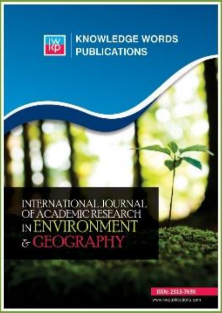

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN ENVIRONMENT & GEOGRAPHY

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To Link this Article: http://dx.doi.org/10.46886/IJAREG/v1-i2/1450 DOI: 10.46886/IJAREG/v1-i2/1450

Received: *10 Jul 2014,* ***Revised:*** *30 Aug 2014,* ***Accepted:*** *19 Nov 2014*

Published Online: 24 Dec 2014

In-Text Citation: (Toma, 2014)
To Cite this Article: Toma, E. (2014). Food Purchase Behaviors for Low, Medium and High-Income Families. *International Journal of Academic Research in Enviornment & Geography*, *1*(2), 44–56.

Vol. 1, No. 2 (2014) Pg. 44 - 56

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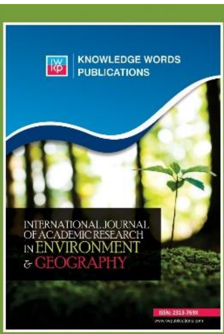

Food Purchase Behaviors for Low, Medium and High-Income Families

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Abstract
Food consumption and purchasing behavior depend on different factors like income level, access to markets, consume patterns, etc. The paper aims to identify, on different levels of family's income, the frequency of acquiring foods and the sources for purchasing the main food products. We applied a questionnaire to 80 household from Braila County and these were completed by the person which make the majority of shopping activities inside family. To emphasize our results, we processed the collected data with SPSS by using descriptive statistic method. Research findings indicate the importance of self-consumption for urban low income level families and the importance of fresh and healthy foods for families with higher income.
Keywords: Food Consumption, Food Purchasing Behavior, Level of Income, Households Consumption.

Introduction

In Romania, the consumer behavior is influenced mainly by a mix food consume model, based on own consumption and purchased products. Due to the existence of extended rural areas, the food demand is concentrated on the products that can't be obtained in rural households for own consumption or on the fresh products that can be obtained in peasant markets. In the last decades the supermarkets and wholesale places spread across the entire country making access to food products more available and diversified, but local markets are still present and developing due to the preferences for healthy and organic food. The main motives for purchasing from peasant market meat products for example are freshness, good taste and favorable prices (Eičaitė, 2014).

Despite the consumption patterns that are traditionally adopted inside Romanian families the pressure on the family budget was reinforced by inequalities in income distribution, which create differences in qualitative structure of human consumption for certain categories of consumers (Alecu et al, 2014).

Even the consumption patterns are dictated by consumer's preferences and customs, his choices are limited especially by the level of income and purchasing power. In this way, the low level of family income and the economic crisis of the last years determined the rise of self-consumption (Iorga, 2013). Also, the crisis conducted in the change of food consumption pattern of population due to the decrease of incomes and the orientation to food with affordable prices (Cofas, 2013).

Methodology of Research

This research aimed to analyze the consumption patters of Romanian families starting from the buying behaviors of food products. Our research is based on the results obtained form 80 questionnaires completed in Braila County. The questionnaires were completed by different families from Braila town and peripheral villages during year 2014. The results were processed by SPSS, with descriptive statistic methods.

The main characteristics of respondents are the following (Table 1):

Table 1 – Main characteristics of the respondents

		N^0	***Frequencies (%)***
Number of members	1	9	11.3
	2	10	12.5
	3	28	35.0
	4	20	25.0
	5	10	12.5
	Over 6	3	3.9
	Total	80	100.0
Respondent's role in the family	Father	35	43.8
	Mother	24	30.0
	Grandfather	7	8.8
	Grandmother	3	3.8
	Child	11	13.8
	Total	80	100.0
Age	Under 25 years	10	12.5
	26-35 years	11	13.8
	35-50 years	44	55.0
	51-65 years	6	7.5
	Over 65 years	9	11.3
	Total	80	100.0
Education level	Gymnasium	9	11.3
	High School	30	37.5
	University	40	50.0
	Master/PhD	1	1.3
	Total	80	100.0
Occupation	Student	8	10.0
	Pensioner	10	12.5

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		N^0	***Frequencies (%)***
	Sailor	9	11.3
	Nurse	6	7.5
	Doctor	5	6.3
	Engineer	2	2.5
	Farmer	2	2.5
	Seller	13	16.3
	Postal functionary	4	5.0
	Mechanic	2	2.5
	Professor	7	8.8
	Cop	4	5.0
	Electrician	2	2.5
	Constructor	3	3.8
	Architect	1	1.3
	Cashier	1	1.3
	N/R	1	1.3
	Total	80	100.0
Food consumption outside household (fast-foods, restaurants, etc.)	sub 10%	41	51.3
	10-15%	8	10.0
	15-20%	5	6.3
	20-30%	6	7.5
	over 30%	20	25.0
	Total	80	100.0

Based on their family income, the respondents have the following characteristics (Table 2):

- **12,5 %** - 10 households with under 225 €;
- **15 % -** 12 households with 225-350 €;
- **18,75 % -** 15 households with 350-450 €;
- **28,75 % -** 23 households with 450-650 €;
- **25 % -** 20 households with over 650 €.

Table 2 – Main characteristics of the respondents on income classes

		Under 225 €	*225 – 350 €*	*350 - 450 €*	*450-650 €*	*Over 650 €*
Number of members	1	50.0		26.7		
	2	20.0	16.7	6.7	13.0	10.0
	3	10.0	50.0	20.0	52.2	30.0
	4	20.0	25.0	26.7	17.4	35.0
	5		8.3	20.0	17.4	15.0
	Over 6					10.0
Respondent's role in the family	Father	30.0	33.3	20.0	43.5	75.0
	Mother		25.0	20.0	56.5	25.0
	Grandfather	20.0	33.3	6.7		
	Grandmother	10.0	8.3	6.7		
	Child	40.0		46.7		
Age	Under 25 years	40.0		40.0		
	26-35 years		8.3	13.3	34.8	
	35-50 years	30.0	50.0	33.3	65.2	75.0
	51-65 years		8.3			25.0
	Over 65 years	30.0	33.3	13.3		
Education level	Gymnasium	20.0	25.0	13.3	8.7	
	High School	60.0	75.0	40.0	26.1	15.0
	University	20.0		46.7	65.2	80.0
	Master/PhD					5.0
Food consumption outside household (fast-foods, restaurants, etc.)	Under 10%	60.0	91.7	53.3	34.8	40.0
	10-15%			13.3	17.4	10.0
	15-20%		8.3	6.7	8.7	5.0
	20-30%			6.7	13.0	10.0
	Over 30%	40.0		20.0	26.1	35.0
Number of households		**10**	**12**	**15**	**23**	**20**

Results and Discussions

In Romania, in 2014, the average income was around 550 €, for a family with 2.7 members, respectively around 200 € per person. In this condition we included all the families with under 450 € in low income category.

Families with Low Incomes

Families with an income under 225 € make their food shopping in proportion of 60% daily and only 50% prefer the peasant market. They have a higher dependence from the product produced in household (or household owned in rural areas) like meat, cheese, eggs, vegetables, etc. Families with an income between 225 and 350 € purchase food on weekly basis and only 41.7 % have access to self-produced products. Also, 33.3 % prefer peasant markets and only 25 % supermarkets. Families with an income between 350 and 450 € purchase food especially on weekly basis and only 2 households have access to self-produced products. From these households 53.3 % prefer supermarkets products. The most preferred supermarkets by low income families are Carrefour and Billa (Table 3).

Inside families with low incomes shopping from peasant markets and the consumption of own products are preferred for basic aliments like meat, milk, eggs, vegetables and fruits. From supermarkets are acquired sausages, sugar, oils and drinks. Families with a level on income between 350 and 450 €, which are shopping from supermarkets buy milk, yogurt, cheese, eggs, fruits and fish (around 20 – 30 %), but also sausages, bread, vegetables and sugar (40 – 50 %). Peasant markets remain the main sources for shopping of milk and milk products, fresh meat, vegetables and fruits (Table 4).

Table 3 – Food consumption patterns and shopping sources

	N^0			***Frequencies (%)***		
	Under 225 €	**225 – 350 €**	**350 - 450 €**	**Under 225 €**	**225 – 350 €**	**350 - 450 €**
	Most food purchases are made :					
Daily	6	5	6	60.0	41.7	40.0
Weekly	4	6	8	40.0	50.0	53.3
Monthly		1	1		8.3	6.7
	The main source of shopping:					
Peasant market	1	4	3	10.0	33.3	20.0
Supermarket	3	3	8	30.0	25.0	53.3
Shops	1		2	10.0		13.3
Self-consumption	5	5	2	50.0	41.7	13.3
	Which supermarket?					
Billa	1	1	3			
Metro	0	1	1			
Carrefour	1	1	6			
Mega Image	2	0	1			
XXL	0	0	0			
Kaufland	1	1	3			
Lidl	0	0	3			
	Food from self-consumption:					
Meat	5	5	2			
Cheese	3	1	1			
Eggs	5	5	2			
Vegetables	5	5	2			
Fruits	5	5	2			
Others	0	0	1			

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Table 4 – Food shopping sources (Frequencies (%))

	Supermarket			*Peasant market (including self-consumption)*			*Don't consume*		
	Under 225 €	**225 – 350 €**	**350 - 450 €**	**Under 225 €**	**225 – 350 €**	**350 - 450 €**	**Under 225 €**	**225 – 350 €**	**350 - 450 €**
Milk	30.0	-	33.3	60.0	100.0	-	10.0	-	66.7
Yogurt	20.0	25	33.3	50.0	75.0	-	30.0	-	66.7
Cheese	20.0	-	20.0	60.0	100.0	73.3	20.0	-	6.7
Meat	10.0	8.3	26.7	60.0	91.7	66.7	30.0	-	6.7
Sausages	50.0	58.3	40.0	40.0	58.3	33.3	10.0	8.3	26.7
Bread	40.0	16.8	53.3	60.0	83.3	46.7	-	-	-
Vegetables	20.0	100.0	40.0	80.0	-	60.0	-	-	-
Fruits	20.0	100.0	26.7	80.0	-	73.3	-	-	-
Sugar	70.0	75.0	53.3	30.0	25.0	46.7	-	-	-
Oil and vegetal oils	80.0	66.7	73.3	20.0	33.3	20.0	-	-	6.7
Eggs	40.0	8.3	26.7	60.0	91.7	66.7	-	-	6.7
Fish	20.0	25.0	33.33	40.0	66.7	33.33	40.0	8.3	33.33
Alcoholic drinks	50.0	75.0	60.0	10.0	16.7	6.7	40.0	8.3	33.4
Non-alcoholic drinks	70.0	83.3	86.7	30.0	16.7	-	-	-	13.3

Almost all household prefer fresh milk, meat, vegetables and fruits and around 50 – 60 % prefers preserved and frozen fish (Table 5).

Table 5 – Food consumption preferences

Preference		N^0			Frequencies (%)		
		Under 225 €	225 – 350 €	350 - 450 €	Under 225 €	225 – 350 €	350 - 450 €
Milk	Fresh	6	12	12	60.0	100.0	80.0
	Preserved	4		3	40.0		20.0
Vegetables	Fresh	7	12	11	70.0	100.0	73.3
	Frozen	3		3	30.0		20.0
	Preserved			1			6.7
Fruits	Fresh	9	12	15	90.0	100.0	100.0
	Frozen	1			10.0		
Meat	Fresh	7	9	10	70.0	75.0	66.7
	Frozen	1	3	4	10.0	25.0	26.7
	N/R	2		1	20.0		6.7
Fish	Fresh	3	5	7	30.0	41.7	46.7
	Frozen	3	7	4	30.0	58.3	26.7
	Preserved	2		1	20.0		6.7
	N/R	2		3	20.0		20.0

Families with Medium Incomes

Households with medium income make their food shopping weekly (87.0 %) and 78.36 % prefers supermarkets, especially Metro, Carrefour and XXL (wholesales). Only 2 households (13.3 %) have access to own produced products (Table 6).

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Table 6 – Food consumption patterns and shopping sources

	N⁰	*Frequencies (%)*
Total	**23**	**100.0**
	Most food purchases are made :	
Daily	1	4.3
Weekly	20	87.0
Monthly	2	8.7
	The main source of shopping:	
Peasant market	3	13.0
Supermarket	18	78.3
Self-consumption	2	8.7
	Which supermarket?	
Billa	5	
Metro	13	
Carrefour	10	
Mega Image	0	
XXL	8	
Kaufland	0	
Lidl	4	
	Food from self-consumption:	
Meat	2	
Cheese	1	
Eggs	2	
Vegetables	2	
Fruits	1	
Others	1	

Supermarkets are the main source for shopping. From this source 40 % from households buy milk, cheese, fruits and fish and 50 – 60 % buy yogurt, meat, bread and vegetables and over 80 % buy sausages, sugar, oils and drinks (Table 7). Peasant market remains the main source for milk, cheese, fish and fruits.

Table 7 – Food shopping sources (Frequencies (%))

	Supermarket	*Peasant market (including self-consumption)*	*Don't consume*	*N/R*
Milk	39.1	47.8	4.3	8.7
Yogurt	47.8	34.8	8.7	8.7
Cheese	39.1	47.8	4.3	8.7
Meat	56.5	43.5		
Sausages	82.6	8.7	8.7	
Bread	52.2	47.8		
Vegetables	60.9	39.1		
Fruits	39.1	60.9		
Sugar	82.6	17.4		
Oil and vegetal oils	95.7	4.3		
Eggs	21.7	78.3		
Fish	39.1	60.9		
Alcoholic drinks	82.6	4.3	13	
Non-alcoholic drinks	95.7	4.3		

Due to the fact that supermarkets are the main source of food shopping, we may observe an increased number of household which consume preserved or frozen products, but the main form of consume remains fresh status (Table 8).

Families with High Incomes

The household with high income make in proportion of 55 % weekly food shopping and in proportion of 45 % monthly food shopping. Also, 70 % prefers supermarkets, 15 % wholesales places and only 5 % (1 household) has access to self-consumption. These household prefer Carrefour, Metro and XXL based on their proximity, not prices (Table 9).

Table 8 – Food consumption preferences

Preference		*N⁰*	*Frequencies (%)*
Milk	Fresh	20	87.0
	Preserved	3	13.0
Vegetables	Fresh	20	87.0
	Frozen	3	13.0
Fruits	Fresh	22	95.7
	Frozen	1	4.3
Meat	Fresh	18	78.3
	Frozen	5	21.7
Fish	Fresh	7	30.4
	Frozen	12	52.2
	Preserved	3	13.0

Table 9 – Food consumption patterns and shopping sources

	N⁰	*Frequencies (%)*
Total	**20**	**100.0**
	Most food purchases are made :	
Weekly	11	55.0
Monthly	9	45.0
	The main source of shopping:	
Peasant market	14	70.0
Supermarket	2	10.0
Shops	3	15.0
Self-consumption	1	5.0
	Which supermarket?	
Billa	5	
Metro	4	
Carrefour	10	
Mega Image	0	
XXL	4	
Kaufland	0	
Lidl	2	
	Food from self-consumption:	
Meat	1	
Cheese	0	
Eggs	1	
Vegetables	1	
Fruits	1	
Others	1	

The consumptions patterns are changing with the rising of income. We observe that some households doesn't consume milk or milk products, some doesn't consume meat and in others are excluded products like egg or fish. We observe also a tendency to buy more food from peasant markets due to a general orientation for organic and healthy products. 40 – 45 % of these households buy from peasant markets milk, cheese, bread and fish, and around 50 % buy also meat, vegetables, fruits and eggs. The supermarkets remain the main sources for acquiring sausages, bead, fruits, oils, fish and drinks (Table 10).

Table 10 – Food shopping sources (Frequencies (%))

	Supermarket	*Peasant market (including self-consumption)*	*Don't consume*	*N/R*
Milk	40.0	45.0	15.0	
Yogurt	45.0	25.0	30.0	
Cheese	40.0	40.0	20.0	
Meat	45.0	55.0		
Sausages	50.0	25.0	25.0	
Bread	55.0	45.0		
Vegetables	45.0	55.0		
Fruits	50.0	50.0		
Sugar	75.0	25.0		
Oil and vegetal oils	75.0	25.0		
Eggs	40.0	55.0	5.0	
Fish	55.0	40.0	5.0	
Alcoholic drinks	75.0	5.0	20.0	
Non-alcoholic drinks	90.0	10.0		

Also, compared with other household these families consume more preserved and frozen food, but the main preferences remain the fresh ones (Table 11).

Table 11 – Food consumption preferences

Preference		*N^0*	*Frequencies (%)*
Milk	Fresh	15	75.0
	Preserved	3	15.0
	N/R	2	10.0
Vegetables	Fresh	17	85.0
	Frozen	3	15.0
Fruits	Fresh	19	95.0
	Preserved	1	5.0
Meat	Fresh	18	90.0
	Frozen	2	10.0
Fish	Fresh	13	65.0
	Frozen	4	20.0
	Preserved	2	10.0
	N/R	1	5.0

Conclusions

The low incomes families tend to acquire food products daily, especially from peasant markets or from self-consumption sources. Once with the increasing incomes, the people tend to make there shopping's weekly or monthly from both supermarkets and peasant markets. In this way the peasant markets remain the main sources for milk, cheese, egg, vegetables and

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fruits, and supermarkets for sausages, sugar, bread, oils and drinks. The high income families are changing their consumption patterns being more oriented to healthy and organic foods.

The main conclusion is that self-consumption in our country is very important for families with low incomes from urban and peripheral areas, the majority of them having access to a small subsistence farms in rural areas which supply them with basic foods. We have to understand that the subsistence farming is not a 'problem' for rural economies but a support for many families in urban areas. In the absence of this self-consumption, the main source of food remains the big supermarkets which practice higher prices and maintain these families to an urban subsistence level.

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