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The Behaviour of Estonian Consumers Towards Chilled and Canned Ready Meals

Case Study: Portion Dishes and Canned Soups

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The Behavior of Estonian Consumers Towards
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Case Study: Portion Dishes and Canned Soups

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The present research attempts to reveal consuming habits of Estonian customers towards chilled and canned ready meal. The main objective of the thesis was to examine consumer behaviour towards chilled and canned ready meal.

The research seeks to provide information regarding consumer behaviour related to chilled and canned ready meal consumption in Estonia.

The theoretical background of the thesis was based on the concepts of consumer behaviour. The empirical section of the thesis was conducted by means of a quantitative research method. The data collection for this study was implemented through questionnaires, where the respondents were asked questions related to consumption habits of chilled and canned ready meal.

The research discovered consumer segmentation related to chilled and canned ready meal the frequency of purchases and the attitudes towards chilled and canned ready meal. The study explored the factors influencing on buying decision chilled and canned ready meal.

Key words, consumer markets, ready meal, consumer behaviour, buying decision process, buying roles

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of the study

Businesses are becoming more concerned about their consumers. In today's highly competitive business environment a consumer has an important role. For this reason, it is very important for businesses to get to know their consumers, educate them, establish strong relationships with them and make high profit.

As Kotler states (2000, 159) the purpose of marketing is meeting and satisfying customers' needs and wants better than competitors do. Successful marketing requires that companies fully connect with their consumers. Companies need to understand their consumers, their daily lives and changes that occur during their lifetimes. They need to acquire much information about consumers' behaviour to meet their highest expectations and satisfy their constantly changing needs.

A consumer's satisfaction depends on satisfaction with consumption of the product. Modern consumers are more knowledgeable than ever before as they have more access to information. Consumers are willing to pay only for products that satisfy their needs. Entrepreneurs are trying to do their best to understand their consumers. Marketers make their efforts to keep customers so satisfied that they will not only return but will also make their friends and relatives to be customers. To accomplish this purpose, companies must investigate the reasons for their behaviour.

Understanding of how buyers consume or purchase particular products is very important. Knowing why and how people consume products helps marketers to understand how to improve existing products, what types of products are needed in the marketplace, and how to attract consumers to buy new products. In essence, consumer behaviour analysis helps companies to know how to satisfy customers and how to increase their sales and profits.

This thesis investigates the concept of consumer behaviour and examines the attitudes and preferences of Estonian consumers towards chilled and canned ready meal. The research would benefit the entrepreneurs that are going to operate or already operating in such business, to understand does the consumer need such product in the market, as the companies have no sufficient time and resources to conduct a thorough consumer research in Estonia.

1.2 Choice of the research context

The choice of the research context has been defined by a number of reasons. First of all, consumer behaviour is the study of human beings. It is the study of processes involved when people purchase, select, use and dispose of products. The consumers differ from each other by income, age, education, lifestyle, character, etc. and all this influences their purchasing decisions. The consumer is not as trusting, loyal and malleable than in the past. Having and preserving their independence and individuality is highly valued by today's consumers, even more than being in conformity with social norms. Today's consumers make very rational purchase decision, there are several authors who say that today's consumer is mainly an emotional buyer everyone has one's own needs, desires and attitudes. For this reason, the author regarded the studying the field of consumer behaviour as interesting and challenging.

Nowadays companies more often recognise that satisfying consumers with quality products, offering them excellent customer service and understanding their needs and reasons behind their consumption decisions are the keys for success.

The present research was conducted to find out the behaviour of Estonian consumers toward chilled and canned ready meal. Due to the background of the thesis author, the place of the research to be conducted was chosen to be Tallinn, the capital of the Republic of Estonia.

At the present time chilled and canned ready meal market is slowly growing in Estonia. For this reason, companies have to understand consumer attitudes and behaviours concerning chilled and canned ready meal consumption in the country, in case, if they are planning to increase the selection of the chilled and canned ready meal products in the future and be able to gain competitive advantage in the market.

When studying the concept of consumer behaviour the author of the thesis has deepened her knowledge of the subject. Through the research the author understood the diversity of consumer behaviour concept and discovered that numerous factors affect consumer choices.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine behaviour of Estonian consumers towards consumption of chilled and canned ready meal.

1.4 Limitations of the study

The study will provide information regarding chilled and canned ready meal buyers' behaviour, assuming that the knowledge provided would assist the companies that produce chilled and canned ready meal in implementation of its marketing decisions.

The nature of the consumer behaviour field is very dynamic and diverse, as it involves the study of human beings. People are different and their needs and desires as well are different. All people use or consume various products or services. Consumers and their preferences are constantly changing and becoming highly diversified.

The field of consumer behaviour covers many issues. As could be seen from the theoretical background of the present research, consumer behaviour is influenced by a large number of various factors. In addition, there exist different approaches for studying consumer behaviour.

The present study of consumer behaviour was conducted from the point of view of understanding consumption behaviour. It did not include all aspects of the study. In addition, the implementation of this research was limited to a specific period of time, place, products and target groups. For this reason, the findings of the present research cannot be fully generalized. To understand the whole consumption pattern, there is need in deeper analysis and research on a larger scale.

1.5 Structure of the study

The thesis consists of five sections. The structure of the thesis is illustrated in Figure 1.

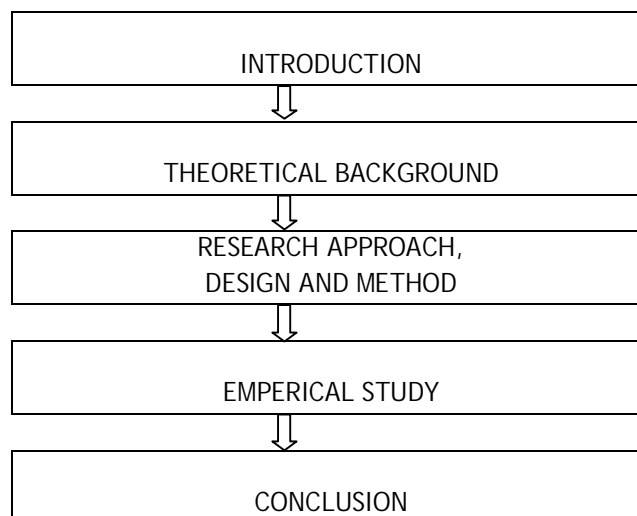


FIGURE 1. Structure of the study

The first section of the thesis presents the subject and background information of the research. The section explores the research problem and objectives, structure and limitations of the study and explains the choice of the research context.

The second section of the thesis focuses on the existing theories related to the research subject. The theoretical section starts with the definition of the consumer behaviour concept. Further, it provides background for an understanding of the consumer behaviour concept by describing the model of consumer behaviour and different factors influencing consumer behaviour. The section also discusses the buying decision process and issues related to consumer responses to products. Finally, the section presents an overview of the Estonian chilled and canned ready meal market, the theoretical framework of the study and the research hypothesis.

The third section of the thesis explores the methodology of the study. This section describes the research methodology adopted to conduct the research. The section starts with explaining the choice of the methodological approach and continues with discussing methods used in the research. The section concludes with the issues related to validity and reliability of the research.

The fourth section of the thesis is the empirical study. The section starts with the description of the chilled and canned ready meal business culture, followed by the presentation of data analysis.

The last section of the study is conclusion. The section starts with the presentation of research findings, followed by a discussion of future research challenges. The fifth section of the thesis concludes with the description of managerial implications.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Consumer markets

Consumers around the world differ in age, income, education and tastes. They buy a variety of products and services according to their preferences and needs. Consumer markets comprise all individuals and households who buy or acquire goods and services for personal consumption. (Kotler & Armstrong 2004, 178).

2.2 Defining the concept of consumer behavior

Earlier the study of consumer behaviour focused on buyer behaviour or "why people buy". More recently, researchers have focused on consumption analysis, which refers to why and how people use products in addition to why and how they buy them. Consumption analysis is a broader conceptual framework than buyer behaviour.

It includes issues that arise after the purchase process occurs - issues that often affect how people buy and the satisfaction they receive from their purchases. (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel 2006, 4)

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (1994, 7) the term consumer behaviour refers to the behaviour that consumers display in searching, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs.

The study of consumer behaviour is the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources such as time, money, and effort on consumption-related items. It includes the study of what, why, when and where consumers buy products or services and how often they buy and use them. (Shiffman & Kanuk 1994, 7)

Blackwell et al. (2006) emphasise that consumer behaviour should be the primary focus of every aspect of the company's marketing programme. Studying consumers helps to improve existing products or services and introduce new ones. It provides a basis for setting prices, devising channels and developing different marketing activities.

In order to obtain deeper knowledge of the given concept hereafter will be considered the model of consumer behaviour, various factors affecting consumers' decision, the process of making purchase decision and different types of buying behaviour.

2.3 Model of consumer behaviour

According to Kotler (2000, 160) the starting point in understanding consumer behaviour is an understanding of the stimulus-response model shown in Figure 2.

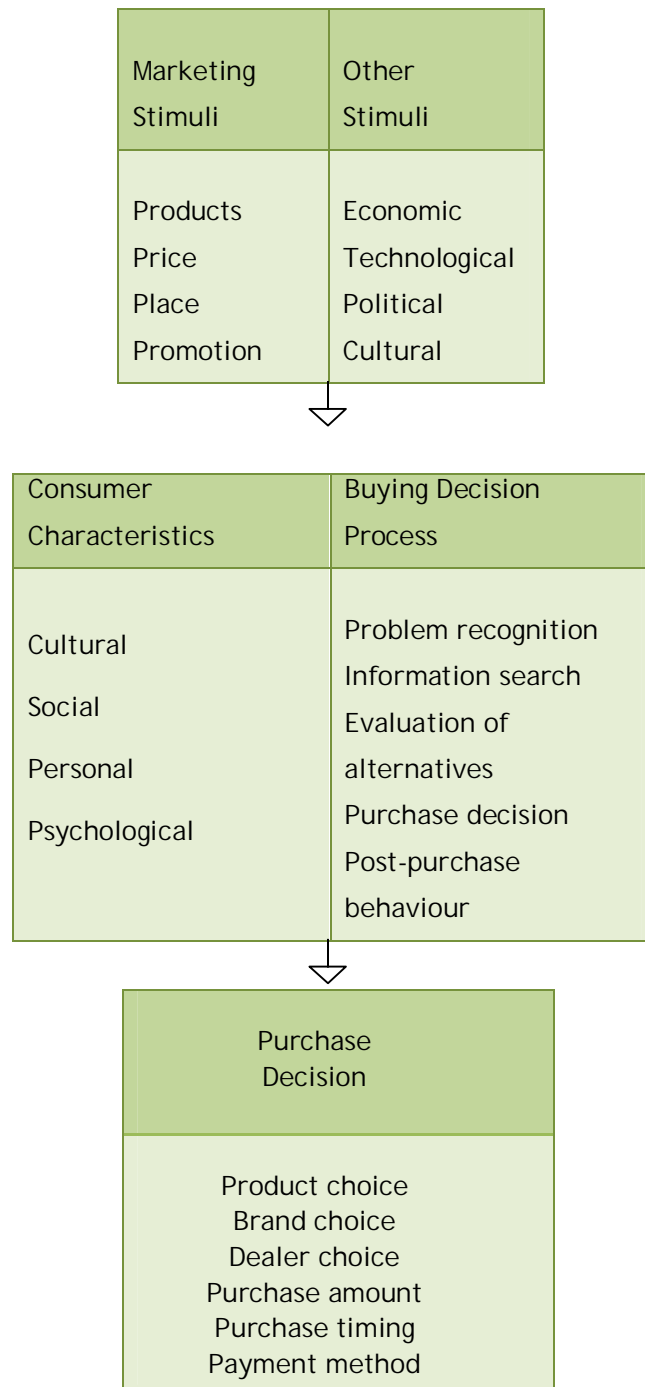


FIGURE 2. Model of consumer behaviour (Adapted from Kotler & Keller 2006, 184; Kotler 2000, 161)

Figure 2 shows that marketing and other stimuli enter the consumer's consciousness and produce certain responses. Marketing stimuli consist of such traditional marketing activities as product, price, place and promotion. Marketing stimuli influence consumers in such a way that they arouse their willingness to buy and use different products. (Kotler 2000, 161)

Other stimuli consist of major forces existing in the consumer's environment: economic, technological, political and cultural. Consumers cannot directly affect those stimuli by actions. All these stimuli influence consumers and consequently impact their purchase decisions.

Psychological processes, including motivation, perception, learning and memory, in combination with particular consumer characteristics, also result in the decision process and purchase decisions. Marketers need to investigate how consumers respond to different marketing efforts the company might use and how various factors and consumer characteristics affect buying behaviour. (Kotler 2000, 161)

2.4 Factors influencing consumer behaviour

Figure 2 makes clear that there are many different factors that influence consumer behaviour. A consumer's buying behaviour is influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Cultural factors have the strongest influence. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 174)

2.4.1 Cultural Factors

2.4.1.1 Culture

Culture is the main determinant of a person's wants and behaviour. It is a crucial concept in understanding consumer behaviour. According to Blackwell et al. (2006, 426) culture can be defined as a set of socially acquired behaviour patterns transmitted symbolically through language and other means to the other members of a particular society.

Schiffman and Kanuk (1994, 409) define culture in the context of consumer behaviour as the sum total of learned beliefs, values, and customs that serve to direct the consumer behaviour of members of a particular society.

2.4.1.2 Subculture

Each culture consists of smaller subcultures. Subculture is a distinct cultural group that exists as an identifiable segment within a larger, more complex society. The members of a certain subculture share beliefs, values, traditions that differentiate them from other members of the same society. Major subcultures include nationalities, religions, racial groups and geographic regions. A person's identity is often determined by his or her ethnic, racial or reli-

gious background. Sub-cultural analysis enables marketers to segment their markets according to specific needs, perceptions and attitudes shared by members of a specific subculture. (Shiffman & Kanuk, 1994)

2.4.1.3 Social class

Social class is another determinant of a person's behaviour. Nowadays the term social class is used more generally to describe the overall rank of people in a society. People belonging to the same social class are approximately equal in terms of their social standing in the community. These people work in similar occupations and tend to have similar lifestyles due to their income levels and common tastes. A person's occupation, income and education are considered to be the main indicators of social class. (Solomon 2004, 449-450)

Kotler and Keller (2006) state that different social classes show distinct product and brand preferences in many areas, including clothing, food, home furnishings and leisure activities. Understanding of social-class differences is useful to consumer analysts in designing special marketing programs and promotional strategies for each social-class target segment.

2.4.2 Social factors

Besides cultural factors, consumer behaviour is also influenced by such social factors as reference groups, family, social roles and statuses.

2.4.2.1 Reference group

Kotler and Keller (2006, 177) state that reference groups consist of all the groups that have a direct or indirect influence on a person's attitudes or behaviour. Groups that have direct or face-to-face influence on a person are called membership groups. Membership groups, with whom the person interacts continuously and informally, such as family, friends or co-workers, are called primary groups. Groups that are more formal and do not require continuous interaction, such as trade unions, are called secondary groups.

Groups to which a person does not belong can also influence a person's buying behaviour. They are called aspirational and dissociative groups. Aspirational groups are those groups to which a person hopes to join. Dissociative groups are those groups whose values are rejected by an individual. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 177)

Consumers tend to ask for advice about purchases from people who are knowledgeable about products and whose advice is considered valuable. These people are called opinion leaders. An opinion leader is a person who is frequently able to influence others' attitudes or behaviour. Opinion leaders are valuable information sources because they are usually technically competent, they do not represent the interests of the company and they are often among the first to buy new products. (Solomon 2004, 388-389)

2.4.2.2 Family

According to Blackwell et al. (2006, 482) families or households are consumer units of critical importance in the study of consumer behaviour for two reasons. Firstly, many products are purchased by a family or household unit. Secondly, other family members may heavily influence an individual buying decision.

A person's spouse, children and parents may influence everyday buying behaviour. Parents' influence can be significant even if the buyer no longer interacts much with them because from parents a person acquires an orientation toward religion, politics and economics. Children's influence on purchase decisions is of great interest to marketers, as they tend to increase family demand and spending on food, clothing and furniture, and decrease it for many discretionary items such as travel or expensive restaurants. (Blackwell et al. 2006, 495-510)

2.4.2.3 Social roles and status

One person may belong to a number of various groups such as family, clubs and organisations. The person's position in each group can be defined in terms of roles and status. According to Kotler and Keller (2006, 181) a role consists of the activities a person is expected to perform. Each role has a status. People choose products that reflect and communicate their role and actual or desired status in society, for this reason marketers must be aware of the status symbol potential of products and brands. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 181)

2.4.3 Personal factors

A consumer's personal characteristics also influence the buying decision. Personal characteristics are the buyer's age and stage in the life cycle, occupation and economic circumstances, personality and self-concept, life style and values. Most of the mentioned characteristics have a direct impact on consumer behaviour. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 181)

2.4.3.1 Age and stage in the life cycle

Kotler and Keller (2006, 181) state that people buy various products and services over a lifetime. Consumer needs and preferences towards different goods, such as food, clothes, furniture and recreation, are often age related.

According to Solomon (2004, 499) an age cohort consists of people of similar ages who have had similar experiences. People belonging to the same age cohort share common memories and values and they are likely to buy similar products. For this reason, marketers need to communicate with members of a certain age cohort in a certain way and market products to a specific age group.

Kotler and Keller (2006, 181) point out that critical life events such as marriage, childbirth, illness, relocation, divorce, career change and widowhood should also be considered by companies as these transitions raise new customer needs.

2.4.3.2 Occupation and economic circumstances

Occupation and economic circumstances also influence consumption patterns. People often buy products specific to their occupation. For instance, a company president is likely to buy dress suits and air travel. Companies try to identify and target the occupational groups that may be interested in their products or services. Economic circumstances affect product choices. If economic indicators point to a recession, marketers redesign or reposition their products in order to offer more value to the customers. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 182)

2.4.3.3 Personality and self-concept

Personality characteristics have a great impact on buying behaviour. Kotler and Keller (2006, 182) define personality as a set of distinguishing human psychological traits that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to environmental stimuli. Personality can be a useful factor in analysing consumer brand choices because brands also have personalities and consumers are likely to choose brands whose personalities match their own.

Consumers often choose brands that have brand personality consistent with their own actual self-concept, i.e. how one views oneself. In some cases brand choices may be based on the consumer's ideal self-concept, i.e. how one would like to view oneself, or even others' self-concept, i.e. how a person thinks others see him or her. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 182)

2.4.3.4 Lifestyles and core values

Lifestyles of people belonging to the same social class or subculture may be different. According to Kotler and Keller (2006, 183) a lifestyle is a person's pattern of living in the world as expressed in activities, interests, and opinions. To some extent, lifestyles are shaped according to whether consumers are money-constrained or time-constrained.

Consumer decisions are also influenced by core values. Core values are belief systems that underlie consumer attitudes and behaviours. Core values determine people's choices and desires over a long period of time. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 184)

2.4.4 Psychological factors

Four major psychological factors affect consumer behaviour. These psychological processes include motivation, perception, learning, and memory.

2.4.4.1 Motivation

A person has many needs at any given time. A person may have biogenic needs such as hunger, thirst, or discomfort, or psychogenic needs such as the need for recognition, esteem or belonging. A need becomes a motive when it is aroused to a sufficient level of intensity and makes a person act. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 184)

According to Maslow human needs are arranged in hierarchy, from the most pressing need to the least pressing one. As Figure 3 shows, physiological needs come first.

According to this theory a person tries to satisfy the most important needs first before progressing up the ladder. For instance, a starving man is not interested in status symbols, friendship or self-development. When a person succeeds in satisfying an important need, he or she will try to satisfy the next-most-important need. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 185)

The given theory helps to understand how different products conform to consumer lives, plans and objectives. The model shows that consumers may have different need priorities at different stages of their lives.

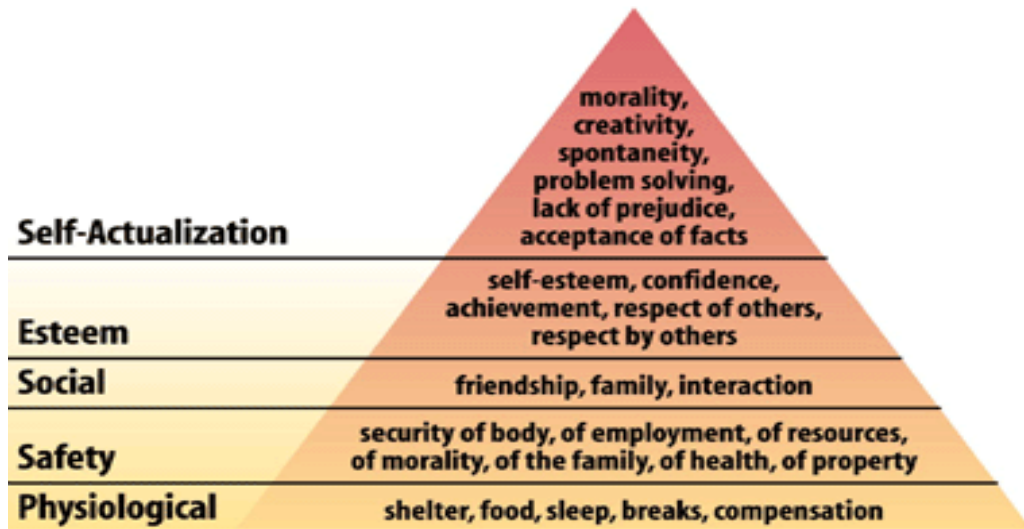


FIGURE 3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Kotler & Keller 2006, 185)

2.4.4.2 Perception

Kotler and Keller (2006, 185) define perception as the process by which an individual selects, organises, and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world. The perceptions can vary widely among people exposed to the same reality. For example, one person may perceive a salesperson as aggressive; another may perceive the same salesperson as intelligent and helpful. Three perceptual processes such as selective attention, distortion and retention can explain why people perceive the same objects differently.

People tend to retain product information that supports their attitudes and beliefs. Selective retention occurs when good characteristics of a product that consumers like are remembered and good features of competing products are forgotten. For this reason, marketers need to repeatedly approach the target market to make sure that their efforts are not overlooked. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 186)

2.4.4.3 Learning

Kotler and Keller (2006, 187) point out that learning involves changes in a person's behaviour arising from experience. Learning is produced through drives, stimuli, cues, responses and reinforcement. A drive is a strong internal stimulus, impelling action. Cues are minor stimuli determining when, where and how a person responds. For instance, if once a person bought one product of a certain brand and the purchase experience was positive, his or her response to this brand will be positively reinforced. Later, he or she is likely to buy the same brand, because a person generalizes responses to similar stimuli. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 187)

2.4.4.4 Memory

According to Solomon (2004, 95) memory involves a process of acquiring information and storing it over time so that it will be available when needed. The memory process includes the following stages: encoding, storage and retrieval. In the encoding stage, information is placed in memory. In the storage stage, this information is integrated with already existing knowledge and stored until it is needed. During retrieval stage, a person accesses the desired information.

Memory plays an important role in buying decision process. When consumers consider the purchase alternatives during decision-making stage, their purchase decisions may heavily depend on what they remember about products. By means of influencing the memory process, companies can help consumers to retain information they have obtained about products, trusting that it will later be applied when purchase decisions are made. (Solomon 2004, 95-97)

2.5 The buying decision process

It is very important to understand the consumers' buying decision process - all their experiences in learning, choosing, using and even disposing of a product. Companies must identify the roles people may have when making buying decisions and types of consumer buying behaviour.

2.5.1 Buying roles

Kotler (2000, 176) identifies five roles people may have in a buying decision. (See Table 1)

Initiator	A person who first suggests the idea of buying the product or service and who gathers information to aid the decision
Influencer	A person whose opinion or advice affects the decision
Decider	A person who decides whether to buy or not, what to buy, how to buy and where to buy
Buyer	A person who purchases the actual product
User	A person who consumes or uses the product or services

TABLE 1. Buying roles (Kotler 2000, 176)

2.5.2 Buying behaviour

According to Kotler (2000, 177) there are four types of consumer buying behaviour based on the level of consumer involvement and the degree of differences among brands. The types of buying behaviour are shown in Figure 4.

2.5.2.1 Complex buying behaviour

In complex buying behaviour consumers display high level of involvement in a purchase and make differences between various brands. Usually consumers engage in complex buying behaviour when they buy products, which are expensive and are not bought on a regular basis. Typically consumers do not know much about the product category. The marketers of these type products should try to understand consumer information search and evaluation of alternatives. They need to differentiate brands so that the consumer chooses that particular brand. (Kotler 2000, 177)

2.5.2.2 Dissonance-reducing buyer behaviour

In case of dissonance-reducing buyer behaviour, consumers show a high level of involvement in a purchase but see little difference in brands. Consumers engage in dissonance-reducing buyer behaviour when their purchases are expensive and infrequent. Consumers are likely to learn first what is available in shop but then buy quickly, making purchase decisions based on a good price or purchase convenience. (Kotler 2000, 177)

2.5.2.3 Habitual buying behaviour

In this type of buying behaviour consumers show a low level of involvement and see no difference in brands. Consumers have low involvement with inexpensive, frequently purchased products. In this case, consumers usually do not search for product information, evaluate alternatives and form brand preferences. Marketers of low-involvement products must try to convert these products into ones of higher involvement. (Kotler 2000, 178)

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Significant Differences Between Brands	Complex Buying Behaviour	Variety-seeking Buying Behaviour
Few differences Between Brands	Dissonance-Reducing Buying Behaviour	Habitual Buying Behaviour

FIGURE 4. Four types of buying behaviour (Kotler 2000, 177)

2.5.2.4 Variety-seeking buying behaviour

In case of variety-seeking buying behaviour, consumers show little involvement but see significant brand differences. Here consumers often try new products and brands and evaluate them during consumption. Consumers change brands not for the reason of dissatisfaction but for the sake of variety. Marketers of brand leaders should encourage habitual buying behaviour. As for the marketers of minor brands, they should encourage variety-seeking behaviour by offering consumers lower prices or free samples. (Kotler 2000, 178)

2.5.3 Stages of buying decision process

The five-stage model of the consumer buying process is presented in Figure 5.

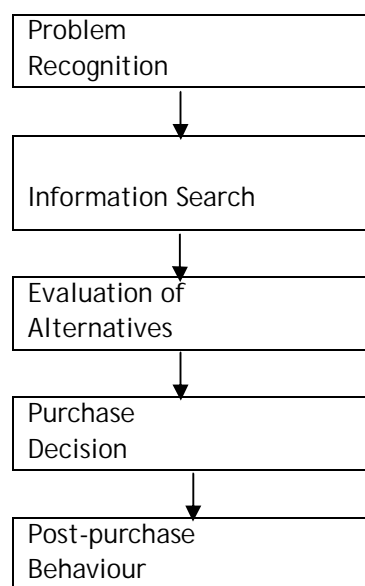


FIGURE 5. Five-stage model of consumer buying process (Kotler & Keller 2006, 191)

According to Kotler and Keller (2006, 191) there are five major stages in the buying decision process: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour.

However, consumers do not always experience all five stages in the buying process. Some stages may be omitted, for instance, when consumer buys a particular brand regularly, he or she goes directly to the purchase decision stage avoiding information search and evaluation of alternatives. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 191)

2.5.3.1 Problem recognition

The buying process starts from problem or need recognition. According to Blackwell et al. (2006) consumers buy products when they believe that a product's ability to solve a problem is worth more than the cost of buying it. The need can be aroused from internal or external stimuli. An internal stimulus is one of the person's normal needs such as hunger or thirst. An external stimulus arises from a consumer's empirical world. For instance, a television advertisement might evoke a need for making a purchase. (Kotler & Keller, 2006)

2.5.3.2 Information search

Once a need is recognised, consumers start searching for information and solutions to satisfy their unmet needs. The information search may be internal or may be external.

Internal search refers to retrieving knowledge from memory. When engaged in internal search, people scan their memory to assemble information about different product alternatives. External search refers to collecting information from family, friends, advertisements, the Internet or from the marketplace. (Solomon 2004, 297)

Consumers search various sources to obtain the information they need to make product choices, which will satisfy their needs. Kotler and Keller (2006, 192) classify these information sources into four groups. Product information sources are presented in Table 2.

Personal	Family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances
Commercial	Advertising, Web sites, sellers, dealers, packaging
Public	Mass media, consumer-rating organizations
Experimental	Handling, examining, using the product

TABLE 2. Product information sources

The influence of these sources varies depending on the product category and buyers' characteristics. Consumers receive the most information about products from commercial sources. However, the most effective information sources are considered to be personal or public, which are independent authorities. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 192)

It is essential for companies to identify the consumer's information sources and to evaluate their relative importance. The information about how customers learn about the brand or who recommended it will help the company to prepare an effective communication strategy for the target market. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 192)

2.5.3.3 Evaluation of alternatives

The next stage in the buying decision process is evaluation of alternative options identified during the search process. In this stage, consumers evaluate and select from various products or services, they compare what they know about different products and brands with what they consider most important and narrow the field of alternatives before the final product decision is made. (Blackwell et al. 2006)

In order to understand consumer evaluation process it should be remembered that the consumer is trying to satisfy a need. The consumer is looking for certain benefits and, finally, sees each product as a set of attributes with varying abilities for delivering benefits sought to satisfy this need. The attributes of interest to buyers vary by product categories.

For example, in evaluating hotel options consumers may think about hotel location, price and cleanliness. When choosing between cameras they may consider their size and price, etc. Consumers pay most attention to attributes that deliver the sought-after benefits. The market for a product can often be segmented according to attributes that are important to different consumer groups. (Kotler & Keller 2006)

Beliefs and attitudes also have impact on the evaluation process and, consequently, on consumer behaviour. People acquire beliefs and attitudes through learning and experience. Beliefs are usually based on knowledge, opinion or faith. Beliefs form product and brand images. Attitudes are based on people's favourable or unfavourable evaluations of some objects. People tend to have attitudes towards almost everything, including food, clothes, and politics. People like or dislike products because of their attitudes. Attitudes are very difficult to change. For this reason, companies are advised to adapt their products to existing attitudes instead of trying to change people's attitudes. (Kotler 2000, 175)

2.5.3.4 Purchase decision

During the evaluation stage the consumer considers various alternatives and forms product or brand preferences and a purchase intention. In executing a purchase intention, the consumer makes up to five decisions among several choices: brand, dealer, quantity, timing and payment method. When purchasing everyday consumer products, the buyers are likely to have fewer decisions. For instance, in buying sugar, a consumer does not think much about its supplier or payment method. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 197)

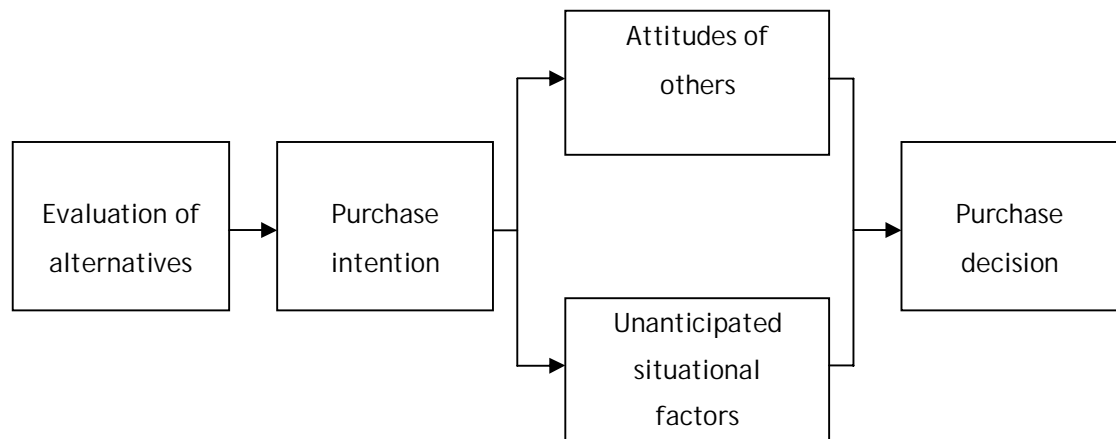


FIGURE 6. Steps between evaluation of alternatives and purchase decision (Kotler & Keller 2006, 197)

Kotler and Keller (2006, 197) state that there are two general factors that can intervene between the purchase intention and the purchase decision. These factors are shown in Figure 6 presented above.

The first factor is the attitudes of others. The purchase decision can be affected by other people's negative or positive attitude toward the consumer's preferred alternative. A buyer's preference for a brand will increase if someone whose opinion is important to the buyer favours the same brand strongly and, vice versa, a buyer's preference for a brand will decrease if someone does not favour the same brand. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 197)

Unanticipated situational factors may change the purchase intention. Purchase intentions are not completely reliable predictors of purchase behaviour. Unanticipated situational factors can be changes in the consumer's financial situation or dissatisfaction in the buying situation. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 197)

2.5.3.5 Post-purchase behaviour

The last stage in the consumer decision-making process is post-purchase behaviour. In this stage consumers experience either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. According to Blackwell et al. (2006, 83) satisfaction occurs when consumers' expectations are matched by perceived performance. Dissatisfaction occurs when consumers' experiences and performance do not correspond with their expectations. These feelings have an effect on whether the customer buys the product again and talks favourably or unfavourably about it to others. If the customer is satisfied with the product, he or she will probably buy the product again and recommend it to others. Dissatisfied customers may return the product or complain about it to others. (Kotler & Keller, 2006)

2.6 Consumer responses to foreign-made products

Nowadays consumers have an option to choose among products made in many different countries. In highly competitive global marketplace marketers are concerned with how attitudes and beliefs about their country influence consumer decision-making.

Country-of-origin perceptions are the mental associations and beliefs associated with a particular country. Marketers must try to use country-of-origin perceptions in the most advantageous way possible to sell their products and services. (Kotler & Keller 2006, 686)

Mooij (2004, 121) suggests that consumers can be sensitive to the country-of-origin of products and brands. According to her the country-of-origin affects consumer product perceptions. Consumers use the information of country-of-origin during the evaluation stage of products. Positive or negative attitudes toward a particular country show favourable or unfavourable responses to products.

Solomon (2004) points out that, in general, people tend to rate their own country's products more favourably than do people living elsewhere. The tendency to prefer products of one's own culture to those of other countries is called ethnocentrism. Ethnocentric consumers tend to think that it is wrong to buy products from other countries because it may have a negative effect on the domestic economy.

Shiffman et al. (2005, 118) state that if the potential customers in a certain country have a positive image of products made in the country in which they are produced, the marketers should adopt a marketing strategy that is presented in the positive column of Figure 7. In contrast, if the potential customers in a particular country have a negative image of products

produced in the certain country, the marketers should adopt the strategy presented in the negative column of Figure 7.

Marketing mix	Country image	
	Positive	Negative
Product	Emphasise "Made in"	Emphasise brand name
Price	Premium price	Low price to attract value conscious
Place	Exclusive locations	Establish supply chain partners
Promotion	Country image	Brand image

FIGURE 7. Strategies for managing country-of-origin effects (Shiffman et al. 2005, 119)

2.7 Chilled and canned ready meal

Chilled and canned ready meals are generally defined "as any products, whether based on meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, Quorn, pasta or rice, which have recipe skills added and form part or all of the main meal. They include complete meals, which require nothing to be added by the consumer, such as lasagne, chilli con carne with rice, and part meals or meal centres to which vegetables and or rice or pasta need to be added for example chicken tikka masala" (Consumer Goods UK, 1998).

Several factors, particularly changing consumer trends and lifestyles, have contributed to the development and impressive growth of this particular segment of the chilled food market including: an escalating consumer demand for convenience/flexibility in eating; growth of single person households; increase in working women; decline in cooking skills despite the popularity of television cooking programmes; growing household ownership of microwave ovens and freezers; less formal eating occasions moving towards an increase in snacking/grazing; increased experimentation with foreign food. (Nutrition & Food Science, Vol. 31 Iss: 2)

The chilled and canned ready meal market can be segmented by cuisine type. There are various varieties emerging although Italian, Indian and Chinese significantly outperform other market segments. High levels of activity and interest in product development fuelled by consumers' demand for more authentic and adventurous meals have led to the growth of all sectors of the market but in particular the ethnic sector has benefited tremendously (Reed et al., 2000). Chilled and canned ready meal manufacturers driven by the food retailers have

also launched new varieties such as low-fat versions, healthy choice, vegetarian products, new flavours and cuisines, all of which increase product range and choice to satisfy the more affluent, discerning and variety seeking consumer.

2.8 Overview of Estonian food, chilled and canned ready meal market

2.8.1 Estonian food market

Each country has own food culture, traditional food and food ingredients. Food is a necessity; therefore, a meal is important part in everyone's life, no matter are you tourist or citizen of country. However for the visitor, food experience can become a memorable experience in the foreign country. Food culture is a very important part of national culture, as well as the domestic food ingredients. It is important that the typical Estonian food products and meals, which are prepared from raw materials, are originally from Estonia.

Every resident of Estonia have certainly own vision on the Estonian national food. Often first comes into mind traditional foods, in fact, most of them do not eat it on a daily basis. Over time, the opportunities, the life style and eating habits have changed. However, there are always meals, that Estonian people love to eat and with pleasure will suggest and offer to visitors. The food selection is compatible with the consumers' needs and all needed and favourite food products are always available to consumers. Knowledge and a reputation in the food industry have economic effect on each country's market share due to competition on the global economy. Opinion of foreign consumers about Estonian local food can create a positive impression in the global market that would help develop the domestic food industry and increase export opportunities. Enlargement of European Union has increased interest of countries in each other. Estonian Agricultural Chamber of Commerce is asked frequently how Estonia enriches the food table. In other European countries the food selection is bigger than in Estonia, due to that countries import foods from other countries to educate their consumers about the world cuisine. Estonia could as well take opportunity and represent their food to the other countries.

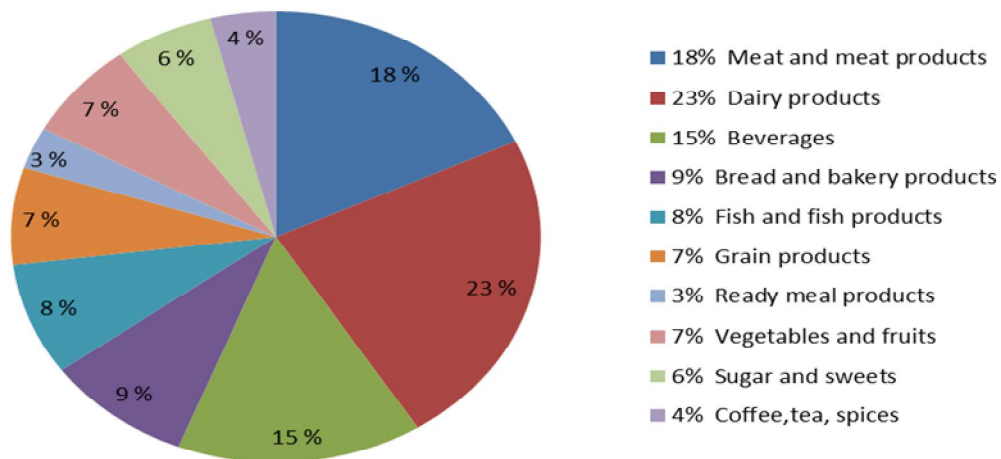


FIGURE.8 Source: Estonian Statistical office, Structure of the Estonian food industry in 2010 (<http://www.stat.ee/>)

As can be seen from the Figure 8, dairy and meat product are the dominant in the Estonian food market. Bread and bakery products 9%, Fish and fish products 8%, Grain products 7%, Vegetables and fruits 7%. Only 3% of market share belong to ready meal products.

2.8.2 Estonian chilled and canned ready meal market

„The trends in consumption ready meal is growing and is certainly popular among the young and people that are living alone, which gives reason to increase variety of ready meal products in the Estonian food market. Just as consumer changing preferences and desires, the manufacturer is reacting on those changes as well. Nowadays ready meal products do not differ much from homemade food. The manufacturer is producing the ready meal that with delicious taste, good quality and as much as possible without preservatives using the fresh products. ” said marketing manager of Saarioinen Eesti OÜ Katrin Tuisk.

Market Share of chilled and canned ready meal in Estonian market has created intense competition in the short term. There are several major companies that are providing chilled and canned ready meal in Estonian market. Those companies are Salvest AS operating since 1946, Tallegg AS since 1956. From 2001 Tallegg AS is under control of Finnish company HK Ruokatalo and the Federation of Swedish Farmers as they purchased controlling shares in Tallegg AS. Põltsama Felix AS since 1920 and newcomer Saarioinen OÜ since 2009 brand Mamma, Atria Oyj and Põltsamaa Felix AS that is owned by Swedish Procordia Food AB since 2004.

Most known from all, is domestic company Salvest AS which produces ready meal that is very close to homemade taste and traditional food. The brand Salvest AS is very strong in the Estonian market as it has many years of experience in operating in Estonian food market. For packaging Salvest AS use Mason jars, that guarantees longer expiry date and the taste of food

do not lose its flavour. Salvest AS and Saarioinen OÜ at the moment are the biggest producers of portion dishes and canned soups. The research of the thesis will concentrate more on these two companies.

2.9 Earlier studies

Consumer behaviour has been a research topic for some theses. Although the author did not find much research that fully concentrates on the similar subject. Here are presented the theses relevant to this study to some extent.

- Kemppinen, Markku, 2007. Belarusian frozen food market analysis and best recommended entry strategy for Findus Ltd. Master's Thesis. International University Audentes

Findus Finland Oy provided the author with this research. The objective of the research was to study the feasibility of the Belarusian frozen food market and to propose the best market entry strategy for Findus Finland Oy. The research results showed that the Belarusian market of frozen food products could be considered attractive from the perspectives of market capacity and its acceptance. The author analysed and recommended possible market entry strategies for the case company. The thesis partly revealed the issues related to consumer behaviour and research. (Kemppinen 2007)

- Kaustell, Salla, 2010. The environmental profile of ready meals from the consumer perspective.

The study showed that food and ready meal related environmental problems and impacts were not familiar to the respondents. According to the respondents industrially produced food is less environmentally friendly than home-made food and packaging waste is the most important environmental impact of ready meals. It has been demonstrated that the most significant environmental impacts of food production are formed during primary production of raw materials, and the environmental impacts of ready meals and home-made food do not differ significantly. (Kaustell 2010)

2.10 The theoretical framework of the study

The theoretical background of this study was based on the concepts of consumer markets and consumer behaviour. The model of consumer behaviour and different factors influencing the buying decision process were described in the present section of the research. The section discussed consumer responses to foreign-made products and presented an overview of the

chilled and canned ready meal market. The theoretical framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 9.

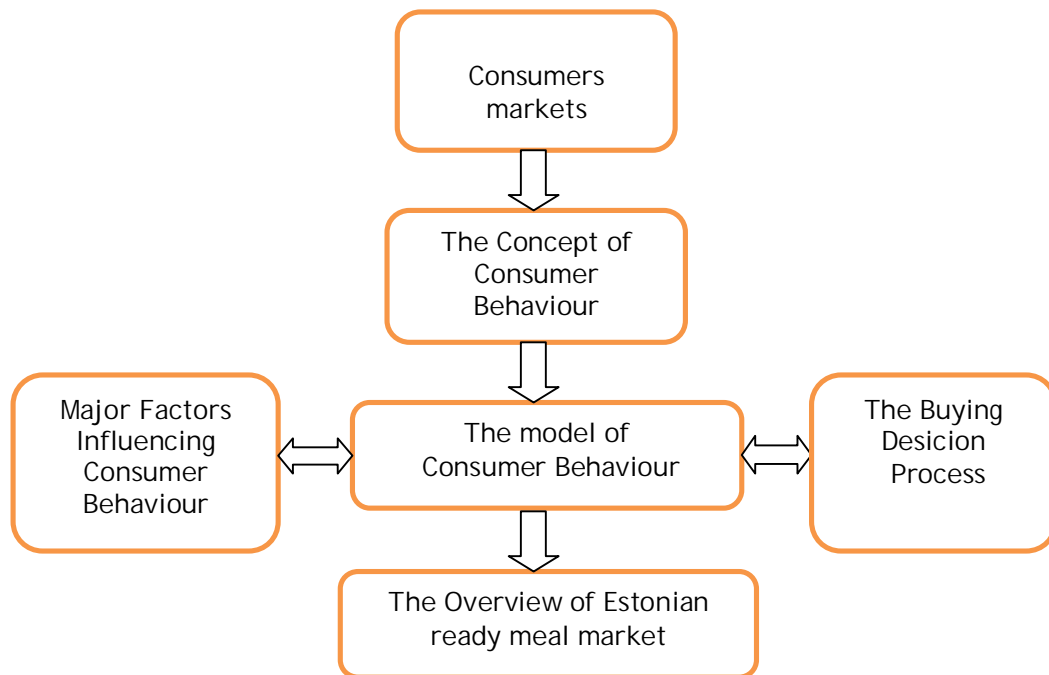


FIGURE 9. The theoretical framework of the study

2.11 Hypothesis

Kumar (2005, 79) defines a hypothesis as a speculative statement that is subjected to verification through a research study. According to him, hypotheses bring direction, specificity and focus to a research study. In most studies hypotheses are based on either previous studies or the researcher's or someone else's observation.

The hypothesis of this research was mainly based on the author's own observation of Estonian consumers' behaviour towards chilled and canned ready meal consumption and on the author's own experience as a chilled and canned ready meal consumer.

The research hypothesis was based on the assumption that young and middle-aged people make use of chilled and canned ready meal products. The majority of chilled and canned ready meal buyers are women. The demand for traditional types of chilled and canned ready meal products prevails among people with average incomes. It was hypothesized that portion dishes are the most popular and frequently consumed as a chilled and canned ready meal product.

3 RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHOD

This section describes the research methodology adopted to conduct this study. The section starts with explaining the choice of the methodological approach and continues with discussing methods used in the research. The section concludes with the issues related to validity and reliability of the research.

3.1 Methodological approach: quantitative versus qualitative

According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) the choice of the research approach depends on the research problem and its purpose. The main difference between qualitative and quantitative research is considered to be that quantitative researchers employ measurement and qualitative researchers do not use it. The distinction between these approaches is not only in the question of quantification but also in reflection of different perspectives on knowledge and research objectives. (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005, 109)

Based on the research purpose of the thesis the approach chosen for this study is a quantitative research approach. The choice of the quantitative research approach is also explained by the fact that it involves a large number of respondents needed for this study and the usage of structured questions where the response options are predetermined.

The design of a quantitative research study includes the methods of data collection, the sample design and construction of the data collection instrument. (Schiffman & Kanuk 1994, 32)

3.2 Methods used

The theoretical background of the present research was collected mainly through foreign literature. Books, earlier studies and articles relevant for this study were used as sources of information.

There are three basic methods to collect primary data in quantitative research: by observing, by experimentation or by survey, i.e. by questioning people. Survey is considered to be a good method to learn about consumer preferences and attitudes. Surveys conducted by the researcher in person in a retail shopping area are also often called mall intercepts. This type of survey is considered to be an efficient way of gathering information from a large sample of consumers. (Shiffman & Kanuk, 1994)

The research conducted by the thesis author took place in the shopping area of the hypermarket "Rimi" (Ülemiste Rimi hüpermarket, Suur-Sõjamäe 4 st, Tallinn) that is considered to be one of the popular shopping destinations in the city. The survey was implemented during

19 - 23 August 2011. Prior to conducting the survey, the required permission had been obtained from the shop personnel.

According to Shiffman and Kanuk (1994) the data collection instrument in a quantitative research is a questionnaire, which can be sent via mail or administered by an interviewer in person or by telephone. The data collection for the empirical section of the present research was obtained and personally administered by the author through a questionnaire, which is presented in Appendix 1.

3.3 Questionnaire design

As mentioned above, data for this research was collected through questionnaires. The author tried to design the questionnaire in such a way that it would be interesting, objective and easy to complete for respondents. The questionnaire was constructed with the assistance of the thesis supervisor. His assistance enabled the author of the thesis to improve a questionnaire and establish its content validity.

To enhance the research, questions relevant for purposes of the study as well as demographic questions were included in the questionnaire. The majority of questions designed were of fixed-choice and multiple-response format. Initially, the questionnaire was constructed in the English language, then before collecting data it was translated into Estonian and Russian. (See Appendix 2)

Prior to using the questionnaire to collect data, it was tested to assure the validity of its content. The purpose of testing was to refine the questionnaire so that respondents would not have difficulties in answering questions and there would not be problems in recording the data.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling is an integral part of a research design. As the thesis author worked within time and resource constraints, the size of the sample was determined to be 111 people and the respondents to be surveyed were chosen at one particular geographical location.

The sample size is sufficient for this study, because usually consumers are reluctant to spend time and respond to surveys in shopping areas. There is a considerable non-response rate when this type of survey is conducted. For this reason, people who refused to participate in the survey and complete questionnaires at the first attempt were excluded from the sample.

As mentioned before, the respondents were chosen inside the shopping area, mostly near the chilled and canned ready meal products department at different times of the day.

The method chosen for the survey was a non-probability sample. According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005, 147) a non-probability sample is a sample that is not selected using a random selection method.

The sample design used in this research was quota sampling. The sample design was chosen on the basis of convenience in accessing the sampling population. The sample was selected from the location convenient to the thesis author. The persons with visible relevant characteristics who are likely to make use of chilled and canned ready meal products were asked to participate in the survey. Each new survey participant was approached as the questionnaire of the previous respondent was completed.

3.5 Analysis method

After the data for this research was collected, the information obtained was analysed and conclusions were drawn. The findings of this study are presented in the fifth section of the research.

The analysis was implemented with the help of Microsoft Excel and SPSS for Windows programmes. The data obtained from questionnaires first was coded and quantified, then the responses were tabulated and analysed.

3.6 Validity and reliability of the study

The purpose of reliability and validity in research is to demonstrate the quality and thoroughness of the study. Kumar (1999, 137) defines validity as the ability of an instrument to measure exactly what it is supposed to measure.

Kent (1999, 44) agrees that a measurement is said to be valid if it measures what it is intended to measure. He points out that, in practice, validity means looking for evidence that the instruments or techniques used to measure a concept give a true reflection of what was intended. The validity can be measured from different aspects and it should be remembered that the reality might be different from the intended research, for instance, if respondents understood issues in a different way than was expected.

To ensure the validity of this study, the author studied and utilized various sources of information in the research. The author tried to use the sources relevant for the purpose of this

study. The literature used in the theoretical section of the research is written by prominent authors in the field of consumer research. To increase the validity of the study, all information applied was marked with a source reference. The data used in the empirical section of the research was based on the theory from the theoretical section of the research. Research methods that are generally accepted for collecting and analysing the study object were implemented in this thesis.

According to Shiffman and Kanuk (1994, 118) reliability refers to the consistency with which the technique measures what it should measure. Kent (1999, 45) defines reliability as the extent to which measurements are repeatable.

The author of the thesis tried to increase the reliability of the research by attempting to combine data collected from a wide range of theoretical knowledge with the implementation of the survey. The background of the author, knowledge of the local market and understanding of the peculiarities of local consumers in some way reinforced the reliability of the research. Due to the lack of necessary resources the author adopted only a quantitative research approach in this study. For this reason, this research cannot be considered totally reliable. The research topic, consumer behaviour, is diverse and dynamic by its nature and there can be no single conclusion. The findings of the research may differ under similar conditions in the course of time.

4 EMPIRICAL STUDY

The fourth section of the thesis is the empirical study. The section starts with the overview of Estonian chilled and canned ready meal market, followed by the presentation of the data obtained as a result of the survey. The data analysis includes the description of consumer characteristics, the presentation of the market structure of chilled and canned ready meal in Estonia. Moreover, consumer preferences towards, frequency of chilled and canned ready meal purchases and consumption habits are presented in the section.

4.1 The data of the study

The data obtained as a result of the survey is presented in the following sub-sections of the thesis.

4.2 Consumer characteristics

The total number of the respondents, which participated in the survey, was 111 people. A considerable percentage of the participants, 55%, were women and 45 % were men. The analysis made clear that the majority of the respondents is more than 33.3 % belonged to the age group of 25-35 years old, 26.1 % were in the age group of 18-24 years old and 23,4 % of the participants were in the age group of 36-46 years old.

According to the data obtained 41.4% of the respondents were single and 32.4% were married. The majority of them were families containing one to two people 64.9 % and 35.1 of the respondents belonged to families including from three to five people. Survey revealed that 66.7% of respondents are workers, 22.5% students, 5.4% pensioner and 5.4% replied that they were unemployed.

The survey started by asking if the respondents usually bought chilled and canned ready meal. 98,2 % of all respondents answered that they buy chilled and canned ready meal products. Those participants who responded negatively to the question expressed their preferences for fresh products.

4.2.1 Market structure

One of the questions addressed in the survey was to indicate the types of chilled and canned ready meal products the respondents purchase on a regular basis. Based on the data obtained, the structure of the chilled and canned ready meal products market in Estonia was created, which is presented in Figure 10.

The results show that the largest segment of the chilled and canned ready meal market in Estonia is portion dishes 55,86 % of the respondents answered that they prefer to buy portion dishes.

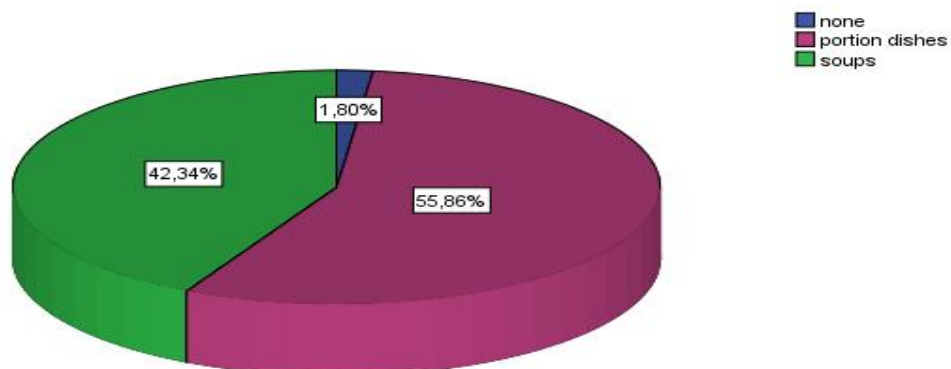


FIGURE.10 Ready meal preferences

Another chilled and canned ready meal product indicated by the respondents was canned soup. Figure 10 shows this product is consumed by 42, 34 % of the respondents. Only 1.8% answered that they do not purchase chilled and canned ready meal products.

4.2.2 Brand preferences

The survey participants were questioned about the preferences for different brands of chilled and canned ready meal, mainly soups and portion dishes. Figure suggests that "Salvest" and "Saarioinen Eesti OÜ" are the most preferred brands chosen by the respondents.

A sizable percentage, 66,97 % of the respondents, indicated that they prefer to buy the "Salvest" brand, which means that chilled and canned ready meal products and traditional products of national cuisine manufactured under the "Salvest" brand are in demand among consumers.

The analysis showed that the "Saarioinen Eesti OÜ" gained 28,44% of the respondent's. AS Põltsama Felix collected 4,59% of the respondents.

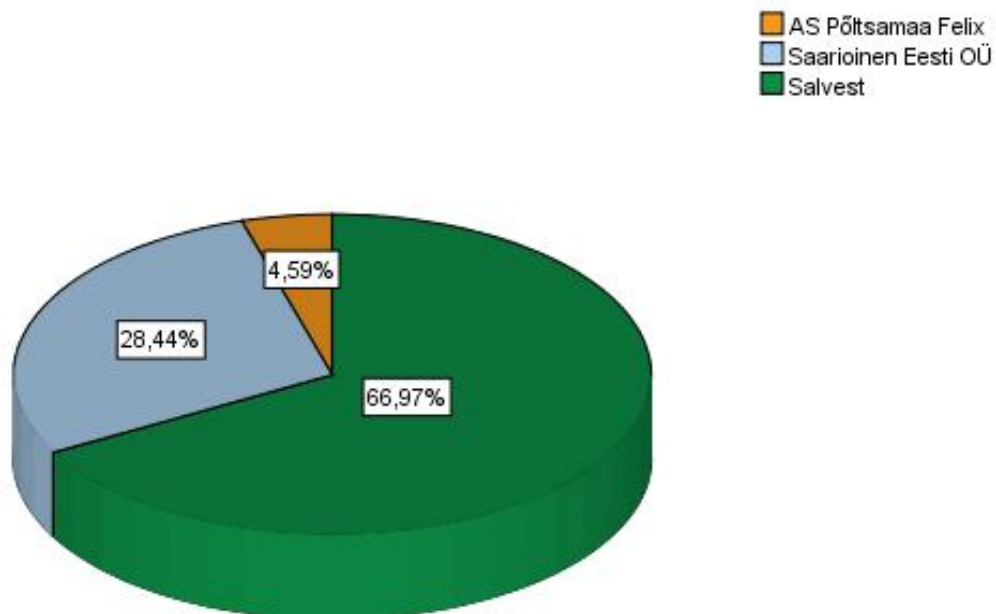


FIGURE 11. Brand preferences

4.2.3 Frequency of chilled and canned ready meal consumption

One of the questions addressed in the research was about the frequency of chilled and canned ready meal product purchases. The results are presented in Figure 12.

As can be seen from Figure 12 many of the respondents surveyed (49.5 %) said that they purchase chilled and canned ready meal products 3-6 times a month.

Almost quarter of the respondents (26.1 %) answered that they buy chilled and canned ready meal from 6 to 15 times per month, while 21.6 % purchase it 1 to 3 times per month. 1.8% of respondents chose the response option "never".

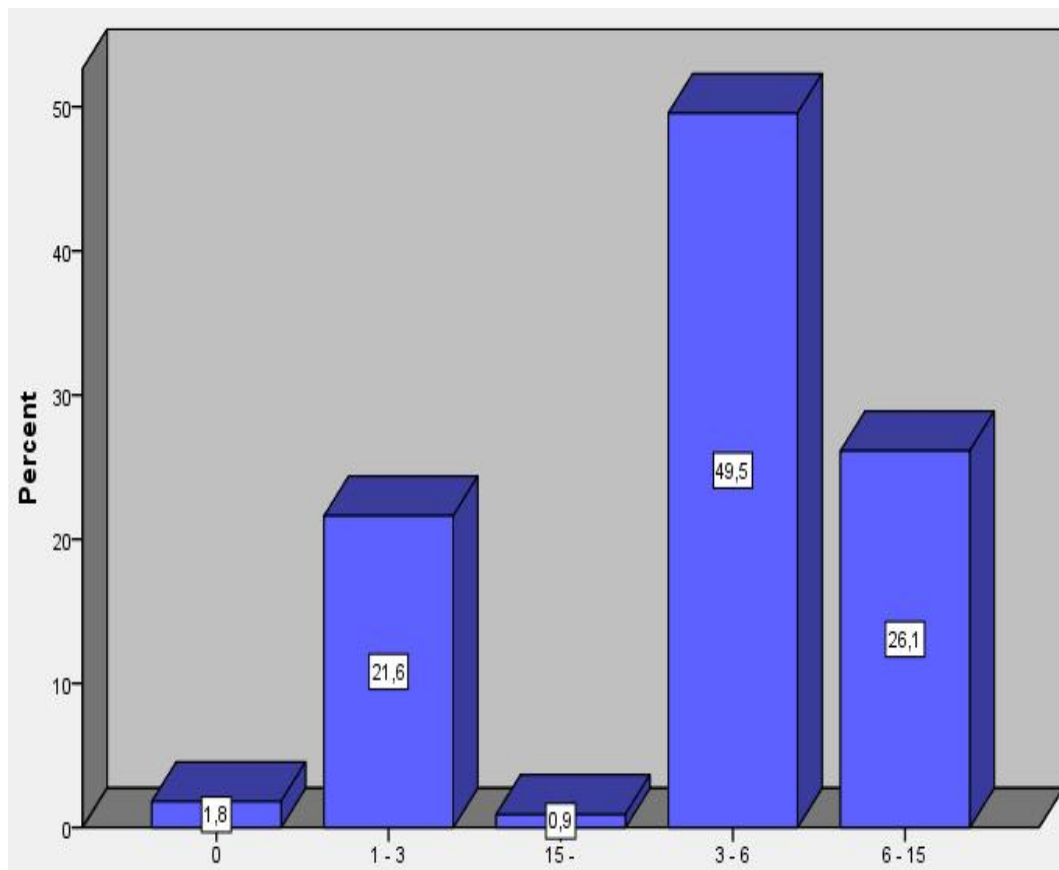


FIGURE 12. Frequency of purchases chilled and canned ready meal per month

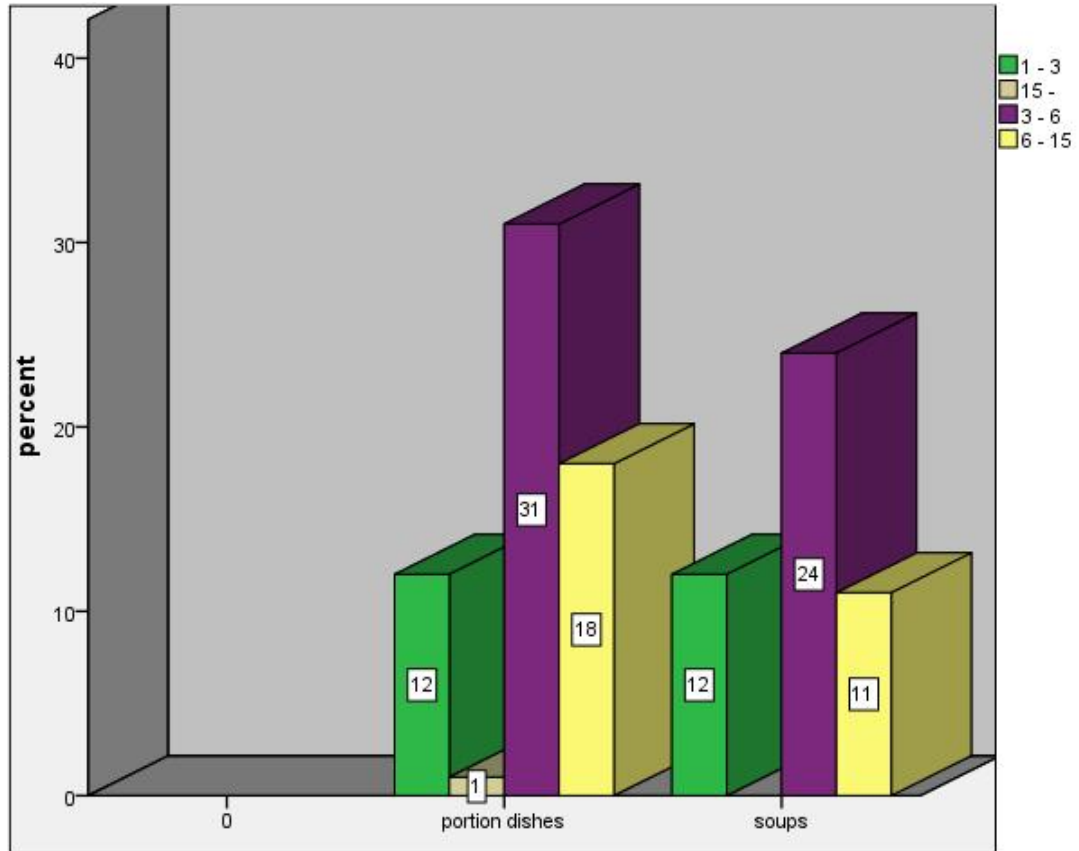


FIGURE 13. Frequency of purchasing ready meal by product per month

Figure.13 shows that 31% of respondents purchase portion dishes 3 to 6 times per month, when at the same time 24% of respondents answered that they purchase soups 3 to 6 time per month. 18% answered that they buy portion dishes 6 to 15 times per month and 11% replied that they purchase soups 6 to 15 times per month. 12 % of respondents purchase portion dishes and soups 1 to 3 times per month.

4.2.4 Factors influencing purchase decisions

As it was explained from the theoretical section of the research there are different factors, which can influence consumers' buying decisions. In the questionnaire the respondents were requested to name the reasons for buying chilled and canned ready meal products.

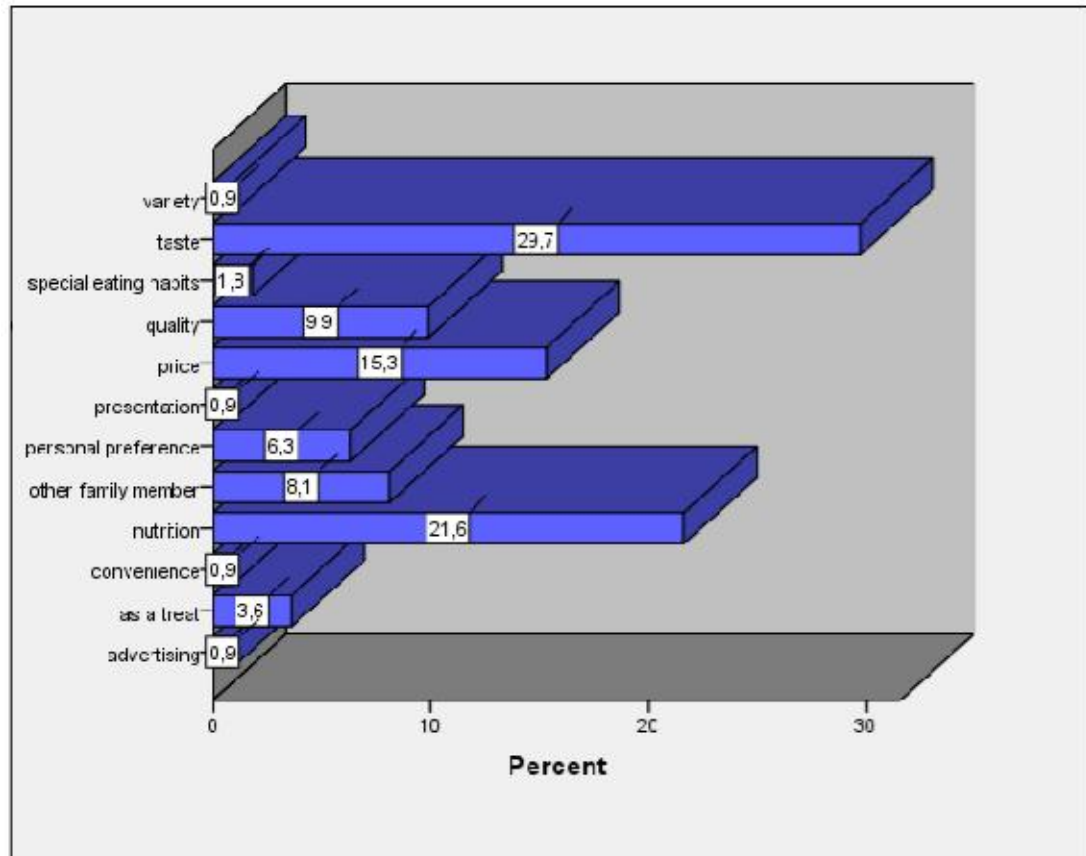


FIGURE 14. Factors influencing ready meal purchase decision

Figure 14 demonstrated that a major amount of the respondents (29.7 %) specified the taste of chilled and canned ready meal as the main determinant influencing their purchase decision.

Such factors as nutrition (21.6 %), price (15.3 %) and quality (9.9 %) are also considered by the respondents as deciding factors influencing their purchase decisions.

4.2.5 Country of origin of chilled and canned ready meal products

As stated in the theoretical section of the thesis the country-of-origin of food affects consumer choices. One of the research questions in the study was to investigate whether consumers consider the food origin while buying chilled and canned ready meal products. Figure 15 suggests that the majority of the respondents, that is 78, 9 %, take into account the country of origin of chilled and canned ready meal products when making purchases.

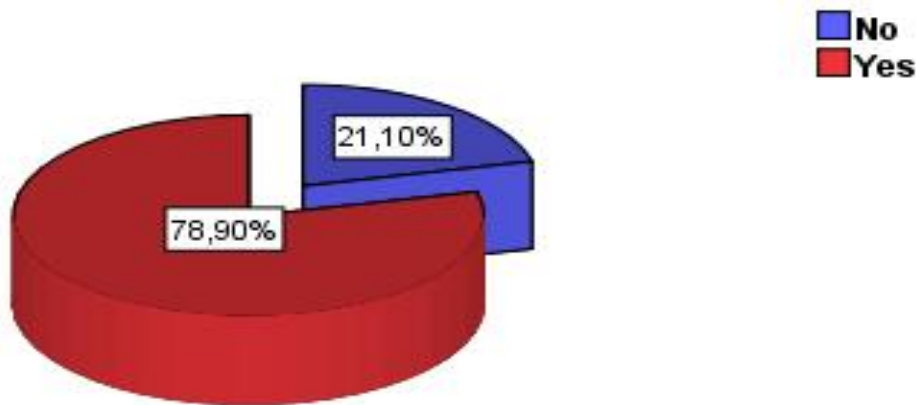


FIGURE 15. Consideration of country of origin chilled and canned ready meal products

4.2.6 Monthly income of the households

Table 3 clarifies that the majority of the respondents stated the amount of their monthly household income to be in the range of 600 to 800 euros. This option received 51.4 % of the responses. Almost 24,3 % of respondents chose the option 900-1100 euros. 22.5% of the survey participants reported their income to be in the range of 300-500 euros. 1.8 % of people avoided answering this question. Only 1.8% gave a response that their salary range is from 1200 and more. Table 3 shows that monthly incomes of most households consuming chilled and canned ready meal products appear to be not high

Table 3 Monthly income of the household

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1200 +	2	1,8	1,8	1,8
300 - 500	25	22,5	22,5	24,3
600 - 800	57	51,4	51,4	75,7
900 - 1100	27	24,3	24,3	100,0
Total	111	100,0	100,0	

4.2.7 Frequency of purchases in relation to household income

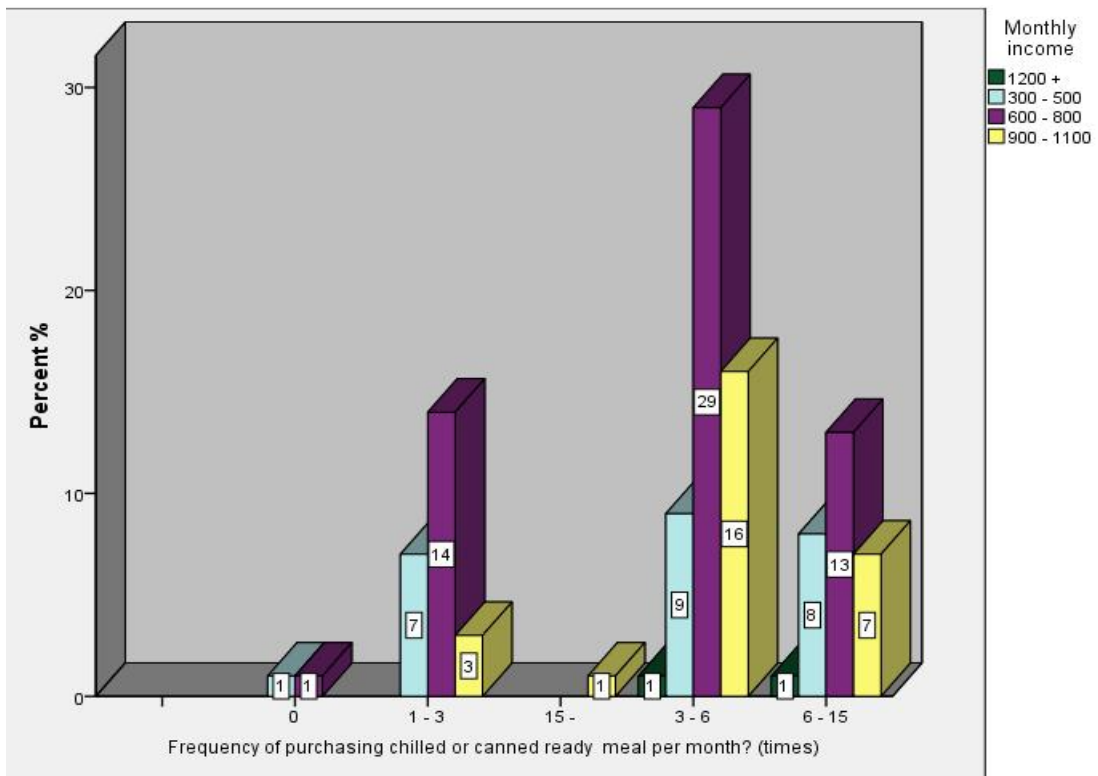


FIGURE 16. Frequency of purchasing chilled and canned ready meal per month (times)

Figure 16 describes the relationship between the monthly income of the respondents' household and frequency of chilled and canned ready meal purchases. The results suggest that households with monthly income of 600-800 buy chilled and canned ready meal products more frequently than others do.

On the basis of the data presented in Table 12 it can be concluded that in general people with monthly household income ranging between 500 - 1100 euros purchase chilled and canned ready meal products more often. Consumers who have lower level of income appear not to make use of chilled and canned ready meal.

4.2.8 Other issues

According to the survey results 91 % of the respondents are planning to purchase chilled and canned ready meal food in future. 57.4 % of people surveyed are usually interested in new chilled and canned ready meal products and willing to buy them.

According to results of the survey 58% of the respondents answered that they would like to see more selection in portion dishes products from Salvest As.

67.3 %, purchase chilled and canned ready meal at supermarkets, 22.5 % in hypermarkets and only 10.2 % of consumers buy it from department stores.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Research findings

In the present research the author of the thesis attempted to examine the behaviour of Estonian consumers towards consumption of chilled and canned ready meal products. The researcher tried to discover which groups of people make use of chilled and canned ready meal, what kind of chilled and canned ready meal they consume, how often they buy, what brands of chilled and canned ready meal they prefer, what influences their product choice and what their attitudes are towards the country-of-origin of chilled and canned ready meal.

According to the survey results the demand for chilled and canned ready meal among consumers is considerably high. People belonging to the age group of 18 to 46 years mostly consume chilled and canned ready meal products. A considerable number of chilled and canned ready meal buyers are women. In general, these people are young and middle-aged. Research showed that soups are more popular among women and the portion dishes among men respondents

Referring to the survey results, buyers of chilled and canned ready meal tend to consume domestic chilled and canned ready meal more frequently. Domestic chilled and canned ready meal includes products belonging to the national cuisine.

The most popular and frequently consumed chilled and canned ready meal products among Estonian consumers are portion dishes. Almost 56 % of the respondents consume portion dishes at a minimum once a month.

On average, more than half of the survey participants, 98.2 % consume different types of chilled and canned ready meal products several times a month.

The demand for chilled and canned ready meals such as portion dishes is quite new to the market.

Consumer preferences for traditional types of chilled and canned ready meal products are also revealed from the results of brand preference research. According to the results, the most popular brand among chilled and canned ready meal consumers appeared to be the local regional producer operating mostly in chilled and canned ready meal products.

As the main factors influencing the choice of particular brands of chilled and canned ready meal consumers indicated taste, nutrition, reasonable price and good quality of chilled and canned ready meal products

As a result of the survey it appears that brand preferences have been strongly formed among the participants of the research. Only 35 % of the respondents are ready to buy another brand if the favourite one is unavailable in shops.

The results suggest that the dominant factor affecting the choice of buying chilled and canned ready meals products is reasonable price, good quality, nutrition and taste Recommendations of friends, attractive packaging do not strongly motivate consumers to make purchases.

In regard to the data obtained it can be concluded that more than half of the respondents consider the origin of chilled and canned ready meal products during the purchase decision process.

Research findings suggest that consumers of chilled and canned ready meal products are households with average incomes.

Majority of consumers seem to be satisfied with chilled and canned ready meal products and are planning to buy them in the future. More than half of the respondents are usually interested in new types of chilled and canned ready meal products and tend to buy them.

5.2 Managerial implications

In the present research the author of the thesis attempted to utilize the knowledge related to the theories and concepts of consumer markets and consumer behaviour. The author provided an overview of the Estonian chilled and canned ready meal market and revealed trends existing in the given industry. In the empirical section of the study the author provided information concerning the attitudes and preferences of Estonian consumers towards chilled and canned ready meal consumption.

The companies that are operating in the ready meal industry will benefit from this study, as the author of the thesis presented data in this research, which would help marketers to make decisions, which can be useful in the implementation of future marketing strategies.

Other companies operating in chilled and canned ready meal products industry may also find this research useful. The information discussed in this study can be utilized for constructing the basis of future research.

5.3 Future research challenges

The concept of consumer behaviour is very wide and complex. All aspects of the concept could not be included in this study. During the implementation of this research some future research topics arouse. One research challenge could be to conduct an attitude and usage study of chilled and canned ready meal products in the future. This type of study could provide a basis for a deeper and more detailed understanding of all aspects of the relationship between consumers and chilled and canned ready meal products.

Moreover, another interesting research challenge recognised by the author could be the implementation of a thorough analysis of the chilled and canned ready meal in Estonia. The analysis will provide the company with valuable information concerning the opportunities and threats, weaknesses and strengths of the market. The analysis will help companies to make proper strategic marketing decisions in the future.

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Questionnaire

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

1. Age Group

- 24
- 25 - 35
- 36 - 46
- 47 - 57
- 58 +

2. Social status

- Student
- Worker
- Unemployed
- Pensioner

3. Marital status

- Single
- Married
- Cohabitation
- Divorced
- Widow / widower

4. Family size

- 2
- 3 - 5
- 5 +

5. Monthly income (Eur)

- 300 - 500
- 600 - 800
- 900 - 1100
- 1200 +

6. Do you consume ready meal?

- Yes
- No

7. Factors influencing chilled or canned ready meal choice

- Quality/freshness of the product
- Price
- What other family member will eat

- Taste
- Convenience
- Presentation, package appearance
- Personal preference
- Advertising
- Special eating habits
- Nutrition
- Variety
- As a treat

8. How often do you buy chilled or canned ready meal per month? (times)

- 0
- 1-3
- 3-6
- 6-15
- 15-

9. Do you prefer to buy soups or portion dishes?

- Soups
- Portion dishes

10. Brand Preference

- Salvest As
- Saarioinen Eesti OÜ
- Põltsamaa Felix As

11. When you buy ready meal products do you consider the country of its origin?

- Yes
- No

12. Are you planning to purchase ready meal products in the future?

- Yes
- No

13. Are you interested in the new ready meal products and willing to buy them?

- Yes
- No

14. Where do you purchase ready meal products?

- Hypermarket
- Supermarket
- Domestic store
- Other

15. Would you like to see more selection from Salvest AS portion dishes and soups or Saarioinen Eesti portion dishes and soups?

- Portion dishes Salvest AS
- Portion dishes Saarioinen Eesti
- Soups Salvest AS
- Soups Saarioinen Eesti