilities are highly important to anticipate and perceive the market's tendencies, to fulfill the clients' needs, make customers stick to the company and differentiate the product from the similar ones from the market.

Moreover, the consumers are anxious about a healthy lifestyle. The Romanian biscuit consumer looks healthy products which do not alter their taste. Thus, paying attention to flavorless, bio, digestive, gluten free and low percentage in sugar biscuits is highly important, so that to provide various assortments and fulfill all the needs. A category which is continuously growing is represented by the soya biscuits, together with those made for people who suffer from diabetes or are on a diet. Another tendency is the growth of the area consisting of biscuits which are rich in bioactive elements. The interest for functional aliments increased, the Romanian consumers starting looking for products made of natural ingredients, with seeds, especially, and pay more attention to the products they buy, focusing on those which are beneficial to the organism.

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