

## THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE FOOD BEHAVIOUR OF CONSUMERS – LITERATURE AND RESEARCH REVIEW

Gabriela Hanus<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Currently, market behaviour, including the food behaviour of consumers, shaped in societies is largely a consequence of civilizational and cultural development and the ongoing globalization process. The aim of this article is to discuss the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers based on secondary sources of information published over the period of 1995-2017. The article shows theoretical aspects of globalization and the food behaviour of consumers, the globalization phenomenon in the contemporary world and the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers. Across the studies covered by this paper it was found that the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers is visible in such behaviour as buying food in supermarkets, eating in fast food restaurants, looking for both comfort in eating and unique experiences. However, it has also been indicated that globalization influence on creation of some moves and attitudes against it, such as preferring domestic or ecological products, slow food ideas or actions in the field of food safety.

**JEL Classification Numbers:** F69; **DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.12955/cbup.v6.1151>

**Keywords:** Globalization, consumer food behaviour, consumer behaviour

### Introduction

Currently, market behaviour, including the food behaviour of consumers shaped in societies is largely a consequence of civilizational and cultural development and the ongoing globalization process. In the 21st century, globalization processes, which are influenced by easy access to the product, are extremely important. Buying global products, and expressing a lifestyle desired by buyers, contributes to the modelling of consumption patterns and the behaviour of consumers, thus leading to an increase in the role of some of the hitherto unimportant conditions of consumption. In the formation of household consumption, psychosocial patterns become particularly significant, determining the willingness to buy and appearing in such areas as social imitation, intra- and intergroup imitation, international imitation, ostentatious consumption, showing effect and fashion. It should be noted that fashion on the one side allows to express one's individuality, and on the other side, it is proof of belonging to a specific group (Niemczyk, 2004). For example, after the popularity of coloured, flavoured food with long shelf-life, consumers began to appreciate particularly what is produced directly by nature, without the use of plant protection products or antibiotics. In the time of industrial food production, natural products produced in a traditional way are particularly popular (Zachora & Juszcak, 2016, Hanus, 2017).

The aim of this article is to discuss the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers based on secondary sources of information published over the period of 1995-2017. The article shows theoretical aspects of globalization and the food behaviour of consumers, and the globalization phenomenon in the contemporary world and the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers. A literature review methodology has been used and in particular the latest publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals have been reviewed.

### Globalization and consumers' food behaviour in theoretical aspects

The phenomenon of globalization can be defined as a historical and spontaneous process of liberalization as well as the integration of capital, markets, labour force, technology and information into one interdependent global market (Lemańska-Majdzik & Sobiegraj, 2013). According to Maśloch (2013) globalization is a process integrating national and regional markets into one global market in which penetration and unification of economic, political and cultural spheres occurs. Gupta (2011) notices that there are five types of global flows, which are: ideascapes (flows of ideologies or political ideas, mediascapes (flows of image and communication), technoscapes (flows of technology and know-how), ethnoscapes (flows of migrants, tourists and foreign students) and finanscapes (flows of money and capital). Hartungi (2006) finds that globalization is generally seen as the 'breakdown of the following elements: borders between countries, governments, the economy and communities. It might also mean the increasing liberalization and openness of markets, particularly through the

---

<sup>1</sup> Gabriela Hanus, University of Economics in Katowice, Katowice, Poland, [gabriela.hanus@edu.uekat.pl](mailto:gabriela.hanus@edu.uekat.pl)

elimination of barriers to trade in goods and services and the development of an integrated international financial market’.

Consumption is a process that items such as food, non-food items and services are consumed. Its main purpose is to meet human needs (Piekut, 2009), but it should be noted that nowadays it has also become an important manifestation of the standard of living, the criterion of structuring society, as well as the way of communicating the identity of consumers. Sobczyk (2014) notes that consumption that enables people to meet their needs and expectations can become a factor initiating their action and creativity.

Due to the fact that eating food is a prerequisite for the proper functioning of the human body, nutritional needs are considered as the most important, and their fulfilment determines the development of further needs (Zalega, 2011).

The food behaviour of consumers is one of the most important forms of behaviour of consumers. It signifies ways of acting as well as attitudes of individuals, which are directly related to satisfying nutritional needs. Eating behaviour is related to the choice of food and dishes, the organization of their purchase, storage, the preparation of consumption, the composition of meals, the place and time of their consumption, as well as accompanying people (Goryńska-Goldmann & Ratajczak, 2010; Hanus, 2016).

### **Globalization phenomenon in contemporary world**

Globalization is the main factor contributing to the homogenization of consumption. This phenomenon is associated with alignment of the lifestyles of different age and social groups (especially younger and middle-aged people), as well as reducing the role of local traditions in consumption behaviour (Gałązka & Grzelak, 2013). This standardization is referred to the phenomenon of McDonalidization, which is defined as the process by which some principles of the fast-food restaurants start to dominate more and more sectors of American society, as well as the rest of the world. It is also indicated that in the world of mass production, consumers more and more often accept standard goods. What is more, their acceptance facilitates the development of the market and the diminution of prices, through growing economies of scale. The increasing gap between the price of mass-produced goods and that more personalized goods encourage to concentrate demand around homogeneous products (Taylor & Lyon, 1995).

The assimilation process of food consumption is created by many various factors, such as easier mobility, technological progress, as well as the expansion of international retail chains (hyper- and supermarkets and discount stores) and standardization of their offers. One of the most important determinates is the development of the Internet, which is associated with better and easier communication among people from various places in the world, who can exchange experiences. Among such factors, the media’s (traditional and new medias) impact on the lives of people should also be pointed out. Consumers are manipulated by commercials, movies, electronic social networks, blogs and selected world information so they repeat presented patterns (Alden et al., 2006, Gulbicka & Kwasek, 2007). Consequently, the desire for a more attractive, modern lifestyle, looking for convenient products is added to the behaviour of consumers by the globalization process (Mazurek-Łopacińska, 2003).

McDonald (2002) claims that mass culture “is a dynamic, revolutionary force that eradicates class divisions, tradition, taste and blurs cultural distinctions”, which means that it has significant impact on the development of consumers’ behaviour, their lifestyles and preferences (Michałowska & Danielak, 2015).

Globalization and accompanying changes and trends are visible in the sphere of consumption mainly through initiating new forms of consumption and consumption behaviours, creating new products, new sales places and new needs, changing the ways of consumption, trends and lifestyles, increasing in consumer activity on the market, as well as increasing competitiveness and entrepreneurship of consumers (Włodarczyk, 2015).

### **The impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers**

The impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers is visible primarily in three areas: the market environment and conditions conducive for satisfying the needs of consumers, the ways of

satisfying needs and in the structure and hierarchy of these needs (Włodarczyk, 2015). The first of the areas of global food consumption is associated with retail and service infrastructure, expansion of hypermarkets, fast food restaurant chains and legal provisions regulating the protection of consumers' interests. The second area is associated with the expanding shopping and eating habits, brands and assortments in individual consumer segments. While the third area is a hierarchy of needs, resulting from the adopted systems of norms, values and implemented lifestyle styles shaped as part of the existence and development of Western civilization.

Researches conducted by Wrzeńska (2006) show that especially young consumers have positive attitudes towards supermarkets and hypermarkets. The most important factor, which encourages to visit them is the possibility of buying a big quantity of goods in one place. While Kłosiewicz-Górecka (2013) finds that also the high availability, wide assortment offers and the level of client communication and services are very significant to them. The author also notes that more and more consumers appreciate the advantages of purchasing food products online network, which can allow them to save time and money (the prices are often lower), as well as are very comfortable. However, in opposite to the research presented above and as a response to the process of globalization, many researchers notice that after a period (the turn of the 20th and 21st century) of fascination with supermarkets and hypermarkets, offering a very wide range, consumers noticed the advantages of shopping in small stores located close to home or local marketplaces, where they can find domestic products (Kłosiewicz-Górecka, 2013).

The process of globalization has also important meaning in the development of fast food restaurant chains. From about 30 000 fast food outlets in 1970, their quantity grew to more than 233 000 locations in the USA in 2004 and has been classified as the most rapidly expanding sector of the US food distribution centre (French et al., 2001). Although there are indications of bad health influence of fast food products, their popularity is still high, especially among young people (McLean-Meynsse et al., 2015). Customers especially appreciate the palatability of dishes offered there, their large selection, and fast service, reasonable prices and standardization of the offer (Adamczyk, 2005; Cieślak et al., 2014).

In connection with the processes of globalization and the extreme liberalization of economic relations directly connected with them, the increasing consumer consciousness about food and health can be observed. Consumers demand the necessary remedial actions in the field of food safety status protection, so there are initiatives, which focus on creating, changing or modernizing legal, control and organizational structures in the area of food safety. These activities also apply to educational campaigns aimed at increasing knowledge of food, as well as creating environmental and supra-territorial social relationships, as well as ongoing monitoring and information on the state (Kowalczyk, 2017). Liu et al. (2013) focused on the behaviour of Chinese consumers towards safe food in China, which are based on published English and Chinese language reviewed articles. They showed that Chinese consumers mainly use newspapers and mass media as their main information sources about safe food. Personal contact and interpersonal trust also play a significant role. They have a high awareness about safe food, however limited knowledge about the concept, how to identify safe food.

The economic, social and technological changes, which are expanded by globalization in to the whole world cause unification of the habits and preferences of consumers. Buckley et al. (2007) notice that global trends associated with globalization and servicization of consumption make more consumers looking for comfort and saving time ideas. They minimize the attention devoted to cooking, using convenience, fast or take-away food products. On the other hand, Pelletier et al. (2013) find that world trends associated with ecologisation and rationalisation of consumption contribute to searching by consumers products which are less processed and characterised by higher quality, more nutrients or better taste. They also more and more often appreciate slow food ideas promoting cooking at home, with friends, without rush, using only fresh and good for health ingredients (Gołębiowska, 2016).

It is also worth it to notice the kind of transformation of consumers' needs. Consumers more and more often prefer various experiences to material possessions. Therefore, food market producers more and more often create new products, which satisfy contemporary consumers' needs and are offered in some individual consumer segments (Tkaczyk & Kołuda, 2013). Some examples could be functional food for the segment of consumers who care about health in comfort way, leading rather passive style of lives, ecological products, which are offered to consumers caring about their health in active way,

combining sport and healthy eating, who care about environmental aspects (Goetzke & Spiller, 2012), as well as convenience food products for consumers who appreciate the possibility of saving time, reducing wastes and easiness in preparation (Babicz-Zielińska et al., 2010). In addition, restaurants try to be more attractive for consumers, using unique menu, places or interior design (Mazurek-Łopacińska, 2011). In the context of food product innovation, it should be noticed, that research conducted by Sojkin (2009) show that more than half of respondents asked about understanding the concept of 'food product innovation'. They indicate that new products are supplementing the range by producers with a new taste or consistency change, that is, each modification of the article or the introduction of a completely new product, previously absent from the market. About 1/3 respondents claim that product innovation is a part of the marketing game of enterprises and a reduction in the level of ingredients harmful to health. 28% of respondents consider changing the product packaging as product innovation, and every fourth one adding new ingredients to food.

## Conclusion

The aim of this article was to discuss the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers. Across the studies covered by this paper it was found that the globalization has generally been defined as a process, which integrate national and regional markets into one global market, which has been perceived as a main factor contributing to the homogenization of consumption and hence, the food behaviour of consumers. The assimilation process of food consumption has been created by many various factors, such as easier mobility, technological progress, development of the Internet, media, as well as the expansion of international retail chains and standardisation of their offers. The article shows that the impact of globalization on the food behaviour of consumers has been visible in such behaviour such as buying nutritional products in supermarkets and hypermarkets, eating in fast food restaurants, looking for comfort and easiness in eating, as well as new, unique experiences, which become more important for them than material possessions. However, it was also indicated that the globalization process has influenced the creation of some moves and attitudes against globalization, such as preferring domestic or ecological products, slow food ideas, actions in the field of food safety. New trends in the food behaviour of consumers, which are expanded by globalization in the whole world, forced food producers to create new, individualized products, which can satisfy consumers' needs, such as functional food, convenience food or organic food. These topics may be the subject of further researches.

## References

- Adamczyk, G. (2005). Popularity of fast food bars among Poznań inhabitants, *Association of Agricultural and Agribusiness Economists*, VII/3, 133-145.
- Alden, D. L., Steenkamp, J. B. E., & Batra, R. (2006). Consumer attitudes toward marketplace globalization: Structure, antecedents and consequences. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 23(3), 227-239.
- Babicz-Zielińska, E., Jeżewska-Zychowicz, M., & Laskowski, W. (2010). Consumer attitudes and behaviours towards convenience food, *Żywność Nauka Technologia Jakość*, 17(4), 141.
- Buckley, M., Cowan, C. & McCarthy, M. (2007). The convenience food market in Great Britain: convenience food lifestyle (CFL) segments, *Appetite*, Vol. 49 No. 3, 600-617.
- Cieślak, E., Cieślak, J., Wasilewski, P., Turcza, K., & Siembida, A. (2014). Evaluation of quality catering services as a factor in increasing consumer loyalty, *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development*, 03/33, 15-24.
- French, S. A., Story, M., Neumark-Sztainer, D., Fulkerson, J. A., & Hannan, P. (2001). Fast food restaurant use among adolescents: associations with nutrient intake, food choices and behavioral and psychosocial variables. *International journal of obesity*, 25(12), 1823.
- Goetzke, B. I., & Spiller, A. (2014). Health- improving lifestyles of organic and functional food consumers, *British Food Journal* Vol. 116 No. 3, 2014, 510-526.
- Gołębiowska, J. (2016). On the Art of Slow Eating in an Era of Globalisation: A Sociologist's Commentary, *Culture - History - Globalization*, No. 20, 31-43.
- Goryńska- Goldmann, E., & Ratajczak, P. (2010). Nutritional awareness and nutritional behaviours of consumers, *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development* 4 (18), 41-48.
- Grzelak, A., & Gałązka, M. (2013). The Tendencies of Food Consumption in Poland on Background of Global Conditionings, *Economic Yearbook of the Kujawsko-Pomorska University in Bydgoszcz*, (6), 223-241.
- Gulbicka, B., & Kwasek, M. (2007) The organic food market. In: *The impact of globalization on the nourishment patterns in Poland, Economic and Social determinants of the development of the Polish food economy after Poland's accession to the European Union*, IERiGŻ-PIB, Warszawa, 7.

- Gupta, N. (2011). Globalization does lead to change in consumer behavior: an empirical evidence of impact of globalization on changing materialistic values in Indian consumers and its aftereffects. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 23(3), 251-269.
- Hanus, G. (2016). Searching for new culinary experiences as a new trend in nutritional behaviour of consumers, *AD ALTA Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 6, issue 2, Magnanimitas, Praga, 31-33.
- Hanus, G. (2017). The pro-healthy behaviours of consumer on global food market, *Economic Studies - Scientific Papers in Katowice*, 80.
- Hanus, G. (2017). Traditional or modern? Preferences of young consumers in the food market- literature and researches review, *Proceedings of the 8th CER- Cooperative European Research- Interational Scientific Conference for PhD , Students of UE Countries, London, Vol. 4, Issue II., 111-115.*
- Hartungi, R., (2006). Could developing countries take the benefit of globalisation? *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 33 Issue: 11, 729.
- Kłosiewicz-Górecka, U. (2013). Structure of Retail Trade in Poland and the Preferred by Consumers Places of Purchasing FMCG, *Consumption and Development*, 2(5),
- Kowalczyk, S. (2017). Free market and the food safety in the globalization era, *Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development*, Vol. 104, No. 4., 15-27.
- Lemańska- Majdzik, A., & Sobiegraj, A. (2013). Globalisation - Opportunity or Threat to Modern World, *Humanitas University's Research Papers Management*, No. 1/2013, 114-125.
- Liu, R., Pieniak, Z., & Verbeke, W. (2013). Consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards safe food in China: A review. *Food Control*, 33(1), 93-104.
- Macdonald, D. (2002). Theory of mass culture, [in:] Cz. Miłosz (ed.), *Mass culture*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 2002, 482.
- Maśloch, P. (2013). Globalization and Market Development in Crisis, *Studies of the Industrial Geography Commission of the Polish Geographical Society, WSB Universities, Toruń*, 147-160.
- Mazurek-Łopacińska, K. (2003). Buyer Behaviour and its Marketing Consequences, PWE, Warszawa
- Mazurek-Łopacińska, K. (2011). Postmodernist Consumption Culture in Shaping Demand and Contemporary Consumer's Lifestyles, *Konsumpcja i Rozwój*, No. 1., 53.
- McLean-Meyinsse, P. E., Taylor, S. S., & Gager, J. V. (2015). Self-Reported Consumption of Fast-Food Meals by University Students. *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, 46(1), 23-29.
- Michałowska, M., & Danielak, W. (2015). The Impact of Globalization on Consumer Behavior in Lubuskie Province in the Light of the Research, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska Lublin – Polonia Vol. Xlix, 3, Sectio H*, 136.
- Niemczyk, A. (2004). A consumer in the modern world, *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Oeconomica* 179, 166-167.
- Piekut, M. (2009), Consumption Diversity between Poor and Rich Households in Poland, *Scientific Papers Warsaw University of Life sciences – SGGW*, No. 73, 105.
- Sobczyk, G. (2014), Contemporary consumption – new trends in the polish market, *WSEI: EKONOMY*, 9(2/2014), University of Economics and Innovation in Lublin, 88.
- Sojkin, B. (2009). A consumer towards product innovations in the food market, *Publisher of the University of Economics in Poznań*, p. 99-100
- Taylor, S., & Lyon, P. (1995). Paradigm lost: the rise and fall of McDonaldization, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 7 Issue: 2/3, 64-68.
- Tkaczyk, S., & Kołuda, J. (2013). New Consumer Trends and the Success of the Organization, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo-Humanistycznego w Siedlcach, seria: Administracja i Zarządzanie*, nr 97, 31.
- Włodarczyk, K. (2015). Globalization and economic patriotism of polish consumers, *Economic Studies - Scientific Papers in Katowice*, No. 214, 66-67.
- Wrześcińska, J. (2006). Young consumers preferences regarding to shopping in supermarkets (personal empirical research), *Scientific Journal of Warsaw University of Life Sciences, series Economics and Organization of Agri-Food Sector*, No. 59, 89-100.
- Zachora, A., & Juszczyk, L. (2016). Organic food, traditional ... - contemporary fashion or an indispensable element of sustainable development? *Innovative Solutions in Food Technology and Human Nutrition*, Polish Society of Food Technologists, Kraków 2016, 32-33.
- Zalega, T. (2011): Consumption of food in households with unemployed members in the Mazowieckie voivodeship, *Scientific Journal of Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Warsaw - Economics and Organization of Agri-food Economy*, No. 93, Warsaw, 119.