

Analysis of consumer behaviour in self-service stores from Craiova

Ph.D Professor. Ion Stancu

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
University of Craiova
ion.stancu @ gmail.com;

Ph.D Candidate Cristina Ploscaru

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
University of Craiova
cristinafpk@yahoo.com.

***Abstract:** Consumption is a universal phenomenon. In order to exist, all living beings must consume. In a complex and dynamic environment, the ability to process marketing information is a source of sustainable competitive advantage. In the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in research concerns directed towards understanding both the market knowledge contributions to the company's marketing performance increase and the process by which such knowledge is generated. This paper highlights the results of a study, that of determining customer behaviour in self-service stores from Craiova.*

***Keywords:** consumer behaviour, marketing research, self-service stores*

Introduction

In recent decades, one of the key problems of manufacturing companies is the knowledge of how the consumers will respond to various factors that they will use in order to achieve their ultimate goal – the biggest profit.

The study of consumer's behaviour has become a concern of marketing specialists, because they can learn how buyers choose their goods and services required to meet their multiple needs, which are the stimuli that influence their choice.

The increasing complexity of economic life led to understanding the mechanism of human economic behaviour, which is becoming larger and more complicated, requiring a separate study for the two intrinsic components: the behaviour of the human as producer of goods and services and his behaviour as consumer.

For the contemporary society, where the scientific and technical progress tends, in many fields, to replace the producer-man with the producer-machine, the study of the consumption behaviour becomes very important and significant, especially since rare resources with alternative uses which human society has at its disposal require the production only of those goods and services that meet the needs in the needed quantities. Therefore, understanding and explaining consumer and purchase behaviour has become a necessity, and ignoring its means of manifestation, causes serious imbalance. Also, under considerable conditions of supply diversification, consumers have wide choice. On the other hand, increased purchasing power, simultaneous with raising the level of education and culture enables the purchaser to satisfy even more needs, more sophisticated and of a higher quality level, aspects that are compulsory for the producer to take into account, in order to meet consumers desires.

Studying the consumer behaviour enables a broader and more complex characterization of market phenomena, the development of more realistic strategies and the deployment of effective marketing actions.

The concept of consumer behaviour

As with any new field, conceptual approaches of consumer behaviour meet a wide variety, that expresses on one hand its complexity, but also the attention that it receives from specialists.

The behaviour is a set of external reactions by which individuals respond to stimuli. Psychologically, behaviour designates what is objectively observable in the global response of the individual, regardless of what he declares, of his thoughts and psychological attitudes. From a *sociological* point of view,

behaviour is the subject's activity in a given social situation. (P. Mâlcomete coord., Marketing dictionary, Publishing House Junimea, Iași 1979 p.72).

Marketing deals with the concept of consumer behaviour in both narrow and broad way, but most experts place its definition between the two extremes.

Thus, in a narrow way, consumer behaviour reflects „human behaviour when buying and/or consuming goods and services” (C. Florescu (coord.) p.156) and in a broad way – it encompasses the entire conduct of the final user of material and intangible goods, including, for example, voter's, doctor's patients or church parishioners behaviour. (Werner Kroeber Riel - Konsumentenverhalten - Auflage, Verlag Franz Vahlen München 1990 p. 1).

The well-known specialists J. F. Engel, R. D. Blackwell and D.T. Miniard in their work „Consumer Behaviour (ed. 5-a The Dryden Press, 1986) define consumer behaviour as „those actions of individuals directly involved in the production and use of goods and services, including the decision-making process that precedes and determines these acts”.

American Marketing Association defines consumer behaviour as „an interaction on the impression and perception, behaviour and natural common events through which human beings direct the changes in their lives”.

Obviously, we could present other attempts of delimitation of this concept, but we consider, that by systematizing them we can score some *key aspects* of consumer behaviour:

- Consumer behaviour is a complex system of events, attitudes, motivations, decisions;
- Development of human individuality, both naturally and through education is reflected in his behaviour by preferences, dislikes, beliefs, attitudes and values, their position in society, attended entourage, etc. This way, by combining individual circumstances and psychology the purchasing decisions of each individual will be influenced;
- Consumer behaviour is dynamic, both due to the evolution in time of consumers generation facing the changes they made, and to the emergence of new factors that directly influence their behaviour. The changing in time, determine the producers to always monitor their clients in order to have the safety of a real and correct perception;
- Consumers behaviour determine interactions and that is why it is important to know what consumers think (perception), feel (impression) and do (behaviour), which are the things and places that influence (Jim Blythe – Consumer behaviour, Ed.Teora 1998 p.11);
- Consumer behaviour determine changes between people and that it's why in the relationship between consumer, that sizes the demand, and producer, that sizes the offer on the market, the mutual understanding is essential in the buying process as in the production of goods and services (Ioan Mihaș, Marius Pop, Consumer and offer management, Ed. Dacia Cluj - Napoca 1996 p.14);
- Consumer behaviour involves successive or simultaneous actions for the selection of and alternative or another, embodied in decisions (P. Mâlcomete (coord.) – Marketing lexicon. p.67);
- The skyline of the consumer behaviour widens, especially due to the development and diversification within the non-profit service sector. As a result, in the present acceptance of the social marketing, consumer behaviour requires such a comprehensive approach that expresses the position of people, as such, towards all goods.
- Tangible and intangible appeared in the final consumption (P. Mâlcomete, Marketing, Ed. Academică Gh. Zane, Iași 1993 p.51);
- Consumer behaviour is the individual's reaction to various endogenous and exogenous variables.

It was observed that all these details, outlined best the comprehensive concept of consumer behaviour.

Research methodology on consumer behaviour in self-service stores from Craiova

From the specification of information to their analysis and interpretation, the entire process of marketing research seeks to answer the problems faced by managers in the choice of the most appropriate action plan. Marketing research does not only aim to obtain some data based on a

sophisticated methods, it aims the identification of decisional alternatives and their evaluation against the objectives of the company, the potential for increasing the profits and satisfaction of customer needs on short, medium and long term.

The purpose of our research is to determine the consumer behaviour in self-service store.

Target segment: the natural person segment will be targeted, customers that leave the stores will be interviewed by a questionnaire, respectively, according to the following ways of action.

Concerning the determination of communication aspects and satisfaction degree achieved within the store, the ways of action:

- Starting a marketing research based on questionnaire at the four stores (BILA, PRIMAVARA, SELGROS and METRO) from Craiova;
- The research sample of 140 persons will be distributed as follows: one 35 questionnaires for each store;
- Consumers will be interviewed when leaving the store;
- The research was conducted during **1-15 October 2009**.

Analysis and findings

The conducted marketing research revealed several aspects of consumers' behaviour in self-service stores. In this regard we can appreciate the following:

Of the total respondents, about 65%, choose where to buy their purchases out of necessity, due to the diversity of products in these stores (Fig. No.1). This is highlighted also in the identification of factors that may influence the consumer behaviour. 2 of 3 people choose the stores according to prices while only 1 of 3 persons chooses them because of promotions.

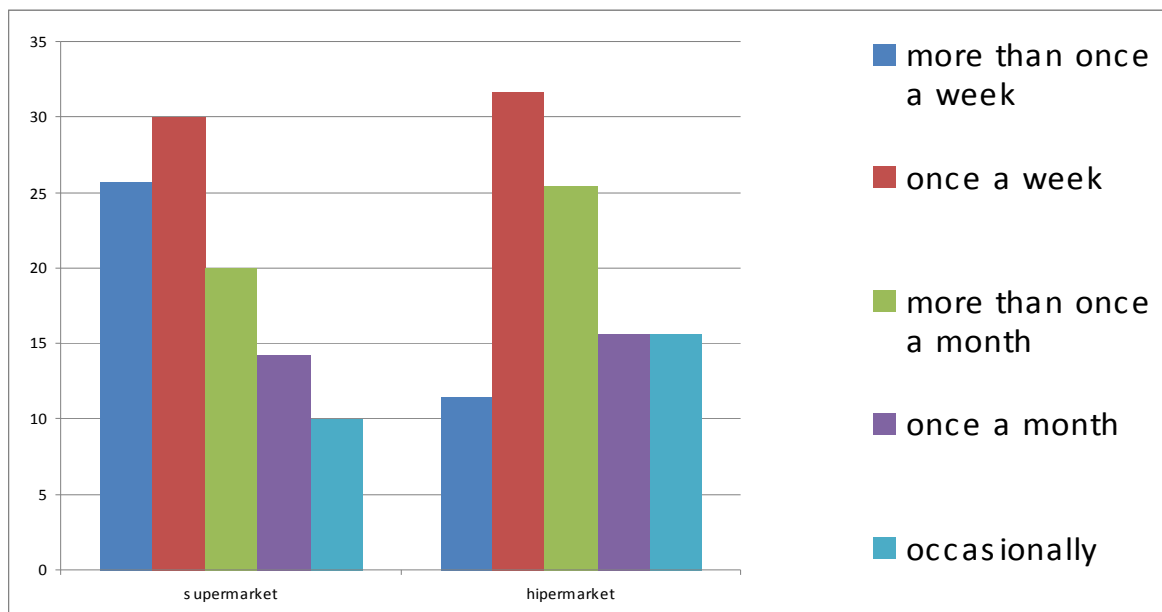


Fig. no.1 Frequency

The most commonly purchased products are food, followed by household products and cosmetics.

People who come shopping with a list are those falling between 30-45 years, these being in a much larger proportion than those between 20-30 years. Most of them respect it. People who do not have a shopping list rely on memory (and may forget to buy some products) or consider the store as an auxiliary memory, walking across various stands to remember what to buy, thereby risking to buy more than foresaw.

It was found that the time spent shopping in supermarkets is smaller than that spent shopping in hypermarkets, with a difference of some 30 to 45 minutes (fig. no. 2)

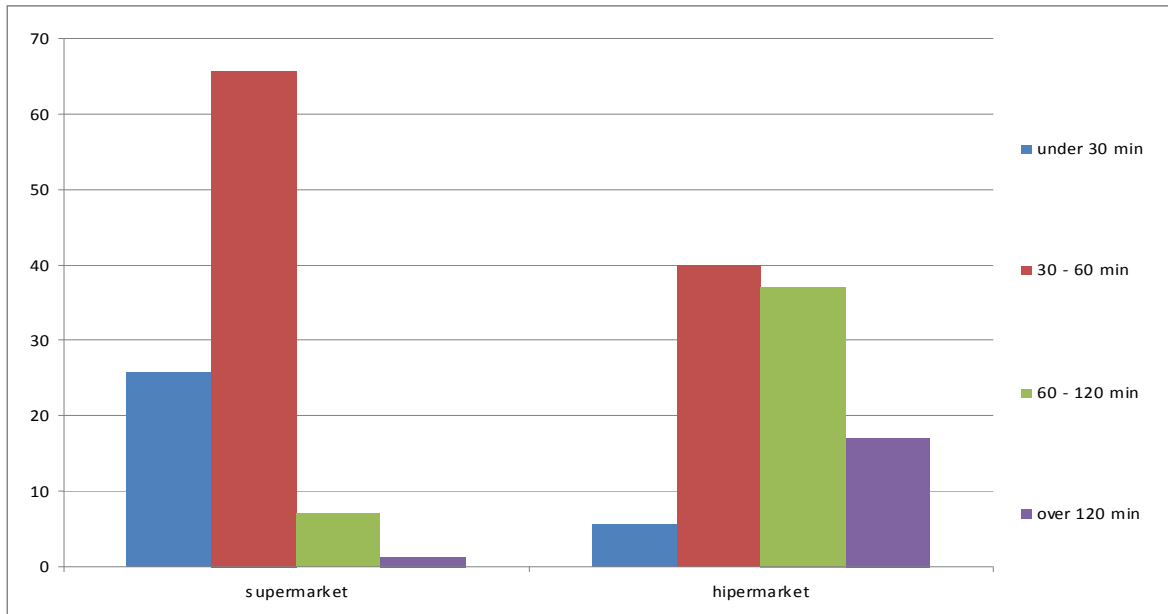


Fig. no. 2 Time spent shopping

It was also found that 1/3 of those polled are devoted both to product and brand but they are not devoted to the store where they do their shopping. This can determine the consumer to change his buying habits and to go to other stores. Following the analysis made, it was found that 2.3 from 3 persons choose to visit the entire store when going shopping. And those who choose to go directly to the stand they are interest in are those who devote less time shopping. (Fig. no. 3)

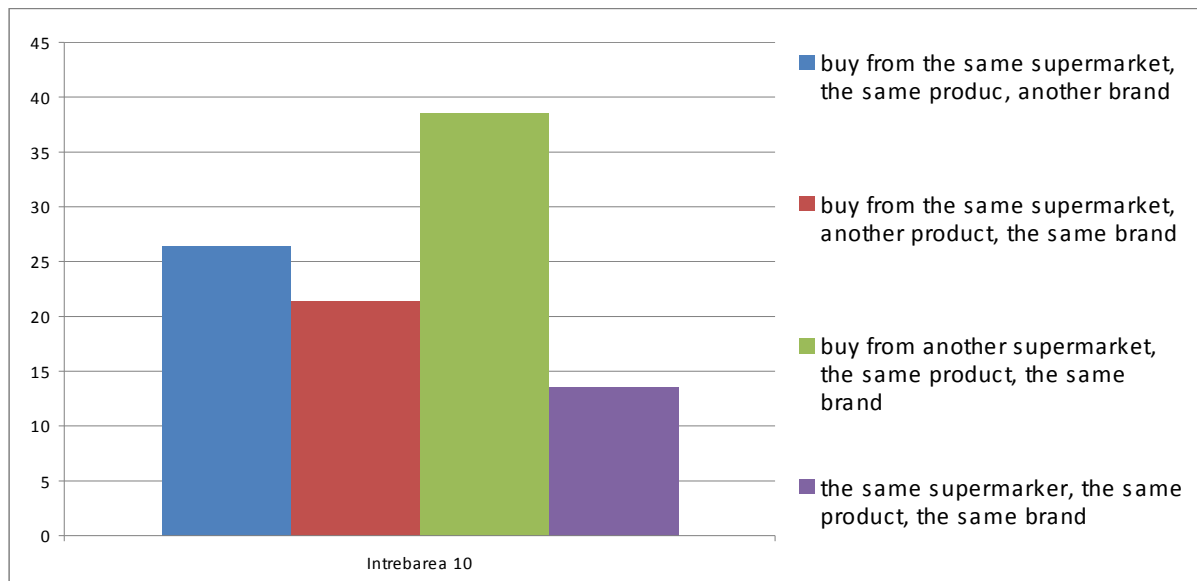


Fig. no. 3 Client fidelity

The thing that welcomes customers to self-service stores is the way that they display the products. Staff conduct is less appreciated by customers.

Another important aspect highlighted by the research would be the payment method, the most commonly used method being cash payments. Those who use bank cards as payment methods are mainly young people aged 20 to 30 years.

In figure no. 4 we can see that the value of purchases differ from shop to shop as follows: in supermarkets the value falls between 50-100 RON and even under 50RON, and in hypermarkets the value falls between 50-200 RON and even over 200RON.

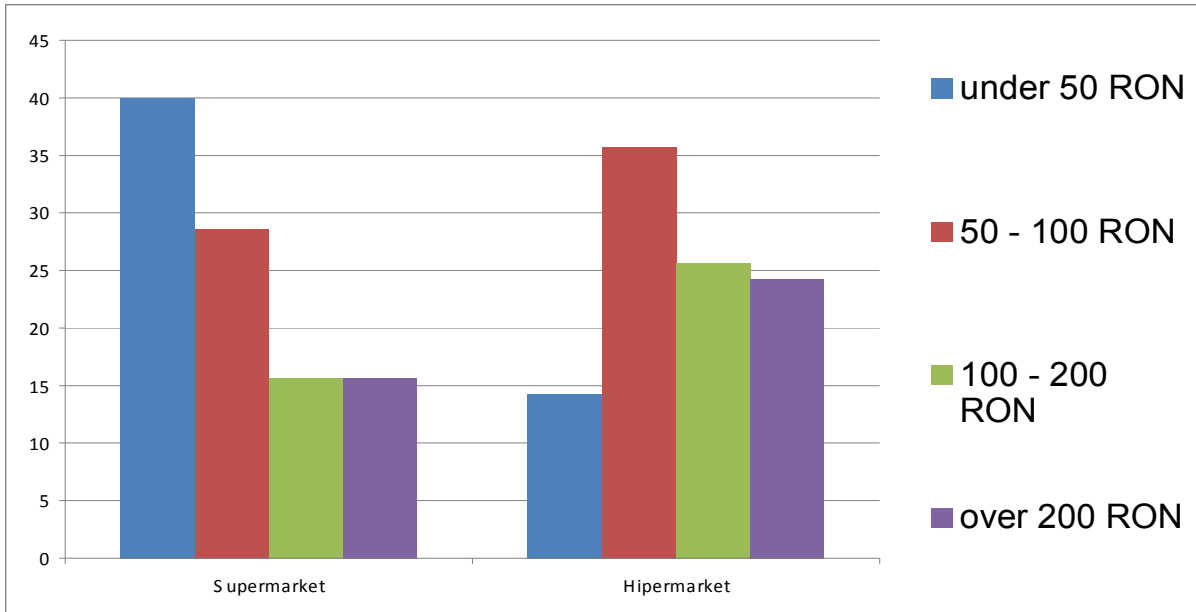


Fig. no.4 Shopping value

Figure 5 reveals that in supermarkets most consumers reside in Craiova (3 out of 4), while in hypermarkets 1 of 3 consumers are from another locality.

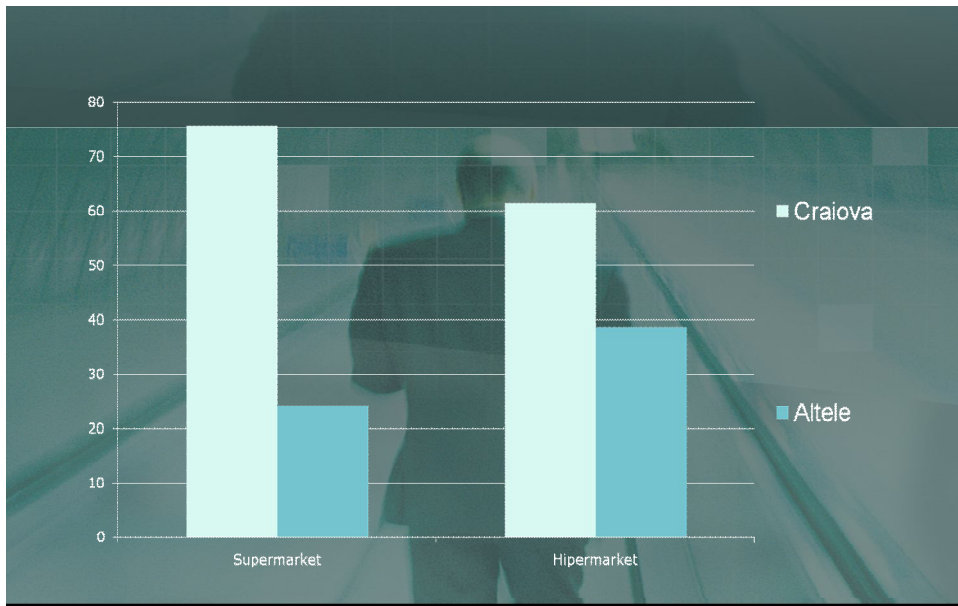


Fig. no. 5 Consumers' home

In supermarkets it's noted that the income of many consumers fall below 500RON and 500-1000RON, a smaller proportion is held by those with incomes over 1000RON. In hypermarkets the situation is otherwise and most consumers have incomes between 1000-2000RON and even over 2000RON, while consumers with an income below 500RON are of a smaller proportion (fig. no. 6).

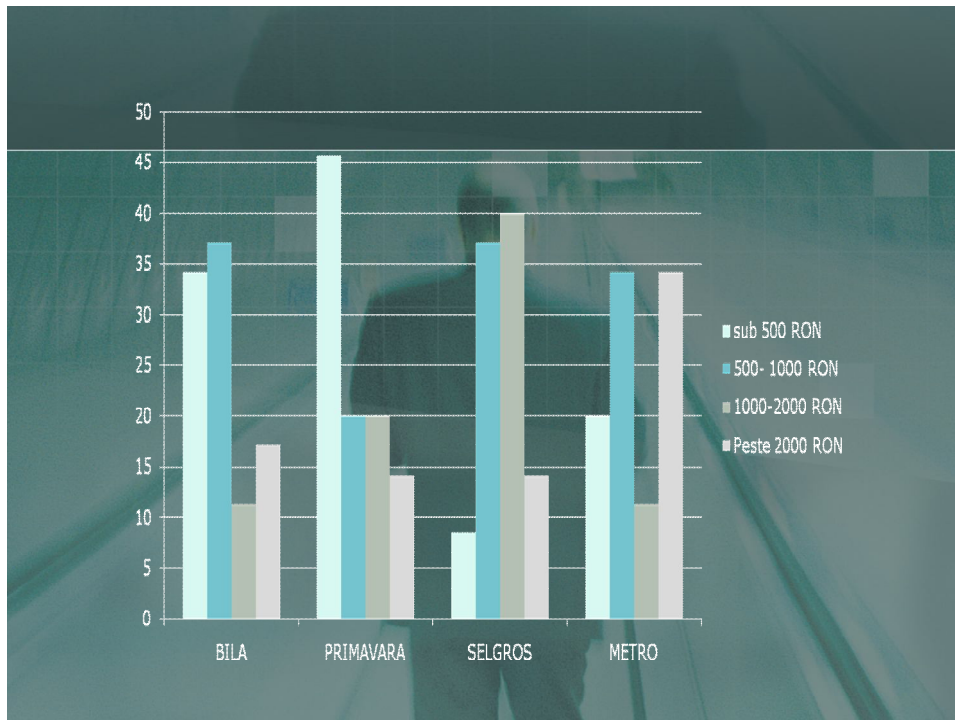


Fig. No. 6 Clients income

People who shop more frequently are those aged between 20-30 years, followed by those aged between 30-45 years. People over 45 scarcely go shopping. And those aged under 20 years represent a very small percentage (fig. no. 7).

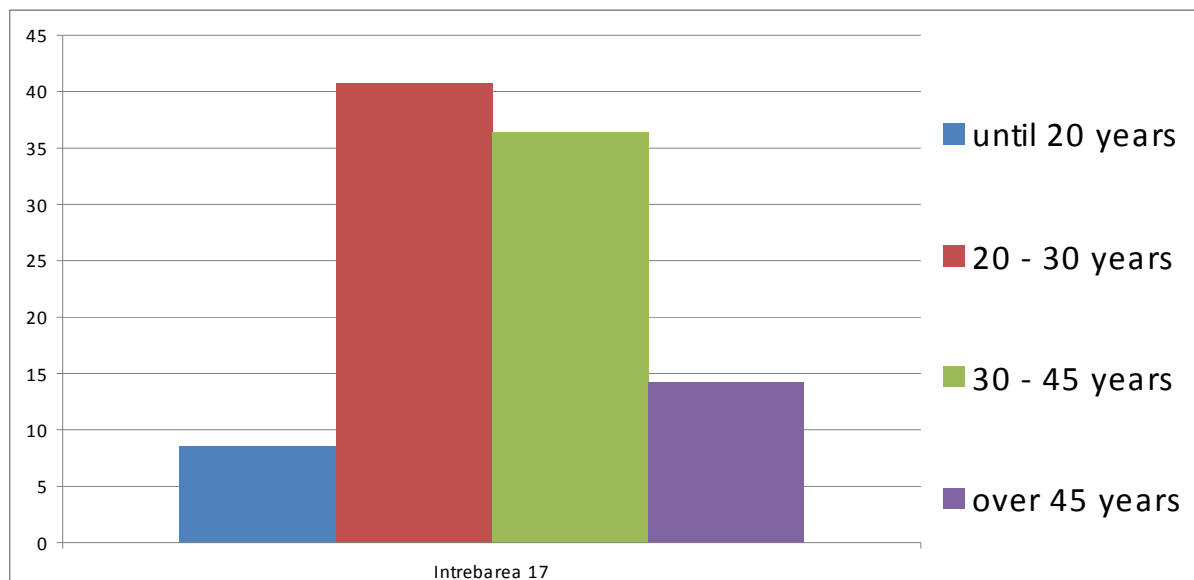


Fig. no. 7 Clients age

After analysing the factors that influence the purchase decision and the information relieved after the marketing research, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Consumer behaviour is the result on interaction of several factors including need, motivation, perception, environment and behaviour itself;

- Each consumer is unique and acts differently. This is highlighted in the survey, when following the collection of questionnaires was found that none of them contain identical answers;
- Consumers are grouped according to similar criteria needs, this groups are called segments;
- Respondents were segmented by age, income, living environment.

Bibliography

- [1] Iacob Cătoi (coord) – Cercetări de marketing, Editura Uranus, 2002;
- [2] Jim Blythe – Consumer behavior, Ed. Teora 1998;
- [3] J. F. Engel, R. D. Blackwell și D.T. Miniard - Consomer Behaviour, ed. 5-a The Dryden Press, 1986;
- [4] Werner Kroeber Riel - Konsumentenvertalten - Auflage, Verlag Franz Vahlen München;
- [5] P. Mâlcomete – Dicționar de marketing, Ed. Junimea, Iași;
- [6] P. Mâlcomete- Marketing, Ed. Academică Gh. Zane, Iași 1993;
- [7] Ioan Mihuț, Marius Pop, Consumatorul și managementul ofertei, Ed. Dacia Cluj - Napoca 1996;
- [8] Sica Stanciu, Bazele generale ale marketingului, București, 2001;