

Original Article

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR RELATING TO THE PURCHASING OF HONEY

PART 1. THE BUYING PROCESS AND THE LEVEL OF CONSUMPTION

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Abstract

Production of honey is the main determinant of profitability in the beekeeping sector. However, high production does not always imply higher profits. A major determinant of the profitability of an apiary is the ability to sell the acquired product. The aim of the study was to present the most important factors influencing consumer honey purchasing behavior. The results showed that honey can simultaneously satisfy a multitude of needs - nutritional, taste, prophylactic, and medicinal. Consumer decisions to buy honey are influenced by economic factors, indicating the financial situation of households. The decision is often habitual and dictated by knowledge of the value of honey. Psychological and social determinants are the main motives when choosing among the varieties of honey. Studies have shown that the average annual per capita consumption of honey was 1.32 kg. However, honey consumption rates differed strongly, ranging from 0.066 to 0.4 kg per person per month. More than 60% of respondents indicated the high or very high price of honey. Buying honey directly from the beekeeper was widespread among respondents (63.9%). Some respondents (7.2%) stated that they do not consume honey at all, but price cuts and the opportunity to taste test honey at the point of sale would be an incentive for them.

Keywords: behavior, consumer behavior, determinants, honey, needs.

INTRODUCTION

Each product on the market is designed to satisfy a consumer's need. The sales volume of the product is primarily determined by the ability to meet customer needs. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing consumer behavior is the first step towards taking appropriate decisions in marketing to increase sales of honey. The constant changes in the market economy in Poland as well as the progressive impact of globalization make for a rapid evolution in consumer behavior (Sagan, 2005). In-depth knowledge of the consumer cannot be underestimated since the knowledge of a behavior, the ability to predict it and to respond appropriately, leads to

economic and social success (Gajewski, 1994; Falkowski and Tyszka, 2006). The honey market is not exempt from the laws of the market that are related to supply and demand and marketing activities. The main factors that determine the profitability of beekeeping activity are the production and sales of honey. These factors are responsible for about 90% of apiary income (Majewski, 2010). Honey does not, however, belong to the group of those articles which are consumed daily, therefore its consumption in Poland is low (Mruk, 1987; Marzec, 1998). Most consumers turn to it out of necessity, or are honey lovers. Honey is a relatively high priced product, thus it is typically regarded as a luxury. Expenditure incurred on the purchase,

limits consumption of this product. Honey is consumed primarily for nutritional benefits and as a preventative treatment. For this reason, it is mostly consumed by the elderly and children. In Poland, 65 - 70% of the honey distribution takes place primarily through producer-consumer distribution channels (Bratkowski and Wilde, 2002; Borowska, 2011; Semkiw and Ochal, 2012). This allows the producer to have better control over the sales as well as better customer service (Pawłowska-Tyszko and Śrubkowska, 2006). Direct selling is more important in building consumer confidence in the quality of honey, as compared to other distribution channels (Semkiw and Ochal, 2012). There is an observed phenomenon of consumer attachment to the place in which the honey was purchased. Such an attachment is undoubtedly associated with building a relationship based on a solid foundation of confidence in the honey manufacturer. This trust can be obtained by placing accurate information about the nutrient content on the label. The listed information will not only provide consumers with knowledge about the product but also help them make a more informed choice of honey (Arszułowicz, 2009; Włodarczyk-Śpiewak, 2001). The listed nutrient content documents the product's quality (Gutkowska and Ozimek, 2002).

Consumer behaviour stems from many different reasons, including habits and state of consciousness. According to the theory of consumer behavior, the main determinants of the number and structure of the purchased goods are consumer preferences and consumer budget constraints (Zielińska and Zieliński, 2004; Sagan, 2005). Consumer preferences being subjective ideas of the product based on the choice to select a specific item among many others (Gutkowska and Ozimek, 2002). Therefore, in order to create a good strategy to sell a product, it is crucial that one understands the needs, preferences, and expectations of the consumer (Wilde and Szulc, 2000; Marzec, 2002; Światowy, 2006; Karczewska, 2010).

The volume of honey production in Poland is highly dependent on the number and capacity of colonies, nectar flow, weather conditions, and support programs for the beekeeping

sector. Honey production in 2008 and 2009 amounted to 18 thousand and 15 thousand tonnes, respectively (Semkiw and Ochal, 2012). However, in 2010 and 2011, honey production was 12.5 thousand and 23.0 thousand tonnes, respectively (according to the Foreign Trade Information Centre of the Ministry of Finance). According to the Central Statistics Office (Mieczkowski, 2007), consumption of honey in Poland, in 2007, amounted to 0.5 kg per year per capita (as against the EU-25 average of 0.7 kg/person). Currently, the consumption of honey is slightly higher, and is 0.60 - 0.62 kg per person per year (MARD data).

The unit price of 1 kg of honey depends primarily on the harvest quantity (weather conditioned), the particular variety of honey, and also on the supply of the product and its demand on the market (Semkiw and Ochal, 2012). The cost of production, the form of sales, and the cost of packaging are also taken into account when discussing the price of honey (Mieczkowski, 2005; 2007).

The first aim of this study was to investigate the socio-economic factors influencing the decision-making process related to the purchase of honey. The second aim was to determine the importance of these factors on consumer buying behaviour. The point of departure of the study was to learn about consumer preferences determining the purchase of honey.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was a fieldwork, face-to-face survey. The study used a questionnaire containing 40 questions. People who do not consume honey were asked about the reasons they do not consume honey, and about possible forms of sales promotion that might stimulate their interest in the product.

Street surveys were conducted in the months of August through December 2011 and March through July 2012. The study assumed the surveys would continue over a period of 12 months, unfortunately, due to difficult weather conditions (severe frosts in January - February 2012) it was necessary to interrupt the research.

The research was conducted in the region of southwest Poland (Lower Silesia, Opole, Silesia, and Wielkopolska). More than half of the surveys were taken in cities with populations over 100,000 (academic centers, e.g. Opole, Wrocław, Poznań, Katowice). All respondents came from the study area.

Respondents were chosen randomly and the random sample of 540 respondents was not divided into segments. Each household had a representative who was one individual member of the family. The average household of surveyed respondents was made up of 3.8 persons.

Received responses were coded. Each response was assigned a consecutive number (e.g. a = 1, b = 2, etc.). For multiple-choice answers, coding was held analogically to the above.

Each respondent was assigned the next sequential number. Respondents not consuming honey received serial numbers.

Numerical data prepared as above, was entered into Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet. Several methods for calculating the relative frequency of the occurrence of the variable were used in developing the study results. The type of method used was dependent on the number of answers from single and multiple choice questions. For single choice questions, the rate reflects the structure of the overall population ($n_o = 540$) or in the surveyed population declaring the consumption of honey ($n_c = 501$). For multiple-

choice questions, several indicators were used, depending on the intended purpose.

Popularity Index W_p :

$$W_p = \frac{N_i}{N_c}$$

n_c - number of study respondents ($n_c = 501$)

N_i - number of specific i-th category (variable features)

Popularity Index (W_p) is the ratio of tested variable feature to the number of study respondents (average number of people pointing to a particular response).

RESULTS

The results of the study showed that out of 540 people 39 (i.e. 7.2% of respondents) declared that honey is not consumed in their households. The vast majority of respondents representing households were female (64.1%). Most representatives (77.3%) were up to 34 years old. The group of people with a higher education constituted 40.9% (Tab. 1).

An analysis of the surveyed data revealed that honey is not considered a staple food item. Only 20.6% of respondents stated a daily consumption of this product while almost 39% of respondents stated that they consumed it only occasionally (Fig. 1).

Table 1.

Characteristics of respondent types

Specifications	In total		People consuming honey		People not consuming honey		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
In total	540	100	501	100	39	100	
Gender	Female	346	64.1	319	63.7	27	69.2
	Male	194	35.9	182	36.3	12	30.8
Age	18-24	225	41.7	207	41.3	18	46.2
	25-34	138	25.6	131	26.1	7	17.9
	35-44	79	14.6	73	14.6	6	15.4
	45-54	54	10.0	50	10.0	4	10.3
	55 and more	44	8.1	40	8.0	4	10.3

Table 1. Continued

Characteristics of respondent types							
Education	Primary	7	2.0	3	0.9	4	14.8
	Vocational	24	4.4	23	4.6	1	2.6
	Secondary	150	27.8	137	27.3	13	33.3
	Incomplete higher	138	25.6	129	25.7	9	23.1
	Higher	221	40.9	209	41.7	12	30.8
Number of people in households	1-2	121	22.4	106	21.2	15	38.5
	3	123	22.8	113	22.6	10	25.6
	4	137	25.4	128	25.5	9	23.1
	5	84	15.6	80	16.0	4	10.3
	6 and more	69	12.8	68	13.6	1	2.6
Net income per single person	Under 300 PLN	34	6.3	32	6.4	2	5.1
	301-500 PLN	66	12.2	60	12.0	6	15.4
	501-1000 PLN	138	25.6	134	26.7	4	10.3
	1001-1500 PLN	126	23.3	113	22.6	13	33.3
	1501-2000 PLN	108	20.0	100	20.0	8	20.5
	Over 2000 PLN	68	12.6	62	12.4	6	15.4
The main Source of income in households	Manual labor	154	28.5	140	27.9	13	33.3
	White-collar	145	26.9	131	26.1	13	33.3
	Health service	9	1.7	10	2.0	0	0.0
	Agriculture	28	5.2	29	5.8	0	0.0
	Contract work	10	1.9	7	1.4	3	7.7
	Annuity	2	0.4	2	0.4	0	0.0
	Old age pension	22	4.1	21	4.2	0	0.0
	Non-revenue	3	0.6	0	0.0	3	7.7
More than one source	167	30.9	161	32.1	7	17.9	
The amount spent monthly on the purchase of food	Under 300 PLN	29	5.4	21	4.2	9	23.1
	400-600 PLN	148	27.4	145	28.9	3	7.7
	700-1000 PLN	184	34.1	168	33.5	16	41.0
	1100-1500 PLN	124	23.0	118	23.6	5	12.8
	1600-2000 PLN	47	8.7	41	8.2	6	15.4
	Over 2000 PLN	8	1.5	8	1.6	0	0.0

Table 1. Continued

Characteristics of respondent types							
Place of living	City with a population over 500 000	103	19.1	95	19.0	8	20.5
	City with a population from 200 000 to 500 000	89	16.5	83	16.6	6	15.4
	City with a population from 100 000 to 200 000	100	18.5	87	17.4	13	33.3
	City with a population from 20 000 to 100 000.	94	17.4	91	18.2	3	7.7
	City with a population under 20 000	76	14.1	70	14.0	6	15.4
	Village	78	14.4	75	15.0	3	7.7
Province	Wielkopolska	125	23.1	118	23.6	7	17.9
	Lower Silesia	155	28.7	141	28.1	14	35.9
	Opole	152	28.1	145	28.9	7	17.9
	Silesia	108	20.0	97	19.4	11	28.2

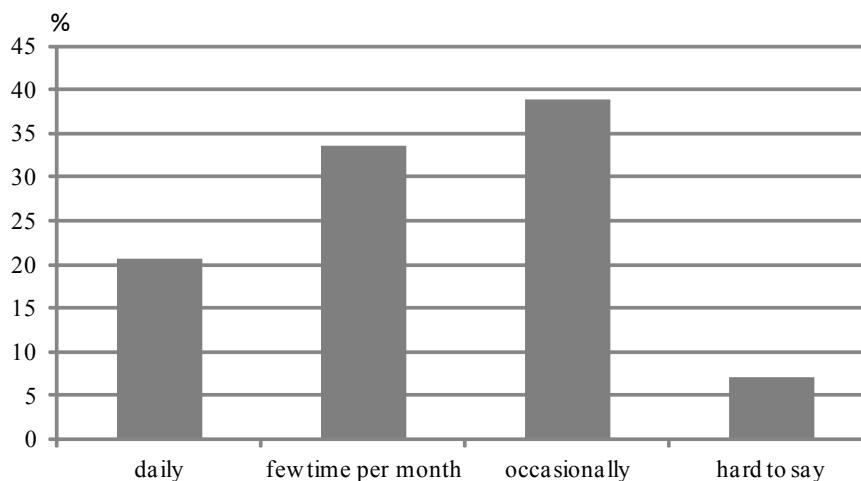


Fig. 1. Declared frequency of honey consumption.

The average monthly consumption of honey attributed to one household was 0.42 kg, i.e. about 0.11 kg per person (Fig. 2). The annual honey consumption in households surveyed averaged 1.32 kg per person. It has been shown that most households (up to 49.2%) had the

lowest monthly consumption of honey of less than 0.25 kg, or 0.066 kg per person. On the other hand, households in which more than 1.51 kg (about 0.4 kg/person) of honey per month was consumed accounted for only 3%.

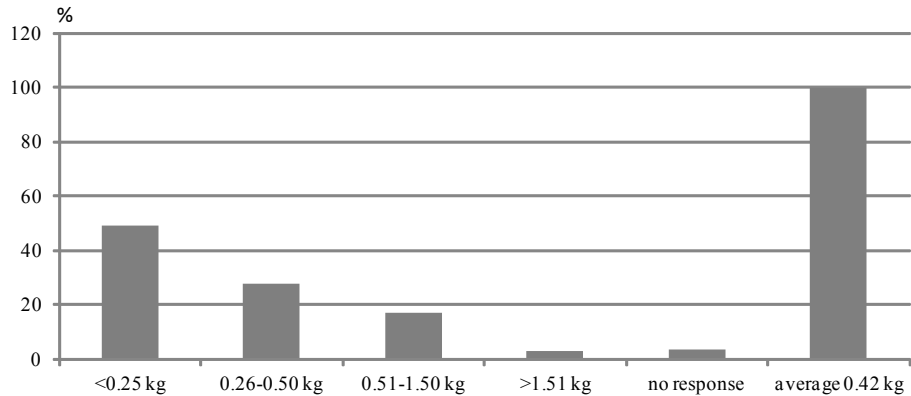


Fig. 2. Declared monthly consumption of honey in the surveyed households.

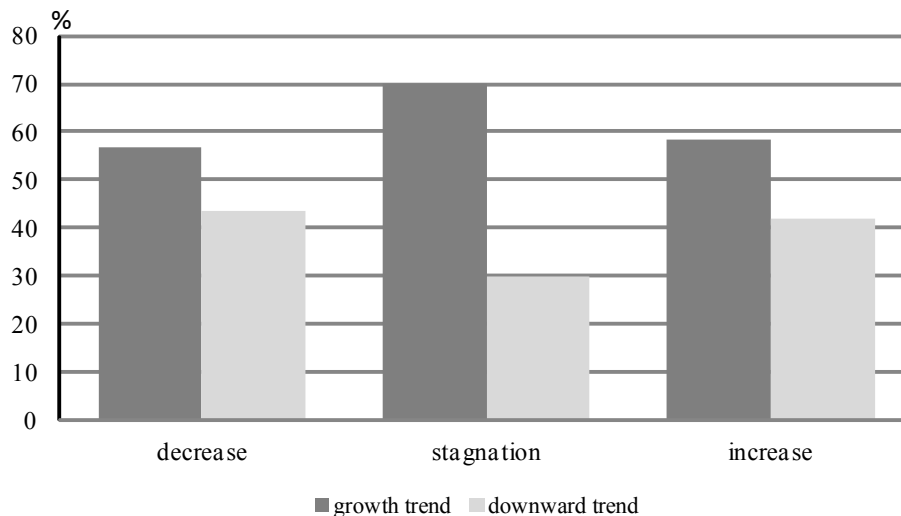


Fig. 3. Forecast of consumption of honey among respondents.

The consumption of honey in recent years has remained stable for over half of the respondents, i.e. 57.3% (287 respondents) (Fig. 3). However, analysis of the change within the group, showed that 30% of the respondents said there was a possibility of increasing their consumption of honey. It has been shown that for 11% of the respondents, there was a decrease in consumption, while for 31.8% an increase was observed. Up to 41.8% of the respondents in the group with a downward trend (i.e. 46 subjects) and 43.4% in the group with a growth trend, would like to increase their consumption of honey. Such a continued trend is a very good prognosis for the beekeeping sector. As many as 35.6% of the respondents said that if it was not for financial constraints, they would definitely increase their consumption of honey. The obtained results showed that the level of income was an important factor when considering the purchasing behavior of consumers.

Subsequently, the subjective feelings of respondents about honey prices was analysed (Fig. 4) to assess consumer awareness of this factor. The surveys showed that as many as 60.1% of the respondents felt that the price of honey was high or very high. However, 38.3% of respondents said that the prices of honey were appropriate, and only 1.6% considered it as low. These results indicate that the high price of honey causes frequent fluctuations in the decision-making process especially within the group of the low-income consumers. The high price deters the consumers from making the purchase, or forces them to search for a cheaper substitute that would meet their consumer needs.

The relationship between the income level and the monthly consumption level of honey is difficult to predict. If it were only a question of economic factors, the actual volume of consumption would be expected to increase with income (according to Engel's first law). However,

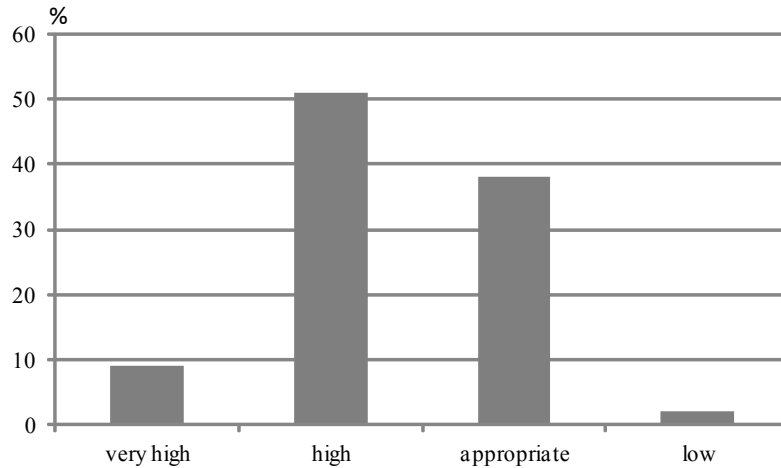


Fig. 4. Price of honey according to the respondents

Table 2.

Influence of net household income on consumption of honey [%]		Net income per capita per month (PLN)					
Specification	Frequency	<300	301 - 599	600 - 1099	1100 - 1599	1600 - 2000	>2001
Frequency of honey purchase	Once a month	-	13.4	12.0	6.2	16.0	17.8
	Once every 3 months	3.2	11.7	24.7	27.5	20.0	27.5
	Once every six months	84.4	25.0	19.5	19.5	30.0	24.2
	Once a year	6.3	18.4	27.7	30.1	18.0	17.8
	Upon consumption	6.3	31.7	16.5	16.9	16.0	13.0
Annual consumption of honey for 1 person	Up to 0.79 kg	68.8	48.4	52.3	49.6	46.0	35.5
	0.80-1.50 kg	18.8	26.7	25.4	26.6	29.0	40.4
	1.51-4.70 kg	9.4	16.7	15.7	20.4	15.0	19.4
	more than 4.71 kg	-	5.0	3.0	0.9	6.0	1.7
Frequency of honey consumption	Every day	-	26.7	8.3	23.9	29.0	32.3
	Several times a month	53.2	41.7	37.4	28.4	27.0	27.5
	Occasionally	40.7	18.4	48.6	36.3	40.0	40.4
	Hard to say	6.3	13.4	6.0	11.6	4.0	-

the relationship between the level of income and the frequency of consumption among the respondents is often due to such variables as habit or tradition.

The frequency in which honey is purchased strongly depends on the level of the consumers' income (Tab. 2). None of the surveyed households in the lowest income category (up to 300 PLN per person) declared the highest frequency of honey purchase (i.e. once a month). Once every six months was the stated time period

given that 84.4% of the surveyed households in the lowest income category usually purchase honey. The economic factor, meaning the level of income, is evidently the major limiting factor in the honey purchase process. However, the results in the next category of income (i.e. 301 - 500 PLN per person) were not so uniform. The percentage of once-a-month honey buyers was quite substantial and amounted to 13.4%. The group of respondents purchasing honey on a regular basis, or "as soon as it is consumed" was more than double and amounted to 31.7%. In other categories of income, the number of respondents corresponding to each purchase frequency, showed some repetition.

For monthly consumption of honey a direct relationship between the level of income and a gradual increase in the consumption level could be observed (Tab. 2). However, for the highest income category, only 21.1% of households declared consumption of more than 0.5 kg per month out of which only 1.7% of monthly consumption was above 1.51 kg.

The results show that 26.7% of consumers with a monthly income between 301 - 500 PLN per person consume honey every day, and 41.7% of them several times a month. The biggest impact of income on the frequency of honey consumption was seen for the consumers with a monthly income of up to 300 PLN per person. Within this group no daily consumption of honey was declared. However, the declaration of honey consumption several times a month in this group was the highest and amounted to 53.2%.

The compiled data shows that the respondents usually buy honey in the standard container size which is the equivalent of 0.9 liters (about 1.3 kg). This pattern is repeated in all categories of the frequency of purchase segment, with the exception of respondents who purchase honey only once a year. A once-a-year purchase of honey was declared by 22.6% of the respondents and half of them chose the 0.5 kg container of honey when purchasing.

Acquisition of the product can be carried out in different ways (Tab. 3). Direct purchase from a beekeeper was chosen as the most popular

Table 3.

Popularity of various forms of selling honey

Form of selling	Generally		Sometimes		Seldom		Never	
	Number of responses	Wp (%)	Number of responses	Wp (%)	Number of responses	Wp (%)	Number of responses	Wp (%)
Direct purchase from beekeeper	320	63.7	52	10.4	35	7.0	89	17.8
Through a friend	129	25.7	115	23.0	68	13.6	184	36.7
Super- and hypermarkets	75	15.0	47	9.4	89	17.8	285	56.9
Market	56	11.2	58	11.6	96	19.2	286	57.1
Health food shop	40	8.0	54	10.8	70	14.0	332	66.3
Occasional events	29	5.8	71	14.2	53	10.6	343	68.5
Gifts	23	4.6	25	5.0	34	6.8	418	83.4
Own apiary	12	2.4	1	0.2	2	0.4	482	96.2
Small housing estate shops	6	1.2	41	8.2	108	21.6	341	68.1
Direct purchase from vendor / peddler	4	0.8	19	3.8	10	2.0	463	92.4
The Internet	0	0	5	1.0	11	2.2	480	95.8

W_p - popularity index (average number of people pointing to a particular response)

point of sale. The results showed that 63.9% of the respondents noted that this was their preferred option for buying honey. Another popular way was through a friend who is in contact with a honey producer. This option was chosen by 25.7% of respondents. The least popular forms of purchase are the Internet - 3.4% and purchase from strangers and peddlers - 3%.

Respondents most often buy honey directly from the beekeeper (320 responses) or through friends (129 responses). The position of super- and hypermarkets in the ranking is more noteworthy. Only 15% of respondents said they usually buy honey in the super- or hypermarket and as many as 56.9% of respondents said they never buy their honey there. The most important factor in choosing the place of purchase according to 47.7% of the respondents, was trust in the seller. However, at the same time, this factor was not taken into account by 20% of the respondents, and 12.4%

identified it as insignificant. Availability was also among the most important factors for 37.7% of the respondents. Habit and favorable prices were indicated by 34.3% of the respondents as the most important. Special origin of honey, such as its certification, significantly influenced the purchase decisions of 24% of respondents. The appearance of the packaging was the factor that influenced the decisions the least. Decisions as to the choice of the honey point of sale, were conditioned not only by the buyer's desire but also by convenience and location. Therefore, the structure of the selection of points of sale, taking into account the place of residence of the respondents, was examined (Tab. 4). Residents of all places, by far chose to buy directly from the beekeeper or during occasional events. Rural area inhabitants constitute, however, most of this group (81.4%). Supermarkets were the most popular among buyers in cities of 500 thousand or more residents (21.1%).

Table 4.

Popularity of different forms of sales depending on the place of residence

Place of living	Number of respondents	The most common place of honey purchase / acquisition (%)									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
City with a population over 500 000	95	21.1	2.2	18.5	6.4	54.8	1.1	22.2	2.2	2.2	5.3
City with a population from 200 000 to 500 000	83	10.9	0.0	10.9	12.1	71.1	3.7	27.8	1.3	1.3	6.1
City with a population from 100 000 to 200 000	87	16.1	2.3	8.1	9.2	61.0	15.0	34.5	0.0	1.2	1.2
City with a population from 20 000 to 100 000.	91	14.3	0.0	11.0	7.7	59.4	2.2	25.3	0.0	4.4	2.2
City with a population under 20 000	70	17.2	2.9	11.5	8.6	58.6	7.2	18.6	1.5	1.5	10.0
Village	75	9.4	0.0	1.7	0.0	81.4	81.4	25.4	0.0	4.0	4.0

1 - Super- and hypermarkets; 2 - Small housing estate shops; 3 - Market; 4 - Health food shop; 5 - Direct purchase from beekeeper ; 6 - Occasional events; 7 - Through a friend who is in contact with the honey producer; 8 - Direct purchase from vendor /peddler; 9 - Own apiary; 10 - Gifts.

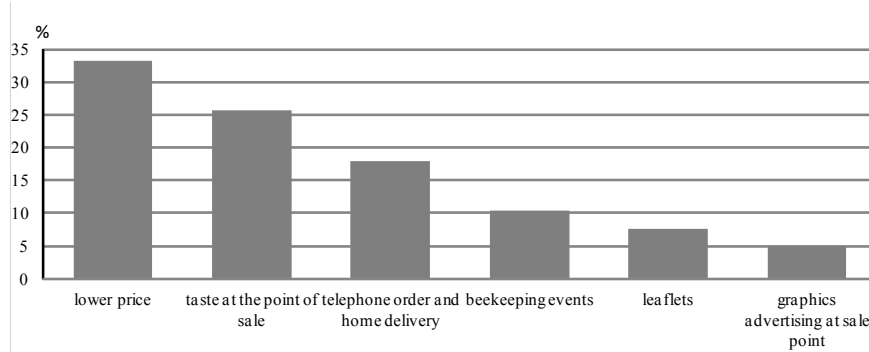


Fig. 5. The list of different forms of marketing strategies to encourage consumers to purchase honey

Of all the respondents, only 39 indicated that they do not eat honey. These people were asked to rank the reasons starting from the most important. Almost half of the respondents (41.0% of responses) do not like the taste of honey. Being inconvenient to use was a determining reason for a quarter of the respondents (25.6% of responses). According to 17.9% of the respondents, honey is too expensive and 10.3% of them stated that honey has harmed them in some way. Respondents who do not consume honey were asked to choose options that in any way would encourage them to buy honey (Fig. 5).

The obtained results indicated that the most favorable honey purchase incentive would be lower prices and the opportunity to taste at the point of sale.

DISCUSSION

It is unarguably true that low-income households curtail their spending of more expensive foods in favour of cheaper substitutes. According to 60.1% of the respondents, prices of honey are high or very high and for 38.3% of the respondents, the prices are at an appropriate level. This trend is confirmed by Winiarski (2003), indicating that for 75% of respondents, the price of honey is a very or extremely important factor when making purchasing decisions. Somewhat different results were obtained by Marzec (1998) in studies carried out in 1994 - 1995 in the former Kraków Voivodeship, where for 40% of respondents, the consumer price of honey was the main factor influencing their willingness to purchase honey. Another study of Marzec (1999) conducted in 1998 - 1999, reported that half of the respondents considered honey

prices to be adequate while only one-third of the respondents saw it as high. Bratkowski et al. (2008) examined purchasing preferences pertaining to strictly defined consumer needs, such as the needs of customers of apiary farms. Their findings showed that price was only cited as a third determining factor when buying honey. In the markets of many countries honey prices are rising, but parallel to the level of consumption of this product. The observations of the honey market shows that price increase was higher in direct sales channels than that in retail sales channels such as supermarkets and hypermarkets (Caron, 2000). However, on global markets honey prices had reached a plateau before rising slightly above the minimum level in recent years, thus leading to a decrease in the sale of honey in the world markets (Phipps, 2006).

A decisive impact on the level of consumption of food products is primarily attributed to changes in the real income of the population. It has been shown that many Polish households are unable to allocate sufficient funds for the purchase of food products (Zielińska and Zieliński, 2004), which has been further confirmed by the results of our study. In none of the surveyed households with the lowest disposable income per capita, did honey purchases occur on a monthly basis. The study showed that 84.4% of respondents in this group stated that they purchased honey twice a year. However, while for 68.8% of respondents the annual consumption of honey was below 0.79 kg/person, the 53.2% of respondents in this group said they consume honey several times a month. These figures prove that while low per capita consumption is indeed related to a poor financial situation, it does not necessarily constitute an

obstacle. Although the low disposable income and the high price of honey together contributed to a significant limitation of consumption, it seems that some inner need (perhaps conditioned by an age-old tradition of eating honey) assured the same level of honey consumption was maintained throughout the year. Zielińska and Zieliński (2004) concluded that the impact of income on food consumption depends on the income level and the coefficients of income elasticity of demand for individual articles. Unfortunately, no recorded study of the consumption of honey as determined by the level of income and the rate of purchase and consumption can be found. For this reason, a comparison of our own results with other works is not possible. Engel's 1st law can serve as the only confirmation of the observed regularity of an increase in consumption connected with an increase in revenue (Światowy, 2006; Karczewska, 2010). According to the study, in 49.2% of households 0.25 kg of honey was consumed per month and only in 3.2% of households was this consumption above 1.51 kg. The results apply only to households where honey is consumed. The average annual consumption of honey demonstrated in our study, was 1.32 kg per person, which is much higher than the national average in 2007, 0.5 kg per person (Mieczkowski, 2007). According to a study by Giemza (2004), up to 77.73% of the respondents declared their monthly consumption of honey as being below 0.25 kg, and only 3.02% of the respondents declared over 0.5 kg. More important for the purpose of further discussion, is the frequency of honey consumption. In these same studies (Giemza, 2004) an occasional consumption was a choice of 50% of the respondents, while a regular daily intake was declared by only 9.18% of people surveyed. Our results, on the other hand, indicated that as much as 20.6% of the respondents consumed honey daily, while 38.9% of the respondents consumed honey only occasionally. However, 21.8% of all respondents felt that the consumption of honey in their households had increased over the past two years.

Distribution of honey takes place primarily through producer-consumer or manufacturer-retailer-consumer channels (Caron, 2000; Pawłowska-Tyszko and Śrubkowska, 2006; Borowska, 2011; Kumar et al., 2012). Marzec (2003) in her research showed that 84% of consumers purchase honey at the store, and only 21% directly from the beekeeper. Quite the opposite ratio was obtained in the present study, as an estimated 60% of the respondents are supplied with honey directly from the beekeeper. The division of respondents according to the place of residence showed that not only the inhabitants of villages and small towns purchased honey from beekeepers but also the vast majority of the residents of the largest cities chose this way of supply. Inhabitants of big cities, 21.1% of respondents, most often bought honey in hyper- and super-markets. This is confirmed by Marzec's study (2000, 2003) carried out in Kraków. However, the author's research shows that as many as 54% of consumers from large cities usually purchased honey in hyper- and supermarkets. The goal of our research on consumer behavior was to gather information on where the product is purchased and to get to know what drives the decision-making process. The reasons can be many and varied. Each reason is the result of the personal convictions, beliefs, and attitudes of the individuals examined. The achieved results allow us to conclude that for the surveyed households, the most important factor determining the place that the honey is purchased, is trust in the seller (47.7%). Consistent with this finding, the most preferred form of purchase, i.e. to buy directly from the beekeeper, implies that the vendor who is a direct manufacturer enjoys more credibility. In the studies of Bratkowski et al. (2005) the most important factor cited by the consumer and determining the point of purchase was the quality of the honey (37%), followed by trust in the beekeeper (33%), and finally price (30%). According to Winiarski (2003), the price is determined by the place of the honey purchase. However, our own studies put the price only in fourth place with 34.3% of responses, preceded by the trust in the seller and the availability of the wanted product,

37.7%; and habit, 34.4%. On this basis, one can conclude that the manufacturer-consumer distribution channel is extremely valuable. As pointed out by Pawłowska-Tyszko and Śrubkowska (2006), the manufacturer is in direct contact with the buyer of the final product, and can consequently access market information faster, and quickly react to customer needs. As the market research shows, the majority of honey in Poland; 65%, is sold by beekeepers directly to consumers, bypassing middlemen (Semkiw and Ochal, 2012). The reason for this may be associated with the popular theory that the honey purchased directly from the beekeeper is of better quality (Bratkowski et al., 2005). This theory was confirmed by the results of own research where 78% of the respondents were of the same opinion, pointing out indicators such as better taste and aroma of honey in favour of the beekeepers. In addition, 29.1% of the respondents emphasized the better range of available varieties as an advantage enjoyed by shops which they highly appreciated. According to Marzec (2003), consumers of the largest cities are primarily guided by the large choice of products (76%), followed by lower prices (65%) and convenient location (42%) when choosing a retail outlet. The author states that the evolution of consumer purchasing behavior is undoubtedly influenced by the change in lifestyles (Marzec, 2003). Looking at the diversity of choices of respondents with regard to the place of residence, similar conclusion can be drawn (Tab. 4).

Today's consumers are more sensitive to the role of social status. Demand is not always functional and more consumers intentionally purchase food products that demonstrate social status and cause psychological effects (Zielińska and Zieliński, 2004). The results obtained in the group of respondents who do not consume honey can serve as proof. Although the majority noted that the main reason for not buying honey is the flavor, at the same time the vast majority expressed the desire to purchase it provided the prices were reduced.

Healthy, natural food has to compete with the products of the modern world, such as fast foods and convenience foods. On the other hand, the number of households who prefer high quality

food with valuable health benefits is on the rise. Factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior will therefore continue to change. The only way to increase profits from the sale of honey is to increase the advantages of the benefit basket which honey holds. With the creation of new, previously unsatisfied needs, the behavior of consumers relating to the acquisition of honey can be influenced, resulting in new patterns of consumption.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the obtained data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Economic factors such as the level of the net income per person in the household and the price of the product have a significant, but not mandatory influence on the purchasing decisions of honey consumers.

Almost half of the respondents indicated the lowest monthly consumption of honey amounting to less than 0.066 kg per person.

Most of the respondents declared constant consumption of honey in recent years.

Well over half (60.1%) of the respondents indicated the high or very high price of honey.

Direct purchase from the beekeeper was the most popular form of purchase among the respondents (63.9%).

Only 7.2% of the respondents declared a lack of interest in honey and its consumption.

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